

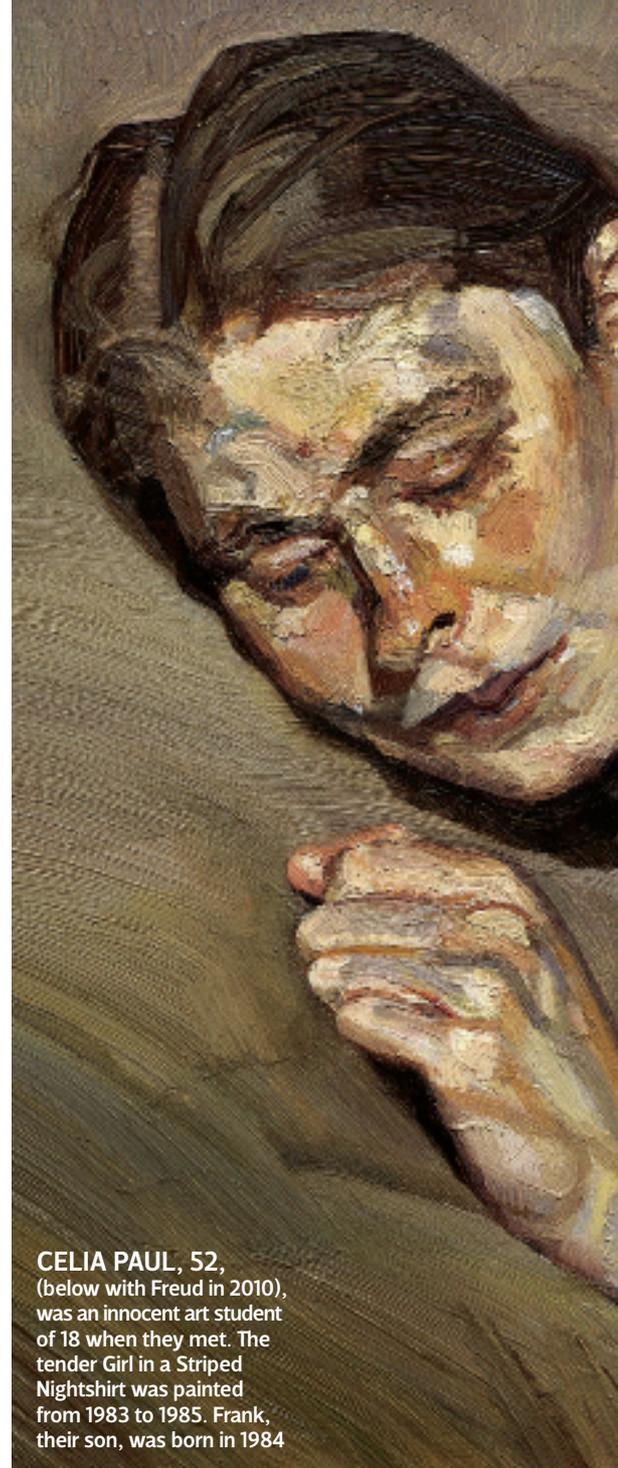


For the love of Luci



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Celebrated painter, obsessive task-master, lothario with 15 children, Lucian Freud changed women's lives for ever. In intimate interviews with Caroline Scott, his models, including his daughter Annie, reveal the ordeals he put them through



Ria Kirby, a former student at Camberwell art school, has crinkly hair the colour of corn and scrubbed, flawlessly clear skin which give her an air of Arcadian purity. She was 26 and a technician at the V&A when she spotted Freud there one day and felt compelled to tell him how much she admired his work. Freud



RIA KIRBY, 31, was hanging Freud's paintings at the V&A when he asked if she'd sit for him. The result, *Ria: Naked Portrait*, 2007 (above), took some 2,400 hours – all unpaid. For that period she went everywhere with Freud, but they did not become lovers

thanked her graciously. Later she had a message from the V&A's head of painting: "Mr Freud would like to know if you'd sit for him."

"When I called, he said, 'Can you come to the studio tomorrow at 6pm?' And I remember thinking, 'It's good this is happening quickly,' because I was really nervous about whether he'd want me naked and how I'd feel about that."

