

Francis  
Bacon

to

Paula  
Rego

Abbot Hall Art Gallery, Kendal  
23 June - 16 September 2012

**Curated by:**

**Helen Watson** is the Director of Exhibitions & Collections for the Lakeland Arts Trust. Previously she was the Deputy Head of Education at the National Galleries of Scotland and Curator at Scarborough Art Gallery. She is an Associate of the Museums Association, a Trustee for engage, the National Association for Gallery Education and the Peter Scott Gallery at Lancaster University. Watson has previously curated many exhibitions including the critically acclaimed *The Loneliness of Lowry* (2010), *Sheila Fell* (2011) and was one of the co-curators of *Kitaj: Portraits and Reflections* (2010) and *Turner and his Contemporaries: The Hickman Bacon Watercolour Exhibition* (2012).

**Robert Priseman** was born in Derbyshire in 1965. He read Aesthetics and Art Theory at the University of Essex under the art theorist Professor Michael Podro and began his working life as a book designer for Longman Publishers. Whilst there he started painting portraits in oils, which soon became his sole occupation, with sitters from this period including His Holiness the Dalai Lama, His Grace the Duke of Atholl, The Marquess of Northampton, Sir Eric Mensforth, Lord and Lady Johnston and Cardinal Basil Hume.

In 2004 Priseman gave up portraits to begin work on large scale thematic series of works which have included *The Francis Bacon Interiors*, *No Human Way to Kill*, *Subterraneans*, *Gas Chambers* and *SUMAC*. Exhibitions of these projects have taken place in New York, Miami, San Francisco, Paris, New Zealand and London. His work is to be found in numerous permanent collections including: Art Gallery of New South Wales in Sydney, the Mead Art Museum, Massachusetts, The Dittrick Museum, Ohio, The Northern Ireland Collection, The Wellcome Collection and the Museum der Universität Basel.

Priseman was made a Fellow of the University of Essex in 2010.

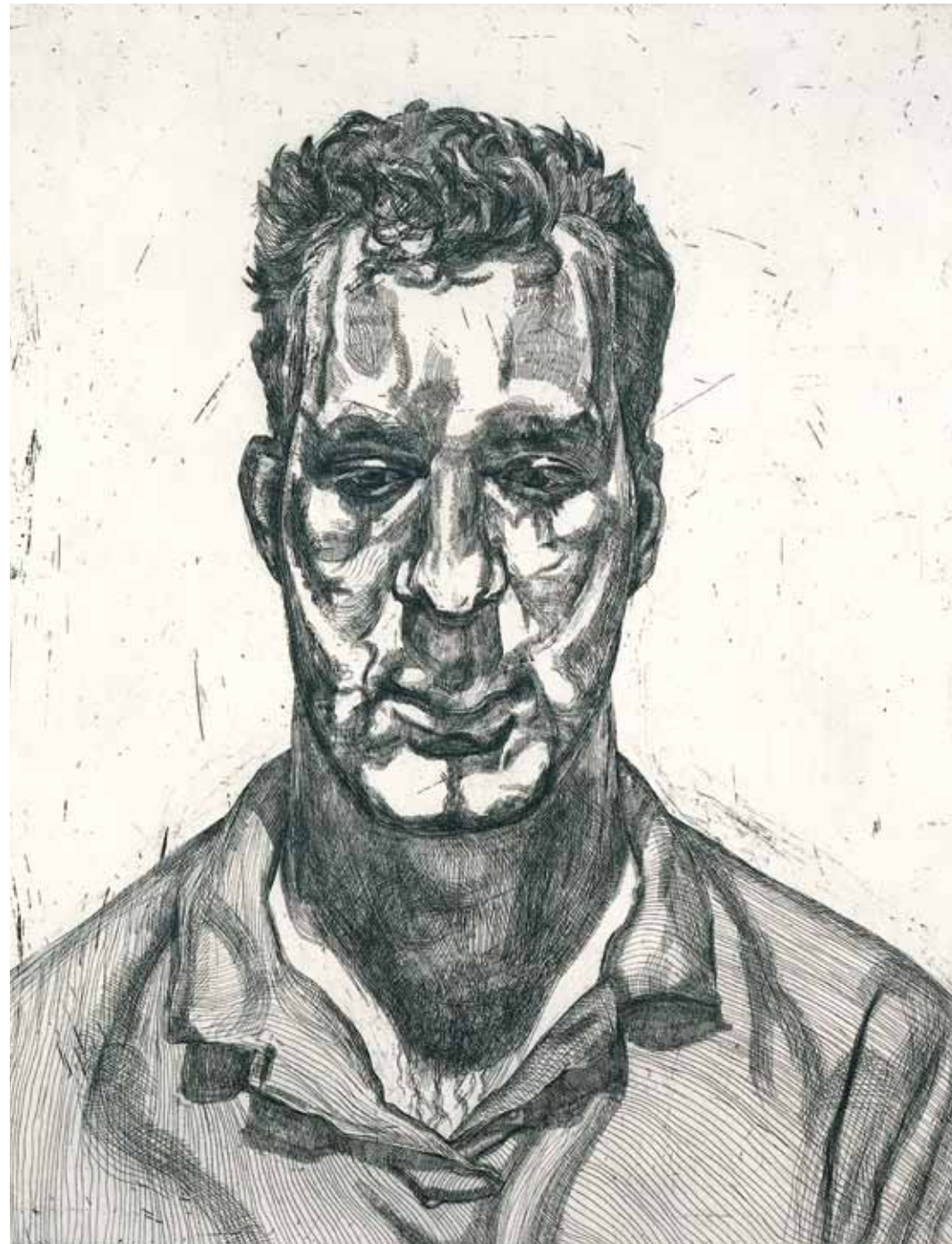
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1  
**Lucian Freud**  
*Kai*, 1991-92  
Etching  
69.7 x 54.5 cm

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## Introduction

It is fifty years ago that Abbot Hall Art Gallery opened its doors as a public art gallery. Since then Abbot Hall has gained an impressive reputation as one of the leading galleries in the north of England building up a significant permanent collection and curating an imaginative and independently minded artistic programme.

Abbot Hall holds over four thousand objects including paintings, sculpture, furniture, drawings and photographs. The collection includes one of the finest collections of George Romney (1734-1802), paintings in Britain including his 1776 masterpiece 'The Gower Family', a significant collection of mid-eighteenth to the first half of the nineteenth-century watercolours, with some of the greatest watercolourists of the period represented, including Ruskin, Peter De Wint, Edward Lear and JMW Turner. The gallery also has an impressive collection of modern works including works from the St Ives School by Ben Nicholson, Peter Lanyon, Patrick Heron and Roger Hilton as well as landscape works by Gillies, Piper, Sutherland and Hitchens. More recently the gallery has collected works by more contemporary artists such as Bridget Riley, Frank Auerbach, Paula Rego, Tony Bevan, Lucian Freud and David Hockney and it is these works that proved the initial inspiration for Abbot Hall's 2012 summer exhibition titled 'Francis Bacon to Paula Rego'.

Abbot Hall in addition to having a strong permanent collection has carved a national reputation for curating exhibitions of the highest quality by a wide range of artists of international calibre such as: Lucian Freud, Bridget Riley, JMW Turner, LS Lowry, RB Kitaj, Paula Rego, Stanley Spencer, Frank Auerbach, Ben Nicholson and Sean Scully. In celebration of the gallery's fiftieth anniversary the 2012 exhibition programme has drawn its inspiration from the permanent collection; starting the year with an exhibition focused on 'Turner & his Contemporaries; The Hickman Bacon Watercolour', continuing with 'Abbot Hall at Fifty' which invited members of the public, artists and art critics to select their fifty favorite works from the permanent collection and then returning to 'Francis Bacon to Paula Rego' the exhibition pays tribute to Abbot Hall's modern and contemporary collection and the rich tradition of painting in the United Kingdom.

The exhibition takes further inspiration from the exhibition 'A School of London: Six Figurative Painters' which was curated by the writer and critic Michael Peppiatt in 1987. 'Francis Bacon to Paula Rego' explores the original theme of Peppiatt's show with the artists Frank Auerbach, Leon Kossoff, Lucian Freud, RB Kitaj, Michael Andrews and Francis Bacon, whilst also seeking to survey some of the most exciting and challenging contemporary British painters working in the United Kingdom today including George Shaw, Carol Rhodes and Gillian Carnegie. Artists who are taking painting forward and making it relevant in the twenty-first century.

During the development of the exhibition I have spent time discussing, analysing and questioning the curation of the show with the artist Robert Priseman, who contacted the gallery about two years ago to discuss both his own practice and an exhibition idea he had borne out of some of his favorite paintings in the gallery's collection. Over the course of our discussions we explored the exhibition 'A School of London: Six Figurative Painters' which had left a big impression on Priseman as a student and the importance of Abbot Hall's collection on painting over the last fifty years. Priseman in his essay 'Sustained Reality: From Francis Bacon to Paula Rego' further explores how figurative painting in Britain has developed, bringing his thoughts up to the present date with artists actively working today.

Featuring work from the major collections including Tate, National Galleries of Scotland and the Arts Council Collection as well as private lenders 'Francis Bacon to Paula Rego' brings together some of the most important artists of last fifty years and exhibits them alongside some of the most challenging and exciting British painters working today.

We are extremely grateful to all the lenders for their generosity in parting with their works. I would like thank in particular Michael Peppiatt for all his support for the show and Robert Priseman whom I have found fascinating to spend time with, and whose enthusiasm and vision for the exhibition has never faltered. Thanks also go to the Lakeland Arts Trust Team.

Finally I would like to take this opportunity to thank all Abbot Hall Art Gallery supporters over the last fifty years, I look forward to continuing the success for the next fifty.

Helen Watson 2012



## Sustained Reality: From Francis Bacon to Paula Rego

### The Human Clay

Our desire to express and record the reality of our being through the creation of objects stretches back with photography to the invention of the daguerreotype in 1837 and in written literature to the Mesopotamian 'Epic of Gilgamesh' some 4,500 years earlier. Painting has an even longer history, whose evidence we find preserved in the 'Cave of Swimmers' of the Gilf Kebir plateau in the Libyan Desert, which dates back 10,000 years, to the Wandjina figure paintings of Kimberley in Western Australia which are 17,000 years old and to the Lascaux cave paintings which were painted some 20,000 years ago.

