

ORDOVAS

PRESS RELEASE
NOVEMBER 1, 2018

9 East 77th Street
New York, NY 10075
T. +1 212 756 8870

Gallery Hours:
Tue-Sat: 10:00-18:00



Bacon's Women

2 NOVEMBER 2018—11 JANUARY 2019

Bacon's Women, on display from November 2, 2018 - January 11, 2019 at Ordovas, New York, will be the first exhibition in the United States to focus on Francis Bacon's female subjects. Although historically the emphasis has been on the men in Bacon's life, the artist was equally engaged with women, many of whom he had long-lasting relationships with, and he painted more female than male nudes. Through a selection of portraits and photographs of his closest female companions, **Bacon's Women** will explore the artist's relationship with the opposite sex and dive into this under-researched area of one of the twentieth century's greatest painters.

The paintings are accompanied by photographs taken by John Deakin, which Bacon commissioned and used as the starting point for many portraits. While Bacon's lovers came in and out of his life, there were constant female figures. Among them were his mother, nanny, sister, gallerist and Valerie Beston, who looked after him at Marlborough, as well as three women that he loved to paint: **Muriel Belcher**, **Henrietta Moraes** and **Isabel Rawsthorne**, who together are the subjects of forty-six paintings.

Muriel Belcher (1908-1979) was the founder and proprietor of London's notorious drinking hole, the Colony Room. *Seated Woman*, 1961, is one of only four portraits Bacon ever made of Belcher, who paid the charismatic artist £10 a week and gave him free drinks in exchange for inviting new, wealthy customers to her club. The Colony Room was a regular haunt for artists and writers, including Lucian Freud and Frank Auerbach, and Belcher was famous for her cutting wit and for making access to her prized community an arduous challenge.

Born in India, **Henrietta Moraes** (1931-1999) was one of Bacon's favorite models during the 1960s. She was the artist's most frequent female subject: Bacon painted her no less than 23 times. *Portrait of Henrietta Moraes* and *Three Studies of Henrietta Moraes* were both painted in 1969 in a studio at the Royal College of Art, which Bacon borrowed for eight months while his Reece Mews studio was being rebuilt after George Dyer had damaged it in a fit of rage. The cropped profile in *Portrait of Henrietta Moraes* perhaps suggests the result of Bacon tearing up one of Deakin's photographs.

In its vigorous and incisive brushstrokes, *Study for Head of Isabel Rawsthorne*, 1967, conveys **Isabel Rawsthorne's** (1912-1992) strength and energy. Despite his homosexuality, Bacon claimed he tried to make love to this confident, beautiful woman. After leaving home as soon as she could to study art and stage design, Rawsthorne got into the Royal Academy with a scholarship; there she began meeting young artists and, like Moraes, modeled to make ends meet. Rawsthorne inspired many of the twentieth century's greatest painters and sculptors - when she moved to Paris in 1934, alongside her studies she sat for André Derain and Alberto Giacometti and according to her diary, Picasso made a number of portraits from memory, after seeing her from afar.

Francis Bacon and Muriel Belcher photographed by John Deakin © John Deakin

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Triptych – Studies of the Human Body, 1970, epitomizes a phase in which Bacon introduced more complex iconographies in his large canvases, often alluding to classical mythology. Of the three suspended figures, that on the left is adapted from Picasso's *Female Nude in a Garden*, 1934. The central panel switches the gender of Bacon's source, the Belvedere torso, to female, and the figure in the right panel was adapted from Spadarino's *Narcissus*, but has been given breasts. The head, however, is a self-portrait and an image of Bacon literally inserting himself into this meditation on sex and gender.

Francis Bacon and Muriel Belcher photographed by John Deakin © John Deakin

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