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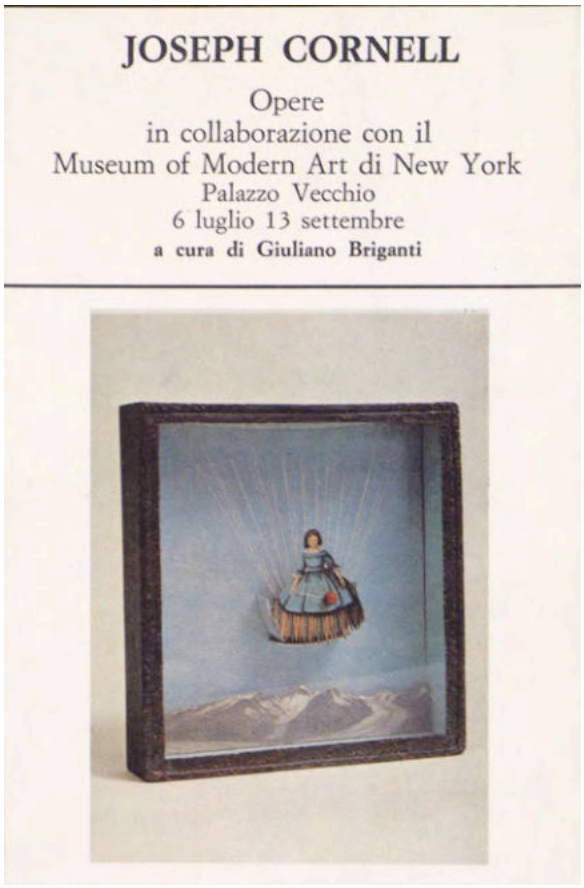

GEOGRAPHIES OF SURREALISM

THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF THE MOVEMENT: UNITED STATES AND ITALY

ÉDITIONS MÉLUSINE 2021

GEOGRAPHIES OF SURREALISM

THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF THE MOVEMENT: UNITED STATES AND ITALY

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GEOGRAPHIES OF SURREALISM: INTRODUCTORY NOTES

By evoking the "geographies" of Surrealism and the internationalisation of the movement in the title of this issue, we intend to respond to a line of research that has received particular attention in recent times. The issue is one that, in a certain sense, characterized the history of this avant-garde, even before the outbreak of the Second World War and before the consequent diaspora from France of many intellectuals led to its dissemination overseas. A proof of how this trend has become dominant in many lines of research is also the fact that at the time of writing these notes an important international exhibition is about to be inaugurated at the Metropolitan Museum of New York, and then to be moved to the Tate Modern in London, with the programmatic title of *Surrealism Beyond Borders*.

At the same time, choosing two countries such as the United States of America and Italy as case studies might seem strange or contradictory, given that, at least at first glance, the impact of the Surrealist movement in these two nations appears diametrically opposed in terms of importance and consequences. For the United States, in fact, there is a long tradition of research aimed at investigating the spread of Surrealism throughout the nation, traditionally considered, alongside abstract art movements, as one of the two essential artistic stimuli that contributed to the mature development of a fully and authentically American art: a line of investigation that has grown steadily over time and continues to be topical, as demonstrated, for example, by the recent exhibition held in Marseille and entitled *Le surréalisme dans l'art américain.*

Quite different is the case in Italy, where Surrealism appeared as a foreign body difficult to interpret and in any case to be rejected, not only – as might seem obvious – in the years of the Fascist dictatorship, in which the avant-garde currents were obviously not well viewed by the official culture, but also in the post-war period, in which, paradoxically, the movement founded by Breton was at the centre of polemics and rejections that came from different and sometimes antithetical intellectual circles (from Catholic to Marxist ones), which nevertheless clustered around the rejection of an avant-garde that was in fact still poorly known (we may think of the two culminating moments of this controversy, the Venice *Biennali* of 1948 and 1954). The Italian reception of Surrealism was therefore controversial and problematic, and has recently been the subject of a lively season of studies.

