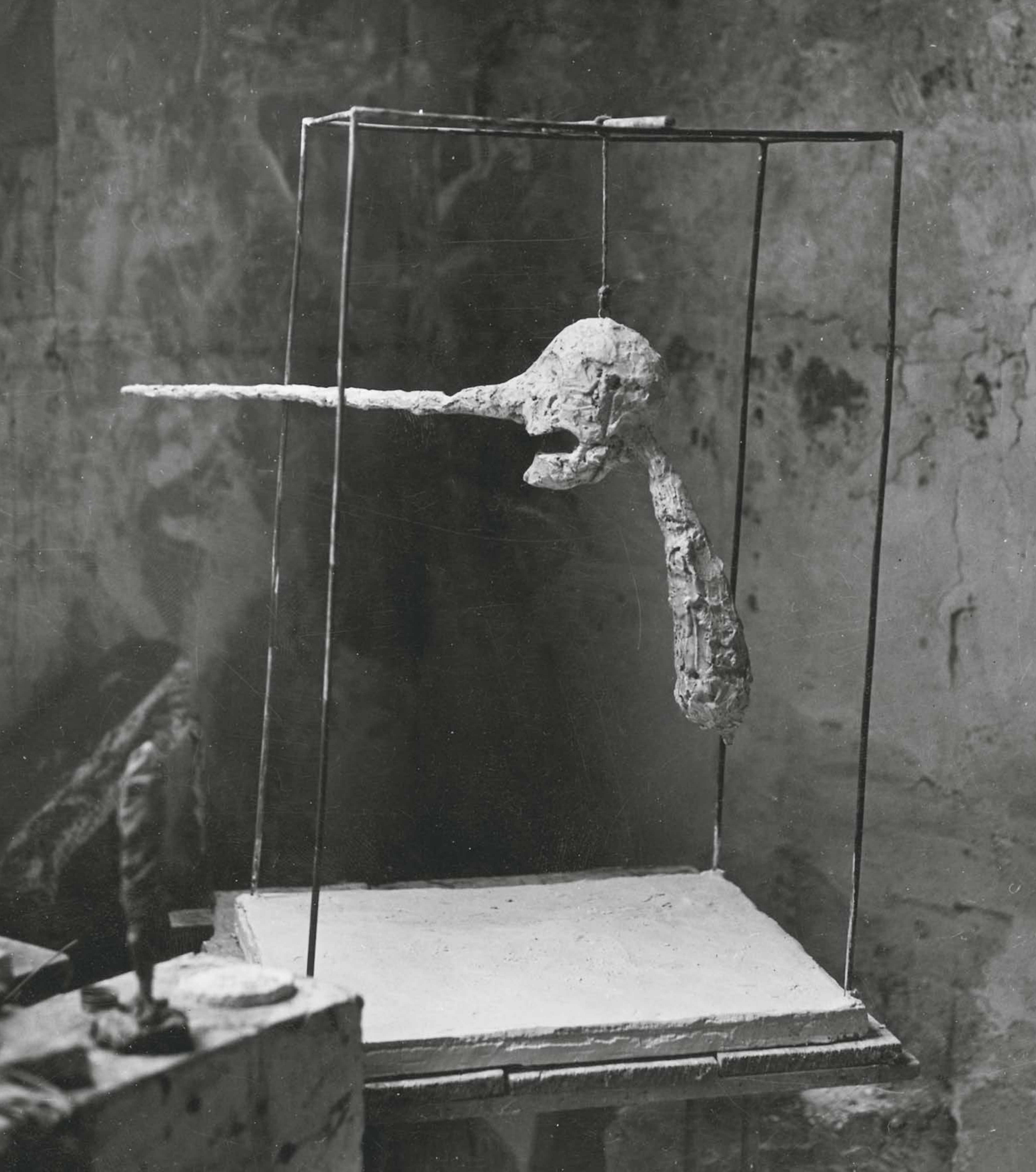

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Bacon Giacometti

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Foreword

Two of the twentieth century's most outstanding artists meet: Alberto Giacometti and Francis Bacon. Both have influenced art and intellectual discourse in the postwar period. They are individualists, each evolving his own deeply personal style. The Englishman Bacon is a self-taught painter who spent nearly his entire life in London. The Swiss-born Giacometti is a sculptor, painter, and draftsman from a family of artists in the Bregaglia Valley, near the Swiss-Italian border. Despite their differences, which highlight the uniqueness of their respective achievements, Bacon and Giacometti are closely related artistic personalities, with striking similarities in their lives and work. Bacon, born in 1909, reportedly said of Giacometti, eight years his senior: "This is the man who has influenced me more than anyone."

The two men shared a fascination with the traditions of the artistic past, to which they both felt indebted. Bacon's main interest was European painting, from the Old Masters, such as Diego Velázquez and Rembrandt van Rijn, to the pioneers of modernism, including Vincent van Gogh and Pablo Picasso. Giacometti, too, engaged with contemporary art but was equally intrigued by non-European cultures and by the art of antiquity, particularly that of ancient Egypt. In their positive relationship to tradition, both artists showed anti-modernist leanings, which also informed their lifelong adherence to the human figure and to working from models and photographs.

Both artists consciously elected not to pursue the path of abstraction, which otherwise dominated art after 1945. It was artists such as Bacon and Giacometti, marked by the crisis of humanity following two world wars, who convincingly addressed the turmoil that surrounded them, by seeking in their work to uncover the essence of the human. The modern individual and his or her complex relationships with other individuals and groups, the manifold forms of existential distress and suffering, loneliness and pain, sexuality and violence, life and death: these are some of the crucial themes to which both Giacometti and Bacon devoted rigorous attention. Their quest for truth and beauty in art was accompanied by self-doubt and nagging obsessions, stemming from a persistent fear of failure.

Both artists lived a life of extremes. They worked in small, cramped studios, cluttered to the point of chaos, that served as a source of inspiration and creativity. They combined intensive work with an excessive lifestyle. Giacometti was a chain smoker, and Bacon a gambling addict. They both drank abundantly and had sexual preferences that placed them outside social norms. Giacometti had a known penchant for prostitutes and spent long nights in their company. Bacon lived a relatively open gay life at a time, before 1967, when homosexuality was still criminalized under British law. Both artists had connections with the demimonde, as well as with the art world and patrons from the upper echelons of society. In particular, they were on close terms with other artists and members of the intellectual vanguard in their respective cities. Each achieved fame in his own lifetime and was internationally revered. Both artists could be rough in manner and scathing in their judgments, but exceptionally charming on a personal level, as contemporaries recalled.

Ernst Beyeler belonged to the small circle of people—including Michel Leiris, Isabel Rawsthorne, Jacques Dupin, and David Sylvester—who knew both artists personally. He also contributed very significantly to the dissemination of their work. With the brothers Hans C. and Walter A. Bechtler, as well as Hans Grether, he played a key role in establishing the Alberto Giacometti Foundation, in Zurich. As a gallerist, he managed the sale of around 350 works by Giacometti, and some forty works by Bacon, including four triptychs, passed through his hands. Today, works by both artists—including Giacometti's complete group of figures for the Chase Manhattan Plaza and Bacon's first "black" triptych, *In Memory of George Dyer* (1971)—also occupy a central place in the Beyeler Collection. In a letter to Ernst Beyeler, Bacon remarked that he considered the painting *Lying Figure* (1969), which Beyeler had recently acquired, to be one of his best works. This is a gratifying confirmation of the close relationship between artist and collector: appropriately, the picture is the concluding work in the present exhibition.

Joint exhibitions, showing the work of two artists, are a difficult and sensitive undertaking, especially where the declared aim is to identify points of similarity without neglecting differences. The Fondation Beyeler is an appropriate setting for an encounter

between Giacometti and Bacon. In 2004, in collaboration with the Kunsthistorisches Museum, in Vienna, it organized the monographic exhibition *Francis Bacon and the Tradition of Art*, examining the relationship between Bacon and his artistic predecessors. This was followed in 2009 by a Giacometti retrospective, focusing on the relationships between his art and his family roots. The museum's intensive exploration of the work of the two artists—inspired also by a close association with the Esther Grether Family Collection, which holds prominent works by both artists, installed in a form of dialogue—has facilitated encounters between Bacon's paintings and Giacometti's sculptures in varying presentations of our permanent collection. Works by Bacon and Giacometti were exhibited together during their lifetime, such as at London's Institute of Contemporary Arts in 1952 and at the Hanover Gallery in 1955; both artists are known to have visited the latter, but there is no documentary evidence of any meeting. Whether they saw each other during Bacon's visits to Paris is equally uncertain; however, conclusive proof of their meetings in 1962 and 1965, when Giacometti was in London, is available, particularly in the shape of the photographs taken by Graham Keen in 1965, whose remarkable expressive power can be seen here—in some cases, for the first time. The Fondation Giacometti in Paris and the Fondation Beyeler have worked together for several years to organize the first comprehensive museum exhibition of the work of Giacometti and Bacon, accompanied by a scholarly catalogue, examining the relationships between the two artists with respect to their lives, their studio practice, and their work. We hope thereby to illuminate the work of both artists from a different perspective and contribute to a deeper understanding of each individual.

This project began during the 2015 Venice Biennale with a meeting at Caffè Florian on St. Mark's Square, and through close teamwork, its realization has been a stimulating and rewarding experience.

Sam Keller, Director, Fondation Beyeler
Catherine Grenier, Director, Fondation Giacometti, Paris, and guest curator
Ulf Küster, Curator, Fondation Beyeler
Michael Peppiatt, guest curator

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Violence and Compulsion

Catherine Grenier

The art of Alberto Giacometti and Francis Bacon is characterized by a fundamental struggle, a shared involvement in the fight to defend figuration, with the accompanying refusal to yield to the dominance of abstraction. Yet, neither of the two artists based this refusal on a tradition that demands unquestioning respect, or on the ideological position of an art directed toward communication. In their work, the question of figuration—defying conventional realism and the realism of social or political art—became a source of creative energy, by providing the locus for questioning the most intimate human experience of the artist and his art. For Giacometti and Bacon alike, figuration was concerned, primarily or even exclusively, with affirming the presence of the body. Few artists have gone as far in reducing their range of themes and motifs, to the point of becoming obsessive. The human figure—bodies, heads, fragments—unremittingly explored, was the nodal point from which they articulated their work. In response to this, their art was often labeled "existentialist" by their contemporaries. Although the concept is too restrictive, since it implies that their paintings or sculptures can be read entirely in terms inspired by Jean-Paul Sartre and his philosophy of existence, it nevertheless conveys the centrality of physical experience in their work. If creative freedom prevails over system and tradition, as the avant-gardes claimed, it must surely also impinge on the world in its human dimension: the revolution in art is a revolution of the body. The body of the artist, the model, the viewer: these are the coordinates of the triangle within which the art of these two creators finds its sources and its fulfillment. The space thus delimited resembles a cage, a game board, or an arena, depending on the direction of each artist's oeuvre and his personal vocabulary. In this defined framework, each tried in his own way to express the body with the maximum of intensity: through profound silence and incommunicability in the case of Giacometti, and through the scream and the frictions of the flesh in the work of Bacon.

The quest for intensity, for both artists, was a path strewn with obstacles, where doubts were more frequent than moments of satisfaction. "I have never succeeded, and because of that I carry on; otherwise, I wouldn't paint anymore. I keep hoping something will happen."[1] This statement, which might seem attributable to Giacometti, is in fact by Bacon. The two men shared this fundamental doubt, and, still more significantly, they both referred to self-doubt and dissatisfaction as the driving force of their art. Giacometti expressed his misgivings in a litany of complaint—fulfillment always eluded him, with each day bringing hope, followed by disappointment. Even so, this sense of failure was precisely the stimulus that goaded him to carry on, since in the depths of doubt there remained a certainty that he was on the right path and that success would materialize the next day. In the everyday studio situation, the artistic act was a merciless struggle between the artist and both his work and himself. Isaku Yanaihara, Giacometti's model and friend, bore witness to the violence triggered by the artist's frustration at the moment of creation: "The calm didn't last. All of a sudden, a storm blew up. 'It's not right, I'm almost there and I don't have the courage to go just one little step further, damn!' Grinding his teeth, he forced himself to continue painting, with the blackest curses and cries of despair pouring out of his mouth. And sometimes, to crown it all, a piercing howl—Aah!—at the top of his voice. . . . The little street, rue Hippolyte-Maindron, where he had his studio was generally deserted, but anyone happening to pass by there on a November evening in 1956 would certainly have been frightened by the strange noises coming through the walls of that dilapidated hovel. They would have sounded like the ravings of a madman."[2] In this frenzy of dissatisfaction, the artist set about destroying what he had spent hours making, by diluting or scraping away the paint to recover a virgin surface on which he again tried to capture the reality of the model. For this is what mattered: not the achievement of success in aesthetic terms, but the sense of arriving at the "truth" of the subject.[3] To this end, Giacometti imposed unlimited demands, on himself and on the sitter. The model had to remain perfectly still, for hours on end. He or she was privy to moments of elation and wonderment, before reverting to the status of a receptacle for the artist's imprecations expressing his anger and desperation. The sitter was a hapless witness to destructive impulses that led the artist to obliterate a work that nevertheless seemed to be moving in the right direction. And why, moreover, did Giacometti need a model to pose for him, as an artist who always reproduced the same faces and whose features were deeply inscribed in his memory? Because the work sprang from the tension that the artist established with the body in front of him, a body subjected to constraints and exposed to the sharpness of his gaze. And it was this discomfort, this unease, compounded by fatigue, that would cause the model to let go, to abandon all seduction and expression. While conforming to the laws of resemblance, the models painted or sculpted by Giacometti seem ageless, deprived of story or meaning, to exist in an indeterminate time. The unnecessary is erased; appearance dissolves. At this cost, and only at this cost, the portraits tend toward the universal, while delivering experience from presence.

Bacon, like Giacometti, surrendered to indecision and fluctuations of tension in his creative process. Whether painting from the model or, more typically, from photographs, his manner of working—as he described it—followed an uncontrolled movement, subject to chance and accident. And, as he said, precisely these accidents had the effect of a "shock" that enabled him to reestablish contact with "reality."[4] Like Giacometti, he was aware of the stimulating effect of the fear and doubt that result from failure, and knew that these were essential, and positive, vectors of his work: "I think that, quite possibly, when things are going badly you will be freer with the way you mess up by just putting paint through the images that you've been making, and you do it with a greater abandon than if things have been working for you. And therefore, I think, perhaps, that despair is more helpful, because out of despair you may find yourself making the image in a more radical way by taking greater risks."[5] He too trusted chance, embarking on

a painting without the aid of preliminary drawings: "That is the reason that accident always has to enter into this activity, because the moment you know what to do, you're making just another form of illustration."[6] Here again, the act of creation had the appearance of a struggle rather than an ordered process; moreover, it took place in a quite similar physical setting. Bacon and Giacometti both worked in small studios, the space invaded by an accumulation of works, together with the tools and traces of their making. This chaos and clutter, Bacon assured us, were indispensable to creation. The artist in the studio was separated from the world, overwhelmed by memory, and surrounded by the history of art—which in Bacon's case took the form of a multitude of images, while Giacometti, with his abnormally keen memory, possessed a vast inner picture library. The physical or photographic presence of the model therefore caused a hiatus, a sudden irruption of something new at the heart of intimacy. It stimulated the artist's psyche and gave rise to moments of extreme intensity that took material shape on the canvas, or in the clay or plaster. In both cases, the object of the artistic quest was less the psyche of the model than the disruption of the psyche of the artist, caused by the confrontation with the model's essential otherness and exacerbated by the impossibility of fully conveying it. Thus, for example, the busts of Diego created by Giacometti may be faithful to the model's appearance, but they are nevertheless tortured portraits, depicting the artist's own anguish rather than the placid temperament of his brother. The same characteristic is apparent in the work of Bacon, who subjected his portraits to violently expressive deformations, regardless of their subject. In his triptychs, moreover, Bacon saw a kind of self-portrait in the feelings and sensations expressed on the canvas.[7] The arena or cage in which the figures are so often set, in the work of both artists, refers metaphorically to the studio, the place of a confrontation whose violence was physical as well as symbolic.

It is easier to think of Bacon's work than Giacometti's as violent. But there was an extreme tension in the creative process that led Giacometti to destroy one attempt after another before he was satisfied—or, more usually, before he came to a halt, remaining dissatisfied but impelled by the need to stop (or by his brother's shrewd intervention) and grudgingly accept a result that in the eyes of anyone but him would have appeared to be a perfectly accomplished work. A feverish urge led the sculptor to take away more and more of the material, stripping the flesh from the body, and in some cases reaching the outer limit at which his figures, in all their fragility and delicacy, would start to become invisible. His creative process was adapted to his personal temperament. The clay model, shaped by powerful hands digging into the material, was cast in plaster and reworked by the artist with the tip of a penknife. As the original plaster casts clearly show, the surface is scarred with deep and clean incisions, covering the surface of the sculpture with a network of lines that recalls the technique of his paintings. In all the works he made between his postwar return to France and the time of his death, an underlying destructive force attacked and injured the form, reducing it to silence. Speaking of his visits to the Louvre, especially to the Department of Egyptian Antiquities, which he loved most of all, he explained: "It's in sculpture that I feel a kind of contained violence which touches me the most. Violence touches me in sculpture."[8] The violence expressed in his Surrealist objects and texts, whose phantasmal energies were mainly sexual, is less manifest in the works that followed his return to figuration, with more conventional subjects centered on a body that is often almost androgynous. The artist progressed from overtly expressed violence to violence that is contained, from erotic conflict to the tension between the living and the dead. His text "Le rêve, le Sphinx et la mort de T.,"[9] published in the periodical *Labyrinthe* in 1946, in which he speaks of the enduring trauma of witnessing two agonizing deaths, in his youth and then as an adult, provides an essential key to understanding how death haunted him and why it regularly surfaces in his work. Giacometti often spoke of his constant awareness of the finality of death, which to him was visible in life: "I always feel there's a fragility in living creatures, as if at every moment, they needed an incredible drive just to remain standing every single instant, always at risk of collapsing. I feel this when I work from nature."[10] Like humans themselves, his work is fragile, and a death mask often appears in the portraits of his models. In his borrowings from the history of art, funerary art stands at the fore. "Although still present here," Jean Genet remarked, "where actually are these figures by Giacometti of which I was speaking, if not in death itself?"[11] Giacometti's first biographer, Jacques Dupin, argued that his work and his thinking were founded on the violence suggested by the realization of nothingness: "Emptiness, the breach, the dark space, the air pocket. . . . The writings and remarks of Alberto Giacometti take their form and life entirely from the void that carries them, that violently justifies them. By violation, acquaintance, the intake of breath. . . . Against the distant world, against the imposed structure, the sight by transparency of the skeleton, the skull and the hollowed socket—the void is the force of life, the effervescence in everyone, the establishing principle."[12] Indeed, in his paintings, the sharp brushstrokes create a dense network of lines on the canvas that echoes the features of the skull, emphasizes the relief contours, insists on the hollows of the nose and eyes. As his work evolved over time, the void around the face grew deeper; the body is reduced to a few constructive lines; the surroundings become blurred in a wash of monochrome color. In the very last paintings before the artist's death, this depletion becomes total: the canvas is raw, and the portrait is left in a deliberately unfinished state, except for the eyes, around which the sharpness of line is concentrated.

In his own defense, against a common interpretation of his pictures, Bacon contended that violence lay not in his painting, but in life itself: "Life is so violent; so much more violent than anything I can do!"[13] Instead of referring to "violence," the artist prefered to speak of "immediacy," the direct capturing of reality in the moment, to describe

the source of the deformations that viewers of his work find violent. Still, he did not deny that life for him had been more violent than for others, and that he remained haunted by fear, which was reflected in his obsessions. To David Sylvester he remarked, "One of the nicest things that Cocteau said was: 'Each day in the mirror I watch death at work.'"[14] He experienced a fear of death, of brutality, but also an awareness of the intensity on which life depends in its struggle against obliteration. He explained that what he disliked was the idea of a sterile, morbid violence, instead of the eruptive force of a vital, ferocious energy, for which his own preferred term was not violence but emotion. "I really cannot even begin to believe that my work is violent. But maybe it's the actual word violence that basically I don't understand properly. In a certain sense the Picassos that I like are violent, but not in their subject matter; they are violent in the colours and forms that they use, and it's because these pictures are so remarkably well executed that one could say that they are violent in a certain sense. They are violent because of the incredible emotional charge which they produce, and that is an impressive sort of violence."[15] The violence found in Bacon's works is not of the kind suffered by the victim: instead, it was the vital power that enabled him to overcome fear and the morbid forebodings triggered by threat. The sense of life in his oeuvre is therefore connected to a struggle that is paradoxical and often paroxysmal, as described by Michel Leiris: "To try and convey a living presence, and convey it without losing the life essential to it, is to try to pin it down without pinning it down, to force oneself paradoxically to pin down that which cannot and should not be pinned down because to do so is to kill it."[16] Even the depiction of flesh, be it meat on a butcher's slab or the bodies of Bacon's human figures, is assimilated into vitality, rather than extinction. Gilles Deleuze wrote that flesh, for Bacon, epitomized the love of life in its most vulnerable state: "Pity the meat! Meat is undoubtedly the chief object of Bacon's pity, his only object of pity, his Anglo-Irish pity. On this point he is like Soutine, with his immense pity for the Jew. Meat is not dead flesh; it retains all the sufferings and assumes all the colors of living flesh. It manifests such convulsive pain and vulnerability, but also such delightful invention, color, and acrobatics. Bacon does not say, 'Pity the beasts,' but rather that every man who suffers is a piece of meat. Meat is the common zone of man and the beast, their zone of indiscernibility; it is a 'fact,' a state where the painter identifies with the objects of his horror and his compassion."[17] Like the film director Robert Bresson, who put his actors through endless rehearsals to eliminate any precomposed image, Giacometti pushed his models to the limits of self-effacement. His portraits thus convey a powerful impression of solitude and emptiness. Bacon's figures, for all their expressiveness and animation, also suggest an intense feeling of loneliness, linked to a state of extreme anxiety. To the silence and immobility of Giacometti's hieratic figures, Bacon's popes respond with their celebrated scream, projected into the void of an incommunicability that is irreducible. A silent scream on the one hand,[18] a silence that is itself a cry on the other: the intensity of the body in its extreme forms of expression characterizes the work of both artists. A further common feature of their art consists in the closing of space around the essential, the figure or the face, or sometimes only a fragment of the body. Bacon described a process of reduction that can lead to extremes: "For instance, I can think of that picture I've done of some grass, a landscape that I wanted to put into a frame. I wanted it to be a landscape and look unlike a landscape. And so I whittled it down and down until in the end there was just a little stretch of grass left which I enclosed in the box. And that really came about from trying to cut away, out of despair, the look of what is called a landscape."[19] This statement is not far removed from Giacometti's description of how he was impelled to reduce his figures to a minute scale when he returned to figurative sculpture at the end of his Surrealist phase: "That is to say, that in 1940 the heads became minute, and tended to disappear. All I could distinguish were innumerable details. In order to see the entirety, it was necessary to make the model recede further and further. The further back it drew, the smaller became the head, and that terrified me. The danger of the disappearance of things."[20] Giacometti's explanation of the reasons for this process is similar to that given by Bacon: he too sought a means of escape from preconceptions, from pictorial and sculptural conventions, to discover a new, hitherto unimagined reality: "You begin by seeing the person who is posing, but gradually every possible sculpture interposes itself between the sitter and you. The less clearly you actually see the model, the more unknown the head becomes. We are no longer sure of its appearance, its size or anything at all!"[21] Like Bacon, striving to convey on the canvas the "brutality of fact"[22] that characterized the real, Giacometti was in pursuit of an immediate truth of life. He explained the radical character of this quest by recalling a revelatory experience in his youth, when he was overcome by an intense confusion at the sight of three young girls on the street: "They seemed immense, beyond all conception of measurement, and their whole being, and their movements were charged with a dreadful violence. I stared at them, as if hallucinating, invaded by a sensation of terror. It was like a fissure in reality."[23] This experience, which places the real beyond all representations, even those of the greatest masters in the history of art, provided a source of inspiration after World War II, when Giacometti resumed working from models.

To Giacometti, as to Bacon, life had a quality of extreme shrillness, combining violence with fragility. While the work was the place for expressing this, the viewer nevertheless had to be kept at a distance from an experience that would be too literal. Both artists therefore employed techniques of distancing and separation that maintain a non-pathetic relationship between the viewer and the painting or sculpture. In various ways, the two artists introduced a specular dimension into their work—by systematically exhibiting pictures behind glass, like Bacon, or suggesting distance through the reduced scale of the

figures or the exaggerated size of the plinths, as in the work of Giacometti, or by inserting the motif into a restricted space, as they both did, which reinforces the effect of the picture frame or the plinth. The viewer is no longer an actor in the reality depicted, but a voyeur. The question of voyeurism held an obsessive interest for Bacon, and equally for Giacometti, who made it the subject of several texts and pictures or sculptures. Talking about the sculpture *Quatre femmes sur socle* (1950), he related the work to his memory of sitting in a Paris brothel and seeing several naked women at the far end of the room. "The distance that separated us, the polished floor, seemed insurmountable in spite of my desire to cross it and impressed me as much as the women," he recalled.[24] Both artists were interested in oddities of perspective, in anamorphosis, multifocalism, and other visual distortions,[25] as seen in Bacon's organic metamorphoses and Giacometti's treatment of the bodies and faces in his sculptures, which are flattened, elongated, and pulled out of shape. They were both savagely contemptuous of conventional notions of realism and verisimilitude. Although the aim of art, for them, was to capture the real, naturalism and representation were not the way to achieve it. "The more the artificiality of the painting is apparent, the better, and the more chance the painting has of working or of showing something," Bacon explained.[26] Giacometti observed that the "works of the past" that came closest to reality were those "generally judged most distant from it. . . . But not at all what one calls realism!" Indeed, as Giacometti boldly affirmed, "Realism is balderdash."[27] Resemblance to the real was a matter not of the fidelity that could be recreated by a photograph, but of emotion (as Bacon would say),[28] or of sensation (as Giacometti would say). Talking about the two portraits he painted of Leiris, Bacon said he preferred the earlier one, because it "is less literally like him [but] in fact more poignantly like him."[29] Whether "artificiality" (Bacon) or "style" (Giacometti) was the means of attaining it, this truth only yielded itself to the image by showing its exposition: the theater of vision was not only experienced by the artist, but was itself an object of representation.

Giacometti and Bacon were obsessive artists, with an almost exclusive focus on creation. They both asserted that the creative act involves an experimental, autonomous dimension. "Every time I work," Giacometti explained, "I am prepared to undo without the slightest hesitation the work done the day before, as each day I feel I am seeing further. Basically I now only work for the sensation I get during the process."[30] He also remarked: "It would be worth my while to work even if it produced no result for others, as a result of my own vision."[31] In conversation with another interviewer, he explained his attitude toward painting by a kind of compulsion: "It may be that all this is nothing but an obsession, the causes of which I do not know."[32] Bacon, in turn, declared: "There's no pleasure in exhibiting at all. The only pleasure is to work for yourself and hope that sometime you'll do something that you really want." When asked, "Wouldn't you mind that your pictures would never be seen by someone else?" he replied: "Not at all, no," explaining that he would continue to paint anyway, because art, to him, was "a way of life."[33] Giacometti fully shared this idea of art as a way of life, but for him it was also accompanied by a sense of strangeness: "In a way, it is rather abnormal that instead of living one spends one's time trying to copy a head, immobilizing someone in a chair every evening, the same person for five years, trying to copy him without succeeding, and still going on. It's not an activity you could exactly call normal, do you think?"[34] Bacon repeatedly acknowledged the compulsive nature of his temperament, which affected everything: his attitude toward food and drink, toward sex, and above all toward artistic creation—which supplanted all other aspects of life. Giacometti and Bacon belonged to the group of monomaniacs in art who radically recast their personal life to put it at the service of creation. They both displayed the same stubbornness, the same discipline in their artistic work, no matter how uncontrolled their personality remained in other respects. Bacon's studio was described as a monastic cell, with an austerity that did not change when his fortunes began to improve.[35] The same applies to Giacometti, whose living and working space was described by his model Isaku Yanaihara as a "hovel," at a time when the artist was at the height of his fame.

Thus, beyond their obvious differences in terms of style and iconography, and despite their equally evident differences of temperament, the two artists embodied the same conceptions of art and the artist. Irreducible to the terms of their era, yet fully participating in the life of the period, these two singular individuals personified the sovereign, often painful freedom of the creator. Filled with doubts and obsessions, enriched by the experience of failure, animated by the same inner violence, Giacometti and Bacon, who were both friends of the writer Leiris, could have recognized themselves equally in an observation of Leiris's, on the subject of Giacometti, but just as applicable to Bacon: "There are moments of what can be called crisis, the only ones that count in life. . . . I love Giacometti's sculpture because what he makes is like the petrification of one of these crises, the intensity of a chance event swiftly caught and immediately frozen, the milestone telling its story."[36]

1 Francis Bacon, "Francis Bacon, peintre anglais," interview conducted in French, *Continents sans visa*, Radio Télévision Française, broadcast on July 2, 1964.
2 Isaku Yanaihara, *Avec Giacometti*, French trans. Véronique Perrin (Paris, 2014), p. 145.
3 Alberto Giacometti, "I am very interested in art, but I am infinitely more interested in truth," cited in "My Long March," interview by Pierre Schneider, in *Alberto Giacometti: Works, Writings, Interviews*, ed. Ángel González (Barcelona, 2006), pp. 139–43, here p. 143. Originally published as "'Ma longue marche' par Alberto Giacometti," *L'Express*, no. 521 (June 8, 1961).
4 Francis Bacon, radio interview by Michel Couturier, France Culture, April 1975.
5 Francis Bacon, "Interview 4," by David Sylvester [1974], in David Sylvester, *The Brutality of Fact: Interviews with Francis Bacon*, 3rd enlarged ed. (London, 2016), pp. 126–45, here p. 139.

6 Francis Bacon, "Interview 2," filmed interview by David Sylvester [May 1966], BBC 1, September 18, 1966, in Sylvester 2016 (see note 5), pp. 36–77, here p. 67.

7 Martin Harrison, *In Camera: Francis Bacon: Photography, Film and the Practice of Painting* (London, 2005), pp. 169–70.

8 Alberto Giacometti, interview by Georges Charbonnier, English trans. in Timothy Matthew, *Alberto Giacometti: The Art of Relation* (London and New York, 2014), p. 34. Originally published as "Entretien avec Alberto Giacometti," *Les Lettres nouvelles*, no. 6 (April 8, 1959).

9 Alberto Giacometti, "The Dream, the Sphinx, and the Death of T.," in *Alberto Giacometti: A Retrospective*, ed. Véronique Wiesinger, exh. cat. Museo Picasso Málaga (Barcelona, 2012), pp. 272–77. Originally published as "Le rêve, le Sphinx et la mort de T.," *Labyrinthe*, nos. 22–23 (December 1946).

10 Alberto Giacometti, cited in *Alberto Giacometti: Ein Mensch unter Menschen*, directed by Jean-Marie Drot, documentary film, arte Edition DVD (Berlin, 2001), min. 35:55–36:20, with English subtitles.

11 Jean Genet, *The Studio of Giacometti*, trans. Phil King (London, 2015), n. p. [p. 6]. Originally published as *L'atelier d'Alberto Giacometti* (Paris, 1963).

12 Jacques Dupin, *Alberto Giacometti* (Tours, 1999), p. 109.

13 Francis Bacon, *Francis Bacon in Conversation with Michel Archimbaud* (London, 1993), p. 151. Originally published as *Entretiens avec Michel Archimbaud* (Paris, 1992).

14 Francis Bacon, "Interview 5," by David Sylvester [1975], in Sylvester 2016 (see note 5), pp. 146–61, here p. 152.

15 Bacon 1993 (see note 13), pp. 151–52.

16 Michel Leiris, "What Francis Bacon's Paintings Say to Me," trans. Sonia Orwell, in *Francis Bacon: Recent Paintings*, exh. cat. Marlborough Fine Art (London, 1967), p. 23.

17 Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, trans. Daniel W. Smith (London and New York, 2003), p. 23.

18 As early as 1949, Nevile Wallis commented on Bacon's silently screaming figures, which he associated with existentialism. See Nevile Wallis, "Nightmare," *The Observer*, November 20, 1949, p. 6.

19 Francis Bacon, "Interview 7," by David Sylvester [1979], in Sylvester 2016 (see note 5), pp. 176–91, here p. 181.

20 Alberto Giacometti, "Why Am I a Sculptor?," interview by André Parinaud, in González 2006 (see note 3), pp. 146–53, here p. 148. Originally published as "Entretien avec Giacometti: Pourquoi je suis sculpteur," *Arts*, no. 873 (June 13–19, 1962).

21 Ibid.

22 Bacon frequently used this expression, which was taken up by Michel Leiris in his book *Francis Bacon ou la brutalité du fait: Suivi de cinq lettres inédites de Michel Leiris à Francis Bacon sur le réalisme* (Paris, 1996).

23 Alberto Giacometti, "Mai 1920," *Verve* 3, nos. 27–28 (December 1952), reprinted in *Ecrits: Articles, notes et entretiens* (Paris, 2007), pp. 122–24, here pp. 123–24.

24 Alberto Giacometti to Pierre Matisse, January 1951, private collection.

25 See Catherine Grenier, "Giacometti et la perspective dépravée," in *Alberto Giacometti,* exh. cat. Fonds Hélène et Edouard Leclerc pour la Culture, Landerneau (Paris, 2015), pp. 12–31.

26 Francis Bacon, cited in Martin Hammer, *Francis Bacon* (London and New York, 2013), p. 9.

27 Alberto Giacometti, "At the Louvre with Giacometti," interview by Pierre Schneider, *Encounter* (March 1966), pp. 34–40, here p. 36. Originally published as "Au Louvre avec Alberto Giacometti," *Preuves*, no. 139 (September 1962).

28 "If I go to the National Gallery and I look at one of the great paintings that excite me there, it's not so much the painting that excites me as that the painting unlocks all kinds of valves of sensation within me which return me to life more violently." Bacon, in Sylvester 2016 (see note 14), p. 161.

29 Francis Bacon, "Interview 6," by David Sylvester [1979], in Sylvester 2016 (see note 5), pp. 162–75, here p. 164.

30 Giacometti, in González 2006 (see note 20), p. 151.

31 Giacometti, in González 2006 (see note 3), p. 143.

32 Alberto Giacometti, artist's statement in *New Images of Man*, ed. Peter Selz, exh. cat. The Museum of Modern Art (New York, 1959), p. 68.

