

# THE SPECTATOR



'Crouching Nude', 1956, by Emilio Greco

PRIVATE COLLECTION

**Raw Truth: Auerbach – Rembrandt**  
Ordovas, 25 Savile Row, W1, until  
1 December

Pilar Ordovas continues to mount extraordinary museum-quality exhibitions in her modestly sized Savile Row gallery. The latest theme is a telling conjunction of Rembrandt and Frank Auerbach. Ordovas seems somehow to charm museums into lending masterpieces that are never usually seen in a commercial gallery space, and this show has been organised in collaboration with the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, whether the exhibition will travel (12 December 2013 to 16 March 2014). Rembrandt is represented by two paintings and two etchings: an oil on paper of 'Joseph telling his dreams to his parents and his brothers', with an etching on the same subject; a small oil on panel, 'Portrait of Dr Ephraim Bueno'; and a substantial landscape etching of trees. To counterpoise these are two Auerbach paintings of heads (of EOW, a favourite sitter), an interior with figure ('The Sitting Room'), and a trio of Primrose Hill paintings.

Two of the Primrose Hill pictures will be familiar from public collections (Arts

Council and Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art), but the third (and to me the most interesting), the subject under winter sun, is from a private collection. The three present different seasons, spring, summer and winter, and allow the viewer a rare chance to compare and contrast. This is of course an urban subject, but these paintings look more like landscapes than cityscapes, being principally about space and the basic

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structures of the land, in which the buildings are almost incidental.

I love the idea of Rembrandt's pictures being in dialogue with Auerbach's, for this is what the great western painting tradition is all about. The exhibition does not make immodest comparisons between contemporary artist and Old Master, it simply juxtaposes the work of two individuals for our greater edification. Auerbach, while stressing that he cannot really put it into words, suggests that Rembrandt aims at 'the absolute grandeur of the absolute ordinary'; or perhaps in other words, the majestic dignity of everyday appearance. In his own terms, this is surely what Auerbach also tries to paint, and what thus makes this pairing so stimulating and rich an experience.

**Opera**  
Slav flavour  
*Michael Tanner*

**Eugene Onegin**  
Met Opera Live

**Two Caravans**  
King's Head, Islington, until 20 October

This year's live relays of New York Met performances have a markedly Slav flavour, with Shostakovich's rare *The Nose* next up, and later Dvorak's *Rusalka* and, most interestingly, Borodin's *Prince Igor*. It kicked off with Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, the most popular though not the finest of his operas. On the first night there were sustained protests both outside and inside the Met, against the Putin crony Valery Gergiev and against Anna Netrebko, a supporter of the plutocrat dictator. Odd that there aren't more protests, when you think that people still get heated and even write books about musicians who stayed in the Third Reich, often acting courageously. There were no protests, alas, before the matinee that was broadcast. The production has had its own troubles, with the original director, Deborah Warner, withdrawing through illness, and Fiona Shaw



**FREE EVENT**



**The Changing Face of Value**

'The Changing Face of Value' sets out to explore and critique how value and values may be shifting or indeed completely changing. At the heart of the discussion is a mandate to explore and challenge our understandings of what is valued by whom and why in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Wednesday 23 October**  
6 – 7.30pm

Organised in partnership with:



Registration required  
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