MEDIA RELEASE

SYDNEY ONLY
17 November 2012 – 24 February 2013
Art Gallery of New South Wales

FRANCIS BACON
FIVE DECADES

SYDNEY INTERNATIONAL ART SERIES
Francis Bacon: five decades is the first major exhibition of this great artist’s work to be shown in Australia and marks the 20th anniversary of Bacon’s death.

Organised by the Art Gallery of New South Wales, the exhibition presents more than 50 works by the master of post-war British art, loaned from 30 international and Australian institutions, including the Museum of Modern Art and Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Tate Britain, London; Pompidou Centre, Paris; Art Institute of Chicago; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; as well as the Francis Bacon Estate and private collectors.

Francis Bacon: five decades is part of the Sydney International Art Series, bringing the world’s outstanding exhibitions to Australia. The exhibition is curated by Anthony Bond, curatorial director at the Art Gallery of New South Wales.

Francis Bacon created some of the most vibrant and innovative paintings of the 20th century. His use of colour and texture is outstanding while his imagery is often emotionally challenging.

There are some 600 known paintings by Bacon, many of which are held by major museums around the world. Although securing loans is often a challenge because of the extraordinarily high value of Bacon’s paintings, the Art Gallery of New South Wales is delighted to have secured so many key works for this exhibition.

Bacon’s Reece Mews, London studio has been preserved and is on public display at Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane. The contents of the studio provide an insight into the artist’s unique work practice and have greatly benefited research into his painting. Francis Bacon: five decades includes an archive room with more than 70 photographs and ephemera from the studio assembled by Margarita Cappock, curator of the Bacon archive at Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane.

‘Francis Bacon: five decades presents a dazzling picture of a complex and conflicted artist whose work retains its visceral impact 20 years after his death. It’s an exhibition not to be missed.’

Michael Brand, director, Art Gallery of New South Wales
‘For Bacon the virtues of truth and honesty transcend the tasteful. They give to his paintings a terrible beauty that has placed them among the most memorable images in the history of art.’

Alan Bowness, director of the Tate 1980–88

Francis Bacon is widely acknowledged as the most important figurative painter after Picasso. In fact, in 1927 Bacon visited Paris where he saw a Picasso exhibition that he later claimed was the moment he decided to become a painter. ‘Picasso is the reason why I paint. He is the father figure who gave me the wish to paint’, said Bacon. Francis Bacon: five decades is therefore a fitting sequel to last year’s major exhibition at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Picasso: masterpieces from the Musée National Picasso, Paris.

Bacon’s life was extraordinarily colourful and is the subject of a film Love is the devil (1998). Like Picasso, Bacon was influenced by his personal relationships; indeed, each of the five decades represented in this exhibition was dominated by a different partner. He liked male beauty and many of his lovers are portrayed in his paintings.

The exhibition acknowledges the importance of Bacon to a number of key Australian artists. Roy de Maistre, who had moved from Sydney to London in the early 1930s, was an important mentor to the young Bacon. The older artist shared his extensive artistic knowledge and contacts with Bacon and it was de Maistre who suggested Bacon should paint (at the time Bacon was a moderately successful furniture designer). Bacon was also a formative influence on Brett Whiteley, who went on to dominate and define the Australian art scene later in the 20th century.

Bacon had strong views about art and life. He was a fiercely committed atheist; he hated expressionism (meaning self-expression) in art; he wanted art to bring reality back to us as forcefully as possible; and was passionately opposed to narrative in painting which he believed should be about the experience of the image before you.

Bacon created some of the most alarming and outrageous images of the 20th century. His work shows human figures set on pedestals or enclosed in cage-like structures. It speaks of violence as well as the sensual enjoyment of paint, from depictions of screaming popes to crucifixions, animals and carcasses, ancient Greek figures and heavily distorted, emotionally charged portraits of his close friends and lovers. As Bacon explained: ‘... they always talk about this violence in my work. I don’t think my work is violent at all. You’ve only got to think about life.’
The exhibition is structured around five decades which correspond to key themes in Bacon’s development. Each decade is represented by works that characterise his art during that period.

