

SOME CRITICAL NOTES ON MARTIN HARRISON'S "ESSAY" REGARDING THE DRAWINGS BEQUEATHED TO ME BY FRANCIS BACON.

BY

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I am aware this is only a quip, but I must say that the essay Martin Harrison made concerning the drawings the painter Francis Bacon gave me is incorrect, even concerning my name. My name is no longer Cristiano Ravarino but Cristiano **Lovatelli** Ravarino considering that the Lovatelli Del Colombo family legally adopted me years ago. For instance, it has been eight years that I have been signing my online newspaper in this way.

It may not be a crime legally, but culturally significant to be inaccurate, especially for a person whose aim is to be the accurate memorialist of Francis Bacon.

Martin Harrison's essay is not based upon facts, but a platonic idea he presents not only concerning my Bacon drawings, but the work of the artist himself, as I hope I will be able to demonstrate,

All the writing is based on taking for granted what is not at all granted!

Harrison writes for instance *(all the critical notes of MH will be quoted in block cursive characters)*

"There is evidence that at the very beginning of his career he made a few simple drawings..."

That is not enough. In general, during his lifetime he denied that he drew but in one of his last interviews to the Irish Times for instance the artist admitted that he did in fact draw, although not emphasizing the importance of that activity (he certainly could not admit he was giving away hundreds of drawings to me, completely beyond Marlborough's control).

"Sylvester again suggested that he did entirely without preliminary drawings..."

Drawing, for Bacon, was much more important than preliminary sketches or vague layouts. As ratification, one of the last works he made (or better...outlined) before he died, was a perfect, complete drawing on canvas ...See: *"A Terrible Beauty" Steidl editor, pg 46*. It is incomprehensible why such crucial evidence of the importance of drawing in the painter's work has been neglected (I don't want to say hidden) all these years and only quoted almost twenty years later in a specialized book. Maybe they are very absent-minded or maybe the subject, ultimately, is extremely "shifty". Or maybe in the UK, for the reference

authorities, there is no particular interest in being objective about the importance of drawing in the life of Francis Bacon.

"The profound differences between these notations and the works in the Ravarino collection make it difficult to find comparisons..." As Latin philosophers used to say: *NegoParitatem*

The specious syllogism on which all the conceptual architrave against the drawings the painter gave me is based goes something like this: *the only drawings that exist are the ones belonging to the Spender and Pollock collection and the graphic notations recovered in his Studio. The rest are forgeries.* There is only one little problem: the items recovered in Spender and Pollock's collection, and indeed most of the ones from his Studio are NOT drawings. They are hasty and clumsy black strokes of a paintbrush, frequently using a watercolour technique in order to jot down an idea for a later work, or even to make a dedication in a book. To maintain, as Martin Harrison does, that they are ambiguously different compared to my drawings is like saying that the bicycle Bacon used was different from the motorbike that he gave me!

"Typically Bacon placed an organic form within a geometric space made up of lines which enclosed and raised the figure, and those in Ravarino's do not. See Ravarino no. 4 drawing in Werkstatt catalogue..."

It's even embarrassing the level to which he manipulates the truth in his objections. Martin Harrison does not understand what he is talking about and could have at least asked me for explanations. No. Instead, in a very unassuming and sly way, he only asked me innumerable questions in many emails about the details of my friendship with the artist. He hoped that he could undermine my reputation. Going back to his doubts about drawing number four: The director of the Catalogue Raisonné states ex cathedra that for a drawing to be credible it must be a clone of a painting, even in the details. The geometric armature with which the artist frequently focused on and surrounded his figures was the enclosing and raising of a head... a Pope in the painting as *he* claims? And so it MUST be in the drawings. But who decided that? The painter, our Holy Lord, or simply the revealed truth? No, he himself, the antiquarian expert Martin Harrison. The amusing paradox, is that a great art historian like Brian Sewell (who contrary to Mr Harrison and all the functionaries of the Estate, was in close contact with the artist) wrote to my lawyers saying that a drawing to be very similar to a painting is not a good sign. Because to draw could have been, *should* have been, a way to renew his interest in experimenting, or also be a way to give thanks to a friend or a lover. But the exhilarating side of this high and mighty point of view is that Harrison made a blunder! The reason is very simple. What is under the shoulders of the Pope on pg 4 of the Werkstatt Gallery catalogue is NOT his typical geometric armature...but actually a throne! It may be stylised, but it is, in any case, a throne as Francis himself told me and as can be seen in some of his paintings. And that's not all. Frequently the painter stylised the throne with two or three simple vertical lines,

exactly like the Pope on the next page (5), but Harrison of course, didn't notice that...maybe because there weren't any dissimilarities to daydream about.