Freud offered tea or champagne. She chose tea. Did she know about his reputation with women? "I was very conscious of it, but I'm not very flirty or tactile and he was over 80 then.

from the royal box and they'd turn up at parties and private views. At weekends she might go with him to a grandchild's birthday party.

"Overnight, I was part of the family. I think they assumed I was his girlfriend, and I found that intimacy slightly awkward. He didn't."

Ria thinks she sat for a total of 2,400 hours, all of it unpaid, for a painting she'd never see again. "Freud was considered one of the world's greatest painters," she says tightly. "As a painter, to become part of a work that will have

CELIA PAUL, 52, (below with Freud in 2010), was an innocent art student of 18 when they met. The tender *Girl in a Striped Nightshirt* was painted from 1983 to 1985. Frank, their son, was born in 1984

'I think the family assumed I was his girlfriend'

I just felt a real sense of urgency; he wanted someone he'd be comfortable working with." Ria chose a modest pose ("the position I sleep in") and went to the studio seven nights a week and every weekend, pocketing the taxi fare he gave her and cycling home to east London each evening. Freud took her to Clarke's for dinner or the Wolseley. "I'd plough through three courses, with wine and pudding. He hardly ate, because he was working." Then they'd get a cab back to the studio. They watched the Bolshoi Ballet

a place in the history of art was a privilege."

There was never any question of having a personal life at the same time. Ria turned down the chance to sit for another portrait ("I wanted my life back") but looks on it as "an extraordinary time, something to tell the grandchildren". When her daughter, Imogen, was born in 2010, she took her round to see him. "He was so tactful," says Ria, generously. "She bawled in his face for a few minutes and he said, 'I'm much better with animals, I think, than people.'" ■



Lured by immortality

Waldemar Januszczak on Freud's power over his sitters

There are, of course, important differences between Premiership footballers and premier-league painters. Obviously, one plays football and the other does not. And one needs to be young while the other can be old. But when it comes to women, their behaviour is not entirely dissimilar. Both are controversially libidinous. Neither strikes you as being particularly choosy. And if you have a younger sister, you'd prefer it if she met neither of them.

However, one important variance does stand out, and that is the reluctance of the women with whom they have been intimate to hire Max Clifford and spill the beans. Girls who go with Premiership footballers seem actively to enjoy kissing and telling. But getting anything intimate or revealing out of any of the women that Lucian Freud got

painting her sprawled naked across his settee, she was internationally adored and the subject of the most expensive picture ever sold at auction by a living artist. Celia Paul was a mousy art student of 18 when Freud walked into her art class to teach her painting. Seven years later, after the lessons and the affair were over, she was the Girl in a Striped Nightshirt; the Naked Girl with Egg; and the figure on the left in Freud's most ambitious group portrait, *Large Interior*, W11 (after Watteau).

Freud turned the ordinary into the gripping. People you would never normally look at twice found themselves magicked into some of the most compelling portraiture ever painted. They come in all shapes. Sue from the job centre was fearsomely fleshy: the kind of big girl you would not usually see naked except in the pages of a specialist magazine. Freud painted her conked out on a couch, her head thrown back, snoring. Celia Paul, meanwhile, one of the many lovers who bore him a child, is a small woman with big breasts whose stretch marks he examines with a directness that feels like cruelty. As a final touch, he placed a plate of fried eggs by Celia's legs, as if to say: this is what you are.

All of which is the opposite of Premiership behaviour. No lavish gifts. No promises of money. No flashy nights in expensive hotels. Yes, he was partial to a glass of champagne and would sometimes share it with his sitters on a rare evening out, but never to seduce them or weaken their resolve. Freud liked champagne. And what Freud liked, he did. If he wanted to gamble all night, he gambled. If he wanted fine clothes, he bought them. If the fine clothes got covered in paint, so be it.

The only time I ever met him, on Kensington Church Street on his way to lunch, I assumed him to be a homeless man from the back. It was only when I overtook this small, crumpled figure that I noticed the posh silk scarf round his neck and recognised Lucian Freud.

