



Breakfast with Lucian: The Astounding Life and Outrageous Times of Britain's Great Modern Painter

By Geordie Greig

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An insider's account?the first of its kind?of the thoroughly unconventional life of one of the twentieth century's most shockingly original painters

Lucian Freud's paintings are instantly recognizable: often shocking and disturbing, his portraits convey a profound yet compelling sense of discomfort. Freud was twice married and the father of at least a dozen children, and his numerous relationships with women were the subject of much gossip?but the man himself remained a mystery. An intensely private individual (during his lifetime he prevented two planned biographies from being published), Freud's life, as well as his art, invites questions that have had no answer?until now. In *Breakfast with Lucian*, Geordie Greig, one of a few close friends who regularly had breakfast with the painter during the last years of his life, tells an insider's account?accessible, engaging, revealing?of one of the twentieth century's most fascinating, enigmatic, and controversial artists. Greig, who has studied his subject's work at length, unravels the tangled thread of a life lived on Freud's own uncompromising terms. Based on private conversations in which Freud held forth on everything from first love to gambling debts to the paintings of Velázquez, and informed by interviews with friends, lovers, and some of the artist's children who have never before spoken publicly about their relationships with the painter, this is a deeply personal memoir that is illuminated by a keen appreciation of Freud's art. Fresh, funny, and ultimately profound, *Breakfast with Lucian* is an essential portrait?one worthy of one of the greatest painters of our time.

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Editorial Review

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Starred Review Lucian Freud (1922–2011), “the greatest realist figure painter of the twentieth century,” went audaciously far beyond “nude” to shockingly naked and forever changed portraiture. Greig tells the astonishing story behind some of Freud’s most disturbing paintings and wryly observes that Freud and Sigmund, his famous grandfather, had a lot in common since it was also “Lucian’s business to get people to sit on beds or couches, and to reveal more about themselves than perhaps they wished to show.” Ironically, Lucian was a fiend for privacy, refusing interviews and derailing would-be biographers. Greig, a prominent newspaper editor, managed to get close to Freud during the painter’s last decade, meeting him regularly for breakfast near his London home and studio. Freud spoke expansively about his tumultuous and maniacal life, from his Jewish German family’s escape from the Nazis to his starving-artist years. Impudent, ambitious, and voracious, Freud did have a lot to hide. His prodigious sex life, a dizzying carousel of simultaneous partners, resulted in at least 14 children. Because he often paid his enormous gambling debts with paintings, a bookie owns the world’s largest private Lucian Freud collection. Greig’s vivid, swiftly flowing, bracingly candid, alluringly illustrated chronicle of the exploits and accomplishments of this renowned renegade artist is as arresting, discomfiting, and unforgettable as a Freud portrait. --Donna Seaman

Review

“Breakfast with Lucian is a superb, flawlessly crafted portrait of about as messy a life as was ever lived . . . out of which emerged the greatest British painter of the past one hundred years.” *?Tom Wolfe*

“Both tender biography and blunt revelation . . . It is the most important book yet written on Freud.” *?Brian Sewell, The Evening Standard (London)*

“Geordie Greig's book is an unapologetic mixture of intelligent perception and high gossip. It deepens the reader's understanding of Lucian Freud, as both man and artist . . . No person interested in Freud will ignore this book. It is, overall, more revealing than anything about him yet written.” *?Frances Spalding, The Guardian*

“Lucian Freud was a dedicated artist. I once heard him say, ‘I will paint myself to death.’ The artist was also a dedicated social butterfly. In the middle of the art and the women, titled people were never far away. Both aspects of the life would have made for a repetitive story. Geordie Greig has overcome this double hazard to write a gripping and elegant and original book, shapely and full of unexpected matter. It will surely establish him as a master biographer.” *?V. S. Naipaul*

“Geordie Greig has written an extraordinary, candid book that is at times intensely shocking and at other times even more intensely moving.” *?Antonia Fraser*

“*Breakfast with Lucian*, Geordie Greig's juicy, eye-popping book about Lucian Freud . . . offers a fond but by no means whitewashed account of how Freud's spectacularly messy life relates to his extraordinary body of work . . . Along with Freud's sexual profligacy and self-destructive passion for gambling, Greig captures the intensity of the artist's ambition and drive, his exacting work ethic and his numerous ‘splintered’ friendships, including with fellow artist Francis Bacon. Greig's own friendship with Freud provides access to the chaos and squalor of his home and studio--littered with used brushes, flicked paint splotches and the carcasses of half-eaten dinners. His portrait comes alive with descriptions of Freud's ‘ferret-thin figure,’