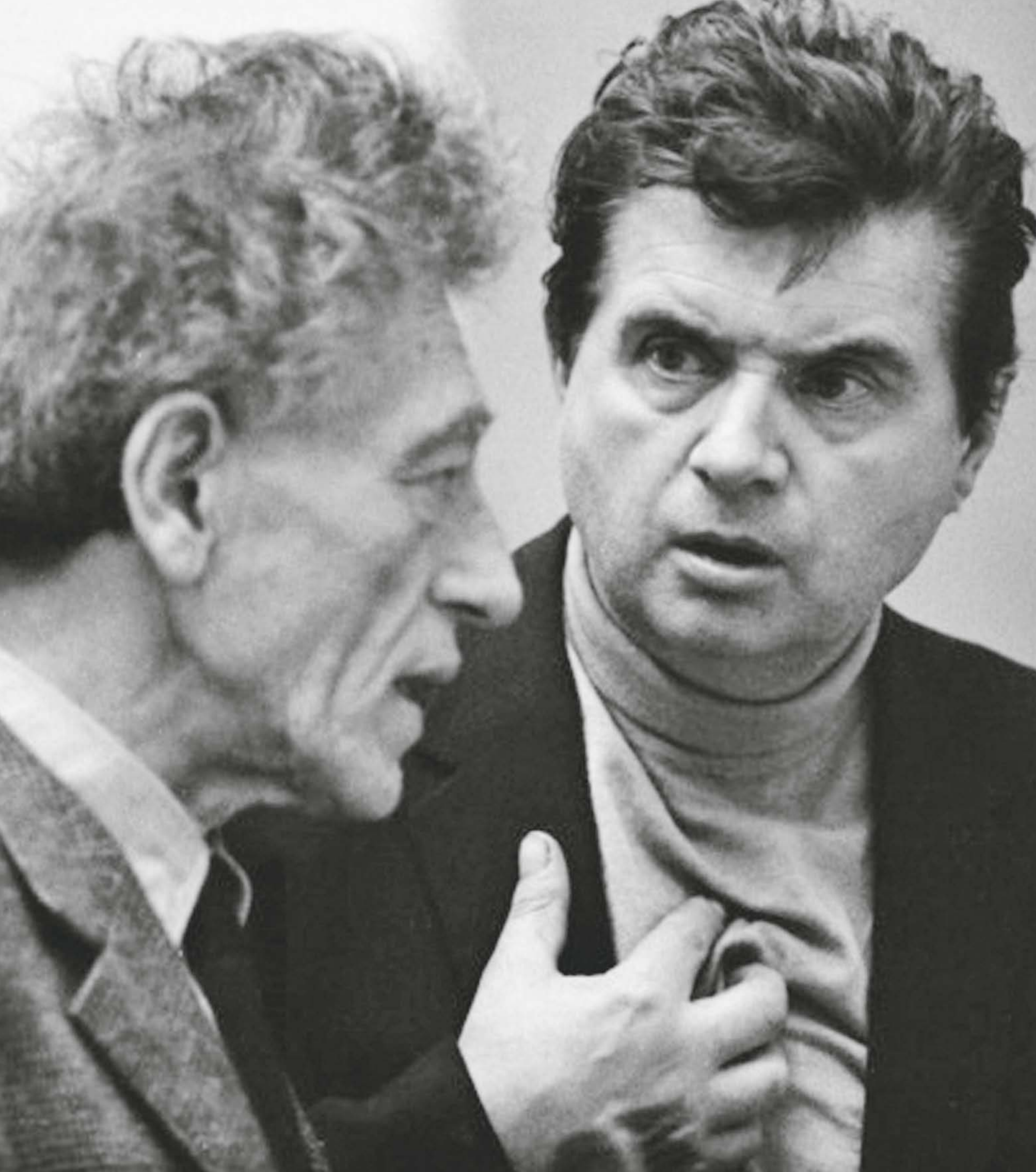
33 Francis Bacon, "The Art Game," interview by Daniel Farson, August 27, 1958 (film destroyed), cited in Daniel Farson, *The Gilded Gutter Life of Francis Bacon* (London, 1994), pp. 101–02.

34 Giacometti, "Entretien avec Giacometti: Pourquoi je suis sculpteur," *Arts*, no. 873 (June 13–19, 1962), reprinted in *Ecrits: Articles, notes et entretiens* (Paris, 2007), pp. 238–50, here p. 249.

35 "The studio at Reece Mews was a monastic cell where Bacon practiced his engagement with flesh, and the living areas were similarly spartan—*unheimlich*." Harrison 2005 (see note 7), p. 121. Harrison notes that the studio, rented by Bacon from 1961 on, remained austere and shabbily furnished despite the painter's growing prosperity.

36 Michel Leiris, "Alberto Giacometti," *Documents*, no. 4 (1929), p. 209.

Alberto Giacometti and Francis Bacon at the Tate Gallery, London, 1965, photographed by Graham Keen, pp. 23–31



Bacon—Giacometti: Introduction to the Exhibition

Ulf Küster

Artists' comments on other artists can be particularly revealing: Louise Bourgeois knew Alberto Giacometti and Francis Bacon, and expressed very definite views about both of them. With her husband, Robert Goldwater, she visited Bacon in London in July 1951, and in 1999 she described this meeting, arranged by the art critic and curator David Sylvester, in a text full of enlightening observations:

"When Robert and I visited Bacon, two women were there: one of them was his friend, the painter Isabel Lambert (who later became Isabel Rawsthorne) [cf. cat. pp. 36–51]. The floor was covered with junk and garbage. Bacon was slightly drunk. He showed us his paintings, unrolling them on a very large couch. . . . In his tipsy state he was friendly, very talkative and clever. . . .

One can see Bacon's face in all his pictures, since they are all self-portraits. He doesn't look at things but paints them on the basis of his desire: painting is a voyage into the interior, so his relationship to the real is obviously deformed. Bacon painted the kick of adrenalin in the nervous system that triggers the obsession with self-expression.

He had an untamable urge to express his rage and desire. Sex, alcohol, and gambling were further attempts to free himself from the burden of self-restraint.

Bacon's emotions may not have been lethal, but they were undoubtedly violent. He was a painter of frightening brutality. The violence is directed toward others and toward himself. Bacon was a masochist. He distorted his figures—most of them male—like a pretzel, in a movement of attraction and repulsion, as in a Moebius strip.

Bacon's paintings deal with volume in space. They are extremely sculptural, and I consider him a colleague in sculpture. Bacon's characteristic *touche sinueuse* ['swirling brushwork'] always reminds me of Munch's *The Scream*.

Bacon wasn't a loner. He died in an excess of passion. His suffering was communicative. That's something I have in common with him."[1]

That Bourgeois referred to Bacon as a "colleague" is high praise indeed from an artist who saw herself above all as a sculptor. Her description of Giacometti was less flattering. This may be connected with feelings of rivalry toward him as an artist working in her own preferred medium. Her last meeting with Giacometti took place under difficult circumstances in the house of Pierre Matisse in New York: Giacometti spoke very little English and was disconcerted during his visit to the US in 1965 by the sheer scale of New York, which to him was unfamiliar.[2] Bourgeois described him as numb with fear, unable to speak, and afraid even to come out of Matisse's kitchen.

Although Bourgeois generally held Giacometti in high regard, especially as a portrait sculptor,[3] her works were different from his: "The main resemblance between Giacometti and me is that we make vertical figures. There are too many more differences. . . . Also, Giacometti's things are always walking away, and mine are there for ever—immobile, because I don't want them to move away."[4] Bourgeois was evidently unreceptive to the fascination exerted by the idea of movement in Giacometti's work. But her characterization of his sculptures as "walking away"—initially a contradiction in itself—points to the paradox at the center of Giacometti's oeuvre. Making movement visible was one of his great themes. In this sense, he overstepped the limits of traditional sculpture but at the same time remained keenly aware of them, precisely because of their constraining effect. This is apparent in his interest in ancient art, especially Egyptian art. Here, Giacometti took on the role

of a protagonist of anti-modernism, which is also evident in his ongoing attachment to figuration.

Similar considerations apply to Bacon, whose pictures Bourgeois described as "extremely sculptural." As a painter, Bacon saw himself as heir to a long tradition, as his obsessive occupation with Diego Velázquez's *Portrait of Pope Innocent X* (ca. 1650) already indicates. And in his case, as well, the human figure was always the point of reference for his work, in which nothing is entirely abstract. Yet Bacon, too, was concerned with overstepping limits, in the playful rendering of three-dimensionality within the flat picture surface or—a further analogy to Giacometti—in making movement visible.

At a time, after the horrors of two world wars, when art was seeking a new beginning through a return to the essence of painting, with a reduction to gesture as the favored solution, Giacometti's and Bacon's insistence on taking the human figure as the starting point for all their artistic activity seemed positively anachronistic. Consequently, they had the status of outsiders. Nevertheless, their work was perceived as giving unique expression to the crisis of humanity after 1945, and they both became legends in their own lifetime.

Giacometti and Bacon were individualists in art, with different cultural backgrounds and major disparities between their respective oeuvres. There is no intention here of trying to play down these contrasts. The purpose of an exhibition of this kind is not to give answers, but to ask questions; and differences, of the most striking kind, can be especially instructive in understanding the work of either artist. Giacometti's radical elimination of color from his works, for instance, is especially noticeable in comparison with the sometimes excessive use of color in Bacon's paintings. It also becomes clear how works of art can dominate the space surrounding them, in the case of Bacon through the monumentality of the pictorial composition, especially in his triptychs, or through the aura with which Giacometti managed to invest even the smallest of his figures.

1 Louise Bourgeois, "Francis Bacon" [1999], in *Destruction du père: Reconstruction du père: Ecrits et entretiens 1923–2000*, ed. Marie-Laure Bernadac and Hans-Ulrich Obrist (Paris, 2000), pp. 387–89, here pp. 388–89.

2 Cf. Ulf Küster, "Zu Giacomettis Projekt einer Figurengruppe für die Chase Manhattan Plaza, New York," in *Giacometti: Die Spielfelder*, ed. Hubertus Gassner and Annabelle Görgen, exh. cat. Hamburger Kunsthalle (Hamburg, 2013), pp. 140–45, here p. 140.

3 Louise Bourgeois, "Louise Bourgeois in Conversation with Christiane Meyer-Thoss," in Christiane Meyer-Thoss, *Louise Bourgeois: Designing for Free Fall / Konstruktionen für den Freien Fall* (Zurich, 1992), pp. 119–44, here p. 140.

4 Louise Bourgeois, "Interview with Michael Auping" [1996], in *Destruction of the Father, Reconstruction of the Father: Writings and Interviews 1923–1997*, ed. Marie-Laure Bernadac and Hans-Ulrich Obrist (Cambridge, MA, and London, 1998), pp. 351–61, here p. 354.

London, Tate Gallery, July 13, 1965

On September 9, 1955, Francis Bacon wrote a letter from Cannes, on the Côte d'Azur, to the above-mentioned art critic David Sylvester, who was also a friend of Giacometti's:

"I was having dinner in a restaurant on the Port and Giacometti and his wife and two other people were having dinner at the next table. I heard someone say 'les anglais deviennent comme les framboises dans le soleil' and looked around and saw it was him. He looked very sympathetic but I did not like to speak to him. I did not know he came to such a common place as Cannes."[1]

In 1955, Bacon and Giacometti did not know each other well enough to exchange greetings in a restaurant, and Giacometti, who was eight years older, would probably not have recognized Bacon. It is doubtful

that he was even aware of Bacon as an artist. He, on the other hand, was enveloped in such an aura of importance and unapproachability that Bacon was surprised to encounter him in a "common" place where Bacon himself was a frequent guest. This sheds a certain light on Bacon's conception of himself as an artist who did not move in the higher spheres associated with conventional notions of art, leading him to take a stereotyped view of a fellow artist.

Ten years later, the situation was quite different. The two artists knew each other well enough for Bacon to call on Giacometti at the Tate Gallery in London while the latter was setting up his major exhibition there, and there are also contemporaneous accounts of several meetings at dinner parties.

Bacon's visit to Giacometti's exhibition is well documented, in a series of photographs taken by Graham Keen, a then twenty-three-year-old photographer who had studied sculpture at art school and was a great admirer of Giacometti. Keen found an opportunity to meet his idol via his girlfriend's mother, Virginia Haggard, who had been Marc Chagall's lover and had a son with him.[2] Haggard knew Pierre Matisse, Giacometti's gallerist, who was also present during the installation of the exhibition and helped Haggard to smuggle Keen into the museum.

Keen even found the courage to ask Giacometti to sign a book for him and took a photograph of the event. Otherwise, he kept a safe distance from the artist and mainly used a telephoto lens for his shots of people, which gave them a somewhat distorted appearance. Haggard is to be seen, with Matisse, his wife Patricia (also taking photographs), the exhibition curator Sylvester, and of course Giacometti, talking with two further visitors: Bacon and his friend and fellow artist Lucian Freud. The conversation appears animated, with no hint of the detachment that is noticeable in Bacon's letter to Sylvester.

Giacometti had only a few months left to live: he died on January 11, 1966. At that time, his reputation among the general public remained controversial, but he was a towering figure in the art world. Bacon, in 1965, was still some way from achieving such elevated status. The photographs taken by Keen are documents of an incipient friendship that ended shortly afterward.

1 Francis Bacon to David Sylvester, September 9, 1955, David Sylvester Papers, Tate Archive, London. I thank Michael Peppiatt for this reference.

2 My thanks are due to Graham Keen for this valuable information. Keen subsequently made a career for himself as a documentary recorder of the 1960s London art and music scene.

Isabel Rawsthorne

Alberto Giacometti and Francis Bacon were introduced to one another by Isabel Rawsthorne (1912–1992).[1] Rawsthorne, born Isabel Nicholas, was a painter, and in her early twenties she embarked on a relationship with the sculptor Jacob Epstein, for whom she sat as a model. The couple's son, Jackie Epstein, who later became a racing driver, was brought up by Epstein's wife. Beginning in 1936, when her marriage to the well-known journalist Sefton Delmer gave her a measure of financial independence, Rawsthorne became a central figure of the Paris avant-garde world, and befriended André Derain and Balthus, modeling for both of them. She and Delmer divorced during World War II, when she worked in intelligence and black propaganda for a clandestine department of the British government. In 1947 she married the composer Constant Lambert; following his death, in 1951, she married Alan Rawsthorne, who also was a composer.

Isabel Rawsthorne has been described as an "exotic" and compelling figure who captivated men and women alike. She is said to have had countless affairs, but whether or not these stories are true is unimportant: they mainly highlight the fantasies evoked by her appearance and personality. In the male-dominated art world there was no place for women artists like Rawsthorne, who were unconventional and intellectual—and who quickly found themselves dismissed as embodiments of the femme fatale. Bacon's claim that Rawsthorne was the only woman with whom he ever had a sexual relationship[2] has also contributed to the subsequent underestimation of her achievement as a painter and intellectual sparring partner of many artists, male and female.

For Giacometti, Rawsthorne was a figure of crucial importance. The two of them became friends in 1935, and their relationship was initially platonic, but they were lovers for a time shortly after World War II. Giacometti's first portrait sculpture of Rawsthorne, made in 1936, documented their mutual enthusiasm for the great traditions of art,

especially for the sculpture of ancient Egypt (cat. p. 37). The work is a paraphrase of the famous bust of Nefertiti. Isabel takes on the stylized appearance of the godlike Egyptian queen: an aura of unapproachability is established between the subject and the viewer. The second sculpture, from the late 1930s, shown here in plaster and in bronze (cat. pp. 38 and 39), strikes a far more personal note. From the plaster version, modified by the artist with pencil drawings, it is apparent that the bronze head is not a finalized portrait: Giacometti's struggle to address the complex character of his model was not fully resolved by the casting in bronze.

After Giacometti's break with the Surrealists, Isabel Rawsthorne had a further important function for the sculptor, in his search for what he—in an interview by Pierre Schneider in 1961—referred to as "reality [being] something familiar, banal, or let's say stable."[3] By this, the artist meant the depiction of reality in precisely the dimensions in which he saw it. His miniscule figures of the late 1930s are defined by the distance between the persons depicted and Giacometti's own perception.

An experience with Rawsthorne in 1937 provided a new impulse for Giacometti's conception of sculpture, with the consequence that his figures became ever smaller:

"I wanted to make a sculpture of this woman [Rawsthorne] exactly as I had seen her some distance away on the street. I wanted to give her the size she had at that distance. . . . It was around midnight on the Boulevard Saint-Michel. I saw the immense darkness above her, I saw the buildings—to capture the impression, I should have painted a picture instead of making a sculpture. Or I should have made a huge plinth so that the ensemble corresponded to what I saw."[4]

The present exhibition includes a number of sculptures from this phase of Giacometti's oeuvre that refer, in some cases directly, to the experience of seeing Rawsthorne from far away (cat. pp. 43–45). Yet, the process of liberating himself from his obsession with the reduction of scale was also connected with her. His first near-life-sized sculpture after the small figurines, *Femme au chariot* (cat. p. 41), dating from around 1945, is seen as embodying a memory of Rawsthorne, from whom Giacometti was separated during the war. The figure, made in his workshop in Maloja, is constructed in such a way that the distance between the sculpture and the viewer can vary: it stands on a chariot that makes it possible to dissolve the "stable" element of reality by moving the object closer to—or farther away from—the beholder. This

enabled Giacometti to solve, at least potentially, a problem that had preoccupied him since childhood.[5]

Bacon's treatment of Rawsthorne is quite different, but here, too, he was concerned with formalization and the attempt to convey her character in the picture. Among his many paintings of her, the most impressive is the monumental portrait from 1967, which, as the title indicates, shows her standing on a street in Soho (cat. p. 47). Here, Bacon is citing the "swagger portrait," a genre emphasizing status and urbane glamour, which enjoyed great popularity around 1900 in both the US and Britain and is familiar especially from the work of such painters as John Singer Sargent. At the same time, however, Bacon ironized the genre, signaling this already through the work's title, since a street in Soho—at that time one of the less reputable areas of London—was hardly a typical location for a swagger portrait. The picture of Rawsthorne probably owes part of its inspiration to a photograph by John Deakin from the 1960s, which was found on the floor of Bacon's studio (see fig. p. 194).

In contrast to the photograph, however, Bacon expunged all trace of ladylike elegance; instead, he accentuated the supposedly feline, untamed aspect of Rawsthorne's nature: her face, with staring eyes and mouth smeared blood red, could be that of a terrible ancient deity or a frenzied maenad. The pink line extending from her left eye resembles an antenna—is she perhaps a monster looking for her next victim? A car tire in the background could be intended as a reference to the street in which the scene is supposedly set. Next to it, on the right, the powerful form of a charging bull alludes to the excitement of bullfighting, which Bacon loved. Combining Rawsthorne with a scene from the corrida emphasizes the characterization often associated with her as being a man-eater. At least since Francisco de Goya's demonic *Tauromaquia* etchings (1816), and especially since Pablo Picasso's explorations of the theme, the bullfight has been a metaphor for the battle of the sexes and for radical eroticism: a love that finds its fulfillment in violent death.

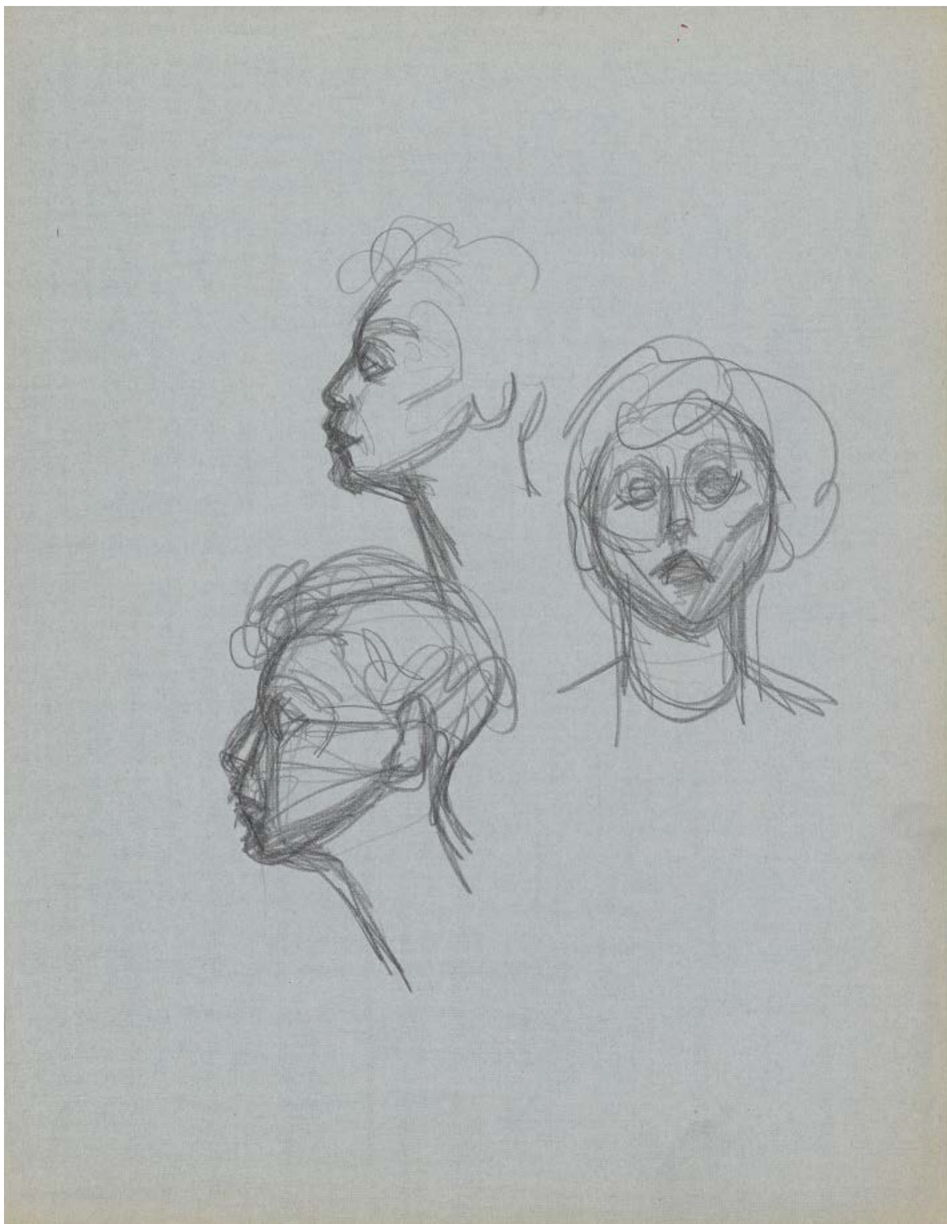
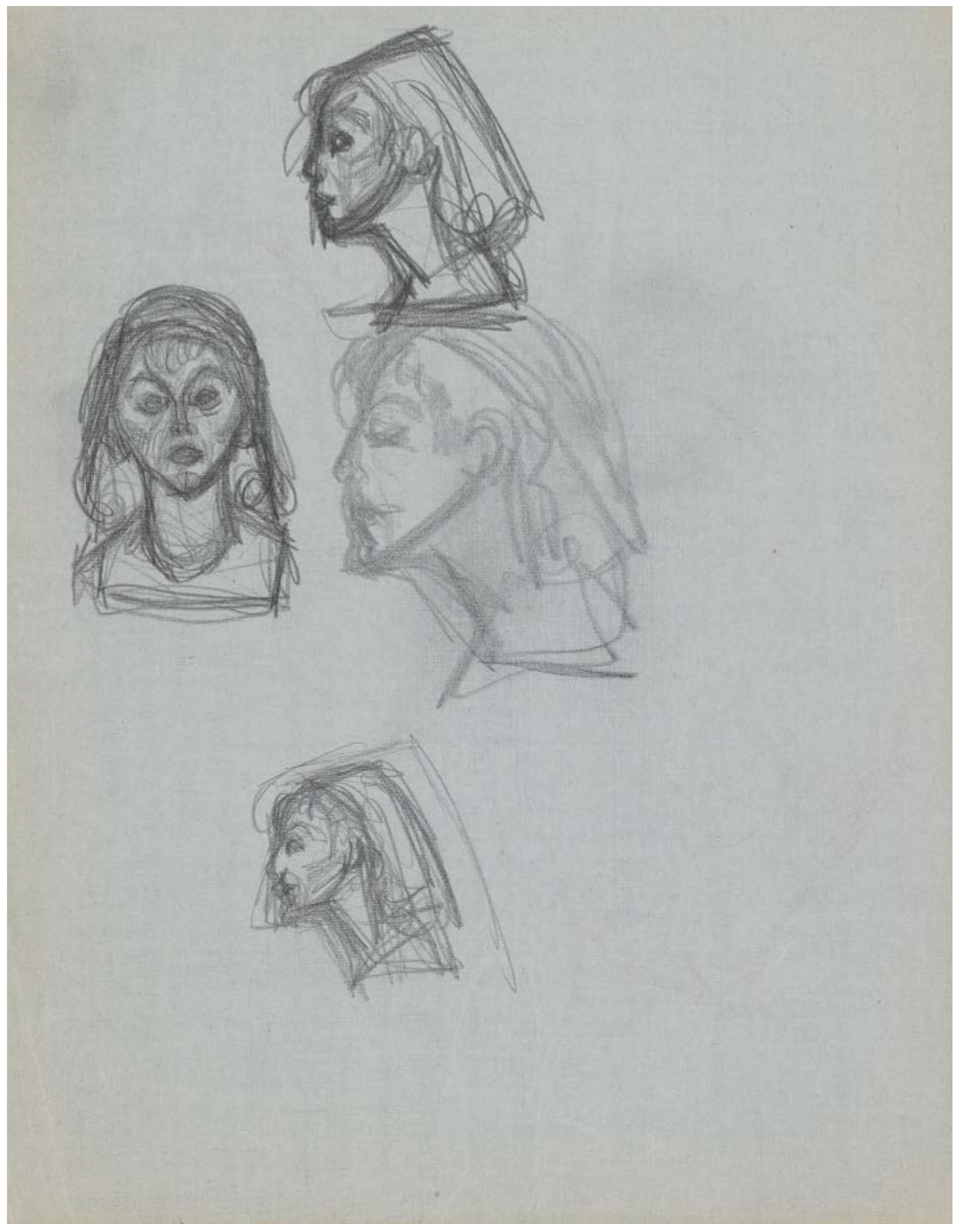
1 Cf. also *Isabel and Other Intimate Strangers: Portraits by Alberto Giacometti and Francis Bacon*, ed. Valentina Castellani, exh. cat. Gagosian Gallery (New York, 2008); and Catherine Grenier, *Alberto Giacometti* (Paris, 2017), pp. 145–46.

2 Bacon is supposed to have made this claim in an interview by *Paris Match* in 1992, shortly after Rawsthorne's death. See Daniel Farson, *The Gilded Gutter Life of Francis Bacon* (London, 1994), p. 167.

3 Alberto Giacometti, "My Long March," interview by Pierre Schneider, in *Alberto Giacometti: Works, Writings, Interviews*, ed. Ángel González (Barcelona, 2006), pp. 139–45, here p. 140. Originally published as "'Ma longue marche' par Alberto Giacometti," *L'Express*, no. 521 (June 8, 1961).

4 Alberto Giacometti, in Pierre Dumayet, "Le drame d'un réducteur de tête," *Le Nouveau Candide*, no. 110 (June 6–13, 1963), reprinted in *Ecrits: Articles, notes et entretiens* (Paris, 2007), pp. 301–10, here pp. 302–03.

5 Cf. Ulf Küster, *Alberto Giacometti: Space, Figure, Time* (Ostfildern, 2009), pp. 70–71 and pp. 76–77.

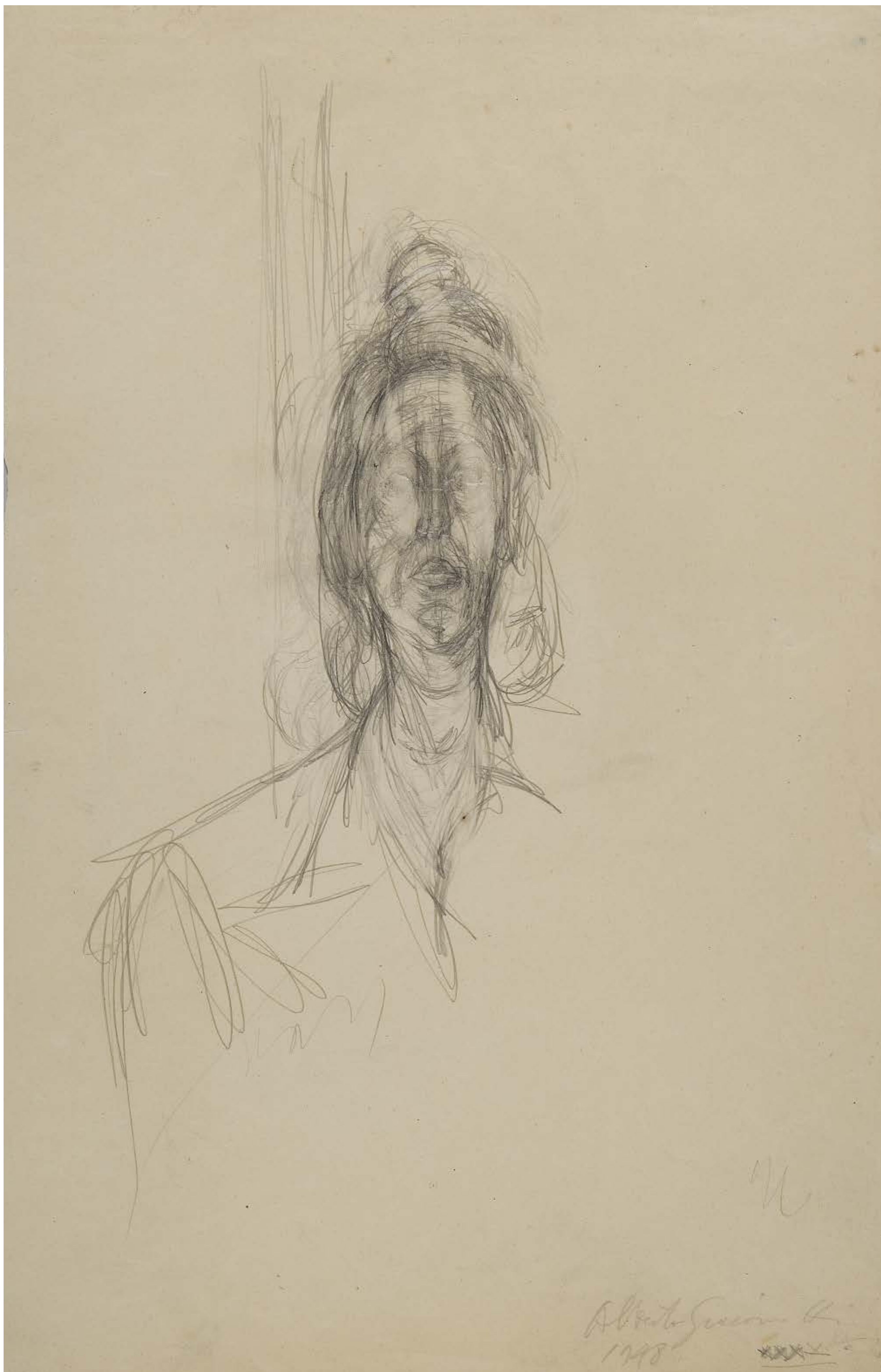
Alberto Giacometti, *Trois têtes de femme (Isabel) de face et de profil*, ca. 1936–37, pencil on paper, 27 × 21 cm, Fondation Giacometti, Paris;
Quatre têtes de femme (Isabel), ca. 1936–37, pencil on paper, 27 × 21 cm, Fondation Giacometti, Paris

Alberto Giacometti, *Tête d'Isabel*, 1936, terracotta, 27.7 × 20.8 × 23 cm, private collection

Alberto Giacometti, *Tête d'Isabel*, ca. 1937–38, bronze, 21.3 × 16 × 17.2 cm, Fondation Giacometti, Paris

 Alberto Giacometti, *Tête d'Isabel*, ca. 1937–39, plaster and pencil, 21.6 × 16 × 17.4 cm, Fondation Giacometti, Paris

Alberto Giacometti, *Femme au chariot*, ca. 1945, plaster and wood, figure 154.5 × 33.5 × 35.3 cm, Fondation Giacometti, Paris



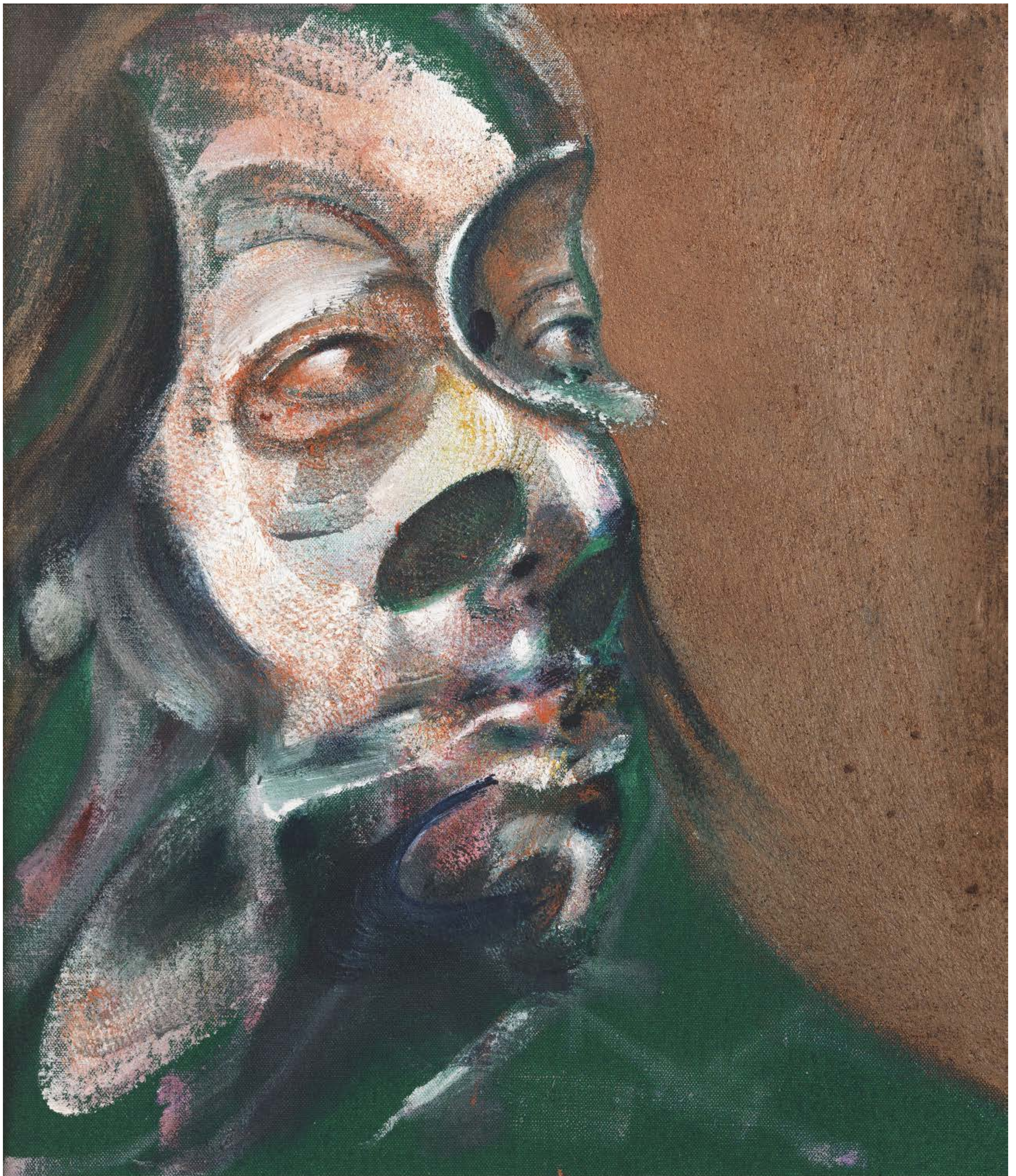
Alberto Giacometti, *Isabel en buste*, 1948, pencil on paper, 50 × 32.5 cm, Fondation Giacometti, Paris

