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**FRANCIS BACON** Florence, Palazzo Strozzi  
Centre for Contemporary Culture Strozzi  
and the Existential Condition in Contemporary Art **5 October 2012 - 27 January 2013**

***Francis Bacon and the Existential Condition in Contemporary Art***  
***Nathalie Djurberg | Adrian Ghenie | Arcangelo Sassolino | Chiharu Shiota | Annegret Soltau***  
**5 October 2012 to 27 January 2013**

***Francis Bacon and the Existential Condition in Contemporary Art***, an exhibition co-curated by Franziska Nori (Director of the CCCS) and Barbara Dawson (Director of the Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane), will be presenting work by contemporary artists who examine today's existential state of societal mind. Their work explores the kind of questions man asks himself in his relationship with his own interior being, his body and the outside world. At the core of the exhibition are paintings by **Francis Bacon** (1909-1992), whose work is placed in dialogue with that of five contemporary artists of international renown: **Nathalie Djurberg, Adrian Ghenie, Arcangelo Sassolino, Chiharu Shiota** and **Annegret Soltau**. These artists share Bacon's reflection on man's existential condition and on the depiction of the human figure.

Alongside major works from international collections, the exhibition will also be showing, for the first time in Italy, four unfinished works by Bacon which he kept in his workshop for many years and which have been on display in the DCG The Hugh Lane since 2005. They include what is thought to be the artist's last work, discovered on an easel in Reece Mews in London while he was on his deathbed in Madrid.

The main character in Bacon's works is the human figure, often distorted and incapable of finding complete definition in the space offered by the painting. Bacon's paintings on display, selected by Barbara Dawson, are set against a selection of photographic and archival material from the artist's studio: photographic portraits, reproductions of old masters, film stills, and pictures from books and magazines. This material, which Bacon used as a working tool when creating his art, is presented in the exhibition thanks to this collaboration between the CCCS and the Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane, which acquired an authentic and perfectly preserved reconstruction of the artist's last London workshop in 1998. Inside his studio, Bacon collected this material in an almost compulsive fashion, using it again and again. The resulting wear and tear has left traces that became "scars", which play a crucial role in understanding the artist's creative process.

Bacon's mingling of the figurative and the abstract, bodies transfigured, his reference to autobiographical elements, his use of a variety of different iconographic sources and of tension and isolation as metaphors of man's life can also be found in the work of the five contemporary artists that Franziska Nori has installed in such a way that they dialogue with Bacon resulting in an existential reflection on contemporary living.

**Nathalie Djurberg** (Sweden, 1978) works with clay and plasticine to create the symbolic and disturbing environments and figures which populate her installations and her video animation. Thanks to the cooperation of the Fondazione Prada, the CCCS will present three installations particularly representative of her approach, in which often crude and violent content is expressed through grotesque and, at times, fairylike images in a style that is seemingly naive and playful. Her figures' bodies are matter in transition subject to processes of decomposition and distortion, emphasized by the use of such a malleable and versatile material as plasticine. Djurberg raises existential doubts and asks existential questions shifting between life and death, fear and desire, moving between unsettling taboos and such complex facets of the human condition as vulnerability, solitude, sexuality and death. The international institutions that have hosted exhibitions of her work include the Venice Biennale, Tate in London and the PS1/MoMA in New York.

**Adrian Ghenie** (Romania, 1977) creates paintings in which he merges personal images or images that are emblematic of recent history by dipping into such varied sources as catalogues, history books, film stills and pictures discovered on the internet. Represented here by a selection of his most recent works, Ghenie explores the depiction of the human figure, which he almost assaults especially around the face – the symbol of a person's individuality, with a style of painting that corrupts and destroys his subject to the point of making it almost unrecognisable. A strong sense of realism coexists alongside drips and rivulets of paint, and evocative patches of colour in a fusion of the figurative and the abstract. Ghenie's work has been shown in such prestigious venues as Tate Liverpool, Palazzo Grassi in Venice, the S.M.A.K. (Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst) in Ghent and the Denver Museum of Contemporary Art.

**Arcangelo Sassolino** (Italy, 1967) creates installations in which mechanical systems explore the effects caused by extreme forces. Sassolino's works shows us both the shaping and the transience of things in their essentiality, deliberately rejecting all explicit recourse to metaphor. Sassolino displays rather than hides the individual component parts of his works in which processes are constantly ongoing, even if they can only be perceived when the matter bears concrete traces of their effects. They are a latter-day *memento mori* warning, depicting man's inability to go beyond the expectation of an event, or vice-versa, beyond its end. His work has been shown in such international museums and galleries as the Palais de Tokyo in Paris, the Macro in Rome and the CCCS in Florence.

In her installations, **Chiharu Shiota** (Japan, 1972) seems to translate emotional states and existential reflections onto a three-dimensional plane, addressing such issues as memory and dreams, autobiographical elements and traces of a past that take on an evocative, collective physical form. The new site-specific installation that she has created for the CCCS will be built with her characteristic use of an inextricable net of black threads which, in interacting with objects of everyday use, will impart a new density to the overall space where time will appear to stand still and to coagulate, creating an area in which to bring out hidden, forgotten or imagined connections. Shiota trained with Marina Abramovic and she has shown her work in such institutions as the Osaka National Museum of Art, the Warsaw Centre for Contemporary Art and the Sucrière in Lyons.

**Annegret Soltau** (Germany, 1946) works on the themes of the body and of identity through performances, video art and photography. Her section of the exhibition will consist of a selection of works both from several of her historic series from the 1970s and from her more recent output, thus allowing the visitor to explore her experimentation with photography through so-called *photo sewings*, in which the artist's face or fragments of different faces are criss-crossed by thin black thread. The wounds, constrictions and fragmentation of her faces and bodies are transformed into a tool for reflection on the depiction and expression of the human existential condition. Soltau's work has been shown in such international museums and galleries as the Museum Mathildenhöhe in Darmstadt and the MOCA in Los Angeles.

**Francis Bacon and the Existential Condition in Contemporary Art** is organised by the CCCS in conjunction with the Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane, Dublin and runs concurrently with **The Thirties. The Arts in Italy Beyond Fascism** at Palazzo Strozzi from 22 September 2012 until 27 January 2013.

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Palazzo Strozzi, 50123 Firenze, Italy

**Opening hours:** Tuesday to Sunday, 10.00 to 20.00; Thursday 10.00 to 23.00; Monday closed

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€3.00 schools; Thursday, admission free from 18.00 to 23.00

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# FRANCIS BACON

Florence, Palazzo Strozzi  
Centre for Contemporary Culture Strozzina  
and the Existential Condition in Contemporary Art 5 October 2012 - 27 January 2013

Franziska Nori

## Francis Bacon and the existential condition in contemporary art

"When you can give a name to things, you lessen the suffering in the world". Paraphrasing this statement by Albert Camus we might say that when one is able to find words to recount a painful experience then something changes in a human being and in his or her perception of the world. This experience becomes visible, verbalizable and thus shareable. An idea of solidarity is created, an emerging from solitude. *Francis Bacon and the existential condition in contemporary art* proposes the work of artists who explore the theme of existence. Their works give form to states of mind and questions that a human being poses in his relationship with the most intimate and emotional sphere of his self, but also with his body, either his own or that of others, and the surrounding world. The starting point is a group of paintings by the great master Francis Bacon, whose work enters into a dialogue with that of five contemporary artists: Nathalie Djurberg, Adrian Ghenie, Arcangelo Sassolino, Chiharu Shiota and Annegret Soltau. The exhibition has provided the opportunity to gather together contrasting sensibilities, over and above the temporal and cultural differences that exist between the various artists. The works of Bacon are in a certain sense subjected to a test of their modernity through a comparison with five artists who in different ways in terms of form, choice of style and sensibility, are characterized by an aptitude for research that is either similar or comparable with the almost obsessive intensity of his work. The intermingling of figurative and abstract art, the transfigured bodies, the autobiographical references, the use of different iconographical sources, tension and isolation as metaphors for the life of mankind recur as fundamental components in the works of the five contemporary artists placed alongside those of Bacon.

