

THE BODY LAIN BARE

Masterpieces
from Tate

Exhibition labels

This exhibition originated at the Art Gallery of New South Wales as a co-curated collaboration with Tate.

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Introduction

The nude is a contested category, constantly challenged and reshaped by artists, critics and viewers. This exhibition explores how the naked body was at the centre of artists' practices from the 1790s to the 2000s. It shows how the body was transformed from a focus of high art training, where students learnt the skills of life drawing as a prelude to producing history painting, through a genre that was at the centre of modernist formal experimentation, to a site of political activism and identity politics. Alongside these shifts the nude must also be understood as a subject embedded in social history, its aesthetic and critical reception informed by social developments, gender politics and the contexts in which artworks are viewed.

These shifts have played out both in the different intentions of artists and how the works were experienced and understood by viewers at the time and today. Thus, some 19th-century nudes that unproblematically constitute high art for us now were considered immoral at the time of making, while feminist artworks of the 1970s that explicitly adopted the poses and photographic medium of pornography to critique its message are emblematic of the transformation of this subject matter into art. A response to, and reaction against social contexts, constructions and expectations, and a conduit to express imagination and challenge the limits of reality, the depicted nude body lays bare the cultures of each epoch.

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The Historical Nude

The nude was fundamental to the elite genre of history painting, encompassing subjects taken from classical mythology, the bible and literature, and essential for artists who wanted to be considered serious practitioners of high art. In the 19th century, drawing from the nude life model was a key part of an artist's academic training, only undertaken after the satisfactory completion of studies copying prints and drawing from antique sculpture. Models were primarily male, although female models were used in painters' private studios. Life models enabled the artist to understand the shapes of bones and muscles in different poses, and drapery could be added either in further studies or in figurative paintings. History painting offered a repertory of biblical subjects and undraped figures, such as Adam and Eve, as did the classical subjects of bathers and athletes, with the sexes distinguished by the soft, smooth, bodies of female bathers in curvilinear poses designed to display their bodies to the viewer, and the defined, flexed musculature of male athletes in active poses.

In Victorian Britain, there was extensive discussion of appropriate and inappropriate representation of the female body in a period when female sexuality and prostitution was a major topic of public concern. Whereas male life models were often soldiers or pugilists and could be aligned directly with the athletes of antiquity, there were no comparable contexts for female models and their morality, and the models and the artworks they posed for were frequently discussed in terms of decency.

There were two distinct traditions of depicting the female nude in Victorian Britain: the naturalistic 'English nude', inspired by the rich colour of Venetian painters such as Titian, as painted by William Etty and John Everett Millais; and the 'classical nude', idealised sculptural figures incorporated in scenes inspired by the architecture and mythology of antiquity which drew on the restrained French neo-classicism of JAD Ingres. The influence of French neo-classicism and the emerging theory of aestheticism, which stressed the abstract and formal qualities of a work of art over its subject, led to a growing taste for classical female nudes by artists such as Frederic Leighton.

The representation of the male nude in the classical tradition was aligned with Victorian ideals of athletic masculinity. Hamo Thornycroft's *Teucer*, 1881 exemplifies this approach, and the sculpture became a popular illustration in physical culture magazines of the period. The languid passive body of Icarus in Herbert Draper's *The Lament for Icarus*, exhibited 1898, indicates how the representation of the male figure had extended by the 1890s as symbolism began to introduce the possibility of the male nude having a feminine sensuality and vulnerability.

Frederic, Lord Leighton (1830–1896)
England

The Bath of Psyche exhibited 1890

oil paint on canvas

Tate: Presented by the Trustees of the Chantrey Bequest 1890

Psyche languorously undresses in order to bathe in anticipation of greeting Cupid in the evening. The ancient Roman story of Cupid and Psyche was extremely popular with writers and artists in the second half of the 19th century. In this painting Psyche is completely absorbed in her reflection captured in the water's smooth surface. Frederic Leighton was one of the leading figures of the classical revival in Victorian art, in which artists sought inspiration from the statues and tales of antiquity. Psyche's pose derives from the Callipygian Venus, a famous Greek statue of *Venus Leaving the Bath* that Leighton would have seen in the Capodimonte Museum in Naples. He combined a number of models to create an idealised female figure, emphasising the verticality of Psyche's posture and the softness of her flesh. The sensuous form prompts us to revel, like Psyche, in its beauty.

William Etty (1787–1849)

England

Candaules, King of Lydia, Shews His Wife by Stealth to Gyges, One of His Ministers, as She Goes to Bed exhibited 1830

oil paint on canvas

Tate: Presented by Robert Vernon 1847

William Etty was one of the few British artists to specialise almost exclusively in painting the nude, a persistent interest that brought him criticism and disdain despite the popularity of his paintings. In this painting Etty depicts an episode from the story of Candaules and Gyges. Candaules, proud of his wife's incredible beauty, persuades his general Gyges to spy on her nude body, as a 'man always believes his eyes better than his ears'. Although initially resistant, Gyges eventually concedes to hiding in the royal bedroom to observe the Queen undressing before bed. Picturing the nude from behind, the painting makes the spectator complicit in Gyges' voyeurism. Sensual nudes like this were often seen in private collections and, when first exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1830, this work was criticised for its 'debasement of sensuality'. In 1833 *The Morning Chronicle* demanded that Etty should choose 'a purer channel, and not persist, with an unhallowed fancy, to pursue Nature to her holy recesses'. When Robert Vernon gifted *Candaules* to the British nation in 1847 it was deemed 'objectionable' and excluded from published engravings of the collection.

Lawrence Alma-Tadema (1836–1912)

England

A Favourite Custom 1909

oil paint on wood

Tate: Presented by the Trustees of the Chantrey Bequest 1909

Airy, dream-like and tranquil, this painting provides a timeless and idealised vision of the glories of Ancient Rome. Lawrence Alma-Tadema visited the ancient towns of Herculaneum and Pompeii during a trip to Italy in 1863 and afterwards predominantly painted subjects inspired by Ancient Rome, Greece and Egypt. Like the majority of Alma-Tadema's artworks, this painting conveys the luxury and decadence of the Roman Empire in its depiction of women languorously bathing in the 'frigidarium' (a cold bath), its translucent water both revealing and veiling their nude bodies. Although based on the ruins of the Stabian Baths uncovered by archaeologists in Pompeii in 1824, Alma-Tadema has enriched his vision of antiquity by meticulously painting an opulent marble floor and walls that usually would have been found in larger imperial baths.

Anna Lea Merritt (1844–1930)

United States of America

Love Locked Out 1890

oil paint on canvas

Tate: Presented by the Trustees of the Chantrey Bequest 1890

Cupid tries to open the door of a mausoleum, his languid pose indicating that this endeavour will be futile. His attempts to transcend the boundary between life and death mirror those of Anna Merritt, who completed this painting as a memorial for her late husband. The depiction of a male nude by a female artist was controversial in the 19th century – child nudes were considered more appropriate. Merritt's use of this alternative evidently satisfied decorum: this painting was the first artwork by a female artist to be acquired by the British national collection.

Alfred Gilbert (1854–1934)

England

Comedy and Tragedy: 'Sic Vita' circa 1890–2

bronze

Tate: Bequeathed by Frederick Harrison 1936

Sir John Everett Millais (1829–1896)

England

The Knight Errant 1870

oil paint on canvas

Tate: Presented by Sir Henry Tate 1894

A medieval Knight is rescuing a woman who has been stripped and tied to a tree by robbers, who can be seen fleeing the scene in the top right corner of the canvas. Although the painting displays the Victorian interest in tragic female figures from chivalric historical tales, John Millais' depiction of the female figure was criticised for being too life-like – 'almost too real for the treatment of the nude'. This criticism may have influenced Millais' eventual alterations to the figures' poses. Recent x-ray photographs of the painting reveal that the woman's head and torso were originally turned towards the knight, enabling eye contact. This intimacy was presumably far too scandalous for a morally anxious Victorian public. Millais subsequently cut out the head and chest of the female figure and reworked these parts of the canvas to show the woman turning away.

Sir Alfred Gilbert (1854–1934) England

Icarus 1882–4

bronze

Tate: Bequeathed by Frederick Harrison 1936

Together with Frederic Leighton, Alfred Gilbert was one of the leading figures of the 19th-century 'New Sculpture' movement, which aimed to invest mythological and exotic subject matter with dynamism, energy, and a focus on naturalistic details. Leighton commissioned a statue from Gilbert when the two met in Italy around 1882. Gilbert chose to depict Icarus, the reckless ancient Greek mythological figure whose wax feathers melted after flying too close to the sun. Icarus's inhibited flight was viewed by Gilbert as being a symbolic parable to his career ambitions, stating 'it flashed across me that I was very ambitious: why not Icarus with his desire for flight'. Depicting Icarus before his doomed flight, Gilbert has chosen to commemorate the mythological figure's ambition at its peak, a telling indication of the artist's personal vision. Sinuous, vibrant and elegant, the tragic Icarus is melancholic and sensual.

