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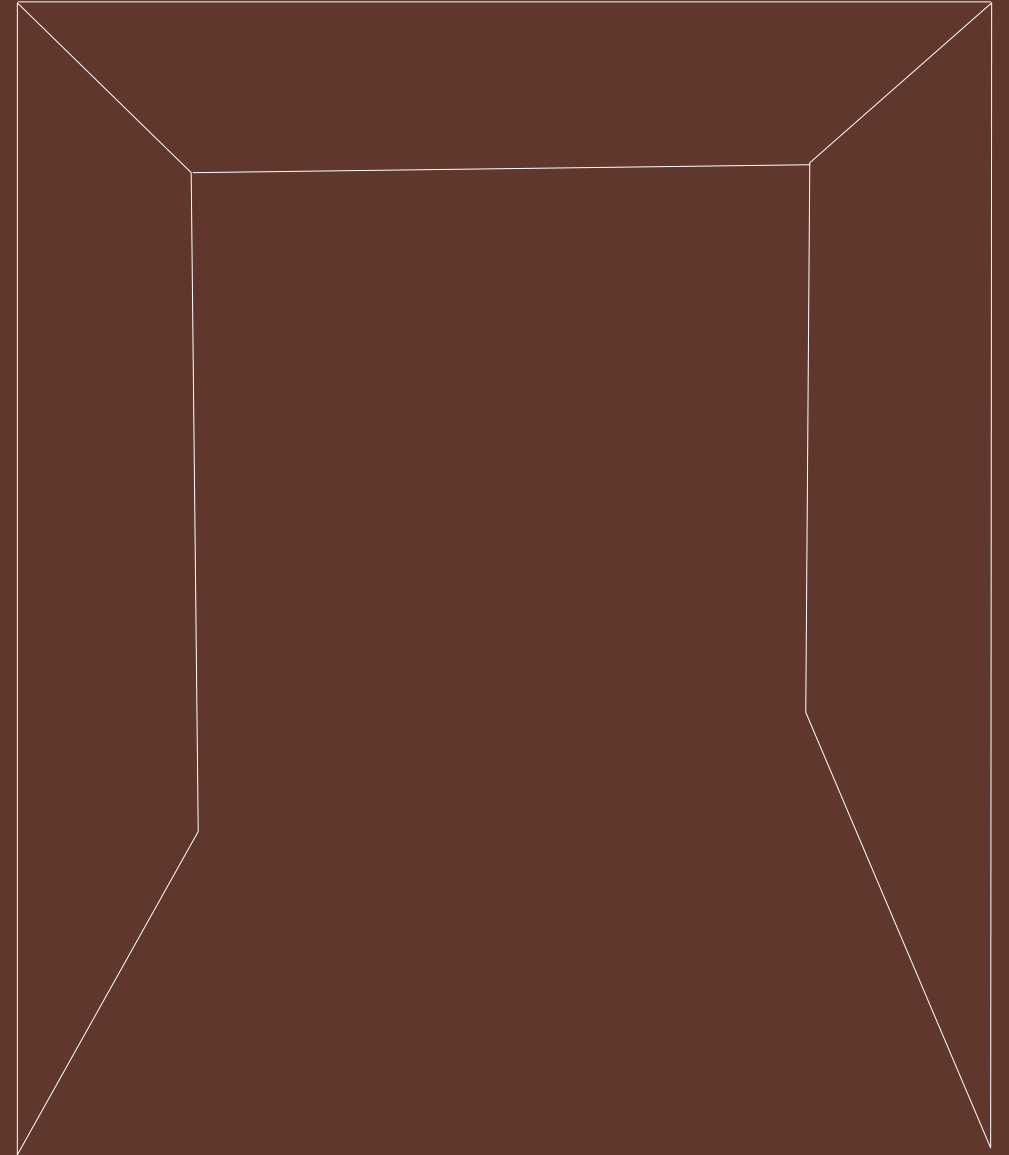
FRANCIS BACON: THE BEAUTY OF MEAT

**5.11.2023
THURSDAY
10:30AM – 5:30PM (BRT)**

Live stream on YouTube
[@maspmuseu](#)

ORGANISATION

Adriano Pedrosa
Fernando Oliva
Laura Cosendey



Production

MINISTÉRIO DA
CULTURA



FRANCIS BACON: THE BEAUTY OF MEAT

Francis Bacon: The Beauty of Meat aims to reflect on the work of the famous Irish-born artist Francis Bacon (1909-1992) by adopting an unusual approach, shedding light, above all, on the queer elements present in both his artistic production and personal life. Quite surprisingly, much of the criticism and canonical art history sought to bypass the queer aspects that permeate his paintings, offering a controversy-free vision of his homosexuality. Bacon had to struggle against social norms, confining his personal life to secluded spaces, a common experience for queer men of his period. Adopting a contemporary perspective on the artist's work, the group of scholars gathered for this seminar will address the different ways through which Bacon paved the way for the presence of queerness in Western visual culture. As this seminar is intended to provoke—laying the ground for a major show dedicated to the artist at MASP in 2024—it is time to challenge some of the stereotypes and clichés associated with Bacon's work.