In the 1940s, under the influence of Roy de Maistre and the British painter Graham Sutherland, Bacon embarked on a series of studies relating to the theme of crucifixion. The figures in these paintings blur the boundaries between human and animal, their gaping mouths expressing extreme emotional agony. In this decade Bacon began experimenting with unusual painterly techniques and materials. He applied paint with fabric rather than a brush, and mixed dust from the floor of his studio into paint to create textured surfaces.

In the 1950s, marked by an expansion of subject matter and technique. During this decade Bacon began experimenting with unusual painterly techniques and materials. He applied paint with fabric rather than a brush, and mixed dust from the floor of his studio into paint to create textured surfaces. In the 1950s Bacon consolidated his technique. In contrast to the sombre tones of the previous decade, he began using acrylic paint in high-key colours. During this time he made many portraits of close friends including the artist Lucian Freud, and well known Soho bon vivants such as Muriel Belcher (owner of his favourite bar, the notorious Colony Room in Soho), Isabel Rawsthorne and Bacon’s younger lover George Dyer.

1970s The death of George Dyer in 1971, on the eve of Bacon’s major exhibition at the Grand Palais in Paris (at this time Picasso and Bacon were the only living artists to be honoured with shows at the Grand Palais) led to a series of commemorative paintings known as the black triptychs. Bacon also turned to literary subjects drawn from the darker side of Greek mythology invoking themes of haunting guilt.

1980s The last decade of this exhibition is filled with portraits and also continues the theme of Greek tragedy, portraying scenes from Oedipus Rex and Aeschylus’s bloody play Oresteia which features the line: ‘the smell of blood smiles out at me.’ The final decade of Bacon’s life was also marked by his acute knowledge of death – he commented that old age is ‘a desert because all of one’s friends die’. For this reason Bacon made many self-portraits toward the end of his life.
At Ernst & Young we are passionate about the arts. Our long history of supporting the arts, both nationally and globally, demonstrates our commitment to bringing significant collections to a wider audience than would otherwise see them. It is one of the ways we inspire our people, clients and communities to reach their potential.

Francis Bacon: five decades marks the 20th anniversary of Bacon’s death and, as the first major exhibition of his work to be shown in Australia, it provides a unique opportunity to view a collection of pieces from throughout his lifetime.

As principal sponsor of Francis Bacon: five decades and a long-term sponsor of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Ernst & Young is delighted to help bring this exhibition to Sydney.

Rob McLeod
Chief Executive Officer, Ernst & Young Oceania
SYDNEY ONLY
17 November 2012 – 24 February 2013
Art Gallery of New South Wales
Art Gallery Road,
Sydney NSW 2000
artgallery.nsw.gov.au

Hours
Daily 10am–5pm
Art After Hours,
Wednesdays until 9pm

Admission
Adult $20
Member $12
Concession $15
Family $50
Season ticket $40

Tickets on sale from 25 July
artgallery.nsw.gov.au

Book
Francis Bacon: five decades
A comprehensive full-colour book published in conjunction with the exhibition and edited by curator Anthony Bond, includes essays by international experts Margarita Cappock, Rebecca Daniels, Martin Harrison and Ernst van Alphen and over 200 images. RRP $65; only $50 from the AGNSW Gallery Shop.

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‘It’s easier for me to work from these records than from the people themselves; that way I can work alone and feel much freer ... They were useful to me simply as a tool.’

Francis Bacon

from left:...
Photo-booth self-portrait strip, 1970s–80s and part of a photographic contact sheet of series Bacon’s friend Henrietta Moraes by John Deakin, c1963; Page fragment from Bacon’s studio illustrating Diego Velázquez’s Portrait of Pope Innocent X c1650 (Elizabeth Du Gué Trapier, Velázquez, Hispanic Society of America, New York, 1948), Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane

above from left: Brett Whiteley Francis Bacon c1984–89
Private collection; Photographic contact sheet of Francis Bacon sitting for Brett Whiteley at Bacon’s South Kensington studio, October 1984

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FRANCIS BACON FIVE DECADES
Symposium: Bacon’s bodies
Saturday 9 February 2013
This symposium considers the body as subject, the physicality of painting and the continuing significance of Bacon’s body of work from diverse perspectives, including art, film, history and sexuality.
Bookings required
Presented in conjunction with the Power Institute for Art and Visual Culture, University of Sydney.