Alberto Giacometti, *Femme debout*, 1956, bronze, 30.5 × 7 × 9.5 cm, Fondation Giacometti, Paris

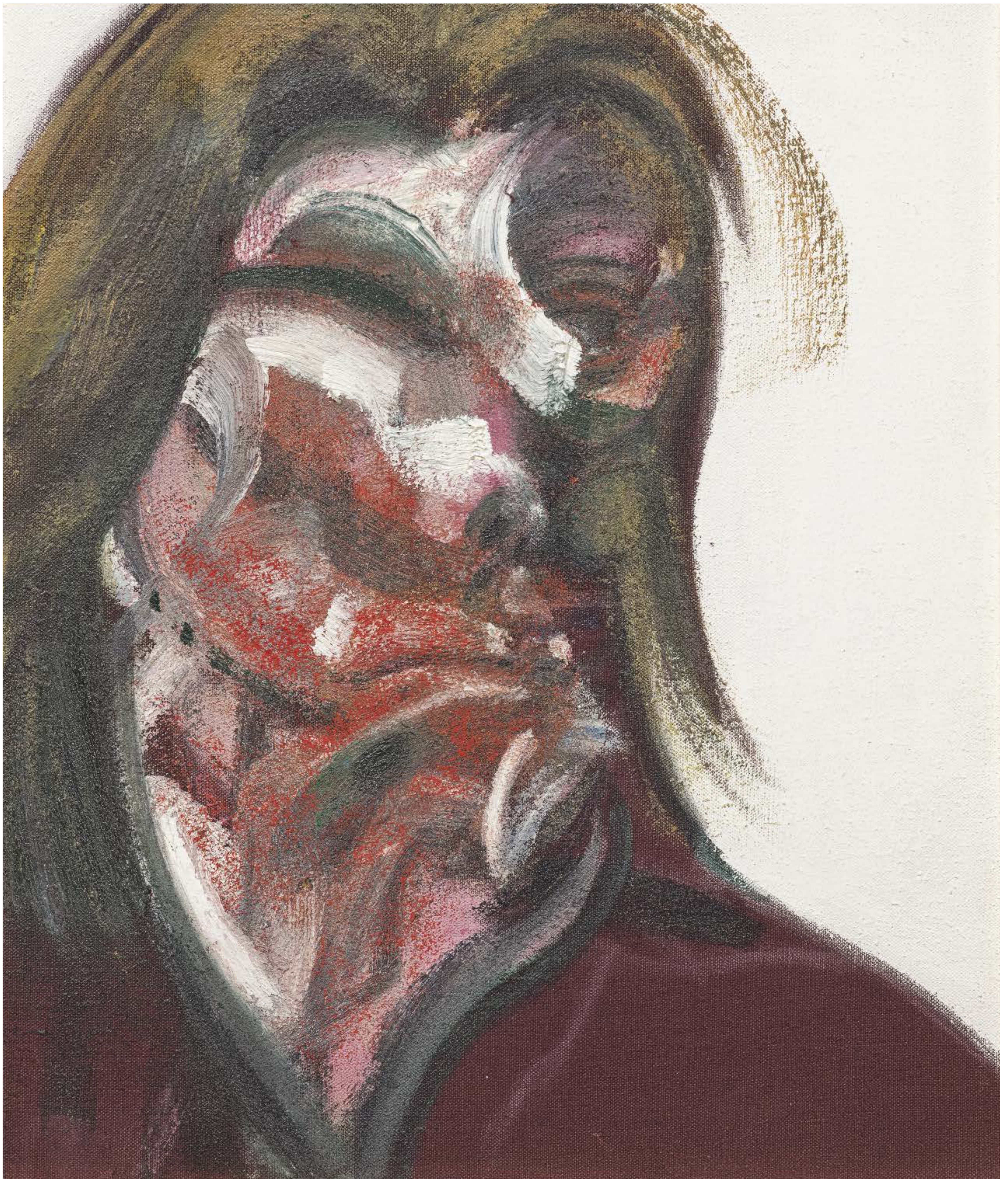
Alberto Giacometti, *Figurine*, 1953–54, bronze, 10.7 × 3.5 × 4.3 cm, Fondation Giacometti, Paris;
Figurine de Londres I, 1965, bronze, 26.5 × 9 × 13.5 cm, Fondation Giacometti, Paris

Alberto Giacometti, *Figurine*, ca. 1956, bronze, 23.4 × 6.9 × 10.1 cm, Fondation Giacometti, Paris;
Figure sans bras, ca. 1956, bronze, 14.1 × 6.2 × 7 cm, Fondation Giacometti, Paris

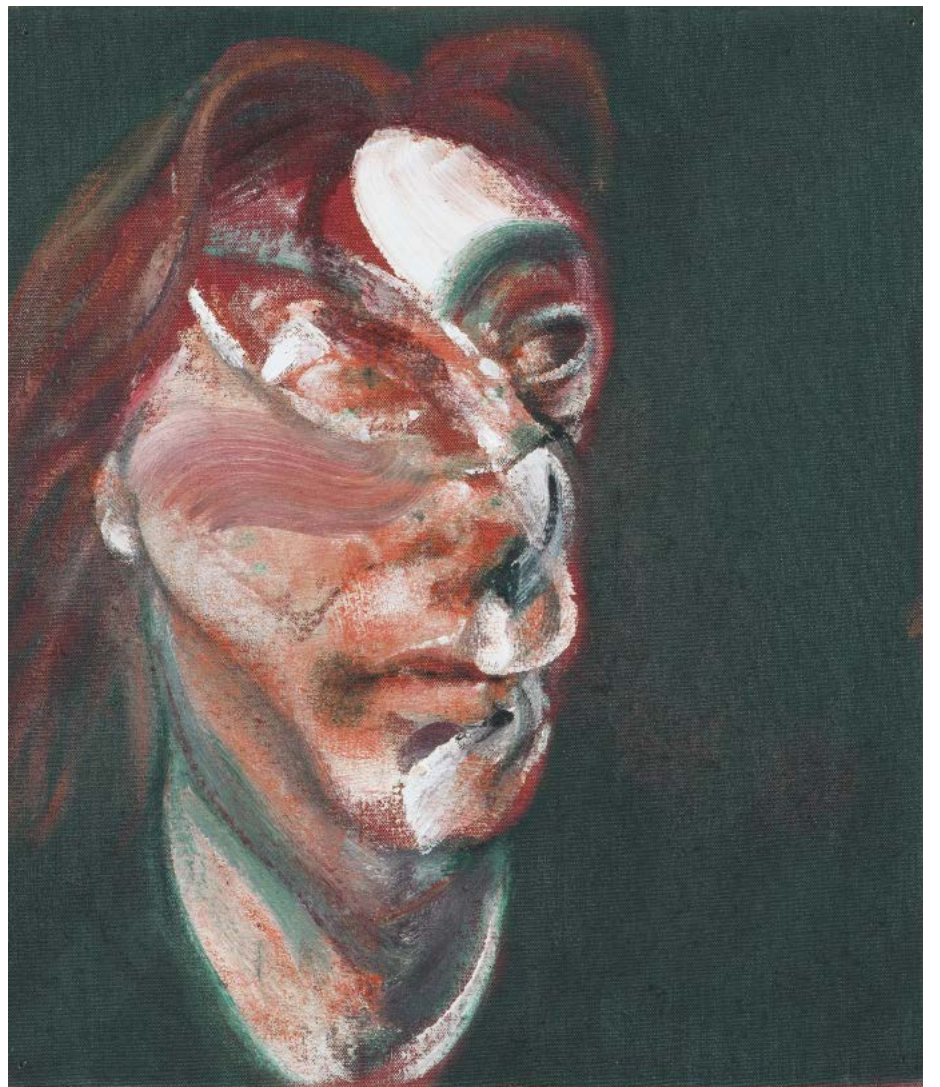
Francis Bacon, *Portrait of Isabel Rawsthorne Standing in a Street in Soho*, 1967, oil on canvas, 198 × 147.5 cm, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Nationalgalerie, acquired 1967 through the State of Berlin



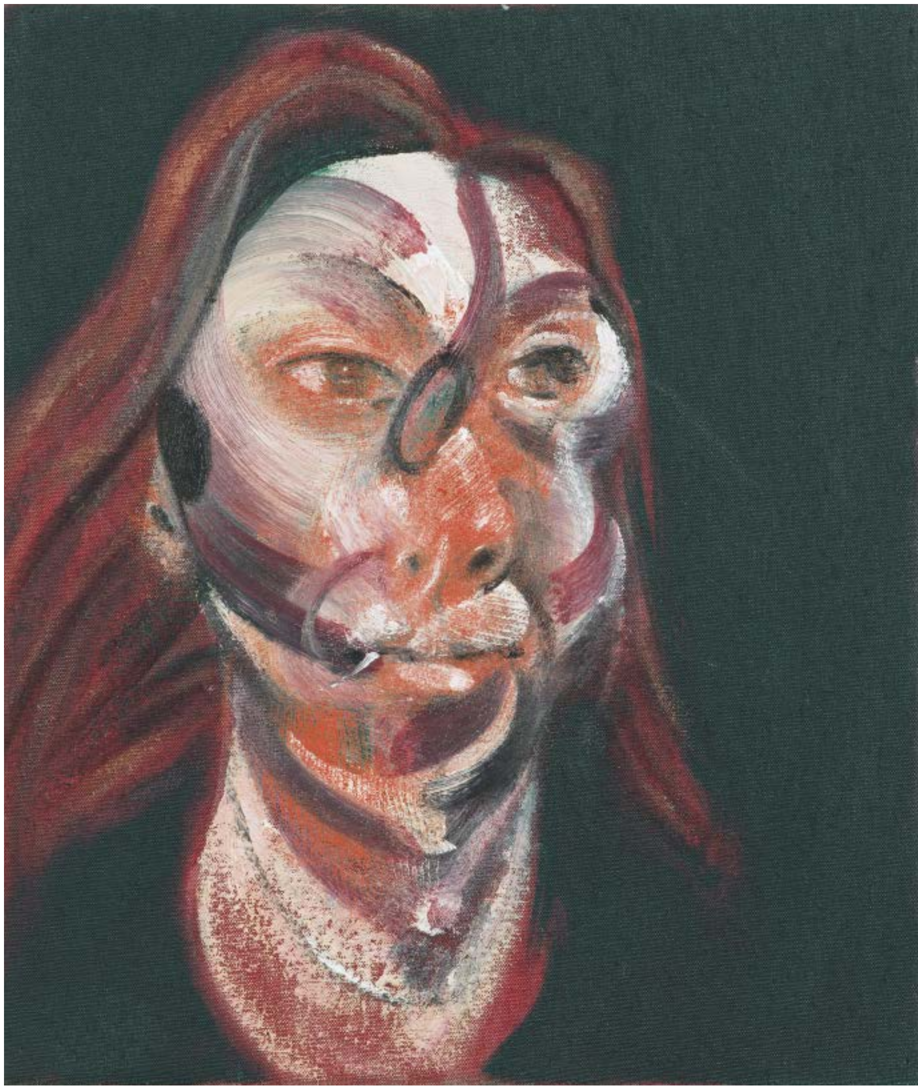
Francis Bacon, *Study of Isabel Rawsthorne*, 1966, oil on canvas, 35.5 × 30.5 cm, Musée national d’art moderne, Centre Pompidou, Paris, gift of Louise and Michel Leiris, 1984

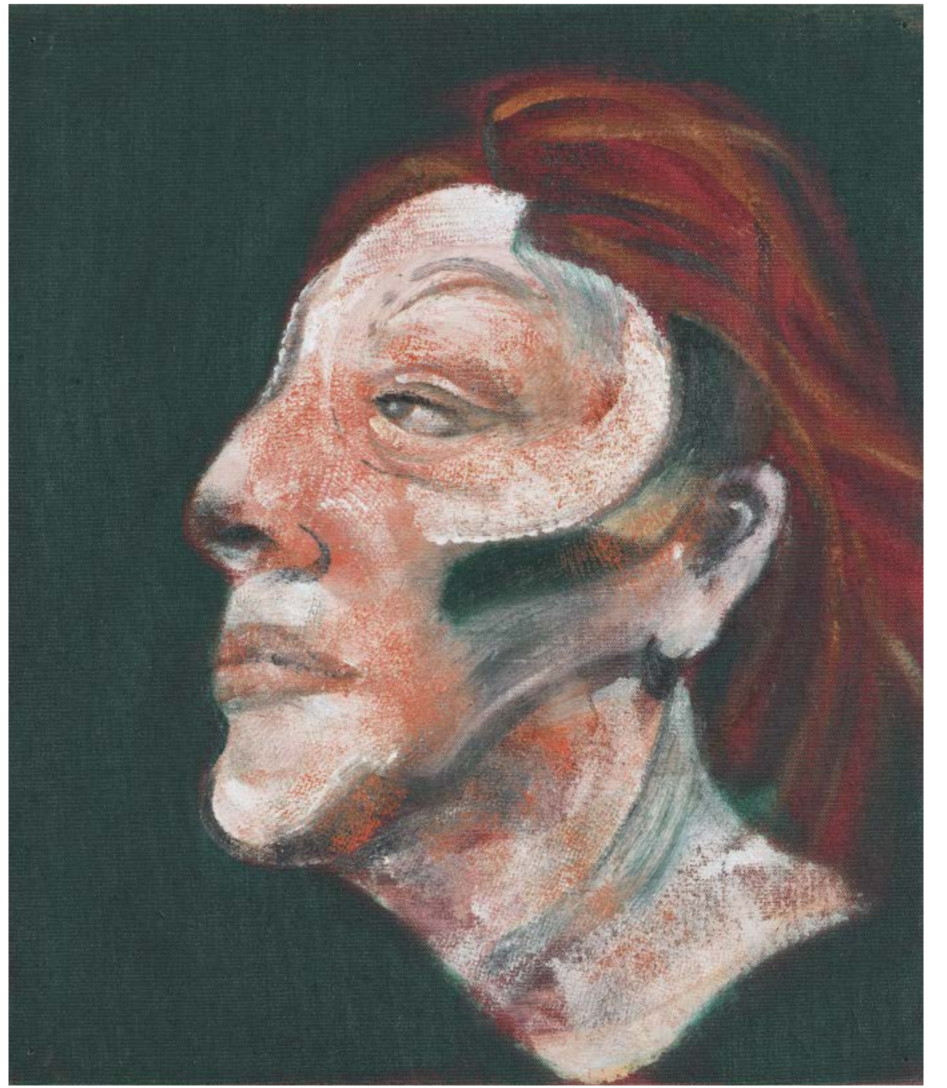


Francis Bacon, *Study for Head of Isabel Rawsthorne*, 1967, oil on canvas, 35.5 × 30.5 cm, private collection



Francis Bacon, *Three Studies for Portrait of Isabel Rawsthorne*, 1965, oil on canvas, triptych, 35.6 × 30.5 cm each, The Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Collection, Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, University of East Anglia





La Cage

In one of Alberto Giacometti's notebooks we find the following remark, from around 1949, providing insight into his occupation with space as such: "Space does not exist. It has to be created, but it does not exist, no."[1]

This sounds almost like a despairing attempt to repudiate the prevailing view in theoretical physics that there was such a thing as absolute space. For an artist, space is defined by objects and their relation to one another. In the work of Giacometti, the actual importance of the representation of space is emphasized by the placing of objects in regular-shaped wire structures that have an additional space-defining function. Thus, the encounter between the semi-phallic form and the grooved sphere in the famous *Boule suspendue* (cat. p. 55) not only has an erotic dimension: the work is also concerned with making energy and emotion visible in space. The definition of space is also a theme of the sculpture

La Cage, exhibited here in the plaster and bronze versions (cat. pp. 59 and 61). The dominant figure does not support itself by clutching at the edges of the cage but is opening the cage up as a space. Space in Giacometti's work is also defined by the boundaries of the baseplates on which the figures are mounted, appearing to stand still in space (cat. pp. 62 and 63) or about to step beyond it (cat. p. 67).

Looking at the pictures by Francis Bacon, it is immediately apparent that he too was concerned with spatial structures. Many of his paintings are organized by frameworks of lines that have a spatial effect. There is no proof as to whether he was influenced in this respect by Giacometti. It is, however, safe to assume that he saw Giacometti's *Le Palais à 4 heures du matin* (1932) when it was shown in London in 1936 at the *International Surrealist Exhibition*, before its acquisition in the same year by the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Giacometti's *Palais*, dramatically photographed by Man Ray and featured in *Cahiers d'art* (nos. 8–10, 1932), is a kind of stage set for Giacometti's thinking: the work consists of various wire structures in which objects are placed.

It is interesting, at all events, to juxtapose and compare Giacometti's spatial constructions with the painted structures of Bacon. In one of his interviews with David Sylvester, Bacon emphasized that the sole purpose of his "frames," as he called them, was to focus attention on the image: "I cut down the scale of the canvas by drawing in these rectangles which concentrate the image down. Just to see it better."[2] The same could be said of Giacometti's constructions: his cage-like definitions of space underline the presence of the objects contained within them. Bacon's "frames" were also one of the features that led Louise Bourgeois, for example, to commend his paintings for their especially sculptural character. Bacon's playful use of linear structures to create an appearance of spatial depth in his pictures is exemplified by the relatively small-format painting *Study of a Nude* from 1952–53 (cat. p. 58). The figure seen from behind with raised arms does not appear inside the illusionistically rendered linear structure, but seems to stand outside it, as if the figure were depicted at the very moment of plunging into the illusion of spatiality—thus the intrinsically two-dimensional picture takes on a three-dimensional or "sculptural" effect.

1 Alberto Giacometti, "Carnet, vers 1949," reprinted in *Ecrits: Articles, notes et entretiens* (Paris, 2007), pp. 539–44, here p. 542.

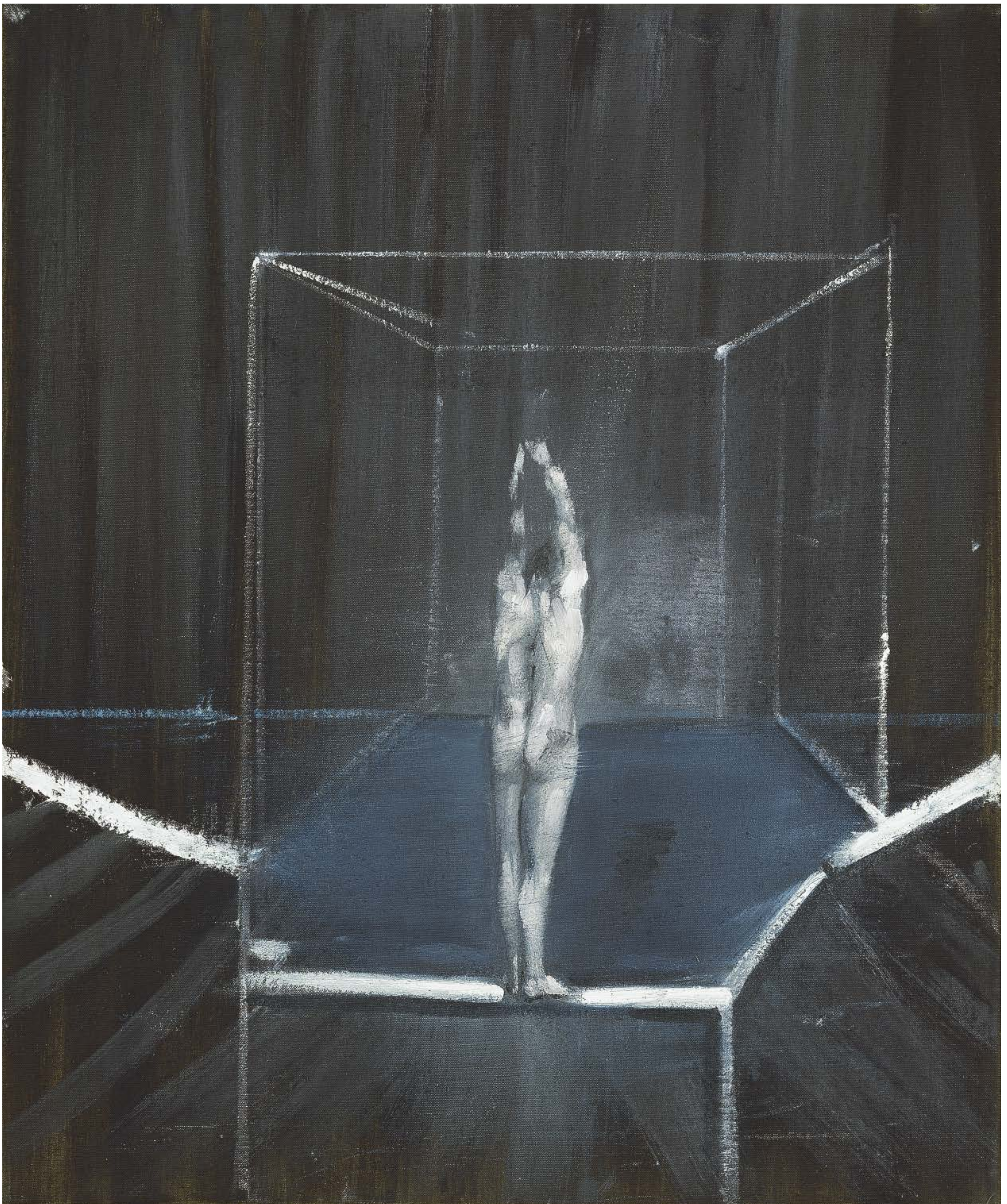
2 Francis Bacon, "Interview 1," by David Sylvester [1962], in David Sylvester, *The Brutality of Fact: Interviews with Francis Bacon*, 3rd enlarged ed. (London, 2016), pp. 8–35, here p. 23.

Francis Bacon, *Sand Dune*, 1983, oil, pastel, and sand on canvas, 198.5 × 148.5 cm,
Fondation Beyeler, Riehen / Basel, Beyeler Collection

Alberto Giacometti, *Boule suspendue*, 1930, plaster and metal, 61 × 36 × 33.5 cm, Kunstmuseum Basel, on permanent loan from the Alberto Giacometti Foundation, Zurich

Alberto Giacometti, *Le Nez*, 1947–49, plaster, 43.6 × 9 × 61.6 cm, Fondation Giacometti, Paris

Francis Bacon, *Head VI*, 1949, oil on canvas, 91.4 × 76.2 cm, Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London



Francis Bacon, *Study of a Nude*, 1952–53, oil on canvas, 59.7 × 49.5 cm, The Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Collection, Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, University of East Anglia

59 Alberto Giacometti, *La Cage (première version)*, 1949–50, plaster, painted, 91.1 × 38.5 × 34.9 cm, Fondation Giacometti, Paris

Alberto Giacometti, *La Cage*, 1950–51, bronze, 175.6 × 37 × 39.6 cm, Fondation Giacometti, Paris

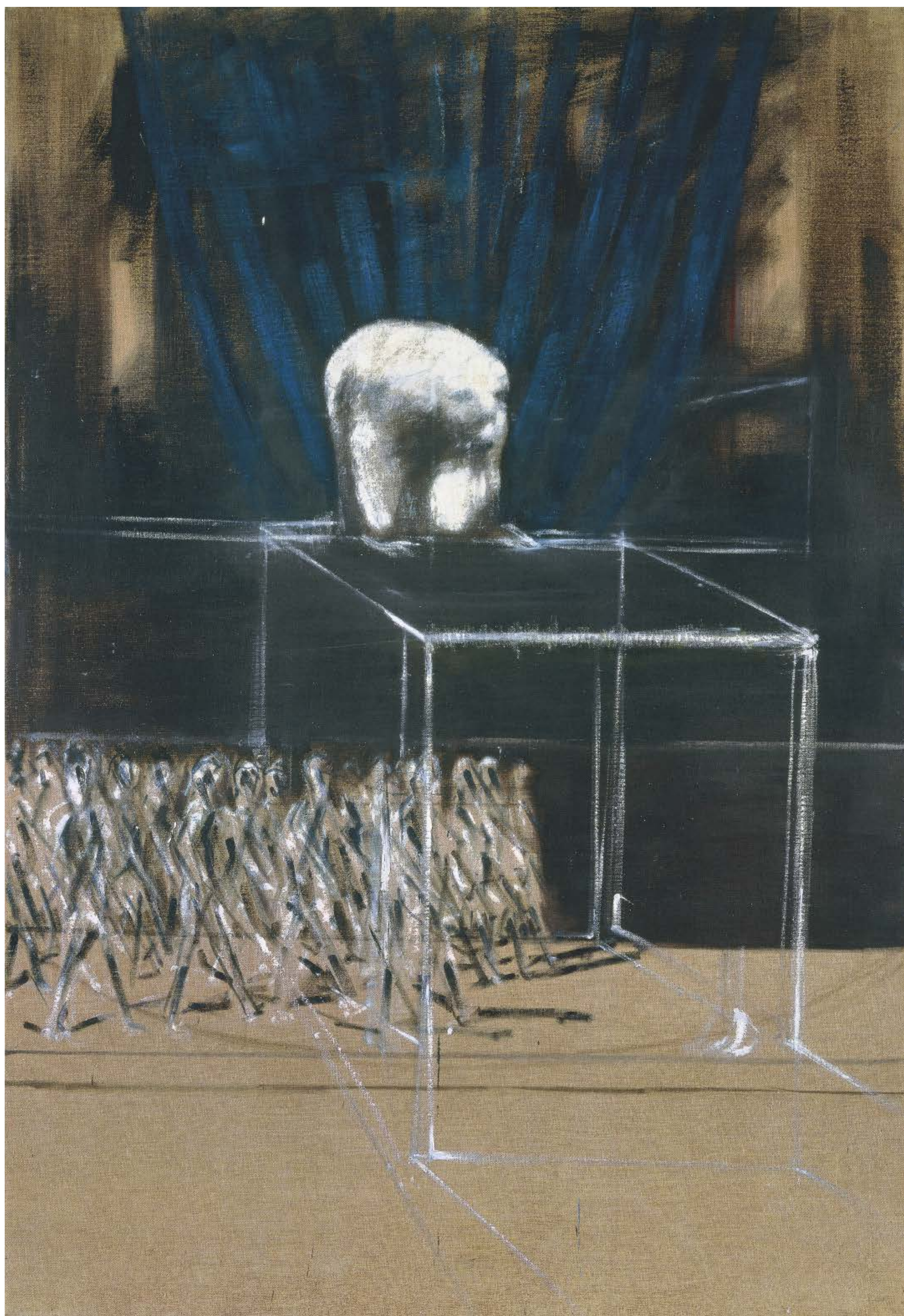
61 Alberto Giacometti, *La Cage (première version)*, 1950, bronze, 90 × 36.5 × 34 cm, Fondation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel, Beyeler Collection

Alberto Giacometti, *Composition avec trois figures et une tête (la place)*, 1950, bronze, 57.2 × 53.3 × 40.3 cm, Fondation Giacometti, Paris

Alberto Giacometti, *La Forêt*, 1950, bronze, 57 × 61 × 47.3 cm, Fondation Giacometti, Paris

Francis Bacon, *Man in Blue IV*, 1954, oil on canvas, 198 × 137 cm, mumok – Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien, Vienna, on loan from the Austrian Ludwig Foundation, since 1984

Francis Bacon, *Chimpanzee*, 1955, oil on canvas, 152.5 × 117.2 cm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart



Francis Bacon, ‘Marching Figures’, ca. 1952, oil on canvas, 198 × 137 cm, private collection

67 Alberto Giacometti, *Trois hommes qui marchent (petit plateau)*, 1948, bronze, 72 × 32.7 × 34.1 cm, Fondation Giacometti, Paris

Screaming and Silence

Seated figures, heads with gaping mouths, distorted in a cry of madness: Francis Bacon's numerous depictions of screaming figures are among his most powerful and shocking works. The figure of the screaming pope (cat. pp. 57, 71, 73, and 74), as a metaphor for the pain of human existence under inescapable constraints, is linked to Bacon's obsessive fascination with Velázquez's portrait of Innocent X. A further source for the depiction of screaming mouths in Bacon's work is the image of the injured nursemaid in Sergei Eisenstein's legendary film *Battleship Potemkin* (1925).[1]

This contrasts sharply with the absolute calm and concentration in Alberto Giacometti's portraits, whether in painting or in sculpture. The expressiveness and compulsive extroversion of Bacon's pictures cast an immediate spell on the viewer. The silence in the art of Giacometti is no less hypnotic in its effect.

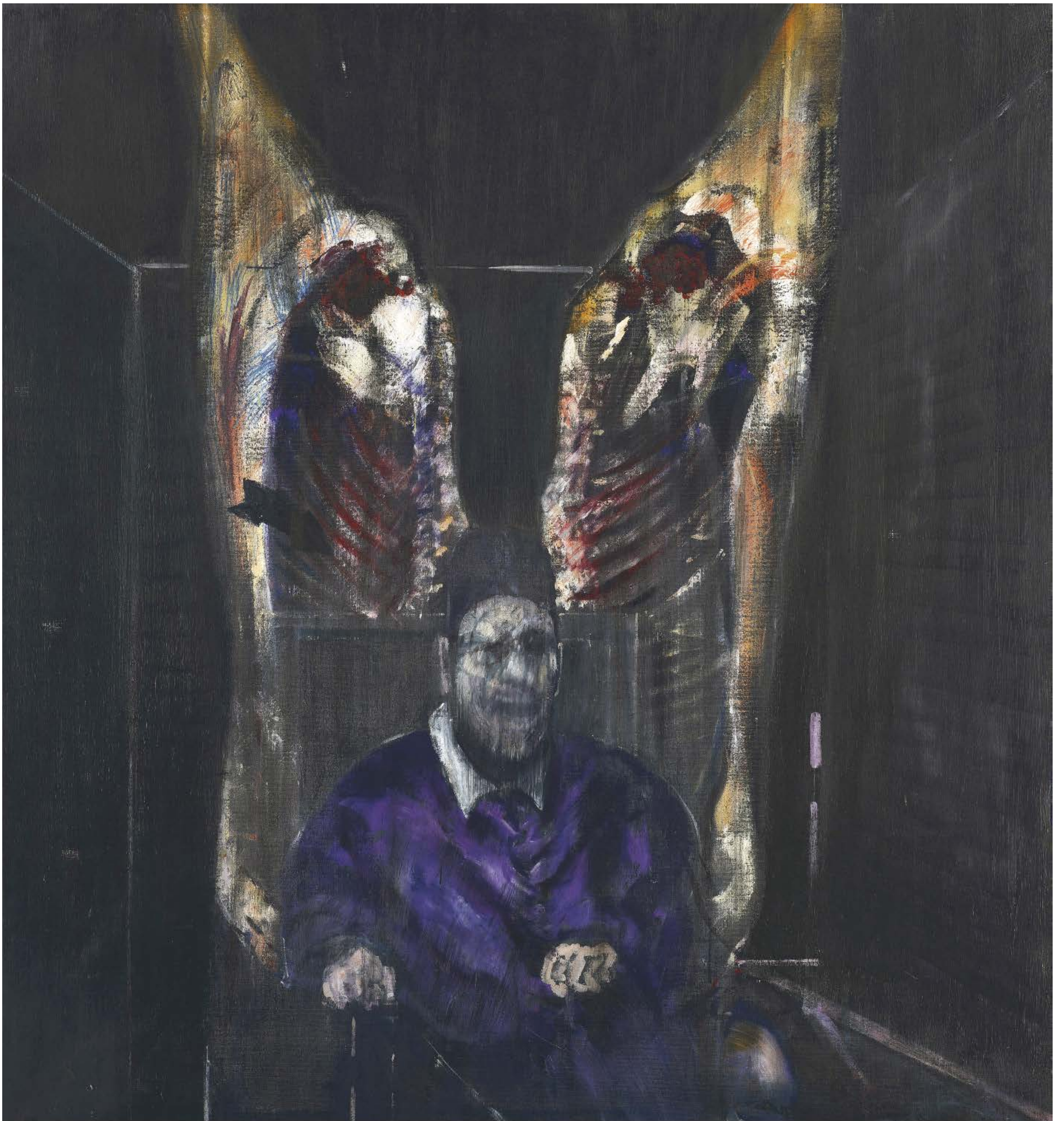
Even so, Bacon's screams also make visible the constraints to which Giacometti's figures are subject, in the silence born of repression. Giacometti's late portraits are grounded in the agony of failure. They not only bear the marks of the near-torture inflicted on the models by forcing them to sit still for hours at a stretch; they also document the eternal disappointment of an artist who continually bewailed, in a positively masochistic spirit, the impossibility of depicting human individuality.

Different as they may at first seem, the artistic positions of Bacon and Giacometti reveal a similar fundamental doubt about human existence and individuality, emerging in the wake of World War II, that remains valid today.

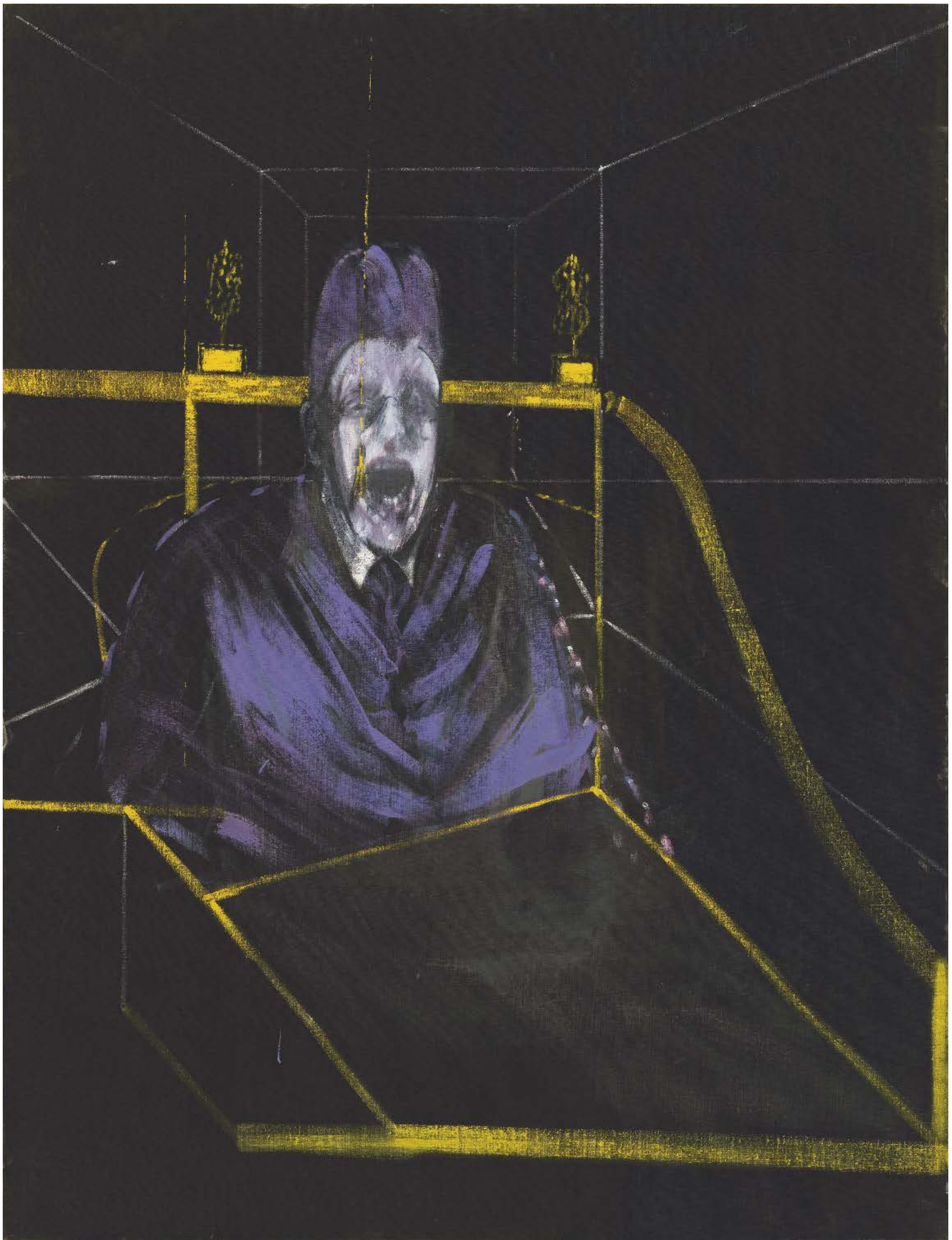
1 Francis Bacon, "Interview 2," filmed interview by David Sylvester [May 1966], BBC 1, September 18, 1966, in David Sylvester, *The Brutality of Fact: Interviews with Francis Bacon*, 3rd enlarged ed. (London, 2016), pp. 36–77, here pp. 40–41.