Herbert Draper (1863–1920)

England

The Lament for Icarus exhibited 1898

oil paint on canvas

Tate: Presented by the Trustees of the Chantrey Bequest 1898

Female water nymphs mourn the death of Icarus, who has fallen from the sky after flying too close to the sun. The last rays of the sun responsible for his death illuminate the cliffs behind him, providing a melancholic and sentimental allusion to the passing of time and the transience of human life. Icarus's languid pose, derived from imagery of the dead Christ, emphasises his physical beauty and he seems to melt into the arms of the lamenting nymphs. Although 19th-century audiences would have accepted the possibility of depicting a male nude alongside female figures, decorum dictated that Herbert Draper pose the four professional male and female models separately.

Sir Hamo Thornycroft (1850–1925)

England

Teucer 1881

bronze

Tate: Presented by the Trustees of the Chantrey Bequest 1882

The champion Greek archer Teucer was one of the heroes of Homer's story of the Trojan War. Hamo Thornycroft, like Frederic Leighton, was inspired by the ancient Greek marbles from the Parthenon, which were brought to England and placed on display at the British Museum in 1817. *Teucer* showcases Thornycroft's interest in the monumental, statuesque figures and mythological tales from ancient Greece. With his firm physique, *Teucer* embodied the Victorian ideals of an athletic figure and the statue became an icon of British strength. The figure is modelled after Orazio Cervi, who was a worker from Picinisco, an Italian town that was frequented by a number of Victorian artists and writers, and who DH Lawrence noted served along with other men from the town as a model for the Victorian artists Frederic Leighton and Alfred Gilbert.

William Strang (1859–1921)

Scotland

The Temptation 1899

oil paint on canvas

Tate: Presented by the Friends of the Tate Gallery 1999

Symbolic of human weakness, sin and humiliation, the moral connotations of nakedness in the Biblical story of Adam and Eve provided an appropriate avenue for early Renaissance (pre-16th-century) artists to depict the nude human body. William Strang quotes Italian frescoes from this period in his use of pale chalky colours and strong contours. *The Temptation* is the first in a series of 10 paintings of the story of Adam and Eve commissioned as a frieze by the brewer Laurence Hodson for his library at Compton Hall. William Strang studied at the Slade School of Fine Art in London, which stressed the importance of early drawing from life models rather than a prolonged study of antique casts.

Henry Fuseli (1741–1825)

Switzerland, England

Polyphemus Hurling the Rock at Odysseus

circa 1819

pencil, grey wash, blue wash and brown wash

Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki

purchased 1965

Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775–1851)
England

A Kneeling Male Nude with Upraised Head and Arm in a Landscape Setting circa 1794–5

chalk on paper

Tate: Accepted by the nation as part of the Turner Bequest 1856

JMW Turner's sketchbooks reveal a little-known aspect of his work, containing life-room studies but also sporadic erotic sketches, including couples making love and nudes observed by other figures. It is said that in the 1850s, to protect Turner's reputation, the art critic John Ruskin and Ralph Wornum, National Gallery Keeper and administrator of the Turner Bequest, destroyed many of the sketches, although the truth of the story has been debated. These drawings show Turner exploring the erotic and aesthetic potential of intertwined bodies in indistinct and fluidly sketched bedroom scenes which often require the viewer to adopt a voyeuristic position as they peer closely at the works to make out the subjects.

Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775–1851)

England

Nude Swiss Girl and a Companion on a Bed

1802

graphite and watercolour on paper

Tate: Accepted by the nation as part of the Turner Bequest 1856

Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775–1851)

England

Reclining Nude, Draped with a Red Cloth 1821

watercolour on paper

Tate: Accepted by the nation as part of the Turner Bequest 1856

Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775–1851)

England

A Bedroom: The Empty Bed 1827

gouache and watercolour on paper

Tate: Accepted by the nation as part of the Turner Bequest 1856

Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775–1851)

England

A Curtained Bed, with a Naked Couple Engaged in Sexual Activity circa 1834–6

watercolour and graphite on paper

Tate: Accepted by the nation as part of the Turner Bequest 1856

Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775–1851)

England

Reclining Nude on a Bed 1840

gouache and watercolour on paper

Tate: Accepted by the nation as part of the Turner Bequest 1856

Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775–1851)

England

Erotic Figure Studies circa 1805

drawing in brown ink, watercolour and graphite

Tate: Accepted by the nation as part of the Turner Bequest 1856

William Mulready (1786–1863)

Ireland, England

Academy Study 1842

pastel on paper

Tate: Presented by Society of Arts 1858

Alfred Stevens (1823–1906)

Belgium, France

**Study of a Kneeling Boy Bending a Bow, for
Dorchester House** circa 1860

chalk on paper

Tate: Presented by the Trustees of the Chantrey Bequest 1923

Joseph Highmore (1692–1780)

United Kingdom

Academy Study of a Male Nude circa 1744

ink and watercolour on paper

Tate: Presented by Mrs Joan Highmore Blackhall and
Dr RB McConnell 1986

The Private Nude

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the genre of the private modern-life nude coexisted with allegorical and historical subjects. Nude subjects in contemporary interiors were popularised by realist and impressionist painters interested in modern urban life. The nude was often located within domestic spaces engaged in intimate activities, giving the viewer the illusion of access to a private world, while the subjects seemed unaware of the artist's or viewer's gaze. The juxtaposition of the nude with ordinary modern rooms often attracted adverse criticism – the particularity of unidealised bodies triggering anxiety about the depiction of working-class models, and suggesting immorality to the viewer.

In the 1860s, Édouard Manet shocked the Parisian art world with *Olympia*, 1863, in which he abandoned the idealisation of the nude to present a modern Parisienne reclining on a bed in a scene that was recognisably one of contemporary prostitution. Equally as problematic as the subject matter was the fact that the model's gaze directly met that of the viewer, challenging established conventions of the nude's averted gaze. The subject of Edgar Degas' *Bed-time*, circa 1880–5 of a contemporary female nude getting into bed had similarly risqué connotations.

In contrast to Victorian artists who sought to purge the female nude of any suggestion of the urban sexual economy, Walter Sickert condemned the artificiality of the academic nude and relied on contemporary references to position it within a specific social setting: in *La Hollandaise*, circa 1906 the juxtaposition of the iron bedstead with rumpled sheets and a female nude would have signified prostitution to the contemporary viewer. Even contemporary clothing could trigger discussions of decency, as occurred with Philip Wilson Steer's *Seated Nude: The Black Hat*, circa 1900.

The act of painting the nude in the artist's studio, which had previously been a preparatory practice for placing figures in other settings, now became a subject in its own right and provided insight into the relationship between artist and model. Artworks by Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, Matthew Smith and CRW Nevinson show the creative potential of the studio as a space to generate and project fantasies of the nude body and Parisian bohemian life.

Auguste Rodin (1840–1917)

France

La Grande danseuse (Great Dancer) 1913

bronze

Mackelvie Trust Collection

Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki

purchased 1956

Considered to be the greatest sculptor since Michelangelo, Auguste Rodin reacted against the sentiment and idealism of French academic artists. He studied his models in constant motion, so that many of his late sculptures celebrate movement. *Great Dancer* expresses Rodin's admiration for the physicality of a moving female figure seen from all angles. The inspiration for this work was Isadora Duncan (1878–1927), who championed free and poetic dance movements.

Edgar Degas (1834–1917)

France

Bed-Time circa 1880–5

pastel and print on paper

Tate: Presented by C Frank Stoop 1933

Walter Richard Sickert (1860–1942)

England

La Hollandaise circa 1906

oil paint on canvas

Tate: Purchased 1983

The crumpled sheets and bare surroundings of *La Hollandaise* evokes the everyday realities of life in Camden – one of London’s poorer areas where Walter Sickert painted most of his nudes. The body suggests the warmth and life that Sickert sought in an environment of complete contrast and reflects Sickert’s interest in the perspectives employed in Edgar Degas and Pierre Bonnard’s paintings of women bathing and drying their bodies. The sitter’s identity is concealed by the shadows and the title, which translates to ‘The Dutch Girl’, may refer to the nickname of a prostitute in a 19th-century French novel.

Gwen John (1876–1939)

Wales, England

Nude Girl 1909–10

oil paint on canvas

Tate: Presented by the Contemporary Art Society 1917

When Gwen John painted this work social mores meant it was still difficult for women to paint nudes. In the painting John pays close attention to the specific details of the sitter's body, her thin frame, sloping shoulders and flaccid arms. The model Fenella Lovell is depicted with a quiet intensity and the painting was described by Linda Nochlin, the renowned feminist art historian, as 'a masterpiece in the minor key'. The delicate colours, discarded dress and distorted limbs give the painting a sense of disquiet.

