

Letters



Freud and sculpture

Sir, In his review article 'Portraits of Lucian Freud' (January; pp.46–51) James Cahill comments on the 'encrusted' self-portrait *Painter working, reflection* (Fig.1): 'the first canvas in which the elderly Freud depicted himself nude, his pose – palette knife flung out, legs apart – carries an ironic echo of the swagger of the Apollo Belvedere'. The sculptural reference is apposite, but Freud primarily seems to be referencing the appearance and encrusted facture of a sculpture such as Alberto Giacometti's *Man pointing* (Fig.2), which is more obviously an 'ironic echo' of the Apollo Belvedere. A cast of Giacometti's sculpture was acquired by the Tate Gallery in 1949. The 'booted' feet of the Freud and Giacometti are similar. Giacometti is undoubtedly a key inspiration for Freud in his 'encrusted' period, both formally and in the persona he cultivated – the shabby, claustrophobic studio; the interminable portrait sessions; the sexual predations.

But one could also make a larger point. If in Freud's early years his work overtly referenced painting and drawing ('the Ingres of Existentialism' etc.), his later work is more emphatically in tune with sculpture. In the self-portraits of the 1960s, his nose stops being straight and looks bent and mashed – an allusion to Auguste Rodin's *Man with the broken nose* (1874–75; Musée Rodin, Paris), which in turn alludes to Michelangelo's broken nose. The single figure was Freud's forte and sculpture was an essential inspiration: the sofa or bed often operated like the sculptor's block that

1. *Painter working, reflection*, by Lucian Freud. 1993. Oil on canvas, 101.2 by 81.7 cm. (Private collection; © The Lucian Freud Archive; Bridgeman Images).

2. *Man pointing*, by Alberto Giacometti. 1947. Bronze, 178 by 95 by 52 cm. (© The Estate of Alberto Giacometti; DACS, London 2020).

contains the figure – although the poses are more like those of body casts from Pompeii. Freud's most blatant reference to Classical Antiquity is probably *Naked man, back view* (1991–92; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York), which transforms Leigh Bowery into a buttery *Belvedere Torso*.

JAMES HALL

Spalliera panels at Longleat House

Sir, In the captions of the illustrations to Anne B. Barriault's article about spalliera panels (January; pp.37–45) it is implied that the panels of 1493–94 of episodes from the life of Alexander the Great and Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon are in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. While owned by that institution, these remain in the Drawing Room at Longleat House, Wiltshire, as in 2005 they were accepted in lieu of tax to remain *in situ*, in order to preserve what is the most authentic extant late nineteenth-century arrangement of Italian Renaissance pictures in any British house.

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