

land. In 1738 Samuel Madden wrote of servants: 'We keep many of them in our house, as we do plate in our sideboards, more for show than use, and rather to let people see that we have them than that we have occasion for them'.

Martin Harrison, ed

Francis Bacon: Catalogue Raisonné

The Estate of Francis Bacon (distr. by HENI), 2016

5 hb vols in slipcase, 1,538pp, 800 col

ISBN 978 0 956 92731, £1,000/\$1,500/€1,400

Jon Lys Turner

The Visitors' Book: In Francis Bacon's Shadow: The Lives of Richard Chopping and Denis Wirth-Miller

Constable, 2016, hb, 392pp, some illus, ISBN 978 1 472 121660, £20

Martin Harrison, ed

Francis Bacon: France and Monaco

HENI/Francis Bacon MB Art Foundation/Albin Michel, 2016 (French-English bilingual), hb, 240pp, fully illus, ISBN 978 0 956 873880,

£35/\$50/€40

Martin Harrison, Sarah Whitfield, Manuela B Mena Marqués,

Francis Bacon: de Picasso a Velázquez

Guggenheim Bilbao/Turner 2016 (Spanish only), hb, 207pp, 110 col

ISBN 978 8 416 714360 €45

Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, Ina Cozen, eds

Francis Bacon: Invisible Rooms/Unsichtbare Räume

Prestel/ Staatsgalerie Stuttgart/Tate Liverpool, 2016 (German-English bilingual), hb, 256pp, 150 col ISBN 978 3 791 355764 £29.99/\$45

Alexander Adams

On 30 June 2016, Martin Harrison launched the long-anticipated *Francis Bacon: catalogue raisonné*. He commented that a full reappraisal of Francis Bacon (1909–1992), British art's most influential Modernist painter, could begin in earnest. And yet, important as the publication of such scholarship is, in a way Bacon's art, ideas and life have been in a state of continual reappraisal since his death. It seems that, every year, previously lost and disavowed works are exhibited and new biographical information emerges. Adrian Clark's in-depth review (*The British Art Journal*, XVII, 2, 2016) is a fair and thorough assessment of the majestic *catalogue raisonné*. My review of the catalogue was published in *The Art Newspaper* in July. I concur with Clark that the cataloguing is rigorously thorough, despite a small number of omissions in the bibliography. The illustrations are excellent and the most truthful reproductions of the paintings to date. The binding and printing are of the highest quality. A number of copies have been distributed to important libraries and universities and may be consulted there.

The Visitors' Book is a new biographical study that describes the lives of commercial illustrator and teacher Richard Chopping (1917–2008) and his partner, landscape painter Denis Wirth-Miller (1915–2010). The two artists were part of the bohemian Soho scene of the 1940s and 1950s but lived in Wivenhoe on the Essex coast. The book describes their lives through anecdotes about their interaction with an array of mid-century luminaries, the most prominent of which was Bacon. Bacon owned a cottage nearby and sometimes painted with Wirth-Miller who assisted Bacon with a handful of paintings. *The Visitors' Book* is an excellent insight into Bacon's character and social milieu.

Bacon, Wirth-Miller and Chopping visited Monte Carlo together. As a young hedonist, Bacon came for the roulette tables and found he could make a living gambling. From 1946 to 1949 Bacon's main place of residence was Monaco and he frequently visited the principality over the years that followed. Thus it was fitting that the Forum Grimaldi hosted 'Francis Bacon: France et Monaco', the first ever Monégasque display of Bacon's art (2 July–4 September). The exhibi-

tion explored Bacon's many personal, cultural and artistic links with France and Monaco, including work by French-based artists who influenced him.

Unpromising as the giant conference hall seemed as a venue for a fine-art exhibition, the display turned out to be superb. Since the designers had completely free rein over the size, layout and decoration of spaces, they were able to be ambitious. The early work was presented in dark spaces, spot-lit, with black and dark-grey drapes and carpet, which meant figures were like butterflies pinned on black velvet. The décor and lighting design varied in the spaces: later brighter paintings were shown in lightly coloured spaces with more ambient light.