Christopher Richard Wynne Nevinson

(1889–1946)

England

A Studio in Montparnasse exhibited 1926

oil paint on canvas

Tate: Presented by HG Wells 1927

This painting is based on a sketch made in the studio of the author and journalist Sisley Huddleston, who was a friend of Christopher Nevinson's. Demonstrating his interest in modern life, Nevinson's nude is silhouetted against the fragmented shapes of the window and the vista of urban Paris. In deviating from the naturalistic female body we see before us, the painting on the easel seems to lightheartedly satirise the artist's alignment of body and modernity. An artwork about looking, *A Studio in Montparnasse* playfully refers to its status as a painted creation in which the nude figure is subject to artistic invention and interpretation.

Philip Wilson Steer (1860–1942)

England

Seated Nude: The Black Hat circa 1900

oil paint on canvas

Tate: Presented by the Contemporary Art Society 1941

The representation of naked models posed in contemporary settings was significant in challenging the idealised classical-historical nudes favoured by 19th-century decorum. Philip Steer posed his nudes in everyday settings and in this painting the model is playfully trying on a hat that she found in his studio. The artist described how 'friends told me it was spoiled by the hat; they thought it indecent that a nude should be wearing a hat so it's never been shown'.

Sir Matthew Smith (1879–1959)

England

Nude, Fitzroy Street, No. 1 1916

oil paint on canvas

Tate: Presented by the Trustees of the Chantrey Bequest 1952

Limiting his palette to four colours, Mathew Smith unites the nude and the background in complementary red and green. The curves of the figure and the gracefulness of her pose are interrupted by the straight lines that dart across the composition creating depth and a sense of space in the room. Smith lived in Paris and was inspired by the French Fauve artists' love of colour. The red room in *Nude, Fitzroy Street, No. 1* is also indebted to Henri Matisse's paintings of red interiors.

Balthus (Balthasar Klossowski de Rola)

(1908–2001)

France, Switzerland

Nude on a Chaise Longue (Nu sur une chaise longue) 1950

oil paint on canvas

Tate: Bequeathed by Simon Sainsbury 2006, accessioned 2008

This painting is one of many by Balthus depicting the private world of day-time reverie and sleep. The woman's stiff and awkward recline against the chaise longue is amplified by the striking contrasts of dark and light across her body, creating an erotic and haunting atmosphere that permeates a number of Balthus's nude paintings. Many of the artist's models were also his lovers and the model for this painting may have been Laurence Bataille (1930–1986), who was 17 when she met Balthus and became his companion from the late 1940s to the early 1950s. Predominately featuring pubescent females, Balthus's nudes remain controversial and unsettling – critic Judith Thurman recently described his works as an occasion 'to examine the nuances of your own discomfort'.

Henri Matisse (1869–1954)

France

Draped Nude (Femme nue drapée) 1936

oil paint on canvas

Tate: Purchased 1959

Henri Matisse collected objects and textiles from Africa, Asia and the Middle East and decorated a corner of his studio in the manner of a Moorish room he had seen in Morocco. The patterns and rich colours of the pieces in his collection found their way into his paintings and inspired the creation of his decorative style. Painted in the spring of 1936, *Draped Nude* demonstrates Matisse's fluid draughtsmanship and love of colour. The exotic plant and floral gown allude to this sitter's identity as an Odalisque, which was an important subject that Matisse explored from 1917 to 1939. The term comes from the Turkish word *odalik*, which means female harem slave or chamber maid, and Matisse's interest in the subject was criticised by some as continuing the voyeuristic French Orientalist tradition established by painters such as Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres and Eugène Delacroix in the first half of the 19th century.

Pablo Picasso (1881–1973)

Spain, France

Nude Woman in a Red Armchair (Femme nue dans un fauteuil rouge) 1932

oil paint on canvas

Tate: Purchased 1953

Pablo Picasso met Marie-Thérèse Walter in 1927 outside a department store in Paris when she was just 17 years old. Marie-Thérèse became the artist's lover and recurring muse. *Nude Woman in a Red Armchair* is one of a series of portraits that Picasso made of her at his country property at Boisgeloup. She is presented as a series of curves that lead our eyes over her languid body. Her right hand resembles the wing of a dove, which alludes to a photograph of her holding a dove in each hand. The right side of her face, a blue face in profile, can also be read as a second figure leaning over to embrace her. Sensuous and intimate, *Nude Woman in a Red Armchair* portrays human love as a dreamlike merging of two bodies into one.

The Bathers

Bathers were an important theme in the depiction of the nude throughout its history, allowing artists to present the unclothed body without a historical narrative. Nineteenth-century bathers were often placed in classical settings and given poetic associations with figures such as Venus, but by the end of that century bathers in a domestic setting had become a popular motif for artists. The subject of the female bather absorbed in her toilette created the impression that the viewer had privileged access to private everyday scenes. The interior setting could also convey intimacy between artist and model and bathing could suggest the sensuousness of water on flesh. Pierre Bonnard's extensive series of paintings of his wife Marthe bathing allowed him to explore unconventional poses and viewpoints, in which the bather is a fragmented figure whose legs float in disembodied space as well as more traditional views of the bather seen from behind.

Artists also used bathing subjects to explore new expressive approaches to the naked form. Duncan Grant's and Vanessa Bell's paintings are both titled *The Tub*, but define the figure in very different ways. While Bell employed elegantly elongated curving shapes against decorative blocks of colour, Grant's use of boldly simplified forms for the bather's broad hips, tapering legs and flattened round breasts give the figure a powerful presence and demonstrate the artist's encounter with African sculpture and the paintings of Pablo Picasso. The mask-like faces of Karl Schmidt-Rotluff's bathers were also inspired by African sculpture. Schmidt-Rotluff wished to return to a more direct relationship with nature free from social conventions, and this was expressed through the theme of the outdoor bather which juxtaposed the nude with the landscape.

Duncan Grant (1885–1978)

France

The Tub circa 1913

watercolour and wax on paper on canvas

Tate: Presented by the Trustees of the Chantrey Bequest 1965

Karl Schmidt-Rottluff (1884–1976)

Germany

Two Women 1912

oil paint on canvas

Tate: Presented by the executors of Dr Rosa Schapire 1954

Pierre Bonnard (1867–1947)

France

The Bath 1925

oil paint on canvas

Tate: Presented by Lord Ivor Spencer Churchill through the
Contemporary Art Society 1930

Vanessa Bell (1879–1961)

England

The Tub 1917

oil paint and gouache on canvas

Tate: Purchased 1975

The Tub was designed to hang in the garden room of Vanessa Bell's home Charleston Farmhouse, which was also the meeting place for the Bloomsbury group. Never installed, it was instead folded up and only rediscovered in the 1970s when interest in the famous group of painters, writers and intellectuals revived. Bell's figure was not originally a nude. In a letter she wrote, 'I've taken out the woman's chemise and in consequence she is quite nude and much more decent.'

Pierre Bonnard (1867–1947)

France

**Bathing Woman, Seen from the Back
(Baigneuse, de dos)** circa 1919

oil paint on canvas

Tate: Bequeathed by the Hon Mrs AE Pleydell-Bouverie through the Friends of the Tate Gallery 1968

The Bath 1925

oil paint on canvas

Tate: Presented by Lord Ivor Spencer Churchill through the Contemporary Art Society 1930

Nude in the Bath (Nu dans la baignoire) 1925

oil paint on canvas

Tate: Bequeathed by Simon Sainsbury 2006, accessioned 2008

Pierre Bonnard met his wife Marthe De Méligny (formerly Maria Boursin) (1869–1942) in 1893 and painted her over 300 times. Like most of Bonnard's depictions of her, these paintings show her preparing for and being immersed in the bath. He sketched and photographed Marthe as she bathed and dressed and used these images when producing his oil paintings. Rather than focusing on creating an accurate likeness of Marthe, Bonnard's paintings are more concerned with conveying atmosphere and presence, with particular attention to the play of reflections of coloured light on her body and the surrounding room. With their luminous and tranquil environments and cropped compositions Bonnard's paintings create feelings of warm intimacy and the impression that we are, like the artist, in the room with Marthe.

The Erotic Body

Auguste Rodin's *The Kiss*, 1901–4 is one of the great images in art of unfulfilled human passion. Its power derives from the idealised depiction of the bodies of the couple balanced with the equally high degree of eroticism Rodin conveyed in the work. The sculpture has a controversial history. Commissioned by the American collector Edward Perry Warren, who lived in Lewes, Sussex, it was offered to the Lewes Town Hall as a loan in 1913, but returned to Warren after only two years as its public exhibition caused controversy and the sculpture had ultimately been surrounded by a railing and covered with a sheet. Remaining unsold after his death in 1939, *The Kiss* was lent to the Tate Gallery and entered the Tate collection in 1953 through purchase by public appeal. Since then, *The Kiss* has inspired work by contemporary artists, for example, Cornelia Parker's *The Distance: A Kiss with Added String*, 2003 saw the sculpture wrapped in string in homage to Marcel Duchamp, the bodies of the lovers bound together creating a claustrophobic effect.

