

BLOGS & STORIES

Jane McAdam Freud Continues Sigmund Freud's Legacy

by *Casey Schwartz*

January 25, 2011 | 11:55pm

After initially snubbing her last name, sculptor Jane McAdam Freud found inspiration in the antiques collection of her great-grandfather Sigmund. By Casey Schwartz.

Inside 20 Maresfield Gardens, a sweet-looking house on a leafy street in London, a trove of antiques forges a bond from one man to his great-granddaughter.

It was to this house that Sigmund Freud and his daughter Anna hastily relocated in 1938, fleeing Nazi-occupied Vienna.

The famed psychoanalyst died of cancer one year later, but his daughter stayed on until her own death in 1982, after which the house made its official switch to [museum](#). Perfectly preserved, the home feels like a stage set, the analytic couch covered in oriental rugs, the shelves lined with Freud's extensive collection of antique sculptures and statues, which miraculously made the trip from Austria to England intact.



Courtesy the artist and Sundaram Tagore Gallery

Freud's fascination with antiquities—particularly from Greece, Italy, and Egypt—was well-known. The figures lined his office in Vienna and then in London, adding to the vaguely occult atmosphere in his consulting room.

Strange, then, that his great-granddaughter, [Jane McAdam Freud](#)—who is also the daughter of British painter Lucian Freud—wasn't aware of Freud's hobby until she was in her thirties, when the director of the museum mentioned it to her.

"He said, Oh Jane, what do you think of Sigmund's sculpture?" McAdam Freud recalled. "I said, What sculpture? I'd been there many times and I hadn't even noticed that he'd collected all these antiquities."

As Jane McAdam Freud, an accomplished artist and sculptor in her own right, relayed this story to a room full of psychoanalysts this month in New York, the question was inevitable: Did she not know about her great-grandfather's fabled sculpture collection—or was she not *conscious* of knowing?

"I was in complete denial about it," she said, laughing. "I wanted to be the only sculptor, but I saw that I wasn't—there was already this precedent. I feel he may have been a frustrated artist, in a way."

Speaking at the American Psychoanalytic Association's annual conference, the 52-year-old London native came across as stripped of façade; warm-spirited and direct, earthy and cheerful. McAdam Freud was in town for the opening of her show *Random Plus* on display until January 29 at Sundaram Tagore gallery in Chelsea. Her first solo exhibit in New York is a collection of ceramic, bronze, and clay sculptures, with strands of the mythic running throughout. Her rendering of Sisyphus depicts him as one with his burden, an extension of the boulder he's cursed to push forever.

When she first heard about her great-grandfather's statues, McAdam Freud says she was desperate to handle them. "They were two-sided objects and I recognized them as being the kind of things I made," she said. She began traveling to the house on Maresfield Gardens to draw them, and came so often the Freud Museum's director designated her as an artist-in-residence.

Her great-grandfather's passion was everywhere evident in her own work. She spent her residency creating pairs between her sculptures and Freud's—"objects relating to each other"—which she turned into a five-minute film titled *Dead or Alive*, which shows the paired objects blurring into one other. The similarities between the works are startling.

The most arresting piece in her New York show is *Natural Forces*, a small bronze figure of a man on his knees, head thrown back in enraptured oblivion as he pleasures himself. More than any other work in the room, this conjures the ideas of her great-grandfather and taps the power of internal experience.

Her connection to the father of psychoanalysis gave a slightly voyeuristic thrill to the crowd of psychoanalysts gathered to hear her speak at the Waldorf Astoria. That Jane McAdam Freud is also the daughter of Lucian—one of the most famous painters alive today—further adds to her genetic luster.

The obvious first question, then: "What was it like to have the name of Freud?"

"The interesting thing is," she said, "I didn't grow up with that name. I grew up as Jane McAdam, because my mother didn't want us and didn't encourage us to use the name Freud. I think that was very intelligent of her. I think she thought that it would be too crushing a legacy, that we wouldn't develop. We were encouraged to develop our own talents."

Jane McAdam's mother, artist Katherine McAdam, met Lucian while both were art students in London. They have four children together, but never married. Their daughter Jane was already an art student herself when her father's career continued to expand. "It was becoming more uncomfortable to be quiet about it," she said.

Because of her hidden surname, nobody in the art world knew of her mythical lineage until she had to collect a prize she'd been awarded for her work and was asked to bring her birth certificate. The prize committee looked at her legal name in shock. "They fell down. They were saying, what on earth is *this*? Why didn't you tell us? We discovered you!" she says. "And then suddenly, everything changed."

Afterward, Jane McAdam Freud was obligated to swear allegiance to the queen with her full and legal name, and to promise that she would continue to use it. "Something to do with bankruptcy and an ancient honorary decree," she said, airily. But adopting this new identity did appeal to her vivid imagination.

Her time working around her great-grandfather's study in the Freud museum came afterward. There, surrounded by Sigmund Freud's legacy, she feels she was set on her true course. "I feel I've found my voice," she said.

Casey Schwartz is a graduate of Brown University and has a master's in psychodynamic neuroscience from University College London. She has previously written for The New York Sun and ABC News. Currently, she's working on a book about the brain world.