

**PRESS RELEASE**  
**21 FEBRUARY 2018**

25 Savile Row  
London W1S 2ER  
T. +44 (0)20 7287 5013

Gallery Hours:  
Tue-Fri: 10:00-18:00  
Sat: 11:00-15:00



## LONDON PAINTERS

22 FEBRUARY - 28 APRIL 2018

*London Painters* brings together works by the core proponents of the so-called "School of London": Michael Andrews, Frank Auerbach, Francis Bacon, Lucian Freud, David Hockney, R.B. Kitaj and Leon Kossoff. Through a selection of self-portraits, depictions of their loyal, sometimes shared sitters and London scenes, the show explores the artists' dedication to the figure and cityscape, at a time when abstraction prevailed.

"The story of the supposed School of London is a story of friendships, an intimate tale. With that in mind, *London Painters* unites pictures that highlight these relationships and the circles of shared acquaintance, as well as London itself, the city that provided such a thrilling backdrop to so much of their work" says Pilar Ordovas.

*Man in a Blue Shirt*, 1965, one of two portraits that Freud made of Francis Bacon's partner, George Dyer, will be displayed alongside Francis Bacon's *Three Studies of George Dyer*, painted the following year. This is the first time that these two paintings have come together, giving insight into both the artists, sitter, and the emotional struggles that were taking place on both sides of the canvas. *Three Studies of George Dyer* is one of five triptychs that Bacon painted of his troubled lover. Their first meeting has gained legendary status; Dyer, aged 29, attempted to break into and burgle Bacon's South Kensington studio. Falling through the studio's skylight, Dyer truly tumbled into Bacon's life, forever altering the course of the artist's work. Their relationship was one of extremes, and the full range of emotional and psychological heat seethes and glitters through the richly textured surface of this gem-like triptych.

Freud was close to both Bacon and Dyer during this period and witnessed the passionate, but tempestuous, relationship between them. On several occasions, when Bacon and Dyer needed time apart, Freud took Dyer with him to visit his friend Jane, Lady Willoughby de Eresby on her estate in Scotland. It was during one such stay that Freud began to paint this intimate portrait of Bacon's lover. Lady Willoughby was also a great friend to Michael Andrews – his *Portrait of Jane* is one of the very few portraits that the artist ever painted. Dating from 1989-1990, this work is a striking testament to the intermingled lives of this group.

Also included is Francis Bacon's *'Fury'*, circa 1944, which relates to *Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion* from the same year – the first Bacon painting in the Tate's collection and the first to garner critical attention for the artist. The fervent orange background and screeching creature speak

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of the horrors that remained after the Second World War. Bacon was a regular at Wheeler's and the Colony Club in Soho, as were Frank Auerbach and Leon Kossoff, who met as students in the post-war period, around the same time that Bacon was painting *'Fury'*. As well as sharing a long friendship and a sculptural way of applying oil paint, in the early 1950s, Auerbach moved into his current Camden studio, formerly Kossoff's. In a sense, Auerbach and Kossoff are the most literal members of the "School", using the cityscape as their devout subject. Auerbach's *The Pillar Box III*, painted in 2010-2011, and Kossoff's *Stormy Summer Day, Dalston Lane*, painted in 1975, are intimate portraits of their familiar city.

It was R.B. Kitaj who promoted the notion of a "School of London" when he organised *The Human Clay* at The Hayward Gallery, London in 1976. This show was filled with works by the artists exhibited here, and a few years later, when Kitaj married Sandra Fisher, Auerbach, Freud and Kossoff were part of his *minyán* – the ten Jewish men that accompany the groom at a wedding. Kitaj's oldest and closest friend, whom he met in his first year at the Royal College of Art, was David Hockney.

The artists included in **London Painters** used paint not for the explosions of Abstract Expressionism, but rather to create a connection between artist and subject, and to capture their mortality as well as to immortalise. Nowhere is this more evident than in the self-portraits of this diverse group, including Kitaj's *Bahama Self-Portrait*, one of the last paintings he made before his death in 2007, and Leon Kossoff's *Self-Portrait*, painted in 1971. With much of the canvas left in reserve, the face gazing out, incomplete, visceral, and yet spectral in its partial apparition, Freud's 2002 *Self-Portrait* has only been exhibited once before, in the inaugural Met Breuer show, *Unfinished: Thoughts Left Visible*, and never before in the UK.

### Editors' Notes

1. **London Painters** was previously on display in New York, from 3 November 2017 until 18 January 2018, this was the first ever show in New York dedicated to the "School of London".
2. To join the accredited list for Ordovas events and press viewings please contact Clare Roberts, [communications@ordovasart.com](mailto:communications@ordovasart.com) or +44 (0) 7899 065088.