The Kiss is juxtaposed with works by Pablo Picasso and David Hockney that explore the erotic potential of the nude. Picasso's extensive body of prints from the 347 Series and 156 Series of the late 1960s and early 1970s explore issues of voyeurism in explicit brothel scenes and compositions in which the nude is observed by figures within the image.

Eroticism has often been critiqued as a category designed for men to look at women, but in the late 20th century alternative perspectives began to emerge. David Hockney's illustrations to the poems of CP Cavafy consider homosexual love, including both intimate bedroom scenes and images that place homosexuality in a social context in their depiction of chance encounters and assignations. They were drawn from Hockney's own environment and a trip he made to Beirut. Made in 1966 they precede the legalisation of homosexuality in Britain in 1967 and are pioneering in their imagery. In Louise Bourgeois' *The Laws of Nature*, 2003 a man and woman are engaged in a sexual dance. Bourgeois reverses the usual relationship in such erotic imagery by making the female figure more powerful than the male as she manipulates his body into different poses.

Auguste Rodin (1840–1917)

France

The Kiss (Le baiser) 1901–4

pentelican marble

Tate: Purchased with assistance from the Art Fund and public contributions 1953

Interlocked in a passionate embrace for perpetuity, Auguste Rodin's lovers are overcome with an eternal love and charged eroticism, making them oblivious to all else. The sculpture depicts the first kiss shared between the fictional doomed lovers Paolo Malatesta and Francesca da Rimini from Dante's 13th-century poetic text *Inferno*. Falling irresistibly in love with each other while reading the chivalric tales of Lancelot and Guinevere, Francesca and Paolo kiss, the instantaneity of their passion indicated by the book that can just be seen slipping from Paolo's left hand in this statue. Dante's tale ends tragically: Francesca's husband discovers the adulterous lovers and stabs them to death, destining them to wander eternally throughout Hell. Rodin, however, chooses to permanently enshrine the lovers' passion, portraying Francesca and Paolo in a state of permanent, passionate anticipation.

Louise Bourgeois (1911–2010)
France, United States of America

The Laws of Nature 2003

from a set of five drypoints

Tate: Lent by the Tate Americas Foundation, courtesy of The Easton Foundation 2013

In Louise Bourgeois' *The Laws of Nature* a man and a woman are engaged in a sexual dance. Bourgeois reverses the usual relationship in such erotic imagery by making the female figure more powerful than the male as she manipulates his body into different poses. Bourgeois' series of gouache drawings use the suggestive qualities of the fluidity of red pigment on wet paper to convey the visceral nature of the origins of life in sex, childbirth and nurture. Throughout her career the artist was preoccupied with themes of motherhood and female sexuality, exploring woman's nurturing role while also exposing the female body as a sexualised object, stripped bare and vulnerable.

Pablo Picasso (1881–1973)

Spain, France

Etching 24 March 1968 II (L.6)
(Eau-forte 24 Mars 1968 II) 1968

etching on paper

Tate: Purchased 1993

Pablo Picasso (1881–1973)

Spain, France

**Etching: 11, 28 February 1970 3, 16, 30 March
1970 (L.13) (Eau-forte 11, 28 Février, 3, 16,
30 Mars 1970) 1970**

etching on paper

Tate: Purchased 1993

Pablo Picasso (1881–1973)

Spain, France

Etching: 19 February 1970 (L.16)
(Eau-forte 19 Février 1970) 1970

etching on paper

Tate: Purchased 1993

Pablo Picasso (1881–1973)

Spain, France

Etching: 10 April 1971 (L.112)
(Eau-forte 10 Avrill 1971) 1971

etching on paper

Tate: Purchased 1993

Pablo Picasso (1881–1973)

Spain, France

Etching: 22, 26 May 1971, 2 June 1971 (L.133)
(Eau-forte 22, 26 Mai 1971, 2 Juin 1971) 1971

aquatint and drypoint on paper

Tate: Purchased 1993

David Hockney (born 1937)
England

Two Boys Aged 23 or 24 1966

etching and aquatint on paper
Tate: Purchased 1992

David Hockney (born 1937)
England

He Enquired After the Quality 1966

etching and aquatint on paper
Tate: Purchased 1992

David Hockney (born 1937)
England

According to Prescriptions of Ancient Magicians
1966

etching on paper
Tate: Purchased 1992

David Hockney (born 1937)
England

In an Old Book 1966

etching on paper

Tate: Purchased 1992

David Hockney (1937–)

England

The Shop Window of a Tobacco Store 1966

etching and aquatint on paper

Tate: Purchased 1992

David Hockney (born 1937)
England

In the Dull Village 1966

etching and aquatint on paper
Tate: Purchased 1992

David Hockney (born 1937)
England

One Night 1966

etching and aquatint on paper
Tate: Purchased 1992

David Hockney (born 1937)
England

In Despair 1966

etching on paper

Tate: Purchased 1992

David Hockney (born 1937)
England

Beautiful and White Flowers 1966

etching and aquatint on paper
Tate: Purchased 1992

Louise Bourgeois

Our attitudes to the body encourage expressive or emotional rather than rational responses. Fiona Banner is distinctive in describing the female nude in her own words. Being interested in questions of voyeurism and gender that define the nude's history, and the frisson and energy inside life-drawing classes, in 2006, she arranged a life-studio on stage and proceeded to describe the model to the audience. *Split Nude*, 2007 suggests the elusive nature of language and its limitations as a communication device.

Louise Bourgeois' work, by contrast, is redolent with emotions. Inspired by the Surrealist movement of Paris, where she studied, Bourgeois often set up strange and irrational-seeming juxtapositions of objects in arresting psychological dramas, such as the room-scale *Cells*. Her work had become more sexually explicit by the 1960s when she began using less traditional materials such as latex and plaster. Her bronze *Arched Figure*, 1993 depicts a vulnerable male body in a medium associated with heroic public sculpture. The distorted posture, based on studies of female hysteria from the late 19th century, appears at once helpless and transported to a private, dream-like state. Bourgeois has used gouache and wet paper to create visceral expressions of sex, childbirth, and breastfeeding in the drawings displayed nearby. She invests the drawings with a rawness and intensity reducing moments of interaction between mother and child, or man and women, to viscerally charged engagements.

Louise Bourgeois (1911–2010)
France, United States of America

The Feeding 2007

gouache on paper

Tate: Presented by the Tate Americas Foundation, courtesy of
The Easton Foundation 2016, on long-term loan

Louise Bourgeois (1911–2010)
France, United States of America

Couple 2007

gouache on paper

Tate: Presented by the Tate Americas Foundation, courtesy of
The Easton Foundation 2016, on long-term loan

Louise Bourgeois (1911–2010)
France, United States of America

The Feeding 2007

gouache on paper

Tate: Presented by the Tate Americas Foundation, courtesy of
The Easton Foundation 2016, on long-term loan

Louise Bourgeois (1911–31 May 2010)
France, United States of America

Couple 2009

diptych, gouache and graphite on paper

Tate: Presented by the Tate Americas Foundation, courtesy of
The Easton Foundation 2016, on long-term loan

Louise Bourgeois (1911–2010)
France, United States of America

The Family 2009

gouache on paper

Tate: Presented by the Tate Americas Foundation, courtesy of
The Easton Foundation 2016, on long-term loan

Louise Bourgeois (1911–2010)
France, United States of America

The Friendly Landscape 2008

diptych, gouache on paper

Tate: Presented by the Tate Americas Foundation, courtesy of
The Easton Foundation 2016, on long-term loan

Louise Bourgeois (1911–2010)
France, United States of America

The Birth 2007

gouache on paper

Tate: Presented by the Tate Americas Foundation, courtesy of
The Easton Foundation 2016, on long-term loan

Louise Bourgeois (1911–2010)
France, United States of America

Femme 2007

gouache on paper

Tate: Presented by the Tate Americas Foundation, courtesy of
The Easton Foundation 2016, on long-term loan

Louise Bourgeois (1911–2010)
France, United States of America

Arched Figure 1993 2010 (cast)

bronze, fabric and metal

Art Gallery of New South Wales Foundation purchase 2016

With *Arched Figure*, 1993 Louise Bourgeois reinterprets the long-heroic male form, presenting the body as a vulnerable subject despite the use of a material associated with classical sculpture. The work echoes many surrealist and early modern images of transfigured and sexually contorted female bodies, yet is unequivocally male. *Arched Figure* forms part of a narrative in this exhibition which charts the changing fortunes of the male nude – from Hamo Thornycroft's *Teucer*, 1881 to Henry Moore's *Fallen Warrior*, 1956–7 and sits alongside an increasing number of works by artists who through the latter half of the 20th century brought the male form into their oeuvre.

