

# PACE LONDON

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## *A Strong Sweet Smell of Incense* A Portrait of Robert Fraser, Curated by Brian Clarke

6 February – 28 March 2015  
6 Burlington Gardens, London, W1S 3ET



Portrait of Robert Fraser by Jean-Michel Basquiat. © The Estate of Jean-Michel Basquiat / ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2014.

London—Pace London is honoured to present *A Strong Sweet Smell of Incense*, a momentous exhibition that will take as inspiration the character and career of celebrated art dealer and pioneer, Robert Fraser. Curated by Brian Clarke, the exhibition will be staged at 6 Burlington Gardens from 6 February to 28 March 2015.

Pace will publish a major catalogue to accompany the exhibition, which will include both works shown and archival materials assembled by Clarke. The catalogue will be edited by Clarke and Harriet Vyner, author of *Groovy Bob: The Life and Times of Robert Fraser* (Faber and Faber, 1999). A second catalogue will accompany a parallel exhibition of recent works by Brian Clarke, presented concurrently at 6–10 Lexington Street (13 February – 21 March 2015).

The exhibition will present “a personal portrait” of Robert Fraser told in artworks and curated by artist Brian Clarke.

Clarke was a close friend of Fraser and is also one of several Pace artists who were once represented by the Robert Fraser Gallery – including Jim Dine, Claes Oldenburg and Jean Dubuffet. Rather than adopting an

academic approach, Clarke’s selection of work will seek to capture the spirit and energy of his friend while also providing a historic context for Fraser’s flamboyance, dynamism and avant-garde gallery programme.

In looking at Fraser’s era-defining gallery, Pace’s exhibition will also evoke the artistically flourishing London of the 1960s, when popular culture, music and art collided with Robert at the epi-centre. Paul McCartney has referred to Fraser in *Groovy Bob* as “one of the most influential people of the London sixties scene”. Robert Fraser was instrumental in producing the *Sgt Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band* album cover after he introduced Peter Blake to The Beatles.

In the 1960s and the 1980s, the Robert Fraser Gallery was London’s preeminent gallery showing both European and American emerging artists. Fraser opened his gallery in 1962 with an exhibition of works by Jean Dubuffet, and, over the years, fostered close relationships with luminaries of contemporary art. After leaving London to spend much of the 1970s in India, Fraser reopened in 1982 with an exhibition of works by Brian Clarke from the late 70s and early 80s, some of them on view in *A Strong Sweet Smell of Incense*. These works sparked the inspiration for Pace’s exhibition. “The art world at the time was really tired. Nothing was really happening. But the feeling was, if anything was going to happen, it would be at 21 Cork Street.” Brian Clarke, *Groovy Bob*.

In the years he operated his gallery, Fraser was a great supporter of Neo-Expressionism, Pop Art and Op Art, presenting work by Clive Barker, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Peter Blake, Brian Clarke, Jim Dine, Gilbert and George, Richard Hamilton, Jann Haworth, Ellsworth Kelly, Matta, Claes Oldenburg,

Eduardo Paolozzi, Yves Klein, Bridget Riley, Andy Warhol and many others. His brilliant openings were attended by John Lennon, Yoko Ono, Paul McCartney, Mick Jagger, Keith Richards, William Burroughs, Marlon Brando, Marianne Faithfull, Michelangelo Antonioni and almost anyone else in the mainstream of the avant-garde.

Clarke's selection of works in *A Strong Sweet Smell of Incense* represents the wide ranging influences and eclectic taste of a highly sophisticated aesthete. There are works that Fraser admired, that he owned, that were once on view at his iconic London gallery or passed through his hands or that reflect the cultural background in which the gallery flourished. The artists on view all once exhibited or had close personal relationships with Fraser. Hamilton immortalised his dealer in his Pop Art masterpiece *Swingeing London 67*, a screen print of a famous news image in which Fraser is handcuffed to Mick Jagger inside a police van, following their appearance in court on drugs charges. The title refers to the term *Swinging London* and mocks the judge's decision on imposing what he literally called *a swingeing penalty*.