Francis Bacon, *Study after Velázquez*, 1950, oil on canvas, 198 × 137 cm, private collection

Alberto Giacometti, *Homme à mi-corps*, 1965, plaster, painted, 60.6 × 19.5 × 32.4 cm, Fondation Giacometti, Paris



73 Francis Bacon, *Figure with Meat*, 1954, oil on canvas, 129.9 × 121.9 cm, The Art Institute of Chicago, Harriott A. Fox Fund, 1956



Francis Bacon, *Study for Portrait VII*, 1953, oil on canvas, 152.3 × 117 cm, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, gift of Mr. and Mrs. William A. M. Burden, 1956

75 Alberto Giacometti, *Eli Lotar III (assis)*, 1965, bronze, 65.9 × 28.4 × 35.6 cm, Fondation Beyeler, Riehen / Basel, Beyeler Collection

Alberto Giacometti, *Caroline*, 1961, oil on canvas, 100 × 82 cm, Fondation Beyeler, Riehen / Basel, Beyeler Collection

Francis Bacon, *Study for the Nurse in the Film Battleship Potemkin*, 1957, oil on canvas, 198 × 142 cm, Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main

Alberto Giacometti, *Grande femme assise*, 1958, plaster, 81.5 × 23.5 × 32.5 cm, Fondation Giacometti, Paris

 Alberto Giacometti, *Aïka*, 1959, oil on canvas, 92 × 72.8 cm, Fondation Beyeler, Riehen / Basel, Beyeler Collection

Alberto Giacometti, *Annette assise dans l'atelier*, ca. 1960, oil on canvas, 92 × 73 cm, Fondation Giacometti, Paris

Alberto Giacometti, *Isaku Yanaihara*, 1961, oil on canvas, 100 × 81 cm, Fondation Beyeler, Riehen / Basel, Beyeler Collection

Obsession

Alberto Giacometti's prolonged failure was in a way preordained. Without the constant sense of failure, he might have lacked the impetus to continue. Still, the masochistic streak in his art is disturbing.

Work, for him, apparently involved a considerable measure of self-punishment, as if he were consciously seeking atonement for the very fact of his existence. This would also seem to be true of Francis Bacon, although the aggression in his art, unlike that in Giacometti's, appears to be directed outward.

The works of Bacon and Giacometti are the outcome of a process that was never finished. The artist's hand was continually in motion, at once aggressive and affectionate. Ernst Scheidegger articulated the following description of Giacometti's way of working when modeling a figure:

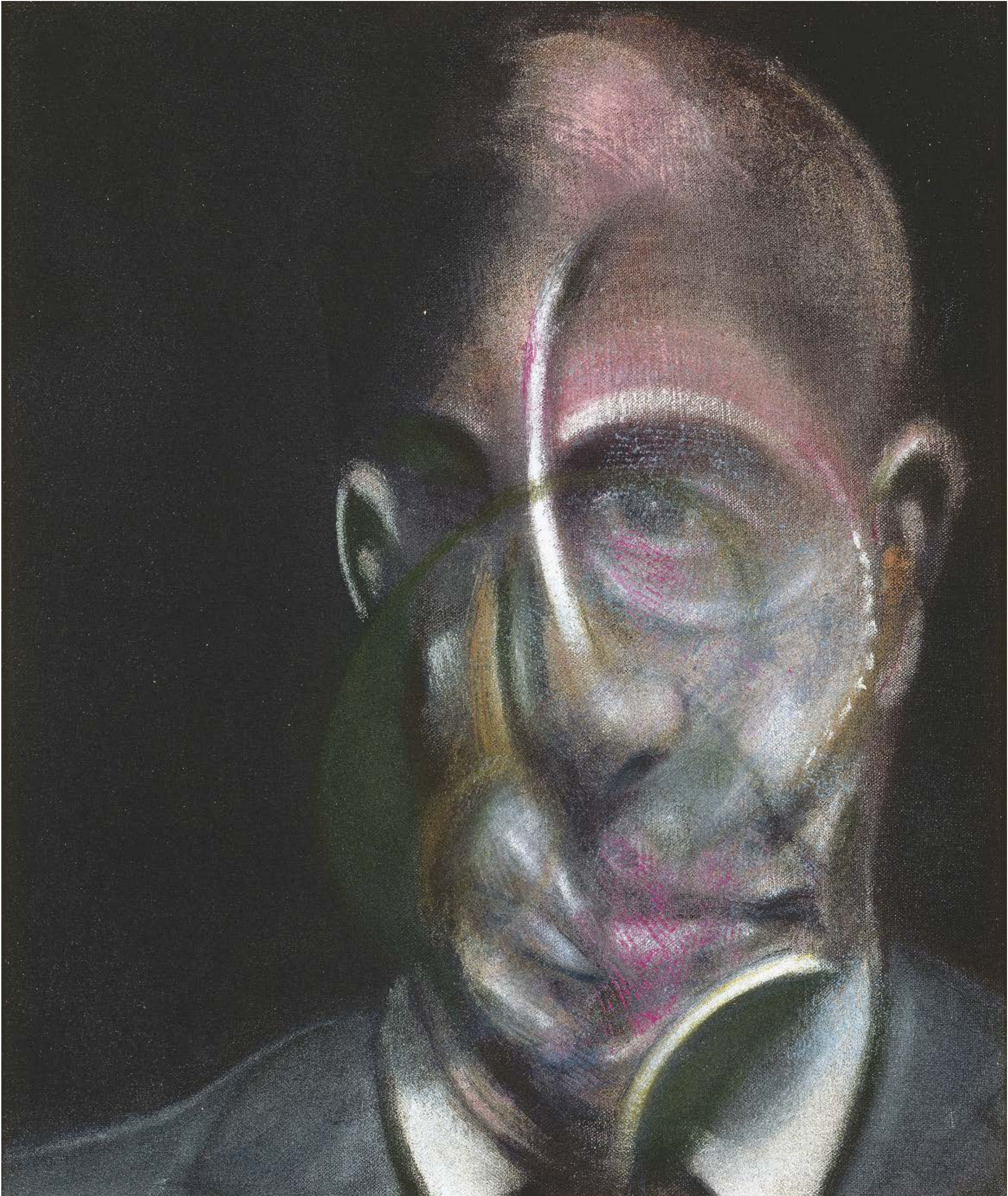
"Alberto had beautiful narrow and delicate hands. One could watch them for hours in fascination as they glided up and down the figures, formed a head, worked it away and then reformed it. He kneaded, hollowed out, squeezed and stroked the clay. From time to time, he used his blade to make the eyes stand out, kneaded everything away, then poked in the figure's nose in order to bring the face back to life."[1]

In contrast to Giacometti, Bacon was an absolute recluse in the studio who refused to be watched in the act of painting. Here, an essential difference between the two artists becomes apparent: whereas Bacon mainly worked from photographs, this seemingly was never an option for Giacometti, who needed the physical presence of human models. A consequence of Bacon's insistence on solitude is the lack of firsthand accounts of the painting process in his studio. Yet, his pictures, above all the portraits, show the movements of the painter's hand very clearly. Here, one thinks of Louise Bourgeois's comment regarding Bacon's *touche sinueuse*[2]: his swirling brushwork, which endowed his portraits, in particular, with a dynamism that is highly impressive, if not always agreeable. Bacon's process of blurring and deformation, especially in the treatment of heads, is similar to the sculptural method of Giacometti. Both artists manipulated the model's appearance and left his or her individuality in doubt. That the resulting portraits may be more honest than if the artists had striven for greater verisimilitude is one thing; the other is that, by making their working processes visible, Bacon and Giacometti drew attention to the importance of their individual form of artistic expression, which—in portraits, too—is always in the forefront.

1 Ernst Scheidegger, *Alberto Giacometti: Traces of a Friendship*, trans. Laura G. Downs, rev. ed. (Zurich, 2013), p. 157.

2 Louise Bourgeois, "Francis Bacon" [1999], in *Destruction du père: Reconstruction du père: Ecrits et entretiens 1923–2000*, ed. Marie-Laure Bernadac and Hans-Ulrich Obrist (Paris, 2000), pp. 387–89, here p. 389.

Alberto Giacometti, *Tête d’homme*, ca. 1962–65, plaster, painted, 15 × 6 × 8.5 cm, Fondation Giacometti, Paris

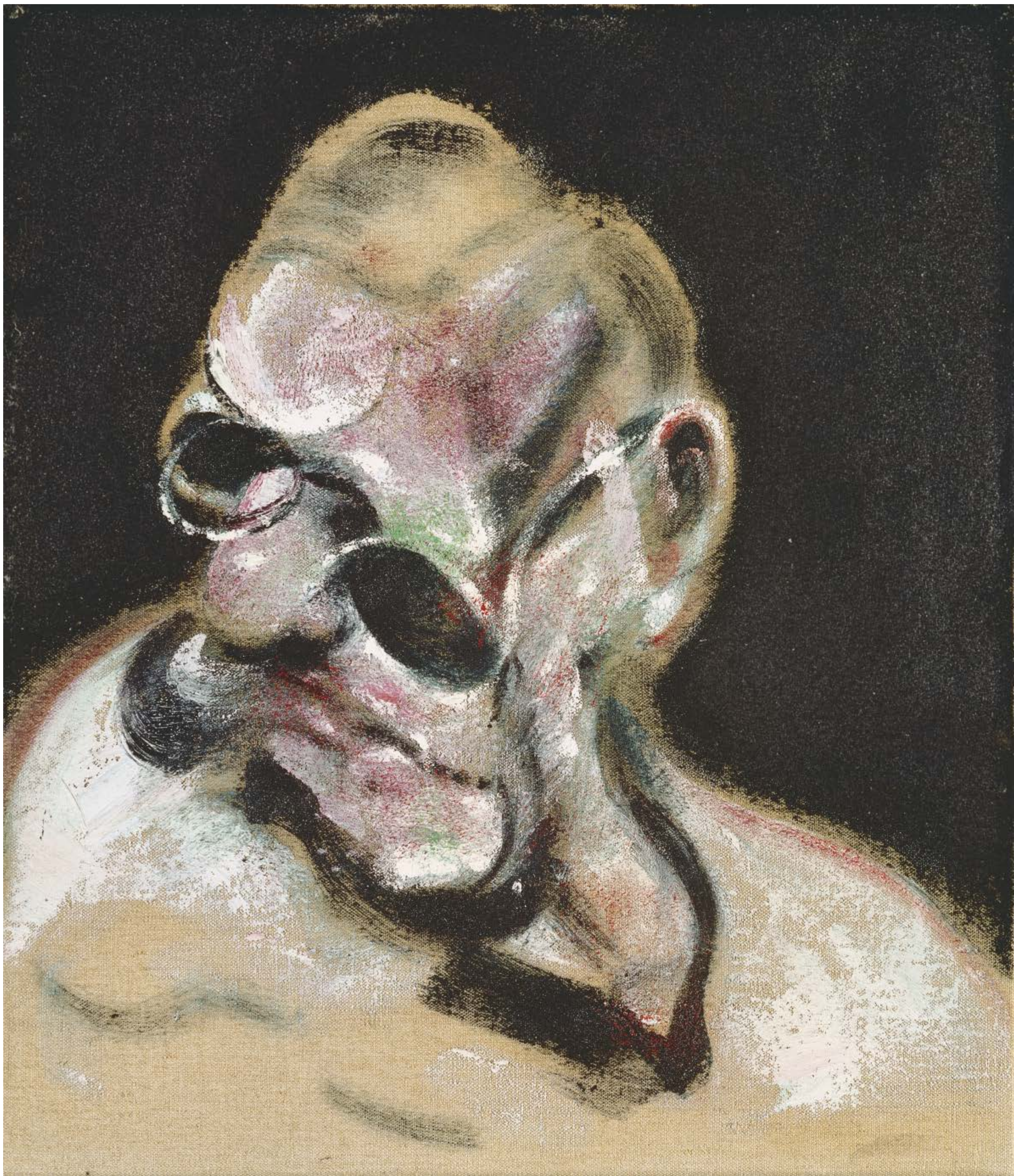


Francis Bacon, *Portrait of Michel Leiris*, 1976, oil on canvas, 34 × 29 cm, Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Pompidou, Paris, gift of Louise and Michel Leiris, 1984

Francis Bacon, *Self-Portrait*, 1987, oil and aerosol paint on canvas, 35.5 × 30.5 cm, courtesy of Ivor Braka Ltd

Alberto Giacometti, *Grande tête mince*, 1954, plaster, painted, 65.6 × 39.1 × 24.9 cm, Fondation Giacometti, Paris

Alberto Giacometti, *Tête d'homme*, n.d., plaster, 15 × 6.5 × 10.5 cm, Fondation Giacometti, Paris

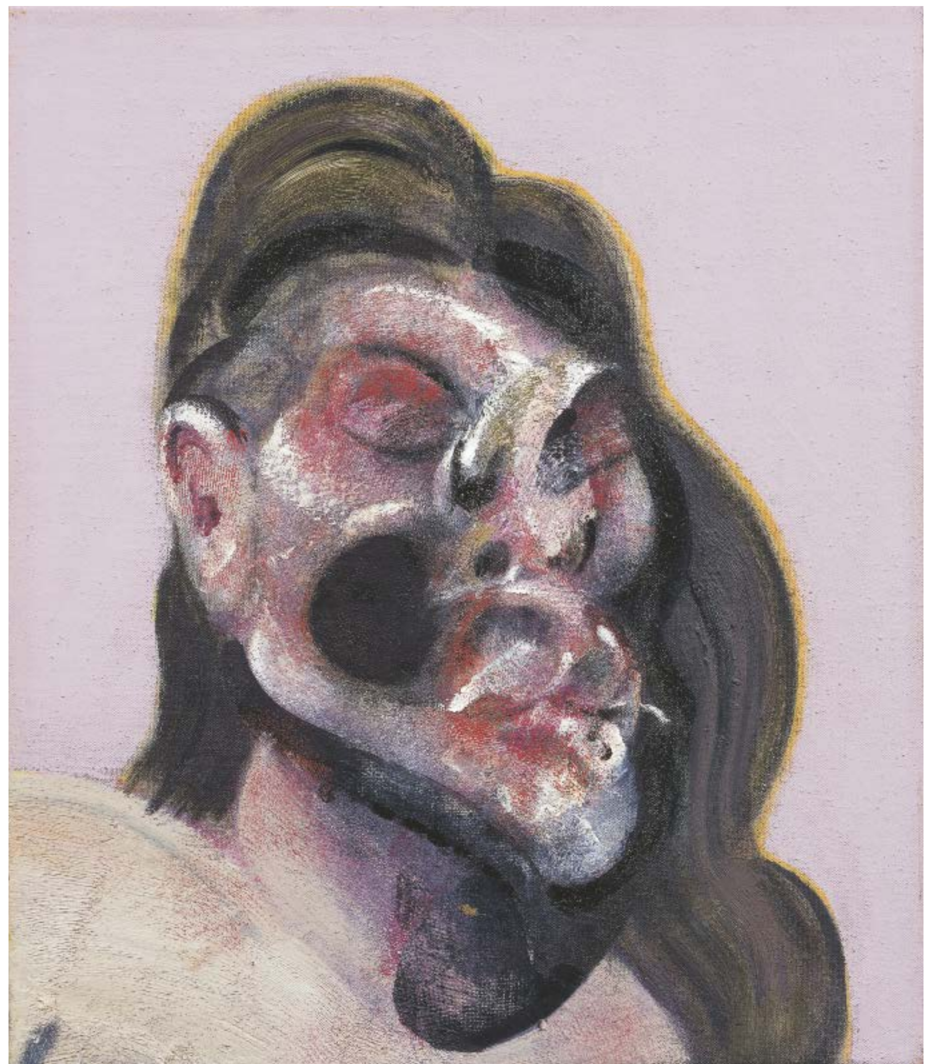


 Francis Bacon, *Portrait of Man with Glasses IV*, 1963, oil on canvas, 33.8 × 28.8 cm, private collection

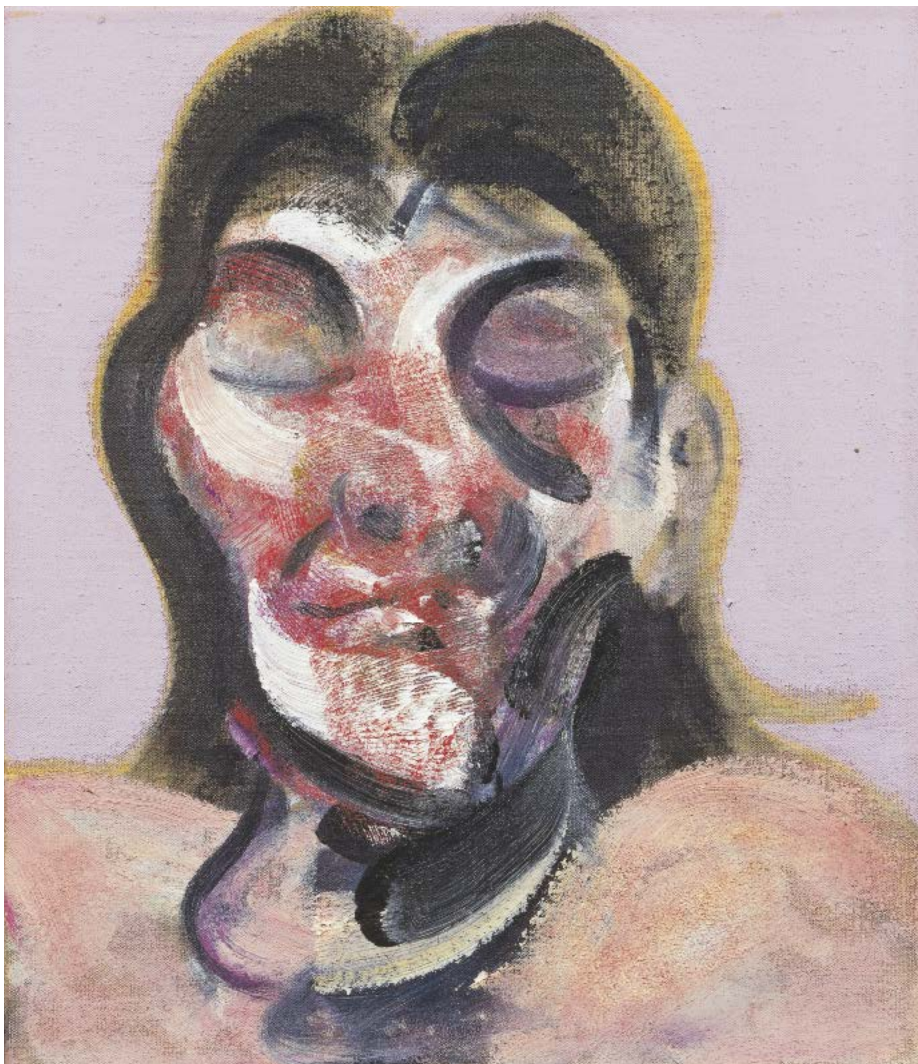
Alberto Giacometti, *Buste de femme aux bras croisés (Francine Torrent)*, 1964, bronze, 51.7 × 25.7 × 20.9 cm, Fondation Giacometti, Paris

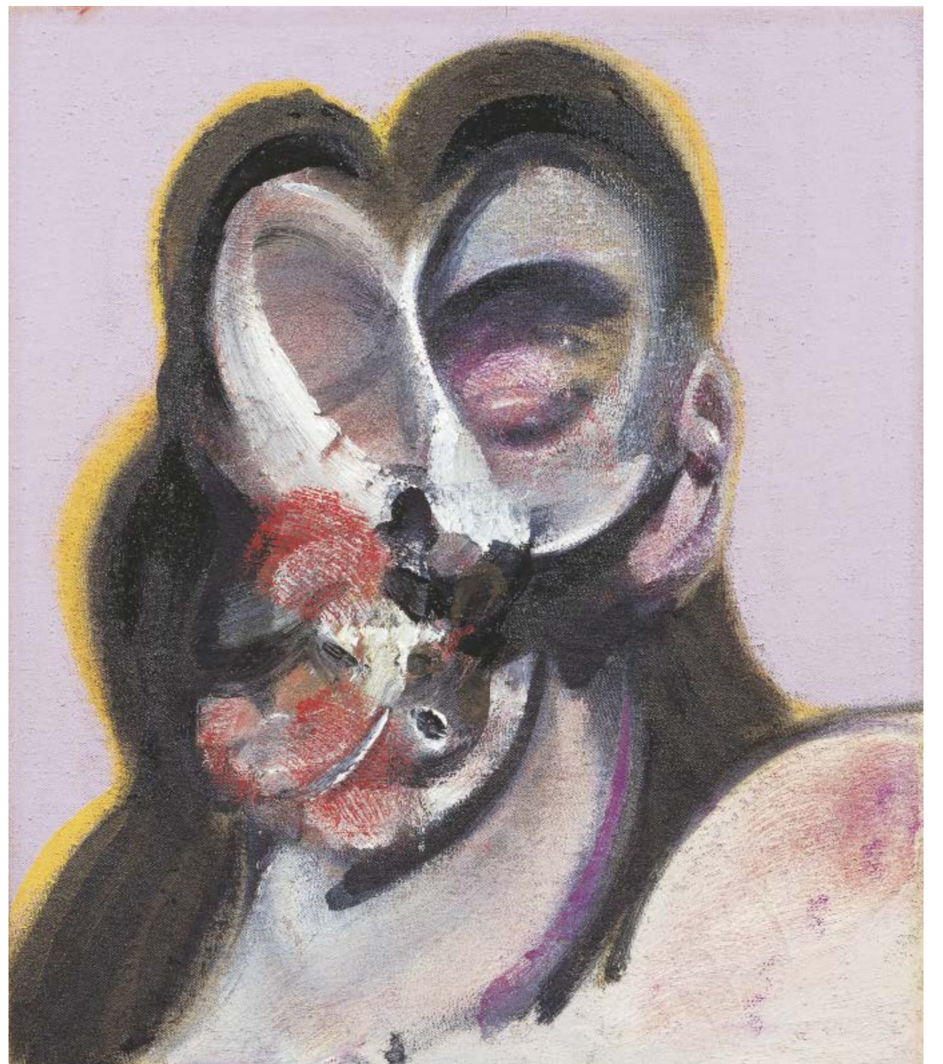
Alberto Giacometti, *Buste de Yanaihara (II)*, 1961, plaster, 36 × 33.5 × 15 cm, Fondation Giacometti, Paris

Alberto Giacometti, *Buste d’Annette (dit Venise)*, 1962, plaster, 47.3 × 27.5 × 16.4 cm, Fondation Giacometti, Paris

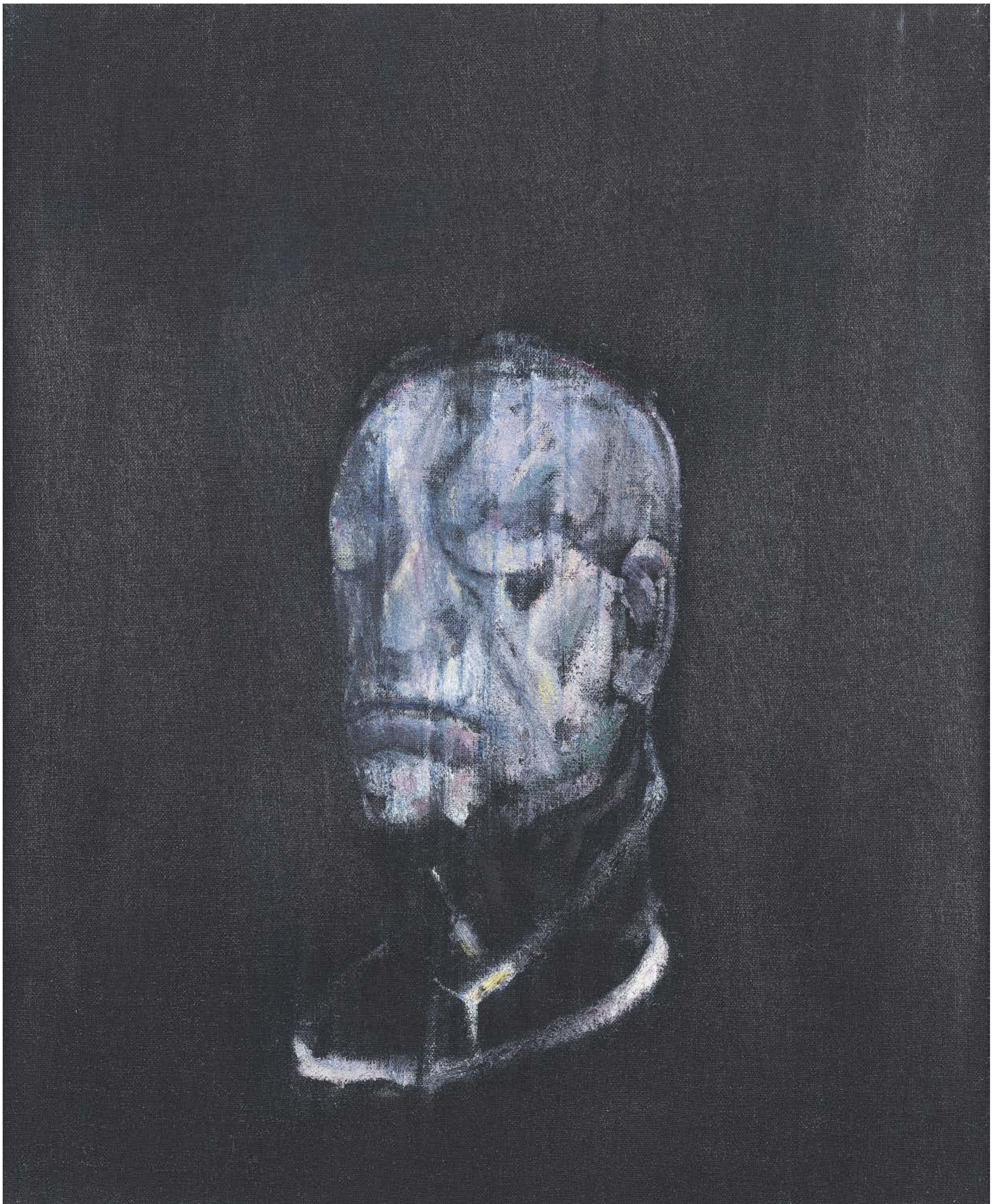


Francis Bacon, *Three Studies of Henrietta Moraes*, 1969, oil on canvas, triptych, 35.5 × 30.5 cm each, private collection





Alberto Giacometti, *Tête de Diego*, ca. 1937, bronze, 19.1 × 11.8 × 16.8 cm, Fondation Giacometti, Paris



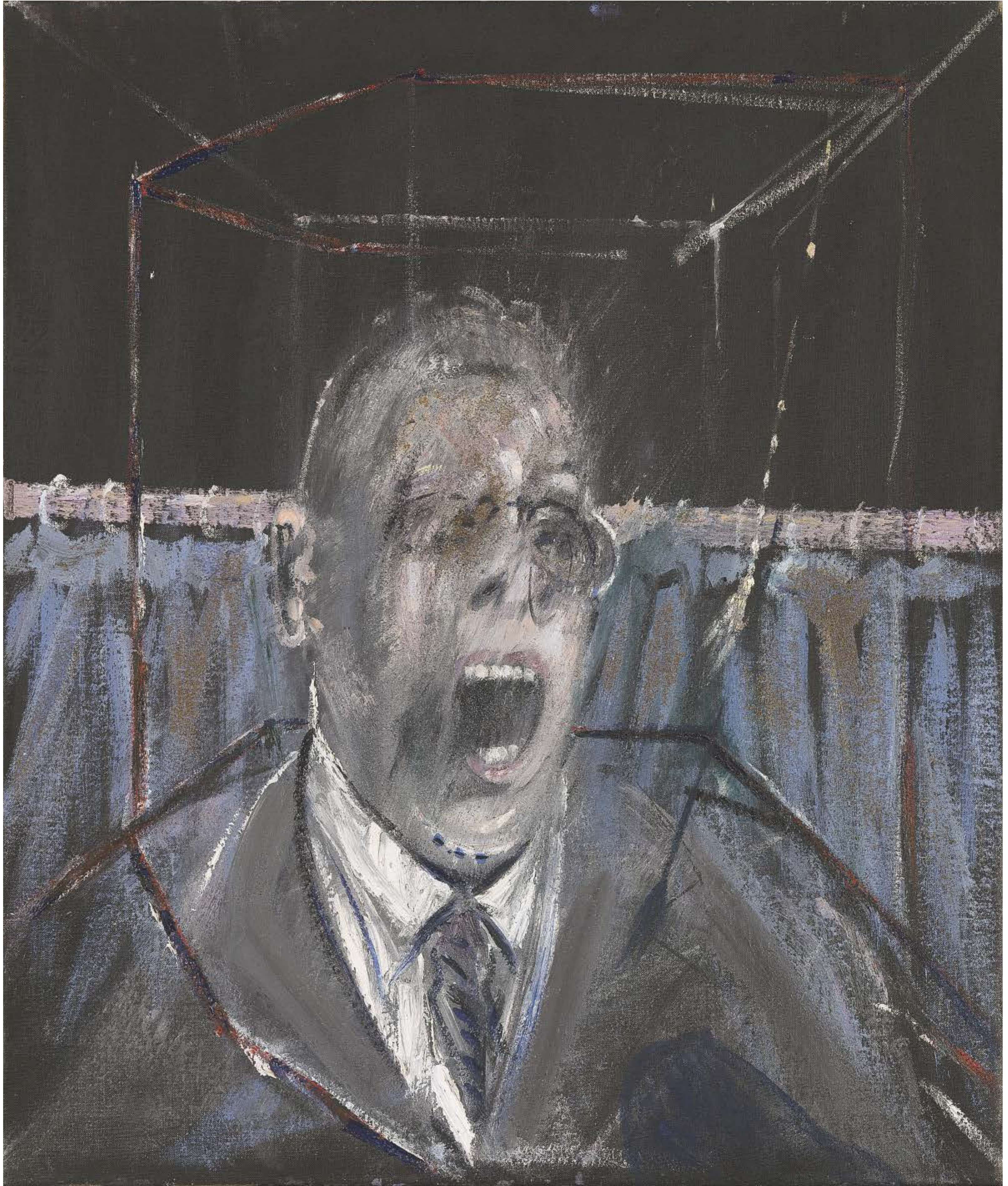
97 Francis Bacon, *Study for Portrait III (after the Life Mask of William Blake)*, 1955, oil on canvas, 61 × 51 cm, private collection

Alberto Giacometti, *Buste de Diego d'après nature*, 1951, bronze, 26.8 × 21.5 × 12.1 cm, Fondation Giacometti, Paris

 Alberto Giacometti, *Petit buste d'Annette*, ca. 1951, plaster, painted, 21.5 × 14.5 × 9.4 cm, Fondation Giacometti, Paris

Alberto Giacometti, *Tête d'homme (Lotar I)*, 1964–65, bronze, 26.1 × 28 × 11 cm, Fondation Giacometti, Paris

Alberto Giacometti, *Tête d'homme (fragment)*, n.d., plaster, painted, 8 × 3 × 4.7 cm, Fondation Giacometti, Paris



Francis Bacon, *Study for a Portrait*, 1952, oil on canvas, 66.1 × 56.1 cm,
Tate, bequeathed by Simon Sainsbury 2006, accessioned 2008

Francis Bacon, *Head III*, 1949, oil on canvas, 81 × 66 cm, private collection

Alberto Giacometti, *Etude pour la tête du colonel Rol-Tanguy*, 1946, plaster, 6.5 × 2.3 × 3.7 cm, Fondation Giacometti, Paris

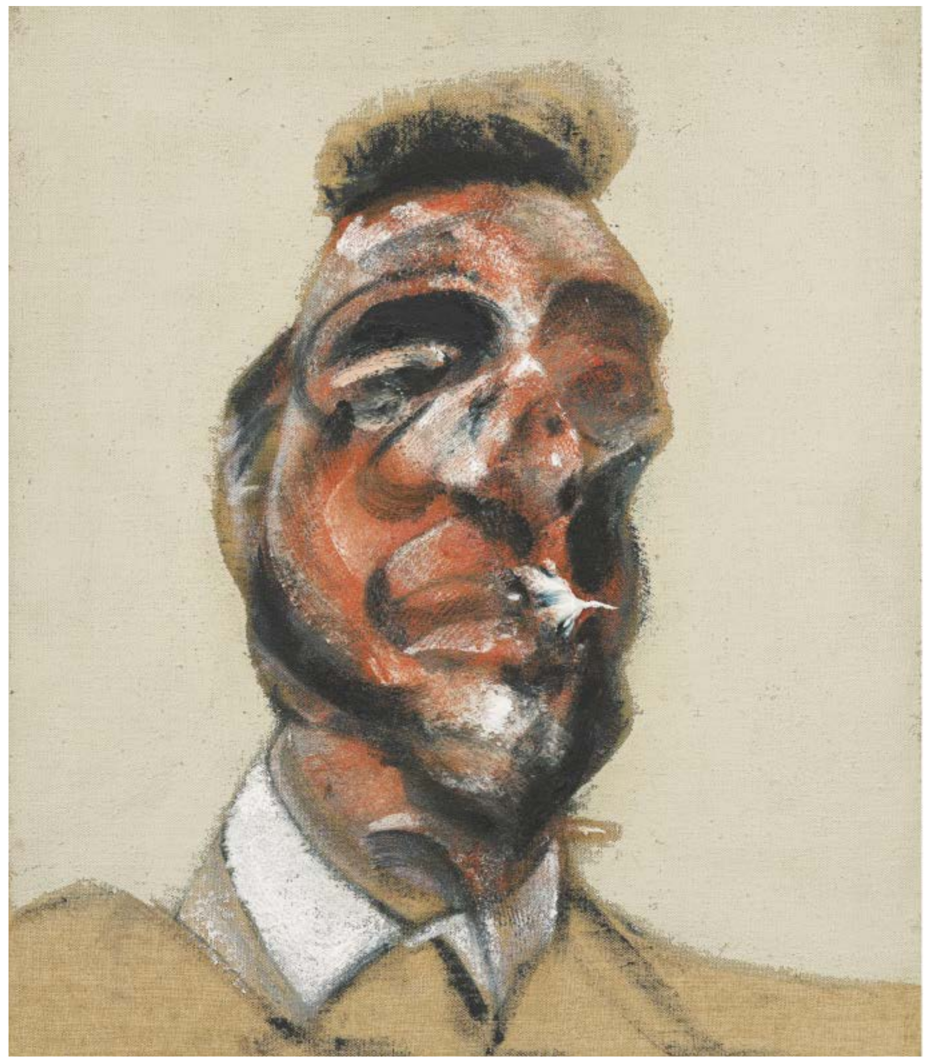
Alberto Giacometti, *Grande tête*, 1958, plaster, painted, 58.1 × 26.4 × 22.5 cm, Fondation Giacometti, Paris