The aim of the exhibition is not to try and create direct connections or links of cause and effect between Bacon's works and those of the other five artists. The exhibition route has been designed in such a way as to enable the spectator to become physically engaged in spaces that make possible an immersion in the aesthetic and emotional dimension characterizing each of the different artistic positions. Proceeding in what might be described as a "wave-like" rhythm, the works of Bacon punctuate the beginning of the exhibition route to then return like an echo through the rest of the exhibition, enabling us thus to compare very different personalities who nonetheless share a common willingness to involve the public in an existential reflection on contemporary living. The first two rooms of the exhibition house works belonging to various moments of Bacon's production and illustrate some of the central themes of his work – the human figure, for example, which is represented deformed and contorted in a state of isolation within empty spaces. Among the various works on display are some unfinished canvases – kept by Bacon in his study for many years and after his death entering the collections of the Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane. The latter are being exhibited for the first time outside Ireland, allowing the public of the CCC Strozzina to appreciate more fully even the more technical aspects of the artist's work. Barbara Dawson, the person responsible for the section of the exhibition devoted to Bacon and director of the Irish institute that since 1998 has taken over the artist's London studio, preserving it exactly as it was, has made a selection of works that prompt far-reaching reflections on the artist's intense process of visual research, juxtaposing both completed and unfinished works with a selection of photographic and documentary material from his studio: reproductions of great masterpieces of the past, stills from films, his own portraits and photographs of friends, pictures taken from books and magazines – material used by Bacon as working tools for the creation of his own art. The artist accumulated these materials in his studio almost obsessively, using them repeatedly and allowing them to become damaged. He scattered them in part over the floor, walking over them, allowing time to make them fragile, deteriorate the supporting materials or wear down the surface of the images. As David Sylvester vividly describes, Bacon did not merely study these images but manipulated them, folding them, cutting them and then piecing them together to be used as models for his deformed representations of human figures that appear devoid of any cohesive resemblance. The heterogeneous subjects of the documentary and photographic materials which Bacon used as models have a connotation as bearers of a visual content, no longer as auratic objects in themselves. In this taking possession of visual material that was drawn from the mass media of his time, Bacon decontextualized the fragments and then reassembled them according to his needs, using an extremely contemporary working method, a sort of manual process of digital copy & paste. The subjects that emerge completely lose their original connotation and take on their own aesthetic independence and a new symbolic significance. Following the initial section dedicated to Bacon, the exhibition continues with the contemporary artists, starting with Natalie Djurberg. Her works raise existential doubts and queries that oscillate between life and death, fear and desire, exploring such disturbing taboos or complex aspects of the human condition as vulnerability, solitude, sexuality and death. The installations and videos of Djurberg presented at the exhibition, thanks to the collaboration with the Fondazione Prada, are particularly representative of her approach, in which often crude and violent content is expressed with disturbing

and grotesque images, according to a style that is only apparently playful. The bodies of her figures are represented as matter in a state of transition, subject to processes of decomposition and deformation that are accentuated by the use of a pliable and ductile material like plasticine. The exhibition proceeds with the room dedicated to Adrian Ghenie who is represented by a series of recent works produced expressly for this event. The Romanian artist creates paintings in which he combines personal memories and emblematic images from recent history, drawing on such sources as catalogues or history books, stills from films and above all images taken from the Internet. He investigates the theme of memory, where traces of the life of a single individual merge with those of historical events, with images from the past whose clarity absorbed by time has yielded to material and visual traces with a collective significance. The human figure is almost assaulted, particularly the face where the individuality of a person is most evident, with an overpainting that annuls and corrupts, obliterates and renders the subject almost impossible to recognize: at times well-known negative characters in European history, at other times anonymous figures. A strong sense of realism coexists with drips and pours of paint or abrasions of the various paint layers and colour backgrounds in a fusion between figurative and abstract art. The figures almost appear to struggle against their own dissolution within closed spaces, domestic places that emanate an estranging familiarity. What strikes us particularly is the solitude of the individual, the silence of the painted landscapes that resemble portraits of our inner self.

In the following section of the exhibition the human figure represented by Bacon is repropounded, in particular through a selection of portraits, photographs and documentary material that the artist used, with almost obsessive fervour, in his study of the various states of the human figure, such as Eadweard Muybridge's studies of the body in motion, images taken from anatomy or surgery books, but also photographic portraits of his closest friends commissioned by the artist and used repeatedly as models over the years. The human body is once again, albeit in a very different way, the raw material characterizing the intense work of Annegret Soltau, represented in the exhibition by works from various stages of her artistic career. In her early performative experiments Soltau used a black thread which she wound around her body in such a way that it cut deeply into the flesh. Other works illustrate the German artist's transition to photography, where the ephemeral event of the performative action is frozen in time. Soltau then uses the photographic representation itself as an object on which to intervene with the application of black threads sewn directly onto the photographic paper *a posteriori*. The violence of these works is in stark contrast with the minimal compositional sobriety characteristic of her style. In a parallelism between the corporeal and physical dimension and the mental and existential dimension, the wounds, the constrictions and the fragmentation of Soltau's faces and bodies become an instrument for reflecting on her own person, to then acquire a broader and more symbolic significance regarding the human figure in general. The intersection between the physical and perceptive experience and a mental experience we might call mnemonic lies at the heart of the site-specific installation created for the rooms of the CCC Strozzi by Chiharu Shiota. The artist worked for several days at the exhibition venue, weaving an inextricable web with a black thread. A sort of performance closed off to the public that left visible traces of the artist's passage. As often happens in her work, the dense mesh ensnares familiar objects of everyday use which are thus removed from their normal context and function. In the specific case of the Florentine installation the objects in question are some abandoned old doors of Palazzo Strozzi. The Japanese artist confers new density to a space in which time seems to stop still and congeal, causing hidden, forgotten or imagined connections to emerge. Shiota seems to translate emotional states and existential reflections into a three-dimensional dimension, gathering together memories, dreams, autobiographical elements and traces of a past that take on an evocative physical form with a universal poetical value. Together with this installation we find one of the most important works in the exhibition, that considered to be the very last work of Francis Bacon, the self-portrait found on an easel in his studio at Reece Mews in London when the artist died in Madrid in 1992. The face is almost complete, while the body is merely sketched out with light brushstrokes that seem to dissolve on the raw canvas. We do not know whether this is in fact a self-portrait or instead the face of an old friend or a profile taken from one of the iconographical sources the artist collected. Once again, however, we clearly perceive the theme of the isolation of the figure, here even more emphasized by the silence of the spatial emptiness in this last, authentically "unfinished" work. The exhibition ends with a site-specific installation by the Italian artist Arcangelo Sassolino, whose work is distinguished by his ability to create powerful forms, objects and mechanical systems that shun any concession to narrative, yet create the conditions for an existential experience. In the case of the work made for the present exhibition two pistons pull taut a heavy rope linked to two beams placed against the thick walls of the two entrances of the room. The system enters into operation at unexpected intervals, taking the rope or the wood of the beams to the limit of their resistance, their potential giving or breaking point. This precarious play of balanced forces applies in the relationship between the entire system and the architecture housing it, but above all in the relationship between the object and the spectator, who is placed in a psychological condition of tension and direct confrontation with the risks of the work.

