

## FRANCIS BACON

We are excited to invite you to submit a short play (6-8 min. long) for the Museum Plays project April 30<sup>th</sup> and May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2020, at the Museum of Fine Arts Houston. The plays should be written around the Francis Bacon exhibit. For the first time, Script Writers-Houston will collaborate with the MFAH in a project combining theater with a major art exhibit. Total number of scripts selected will be between 6 and 9.

Born in Ireland in 1909, Bacon was a brilliant, courageous, bold artist proud of his homosexuality at a time when being homosexual was illegal in the United Kingdom, a law that existed until 1967. Do not confuse him with Lord Francis Bacon of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

Our Francis Bacon loved the male body and captured its physicality in erotic and provocative abstract images. He was the most galvanic figure of British art in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He was celebrated, scandalous, and profoundly influential. Bacon was a late bloomer. He never studied painting and was self-taught, inspired by Diego Velázquez, Jean-Auguste Dominique Ingres, Edgar Degas, Pablo Picasso and Lucien Freud as well as his engagement with the intellectual milieu of post-war Europe.

After its debut at Paris's Grand Palais des Champs-Élysées in the fall of 2019, the MFAH will be the single U.S. venue to this landmark exhibition. The MFAH exhibit will focus on the latter stage of his career, from the 60s through the late 80s. Bacon achieved a remarkable level of understanding about what paint can do. According to curator Alison Greene, if his work were to be encapsulated in one phrase it would be: From the particular he addressed the universal.

Bacon's work packs a powerful emotional punch. It invites you to address issues such as homosexuality, social injustice, inclusion, gender identity and life on the fringe, important topics very much at the forefront today. The exhibit also invites you to address his work from novel and unique perspectives. Bacon drew inspiration from dramatists, poets and philosophers, ranging from Aeschylus to T.S. Eliot and Michel Leiris. In like fashion, you are invited to look for inspiration in his work, not just to mirror it. The admonition for you is "to step into the void," in Ms. Greene's words.

We ask you to choose one of the 30 paintings on display as the focus of your work. Some paintings are presented in groups so you can build your play around them. There is a proposed layout of the exhibit on the SWH website showing which paintings will be shown individually and which appear in groups. On the web there is also much more detailed information about each painting. While we are not intending for you to create a "roving" play, Ms. Greene did suggest the possibility of presenting a play in two parts, each around separate paintings. Both parts would not be presented concurrently but would alternate between other plays. This is an interesting thought and an example of the kind of originality and creativity Ms. Greene encourages the writers to present.

You can also choose works in the lobby outside of the exhibition gallery and those are available now. These works are not necessarily related to Bacon's but could be used to inspire or provoke people to step into the exhibition. An example is the statue of a nude Roman emperor on display. Writers will be allowed to visit the exhibit once free of charge when it opens in February. More information will be available about the layout and the exhibit at a later time. Plan on your audience not to exceed 30 per play. Visitors on both of the days chosen for the plays will receive discounted admission tickets.