Alberto Giacometti, *Tête d'homme sur double socle (étude pour la tête du colonel Rol-Tanguy)*, 1946, plaster, 9.2 × 4.6 × 4.7 cm, Fondation Giacometti, Paris

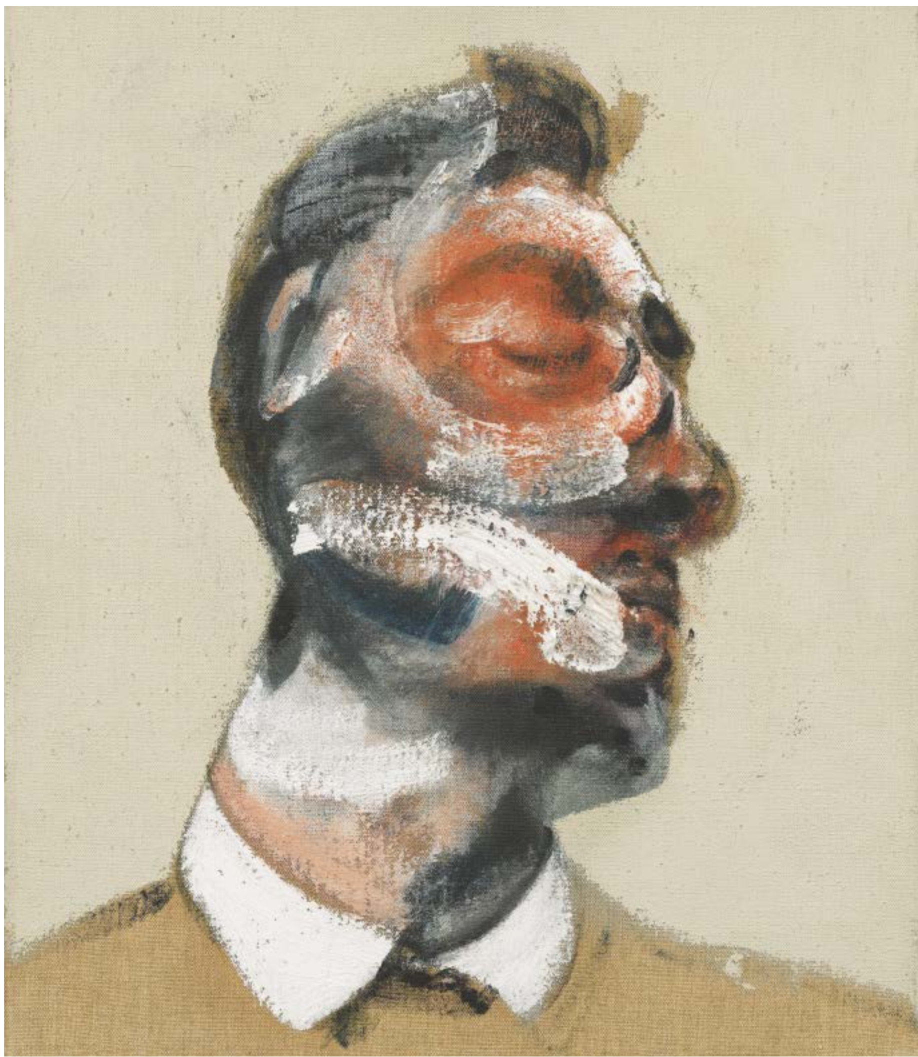
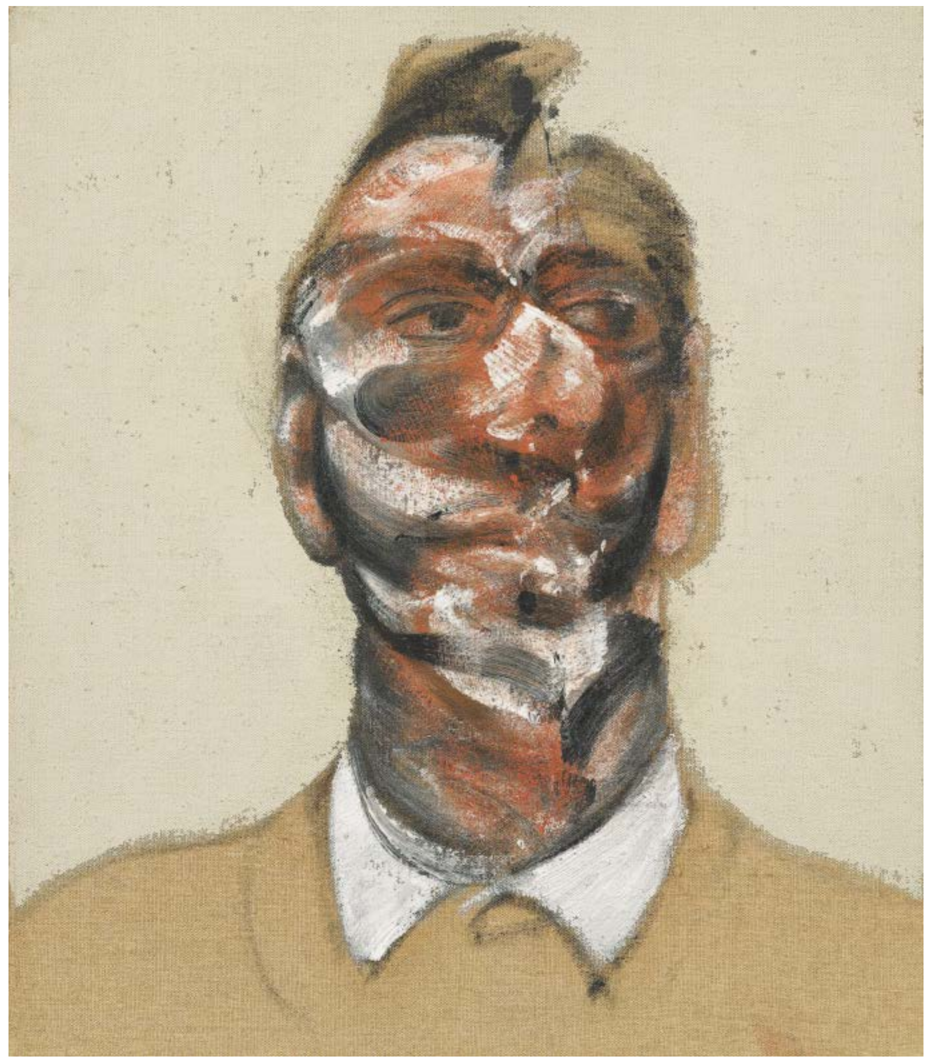
Alberto Giacometti, *Tête d'homme sur double socle (étude pour la tête du colonel Rol-Tanguy)*, 1946, plaster, 15 × 6.5 × 7.7 cm, Fondation Giacometti, Paris

Alberto Giacometti, *Petit buste de Silvio sur socle*, 1944–45, bronze, 11.2 × 5.6 × 6 cm, Fondation Giacometti, Paris

109 Alberto Giacometti, *Petit buste de Silvio sur double socle*, ca. 1943–44, bronze, 18.3 × 12.8 × 11.5 cm, Fondation Giacometti, Paris



Francis Bacon, *Three Studies for Portrait of George Dyer (on light ground)*, 1964, oil on canvas, triptych, 35.5 × 30.5 cm each, courtesy Cingilli Collection, London

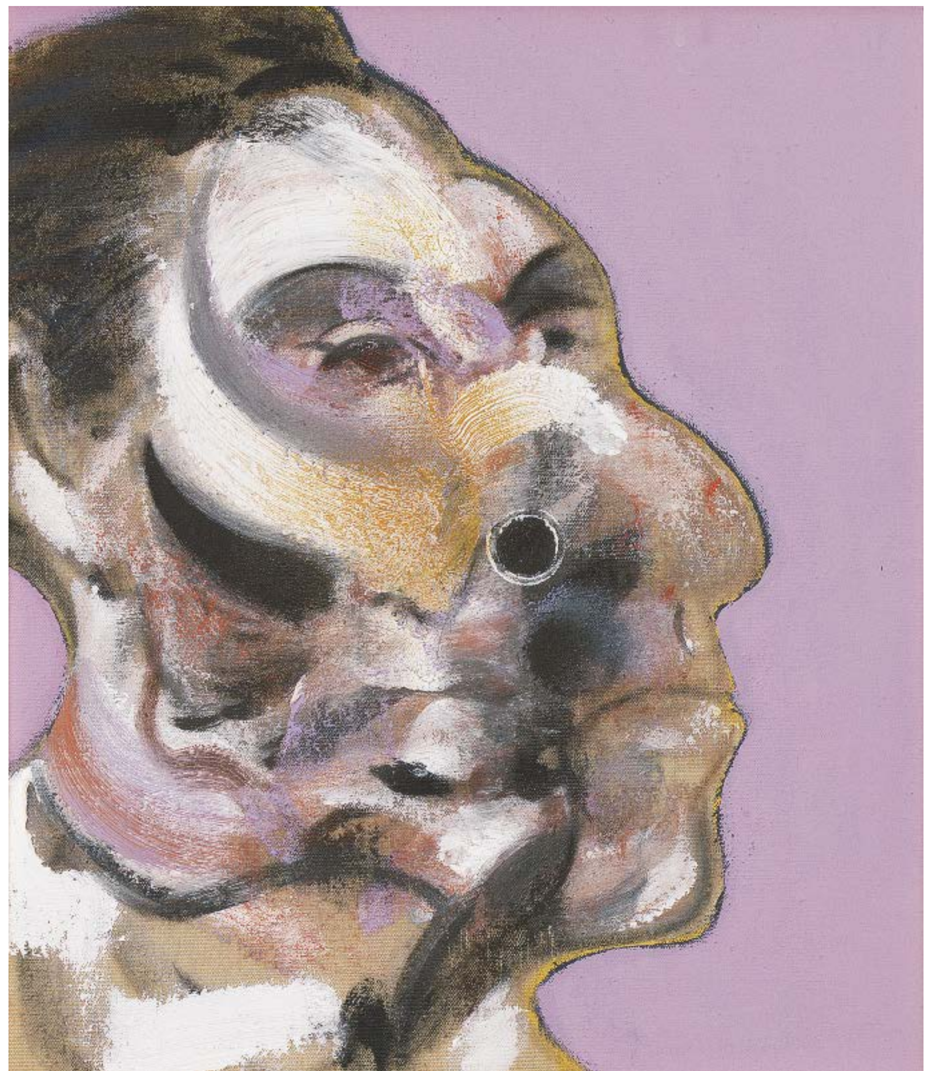



Alberto Giacometti, *Petit buste d’Annette*, 1946, bronze, 16 × 13.6 × 8.5 cm, Fondation Giacometti, Paris

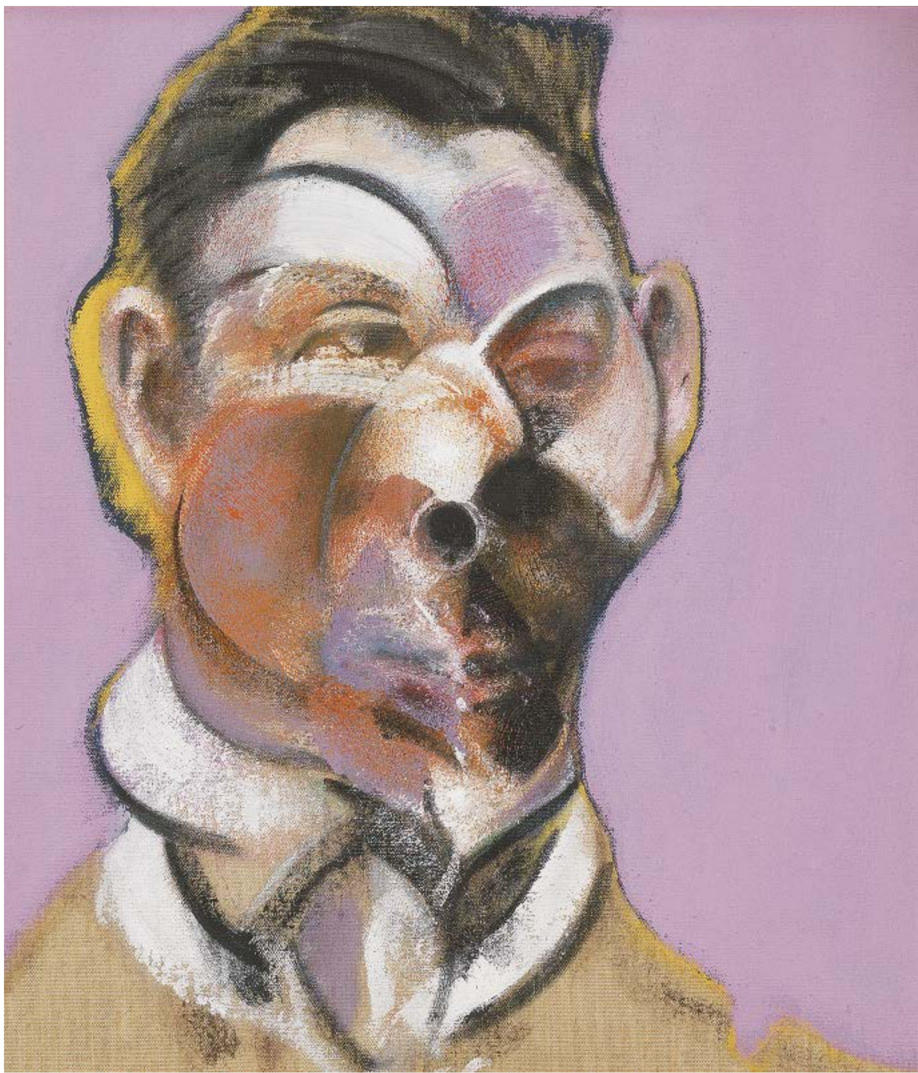
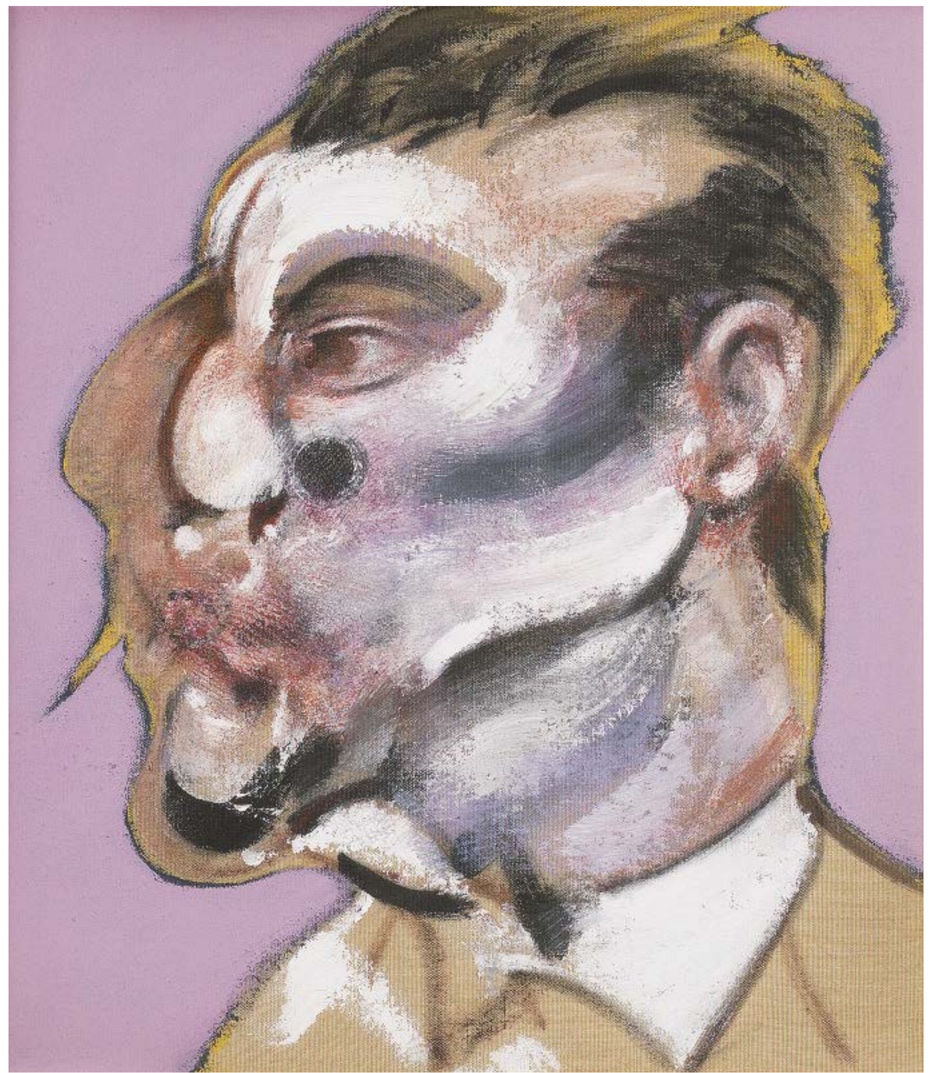
113 Alberto Giacometti, *Tête sur socle (dite Tête sans crâne)*, ca. 1958, bronze, 43.3 × 8.1 × 10.6 cm, Fondation Giacometti, Paris

Alberto Giacometti, *Tête d'homme*, 1948–50, bronze, 28.1 × 8 × 9.9 cm, Fondation Giacometti, Paris

Alberto Giacometti, *Tête de Marie-Laure de Noailles sur double socle*, 1946, bronze, 30.4 × 8.9 × 10.6 cm, Fondation Giacometti, Paris

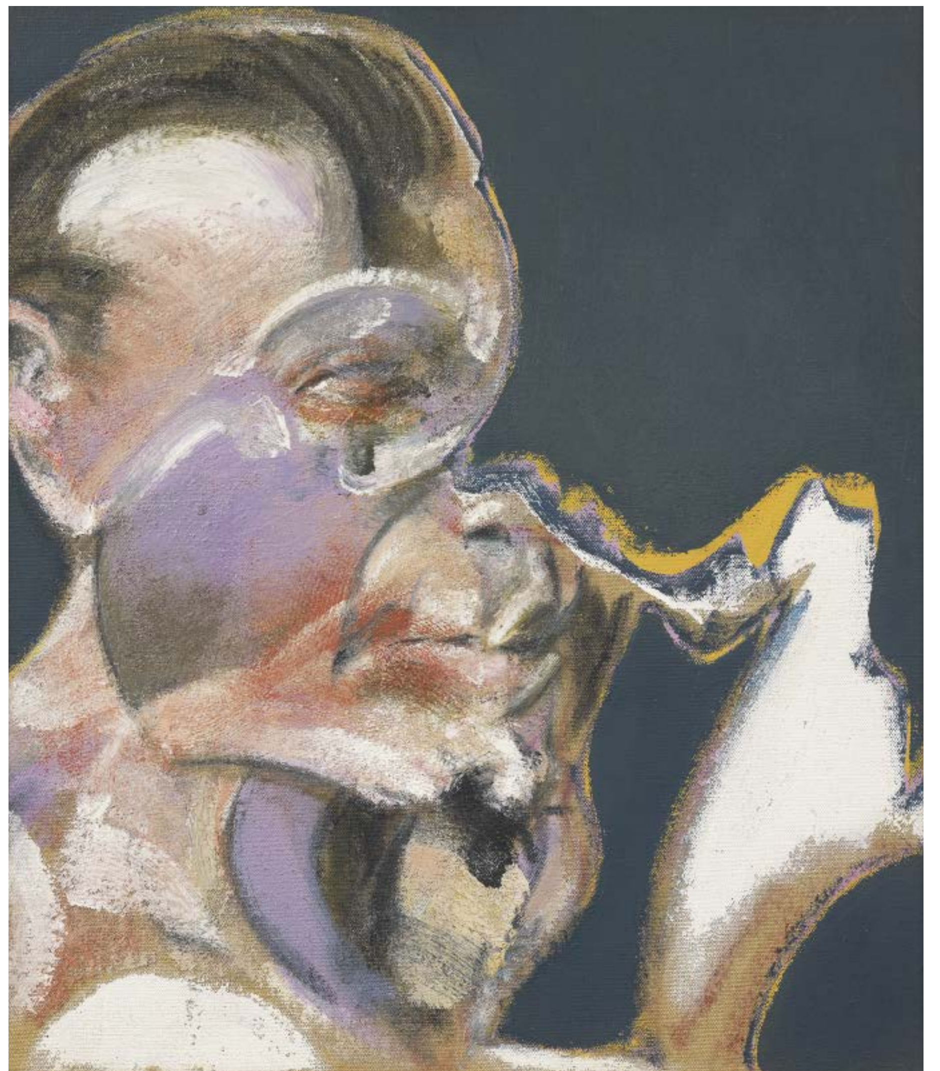


Francis Bacon, *Three Studies of George Dyer*, 1969, oil on canvas, triptych, 35.5 × 30.5 cm each, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebaek, Denmark, gift of the New Carlsberg Foundation

Alberto Giacometti, *Simone de Beauvoir*, 1946, bronze, 13.4 × 4 × 4.1 cm, Fondation Giacometti, Paris

 Alberto Giacometti, *Diego (tête au col roulé)*, 1954, bronze, 33.5 × 13 × 13.5 cm, Fondation Giacometti, Paris



Francis Bacon, *Three Studies for Portraits (including Self-Portrait)*, 1969, oil on canvas, triptych, 35.5 × 30.5 cm each, private collection

Time and Space

The late work of Alberto Giacometti, above all his famous "thin" figures with their rough, pitted surfaces, only became possible when Giacometti had found what he considered a satisfactory artistic answer to the problem, which had occupied him for so long, of how to represent a possible congruence of space and time. In his famous, enigmatic text "Le rêve, le Sphinx et la mort de T.," published in the periodical *Labyrinthe* in 1946, he described his vision in compelling terms: "Suddenly, I had the feeling that all the events existed simultaneously around me. Time became horizontal and circular, it was space at the same time, and I tried to depict it."[1]

Giacometti's drawing of the space-time disk (fig. p. 125) has various precursors in his work.[2] In 1946 he contrived to reconcile the depiction of reality with the possibility of showing movement. The "stable reality," referred to in the preceding chapters, was strictly three-dimensional in relation to the artist himself, as the zero point in the coordinate system of his perception. Basing his approach on the experience of seeing Isabel Rawsthorne on the street, he had represented the figures as small, exactly as he saw them from a distance. Now he succeeded in adding the aspect of time, manifested in motion, to adequately visualize the four-dimensional space-time continuum.

This was achieved, first, by modifying the distance between the artist and the object: the example of *Femme au chariot* has already been mentioned in the chapter on Isabel Rawsthorne. A second discovery, which had a decisive influence on Giacometti, occurred during a visit to the cinema. Perhaps the most vivid description of this experience is found in a 1961 interview by Pierre Schneider, in which Giacometti says:

"Then the way everything looked became transformed, as if movement was no more than a series of points of stillness. When a person was talking there was no movement, stillnesses followed one another, completely detached one from another—moments of stillness which,

after all, could go on for an eternity, broken and followed by another stillness. I remember once, ordering something at a café, the waiter opening his mouth and saying something or other; that movement of the mouth seemed to me to be a succession of immobile discontinuous moments, completely discontinuous. The man became a sort of total stranger, mechanical."[3]

The idea of movement as a succession of immobile moments bears an astonishing similarity to the description of four-dimensional space-time in theoretical physics.[4] The ability to depict one of these moments in isolation implied that the artist had found a means of conceiving it as part of a sequence of movement. This is important for the reception of Giacometti's works after 1945, which represent the reality of movement: time and space have become one. This applies not only to the figures, such as *Homme qui marche* (cat. pp. 127 and 133), that show a momentary detail from a pattern of movement, but also to the standing women, who represent a potential for movement that is—or may be—arrested by their connection with the unusually large baseplates.

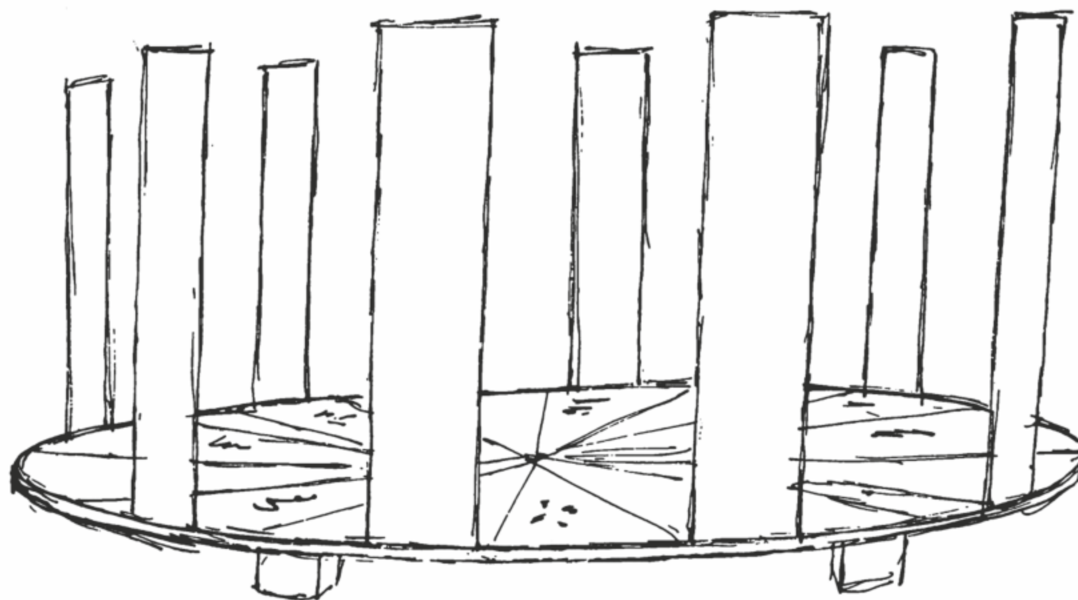
Are there any analogies between Giacometti's thinking and the ideas of Francis Bacon? Paintings such as *Lying Figure* (cat. p. 140) certainly show an astonishing similarity to Giacometti's space-time disk. The background consists of a bay window of the kind typically found in British houses, together with the black surfaces of drawn blinds, but the image strongly recalls Giacometti's drawing with the stelae, especially since the painted figure appears to be lying on a revolving disk. It is not known, however, whether Bacon was familiar with Giacometti's publication. His library contained a collection of Giacometti's writings, albeit in an edition published much later, in 1990.

Bacon was perhaps exposed to fewer formal pressures than Giacometti. But there is a noticeable tendency to question the illusion of three-dimensionality that he himself pursued in his work. Bacon tried repeatedly to visualize time as a factor, manifesting itself in the depiction of movement—through the sweeping brushstrokes, as already mentioned, that emphasize the dynamic element in his pictures, or through the simple inclusion of an arrow, drawing attention to the writhing of the bodies in the triptych *Three Studies of Figures on Beds* (cat. pp. 135–37).

Figure in Movement (cat. p. 145) indicates the extent to which Bacon dedicated himself to artistic problems of this kind, and to which he succeeded, like Giacometti, in exploding the traditional confines of the

picture. The figure—if it can be called that—in the center, unpleasantly distorted and defying categorization, burgeons out over a fragmented disk that stands in an apparently symmetrical illusionist "frame." A left-pointing arrow indicates the direction of movement. In the background, a further creature is visible on the right, which may—conceivably—be observing the scene from a different perspective. And then there is the disk to the left of the picture's center, apparently a kind of magnifying glass, through which part of the figure is enlarged. The magnifying glass motif is repeated on the right, focusing on what appears to be a horribly mangled head. A much smaller disk (a further magnifying glass?) can be seen in front of the strange creature in the background. On the two-dimensional surface of the picture, Bacon develops a three-dimensional illusion of space and movement. Everything is designed to be seen from different angles and also at different distances, making objects smaller or larger.

Proximity and distance, movement, space, and time: the tasks untiringly addressed by the individualists Giacometti and Bacon show a degree of similarity that is astonishing.



Alberto Giacometti's space-time disk, from "Le rêve, le Sphinx et la mort de T.," 1946

1 Alberto Giacometti, "The Dream, the Sphinx, and the Death of T.," in *Alberto Giacometti: A Retrospective*, ed. Véronique Wiesinger, exh. cat. Museo Picasso Málaga (Barcelona, 2012), pp. 272–77, here p. 276. Originally published as "Le rêve, le Sphinx et la mort de T.," *Labyrinthe*, nos. 22–23 (December 1946). On the further references by Giacometti to the congruence of time and space, see Ulf Küster, *Alberto Giacometti: Space, Figure, Time* (Ostfildern, 2009), pp. 74–76.

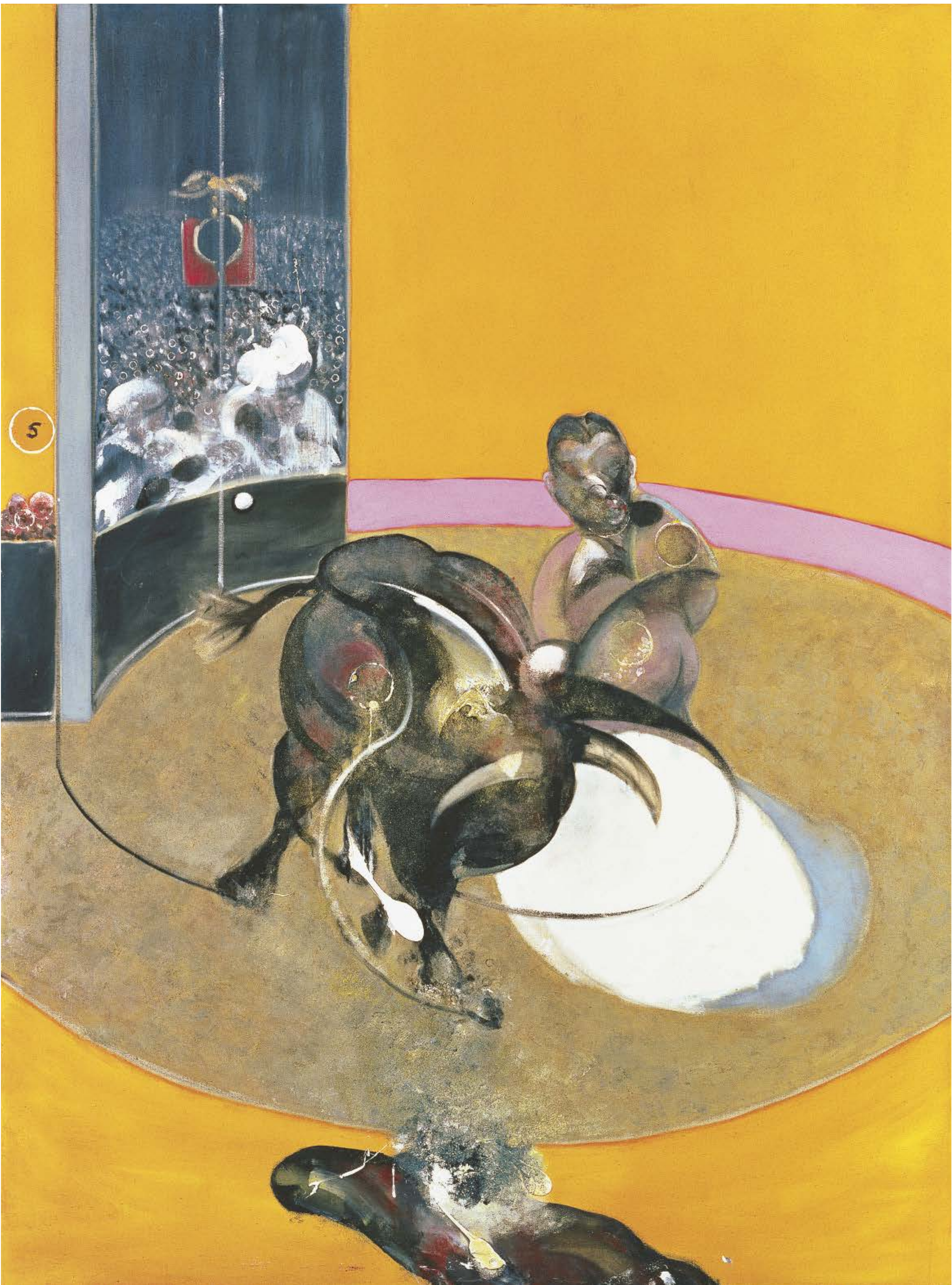
2 Cf. Küster 2009 (see note 1), pp. 74–75 and pp. 76–77.

3 Alberto Giacometti, "My Long March," interview by Pierre Schneider, in *Alberto Giacometti: Works, Writings, Interviews*, ed. Ángel González (Barcelona, 2006), pp. 139–43, here p. 141. Originally published as "'Ma longue marche' par Alberto Giacometti," *L'Express*, no. 521 (June 8, 1961).

4 Cf. the introduction to Norbert Dragon, *Geometrie der Relativitätstheorie*, p. 1, https://www.itp.uni-hannover.de/fileadmin/arbeitsgruppen/dragon/relativ2.pdf (accessed February 8, 2018).

