**Francis Bacon symposium: Bacon’s bodies**

Perspectives on the continuing significance of the art of Francis Bacon

**Saturday 9 February 2013**

9:30am to 4pm

Art Gallery of New South Wales

co-presented with The Power Institute for Art and Visual Culture, University of Sydney

This symposium considers the body as subject, the physicality of painting and the continuing significance of Francis Bacon’s body of work. Speakers will address this theme in relation to Bacon’s material practice, his studio (now preserved at Dublin City Gallery, The Hugh Lane), as well as history, politics, food, and sexuality.

\* **Anthony Bond** director, curatorial Art Gallery of NSW & curator, *Francis Bacon: five decades*  
\* **Nicholas Chare** Department of Gender Studies, University of Melbourne, author of *After Francis Bacon: synaesthesia and sex in paint*, 2012   
\* **Barbara Dawson** director, Dublin City Gallery, The Hugh Lane – home to Francis Bacon's studio  
\* **Andrew Durham** conservator, ArtLab Australia, formerly of the Tate Gallery, London,  where he interviewed Bacon and conserved his works for a major retrospective  
\* **Macushla Robinson** assistant curator, *Francis Bacon: five decades*

Non-member $65  
Member/concession $50  
Full-time student $30

**Includes morning tea, lunch and a glass of wine**

**Bookings and enquiries: 02 9225 1740**

**Program**

**9:30am** Registration and morning tea, Domain Theatre Foyer

**10am** Welcome, Michael Brand, director, Art Gallery of NSW and Mark Ledbury, director, The Power Institute, University of Sydney

**10:15am** Anthony Bond, *Francis Bacon: realist*  
This paper will focus on the realist aspect of Bacon’s practice and his philosophical musings on representation, on chance, chaos and order, unconsciousness and criticality. It will place him within the late 20th-century avant-garde as an indexical realist, based on his own words, material from the studio and the paintings themselves.

**11am** Barbara Dawson, *Francis Bacon’s food*  
Over 40 cookbooks were found in Bacon’s library and several were located in his studio. He was known to be a good, if simple, cook. A renowned gourmand, Bacon enjoyed eating and drinking and was a regular presence in London’s best restaurants as well as in the drinking dens of Soho. He lived through two world wars and witnessed severe food shortages in London during World War II. Food played a significant role in the artist’s life and work. Describing himself as a 'desperate optimist’, Bacon’s nihilistic view of life as expressed in his paintings often drew on images of meat and food to underpin the message.

**11:45am** Break

**11:55am** Andrew Durham, *Francis Bacon: his painting technique*   
This paper will look at how Bacon developed his very idiosyncratic style of painting, the materials he used and what ‘chance’ and ‘accident’ may mean in the context of the act of painting.

**12:40pm** Discussion panel with Anthony Bond, Barbara Dawson and Andrew Durham, moderated by Mark Ledbury

**1pm** Lunch, Domain Theatre Foyer

**1:45pm** Nicholas Chare, *Dissolute practices: addressing Francis Bacon’s body politics*   
This paper will examine recent developments in the study of Bacon’s work, including the theological significance of his art (Rina Arya) and its connection to European fascism (Martin Hammer), in relation to the artist’s enduring fascination with bodies in seeming dissolution. Drawing on this path-breaking scholarship for inspiration it will additionally address how representations of flesh in Bacon’s works betray political agency.

**2:30pm** Macushla Robinson, *Francis Bacon and the female nude*  
Against the tide of art history, Bacon predominantly painted men. It may seem strange, then, to consider his paintings of women, but Bacon painted some erotically charged nude women and these paintings raise a fascinating question about how Bacon, a homosexual man, engaged with and represented female sexuality. This paper will tease out some of the political issues implicit in Bacon’s depiction of the female form.

**3:15pm** Discussion panel with all speakers, moderated by Mark Ledbury

**4pm-4.30pm** Drinks, Domain Theatre Foyer