Presenting Bacon's canvases alongside the art he admired is illuminating. In the Monaco exhibition, the series *Study for Portrait of Van Gogh* looked at home next to paintings by Soutine. Pre-war Bacon's hung near pictures by Jean Lurçat and Fernand Léger. Pieces by Giacometti and Picasso reinforced the case for the influence of École de Paris on Bacon's outlook. Rare paintings – including an unfinished male nude (c. 1953), a seascape and an architectural scene (c. 1945) – complemented well-known works, and made the display a full retrospective. The exhibition included Bacon's earliest surviving painting and the last completed one (of a standing bull). One of the most accomplished paintings of the figure in all of Bacon's oeuvre is the late *Man at a Washbasin* (1989–90). The compact form is tightly defined but richly expansive in tone and hue, with sprays of maroon, lilac and black suggesting shade. The Monaco exhibition is the best selected solo exhibition of Bacon I have seen and it was the best visually conceived of Bacon solo exhibitions.

The Monaco exhibition was the first exhibition to be organised and partly funded by the Francis Bacon MB Art Foundation, which was founded on 28 October 2014 as a non-profit organisation. The moving spirit behind the foundation is Dr Majid Boustany, who became fascinated by Bacon's paintings while he was a student in London in the 1990s. The foundation's mission is to research, collect and preserve art, documents, personal items and material associated with Bacon, especially in connection with France and Monaco, in order to promote knowledge of Bacon's art and life. As well as sponsoring Baconian publications and exhibitions, the foundation assists original research and plans to provide grants to artists in need of financial support.

Situated in a dramatically positioned 1908 townhouse in Monaco, the foundation is home to a collection of more than 2,500 items, 90 of which are art works, some by Bacon. There are a number of small paintings by Bacon from all periods. The collection includes Bacon's first surviving painting and an early painting of a figure with a caged ape, both loaned to the Monaco exhibition. Other works include *House in Barbados* (1952), painted for Peter Lacy, which Wirth-Miller assisted Bacon with. A comprehensive body of Baconian literature is supplemented by a replica of Bacon's library, comprising books he owned, accurate down to the exact edition – a useful resource for scholars. Objects in the foundation collection include Bacon's Paris easel, plates used as palettes and his brushes. There are forms for resident-identity cards, made out for Bacon, his nanny Lightfoot and Eric Hall, the London alderman who was Bacon's lover in the 1940s.

The décor and lighting of the foundation are a combination of mid-century luxury and Art Deco, with contemporary lighting and air-conditioning technology. The bespoke furnishings replicate some of Bacon's own designs and the foundation owns a rug (1929) and a stool (1930) by Bacon. Guided tours (in English or French) are restricted by group size and must be booked in advance. For both experts and fans, a visit to the foundation offers a fascinating insight into Bacon's art and life.

Much of the work in the Monaco exhibition was included in the subsequent exhibition 'Francis Bacon: de Picasso a Velázquez' held at Guggenheim Bilbao (30 September–8 January 2017), which is reviewed here from the Spanish-language catalogue. Spanish art was intermittently important to Bacon. He acknowledged the

accomplishment of Picasso and Velázquez above all other painters but he did not comment much beyond that on Spanish art.

The Spanish exhibition included work from all periods of Bacon's career, as well as pieces by Rodin, Toulouse-Lautrec, Giacometti, Soutine and Spaniards Picasso, Velázquez, El Greco, Goya, Zurbarán, Zuloaga, Ribera. The 1962 *Crucifixion* travelled from New York, which helped those wishing to understand Bacon as a painter who used religious themes and imagery while not subscribing to the theology. The *Tauromaquia* prints (1816) were included and are the works of Goya which most closely resemble Bacon's, even if Bacon may not have been familiar with them. Bulls appear in a handful of Bacon paintings. Bacon owned a number of illustrated books on bullfighting. The exhibition made a cogent case for the influence of Spanish art on Bacon.

A third solo exhibition took a different approach. Ina Conzen notes in the catalogue for 'Francis Bacon: Invisible Rooms' (Tate Liverpool, 18 May–18 September; Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, 7 October–8 January 2017) that 'Bacon's figures are frequently confined in closed rooms and glass-like cages, or they are pressurised by scaffold-like beams that disappear into nothingness; curved steel railings, circular and elliptical arenas and pedestals exhibit their bodies mercilessly, just as if they were displays in a museum or animals in a zoo'. The aim of the exhibition was to consider Bacon's approach to space, specifically centring on the use of spatial dividers in his paintings.

