

## Lucian Freud

## Portraits by Bacon and Freud of same man go on display together

Strikingly different paintings of Bacon's lover George Dyer hung side by side for first time



▲ The two portraits shed light on one of the most fascinating artistic friendships of the 20th century. Photograph: David Levene for the Guardian

Two portraits by Francis Bacon and Lucian Freud of the same man, one intense, twisted and distorted; the other serene, relaxed and unguarded, have gone on display side by side for the first time.

Mark Brown Arts correspondent

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▲ Detail of Three Studies of George Dyer by Francis Bacon. Photograph: David Levene for the Guardian

The portraits of George Dyer were produced around the same time, but are strikingly different and shine light on one of the most fascinating artistic friendships of the last century.

Bacon depicts Dyer, his lover and muse, with sexually-charged intensity while Freud appears to give him a break from all of that.

“Lucian painting George was a way of giving him some space and some distance and a bit of a rest from Francis Bacon,” said gallerist Pilar Ordovas, who knew Freud. “You can see a George Dyer that is pensive, into his thoughts and with his guard down. There is something very fragile about him.

“The Francis Bacon is completely different. There is this violence, and it is fascinating to see how different they are.”

Bacon's triptych, *Three Studies of George Dyer* 1966, which sold at auction for £29m last year, and Freud's *Man in a Blue Shirt*, painted in 1965, have gone on public display at the Ordovas gallery in London, part of a small display of works by artists who were part of the “School of London”.

It is often said that Bacon met his lover when Dyer, a petty East End crook, burgled his house. The truth, however, is that they met in a Soho pub when, according to Bacon's biographer Michael Peppiatt, Dyer approached him and cheerily said: “You all seem to be having a good time, can I buy you a drink?”



▲ Detail of Man in a Blue Shirt by Lucian Freud. Photograph: David Levene for the Guardian

They fell in love and Bacon painted Dyer many times. Their relationship was a dysfunctional one, however, fuelled by alcohol and sadomasochistic sex, and it ended in the most tragic of circumstances when Dyer killed himself two days before the opening of Bacon's hugely important retrospective at the Grand Palais in Paris in 1971. It was an event that haunted Bacon and had a profound effect on his work.

Ordovas said the relationship between Bacon and Dyer was tumultuous, but that it is sometimes misunderstood. “People think of George Dyer as the violent one, but talking to Lucian it was the other way round.”

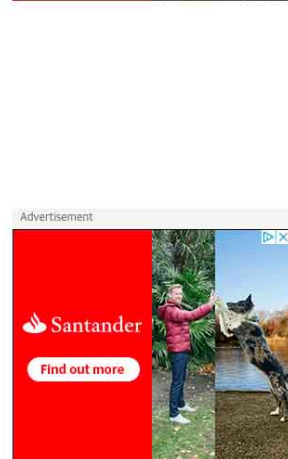
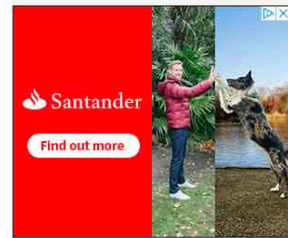
Bacon and Freud were almost inseparable in the mid-1960s. They would work in the morning, have lunch at Wheeler's and then go drinking in the Colony Room.

Freud saw that Bacon's intensity was taking a toll on Dyer and took him to stay with his friend Jane, Lady Willoughby de Eresby, on her estate in Scotland. It was here that Dyer sat for the portrait.

Also on display at the gallery for the first time in the UK is an unfinished Freud self-portrait from 2002 along with works by Frank Auerbach, Leon Kossoff, David Hockney and RB Kitaj. Ordovas said “the story of the supposed School of London” was a story of friendships and that is what the exhibition explores.

● *London Painters* is at Ordovas, Savile Row in London from 22 February to 28 April

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