

Press Release

Exhibition: **Marlene Dumas-Francis Bacon**
Curators: Marente Bloemheuvél e Jan Mot
Opening: **Monday June 5th, 1995**
Duration: June 6th - October 1st, 1995
Catalogue: Charta; texts by Marente Bloemheuvél and Jan Mot, Richard Francis, Daniel Kurjakovic, Marlene Dumas, Maurizio Fagiolo dell'Arco

The surprising yet entirely natural encounter between two painters who represent two different generations and two entirely different worlds is the springboard for an exhibition focusing on the representation of the human being.

Both artists depict man in his essence, in all his fear and solitude; both express enormous compassion for the human condition.

Francis Bacon (1909-92) is recognised as one of the greatest of contemporary artists. His portraits in particular are imbued with tragedy (so much so that they deliberately verge on the grotesque) and had a significant impact on figurative exploration in the Sixties.

Marlene Dumas (1953) creates penetrating portraits and human figures. Eroticism, fear and death are her dominant themes though they are often portrayed in a poetic light or a humorous context.

Contradictions and moral dilemmas, political and cultural commitment, these are the central themes of an artist who will be representing Holland at the next Venice Biennale.

Exhibition: **Joel-Peter Witkin**
Curator: Germano Celant
Opening: **Monday June 5th, 1995**
Duration: June 6th-End of September, 1995
Catalogue: Charta; text by Germano Celant, Joel-Peter Witkin

Witkin is one of the most controversial of contemporary photographers and, according to many, the most scandalous - having developed an aesthetic based on the sublimation of abnormality.

His world is populated by cadavers, foetuses and freaks, hermaphrodites, dwarves and stunted or dismembered bodies, transsexuals, portraits of torturers and their victims arranged in sadomasochistic or sacrificial poses. Witkin's work investigates the relationship between love and death, pain and sex, offering his audience an iconography that documents the beauty of the macabre.

Witkin uses a variety of printing techniques: the surface of each photograph is etched with signs, scratches and blotches, forming an evocative back-drop for the dramatic tableaux that emerge from the artist's imagination.

The exhibition on the Museum's third floor includes some 100 of the photographs and preparatory sketches Witkin has produced since 1973, works loaned to the exhibition from American and European private collections and public museums.

PRESS RELEASE

EXHIBITION

MARLENE DUMAS-*FRANCIS BACON*

CURATORS

MARENTE BLOEMHEUVEL and JAN MOT

OPENING

MONDAY 5TH JUNE, 1995

PRESS OPENING FROM 11 am.
GUIDED TOUR WITH THE CURATORS AT 5pm
OPENING AT 7pm

PERIOD

JUNE 6th - OCTOBER 1st, 1995

MUSEUM HOURS

**THURSDAY THRU FRIDAY 10am TO 5pm
SATURDAY AND SUNDAY 10am TO 7pm
THE THIRD THURSDAY OF EACH MONTH
10am-10pm**

EXHIBITION SITE

**CASTELLO DI RIVOLI
MUSEO D'ARTE CONTEMPORANEA
PIAZZA DEL CASTELLO
10098 RIVOLI (TO)**

CATALOGUE

CHARTA

Marlene Dumas-Francis Bacon

The exhibition is an as surprising as natural encounter of two painters, representing different generations, different worlds, the one a man, the other a woman. The one is the Englishman Francis Bacon (1909-1992), the other Marlene Dumas (b. 1953), grew up in South Africa, and has lived in Amsterdam since 1976.

The exhibition focuses on the representation of the human being. It reflects on the question how within the mystery of the making of the painting the mystery of the appearance can be caught.

The answer probably lies in the candour and the freedom both painters approach their subject with. They depict man in his essence: confrontingly, instinctively and plainly. Despite the fact that the human incapacity, fears and loneliness are portrayed relentlessly, the work of both painters express a great compassion for the human tragedy.

Bacon generally prefers to isolate his figures, in a rudimentally indicated environment, on moments of acute perception of mortality. His brush technique is masterly, accurate, balancing between abstraction and figuration.

Coincidence plays an important part in the creation process. The individuals in Bacon's work give the impression to be in continual conflict with the situation in which they find themselves. From the distorted face and body the appearance emerges. With the aim of intensifying it, reality is transformed.

