

All Too Human
Bacon, Freud
and a Century of Painting Life

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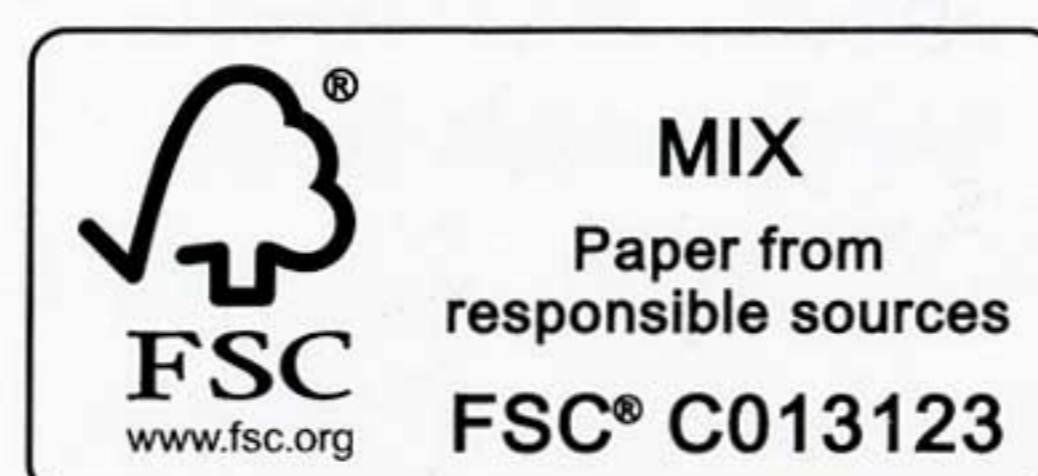
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Front cover: Lucian Freud *Girl in a Striped Nightshirt* 1983–5, see p.155
Back cover: Lynette Yiadom-Boakye *Coterie of Questions* 2015, see p.204

Page 1: David Bomberg *Self-Portrait* 1931 (detail), see p.76
Page 2: Dorothy Mead *Reclining Figure* c.1954 (detail), see p.122
Page 3: Chaïm Soutine *Landscape at Céret* c.1920–1 (detail), see p.73
Page 4: Cecily Brown *Teenage Wildlife* 2003 (detail), see p.200
Page 6: Francis Bacon *Portrait of Isabel Rawsthorne* 1966 (detail), see p.168





all its physical needs and desires, rather than aiming for a skin-deep resemblance of a specific figure. This approach acknowledges that we all exist in a fleeting present, creating our own subjective view of the world from a series of staccato moments that we store as memories. This view constantly twists and shifts and grows around us. There is no such thing as a singular reality, her paintings seem to say. You won't be able to pin such a thing down, because a clean-cut one-size-fits-all version simply doesn't exist.

Body as battleground

The postwar period in Britain was dominated by men looking at the figure: not just Bacon, Freud and the artists in this exhibition, but also David Hockney, Allen Jones, and Gilbert and George, and sculptors Henry Moore and Antony Gormley. However, the twenty-first century is more expansive, and embraces new perspectives, new voices. An increasing number of female figurative artists are now supported by commercial galleries and institutions, which garners a global audience for their work. The figure, particularly the female figure, has been reappropriated and put to work to question underlying systems that still shape how women are perceived and how they perceive themselves. Historically, paintings such as Titian's (1490–1576) *The Venus of Urbino* 1538 (above) or Velázquez's *The Toilet of Venus* 1647–51 were sites of male activation based on female passivity (the female nude as an object to be admired by the male viewer). By contrast, Brown's orgiastic explosions of nudity, Lisa Yuskavage's (b.1962)

Titian
The Venus of Urbino 1538
Oil on canvas
119 × 165
Uffizi, Florence

Marlene Dumas

Stern 2004

Oil paint on canvas

110.1 × 130.2 × 2.4

Tate. Purchased with
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Dutch Artworks and Bank

Giro Loterij 2007



Lisa Yuskavage

Brood 2005–6

Oil paint on linen

195.6 × 175.3

Jeffrey A. Altman collection:

David Zwirner Gallery





fecund models (p.59), Maria Lassnig's (1919–2014) confrontation of ageing (p.54), Marlene Dumas's (b.1953) evocations of death (p.59) and Jenny Saville's body as battleground (pp.198–9) all force us to confront and question the (male) history of the female nude.

Paula Rego's strident paintings from the 1980s and 1990s now appear as an early clarion call for this reclaiming of the figure by female artists. The women she paints reveal raw, human instincts in her 'Dog Women' series (such as *Dog Woman – Moth* and *Bride* 1994, pp.26 and 190). They are presented with unflinching realism, even when subjected to real-life travesties such as illegal abortions, as in *Untitled No. 7* 1999 (above). (Compare this woman to the one laying on Sickert's single bed in *Nuit d'Été* c.1906, p.66.) Men often appear submissive, as in *The Company of Women* 1997 (p.186), or physically absent, as in *The Policeman's Daughter* 1987 (above). Despite this, their status in society often shapes the lives played out in Rego's dark, claustrophobic tales, where strong and active women act out each unsettling scene.