The mood of the remarkable gallery of Freud portraits going on show soon at the National Portrait $\gggg \rightarrow$ p17

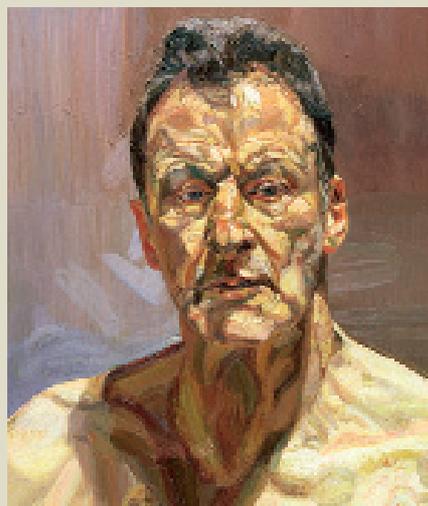
Freud's women felt the breath of the gods whistling across their bodies

through has proved difficult. The interviews on these pages reveal more than many of them have ever said before.

Why have his sitters been so circumspect, at least until now? Principally, I suggest, because we are dealing here with a particular class of woman, very different from the footballing wags. However naked they look in his art, however brazenly they expose themselves to him and us, Freud's women are never in it for the media exposure or the bucks. They're in it for the immortality: for the breath of the gods they felt whistling across their naked bodies when they posed for him.

Before she met Lucian Freud in a nightclub, Sue Tilley was just a fat woman who worked at a job centre in the West End. By the time he finished

SELF-PORTRAIT
Freud was as unflinching in depicting himself as his other sitters. This portrait, titled *Reflection*, dates from 1985, when he was in his early sixties



Freud met Celia Paul in 1978 at the Slade, where she was an art student. She was 18 and had never had a boyfriend. He was 55 and had been invited to be a visiting tutor. Later, he told her he'd accepted the invitation specifically to find a girlfriend. "He said he'd come to find a girl and that girl was me," she says. "The relationship he was in was foundering. Of course I was totally unaware of that at the time."

Lucian was wearing a beautiful grey suit and smoking a French cigarette. Celia was an ingénue who had just begun to find her own way as an artist, using her own mother as a life model. It's easy to see how flattered she would have been by his attention. She seemed $\gggg \rightarrow$

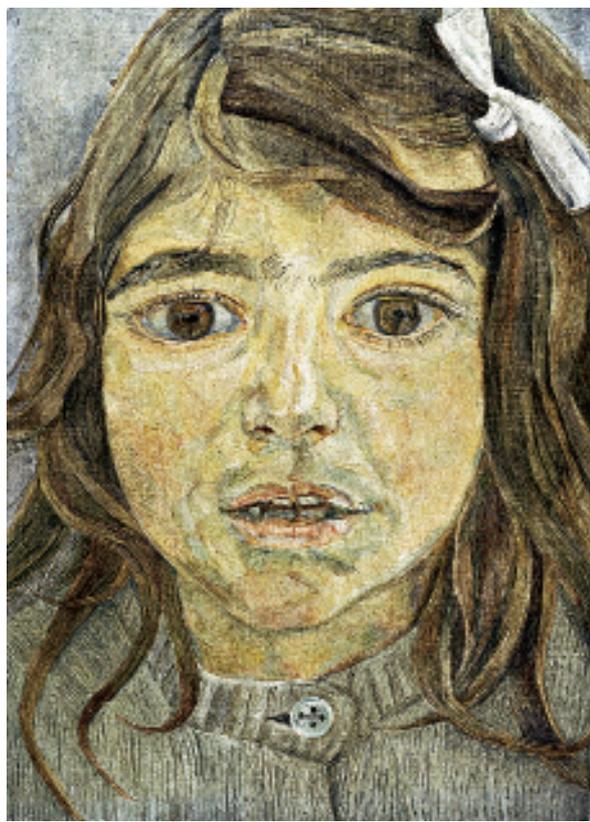
to have no idea what was on his mind. “I think I felt a connection to Lucian because he also worked from people he was intensely involved with,” she says. She found being with him “inspiring”, with the result that her own work became more ambitious. She was raised as one of five girls in what she describes as “a strict religious household” — nothing could have prepared her for being the object of his desire. “He was my first romantic encounter and he had a lot of trouble seducing me. I think Lucian was really exasperated.”