Fiona Banner (born 1966)
England

Spilt Nude 2007

ink, transfer lettering and household paint on board
Tate: Presented by Tate Members 2012

In 2006 Fiona Banner set up a life-studio on stage and verbally described the live model to the audience. The resulting text-work invites us to compose an image in our minds. Banner has noted how life classes generate a 'frisson of subdued sexuality – an excitement about how to formalise an act that would normally be very intimate and very erotic: looking . . . very intensely at a naked person'. Interested in the power relationships inherent in observing a nude body and its representation, *Spilt Nude* is an exploration into the acts of looking, presenting and interpreting the nude body.

Alberto Giacometti (1901–1966)
Switzerland

Walking Woman (Femme qui marche) 1932–6

bronze

Tate: Presented by the artist and Mrs Erica Brausen 1972

This sculpture – evoking forms of antiquity – was begun when the artist was a member of the Surrealist group. First presented in plaster, its form was similar to that of the bronze on display. But Giacometti then made radical alterations to the work, adding outstretched arms ending in feathers and flowers – and a head in the form of the neck and head of a cello. It is probable that these modifications were made prior to the plaster's exhibition in a 1933 Surrealist show in Paris.

In the summer of 1936, the plaster was sent for exhibition in London – in the International surrealist exhibition held at the New Burlington Galleries – alongside other leading Surrealists including Salvador Dalí, Joan Miró, and Man Ray. The sculpture arrived in London with arms but no head – and upon the opening of the exhibition, Giacometti made further alterations to the plaster, cutting off the arms just below the shoulders. This final modification recognised the power of the simplified form and was a prelude to what would become the basis of Giacometti's future practice.

The Modern Nude

As the nude became established as a genre in its own right, no longer requiring a narrative or historical context, it increasingly became open to formal experimentation exploring new ideas about the human body. Early 20th-century modernist movements such as Cubism, Futurism and Vorticism were concerned with the exploration of form rather than the imitation of appearance and saw an affinity between their simplification of the figure and what was then known as 'primitive art' – the sculpture of pre-classical and non-European cultures. These artistic movements used the nude to explore the notion of multiple viewpoints, the emotional impact of colour and the simplification of the human form to geometric components. In Pablo Picasso's cubist *Seated Nude*, circa 1909–10 gives the illusion of viewing the figure from multiple angles, abandoning the tradition of illusionistic linear perspective.

Futurism and Vorticism had an agenda of social change; both produced radical manifestos that rejected bourgeois tradition and set out the conditions of a new machine age. They focused on representing modern urban life and the human figure in action. The athletic male body was an important subject for these artists. Boxers, wrestlers and bathers were frequently depicted as they gave scope for a muscular and masculine version of modernism in which the male body in action signalled a dynamic modernity.

Sculpture was particularly important for the working out of new ideas of bodily form in this period. Alexander Archipenko explored how cubist methods might be applied to sculpture, developing a new language of concave and convex forms, and voids, which resulted in a simplification of the figure that approached abstraction. Henry Moore's reclining figures of the 1930s also explored the use of the void in sculpture to open out the form, but their flowing rounded forms were inspired by the organic shapes of natural materials, such as pebbles, and were allied to biomorphic abstraction. New forms of representation for the body were also suggested by non-western sculptural traditions such as African and Greek Cycladic sculpture, which artists, including Henri Gaudier-Brzeska and Barbara Hepworth, felt had a simplicity and energy absent in western art.

Pablo Picasso (1881–1973)

Spain, France

Seated Nude (Femme nue assise) 1909–10

oil paint on canvas

Tate: Purchased 1949

Henri Gaudier-Brzeska (1891–1915)

France

Wrestlers 1914

plaster

Tate: Presented by Kettle's Yard Collection, Cambridge 1966

Henri Gaudier-Brzeska (1891–1915)

France

Red Stone Dancer circa 1913

Red Mansfield stone

Tate: Presented by C Frank Stoop through the Contemporary Art
Society 1930

Alexander Archipenko (1887–1964)

Russia, United States of America

Woman Combing Her Hair 1915

bronze

Tate: Purchased 1960

Barbara Hepworth (1903–1975)
England

Figure of a Woman 1929–30

Corsehill stone

Tate: Presented by the artist 1967

David Bomberg (1890–1957)

England

The Mud Bath 1914

oil paint on canvas

Tate: Purchased 1964

Dancing vivaciously across the canvas, David Bomberg's nudes are reduced to angular blue and white shapes interlocked in incessantly pulsating rhythms. Based on the Russian Vapour Baths near the artist's home in East London, Bomberg's vibrant artwork is a modern revision of the traditional iconography of the bather common in nude paintings. Simplified to a series of vibrant geometric shapes, Bomberg's bathers are an exercise in creating forms that convey movement and repetition, demonstrating the artist's fascination with the energy and mechanics of the modern machine age.

Henry Moore (1831–1895)
England

Falling Warrior 1956–7

bronze

Tate: Presented by the artist 1978

Wyndham Lewis (1882–1957)

Canada, England

Indian Dance 1912

chalk and watercolour on paper

Tate: Purchased 1955

Wyndham Lewis and William Roberts were key players in the British art movement called Vorticism, founded 1914, which celebrated the vitality of the modern city as an 'attack on traditional harmony'. In these two watercolours the nude forms are simplified into geometric shapes, demonstrating the interest of both artists in the muscular mechanics of the human body as symbols of dynamic modernity.

William Roberts (1895–1980)

England

Athletes Exercising in a Gymnasium 1920

ink, watercolour and graphite on paper

Tate: Purchased 1960

Henry Moore (1898–1986)
England

Reclining Figure 1939

lead on wooden base

Tate: Transferred from the Victoria & Albert Museum 1983

Henri Matisse (1869–1954)

France

Reclining Nude II 1927

bronze

Tate: Purchased 1993

Real and Surreal Bodies

The turbulent social context of the mid-20th century saw two dominant modes of depicting the nude: Realism and Surrealism. The First and Second World Wars ruptured the existing semblance of world order and harmony, exposing horrifying new realities in which bodies were both perpetrators and victims of horrific violence. In this context surrealist artists began using the nude to explore ideas about the unconscious and the world of dreams. One of the main aims of Surrealism was the replacement of the everyday world with one constructed from the unconscious, and many surrealist works had their origins in automatic writing and painting techniques, events remembered from dreams and the coexistence of different realities, both observed and imagined. Embracing the subconscious world of dreams, nude forms in many surrealist works blatantly embrace and give voice to erotic fantasies and fetishes that are often left unspoken. This visualisation of otherwise taboo or unconscious subjects is by no means a simple cathartic process; rather surrealist nudes are often set in uncanny scenes and evoke anxiety, tension and fear. Fragmented, placed alongside incongruous objects and contorted, the surrealists made the human body seem newly strange.

Disenchantment with machine aesthetics in the aftermath of the First World War saw many artists abandon experimentation with abstracted human form in the 1920s and 1930s to focus on realistic depiction in what became known as the 'return to order' in France and the new objectivity movement in Germany. Realist painters also used the nude as a vehicle for symbolism addressing the grim realities of the Second World War and its aftermath. Francis Gruber's politically charged narrative likened the suffering of the French people to the biblical figure of Job depicted in naked vulnerability, while Jean Hélion's combination of the nude with everyday objects in shabby interiors constituted a penetrating examination of the human condition in a period of post-war anxiety.

Giorgio de Chirico (1888–1978)

Greece, Italy

The Uncertainty of the Poet (L'incertitude du poète) 1913

oil paint on canvas

Tate: Purchased with assistance from the Art Fund (Eugene Cremetti Fund), the Carroll Donner Bequest, the Friends of the Tate Gallery and members of the public 1985

Giorgio de Chirico presents a disquieting dreamscape in which classical and contemporary worlds collide. The tilted bust of a female marble statue stands amidst an empty town square lined by classical colonnades. Any assumptions about the classical origins of this scene are, however, negated by the improbable railway train in the background and the glimpse of a ship's sail. This dissonance is heightened by the clusters of bright yellow bananas placed incongruously next to the classical bust. Traditionally symbolising the transience of human life and its pleasures, the vibrancy of De Chirico's fruit contrasts starkly against the grey bust, creating a tension between the living and the immaterial that usurps any sense of logic in the scene. Placed on a plinth amid an unsettlingly tilted environment shrouded in ominous shadows, De Chirico's nude displays his interest in the otherworldly, the imagined and the enigmatic possibilities of an alternative, parallel reality.