Special lectures
Saturday 17 November 2012 and various Saturdays in January 2013
Lectures on Bacon and his time by visiting guest speakers and Gallery curators.
Bookings required

Artist talks
Various Wednesdays, 5.30pm
Gain artistic insight into Bacon’s works with this series of short talks by significant Australian artists including Ken Unsworth, Rodney Pople, Justene Williams and Mike Parr. Talks occur in the exhibition, where the artists will analyse Bacon’s visceral works firsthand.
Free with exhibition ticket

Art After Hours
Wednesday late-night openings provide a range of free programs to enhance visitors’ engagement with the exhibition. The entire Gallery and Art Bar are open until 9pm, with a free film screening, exhibition and collection tours and celebrity talks. The celebrity talks and performances will look at themes such as swinging 60s London, gay life and politics, and films and music of Bacon’s time.

Access programs
Free programs offering insights into Bacon’s life and work for people with disability, including audio description tours, Auslan interpreted talks and Community Access workshops. Programs are offered in the week of International Day of People with Disability (3 Dec 2012) or are available for groups by arrangement.
Free, bookings required.
Audio description tours require purchase of an exhibition ticket.

Guided tours
Daily introductory tours of the exhibition led by the Gallery’s volunteer guides.
Free with exhibition ticket

Free film series:
Hitting rock bottom in post-war England
Covering the period from post-WWII Britain to the present, the films explore class, wealth, austerity, crime, the effect of the war and the decriminalisation of homosexuality.

Holiday fun for kids
Summer holiday drawing workshops will engage children with art in the Gallery’s collection and allow adults to see the Francis Bacon exhibition.
Bookings required

Education programs and resources
A teachers day will introduce the exhibition and provide resources and strategies for engaging with Bacon’s body of work. For secondary students, study mornings will take an intensive look at the exhibition. To support preparation for the HSC, intensive workshops will look at the artistic relationship between Bacon and Brett Whiteley. Online education resources will provide high-quality images, quotes, texts and questions for discussion.
Study for self-portrait: Francis Bacon's Britain
An eight-part course looking at the life, times and art of Francis Bacon.

Sundays 10.30am–1pm
Full series: $320 / $240 members
Single lectures: $45 / $35 members
Bookings: artgallery.nsw.gov.au/members

01 // 16 SEPTEMBER
Exhibition overview
Anthony Bond, curator of Francis Bacon: five decades, guides you through the exhibition putting the works into the context of Bacon's life.

Rainbow scale: Bacon and Roy de Maistre
Terence Maloon
In 1930s London, Australian painter Roy de Maistre became a friend and mentor to the young Francis Bacon, encouraging him to paint in oils. The two formed a business relationship as interior designers who were at the forefront of British art deco.

02 // 23 SEPTEMBER
The road to Carnaby Street
Claudia Chan Shaw
London in the swinging sixties was the most fashionable city in the world. A vibrant energy and creativity was born, and for the first time fashion was created especially for the young. Taking its cue from popular culture, music and art, the London fashion scene was the home of Mary Quant, the mini skirt and hot pants.

In corporeal conversation: Francis Bacon and Lucian Freud
Dr Andrew Yip
In an era in which abstraction began to dominate avant-garde painting, Francis Bacon and Lucian Freud remained staunch advocates for the power of the human figure as an expressive form. Through a reading of the artists’ portraits of each other, this lecture traces the pair’s friendship and explores their experimentation with corporeal and metaphysical identities.