What the artists present at the exhibition have in common is a profound lucidity in dealing with the often painful themes of existence, even though they are approached from different perspectives and with a variety of stylistic forms. Frequently they depart from an autobiographical reference or content and succeed in creating aesthetic experiences that produce a visual and physical impact in the onlooker, giving form to emotional and mental states common to many people which are thus made manifest and shareable. Another element we might identify as common to these various artists is the importance attributed to the place of study, the physical space in which they elaborate their work in a temporary retreat from the world, as if they were listening to their own "inner sounds". The studies of these artists are not places of mass production where numerous assistants work on the material execution of pre-conceived works, but are primarily places of reflection in which the artists proceed in a process of depersonalization through which precise formal syntaxes make possible the synthesizing of various reflections and conceptual and visual influences, producing thus the object of an interpersonal experience and therefore one with a collective validity. The considerations preparatory to the putting together of the exhibition revolved around the issue

of why the works of Francis Bacon still have such strong resonance today. Bacon's work was emblematic for the generation that lived through the period following the end of the Second World War. Our research aimed to discover whether that experience of the absurd still has an echo in the contemporary world, as an individual and collective existential experience. Bacon's works are often indicated as representations of the concept of the absurd, as the philosophical experience of an abstract *Weltanschauung*. However, Bacon appears to aim above all at an existential examination of the autobiographical self. "The embryonic idea of the radical irrationality of existence", wrote Steven Madoff in an exchange of e-mails during the preparation of the exhibition, "is the trajectory of the postulation of the human experience worked by Bacon. His figures are born from the crucible of a non-necessity and an innate lawlessness, which rises from the energy of chaos to an emotional and, by extension, biological exhaustion, whose central point is the fury of the flesh." If the existentialist philosophers and intellectuals of the 20th century expressed a reflection that was born from the unprecedented traumatizing experience of the two world wars, today we see a sort of *nouvelle vague* of intellectuals who depart from phenomena that are more typically individual. Spurred on by a post-modern pragmatism, subsequent to the collapse of the great 20th-century utopias, the latter work with an awareness of the impact of personal impulses on the paradigms of the dominant culture. They seem to depart from observations on the self in its relationship with reality and the conflicts of everyday life, primarily the state of material precariousness of the younger generations and the crisis of a system of collective values that has led to the conviction of having to find individualistic solutions to phenomena for which society as a whole should take responsibility. Within reflections we might call neo-existentialist, the central theme is the body, the interface defining and circumscribing the quality of interpersonal relations in an increasingly aestheticized society. The body becomes an object to be moulded and controlled, generating anomalies and conflicts verging on pathology. Michela Marzano, professor of moral philosophy at the Paris Descartes University and author of an article in the present catalogue, analyzes the various conflicts of a person in his relationship with the dimension of the body. Confronted by profound changes in society and increasing ethically controversial progress in the field of science and medicine – from genetic manipulation to the use of animal or artificial organs in human transplants – a fundamental reappraisal and verification of the concept of the body is essential. According to Marzano, it is the instrument through which a person expresses and materializes inner states, malaises and individual pathologies that increasingly assume the status of collective phenomena; from plastic surgery to anorexia, from the violence suffered especially by women and children to violence that is self-inflicted, issues which are also explored in the works in the exhibition by artists like Nathalie Djurberg and Adrian Ghenie. Mehdi Balhaj Kacem, the Algerian philosopher who lives and works in Paris, investigates such themes as memory, evil and the fear of death, central ideas in the expression of the artists represented at the exhibition. A pupil of Alain Badiou, Kacem explores the nature of evil, a phenomenon man has always been attracted by and which philosophical studies traditionally have only examined as a collateral factor in more major issues like truth, science, politics or art. It is contemporary entertainment culture particularly that seems most susceptible to the allure of this concept, which finds trivialized expression in such musical genres as rap or heavy metal, or in video games, films and television programmes in which violence and evil are normal, everyday phenomena. Kacem defines evil as "that added suffering which only man brings into the world. Animals do not know the concept of torture" (see the interview with Gero von Randow; *Die Zeit*, 3 October 2011). Kacem claims that this added suffering is expressed in the "scientific nature" of man, where science should be understood as man's capacity to produce instruments that maximize the attainment of an atrocious goal, identifying a direct link between the cultural topos of the original sin of Christian origin and the ecological apocalypse induced by man. Also intriguing is the idea of the sublimation of existential fear that Kacem touches on when reflecting on contemporary art. Artistic production, according to Kacem, makes it possible to confront the eternal sentiment of the fear of death, by exploiting it and channeling it. In the creation of a work of art the relationship with death is experienced as the capacity to generate an emotional impulse that enables the artistic work itself. Providing a sort of indirect interpretation of the work of artists like Arcangelo Sassolino or Chiharu Shiota, who refers to her work as a search for an "absence of existence", Kacem identifies the power of art as the capacity to face the fear of death, to shock and traumatize, generating nonetheless a paradoxical pleasure of the intellect: "It is our Aristotelian nihilism, our relationship with the meaning of power and brute emotional violence." (see Conversation between Mehdi Balhaj Kacem and Djamel Kokene, 8 April 2012). The art object, also to be understood as a conceptual and not necessarily material object, becomes the symbol of a new sense of control and reappropriation in the relationship between human existence and reality. Fear ceases to be an immobilizing force and becomes instead a creative driving energy.

The present volume aims to be an instrument for reflection on these various themes through the descriptive entries on the works of the artists involved and the essays of Michela Marzano, Martin Harrison and Barbara Dawson. The latter two contributions are fundamental for a reappraisal of the work of Francis Bacon in the light of the most recent studies. Harrison, an eminent scholar of Francis Bacon and editor of the catalogue raisonné dedicated to his work, formulates reflections that contribute to an understanding of the fundamental importance of the artist's visual archive, illustrated in the exhibition by materials from his studio. Dawson, on the other hand, focuses particularly on the meaning and importance of Bacon's unfinished works, whose role in Bacon's artistic production provides the cue for further possibilities of study and analysis. In addition to the catalogue, as in every CCC Strozziina project, a further stimulus to reflection is represented by the programming of conferences and activities that will be held throughout the period of the exhibition, from those for schools and universities to those for families and adults. The programme of Thursday lectures in particular will deepen our understanding of the work of the artists, with interdisciplinary analyses geared to interpreting the themes of the exhibition. If, on the one hand, Barbara Dawson herself and the artists Adrian Ghenie and Arcangelo Sassolino will interact directly with the public, on the other there will be contributions by experts of the calibre of Franco Rella, philosopher and teacher of aesthetics who will explore the themes of the body and evil, Luigi Ficacci, one of the most important Italian scholars of Francis Bacon, Federico Ferrari, philosopher and art critic who will examine the theme of the self-portrait, and, thanks to

collaboration with the Fondazione Studio Marangoni, Giovanna Calvenzi and Nicoletta Leonardi, who from the viewpoint of photography scholars will deal with themes like the genre of the female self-portrait and the role of the archive in the recovery of a new outlook on everyday life. As well as thanking the Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane, all the artists and the galleries involved in the collaboration which made possible the staging of the exhibition, we wish in particular to underline the moral and organizational support of the Estate of Francis Bacon, which in its capacity as trustee of the artist's work contributed to the realization of this project.