Now working from a studio in Holland Park, Freud did not begin painting Celia until two years after they started “going out together”. She says his first portrait of her, *Naked Girl with Egg*, is “pitiless”. “I was painfully conscious of my femininity. Lucian was always astonished by my ‘voluptuousness’, as he put it. He stood very close and I felt my flesh under scrutiny in a way that made me feel very undesirable.”

Celia says she cried throughout, which makes it a very discomfiting image. “There is a cold power to his work,” she says. She knocks back any attempt to explore her relationship with Freud and seems to have had little contact with his family, even for group portraits. “For *Large Interior: W11*, I only ever sat with Bella, and I think this makes it a very melancholy, remote image, with all the figures isolated.”

But there are tender images too. Celia points to the pictures of Freud’s mother, painted when she was depressed after the death of his father in 1970. *Girl in a Striped Nightshirt* is also a very tender painting. “It’s a small picture, but it took two years: 1983 to 1985. I became pregnant with our son, Frank, in 1984, and I think it records our closeness at that time.”

After Frank’s birth in December 1984, Celia found it impossible to balance sitting for Freud, looking after the baby and working. The last



ANNIE FREUD, 63, is Lucian’s eldest child, and for a few years she had her ‘gorgeous’, loving father to herself. Inset: he drew her in *Head of a Child*, 1954

Annie Freud was born in 1948, when Lucian was 25. Psychologically charged portraits of her mother, Kitty Garman, dominate this period of his life. *Girl with Roses* (1947-8), painted when she was pregnant with Annie, is so lovingly executed it looks almost like a devotional painting; three years later, pregnant with Annabel in *Girl with a White Dog* (1950-1), Kitty, her right breast exposed, looks utterly desolate and slightly mad.

Freud and Garman separated less than a year later; Annie and the newborn Annabel went to live with their maternal grandmother,

her development. “In many ways, I had the best of him,” she says. “He loved me absolutely. He loved my company and the way I looked, and he actively fostered my sense of uniqueness.”

But the strain of having divorced parents was very great. Freud wasn’t welcome at her mother’s house, and Annie felt her world had “split in two”. “We’d hold hands as we walked and he’d ask me if I missed him. I would say ‘no’, and I regret that terribly, but to say ‘yes’ would have been admitting my pain.”

Annie talks in great gasps, followed by long silences as she tries to find the right words. She stumbles along, touching on grievances and old rows, then retracting: “...but you can’t print that”. As Freud’s personal life became ever more complicated — three daughters, Bella, Isobel and Lucy, were all born in 1961 — his 15 children would inevitably battle it out among themselves for time and attention; but for a few years it was just Annie, and these early memories of her young, fresh-faced father are incredibly precious.

Freud wanted her to have lovely manners and to know how to be around grown-ups — specifically his friends and the people he was

‘He wanted me to be strong and fearless, which I wasn’t’

time he painted her was for *Painter and Model* in 1986. She believes that in it she relinquishes her “voluptuous passivity” and is finally in a position of power. Celia and Freud separated soon after. Frank is now 27 and an illustrator.

Celia still seems in thrall to the man who changed her life so profoundly. Her answers are careful, short and to the point. She could not answer any of my questions on Freud’s role as Frank’s father “because of the complexity involved in all Lucian Freud’s relationships” ■

Kathleen — who was “a pretty rubbish mother but a tremendous grandmother” — and her grandfather, the sculptor Jacob Epstein. Annie also cleaved to Freud’s parents, Lucie and Ernst (Sigmund Freud’s second son). “In some ways, my grandparents saved my life, because they made me feel there were solid people.”

Despite her parents’ fragile relationship, Annie describes Freud as a devoted father, who regularly collected her from her grandparents’ house to take her out, and was fascinated by



Gallery is never luxurious or pampered. Freud doesn't take his lovers to the Ritz and then bring them back to the Savoy. He strips them off on a cold hospital bed and gives them an itchy industrial blanket to lie on. If they're fat, he makes them fatter. If they're scrawny, they appear scrawnier still. If they've got blemishes, he focuses on them. If their breasts sag, he exaggerates the sagging. If their pubic hair spills out onto their thighs, he delights in noticing every stray hair.