03 // 7 OCTOBER
Deeply ordered chaos: Bacon and cinema
Dr Christopher Hartney
Bacon sought shock in a concentration of reality and a shorthand of sensation, also the aim of British cinema from the 1950s onwards. Hartney examines how Bacon and British cinema dealt with the image and how they fed each other until their final consummation in John Maybury’s 1998 biopic of Bacon: love is the devil.

British design and popular culture 1940–80
Professor Adrian Franklin
As with Bacon’s art, design and popular culture in post-war Britain was awakening. Revolutions in sexuality, popular culture, gender, fashion and lifestyle were given shape and expression through a new material culture that was richly visual. The result: a fabulously rich fusion, but still distinctly British.

04 // 14 OCTOBER
London after the rain: Francis Bacon
Tom Wright
London in Bacon’s time was a city of destruction. New theatre emerged, a drama of kitchen-sink realism and a generation of the angry and the young. But there was also a theatre of the city, a city producing gangsters, depraved killers and Orwell.

A world in transition: Francis Bacon and the modern world
Meredith Burgmann
Francis Bacon created bleak and bad-news art in a time of social and political transition. From the Britain of Churchill, Macmillan and Profumo to Tariq Ali, Robin Blackburn and the LSE riots, politics was changing.

05 // 21 OCTOBER
The body in motion: Francis Bacon and the influence of Eadweard Muybridge
Macushla Robinson
The 19th-century photographer Eadweard Muybridge was a seminal influence on Bacon. Muybridge’s sequential photographs of figures in motion functioned as a visual lexicon that formed the basis of many of Bacon’s paintings.

Bertrand Russell: revered rebel
Professor Robert Spillane
Bertrand Russell (1872–1970) is one of the most remarkable intellectual figures of the 20th century. He led the revolt against idealism in philosophy and promoted ‘antagonistic atheism’ to one of the widest audiences ever enjoyed by a philosopher.

06 // 4 NOVEMBER
Bacon and beetcake: the influences of Michelangelo and the masters
Lorraine Kypiotis
Inspired by the monumentality of Michelangelo and the psychological insight of Velázquez, Bacon interpreted the human form with a new and unsettling intensity, deforming and distorting appearances with his penetrating gaze.

From ballet clubs to British ballet as export
Lee Christofis
Traces the evolution of modern English ballet championed by former Ballets Russes dancers, Ninette de Valois and Marie Rambert in the 1930s, choreographers Antony Tudor and Frederick Ashton, to the neoclassical ballets of Kenneth MacMillan and the ultra-modern Glen Tetley, and the explosion of male talent to develop in the aftermath of Rudolf Nureyev’s defection from the Soviet Union in 1961.

07 // 11 NOVEMBER
British poetry in the post-war era: Larkin, Hughes and Plath
Professor Barry Spurr
In the decades following WWII, British poetry reflected the complex and evolving intellectual and cultural world of British society. Prominent among these poets were Philip Larkin, Ted Hughes and Sylvia Plath. Readings from several of their poems reflect this new age of anxiety and, often, intense personal despair.

John Wolfenden and his friends
Justice Michael Kirby
The ground-breaking Wolfenden Report of 1957 aimed to decriminalise homosexuality. Justice Michael Kirby examines the report, its passage into law in Britain ten years later and in Australia in the decades after. It provides a critical context for Bacon’s attitude to his own sexuality.

08 // 18 NOVEMBER
Francis Bacon: disputed master
Craig Judd
Examines the broader contexts of visual culture and art in Britain 1945–60. In this terrain Bacon towers above the rest, a disputed problematic master.

Picasso and Bacon
Terence Maloon
Bacon was crucially influenced by Picasso as a young artist, and this final lecture examines the parallel careers of the two giants of 20th-century art, focussing on their subversive but ultimately redemptive re-interpretation of the great figurative tradition.
The Sydney International Art Series brings the world’s most outstanding exhibitions to Australia, exclusive to Sydney.

