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Lucian Freud, 'The Egyptian Book', 1994

ARTIST

Lucian Freud (1922 - 2011)

TITLE

The Egyptian Book

MEDIUM

Etching, on T.H.S. Saunders wove paper

DATE

1994

SIZE

18 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 16 $\frac{3}{4}$ in : 46.7 x 42.5 cm

FRAME SIZE

21 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 19 $\frac{1}{4}$ in : 54.3 x 50.5 cm

EDITION

From the edition of 40

INSCRIPTIONS

Signed and numbered by the artist

PRINTER

Marc Balakjian at Studio Prints, London

PUBLISHER

Matthew Marks Gallery, New York

EXHIBITED

Galleria Ceribelli, Bergamo, 1994-95, touring exh.

Marlborough Graphics, London, 1995

Acquavella Contemporary Art, New York, 1996,
no number, cat. illus.

Tel Aviv Museum of Art, 1996-97, no. 48, cat. illus.

Rubenspreis der Stadt Siegen, 1997, no. 20, cat.
illus.

Pollock Gallery, Dallas, 1998, no. 21, cat. illus.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1998

Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, 1999-
2000, touring exh., USA, no. 36, cat. illus.

Matthew Marks Gallery, New York, 2000, no. 19,
cat. illus.

National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh, and
Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, in association
with Marlborough Graphics, London, 2004-05,
touring exh., no. 41, cat. illus.

Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin, 2007-
08, touring exh., Ireland, Denmark and the
Netherlands, no number, cat. illus.

James Hyman Gallery, London, 2009, no. 27

Niagara Galleries, Melbourne, 2009, no. 10

National Portrait Gallery, London, 2012, touring
exh., UK and USA, no. 124, cat. illus.

Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebaek,
2015, no. 37, cat. illus.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1998

Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin, 2016-21,
no number, cat. illus.

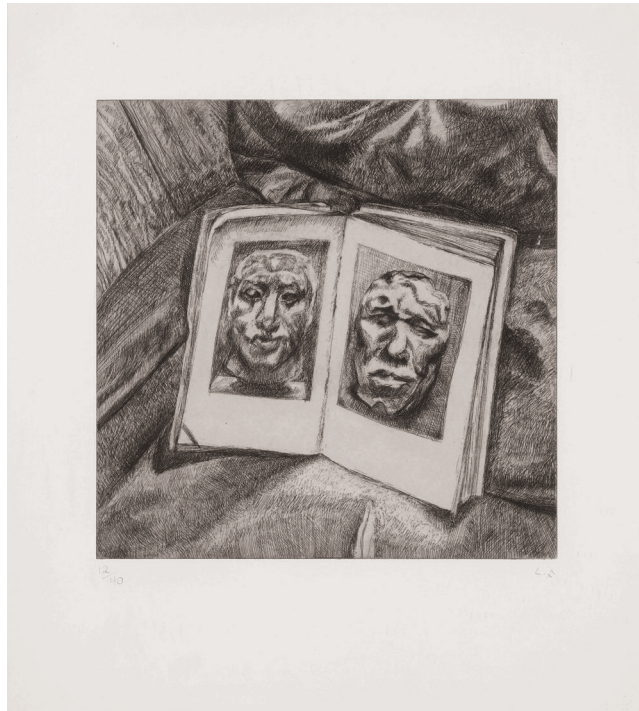
Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin, 2017, no. 37, cat. illus.

LITERATURE

Hartley 1995, pp. 26-7, no. 49, illus.; Omer 1996,
p. 97, illus.; Penny 1996, p. 310; Franzke 1997;
Fever 2002, p. 14, illus. p. 14; Hartley 2004, p. 29,
illus. no. 41; Feaver 2005, p. 36; Feaver 2007A,
illus. frontispiece; Calvocoressi and Smee 2008,
illus. pl. 163; Howgate 2012, pp. 32-4; Wildung
2013, pp. 134-6, ill. 7; Kold 2015, pp. 7-8, illus. p. 7,
Kennedy 2016, p. 17; Kold 2017, pp. 9-10, illus. p.
9; Gayford 2018A, p. 21; Gayford 2018B, illus. p.
147; Feaver 2019, pp. 143, 407; Treves 2022, pp.
186-7, no. 70, illus.

REFERENCE

A17-59



The book depicted is a copy of J. H. Breasted's *Geschichte Egyptens* that Freud was given around 1939 and kept for the rest of his life. Richly illustrated with colour plates and monochrome reproductions of Ancient Egyptian buildings, paintings, carvings and artefacts, the book contains a spread of two life-like plaster masks that seem to have fascinated him. On it, two plaster masks from the workshop of the sculptor Thutmose are reproduced. Freud found these faces, which are startlingly real, intensely moving, commenting, 'I thought about those people a lot. There's nothing like them: they're human before Egyptian in a way' (Feaver 2002, p. 14). Whether it was the fact of two beacons transmitting a signal of familiar humanity over a distance of 3,300 years or, as Martin Gayford (2018A, p. 21) has suggested, the confirmation that 'a powerful work of art communicates everything we need to know about it, all on its own,' Freud painted the book, propped up against a cushion, open at these pages in *Still-life with Book* (1991-92; private collection) and *Still-life with Book* (1993; private collection). And a year later he made the present etching of the same subject, this time with the book on the seat of an armchair. The plate was bitten and first proofed on 8 February

1994. The tone has been carefully manipulated so that the darkest areas are in the floorboards, the back and arm of the chair and the lightest on the pages of the book and the open area immediately below, seemingly lit by the reflected light. As Craig Hartley (1995) records, Marc Balakjian had a wet sheet of T. H. S. Saunders paper 140 lb available while he was proofing the etching. Freud liked the result and consequently the etching is not on one of the BFK Rives or Somerset papers that he favoured at this time.

The installation view with another painting showing was taken at the Freud Museum, London during the exhibition *Lucian Freud: The Painter and his Family*, July 2022.

Impressions of this etching are held in the permanent collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (3/40); the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin; the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh, (AP 5/12); Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Caracas (22/40) and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, (CP)



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