Alberto Giacometti, *Homme qui marche II*, 1960, plaster, 188.5 × 29.1 × 111.2 cm, Fondation Giacometti, Paris

Francis Bacon, *Two Studies from the Human Body*, 1974–75, oil and dry transfer lettering on canvas, 198 × 147.3 cm, private collection



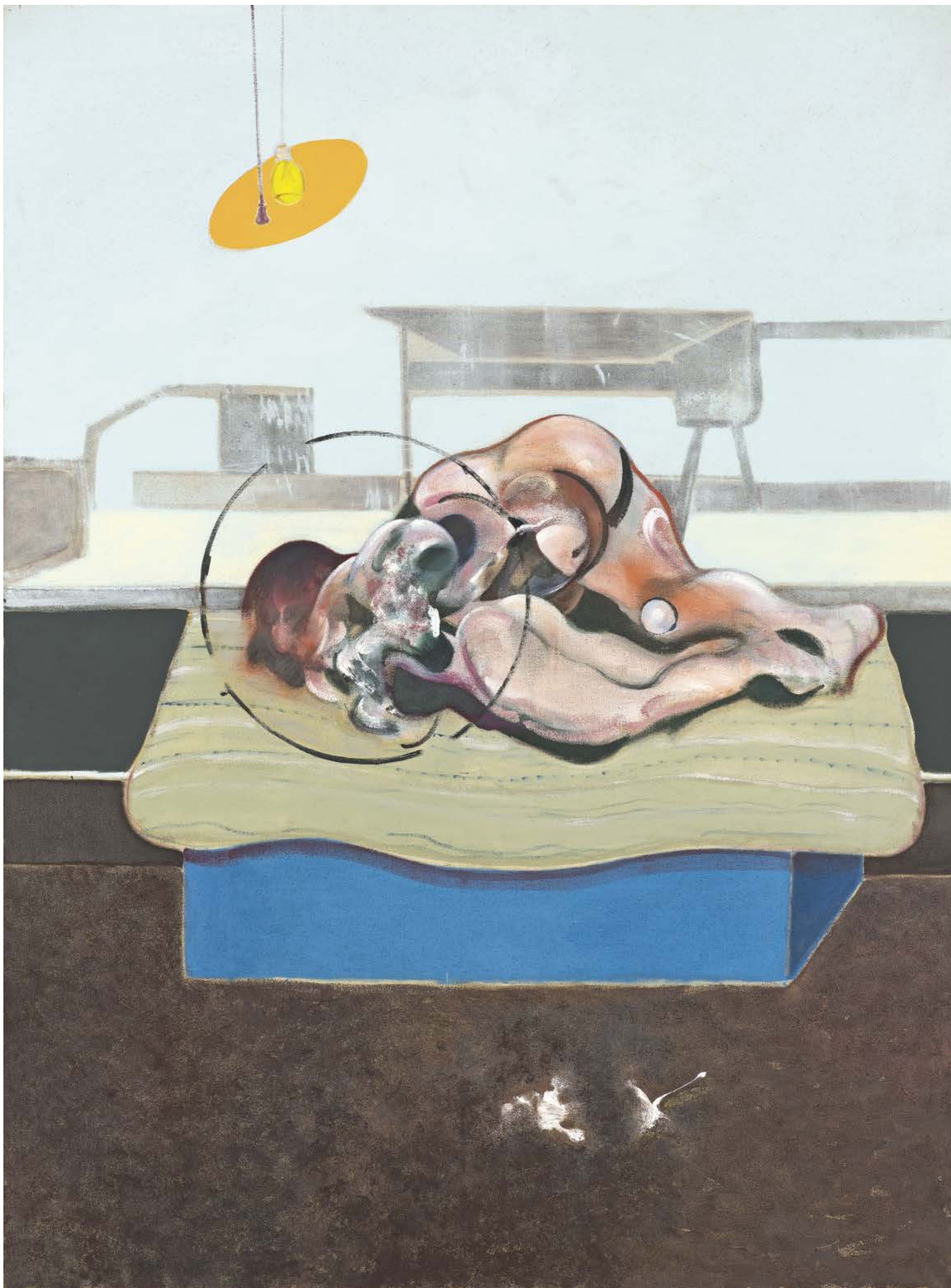
Francis Bacon, *Study for Bullfight No. 2*, 1969, oil on canvas, 198.3 × 147.5 cm, Museum of Fine Arts of Lyon

Alberto Giacometti, *Grande femme III*, 1960, bronze, 235.8 × 32.3 × 54 cm, Fondation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel, Beyeler Collection

131 Alberto Giacometti, *Grande femme IV*, 1960, bronze, 269 × 33 × 57.5 cm, Fondation Beyeler, Riehen / Basel, Beyeler Collection

Alberto Giacometti, *Grande tête*, 1960, bronze, 94.6 × 30.9 × 34.7 cm, Fondation Beyeler, Riehen / Basel, Beyeler Collection

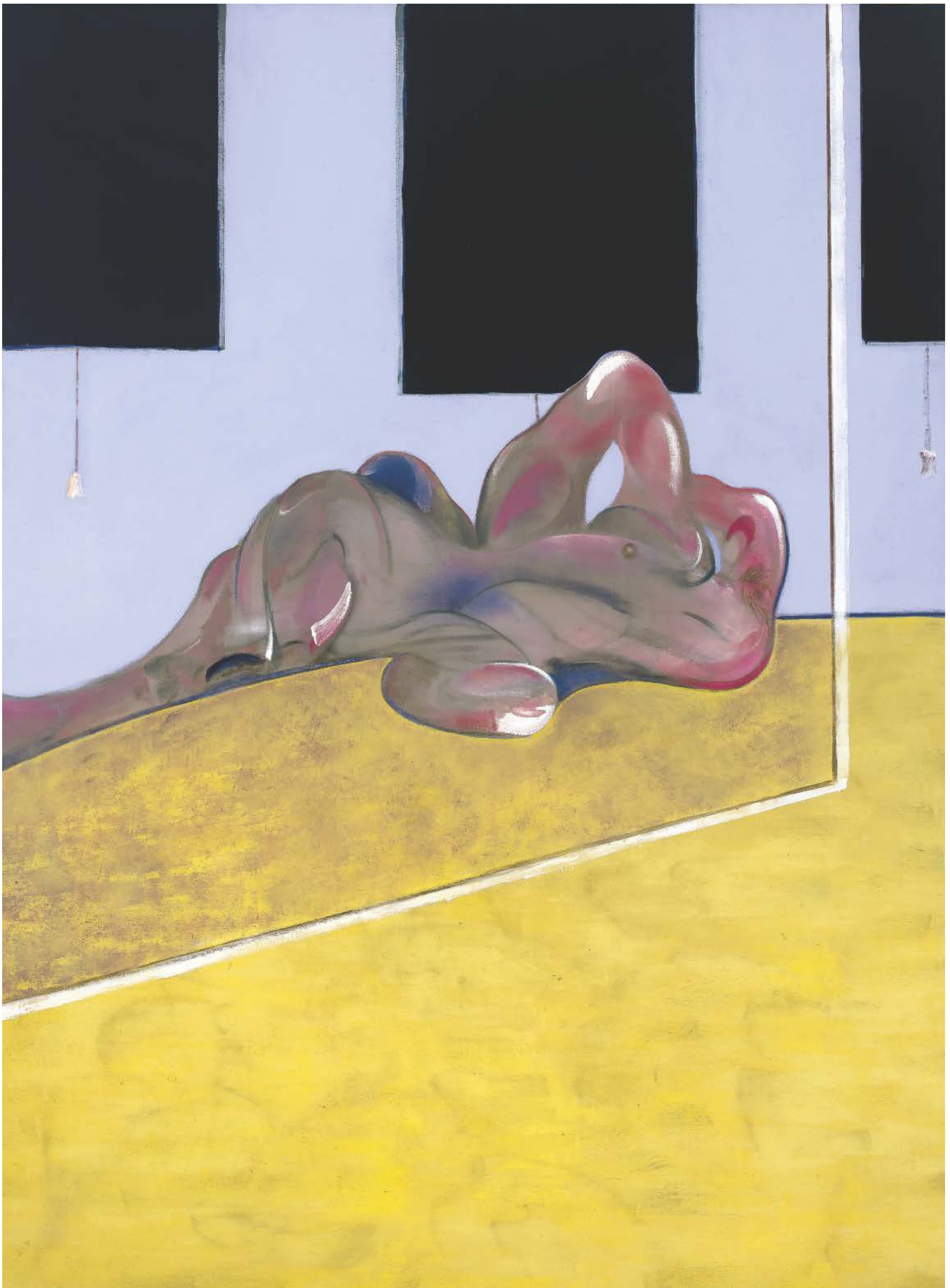
Alberto Giacometti, *Homme qui marche II*, 1960, bronze, 188.5 × 29.1 × 111.2 cm, Fondation Beyeler, Riehen / Basel, Beyeler Collection



Francis Bacon, *Three Studies of Figures on Beds*, 1972, oil and pastel on canvas, triptych, 198 × 147.5 cm each, Esther Grether Family Collection

Francis Bacon, *Portrait of George Dyer Riding a Bicycle*, 1966, oil and sand on canvas, 198 × 147.5 cm,
Fondation Beyeler, Riehen / Basel, Beyeler Collection

Francis Bacon, *Lying Figure*, 1961, oil on canvas, 198 × 142 cm, private collection, Ulmberg

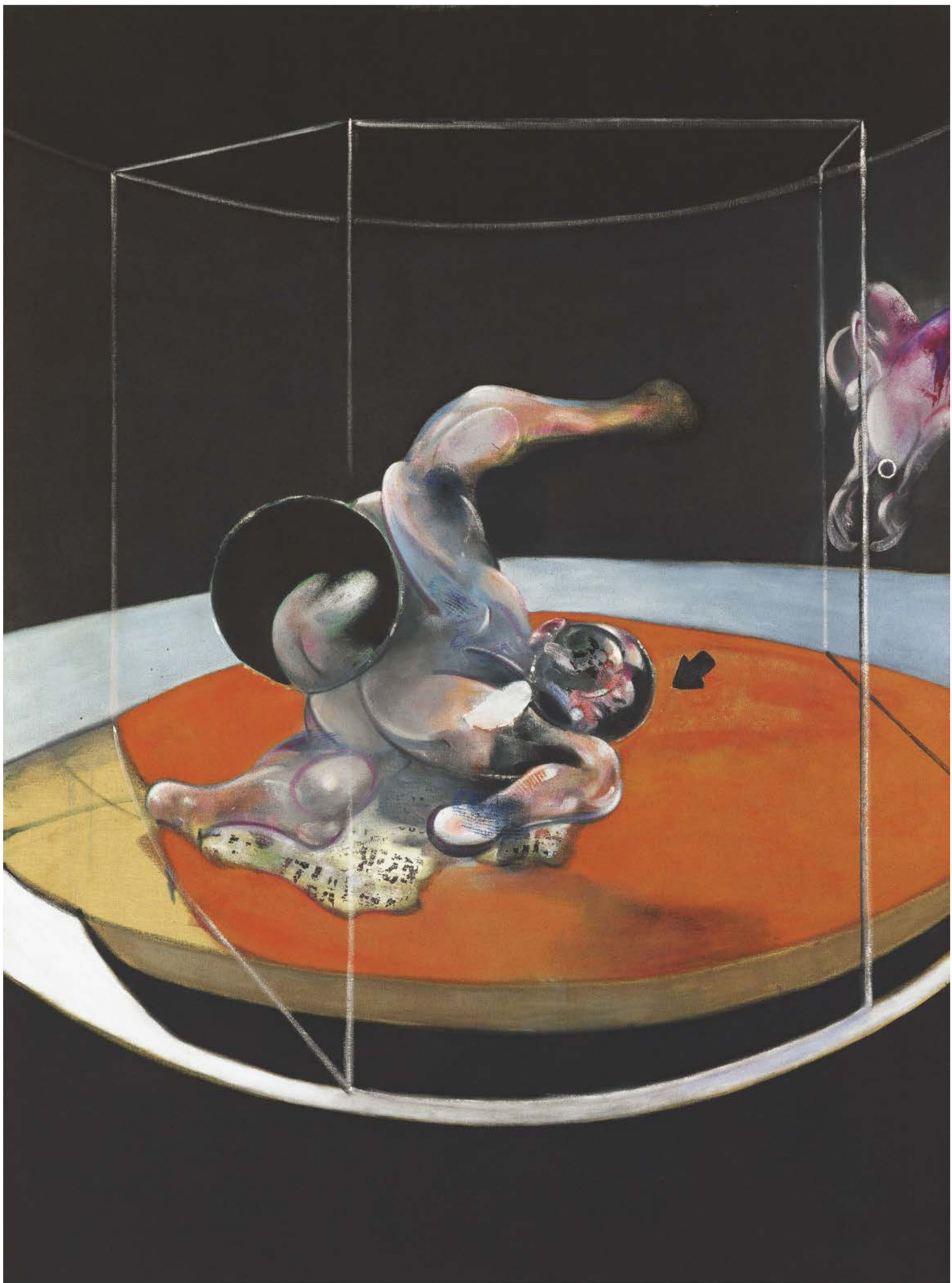


141 Francis Bacon, *Lying Figure in a Mirror*, 1971, oil and sand on canvas, 198 × 147.5 cm, Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao

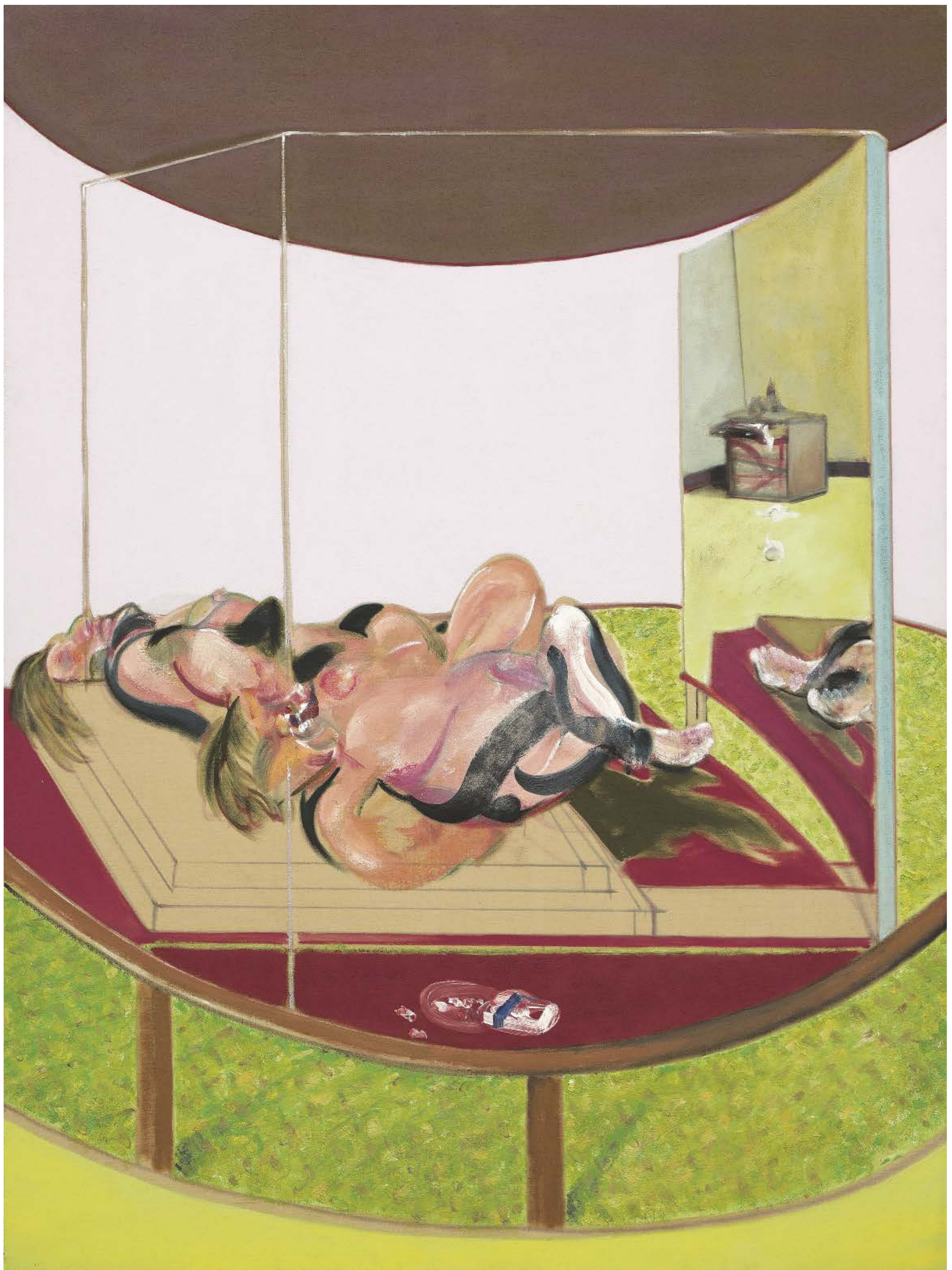
Alberto Giacometti, *Femme de Venise I*, 1956, plaster, 108.5 × 17 × 30 cm, Fondation Giacometti, Paris;
Femme de Venise V, 1956, plaster, painted, 113.5 × 14.5 × 31.8 cm, Fondation Giacometti, Paris

Alberto Giacometti, *Femme de Venise III*, 1956, bronze, 118.5 × 17.8 × 35.1 cm, Fondation Giacometti, Paris;
Femme de Venise VIII, 1956, bronze, 121 × 15.8 × 33.7 cm, Fondation Beyeler, Riehen / Basel, Beyeler Collection

Alberto Giacometti, *Femme debout*, 1957, bronze, 131.5 × 19 × 32.5 cm, Fondation Giacometti, Paris



 Francis Bacon, *Figure in Movement*, 1976, oil and dry transfer lettering on canvas, 198 × 147.5 cm, private collection



Francis Bacon, *Triptych*, 1967, oil on canvas, triptych, left 198.8 × 148.3 cm, center and right 198.8 × 148 cm, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, gift of the Joseph H. Hirshhorn Foundation, 1972

Alberto Giacometti, *Annette X*, 1965, bronze, 43.9 × 18.8 × 13.7 cm, Fondation Giacometti, Paris

Francis Bacon, *In Memory of George Dyer*, 1971, oil and dry transfer lettering on canvas, triptych, 198 × 147.5 cm each, Fondation Beyeler, Riehen / Basel, Beyeler Collection

Love and Aggression

Many of Alberto Giacometti's and Francis Bacon's works show a disturbing ambivalence. On the one hand, there is artistic brilliance, passion, intensity, and a perfect mastery of the means of expression, and on the other hand, a kind of will to destruction. The deep scars left by Giacometti's attacks with the modeling knife on his plaster busts indicate a high level of aggression, directed possibly against the model but certainly against his own work and therefore against the artist himself. Looking at Bacon's pictures, a similar impression emerges: bodies and faces are distorted and mutilated with seemingly unbelievable brutality, as if the artist were venting his self-hatred on the models and the motifs, or on the human figure in general. In the work of both artists, established aesthetic categories are overturned, to an astonishing degree. Does this permit the drawing of conclusions about their character or their private life? Here, one must be cautious: conducting posthumous psychological analysis of artists on the basis of their work is inacceptable. Artistic creation is a conscious process, not an outpouring of the unconscious. What Bacon and Giacometti reveal here is the nocturnal side of human existence: in each of us there is a Dr. Jekyll and a Mr. Hyde, a duality of light and dark, good and evil. That which we love, we often seek to destroy.

Alberto Giacometti, *Buste d'homme*, 1961, plaster, 46.8 × 28 × 15.3 cm, Fondation Giacometti, Paris

 Alberto Giacometti, *Buste d'Annette VII*, 1962, plaster, 61.5 × 28.1 × 21.7 cm, Fondation Giacometti, Paris

Francis Bacon, *Lying Figure*, 1969, oil on canvas, 198 × 147.5 cm, Fondation Beyeler, Riehen / Basel, Beyeler Collection

 Alberto Giacometti, *Buste d'Annette IV*, 1962, plaster, 59.6 × 24.9 × 23 cm, Fondation Giacometti, Paris

Alberto Giacometti, *Buste d'homme (dit New York II)*, 1965, plaster, 47.5 × 25.2 × 16.5 cm, Fondation Giacometti, Paris

 Alberto Giacometti, *Buste d'homme (dit New York I)*, 1965, plaster, 55 × 28.4 × 16.3 cm, Fondation Giacometti, Paris

Francis Bacon, *Triptych Inspired by the Oresteia of Aeschylus*, 1981, oil on canvas, triptych, 198 × 147.5 cm each, Astrup Fearnley Collection, Oslo

Francis Bacon and Alberto Giacometti:
Parallel Visions of a Terrible Truth
Michael Peppiatt

In the postwar British art world, Alberto Giacometti enjoyed the status of a hero. Just as Paris itself seemed grittier, sexier, and more daring than London in that bleak era of privation, so its art appeared to delve more deeply into the "human condition" and the philosophical problems that confronted a generation that, after years of destruction and debasement, now had to deal durably with survival. Of all the artists across the Channel, none had the aura of Giacometti as he toiled nightly in the solitude of his cave-like studio to forge a new image of man emerging from the rubble of civilization.

That aura only increased for many British artists as the new wave of American abstraction began to unfurl over Europe and Giacometti stood out as the figurative tradition's prime defender. Francis Bacon and several of his contemporaries (not least Henry Moore[1]) had been long aware of Giacometti's importance, both as an artist and as a figurehead in the complex civil war of figuration versus abstraction that was thenceforth to characterize modern art. The youngest British artists just coming of age professionally were also fascinated by the concept of Giacometti not only as the defining sculptor of their time but also as a leading exponent of the seductive new cultural movement called existentialism (from which Giacometti later sought to distance himself). Consequently, no sooner had cross-Channel borders reopened than Eduardo Paolozzi, Lucian Freud, and William Turnbull beat a direct path to the revered sculptor's famously chaotic studio at 46 rue Hippolyte-Maindron, while other British artists, such as Frank Auerbach,[2] Leon Kossoff, Elisabeth Frink, and Bernard Meadows, continued to admire him from afar.

Partly as a result of their interest, Giacometti was also recognized by the official British art world. In 1949, the Tate Gallery acquired both a sculpture, *L'Homme qui pointe* (1947), and a painting, *Homme assis (Diego)* (1949).[3] A few adventurous private collectors, such as Peter Watson (who funded the influential literary review *Horizon*[4]) and Robert and Lisa Sainsbury (whose wealth derived from the eponymous grocery stores), also bought works of his. The Sainsburys, who collected Bacon's work as well, went on to establish a more personal relationship with Giacometti (having been introduced to him in 1949 by his first Parisian dealer, Pierre Loeb), and in 1955 they persuaded Giacometti to make portrait drawings of their two children. Characteristically, Giacometti deemed the drawings worthless and refused to accept money for them, until the Sainsburys solved the problem by sending a handsome, Aquascutum raincoat from London as a present for his wife, Annette.[5]

Gallery and museum exhibitions followed. Erica Brausen, whose Hanover Gallery had a reputation for choosing the most "advanced" art from the Continent, showed Giacometti's work on several occasions, as indeed she regularly exhibited Bacon from 1949 onward. Then, in 1955, the Arts Council dedicated an entire retrospective to Giacometti, with a catalogue introduction by Bacon's friend and commentator, the art critic David Sylvester.[6]

Thus Giacometti's reputation was already well established in Britain as Bacon began to come into his own in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Bacon avidly followed recent developments on the Paris art scene—which for him meant essentially Pablo Picasso's and Giacometti's latest work—by consulting the appropriate catalogues, talking to Francophile friends, and scanning the leading French art magazines, notably *Cahiers d'art*, available at Zwemmer's international bookshop on Charing Cross Road. Bacon also made trips to Paris, the city he loved above all others, and he would have frequented the cafés and brasseries in Saint-Germain-des-Prés and Montparnasse that Giacometti patronized. Indeed, on at least one occasion, Bacon actually saw Giacometti and went over to introduce himself and tell Giacometti how much he admired him and his work.[7] We also know that as early as September 1955, when he was staying at the Hôtel Martinez in Cannes, Bacon suddenly realized that Giacometti was sitting at the table next to his at dinner in a restaurant beside the port, though it sounds unlikely that the two men actually spoke on this occasion.[8]

A personal relationship between the two artists did not really get under way, in fact, until the following decade, when each had a retrospective show at the Tate, Bacon in 1962 and Giacometti in 1965. Numerous factors promoted closer ties between them, as we will see. Not only was the work of both men resolutely figurative in a period increasingly dominated by abstraction, they also drew inspiration directly from the history of Western art (a practice then much frowned upon as retrograde in "forward-thinking" artistic circles). Moreover, and perhaps most importantly, they had several bosom friends in common. Here Isabel Rawsthorne, a hard-drinking, fun-loving artist and model, emerges as unquestionably the key figure. She first met Giacometti in the 1930s, when (having modeled for Jacob Epstein and André Derain) she was already acting as a vital link between the Paris and London art worlds. Having been portrayed several times by both Giacometti and Bacon, and established close links with each of them, Rawsthorne made it a point of honor to bring them together. The ideal occasion arose when Giacometti began visiting London in the run-up to his big show at the Tate, enabling Rawsthorne to organize a series of dinners in Fitzrovia and Soho for the two men, while inviting such other mutual friends as the writer Michel Leiris, the critic Sylvester (both of whom became significant commentators on the two artists), and Bacon's new boyfriend, George Dyer.[9]

These evenings tended to last late into the night, starting in restaurants like Wheeler's, famous for its Whitstable oysters and Dover sole, or L'Etoile on Charlotte Street, and continuing in clubs, such as the Gargoyle or Bacon's home-away-from-home, the Colony Room, where the barman was well used to the colorful painter's habit of ordering prodigious amounts of champagne. The two artists thus had ample opportunity to discuss everything that interested them, from gossip about their friends and the relative merits of Paris and London to the highest aims of their art. By now both men knew each other's work well, since Bacon had visited Giacometti's major retrospective

at the Tate and Giacometti went out of his way to see the latest portraits Bacon had done of such close friends as Rawsthorne herself, George Dyer, and Lucian Freud. These latter paintings on exhibit at the Marlborough gallery[10] impressed Giacometti so strongly that he commented, with characteristic self-irony, that next to Bacon's powerful, inventive portraits his own looked "old-maidish."

This remark in turn prompted Bacon to say that he thought Giacometti was indisputably the greatest living artist, to which Giacometti replied that, on the contrary, Bacon was the greatest living artist; and this refrain, this duet, was repeated at various intervals throughout the evenings the two artists spent together. But although he was deeply flattered, Bacon was well aware that the older artist (born eight years earlier than Bacon, in 1901) could lay claim to having had his work not only exhibited far more widely than his but also written about by such literary eminences as Jean-Paul Sartre, Jean Genet, and Leiris. Although Bacon might not have admitted it freely, he was also conscious of being indebted to Giacometti for various stylistic devices, notably the cage-like structure—or "space frame"—that he clearly borrowed from Giacometti and regularly employed as a means of isolating and focusing attention on the central figures in his compositions, which otherwise would have lacked perspective. It might also be said that Bacon (who, as a budding young designer, had formerly worked in spotless, stylish interiors) derived the spectacular chaos of his studio, piled ankle-high in paint-spattered books, photographs, and artist's materials, from the much-photographed (and highly photogenic) mess that Giacometti had built up in his "cave" behind Montparnasse.

But for Bacon as for Giacometti, the studio became the hub and carapace of their existence, almost the repository of their imagination, because it contained so many traces of and reference points for their work that by merely being within its paint- or plaster-strewn chaos it triggered potentially exciting ideas and images. In each case, the studio resembled an archive of their achievements, their failures, and their aspirations: Giacometti and Bacon knew every splinter of plaster, every smear of paint, and this familiarity acted as a spur, an incitement, to take their "search for the absolute" (in Jean-Paul Sartre's words) a stage further. And, if any further proof were needed, long after both men could have easily afforded larger, more commodious ateliers, neither wanted to move out of the dour but picturesque lairs that served the needs of their art so well.

From what Bacon told me in some detail about the evenings he spent with Giacometti,[11] they were lively, even boisterous, although the story James Lord tells in his Giacometti biography about Bacon sending all the plates and glasses on the restaurant table crashing to the floor to illustrate a philosophical point sounds out of character.[12] It does seem likely, however, that Giacometti was intrigued by Bacon's new lover, the ill-fated George Dyer,[13] to the point of saying, "When I'm in London, I feel homosexual," and that he suggested that George come to see him in Paris so as to learn French and a trade like gilding or patinating. The two artists would also have gossiped about their respective dealers (Pierre Matisse came over especially for Giacometti's Tate show[14]), not least because Giacometti had recently broken with his Paris dealer, Aimé Maeght, and Bacon, who had recently signed up with the Marlborough gallery, would have sympathized, reiterating his underlying conviction that "all art dealers are crooks."

After a few similar sallies, the two artists would nevertheless have settled down to try and define, both for themselves and for each other, the pressing problems and aims of their art. As numerous published interviews confirm, both men were consummate talkers, skilled dialecticians capable both of highly penetrating analysis and of finding the exact phrase, the mot juste, for a new concept or definition. In company, Bacon often complained that he had no one he could really talk to, whether about life or about art, and Giacometti went so far as to claim, in one of the absurd exaggerations he enjoyed, that he would happily accept being reduced to a trunk, without arms or legs, and placed on a mantelpiece, so long as he could engage in interesting discourse with the people in the room before him. The conversations between these two nimble, unorthodox intellects about their artistic practice and convictions could only have been of the highest order, and it is a great pity (as Simone de Beauvoir said of Giacometti's voluminous conversations with Sartre) that their closely argued exchanges were not recorded for posterity.

Significantly, both artists had already gone on record as saying that they considered their art above all "realist." Time and again, Giacometti emphasized that his only true goal was to try to reproduce things, whether a glass, a nose, or a tree, exactly as he saw them, whereas Bacon claimed that he only sought to convey the deepest "sensations" about life that he felt as a convinced atheist (even if he had to use a "crucifixion" or a "pope" theme to achieve that aim); Bacon also replied to charges that his subject matter was "horrific" by claiming that it was hardly more horrific than the news the press relayed every morning.

It would have soon become apparent to both artists that their notion of "realism" differed, since the notion itself was both highly subjective and ultimately indefinable. But those very difficulties would have prompted a spirited exchange, all the more so because Giacometti had come to hate being pigeonholed as an "existentialist" artist just as much as Bacon loathed the "expressionist" label so often applied to his work ("I'm not expressionist at all," Bacon would attest airily. "After all, I have nothing to express"). Having freed themselves of those crudely journalistic tags, however, they might well have agreed that, as younger men, they had both fallen under the spell of another "-ism"—namely that of Surrealism.

Giacometti had of course actually played a prominent role in the Surrealist movement, producing highly inventive sculpture for several years while he was caught squarely under its influence. If he later fiercely rejected the movement, it had nevertheless helped to form him. Bacon was

also highly aware of Surrealism's potent lure, which he had first encountered during his early visit to Paris in 1927; he read the movement's declamatory tracts and followed its development for many years thereafter, adopting Surrealist attitudes and techniques that were to durably affect both his attitudes and his painting. In fact, possibly because he had never been as close to the movement's epicenter as Giacometti, Bacon rejected it less violently. Such strategies as bringing together two quite dissimilar objects (as in Comte de Lautréamont's famous line: "the chance meeting on a dissecting-table of a sewing-machine and an umbrella") stayed with him throughout most of his career, enabling him to create such haunting images as the screaming pope (the Velázquez portrait overlaid by the cry of the wounded nanny in Sergei Eisenstein's 1925 film *Battleship Potemkin*) or the bloodied bull alone in an arena dominated by a Nazi banner (pp. 57, 71, 73, 74, 77, and 129).

Diego Velázquez, the painter's painter, would certainly have been invoked in these epic exchanges as Bacon drank immoderately and Giacometti smoked immoderately through the night. Both painters had actually copied the masterful *Portrait of Pope Innocent X* (ca. 1650), housed then as now in the Palazzo Doria Pamphilj collection in Rome, and both painters immediately acknowledged their overwhelming debt to the great art of the past, from the magnificent achievements of Egypt onward. But here a difference in this similarity between the two artists becomes clear, because where Bacon had narrowed down his pantheon to a handful of great names (Michelangelo, Rembrandt van Rijn, Velázquez, Edgar Degas, Edouard Manet, Vincent van Gogh, Picasso), Giacometti was more inclusive in his choice, since his capacity for admiration ran wider. Indeed, in one remarkable phrase, Giacometti acknowledged that: "The entire art of the past, of all periods, of all civilizations rises before my mind, becomes a simultaneous vision, as if time had become space."[15] And where Bacon paraphrased certain great images of the past, integrating them into his work, Giacometti copied them, as a delicate homage, in endless drawings, but without visibly incorporating them into the fine-spun stuff of his vision.

At some point in their intense discussions, Bacon would have brought up his central belief in the need to "distort" appearance in order to give an image maximum intensity. Since both the great art of the past and photography had already "cancelled out" (as he put it) so many of figurative painting's possibilities, he felt that only by distorting the figures he created could he give them the vitality they would need to renew tradition and survive. Only by twisting appearance radically, Bacon insisted, could a new truth be revealed; and here one might apply Sartre's description of Giacometti's forms as "always mediating between nothingness and being" as revealingly to Bacon's near-deliquescent figures. Less expansive than his English counterpart, Giacometti would no doubt have absorbed Bacon's credo cautiously, since his own fundamental belief was that his entire activity consisted in attempting "merely" to reproduce what he saw. But Giacometti was too subtle not to have realized that his patient search had resulted in distortions as extreme, if more self-contained, as any of Bacon's wildly dislocated limbs and exuberantly pummeled flesh. One might indeed argue that distortion in three dimensions becomes even more disturbing than in two.

Another decisive element shared by both artists was their love of literature. Bacon and Giacometti were dedicated readers, although here once again Giacometti's tastes were more catholic, since he read not only the great classics but also the work of his contemporary poet friends, such as René Crevel and Georges Bataille, whose new books he illustrated; among other things, Giacometti also kept abreast of current politics and, interestingly, developed a passion for military history and such specialist themes as Napoleon's military strategy.[16] Bacon, on the other hand, focused more exclusively on the very highest dramatic and poetic achievements, from the Greek tragedies and William Shakespeare to such modern masters as Marcel Proust, W. B. Yeats, and T. S. Eliot; he also purported to have been directly affected by literature while painting such key works as *Triptych Inspired by the Oresteia of Aeschylus* (cat. pp. 165–67).[17]

Other similarities that bound Bacon and Giacometti together include the distinct, not to say anguished, isolation in space of the figures they created, notably by means of the cage-like device mentioned earlier. Both artists, too, tended to confine their subjects to the four walls of a room, to the extent that, while Giacometti broke out occasionally to produce the odd, desolate landscape, Bacon very rarely ventured beyond his tightly sealed, strangely airless, claustrophobic interiors. With the European landscape devastated by war, life had been driven indoors, with man all the more isolated within the empty banality of a modern interior. The two artists also shared a marked preference for portraying the same people, repeatedly and obsessively. If Bacon's inner circle chiefly comprised his lover George Dyer and a handful of close friends (Lucian Freud, Isabel Rawsthorne, Henrietta Moraes, Muriel Belcher), then Giacometti's was even more restricted and focused above all on his brother Diego; his wife, Annette; and, later, his lover, Yvonne Poiraudeau, whose nom de guerre was Caroline. And of course, since neither artist, having set their sights so high, ever felt satisfied with anything they had produced, they both abandoned or destroyed a substantial number of works throughout their careers—unlike no doubt Picasso, who appears to have rarely called into question the quality of what he created and consequently destroyed little.