## BARBARA DAWSON Traces of Time

Francis Bacon was born at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which saw the rise of modernism in Europe abutting up against rural traditions and agricultural economies. An era which witnessed surges of revolutionary creativity, technical invention and social reform. It was the peripheries both geographically and socially that nurtured this tumultuous change which threatened established canons in politics, society and art. The struggle for self determination and search for national identity saw the break up of empires and partitioning of countries beginning with Ireland. Bacon lived through two world wars, the Russian Revolution and, as a young boy, witnessed firsthand the War of Independence and the Civil War in Ireland. Bacon refers to the *Zeitgeist* as “the neurosis of my century, which affects one’s way of feeling about things” (*Kaleidoscope* 1991).

Francis Bacon’s pitiless portrayal of the human figure makes for some of the most profound figurative paintings of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Totally without hope of any underlying reason for existence, this nihilistic thinking was offset by, he acknowledged, a very optimistic nature, which in later life led to his reputation of a *bon viveur* and *raconteur*. In his paintings he conveys the banal and often tragic circumstances of man’s pursuit of passion and love with unique imagery that underpins that sense of isolation which was a prevailing condition of his generation. Distorted figures brutally convulsed and twisted take on a latter day heroic splendor, forever trapped within the confines of their delineated spaces. In Bacon’s paintings, emotion is embodied in the individual experience. The hierarchical is eschewed in favor of the ordinary; the existential isolation of the individual comes centre stage. A unique painting in Bacon’s oeuvre, *Untitled (Marching Figures)* ca. 1950 (cat) which shows sticklike figures marching beneath a lumbering polar bear, may be referencing Nietzsche’s definition of man as “a rope stretched between animal and the overman (superman) – a rope over an abyss<sup>1</sup>”, or the poet Delmore Schwartz’s “heavy bear” who is man, by nature unhappy, burdened by ego or self and who “howls in his sleep because the tightrope. Trembles and shows the darkness beneath” (Schwartz 1959). Throughout his life Bacon collected pictures of war and war atrocities which considerably contributed to his bank of images. In *100 Years of Pictures*, an image shows British First World War recruits drilling with long sticks. The long shadows cast by figures emphasize the diagonal composition and heighten the visual drama. The unit’s mascot, a dog, is on a lead to the left (fig 1).

### Irish Influences

Bacon was born in Dublin in 1909, into a society that has now vanished – the Anglo Irish ascendancy which ruled Ireland until the War of Independence (1919-1921). His parents were English who moved to Ireland after their marriage in 1903. Francis’s father, Eddy, who was a captain in the British army, set up racing stables in county Kildare. Bacon had a considerable interest in medical books and skin diseases throughout his life, which may have been initiated by his asthma, suffering severe attacks from an early age. He was susceptible to the condition all his life and as late as March 1992, a month before he died, he wrote to his friend, the Irish artist Louis Le Brocqy: “I am much better now but my lungs are almost pulverized by asthma.” A page torn from the book *Positioning in Radiology* by Kathleen C. Clarke, of which Bacon had at least two copies, shows x-rays of the lungs and respiratory system (fig 2). The lower right hand x-ray image has compositional similarities to the torso in the central panel of Bacon’s *Triptych* 1976 which shows the lungs being devoured by a bird of prey (fig 3).

When Bacon was just ten, the family was caught up in the Irish Revolution against British rule – the Irish War of Independence (1919-1921) was followed by the Civil War (1921-1923). Although the Bacons were not involved in Irish politics, because they were a wealthy Protestant family, they were associated with the Anglo Irish ruling class, who was target of the Irish Republican Army. Over two hundred and seventy houses owned by these landlords were burnt down and although the destruction of property was the primary goal of the IRA, the threat to life could not be ruled out. The Bacons escaped being attacked, but Bacon vividly remembered his grandmother’s house being sandbagged and ditches dug in the roads. One night, traveling by car with his grandfather Supple, they hit one of these ditches causing the car to swerve off the road. Chased by the rebel forces, they were forced to flee across the countryside to safety. Bacon left Straffan House, his family home in county Kildare, when he was about sixteen reputedly because his father detected he was homosexual. In a strange twist of fate, Bacon was sent to Berlin with a friend of the family to “sort himself out” only to find himself in an environment where gay sex was publicly flaunted. There were more gay bars in

<sup>1</sup> Bacon’s library included several books by Friedrich Nietzsche. See Bacon’s Books online on [www.hughlane.ie](http://www.hughlane.ie).

Berlin in the 1920s than there were in 1980s in New York. "The Berlin of 1927 and 1928 where there was a wide open city, which was in a way, very, very violent. Perhaps it was violent to me because I had come from Ireland, which was violent in a military sense but not in the emotional sense." Although decriminalized in England in 1967, in an interview in 1991, Bacon reflected that "there was and still is and probably always will be a climate against homosexuality" (*Kaleidoscope* 1991).

Francis Bacon studio and contents, 7, Reece Mews London were donated to Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane in 1998 by the artist's heir John Edwards, supported by Brian Clarke, now executor of the Estate of Francis Bacon (fig 4). The studio was chaotic, stuffed with books on subjects ranging as wide as from sport to skin disease, from dance to photography and film. Torn pages from books and magazines, created and manipulated photographs, including an important series of black and white photographs taken by John Deakin which Bacon commissioned in the late 1950s and 1960s, drawings, abandoned and slashed canvases and artist's materials cluttered the small studio. Seeking out such a gift as this is not the normal acquisition of a public museum or gallery at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – probably the least documented century ever. We now live in an age of managers of meaning and the questions we posed to ourselves are how to make this studio and archive relevant in the post modern era. How does one interpret the material? Who decides the categories and search words? Are we controlling the meaning by the manner in which the archive is navigated – artist, homosexual, Soho, alcohol, lovers etc? Who is in charge? Before the Hugh Lane team took out the contents, we decided that every item was to be given equal importance. No interpretation or selection process was allowed. Everything was itemized either individually or collectively before coming to Dublin, even the dust was included, scooped up in small bags before transportation. In the gallery, all over 7,000 items were catalogued and photographed and the information inputted on a bespoke database. It was a pioneering project in museum practice and is a very significant addition to Bacon canon, the only remaining fact beyond interpretation now that the artist is dead. It is a *locus classicus*, illuminating the processes, methods and concerns of the artist. Bacon's career spanned most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the more successful he became the more he retreated behind the myth. The studio and archive is an investigation into process; into the space and environment where the artist persistently struggled to capture and make visible the images he searched for and for which he became so famous.

Francis Bacon's oeuvre of circa six hundred paintings is a vivid picture of an extraordinary artist, whose singular viewpoint of human existence is forever trapped in the vital, beautiful convulsed images of the human body isolated within defined spatial reality. The subject is the fact. It neither references nor interprets figuration. It is made flesh through the corporality of the paint. The materiality of the paint excited him as well as the possibilities presented by manipulation of it on the canvas. He speaks of it in the active sense. How the paint moves from one tone into another completely changing the image. How it could morph into images which embodied the sensations he was searching to express. His was a singular visual language, his paintings phenomenological experiences, which he sought to divorce entirely from any suggestion of representation or illustration. For him, the process of painting was emptying the canvas of possible images to draw back to the essential image which stands alone. "The artist must deepen the game if he is any good at all and return the onlooker to life more violently" (*The Third Programme* 1963).

He was a notorious editor of his own work and hundred slashed canvases were recovered from the studio. These are in varying degrees of disintegration and in themselves are very revealing of Bacon's painting techniques and methods (Shepard 2009). A gambler throughout his life, Bacon frequently referred to the significant part chance or luck played in his work. Yet, as he grew more confident technically, the context and extent chance played in manipulating the paint to yield up the yet unrealized images was more skillfully managed. These slashed canvases were kept in the studio, the larger ones stacked up against the walls, with the smaller ones piled on the shelves around the studio. The smaller canvases were used as palettes, with the residues of paint tests clearly visible across the painted surfaces (fig 5). What is equally if not more intriguing is the gallery's collection of unfinished works which the artist kept in Reece Mews. Although Bacon said he never returned to works once he had abandoned them, it is speculation as to why these survived. They, like all of the items in Francis Bacon's archive at the Hugh Lane, reveal fascinating and significant insights into the artist's mindset as well as his painting process and techniques and this is the first time they have been publicly exhibited outside Dublin.

