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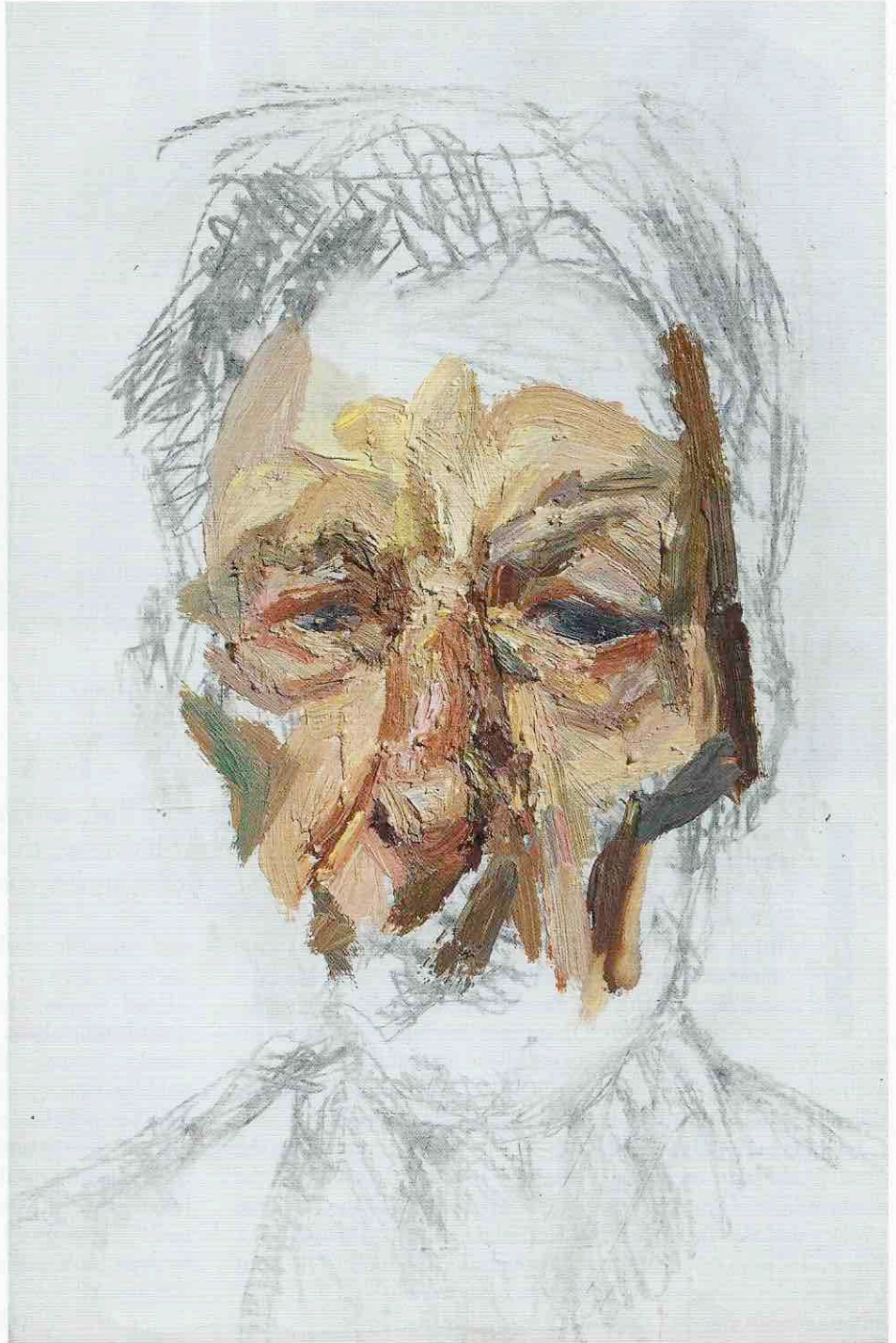
SELF PORTRAIT (2002), BY LUCIAN FREUD

Lucian Freud glares out ferociously from this unfinished canvas. Painted in 2002, the year he turned 80, this self-portrait was one of many that the artist painted throughout his life. Like Rembrandt before him, he recorded himself across the passage of time until his death in 2011. Pilar Ordovas, who knew Freud for the last 12 years of his life, says the artist was rarely in a good mood when working on a self-portrait. 'He was alone with his thoughts, with no one to distract him,' she explains.

He was no less forgiving to himself than he was to his sitters and there is a rough, naked quality to this portrait that typifies Freud's later work, with its heavily worked surface and thick, sculptural brushstrokes. Looking at himself in a hand mirror, he would mix his colours on the canvas. You can see his under-drawing in this work: rough charcoal marks that provide an insight into his practice. The painting might be unfinished but this was intentional. 'Lucian always left things exactly as he wanted them to be,' says Pilar. 'If he had not wanted this work to see the light of day, he would have destroyed it.'

Freud was known for being a slow worker. The art critic Martin Gayford wrote that, for Freud, 'time is his luxury, and he is prepared to spend any amount necessary to get a picture right, which is another paradox, since by nature LF is packed with nervous energy and still apt, for example, to dive into traffic and sprint down the road in pursuit of a taxi. "All my patience," he notes, "has gone into my work, leaving none for my life."

'I look at this painting and I almost feel that he's back, that I'm looking at him,' says Pilar. 'He looked at you and you felt that he



The heavily worked surface and thick, sculptural brushstrokes of this unfinished self-portrait, which was painted over a charcoal drawing, are typical of Lucian Freud's later work

could completely see you. I wish he was still here, but looking at this work, he remains alive for ever.'

The painting will be on view as part of an exhibition at Ordovas, Pilar's gallery in Mayfair, starting this month. **ET** 'London Painters', February 22–April 28; ordovasart.com ▷