The American painter RB Kitaj, who lived and worked in London between 1959 and 1997, believed the human figure created the foundation on which all great art is formed, and argued that art's core mission lay in unearthing the reality of significant and sacred human experience. Based upon this principle, Kitaj was approached by the Arts Council of Great Britain in 1976 to put together a selection of works by British artists for an exhibition which he titled 'The Human Clay'. Kitaj stated his criteria for selection quite simply: *"I was looking mostly for pictures of the single human form as if they could be breathed on, whereupon they would glow like beacons of where art has been and like agents of a newer life to come."* In total Kitaj selected 105 artworks by 48 painters for his survey; including Michael Andrews, Frank Auerbach, Francis Bacon, Adrian Berg, William Coldstream, Lucian Freud, David Hockney, Howard Hodgkin, Leon Kossoff, William Turnbull and Euan Uglow.

'The Human Clay' opened at a time when abstract painting was the fashionable and dominant trend in the art world. Abstraction was predominantly seen as an American art movement which had been championed by the New York art critic Clement Greenberg. With the emergence of painters like Willem de Kooning, Hans Hofmann, Barnett Newman, Jackson Pollock and Clyfford Still, Greenberg made a case that, after the war, the new avant-garde in art was emerging away from Europe and flourishing in the USA. Yet among many of his contemporaries, Kitaj came to see in the United Kingdom *"...artistic personalities in this small island more unique and strong and I think more numerous than anywhere in the world outside America's jolting artistic vigour. There are ten or more people in this town, or not far away, of world class, including my friends*

**Euan Uglow**  
*Snake*, 1976  
(detail, see page 36)

*of the abstract persuasion. In fact, I think there is a substantial School of London.*"<sup>2</sup>

It was this small group, and most specifically the figurative artists within it, namely, Michael Andrews, Frank Auerbach, Francis Bacon, Lucian Freud, RB Kitaj and Leon Kossoff, which the art critic Michael Peppiatt came to focus on when he further distilled the essence of 'The Human Clay' exhibition by curating the 1987 show 'A School of London: Six Figurative Painters'.

Of the six 'School of London' artists, four - Auerbach, Freud, Kitaj and Kossoff - were Jewish, with only Kossoff having been actually born in London. Freud and Auerbach had moved to England from Berlin, while Bacon came from Dublin, Kitaj from Cleveland, Ohio and Andrews from Norfolk. Whilst at first appearance these six artists seem to have little in common other than a residence in London, they were all united in friendship, the exchange of ideas and a preoccupation with painting. Peppiatt describes them as holding a "*disdain for art-world vogues...*"<sup>3</sup> whilst observing in their work a common philosophical underpinning, writing how "*...the atmosphere of guilt and human vulnerability that rises from their pictures constantly recalls the existentialist mood.*"<sup>4</sup> This philosophy is one which emphasises the uniqueness and isolation of individual experience in a godless world. It places an emphasis on the freedom of individual choice and a responsibility for the consequences of one's own action. This 'existentialist mood' appears to stem from a sense of individual alienation felt in the direct aftermath of the Second World War.

It is perhaps not surprising that the work of the post-war London figurative painters was seen at the time as unfashionable, because what comes into fashion must by definition go out of fashion. The defining agenda of this group was a wish to unearth and express in paint something of the fundamental emotional undercurrent which helps define our common human experience. In this way painting acts as a means to meditate on our feelings about a subject rather than merely describe it. It is a slow and absorbing process which enables paint to function as a metaphor for our subconscious, allowing it the capacity to make visible a world we sense inside ourselves yet cannot easily see. The result when we look at the output of the 'School of London' is a body of work which has stood the test of time, an art which endures.

The School of London painters mediated their differing views of reality either through the use of photographic source material which acted as a starting point for accessing the emotional or by direct observation from life. Where Andrews and Bacon made extensive use of photographs, the paintings of Auerbach, Freud and Kossoff are born from direct observation. The thick use of impasto by Auerbach for example, appears to be the polar opposite to the delicate and near photo-realistic handling of paint by Andrews, an

artist who he greatly admires. Peppiatt wrote of Andrews that he "*...maintains a hair's breadth between the reality and its translation into acrylic or watercolour. Within that narrow, enigmatic area, he captures appearances accurately while subjecting them to a kind of astonished scrutiny - as if to recall the mystery inherent in the very act of seeing.*"<sup>5</sup> This 'astonished scrutiny' is a phrase which could easily be applied to the work of Freud, whose intense visual gaze seems to pierce the surface of observed human flesh in what Peppiatt refers to as "*...the dislocation of appearance*".<sup>6</sup>

Auerbach and Kossoff created a visual architecture rooted in the real world upon which they lay the stuff of paint. Andrews, Freud and Kitaj on the other-hand convey "*a sense of mystery which lies inherent in the very act of seeing.*" What unites these different approaches is a desire to prise open the shell of the human figure and peer below its surface, in an attempt to understand the nature of our fundamental human existence. This coherent act led Michael Peppiatt to write of them that "*...over the past thirty-five years a body of work has evolved in London which possesses a power and a relevance to the future of painting that would be hard to match anywhere else in the world.*"<sup>7</sup>

Yet British painting almost appears to have come to an end in 1987. In the years following 'A School of London: Six Figurative Painters', it is not only figurative painting which appears to be operating against the vogues of artistic fashion, but painting itself. In an interview with David Sylvester in October 1962, Francis Bacon had said "*...what is fascinating now is that it's going to become much more difficult for the artist, because he must really deepen the game to be any good at all.*"<sup>8</sup> This deepening of the game of art is a challenge only a handful of figurative painters appear to have developed a wish to fully engage with, painters like Tony Bevan, Christopher Le Brun, and Paula Rego, who emerged as significant artists working in the United Kingdom during the 1980s.

### **A Sustained Reality**

When we look at these artists we find common threads of interest with the 'School of London' painters. Bevan's works for example are often concerned with the structure of the human head alone. The art critic Marco Livingstone described how "*The human head, and specifically his own, has been Tony Bevan's most obsessive subject during the 90's, endlessly rephrased and reinvented on a colossal scale that allows the viewer no escape from the confrontation. Of all the images at the disposal of a figurative artist it is the one with the greatest potential of speaking of the human spirit and the full range of emotions.*"<sup>9</sup> This inquiry beautifully explores and develops the world of the painters who have gone before him.



**Tony Bevan**  
*Head Horizon*, 1996  
(detail, see page 39)

Christopher Le Brun's paintings are more romantic than Bevan's, and appear influenced by Delacroix and early Guston. They recall the fairy tales told to us in our childhood and reconnect us with a sense of internal poetry. Bryan Robertson describes how "*Le Brun is not offering us pastiche, or a contrived neo-romanticism, but a re-definition of the past in terms of the present: the objects, events and presences of an ancient and legendary world caught up and transformed by the imaginative urgency of a painter working in the late twentieth century.*"<sup>10</sup> He goes on to say that, "*Le Brun's painting is often nocturnal, elegiac or valedictory; sunset or late afternoon rather than morning or sunrise; farewell and passion spent rather than physical engagement or direct encounter.*"<sup>11</sup> The paintings of Paula Rego also contain a sense of folk tale narrative, viewed through a surrealist eye and dislocated from reality. Her figures are wrapped up in their own thoughts, contained within their own universe.

These three artists don't appear as part of an art movement or school, but represent a desire to continue an engagement with the human form through painting which Kitaj laid out in 'The Human Clay', as a means to unearth the reality of significant and sacred human experience.

By engaging in the process of painting, painters move beyond description and use paint as a means to explore and express the emotional undercurrent of human existence, this is almost always their own and makes the act of painting a deeply autobiographical process. To engage in this process requires a degree of personal removal by the artist and is where photography sometimes aids the production of contemporary work, because it offers an emotional distance from a subject. This means photographs can provide the artist with a safe starting point for returning to the source, which in turn allows the emotional response to be explored.

Kitaj wrote of this when he said "*The consequences of a detached art are very seductive ... a very high act indeed is said to transpire there, an ultimate act or moment or feeling, so independent of anything else but its paint or shape, for instance, as to give that art its very value, an incredible purity. The idea took root in Mondrian's concept of art as a 'life substitute', something apart, detached from a life out of balance.*"<sup>12</sup> This highlights a seeming contradiction at the heart of painting; it is attempting to be both emotionally engaged and intellectually relevant. For painters, this delicate balancing act is achieved when emotional sensitivity leads the way to the subject, and then an intellectual detachment from feelings and absorption in the process occurs when the work of painting begins.



### A New Reality

Part of Kitaj's original criteria for 'The Human Clay' was to find artists who would act as "agents of a newer life to come". At the beginning of the twenty-first century, practitioners who represent this newer life in the story of painting in Britain are emerging. They are engaged with the issues that painters have always concerned themselves with: the plasticity of paint, the balance between the rational and the intuitive and the mystery of human existence. Like the School of London painters they are highly individualistic in their approach to work, yet where the School of London artists were primarily concerned with representations of the human form, these new painters have moved their focus away from direct depictions of the figure, while the mystery of human experience remains central to their concerns. They are interested in the uncanny, the slippage of the real, what Michael Peppiatt refers to as the "dislocation of appearance". Through painting the non-portrait, as we may recall in Van Gogh's paintings of his empty bedroom, the human presence can be felt through its absence. The artists who seem to be working in this new direction are artist like Gillian Carnegie, Simon Carter, Monica Metsers, Nicholas Middleton, Carol Rhodes and George Shaw.

