

Suffering of the Jews in Poland (no.87; Fig.80). An essay by Birgit Möckel tackles the question viewers will have asked of the drawings and prints addressing the Holocaust and other wartime travesties: namely, what kind of representations are these? Möckel considers them in relation to the tradition of British caricature embodied by Cruikshank, Gillray and Hogarth and identifies recurrences of motifs in certain Meidner images, yet finds that neither caricature nor satire fully characterise Meidner's pictorial operations. His treatments of the human condition are often both more cynical and more human, and usually grounded in his Jewish faith and experiences. Möckel, like Erik Riedel, reckons well with the imagery Meidner synthesises from his rich pictorial memory banks. Both scholars suggest that the key to much of the artist's cynical yet often humorous later works (his representations of cafés and variety theatres in the period 1942–53, for instance) may reside in a concept of the grotesque (no.124; Fig.81).

The project of honouring Meidner fifty years after his death was well served by this exhibition, curated by Birgit Sander of the Museum Giersch in collaboration with the Jewish Museum, Frankfurt. The richly documented, well-illustrated catalogue provides art historians with ample evidence and stimulus to reassess Meidner's achievements amid the confluences of fellow exiles and artists, political upheavals, anti-Semitism and the Holocaust, especially as they were figured in contemporary visual representations.

¹ Catalogue: *Eavesdropper on an Age: Ludwig Meidner in Exile*. Edited by Birgit Sander and the Museum Giersch der Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt am Main, with essays by Shulamith Behr, Birgit Möckel, Martina Padberg and Erik Riedel. 240 pp. incl. 208 col. ills. (Hirmer Verlag, Munich, 2016), €45. ISBN: 978-3-7774-2586-3.

² *Ludwig Meidner: Encounters* runs from 9th October to 5th February 2017 at the Mathildenhöhe; an exhibition devoted to Meidner and his contemporaries during the First World War is on view at the Kunst Archiv from 23rd October to 31st March 2017; Galerie Netuschil hosted works by Meidner and his pupil Jörg von Kittakittel (closed 24th September); the Stadtmuseum Hofheim exhibits a selection of Meidner's portraits from the 1950s and 1960s until 13th November; and the Jewish Museum will be the venue for a major symposium on Meidner from 16th to 18th January 2017.

Francis Bacon

Monaco and Bilbao; Liverpool and Stuttgart

by MARGARITA CAPPOCK

FRANCIS BACON'S LIFELONG passion for France and French art and culture is well documented. Many of Bacon's paintings are inspired by French artists such as Ingres, Degas, Manet, Toulouse-Lautrec and Gauguin, or indeed artists who lived there, such as Van Gogh, Giacometti and Picasso. Apart



82. *Fragment of a Crucifixion*, by Francis Bacon. 1950. Canvas, 140 by 108.5 cm. (Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven; exh. Grimaldi Forum, Monaco. © The Estate of Francis Bacon. All rights reserved. DACS 2016).

from Paris, Bacon spent significant periods of time in Monaco, with his longest stay there spanning the years 1946–49, when gambling at the Casino was a key attraction. It was in Monaco that he painted his first papal portrait, *Landscape with Pope/Dictator* (c.1946; not exhibited), and where he started to paint on the unprimed reverse of the canvas, a hugely significant change in his *modus operandi*. Bacon travelled extensively in the south of France from the 1950s onwards. From 1975 to 1987 he kept an apartment in Paris at 14 rue de Birague in the Marais district. Close French friends included Michel Leiris, Jacques Dupin, Claude Bernard, Eddy Batache and Reinhard Hassert.