Such an abundance of research in both these areas could be discouraging, yet the field of investigation still appears very vast and open to further study. In particular, with regard to the present issue of Mélusine, we have tried to privilege innovative and specific case studies that present new documentary evidence; with regard to Italy, moreover, we have considered it appropriate to extend the spectrum of analysis to a series of artists who fall within a broader definition of fantastic art, given the particular way in which Surrealism was received in the peninsula. Finally, an attempt has been made to create a bridge between the two sections of the issue which, although dealing with different periods (the American part focuses on the years between the two wars and the Italian one on the post-war period), are in some way linked (in at least half of the essays proposed) by an ideal journey from the United States to Italy of some of the artists examined. Thus, symbolically, the first part closes with a contribution on Milton Gendel, who moved from New York to Rome; and the Italian section features artists who were active in both countries, from the Italian-American Surrealist Enrico Donati to figures such as Pavel Tchelitchew, Eugène Berman, and Carlyle Brown; finally, one essay addresses the issue of the Italian reception of Joseph Cornell.

With regard to the American section, Carlotta Castellani analyses, on the basis of archive material, a selection of films made by Hans Richter between the 1920s and 1940s, highlighting how the artist expresses himself in ways that are sometimes based on the paratactic structure of Dadaist collage,

and sometimes on the liberating and subversive character of Surrealist cinema. From the objective of freely investigating the characteristics of film in terms of movement and rhythm of vision one moves on, in the American period, to a focus on the potential of this medium in the investigation of the unconscious in psychoanalytic terms.

Alice Ensabella investigates the issue of the circulation of art works from the early Surrealist period between Europe and the United States, focusing in particular on the private collections of the movement's members, which were the object of interest on the part of American museum curators, collectors and gallery owners. The paradigmatic example taken into consideration is that of the purchases made by Pierre Matisse and Alfred Barr in the summer of 1935 (respectively for the Giorgio de Chirico solo show in the autumn of that year at the Pierre Matisse Gallery and for the exhibition *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism* in 1936), which make it possible to highlight both the awareness of the protagonists of the Surrealist movement regarding the cultural but also financial value of their collections, and the economic fortune that Surrealist art enjoyed on the American market as early as the mid-1930s.

Serena Trinchero's paper reconstructs the critical reception of Surrealism in the American modernist magazines published in Europe since 1921 by American writers and artists. Through an excursus that covers a period of about ten years, she outlines the way Surrealist instances were reinterpreted and transformed for the American public. In particular, emphasis is placed on the market practices of the Surrealists, who saw in these magazines a possibility to support their strategies and an ideal opening towards American collectors, as well as on the artistic preferences of American expatriates, which focused in particular on the figures of Giorgio de Chirico and André Masson, the latter considered by them as the emblematic figure of the cultural legacy of Surrealism.

Valeria Romano's essay analyses the exhibition *20th Century Portraits*, which took place at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1942-1943, and the figure of its curator, Monroe Wheeler. The author examines the organization of the exhibition, made difficult by the particular historical period, its significance within MoMA's exhibition program, and the particular curatorial choices in which the Surrealist artists were given significant space, starting with Salvador Dalí, of whom five works were exhibited, and continuing with Leonora Carrington, Paul Delvaux, Marcel Duchamp, Max Ernst, Frida Kahlo, Man Ray, André Masson, Joan Miró and Kurt Seligmann. In particular, it is pointed out that Wheeler's elegant and refined exhibition, to be understood as following Alfred Barr's example, had opened only a few weeks after a much more famous and disruptive exhibition, *First Papers of Surrealism*. It may seem strange that Breton, fresh from that event, had somehow collaborated with Wheeler's exhibition, so far from his conceptual horizon. Romano investigates this last aspect, providing a series of hypotheses, also in the light of the difficult situation Breton was going through during his years of exile and of his weakened charisma.