The curators of the Liverpool exhibition did what was not done in the other exhibitions: inclusion of Bacon's sketches and altered photographic sources, lent by the Tate and the Hugh Lane Gallery. The upper floors of Tate Liverpool are sympathetic spaces for moderately sized work and this added to the intimacy of the display. Although the selection included a number of Bacon's weakest paintings (discussed below), the hang, lighting and layout were good. Triptychs were given enough space to be seen in totality.

While Bacon was very sensitive to space and rooms, he retreated from landscape as a genre after some forays into landscape painting in the 1950s. Often Bacon made exterior views fragmentary (over time, increasingly so). This practice was partly a demonstration of the law of contrasts, namely that the property of an element is emphasised by proximate contrast with its opposite. Thus the human figure – which possesses no straight lines and no hard exterior – is rendered more itself when seen against its opposite: elements that are inflexible, geometric and unyielding. Bacon considered landscape in anthropomorphic terms. Grass is akin to human hair or the pelt of an animal, the swell of a sand dune is akin to muscle, spume of a breaking wave is akin to the spurt of seminal fluid. Despite the rocky, bare terrain of Monaco's Mont Agel and the coastal cliffs of Tangiers, Bacon generally chose to portray landscapes that were less dramatic: Essex marsh, African veld and the lush greenery of French and British gardens. Bacon treats flat horizontal military parade grounds, veldes, sandy arenas and lawns as akin to the flat floors of domestic interiors, thereby turning the exterior into a surrogate interior.

The range of work was wide even though the Monaco-Bilbao exhibition made certain pieces unavailable for inclusion. The Tate's collection was drawn from as were many North European museum collections. The issue of space is a part of comprehending the way Bacon's famous triptychs work, wherein a single tripartite space is established while at the same time one figure is presented multiple times. This presents a paradox. How can the same figure exist in one space at one time in multiple forms? The artist went even further by apparently doubling single figures within the same painting. During the late 1960s and early 1970s Bacon worked on the theme of the double, with identical figures in identical or similar poses placed so close that their bodies overlap and merge. The very similarity of the figures implies that these pairs are not truly separate individuals but figures becoming single entities briefly during shared states (copulating, sleeping, working or marching). The sensation of losing one's identity in shared activity is something that has been analysed at length by so-

ciologists and psychologists but – aside from heroic collective activity depicted in Socialist Realism and political propaganda – it has not been addressed by many artists. This is one of Bacon's most fascinating philosophical propositions.

Triptych, 1967 (Hirshhorn, Washington DC) is a good example of doubling. The left panel has a lesbian couple resting passively; the right panel has a (probably male) couple engaging in sexual activity. This is Bacon's only scene with a lesbian couple; it is telling that the only time it appeared was to contrast it with male homosexuality. At the time it was painted (autumn 1967), homosexual acts had been legal for only a few months (commencing 27 July) and it was significant that Bacon chose to locate the homosexual acts in close pictorial proximity to the site of a crime: the bloody garments and bedding in the central panel. Biographers noted that Bacon (who was homosexual) apparently lamented that legalisation removed the frisson of illicitness from the sex act and so the association in this triptych between homosexuality and violent crime was possibly some way of commemorating the psycho-sexual charge of danger at the beginning of a new social era.

One of the more striking paintings is *Study from the Human Body and Portrait* (1988). It presents the truncated male nude and the painted photographic self-portrait. It retains an air of mystery despite its bold design and intense palette. This combination is characteristic of Bacon and can be found in works of all periods. Again, observation of the best of late Bacon disproves the common criticism that his late work was stale and repetitive.

A number of canvases that feature space-frames are substandard as art (cats. 16, 17, 20, 21, 24), though their inclusion for the sake of example is worthwhile. They demonstrate the problems Bacon had during the transitional 1957–62 period. Bacon took a risk in moving from a tenebrous dark-ground, cautious style to a more dramatic, highly coloured, high-risk style. These weak paintings play an essential part in the story of Bacon's transformation in his painting approach while also demonstrating how constant the use of internal spatial dividers was in his output.

Contributions to the catalogue raise more questions than they answer, but they are intelligent questions. All of these exhibitions and publications present us with more Bacon – the man and his art. Perhaps the questions and intriguing blank areas that remain only seem worth addressing because of the one immutable truth that underpins the art of Bacon: Francis Bacon was supremely gifted at conceiving and painting powerful works of art that have an enduring power to haunt us.