Lucian Freud Portraits is the first major exhibition to focus on the portraiture of Lucian Freud (1922–2011), one of the twentieth century’s most important artists, a modern master of figuration. The exhibition features 130 works, some of which have not been exhibited before, drawn from his career spanning over seventy years.

These questions and activities suggest approaches into the exhibition for teachers of KS3+ Art and Design, aimed at generating pre-, during and post-visit discussion, assignments and practical activities for students.

The exhibition is arranged into ten sections. The free exhibition label booklet contains information on each section and on about 70 selected works. These Teachers’ Notes follow this broadly chronological approach under themed headings, with recommendations for planning your visit at the end of this document. All quotations are from Lucian Freud.

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IN THE GALLERY:

Atmosphere, Detail and Intensity

‘I’ve always wanted to create drama in my pictures, which is why I paint people. It’s people who have brought drama to pictures from the beginning. The simplest human gestures tell stories.’

- After observing the whole exhibition, discuss how you think Freud achieved such drama in his work. What were his key approaches to achieve this?
- Notice Freud’s early work with his attention to detail and effect of his stylised and intense approach to his subjects. Select three works - what was he trying to say about his sitters?
- For his early portraits, Freud used a fine sable brush and remained seated to focus extremely closely on his sitters. Describe the difference between his early and later approaches.
- Look at the portrait of Freud’s first wife Kitty Garman, in Girl with Roses (1947–8). How has his linear style and tone helped suggest atmosphere? Write down ten words which describe the atmosphere and mood of the piece.

Sketchbook activity: Make three or four thumbnail sketches from contrasting examples of Freud’s early and later works observing his use of line and shape in particular. Consider composition and viewpoint.

Form and Energy

‘When I stood up I never sat down again’

- In the mid-1950s, Freud began to paint standing up at the easel and to use coarse hog’s hair brushes. In 1966, he began to investigate painting whole figures. In what way did these changes affect the outcomes of his portraits?
• Locate the transitional work *Woman Smiling* (1958-9), where Freud draws close attention to the surface of the face for the first time. Observe and describe the type of brushstrokes and texture in the painting. Compare and contrast this to one of his earlier portraits – what are some key differences?

Sketchbook Activity: Compare and contrast two different paintings e.g. *Girl with Beret* (1951-2) and *Woman Smiling* (1958-9). Observe the two different approaches then annotate and describe the difference in mood and atmosphere of each piece.

**Colour and Intimacy**

‘*Paint as flesh’ ‘When I paint clothes I am really painting naked people who are covered in clothes’*

In the 1960s and 1970s, Freud continued to pull back from the head to reveal the whole body. He would work on several paintings concurrently, dividing them into ‘day’ and ‘night’ pictures.

• Describe Freud’s use of light/ colour/texture/mood and composition, looking at two portraits from this period, for example *Naked Portrait* (1972-3) and *Large Interior, Paddington* (1968-9).
• Freud’s subjects included family, friends and lovers, and sometimes himself. He always painted from life, with some pieces taking a period of many months or years to complete. Describe how this intimacy is reflected in his final works.
• Look at the portrait *Reflection with Two Children (Self-portrait)* (1965). How did he create this unusual composition with the figures of two of his children in the foreground? What does this say to you about their relationship?

Sketchbook activities: Draw thumbnail sketches of four other dynamic compositions in the exhibition. Using the side of your pencil and a range of different marks, explore two different approaches to light and tone in two half-page drawings. You may wish to look at the works *Naked Girl Asleep I* (1967) and *Naked Girl Asleep II* (1968) as inspiration.

**Self-portraits**

‘I wanted to do something rather than stand and stare. I wanted to create a little drama.’

• Observe the two self-portraits entitled *Reflection (Self-portrait)* (1985). Why do you think the artist chose this particular title?
• Look at a selection of Freud’s self-portraits. How do you think the artist sees himself? Write down five words or sentences which you think describe his self-image.
• Freud said, ‘The way you paint yourself, you’ve got to try and paint yourself as another person.’ What did he mean by this?

Sketchbook activity: Find some other self-portraits in the exhibition and make some quick sketches of them. Now annotate with words to describe the mood, attitude, and character of the portraits.

**IN THE CLASSROOM:**

**Ideas for Classroom Activity around self-portraits:**
As well as the self-portraits in *Lucian Freud Portraits*, study self-portraits by up to three other artists. Some examples could include: Chuck Close, Maggi Hambling, Dame Laura Knight, John Minton, Samuel Palmer or Sir Stanley Spencer.

