

The Unbearable Lightness Of Witnessing

Studies Of A Self-Portrait

«If I go into a butcher's shop I always think it's surprising that I wasn't there instead of the animal.» Francis Bacon

Witnessing violence

You might not see its traces on your body, but you will certainly find them somewhere, between your first and second skin, in the salt of your bones or perhaps, in your spine. How can I face this immense violence surrounding me? How can I frame it, make it bearable?

These questions have led me to rediscover Bacon's portraits, which at times appear to be witnessing pain, and others to be engulfed by it. Was Bacon «studying» how to trace the effects of pain on our «skins» - the wrapping of our souls - when he painted them?

Bacon was surprised not to find himself «there instead of the animal .”

For eighteen months now I have been wondering: is this not my own flesh that hangs there? *

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When I started with this project my main concern was to find an outlet to the images of violence that had become part of my daily life. Whenever I'd see them, my shadow-hand would grope the areas of my face. I would wonder whether the hole in that man or woman's face has penetrated my face too... Is my mouth, which had become an extension of the remains of another's face, still in its place?

There is only one way to bear a violent scene: to pretend that the person in the image exists only inside the screen, as if one is watching a fictional film, certain that what one sees has never happened. I hold my breath, remove my glasses, and often mute the sound in an attempt to glean any context or meaning from the scene.

It is impossible to understand the reasons why someone would exercise violence on another's body.

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When I revisited the faces of Francis Bacon, or his heads as he called them, they appeared to me as a reflection of the pain resulting from the violence that had been exerted upon them.

A lot of flesh in his works, mutilated flesh taking shapes thought to be those of humans. The same flesh that Bacon painted there allegorically was real. I began seeing his pictures on the screens, and so knew I had to stop watching.

The Unbearable Lightness of Witnessing is an expression of what the soul becomes when watching those who are now nothing but these lumps of flesh. It is also an attempt to

become one with them.

If my face were to take on the form of my feelings, the pictures you are seeing would be the image of my face, *witnessing*.

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*Beginning of the Revolution in Syria