"There is a coagulation of non-representational marks in Bacon's works...most of his heads are more distorted than the heads in the Ravarino drawings..."

One of the elementary tricks in Harrison's essay is that he handles the drawings as though they are paintings...or better yet, criticizing the fact they are...*structurally*...different. I can believe it!! They are pencil drawings, not a coloured oil! *Coagulation, sharpness of the cheekbone*... he throws these terms slapdash in my face because, as I say again, they can only be used correctly for oil paintings. Not understanding that one of the (many) reasons Bacon drew was that he wanted to challenge the art world using the brittleness of a pencil which is such a weak medium, but at the same time, able to produce such masterpieces like the Renaissance masters he adored.

"Most of his heads are more distorted than..."

Two observations: MH is basing most of his observations on a Berlin exhibition of fifty of these drawings. Is he informed on all the others? No, since many haven't ever actually been exhibited. If he was a scientific art historian- as he claims to be- he would have me asked to see ALL the drawings and then he would have been able to criticize the *whole* corpus/body of sketches Francis gave to me. After the Courtauld "debate" regretfully failed, (*it would be more correct to call it a childish ambush... he formally invited ten or more of his experts and stated that indeed he would have invited mine...but nobody, not even me, received a formal invitation. So in order to enter the debate we had to ask permission*) I told him, which many emails can prove, that I was available to meet him (even though my lawyers disagreed) and *hundreds* of his experts and companions ALONE in a tavern in London while recording everything, they could have inundated me with billions of questions, having the possibility to torture me if they so wished. I wasn't scared because *I had nothing to hide*. Tell me, what better occasion could there have been to understand if I had any "skeletons in the cupboard" so to speak, to hold me to my responsibilities! Harrison never took advantage of this potentially crushing possibility. I suppose it is not in the least bit malicious to think that he is not interested in the truth at all...he that was so ready to trust the grotesque material coming from a pathetic individual in Italy who claimed that he knew the secrets of the corpus/body of drawings Francis gave to me...this was so absurd, to the point that I wrote him this email on the 17th of February 2012 at 5.23 PM:

Dear Mr Martin Harrison,

I'm sorry but I must tell you that I have nothing to do with that insane, ridiculous, daub, scribbled scrawls on which you tried to undermine the reputation of my drawings with Edward Lucie Smith.

A great art historian, or at least a remarkable antiquarian expert as you are quoted to be, should maybe have been a little more accurate (as I must say you incomparably are with Bacon materials) in checking the

sketches rumoured/heard to belong to my corpus/body of work...the gentleman from whom you received the materials is an ill, crazy person who had been sentenced innumerable times in Italy for defamations, false accusations, embezzlement, and is also known to have been in prison for forgeries...We can send you his judicial register if you need. They all know, in Italy, he is believed to be a desperate sewer rat and an embarrassment to art critics...see - if you have the time - the article (not sued) that one of the most serious Italian investigative art newspapers "Kengarags" wrote on a short while ago...

I wonder how it is possible that you can even imagine there is some similarity between the drawings Francis gave me and the ridiculous squiggles you so much overvalue.

What you have done is equivalent to some drunkard from Birmingham writing me saying that you had murdered Aldo Moro in Italy and I being authorized, acting like you, to write an article on: "Martin Harrison. The wretched killer." Or famous member of the red brigade, Mr Martin Harrison. Associated with Marlborough in secret financial society in Liechtenstein". Well, joking aside, thank you dear Harrison (not being sarcastic) to have let me understand at what level we are moving on.

I'm so sorry the art historian friend of yours felt squalid after seeing my drawings by Bacon in the Cork Gallery in London (like a friend of mine who tried to kill himself after he read one of your books. People's reactions are unpredictable). I hope she will not sue me for visual damage...but please, if you can, reassure her that, on the contrary, many people not only enjoyed but were stunned by the beauty of the drawings as innumerable visiting cards with lovely words left in the gallery can testify...but they are still not forgeries!

