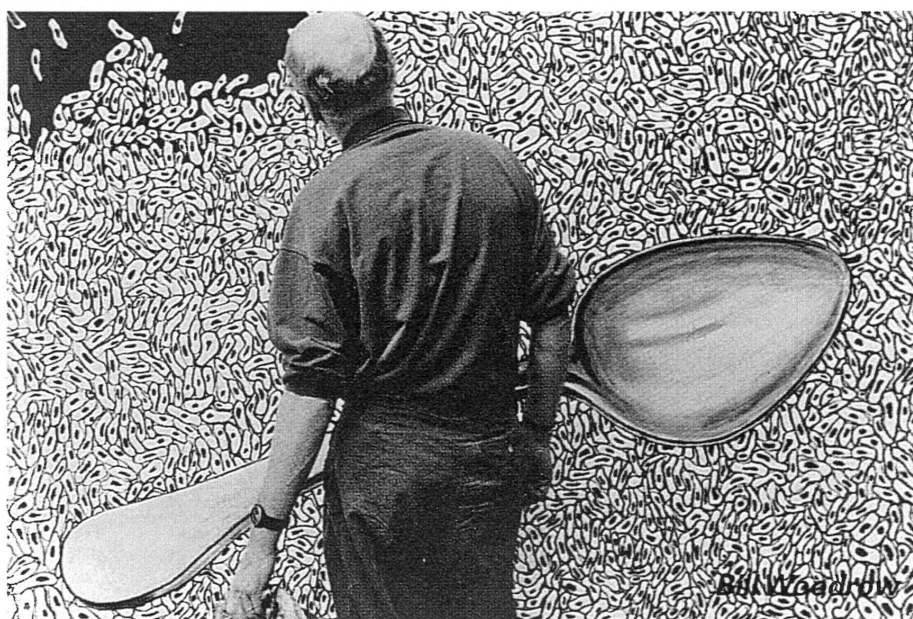


Deblonde bombshell

Gautier Deblonde's photographic studies of artists are a close-up thing



Take a closer look at artists by paying a visit to the new photographic gallery, Focus, to see an exhibition of 70 black and white portraits by the French photographer Gautier Deblonde. He is an art-world outsider whose intense studies of artists are the result of five years' studio-hopping.

The mood and spirit of his subjects are brilliantly captured; Fiona Rae looks waif-like and beautiful, while Sam Taylor Wood seems to have stepped out of a Prada advert. Sarah Lucas

looks fierce, Tracey Emin sexy, and Gary Hume distinctly classical. Damien Hirst and Anish Kapoor are both in masks to protect them from the fumes of formaldehyde and poisonous resin. The duo Langlands and Bell are silhouetted like criminals; the sculptor Anthony Gormley is captured in a mould cast from his own body, half embalmed in plaster of Paris; Gilbert and George are glimpsed in tweed suits sipping cups of tea at their favourite lunchtime venue, a café on Fournier Street.

Deblonde's sequence of images, which also includes portraits of Peter Blake, Sir Eduardo Paolozzi and Sir Howard Hodgkin, transcends mere documentation. Not since Lord Snowdon's *Private View* in the Sixties has such an important archive of British artists been produced to such impressive effect.

Artists is at Focus, 43 Museum Street, WC1, from 4 May. Deblonde's work is also featured in Artists in the 1990s at the National Portrait Gallery, until 25 April. The paperback book Artists is published by the Tate Gallery at £14.99.