Marlene Dumas depicts the human figure in order to represent what she calls "situation", i.e. emotions, experiences and events. Contradictions in their existence and moral dilemmas, political and cultural are central concerns.

Apart from isolated figures she also paints group portraits. Like with Bacon, her portraits are inspired by photos, often of friends and relatives.

In contrast with Bacon, Dumas attributes a crucial significance to the word, both via poetic, often contradictory titles, and via the direct integration of texts in the image. With Dumas the individual, private experience is converted into a collective, public experience.

This way a portrait of her daughter may function within a painting that has as theme racial discrimination, innocence or virginity.

With the bringing together of these two artists, a polarisation is not aimed at: not a confrontation but a dialogue respecting the inherent qualities of the artists is the central objective.

Marlene Dumas-Francis Bacon

The exhibition

The exhibition has been conceived as a dialogue between the works of two very different artists both of whom, however, place the human figure at the very centre of their art.

The works will be displayed on the second floor of the museum. They will be arranged in parallel with each other, thereby creating a continuous flow of stimuli and sensations, with representations that investigate the nature of man, his hopes and fears. Worlds viewed from the unique perspectives of a contemporary master and a young but already acclaimed artist who will be representing her adopted country, Holland, at the Venice Biennale.

Francis Bacon (1909-1992), an English artist of Irish origin, was influenced by Van Gogh and came into fruitful contact with the realism of Grosz. His exploration of the human condition began in 1944 with a series of profoundly disturbing, tragic paintings based on images of distorted bodies. These were often derived from pre-existing sources - some anonymous, others created by authors like Muybridge, Eisenstein and Bunuel.

His work, charged with expressionist vigour, exerted a considerable influence on later artists, particularly those engaged in the figurative research of the Second World War.

Marlene Dumas was born in 1953 in Cape Town where she attended the Academy of Fine Arts. Moving to Holland, she was admitted to "Ateliers 63" in Harlem. In the Eighties she concentrated her energies on portraits and depictions of the human body, exploiting an intense mixture of eroticism, fear and death, frequently set in a poetic or humorously ironic context.

Both photography and printed word play a major part in her works.

From the text by Marente Bloemheuvel & Jan Mot

Both of them display a desire to retain a link with reality by using a referential or figurative way of working, while at the same time dismantling the belief that traditional mimetic portraiture is a true record of the unique character of the subject. The 'coupling' of Francis Bacon - who has now become a legendary figure in twentieth-century art - with a comparatively young artist like Marlene Dumas, clearly breaks with certain exhibition conventions. But the intention is neither competitive nor polemic: all that we hope is that the exhibition will stimulate an interesting and open discussion. It is in meeting with the other that the image of the 'I' is born. And the examination and modification of that image should be a continuous process.

From the text by Richard Francis

(...) The romantic existentialist of Sartre and Camus, born of Nietzsche's Dionysian glamour, is the place from whence Bacon's 'rivers of flesh' emerge. (Bacon told Sylvester that he wished to 'make paintings in which images, as it were, would arise from a river of flesh'. The work denies the strict self-reference of modernist practice because it uses the literary as a device to extend its emotional range. The sense of emotional structure is contained within the bleakness of *existence*, that nothing is important beyond the momentary pleasure, and this is achieved at the risk of extinguishing it through death rather than boredom. The paintings excite us because they are at the very edge of our experience, reporting nothingness as subject and in this lies their modernity.

Marlene Dumas' pictures seem by contrast to be less extreme, to be coded within a discourse of sexual desire that conveys a sort of happiness rather than despair. They look as if they are made with desire, but a desire satisfied. This may be only in contrast with Bacon, since Dumas is operating within the conventions of 1980s theoretical practice, the period of post Freudianism and abjection. We can speculate that the dominant emotion here, in its presentation of simple, calm forms (in general), is pleasurable, that is, without the despair that drives Bacon. (...)

From the text by Daniel Kurjakovic

The works of Bacon and Dumas show differences that should not be masked by concentrating on the human figure. Both positions are certainly fruitful to the extent that they are able to turn the basic assumptions of western anthropocentric self-perception upside down, liquefy them and denaturalize them. Bacon's work denaturalizes the notion of general, ontological space. It shows how the intelligibility of space is regulated and ordered by means of a metaphysical logic that establishes hierarchies; it also shows how the subjects that enter it are submitted to a disciplining process if they do not succeed in perceiving the intensities of the space. Dumas' works are embedded in discourses that process gender, politics, race and history; her works attempt to actualize as painting the presence, presented there, but very difficult to feel, that is the other (woman, child, black person ...). (...)

