

INTERNATIONAL

ST. PAUL DE VENCE

Francis Bacon,
Lucian Freud

FONDATION MAEGHT

By presenting Francis Bacon and Lucian Freud together in this big show, the Fondation Maeght clearly demonstrated their affinities and differences. Bearing famous names, they were both part of the School of London, they were close friends for many years, and, most important, they remained resolutely figurative in the face of contemporary abstract conventions. Yet Bacon's torment was turned inward, while Freud lashes out at others.

The 75 mostly large paintings in "Bacon-Freud: Expressions" were presented chronologically, with Bacon first, then Freud, and in the final gallery a face-off of big works by both. Among the 29 Bacons on view were some of the artist's most powerful, including four stunning triptychs—a macabre blue-and-gray example from 1976 is a standout incorporating heads and animals—and three works from the notorious "Pope" series, including *Number VII from Eight Studies for a Portrait* (1953). The image is of a purple-garbed pontiff in an orange box against a black background, howling in white-faced terror. There were four of Bacon's portraits of his colleague Freud, depicted as a large, seated figure recognizable only by his distinctive hairline. Additionally, there were three small studies by Bacon of a head in smears of red, white, and black.

Freud outnumbered Bacon in this show but did not outweigh him. The works

moved from the precise, pale-palette portraits of Freud's early years to the minutely observed hyperrealism of the 1970s (including several stinging portraits of his mother) to a very recent work, *Benefits Supervisor*, a merciless examination of a grotesquely obese woman sprawled in a nude mass on a tattered sofa. Strangely missing, in what amounted to a mini-retrospective, were Freud's crudest male nudes, although there was on display a photograph of his studio showing his own cruel, full-frontal *Self-Portrait* (1993). All told, it was a superb show which, in the best tradition, left the visitor wishing for more.

JUDY FAYARD

VENICE

Abby Leigh

CHAPELLE DES PÉNITENTS BLANCS

Abby Leigh showed 52 vivid watercolors at the Chapelle des Pénitents Blancs, a domed church constructed in 1641. Her small works, all painted in 1994–95, describe her summertime existence in the town of St. Paul de Vence. She paints what is close to her: her pensive husband, her children swimming underwater, the countryside with its distinctive hilltop villages, flowers, vegetables, and fruit.

These simply arranged still lifes reveal a naturalist's eye and an acuteness that might have impressed Charles Darwin. Leigh has a knack for noticing every tiny blemish on each piece of fruit she paints—her sense of detail is exquisite. Fittingly, the titles are simple—*Three Figs, Tomatoes*—for what Leigh aims to portray is a sense of solitude and the essence of her subjects.

Her palette is easily associated with the south of France. Sensuous hues

record the colors of foods: fig purple, aubergine violet, peach orange, tomato red, lime green, lemon yellow. The texture and the form of her subjects—the skin of the apricot, the roundness of the apples—beautifully complemented the chapel's cool, whitewashed walls.

The only large (88 by 31 inches) painting, *Carrots*, was perhaps Leigh's most successful in suggesting the earthy freshness and seductiveness of common vegetables.

In a different vein, Leigh's Hockneyesque underwater paintings surreally juxtapose weightless bubbles and ripples of water with solid, often headless or limbless bodies. These images contrasted nicely with the delicately rendered fruits and vegetables.

JOEL STRATTE-McCLURE

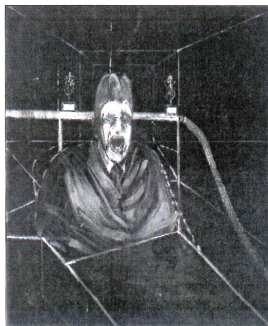
LONDON

Charles Hewlings

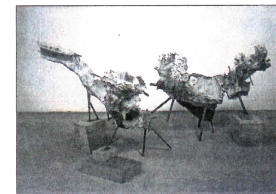
KAPIL JARIWALA

Imagine some celestial being pointing his finger at an ocean swell and telling it to freeze. This gives some indication of what Charles Hewlings's *Silence and Happening* looks like. Hoisted off the floor by massive steel armatures that thrust through and out the other side again, the sculpture's two parts appear to float above the ground, lashing out in all directions. They are pocked, pitted, folded, ever-changing in form. At one moment they remind the onlooker of the twist of a body in a Nolde painting; at another, they resemble the lacy hem of a woman's dress in a Fragonard. Yet it is concrete that we are staring at.

The process Hewlings uses to create these sculptures is fascinating: he pours liquid concrete into clay molds, whose shapes have been twisted, hammered,



Abby Leigh, *Tomatoes*, 1994, watercolor on paper, 6" x 9".
Chapelle des Pénitents Blancs.



Charles Hewlings, *Silence and Happening*, 1994, concrete, steel, and wood, 45" x 110 1/2" x 80".
Kapil Jariwala.

Francis Bacon, *Number VII from Eight Studies for a Portrait*, 1953, oil on canvas, 59 1/2" x 45 1/2".
Fondation Maeght.

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