The most complete is *Untitled (Seated Figure on Dappled Carpet)* ca. 1966 (cat no) which was discovered in the studio by the Hugh Lane team in 1998 (fig 6). It is a portrait of George Dyer, Bacon's lover in the 1960s and the subject of some of Bacon's most monumental paintings. The street was a vital source of imagery for Bacon and the patterned carpet draped over the steps is reminiscent of 1960s window displays in certain furniture shops in the vicinity of Bacon's studio (Russel 1996). In this painting, George Dyer is seen looking to the left. Bacon was very taken with Dyer's distinctive profile and commissioned numerous photograph of him from John Deakin (fig 7). This painting reveals Bacon's painting process whereby he fills in the rectangular background last, heightening the relief of the sitter. He explains: "I cut down the scale of the painting by drawing in these rectangles which concentrate the image" (*The Third Programme* 1963). It is unclear as to why he abruptly stopped painting the black background. It may have been due to the vertical damage below the left foot. A slashed canvas featuring a patterned carpet with a step to the left was also found in the studio. Horizontal in composition, which is most unusual for Bacon, the head or top of the figure has been cut out (fig 8).

Throughout his life Bacon was prone to making contradictory statements on his processes and techniques including his practice of drawing. Although he later denied it, Bacon did make drawings particularly in his early career. As early as 1934, he organized an exhibition: *Francis Bacon Paintings and Drawings*. However *The Times* review of his works on paper was discouraging and although he did continue to draw he abandoned public exhibitions of his works on paper and denied he made drawings – Bacon held the exhibition in the Transition Gallery in Sunderland House, Curzon Street (Peppiatt 2008). As late as 1991 he declared: "I can't draw. I don't think I can draw. People have said he can't draw so

there it is" (*Kaleidoscope* 1991). He did however draw as the sketches found in the studio confirm<sup>2</sup>. But he did not see his drawings as an independent art form in the way, for example, he appreciated Picasso's drawings. He also drew directly onto the canvas as these unfinished works reveal.

*Unfinished (Seated Figure)* ca.1979 is an exceptional and singular drawing on canvas in the artist's oeuvre (fig 9). It was abandoned and one can see probably why. It is complete in itself revealing tremendous facility with the paint brush; a finished composition with minimal texture allowing for no possibility for disruption – two of the components Bacon greatly cherished in his finished work.

In *Untitled (Three Figures)* ca. 1981 (cat no) Bacon has outlined three figures seated on chairs. While none of the subject matter is by any means completed, it clearly shows Bacon's process of sketching out his spatial structure before working up the figures. The composition of this group portrait is unusual for Bacon. Bacon's friend and heir John Edwards is seated in the centre, the strong muscular form of his right leg is outlined in black paint while the upper torso sees the beginnings of a build up of texture and color. A sketch found in the studio of a seated figure, possibly John Edwards, shows reverse of this pose (fig 10). The pose is adopted in *Unfinished Seated Figure* (Fig 7) and suggested in the last unfinished self portrait (cat no) but does not appear in any finished portrait of Edwards. To the right is a sphinx-like creature. Bacon visited Egypt in early 1951. He greatly admired Egyptian sculpture and drew on the imagery for his subject matter as is evidenced by the number of books and illustrations on the subject in the studio. In 1979, Bacon painted a portrait of his long time friend Muriel Belcher as a sphinx, (*Sphinx – Portrait of Muriel Belcher* 1979) and while the long straight hair on this head study is similar to that of Muriel, it is a more youthful image and the over painted face suggests a similarity to the sphinx in *Oedipus and the Sphinx after Ingres*, 1983. The sculpted figure to the right is enigmatic but the contour of the head, shock of thick hair and pronounced moustache, has similarities to the Egyptian sculpture of Prince Rahotep in the Cairo Museum. Illustrations of this sculpture feature in a magazine, *Discovering Art. The Story of Art through the Ages*, which Bacon had in his studio magazine (fig 11). It may have been that there was an over load of imagery in this work that Bacon couldn't discipline causing him to abandon it.

Texture was central to Bacon's work and in his efforts to heighten its haptic qualities, he often clogged the canvas with paint and couldn't continue. The paintings were then always abandoned apart from one exception (Sylvester 1995).

*Untitled (Figure with Raised Arm)* ca. 1949 is the earliest unfinished or abandoned work in the Hugh Lane's collection. Towards the end of the 1940s, Bacon began to paint on the un-primed side of the canvas. It has more "tooth" to hold the paint the way he wanted and supported his aim to have his technique "as raw as possible" (Durham 1985). *Untitled (Figure with Raised Arm)* is somewhat similar to *Study from the Human Body* 1949 in that both works are painted in thin washed of blue grey paint and both endeavor to exit the picture frame through heavy curtains. However in the unfinished work the movement is more dynamic. Bacon places his figure on a diagonal, echoing the outline structure sketched across the picture plane. The composition reveals many similarities to an image in Eadweard Muybridge's *The Human Figure in Motion* ( Fig 12). In 1949, Bacon went to see an exhibition of the pioneering photographer's work in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London<sup>3</sup>. There is also a suggestion of ectoplasm emanating from the mouth of the figure. One of the most curious and revelatory books found in Bacon's studio is *Phenomena of Materialisation* by Baron Albert Freiherr von Schrenck Notzing. It documents the paranormal and physic phenomena through staged photographs. At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, *séances* and a fascination with the occult was very much in vogue. It appears that for Bacon, the depictions or "documentary evidence" of the *séances* was of the most interest to him. In many photographs white blobs of supposed ectoplasm emerge from the mouth of the medium and float through the air (fig 13). These individual *séances* took place in a tent-like structure partially concealed by heavy curtains. Bacon drew on these photographs for inspiration throughout his career and there are even some direct correlations between these photographs and his finished works (Cappock 2005, p. 111, and Hudson 2005). The outline structure indicates Bacon's forethought and compositional planning and the shape of striated background is also reminiscent of Bacon's interior designs of the 1930s of rubber curtains.

The unfinished *Self Portrait* 1992, is exceptional in this category of unfinished works as it was on his easel in the studio at the time of his death in April 1992. Bacon painted many self portraits during his career, and the intensity of this final image reflects an impassioned life of vital creativity: "The older I get the stronger the urge to paint. I feel more inventive" (*Kaleidoscope* 1991).

## Finished Works

*Seated Woman (Muriel Belcher)* 1961.

The 1960s saw Bacon's introduce the female nude into his oeuvre and *Seated Woman (Muriel Belcher)* is a portrait of his long time friend and comrade in arms. Muriel Belcher was the proprietor of a famous drinking club in Soho, The Colony Room, which opened in 1948. Bacon was one of the first members. At that time all of the London pubs were obliged to close between 2.30 and 5pm. But because it was a private club, Belcher managed to obtain an alcohol license from 3pm to 11pm which was hugely popular with the bohemia of London. The Colony Room attracted all sorts and, Muriel being gay, homosexuality was openly flaunted. Muriel called Bacon "daughter" and most everyone else "cunt" as a term of abuse or "cunty" as a term of endearment. She lived in Shelton Street, Covent Garden, with her Jamaican girlfriend Carmel Stuart (known as "melon lips") who often went gambling with Bacon at the Charlie Chester's gambling club<sup>4</sup>. Belcher reputation was legendary<sup>5</sup>. This portrait places her centrally in the composition seated on a sofa

<sup>2</sup> Forty-one drawings and sketches were found in the studio, including sketches in bookends. As well as loose leaves and sketches were also discovered books (Cappock 2005).

