EXHIBITIONS
Previews

Previews, reviews and artist interview, focusing on our pick of shows worldwide

Hopper's fight for New York culture

The exhibition ***Edward Hopper's New York*** at the Whitney Museum of American Art will focus on work the artist made in the city he called home for six decades (19 October-5 March 2023). As well as some of Hopper's most famous paintings, such as ***Morning Sun*** (1952, above), the show will feature artefacts from the recently acquired Sanborn-Hopper Archive, which includes correspondence and clippings on New York artists' fight against eviction from homes and studios in the late 1940s. In one letter, Hopper laments that if these types of developments continue, **"New York will cease to be the world's cultural capital."** Was he right? Answers on a postcard.

Warhol uncloseted

A searing **1970 portrait of Andy Warhol** will be included among the 75 works in the Centre Pompidou's expansive Alice Neel survey (5 October-16 January 2023). The Pop artist, who often wore a wig and sunglasses in public and was careful about the image he projected, is seen here in an **unusually intimate state**: contemplative, topless and baring the scars of being shot two years earlier. Warhol described the work as a **"closet painting"**, perhaps suggesting that it should be hidden away. It will be very much on show as one of the many highlights showing Neel's prowess at capturing another side of her sitters.

Red-hatted girl is the real deal

Girl with the Red Hat (around 1666-67, below) is one of two once disputed paintings by Johannes Vermeer that have been examined ahead of a new show, *Vermeer's Secrets*, at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC (8 October-8 January 2023). The painting is now **confirmed as a Vermeer**, while the results for the second work will be announced shortly before the exhibition opens. Two fakes made in the 1920s, which entered the museum's collection as part of a bequest, will also go on show and **help audiences** distinguish between a Vermeer and very-near-Vermeer. For more on this story, see theartnewspaper.com

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Taking a closer look at Lucian Freud on 100th anniversary

Among a slew of shows celebrating the artist's centenary, the National Gallery's extensive survey explores his enduring appeal as a new generation embrace figuration. By **Andrew Pulver**

CONTEMPORARY ART

LONDON. How much is too much? That is the question facing the National Gallery as it launches its blockbuster Lucian Freud (1922-2011) exhibition this month, timed to coincide with the centenary of the painter's birth. Freud, undeniably, is everywhere; over the past two decades, there have been almost a dozen shows of his work in London alone, including major surveys at the National Portrait Gallery in 2012 and the Royal Academy of Arts in 2019. Last year, Freud was on show at Tate Liverpool, while several smaller exhibitions will run concurrently with the National Gallery's (see box, right).

The National Gallery's Daniel F. Herrmann, who has curated *Lucian Freud: New Perspectives*, suggests that the gallery is able to move the dial. "His popularity speaks to the quality of his work – people like to see it and there's a lot to see. But I also feel that a lot of exhibitions show ways of thinking about Freud that have been done before. Now is a great time to reconsider Freud. That is what we are trying to do and what, frankly, we are fortunate we can do as an institution."

Herrmann's approach is essentially to reposition a major figure. "Younger artists are interested in his work right now," he says. "There is a real resurgence in figuration, what it does, how it conveys messages, what it can do. All of these questions intersect with Freud."

So, what is this new thinking? Herrmann says he admires "how committed Freud is to the practice of painting", which "comes with a certain amount of radicality". He continues: "The work requires and rewards radical looking. You learn a lot when you try to figure out how each painting operates." Freud's commitment to flesh and nakedness is a key part of it. "It is about truth. Not through simple verisimilitude, photorealism as it were, but veracity – what is the truth of a person? Freud makes the analogy: life is paint, flesh is paint, paint is flesh."

Above: Freud's *Reflection with Two Children (Self-portrait)* (1965) will be exhibited at the National Gallery. Top right: *Mare Eating Hay* (2006), which is on show at Ordovas gallery

Rawness and intimacy

To back up his contention of figuration's new relevance, Herrmann has enlisted Tracey Emin, Jutta Koether and Chantal Joffe to contribute to the catalogue; all speak of the rawness and intimacy Freud achieved. Herrmann suggests that there has been a sea change in the way Freud's more spectacular pictures – portraits of Leigh Bowery and Sue Tilley (the "benefits supervisor") – are viewed. "Ten or 20 years ago, Freud was often called a painter with an 'unflinching eye', or a 'cruel gaze'. But in fact, the things that people found cruel came from their own judgments about the subject. Freud will paint a figure with a non-normative body, and quite frankly is celebrating them. This is why people have an interest in figuration now: it is a way of dealing with identity and the person, it gives us a way to think about ourselves."

