

Press Release

ELISABETH FRINK: HUMANS AND OTHER ANIMALS

The largest presentation of work by Elisabeth Frink since the artist's death in 1993.



Elisabeth Frink photographed by Edward Pool, c.1964-5

Elisabeth Frink: Humans and Other Animals: 13 October 2018 – 24 February 2019

Press View: Friday 12 October

High-resolution images available for download: <https://bit.ly/2KE0V4C>

This autumn, the Sainsbury Centre will present a major new exhibition of work by Elisabeth Frink (1930-1993). *Elisabeth Frink: Humans and Other Animals*, featuring over 130 works by the artist, will be the largest showing of Frink's work in 25 years. The exhibition will provide new perspectives and examine her radical and bohemian beginnings in 1950s London, reappraising one of the most important British sculptors of the twentieth century. Frink's work will be placed alongside that of other modern masters, most notably Pablo Picasso, Alberto Giacometti, Auguste Rodin, Francis Bacon, Germaine Richier and Louise Bourgeois. In addition, work by two exciting contemporary artists, Douglas Gordon and Rebecca Warren, will also provide a wider context to explore themes important to Frink.

Elisabeth Frink: Humans and Other Animals will trace the evolution of Frink's work over four decades, presenting the major themes in her practice and paying significant attention to her early work in the context of artists such as Rodin, Giacometti and Richier who inspired her. The relationship between humans and animals was central for Frink and one she returned to throughout her life. Whilst offering exciting contemporary possibilities both metaphorically and directly, she was conscious of the fact that animals appear in art from the very earliest times and that their relationship with humans and animals is interdependent.

Frink rose to prominence while still a student at Chelsea College of Art in 1952, when she had her first major gallery exhibition and won a prize in the international competition for the *Monument to the Unknown Political Prisoner*. During this period, she created a series of expressionist bird sculptures, which for her, evoked 'strong feelings of panic, tension, aggression and predatoriness'. Frink created one of the most succinct responses to the Second World War and to the climate of fear generated by the encroaching Cold War.



Powerful examples of this series of sculptures will include *Bird* (1952), purchased by Tate from Frink's first major exhibition and *Vulture* (1952). For Frink the bird-form became an avatar evoking an extreme sense of menace, fear and panic. 21 of these remarkable works will go on display and will be presented alongside works of a similarly foreboding and animalistic nature by Bourgeois and Richier. *Mirage I and II* (1969), presented outside in the Sainsbury Centre's 350-acre Sculpture Park at the University of East Anglia, will provide an appropriate natural setting for these major works and a lasting legacy of the exhibition.

The bird forms evolved into man-bird hybrids, falling or spinning through space. These works were inspired by vivid childhood memories of living next to a World War Two airfield where Frink witnessed planes and pilots falling from the sky. Frink's *Birdman* (1959) was further inspired by the adventurer Léo Valentin, the self-styled 'birdman', who fell to his death after attempting flight with his hand-made wings. *Birdman* will be shown alongside the work of César Baldaccini who also responded to the shock of Valentin's demise and such references demonstrate how Frink was constantly responding to current events and the mass media. For instance, the 'Space Race' was also a crucial theme, with Frink's helmeted figures *Spinning Man I and II* (1960). Associated drawings echo images of early cosmonauts such as Yuri Gagarin, the first human in outer space.

Frink's most famous and unique theme is a series of *Goggle Heads* (1967-69) and *Tribute Heads* (1970s-80s). 10 of these larger-than-life-size bronze heads will be presented in the exhibition, the first time so many have been displayed together. Like other great twentieth century artists such as Bacon and Picasso, Frink explores the binary attributes of human behavior, representing man as both aggressor and victim. The *Goggle Heads* were based in part on the likeness of Mohamed Oufkir, who during the 1960s and 70s became a notorious mastermind of state orchestrated terror in post-independent Morocco. In contrast, the *Tribute Heads* commemorate the victims of acts of brutality or martyrs to a cause.

A further significant section will explore Frink's concern with the figure of the warrior, culminating in her magnificent yet terrifying *Riace* warriors, shown as a full quartet for the first time in decades. This section of the exhibition will demonstrate Frink's unique treatment of the warrior as aggressor but also as a brutalised victim, and the contradictory forces of masculinity and vulnerability. Frink's iconic *Running Man*, a theme she explored between 1978 and 1980, represents passive resistance and humanity's ability to strive against adversity.