ORGANISATION

ADRIANO PEDROSA

Artistic Director, MASP

FERNANDO OLIVA

Curator, MASP

LAURA COSENDEY

Assistant Curator, MAS

LIVE BROADCAST

The seminar will be broadcast online and free of charge through the MASP profile on YouTube, with simultaneous translation into LIBRAS, Portuguese and English.

CERTIFICATE

To receive a participation certificate, it is necessary to register through a link that will be provided during the seminar. The certificates will only be sent to the registered email of those who attend the seminar.

PARTICIPANTS

DOMINIC JANES

Professor of Modern History, Keele University, and a Professorial Fellow, University for the Creative Arts. He is a cultural historian who studies texts and visual images relating to Britain in its local and international contexts since the eighteenth century.

GREGORY SALTER

Lecturer in art history at the University of Birmingham. He published a book titled *Art And Masculinity In Post-War Britain: Reconstructing Home* in 2019. He is currently working on a research project that addresses transnational histories of queer art from Britain between 1957 and 1988.

MICHAEL PEPIATT

Member of the Society of Authors and the Royal Society of Literature. He has curated numerous exhibitions, notably retrospectives of Francis Bacon and Alberto Giacometti in Europe and the US. Recently, Peppiatt curated the show *Francis Bacon: Man and Beast* at the Royal Academy of Arts.

PAULO HERKENHOFF

Curator of the 24th São Paulo Art Biennial, dedicated to the autonomy of Brazilian art with the problematisation of anthropophagy (1998), of which Francis Bacon's work was part. Chair at the Instituto de Estudos Avançados da Universidade de São Paulo (USP) (2019), and honoured with the Grand Cross of the Order of Cultural Merit (2015). Former Cultural Director of Museu de Arte do Rio (2013-2016).

RICHARD HORNSEY

Associate Professor in Modern British History at the University of Nottingham, UK. Author of *The Spiv and the Architect: Unruly Life in Postwar London*. He currently works on a project to explore the colonial dynamics of over-the-counter medicine through the British pharmacy chain Boots The Chemists.

RINA ARYA

Professor of Visual Culture and Theory at the University of Huddersfield. Her monograph, *Francis Bacon: Painting in a Godless World* (2012) was well acclaimed. She also wrote *Bacon's beasts: The pathos of the animal*, which is forthcoming in *The British Art Journal*.

SIMON OFIELD-KERR

Vice-Chancellor of the Norwich University of the Arts. He started his academic career at Leeds and held a series of key leadership roles at Middlesex University and Kingston University. Before joining Norwich University of the Arts, Ofield-Kerr was Deputy Vice-Chancellor at University of the Arts London (UAL).

5.11.2023 THURSDAY

10:30 AM

Introduction

ADRIANO PEDROSA

Artistic Director, MASP

10:40 AM – 12 PM

SIMON OFIELD-KERR

Wrestling with Francis Bacon, yet again!

Simon Ofield-Kerr's research interests are focused on the relationships between social/sexual practices, pleasures and identities, and both visual and literary cultures. In this talk he continues to wrestle with the work of Francis Bacon and in particular his 1953 painting *Two Figures*, approaching it through an archive of popular and banal visual and written texts that are related to social/sexual practices and pleasures that in the 1950s were increasingly identified in the popular press as 'homosexual'. It is suggested that *Two Figures* can be viewed within a history of social and sexual encounters between men that were orchestrated by class difference and influenced by the visual and sexual economy of 1930s' German modernism. The talk proposes how this economy is popularised and re-presented on the pages of British and American fitness, physique, and wrestling magazines of the 1950s, and how the classified advertisements in these magazines provide a popular context for making sense of Bacon's painting.

GREGORY SALTER

Francis Bacon and Queerness

Beyond Britain in the 1950s

In the 1950s, Francis Bacon made repeat journeys to Tangier in Morocco, partly to follow his then-lover Peter Lacy. A small number of paintings survive that were either produced in Morocco or that reference Morocco in some way, and they have been under-explored in Bacon scholarship. At the same time, Morocco—and particularly Tangier—had become a space that attracted queer tourists and queer cultural figures in the post-war years. This paper builds on existing research on the relationship between Bacon's art and queer contexts within Britain and asks how such histories can be expanded with an attention to the spaces outside of Britain into which queer British men travelled. Drawing on Morocco-focused paintings such as *Man Carrying a Child*, 1956 and *Landscape Near Malabata, Tangier*, 1963, this paper argues that international spaces like Tangier were crucial to Bacon's negotiation and articulation of queerness in the post-war years.

