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Lucian Freud: Eyes Wide Open

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Synopsis

Phoebe Hoban, author of definitive biographies of Jean-Michel Basquiat and Alice Neel, now turns her attention to Lucian Freud, the grandson of Sigmund and one of the greatest painters England has produced. *Lucian Freud: Eyes Wide Open* is the first biography to assess Freud's work and life, showing how the two converge. In Hoban's dramatic and fast-paced narrative, we follow Freud from his birthplace in Berlin to London, where he fled with his family in the 1930s, and then to Paris, where he mixed with Picasso and Giacometti. He led a dissolute life in Soho after the war, gambling and womanizing with fierce energy. He painted his wives nude, his children nude, himself nude. He married twice, had an uncountable number of children, and kept working through it all, painting everyone from close friend and rival Francis Bacon to Kate Moss and Queen Elizabeth. He sometimes spent years on a single painting, which could require hundreds of hours of sittings. However various his subjects, his intent was always the same: To find and reveal the character hidden within by means of his intense visual imagination. Along with its startling biographical revelations, the great thrill of *Lucian Freud: Eyes Wide Open* is the way Hoban deconstructs the art itself - its influences, models, and technique - to show how Freud reproduced reality on the canvas while breaking down the illusion that what we see is real.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 5 hours and 31 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Brilliance Audio

Audible.com Release Date: April 15, 2014

Whispersync for Voice: Ready

Language: English

ASIN: B00JMIN17A

Best Sellers Rank: #68 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Arts & Entertainment > Art #342 in Books > Arts & Photography > Individual Artists > Monographs #360 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Biographies & Memoirs > Artists, Writers & Musicians

Customer Reviews

LUCIAN FREUD: EYES WIDE OPEN comes to us from Phoebe Hoban, who has previously published BASQUIAT; A QUICK KILLING IN ART and ALICE NEEL: THE ART OF NOT SITTING

PRETTY. As is well-known, Lucian was the grandson of the wizard of Vienna, Sigmund Freud, father of psychiatry; Lucian was also considered one of the greatest British painters of the twentieth century, and possibly the greatest representational painter still working in the twentieth century. This is the first biography to assess the artist's life and work: unfortunately, it runs just 150 pages, and the artist lived a long life and worked almost until his death: He attained the age of 88. So the narrative here is definitely fast-paced: friends, lovers, wives, models, enemies whiz by as we read. Lucian Freud was born in Berlin; but the Freud family was smart enough to see World War II, and the Holocaust coming, and well-connected enough to get out while the going was still good. They relocated to London, where Lucian got most of his schooling: he seems always to have been readying for his career as an artist. After the war, he began his career in earnest. He made friends with another great British artist, Francis Bacon; moved in society, seducing several titled society women and dozens more; was an addicted gambler, losing millions of dollars betting horses, dogs and roulette. He went to Paris, where he socialized with Picasso and Giacometti. He married twice, had fourteen acknowledged children by several women: there were probably more, as he famously refused to use birth control measures, or allow his partners to do so either. He painted well-known model Kate Moss, and Queen Elizabeth II; he painted his wives, his daughters and himself nude.

Hoban's biography is an eye-opening look at the life and work of one of the premier realist artists of modern times. Freud discouraged most attempts at biography during his lifetime. The frankness of family members, friends and possibly even a few enemies interviewed by Hoban discloses a man driven by an obsessive creativity as analytic as the mental probing of his grandfather, Sigmund Freud. Like many artists, Lucian Freud began drawing at an early age. Though he was admitted to the Central Arts and Crafts School in London at the young age of 16, he lasted only one term, preferring to find his way with a teacher of his own choosing. Lucian's talent was nurtured by his father, Ernst, who gave up his own desire to paint in favor of the more pragmatic profession of architecture, as well as his grandfather, who gave him materials and was marvelously understanding and amused by the boy's interest in art. Touching on speculation Freud may have had Asperger's syndrome, Hoban suggests his realism may not have been an aesthetic choice but rather an instinctive strategy for coping with the behavioral tic. She also sees this as a possible link to his addiction to women, gambling and other foibles as well as his difficulty in relating to his lovers and children, other than as models. She also relates his long relationship with Francis Bacon. Given Freud's stubborn independence, in some ways it seems surprising how quickly he abandoned his original graphically-based technique for the later impasto style under the influence of

Bacon.

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