

Catalogue

Life above Everything: Lucian Freud and Jack B. Yeats is accompanied by a fully-illustrated catalogue with contributions from David Dawson, William Feaver, Eithne Jordan, Christina Kennedy, Róisín Kennedy, James Finch, Nathan O'Donnell and Hilary Pyle. Available from the IMMA shop for €25.00.

Associated Talks and Events,

July 2019 – January 2020

For further information, reading, and a full programme of IMMA talks and events programmed in association with this exhibition, please see the IMMA website www.imma.ie

Talks in the series includes Curator's Talk by Christina Kennedy, Head of Collections, IMMA: Fri 12 July, 1.15pm / Research Symposium, Lucian Freud Networks, Contexts, Responses: Offsite, TCD, Sat 07 Sept, 9.30 - 5pm / Closing Seminar on the shared painterly and literary interests of Freud and Yeats, taking into account cultural shifts in Irish/Anglo relations: Sat 18 Jan 2020, 2 - 5pm / and a range of other lectures and responses to be announced.

IMMA wishes to express deepest thanks to all the private lenders and institutions for their generosity and vision. Our thanks to David Dawson, the Lucian Freud Archive and Estate and the Estate of Jack B. Yeats. We are grateful to Christie's for their support of the accompanying publication.

IMMA would like to thank our invaluable Members, Patrons and Partners for their continuous support.

This exhibition is co-curated by David Dawson, Director of the Lucian Freud Archive and Christina Kennedy, Senior Curator: Head of Collections, and Chief Curator of the Freud Project at IMMA. Dr. Nathan O'Donnell, Irish Research Council Enterprise Postdoctoral Fellow, IMMA Collection: Freud Project, is lead researcher for this exhibition.

Have a question about an artwork? Want to know more? Ask a member of our Visitor Engagement Team, easily identifiable by their blue lanyards.

IMMA Collection: Freud Project is made possible through the visionary support of the Freud Circle listed below, and those donors that wish to remain anonymous.



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+353 1 612 9900
imma.ie / info@imma.ie

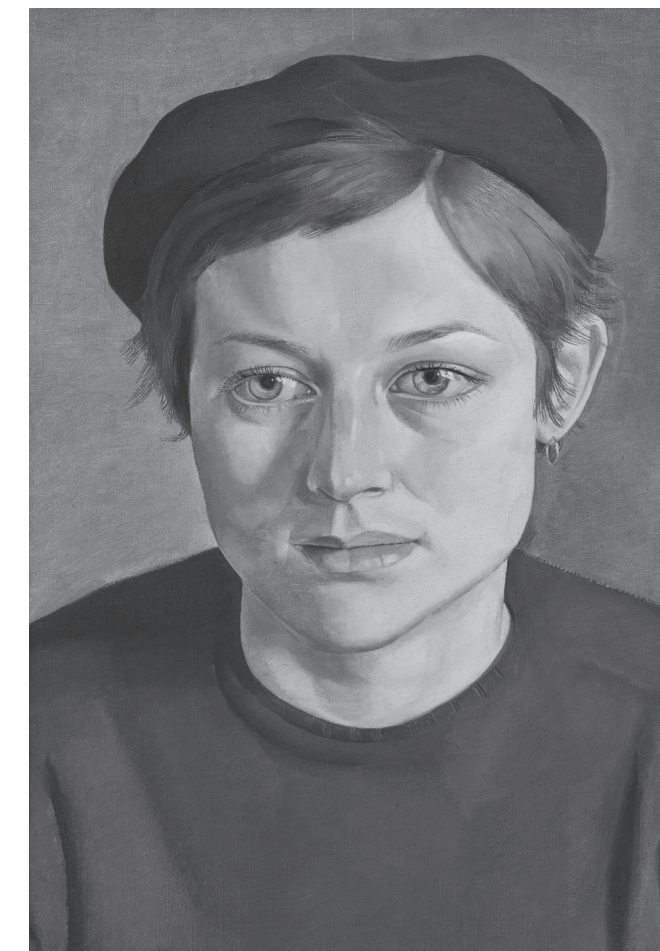


Front cover:

Lucian Freud (1922-2011),
Girl with Beret, 1951-52 (oil on canvas)
Manchester Art Gallery, UK
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IMMA
FREUD CENTRE
28 JUNE 2019 – 19 JANUARY 2020

IMMA Collection: Freud Project Life above Everything Lucian Freud and Jack B. Yeats



IMMA Collection: Freud Project is a major five-year initiative for IMMA, where fifty-two works by painter Lucian Freud (1922-2011) are on loan by private lenders to the museum's Collection. During this unique project, IMMA will present a series of Freud-related exhibitions each year. Freud's relationship to Ireland is one of the key interests of the *Freud Project*. In this exhibition, we explore Freud's work alongside fellow painter Jack Butler Yeats, an Irish artist who Freud deeply admired. *Life above Everything: Lucian Freud and Jack B. Yeats* is the fourth exhibition to be presented as part of the series.