And that's just the women. The men who also pop up explicitly naked in his art have the

This is an examination so cold that it feels medical

additional humiliation piled upon them of needing to lie there with their legs open while he measures their members and counts the wrinkles on them. This isn't voyeurism. At no point do you feel anyone is getting turned on here. It is an examination so cold and unglamorous that it feels medical: the sort of probing you might only otherwise submit to from a doctor. And yet, counting the number of naked sitters of both sexes who agreed to pose for him, it is clear that Freud never needed to search hard for volunteers. Which I have to say

I fully understand. I myself am fat and unconfident when naked. I don't even like standing around on the beach in my Speedos. But if Freud had asked me to pose for him, I would have jumped at the chance as quickly as Rooney in the box. It would have been like having Michelangelo ask you to pose as one of his *ignudi* on the Sistine ceiling. Or being persuaded to model for a drunken Bacchus by Caravaggio.

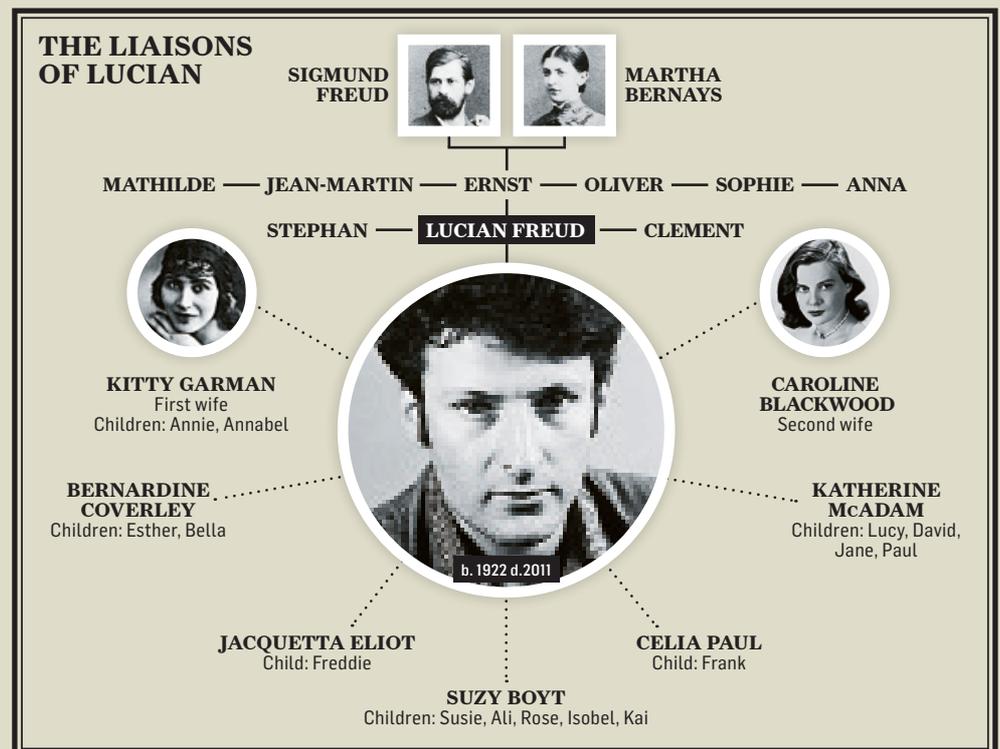
What we are actually talking about here is power. The power that special people have over mere mortals. The power to control others and make them do things. Whenever I hear anyone fretting about the exact meaning of a Lucian Freud painting — wondering why he preferred big fat council workers to pretty underwear models; wondering why the extra-large performance artist Leigh Bowery arrived so brazenly in Freud's art with his dong flapping about like an angry python — I think of something that Mark Rothko once said: "There is more power in telling little than in telling all."

The less you say, the more people want to know about you. Freud understood this. By keeping mum about the exact meanings of his deadpan and occasionally creepy portraits, he knew he was fuelling a hunger in his audience that no amount of media nibbling would ever assuage. As the philosophical Eric Cantona nearly put it once, tell them nothing and they'll squabble and squawk in your wake like hungry seagulls following a trawler ■

having relationships with, who lived in grand houses and spent their time "eating complicated food and discussing art". It all seems a lot for a little girl to cope with, but Annie found it empowering. He took her to Chinese restaurants in Kensington, which she loved, and taught her to turn somersaults in the park.