- How has each artist conveyed ideas about themselves? Describe their techniques and approaches.
- How do artists show themselves? As a painter? As a parent? As a friend? As a person with status?
- Why are self-portraits made? Look at each of your examples. Have they been made to record an important time in a person’s life, to project a powerful image of a person, to portray individuals as wealthy, knowledgeable or hard-working?
- Freud said, ‘I think of painting as a continuous group portrait…’ Make a collection of baby photos/current photos of members of your class or individually in sketchbooks. Develop a series of working drawings with some of the figures grouped in different ways.
- Use a hand mirror to observe yourself from a variety of angles, using dramatic lighting. Make several studies in graphite or charcoal on large sheets of paper pinned to a wall or an easel. Compare and contrast the outcomes.

**Ideas for further projects:**

Freud’s portraits often reflect the close relationship between the artist and the sitter, and were completed over many sittings. Using a life model, take time over a drawing a variety of compositions. Use dynamic lighting to cast dramatic shadows or paint from a particular viewpoint such as from below the model or from above the model. Take photographs to record each pose. Make thumbnail sketches before deciding on a piece to paint.

Find a picture of a person close to you that describes their character. Annotate it, using as many words as you can to describe them. Make drawings exaggerating the form, line, tone, colour and shape of the image to illustrate elements of their character.

Zoom in on one area of an image of one of Freud’s nudes. Explore his use of colour to depict and explore and experiment with skin tones by lightly layering oil pastels onto dark sugar paper.

Experiment with paint: Begin by blocking out the dark and light tones with acrylic paint, covering the whole canvas/board/paper, then when dry over-paint with oil paints or thick acrylics to explore skin tones with a large brush. Be bold; exaggerate your mark-making.

Other considerations for sketchbook or painting tasks: explore angle, scale, texture, pose, cropping, juxtapositions e.g. scale and content, focal points, paintings of groups or couples, and viewpoint.

**THINGS TO NOTE FOR YOUR CLASS VISIT TO LUCIAN FREUD PORTRAITS**

**Further resources and information:**
• The Reading Room at the beginning of Lucian Freud Portraits contains photographs of the artist at work and copies of exhibition publications. Individual students are welcome to read material in here, but please note this is not designed as a space for classes to read or meet.

• A selection of etchings by the artist can be seen on the wall outside the exhibition space.

• The Lucian Freud Portraits audio guide is available from the Gallery for £3 or to download as an app for £1.99.

• There are two exhibition publications: Lucian Freud Portraits (hardback RRP £35 or Gallery-exclusive paperback, RRP £25) and the paperback Lucian Freud: Painting People (RRP £10). These are available, along with postcards, posters and other merchandise, from the Gallery or online www.npg.org.uk

**Guidelines for bringing your class to Lucian Freud Portraits:**

• All group visits to Lucian Freud Portraits must be booked in advance – please contact education@npg.org.uk or 020 7312 2483

• Upon arrival, please send one person up to collect your exhibition tickets from Desk D in the Main Hall, and then please take your class downstairs to the Schools Cloakroom to leave your belongings (no bags may be taken into the exhibition).

• Due to crowding in the ticketing area during Lucian Freud Portraits, we ask that groups do not meet or brief in the Main Hall – please brief your group outside the Ondaatje Wing Lecture Theatre on Level -2 before entering the exhibition.

• For maximum enjoyment of the exhibition for all visitors, we ask that teachers please do not teach their class inside the exhibition. Please plan to facilitate your students either individually or in pairs, following the earlier briefing. Thank you for your understanding.

• Students are welcome to sketch from the works in small-scale notebooks working individually or in pairs. We ask that they move along or move aside if requested to do so by a member of Gallery staff, so all visitors can view the works clearly.

• To make the most of your limited time in such a comprehensive exhibition, we advise teachers to recommend that students do not try to look at every work. We suggest selecting two to five representative works in each room, or recommending some key rooms to enter, using the map and information in the exhibition booklet as your guide.

• Please note there is no readmission to the exhibition.

• For information on public events, talks and workshops please see www.npg.org.uk/lateshift or the ‘What’s On’ guide.

• For further information on our programmes for schools during Lucian Freud Portraits please see www.npg.org.uk/learning

**BOOKINGS AND FURTHER INFORMATION:** education@npg.org.uk or 020 7312 2483