Camilla Froio sheds light on the complex relationship between the critic Clement Greenberg and the Surrealist movement, starting from a trip, reconstructed on the basis of archive documents, undertaken by the young critic in the spring of 1939 in Europe and in particular in Paris. A few months later, Greenberg published the essay *Avant-Garde and Kitsch*, in which he criticized the Surrealist conception of painting, a criticism he renewed in *Towards a Newer Laocoon.* However, a few years later, going beyond both his own aesthetic perspective and the superficial reading of the movement that was widespread among American critics at the time, Greenberg demonstrated a new critical awareness, dedicating an essay to Surrealist painting in which he abandoned his original polemical vein to attribute to the movement the historical importance that he had denied it until recently.

Barbara Drudi concludes the American section with an in-depth examination of the figure of Milton Gendel, photographer, art critic and writer, born in New York in 1918 but Roman by adoption from 1949. In particular, an analysis of his writings dedicated to his formative years in New York and of some of his photographs is proposed, which makes it possible to highlight how Gendel's notable affinities with the culture of "Surrealism in exile" strongly connoted his artistic and literary production, although he was somewhat reluctant to admit it.

The second part identifies a number of case studies relating to the penetration of Surrealism and fantastic art in post-war Italy through some insights into the history of exhibitions and collecting. For the most part, these were artists from the United States: former exiles from Europe to America at the time of Nazism, second-generation American Surrealists and neo-romantic painters ascribable to a broader trend of fantastic art. The role played by some leading galleries, which were among the first in post-war Italy to devote more than sporadic attention to international Surrealism and fantastic art, emerges clearly in the essays proposed: the Cavallino in Venice (from 1942) and the Naviglio in Milan (from 1946), both run by Carlo Cardazzo, and the Galleria dell'Obelisco, directed in Rome from 1946 by Gaspero del Corso and Irene Brin.

In her contribution Caterina Caputo recalls that Cardazzo was the first to publish Breton's first *Manifesto* in Italian in 1945 and reconstructs some exhibitions of Surrealists hosted in the 1950s in his galleries in Milan and Venice (Enrico Donati, Roberto Matta and Victor Brauner). According to the author, 'Cardazzo strove to become the exclusive representative in Italy of the Surrealist artists who most closely adapted to the line of action that distinguished his galleries, which he had moulded around the researches of Spatial Art and the art informel movements.' Before finding a more stable home at Il Cavallino, Enrico Donati had exhibited for the first time in Italy in 1950 with three shows in rapid succession, reconstructed in detail by Claudio Zambianchi: at the Galleria del Milione in Milan, at the Venice Biennale and at the Obelisco in Rome (a text by Breton, reused several times, appeared in the exhibition leaflet in the latter case). Donati, an Italian painter naturalized in the United States in 1940, thanks to the mediation of Lionello Venturi had come into the good graces of Breton, who had included him in the important exhibition *Le Surréalisme en 1947* at the Galerie Maeght. Favoured by the good offices of Daria Guarnati, a friend of Rodolfo Pallucchini and Giò Ponti, he succeeded in presenting works influenced by Matta and Gottlieb in Italy, now almost forgotten by critics.

In addition to Donati, Eugene Berman, Pavel Tchelitchew, and the latter's pupil Carlyle Brown also travelled from the United States to Italy. The first two have in common their Russian origins, their Parisian debut in 1926 among Waldemar George's "neo-humanists", and their American success as neo-romantics in the second half of the 1930s thanks to the support of Chick Austin Jr., Julien Levy and James Thrall Soby; furthermore, both chose Rome as their last residence and exhibited at the Obelisco.

Giulia Tulino reconstructs Tchelitchew's move to Italy in 1952 together with his companion Charles Henry Ford, editor in New York of the Surrealist-inspired magazine *View*. The author highlights the role of Fabrizio Clerici, who introduced the Russian artist to Gaspero del Corso (as he had also done for Berman); moreover, she mentions the important role played by Cardazzo, who was often a partner of L'Obelisco for surrealist exhibitions. Under the influence of Quattrocento art and Renaissance perspective treatises, in Rome Tchelitchew experimented for the first time with unprecedented geometric mannequins constructed by linear interweaving.

