

Bacon, Freud and a tragic legacy

Print

By Georgina Adams

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With the opening of Tate's major Bacon retrospective, two London galleries are also showing his work. Faggionato Fine Art unveiled a small show, *Francis Bacon's Women*, last week, with portraits of Henrietta Moraes, Isabelle Rawsthorne and Muriel Belcher. Prices range from £250,000 for a rare oil on paper, "Lying Figure" (1957-61), to about £9m for a 1961 "Crouching Woman". The art critic David Sylvester once said that every portrait Bacon painted was a self-portrait - "including the women" - and this is a show to verify his assertion. More affordable prints are on view at James Hyman Fine Art, which is showing 12 lithographs, priced between £5,000 and £35,000.

Francis Bacon often

Painted his friend and drinking mate Lucian Freud but Freud only painted Bacon twice, once in 1952 and the other in 1956-57. The first work, a tiny portrait on copper, was stolen from a Berlin gallery in 1988; Freud designed a "Wanted" poster which was plastered around Berlin, but the picture is still missing. The other, painted by Freud "knee to knee" with his sitter, remained unfinished: Bacon suddenly decamped, probably to follow his lover Peter Lacey to Morocco. Christie's is selling this portrait on October 19, with an estimate of £5m-£7m.

Prices for modern Italian art have been soaring (Art Market Research reports growth of 95.6 per cent in the last 10 years), with the undisputed star being Lucio Fontana, whose work has shown a jaw-dropping 441 per cent rise since 1998. His best-known works are slashed or punctured canvases; earlier this year a pierced, gold egg-shaped canvas, "La Fine di Dio", from 1963, made a record £10.3m at Sotheby's in London. Now Pescali, a long-established firm of Italian dealers from Milan, is setting up in London and will open next month with a major exhibition of 35 Fontana works, about 10 of which will be for sale. Designer Michael Wolfson is doing the interior of the gallery at 4 Clifford Street and among the works for sale is a "Teatrino" from 1967, at around £750,000.

Two city financiers, one from Russia, one from the Czech Republic, are behind a new gallery opening in London's Shoreditch this week. Nonna Materkova and Peter Malik founded Calvert 22 at 22 Calvert Avenue, and kick off with a show of work by 18 emerging artists. Entitled *Fresh Air Machine*, the exhibition is "a chance to make art and not comment on society or the market," says curator Howard Dyke. Paintings, sculpture and video are on display, among them Geraldine Swayne's appealing portrait "Industrialist on Wheels, 2008" (prices £6,000-£8,000). Future shows will create a dialogue between eastern European and western artists.

A poignant souvenir of Marie Antoinette's tragic fate comes up for auction at Christie's in Paris next month. It is a small purse (below), embroidered by the Queen when she was awaiting the guillotine in the Temple prison (estimate €12,000-€15,000) and given to her companion Mme de Tourzel. Also in the sale is a portrait, in prison, of her son Louis XVII, whose fate remains an enigma (estimate, €6,000-€8,000). The objects are part of a collection of 600 items from the estate of the Comte de Paris, the previous Orléans pretender to the French throne. His financial affairs were controversial and his nine children were furious when he sold part of his - or their - heritage at auction before his death in 1999. This sale is expected to make up to €1m - but it will probably fetch a great deal more.

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