Francis Bacon, Monaco and French Culture at the **Grimaldi Forum, Monaco** (closed 4th September), was the first Bacon exhibition to focus specifically on this French connection.¹ Its significance was demonstrated through

sixty-six paintings by Bacon accompanied by judiciously chosen works by artists who had inspired him. It was unique in that it featured both Bacon's first and last works, *Watercolour* (1929; cat. no.24) and *Study of a Bull* (1991; no.61). The exhibition had nine thematic sections: 'Influences', 'The Cry', 'The Human Body', 'The "Caverne Noire"', 'France and Monaco', 'The Triumph of the Grand Palais', 'Portraits', 'The Reece Mews Studio' and 'Final Works'. In response to the cavernous space of the Grimaldi Forum, a multi-purpose conference centre, the curator, Martin Harrison, and the in-house designers opted for a theatrical presentation in keeping with Bacon's own aesthetic. A debt to the influential stage designers Adolphe Appia (1862–1928) and Edward Gordon Craig (1872–1966) was evident in the use of verticals, horizontals and diagonals throughout and the bold, dramatic use of light. Metal structures were sus-



83. *Triptych*, by Francis Bacon. 1967. Canvas, left panel 198.8 by 148.3 cm; centre and right panels 198.8 by 148 cm. (Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington DC; exh. Staatsgalerie Stuttgart. © The Estate of Francis Bacon. All rights reserved. DACS 2016).

pended from the ceiling or used to divide rooms in reference to the cage motif in Bacon's art.

In the first room, *Watercolour* (no.24) and *Painting* (c.1930; no.26) were displayed alongside works by Léger, Toulouse-Lautrec and Jean Lurçat, demonstrating how early on Bacon's art was informed by French painting. One's eye was drawn inexorably to the next room, through a series of four vertical pillars, to a nineteenth-century copy of Velázquez's *Portrait of Innocent X* (no.47), the departure point for Bacon's most famous series of paintings. The verticality of the pillars echoed the striated or shuttered effect in many of Bacon's paintings from the 1950s. The 'Odessa Steps' sequence from Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* was shown on a loop, appropriately merging the painting and film in the visitor's mind. Placed in front of the Velázquez was a series of steps, suggesting that one should kneel in veneration. This device was employed again later in the exhibition, in front of *Triptych – Studies of the Human Body* (1970; no.51), to reference the steps and columns of the Grand Palais, where the triptych was first shown in Bacon's exhibition in 1971. However, the steps infer quasi-religious associations even though Bacon, a self-professed atheist, used the triptych format for purely secular purposes.

The 'Caverne Noire' featured works for which Bacon employed a very restricted palette. Enormous, rich velvet drapes in papal purple lined the walls and, coupled with exceptionally dim lighting, lent a majestic yet oppressive, claustrophobic air to the room. This reviewer felt that this room was over contrived and dark. More sympathetic lighting might have allowed the viewer to appreciate fully the subtleties of Bacon's colours and techniques, especially with works such as *Landscape near Malabata, Tangier* (1963; no.11)

and *Sea* (c.1953; no.43). *Study for Portrait of Van Gogh I* (1956; no.31) showed Bacon's emergence from these dark tones, which came to fruition in *Study for a Portrait of Van Gogh VI* (1957; no.32), exhibited in the next room. Its intense, vivid colours and gestural brushwork reflect Bacon's admiration for Chaim Soutine's Céret landscapes, of which a superb example, *Le Gros Arbre bleu* (c.1920–21; no.34), was included.

Several exceptional paintings devoted to the human body were featured, ranging from *Seated Figure* (1962; no.70) and *Figure in Movement* (1972; no.1) to *Man at Washbasin* (1989–90; no.63). *Seated Woman* (1961; no.36), one of the ten female nudes Bacon painted between 1959 and 1962, looked magnificent. Rodin's monumental *Muse Whistler, grand modèle* (1908; no.17) was apposite given the presence of Rodin's influence in most of Bacon's lying, reclining and sleeping figures from 1959 to 1961.² One notable omission was Ingres, whom Bacon certainly admired. A number of Bacon's paintings are variations on works by Ingres, although Bacon did not put him in the first rank, which may explain his exclusion.