Marlene Dumas

Paintings

Occult Revival, 1984

oil on canvas 130 x 110 cm
Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

Martha - Sigmund's Wife, 1984

oil on canvas, 130 x 110 cm
Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

Genetiese heimwee (Genetic Longin), 1984

oil on canvas, 130 x 110 cm
Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven

Het kwaad is banaal (The Banality of Evil),

1984
oil on canvas, 125 x 105 cm
Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven

The White Disease, 1985

oil on canvas, 120 x 105 cm
Private collection, London

The Accident, 1986

oil on canvas, 130 x 110 cm
Bayerische Staatsgemaldehyesammlungen,
Munich

Albino, 1986

oil on canvas, 130 x 110 cm
Courtesy Galerie Paul Andriess, Amsterdam

The Particularity of Nakedness, 1987

oil on canvas, 140 x 300 cm
Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven

Losing (her Meaning), 1988

oil on canvas, 50 x 70 cm
Private collection

Snowwhite in the Wrong Story, 1988

oil on canvas, 100 x 300 cm
Jo e Marlies Eyck collection, Wijlre,
the Netherlands

Snowwhite and the Broken Arm, 1988

oil on canvas, 140 x 300 cm
Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague

Waiting (for Meaning), 1988

oil on canvas, 50 x 70 cm
Kunsthalle, Kiel

The Human Tripod, 1988

oil on canvas, 180 x 90 cm
Centraal Museum, Utrecht

Before Life, 1989

oil on canvas, 50 x 40 cm
Private collection

Pregnant Image, 1988-90

oil on canvas, 180 x 90 cm
Jack Tilton collection, New York

Schaammeisje (Embarrassment), 1990

oil on canvas, 60 x 50 cm
Private collection, Amsterdam

Het Laatste Avondmaal (The Last Supper),
1985-91

oil on canvas, 160 x 200 cm
Private collection, Amsterdam

Sold against one's Will, 1990-91

oil on canvas, 70 x 50 cm
Collection of the artist

Helena, 1992

oil on canvas, 60 x 50 cm
Helena Dumas collection, Amsterdam

De Dans (The Dance), 1992

oil on canvas, 90 x 180 cm
F. Wisman - P. Dinghs collection, Utrecht

The Ritual (with Doll), 1992

oil on canvas, 110 x 130 cm
Courtesy Galerie Paul Andriess, Amsterdam

Group Show, 1993

oil on canvas, 100 x 300 cm
Centraal Museum, Utrecht

Cupido, 1994

oil on canvas, 150 x 150 cm
Blair Effron collection, New York

The Cover-Up, 1994

oil on canvas, 200 x 100 cm
Private collection

The Painter, 1994

oil on canvas, 200 x 100 cm
Eisenberg collection, Rye Brook, USA

Reinhardt's Daughter, 1994
oil on canvas, 200 x 100 cm
Penny McCall collection, New York

Indifference (Indifference), 1994
oil on canvas, 100 x 300 cm.
Courtesy Galerie Paul Andriessse, Amsterdam

Naomi, 1995
oil on canvas, 130 x 110 cm
Collection of the artist

The Visitor, 1995
oil on canvas, 180 x 300 cm
Collection of the artist

The Model, 1995
oil on canvas, 200 x 100 cm
Collection of the artist

Maria Magdalena, 1995
oil on canvas, 300 x 100 cm
Collection of the artist

Maria Magdalena, 1995
oil on canvas, 300 x 100 cm
Collection of the artist

Works on paper

The Pasolini Series, 1985-90
mixed media on paper
(8x)ca 30 x 21 cm
Collection of the artist

Jesus - Serene, 1994
mixed media on paper
(21x) ca. 65 x 50 cm
Courtesy Galerie Paul Andriessse, Amsterdam

