

Freudian Psychology

At least one sitter and lover of **Lucian Freud** discovered the artist was cheating on her by finding freshly painted canvases of other nudes in his studio, knowing Freud's reputation for bedding many of his female models. The biography *Breakfast with Lucian* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux) portrays Britain's foremost modern figurative painter, who died in 2011 at age 88, as a magnetic, unconventional individual who chased adrenaline highs through relentless womanizing, reckless gambling, and frequent brawling, and left a trail of casualties in his dogged pursuit of artistic greatness.

Author **Geordie Greig**, editor of the British tabloid *Mail on Sunday*, based his book on ten years' worth of breakfast conversations with his friend Freud, as well as interviews with aristocrats, models, bookies, friends, and family. "It is a book to explain the people in Freud's life and paintings, and I think the people are key to understanding the paintings," Greig says. The author's first, teenage encounter with Freud's raw portraits electrified him, igniting a desire to unlock the identities behind such opaque titles as *Large Interior, W9*, a jarring double portrait from 1973 of the painter's elderly mother in an armchair and his naked lover in a nearby bed, each suspended in her own world.

After 20 years of interview requests, Greig finally gained access to the obsessively private artist through "stalking and subterfuge." In 2002, he was invited to Freud's studio for a breakfast of Burgundy and leftover partridge at 6:45 A.M., and then persuaded



Frank Auerbach (left) and Lucian Freud having breakfast at the Cock Tavern in London, 2002.

Freud to meet for another breakfast with their mutual friend **Frank Auerbach**. At that subsequent meal, the two German-born, British artists were photographed together for the society magazine *Tatler*, of which Greig was then editor.

Like a *Tatler* gossip column, *Breakfast with Lucian* includes breathless descriptions of the intelligent society beauties with whom Freud had affairs and up to 40 children, although he acknowledged only 14 offspring. Greig's biography also tells of Freud's homosexual dalliances, intense friendships often ending in feuds—as was the case with **Francis Bacon**—receiving

threats of limb removal by debt-collecting gangsters, and hobnobbing with lords and ladies.

Beyond the salacious details, the book contains engrossing snippets of stories behind the paintings, such as Freud's daughter **Annie** recalling her confused emotions when her father matter-of-factly brushed away her hair to expose her nipple while he painted a nude portrait of her, aged just 14. The result is the captivating *Naked Child Laughing* (1963).

In another vignette, Greig tracks down **Raymond Jones**, the redheaded sitter in *Naked Man with Rat* (1977–78), who reveals that he and

Freud had drugged the rodent with Veuve Clicquot champagne and sleeping pills. After a while the effects wore off, the rat scampered away, and the men chased it around the room to drug it again so the sitting could resume.

Greig believes Freud would have appreciated the book's frankness, although the painter knew nothing about it in his lifetime and had taken action to stop the publication of two previous biographies. "Because he was so candid in his approach to how he depicted people, he understood there was a need to be brutally honest," Greig says. "He would get that."

—Elizabeth Fullerton