

ORDOVAS

October 2011

PRESS RELEASE

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



Irrational Marks:
BACON
REMBRANDT

7 OCTOBER – 16 DECEMBER 2011

PRESS THURSDAY 6TH OCTOBER · PHOTO CALL 10-11 · PRESS VIEW & BRUNCH 11-1

Irrational Marks: Bacon and Rembrandt is Ordovas' inaugural exhibition and the first to be devoted to exploring the connections and influences of Rembrandt's late self-portraits on Francis Bacon's own self-portraits. Bacon considered Rembrandt's self-portraits the artist's greatest works. He spoke in depth about Rembrandt's *Self-Portrait with Beret* in the Musée Granet in Aix-en-Provence, which he often visited, yet his creative dialogue with Rembrandt's art has been, until now, largely overlooked.

Bacon kept a number of documents and source images relating to Rembrandt's work in his studio. They were clearly working documents and no doubt provided him with inspiration. Some of them will be shown here, covered in paint and in many cases folded. It was one of these images, Irving Penn's 1962 photograph of Francis Bacon in his studio with a pinned-up, paint-spattered image of the Rembrandt he most admired in the background, that planted the seed for this exhibition.

In 2006, Pilar Ordovas handled the estate of Valerie Beston, the owner of that photograph and the person who looked after Francis Bacon at Marlborough Gallery most of his working life. It was then that Ordovas envisioned this exhibition, which will be the first in her own gallery. Today, thanks to the support of the Musée Granet, the Dublin City Gallery, the Hugh Lane Gallery, the Estate of Francis Bacon, many private collectors, and the encouragement and expertise of Martin Harrison, one of the most eminent Bacon scholars and editor of the forthcoming Francis Bacon catalogue raisonné, and of Taco Dibbits, Director of the Rijksmuseum Collections, that dream has become a reality.

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue with essays by Martin Harrison and Taco Dibbits. As well as Rembrandt's *Self-Portrait with Beret*, from circa 1659, the exhibition includes rarely seen Francis Bacon self-portraits from private collections, Irving Penn's *Francis Bacon* from 1962, and all the material relating to Rembrandt from Bacon's studio in South Kensington.

"Well, if you think of the great Rembrandt self-portrait in Aix-en-Provence, for instance, and if you analyse it, you will see that there are hardly any sockets to the eyes, that it is almost completely anti-illustrational. I think that the mystery of fact is conveyed by an image being made out of non-rational marks." (Francis Bacon quoted in David Sylvester, *Interviews with Francis Bacon*, 1975, p 58).

Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn (1606-1669) *Self-Portrait with Beret* oil on panel, 30.7 × 24.3 cm., painted circa 1659
Musée Granet, Communauté du pays d'Aix-en-Provence © CPA, Musée Granet

page 1 of 2

ORDOVAS

Editors' notes

1. When Ordovas opened in June this year it made a commitment to a public gallery programme staging museum-quality exhibitions as well as offering a private space for selling 20th century and contemporary art in the secondary market.
2. *Irrational Marks: Bacon and Rembrandt* is Ordovas' first curated exhibition and is non-commercial.
3. There has not been an exhibition on the influence of Rembrandt on Bacon's work before. *Francis Bacon and the Tradition of Art* in Vienna and Basel, 2003/4 looked more generally at paintings that inspired Bacon.
4. The exhibition will include rarely seen paintings such as:
 - *Self-portrait with Beret*, Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn, painted circa 1659, on loan from Musée Granet, Aix-en-Provence. The last time this was seen in the UK was in 1999 when it was part of the National Gallery's exhibition *Rembrandt by himself*.
 - *Study for Self-Portrait*, Francis Bacon, painted in 1964, on loan from a private collection. This is one of Bacon's rare large-scale self-portraits.
 - *Self-Portrait*, Francis Bacon, painted in 1972, on loan from a private collection. This was last shown in London in 1993.
 - *Study for Self-Portrait*, Francis Bacon, painted in 1973, on loan from a private collection. A significant painting marking the passing of time, it has not been seen since it sold at auction in 1991.
 - *Two Studies for Self-Portrait*, Francis Bacon, painted in 1977, on loan from a private collection.
 - *Three Studies for Portraits, including Self-Portrait*, Francis Bacon, painted in 1975, on loan from a private collection. This is one of the very few works that Bacon painted in Paris. It was sold at auction in 2008 and has not been seen since in public.
 - *Three Studies for Portraits, including Self-Portrait*, Francis Bacon, painted in 1969, on loan from a private collection. This work has been in a private collection ever since it was painted; it appeared in the *Francis Bacon* retrospective exhibition at the Tate in 2009.

The exhibition also includes:

- Irving Penn, *Francis Bacon*, 1962, silver gelatin print mounted on card with paint from Francis Bacon's studio. Penn gave this photograph to the artist who later gave it to his aide and confidante, Valerie Beston. It was clearly used by Bacon as inspiration and shows, over his shoulder, pinned to his studio wall, an image of Rembrandt's *Self-Portrait with Beret* that he had cut out of a book.
- The working documents that Francis Bacon used while he painted – fragments and leaves of Rembrandt self-portraits torn from books, some folded and worked with. They are on loan from Dublin City Gallery, The Hugh Lane, home of Bacon's studio after the contents were removed from 7 Reece Mews, South Kensington, in August 1998.

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