Herrmann is keen to stress Freud's personal connection to the National Gallery, where he was sometimes allowed to wander after-hours. It was here that the artist developed an interest in referencing masterpieces in his own work, most famously seen in *Large Interior W11 (after Watteau)* (1981-83), which was inspired by the titular French painter. But Herrmann also points to Freud's naked self-portrait, *Painter Working, Reflection* (1993), which the curator says alludes to both Vincent van Gogh's painting of his boots and Michelangelo's self-portrait as St Bartholomew, portrayed holding his own flayed skin.

Is this exhibition the last word on Freud? Herrmann hopes not. "Freud is one of the best figurative artists in the world and deserves being looked at afresh," he says. "When people get a chance to reassess what Freud is, I hope it will allow lots of new exhibitions, new questions and new ideas in the future."

• Lucian Freud: New Perspectives, *National Gallery, London, 1 October-22 January 2023*

MORE SHOWS TO TROT OFF TO

- ***Lucian Freud: B.A.T.***, **Lyndsey Ingram**, London, until 4 November
- ***Horses & Freud***, **Ordovas**, London, until 16 December
- ***Lucian Freud: the Painter and His Family***, **Freud Museum**, London, until 29 January 2023
- ***Lucian Freud: Interior Life***, **Hazlitt Holland-Hibbert**, London, 6 October-16 December
- ***Friends and Relations: Lucian Freud, Francis Bacon, Frank Auerbach, Michael Andrews,*** **Gagosian**, London, 18 November-28 January 2023

Garden Museum introduces Freud's least fidgety sitters

LONDON. Lucian Freud was not a plant lover. At least not in the sense of having "wellies and shovels and his watering can by the door," says Giovanni Aloi, the curator of a new show at London's Garden Museum about the artist's pictures of plants. Although not typically green fingered, Freud did create a remarkable number of images of plants throughout his career, treating them more like he did his human subjects than traditional still-lifes. This side of Freud's work was little explored until Aloi's 2019 book, *Lucian Freud Herbarium*, on which this new show is based.

Potted plants surrounded the artist in his studio and often appear as supporting characters in some of his best-known portraits, whether it is a yucca tree in *Interior at Paddington* (1951) or a huge pelargonium in *Large Interior W11 (after Watteau)* (1981-83). But the Garden Museum, which will include 25 works as well as supporting material such as photographs and film, will focus on paintings where the plants are the main attraction and treated as subjects every bit as worthy, interesting and individual as the friends and family Freud painted.

In fact, some of the plants in Freud's possession were near enough part of the family, having been propagated from specimens owned by his grandfather, Sigmund Freud. One of the highlights of the show will be *Still Life with Zimmerlinde* (1950). The unfinished oil painting was first seen in public when it was sold by Freud's second wife, Caroline Blackwood, at Christie's in 2018. Zimmerlinde were fashionable with the Austrian middle classes at the beginning of the 20th century and this one is a descendant of a plant owned by Sigmund.

Cyclamens were the favourite flower of Lucian's grandmother, Martha Freud, and of the artist himself. Freud's assistant, David Dawson, has said that there were always cyclamens in the house; Freud liked the way their stems drooped as the flowers blossomed, which he captured in a neat 1964 oil painting, which is coming on loan from a private collection. Freud also painted a mural of cyclamens in a bathroom at Chatsworth House in Derbyshire, which will be recreated in the show.

***Cyclamen* (1964) highlights Lucian Freud's enduring fondness for the plant**

The exhibition is purposefully titled *Plant Portraits* to highlight the way Freud employed a similar focus and thrust to flora as he did when painting people. "We're trying to think about plants in ways that are not generic or grounded in science," Aloi says. Instead, he wants us to try to think of them "like Freud did, as individual plants that you can have a relationship with".

Aloi points out that plants today still suffer from the "marginalisation of nature" in place since the 15th century, which puts the natural world at the bottom of the painting hierarchy. Furthermore, "whenever we attach symbolism to a human body or an animal or a plant, we're muting them," Aloi says. In contrast, Freud "deliberately chose plants that don't carry symbolism".

Aloi hopes that visitors will not only appreciate this different side of Freud's work, but also that the show will help enrich our own relationship with plants. He adds that many of the ones that Freud painted are still alive, looked after by Dawson at the artist's former home and studio in London.

José da Silva

• Lucian Freud: Plant Portraits, *Garden Museum, London, 14 October-5 March 2023*