Rejects, 1994-95
mixed media on paper
(48x) 60 x 50 cm
Collection of the artist

Francis Bacon

Paintings

Fragment of a Crucifixion, 1950

oil and cotton wool on canvas

139,7 x 108,6 cm

Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven

Study for Portrait, 1952

oil on canvas, 61 x 51 cm

Private collection

Study for Portrait IX, 1957

oil on canvas, 152,5 x 118 cm

Private collection

Study for Portrait X, 1957

oil on canvas, 198 x 142 cm

Private collection

Lying Figure, 1958

oil on canvas, 153,5 x 119,5 cm

Museum Bochum, Bochum

Head II, 1958

oil on canvas, 61 x 51 cm

Private collection

Reclining Woman, 1961

oil on canvas, 198,8 x 142,2 cm

Tate Gallery, London

Double Portrait of Lucian Freud and Frank Auerbach, 1964

oil on canvas, dyptic, 165 x 290 cm

Moderna Museet, Stockholm

From Muybridge "The human figure in motion: woman emptying a bowl of water/paralitic child walking on all fours"
1965

oil on canvas, 198,5 x 147 cm

Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

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EXHIBITION

JOEL-PETER WITKIN

CURATOR

GERMANO CELANT

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CATALOGUE

CHARTA

Joel-Peter Witkin

The photographs of Joel-Peter Witkin (Brooklyn 1939) are difficult to forget. For the last twenty years, this American artist has been engaged in the task of photographically documenting unusual and sometimes even horrific subjects. Such subjects are commonly regarded as unacceptable in our society because they overturn our accepted taboos.

His photographs of fetuses, cadavers, freaks of nature, hermaphrodites, dwarves and dismembered bodies take as their theme the relationship between love and death or pain and sex. They set out to document the beauty to be found in the macabre, conceived as a point of transition between the light of life and the darkness of death. All Witkin's photographs represent an attempt to transmogrify earthly misfits into angels and saints; to transmute a fear of bodily decay into the oblivion of death. His most fascinating works therefore deal with sacrifices and Beauty associated with intimations of mortality as represented in terms of Catholic iconography in the works of such artists as Velasquez, Bernini, Canova, Botticelli, Bosch and Rubens. While these artists use metaphor to represent the vanity of life, though, Witkin uses real corpses, dwarves, freaks and hermaphrodites in his photographs. His Baroque portraits of torturers and the suffering, skeletons and anatomical torsos, severed and amputated heads, pregnant women and transsexuals force us to face the existence of an alternative universe before life and after death, where the sacred meets the profane, flesh falls away and dissolves, sex mingles with death.

Witkin produces his extraordinary work by photographing his subjects in specially lit, contrived sets. He also uses masks and spectacular devices in his work and treats his photographs by using various contrast and scratching techniques. Witkin is aware of the shocking effect of the subjects he deals with and supports his approach with references to ancient art, where such subjects have formed the basis for an infinite number of paintings. His remorseless lens differs from a paintbrush, though, in clinically documenting and revealing a universe normally kept under wraps by our society. *The pornography of death* comes after the pornography of sex and constitutes the ultimate taboo.

The curator of this exhibition devoted to the work of Joel-Peter Witkin is Germano Celant. The show can be seen on the third floor of the Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea.

The retrospective includes about one hundred photographs and preparatory sketches dating from 1973 to the present. These come from major European and US photographic collections and international museums of renown.

The catalogue is published by Charta, Milan.

Joel-Peter Witkin

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Joel-Peter Witkin

Works in Exhibition

Photographies

Gelatin silver print.