<sup>3</sup> Martin Harrison believes this image is related to the photography of Étienne-Jules Marey. (Dawson and Harrison 2009, p. 42)

<sup>4</sup> Author's correspondence with David Marrion and David Edwards.

leaning forward. The owl-like physiognomy references her hooded eyes and hooked nose. The image also references her nightly surveillance of The Colony Room, perched on a high stool screeching at her customers. Bacon often drew on images birds or wild animals as inspiration for his portraits and books, magazines and torn pages featuring birds littered his studio (fig 14). Deakin's photograph shows her distinctive arched eyebrows and signature parting in her thinning hair. The paint smudges on the photograph indicate Bacon used of it while painting but not necessarily when painting this work (fig 15).

*Turning Figure* 1962 is one of a number of twisted figures which appear in Bacon's work during the 1960s and 1970s. Devoid of body parts and abstracted from any suggestion of figuration, the corkscrew-like figure twists in her skin in a contorted state of mobility. Bacon was fascinated by movement and had several copies of the publication *The Human figure in Motion* by the pioneering photographer Eadweard Muybridge. One of the loose leaves from Muybridge of a female figure walking down the stairs reveals Bacon's practice of intervening on printed image as part of process. By painting the background behind the figure he heightens the concentration on the movement (fig 16). Although not as prolific as male image, images of the female nude were part of Bacon's archive. The loose page illustrating Henri Godet's painting *Modele dans la pose du "Lierre"* – version 1898 – features a female nude revolving. The accompanying text discusses artists' response to their models features including their skin, which underpins Bacon's ongoing interest in this erogenous zone (fig 17).

#### *Seated Figure* 1974

In 1971 George Dyer, Bacon's onetime lover died on the eve of Bacon's triumphant exhibition at the Grand Palais Paris, and through the 1970s we see in Bacon's work a concentration of single male portraits and monumental triptychs. This portrait shows a contorted seated figure with a winged animal hovering to his left. Is man at his most human when revealing his animal side? One of Bacon's enduring influences was Aeschylus trilogy *Oresteia*. He thought the images were "startlingly beautiful". The third play in the series is titled *The Eumenides*. The Eumenides or Furies avenge matricide and sought to kill Orestes who murdered his mother Clytemnestra. The Eumenides appear periodically in Bacon's work and were first introduced in 1944, when Bacon stunned the art world in London with his triptych *Three Studies for Figures at the base of a Crucifixion* 1944, exhibited at the Lefevre Gallery (Sylvester 1995). Richard Hamilton's reaction summed it up. Startled by the work he remembered asking: "What the hell are these?" He went on to say how they showed extraordinary originality and painterly skill. They were "so stunning and startling... unlike anything I had ever seen by an English artist" (Cork 1985). The Fury in this painting is more bird-like as it hovers to the left of the figure. Bacon's library of avian images was extensive, including a concentration on birds in flight and an image of a king vulture showing off his flying techniques, pointing out similarities to this sinister creature (fig 18).

Throughout his career, Bacon submerged himself in the violence of life as he observed and experienced it. In his art, he waged war on the figure forever questioning the nature of the human condition. Through that restless turmoil, he created a complex and revolutionary visual language.

Ezra Pound could have been talking about Bacon when he observed: "Yeats learns by emotion, and is one of the few people who have ever had any, who know what violent emotion really is like; who see from the centre of it – instead of trying to look in from the rim" (quot. in Foster 2003). Bacon like Yeats foresaw the emergence of a new order and in his search for an understanding of human existence created art that was central to a new radical identity.

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<sup>5</sup> "Arguably the rudest person in England", Christopher Hitchens.

## ARTISTS' BIOGRAPHIES

**Francis Bacon** (1909, Dublin–1992, Madrid) was born to an English family in Dublin, the second of five children of Christina Firth, a steel heiress, and Edward Bacon, a race-horse trainer and former army officer. His childhood was blighted by asthma, from which he suffered throughout his life. With the outbreak of war in 1914, the family moved to London and spent the post-war years between London and Ireland. After his father, repelled by his homosexuality, threw him out of the family home, in 1926 Bacon arrived in London with little schooling but with a weekly allowance of £3 from his mother. In 1927 Bacon traveled to Berlin and Paris. Returning to London the following year, he settled there working as a furniture and interior designer. However, Bacon continued to pursue his passion for painting with de Roy de Maistre as an important influence and guide, and with results showing the impact of Jean Lurçat and Picasso. In 1934 he organized his first solo exhibition in the basement of a friend's house renamed Transition Gallery, but it was not well received and he responded by destroying the paintings.

At the end of the 1930s and the beginning of the 1940s the works which he later considered as the beginning of his career emerged, pre-eminently the partial bodies of *Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion*, 1944, which was first shown at the Lefevre Gallery (April 1945) to be criticized and acclaimed alike. In post-war Soho Bacon

became central to an artistic milieu which included Lucian Freud, Michael Andrews, John Deakin, Henrietta Moraes and others. The early 1950s constituted a period of success. Bacon's first post-war solo exhibition included the first of many works inspired by Velázquez's *Portrait of Pope Innocent X* (Hanover Gallery, 1951–1952), showing the importance of the use of historical works for his paintings. This was followed by the artist's New York debut (Durlacher Gallery, 1953). The paintings of Popes, which established his reputation, alternated with those of contemporary figures in suits—often similarly composed. Together with these, however, after a trip to Egypt and South Africa (1950) a lighter tonality emerged in paintings of sphinxes and of animals. During this period Peter Lacey became Bacon's lover and inspired homoerotic images of wrestlers derived from Eadweard Muybridge's photographs. Photography became a habitual source, and the theme of sexual encounter persisted as well. In Italy, in 1954, Bacon avoided seeing Velázquez's *Pope Innocent X* in Rome and his own paintings at the Venice Biennale, where he shared the British pavilion with Ben Nicholson and Freud.

Despite the success of his paintings after Van Gogh (Hanover Gallery, 1957), the next year the painter transferred dealer to Marlborough Fine Art, that paid off his growing gambling debts and mounted larger exhibitions. In 1961, Bacon settled in Reece Mews, South Kensington, where he remained for the rest of his life, and the following year the Tate Gallery organized a major touring retrospective. At that time he recorded the first of the interviews with the critic David Sylvester which would have constituted the canonical text on his own work. Bacon's international reputation was confirmed by his retrospective at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (1963), and by the publication of Ronald Alley's catalogue *raisonné*. He refused the Carnegie Institute Award (1967) and donated the Rubens Prize towards the restorations after the flood of Florence. On the eve of Bacon's large retrospective at the Grand Palais in Paris (1971), his long-time lover George Dyer committed suicide, and this event left haunting echoes in ensuing paintings. In 1974 John Edwards became the painter's new companion and model. In the 1970s Bacon traveled regularly to New York and Paris. Publications devoted to him helped to establish the popular image of his work as a manifesto of modern human condition. International exhibitions became more wide-ranging: Marseilles (1976), Mexico and Caracas (1977), Madrid and Barcelona (1978), Tokyo (1983). The exhibitions culminated in a second Tate retrospective (1985, traveling to Stuttgart and Berlin) and shows in Moscow (1988) and Washington (1989). On a visit to Madrid in 1992, Bacon was hospitalized with pneumonia exacerbated by asthma and died on April 28.