If numerous beliefs and working habits draw Bacon and Giacometti together, there are—unsurprisingly—several polarizing differences between these two twentieth-century masters. Probably the most significant and divisive is the fact that whereas Giacometti based everything he did on drawing, Bacon at most did only very basic, notational drawings—virtual squiggles—but freely admitted that he could not draw, did not draw, and was moreover not even interested in drawing; at the same time, somewhat ambiguously, he declared that what he liked most in

Giacometti's whole oeuvre were his drawings rather than his achievements as a sculptor and painter.[18] For Giacometti, on the other hand, only constant drawing, copying, erasing, and copying again seemed eventually to enable him to reproduce what he saw, whether it was a chair, a tree, or a face. Bacon meanwhile—and here the difference between them takes on its full significance—felt that preliminary drawing would hamper the spontaneity he sought: with only an outline of an image in mind, and uncertain how he might realize it technically, he wanted to attack the canvas directly and take advantage of whatever unforeseen shapes and suggestions the first fluent, loaded brush marks in oil paint made. This is what Bacon, the inveterate gambler, the devotee of roulette, called "chance" or "accident," and although he perhaps exaggerated its actual role in the making of a new image, he believed in it as a central tenet of his creativity. While Giacometti was amused by this profession of spontaneity, he nevertheless believed that Bacon's inability to draw was a severe handicap to making durable, worthwhile imagery.[19]

Another aspect of Bacon and Giacometti's respective practices that divided them sharply was the importance of models. In the earlier part of his career, Bacon had painted from sitters. We know, for instance, that Lisa Sainsbury sat for him regularly while he painted her portrait, as did the society photographer Cecil Beaton. The latter, however, was so horrified by the portrait that eventually emerged that, when he learned of Beaton's horror, Bacon destroyed the offending canvas without demur. But from about the time of this incident (and possibly because of it), Bacon would only paint portraits from photographs, which he asked his friend, the Soho photographer John Deakin, to take especially for him. Bacon explained away this new departure by saying, somewhat melodramatically, that he would not want to "practise before them the injury that I do to them in my work."[20] He also came to prize the "accidents" that happened to these photographs as they became splattered with paint and trodden, dented, and folded under foot into the mass of other images littering his studio floor.

For Giacometti, however, being able to work from a model immediately to hand was an article of faith: his entire artistic routine revolved around having Diego and Annette come every day to sit for him. During these sessions he was so focused on capturing what he saw, tantalizingly, before him that he virtually forgot who his sitters were. Thus, when he saw Annette one evening, after she had spent several hours patiently sitting for him, Giacometti remarked famously: "I haven't seen you all day." A few other sitters, such as the Japanese philosopher Isaku Yanaihara or James Lord, accepted the almost slave-like conditions that sitting for Giacometti entailed, with their return tickets to Japan or the US being constantly booked, then cancelled.

This fundamentally different approach between the two becomes all the more marked once one takes into account how deeply Bacon's art was indebted not only to photographs of his sitters but to photography in general. Whereas Giacometti's studio was filled with his own sculptures and drawings, as well as plaster shards and artist's paraphernalia, Bacon's was awash with photographs of every conceivable sort, from reproductions of famous paintings to birds in flight, war scenes to athletes in competition, Nazi leaders in full harangue to monkeys in the zoo. All these images, moreover, were scattered across his studio floor and, as already noted, crumpled underfoot and laced over by endless skeins of dropped, dripped, or thrown paint. And, of course, many of these photographic images, whether taken from Eadweard Muybridge or *Paris Match*, found their way into Bacon's painting. This certainly would have perplexed Giacometti, who required no more than a single, living model, or a glass on a table, in order to have the necessary stimulus to reconnect to his endless search for the single, inalterable truth.

Bacon, seen from this particular perspective, was much more of a showman than Giacometti. While the latter had long established the narrow, if enormously demanding, limits of his field of inquiry, Bacon welcomed the chance to expand his universe with allusions to a whole variety of sources. If Giacometti's universe hangs on the knife's-edge profile of a bronze head or the linear reverberations of an apple drawn on his studio's pitted wall, Bacon's opens to the ambiguous connotations of a papal throne, a syringe, a sphinx, or a swastika on an arm. As Giacometti pursued his maniacal quest for an eye to represent all eyes, a figure to represent all figures who ever strode or stood stock still, Bacon opened the encyclopedia of history, of events that happened or might still be conjured from the past. Thus, the nurse's scream issues from the Velázquez pope, the bull charges under the Nazi banner, and the chimp, baring its fangs, reappears as the businessman in the dark blue suit.

The two artists whom we have mainly considered for their similarities nevertheless spring apart once again as their disparities come into consideration. Bacon burst forth in vivid color—blood reds, acid greens, voluptuous pinks—as Giacometti clung to the varieties of gray to which he was accustomed in his dusty reflections on the world. Giacometti hardly needed the operatic gesture, the full-blown conceits of Bacon since he was simply creeping up on hard-won purchases of a certain elusive truth. "*Ma grisaille*," my "grayness," Caroline, his prostitute-mistress, called him fondly. But there was nothing gray and no lurking in the modest backrooms of painstaking trial and error about Bacon: he exulted in large formats as well as acid bright colors and sharp tonal contrasts, which he encased under glass in lustrous gold frames. In the same way, where Giacometti's images remain mostly silent and withdrawn, as if folded back on themselves, Bacon's scream for attention.

Bacon was a born star, gambling a whole painting on the final twist of the brush, and the immediate center of attention in whichever situation, restaurant, or bar he entered. If Bacon burst out of his studio to go on the town in the evening, it was not as a bedraggled artist with his hair and jacket still caked in paint and plaster, as Giacometti did when he made his modest way up to Montparnasse. Bacon wore a perfectly pressed, bespoke suit and a crisp, new shirt, and he looked, if anything, like a slightly

gangsterish banker. Rather than the democratic spaces of La Coupole and other left-bank brasseries that Giacometti favored, Bacon went straight to the gastronomic top, with champagne at the Ritz, then dinner in another exclusive hotel or, if he deviated from Wheeler's classic fish menu, the latest, glamorous restaurant in Soho or Mayfair.

Politically, the two artists were poles apart. Giacometti had been aligned with the French Communist party in the earlier part of his career, and he never wavered thereafter from the Left. Bacon, on the other hand, considered himself an "old-fashioned Liberal" and believed that the individual generally had more freedom and less "interference" under a liberal, right-of-center government. He was notably skeptical about those friends of his, like Leiris, who supported left-wing causes while leading lives of considerable privilege. In both artists, however, there was a deeply anarchic streak that conditioned any political views they might have had, and neither of them would have accepted that their art had any political implication.

Another potential point of discord between the two artists might have been their respective attitudes toward Picasso. As a young painter, certainly, Bacon was entranced by Picasso, and he really came of age as an artist under Picasso's influence. What drew Bacon to Picasso above all were the highly suggestive beach scenes that Picasso produced at Dinard in 1928, when he was secretly carrying on an affair with Marie-Thérèse Walter. The erotic overtones of these images made an enduring impression on Bacon in his search for "what it feels like to be a human being," although in time he grew increasingly critical of Picasso's late work. Giacometti had also originally conceived a distinct admiration for Picasso, and vice versa, so that for many years from the 1930s on the two met frequently in each other's studios; at one point, Giacometti actually began to make a bust of Picasso, and Picasso gifted him a drawing. Then, as Picasso increasingly became a magnet for the media, Giacometti had one of those abrupt volte-faces that occasionally marked his relationships (he had a similar fall-out with Sartre), and from that moment on he broke with Picasso for good.

The similarities between Giacometti and Bacon in their everyday lives turn out to be more numerous, however, than their differences. Both artists loved big cities, carried large amounts of cash on them (as, incidentally, did Sartre) wherever they went, ordered meals without consideration of the cost, and tipped extravagantly, as if money had no importance. Neither Bacon nor Giacometti had any truck with the official honors that were periodically pressed on them (Bacon, for instance, officially turned down a knighthood). Both moreover showed not only a gentlemanly deference toward the people who served them, like waiters, but also a distinct taste for what's called "low life." Prostitutes, petty gangsters, chancers of every stripe appealed equally to Giacometti and Bacon, possibly because it occurred to them that they, as artists, were also operating at a level that challenged society—questioning dearly held beliefs, subverting basic convictions, and suggesting transgressive alternatives.

At all events, Bacon's homosexuality, which put him automatically on the wrong side of the law for much of his life, tended to lead him into dubious circles and compromising situations, while Giacometti's passion for Caroline brought him into contact with various underworld characters who extorted significant sums of money from him. Both artists actually found the company of such low-lifes more stimulating than the art-world dignitaries and bourgeois collectors with whom they otherwise spent much of their time.

Had Giacometti lived longer, the friendship he had begun with Bacon would undoubtedly have deepened, particularly since Bacon began to visit Paris more and more frequently in the years following Giacometti's death, in 1966. Later that very year, for instance, Bacon had a show of new paintings at Galerie Maeght, Giacometti's own former gallery, and its success paved the way for his major retrospective at the Grand Palais, in 1971–72, for which he spent regular periods in the French capital. Bacon remained durably influenced and impressed by Giacometti the man and the artist. One of his biographers, Daniel Farson, for instance, recalled: "One night Francis introduced me to Giacometti, declaring: 'This is the man who has influenced me more than anyone.'"[21] As soon as he heard of Giacometti's death, Bacon wrote to Leiris, saying, "I know that the death of Giacometti has shattered his friends as well as people he barely knew. I wanted to write to Annette but I did not know what to say. When you see Annette would you give her all my best wishes and love."[22] Later on, at the request of the Parisian dealer Claude Bernard, who had organized an exhibition of Giacometti's drawings, Bacon wrote a brief tribute to Giacometti the draftsman:

"For me Giacometti is not only the greatest draughtsman of our time but also one of the greatest of all time."[23]

What Bacon did not say was how much of Giacometti he had absorbed, just as, like Giacometti himself, he had absorbed so much of *l'air du temps* through which both men had lived: the sense of alienation and isolation that post-war man had inherited, the need to distort the human image in order for it to communicate a new, terrible truth, the unrelenting awareness that all of us poor mortals are condemned to exist in a void. These are the strongest bonds between them, and this in the end is surely what emanates most powerfully from every comparison of their work.

1 Moore first visited Giacometti in Paris in the 1930s.

2 Auerbach has said that in the 1950s "an artist like Giacometti offered hope, to continue to give everything for a truthful art without any compromises." Frank Auerbach, cited in Catherine Lampert, "An Intensification of Reality," in *London Calling: Bacon, Freud, Kossoff, Andrews, Auerbach, and Kitaj*, ed. Elena Crippa and Catherine Lampert, exh. cat. The J. Paul Getty Museum (Los Angeles, 2016), pp. 13–27, here p. 17.

3 In recognition of this early gesture of support, Giacometti allowed the Tate to acquire a body of his work (eight sculptures and two paintings) at a very reasonable cost, £8,000, when his retrospective opened there in 1965.

4 Peter Watson also co-founded the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA), where the work of both Bacon and Giacometti was exhibited (the latter in a group show) in 1955.

5 The Sainsburys thus acquired three drawings of their son for £27.60.

6 According to Sylvester, Giacometti saw a painting by Bacon (*Study for Figure II*, 1953) for the first time at an exhibition at Erica Brausen's Hanover Gallery in London in 1955, and his reaction then was that it was "too expressionistic." See David Sylvester, *Looking Back at Francis Bacon* (London, 2000), p. 204.

7 Bacon himself mentioned this to me without giving any precise date.

8 In a letter to Sylvester, Bacon recounts this chance encounter with Giacometti in detail. Francis Bacon to David Sylvester, September 9, 1955, David Sylvester Papers, Tate Archive, London.

9 Other guests probably included Lucian Freud (who at one point had modeled for Giacometti) and Sonia Orwell, the writer George Orwell's widow, well known for regularly bringing together French and British writers and artists at dinner parties in her house in London.

10 Giacometti had already visited the Marlborough with Bacon in 1964 to see the first-ever exhibition of Egon Schiele's work in the UK, in October, as noted by the exhibition's organizer, the Austrian dealer and writer Wolfgang Fischer, in his diary. See *Alberto Giacometti: Pionier der Moderne/Modernist Pioneer*, ed. Franz Smola and Philippe Büttner, exh. cat. Leopold Museum (Vienna, 2014), p. 32.

11 I first met Bacon in June 1963, to interview him for the student magazine *Cambridge Opinion*.

12 However drunk, Bacon retained control and avoided "scenes" in public. This anecdote is relayed in James Lord, *Giacometti: A Biography* (New York, 1985), p. 455. According to the James Lord papers held at the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, in New Haven, Lord interviewed Bacon about Giacometti on three occasions in London in the 1970s. No further information about these interviews appears to exist.

13 Bacon was already anxious about Dyer, who, having retired as a cat burglar, was doing nothing but drink heavily. As is well known, Dyer committed suicide in 1971, just before Bacon's retrospective opened at the Grand Palais.

14 Interestingly, Matisse later wrote to Bacon to inquire whether he might consider exhibiting at the Pierre Matisse Gallery, in New York. Pierre Matisse to Francis Bacon, January 1967, Pierre Matisse Gallery Archives, Morgan Library and Museum, New York.

15 Alberto Giacometti, "Notes on the Copy-Interpretations," in *Alberto Giacometti: A Retrospective*, ed. Véronique Wiesinger, exh. cat. Museo Picasso Málaga (Barcelona, 2012), pp. 281–83, here p. 281. Originally published as "Notes sur les copies" [1965], *L'éphémère*, no. 1 (1966).

16 I owe this information to the poet and gallerist Jacques Dupin (1927–2012), who became a close friend of Giacometti's and wrote the first monograph on him, in 1962. Dupin also got to know Bacon well when the latter exhibited at Galerie Maeght in Paris. He wrote about the artist, and Bacon later painted a portrait of him.

17 Bacon later claimed that his gallery had suggested these literary allusions rather than he himself.

18 In 1974, Bacon remarked to David Sylvester: "My own feeling about Giacometti is that he never had any necessity either to do sculpture or to paint, that he was able to do everything in his marvellous drawings. I always feel that his sculptures and his paintings were other aspects of the drawings, and for me not as satisfactory." See Sylvester 2000 (see note 6), p. 245.

19 Jacques Dupin told me Giacometti had mentioned that he thought Bacon's inability to draw represented a major weakness in his work. Similarly, Bacon once stigmatized Giacometti's sculpture as "arty."

20 Francis Bacon, "Interview 2," filmed interview by David Sylvester [May 1966], BBC 1, September 18, 1966, in David Sylvester, *The Brutality of Fact: Interviews with Francis Bacon*, 3rd enlarged ed. (London, 2016), pp. 36–77, p. 46.

21 Daniel Farson, *The Gilded Gutter Life of Francis Bacon* (London, 1994), p. 64.

22 Francis Bacon to Michel Leiris, January 25, 1966, cited in *Francis Bacon*, ed. Serena Cattaneo, exh. cat. Gagosian Gallery (London, 2006), n. p.

23 This tribute was reproduced in Bacon's handwriting and dated 8/10/75 by him. Facsimile in *Alberto Giacometti: Dessins*, exh. cat. Galerie Claude Bernard (Paris, 1975), n. p.

Remaking the Human Image:
"Reality" and the Photographic Image in the Work of Giacometti and Bacon

Hugo Daniel

he becomes a Giacometti or a Bacon,
his spectacular, ghostly figurations
symbols of the tragedy of the world in a sick soul
—Pier Paolo Pasolini[1]

A Shared Realism

In the eyes of Pier Paolo Pasolini, who in exemplary fashion pointed to the close relationship between the two artists but examined each of them on his own terms, the "ghostly figurations" were common to Alberto Giacometti and Francis Bacon. This thought, formulated by the film director in his autobiographical poem, expresses a perception that is intuitive and widely shared. The connection established between the two artists is based principally on their relationship to a form of figuration that stands under the double sign of permanence and transience—hence the reference to "ghosts." Within this twofold constellation, a certain concept of realism found arguments from a common front. This historically significant link was confirmed by the critics, art dealers, and institutional representatives who supported the work of both artists: Herbert Read, David Sylvester, Michel Leiris, Jacques Dupin, Erica Brausen, Peter Watson, and John Rothenstein.[2] Giacometti and Bacon shared an idea of figuration as based on distortion and disfigurement, as a quest endlessly renewed with the same passion for the classic forms of figuration, and with the goal of "remaking the human image."[3] The theme of the first exhibition that brought their work together was especially contentious, at a time, in 1952, when a new abstraction was vigorously flourishing. Titled *Recent Trends in Realist Painting*, the presentation was staged by Sylvester and others at the London Institute of Contemporary Arts.[4] Accepting the "eclectic" character of the show, the organizers admitted to their lack of "any determinate notion of what 'realism' means,"[5] while seeing in diversity and indecision a renewal of an approach to painting for which they anticipated a certain future. The exhibition celebrated those painters "who have been prepared to face up to appearances."[6] The question therefore arises: what is it that unites the work of Giacometti and Bacon in their relationship to reality?

Realism, in the work of these two artists, is generally viewed not as a method, but as a form—referring to similarities such as the motif of the cage and the constructed setting, the deformation of the figure, and the focus on the human face. Yet, any assessment of the common ground between Bacon and Giacometti must also include an examination of what constitutes their relationship to reality. Significantly, Bacon professed to admire Giacometti chiefly for his work in a medium—drawing—to which he himself rarely resorted and for which he had little flair. Likewise, Bacon's extensive use of photographic reproductions would appear to mark a difference from Giacometti in the construction of the image, which in the one case involved the manipulation of reproductions, and in the other required direct observation of the model. Nevertheless, the differences in the basis of their relationship to the real are less fundamental than they might initially seem. Photography is a means of access to these issues, a starting point whose significance rests in the fact that it interrogates the creative process, as well as what we call "reality."

Although their paths continually crossed, Bacon and Giacometti never really met until the early 1960s, a few years before Giacometti's death. In the 1950s, however, both were championed by the same London gallery, Brausen's Hanover Gallery, and had several mutual friends,[7] the most prominent of whom—Isabel Rawsthorne—was also one of their models.[8] At the heart of Bacon's and Giacometti's relationship to reality, a subject incessantly scrutinized and reexamined, biographical and artistic elements join and merge. To retrace the points of convergence and the missed meetings is also to underline the closeness of two trajectories that prepared the artists to "face up to appearances."

Bacon said on several occasions that what he admired most about Giacometti was neither his sculpture nor his painting, but his drawings.[9] This remark is significant if one remembers that his vocation as a painter was first confirmed during a stay in France in 1927, when he went to see an exhibition of drawings by Pablo Picasso at the Galerie Rosenberg in Paris.[10] Picasso, undeniably, was the model—far more than Giacometti—that inspired Bacon's painting, but this concern with drawing, on the part of an artist who received almost no formal training,[11] indicates an interest that persisted. A number of artistic and iconographic discoveries soon ensued. When visiting Paris in the 1930s, Bacon began reading the magazines *Minotaure* and *Cahiers d'art*, which published articles on Giacometti, with reproductions of his works. It was during one of these trips to Paris that Bacon saw Sergei Eisenstein's 1925 film *Battleship Potemkin* and where, in 1935, he purchased an illustrated book on diseases of the mouth[12]—both of which became essential iconographic sources for his depictions of screaming figures. With a series of convergences, intersections, and separations, 1935 was a crucial year for Giacometti, between his Surrealist period and his return to working from the model. A year later, despite his break with the group, Giacometti took part in the *International Surrealist Exhibition*, organized by André Breton, Read, and Roland Penrose, among others, at the New Burlington Galleries, in London.[13] By contrast, despite his contacts with Read and Penrose, Bacon's work was judged "insufficiently surreal" for inclusion in the show. In his preface to the catalogue, Breton took the opportunity to reaffirm the position of Surrealism against "the old realism," which was to be overcome by ceasing to privilege objective reality over subjective perception, leading to the conclusion that "the art of imitation . . . has had its day."[14] In his text on "superrealism," Read presented a more nuanced version of this argument: "The common notion of reality is based on the limited data of the conscious ego; the superreality which the artist now freely proclaims is a synthesis of experience which takes into account the evidence of every manifestation of life."[15]

At this point in the 1930s, the notions of realism and the artist's relationship to reality that informed the thinking of Bacon and Giacometti were also defined in

relation to Surrealism. The proximity of both artists to Surrealism, while leading in both cases to exclusion from the group, reveals their common search for an approach to reality that integrated the conditions of its manifestation and the means of questioning it. In some of his later comments, Giacometti implied that the drama of his break with Surrealism had been exaggerated by his formal expulsion at the behest of Breton. Indeed, he remarked in 1962, "Realism is balderdash,"[16] declaring also that "photography affords a sufficient vision of the exterior world for artists to be free to paint the interior, or their unconscious or their sensations."[17] The similarity between Giacometti and Bacon goes beyond the distortion of the figure, the confined space, or the frame that becomes a cage; moreover, the two artists shared the same interest in the relationship between their vision of the real and the ability to render it through the figure.

Inside the Anatomy of the Image

In this interest in the construction of the image, photography played an important role. The approach of the two artists to photography provides an avenue of inquiry into the details and variations of a relationship with appearances. Viewed from this angle, the aspects that connect and distinguish them take on added complexity, moving beyond issues of simple "influence" such as the frequently cited cage motif and the association of figuration with a sense of the tragic. In the reception of Giacometti, art criticism has maintained a strange silence about his relationship to photography. The general view is that, from 1935 onward, his "return to figuration"[18] is evidenced by his work with models in the studio. His brother Diego, the professional model Rita Gueyfier, and others, including Rawsthorne, lent their faces and bodies to his incessant quest to capture the real in his confrontation with the model. It is often said, too, that his practice of painting from the model was accompanied by the study of historic sources, which he had never abandoned and at this point intensified: the Old Masters, the art of antiquity, of Africa and Polynesia. But a proper assessment of this iconographic research must take into account that copying, one of its essential tools, is also based on photography. Giacometti emphasized this simultaneity: "The need to copy works of art began at more or less the same time of my life when I felt the need to copy directly from nature."[19] To which one must add that most of his copies were not made from objects seen in a museum but based on photographic reproductions. This practice may be more discreet, but it is no less essential, and obsessive, ultimately characterizing a certain relationship to reality and to figuration.

A consequence of the copying method, working from the model as well as from older works of art and photographic reproductions, was the occasional merging of several sources of inspiration. This can be seen in the *Tête d'Isabel* (cat. p. 37), with its "Egyptian" appearance, indicating that a synthesis has taken place between the works of Egyptian art that the artist copied and the image of his friend and model. A set of drawings documents Giacometti's progressive shaping of the portrait after the Egyptian canon, in a stylization of forms that tends toward reduction, while retaining the smooth, rounded lines of the abstract sculptures from his Surrealist years (cat. p. 36). The copy dissolves distance in space and time, not only vis-à-vis the objects, but also among them. Assembled on the same sheet, the varied motifs, taken from the art of the Cyclades, Polynesia, and ancient Egypt and Greece, take on an autonomous existence, converging to the point of fusion. As the artist observed, copying from photographs placed the models "on the same plane"[20] and involved them in a heuristic dialogue. These encounters have been described as a comparative study of sources,[21] but they could be viewed more appropriately as a form of hallucinatory confusion. Giacometti's own comments on the subject evoke a merging of space and time: "The entire art of the past, of all periods, of all civilizations rises before my mind, becomes a simultaneous vision, as if time had become space."[22] The comparative model suggested by André Malraux in his three-volume *Le Musée imaginaire de la sculpture mondiale* (*Imaginary Museum of World Sculpture*, 1952), which Giacometti regularly consulted for his work, is misleading: Giacometti's practice in copying went far beyond this dimension, developing a logic of combination that also included personal memory. The plastic similarities between the works were not merely presented as such, but became the subject of a genuine visual synthesis, facilitating the accentuation and integration of the motifs.

Moreover, in his regular and continuing activity of copying from photographic reproductions, the artist did not apply an aesthetic filter or principle of selection to the sources but allowed himself to be guided by his own eye and the appeal of the individual image. This is apparent in Giacometti's numerous drawings made after photographs found in magazines and newspapers. The procedure was the same as in his copies from antiquity: he reproduced the illustrations directly in his journal, singling out a detail, a pose, or a face. The copy duplicated the "original" photographic image, sometimes even overlapping it. The drawings, combining photographic images with thumbnail sketches, extend the visual simultaneity that is generally to be seen in the copies. This placing of iconographic sources "on the same plane" makes it clear that the copies were more than a simple exercise of the eye and hand. The press photographs say as much about the availability of the image of the world as about the artist's receptiveness to these images. They convey a kind of voracity, an insatiability of the gaze.

In this profusion of images, typical of the modern condition, which are reproduced and integrated into a reality that photography can place "on the same plane," there are many instances of overlap. On the front page of the December 1953 issue of *Les Lettres nouvelles*, Giacometti drew a copy of Diego Velázquez's *Portrait of Pope Innocent X* (ca. 1650), together with three sketches of entirely unrelated busts. The exercise is repeated on another page of the journal. Did the repetition serve to achieve a better understanding of the image, or was the

artist simply obsessed with it? We know that this portrait of Innocent X held a magnetic fascination for Bacon, who gave it his own interpretation in some fifty pictures between 1949 and 1971. Although he spoke of his becoming "obsessed" with the Velázquez painting,[23] Bacon was content to use reproductions of the work and waived the opportunity to see the original during his stay in Rome in 1954. The photographic image gave him an unequalled freedom and scope to exercise his own imagination. His discovery in 1949[24] of the work of Eadweard Muybridge in the photographic study of motion preceded the serial variations on the Velázquez painting, and both of these sources became equally important for his work. The effect of this consumption of images makes it clear that Bacon's reality was polymorphous and combinatory: "Actually, Michelangelo and Muybridge are mixed up in my mind together."[25] The question of Bacon's iconographic precursors is therefore difficult to define and assess. An illustration from Amédée Ozenfant's *Art* (published in France in 1928 and translated into English in 1931 as *Foundations of Modern Art*), showing soldiers from the Egyptian and British armies, is one of the sources of 'Marching Figures' (cat. p. 66). But the formal proximity to Giacometti's *Homme qui marche* (1947), reinforced in drawings of the same motif, resists explanation in purely iconographical terms: assimilations and fusions of reality and its representations, as well as an inherent ambiguity, comprise these works.

Bacon made frequent use of images embodying an iconography of violence, both historic and recent (from Nicolas Poussin's painting *Le Massacre des innocents* [ca. 1627–28] to photographs of crime scenes and images of war), which testify to a form of obsession,[26] unfolding between the real and the imaginary: "What I want to do is to distort the thing far beyond the appearance, but in the distortion to bring it back to a recording of the appearance."[27] The images reflect an ability of the artist to confront the outward face of reality and to create works that can address the violence of the world. In Bacon's work, as in Giacometti's, the relationship to the photographic image is inclusive: it combines and merges the sources according to the dictates of the artist's style. The obsessive and repetitive character of the visual confrontation with the world reveals, ultimately, an urge for control.

The Photographic Eye

Despite an age difference of eight years, Bacon and Giacometti represent the attitude of a particular generation to the photographic image. This view of photography partly contradicts the arguments of Walter Benjamin on the technological reproducibility of the work of art: the issue is not that reproduction erodes the aura of the original, but that the photograph leads to an omnipresence that duplicates and transforms reality, instead of competing with it. This, as Bacon observed, gives rise to a different understanding of appearances, in which the question of originality—with regard to the work or the model—is secondary to the issue of the conditions governing the way of seeing. Benjamin's contemporaries included many painters, such as Picasso, Balthus, or André Derain, who used photography as a supplementary tool in painting and as an adjunct to the gaze. The fact that artists used photographs as source material is banal. In the case of Giacometti and Bacon, however, this tool also had a qualitative dimension. The two artists belonged to the era when the world began to be seen through photography, and they both saw how these images modified reality. Asked about his status as an artist going against the Zeitgeist by adopting a realist stance, Giacometti complained of a "devaluation of reality," observing that "photography, the cinema, radiology, and the discovery of the expressionist arts of Africa and Oceania have given people the feeling that there was nothing more to be done in that direction."[28] Bacon's analysis was the same, but with different conclusions: "Photography has covered so much: in a painting that's even worth looking at the image must be twisted if it is to make a renewed assault upon the nervous system. And that is the peculiar difficulty of figurative painting now."[29] Ultimately, the two artists followed the path of figuration with an equal degree of consistency. Far from representing a danger, photography provided an opportunity to see reality in a new way, which for both artists was at once liberating and distressing, even anguishing.

A revelatory event often mentioned by Giacometti sheds a different light on the importance of photography in his work. He linked the event in question to his preference for working from the model: "In point of fact I began to distinctly want to work from life towards 1945. I experienced a complete scission between the photographic vision of the world and the vision I had accepted. It was the moment in which reality astonished me as it had never done. Previously, when I left a cinema nothing happened, in other words, the practice of the screen was projected onto the ordinary vision of reality. Then all of a sudden there was a break, that is to say that what was taking place on the screen had ceased to resemble anything, and I looked at the people in the theatre as if I had never seen them before. And in that instant once again I felt the need to paint, to make sculpture, for photography did not provide me with a fundamental vision of reality at all."[30] The artist saw this experience in qualitative terms, contrasting the superficiality of the photographic image with the depth of his own work: "Suddenly, instead of seeing figures, people moving in three-dimensional space, I saw marks on a flat cloth. . . . I walked out. I discovered a Boulevard Montparnasse that was unknown, dreamlike. Everything was different. Depth transformed people, trees, objects. The silence was extraordinary—almost alarming. For the sense of depth creates silence, drowning objects in stillness."[31] It is the photographic image that, in comparison, makes it possible to perceive the specificity of this view into depth.

Bacon's use of photography has been the subject of several studies and already began to attract critical attention in the 1950s,[32] despite the artist's efforts to disguise his sources. *The Crucifixion* of 1933 already incorporated an X-ray of the skull of Michael Sadler, who commissioned the painting, and from the 1950s onward,

photographs played an increasingly central role in Bacon's work, especially after 1962, when the artist set up his studio on Reece Mews. He ordered copies of photographs and commissioned or requested new material from professional and amateur photographers in his circle of friends. Given the diversity of his sources, it is striking to note the extent of Bacon's fascination with the various forms of photomechanical reproduction—not only photography, but also film (including photograms), chronophotography, medical images, and X-rays, all of which influenced his way of looking at the world. These interests testify to a search for visual understanding, through multiple approaches and methods, with the aim of capturing reality more fully. Books such as Albert von Schrenck-Notzing's *Der Kampf um die Materialisations-Phänomene* (1914) and Kathleen Clark's *Positioning in Radiography* (1939), or the works of Muybridge, had a formative impact on the vision of an artist who sought to go beyond the outward appearance of things. Hence, for Bacon, photographs were not, as he once claimed, merely an aide-mémoire,[33] but were in fact fully integrated into the artist's gaze.[34] The same applies to his impression of images "dropping into your mind like slides,"[35] or of seeing "images in series."[36]

The Portrait from a Distance

The convergences and divergences between the two artists in the use of photography emerge more clearly in the light of their approaches to portraiture. Starting in the early 1950s, Bacon painted several portraits of friends who sat for him at his request. This phase of working from the model was probably one of the underlying reasons why Bacon admired Giacometti; certainly, the fixation on a specific model, whom the artist portrayed repeatedly, represents a definite link between their respective oeuvres. Bacon spoke of a need to be on close personal terms with his models, even if he preferred to work from photographs: "I could paint from photographs. But sometimes one needs to see the person, also, while one's painting."[37]

But, unlike in the case of Giacometti, the wish to "see" the person does not mean the model must always be present. Several of Bacon's sitters—Lucian Freud and Sylvester, for example[38]—recounted the surprising experience of arriving in his studio at the agreed upon time, only to find that work on the portrait was already well under way. Nevertheless, contact with the subject remained important for the verification of a connection that preexisted the portrait. Similarly, the photographs of his friends George Dyer, John Edwards, Peter Beard, and Dupin, requested by Bacon in the 1960s, were valuable only by virtue of the artist's relationship with the persons concerned. And when he commissioned John Deakin to supply photographs of Henrietta Moraes, he specified how they were to be taken: the framing of the image, the camera angle, and the model's pose. As an adjunct to the gaze and to painting, the photograph was a necessary mediation of the portrait. In this connection, photography was not there to intensify the realism of the subject; instead, it provided an alternative route that eventually led to the same destination, verifying the correctness of the extrapolation. Bacon explained this as a necessary step in his work: "Even in the case of friends who will come and pose. I've had photographs taken for portraits because I very much prefer working from the photographs than from them. . . . I think that, if I have the presence of the image there, I am not able to drift so freely as I am able to through the photographic image. This may be just my own neurotic sense but I find it less inhibiting to work from them through memory and their photographs than actually having them seated there before me."[39]

For Giacometti, the return to figuration meant feeling "obliged to sit on a stool facing the model."[40] Drawing, painting, and sculpting took place again in direct confrontation with the model in the studio. Even so, the endless drawings in notebooks, on book jackets, or in the margins of the page, on scraps of newspaper and hotel or restaurant bills, make it clear that, to Giacometti, capturing the human figure was an obsession that could not be confined to the studio. These depictions, in which direct observation merged with memories and fixed ideas, also include portraits that were influenced by photographs. Thus his 1935 *Portrait de Paul Eluard* is partly based on the photograph of the poet featured in André Breton's famous illustration *Je ne vois pas la [femme] cachée dans la forêt*, published in no. 12 of *La Révolution surréaliste* in December 1929. The method crops up again, nearly twenty years later, in two series of portraits after photographs of Igor Stravinsky, executed in 1957 for the cover of the LP of the ballet *Agon*.[41] Although Giacometti met the composer at the recording session, in Paris on October 11, 1957, and made drawings of him while he was conducting, he worked on the portraits from photographs of Stravinsky at his desk, isolating the figure and eliminating all trace of anecdote to concentrate on the physical expression. The series of portraits of Paul Eluard from November 22, 1952, based on the photograph that accompanied the writer's obituary in *France Soir* on November 19, responded to a different need: the urge to keep the person at a distance by depicting him. Conceivably, too, the portrait of Pierre Reverdy from 1962, drawn from a photograph by Brassaï,[42] is connected with feelings of loss and a sense of being haunted by the image. Photography was not absent in the relationship between Giacometti and the model.

Bacon admired Giacometti's drawings, although he himself seldom resorted to this medium and tried, moreover, to conceal his use of it. His admiration takes on a different significance in the context of Bacon's use of photographs,[43] which was not only iconic, but directly physical. The photographic image was integrated like a sketch into the fabric of the picture. The photographs Bacon manipulated—which were often folded, torn, and tacked on with safety pins or paper clips—became part of the act, and the material, of painting. The few of Bacon's drawings that have survived are mere outlines, indicating the arrangement of bodies and the organization of space. Bacon was no draftsman, but as Martin Harrison notes, he often made a rough sketch on the canvas before starting to paint.[44] In contradiction to

the philosopher Gilles Deleuze, who envisioned the artist as approaching the canvas without preconceptions, the sketches, together with the photographs that the artist pinned directly to the canvas, suggest a harmony between the preparatory drawing and the photograph: a harmony in which the drawing functions as a simple assembly tool. And if photography is frozen reality—as conveyed by the effect of photographic blurring in Bacon's work—then painting, as Deleuze noted, permits a "pressure of the body,"[45] and the pictorial act is defined as a kind of wrestling match with the image, be it photographic or psychic.

