

# ACKLANDARTMUSEUM

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Exhibition dates: 6 January - 10 April 2016

More information: <http://ackland.org/exhibition/guest-of-honor-francis-bacon/>

Media contact: Emily Bowles, Director of Communications, 919.843.3675, [emily.bowles@unc.edu](mailto:emily.bowles@unc.edu)

## Masterwork by Francis Bacon on View in Chapel Hill

CHAPEL HILL, North Carolina -- Francis Bacon's *Study for Portrait VI* (1953) is now on view at the Ackland Art Museum at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill as a special loan from the Minneapolis Institute of Art. It is on loan reciprocally for the Ackland's loan of a key masterwork, Eugène Delacroix's *Cleopatra and the Peasant*, to an exhibition in Minneapolis.

Francis Bacon (1909-1992) is widely considered the greatest British painter of the twentieth century. This reputation is grounded on paintings such as the one displayed here: Bacon creates a troubling vision of existential despair by focusing on a distorted and fragmented human figure isolated in a spatially tense and complex framework. Despite his international stature, works by Francis Bacon have rarely if ever been exhibited in North Carolina and no publicly-accessible collections in the state currently hold any of his major paintings.

Bacon based this figure in part on his friend the art critic David Sylvester (1924-2001), and in part on photographic reproductions of the famous 1650 *Portrait of Pope Innocent X* by Diego Velázquez (1599-1660), now in the Galleria Doria Pamphilj in Rome. The Velasquez painting haunted Bacon, who called it "one of the greatest portraits ever made, [which] opens up all sorts of feelings and areas of imagination, even in me."

The structure that traps and truncates the figure seems to be made up of three elements: the golden finials of the papal throne; the abstracted configuration of a bay window, perhaps evoking a feature of his beloved maternal grandmother's home; and the linear forms of modernist tubular furniture, of a kind that Bacon himself designed and made around 1930 at the beginning of his career as a largely self-taught artist.

This painting is one of a series of eight variations on the theme made in 1953 in preparation for the artist's first exhibition in New York. Others are in private collections, as well as the Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center at Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, New York; the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington, D.C.; and the Museum of Modern Art in New York. An illustrated commentary on the series is available at: <http://artstories.artsmia.org/#/o/1355>

This exhibition has been made possible by the Ackland National Advisory Board.

### About the Ackland

The Ackland Art Museum is located on the historic campus of The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The Ackland's holdings consist of more than 17,000 works of art, featuring significant collections of European masterworks, twentieth-century and contemporary art, African art, North Carolina pottery,

and folk art. In addition, the Ackland has North Carolina's premier collections of Asian art and works on paper (drawings, prints, and photographs). As an academic unit of the University, the Ackland serves broad local, state, and national constituencies.

### **Admission and Hours**

Admission to the Ackland Art Museum is always free, with donations accepted. The Ackland is open Wednesday through Saturday 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM, and Sundays 1:00 to 5:00 PM. The Museum is closed on Mondays and Tuesdays.

### **Location**

The Ackland Art Museum is located at 101 S. Columbia Street, just south of Franklin Street, on the campus of The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Detailed directions are available at [www.ackland.org](http://www.ackland.org) or by calling 919.966.5736. Downtown Chapel Hill parking information and a map are available at [www.parkonthehill.com](http://www.parkonthehill.com).