

# CHRISTIE'S

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## FRANCIS BACON'S *TWO FIGURES* TO BE SOLD BY BIOGRAPHER AND CURATOR MICHAEL PEPPIATT



Francis Bacon, *Two Figures* (1975) oil on canvas,  
77% x 27%in. (197.2 x 70.3cm.)  
Post-War and Contemporary Evening Auction:  
11 February 2016

London – Christie's will present Francis Bacon's *Two Figures* (1975, estimate: £5-7 million) as a highlight of the Post-War and Contemporary Art Evening Auction in London on 11 February 2016. Painted in Paris in the mid-1970s, *Two Figures* is a self-portrait conjoined with the figure of George Dyer and stands as a tribute to Bacon's great muse and lover who transformed his life. Dyer's tragic death in 1971 gave rise to some of Bacon's most powerful compositions; including the four much celebrated 'Black Triptychs'. *Two Figures* was acquired directly from Bacon by Michael Peppiatt, a close friend and confidant of the artist, and a leading biographer and curator of his work. A focal point of 20th Century at Christie's, a series of sales that takes place from 2 – 12 February in London, *Two Figures* will go on view at Christie's, Rockefeller Center, New York on 14 January alongside highlights from the Post-War and Contemporary Art Evening Auction.

*'You might say that this is the painting where the wound of losing George is beginning to heal – it's a poignant picture because Bacon is looking back on his past – that's to say, lost – happiness. This is Bacon at his most private and most tender. The painter who produced such violent, shocking images was also, perhaps even above all, a great poet of love.'* (Michael Peppiatt in conversation with Francis Outred, London, 10 December 2015).

*Two Figures* consummates one of the darkest self-reflective periods of Bacon's life: a period defined not only by an intensive, highly analytical stream of self-portraiture, but also by the landmark series of four 'black' triptychs, in

which he sought to exorcise the painful memories of Dyer's suicide. Today the 'Black Triptychs' are housed in some of the world's leading collections and museums including Tate, London and Fondation Beyeler, Basel.

Within the charismatic cast of characters that touched Bacon's life, none had a more profound impact than Dyer. The two first met in a Soho bar in the autumn of 1963, and their relationship gave rise to a prodigious series of portraits and triptychs. *Two Figures* is a deeply poignant final farewell to Dyer: rendered with tactile, near-sculptural brushstrokes, Bacon's figures are intimately entwined in a state of sublime torsion, captured in ecstatic, free-falling metamorphosis.

*Two Figures* was originally part of a larger canvas that the artist deliberately divided into two separate paintings. The right-hand portion of the initial work was subsequently titled *Portrait of a Dwarf*, and features a foreshortened figure upon a stool, which was first exhibited at Galerie Claude Bernard in Paris in 1977, as property of the artist, and then subsequently at Bacon's retrospective at Tate in 1985. The voyeuristic relationship between the couple and this figure played directly into Bacon's fascination with the erotic power of watching and being watched. A ruthless editor of his own work, notorious for his abrasions, erasures and annihilations, Bacon's conscious bisection of the canvas freed each beautifully painted work from interaction with, and interference by, the other and transposed that sense of engagement to the viewer, always Bacon's primary concern.

Francis Outred, Chairman and Head of Post War and Contemporary Art, EMERI at Christie's said: *'This work is not only a memorial of Bacon's great love but also a testament to the relationship between artist and writer. The extraordinary story of the painting's evolution and how it came into Michael's collection is unlike any other. The long-standing friendship between Peppiatt and Bacon is one of rare depth and Michael's recollections of this period allow a fascinating insight into the life and working of one of the greatest painters of the twentieth century.'*

Held in Peppiatt's distinguished collection since it was made over 40 years ago, the work has featured in major exhibitions including *Francis Bacon in the 1950s*, 2006 (Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, Norwich); *Caravaggio Bacon*, 2010 (Galleria Borghese, Rome) and *Francis Bacon/Henry Moore: Flesh and Bone*, 2014 (Ashmolean Museum, Oxford), and has been on permanent display at the Pallant House Gallery in Chichester since 2009. A highly-acclaimed writer and scholar, Peppiatt has contributed regularly to *Le Monde*, the *New York Times*, the *Financial Times*, *Art News* and *Art International* magazine, which he re-launched as its new publisher and editor from Paris in 1985. He is the author of over 20 books, including *Francis Bacon: Anatomy of an Enigma* (1997) and *Francis Bacon: Studies for a Portrait* (2008). His latest, *Francis Bacon In Your Blood: A Memoir* (2015), will be celebrated at Christie's, Rockefeller Center, New York on 19 January.

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Auctions: *Post-War and Contemporary Evening Auction*, 11 February 2016: 7pm

## About Christie's

Christie's, the world's leading art business, had global auction and private sales in the first half of 2015 that totalled £2.9 billion / \$4.5 billion. In 2014, Christie's had global auction and private sales that totalled £5.1 billion/\$8.4 billion, making it the highest annual total in Christie's history. Christie's is a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service and expertise, as well as international glamour. Founded in 1766 by James Christie, Christie's has since conducted the greatest and most celebrated auctions through the centuries providing a popular showcase for the unique and the beautiful. Christie's offers around 450 auctions annually in over 80 categories, including all areas of fine and decorative arts, jewellery, photographs, collectibles, wine, and more. Prices range from \$200 to over \$100 million. Christie's also has a long and successful history conducting private sales for its clients in all categories, with emphasis on Post-War & Contemporary, Impressionist & Modern, Old Masters and Jewellery.

Christie's has a global presence with 54 offices in 32 countries and 12 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai, Zürich, Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Mumbai. More recently, Christie's has led the market with expanded initiatives in growth markets such as Russia, China, India and the United Arab Emirates, with successful sales and exhibitions in Beijing, Mumbai and Dubai.

*\*Estimates do not include buyer's premium. Sales totals are hammer price plus buyer's premium and do not reflect costs, financing fees or application of buyer's or seller's credits.*

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*Images available on request*

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