

IMMA
FREUD CENTRE

IMMA Collection: Freud Project 2016-2021



Very few artists spent as much time in the studio as Lucian Freud. The studio was his world. Now in its fourth year, the IMMA Collection: Freud Project currently explores the theme of the studio, its role and function, practically and conceptually, in the production of art.

The Open Research Space is a research and activation programme featuring a number of talks, seminars, and discussions online that explore the role of the studio across the activities of IMMA, with Freud's studio practice as a point of departure for more in-depth consideration.

This research project is rooted in the IMMA Collection: Freud Project, which is showing in the ground and first floor galleries of the Freud Centre. Lucian Freud (1922–2011) is widely recognised as one of the greatest realist painters of the twentieth century, renowned for his intimate, honest, often visceral portrayal of the human form. He changed the way we see portraiture and the nude in art. The works in this exhibition, mainly dating from 1970 onwards, explore several of the artist's key themes such as portraiture; self-portraiture; still-life; animals and nature. They include portraits of his family; other artists; an art writer; his art dealer; business people and his doctor. The loans also reflect his friendships and contacts within the racing world, his love of horses and dogs, his interest in the physical and psychological relationships between human and animal sitters, his studio and garden.

The IMMA Collection: Freud Project marks a major five-year initiative for IMMA. Fifty-two works by Lucian Freud have been lent to the Museum's Collection until 2021. The loans, from a number of private collectors, include thirty-two paintings and twenty works on paper comprising nineteen large scale etchings and one early drawing. Twenty-nine paintings and sixteen works on paper are currently on view.

From September to January third 2022 in IMMA's East Wing Galleries, affiliated to the Freud Project exhibition programme, we will present a major exhibition of the work of Paula Rego, Freud's fellow artist and peer, in *Paula Rego, Obedience and Defiance*.

Room One

From the early experiments in the 1940s to the increasingly large and complex compositions created after his rediscovery of the medium in the early 1980s, Freud's contribution to etching is significant. Treating the etching plate like a canvas, Freud stood the copper upright on an easel. This room includes a copper etching plate for the print **Donegal Man** (2007).

Freud's fondness for double portraits is wittily reflected in **Before the Fourth** (2004), in both an etching and a painting entitled **Expecting the Fourth**, completed in

2005. Both show Freud's fascination with the pregnant female form.

The close friend who sat for **Susanna** (1996) is the subject of a series of small scale, intimate portraits in oils, over a period of twenty years, two of which are in this exhibition. A young Camberwell student gave up her part-time job in a shop to sit for Freud as **Girl with Fuzzy Hair** (2004), each curl delicately delineated. Included in these strong female portraits is a Brighton solicitor who wrote to Freud asking why he had never painted a black woman. The result was a naked portrait in oils and the etching **Solicitor's Head** (2003).

Freud's studio assistant David Dawson is another consistent model and one of the artist's most trusted friends, who chronicled the life of the studio through photographs. Here he appears in the etching **David Dawson** (1998).

Head of an Irishman (1999) belongs to the series of the son of the Big Man. Another fine male head is of the artist's son Alex Boyt, **Head of Ali** (1999). **The Painter's Doctor** (2006) was a profound thank you to Lucian's physician for his care of Freud during a serious illness in 2005. Freud's Manhattan based gallerist, William Acquavella, sat for a portrait painting and etching **The New Yorker** (2006). Freud said that the most beautiful ear in art belongs to Jean-Siméon Chardin's **The Young Schoolmistress** (1735–1736), in the National

Gallery, London. His series inspired by this work includes the etching **After Chardin** (2000).

Room Two

Sometimes referring to himself as a biologist, Freud was especially interested in people as animals, their real natures evident when his sitters divested themselves of their clothes and their facades. **Double Portrait** (1985–1986) features Susanna who introduced whippets into Freud's life and art. With her arm raised shielding her eyes, she lies in a relaxed pose with her whippet Joshua. Hands and paws, whippet's legs and sitter's forearms entwine in an interrelationship of living things.

Triple Portrait (1987), a much smaller work, portrays her with two dogs: Joshua and Freud's dog Pluto. The background depicts the piles of paint-stained, crumpled white sheets that Freud used to clean his brush, and which appear as a feature in numerous paintings.

Freud's daughters Bella and Esther were among his most frequent sitters. **Bella and Esther** (1988) is part a major series of portraits of his daughters painted in the 1980s. Reclining on a chesterfield sofa their poses are awkward and askew; however, a sense of ease with each other and with the artist is prevalent in the work.

The Pearce Family (1998) began as a portrait of the artist's daughter Rose Boyt and her husband Mark Pearce, but Freud decided to extend the canvas as

Rose's family grew, wanting "the subject to finish the picture: to allow the life full swing".

Freud is renowned for his "naked portraits" of friends, family, lovers and fellow artists, which are not nudes in the classic sense but real, undressed people. Freud liked to select his models from among his close friends and family. Throughout his career he painted many of his children both clothed and naked. Annabel is Freud's second-eldest child from his first marriage to Kitty Garman. The unfinished **Naked Portrait, Fragment** (2001) gives us an insight into how Freud began his work, drawing the forms in charcoal and moving outwards from a central area, often the eyes.