Mediation:

FERNANDO OLIVA

Curator, MASP

1:30 PM – 3 PM

RICHARD HORNSEY

Bacon's Heads and the fragmentation of the queer male face in post-war Britain

This talk reads Bacon's dissolving *Heads* series as an aesthetic response to the socio-political position of queer men in post-war Britain. In the early 1950s, increased police surveillance made the experience of inhabiting public space increasingly fraught for queer men. Faced with problems of detection and proof, legal authorities developed a set of visible queer tropes (gestures, facial expressions, touches of make-up) that were relied on in court to evidence desire on the surface of a suspect's body. At the same time, campaigners for decriminalisation claimed that homosexual men were legitimate citizens precisely because their sexuality was invisible - thereby casting out those who couldn't (or refused to) pass in public space. Bacon's early post-war heads speak to this moment by engaging with the structures of quotidian state portraiture. Ultimately, I argue, Bacon's dissolving or fragmenting heads explored the contradiction of trying to appear in post-war public space as both a queer man and a legitimate citizen.

DOMINIC JANES

Bacon, beefcake and erotic material culture

It is now widely appreciated not only that Francis Bacon was a queer man with interests in BDSM—abbreviation for sexual practices of bondage, discipline (or domination), sadism (or submission), masochism—, but that his sexuality played an important role in the development of his art. This acknowledgement, however, still places him within a set of familiar identity categories and fails to fully illuminate the particularities of his erotic imagination. With that in mind this talk will be exploring the complex ways in which eroticism and material culture interacted in Bacon's life and paintings. This approach takes its cue from early historical definitions that spoke of sodomy as being about a far wider range of physical transgressions than just anal sex. It involves revisiting mid-twentieth-century homoerotic images in ways that trouble the conceptual binaries of human and animal, flesh and meat, and subject and object that acted to demarcate both hetero and homosexual normativity during his lifetime.

Mediation:

LEANDRO MUNIZ

Curatorial Assistant, MASP

5.11.2023 THURSDAY

3 PM – 4:30 PM

RINA ARYA

Queering the oeuvre:

A contemporary look at Bacon

Bacon was an audacious painter who depicted the raw splendour of the male body. Painting during an age when homosexuality was criminalised, Bacon portrayed male same-sex desire in various ways, sometimes surreptitiously, through frenzied couplings veiled in some way, and at other times, more through the homoerotic gaze. Stepping back from this perspective, with the contemporary lens, Bacon can be seen to be commenting more broadly on what we now understand as 'queer', where the term is interpreted as an obfuscation or ambiguity about categories. In many ways his representations are about the pulsating desiring body, coming into life, falling apart, and dissolving into powdery ether. This talk considers Bacon's bodies as queer, as in between genders and sexualities, but as desirous, vital and yet deeply vulnerable.

PAULO HERKENHOFF

**Francis Bacon and
the raw flesh of painting**

If we turn to Paul Éluard's aphorism, reintroduced by Maurice Merleau-Ponty in *Eye and Mind*, that every painter lends their body to the painting, then it is appropriate to look into which body is lent by Francis Bacon to his art. It is one dilacerated by the voracity of his same-sex desire, swallowed by some physical and anatomical issue of the other. Thus, Bacon is a desperate Merleau-Ponty with his entrails exposed, as in Rembrandt's *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp* (1632). Bacon may be considered as "anthropophagic" within the Brazilian culture dimension of *Manifesto Antropófago* [Anthropophagic Manifesto] (1928), by poet Oswald de Andrade. "I am only interested in what is not mine. I am only interested in the flesh of the other". Louise Bourgeois nurtured a cannibal passion for Bacon. However, the aspect of Bacon closer to the anthropophagic pathos may be approached through transgressive Brazilian artist Arthur Barrio, as both are artists of the wild—and simultaneously philosophical—flesh.

Mediation:

MATHEUS DE ANDRADE

Curatorial Assistant, MASP

4:30 PM – 5:30 PM

A conversation with

MICHAEL PEPPIATT

Francis Bacon: In Your Blood

Michael Peppiatt met Francis Bacon in June 1963 in Soho's French House to request an interview for a student magazine he was editing. Bacon invited him to lunch, they began a friendship and a no-holds-barred conversation that would continue until Bacon's death thirty years later. Fascinated by the artist's brilliance and charisma, Peppiatt accompanied him on his nightly round of prodigious drinking from grand hotel to louche club and casino, seeing all aspects of Bacon's 'gilded gutter life' and meeting everybody around him. He also frequently discussed painting with Bacon in his studio, where only the artist's closest friends were ever admitted. Despite the chaos Bacon created around him Peppiatt managed to record scores of their conversations ranging over every aspect of life and art, love and death, the revelatory and hilarious as well as the poignantly tragic.

Mediation:

LAURA COSENDEY

Assistant Curator, MASP