Paul Delvaux (1897–1994)
Belgium

Sleeping Venus (La Vénus endormie) 1944

oil paint on canvas

Tate: Presented by Baron Urvater 1957

Sleeping Venus was inspired by the Spitzner Museum, a display of medical curiosities at the Brussels Fair. Paul Delvaux recalled seeing ‘a man’s skeleton and the skeleton of a monkey and . . . a rather dramatic and terrifying series of anatomical casts in wax’. These fragmented reminders of death undoubtedly resonated with Delvaux’s experience of war-torn Brussels, which suffered from devastating bomb attacks throughout 1944. In describing the influence of this context on his painting, Delvaux said that ‘the psychology of that moment was very exceptional, full of drama and anguish. I wanted to express this anguish in the picture, contrasted with the calm of the Venus’. Delvaux saw a reclining Venus while at the Spitzner Museum and was inspired by the contrast between the Museum’s macabre gloom and the fun, light-hearted atmosphere of the Fair. In *Sleeping Venus* the sensuousness of the female nude is juxtaposed against the oppressive night-time setting, creating a haunting and unsettling vision of human eroticism, mortality and anguish in a turbulent social environment.

Max Ernst (1891–1976)
Germany, France

**Men Shall Know Nothing of This (Les Hommes
n'en sauront rien) 1923**

oil on canvas

Tate: Purchased 1960

The fractured and mutated nude body becomes a symbol of unspoken sexual desire and anxiety in Max Ernst's painting. Having studied psychology, Ernst was interested in alternative psychological realities and was one of the first artists to explore Sigmund Freud's theories about dreams and the expression of the subconscious mind. This painting may have been inspired by the psychoanalytical study of Daniel Paul Schreber, whom Sigmund Freud diagnosed as having a 'castration complex' due to his emasculation hallucinations. Mystical and mysterious, Ernst's painting refers to these hermaphroditic desires through an intricate relationship of symbols. In the centre of the painting are two pairs of legs interlocked in copulation. Surrounded and aligned with strange planetary spheres and crescents, these body parts are located in the otherworldly realm of dreams, expressing the desires and fears of the subconscious.

Jean Hélion (1904–1987)

France

Nude with Loaves (Dos aux pains) 1952

oil paint on canvas

Tate: Purchased 1988

Nude with Loaves is one of several paintings by Jean Hélion aligning flesh with bread, a preoccupation resulting from the artist's experience as a prisoner-of-war in 1940–2. The ripples in the woman's back echo the patterns in the split crust of the three loaves, forging emblematic parallels between food and the desired body. The narrative of desire is implied through the discarded clothes, which suggest an encounter between the woman before us and an unseen visitor, whose gaze fuses with the spectator's. Although modelled on an acrobat named Mauricette, the woman before us is unrecognisable and inscrutable, demonstrating Hélion's interest in the anonymity and isolation of the individual in post-war society.

Francis Gruber (1912–48)

France

Job 1944

oil paint on canvas

Tate: Purchased 1958

Job was a Biblical prophet beset by disasters that tested his faith. Francis Gruber, a committed realist and communist, envisages the Biblical figure on the streets of Paris in the final year of the Second World War. The dilemmas of his faith are alluded to in the boards of the fence forming two broken crosses and the piece of paper on the ground that quotes The Book of Job, 'Now, once more my cry is a revolt, and yet my hand suppresses my sobs.' Symbolising the plight of oppressed peoples who, like Job, had undergone an ordeal of suffering in the course of the war, Gruber's nude interpretation of the Biblical figure suggests vulnerability, dejection and the question of the survival of hope.

Man Ray

United States of America, France

Pisces (La femme et son poisson) 1938

oil paint on canvas

Tate: Presented by William N Copley 1960

An elongated female nude lies alongside a fish, creating what the artist described as 'a contrasting of similar and different forms at the same time'. The English title makes a connection with the Zodiac sign of Pisces. The woman's flattened shape seems sparse next to the detail of the fish, creating two parallel yet disjunctive worlds. This painting is based on an image from *Les mains libres (Free Hands)*, a collection of drawings that Man Ray published alongside poems by Paul Éluard in 1937. In describing these drawings Man Ray said 'in these drawings my hands are dreaming'.

Ithell Colquhoun (1906–1988)

India, England

Scylla 1938

oil paint on board

Tate: Purchased 1977

Scylla was a female monster who in Homer's ancient text *Odyssey* inhabits narrow oceanic channels and devours any sailors who dare pass through her territory. Inspired, as the artist describes, 'by what I could see of myself in a bath', Ithell Colquhoun's painting makes explicit the mythological tale's symbolic allusions to female sexuality. Two vertical rocks emerging out of the water suggest the artist's thighs, with seaweed forming her pubic hair. The fleshy appearance of the rocks is also distinctly phallic, demonstrating Colquhoun's interest in 'double images' and challenging the Greek tale's visualisation of female sexuality as inherently threatening. Uncanny in its realistic depiction of fantasy, Colquhoun's *Scylla* transports the ancient Greek tale into the modern age, presenting a morphing vision of human sexuality that eschews any boundaries between gender, reality and dreams.

Hans Bellmer (1902–1975)

Poland, Germany, France

The Doll (La poupée) 1936 (reconstructed 1965)

painted aluminium on brass base

Tate: Purchased 1969

Hans Bellmer made his first doll sculpture in 1933 after seeing a performance of the Jacques Offenbach opera *The Tales of Hoffmann*, in which the hero falls in love with a realistic life-size mechanical doll. He subsequently re-created the doll in a variety of forms and in 1934 published the book *Die Puppe (The Doll)*, which contained a series of photographs of the doll in various positions and states of dismemberment. Bellmer's dolls share the Surrealist group's fascination with the subversive, erotic, sadistic and the fetishistic. Reduced to two conjoined sets of bulbous hips resembling ball joints, *The Doll* is the product of an unsettling distortion and amplification of human anatomy motivated by sexual fantasy and anxiety.

Paint as Flesh

In Britain, Stanley Spencer was one of the leading realist artists and his meticulous rendition of human flesh was characteristic of the approach to the figure in the inter-war years. *Double Nude Portrait*, 1937 suggests an unflinching examination of the tensions in sexual relationships between men and women and addresses the new genre of the artist's naked self-portrait that emerged in turn of the century Vienna in the work of artists such as Egon Schiele and Oskar Kokoschka and coincided with the rise of psychoanalysis and new ways of analysing identity. Subsequently, the smooth surfaces and meticulously detailed rendition of flesh characteristic of inter-war realism evolved into an expressive manipulation of paint in which its texture and weight took on an independent reality and evoked the materiality of flesh. From the 1950s concepts of Realism began to fragment to encompass different modes of expression focusing on the encounter with the model, the materiality of the human body and the expressive use of paint.

The gestural use of paint was employed to distort the human body into expressive forms in works by Willem de Kooning and Francis Bacon. De Kooning's *The Visit*, circa 1966–7 was composed directly onto the canvas, while Bacon's application of paint with heavily loaded housepainter's brushes resulted in marks which triggered unconscious associations. Bacon deliberately drew the figure in unusual poses inspired by photographs and his distortions of the figure aimed to take it beyond surface appearance and bring it back to a truer recording of appearance. The gestural emphasis of Bacon's and de Kooning's work is echoed in the more recent work by Cecily Brown, where the figures, seemingly engaged in erotic couplings, emerge from expressionist swirls of paint. Lucian Freud's approach, although also focused on the material qualities of paint, drew its power from the intense scrutiny of the sitter in the painter's studio and the accumulation of paint over time. Freud's work, like that of Bacon, has often been considered to represent a universal 'human condition' in its presentation of the nude as exposed and isolated.

Francis Bacon (1909–1992)
Ireland, England

Sketch (Figure Bending Forwards) circa 1959–61

Sketch (Fallen Figure with Arms Up) circa 1959–61

Sketch (Figure Lying, No. 2) circa 1959–61

Sketch (Blue Crawling Figure, No. 2) circa 1959–61

oil paint on paper

Tate: Purchased with assistance from the National Lottery through the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Art Fund and a group of anonymous donors in memory of Mario Tazzoli 1998

One of Britain's most important post-war artists, Francis Bacon's powerful and nightmarish visions of the human figure defy easy categorisation. He preferred to paint the body activated and under pressure, crawling, twisted and alone. Bacon described painting as being exploratory and this series of sketches shows the intensity and quick actions of his brush. The figures come from various sources; the bending body is based on a photograph of an athlete by Eadweard Muybridge, the figure with arms up and laid against the ropes reflects Bacon's passion for boxing magazines, and the figure lying on a bed is a portrait of his lover Peter Lacy.