I asked my Trust to submit two pastels to your scientific Institute, but after you took a person and his documentary garbage seriously - of whom all of Italy laugh at, I'm sorry to say that you can understand why they no longer trust the operation...As for me I'll still remain available, as I promised, to meet you and one hundred suspicious, merciless, functionaries of the Bacon Committee when and where you like.

All my best regards to you to be luckier examining discharged "critical" news coming from Italy.

Yours faithfully,

Cristiano LovatelliRavarino

The gist of the speech by Martin Harrison against my drawings is: Bacon's paintings were material, while the (Lovatelli) Ravarino sketches are linear, SO they are different, SO they aren't good.

What a pity Francis was a genius but not such a genius to be able to use a pencil like a paint brush.

Obviously he *remained* a painter and sometimes in some ways he used a pencil like a paint brush,very often using a pencil eraser on these drawings for example. The problem

with the author of the Catalogue Raisonné is that not only did he not see the whole corpus/body of the items Francis gave me but, respectfully, one wonders if he also looked carefully at all his paintings. Take at random for instance one of the innumerable books written on the artist: "Francis Bacon: painter of a Dark Vision" By Christophe Domino, H.N.Abrams Discoveries published, 1997.

Harrison proclaims "**What we experience as seeing an eye and a socket in Bacon is like a collection of swatches of paint in Rembrandt** (*he is talking of paintings!! Editor's note*), **none of them literally and entirely describe the structure of an eye. The eyes in the drawings in the Ravarino collection such as Ravarino 2010 no.39 and no 4 are composed of a circular pupil sometimes with a small black circle within...Bacon would call this "illustrational"...**"

I don't want to be offensive but I seriously wonder if Mr Harrison doesn't need to start seeing a better ophthalmologist. Let us check the C. Domino book. Even the front page belies the art critic. It is a portrait of Lucien Freud. One eye is totally blown up except for a trail of eyelashes (in apparent sympathy with Harrison's suspicious anti-figurative code. But the other is, totally FIGURATIVE! One can easily discern the pupil, the socket, the eyelash, even the cornea. And so the eyes are totally figurative (only in Domino's book) of Henrietta Moraes's triptych pg 11, in Isabel Rawsthorne triptych pg 43, in John Edward's triptych pg 43, in George Dyer's portrait pg 47, in John Edward's portrait pg 48, in Isabel Rawsthorne portrait pg 74, in the self-portrait pg 76, in (one of the eyes) Self Portrait pg 79, in section two of the triptych of Lucien Freud pg 95, in (one of the eyes) the Portrait of Henrietta Moraes pg 96 and so on, but the very peak of the hoax by Mr. Harrison is in his examples against my drawings. He brands the eyes and the drawing number (pg) 39 of the Berlin catalogue as: "too illustrational and figurative." Well, please enlighten me of any illustrational and figurative elements in the head of this drawing. One eye is replaced by a kind of lava flow.

The face is more than a face and seems like a larval brain exploding out of the skull. The only eye which surfaces more than an eye looks like a painful dark slit typical of many paintings by the artist. Exactly contrary to what Mr Harrison wrote! It is still not enough. In this catalogue part of the eyes, as in many canvases by the artist, are figurative. But in many, if not mostly, they are NOT!

Look at the drawings on pgs 9,10,12,16,17,20,23,32,41,42,50... they seem to be more than anatomical eyes. They are dirty wounds, dark sores, and also when there is the classical layout of the eyes as in pages 12 and 32 they look more than anatomical organs, but electrical light bulbs at the point of disintegration.

So respectfully, I wonder again...about which drawings is Mr Harrison jabbering...Certainly not about mine??? The entire Harrison essay is based upon manipulative technique. He proclaims a holy paradigm which is based upon a distorted vision of his warped reasoning not only concerning the drawings Bacon gave to me, but the paintings of the artist himself. HIS distorted paradigm (founded upon examples which sometimes belie themselves such as the Berlin drawing on pg 39) becomes the Table of

the Law from which obviously, all the materials that are compatible in my corpus/body of work are carefully rejected.