Shaw's paintings are, like those of Carter, Metsers and Rhodes, empty of the living, and autobiographical. Shaw records the mundane and overlooked and finds poetry in the everyday landscapes of his own suburban surroundings. Some of his most famous images depict the two square miles of Coventry which constitute the Tile Hill housing estate where he grew up. This loving obsession for a limited geographical area recalls Constable's paintings of the Dedham Vale, Kossoff's representations of London and Monet's paintings of his gardens at Giverny. Like Shaw, Simon Carter limits most of his paintings to a seven mile stretch of coast in his native Essex which lies between Holland on Sea and Walton on the Naze. This physical constraint is itself part of the narrative which forms his meditations on our material presence within the physical world and highlights the idea that what is most personal is also that which is most universal.

The youngest artist featured in this exhibition is Monica Metsers who was born in 1981. Metsers' geography is even more restricted than Shaw's and Carter's, as she never has to leave her studio. Metsers' enigmatic paintings begin when she remodels children's toys. Broken and then re-fashioned into peculiar landscapes, she photographs the results and paints from the photographs. This return to childhood through an act of destructive manipulation has an unsettling and compelling effect which recalls in some way the paintings of Max Ernst. In her work, Metsers draws out the idea explored by psychoanalysts like DW Winnicott and Marion Milner that play is the birth place for creative acts, a place where a mirror world to the real one is made and controlled, a safe world which represents the real but is not of it.

#### Monica Metsers

*Lechuguilla*  
(*The Chandelier Ballroom*),  
2009  
(detail, see page 49)



After so many years of artistic human production, and in an age which, Post-Duchamp, is comfortable viewing readymades, installations, photography and time-based media, what could be left to say by the artist who wishes to paint a picture? The answer appears to be a desire to return to the origins of creative practice, a desire to find again that which is original. Where photography has the ability to freeze a fleeting moment with dispassion, and film create the illusion of capturing the essence of time itself to hold it prisoner like a bird in a cage, painting distils time into object. For the painter, time is substance, felt both fast and slow, an element we experience through our emotions. In this way, paint has the capacity to make visible a world we sense inside ourselves yet cannot see, to act as a metaphor for our subconscious selves.

### **Acknowledgement**

I can still recall buying a copy of Michael Peppiatt's exhibition catalogue 'A School of London: Six Figurative Painters' as an art student in the late 1980's. This was a deeply influential exhibition on myself and a generation of artists who attended art school at that time. It helped define painting in Britain as truly international, showing us how painting can transcend its medium to explore the profoundly philosophical. It has been a great privilege therefore to have worked with Michael on forming this exhibition, whose vision, guidance and generosity of spirit continue to inspire

Robert Priseman 2012

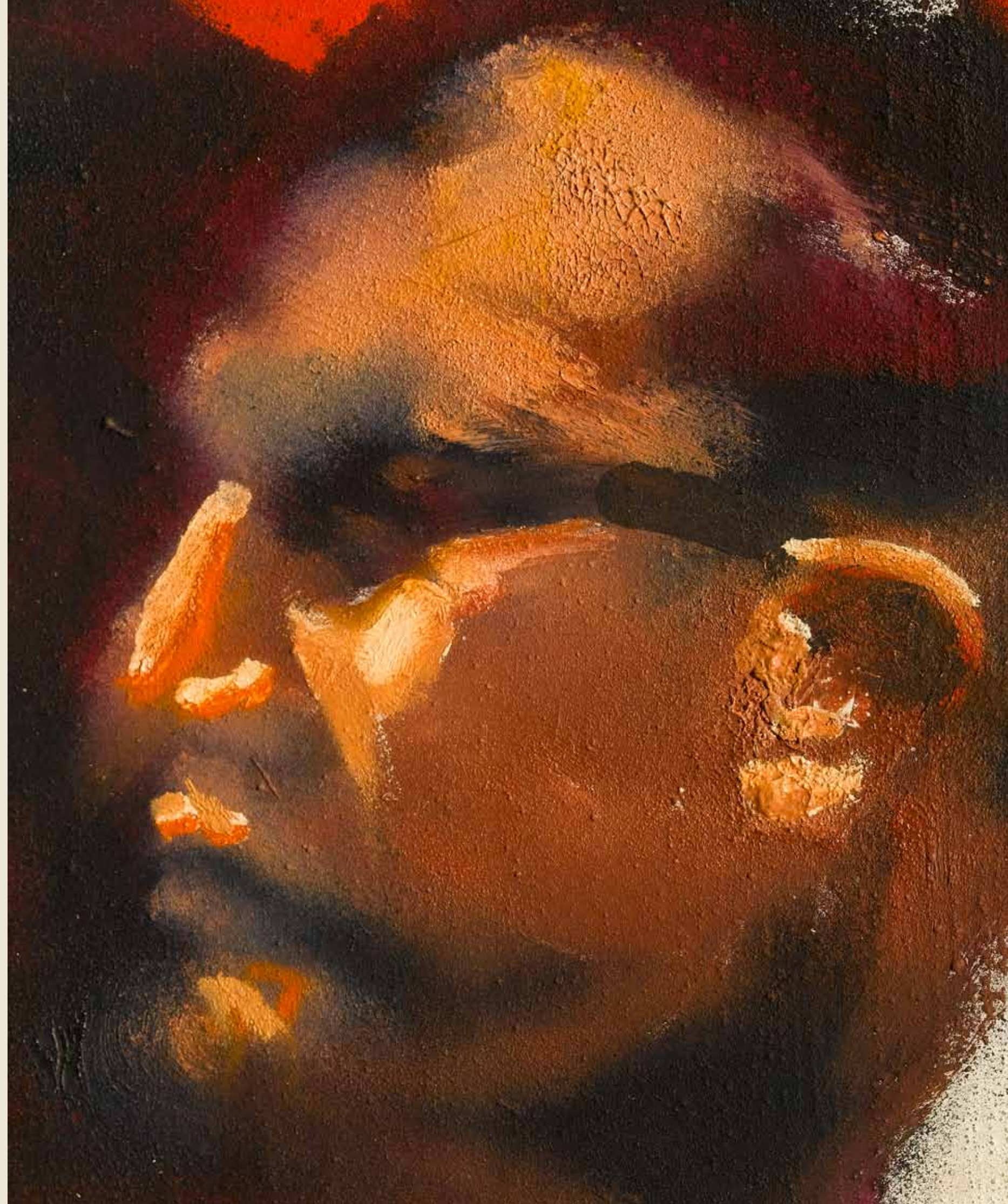
(Endnotes)

- 1 Catalogue preface to 'The Human Clay', Arts Council of Great Britain, 1976
- 2 Catalogue preface to 'The Human Clay', Arts Council of Great Britain, 1976
- 3 Catalogue essay to 'A School of London: Six Figurative Painters', The British Council, 1987, p10
- 4 Catalogue essay to 'A School of London: Six Figurative Painters', The British Council, 1987, p8
- 5 Catalogue essay to 'A School of London: Six Figurative Painters', The British Council, 1987, p11-12
- 6 Catalogue essay to 'A School of London: Six Figurative Painters', The British Council, 1987, p12
- 7 Catalogue essay to 'A School of London: Six Figurative Painters', The British Council, 1987, p7
- 8 David Sylvester, 'Interviews with Francis Bacon', Thames and Hudson, First published 1975, 2002 edition, p.29
- 9 Marco Livingstone, 'In the Spirit Beneath the Skin', [http://tonybevan.com/Tony\\_Bevan\\_Marco\\_Livingstone\\_essay.html](http://tonybevan.com/Tony_Bevan_Marco_Livingstone_essay.html), 1998
- 10 Bryan Robertson, Catalogue Introduction, Marlborough Fine Art, [http://www.christopherlebrun.co.uk/newsite/texts/bryan\\_robertson/](http://www.christopherlebrun.co.uk/newsite/texts/bryan_robertson/), 1994
- 11 Bryan Robertson, Catalogue Introduction, Marlborough Fine Art, [http://www.christopherlebrun.co.uk/newsite/texts/bryan\\_robertson/](http://www.christopherlebrun.co.uk/newsite/texts/bryan_robertson/), 1994
- 12 Catalogue preface to 'The Human Clay', Arts Council of Great Britain, 1976

‘A body of work has evolved in London which possess a power and a relevance to the future of painting that would be hard to match anywhere else in the world.’