This major exhibition brings together these two artists, both acknowledged as master painters. Freud's interest in Yeats is little discussed, but he had a lifelong interest in the Irish painter's work, holding an appreciation for its force and energy. Freud did not cite Yeats as an influence but instead seems to have felt a common purpose with his originality and independence, his continuous searching observation and his sense of the connection between painting and life. A pen and ink drawing by Yeats, *The Dancing Stevedores* (c. 1900), hung on the wall beside Freud's bed for over 20 years.

Life above Everything explores Freud's connections to Dublin and Connemara in the 1940s and '50s and to the London-Irish in later years as well as Yeats's connections to Britain. The two artists exhibited together only once, in a group exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London, 1948. This exhibition brings the work of these two stubbornly individual painters into dialogue, exploring the affinities between them, and placing them side-by-side for the first time in 70 years.

Ground Floor Room 1
<p>Lucian Freud and Jack B. Yeats shared a deep interest in animals and they often depicted human/animal relationships in their works. Both artists painted dogs and horses with the same attention to detail they gave to their human subjects and sitters. This is showcased by the double-figure paintings <i>Double Portrait</i> (1985) and <i>Guy and Speck</i> (1980) by Freud, and <i>The Sleeping Drover, Ballinasloe</i> (1921) by Yeats.</p> <p>Included in this exhibition is a set of oil paintings by Yeats that Freud selected for a close friend, advising him on works to acquire at auction or privately. Three of these paintings are presented here, <i>People in a Street</i> (1936), <i>The Bus by the River</i> (1927) and <i>From the Tram Top</i> (1927). All three are street scenes of Dublin, depicting the crowded bustle of city life. This was a keen interest of Yeats in his early work. Described as a cameo, <i>From the Tram Top</i> features Yeats himself, a rare representation of the artist in his own work.</p>
Room 2

Several key works by Lucian Freud from the *IMMA Collection: Freud Project* long-term loan are exhibited together here, representing a selection of the artist's finest paintings. These works, mainly dating from 1970 onwards, explore several of the artist's key themes such as portraiture, self-portraiture, still-life, animals and nature, and works that reflect his interest in people and the natural world.

Two Brothers from Ulster (2001) and *The Pearce Family* (1998) are examples of Freud's tactic to literally extend his canvas as the composition developed. *The Pearce Family* began as a portrait of the artist's daughter Rose Boyt and her husband Mark Pearce, but Freud decided to extend the canvas as Rose's family grew, wanting to let "the subject...finish the picture: allow the life full swing."

Room 3
<p>A number of iconic works by both Freud and Yeats are placed side-by-side in this room. <i>(An) Evening in Spring (Dinner)</i> (1937) and <i>June Night</i> (1929) both feature windows as a prominent subject within the composition, a motif that Yeats used several times in his paintings and drawings. <i>(An) Evening in Spring (Dinner)</i> was exhibited in London in the late 1930s and was praised by art critics of the time. This oil painting was purchased by Ernie O'Malley, an important supporter of Yeats, who introduced Jack B. Yeats to Sir John Rothenstein, Director of the Tate Gallery. Rothenstein later organised the major travelling retrospective exhibition of Yeats's work in 1948. He was also involved in the acquisition of <i>Two Travellers</i> (1942) for the British national collection. <i>Two Travellers</i> and <i>Two Men Walking</i> (1946) portray another recurring motif of Yeats's work, two figures walking in an isolated landscape. Facing <i>Two Travellers</i> is an important work by Freud, <i>Two Irishmen in W11</i> (1984). This painting shows that Freud shared Yeats's interests in double portraits and the symbolism of windows in a painting's composition, as well as naming sitters by their occupation.</p>
First Floor Room 4
<p>This room features works by both Freud and Yeats that scrutinise male subjects and their clothing, which often resembles a uniform. The men depicted in each painting project a sense of purpose, such as in Yeats's painting <i>A Dancer (Rosses Point, Sligo)</i> (1921) where the central figure is confident and relaxed.</p>
<p>The paintings selected here together convey a sense of gravity and formality. Both artists alleviate the enclosed feeling of a room's interior by including a mirror or a doorframe in the compositions, such as in Yeats's dancer and <i>The Big Man</i> (1976) and <i>Head of an Irishman</i> (1999) by Freud. Lucian Freud, himself</p>