Around this time Freud met his great friend Francis Bacon, whose influence fundamentally changed the way he approached his work. Annie remembers Bacon as a constant, but the women in his life were forever shifting. When Annie was five, he married the Guinness heiress Lady Caroline Blackwood. The first time Annie recalls sitting for her father was at Coombe Priory, the house Blackwood bought for him in Dorset. "I was upset because I didn't understand their relationship. It wasn't like a family — it was my dad with this incredible young girl."

While he painted, Freud sang songs and told "wonderful stories" about a character called Annie, a bold little girl who had a magic dog in a suitcase and survived with nobody to take care of her. "He wanted me to be strong and fearless, which I wasn't. But I knew he wanted it for me and he also wanted it of me." ➤➤➤



LEFT: COURTESY LUCIAN FREUD ARCHIVE. CENTRE: STEVE SCHOFIELD FOR THE SUNDAY TIMES MAGAZINE. DIAGRAM FAR RIGHT: CENTRE, TOP RIGHT AND RIGHT: GETTY



When Annie was in her teens, Freud had an affair with Belinda “Bindy” Lambton, wife of the former Tory minister Lord Lambton, whose large-boned, angular beauty made her a favourite sitter. “I adored Bindy,” says Annie. “God, their house [Biddick Hall in Durham] was grand — chauffeurs, footmen, parlour maids!” Freud lived and worked at the time on Clarendon Crescent in Paddington, which in comparison seemed “an area of extreme squalor. The stench in the street was overpowering”. To Freud it was home. It gave him privacy and the rent was low. “Sometimes he had money,

but Annie recalls “shirts made of finest cambric spilling out of his cupboards, the most superb socks made of fine lisle. And if he ever left a scarf anywhere, it really mattered”.

There are no Freud portraits on the walls of the home in Dorset Annie shares with her second husband. She shows me a tiny framed photograph of the painting *Annie*, 1962. She’s 13, with ruddy cheeks and thick, lustrous hair. “I wish I had more pictures. I have terrible envy” is all she will say. The last time she sat for her father was in 1975, aged 26. Then, in her mid-thirties, they quarrelled and she didn’t see him

‘I could see women eating him with their eyes’

sometimes he didn’t. But the rooms he chose to paint in were like the people he chose to paint — he just liked them.”

Did Annie know why he was so attractive to women? “He was just bloody gorgeous! When we went to the south of France in July, he was addicted to the casinos and lovely meals on terraces. I remember him coming out of the sea wearing these tiny trunks and I could see women eating him with their eyes.” Freud later cultivated an air of casual neglect,

for 10 years. “In all relationships there are periods of strain,” she says vaguely. “He wasn’t interested in other people’s emotional distress. The relationship was always on his terms.”

Towards the end of Freud’s life, all was forgiven, if not forgotten. She recalls a visit just before he died. “There was a copy of *Vogue* next to the bed and he told me how much he loved looking at fashion magazines. After so much realism, he said he found the immaculate, glossy images soothing.” ■

Sue Tilley, 54, is advisory team manager at Tottenham job centre. She was introduced to Freud by the performance artist Leigh Bowery, who died of Aids in 1994. She sat for four paintings and two etchings between 1992 and 1996, spending all her spare time at Lucian’s Holland Park studio. “I went every evening and every weekend. In two years I had about three days off.”

She is one of the few sitters Freud paid. He gave her £20 a day, rising to £33 a day, which seems very little when you consider that *Benefits Supervisor Sleeping* sold in 2008 for £17m, the highest recorded price for a painting by a living artist. “He wasn’t tight,” Sue insists. “He just didn’t have any concept of money.” He gave her a couple of etchings which, regrettably, she sold when she was especially hard up.