Michael Peppiatt, 1987

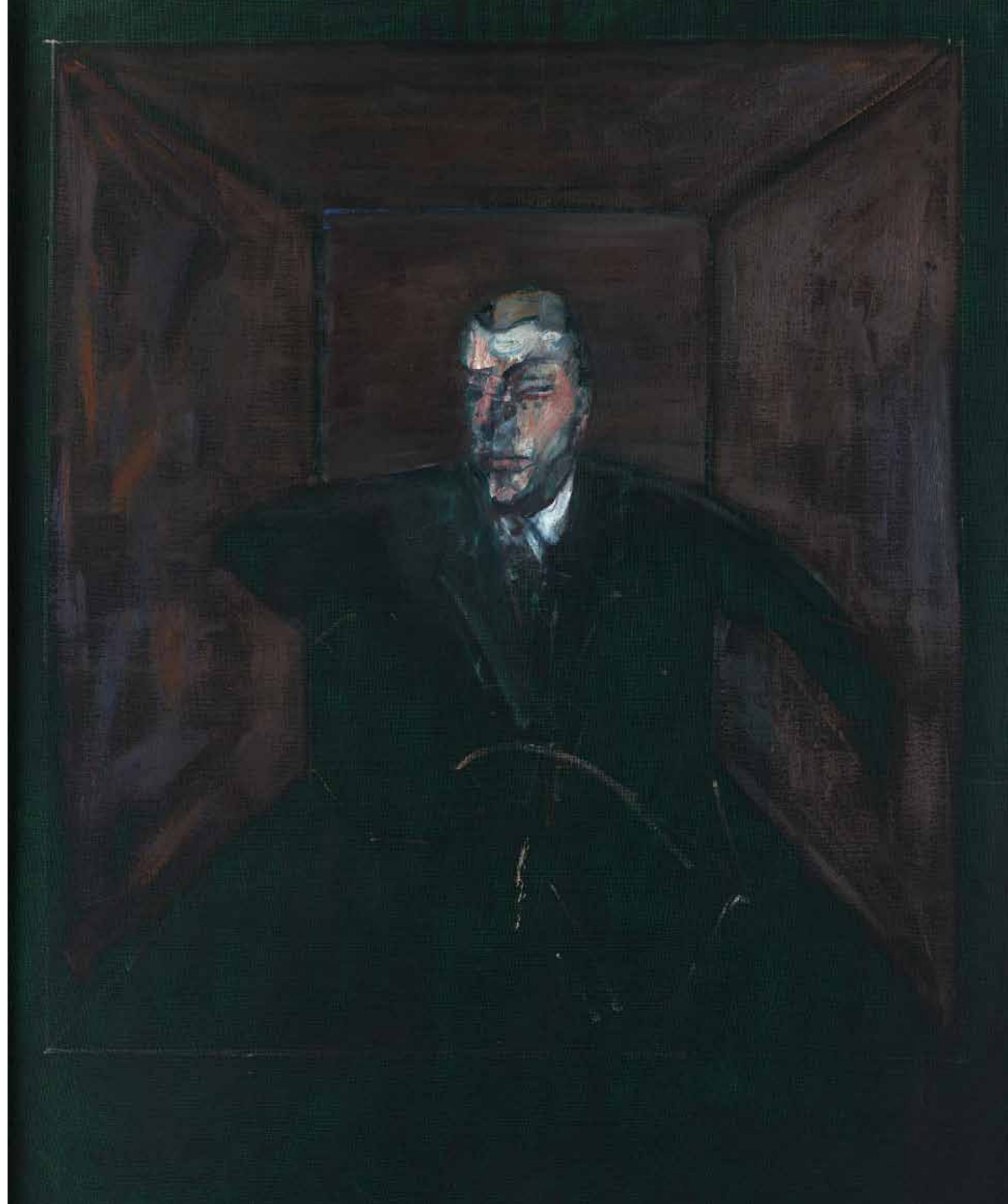
**Michael Andrews**  
*Study of a head for 'Lights'*  
No.2, 1968  
(detail, see page 19)

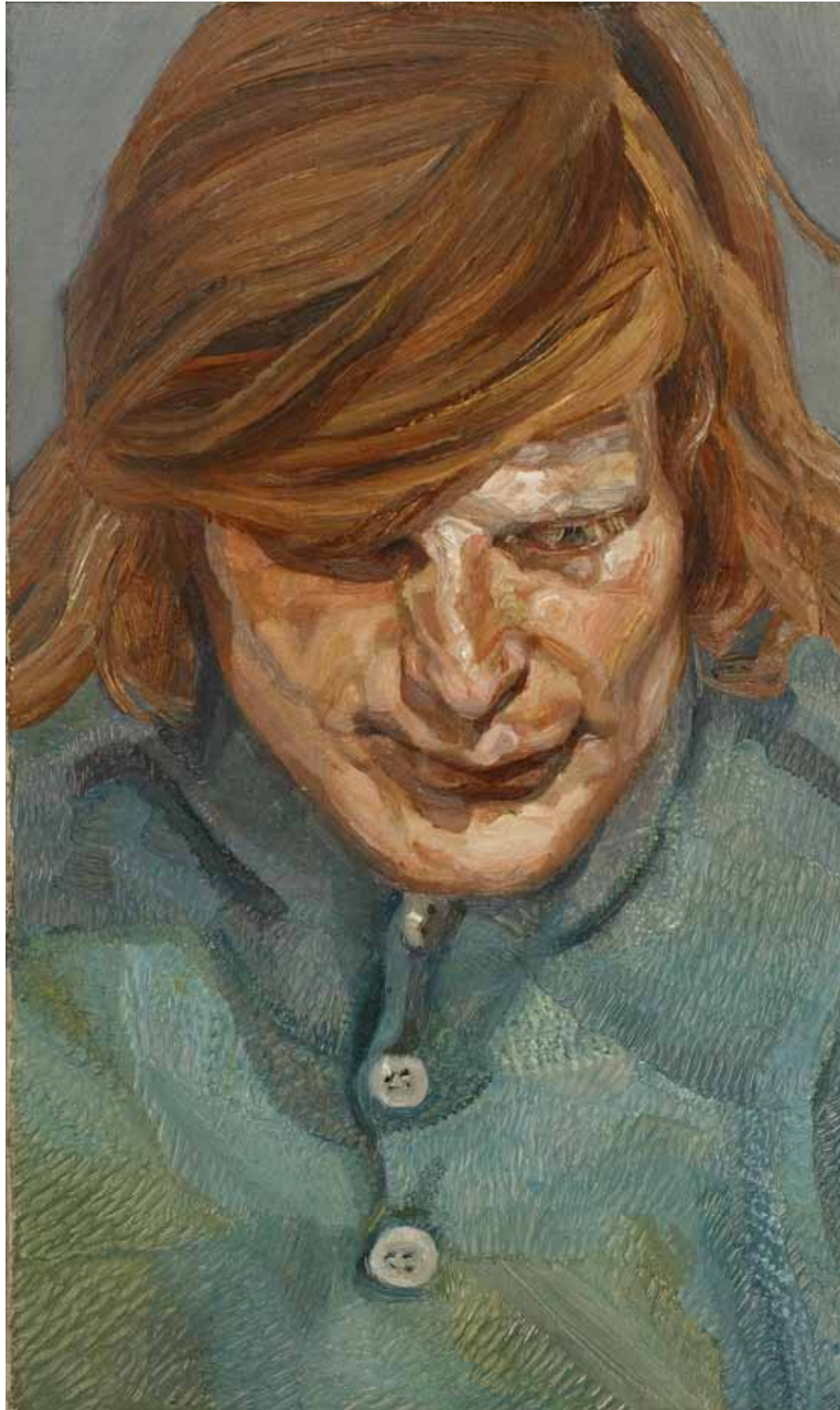




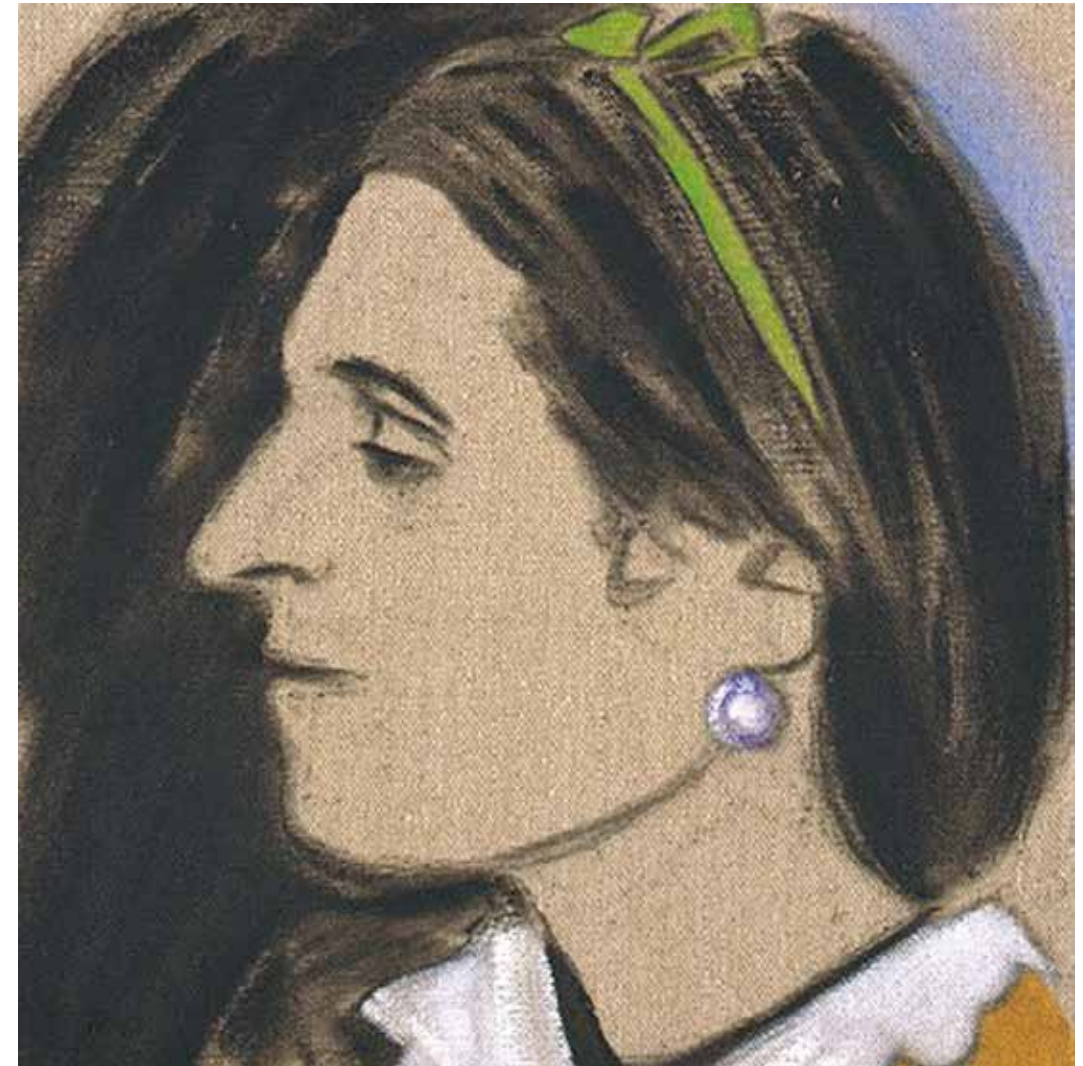
Left: 2  
**Leon Kossoff**  
*Head of Rosalind*, 1981  
Oil on board  
51.5 x 46.5 cm

Right: 3  
**Francis Bacon**  
*Study for Figure VI*, 1956-7  
Oil on canvas  
152.4 x 117 cm