- The city’s two pre-eminent art museums, the Art Gallery of New South Wales and the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia (MCA), have joined forces to present this exciting annual art series in partnership with Destination NSW on behalf of the NSW Government.
- Now in its third year, the Sydney International Art Series 2012–13 presents Francis Bacon: five decades at the Art Gallery of New South Wales and Anish Kapoor at the MCA.
- Since launching in 2010, almost 900,000 people in total have attended Sydney International Art Series exhibitions at the Art Gallery of New South Wales and the MCA.
- Of these, more than 80,000 were interstate and overseas visitors coming specifically to Sydney for the Sydney International Art Series, generating over $75 million in new money for the State.
- The Sydney International Art Series is one of five signature events on the NSW Events Calendar, developed by Destination NSW.
- Tickets for the Sydney International Art Series 2012–13 are now on sale. A special Sydney International Art Pass is also available and will provide discounted entry to both exhibitions.

To purchase tickets visit www.ticketek.com.au

PREMIER’S MESSAGE

The NSW Government, through Destination NSW, is proud to support the 2012–13 Sydney International Art Series, a signature event on the NSW Events Calendar.

For the third consecutive year, Sydney’s two leading art museums, the Art Gallery of New South Wales and the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia (MCA), have united to bring the world’s most outstanding exhibitions to Australia in partnership with Destination NSW.

Following the great successes of The first Emperor: China’s entombed warriors in 2010–11 and Picasso: Masterpieces from the Musée National Picasso, Paris in 2011–12, the Art Gallery of New South Wales will this year exhibit Francis Bacon: five decades.

Francis Bacon: five decades is the first major exhibition in Australia of rare works by the master of post-war British art, drawn from over 30 lenders worldwide including private and museum collections, and spanning the entirety of his full and celebrated career.

The MCA has enjoyed similar achievements over the past two years with Annie Leibovitz: a photographer’s life 1990–2005 in 2010–11 and Rafael Lozano-Hemmer: Recorders in 2011–12, and this year presents an exhibition of Anish Kapoor.

Known for his powerful and beautiful art works, British-based Anish Kapoor is one of the world’s most celebrated sculptors working today. Australian audiences will have the opportunity to encounter Kapoor’s extraordinary sculptures up close and in-depth across two floors of the new MCA following its $53-million renovations.

Bringing world-class exhibitions to Sydney further strengthens our global city’s reputation as Australia’s cultural tourism hub. Both Francis Bacon: five decades and Anish Kapoor are the first exhibitions of their kind in Australia and are exclusive to Sydney.

Major cultural events such as the Sydney International Art Series boost the economy and generate interstate and international visitors. These events also generate significant additional economic activity for Sydney and New South Wales, and support employment in the tourism, events and hospitality sectors.

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the Sydney International Art Series 2012–13.

Hon Barry O’Farrell MP
Premier of NSW

FRANCIS BACON: FIVE DECADES

17 November 2012 – 24 February 2013
Art Gallery of New South Wales

- Five decades is the first major Francis Bacon exhibition to be shown in Australia.
- This exhibition will present over 50 paintings as well as archival material from the artist’s studio, including ephemera and photographs, which helped fuel his painterly process.
- Sydney is the only city in Australia to host the exhibition.
- Francis Bacon paintings are some of the most highly sought-after works of art in the world.
- There are only some 600 Francis Bacon paintings known to exist.
- Many of Francis Bacon’s works are monumental in size, with five triptychs measuring over 4.5 metres wide.

ANISH KAPOOR

20 December 2012 – 1 April 2013
Museum of Contemporary Art Australia

- This is the first major exhibition of Anish Kapoor artworks in Australia, showcasing several decades of practice.
- Sydney is the only city in Australia to host the exhibition.
- Anish Kapoor is one of the world’s most influential sculptors, creating some of the most ambitious and recognisable contemporary artworks.
- Well known sculptures include Marsyas for Turbine Hall at Tate Modern; Cloud Gate in Millennium Park, Chicago; Sky Mirror for New York’s Rockefeller Centre; and Leviathan for the Grand Palais in Paris.
- Kapoor’s ArcelorMittal Orbit has been chosen as the monument to mark the London 2012 Olympic Games. It is 22m higher than the Statue of Liberty.