

**PRESS RELEASE**

# **FRANK AUERBACH AND LUCIAN FREUD: FACES**

**16 MAY TO 12 AUGUST 2018**

**Press preview: Tuesday, 15 May 2018, 11:00 am**

**Städel Museum, Exhibition Hall of the Department of Prints and Drawings**

**Frankfurt am Main, 23 April 2018.** Frank Auerbach (b. 1931) and Lucian Freud (1922–2011) are among the most prominent exponents of post-war English figurative art. From 16 May to 12 August 2018, the Städel Museum's Department of Prints and Drawings will unite major works by the two artists in a single exhibition for the first time. "Frank Auerbach and Lucian Freud: Faces" will present altogether forty drawings and prints, in particular portraits that are among the most uncompromising and most innovative in contemporary art.

The two artists were close friends for nearly four decades, until Lucian Freud's death. It was not only mutual appreciation for each other's work that bonded them; they also shared the fate of having been born as sons of Jewish families in Berlin. Already as children, they were compelled to emigrate/flee from Nazi Germany to England. Their works are expressions of very personal vision and experience. And however different their formal approaches, Auerbach and Freud pursued surprisingly similar strategies: for weeks and sometimes years, they observed and portrayed the same people from among their circles of acquaintances. This repetition and limitation served them as means of concentration in the search for insight: into another person, into the self and into the world.

Several exceptional new acquisitions for the Städel Museum provided the occasion for this special exhibition: the Städtischer Museums-Verein e. V.'s purchase of a self-portrait drawing (*Self-Portrait*, 2017) by Auerbach with funds from the Jürgen R. und Eva-Maria Mann Stiftung and the etching *Pluto* (1988) by Freud with support from the Heinz und Gisela Friederichs Stiftung, a promised gift of selected prints and drawings by Auerbach and Freud from private holdings in Cologne, and the donation of an Auerbach printing plate by the artist and the Balakjian Estate. Further enhanced by loans from within Germany and abroad, these works form the show's cornerstones.

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“Back in 1994, the Städel Museum acquired Lucian Freud’s *Large Head*, and thus one of the first – if not the very first – etching by the artist for a German museum. It is a great stroke of luck that we can now enhance this print with additional works by Auerbach and Freud that have recently likewise made their way into the collection. Together they reinforce the presence of these two outstanding exponents of figurative art of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, while also further heightening the notable quality of the Department of Prints and Drawings”, Städel director Philipp Demandt commented.

“From the very beginnings of their careers, Auerbach and Freud strove to gain a deeper understanding of the visible world. Their concern is not with representability, but with truth. In the process, they arrive at very different results – or, more correctly, insights – again and again. From this perspective, it is thus well worth our while to view the two artists’ so very different works together”, Regina Freyberger, the head of the Städel Museum’s Department of Prints and Drawings from 1750, pointed out.

### **The exhibition**

“Frank Auerbach and Lucian Freud: Faces” begins with two self-portraits: a graphite drawing by Frank Auerbach (*Self-Portrait*, 2017) executed with forcefully dynamic strokes tending towards abstraction, and an etching by Lucian Freud (*Self-Portrait: Reflection*, 1996) distinguished by concrete and descriptive lines of a virtually painterly quality. Both portraits are psychologically charged to a similarly intense degree. Formally and in terms of their critical, unsentimental self-reflection, both are typical of the two artists’ oeuvres. From the 1940s and 1950s onward, it was above all portraits that emerged from Auerbach’s and Freud’s London studios, initially in oil, and later in the etching technique as well. The prints on view in the exhibition retrace this artistic production from the 1970s onward in representative manner. Yet neither artist is a classical portraitist: commissions in the printmaking medium are rare, and none of the likenesses are of the kind intended to represent the sitter and his life achievements to posterity. Freud portrayed the British politician Lord Arnold Goodman, for example, with tousled hair, wearing yellow pyjamas (*Lord Goodman in His Yellow Pyjamas*, 1987). Auerbach and Freud are not interested in the public person with his specific biography, but in the human being in his mental, emotional and physical entirety, in his presence and creatureliness. It is for that reason that Freud generally showed his sitters naked and in unsparingly authentic manner. This also explains the motif of sleeping or falling asleep in the two artists’ work: the tired the model gets, the more clearly does his or her true, undisguised face come to light. At the same time, mutual trust between the artist and his sitter is indispensable. Auerbach and Freud therefore consistently chose their models from within very small circles of familiar persons: Freud’s children posed for him often, and from the 1970s onward he portrayed his mother in more than a thousand sittings. Yet he also made

likenesses of people who inspired him, for example the performance artist Leigh Bowery (*Large Head*, 1993) or the job centre clerk Sue Tilley (*Woman with an Arm Tattoo*, 1996). Much the same is true of Auerbach: his wife, the painter Julia Wolstenholme, sat for him regularly from 1958 onward (*Julia*, 1981, 1998, 2001), and he repeatedly portrayed his son Jake (1990, 2006) as well as various fellow artists and friends.