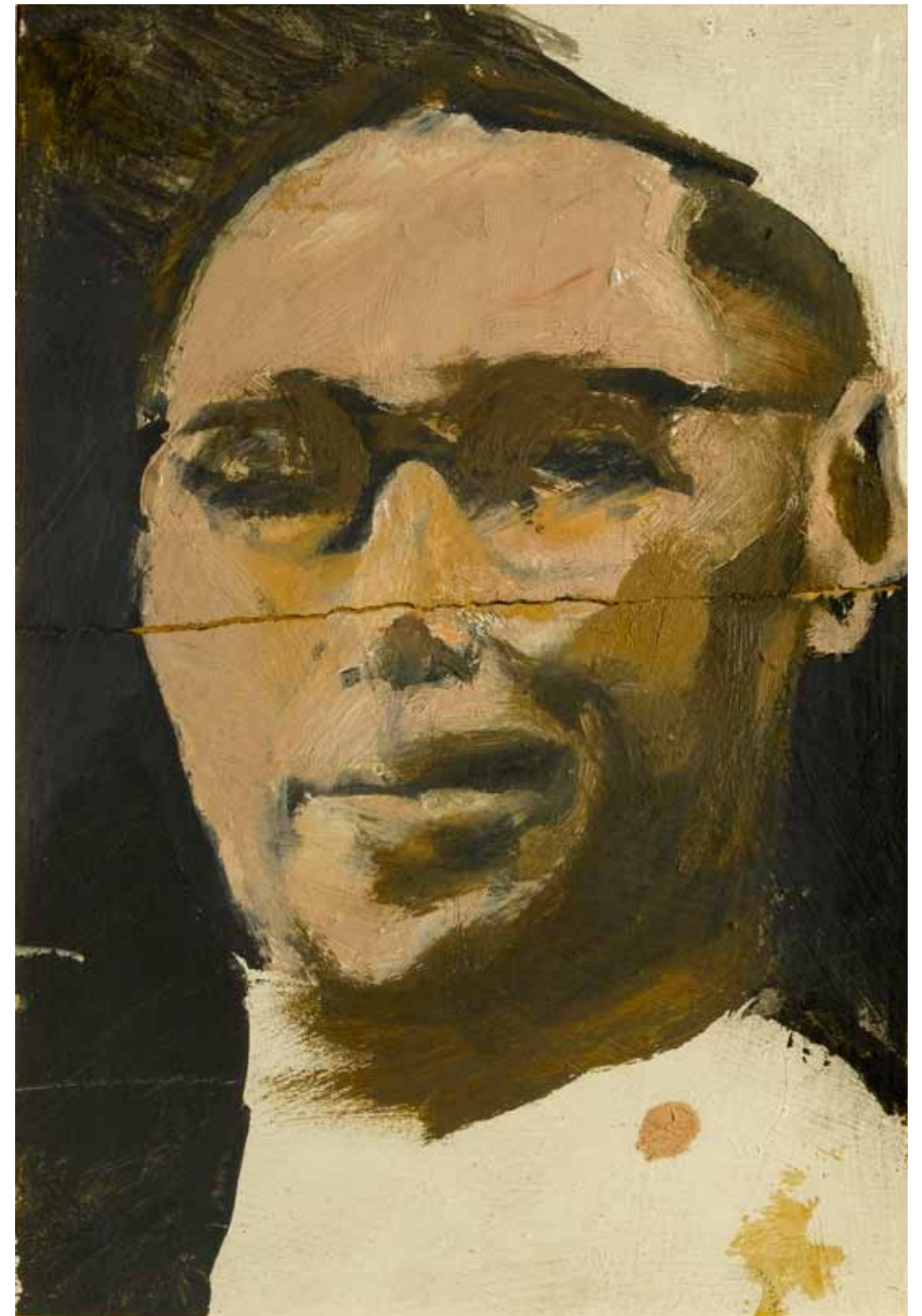
4  
**Lucian Freud**  
*Small Head*, 1973-4  
Oil on canvas  
26.3 x 15.7 cm



5  
**RB Kitaj**  
*Poet*, 2006  
Oil on canvas  
30.5 x 30.5 cm



6  
**Leon Kossoff**  
*Self-Portrait*, c. 1952  
Oil on canvas  
56 X 40.5 cm



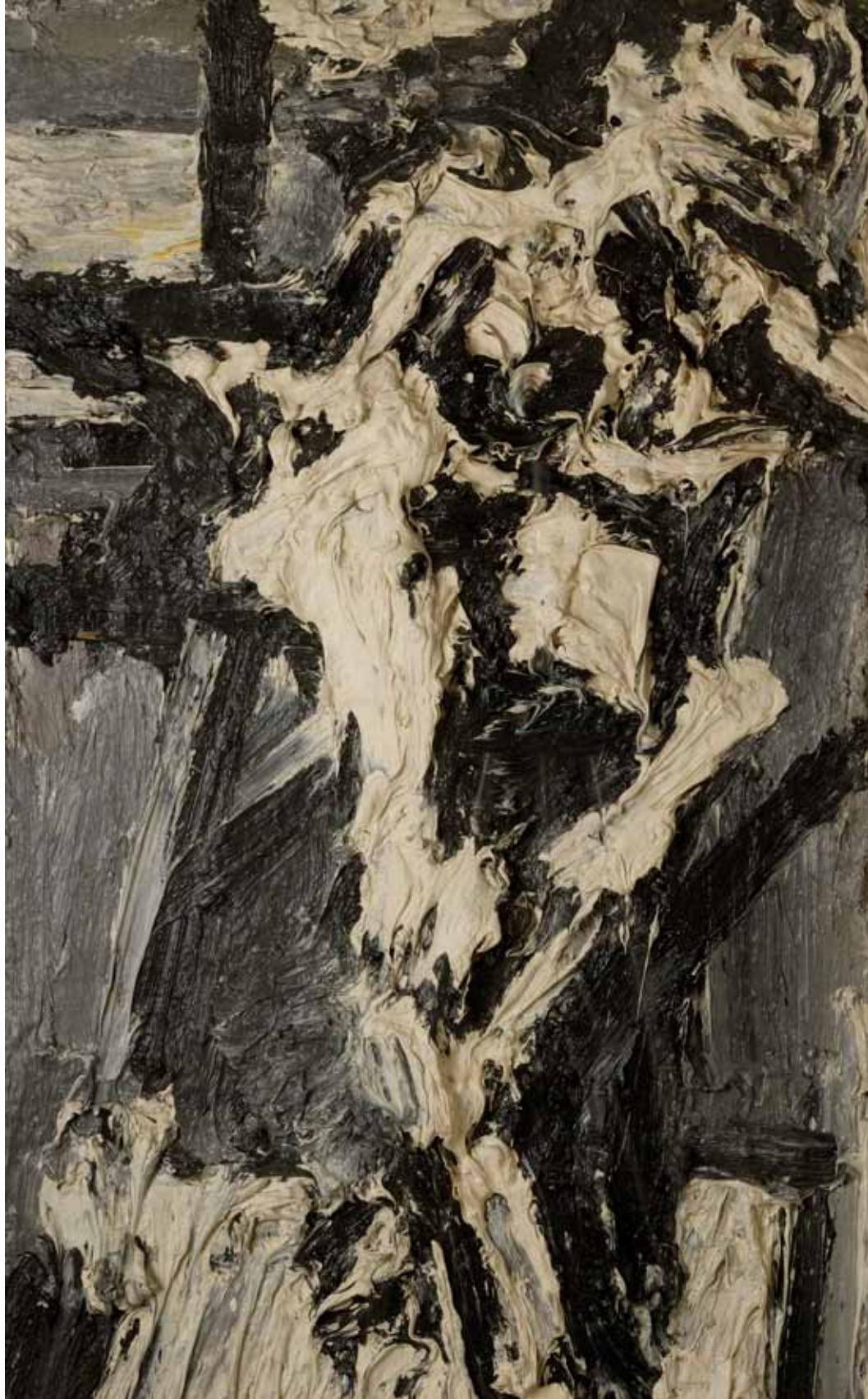
7  
**Michael Andrews**  
*Study of a head for a group of figures No. 6*, 1967  
Oil on board  
22 x 15 cm



8  
**Frank Auerbach**  
*Portrait of Julia*, 1992  
Acrylic on board  
46 x 51.1 cm



9  
**Francis Bacon**  
*Head VI*, 1949  
Oil on canvas  
93.2 x 76.5 cm



10  
**Frank Auerbach**  
*JYM in the Studio VII*, 1965  
Oil on board  
92.5 x 44.5 cm



11  
**Michael Andrews**  
*Study of a head for 'Lights'*  
*No.2*, 1968  
Oil on board  
15 x 17.5 cm

‘What an artist is trying to do for people is bring them closer to something, because of course art is about sharing: you wouldn’t be an artist if you didn’t want to share an experience, a thought.’

