

UP NOW

'Movement and Gravity: Bacon and Rodin in dialogue'

Ordovas
London

According to the catalogue for this mesmerizing exhibition, Francis Bacon once declared that Auguste Rodin was one of



Francis Bacon, *Three Studies from the Human Body*, 1967, oil on canvas, 77 1/2" x 58 3/4". Ordovas.

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Kurt Schwitters, *En Morn*, 1947, tracing paper and paper on paper, 23 1/4" x 18 1/2". Tate Britain.

only three true sculptors that had ever existed, along with Michelangelo and Brancusi. This first-ever pairing of works by the two artists presented three paintings by Bacon alongside three of Rodin's bronze "Iris" sculptures, shedding new light on the extent to which the British painter was influenced by the French sculptor.

As art historian Martin Harrison notes in his catalogue essay, Bacon produced his *Lying Figure* (1959) while living in St. Ives, Cornwall, as one of a series of five paintings directly inspired by Rodin's *Iris, messagère des dieux* (1890–91). Set against flat horizontal planes of gray, black, and turquoise, the painter's writhing nude has a sculptural dimension, achieved with thick, vibrant impasto. The figure's muscular leg—thrust upwards into the ether—mirrors the taut, splayed limb of Rodin's dynamic sculpture.

In *Miss Muriel Belcher* (1959), Bacon curiously placed the subject's head in the lower half of the canvas, framed by a

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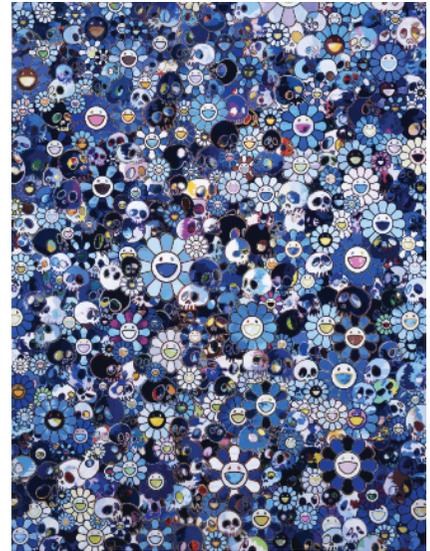
square that suggests his signature cage motif. Vigorous curving brushstrokes convey a rotund face that seems to be turning. The image neatly parallels Rodin's 1890 bronze *Iris, grosse tête*, which was cleverly displayed nearby on a low plinth, echoing the spatial arrangement of Bacon's composition.

Bacon's *Three Studies from the Human Body* (1967) had never been publicly displayed in the United Kingdom before. In a rare depiction of weightlessness, three men are suspended in a black void in various strained positions. Hung near Rodin's two spectacularly balanced "Iris" figures, Bacon's human studies appear similarly to defy gravity.

With just six works, this beautifully curated exhibition sparked a dialogue between these two important artists, demonstrating the profound connection between their representations of the body in movement and in space.

—Elizabeth Fullerton

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Takashi Murakami, *Yet to be titled*, 2012, acrylic on canvas mounted on board, 74 $\frac{3}{8}$ " x 60 $\frac{1}{4}$ ". Gagosian.



Jesús Rafael Soto, *Volume suspendu*, 1968, wood, painted aluminum rods, and metal, 78 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 39 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 19 $\frac{1}{2}$ ". Pompidou Center.