Francis Bacon (1909–1992)

Ireland, England

Sketch (Reclining Figure, No. 2) circa 1959–61

oil paint on paper

Tate: Purchased with assistance from the National Lottery through the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Art Fund and a group of anonymous donors in memory of Mario Tazzoli 1998

Willem de Kooning (1904–97)
Netherlands, United States of America

The Visit circa 1966–7

oil paint on canvas
Tate: Purchased 1969

Willem De Kooning's second series of *Women* in 1938. Featuring boldly painted voluptuous and menacing female figures with gnashing teeth, huge breasts and manic staring eyes, the works in the first *Women* series suggest both a reverence for and fear of female sexuality. *The Visit* belongs to a later series of *Women* produced from 1950 to 1955. Painted in more fluid, looser brushworks, it features a central woman with her legs spread out, and to the right a shape that could either be her outstretched hand or a face in profile looking over her. This work changed considerably during the course of the months it took to complete. Underneath the woman's mask-like face is another set of features – large, made-up eyes and a lipsticked mouth, reflecting De Kooning's interest in the depiction of women in advertising.

Lucian Freud (1922–2011)

Germany, England

Standing by the Rags 1988–9

oil paint on canvas

Tate: Purchased with assistance from the Art Fund, the Friends of the Tate Gallery and anonymous donors 1990

Lucian Freud conducted numerous sittings of subjects in his London studio, sculpting the paint with his coarse hog-hair brushes and rendering the body with raw immediacy. He used the pieces of cloth to wipe his brushes and some consider their inclusion as symbolising the presence of the artist. *Standing by the Rags* is a visceral and pitiless observation of flesh. The distorted perspective of the room makes it difficult to tell if the model is lying or leaning against the heaped pile of rags. Freud strips away extraneous details that may distract from the forensic focus on the qualities of skin and fat, its textures and luminosity.

Cecily Brown (born 1969)

England

Trouble in Paradise 1999

oil paint on canvas

Tate: Purchased 2000

Viscous swirls of painted flesh tones cover the black canvas, suggesting the convergence and movement of human flesh in a visceral expression of sexuality. Like the expressionistic works of Willem de Kooning, *Trouble in Paradise* mingles representation and abstraction, the slathered strokes of paint oscillating between defining and dissolving anatomical contours. The broad areas of flesh colour on the left of the canvas suggest a woman's parted legs, while the grey form in the centre of the composition resembles a man's naked back. Allusive in its narrative, Cecily Brown's painting encourages viewers to fill in the blanks with their own projected desires, as she states: 'the place I am interested in is where the mind goes when it's trying to make up for what isn't there'.

Sir Stanley Spencer (1891–1959)

England

Double Nude Portrait: The Artist and His Second Wife 1937

oil paint on canvas

Tate: Purchased 1974

Stanley Spencer crouches awkwardly over Patricia Preece who lies beside an uncooked leg of lamb. The explicit realism and overt display of flesh creates unease as viewers are forced into an uncomfortably intimate relationship with the artist and his new wife. Spencer created work in accord with his own somewhat idiosyncratic vision. His figurative paintings are characterised by distorted bodies and space, and the suggestion of complex emotional states. Some speculate that the sense of detachment between the figures in *Double Nude Portrait* reflects tensions in the marriage, and Spencer's unrequited love of Preece who remained devoted to her lover Dorothy Hepworth.

Body Politics

The 1970s marked the beginning of an overtly political engagement with the body, reflecting the rise of feminism and a time of questioning traditional power structures and their implications for sexual and racial stereotypes. Earlier traditions of male artists depicting female nudes were contested and critiqued for their implicit gender and sexual relationships. Women artists such as Alice Neel and Sylvia Sleigh established personal relationships with their male and female sitters to subvert the convention of the dominating gaze. Neel's frank naked portraits actively engage with the subjectivity of the model while Sleigh's male nudes challenge the paradigm of the male gaze, presenting her male sitters in erotic reclining poses more frequently associated with the odalisque tradition. A similar inversion of expectations is achieved by Barkley L Hendricks' portrait of George Jules Taylor, a work that signals its transgressive nature through its odalisque pose and the painting's title, NNN (No Naked Niggahs), and addresses the taboos around the representation of black male bodies.

This period saw a change in the media used to portray the nude, as photography was increasingly taken up by feminist artists seeking to draw attention to gendered power relations and the shifting boundaries between art and pornography. Women artists used their own bodies to explore these issues in both performance art and photography, arguing that bodily experience was embedded in society and politics. Hannah Wilke's performative self-portraits raised questions about the acceptability of the artist's use of her naked body and highlighted differences of opinion within the feminist movement in the 1970s about self-exploitation and biological essentialism in relation to women using their own bodies in art. Stereotypes surrounding the interplay between sexuality and domesticity as a means of defining femininity are addressed in the photocollages of Linder and the photographic works of Jo Spence. Linder's works combine pornographic and domestic imagery, inspired by the collage practices of dada artists. Spence's defiantly unglamorous self-presentation focuses attention on identity, class and domesticity in relation to a left-wing political agenda. Sexual politics are also highlighted in different ways by Tracy Emin and David Wojnarowicz, with the latter's photographs made at a time when the artist was challenging homophobic rhetoric around AIDS and had himself been diagnosed with HIV.

Guerrilla Girls (active since 1985)
Various nationalities

Do Women Have to Be Naked to Get into the Met Museum? 1989

screenprint on paper

Art Gallery of New South Wales: Purchased 2014

Since their inception in 1985 the Guerrilla Girls have been working to expose sexual and racial discrimination in the art world and the wider cultural arena. This print is based on a poster made in response to the representation of female artists at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and was originally displayed as an advertisement on New York City buses. The bus company subsequently cancelled the Guerrilla Girls' advertising lease, saying that the image was 'too suggestive and that the figure appeared to have more than a fan in her hand'. In 2005 and 2012 the Guerrilla Girls released subsequent posters counting the number of women artists and female nudes on exhibition at the Met Museum. According to the 2012 poster less than 4 per cent of the artworks in the Modern Art sections at the Met Museum are by women and 76 per cent of the nudes are female.

Hannah Wilke (1940–1993)

United States of America

**Marxism and Art: Beware of Fascist
Feminism** 1977

lithograph on paper

Tate: Purchased 2008

Hannah Wilke's confrontational depiction of her nude body throughout her art practice was criticised by some as an indulgent exercise in narcissism perpetuating the objectification of the female body. *Marxism and Art* is a response to these critics. The photograph is one of a series of 50 self-portrait photographs featuring the artist in topless poses satirising those of glamour models in women's magazines. She is dotted with mounds of chewing gum, which 'starify' her, transforming her into a star as well as emphasising her wounded state as a victim of labels imposed by society, as she states: 'Labelling people instead of listening to them . . . Fascistic feelings, internal wounds, made from external situations.' In addition to satirising mainstream depictions of femininity *Marxism and Art* also challenges the feminist theories that prescribe how a woman should look or behave, implying that such ideology is as harmful as the objectifying values that feminism seeks to redress.

Alice Neel (1900–1984)
United States of America

Kitty Pearson 1973

oil paint on canvas

Tate: Presented by the American Fund for the Tate Gallery, courtesy of Hartley and Richard Neel, the artist's sons 2004

This painting is characteristic of Alice Neel's self-assured and frank portraits of friends, family, poets and artists. It depicts Kitty Pearson, who at the time of this painting's completion had just graduated from the Rhode Island School of Design and had met Neel through a friend of the artist's daughter-in-law Virginia Neel. Painted in Neel's studio in the front room of her apartment in New York, the work is an example of what developed into Neel's signature style: bright, large-scale portraits of a subject defined by a thick black or blue contour line. Typical of Neel's interest in realistically expressing the look and personality of her sitters, this portrait captures Kitty Pearson's individuality and self-conscious nudity, which is emphasised by the over-sized hat that she is wearing.

Sylvia Sleigh (1916–2010)
Wales, United States of America

Paul Rosano Reclining 1974

oil paint on canvas

Tate: Purchased with the support of the Estate of Sylvia Sleigh 2015

Musician Paul Rosano modelled for Sylvia Sleigh on several occasions. In this painting he reclines naked on a puffy pink quilt. His expression is vacant but Sleigh's intentions were pointed. An influential figure in New York's feminist art scene in the 1970s, her paintings of male nudes took aim at the conventions of representation and the gender imbalance in the depiction of women in art history. In many of her works men replace women in scenes based on famous historical paintings such as Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres *The Turkish Bath*, 1863. In *Paul Rosano Reclining*, she explores the nature of feminine desire with comical effect and an obsessional attention to details including Rosano's leg hair.

John Currin (born 1962)
United States of America

Honeymoon Nude 1998

oil paint on canvas

Tate: Purchased with assistance from Evelyn, Lady Downshire's Trust Fund 1999

Honeymoon Nude is a product of both past and present. Copying the classical Venus pose used by Renaissance artists to idealise the nude female form, John Currin's nude has a wide-eyed and open-mouthed expression that recalls contemporary stereotypes of sexualised images of women in advertising and pornography. Combining idealisations of the female form spanning across six centuries, *Honeymoon Nude* embodies the varying ways that the female body has been constructed, appropriated and possessed for the satisfaction of heterosexual male desire. The woman's face, based on Currin's self-portrait, encapsulates the narcissism of this desire. Floating amid an indefinable black space, Currin's ethereal female nude is timeless and detached from reality.