David Hockney

**Paula Rego**  
*Sleeping*, 1986  
(detail, see page 34)







12  
**Leon Kossoff**  
*View of Dalston Junction*, 1974  
Oil on board  
36.2 x 61 cm



13  
**RB Kitaj**  
*If Not, Not*, 1975-6  
Oil and black chalk on canvas  
152.4 x 152.4 cm



14  
**Paula Rego**  
*Sleeping*, 1986  
Acrylic on canvas  
149.8 x 149.5 cm



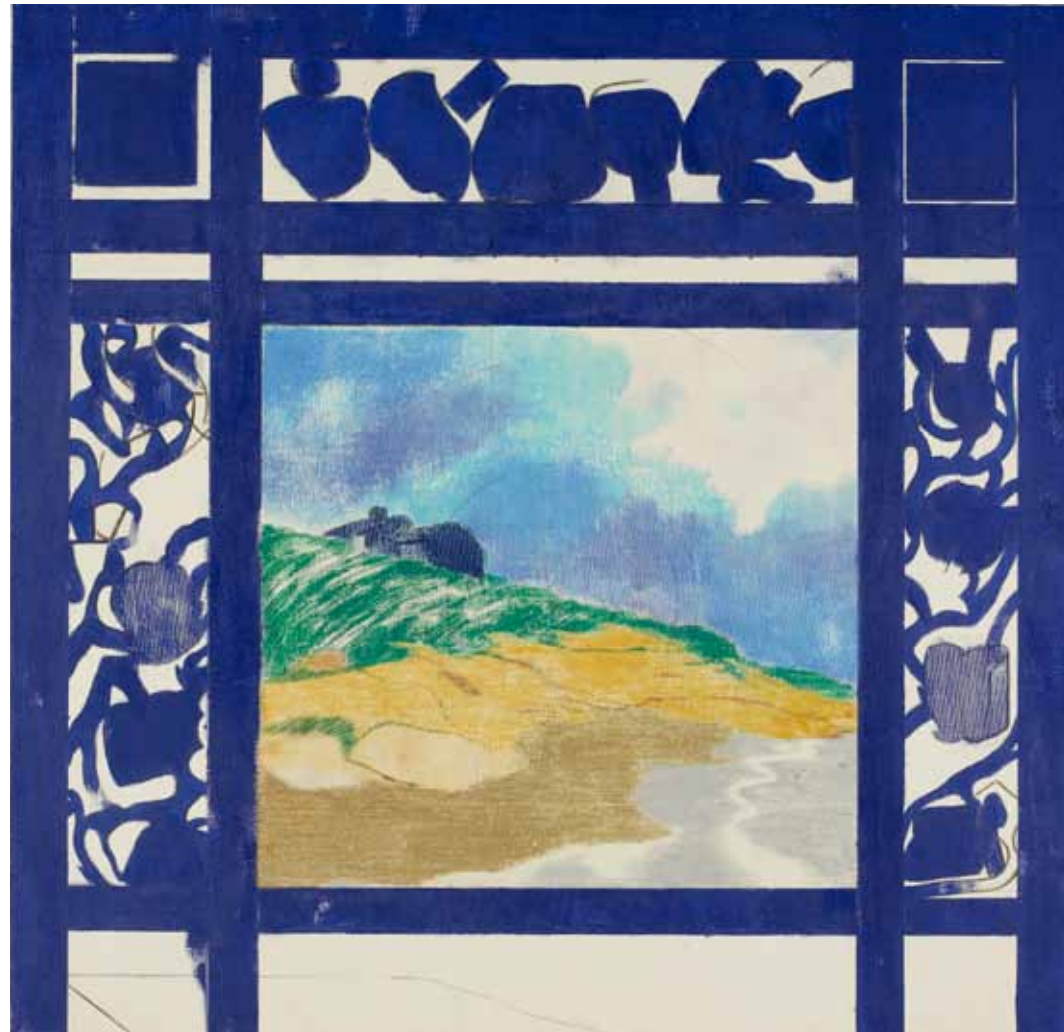
15  
**David Hockney**  
*Man in a Museum (or You're  
in the Wrong Movie)*, 1962  
Oil on canvas  
147.3 x 142.4 cm



16  
**Euan Uglow**  
*Snake*, 1976  
Oil on canvas  
49.5 x 35 cm



17  
**Francis Bacon**  
*Two Figures*, 1975  
Oil on canvas  
190 x 70 cm



18  
**RB Kitaj**  
*Screenplay*, 1967  
Oil on canvas  
78.7 x 78.7 cm



19  
**Tony Bevan**  
*Head Horizon*, 1996  
Acrylic on canvas  
157 x 171 cm



20  
**Frank Auerbach**  
*Euston Steps - Study*, 1980-1  
Oil on board  
122.6 x 152.7 cm

'I try to make images that are arrived at through paint; it's about being aware of what the paint will do but not being aware of it; of searching but finding something else...image and paint bound together.'

Simon Carter

**Simon Carter**  
*Willy Lott's House, 2007*  
(detail, see page 57)

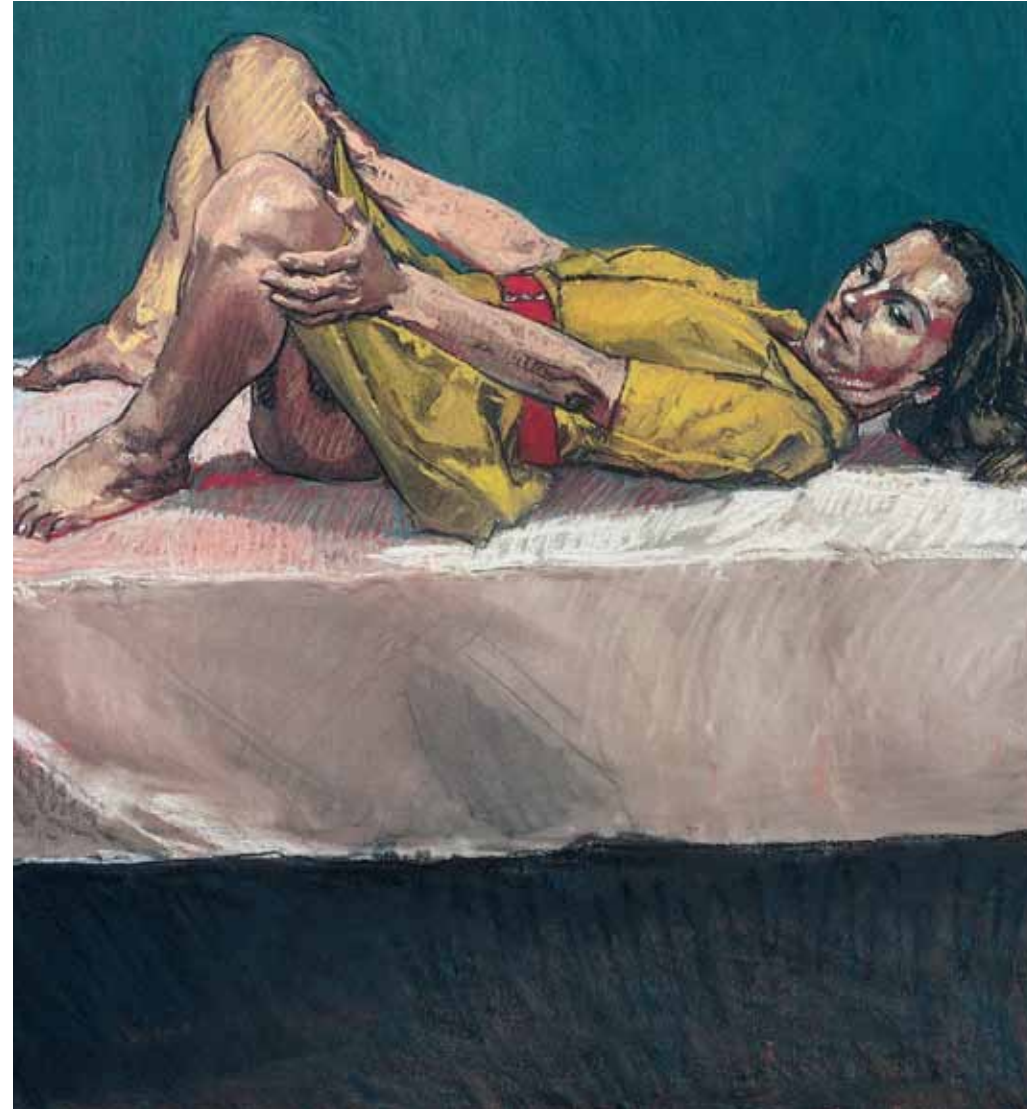
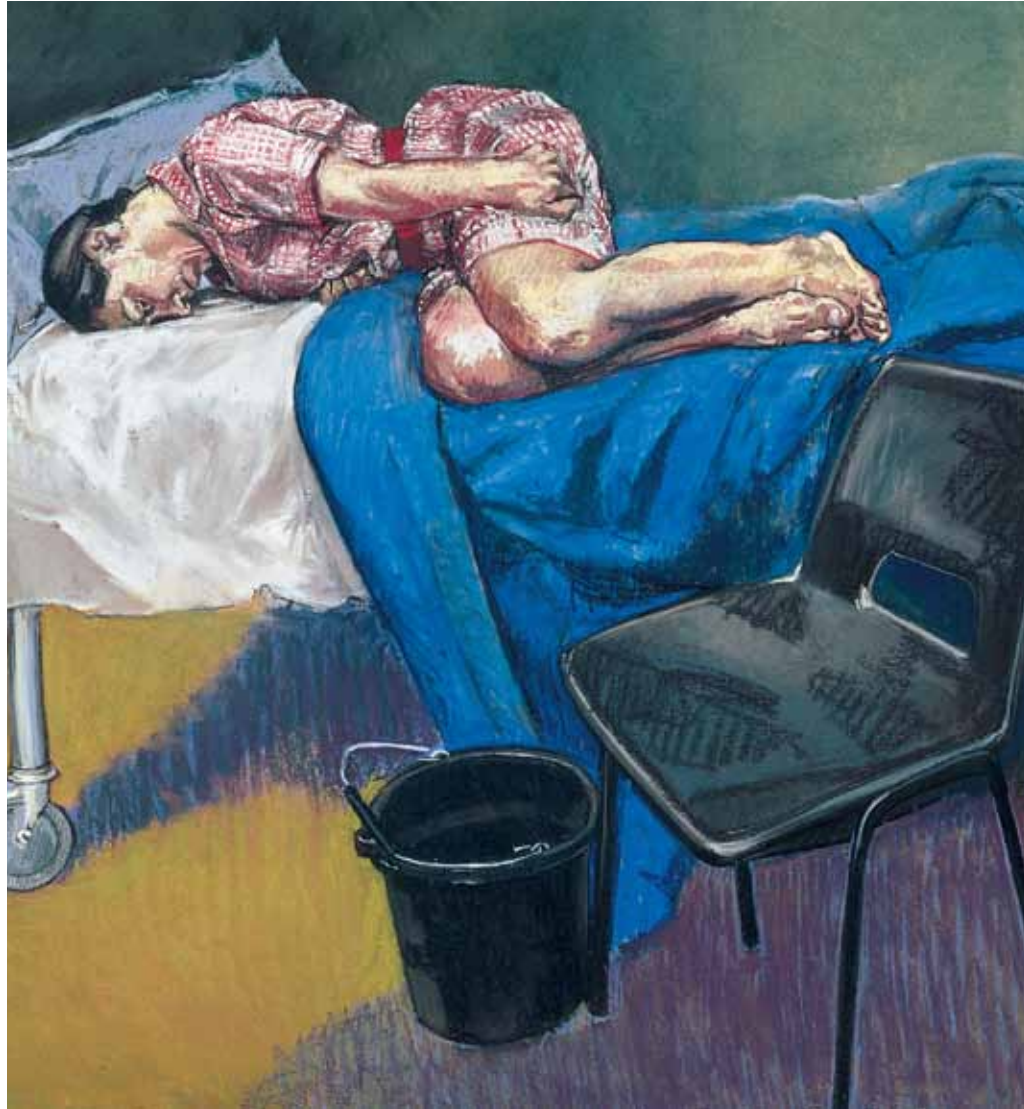