It is not enough. Also, in a recent controversial legal action in which the brother of the universal heir of beloved Francis John Edwards was involved, Mr. Martin Harrison persisted in denying the truth about ME and the drawings in such a clumsy and awkward way that he appears like a kind of desperate accuser. My lawyer's book "The challenge of authenticity" superbly reflects this **manipulation** but let me be even more detailed about some of HARRISON'S untrue affirmations.

He claims: "The note allegedly signed by Francis Bacon dated April 2, 1988 where Bacon is said to have bequeathed these drawings to him (Ravarino) was typed out on what Ravarino had admitted *was his typewriter ...*" . I never said, wrote, emailed, or suggested that...We were in Venice and we used the hotel's old-fashioned typewriter...It would have been very strange to take a heavy typewriter with me, but obviously Harrison invents this detail to insinuate that with MY typewriter I was freer to write what I wanted....

Harrison continues to state:"MrRavarino has admitted *that his story* about meeting Bacon near Bologna in 1980 through one Bernard Sellin was *fabricated* and claims he was encouraged to do that by the sub editor of an Italian publication, La Repubblica." Mr Harrison ought to be ashamed of his defamatory fantasies. I feel ashamed for him. As the email we have can prove, I ONLY admitted that my sub editor told me to re-quote the name of this friend of Francis 'though I was unsure of his surname...it was similar, but not exactly Sellin. So I admitted that I was inaccurate in quoting one surname (as Harrison is incorrect when quoting mine, for instance) in the article. NOT THAT I INVENTED THE MEETING WITH THE PAINTER...

Harrison claims:"Ravarino has published for many years *a photograph* showing Bacon in Panarea Sicily in 1990 with the credit:"Photo LovatelliRavarino" Bacon had copies of the Panarea photographs and I have established that the photographs were taken by Mr Barry Joule and he has now under threat of being sued promised to write to Mr Joule to apologise. "

Some observations: Mr Harrison is, as usual, wrong. In these years I have not published just one photograph of Bacon's holidays in Sicily. I've published DOZENS. Years ago the art deputy editor of the prestigious Spanish El Pais newspaper wrote to me asking how I was able to obtain these pictures that his newspaper had been desperately looking for as they were the only photos in which the painter is seen with his last significant lover, the Spanish JosèCapello. I replied that it was very simple: Francis told me where they were. I went to the Villa of Giulio Contarini (a close friend of the painter in the seventies) in Panarea where Francis had been his guest and he told me that a handyman of his, to whom I have paid the rights, took the pictures. This was the reason why I published the photographs writing: Photos: Cristiano LovatelliRavarino. Not because I said (as Harrison wretchedly insinuates, as usual) I was with the artist in Sicily but because I thought I lawfully had the rights. Barry Joule was in Sicily in that period with the artist and to be correct I replied to Mr Harrison saying that IF it could be proven that the pictures, or some of the pictures, were taken not by Contarini's handyman, but by Mr Joule, I would have dutifully written my apologies to him. Nobody told me of a lawsuit, as the inaccurate Harrison proclaims. Barry Joule, a person who is very sensitive about money, asked me

for 5,000 pounds around two years ago, which I refused to give him because there was no evidence that the pictures, or at least some of them, were actually taken by him.

Mr Harrison had been even able to threaten some crucial witnesses of my story, such as Brian and Lynn Hayhowand Maggie Shearer, calling at their homes without warning and hissing: "*Oh you really exist! You are not a fantasy of Mr Ravarino!*".... Let me please point out how grotesque is to be doubtful or unaware (from a supposed reference authority on Bacon's paintings and biography) of some of the most important friends the artist had in his life. For example, Maggie was living in Suffolk at the time, and her friendship with Francis was very, very close. It was the 1980s. And on one occasion John Edwards said to her, 'Well, I know that you have a bit of cocaine with you, and Francis would like to try some.' So, Francis and Maggie found themselves upstairs, and they did a line, this being a party, and Francis said, 'Yes! This is very, very nice!' So, with this show of trust you can say Maggie and Francis were very, very close friends. I don't know if he ever tried it again. Even with Harrison's menacing attempts to suborn these witnesses against me, he still had a huge problem: unlike him they knew Francis, they knew how much drawing was important to him, they knew - though vaguely - about me. Mr Harrison had been invited to go away...They respected Francis' memory, not Mr Harrison's deceitful malevolent innuendos.