### **The creative process**

Whether it is confined to the face or enhanced by a view of the body, every portrait by either of the two artists is based on a process of gaining insight by means of close, inquiring observation. Frank Auerbach draws or paints one likeness at every sitting. If it does not bear up to his critical appraisal at the next sitting, he scrapes off the paint or erases the pencil lines and starts over again on the same surface. In the etching medium, this process of constant re-seeing, re-experiencing and re-working is technically impossible. In preparation for a print, Auerbach therefore makes several sketches on paper before completing the image on the plate.

Freud proceeded differently. He began by indicating his vis-à-vis's contours on the pre-treated copper plate before taking the etching needle in hand and working from the centre outward. He viewed his sitters from changing positions. The repetition of individual lines not only brought about plasticity and but also served to confirm statements once formulated. Occasional corrections document the artist's gradual approximation of his subject.

### **Biographical aspects**

Auerbach and Freud shared the tragic fate of being born as children of Jewish families in Germany and compelled to flee (Freud) or emigrate (Auerbach) from Germany in the 1930s. Freud took out British citizenship in 1939, Auerbach in 1947. The two presumably first met in 1956 at Auerbach's first London exhibition – an art experience that made a strong impression on Freud. From the start, both artists had a deep appreciation for the art of the other. Towards the end of his working process on a particular composition, Freud frequently asked Auerbach his opinion. To produce their etchings they frequently worked with the same printer, and they moreover portrayed one another. Over the years, Freud amassed one of the largest private collections of Auerbach's works. After his death, this collection was donated to the British nation and distributed among different museums. Two of the drawings from that bequest, now in the holdings of the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, will now document the close artistic exchange cultivated by two artists for the first time in Germany. Auerbach, for his part, gave the Courtauld Institute in London nine of his Freud etchings in 2012. A further etching, *lb* of 1982, still in Auerbach's possession, is likewise on view in the exhibition. The two artists' biographies are presented in the last room of the show along with the printmaking techniques they employed.

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**Press preview:** Tuesday, 15 May 2018, 11:00 am

**Exhibition dates:** 16 May to 12 August 2018

**Curator:** Dr Regina Freyberger (Head of the Collection of Prints and Drawings from 1750, Städel Museum)

**Information:** [www.staedelmuseum.de](http://www.staedelmuseum.de)

**Visitor services and guided tours:** +49(0)69-605098-200, [info@staedelmuseum.de](mailto:info@staedelmuseum.de)

**Location:** Städel Museum, Schaumainkai 63, 60596 Frankfurt am Main

**Opening hours:** Tue, Wed, Sat, Sun 10:00 am – 6:00 pm, Thu + Fri 10:00 am – 9:00 pm, closed Mondays

**Special opening hours (10:00 am – 6:00 pm):** 20, 21, 22 and 31 May

**Admission:** 14 EUR, reduced 12 EUR, families 24 EUR. Until 21 May, admission on holidays costs 16 EUR, reduced 14 EUR; families 24 EUR. Free admission for children under twelve years of age. Groups of at least 10 persons who would normally be charged the full admission fee: reduced admission fee per person. Groups are required to book in advance: please call +49(0)69-605098-200 or contact [info@staedelmuseum.de](mailto:info@staedelmuseum.de). Admission to the special exhibition is free for members of the Städtelscher Museums-Verein.

**General guided tours of the exhibition:** Fridays at 6:00 pm, Sundays at 2:00 pm; Monday, 21 May and Thursday, 31 May at 12:00 noon. The number of participants is limited; no previous reservations necessary.

**Advance ticket sales online at:** [tickets.staedelmuseum.de](http://tickets.staedelmuseum.de)

**Catalogue:** To accompany the exhibition, the Städel Museum has published a catalogue by Dr Regina Freyberger entitled *Frank Auerbach und Lucian Freud. Gesichter*, in German, 104 pages, 15 EUR, made possible by the Städtelscher Museums-Verein e. V.

**Social media:** The Städel Museum is communicating the exhibition in the social media with the hashtag #AuerbachFreud.