a careful dresser, was very attentive when reproducing fabrics in paint. He treated skin and clothing equally, as seen in *The Big Man*. Indeed, both artists are acclaimed for assigning equal importance to the treatment of living and non-living things. The horizontal bands of sea water, grassy plain and mountain in Yeats's *Knocknarea* and the *Flowing Tide/ Horses' Island* (1921) are treated with the same vigour as the four figures.

Room 5
<p>A number of works by Yeats and Freud are included here showing their interest in realism. All featuring working horses, <i>The Star Gazer</i> (1900), <i>Untitled</i> (1906-10) and <i>A Lift on the Long Car</i> (1914) are three of the earliest artworks by Yeats in this exhibition. Freud loved to ride horses bareback and his small horse portrait <i>A Filly</i> (1970) depicts a horse that he briefly owned.</p> <p><i>Girl with Beret</i> (1951-52) is a portrait of Irish actor Helena Hughes, one of the Gate players in the early 1950s who went on to work in film and theatre in London for the rest of the decade, starring opposite American actor Orson Welles in both 'Return to Glennascaul' in 1953 and 'Look Back in Anger' at the Royal Court, London in 1956. Helena Hughes's identity as the sitter for <i>Girl with Beret</i> was unknown until recently.</p>
Room 6

This room features a number of works from Yeats's transitional and late periods. In the 1920s, Yeats's style of painting changed from realism to looser brush-strokes. His paintings continued to depict figures in the Irish landscape, but increasingly merged the two. Yeats's later works use thick, fluid paint marks to create otherworldly scenes that conjure up the atmosphere of places, rather than creating life-like representations.

The Flapping Meeting (1926) features a race meeting, a popular subject in Yeats's work (this is also one of the paintings that Freud advised his friend to acquire). *White Shower* (1928) highlights the dramatic motif of the wind-blown whitethorn tree, as well as the transition to Yeats's later gestural style. This painting approach can be seen further developed in works like *Confidence* (1948) and *On the Move* (1950).

<p>These works by Yeats are accompanied by Freud's <i>Skewbald Mare</i> (2004), a painting noted for its pronounced tactility and wit. Also a later work by Freud, it was painted in stables near his studio in Notting Hill, London. This work echoes the importance of horses in Freud's work and life.</p>
Room 7

Room 7
<p>The works by both artists in this room convey states of mind. Yeats's painting <i>A Westerly Wind</i> (1921) depicts Aston Quay at the River Liffey in Dublin, as the sun is setting. Yeats painted this work in response to walking across Dublin's O'Connell Bridge and noting the changing wind direction toward the West of Ireland. The figure of the child is a hint of the symbolism in Yeats's later work. Freud's portraits of his elderly mother, reading and resting, hang beside the portrait of his grandson <i>Albie</i> (2003), cheekily sticking out his tongue.</p>
Basement

The basement combines works on paper and paintings by the two artists as an introduction to their early styles. Yeats began his career as an illustrator, often working commercially. *The Dancing Stevedores* (c. 1900) is a pen and ink drawing by him that was first created as an illustration for the unpublished book *Pastimes of the Londoners*. This drawing was amongst Freud's personal collection of artworks by other artists, it hung on the wall beside Freud's bed for

over twenty years. Yeats continued to produce cartoons into the 1940s.

Freud often produced etchings, unusually he would create these after finishing an oil painting of the same subject. Art critic William Feaver has described drawing as underpinning all of Freud's work. The drawing *Boat, Connemara* (1951) was made while Freud was in Ireland, staying near Cashel Bay in Connemara on Ireland's west coast. *Dead Cock's Head*, a small oil study, was also painted in Ireland during the same year. *Girl with Roses* (1947-48) is a portrait of Freud's first wife Kitty Garman. This painting represents an early phase of Freud's work that produced hyper-precise portraits. The sitter seems trapped by the artist's gaze. This painting was included in the 1954 Venice Biennale, when Freud represented Britain with artists Francis Bacon and William Nicholson.