

Artist Resources – Francis Bacon (British, 1909-1992)

[Bacon Artist Estate](#)

[Bacon at the Tate](#)

[Bacon at Gagosian Gallery](#)



Bacon, 1950s
Photograph: John Deakin

Read the Tate’s overview by Mike Pinnington, [“Who is Francis Bacon?”](#) calling the artist “a maverick who rejected the preferred artistic style of the abstraction of the era, in favour of a distinctive and disturbing realism.”

[Watch](#) or [read](#) an interview with Francis Bacon and David Sylvester recorded by the BBC in 1962.

A 1971 retrospective at the Grand Palais, Paris was the artist’s first major exhibition, but was overshadowed by the [tragic death](#) of Bacon’s muse and lover, George Dyer. In 2019, [Francis Bacon: Books and Painting](#) was on display at the Pompidou Center, displaying paintings from 1971 and reflecting upon this tumultuous year of Bacon’s life.

Read the artist’s [last interview](#) with photographer Francis Giacobetti, conducted in early 1992.

In 1998, Bacon’s studio was [donated](#) in its entirety to the Hugh Lane Gallery in Dublin. The entire studio, formerly located in London’s South Kensington neighborhood, was mapped, catalogued, and relocated. An article in the Irish Times called it a [“ghastly misunderstanding”](#) of the artist’s studio. There is now a comprehensive database of the studio’s contents at [Hugh Lane Gallery](#).

Francis Bacon: Paintings from the 1950s was developed by the [Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts](#), Norwich, in 2007. The exhibition then traveled to the [Milwaukee Art Museum](#) and the [Albright-Knox Art Gallery](#).

The Metropolitan Museum of Art installed [Francis Bacon: A Centenary Retrospective](#) in 2009, the first major exhibition of the artist’s work in New York in over 20 years.

[Bacon’s Women](#) at Ordovas in New York was “the first exhibition in the United States to focus on Francis Bacon’s female subjects.”

Watch “Francis Bacon – The South Bank Show,” an [Emmy Award-winning profile](#) of Francis Bacon.

In 2022, gallerist James Birch published *Bacon in Moscow*, a new memoir about organizing a Francis Bacon exhibition in the USSR. [Read a review of the book](#) in the Guardian.

The 2022 exhibition at London’s Royal Academy, [Francis Bacon: Man and Beast](#), highlights Bacon’s paintings of animals “from screaming chimpanzees to haunting, wide-eyed owls.” Reviews were published in [The New York Times](#) and the [Guardian](#). Also read an article in Artnet about the inclusion of Bacon’s [infamous Head VII \(1949\)](#) (“The Screaming Pope”) in this exhibition.



Bacon in his studio, 1980
Photograph: Jane Brown



Francis Bacon (British, 1909-1992)

Head, c. 1962

Oil on canvas

Private Collection; L2023:74.8

Francis Bacon is one of the most influential British painters of the 20th century. Known for his psychologically intense portraits and figurative works, Bacon often depicted unsettling emotions in series featuring crucifixions, popes, heads, and self-portraits. **Head** is a highly abstracted example, with loose, gestural brushstrokes that allow the figure to seep into the dark background. In the 1950s and early 1960s, Bacon's series of heads were often isolated in cage-like or nondescript spaces that heighten the emotional tension in the subject. As the artist once said: "I'm just trying to make images as accurately as possible off my nervous system as I can."

On view October 25, 2023 – January 28, 2024

Francis Bacon (British, 1909-1992)
Head IV (Man with a Monkey), 1949
Oil on canvas

Private Collection; L2021:183.1

Born in Dublin to English parents, Francis Bacon was thrown out at age 16 and moved to London. The artist began painting in his late twenties, creating figurative works that express raw, unsettling emotions of isolation, brutality, and terror. **Head IV (Man with a Monkey)** is the fourth of six paintings in Bacon's *Heads* series, one of his most recognized bodies of work. Like others in the series, **Head IV (Man with a Monkey)** features an isolated male head and upper torso against an ambiguous, geometric background. In this example, the man's face is obstructed by the monkey, which turns toward the viewer and seems to dissolve into the man's body. The painting was included in Bacon's first solo exhibition, which was held at London's Hanover Gallery in 1949.

On view May 11 – August 14, 2022

