

# CHRISTIE'S

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## **LUCIAN FREUD'S TENDER PORTRAIT *GIRL WITH CLOSED EYES* OFFERED TO THE MARKET FOR THE FIRST TIME, HAVING REMAINED IN THE SAME COLLECTION SINCE ITS CREATION**



Lucian Freud, *Girl with Closed Eyes* (1986-87, Estimate on Request)

**1 MARCH 2022**

**20<sup>TH</sup> / 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY: LONDON EVENING SALE  
20/21 SHANGHAI TO LONDON**

- In the year that marks the centenary since the artist's birth, Lucian Freud's tender, intimate portrait of Janey Longman will be offered at auction for the first time,
- Created in 1986-87, *Girl with Closed Eyes* has remained in the same collection for 35 years
- Included in the seminal Hirshhorn Museum retrospective in 1987, the painting was later presented in the major survey exhibition at Museo Correr, Venice, curated by William Feaver
- The painting will tour to New York and Hong Kong before being exhibited in London
- Christie's continues to establish cultural dialogues between major international art hubs, launching the key 20/21 Marquee Weeks with 20/21 Shanghai to London sale series
- The sale series will incorporate 20th / 21st Century: Shanghai Evening Sale, 20th / 21st Century: London Evening Sale and The Art of the Surreal Evening Sale

**SHANGHAI AND LONDON** – In the year that marks the centenary of the artist's birth, Christie's will offer Lucian Freud's masterpiece of frank, tender observation, *Girl with Closed Eyes* (1986-87, estimate on request), which is among the most exquisite of Lucian Freud's triumphant 1980s portraits. *Girl with Closed Eyes* will be a focal point of Christie's 20<sup>th</sup> / 21<sup>st</sup> Century: London Evening Sale, a key auction within the 20/21 Shanghai to London sales series, which will take place on 1 March 2022. The painting is being offered at auction for the first time, having remained in the same private collection for around 35 years. Reclined on a bed in the artist's Holland Park studio, the sitter, Janey Longman, is caught as if in a reverie. Her eyes are closed, her lips parted, and her head turned serenely to one side. Her dark hair spills onto the mattress, with Freud's thick, tactile impasto teasing each strand into tousled life.

*Girl with Closed Eyes* was among the most recent works included in the 1987-88 landmark touring retrospective *Lucian Freud: Paintings*, which travelled from the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C. to the Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris, the Hayward Gallery, London, and Berlin's Neue Nationalgalerie. It was later included in the major 2005 survey exhibition at the Museo Correr, Venice, curated by the British curator and art critic William Feaver. Viewers will have the opportunity to experience *Girl with Closed Eyes* in New York from 4 to 8 February, Hong Kong from 15 to 17 February and London from 23 February to 1 March 2022.

**Katharine Arnold, Head of Post-War and Contemporary Art, Christie's Europe:** "“As we celebrate 100 years since the birth of Lucian Freud, it is an honour for Christie's to mark the occasion by offering this magnificent portrait of Janey Longman at auction for the first time. The dexterous handling of the paint sumptuously brings every detail of the sitter's body into sharp focus. The gentle framing of her pose within the composition seems to invite the viewer closer still, a witness to this moment of contemplation. The painting radiates with intimacy, affection and the sheer pleasure that comes from two people enjoying each other's company. This portrait is the way any woman would want to be painted. Having remained in the same collection for 35 years, this will be the first opportunity for collectors to acquire this masterpiece. *Girl with Closed Eyes* will be a leading highlight of our London Evening Sale in March and we are confident that the painting will resonate with our clients internationally.”

**Charles Cator, Deputy-Chairman, Christie's International:** "In this beautiful portrait, Lucian Freud shows a more tender and sensuous side, delighting in the beauty of the sitter and wanting to share it with the viewer. That tenderness and emotion made a deep impression on me when I first saw it in the collector's home. It is a great honour and privilege for us to have been entrusted with the sale of such a superb example of Freud's work.”

From the soft swell of the sitter's breast to the tauter lines of throat and clavicle and her complex, expressive face, he maps her skin's every freckle, sheen and furrow with rapt attention. His palette ranges from shadowed, venous blues to ochres, mauves and flashes of Cremnitz white: its translucent beauty recalls his magnificent early portraits of Lady Caroline Blackwood. *Girl with Closed Eyes* is a luminous, unflinching portrait in which Freud seemingly captures life itself on canvas. Without recourse to symbolism or narrative, he realises a desire for 'paint to work as flesh': the painting is alive with the sensuousness of a person, the push and pull of muscle, the pulse of blood beneath the skin. With her eyes closed, it is unclear whether the sitter is awake or asleep, unguardedly vulnerable or conscious of being observed: she captures the tension between exposure and mystery that makes Freud's portraits so vividly, irrevocably human.

In his sixties, Freud was working with greater formal ambition than ever before. The bold framing, visceral brushwork and acute psychological scrutiny of *Girl with Closed Eyes* exemplify the full flowering of his mature idiom. The sitter, Janey Longman, was also depicted in *Naked Girl* (1985-86) and later, alongside India Jane Birley, in the major canvas *Two Women* (1992). At this stage, Freud's style had gradually evolved from the hard-lined, iconic precision of the 1950s towards a richly physiognomic approach, his oil paint growing thicker and his brushes firmer. Over dozens

or hundreds of hours of sittings, declared by Robert Hughes in 1987 to be ‘the greatest living realist painter’, he would comb and caress his portraits into near-sculptural being.

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