

# Francis Bacon The Popes

Press Release  
30.04.2026





## HENI Releases Limited-Edition Prints of Francis Bacon's Iconic Pope Paintings

HENI releases *The Popes*, two limited-edition prints celebrating Francis Bacon's most visceral and enduring subject: his iconic Pope paintings. The editions are published by HENI in collaboration with The Estate of Francis Bacon.

The artworks are available by application on HENI Editions from 30 April until 17:00 BST on 11 May 2026.

The release features *Study after Velázquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X*, widely regarded as the definitive expression of

the Pope series, and *Head VI*, which marks one of Bacon's earliest iterations of the figure.

The editions are Giclée direct prints on aluminium composite panel. *Study after Velázquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X* measures 145 x 112 cm and *Head VI* measures 91.4 x 75.2 cm. The edition size for each print is limited to 100. All works are hand-numbered and labelled on the verso.

*The Popes* explores the artistic dialogue between Bacon and Diego Velázquez, whose celebrated Old Master portrait of Pope Innocent X became a central obsession for Bacon after he chanced upon a black-and-white reproduction of it in a book. For over 25 years, Bacon revisited this motif, using Velázquez's formal composition as a foundation to explore themes of isolation and existential dread. The resulting works approach the papal figure through the grotesque distortions synonymous with Bacon's practice.

In *Study after Velázquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X* and *Head VI*, Bacon's figures are shown in purple and white vestments, their mouths open in a silent scream. While the compositions echo the architectural structure of Velázquez's throne, Bacon dissolves the sitters' features, using vertical streaks to create the effect of a veil or curtain. These distortions make the figures appear to be both materialising and disintegrating on the canvas.

Speaking on the resonance of the image, Bacon said:

*"In the Popes [the subject] doesn't come from anything to do with religion; it comes from an obsession with the photographs that I know of Velázquez's Pope Innocent X. [...] I buy book after book with this illustration in it of the Velázquez Pope, because it just haunts me, and it opens up all sorts of feelings and areas of – I was going to say – imagination, even, in me."*

**The editions are on display at HENI Gallery, 6–10 Lexington Street, London W1F 0LB for the duration of the release. Admission to the gallery is free. The gallery is open Monday to Friday, 10am–6pm.**

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**HENI EDITIONS:**

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## **Francis Bacon (1909 – 1992)**

Francis Bacon transformed modern art with his disturbing portrayals of human suffering and bodily distortion. Born in Ireland in 1909 to English parents, Bacon felt alienated from his traditional middle-class family, prompting him to move to London. With minimal support and no formal art training, he immersed himself in the avant-garde scenes of London and Berlin, finding inspiration in Picasso's work and Sergei Eisenstein's film 'Battleship Potëmkin', which instilled in him a fascination with the expressive malleability of the human body. This early exposure would shape his signature style, where raw, grotesque figures serve as metaphors for human frailty and existential dread. Bacon died in 1992. His haunting images of contorted bodies and emotional extremes endure, marking him as one of Britain's most significant 20th-century painters.



**Francis Bacon**

*Study after Velázquez's Portrait of Pope  
Innocent X, 2026*

Q10-1

Giclée direct print on aluminium  
composite panel

145 x 112 cm





**Francis Bacon**

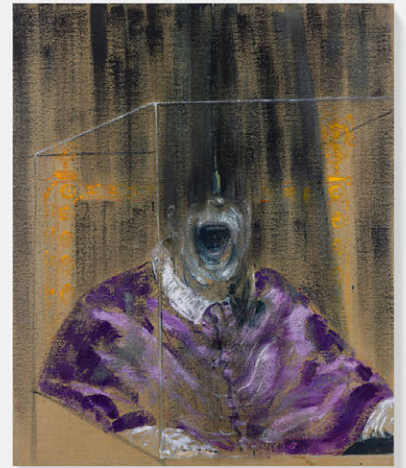
*Head VI, 2026*

Q10-2

Giclée direct print on aluminium  
composite panel

91.4 x 75.2 cm





## About HENI

HENI works with world-leading artists and estates across various sectors including print-making, releases of original artworks, book publishing, films, exhibitions, news and research. Our mission is to make art accessible to everyone by giving people the chance to learn about and collect art.

[heni.com](https://heni.com)

## HENI Editions

HENI Editions works with artists, institutions and estates to produce high-quality, limited-edition artworks. We work with a range of mediums, including sealed or Diasec-mounted Giclée prints, metallic and non-metallic chromogenic prints, large-format jacquard-woven tapestries and stained glass.

[heni.com/editions](https://heni.com/editions)

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