

## Vie des Arts

### ***Lucian Freud on Paper*, Rizzoli, New York, Can\$98.00**

John K. Grande

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Volume 53, numéro 215, supplément, été 2009

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/61890ac>

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#### Éditeur(s)

La Société La Vie des Arts

#### ISSN

0042-5435 (imprimé)

1923-3183 (numérique)

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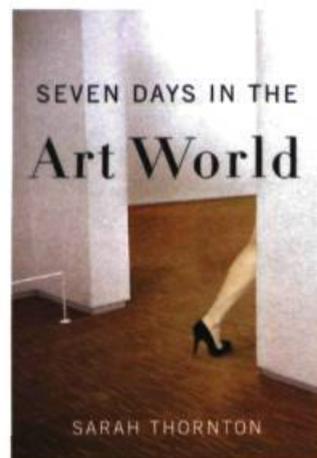
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#### Citer cet article

Grande, J. K. (2009). *Lucian Freud on Paper*, Rizzoli, New York, Can\$98.00. *Vie des arts*, 53, (215), 15–16.

# SEVEN DAYS IN THE ART WORLD

By Sarah Thornton



W.W.Norton and Company, Inc  
500 Fifth Avenue New York,  
NY 10110

W.W.Norton and Company, td.  
Castle House, 75/76 Wells Street,  
London, England, W1T3QT

USA \$24.95  
Can \$27.50

274 pages

Jean-Paul Sartre wrote, that the duration spent within the pages of a book should yield back knowledge that is at least equal to the knowledge that could be gained by living in the *real* world.

*Seven Days in the Art World* by Sarah Thornton is worth the time spent.

Divided into seven art exposures, each takes place in one day, one chapter. The chapters are sufficiently segregated in order to enable pleasant illuminations and even a bleed-through of characters. Like a walk through a city of many ethnici-

ties, the reader will be familiar with some areas while others will freshen curiosity as exoticism accelerates the ascent up a steep learning curve to transcendence.

An artist, for instance, who reads the book, might have experienced a 'crit' (day two) when he was an art student but likely has not had the more exclusive privilege of being nominated for the Turner Prize (day four) or understand the complexities of the art magazine that the 'insider' finds quotidian. He might have a studio but *The Studio Visit* (day six) takes place in the pristine, slippered, clinical, methodical, business world of Murakami's Japanese production center rather than the expected environment of emotive seclusion often associated with a studio. Furthermore, to have the role of 'artist' ethnographically researched and then translated into a text by an 'outsider' might yield results that are not in tune with our sample artist's immersed understanding of his role. Thornton conducts her ethnographic research with feet perched on opposite sides of the chasm of the unknown, one foot well placed within the world of art and the other in sociological studies as a participant observer. This precarious position enables a translation of the research subject without the protectionism of the subject studied which could enable a receptive artist to find questions long left unanswered finally revealed, especially as he reads the chapters which are more foreign to his own position.

In *The Magazine*, the chapter closest to Thornton's own discipline, she relates a conversation with Roberta Smith (NY Times) and Jerry Saltz (The Village Voice). These married art writers have commented on the city's vivid art scene for years, sparking interest veering on religiosity and similar to the fix of a good sermon. Thornton writes on the writers, rather than that which they have written granting access to the back room.

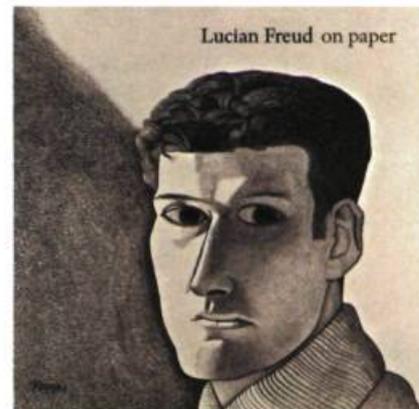
It takes an extremely effective ethnographer to access, process and give back an informed, up-to-date impression of such a mysterious, vague, evasive and elusive nonentity as 'the art world'. To penetrate the upper echelons of collectors, eminent dealers, museum luminaries, protected fame and yet also be sufficiently low key to be able to hang out at a marathon 'crit' takes a chameleon's adaptability backed up by authenticity. Thornton has afforded each of her subjects respect and it has won for her their confidence. And charm can't have hurt as well.

Caught within our own chapters where self-absorption occupies attention, *Seven Days in the Art World* offers a greater vista as it opens more doors than we have time, or perhaps inclination, to knock upon. Currently being translated into nine languages, we should see the French version in the bookstores soon.

Julie Oakes

# LUCIAN FREUD ON PAPER

Rizzoli, New York, Can\$98.00



While many are familiar with Lucian Freud's fleshy paintings, and the like, early works on paper, and notably his early drawings, many of them in this book dedicated to works on paper, are seldom, if ever, seen. Born in Berlin, and the son of Ernest Freud the architect, and grandson of Sigmund Freud, Lucian Freud abandoned drawing for painting in the early 1950s. As he comments in this book, "People thought and said and wrote that I was a very good draughtsman but my paintings were linear and defined by my drawing... (They said) you could tell what a good draughtsman I was from my painting. I've never been that affected by writing, but I thought if that's at all true, I must stop." One of the darlings of the contemporary art market, Lucian Freud pursued the ink or pencil line with remarkable skill as we can see from the private pages of his early Freud-Schuster book, and other sketch materials, some carefully preserved by his

mother. There is some of that quality of line we see in George Grosz's ink sketches to a sketch of *Bedroom with Stolen Socks, 1940* with its awkward angles, disjointed perspective, and mysterious oversized head in bed. When we look at a simple sketch of an oil lamp from 1940 it becomes a universal artwork. The lines are self assured, waver, and there is character to the hatch marks. Freud's intimate ink sketches tell a story of sorts, however minimal, or ephemeral they are. Some of these works, like *Peter Watson in a Fur Hat, 1941* or *David Gascoyne, 1942* have something of that Ron Kitaj or David Hockney intimacy, Freud's studies of a *Dead Monkey or Rabbit on a Chair, 1944* are riveting for the contrasts in line, pattern, detail.