David Wojnarowicz (1954–1992)

United States of America

Untitled (Desire) 1988

photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Tate: Purchased 2010

David Wojnarowicz (1954–1992)

United States of America

Untitled 1988

photograph, gelatin silver print on paper mounted on foam

Tate: Purchased 2010

David Wojnarowicz (1954–1992)

United States of America

Untitled 1988

photograph, gelatin silver print on paper mounted on foam

Tate: Purchased 2010

Barkley L Hendricks (1945–2017)

United States of America

Family Jules: NNN (No Naked Niggahs) 1974

oil paint on linen

Tate: Presented by the American Fund for the Tate Gallery,
courtesy of the North American Acquisitions Committee 2015,
on long-term loan

Tracey Emin (born 1963)
England

The Last Thing I Said to You was Don't Leave Me Here II 2000

digital print on paper

Tate: Presented anonymously 2002

Vulnerability, isolation and dejection is conveyed by the nude figure huddled before us. A self-portrait of Tracey Emin, this photograph was taken at her beach hut property in Kent which she bought with the artist Sarah Lucas and which served as a weekend retreat for her and her boyfriend. This environment directly influenced this photograph, with Emin saying that 'the hut is a bare and naked thing. I thought it made perfect sense if I was.' The title suggests that the image documents the aftermath of a lovers' quarrel that has left the woman abandoned in an inhospitable environment. Damp, peeling and rotting, the hut's desolation heightens the raw sense of abandonment conveyed by the nude figure. Renowned for her highly confessional artworks, *The Last Thing I Said to You was Don't Leave Me Here II* invites an autobiographical but ambiguous reading, leaving the viewer to draw their own conclusions.

Linder (born 1954)
England

Untitled 1976

printed papers on board
Tate: Purchased 2007

This is one of a group of collages produced by Linder from 1976 to 1978 that combine images of naked women from pornographic magazines with elements from domestic interiors and the world of fashion. These montages commonly feature displaced mouths and eyes and in this work the woman's nipples are covered by lips and her head is obscured by a sharp, hard iron. Used as the basis for the cover of the Buzzcocks' single *Orgasm Addict* (October 1977), this image became an icon of punk culture and its anti-establishment spirit. Linder's photomontage is a satirisation of society's visualisation of women as inherently sexualised or domesticated. In covering the woman's head Linder explicitly denies her a specific identity or the opportunity to meet our eyes, in the process highlighting the exploitative and objectifying nature of our/ society's gaze.

Sarah Lucas (born 1962)
England

Chicken Knickers 1997

photograph, colour, on paper
Tate: Purchased 1998

The work of Sarah Lucas often challenges traditional female roles and identities in playful and provocative ways. In *Chicken Knickers*, the orifice of the plucked poultry is laid over her underwear, positioned over her genitals. The apparent immaturity of the subject creates a sense of unease. A tomboy growing up, Lucas noticed boys' ways of talking about sex. She stated:

I sort of got used to their way of talking about sex. And at the same time as thinking it was funny, I suppose I was a bit aware that it also applied to *me*, and I've always had those two attitudes. I did enjoy it – but at the same time I must have shuddered inwardly, I think.

Chicken Knickers reflects a mix of humour and darkness and Lucas's own ambiguous attitudes to sexual objectification and desire.

Jo Spence (1934–1992)

England

Remodelling Photo History: Colonization

1981–2

photograph, tinted gelatin silver print on paper; collaboration with
Terry Dennett

Tate: Presented by Tate Patrons 2014

The Vulnerable Body

From the 1980s large-format photography increasingly encouraged a portrayal of the nude as vulnerable and mortal. Cindy Sherman acknowledges the artificial and commodified nature of identity and its construction through images. In three photographs from her 1982 Pink Robes series Sherman stages the moment after a model has posed for a nude centrefold, emphasising the vulnerability of the woman covered by makeshift clothing and her shifting psychological states, which become progressively more defiant. John Coplans' unsparing photographs of his naked body were influenced by feminist debates re-examining men's roles in relation to women, prompting the artist to 'examine the deeper unconscious drives and images of manhood'.

In Rineke Dijkstra's photographs of women who have recently given birth the subjects appear at once vulnerable and self-composed. Ultimately, however, the images are an affirmative representation of women on their own terms. Dijkstra's work is influenced by the work of Diane Arbus and Richard Avedon, whose photographs document and convey the vulnerability of the sitter. She expressed her interest in Arbus's idea of the 'gap between intention and effect', the idea that 'People think that they present themselves one way, but they cannot help but show something else as well'. Dijkstra has also described how her work is not purely documentary but can 'enlarge and emphasise a certain moment, making it another reality'.

In the 1990s Sarah Lucas used humour to make serious points about traditional female roles and identities, and vernacular descriptions of the body. Her work highlights the gender stereotyping that underlies such jokes, as well as more troubling issues about the objectification of women. Exploiting the rich sensuality of paint in its sheer materiality, Marlene Dumas plays with notions of desire, the erotic, abjection, racism, nakedness, exposure and authenticity. In *Lead White*, 1997 and the companion piece *Ivory Black*, 1997 – both works named after oil-paint colours – she alludes to the issue of racial stereotyping and the hierarchies historically associated with black and white in her native South Africa. Both figures are presented as simultaneously vulnerable and empowered.

Cindy Sherman (born 1954)
United States of America

Untitled # 97 1982

Untitled # 98 1982

Untitled # 99 1982

chromogenic colour prints
Tate: Purchased 1983

Cindy Sherman's art practice has consistently explored how the camera is complicit in producing and perpetuating clichéd representations of femininity in society through mass media, Hollywood or the fashion industry. As with her other photographic works, Sherman is the model, photographer and director in the *Pink Robe* series. The concealment of her body and her direct gaze towards the camera convey a multitude of emotions that complicate a clear reading of the identity and situation of the person photographed; she seems simultaneously vulnerable, hostile, wary and defiant. A similar size to fashion billboards, these photographs challenge the objectification and exploitation of female physicality often wielded by the camera.

Marlene Dumas (born 1953)
South Africa

Lead White 1997

oil paint and oil stick on canvas

Tate: Purchased 1998

Marlene Dumas (born 1953)
South Africa

Ivory Black 1997

oil paint on canvas

Tate: Purchased 1998

Sarah Lucas (born 1962)
England

NUD CYCLADIC 3 2010

nylon tights, synthetic fibre, breeze blocks and steel wire
Tate: Purchased 2012

Sarah Lucas (born 1962)
England

NUD CYCLADIC 10 2010

nylon tights, synthetic fibre, breeze blocks and steel wire
Tate: Purchased 2012

Sarah Lucas (born 1962)
England

NUD CYCLADIC 6 2010

nylon tights, synthetic fibre, breeze blocks and steel wire
Tate: Purchased 2012

John Coplans (1920–2003)
England, United States of America

Self-Portrait (Frieze No. 2, Four Panels) 1994

12 photographs, black and white, on paper

Tate: Presented by the American Fund for the Tate Gallery 2001

John Coplans provides a frank study of the naked, aging body. The four vertical panels present Coplans' naked body from the chest to just below the knees in four poses: two viewing the body from behind, one from the side and one from the front. Emphasising the body's fragmentation, the separation of the panels also evokes the motion of a camera moving up and down the naked body, offering a comprehensive snapshot of its features. The tight composition accentuates the curves of the man's stomach, arms and legs and provides a close-up view of the dark pores and hairs. Although titled a self-portrait, the absence of the artist's head negates particularity and renders this photographic frieze a depersonalised, generalised portrait of the nude body at a certain life stage. This was a frequent interest of Coplans', who stated,

'I'm 70 years old, and generally bodies of 70-year-old men look somewhat like my body . . . I'm using my body and saying, even though it's a 70-year-old body, I can make it extremely interesting.'

Rineke Dijkstra (born 1959)
Netherlands

Julie, Den Haag, Netherlands, February 29 1994
1994

Tecla, Amsterdam, Netherlands, May 16 1994
1994

Saskia, Harderwijk, Netherlands, March 16 1994
1994

photographs, colour, on paper
Tate: Purchased 1998

The transitional moments in peoples' lives has been a central theme in Rineke Dijkstra's photography. She has photographed adolescents on the beach, bull fighters fresh from the fight, and young people entering the military. Works in this series of photographs show women clutching their naked babies against their chests one hour (Julie), one day (Tecla) and one week (Saskia) after giving birth. The realities of childbirth often go unseen and when these photographs were first exhibited women appreciated the more honest depiction of the experience. Photographed in clear light and standing front on to the camera, the new mothers appear exposed, vulnerable and invincible.