For Giacometti, the experience of reality in physical confrontation took place through direct observation. The photographic image appeared in the form of an obsession. Found in a magazine or a book, it demanded to be captured by drawing. In its overt immobility and flatness, it was the opposite of the dynamic vision that unfolded at the heart of Giacometti's works, and was thus linked profoundly with death. For Giacometti, the terrifying images that Bacon associated with the Eumenides, the "Gracious Ones," in the *Oresteia*, were locked in the static reality, astonishing and impalpable, of photography. This is borne out by the photographic image he clipped from a newspaper and kept in his wallet from 1945 onward, showing the corpses of Benito Mussolini and his mistress Claretta Petacci strung up by their feet. The Swiss literary critic Jean Starobinski recalled that Giacometti referred continually, over a period of several days, to "Petacci's legs . . . as an inexhaustible source of holy terror."[46] This is an admission of bewilderment in the face of an image that could not be addressed by copying—in contrast to Bacon, who would seek to deform and assimilate it. The ways in which Bacon and Giacometti used photographic images ultimately reveal a difference between their respective ways of seeing. They looked at the same sources, and the relationship of both artists to photography engendered a new vision of the world, but in Giacometti's case, the concern with photography was less persistent and obsessive. Giacometti's compelling, introspective gaze when encountering the photographic image is quite distinct from the combinatory perspective that Bacon brought to bear on the iconography of present and past horrors, and which enabled him to translate external appearances into a form of exorcism, in and through the picture.

1 Pier Paolo Pasolini, excerpt from "Poet of Ashes, 1966–67," trans. Stephen Sartarelli, in *Pier Paolo Pasolini: Poet of Ashes*, ed. Roberto Chiesi and Andrea Mancini (San Francisco and Pisa, 2007), pp. 11–61, here p. 49.

2 The two artists also shared a common opponent: Clement Greenberg.

3 Francis Bacon, "Interview 2," filmed interview by David Sylvester [May 1966], BBC 1, September 18, 1966, in David Sylvester, *The Brutality of Fact: Interviews with Francis Bacon*, 3rd enlarged ed. (London, 2016), pp. 36–77, here p. 70.

4 *Recent Trends in Realist Painting* took place from July 2 to August 2, 1952. In the exhibition, initiated by David Sylvester and organized with Robert Melville and Peter Watson, one is struck by the coherence of the groups formed on either side of the Channel: around Giacometti (Balthus, Bernard Buffet, Francis Gruber, André Masson, and Paul Rebeyrolle) and Bacon (Lucian Freud, André Minaux, John Minton, and Graham Sutherland), while some were in contact with both (Isabel Lambert [later Rawsthorne] and Peter Rose Pulham). Two canvases by Bacon were shown: *Study for Portrait* (1949) and *Head* (1949); Giacometti exhibited *Portrait du frère de l'artiste* (1948) and *Annette* (1951). In the artists' lifetime, other shows such as *Une nouvelle figuration* at the Galerie Mathias Fels (Paris, November 8 – December 8, 1961) featured selections of their works under the same thematic heading.

5 Robert Melville, David Sylvester, and Peter Watson, exhibition guide to *Recent Trends in Realist Painting*, Institute of Contemporary Arts (London, 1952), n. p.

6 Ibid. In 1951 Sylvester gave a lecture at the Royal College of Art with the title "Towards a New Realism," illustrating his arguments with references to works by Giacometti and Bacon. See Martin Harrison, *Transition: The London Art Scene in the Fifties* (London, 2002), p. 14.

7 Isabel Rawsthorne's correspondence with Giacometti and Pulham demonstrates the extent to which Bacon and Giacometti moved in the same circles and how their paths crossed several times in the 1940s and 1950s. In her correspondence with Pulham in the 1950s, she also makes several references, couched in the same enthusiastic terms, to conversations with the one or the other artist, although they never met. Isabel Rawsthorne Papers, Correspondence with Peter Rose Pulham, Tate Archive, London, TGA 9612/1/3.

8 Born Isabel Nicholas, Rawsthorne changed her name to Delmer (1936) and then Lambert (1947) on her first and second marriages but is generally known by the name of her third husband, Alan Rawsthorne, whom she married in 1955. Giacometti met her in 1935, in Paris, where Francis Bacon encountered her for the first time in 1946.

9 See, in particular, the interviews by Archimbaud 1993 (see note 33) and Sylvester 2016 (see note 3). While Bacon tended to make contradictory or provocative statements, the recurrence of this comment makes it less suspect: it is also corroborated by the testimony of close acquaintances, such as Eddy Batache: "As for the sculptor Giacometti, we had an opportunity to view his exhibition in the Musee d'Art Moderne, a few months before Bacon's death. Despite the affection Francis had for the man, he felt Giacometti had not succeeded in achieving in either sculpture or painting what he had in the realm of drawing. Curiously, he also maintained that it was above all in his drawing that the genius of Michelangelo asserted itself." Eddy Batache, "Francis Bacon: An Intimate View," in *Francis Bacon: La France et Monaco / France and Monaco*, ed. Martin Harrison, exh. cat. Grimaldi Forum, Monaco (Paris, 2016), pp. 186–203, here p. 190.

10 *Exposition de cent dessins par Picasso*, ed. Paul Rosenberg, exh. cat. Galerie Paul Rosenberg (Paris, 1927). During this trip to France, while lodging with the Bocquentin family in Chantilly, Bacon also discovered Nicolas Poussin's painting *Le Massacre des innocents* at the nearby Musée Condé. In Paris, he stayed at the Hôtel Delambre in Montparnasse, near the Café du Dôme, which Giacometti frequented, but the two men did not meet. On Bacon's visit to Paris, see Carol Jacobi, "Francis Bacon and Forties France," in exh. cat. Monaco 2016 (see note 9), pp. 114–30, esp. p. 115.

11 The artist's cousin, Diana Watson, is on record as saying that he "may have had a few drawing lessons at the age of seventeen at St Martin's School of Art." Diana Watson, statement to Ronald Allen, April 4, 1962, Tate Archive, London, cited in Martin Harrison, *In Camera: Francis Bacon. Photography, Film and the Practice of Painting* (London, 2005), pp. 69 and 238 note.

12 Ludwig Grünwald, *Atlas-manuel des maladies de la bouche, du pharynx et des fosses nasales* (Paris, 1903).

13 The show took place from June 11 to July 4, 1936. In April 1935, Giacometti was planning to travel to London for the event, but in a letter penned in Paris on June 29, 1935 to Annetta Giacometti, he announced his decision not to make the trip. Alberto Giacometti to Annetta Giacometti, June 29, 1935, Schweizerisches Institut für Kunstwissenschaft (SIK-ISEA), Zurich, no. 274.A.2.3.45.

14 André Breton, "Preface," *The International Surrealist Exhibition*, exh. cat. New Burlington Galleries (London, 1936), pp. 6–8, here pp. 6 and 8.

15 Herbert Read, "Introduction," ibid., p. 12.

16 Alberto Giacometti, "At the Louvre with Giacometti," interview by Pierre Schneider, *Encounter* (March 1966), pp. 34–40, here p. 36. Originally published as "Au Louvre avec Alberto Giacometti," *Preuves,* no. 139 (September 1962).

17 Alberto Giacometti, "Why Am I a Sculptor?," interview by André Parinaud," in *Alberto Giacometti: Works, Writings, Interviews*, ed. Ángel González (Barcelona, 2006), pp. 146–53, here p. 152. Originally published as "Entretien avec Giacometti: Pourquoi je suis sculpteur," *Arts*, no. 873 (June 13–19, 1962).

18 See *Alberto Giacometti, retour à la figuration, 1933–1947*, ed. Pierre Bruguière et al., exh. cat. Musée Rath, Geneva; Musée national d'art moderne, Paris (Paris, 1986).

19 Alberto Giacometti, "Entretien avec Luigi Carluccio" [1965], cited in Cecilia Braschi, "Les copies du passé: Pour une nouvelle édition critique," in *Alberto Giacometti: Les copies du passé*, ed. Véronique Wiesinger (Paris and Lyon, 2012), p. 11. Four drawings by Giacometti copying, respectively, an Egyptian low-relief, a work by Konrad Witz, a work by André Derain, and a Greek figure were reproduced for the first time in *Labyrinthe*, no. 10 (July 15, 1945), p. 2.

20 Alberto Giacometti, "Notes on the Copy-Interpretations," in *Alberto Giacometti: A Retrospective*, ed. Véronique Wiesinger, exh. cat. Museo Picasso Málaga (Barcelona, 2012), pp. 281–83, here p. 283. Originally published as "Notes sur les copies" [1965], *L'éphémère*, no. 1 (1966).

21 See Braschi, in Wiesinger 2012 (see note 19), p. 23.

22 Giacometti, in exh. cat. Málaga 2012 (see note 20), p. 281.

23 Francis Bacon, "Interview 3," by David Sylvester [1971–73], in Sylvester 2016 (see note 3), pp. 78–125, here p. 81.

24 Bacon was familiar with Muybridge's photographs, but it was only in 1949, at the instigation of his friend Dennis Wirth-Miller, that he began consulting the eleven volumes of *Human and Animal Locomotion* (1887). A copy of the 1955 abridged version, *The Human Figure in Motion*, was also found in his studio on Reece Mews.

25 Francis Bacon, "Interview 4," by David Sylvester [1974], in Sylvester 2016 (see note 3), pp. 126–45, here p. 132.

26 Bacon speaks of the "haunting" quality of photographic images: "And 99 per cent of the time I find that photographs are very much more interesting than either abstract or figurative painting. I've always been haunted by them." Bacon, in Sylvester 2016 (see note 3), p. 37.

27 Ibid., p. 46.

28 Jean Clay, "Alberto Giacometti: Le long dialogue avec la mort d'un très grand sculpteur de notre temps," in Alberto Giacometti, *Ecrits: Articles, notes et entretiens* (Paris, 2007), pp. 310–23, here pp. 315–16. Originally published in *Réalités,* no. 215 (December 1963).

29 Francis Bacon, in "Cambridge Opinion: From a Conversation with Francis Bacon" [1964], in *Francis Bacon: A Retrospective*, exh. cat. The Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, et al. (New York, 1999), pp. 41–42, here p. 41.

30 Giacometti, in González 2006 (see note 17), p. 152.

31 Clay, in Giacometti 2007 (see note 28), p. 318.

32 On this subject, see Harrison 2005 (see note 11).

33 Francis Bacon, *Francis Bacon in Conversation with Michel Archimbaud* (London, 1993), pp. 15–16. Originally published as *Entretiens avec Michel Archimbaud* (Paris, 1992).

34 This is implied by a remark to Sylvester: "Well, I think one's sense of appearance is assaulted all the time by photography and by the film. So that, when one looks at something, one's not only looking at it directly but one's also looking at it through the assault that has already been made on one by photography and film." Bacon, in Sylvester 2016 (see note 3), p. 37.

35 Francis Bacon, "Interview 6," by David Sylvester [1979], ibid., pp. 162–75, here p. 169.

36 Bacon, in Sylvester 2016 (see note 23), p. 98.

37 Bacon, in Sylvester 2016 (see note 35), pp. 163–64.

38 "When Freud arrived at the studio, he found his portrait almost finished, painted from memory and from a photograph of Franz Kafka taken from a book." David Sylvester, "Un Parcours," in *Francis Bacon,* exh. cat. Haus der Kunst, Munich; Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Pompidou, Paris (Paris, 1996), p. 20. Sylvester adds that "a portrait for which I posed in four sittings in 1953 subsequently became—while preserving something of me around the eyes—a Velázquez-style pope, the first in the series for the Galerie Durlacher." Ibid.

39 Bacon, in Sylvester 2016 (see note 3), p. 45.

40 Alberto Giacometti, "My Long March," interview by Pierre Schneider, in González 2006 (see note 17), pp. 139–43, here p. 140. Originally published as "'Ma longue marche' par Alberto Giacometti," *L'Express*, no. 521 (June 8, 1961).

41 The record appeared in 1958 in the collection *Les concerts du Domaine musical*.

42 Photograph published in *Labyrinthe* (December 15, 1945), p. 2.

43 Some 1,080 photographs were found in Bacon's studio after his death, a number that is all the more striking considering that the artist regularly did a certain amount of tidying. On this topic, see Margarita Cappock, *Francis Bacon: L'atelier* (Lausanne, 2006), p. 83.

44 See Martin Harrison, "Francis Bacon—Four Walls," in *Francis Bacon: Unsichtbare Räume / Invisible Rooms*, ed. Ina Conzen, exh. cat. Tate Liverpool; Staatsgalerie Stuttgart (Munich, 2016), pp. 207–19.

45 See Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, trans. Daniel W. Smith (London and New York, 2003), p. 16. Referring to Jean-François Lyotard, Deleuze opposed the "figural" to the "figurative." Here, the figural is neither figurative (or, therefore, narrative or illustrative), nor abstract.

46 See Jean Starobinski, "A Genève avec Giacometti (1943–1945)," in exh. cat. Geneva and Paris 1986 (see note 18), p. 16.

Alberto Giacometti: A Biography

Sylvie Felber

Alberto Giacometti is born on October 10, 1901, in the village of Borgonovo near Stampa, in the valley of Bregaglia, Switzerland. He is the eldest of four children in a family with an artistic background. His mother, Annetta Stampa, comes from a local landed family, and his father, Giovanni Giacometti, is one of the leading exponents of Swiss Post-Impressionist painting. The well-known Swiss painter Cuno Amiet becomes his godfather. In this milieu, Giacometti's interest in art is nurtured from an early age: in 1915 he completes his first oil painting, in his father's studio, and just a year later he models portrait busts of his brothers.[1]

Giacometti soon realizes that he wants to become an artist. In 1919 he leaves his Protestant boarding school in Schiers, near Chur, and moves to Geneva to study fine art. In 1922 he goes to Paris, then the center of the art world, where he studies life drawing, as well as sculpture under Antoine Bourdelle, at the renowned Académie de la Grande Chaumière. He also pays frequent visits to the Louvre to sketch.

In 1925 Giacometti has his first exhibition, at the Salon des Tuileries, with two works: a torso and a head of his brother Diego. In the same year, Diego follows his elder brother to Paris. He will model for Alberto for the rest of his life, and from 1929 on also acts as his assistant. In December 1926, Giacometti moves into a new studio at 46 rue Hippolyte-Maindron. The studio is cramped and humble, but he will work there to the last. In 1926 he exhibits *Le Couple* (1926) and a year later *Femme-cuillère* (1927) at the Salon des Tuileries. In 1929 the French writer, anthropologist, and critic Michel Leiris publishes an enthusiastic essay on Giacometti in the journal *Documents*. Despite his growing artistic reputation, fueled by his first exhibitions and by Leiris's essay, Giacometti's commercial success remains limited. Hence, in 1930 he begins making design objects—with Diego's assistance—for a range of clients, but chiefly for the interior decorator Jean-Michel Frank, who commissions vases, lamps, and sconces from him.

The sculpture *Boule suspendue* (1930), shown with works by Joan Miró and Jean (Hans) Arp in a group exhibition at the Galerie Pierre, marks a first turning point in Giacometti's career. Giacometti comes to the attention of the Surrealist circle around André Breton and Salvador Dalí, and a year later affiliates himself with the group. His first solo show, held in Paris in 1932 at the Galerie Pierre Colle, is favorably reviewed. In 1933, despite his success, he leaves Paris for several months and returns to Stampa to assist his mother in settling the estate of his recently deceased father.

From December 1934 to January 1935, the Julien Levy Gallery, in New York, stages Giacometti's first exhibition in the US, featuring twelve works by the artist. Giacometti begins to work from the model, creating portrait busts and studies of heads. This shift toward realism leads to a falling-out with the Surrealists and to Giacometti's exclusion from the group.

In 1935 Giacometti meets the English artist Isabel Nicholas (later Rawsthorne) and creates two heads using

Giovanni Giacometti, *Portrait of Alberto Giacometti*, ca. 1904

The Giacometti family (clockwise from left): Alberto, Bruno, Giovanni, Annetta, Ottilia, and Diego in Stampa, 1909, photographed by Andrea Garbald

Alberto Giacometti drawing in Schiers, ca. 1917

her as a model (*Tête d'Isabel*, 1936 and ca. 1937–38). He also makes his first attempts at modeling entire figures and begins experimenting with perspective and perception. In 1936 Giacometti participates in the *International Surrealist Exhibition*, at the New Burlington Galleries, in London, and the New York Museum of Modern Art becomes the first museum to acquire a work (*Le Palais à 4 heures du matin*) by Giacometti. On October 19, 1938, Giacometti is hit by an automobile and suffers a foot injury that leaves him with a permanent limp.

Alberto and Diego Giacometti spend the first year of World War II in Paris, but in December 1941 Alberto moves to Geneva, where he remains until 1945, while Diego stays in Paris as custodian of his studio. The sculptures from this period (busts and figures) are tiny, with the exception of *Femme au chariot* (ca. 1943),[2] showing a female figure modeled from the artist's memory of Isabel Rawsthorne. This work paves the way for the standing figures that Giacometti will make after the end of the war. In Geneva, Giacometti meets regularly with Albert Skira, publisher of the journal *Labyrinthe*, to which the artist contributes drawings and texts. In 1943 Giacometti meets Annette Arm, whom he marries six years later and who becomes one of his most important models.

In 1945 Giacometti returns to Paris. In the harsh conditions of the postwar period, art and design have a low priority, which poses a financial problem for the Giacometti brothers. A visit to the cinema in 1945 leads Giacometti to take a particular interest in the perception of the relationship between figure and space. From his deliberations on this subject, a new style emerges, with thin, elongated figures, set on oversized pedestals—necessary for conceptual reasons—that represent the space animated by the figure. In 1947 Giacometti creates a series of life-size female figures, together with his first male full-body figures, and works such as *Le Nez*. In 1948 he has a successful solo exhibition in New York at the Pierre Matisse Gallery. The catalogue includes Jean-Paul Sartre's introductory essay, "The Search for the Absolute." Giacometti has become a close friend of Sartre's and Simone de Beauvoir's, whom he has known since the late 1930s or early 1940s. In 1949 the Tate Gallery becomes the first European museum to buy a work (*L'Homme qui pointe*) by Giacometti.

In the mid-1950s Giacometti meets the Japanese philosophy professor Isaku Yanaihara, who models for him repeatedly between 1956 and 1961 and is the subject of numerous portraits and sculptures. At the same time, he continues to work with Diego and Annette, seeking to give his sculptures "a new volume and a hieratic monumentality."[3] In the 1950s Giacometti's fame grows, and he becomes fully established as an artist. A second exhibition at the Pierre Matisse Gallery, in 1950, is followed a year later by his first solo show at the Galerie Maeght in Paris. In 1955 Giacometti's international reputation manifests itself in retrospectives at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, in New York, and the Arts Council in London, and in three West German cities. In 1956 Giacometti exhibits *Femmes de Venise*, a series of large, slender female

Alberto Giacometti in his studio on rue Hippolyte-Maindron, Paris, 1927

Isabel Nicholas (Rawsthorne), Meret Oppenheim (?), and Alberto Giacometti on the terrace at the café Le Dôme, Paris, 1936, photographed by Béla Bernand

Alberto Giacometti painting rue Hippolyte-Maindron in front of the entrance door to his studio, Paris, summer 1952, photographed by Roger Montandon

Annette, Diego, and Alberto Giacometti in front of the studio, Paris, 1958, photographed by Ernst Scheidegger

Alberto Giacometti in his studio with his studies for the Chase Manhattan Plaza, Paris, 1958, photographed by Ernst Scheidegger

Alberto Giacometti and Caroline (Yvonne Poiraudeau) at the bar Chez Adrien, Paris, ca. 1960

figures, in the French pavilion at the Venice Biennale. In the same year, Switzerland honors him with a retrospective at the Kunsthalle Bern. In 1958 he is awarded a prestigious commission to create a group of sculptures for the Chase Manhattan Plaza, in New York. Giacometti works on the project from 1958 to 1960, developing figures of a walking man and a standing woman, along with a monumental head. In the end, however, the project is abandoned.

At the end of the 1950s, Giacometti meets Yvonne Poiraudeau (better known as Caroline) in one of the Paris bars that he regularly frequents. She begins to model for him (e.g., for the painting *Caroline*, 1961).[4] In Paris, too, the young Francis Bacon introduces himself to Giacometti, at the latest in the early 1960s.

In 1961, Giacometti designs the stage set—consisting of a single tree made of plaster—for a new production of Samuel Beckett's *En attendant Godot* at the Paris Odéon. In the same year, his fourth solo exhibition at the Galerie Maeght attracts much interest and is a resounding success. Giacometti's career reaches its peak. The organizers of the 1962 Venice Biennale invite him to exhibit a group of paintings and sculptures in the main pavilion, which earns him the State Prize for sculpture. In the fall of 1962 he travels to London, where a major retrospective is planned for 1965 at the Tate Gallery. There he meets Rawsthorne and Bacon again. Giacometti and Bacon greatly admire each other, but their budding friendship will end abruptly upon Giacometti's death, in 1966. Also in autumn 1962, preparations are under way for a retrospective at the Kunsthaus Zürich, which opens that winter.

Giacometti's state of health gives cause for serious concern. A chain smoker, he has suffered from chronic bronchitis for years, and his lifestyle, with little sleep and a liberal consumption of coffee and alcohol, places an increasing strain on his constitution. In 1963, a diagnosis of cancer necessitates the removal of a large part of his stomach. A year later, his mother Annetta dies, aged ninety-two, in the bosom of her family in Stampa.

Back in Paris, the photographer Eli Lotar becomes Giacometti's last model. The artist depicts him in works such as *Tête d'homme (Lotar I)* (1964–65) and *Eli Lotar III (assis)* (1965). In 1964 the art collectors and dealers Marguerite and Aimé Maeght establish the Fondation Maeght on the Côte d'Azur, where sculptures by Giacometti are displayed in a central courtyard. In the same year, at the initiative of Ernst Beyeler and others, a group of Swiss collectors and patrons acquires the extensive Giacometti collection of the Pittsburgh industrialist G. David Thompson, which forms the basis for the creation of the Alberto Giacometti Foundation a year later.[5] In 1965 Giacometti travels again to London for the opening of his exhibition at the Tate Gallery. Further retrospectives take place at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, near Copenhagen, and at the New York Museum of Modern Art. For the latter exhibition, Giacometti travels for the first time in his life to the US. In the fall of 1965, the Swiss film director Ernst Scheidegger makes a documentary portraying the artist. In December 1965 Giacometti leaves Paris for the last time

and returns to Stampa. On January 11, 1966, at the Cantonal Hospital in Chur, he dies of pericarditis.

In addition to the Giacometti Foundation, established in 1965 in Zurich, the Fondation Giacometti, based in Paris, is set up in 2003 from the estate of Annette, who dies in 1993.

Alberto Giacometti sculpting a bust of Isaku Yanaihara, Paris, 1960, photographed by Annette Giacometti

Alberto Giacometti and his mother, Annetta, in front of the family house in Stampa, 1960, photographed by Ernst Scheidegger

Alberto Giacometti and Ernst Beyeler at the Galerie Beyeler, Basel, 1963

Alberto Giacometti painting a portrait of his wife, Annette, in his studio in Stampa, 1965, photographed by Ernst Scheidegger

1 *Alberto Giacometti: Pionier der Moderne / Modernist Pioneer*, ed. Franz Smola and Philippe Büttner, exh. cat. Leopold Museum (Vienna, 2014), p. 190. The catalogue includes a biography of the artist on pp. 190–95.

2 Cf. Catherine Grenier, *Alberto Giacometti* (Paris, 2017), pp. 168–69, and 176 for the work's title.

3 Exh. cat Vienna 2014 (see note 1), p. 194.

4 *The Women of Giacometti*, exh. cat. Pace Wildenstein, New York; Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas (New York, 2005), p. 21.

5 Grenier 2017 (see note 2), pp. 297–98.

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- Catherine Grenier, *Alberto Giacometti* (Paris, 2017).
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Francis Bacon: A Biography

Sylvie Felber

Francis Bacon is born in Dublin on October 28, 1909, as the second of five children. His father, Anthony Edward ("Eddy") Mortimer Bacon, is a former major in the British Army, now engaged in breeding and training racehorses. The artist's mother, Christina Winifred Loxley Firth, comes from a family of wealthy industrialists. Bacon's relationship with his parents, especially with his autocratic and violent father, is fraught with conflict. His childhood is also marked by frequent relocations within Ireland and, during World War I, by a period of residence in England. Throughout his life, Bacon suffers from chronic asthma, which largely excludes him from formal schooling.

During adolescence, Bacon becomes aware of his homosexuality, which widens the rift with his sternly disapproving father. In 1926, Eddy Bacon catches his sixteen-year-old son trying on his mother's underwear and throws him out of the household.

From 1926 to 1928, Bacon lives the life of a drifter, at first in London and then in Berlin and Paris. The latter two sojourns have a profound impact on the future artist: in Berlin he enthusiastically embraces the city's nightlife, and it is there, according to some accounts, that he sees, for the first time, Sergei Eisenstein's film *Battleship Potemkin* (1925).[1] His fascination with this cinematic masterpiece results, many years later, in the painting *Study for the Nurse in the Film Battleship Potemkin* (1957). After his stay in Berlin, Bacon spends three months in Chantilly and Paris, learning French and visiting museums and galleries. Nicolas Poussin's *Le Massacre des innocents* (ca. 1627–28) at the Château de Chantilly (now the Musée Condé) makes a strong impression on the young Bacon, who later refers to Poussin as the creator of "probably the best human cry in painting."[2]

An exhibition of drawings by Pablo Picasso, seen at the Galerie Paul Rosenberg in Paris in the summer of 1927, leads Bacon to begin painting, as an autodidact. Following his return to London, he works as a furniture designer and interior decorator, but continues to paint, under the influence of Cubism and Surrealism, to the point of being able to show a number of works in a small group exhibition in November 1930. Despite this quick progress, Bacon is unable to establish himself fully as a designer or as an artist. A phase of restlessness ensues, with continual changes of residence. In 1933 he enters into an unconventional living arrangement with his childhood nanny, Jessie Lightfoot, in Chelsea.

In the same year, Bacon paints his first original works, including *Crucifixion*, and a number of his pictures are included in a group exhibition at the Mayor Gallery, in London. The critical reaction is mixed, but *Crucifixion* is reproduced in Herbert Read's influential book *Art Now: An Introduction to the Theory of Modern Painting and Sculpture* (1933). A solo exhibition in 1934 at the temporary Transition Gallery, set up by Bacon in a cellar, is unsuccessful, however, and his output as a painter thereupon decreases. Moreover, in 1936 his work is rejected by the *International Surrealist Exhibition*, in London, and an ensuing phase of low productivity lasts into the 1940s.

Francis Bacon and his mother, ca. 1912

Francis Bacon outside Farmleigh, Abbeyleix, Ireland, 1924

Francis Bacon (center row, right) as a member of the stretcher party in the Chelsea branch of air raid precautions, 1943

Few of his pictures from this period survive the fits of dissatisfaction that lead the artist to destroy much of his work. His father dies in 1940. Because of his asthma, Bacon is declared unfit for active service in World War II, and he spends the war years in London, where he is active in civil defense.

In 1944 Bacon completes *Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion*, the first of his pictures to arouse public and critical excitement. The work is bought by his patron and lover Eric Hall. Two years later, he completes *Painting 1946*, which is bought by the dealer Erica Brausen, the owner of the Hanover Gallery. The work is subsequently exhibited at the Musée d'Art moderne, in Paris, before its acquisition in 1948 by the New York Museum of Modern Art. Bacon repeatedly uses the earnings from the sales of his works to finance trips to Monte Carlo, where he patronizes the casinos and, from 1946 on, occasionally takes up residence for some years.

Bacon's works from the late 1940s, such as *Head I* (1948) or *Head III* (1949), show a restricted, monochrome palette, and are increasingly focused on facial expressions and details. *Head VI* (1949) is the first of Bacon's many variations on *Portrait of Pope Innocent X* (ca. 1650) by the Spanish painter Diego Velázquez. In the mid-1940s Bacon also acquires the habit of painting on the reverse, unprimed side of the canvas, after finding that the raw fabric absorbs the color better and allows for a thinner application of paint.

In the fall of 1950 Bacon teaches for a few weeks at the Royal College of Art, in London, substituting for a friend. In January 1951 he pays the first of two visits to his mother in South Africa, where she has settled after his father's death. The wildlife and the dry colors of the unfamiliar landscape fascinate him, and their influence can be seen in works such as *Man Kneeling in Grass* (1952) and *Chimpanzee* (1955). The death of Jessie Lightfoot in 1951 has a traumatic effect on Bacon, who once again becomes a nomad, wandering from one lodging and studio to another. In 1952 he meets and begins a new love affair with Peter Lacy, with whom he travels to Rome and Tangiers.

At this point, Bacon's career takes a sharp upward turn. In 1953 he has his first solo exhibition, at the Durlacher Brothers gallery in New York. The year 1954 sees the creation of *Man in Blue I–VII*, a series of pictures showing a man in a dark suit against a somber, minimally defined background. In works such as *Study of a Nude* (1952–53), Bacon begins a deeper investigation of the nude. With Lucian Freud and Ben Nicholson, he exhibits in the British pavilion at the 1954 Venice Biennale. His first one-man show in Paris takes place in 1957 at the Galerie Rive Droite; a year later, a traveling exhibition of his work is shown in several Italian cities. Bacon's first exhibition at Marlborough Fine Art in London, in 1960, is a resounding success, confirming his status as an established artist. A first retrospective takes place at the London Institute of Contemporary Arts in 1955, followed in 1961 by a similar major exhibition at Nottingham University. In May of 1961, Bacon signs the lease on the studio at 7 Reece Mews, where he takes up residence in November and continues to work

Francis Bacon, 1952,
photographed by John Deakin

Francis Bacon and the Moroccan painter
Ahmed Yacoubi, Tangiers, ca. 1957

Francis Bacon standing outside the Wallace Heaton
Camera Shop, Bond Street, London, ca. 1959

until his death. In contrast to the artist's growing fame, the studio premises are small and modest.

The 1960s and 1970s are a time of major successes. A first triumph of this period is the retrospective at the Tate Gallery in 1962, although the event is overshadowed by the death of Peter Lacy. Lacy and Bacon have been separated for some years, but the demise of his former lover hits Bacon hard. Nevertheless, the following year, a new man enters Bacon's life: George Dyer, who becomes a recurrent figure in Bacon's art in the 1960s, with works such as *Portrait of George Dyer Riding a Bicycle* (1966). As Bacon soars to new artistic heights, the thematic focus of his work begins to shift: instead of painting "Furies, . . . dictators and . . . screaming Popes,"[3] he turns his attention to portraiture. In the London district of Soho, Bacon spends long evenings dining and drinking with friends such as Lucian Freud, Henrietta Moraes, and Isabel Rawsthorne, who also find a place in his oeuvre. Often working from photographs, he uses these images as the basis for portraits and depictions of nude figures. *Lying Figure* (1969), for example, is based on a nude photograph of Henrietta Moraes.

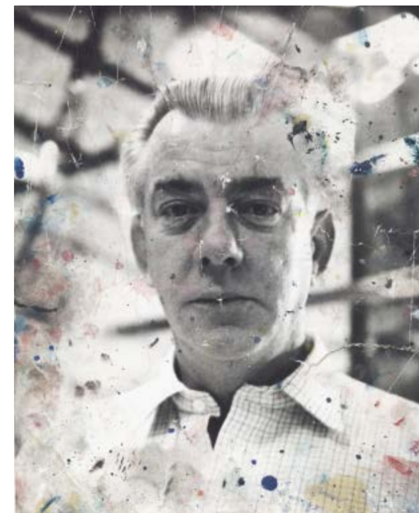
The artist Isabel Rawsthorne is one of Bacon's closest friends. As a member of the Paris avant-garde, she provides a link between Paris and London, as well as between Bacon and Alberto Giacometti, for whom she has modeled (she also models for Bacon, in *Portrait of Isabel Rawsthorne Standing in a Street in Soho*, 1967).

The two artists themselves make each other's acquaintance at the latest in the early 1960s, when Bacon introduces himself to Giacometti in a Paris café.[4] In 1962 and 1965 they meet more frequently, while Giacometti is in London to prepare for his retrospective at the Tate Gallery and to attend the opening.

In 1968 Bacon travels for the first time to New York, for a solo exhibition of his work at the Marlborough-Gerson Gallery. In April 1971 his mother dies, in South Africa. In October of that year, a further Bacon retrospective opens, at the Grand Palais, in Paris. Two days before the exhibition opens, George Dyer takes his own life in his Paris hotel room. Bacon addresses the subject of Dyer's suicide in works such as *In Memory of George Dyer* (1971) and *Triptych August 1972* (1972). He also turns increasingly to painting self-portraits.

In the years prior to 1980, Bacon spends long periods in Paris, where he rents a studio through the offices of his friend Michael Peppiatt. He deepens his friendships with his Paris circle of acquaintances, which includes Michel Leiris, for example, whom Bacon also portrays (*Portrait of Michel Leiris*, 1976). In the mid-1970s Bacon meets John Edwards, a new companion, forty years his junior, whom he names as his sole heir.

In works such as *Sand Dune* (1983), Bacon returns, for the first time in many years, to the depiction of landscape. His painting technique becomes finer and more nuanced, while reducing the means of expression to a minimum. International exhibitions and retrospectives in cities such as Tokyo (1983); Washington, DC (1989); and New York



Peter Lacy, ca. 1959 (from Bacon's studio), photographed by John Deakin

Francis Bacon in his 7 Reece Mews studio, London, 1961, photographed by Mario Dondero

George Dyer, ca. 1964 (from Bacon's studio), photographed by John Deakin

(1990) put the seal on Bacon's status as an artist of world renown. In 1985 the Tate Gallery also stages its second retrospective of his work. At the end of the 1980s, Bacon increasingly faces health problems. During a trip to Madrid his health deteriorates drastically; after being taken to the hospital, he suffers a heart attack and dies on April 28, 1992.

Francis Bacon in his 7 Reece Mews studio, London, 1964, photographed by Peter Suschitzky

Isabel Rawsthorne on Dean Street, London, ca. 1965 (from Bacon's studio), photographed by John Deakin

Francis Bacon and Ernst Beyeler, Basel, 1987

Francis Bacon in his 7 Reece Mews studio, London, ca. 1970s

1 See Michael Peppiatt, *Francis Bacon: Anatomy of an Enigma*, rev. ed. (London, 2008), p. 37. According to the catalogue to the 1996 exhibition of his work at the Haus der Kunst, in Munich, Bacon saw the film for the first time in 1935. *Francis Bacon*, exh. cat. Haus der Kunst, Munich (Ostfildern, 1996), p. 288. The catalogue also contains a detailed biography, see pp. 282–313.

2 Francis Bacon, "Interview 2," filmed interview by David Sylvester [May 1966], BBC 1, September 18, 1966, in David Sylvester, *The Brutality of Fact: Interviews with Francis Bacon*, 3rd enlarged ed. (London, 2016), pp. 36–77, here p. 40.

3 Peppiatt 2008 (see note 1), p. 254.

4 Ibid., p. 251.

Additional Sources

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- Martin Harrison, "Chronology," in *Francis Bacon: Catalogue Raisonné* (London, 2016), vol. 1, pp. 74–101.

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Grande femme IV, 1960
Tall Woman IV
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Homme qui marche II, 1960
Walking Man II
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Homme qui marche II, 1960
Walking Man II
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Bust of Yanaihara (II)
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Roger Montandon
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Roger Montandon
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Bacon—Giacometti

Fondation Beyeler
Riehen / Basel
April 29–September 2, 2018

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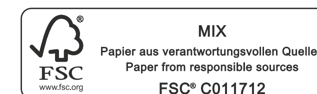

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Alberto Giacometti and Francis Bacon at the Tate Gallery, London, 1965, photographed by Graham Keen

Frontispiece
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