Other highlights in the exhibition include a portrait of Fraser by Basquiat, who the dealer represented in the 1980s. *A Sweet Strong Smell of Incense* will also include a selection of documentary photos of the dealer with artists and friends, and a recreation of Fraser's desk based on an Ian MacMillan photograph.

## LIST OF ARTISTS IN THE EXHIBITION

Kenneth Anger  
Francis Bacon  
Clive Barker  
Jean-Michel Basquiat  
Peter Blake  
Brian Clarke  
Jim Dine  
Jean Dubuffet  
Richard Hamilton  
Keith Haring  
Jann Haworth  
Dennis Hopper  
Ellsworth Kelly  
Robert Mapplethorpe  
Claes Oldenburg  
Eduardo Paolozzi  
Jamie Reed  
Colin Self  
Tony Shafrazi  
Cy Twombly  
Andy Warhol

## NOTES TO EDITORS

**Robert Fraser** (b. 1937, d. 1986) was a leading dealer of contemporary art in the 1960s in London. Called "a superb dealer" by Leo Castelli, the Eton graduate was one of the first figures to present works by leading American and European abstract painters and Pop Art painters in London, capturing the swinging spirit of the city in the 1960s. Fraser shuttered his gallery in the 1972 to spend time in India. He reopened the gallery in 1982 where he continued to present exhibitions by newly relevant artists such as Jean-Michel Basquiat until closure due to illness in 1985. He died in 1986 from complications related to AIDS. Fraser's influence spanned cultural spheres; his likeness was captured in works by Jean-Michel Basquiat, Jim Dine, Richard Hamilton and Larry Rivers, and he brought leading figures in music from the 1960s into his artistic circle, notably The Rolling Stones and The Beatles.

**Brian Clarke** (b. 1953, Oldham, Lancashire, England) is best known for radically updating the medium of stained glass, while also maintaining active practices in painting, sculpture, mosaics and tapestry. Since the early 1970s, he has collaborated with some of the world's most prominent

architects and artists to create stained-glass proposals and installations for hundreds of projects, including the Pyramid of Peace and Accord, Kazakhstan (Norman Foster); the Al Faisaliyah Center, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia (Foster + Partners); the Pfizer World Headquarters, New York; the Papal Chapel of the Apostolic Nunciature, London, U.K.; the Darmstadt Synagogue, Germany; Hessisches Landesmuseum, Darmstadt, Germany; Linköping Cathedral, Linköping, Sweden; NorteShopping, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; and the Research Centre, Saudi Arabia (Zaha Hadid). Clarke also designed stage sets for two of Paul McCartney's world tours and for the Dutch National Ballet.

Clarke's stained-glass works and paintings have been the subject of exhibitions at international museums including the Gemeentemuseum, The Hague; Sezon Museum of Art, Tokyo; Munich Stadtmuseum; the Centre International de Vitrail, Chartres; and the Vitro Musée, Romont, Switzerland. His work is represented in international public and private collections worldwide, including the Corning Museum of Glass, Corning, NY, where his 1,000-square-foot installation *The Glass Wall* (1998) is on view. Clarke lives and works in London.

## PACE

Pace is a leading contemporary art gallery representing many of the most significant international artists and estates of the 20th and 21st centuries. Founded by Arne Glimcher in Boston in 1960 and led by Marc Glimcher, Pace has been a constant, vital force in the art world and has introduced many renowned artists' work to the public for the first time. Pace has mounted more than 800 exhibitions, including scholarly ones that have subsequently travelled to museums, and published nearly 450 catalogues. Today Pace has nine locations worldwide: four in New York; two in London; one in Beijing, one in Hong Kong and a temporary space in Menlo Park, California. Pace London inaugurated its flagship gallery at 6 Burlington Gardens in 2012.

Pace London at 6 Burlington Gardens is open to the public Tuesday to Saturday, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. [www.pacegallery.com/](http://www.pacegallery.com/)

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