

Francis Bacon at the Sainsbury, Norwich, 2015

Yes, now i see he is the most important post-picasso painter. Everywhere in art one is looking for the new way out and at least he has made an attempt. It is not successful but he is the best there is in that medium- although my opinion is not worth much in that regard. To me it is all self-portraiture- more than most. This stems from his iconoclasm. Listening to his conversations with David Sylvester (i slipped and spelt him Slyvester how apt and the little accidents Bacon is so fond of) the emphasis on instinct and chance is exactly my experience writing poetry. The issue can never be forced although once in my long poem "Supernumerary" i sustained it for 85 or so pages over one year but not all at the same level of intensity. It seems to me that his creativity partly arises from self-loathing and this is a reminder of how art, poetry arises from rubbish or what seems like rubbish to the observer. The studio is chaotic as he says like his mind but out of it these hallucinatory images come forth. Take "Marching Figures". Serried ranks of people march toward and into the rectilinear cage which to me represents space and time. He says its frequent use is to focus the image. Above the cage a sphinx-like image lies. This sums up the dilemma of the 20th century. Others have made similar statements but nowhere more succinctly. The early will of the wisp cruxifixion is another example of his genius in summing up the centuries ambiguity.

The furnace that was Bacon allows us who follow to try and discern a more optimistic view because whatever his denial to me he is persued by a torturing angel, his other half, who is sent as de Quincy puts it "to try the capacity of his spirit, a commission which from god we had."

There are so many good things in this exhibition comparing the influences on Bacon a roll call of genii- Michaelangelo, Rodin, Greece and Rome and Egypt, Velaquez, Picasso, a long list- see the book. Let me return later after a further digestion and the buried signs of a way out or as Byron said there is no way out.