Freud only ever worked with people he liked, and Sue is rip-roaring company. He was fascinated by her stretchmarks and patches of chafing, which were to him “signs a woman has lived”. She was intrigued by his tantrums: “If you were late, he’d be absolutely livid and he’d stab himself with his paintbrushes.” And she loved his stories, nearly all of them unprintable. “Leigh had told me I’d fancy Lucian, but I really didn’t, and I wasn’t his cup of tea either, but he was a great gossip. Joan Collins, Judy Garland... he’d say terrible

SUE TILLEY, 54, is unlike other sitters in her attitude to Freud: not reverent, star-struck or traumatised. She sat for him tirelessly for two years for a pittance. Then Benefits Supervisor Sleeping, 1995 (left) sold for £17m



For the last 10 years of his life, Freud worked mostly from a studio next to his house in Kensington; he ate breakfast almost every day, and sometimes lunch too, at Sally Clarke's restaurant a few doors down. Now an iconic figure with his knitted scarf and paint-spattered boots, he gradually began to attract a crowd. He was "extremely courteous" with people, but Sally wanted to give him some privacy. A table was found overlooking the garden, which became his regular spot, where he would entertain sitters and other artists — Kate Moss, Leigh Bowery, David Hockney.

One day, David Dawson (Freud's long-time assistant) asked Sally if he could have a private "word". "Lucian wonders if you'd sit for him," he said. The question in my mind was, why me? I think he asked because he felt as relaxed with me as I did with him." Freud was by now 83 and in poor health. "I'm very comfortable with elderly people; I didn't fuss over him, but I understood him. If he didn't want to talk, I knew. If he wanted me to run next door and get a coffee in the middle of a sitting, I knew."

They'd start at 9.30am and Freud would paint for three hours. "He never wore a watch, but he knew exactly when it was time for lunch, and half an hour later I'd be in my chef's whites and serving him at his table. We used to have this joke. "Hello! Haven't seen you in ages."

Sitting for Freud was "a very special, very intimate thing", Sally says, carefully. "No one disturbed us, and when he put brush to canvas there wasn't any talking at all. During breaks, he'd recite Hillaire Belloc and Noël Coward and tell me funny stories. We'd sip mint tea, singing along to Ella Fitzgerald and Cole Porter." Freud wasn't interested in her private life. But he was "wonderfully indiscreet" about some of the people who'd walked in and out of his life.

Normally, Sally wears foundation on her face, "to cover up my horrible red cheeks", but David made it quite clear that Lucian would not like make-up. "Every time he picked up the red paint, I thought 'Oh, no'. But it was right. My cheeks are red from 20 years' absorbing the heat of the kitchen. However much I want to cover things up, he could see through to the real me."

She was delighted with the portrait. "I'd have loved it whatever it looked like because of the attention to detail and the time he put into it." When she went with Freud to his framers to see it, she cried, "because I knew it was being shipped to New York to be sold and I thought that would be the last time I'd see it." ■ *Lucian Freud Portraits: National Portrait Gallery, London WC2, Feb 9-May 27 (www.npg.org.uk)*

things about people he met at parties."

The first picture Sue sat for was Evening in the Studio, in which she sprawls at the feet of Leigh's Bowery's wife, Nicola Bateman. Sue finds it "disgusting": "I look horrible, it took nine months and I was in agony the whole time." She rocks with laughter at attempts to untangle the imagery. "It was all incidental! Leigh was supposed to be in it but he had to go to Scotland, so Lucian stuck the dog in instead."

Possibly his least star-struck sitter, Sue is illuminating on Freud's women. "The kind of woman he went for was very natural, very quiet, with, you know, that kind of greeny-blond hair?" "Like mine?" I ask. "No, you bleach yours, he wouldn't have been happy with that." Her eyes swivel round the gastropub to find

Lucian's type among the glossy Primrose Hill brigade. She points out a mousy woman in a bobbly jumper: "Like her, but even drearier. Badly in need of make-up and a hairdresser. He'd have thought she was just gorgeous."

Freud was devoted to popular culture while pretending to know nothing about it. "He took seven newspapers a day, including the Mirror." In 1997 he invited Jerry Hall to sit for him, and Kate Moss in 2003. "He loved posh people and glamorous people," says Sue.

She saw a stream of daughters by four different mothers pass through the studio. "Some seemed terribly serious and gloomy, which he wasn't at all. Maybe he made them that way, by not being in the least bit interested in them. We were sitting in the River Café on

Mother's Day once and he looked round at all these tight little groups and said: 'Thank God I'm not a family man.' I said: 'No, Lucian, you're a families man.' He was very easy to wind up." ■

SALLY CLARKE

Between 2003 and 2005, she would sit for Freud for three hours, then serve him lunch at her restaurant

