



PROFILE BOOKS

‘A rollicking cultural adventure before the fall of the Berlin Wall and the meteoric rise of contemporary art in the nineties. Fascinating and true.’

Grayson Perry

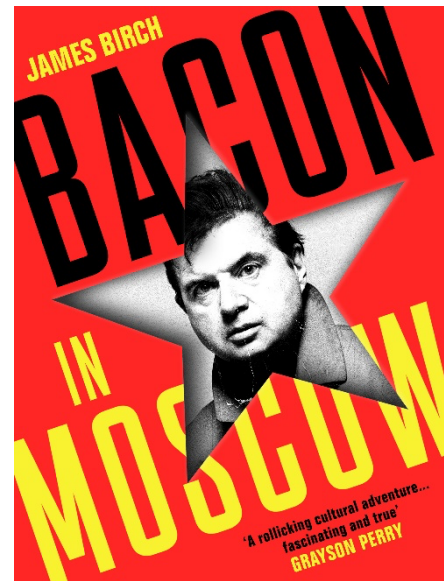
Bacon in Moscow

By James Birch, with Michael Hodges

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Hardback|£20

***Bacon in Moscow* recounts the audacious quest by the young English curator James Birch to mount the ground-breaking Francis Bacon retrospective at the Central House of Artists, Moscow in 1988, a sell-out show that had Muscovites queuing round the block and the first exhibition of a living Western artist in the Soviet Union for over 40 years.**



Travelling between Moscow and the streets of London’s Soho, James Birch recalls the extraordinary events that led to him becoming the subject of the KGB’s attention amid a shady cast of officials, spies and politicians.

When the young curator decides to make his name through a landmark retrospective of his friend Francis Bacon’s work, he is sidelined by the British establishment. Taking matters into his own hands, Birch uses a network of Soviet fixers and government officials to stage the event. With a cast of larger-than-life characters, from the enigmatic Soviet cultural minister, Sergei Klovov, to the bewitching fashion designer Elena Khudiakova and Francis Bacon himself, *Bacon in Moscow* is a unique account of Soviet and Western relations, personal and political, at a time of unparalleled cultural change.

His ambitious plan to bring previously unseen Western culture to the Soviet Union unfolds as the President of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev, takes steps to open up the country through *glasnost* and *perestroika*. The ground-breaking Bacon exhibition is a pivotal cultural event in a wave of change, taking place just a year before the momentous fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

Grayson Perry, whose early works were presented by Birch and who features as a character in the book, said of *Bacon in Moscow*: “A rollicking cultural adventure before the fall of the Berlin Wall and the meteoric rise of contemporary art in the nineties. James Birch pulls off an artistic coup necessitating endless champagne nights in Soho with Francis Bacon and marathon Moscow vodka

sessions with the mysterious Sergei Klovov. Fascinating and true. What a liver!”

James Birch is a curator who has promoted modern art exhibitions around the world for over 30 years. He opened his first gallery in 1983, followed by two more in London over the next two decades. James has exhibited artists including Grayson Perry, Francis Bacon, Gilbert & George, Genesis P Orridge and Austin Osman Spare and Denis Wirth-Miller.

Michael Hodges has reported extensively from Russia and the Middle East. He has written for many newspapers and magazines including *the Sunday Times*, *the Financial Times*, *Time Out*, *New Statesman* and *Esquire*. He is the author of *AK47: THE STORY OF THE PEOPLE'S GUN* and currently editor-at-large for the *Radio Times*. He lives in London with his family.

Bacon in Moscow will be published by CHEERIO in collaboration with Profile Books in hardback on 27th January 2022.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

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