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Of the three etchings of dogs completed by Lucian Freud, Eli is the largest in scale and is considered one of the artist's masterpieces in print. Eli has rarely been offered for sale at auction, only three times in fact. Most notably a proof from the Marc Balakjian collection was offered by Christie's in London in 2012: it sold for £145,250 (\$228,201), which remains the auction record for any etching by the artist. When Freud died in 2011 he was at work on a painting of Eli, called *Portrait of the Hound*.

Freud's portraits of dogs, the others being of his own whippet, Pluto (1988) and Pluto, aged Twelve (2000), are amongst Freud's most tender renderings, the artist's hand entirely obeying his eye's intent to transfer his full affection for the animals to paper.

**ARTIST**

Lucian Freud (1922-2011)

TITLE

Eli

MEDIUM

Etching

DATE

2002

SHEET

30 ½ × 37 ¾ in : 77.5 × 96.0 cm
(Somerset Textured White paper)

PLATE

28 ½ × 33 ⅝ in : 72.5 × 85.3 cm

EDITION

From the edition of 46, signed and numbered
by the artist

PRINTER

Marc Balakjian at Studio Prints, London

PUBLISHER

Matthew Marks Gallery, New York

EXHIBITED

New York, Museum of Modern Art, Lucian Freud:
The Painter's Etchings, 16 Dec 2007-10 Mar 2008
(another impression exhibited and illustrated
p. 123); New York, Acquavella Contemporary Art,
Inc., Lucian Freud: Recent Paintings and Etchings, 28
April - 27 May 2004 (another impression exhibited
and illustrated pl.7)

LITERATURE

Feaver 79 & 330; Figura 93; Hartley (NGS/
Fitzwilliam) 58; Smee 67

REFERENCE

C15-51

L.F.

Lucian Freud

In the mid-1940s Graham Sutherland, an influential British artist, gave his friend Lucian Freud a set of his own etching tools as a gift. Freud had made two linocuts in 1936, and a single pen lithograph in 1944: they were not notable successes. Sutherland, who was a keen sponsor of the young Freud's work, thought Freud's draughtsman-like, direct, almost miniaturist style was much more suited to the etching plate. Freud began tentatively, his first etching was produced in the modest edition size of only 3 copies, his second only 4. By 1948, he had executed just 6 etchings, a mere 30 prints in total. Surprisingly, that would remain the case for another 34 years. By the early 1950s, Freud had arrived at the conclusion that his advancement as an artist was being hampered by his overtly linear style, which was also the defining manner of his paintings. Freud blamed his drawing, and as an extension of that, his etching. From that time, until 1982, Freud worked solely as a painter.

The inducement to restart his etching career came from Lawrence Gowing, who had written a monograph on Freud. The deluxe edition of 100 copies of the book, Gowing requested, should contain one of four etchings printed in an edition of 25. Upon returning to etching, having spent so many years in which he had only painted, Freud

found his line was looser and more gestural. Thus encouraged, printmaking almost replaced the role of drawings in his work for a period. By the end of 1982, Freud had added 15 etchings to his total. Not all were published, as some were the exploratory works of an artist seeking to regain his confidence in the medium. These efforts helped assuage Freud's concerns over the effect of the graphic arts upon his painting, although by this time his doubts could have retained little foundation: Freud's now familiar, heavily impastoed style of painting must have been unassailable. If anything Freud's etchings had become closer to his paintings, especially considering Freud rarely drew with any material, by this time, other than charcoal. Freud was soon ready to make etchings on a grander scale.

During Freud's long career, the artist produced only a little over 70 etchings, many of which were not published, existing only as proofs, and many which were produced in editions so small that there is no possibility of any leaving the great collections to which they now belong. Their importance in Freud's work can be illustrated by referring to the 2007 exhibition at New York's MoMA entitled *Lucian Freud: The Painter's Etchings*, which gathered together 68 of these works and showed them, with 21 related paintings, to a responsive public.





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