His pupil Carlyle Brown, who arrived in the Italian capital in 1948, also transposed the Surrealist impulses already matured under the influence of his master in a neo-metaphysical direction, perceptible particularly in the theme of still lifes. Peter Benson Miller proposes a circular reading of his 1950 works depicting *Plates of Eggs*, involving multiple references to works by artists and photographers gathered in the lively Roman post-war melting pot: from Cagli's still lifes of the same period, to Matta's "phosphorescences", to the photographs of Herbert List (who, among other things, painted a fine portrait "with eggs" of Brown in Rome), to the abstract experiments of the photographer Pasquale De Antonis.

Eugene Berman, best known as a set designer for opera and ballet in the United States and then also in Europe, saw in his "journey to Italy" a reunion with an ideal homeland, constructed starting in his Parisian years on the model of de Chirico's metaphysics. Highlighting his conscious place within a fantastic art in free dialogue with tradition, Ilaria Schiaffini reconstructs his real journey, which took him as far as Rome, and his imaginary one: a dreamlike and melancholic fantasy on the ruins of the past interpreted by the pen of Raffaele Carrieri, his first Italian mentor, in Berman's portfolio of lithographs *Viaggio in Italia*, published by Piero Fornasetti in 1951.

On the basis of previously unpublished documents, Alessandro Nigro proposes an investigation into Leonor Fini's collecting in Italy in the 1950s and 1960s, and in particular into the collection of Renato Wild, who brought together some 20 of the artist's most important canvases in his splendid villa on Lake Como; Wild was an eccentric figure who was also interested in design, and Nigro offers for the first time a historical-critical reconstruction of him, comparing him in the final part of the essay with another important Surrealist collector, Edward James, whom Wild had met.
The last essay, by Eva Francioli, again addresses the difficult reception of Surrealism in Italy through the case of an eccentric artist, Joseph Cornell, who can only be partially placed within the galaxy of the movement. According to the author's reconstruction, his first major Italian anthological exhibition in Florence in 1981, part of a tour that started in New York and came to Italy thanks to the involvement of Giuliano Briganti, was appreciated by the critics but was a failure as far as the visitors were concerned. Presented as a master of the avant-garde and as the 'father of Pop Art', Cornell nonetheless entered a major exhibition circuit that made him known in Italy as well.

As editors of issue 3 of *Mélusine numérique,* we would like to express our deep gratitude to APRES (Association pour la recherche et l'étude du surréalisme) and its president, Henri Béhar, for the attention they have paid to our project; we are also extremely grateful to Elza Adamowicz and Peter Dunwoodie, who took care of the French translations; we would also like to thank Camilla Froio and Giulia Tulino, who were responsible for the editorial coordination of the issue. Finally, our sincere thanks go to all the authors for accepting our invitation and for the effort they put into their contributions.

Alessandro Nigro and Ilaria Schiaffini

FROM DADAISM TO SURREALISM AND BACK: HANS RICHTER'S EXPERIMENTAL FILMS BETWEEN BERLIN (1926) AND NEW YORK (1947)

Carlotta CASTELLANI

The Role of Film in Hans Richter's Poetics

In his writings on the history of Dadaism, the German artist, filmmaker, and activist Hans Richter focused his attention on the Dadaist constructive force, whose intrinsic fluidity was able to transcend national and historical boundaries[1]. After World War II, Richter's project to resurrect Dada – which he believed had never disappeared – was nourished by the conviction that Surrealism was an integral part of Dadaism and that there was a continuous exchange of ideas and practices between the two movements: 'neither Dada nor Surrealism is an isolated phenomenon. They cannot be separated […]. They are basically a single coherent experience […].'[2] In his 1926's article 'History is what is happening today', Richter considered the specific field of art history as a 'unity of connections' between the 'driving forces of an epoch'[3]: art history could represent a 'Manifesto' for today's art 'by indicating not what has been done, but what should be done[4]'. Following this idea of history, the mutual exchanges between Dadaism and Surrealism in Richter's theory and works can be visualized as a dynamic process structured in the form of a network of horizontal connections[5]. This unity of connections can be observed through the lens of film making, the field in which Richter had been most active as an artist. In the wake of Malte Hagener's studies on the importance of networks of the European film avant-garde, the aim of this article is to examine Hans Richter's experimental filmmaking from the 1920s to 1940s to highlight how, in a fluid interchange of practices, the artist drew on the ideas of both Dadaism and Surrealism: indeed, both movements had considered cinema as a model of subversion of reality and as a tool to put the subconscious at the service of a new conception of art.[6]