After Bacon's death many exhibitions devoted to his oeuvre were held. Among the most celebrated we can remember in 1996 *Francis Bacon* at the Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, and in 2008–2009, on the occasion of the centenary of his birth, the traveling exhibition organized by the Tate Britain, then that by the Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid, and that one by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

**Nathalie Djurberg** (1978, Lysekil, Sweden; lives and works in Berlin), winner of the Leone d'argento at the Venice Biennale in 2009 as best young artist, carried out her artistic studies at the Malmö Art Academy and the Hovedskous Art School in Göteborg. Intolerant with more traditional artistic research and techniques, after making experimental videos with the Super 8 she received from her grandfather, Djurberg began to experiment with a particular type of video created with a technique known as claymation in which, through the stop motion method, she builds up stories and images whose protagonists are clay marionettes. Djurberg's videos are always accompanied by musical backgrounds, composed by Hans Berg, which often act also as an estranging element that contrasts with the visual narration. Her first monographic exhibition dates from 2002 at Konstföreningen AURA in Lund, Sweden. In 2004 she presented *Tiger Licking Girl's Butt* at Färgfabriken in Stockholm, while the first solo show at the Galleria Giò Marconi in Milan was realized in 2005. Her first monographic exhibition at the Zach Feuer Gallery in New York took place in 2006, and in 2007 *Denn es ist Schön zu Leben* was shown at the Project Space of Vienna Kunsthalle. In 2008 she was the central figure of *Turn into Me* at the Fondazione Prada in Milan, and other solo-shows were held at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles and at the Santa Barbara Contemporary Arts Forum. *Prospectif Cinéma*, staged at the Centre Pompidou in Paris, and the exhibition *Snakes Know It's Yoga*, set up at the Galleria Giò Marconi and at the Kestnergesellschaft of Hannover, took both place in 2009. *The Parade* at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis and *A World of Glass* at the Camden Arts Centre in London date from 2011, while in 2012 solo shows were held at the Röda Sten Art Centre in Göteborg and at the Zach Feuer Gallery. Recent collective shows include: (2002) *Nordic Hell*, Gallery Konstakuten, Stockholm; (2004) *Multiple Horizons*, Museo d'Arte Contemporanea (MACRO), Rome; (2005) *Enclosed. Contemporary Media Art Screening*, British Museum, London; (2006) *Into Me/Out of Me*, MACRO, Rome; (2007) *Family Pictures*, Guggenheim Museum, New York; *Pain/Schmerz hinter dem Knochen wird erzählt*, Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin; *The Shapes of Space*, Guggenheim Museum, New York; (2008) *Things You Never Saw*, Terme di Diocleziano, Rome; *After Nature*, The New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York; *Worlds on Video*, CCC Strozzi, Firenze; (2009) *Fare Mondi / Making Worlds*, Palazzo delle Esposizioni, LIII Venice Biennale; *La poupée de cire, la poupée de son*, Migros Museum, Zurich; (2010) *Ibrido. Genetica delle forme d'arte*, Padiglione d'Arte Contemporanea (PAC), Milan; (2011) *Anonymous Sculpture*, Galerie im Taxispalais, Innsbruck; (2012) *Gaze & Lust. Sexuality in Contemporary Art*, Bergen Kunstmuseum, Bergen.

**Adrian Ghenie** (1977, Baia-Mare, Romania; lives and works between Cluj and Berlin), creates materially rich paintings that re-elaborate motifs and figures of the collective imagination. Graduating in 2003 at the Cluj University of Art and Design, in 2005 he was co-founder, together with Mihai Pop, of the Plan B Gallery, a venue entirely dedicated to contemporary art which became the epicentre of the artistic tendencies and research of Cluj. His works are characterized by a combination of the artist's personal memories and elements and themes drawn from the most heterogeneous sources such as books, films and archives. His works can be found in the public collections of the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) and the Hammer Museum, both in Los Angeles, as well as in the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA). Works by the artist are also present in Belgium, in the collections of the S.M.A.K. in Ghent and at the Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst Antwerpen (MuHKA) in Antwerp. In the summer of 2009 Hatje Cantz Verlag published the first complete monograph on Adrian Ghenie. Ghenie has held several monographic and collective exhibitions at an international level. Noteworthy among his personal shows are the exhibition of 2006 at the Mihai Nicodim Gallery in Los Angeles, the one held at the Haunch of Venison in Zurich in 2007, the exhibition at the Tim Van Laere Gallery in Antwerp, Belgium (2008), as well as those in 2009 at the National Museum of Contemporary Art in Bucharest, Romania, or at the Haunch of Venison in London. In 2010 personal shows were also held at the Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst in Ghent (S.M.A.K.) and, again, at the Mihai Nicodim Gallery in Los Angeles, while in 2011 he staged monographic exhibitions at the Haunch of Venison in London and at the Tim Van Laere Gallery in Antwerp. A big solo show, the first one in an American museum, is planned for the autumn 2012 at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Denver, Colorado. His collective exhibitions include: (2006) *Drive Slowly Through Our Land*, Mihai Nicodim Gallery, Los

Angeles; (2006) *Cluj Connection*, Haunch of Venison, Zurich; (2007) Galerie Rüdiger Schöttle, Munich; (2007) *Expanded Painting 2*, Prague Biennale 3; (2008) Liverpool Biennale; *Days Become Nights*, Galerie Hussenot, Paris; (2009) *Drawings and Other Works on Paper*, Tim Van Laere Gallery, Antwerp; *Expanded Painting 3 – Staging the Grey*, Prague Biennale 4; *The Punishment of Lust and Luxury*, Mihai Nicodim Gallery, Los Angeles; *I Watered a Horseshoe as if It Were a Flower*, Mihai Nicodim Gallery, Los Angeles; (2011) *Communism Never Happened*, Charim Galerie, Vienna; *The World Belongs to You*, Palazzo Grassi – Francois Pinault Foundation, Venice; *Just Another Brick in the Wall*, Barbara Seiler Galerie, Zurich; (2012) *European Travellers*, Mücsarnok Kunsthalle, Budapest.

**Arcangelo Sassolino** (1967, Vicenza, where he lives and works) creates works of art focusing on the interaction between a variety of different forces and materials, often of an industrial nature. After initially enrolling at the faculty of engineering at the University of Padua, following an opportunity to attend a seminar in New York for the CASIO company, for two years—between 1993 and 1995—he attended the School of Visual Arts in New York. It was from this course of studies that Sassolino's art emerged, with works based on the fusion of art and physics. Noteworthy among the artist's monographic exhibitions are *Concrete Matters* at the Galleria Grossetti in Milan, held in 2001, and *Rimozione*, staged at the Galleria Arte e Ricambi in Verona. *Momento*, realized in the spaces of the Galleria Galica, Milan, dates from 2006. The solo show at the Galerie Nicola von Senger in Zurich was set up in 2007, while in 2008 *Critical Mass* was held at the Galerie Feinkost in Berlin and *Afasia* at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris. In 2010 he set up personal exhibitions such as *Qui e Ora*, at the Galleria Continua of San Gimignano, and *Time Tomb*, an installation created for the Z33 House for Contemporary Art at Hasselt in Belgium. In 2011 he produced *Piccolo Animismo* for the Museo di Arte Contemporanea (MACRO) in Rome, and in 2012 he participated at the Art and the City art festival in Zurich. Sassolino has taken part in numerous collective exhibitions: (2001) *Materia–Niente*, Fondazione Bevilacqua la Masa, Venice; (2002) *Autonomie*, Galleria Grossetti, Milan; (2003) *Mito-logica-mente*, Castelbasso, Teramo; *N–E*, Fondazione O'Artoteca, Milan; (2004) *Zilch*, Associazione Culturale Arte e Ricambi, Verona; *AAVV: 30*, Galleria Fumagalli, Bergamo; (2005) *Arte Oggi – Premio Agenore Fabbri*, Göppingen Kunsthalle, Göppingen; *Orange!*, Galleria Galica, Milan; *Il disegno della scultura contemporanea da Fontana a Paladino*, Palazzo Binelli, Carrara; *Per esempio. Arte contemporanea italiana dalla Collezione UniCredit*, Museo d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto (MART); (2007) *What You See Is What You Guess*, Fonds Régional d'Art Contemporain (FRAC), Rheims; (2008) *Visionary Collection Vol. 6*, Haus Konstruktiv, Zurich; *Disarming Matter*, Dunkers Kulturhus, Helsingborg; (2009) *Themes and Variations*, Collezione Peggy Guggenheim, Venice; *Sleeper*, Brown, London; *Zweckgemeinschaft*, Mica Moca, Berlin; *Italian Open!*, Annet Gelink Gallery, Amsterdam; (2010) *As Soon As Possible*, Strozzi Centro di Cultura Contemporanea a Palazzo Strozzi, Florence; *Videodrome*, Autocenter, Berlin; *Under Construction*, Museum Tinguely, Basel; (2011) *Broken Fall (Organic)*, Galleria Enrico Astuni, Bologna; *Under Destruction II*, Swiss Institute, New York; *Artisti d'Italia*, Ex chiesa della Madonna del Duomo, Arezzo; *Percorsi riscoperti dell'arte italiana nella VAF–Stiftung 1947–2010*, MART, Trento.