In 'A Room of One's Own', Woolf advocated the need for a woman to be a woman and not to try and pretend to be a man to succeed as a writer.⁷ Rego's paintings embody this idea that a woman's voice should be authentic, distinct from and not deferential to the male voice. Fifty years after Woolf's essay was published, at a time when Rego was developing her mature voice, French feminist Luce Irigaray clearly felt progress was yet to be made. She wrote: 'If we continue to speak this sameness, if we speak to each other as men have spoken for centuries, as they taught us to speak, we will fail each other. Again.'⁸ Both Woolf and Irigaray argued that for women's voices to be heard and respected they need to be their own, and not the echoes of men's. Their voices have an equal right to be heard, whether soft or strident, melancholy or celebratory.

Paula Rego

Untitled No. 7 1999

Pastel on paper mounted on aluminium

110 × 100

Private collection

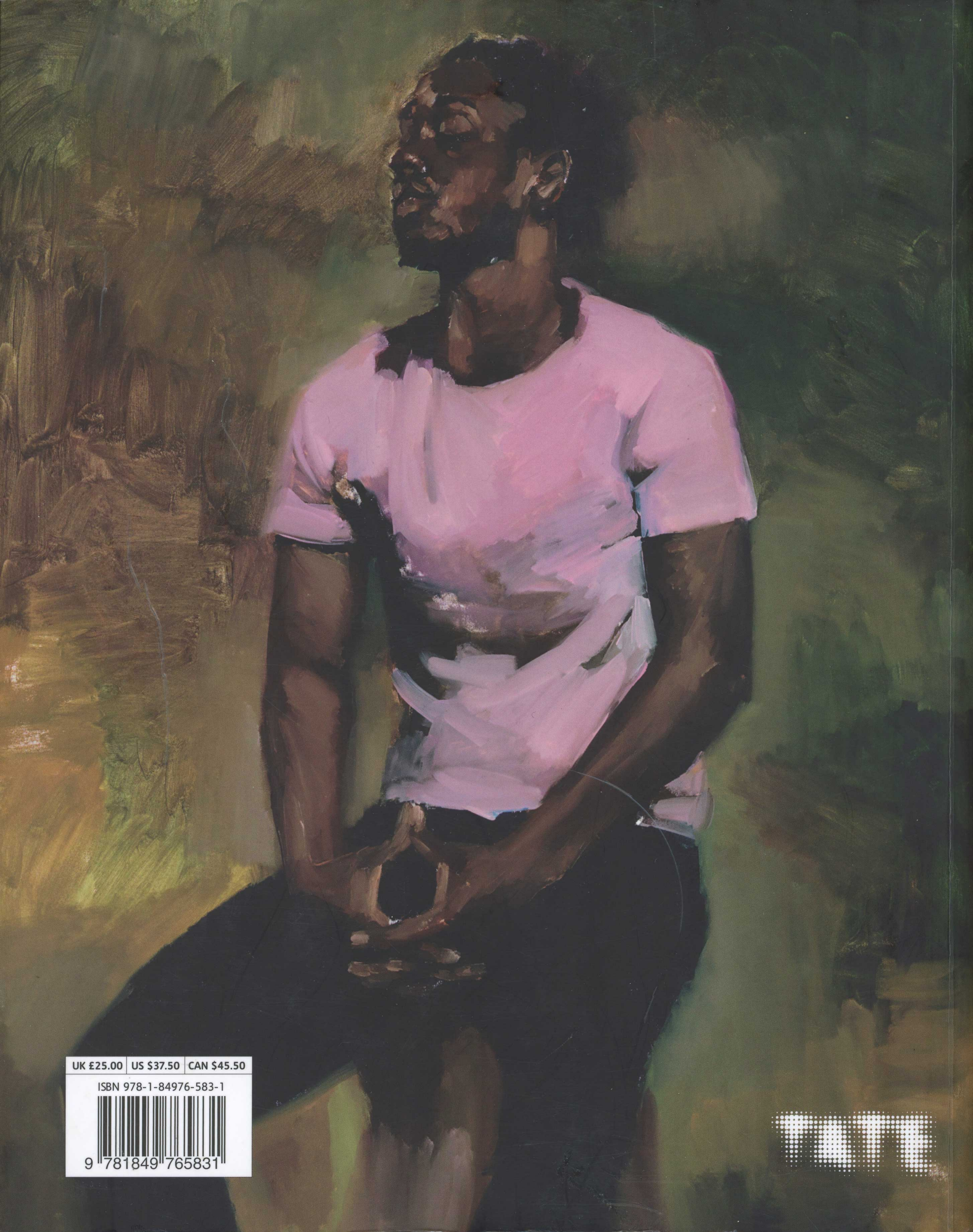
Paula Rego

The Policeman's Daughter 1987

Oil paint on canvas

213 × 152

Casa das Historias Paula Rego



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