21  
**Nicholas Middleton**  
*Subway*, 2008  
Oil on canvas  
101 x 101 cm



22  
**Gillian Carnegie**  
*Mono*, 2005  
Oil on board  
73.3 x 58.7 cm



23  
**Paula Rego**  
*Triptych*, 1998  
Pastel on paper, mounted on aluminium  
110 x 100cm





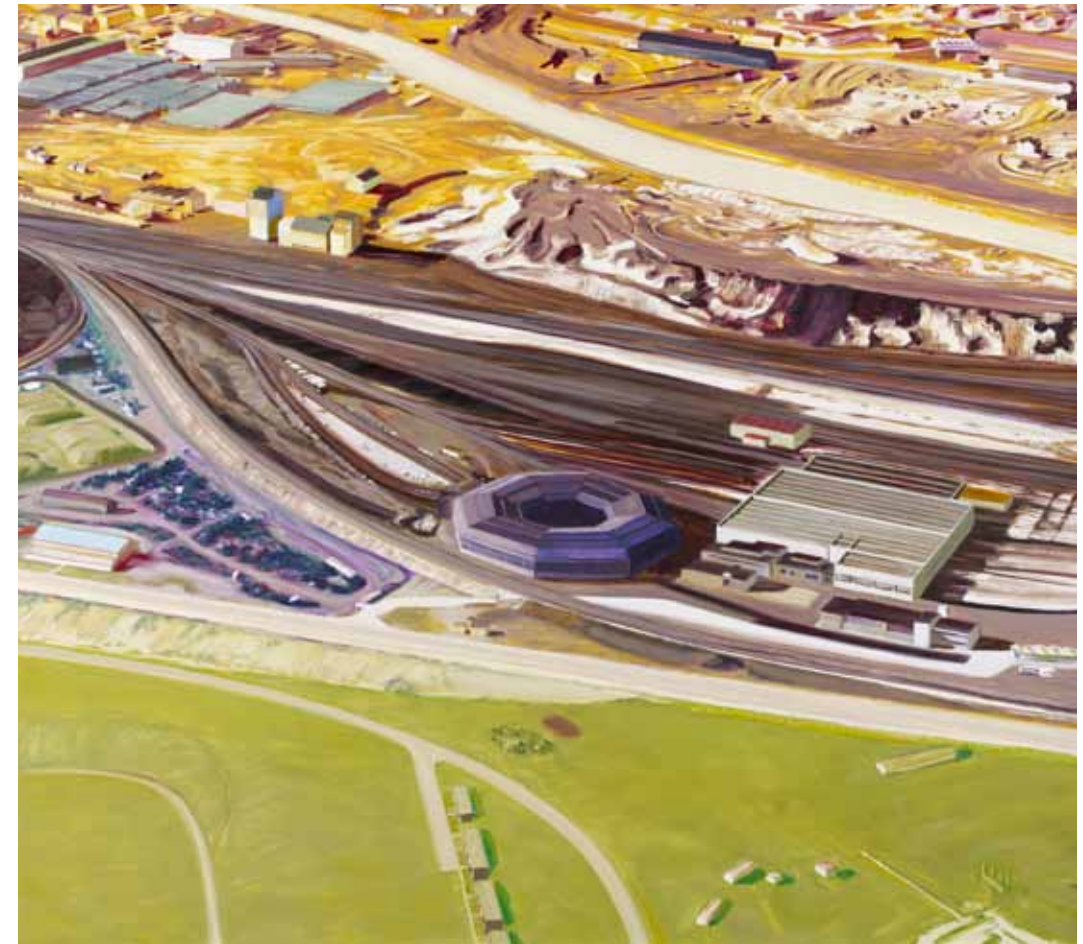
Left: 24  
**Christopher Le Brun**  
*Dido*, 2011  
Oil on canvas  
211 x 151 cm

Right: 25  
**Monica Metsers**  
*Lechuguilla (The Chandelier  
Ballroom)*, 2009  
Oil on board  
90 x 90 cm





26  
**Simon Carter**  
*Double Rainbow*, 2005  
Acrylic on canvas  
92 x 87 cm



27  
**Carol Rhodes**  
*Industrial Belt*, 2006  
Oil on board  
71.5 x 81 cm



28  
**Tony Bevan**  
*Horizon*, 1998  
Acrylic and charcoal on canvas  
210 x 246 cm



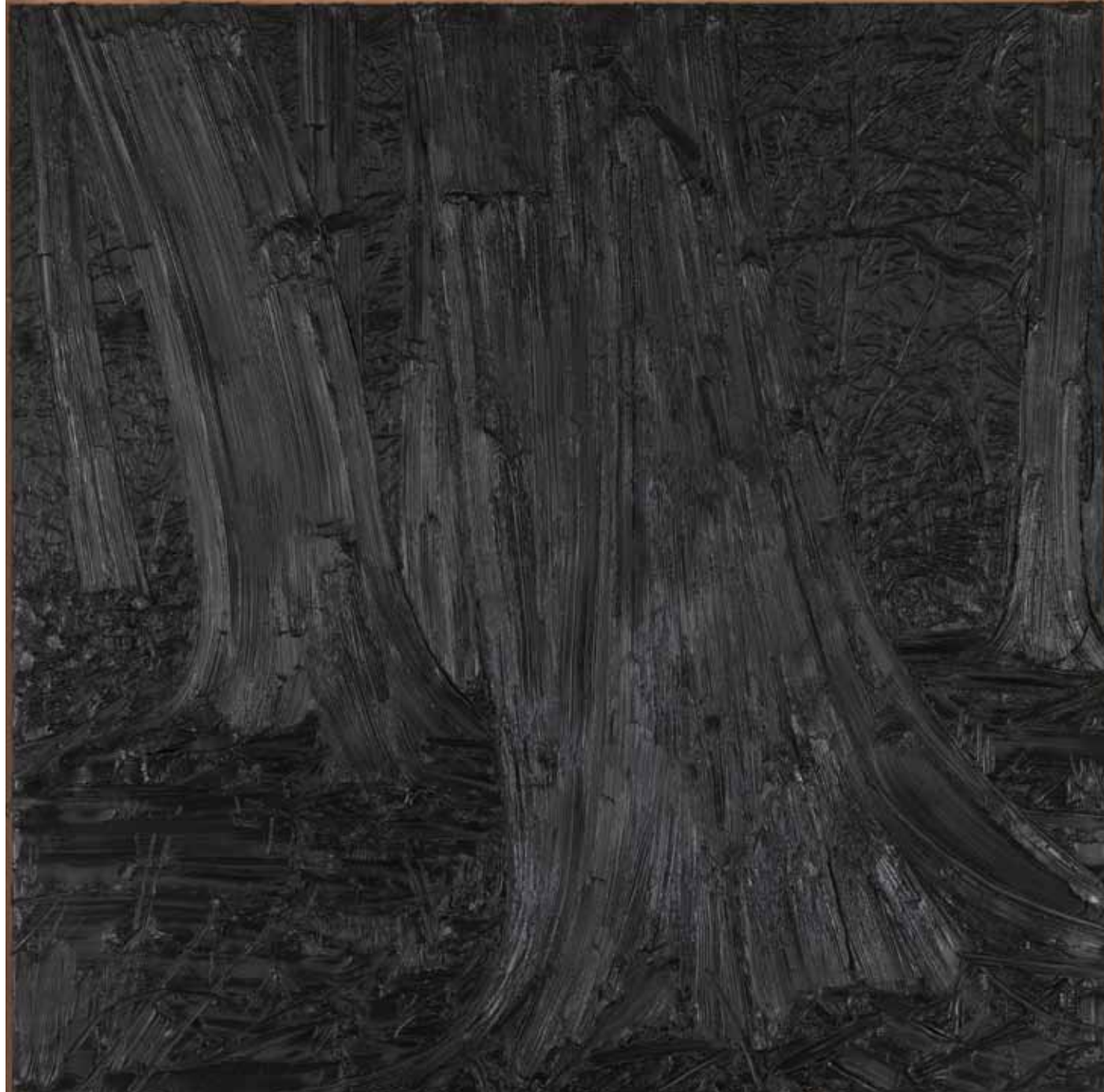
29  
**Carol Rhodes**  
*Industrial Landscape*, 1997  
Oil on board  
42.5 x 47.5 cm



30  
**Robert Priseman**  
*Omagh 15:00*, 2010  
Oil on linen  
30.5 x 45.7 cm



31  
**Robert Priseman**  
*Omagh 15:10*, 2010  
Oil on linen  
30.5 x 45.7 cm



32  
**Gillian Carnegie**  
*Black Square*, 2008  
Oil on canvas  
193 x 193 cm



33  
**Simon Carter**  
*Willy Lott's House*, 2007  
Acrylic on canvas  
116.8 x 127 cm



34  
**George Shaw**  
*The Next Big Thing*, 2010  
Humbrol enamel on board  
147.5 x 198 x 5 cm

## Artists Biographies

### **Michael Andrews**

(b.1928, Norwich, UK, d.1995, London, UK)

Andrews was one of Britain's leading post-war painters and is closely associated with the School of London. From the beginning of his career in the early 1950s, Andrews' work was characterised by an intensity of observation of the human condition. In the 1960s Andrews focused on capturing large party scenes centered on the Colony Room, a drinking club in London, frequented by fellow artists including Francis Bacon and Lucian Freud. Later works included panoramic vistas of Ayres Rock and landscapes. Film and photography constantly informed Andrews' work, as did poetry and fiction.

