

SOTHEBY'S TO OFFER
ONE OF ONLY SIX SURVIVING WORKS FROM
FRANCIS BACON'S *TANGIER PAINTINGS*

POPE

Will be Offered on Behalf of the Brooklyn Museum This Fall
To Support the Museum Collection

Executed in Morocco circa 1958,
In the Throes of a Tumultuous Romance with Peter Lacy,
Bacon Personally Destroyed the Majority of Works from This Series

An Exceedingly Rare Witness to a Critical Period in Bacon's Life and Career,
Pope Is Estimated to Sell for \$6/8 Million

Highlighting Sotheby's
CONTEMPORARY ART EVENING AUCTION
On 14 November in New York

NEW YORK, 15 October 2019 – Sotheby's is honored to announce that we will offer Francis Bacon's **Pope** on behalf of the Brooklyn Museum this November in New York. Proceeds from the sale will be used to support the museum collection.

Executed during a particularly turbulent and emotional moment of Bacon's life, *Pope* offers a rare glimpse into the psychology of the artist and the influences behind the works he created during a passionate yet volatile love affair with Peter Lacy. In the mid-1950s, Lacy moved to Tangier, prompting Bacon to make frequent and extended

trips to Morocco to spend time with his lover, among a group of important creative figures such as Allen Ginsberg and William Burroughs. Perceived as exotic and more tolerant of homosexuality, the Tangier lifestyle offered an escapism that was liberating for both Bacon and Lacy. Despite this, their romance ultimately devolved into violence, which characterized a period of great psychological angst for the artist.

Bacon was particularly prolific during his stints in Morocco. However, he ultimately destroyed the majority of the paintings he created in Tangier – perhaps as a way to separate himself completely from the memory of his calamitous relationship with Lacy. The present *Pope* is one of only six *Tangier Paintings* that survive, five of which Bacon gifted to his friend Nicolas Brusilowski in 1959, hoping that he may be able to reuse the canvases. Brusilowski instead preserved these works, which later made their way into notable private collections worldwide. The sixth work now resides in the Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts in Brussels.



Brusilowski sold the present *Pope* to legendary Swiss dealer Jan Krugier, and the work was subsequently acquired from his Galerie Krugier et cie in Geneva by American collector Olga H. Knoepke in 1967. In addition to her significant holdings of art, including works by such masters as Edward Hopper, George Tooker and Lucian Freud, Knoepke was a pioneering businesswoman, who helped found a plastics factory in Brooklyn, New York. She gifted the work during her lifetime to the Brooklyn Museum in 1981, where it has resided until present.

Prior to Sotheby's November auction, only two of the six surviving *Tangier Paintings* have ever appeared at auction. The most recent – another *Pope* – was sold at Sotheby's Paris in 2008, for \$7.3 million (estimate \$3.2/4.7 million). The full group of *Tangier Paintings* is included in the authoritative catalogue raisonné of Francis Bacon's work, edited by Martin Harrison and published in 2016. The present work arrives at auction this November following Sotheby's sale of another outstanding example of Bacon's Popes, **Study for a Head**, which achieved \$50.4 million in our Contemporary Art Evening Auction in May 2019.

Pope will be exhibited publicly in Sotheby's New York galleries beginning 1 November. The painting is estimated to sell for \$6/8 million in Sotheby's Contemporary Art Evening Auction on 14 November 2019.

Grégoire Billault, Head of Sotheby's Contemporary Art Department in New York and former researcher for The Estate of Francis Bacon, commented: "Pope offers an exceedingly rare glimpse into Francis Bacon's psychological state during a prolific but ultimately tortured time in his life and career. Tangier represented the artist's first travels outside of Europe, and the promise of an open life with Peter Lacy. But their relationship proved volatile and violent, which found expression in Bacon's anguished Popes of the period – of which precious few survive. It is a privilege for us to present a work that combines the rarity of the Tangier Paintings with a lineage distinguished by Jan Krugier, Olga H. Knoepke, and the incredible Brooklyn Museum."

Marking a critical historical moment in Bacon's storied oeuvre, *Pope* illuminates the artist's famously tortured soul as he further developed his most iconic subject matter – the Pope – in a crucial stage of his artistic development. The present work is distinguished by the Pope's fully articulated face and impressive scale, which likens it to some of Bacon's most celebrated works and iconic subject matter.

In the wake of World War II and the Holocaust, Bacon delved into the existential human condition, isolating his figures in anonymous, dark voids and trapping them in Alberto Giacometti-inspired cages. *Pope* bears all these hallmarks, combining the pivotal subject matter of the Pope and the coloring of the Men in Blue series with a superbly rendered face, which sees the artist pull swaths of green and ivory across a taut jawline and hollowed eyes, one of which lands upon the viewer and affords an intimate glimpse into the sitter's psychological state.

ABOUT THE BROOKLYN MUSEUM

Founded in 1823 as the Brooklyn Apprentices' Library Association, the Brooklyn Museum contains one of the nation's most comprehensive and wide-ranging collections enhanced by a distinguished record of exhibitions, scholarship, and service to the public. The Museum's vast holdings span 5,000 years of human creativity from cultures in every corner of the globe. Collection highlights include the ancient Egyptian holdings, renowned for objects of the highest quality, and the American collections, which are unrivaled in their diversity, from Native American art and artifacts and Spanish colonial painting, to nineteenth- and early twentieth-century American painting, sculpture, and decorative objects. The Museum is also home to the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art, which is dedicated to the study and exhibition of feminist art and is the only curatorial center of its kind. The Brooklyn Museum is both a leading cultural institution and a community museum dedicated to serving a wide-ranging audience. Located in the heart of Brooklyn, the Museum welcomes and celebrates the diversity of its home borough and city. Few, if any, museums in the country attract an audience as varied with respect to race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, educational background, and age as the audience of the Brooklyn Museum.

ABOUT SOTHEBY'S

Sotheby's has been uniting collectors with world-class works of art since 1744. Sotheby's became the first international auction house when it expanded from London to New York (1955), the first to conduct sales in Hong Kong (1973), India (1992) and France (2001), and the first international fine art auction house in China (2012). Today, Sotheby's has a global network of 80 offices in 40 countries and presents auctions in 10 different salesrooms, including New York, London, Hong Kong and Paris. Sotheby's offers collectors the resources of *Sotheby's Financial Services*, the world's only full-service art financing company, as well as the collection, artist, estate & foundation advisory services of its subsidiary, *Art Agency, Partners*.

Sotheby's also presents private sale opportunities in more than 70 categories, including S|2, the gallery arm of Sotheby's Global Fine Art Division, and three retail businesses: Sotheby's Wine, Sotheby's Diamonds, and Sotheby's Home, the online marketplace for interior design.

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**Estimates do not include buyer's premium. Prices achieved include the hammer price plus buyer's premium and are net of any fees paid to the purchaser where the purchaser provided an irrevocable bid.*

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