'shabby-chic style,' penchant for silk scarves, nougat candy, wads of cash and hair-raising drives in his brown Bentley . . . Greig's book, a rare case in which the text and illustrations are equally gripping, brings into sharp focus this bold iconoclast who 'pushed boundaries, artistic as well as sexual.' Even better, it makes us look more closely and deeply--and see more." ?*Heller McAlpin, The Los Angeles Times*

"Lucian Freud was the greatest figurative painter of the 20th century, says Geordie Greig in his spirited new book, *Breakfast with Lucian* . . . [a] highly readable life of the artist . . . Mr Greig's is a compelling portrait of a complete amoralist who became a *monstre sacré*." ?*The Economist*

"Greig tells the astonishing story behind some of Freud's most disturbing paintings and wryly observes that Freud and Sigmund, his famous grandfather, had a lot in common since it was also 'Lucian's business to get people to sit on beds or couches, and to reveal more about themselves than perhaps they wished to show.' Ironically, Lucian was a fiend for privacy, refusing interviews and derailing would-be biographers. Greig, a prominent newspaper editor, managed to get close to Freud during the painter's last decade, meeting him regularly for breakfast near his London home and studio. Freud spoke expansively about his tumultuous and maniacal life, from his Jewish German family's escape from the Nazis to his starving-artist years. Impudent, ambitious, and voracious, Freud did have a lot to hide. His prodigious sex life, a dizzying carousel of simultaneous partners, resulted in at least 14 children. Because he often paid his enormous gambling debts with paintings, a bookie owns the world's largest private Lucian Freud collection. Greig's vivid, swiftly flowing, bracingly candid, alluringly illustrated chronicle of the exploits and accomplishments of this renowned renegade artist is as arresting, discomfiting, and unforgettable as a Freud portrait." ?*Donna Seaman, Booklist (starred review)*

"[An] admiring but acerbic biography of the painter . . . The Freud who emerges in this account is a slippery figure, not only for journalists who tried to explain him but also for his intimates." ?*The New Yorker*

"Greig interviewed Freud . . . and many of his intimates and tells an astonishing story of appetite and accomplishment. He follows the painter from childhood to the grave, fills the book with photographs of the author and his work, and expands our notion of the capabilities of the human male . . . Greig also follows the arc of Freud's career, which took years to flower but bore plenty of fruit once it did." ?*Kirkus*

"A personal, anecdotal, and utterly charming book that makes you feel you've pulled up a chair and joined [Geordie Greig and Lucian Freud] for a spot of tea. If only." ?*Lucas Wittmann, The Daily Beast*

"Granted access to colleagues and models and lovers and children who, confronted by an outsider, would have kept schtum, he gains a series of often surprisingly frank interviews, the contents of which he weaves into a compulsively readable life . . . Greig's considerable powers as a tour guide of character, his well-trained eye for the detail along with his insightful study of art . . . [makes for] a riveting anecdotal portrait . . . Here is Freud from many facets: compulsive gambler, the underworld figure, the high-cultural Casanova, the social climber, the devious schemer, the affectionate dad. Even oft-told stories regain a first-person freshness . . . Everywhere there are fascinating nuggest. Some illuminate his paintings . . . Most cast a strong light, and often a harsh one, on his character . . . *Breakfast with Lucian* is a fond, fair-minded, thankfully non-judgmental and pretty full portrait of a person." ?*Rachel Campbell-Johnston, The Times (London)*

"In addition to having conducted some of contemporary art's biggest interviews, Greig had the rare pleasure of becoming one of Freud's few close friends towards the end of the artist's life. The two regularly shared breakfast, and it was from these early morning conversations that Greig drew much of the content in *Breakfast with Lucian*. Greig provides a personable inside look at an unconventional, much speculated about life. Freud speaks to Greig with varying casualness, revealing personal foibles and interests (he was an avid gambler), thoughts on, of course, his art and that of others' (amongst them Spanish Baroque painter Diego