Two sections were devoted specifically to French themes. Paradoxically, Bacon would destroy much of what he had painted in Monaco between 1946 and 1949, but its landscape features in works such as *Dog* (1952; no.10), in which the coast road with palm trees is based on postcards of Monaco. A further link was made concerning *Fragment of a Crucifixion* (1950; no.9; Fig.82), when the outline in black paint in the top-left corner was identified during the installation as being the shape of La Tête de Chien, a high rocky promontory above Monaco. The exhibition at the Grand Palais in 1971 was a triumph for Bacon. He painted five major triptychs for it

and other paintings such as *Lying Figure in a Mirror* (1971; no.52), which hung in close proximity to Picasso's *Femme couchée à la mèche blonde* (1932; no.50) in the present exhibition, a placement that works exceptionally well. The Grand Palais exhibition was marred by personal tragedy for Bacon when George Dyer died from an overdose at the Hôtel des Saints Pères in Paris on 24th October 1971, two days before the opening. *Portrait of a Man Walking Down Steps* (1972; no.13) is a deeply affecting painting and depicts Dyer on the steps of the hotel. The brighter lighting in the final room is in keeping with the subject of these late works, both of which highlight the artist's interest in bullfighting, which was partially inspired by Leiris's text *Miroir de la Tauromachie* (1938). In *Triptych* (1987; no.60), the violence of the bullfight is evoked through the gored limbs and the brooding presence of the bull.

Francis Bacon: Invisible Rooms at the **Staatsgalerie Stuttgart** (7th October to 8th January), seen by this reviewer at its previous venue, Tate Liverpool, also marks a first in terms of Bacon exhibitions by focusing on the linear framework known as the 'spaceframe' in Bacon's *œuvre* from the 1930s onwards.³ Featuring thirty paintings alongside drawings and items from Bacon's studio at 7 Reece Mews, it traces the development of this spatial motif throughout his career. The genesis of the exhibition lies with the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze, whose book *Francis Bacon: Logic of Sensation* (1981) analysed and classified these 'spaceframes'. Bacon employed versions of these devices from 1929 until 1988 and, according to Harrison in his new catalogue raisonné, they are present in approximately twenty-two per cent of his paintings.⁴

The purpose of this device is the delin-

ation and isolation of the space in which the body is placed. Bacon rejected any suggestion that the structures had a psychological dimension or were intended to convey isolation or claustrophobia, but explained them in formal terms as a device for concentrating the image and seeing it more clearly, referring to them as 'a box'. Many viewers of Bacon paintings focus on the contorted figures and the painterly quality of his work and overlook how skilled and, indeed, mathematically minded Bacon was in creating these complex structures, often using rulers and T-squares. This exhibition deftly draws attention back to this facet of Bacon's art.

The exhibition runs chronologically but works are arranged thematically over five rooms, starting with 'Crucifixion', followed by 'Cage', 'Subject' and 'Space, Arena', and ending with 'Mirror/Image'. It includes crucial works such as *Crucifixion* (1933), *Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion* (1944), *Figure Study II* (1945–46), *Man in Blue IV* (1954), *Chimpanzee* (1955) and, through to the 1980s, *Untitled (Kneeling Figure)* (c.1982). The groupings of paintings worked particularly well. *After Muybridge – Woman Emptying a Bowl of Water and Paralytic Child Walking on All Fours* (1965) and *Portrait of Isabel Rawsthorne Standing in a Street in Soho* (1967) look particularly strong together and demonstrate greater complexity in terms of Bacon's spatial arrangements.

Triptych (1967; Fig.83),⁵ one of Bacon's most complex works, is placed on a free-standing false wall alone and commands the visitor's attention. This is the pictorial embodiment of what Bacon meant when he spoke about using the device to intensify the figure. Through the geometrical structures one's attention is focused on the exquisite painterly quality of the sensuous nude figures and the heavily blood-stained pile of clothes. The drawings and original studio items on display serve to emphasise both how the theme of enclosure was a persistent one, and the principal formal devices Bacon used in his paintings, the rectilinear frame, circles, ellipses and arcs, are omnipresent. These exhibitions demonstrate two unique approaches to Bacon, and aficionados and newcomers to Bacon's art alike could not fail to be impressed by what they offer.