Hans Richter's documents at the Museum of Modern Art Archive, New York and at the Getty Research Institute Archive, Los Angeles were studied thanks to a post-doctoral CIMA (Center of Italian Modern Art) Fellowship in 2019. These documents, both in German and English, are sometimes very ungrammatical due to their private nature.

[1] Richter published a number of books on the history of Dada: *Dada Profile. Mit Zeichnungen, Photos, Dokumenten*, Zürich: Verlag Die Arche, 1961; *Dada Kunst and Anti-Kunst*, Köln: DuMont Schauberg, 1964; *Begegungen von Dada bis heute*, Köln: DuMont Schauberg, 1973; *Der Kampf Um den Film Für Einen Gesellschaftlich Verantwortlichen Film,* Munich: Hanser 1976.

[2] Richter, Hans. *Dada Art and Anti-Art*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1997, p. 195.

[3] Richter, Hans. 'Geschichte ist das, was heute geschiet [History is what is happening today]', *G: Zeitschrift für elementare Gestaltung* 5/6 (April 1926): p. 103.

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] I refer to the title of Malte Hagener's study, *Moving Forward, Looking Back: The European Avant-Garde and the Invention of Film Culture, 1919–1939*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007.

[6] A tool for a 'mobilization of the subconscious in the service of a new conception of art', as Richter describes it in *Dada Art and Anti-Art*, p. 195.

Film as Art: the Season of the Avant-garde

Considered by Apollinaire in 1917 as a fundamental development of modernity[7], cinema came into full contact with the artistic avant-garde in the early 1920s, when the category of 'Film as Art' distinguished itself from the rest of the film industry's output[8]. Avant-garde artists saw cinema as the ideal tool to test scientific discoveries and technological progress, as well as to stimulate a socially engaged type of art. As many scholars have argued, the mechanical, time-based image of the new medium certainly expressed the dynamism of modernity, but also reflected the relativity (and limits) of human perception as a time-based process, with clear references to recent discoveries in the field of physics. Moreover, the first avant-garde films had forced viewers to overcome a passive type of vision, showing them unknown and unexpected points of view on reality. It is therefore not surprising that in various avant-garde contexts artists turned to experimenting with film to explore new creative horizons.

As one of the leading figures of Dadaism and a follower of Ludwig Rubiner's utopian ideal of universal brotherhood, in the 1920s Hans Richter tried to condense his ethical and political ideals into filmmaking practice: he saw such experiments as the foundation of a new international language (a 'universelle Sprache') - one that would connect not only artists but even nations. Understanding the potential of the medium, Hans Richter worked on an abstract film language in collaboration with Viking Eggeling, focusing on the principle of 'rhythmus' as an expression of a cinematic vitalism, with an approach 'not restricted to the 'recording' and 'revealing' of the visible world', but also considering the vital exchange between the embodied spectator and the film body'.[9] The two artists called this type of experiments 'Absolute Film'[10] (1920-1925). Richter was convinced that cinema would open up new horizons of knowledge of the world, allowing the limits of human consciousness to be transcended, and claimed that his abstract films were able to reveal new perspectives: 'Film has added a new dimension to the optical consciousness of today's humans [...]. Film is a new truth. [...] the battles that for more than two generations have been waged, beginning

[7] He mentioned directly cinema in the conference entitled 'L'esprit nouveau et les poètes' held on November 26, 1917. See Cohen, Nadja. 'Scénarios, 'poèmes cinématographiques', 'ciné-poèmes'. À la conquête de nouveaux territoires', in *Ead. Les Poètes modernes et le cinéma (1910-1930)*, pp. 327-398.