An interesting special feature to this book is Richard Calvocoressi's essay on *The Graphics of Lucian Freud*, where we learn of his ongoing youthful foray into book jacket design and illustration. The books included *The Glass Tower* (1944) by Nicholas Moore, with contributions in the form of animal and sea life illustrations and the remarkable jacket illustrations for *Cards of Identity* (1955) and *Two Plays and a Preface* (1958) by Nigel Dennis. Freud made remarkable illustrations for *The Equilibriad* by William Samson published by *The Hogarth Press* in 1948. Detailed and near obsessive in their dense attention to subject, these graphics were to continue until the mid-1950s whereupon Freud gradually chose to work in a more freeform manner. He returned to this pastime in the late 1980s and early 1990s and it has continued. From sketches of the painter's mother, or father to hastily sketched and youthful Francis Bacon, to fine portrait studies of Cecil Beaton,

George Balanchine and a deathly ill Christian Berard (1948), this book reveals a seldom seen side of Lucian Freud's work. What we can see is that his skill as a draughtsman raises it all to a high art as significant as his paintings, as witnessed by his *Girl in a White Dress* (1947). These works have a stillness and concentration but equally are obsequious and cheeky. Freud has fun drawing. It's obvious. The later etchings are equally some of the finest to be made by an artist of our times. So it is interesting that having left drawing and sketching for painting, later in life, Freud regains that art form but in reverse, for the inspiration now evolves out of the paintings that become their point of departure, so to speak. A worthy book for the collection.

John K. Grande

# DARE TO DRAW

## LA PASSION DU DESSIN

By Sean B. Murphy  
Foreword by Alex Colville.

ISBN 978-0-9734462-6-5  
Visual Arts Centre/McClure Gallery  
Printed in Canada  
120 pages, bilingual,  
with illustrations.



The English title of Sean B. Murphy's book, *Dare to Draw*, reads like a challenge, while its French version, *La passion du dessin*, speaks of vanquishing obstacles and giving rein to one's calling. Somewhere in between lies the true story of Dr. Murphy's love affair with art.

A distinguished ophthalmologist, a respected patron of the arts and philanthropist, in his retirement Dr. Murphy has in a sense returned to his childhood, a childhood spent with artist parents, renowned printmakers Cecil Buller and John J.A. Murphy. Perhaps unconsciously, through a kind of osmosis, that early introduction to the bohemian, colourful, inquisitive lifestyle his parents embraced, the caliber of the artwork they produced, the art that surrounded him like air took root.

Independent of spirit, Sean B. Murphy charted his own path in life, one of equal fulfillment and service to society, but so very different from the abandon and endless horizon of an artist's vision.

It is actually not that unusual for people in Dr. Murphy's profession, men and women of medicine, to take up art in their later years, or at times, concurrently with their other careers. It fulfills an understandable need for something beyond structure, invisible even under the most powerful microscope, something that allows the hand to slip and still create beauty.

In his foreword to the book, the eminent Canadian painter Alex Colville alludes to this connection, writing: "He once told me that all his teaching of eye surgery had to be done on a one-to-one scale – one pupil at a time. I think the teaching of art is on that scale – by necessity – so it is not surprising that he is so good at his profession – and at his hobby."

Dr. Murphy's drawings and

watercolours are closely linked with his many travels, serving as a second pair of eyes, and providing each time a unique set of memories, noted by hand rather than by the lens of a camera.

Thrilled with the pleasure, no, with the pure joy of drawing, Dr. Murphy is now sharing this passion with his readers, with a caveat, that the book is not one of instruction, but rather inspiration.

And so it is, filled with his delicate, unpretentious watercolours and drawings, images of strange lands and colourful landscapes, jewels of architecture, and simple huts, foreign cathedrals, and quiet pebbly beaches of Quebec...

The pictures are accompanied by text written with a large dose of humour in Dr. Murphy's gentle, no-nonsense style, as he invites the reader to partake in his adventure, without ever losing the magic of it all.

"You pack your sketch kit in your bag, grab your folding chair and head out in the early morning. It is particularly fun to go with a friend. You can each choose your spot, get lost for hours sketching, then reconvene to check each other's masterpieces. Just a slight shift of the chair one way or another and the entire scene and feeling of the land is transformed, especially as the light slowly moves from east to west, drastically changing shapes and hues and intensities of colour." (p. 65)

Although not meant to be didactic, *Dare to Draw* is, nevertheless, filled with useful information on drawing and watercolour techniques and the importance of a sketching kit. A chapter will help you find your personal style, but others will tell you the story of Dr. Murphy's own creative beginnings, as well as his sojourns in foreign places. It is a wonderful book for the summer, but not only.

Dorota Kozinska