*pp19, 25, 29*

### **Frank Auerbach**

(b.1931, Berlin, Germany. Lives and works in London, UK)

Auerbach is an artist who creates images of startling power and presence through the most rigorous of working methods. His sitters are not professional models but people he knows well, each one attending his studio routinely at the same hour on the same day each week. Each work, with its thick swathes of paint jutting out from the support, appears to be the product of numerous sittings but is in fact created in only one; any unsuccessful attempt at capturing the essence of the subject is scraped away from the board or canvas and the artist starts again from scratch.

*pp26, 28, 40*

### **Francis Bacon**

(b.1909, Dublin, Ireland, d.1992, Madrid, Spain)

Bacon is one of the most famous artists of his generation. His work is centered on the depiction of the human figure. His early work owed much to surrealism and cubism but he soon identified his own distinct individual style. His instantly recognisable style is bold, graphic and intensely powerful. Bacon's sources and subject matter was often based on real or traditional images, Old Master paintings, newspapers, medical books and film stills. Velázquez's 'Portrait of Pope Innocent X' 1650, and Sergey Eisenstein's 1925, film Battleship Potemkin were both to have a profound effect on him. Bacon's circle of friends, included Lucian Freud, Michael Andrews and Frank Auerbach.

*pp21, 27, 37*

### **Tony Bevan**

(b.1951, Bradford, UK. Lives and works in London, UK)

Bevan's work pushes the boundaries of figurative painting. Drawing on his own experience, he paints with an expressive power that reveals the isolation, emotion and inner psychology of human existence. Always focused on the human figure, his early

work concentrated on single figures with strained gestures and agitated expressions revealing the anguish of the human condition. In his recent work the head is stretched and twisted, observed from extreme and unusual angles. Bevan draws directly onto the canvas, which is pinned to the wall. It is then moved to the studio floor, where he paints with pure pigments mixed with acrylic. Splinters of charcoal and hand prints are often left on the surface, making the viewer aware of the physical act of painting.

*pp12, 39, 52*

### **Gillian Carnegie**

b.1971, Suffolk, UK. Lives and works in London, UK)

Carnegie's work focuses on the conventions of academic figurative painting and the genres of still life, landscape, the nude and portraiture. Carnegie is known for her use of texture and light to great effect. Her work is based on photographs which she takes herself. 'Black Square' 2008, depicts the trucks and branches of a clump of trees on Hampstead Heath in London. The built up surface of the paint on the canvas is intensely tactile and the use of only one colour relies on the viewer's own movements and the external lighting to expose the image. She was nominated for the Turner Prize in 2005.

*pp45, 56*

### **Simon Carter**

(b.1961, Chelmsford, UK. Lives and works in Essex, UK)

Carter makes paintings of the seven-mile stretch of coast which lies between Holland on Sea and Walton on the Naze. Drawing and re-drawing the same motifs of bathers, sea walls, salt marshes and coastal waters directly from life, he only paints places he can walk to and physically see for himself. This physical constraint is further reinforced by the size of his canvases which are limited to those he can carry through the door of his studio. This enhances a sense of his paintings acting to meditate on the material qualities of the world.

*pp43, 50, 57*

### **Lucian Freud**

(b.1922. Berlin, Germany, d.2011, London, UK)

Freud was a realist, his main interest lay in portraiture and nudes, although he did produce some cityscapes and obsessively detailed nature studies. After experimenting in surrealism in the 1940s his style gave way to a broader handling of paint in the 1950s, using brushmarks to describe his subjects face and body in terms of shape and structure. Regardless of the medium he employed, be it paint, pencil or printmaking, he subjected his models to intense psychological scrutiny with the ultimate aim of revealing a truth about the sitter. His subjects were often people in his life; friends, family, fellow painters, lovers and children.

*pp4, 22*

**David Hockney**

(b.1937, Bradford, UK. Lives and works in the UK and USA)

Hockney is a painter, photographer and stage designer and one of the most versatile and popular figurative artists at work today. His mastery as a draughtsman and his innovative approach to art was obvious from the beginning of his career. Following his move to Los Angeles in 1964 he started to use a more traditional figurative style, developed from his interest in photography. Although his art has gone through a number of stylistic changes over the years, all his works share a wit and vitality that reflect the artist's own colourful and inventive personality. His most recent work features vivid paintings inspired by the East Yorkshire landscape.

*p35*

**RB Kitaj**

b.1932, Cleveland, USA, d.2007, Los Angeles, USA)

Although American by birth, Ronald Brookes Kitaj spent a large part of his life in England, famously coining the term 'School of London' to describe the important figurative painters such as Lucian Freud, Frank Auerbach, Michael Andrews and Francis Bacon, as well as Kitaj himself, working in the capital at that time. A consummate draughtsman and fierce polemicist, Kitaj used searing colours and striking imagery to create mysterious and opaque narratives whose precise meanings continually elude the viewer. At the same time, he also produced numerous intimate, small-scale portraits, often centred around important Jewish figures in his life, that show the more introspective nature of his personality.

*pp23, 33, 38*

**Leon Kossoff**

(b.1926, London, UK. d. 2000, UK)

Kossoff is considered to be one of the most important figurative artists of the twentieth century and is commonly associated with the School of London painters. At the heart of Kossoff's work is the human figure viewed either in isolation or in urban and domestic settings. The subject is always intimately known to Kossoff, whether it is the individual posing in his studio or the familiar London streets close to his home.

*pp20, 24, 32*

**Christopher Le Brun**

(b.1951, Portsmouth, UK. Lives and works in London)

A key figure in the resurgence of painting and figuration in Europe in the early 1980s, Le Brun was initially associated with German Neo-expressionism and the Italian Transavantgarde. His work develops the tradition of English Romanticism. He was elected President of the Royal Academy in 2011. Dido reflects his interest in how Western painting is inspired by classical literature, in this case Virgil's Aeneid. Queen

Dido founded Carthage where the goddess Juno predicted the discovery of an ancient sculpture - the head of a spirited horse - indicating the future nation's distinction in war. The story relates her self-immolation following her abandonment by Aeneas, whose destiny was to found Rome.

*p48*

**Monica Metsers**

(b.1980, Wellington, New Zealand. Lives and works in Kendal, UK)

Metsers makes models out of fragments of broken toys and found objects which she coats in a white paint. These models form the basis for surreal imaginary landscapes which she then photographs, where the photographs act as the starting point for the production of her enigmatic paintings. This return to childhood through acts of destructive manipulation recalls ideas by psychoanalysts like DW Winnicott and Marion Milner that play is the birth place for creative acts, where a mirror world to the real one is made, a dream world which represents the real but is not of it.

*pp14, 49*

**Nicholas Middleton**

(b.1975, London, UK. Lives and works in London, UK)

Black and white paintings of over-looked and neglected urban scenes are contrasted with paintings of people engaged in the activities of contemporary life who often appear lost in their own thoughts. In this way, Middleton's work recalls the stillness and reflection found in Dutch genre paintings by seventeenth century masters such as Vermeer and de Hooch, while overlaying them with an existential quality which emphasises the uniqueness and isolation of individual experience.

*p44*

**Robert Priseman**

(b.1965, Spondon, UK. Lives and works in Essex, UK)

Priseman works almost exclusively in series of paintings which explore themes with a strong contemporary political resonance. Often highly challenging, his paintings act to create a forum for debate and are described equally as both disturbing and beautiful. His use of paint is designed to act as a metaphor for human emotion.

*pp54, 55*

**Paula Rego**

(b.1935, Lisbon, Portugal. Lives and works in London, UK)

Rego is a storyteller, using paint, pastel, drawing and printmaking to create narratives that are frequently confrontational, disturbing, and darkly humorous. Her richly coloured and masterfully executed tableaux rely heavily on ambiguity to explore the complex undercurrents of human relations, particularly within the family. On occasion, such as in the 'Triptych' which were produced in response to a referendum held in Portugal



to decide whether to relax the strict laws on abortion, Rego is far more direct in her approach, using her art to raise awareness of important social and political issues.  
*pp31, 34, 46-47*

### **Carol Rhodes**

(b.1959, Edinburgh, UK. Lives and works in Glasgow, UK)

Rhodes paints aerial landscapes, drawing from her own and 'found' photographs to create composite, quasi-fictional environments. Working relatively small, her process involves repeated correction and revision, after making of an initial 'cartoon' drawing. Though highly controlled, materiality and gesture are as critical for her as composition and colour. Her industrial or post-industrial topography – container ports, motorways, water treatment plants, quarries – may be read as exploring current ecological conditions and questioning landscape norms. Mood and psychology are essential, however, with elevated viewpoints and scale shifts sometimes creating unease. Yet she states that beauty, found in overlooked or marginal places, remains a major concern.

*pp51, 53*

### **George Shaw**

(b.1966, Coventry, UK. Lives and works in Ilfracombe, UK)

Shaw is renowned for his work depicting the landscape of his teenage years in Tile Hill a suburb of Coventry. His style is highly detailed and naturalistic in approach. He works predominantly in Humbrol enamel paints which are more commonly used to paint Airfix models; this medium lends his work a unique appearance. Devoid of human figures his paintings have an eerie, still presence. He was shortlisted for the Turner Prize in 2011.

*p58*

### **Euan Uglow**

(b.1932, London, UK, d.2000, London, UK)

Uglow is primarily considered a painter of nudes, though he also painted still lifes and landscapes. His work is distinct by his method of meticulously measuring subjects, often mathematically, in order to accurately capture them; such observations were often visible by his mark-making. This method restricted his practice and he sometimes only produced two or three works a year. His desire to create images in a realist manner related also to his palette which was graduated to a tonal scale. He was an extremely disciplined painter and his life revolved around his work.

*pp8, 36*

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