[8] For the history of the medium, see: Hammond, Paul. *The Shadow and Its Shadow: Surrealist Writings on the Cinema*. Edinburgh: Polygon 2000; Lawder, Standish. *The Cubist Cinema*, New York: New York University Press, 1975; Kuenzli, Rudolf E. (ed.), *Dada and Surrealist Film,* New York: Willis Locker and Owens, 1996; Elsaesser, Thomas. 'Dada/Kino? Die Avantgarde und das frühe Filmerlebnis', in *Filmgeschichte und frühes Kino. Archäologie eines Medienwandels*, München: edition text + kritik, 2002; Levi, Pavle. *Cinema by Other Means*, Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press: 2012; Elder, R. Bruce. *Dada, Surrealism and the Cinematic Effect*, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2013; *Id. Cubism and Futurism. Spiritual Machines and the Cinematic Effect*, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2018.

[9] See Pollmann, Inga. *Cinematic Vitalism*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017, p. 48. See also Castellani, Carlotta. 'La rivista "G" tra modernismo e Lebensphilosophie', in *Ricerche di Storia dell'arte* 113 (2014): pp.16-26.

[10] See Westerdale, Joel. '3 May 1925: French and German Avant-Garde Converge at Der absolute Film', in *A New History of German Cinema*, (eds.) Jennifer M. Kapczynski and Michael D. Richardson, Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2012, pp. 160–165.

with painting in all the arts, for the sake of a new optical outlook, new optics, have actually led to film'.[11]

In a note from the early 1950s, kept in Hans Richter's archive, the artist confirmed this opinion by stating that cinema in the early 1920s was part of modern art because it was the spontaneous development and the only solution to the artistic problems raised by Futurism, Dadaism, Surrealism and Abstract Art. In Richter's words, the artistic promises of all these movements could only be achieved 'kinematiquement'[12]. This was the main aspect of the experimental phase of abstract cinema in the 1920s, as Richter explained to his American student Jonas Mekas in an interview in 1957:

> We discovered film as a visual art, and we wanted to use the film not to present a drama or a story, but to explore the possibilities of this new visual medium. We embarked at the time, like Sinbad the Sailor, on discoveries in the realm of abstract, fantastic and documentary film. They were all 'Avantgarde' at that time. The experimental film was not yet split up into categories and defined as it is today.[13]

The utopian idea of the unifying power of cinema was confirmed by the fact that it was under its banner that, after the German isolation following the end of the First World War, important international relations were rebuilt, in particular with France and Russia. As Malte Hagener has pointed out: 'On November 1921, Louis Delluc screened *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* at the cinema Colisée in Paris […] this event broke the French boycott as the successful reception of *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* brought other German films into French cinemas.'[14] Important international contacts took place in the mid-1920s and helped the film avant-garde to cross national borders. In May 1925, the *Filmmatinee* 'Der Absolute Film' (3-10 May 1925) opened in Berlin with screenings of 'abstract' films by Hans Richter, Viking Eggeling and Walter Ruttmann as well as Fernand Léger and Dudley Murphy's *Images mobiles* [*Ballet Mécanique*, 1924] [15] and René Clair and Francis Picabia's *Entr'acte*[16]. Richter realized that French filmmakers had succeeded in producing films that, although not abstract, were essentially based on rhythm[17]. Furthermore, the nonsense underlying the film sequences reflected a Dadaist taste bordering on Surrealism. Richter did not consider these films in contrast to his abstract works; on the contrary, the French production with its clear orientation towards 'surrealistic dreams'[18] was a real revelation for

[11] 'Der Film hat dem optischen. Bewusstsein des heutigen Menschen eine neue Dimension hinzugefügt […] Der Film ist eine neue Wahrheit. […] die Kämpfe, die über zwei Generationen von der Malerei ausgehend in allen Künsten um eine neue optische Anschauung, um eine neue Optik ausgefochten wurden', Richter, Hans. 'Zur Stärkerung unseres Bewusstseins!', *G* 5/6 (April 1926).