**Chiharu Shiota** (1972, Osaka, Japan; lives and works in Berlin), after receiving her early artistic education at the Kyoto Seika University, continued her studies at an international level; initially, between 1993 and 1994, at the Canberra School of Art of the Australian National University, and subsequently attending courses at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste and at the Universität der Künste of Berlin, both in Germany. Confirmation of the artist's cosmopolitan character is her work as guest professor sooner at the Kyoto Seika University (in 2010) and later (in 2011) at the California College of the Arts. Noteworthy among her personal shows are the monographic exhibitions which marked the debut of her career in the early 1990s in Kyoto, *Native–600 Masks* and *My Existence as a Physical*. Her first European monographic exhibitions are *Direction of Consciousness* and *Return to Consciousness*, both staged in Hamburg. Since the year 2000 the number of the artist's monographic exhibitions has considerably increased, with exhibits such as *Breathing from Earth* (2000) at Kunstraum Maximilianstrasse, Stadtforum München, Munich, *The Way into Silence* (2003) at the Württembergischer Kunstverein in Stuttgart or, in the same year, *allAlone*, realized at the Centre for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Castle in Warsaw. In 2004 the

show *In Silence* was held at the Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art, while in 2005 *Raum/Room* was shown at the Haus am Lützowplatz, Berlin, and in 2008 *Breath of Spirit*, a solo exhibition, was held at the National Museum of Art in Osaka. *Chiharu Shiota*, in 2009, was staged at the Kenji Taki Gallery in Nagoya, and in 2010 were held shows such as *One Place* at the Haunch of Venison in London and the solo exhibition at the Galería Nieves Fernández, Madrid. Dating from 2011 are *Home of Memory* staged at La Maison Rouge in Paris, *Memory of Books*, an installation realized at the Fondazione Gervasuti during the Venice Biennale, and *Presence of the Past*, a solo show that was presented at the Alexander Ochs Galleries of Beijing. In 2012 relevant monographic exhibitions have been organized: *Labyrinth of Memory* at La Sucrière in Lyon and at the Galerie Daniel Templon in Paris, at the Kunsthalle of Kiel and at the Haunch of Venison in New York. She has taken part to many collective exhibitions, among which some of the most recent are: (2000) *Dorothea von Stetten Kunstpreis*, Kunstmuseum Bonn; (2006) *Imbenge Dreamhouse*, *In Transit 06*, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin; *Berlin–Tokyo / Tokyo–Berlin: The Art of Two Cities*, Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin; *Bathroom*, Performance Intermedia Festival, Szczecin; (2007) *Fiction for the Real*, The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo; (2008) *Eurasia*, Museo di Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto (MART); *Drawn in the Clouds*, Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma, Helsinki; (2009) *The Third Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art*, curated by Jean-Hubert Martin; (2010) *HomeLessHome*, Museum on the Seam, Jerusalem; (2011) *Inner Voices*, 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa; *Making the Territory*, Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin.

**Annegret Soltau** (1946, Lüneburg, Germany; lives and works in Darmstadt) is an artist whose work has been fundamental for the development of experimental research in the sphere of photographic and performative art, being often indicated as an important influence in a reflection on feminist art of the 1970s and 1980s. After the loss of her father, who died in World War II, Soltau's childhood was characterized by a conflictual relationship with her mother, who attempted in vain to discourage her passion for art. Personally sustaining the fees for her studies, Soltau received her artistic education at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste in Hamburg, where she came into contact with artists of the calibre of David Hockney and Hans Thiemann, both fundamental for the development of her various artistic experiments. Soltau has featured in many monographic exhibitions, including *Etchings*, dated 1974, at the Galerie Garuda in Darmstadt, in which she presented her first graphic work, and, again in Darmstadt, *Zeichnungen–Radierungen–Plastiken*, held at the Galerie Karin Friebe, in 1976. In 1978 she put on an exhibition at the Nada Gallery in Sapporo, Japan, while her personal exhibition at the Werkstatt–Galerie in Frankfurt took place in 1980. In 1983 a solo show was held at the Galerie Alain Oudin, in Paris. In 1985 she exhibited her work at the Galerie Quaresso in Munich, while in 1989 *Analogien 1973–1989* was presented at the Galerie Karin Friebe in Mannheim. In 1994 the exhibition *Foto-installation 1986–1994* was staged at the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe in Hamburg; in 1999 the exhibition *Generativ* was organized at the Goldstrom Gallery in New York. The most recent monographic exhibitions include *Zeit-Erfahrung* (Giedre Bartelt Galerie, Berlin, 2003), *Ich Selbst–Werkschau* (Institut Mathildenhöhe, Darmstadt, 2006), *Mal bin ich Frau, mal bin ich Mann* (Galerie Caesar & Koba, Hamburg, 2008), *Arbeiten 1975–2009* (Galerie Friebe, St. Gallen, 2008). The most recent exhibitions are *Self Performing*, staged in 2010 at the Galerie Merkle in Stuttgart, and *Köpfe – Zeichnungen, Radierungen, Fotomontagen* set up at the Galerie Rothe in Frankfurt, in 2011. Collective exhibitions include: (1975) *Frankfurter Künstler*, Musée des Beaux Arts, Lion; (1978) *Das Bild des Künstlers. Selbstdarstellungen*, Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg; (1980) *Frauenbilder*, Galerie Barbara Gross, Bergen/Munich; (1982) *Videokunst in Deutschland 1963–82*, Kölnischer Kunstverein, Cologne; (1984) *Kunst und Medien*, Staatliche Kunsthalle, Berlin; *Nackt in der Kunst*, Sprengel-Museum, Hannover; (1985) *Les immatériels*, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; (1997) *Women. Body and Soul*, Musée de la Civilisation, Québec; (1998) *Shoot Me*, Monique Goldstrom Gallery, New York; (2002) *Muster frau*, Kunsthalle, Darmstadt; (2008) *Wack! Art and the Feminist Revolution*, MOCA, Los Angeles; (2010) *Donna: Avanguardia femminista negli anni Settanta*, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, Rome; (2011) *Das Textile als Medium der zeitgenössischen Kunst*, Kunstarchiv, Darmstadt.