¹ Catalogue: *Francis Bacon: France and Monaco*. Edited by Martin Harrison, with contributions by Majid Boutany, Carol Jacobi, Rebecca Daniels et al. 240 pp. incl. 100 col. + b. & w. ill. (Heni Publishing, London, 2016), £35. ISBN 978-0-9568738-8-0. The exhibition is now on view in altered form at the **Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao**, where Bacon's connection to Spanish culture is emphasised; to 8th January.

² M. Harrison: exh. cat. *Movement and Gravity: Bacon and Rodin in Dialogue*, London (Ordovas) 2013, p.11.

³ The exhibition's catalogue is to be published upon the opening of its second leg in Stuttgart.

⁴ M. Harrison: *Francis Bacon: Catalogue Raisonné*. London 2016, 1, p.14; to be reviewed.

⁵ This work was previously known as *Triptych Inspired by T.S. Eliot's 'Sweeney Agonistes'*, but was recently re-titled in the catalogue raisonné as Bacon had always complained about its long title.

Venice, Jews and Europe 1516–2016

Venice

by MONICA CHOJNACKA

THE HISTORY OF Venice's Ghetto begins with the history of the word itself: *Ghetto*. When the Venetian Republic decided in 1516 to contain the Jews within one small area of the city – the condition for their being able to reside in Venice permanently – it chose an area long known in Venetian as the *Geto*, or Foundry, as this had been the site of an iron foundry centuries before. The first Jews to be forcibly relocated to the area were of Germanic origin; they (mis)pronounced their neighbourhood's name with a hard G, thus *Ghetto*. In this way, the term Ghetto became associated with Jews, and then ultimately with marginalisation, poverty and suppression. But the history of the Venetian Ghetto is about much more than marginalisation. This space fascinates for its uniquely Jewish aspects, but also for the ways in which it reflects a profoundly Venetian experience. To be sure, Venetian Jewish history must be studied apart from general Venetian history for the particular circumstances and experiences of its people. But in other ways the Venetian Ghetto functioned for centuries as a microcosm of social and economic developments unfolding across the city.

The exploration of both the unique and shared elements of the Venetian Jewish experience within the context of Venice's history is the great achievement of the exhibition *Venice, Jews and Europe, 1516–2016* at the **Doge's Palace, Venice** (to 13th November). This ambitious, if not always successful, installation combines interactive tools with original documents and carefully chosen works of art arranged in eleven rooms. Together, these different elements create an experience that can feel diffuse, but overall they offer the visitor a variety of ways to understand the significance of the Ghetto in the contexts of Jewish, Venetian and European history.

The show begins with a room dedicated to the condition of Jews in Europe and particularly in northern Italy before the establishment of the Ghetto in 1516. An informative video traces the spread of Jewish communities in the region in the eighteenth century. This succinct and accurate presentation is slightly undercut, unfortunately, by the fact that the video is located on a small screen in a corner and is visible to only a few people at a time; two or three screens placed strategically around the room would have allowed more visitors to begin their journey with this excellent introduction.

The presence of Jews in Venice in a separate but stable community was also characteristic of a greater social reality in the Republic. For the Jews were but one such community.



84. *Nobleman at his table*, by Giovanni Grevenbroch (1731–1807). From *Gli abiti de veneziani di quasi ogni età con diligenza raccolti e dipinti nel secolo XVIII*. Venice, second half of the eighteenth century. Drawing with watercolour, 28.8 by 20 cm. (Biblioteca del Museo Correr, Venice; exh. Doge's Palace, Venice).