

The Museum of Modern Art

For Immediate Release
April 1990

FACT SHEET

EXHIBITION FRANCIS BACON

DATES June 3 - August 28, 1990

ORGANIZATION James T. Demetrion, Director, The Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Coordinated for The Museum of Modern Art by John Elderfield, Director, Department of Drawings, and Curator, Department of Painting and Sculpture

SPONSORSHIP The exhibition was supported in part by a grant from the Smithsonian Special Exhibition Fund. An indemnity was provided by the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities. The New York showing is made possible by a generous grant from IFI International.

CONTENT A retrospective of approximately sixty works by Francis Bacon honors the English artist on his eightieth birthday. The first overview of his work in the United States in over twenty-five years, the exhibition presents powerful, often troubling representations of the human figure. Bacon focuses on literary and personal subjects and the reinterpretation of traditional religious themes. The works in the exhibition were drawn from collections in the United States, Europe, Japan, Australia, and South America.

Many of Bacon's compositions of the late 1940s, which begin the exhibition, focus menacingly on the head and mouth. Works from the 1950s include landscape and animal subjects, Bacon's first reworkings of masterpieces by Velázquez and van Gogh, and works inspired by photographer Eadweard Muybridge's motion studies.

During the 1960s, Bacon began creating heroically scaled diptychs and especially triptychs ranging from portraits to complex and symbolic figure compositions. Vigorously intensive figure studies and portraits of friends, mostly in quiet interiors, have been the artist's major focus since the late 1970s. Some of these works reflect Bacon's long-standing interest in Greek drama and its themes of guilt, vengeance, and redemption.

THE ARTIST Born in Ireland of English parents in 1909, Bacon left for the continent at age sixteen and then settled in London in

1929. He destroyed much of his early work and effectively started his career at age thirty-five. Bacon's paintings have been exhibited in museums and galleries worldwide, receiving high critical acclaim. Some of his most recent one-person exhibitions have taken place in Tokyo (1988), Moscow (1988), Paris (1987), and London (1985). The last New York retrospective of his work was mounted by the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in 1963.

PUBLICATION

Francis Bacon. Foreword by James T. Demetrion, essays by Sir Lawrence Gowing and Sam Hunter. Includes a chronology, exhibition history, and selective bibliography. 188 pages. 59 color plates and 12 black-and-white illustrations. Published by The Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in association with Thames and Hudson. Hardbound, \$50; softbound, \$25.95.

TRAVEL

After its Washington, D.C., showing, the exhibition traveled to The Los Angeles County Museum of Art, where it is on view through April 29, 1990.

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For additional information or photographic materials, contact the Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 212/708-9750.