[12] 'En effet, tous les arts modernes ont donné cette promesse: Futurism, Dad, Sur., Art abstr. – des produirre qui ne peuvat être réalisé kinetiquement' (sic)', Richter, Hans, no date (1957-1960), Hans Richter Archive, The Museum of Modern Art Museum Archives, Articles/Writings by Richter (unpublished), C.XIV.8.

[13] Richter, Hans, 'Hans Richter on the Nature of Film Poem' (Interview with Jonas Mekas), *Film Culture* 3 (1957): p. 7.

[14] Hagener, *Moving Forward, Looking Back*, p. 25.

[15] One of the first direct contacts with French cinema was established by Viking Eggeling in 1924 when, on a trip to Paris, he met Fernand Léger. See O'Konor, Louise. *Viking Eggeling 1880-1925 – Artist and Filmmaker, Life and Work*, Stockholm: Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis, 1971.

[16] See Wilmesmeier, Holger. *Deutsche Avantgarde und Film. Die Filmmatinee 'Der absolute Film'*, Hamburg: LIT Verlag 1994.

[17] See Schacht, Roland. 'Vom Absoluten zum ganz Realen', *Das Blaue Heft* (1925): p. 457.

[18] Kracauer, Siegfried. *From Caligari to Hitler. A Psychological History of the German Film*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019.

him: it showed that it was possible to use the medium of film to transform the mind, 'the very process of thought'[19].

The Film Issue in the Journal G: Zeitschrift für elementare Gestaltung

In Rudolf Kurtz's well-known theoretical text *Expressionismus und Film* (1926)[20], German abstract films (by authors such as Ruttmann, Eggeling and Richter) were put in parallel with some French film experiments (Léger, Picabia) under the label of 'abstract film'[21]. Rudolf Kurtz's contribution was reviewed and publicized in the last double issue of the journal 'G: Zeitschrift für elementare Gestaltung', founded by Hans Richter[22]. This issue, published in April 1926, not only represented a veritable manifesto of the so-called *absoluter Film*, but also provided a broad overview of the multiple explorations in the field by the German, French and Russian avant-garde, which were compared and presented as different examples of a coherent overall production.

Aimed at changing the 'new man's' optical awareness of reality, Richter's reading of abstract moving images consisted of what the magazine described in terms of a training for the eye. Many articles in the double issue explored the potential of such research, in particular analyzing the work of Richter, Ruttmann and Eggeling. Also published in *G.* was Marcel Duchamp's *Rotary Demisphere* (1925), which Richter considered to be related to his research in that it represented an attempt to destabilize optical habits by constructing a rotating image that would disrupt the logic of rational vision.

On *G*'s page, the photo of the *Rotary Demisphere* is accompanied by the announcement of the future filming of this 'movable disc with concentric centers which produces spirals by means of movement',[23] anticipating Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray's *Anémic Cinéma* (1926). To take up Jean-Louis Baudry's formulation, in these experiments - by Richter as well as by Duchamp - perception and representation cannot be distinguished from each other because they occur simultaneously: 'the system of Consciousness/Perception had not differentiated itself'[24]. As in Richter's case, in Duchamp's optical experiment vision is induced internally, in the eye of the spectator, as an optical effect sustained by the rhythmus of the movement of the discs, so as to bring out the lack of correspondence between reality and visibility: as pointed out by Cheryn Turim, 'the image loses its naturalization, the spectator is brought from illusionary absence into his/her interaction with the image'.[25]

Alongside the work on optical experiments, other articles in the journal dealt with film's ability to connect 'found images, that is images preexisting in the world, in novel and imaginative ways which poetically inverted and subverted reality'.[26] Following the aesthetic principles of Dadaist collage, Richter defined Léger's *Ballet Mécanique* in terms of collage,

[19] Turim, Maureen. 'Avant-Garde Film', in *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy and Film*, (eds.) Paisley Livingstone and Carl Plantinga, Abingdon: Routledge, 2008, p. 527. For an analysis of French Films, see Abel, Richard. *French Film Theory and Criticism: A History/Anthology, 1907-1939*, I, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988.