Rest after the Passion, New York City, 1973

Elisabeth D., New York City, 1973

Mexican Pin-Up, New Mexico, 1975

Indulgences. Man with no Legs (Leo), New Mexico, 1976

Woman Breastfeeding an Eel, New Mexico, 1979

Mother and Child, New Mexico, 1979

Carrotcake I, New Mexico, 1980

Madame X, San Francisco, 1981

Mandan, San Francisco, 1981

Androgyny Breastfeeding a Fetus, San Francisco, 1981

Hermes, San Francisco, 1981

The Prince Imperial, New Mexico, 1981

The American Way, New Mexico, 1981

The Sins of Joan Mirò, New Mexico, 1981

Sander's Wife, New Mexico, 1981

Portrait of Holocaust, New Mexico, 1982

Counting Lesson in Purgatory, New Mexico, 1982

Canova's Venus, New Mexico, 1982

Testicles Stretch with the Possibility of a Crushed Face, New Mexico, 1982

The Bird of Quevada, New Mexico, 1982

26 year old O.D., New Mexico, 1982

Arm Fuck, New Mexico, Nuovo Messico), 1982

Manuel Osorio, New Mexico, 1982

Penitente, New Mexico, 1982

Pygmalion, New Mexico, 1982

Savoir of the Primates, New Mexico, 1982

Collector of Fluids, New Mexico, 1982

The Bra of Joan Mirò, New Mexico, 1982

Woman Masturbating on the Moon, New Mexico, 1982

The Invention of Milk, New Mexico, 1982

Woman with Severed Head, New Mexico, 1982

The Capitulation of France, New France, New Mexico, 1982

Decadent Artists, New Mexico, 1983

Sanatorium, New Mexico, 1983

Eunuch, New Mexico, 1983

Choise of Outfits for the Agonies of Mary, San Francisco, 1984

History of Commercial Photography in South America, San Francisco, 1984

Harvest, Philadelphia, 1984

The result of War, Cornucopian Dog, New Mexico, 1984

Journies of the Mask: Helena Fourment, San Francisco, 1984

Journies of the Mask: The History of Commercial Photography in Juarez, New Mexico, 1984

John Kane, 1984

Portrait of Nan, New Mexico, 1984

Von Gloeden in Asien, New York City, 1984

Man without Legs, New York City, 1984

Melvin Burkhart: Human Oddity, Florida, 1985

Woman in the Blue Hat, New York, 1985

Courbet in Rejlander's Pool, New Mexico, 1985

Infantilism, San Francisco, 1985

Art Deco Lamp, New Mexico, 1986

Bacchus Amelius, New Mexico, 1986

I.D. Photograph from Purgatory: Two Women with Stomach Irritations, New Mexico, 1986

Leda, Los Angeles, 1986

The Guernica Variations: Pathological Reproduction, New Mexico, 1986

Poet: From a Collection of Relics and Ornaments, Berlin, 1986

Amour, New Mexico, 1987
Las Meninas, New Mexico, 1987
Portrait of a Dwarf, Los Angeles, 1987
Picasso en los Disparates de Goya, New Mexico, 1987
Woman on a Table, New Mexico, 1987
Un santo oscuro, Los Angeles, 1987
The Graces, New Mexico, 1988
Apollonia and Dominatrix Creating Pain in the Art of the West, New York City, 1988
Dominatrice, 1988
Siamese Twins, New Mexico, 1988
Gods of Earth and Heaven, Los Angeles, 1988
Blind Woman with Her Blind Son, New Mexico, 1989
Agonistes of the Eternal Wait, Portugal and New Mexico, 1990
Daphne and Apollo, Los Angeles, 1990
Man with Dog, Mexico City, 1990
Vanity, New Mexico, 1990
Negre's Fetishist, Paris, 1990
Feast of Fools, New Mexico, 1990
John Herring, New Mexico, 1992
Laokoon, New Mexico, 1992
La Serpentine, Marseilles, 1992
Satiro, Mexico, 1992
Still Life, Marseilles, 1992
Still Life, Mexico, 1992
Costumed Inmate, Budapest 1993
Man Without a Head, 1993
Printemps, New Mexico, 1993
Pictures from the Afterworld: Countess Daru, Monsieur David, Madame David, 1994
Portrait as Vanite, New Mexico, 1994
Glassman, New Mexico, 1994
History of the (White) World: Venus and the Magdalen, Paris, 1994
Studio de Winter, Paris, 1994

Drawings

(drawing for) Manuel Osorio, 1982
(drawing for) Arm Fuck, New York City, 1982
(drawing for) Courbet's in Rejlander's Pool, 1985
Guernica Variations: Pathological Reproduction, 1986
(drawing for) Illegal Circus, San Francisco, 1989
(drawing for) Studio of the Painter (Courbet), Paris, 1990
(drawing for) Head of Dead Man, 1991
(drawing for) Three Kinds of Woman, 1993
(drawing for) Printemps, New Mexico, 1993
(drawing for) Munch in Mexico, New Mexico, 1994

Encaustic

Gelatin silver print with encaustic
Head of a Dead Man, Mexico, 1990
la Bete, New Mexico, 1989
Studio of the Painter (Courbet), Paris, 1990
Woman Once a Bird, 1990
Cupid and Centaur, 1992
Three Kinds of Woman, Mexico, 1992