Also, in this room is **Kai** (1991–1992), who Freud affectionately referred to as his stepson and is the lynchpin of one of Freud's most famous works, **Large Interior W11 (after Watteau)** (1981–1983).

Room Three

Named Lucian after his mother Lucie Brasch, Freud began a series of paintings of his mother in 1972, after his father's death when she had fallen into a deep depression. In **The Painter's Mother Reading** (1975) she stares down at a book, the reflected light from which brightens her face. Freud had given her his copy of *History of Egypt* by J.H. Breasted, (1936), a publication of

great inspiration to him, but noted she did not seem to register what she was seeing.

The period when Freud worked on **The Painter's Mother Resting 1** (1976) he described as a time in his life when he was “feeling sadder than I ever have before or since... I was painting the paisley patterns on her dress and I remember worrying that my sadness would get into the paisley shapes and disrupt the dress and the calm of it” and also how he liked “painting things individually and seeing what I can get out of each one”.

Room Four

The Big Man (1976–1977) portrays a combination of powerful bulk and quiet intelligence. The Big Man's physical presence is made manifest in paint with the aid of a mirror, expanding our view of the subject.

Freud often turned to his immediate surroundings for inspiration, such as in **Landscape with Bat** (1980), where the landscape is his garden. In keeping with his lifelong interest in horses, which he loved to ride bareback, **A Filly** (1970) is a portrait of a horse Freud briefly owned. There are several paintings in the exhibition which explore Freud's interest in people and dogs and the physical and psychological relationships between them, such as **Guy and Speck** (1980–1981). Guy Hart, antique dealer and former jockey, shared with Freud a passion for horse-racing.

Room Five

Freud's choice of palette was always muted and earthy; he never used saturated colour, considering that it conveyed an overtly emotional significance that he wished to avoid. Subtle accents of colour in the nails and clothing of a **Woman in a Butterfly Jersey** (1990–1991) make the face register as monochromatic. This is yet another example of Freud's interest in the passing of time, as the same sitter appeared in several canvases such as **Figure with Bare Arms** (1961) some thirty years earlier.

Man in a Silver Suit (1998) features another recurrent sitter in Freud's oeuvre. Using a limited palette, Freud has calibrated a spectrum of cool hues in the depiction of the sitter's clothes, contrast with the warm tones of his face and hands. The background wall, a greenish yellow, adds a sense of verdure to an otherwise pronounced feeling of compression.

Room Six

The close-up view and tight framing were characteristics of Freud's work throughout his career. Intense viewing was central to his process. As these works are evidence, especially the despairing yet tender **Head of a Girl** (1975–1976), sitters are usually depicted in a meditative mood, looking down or to one side and away from the

viewer. Katy McEwen was a student at the Slade who introduced Freud to Cremnitz white, a lead-heavy pigment with distinctive body and texture. It was useful in forming the bulge of the neck and the dip of the upper lip in the seated portrait of **The Big Man** (1976–1977) and **Head of the Big Man** (1975) seen in room 4 on this floor and **Kai** (1991–1992) in room two.

Two Brothers from Ulster (2001) is an example of a double portrait, depicting two men the artist returned to as sitters several times throughout his practice. Drawn from his close circle of friends, family and peers, a wide range of people from all walks of life, Freud's sitters are portrayed with intimacy, directness and unflinching honesty.

Room Seven

Pat Doherty was introduced to Lucian Freud by Andrew Parker Bowles, another of Freud's sitters. The first completed painting was **Donegal Man** (2006) followed by a later companion piece **Donegal Man, Profile** (2007), as well as a portrait fragment and an etching, both related to the earlier work, all of which are presented in this room and convey a more rounded account of Freud's approach.

Also in this room is **Man in a Check Cap** (1991), a portrait of Mick Tobin, a retired boxer who sold newspapers outside Covent Garden underground station when Freud

knew him. **The Portrait of Christopher Bramham** (1989) presents a younger painter, part of the School of London, whose work Freud admired.

Open Research Space

The current exhibition provides the context for focused research on the theme of the artists's studio. The studio, in all its forms, continues to exert a fascination as the physical and conceptual site of an artist's work processes and an enduring context from which art emerges. The Open Research Space is a programme of online discussions and research initiatives which has been activated to generate a collective research resource, expanding upon existing ways of thinking about the studio. Using Freud's work, and his intense focus on the interiors of his studios as a prompt, this programme explores the role and function of the studio as a space for production. Focusing on international contexts as well as the contemporary situation in Ireland it aims to make visible the alternative forms of research and learning that can take place in the environment of the museum. This project builds upon ongoing Engagement and Learning initiatives focused on the development of the museum as a site for research.

Associated Talks and Events

For further details of talks and events programmed in association with this exhibition, please see the IMMA website at www.imma.ie

Have a question about an artwork? Want to know more? Ask a member of our Visitor Engagement Team, easily identifiable by their blue lanyards.

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This exhibition is curated by Christina Kennedy, Senior Curator: Head of Collections, and Lead Curator of the Freud Project at IMMA and Johanne Mullan, Curator: Collections.

Research activation programme: Lead researcher Dr. Nathan O'Donnell, IMMA Research Fellow with Lisa Moran, Curator, Engagement and Learning.

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Front cover:

**Lucian Freud standing on his head, with daughter Bella,
in his studio**, circa 1986.

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