Elisabeth Frink: Humans and Other Animals will feature a number of the artist's final works, influenced by the ancient, folkloric figure of the *Green Man*. Drawing solace just before her death in this motif's associations with rebirth and fresh life, this section will evidence how the natural world was a fertile source of inspiration at the core of Frink's oeuvre.

The exhibition has been developed in full collaboration with the Elisabeth Frink Estate, and will include a large number of loans from the Elisabeth Frink Estate, Tate, The Ingram Collection, and private lenders alongside important examples from the Sainsbury Centre's own Collection.



Exhibition Curator: Calvin Winner
Project Curator: Tania Moore

The exhibition will be accompanied by a publication edited by Calvin winner and including new research and critical analysis of Frink's practice with essays by Calvin Winner, Tania Moore and Annette Ratuszniak.

Supported by the Henry Moore Foundation, the Geoffrey Watling Charity and the Hargreaves and Ball Trust.

– ENDS –

Notes to Editors

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About Elisabeth Frink

Frink was born in Great Thurlow in Suffolk and spent her formative years in war-time East Anglia. She studied at the Guildford School of Art (1946–49) and at the Chelsea School of Art (1949–53) and remained resolutely an expressionist figurative artist against the prevailing trends of her time. She died prematurely in 1993 at the young age of 62 and was widely admired in her lifetime, a Royal Academician, a Dame and a Companion of Honour. There was a major exhibition at the Royal Academy in London in 1983 and a posthumous show at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park in 1994. More recent exhibitions include the Lightbox in Woking (2013) and at the Djanogly Gallery in Nottingham (2015), which focused on her public commissions. In 2016 Hauser & Wirth Somerset presented a selection of her work to great acclaim. Frink is represented in the Sainsbury Centre collection as well as other collections in the UK, notably a substantial collection at Tate who purchased a work from her first exhibition in 1952. Her work is also represented in international collections, in particular the USA, Australia, South Africa and Canada.

About the Sainsbury Centre

The Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts is one of the most important public university art galleries in Britain. It was founded in 1973 at the University of East Anglia (UEA) with the support of one of the nation's great philanthropic families, Sir Robert and Lady Sainsbury who donated their extraordinary art collection which includes works dating from prehistory to the late twentieth century from across the globe. A radical new building by Norman Foster was designed to house the collection and was his first public work.



The Sainsbury Centre holds one of the most impressive art collections outside of the national institutions. It includes a significant number of works by modern masters of European art such as Pablo Picasso, Edgar Degas, Alberto Giacometti, Henry Moore, Francis Bacon, Jacob Epstein, Jean Arp, Chaïm Soutine and Amedeo Modigliani. There is also a remarkable collection of art and antiquities dating from prehistory to the late twentieth century from across the globe. There are major holdings from Oceania, Africa, the Americas, Asia, the ancient Mediterranean cultures of Egypt, Greece and Rome, as well as Medieval Europe. Alongside these permanent collections, it hosts a range of exhibitions in the largest suite of temporary exhibitions galleries in Eastern England.

scva.ac.uk

About the Henry Moore Foundation

The Henry Moore Foundation was founded by sculptor Henry Moore and his family in 1977 to encourage public appreciation of the visual arts. Today The Foundation supports innovative sculpture projects through its Grants programme and preserves the legacy of Henry Moore through its own venues, exhibitions, research and collections.

henry-moore.org

About the Geoffrey Watling Charity

The Geoffrey Watling Charity was established in 1993 and distributes grants to causes which in the Trustees' opinion merit support. The Charity's objective is to apply the income of the trust fund to such charity or charities or for such charitable purposes as the Trustees in their discretion determine. A board of Trustees meets quarterly to consider applications for grants from organisations operating within Norfolk and the Waveney area of Suffolk.

geoffreywatling.org.uk

About the Hargreaves and Ball Trust

The Hargreaves and Ball Charitable Trust (2010-2017) was established in order to support registered Charities by the sale of art works collected by two remarkable men, Dr Gordon Hargreaves (1930 – 1989) and Professor John Ball (1931 – 2010). Their private collection included works by three artists in particular - Keith Vaughan, Prunella Clough and Elizabeth Fritsch. These works became the Trust's inheritance, sold over time with the proceeds given to chosen charities. The first to receive such support was London's Wigmore Hall, which was a place of particular importance to John and Gordon. The generosity of spirit which prompted the Trust's foundation is still felt elsewhere as well, as many other charities have been chosen over the years to receive support from this inspired and generous venture.

