

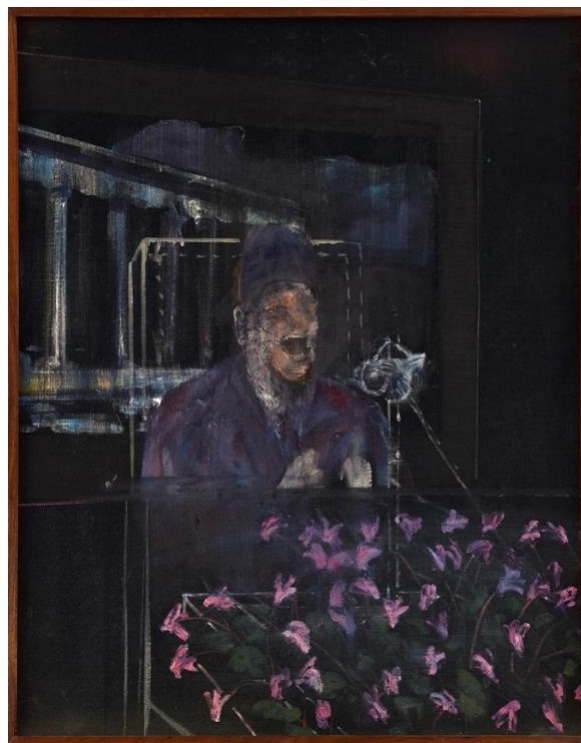
## GAGOSIAN



THE ART NEWSPAPER

**Never before exhibited, Francis Bacon's first screaming Pope goes on show at London's Gagosian gallery**  
*Sinister besuited figure, painted in Monaco in 1946, was only recently rediscovered*

Gareth Harris



*Francis Bacon's Landscape with Pope/Dictator (around 1946) © The Estate of Francis Bacon. All rights reserved. DACS 2022*

Francis Bacon's first image of a screaming Pope—which has never been exhibited publicly—is due to go on show next week at Gagosian gallery in London. The papal image, known as *Landscape with Pope/Dictator*, will be displayed at Davies Street gallery in Mayfair from 15 March to 23 April.

The work, made in Monaco in 1946, depicts a figure in a traditional Catholic clergy cap known as a biretta and a shirt and tie, combining religious elements and more sinister aspects, drawing on the artist's fascination with Fascist dictators.

On 19 October 1946, Bacon wrote to Duncan MacDonald, a director of the Lefevre Gallery in London: "I am working on three studies of Velázquez's portrait of *Innocent II* [*sic*]. I have almost finished one. I find them exciting to do." Bacon was fascinated by Velázquez, the leading 17th-century artist in the court of King Philip IV of Spain.

According to the Sunday *Times*, the work was discovered by Martin Harrison as he compiled Bacon's catalogue raisonné in 2016. The painting was reportedly acquired from Bacon's London studio in 1951 and was later held by galleries in Milan and Turin before being bought by an unnamed Italian collector. Gagosian gallery says that *Landscape with Pope/Dictator* is not for sale.

Gagosian's director Richard Calvocoressi says in a statement: "It is particularly exciting that this important early Bacon has re-emerged now, while three of the artist's reinterpretations of the Pope theme—from 1949, 1951, and 1965—are on display in London, in the Royal Academy's current exhibition, *Francis Bacon: Man and Beast*." Bacon, a devout atheist, made more than 40 portraits of popes over a 20-year period.