Velázquez) and something more universal: first love. Lending greater depth to this memoir of sorts are thoughts from friends, romantic partners and even some of Freud's children, some who've never publicly spoken about their relationships with the painter. *Breakfast with Lucian* is the book art biographers have been chasing (Freud had twice denied proposed biographies). Considering their fruitless efforts, what Greig sits on top of, on the cusp of unveiling to the world, is one of the art world's most eagerly anticipated peeks over a spiked electric fence. Art aficionados: *Breakfast with Lucian: The Astounding Life and Outrageous Times of Britain's Great Modern Painter* is not one to be missed." ?Leslie Ken Chu, *Vancouver Weekly*

"*Breakfast with Lucian* brims with quotations from Freud's lovers, children, friends, sitters, dealers and associates, as well as from the artist himself . . . My favourite passages are those in which Greig quotes chunks of his interviews with Freud: in a flash, it feels as though we are chatting with the artist over a cup of tea, privy to his mischievous, witty and unbuttoned recollections . . . Greig also records Freud's destructive idiosyncrasies, while the final chapter, which deals with the artist's death and its aftermath, is heartfelt and upsetting." ?Alastair Sooke, *The Telegraph*

"Geordie Greig, who knew him well, here reveals more about [Lucian] Freud than has ever been in print before . . . The book is excellent on Freud's extraordinary charisma, which worked its magic equally on women, men, animals and children. An especially charming passage--with accompanying photographs--describes Freud's easy playfulness with Greig's young children. The dark glamour is here, too . . . The best portraits bring their sitters vividly to life, and this book does just that. There can be no greater compliment than to say that Greig makes the reader feel exactly as if they have met Lucian Freud." ?Cressida Connolly, *The Spectator*

"Geordie Greig's fascinating biography reveals a compelling but chaotic life which, until Freud's death in 2011, was largely kept veiled in secrecy by his family, friends and ex-lovers . . . The bio reveals Freud to have been a series of paradoxes . . . Greig, a former *Tatler* editor, revels in tracing the web of unlikely, unwieldy relationships that the artist liked to keep highly separate." ?James Lane, *3 News*

"We learn about the long and complicated personal life of Freud, as well as the techniques he employed as a painter, as a result of the informal meetings and breakfasts Greig had with him . . . Greig masterfully mixes hard-core biography with snippets of Q & A dialogue he conducts with Freud's lovers and children and Freud himself to create a memorable portrait of a portraitist. And because Greig spent so much time in the company of Freud's paintings and studio, he has earned the right to be psychoanalytical about the grandson of the world's most famous psychoanalyst . . . the reader feels by the time the paint has dried that he has been in the company of the artist." ?David Masello, *The Santa Fe New Mexican*

"Greig has done a lot of legwork--tracking down lovers and confidantes and subjects of Freud's work, including Raymond Jones, who posed for the . . . painter's first full-length nude. Jones's account of sitting is revealing of the twin obsessions of Freud's life." ?Tim Adams, *The Observer*

"Greig has drawn on interviews with those who knew Freud intimately--comprising countless girlfriends, models, dealers and bookmakers--to piece together the previously inexplicable existence of a man who compartmentalised all avenues of his life, as well as his anecdotes ranging from sleeping with horses to painting the Queen . . . Thoughtfully, he compares Freud to a cultural Forrest Gump of the 20th century, or an artistic incarnation of influential English rock band The Sex Pistols: 'Every interesting and extraordinary person of the cultural and social world seemed to pass before him, yet at the same time he was this incredibly hardworking, obsessive painter.'" ?Alex Bellotti, *The Hampstead and Highgate Express*

"Geordie Greig, a journalist and close friend of Freud's during the latter years of his life, provides an unobstructed view into the artist's professional and private in his new memoir, *Breakfast with Lucian* . . .

Greig delves into Freud's rarely-discussed personal life, from his burning temper . . . to his excessive gambling . . . to his close friendship with Bacon.” ?Erin Cunningham, *The Daily Beast*

About the Author

Geordie Greig is the editor of *The Mail on Sunday* and, over the last thirty years, has interviewed most major living artists. Prior to moving to Britain's largest-circulation quality Sunday newspaper, he was the editor of the *London Evening Standard*, before which he spent ten years editing *Tatler* and, previously, working as American correspondent and as literary editor for *The Sunday Times* (London). Greig lives in Notting Hill, London, with his wife, Kathryn, and their son and twin daughters.

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