[20] Kurtz, Rudolf. *Expressionismus und Film*, Berlin: Verlag der Lichtbildbühne, 1926; Eng. translation, *Expressionism and Film*, (eds.) Christian Kiening, Ulrich Johannes Beil and Brenda Benthien, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016.

[21] See Kurtz, 'Absolute Kunst', in *Expressionismus und Film*, pp. 86-108.

[22] On this magazine see Castellani, Carlotta. *Una rivista costruttivista nella Berlino anni Venti: "G" di Hans Richter*, Padova: CLEUP, 2018.

[23] *G: Zeitschrift für elementare Gestaltung* 5/6 (April 1926): p. 120.

[24] Baudry, Jean-Louis, *The Apparatus*, p. 311.

[25] Turim, M. Cheryn, *Abstraction in Avant-Garde Films*, Ann Arbor: Umi Research Project, 1986, p. 11.

[26] Rose, Barbara. 'The Films of Man Ray and Moholy-Nagy', *Art Forum* 10 (September 1971): p. 70.

judging it as a collection of 'objects, points of view, the most everyday figures, fragments of form, mechanical and metallic fragments [...] No scenario, reactions, rhythmic images, nothing more'.[27] Richter's reading of these films as a collection of rhythmic images is similar to René Clair's analysis of his film *Entr'acte*, included in the review as a further example of film collage. Clair pointed out that rhythmic qualities in cinema are achieved when 'thoughts try to outfly the images; impossible, they fall behind, capitulate – the screen, as a new eye, takes the place of our passive gazes'.[28] Clair further explained how cinematic rhythm derives directly from the operations of film editing, i.e. the duration, variation and movement of images - aspects that do not have to follow metrical laws or any other rules because images can express rhythm without burdening themselves with logic.[29] Ultimately, Clair's article highlighted the importance of an irrational sequence of images for the awakening of a vision exclusively based on the sense of rhythm.

Both the dadaists and the surrealists regarded the technique of 'collage' as the compositional principle in film making: 'collage,' as Elder noted, was able to capture the mind's intuitive leaps as it vaulted over reason to help force open the doors to mystery'.[30] The paratactic structure of the collage technique was the closest expression of the dream-like quality that the surrealists also sought in and with film[31] because 'the poetic state of mind apprehends reality imaginatively, that is, in a manner akin a dream. […] and it is that which gives film a disposition towards the same formal syntax that collage and dream both possess, for film, collage and dream all operate by the fundamental poetic principle, the principle of parataxis'.[32]

Philippe Soupault, Antonin Artaud and Robert Desnos were the first of the future group of surrealists to become aware of this potential and develop 'scenarios' or *poèmes cinématographiques* based on such principles in order to emphasize the capacity of film to make the ordinary wonderful and to transform visual perception[33]. Richter recognized his affinity with these ideas and published Philippe Soupault's *Je m'en fiche* in the magazine *G.*, a scenario consisting of a paratactic and rhythmic collage of scenes that can be linked to his future 1922 collaboration with Walter Ruttmann for the making of three (lost) films.[34] 'With Philippe Soupault - as Richter wrote - [...] I have had frequent contacts. We corresponded as early as the Dada Period itself. He sent me his poems […]. One of them I published in my periodical G in 1924, in a translation by Walter Benjamin. Soupault's elegance and lightness of touch, together with his great gifts as a poet, appealed me

[27] Clair, René. 'Rhythmus', *G: Zeitschrift für elementare Gestaltung* 5/6 (April 1926): p. 116. The original French version of the essay was published a year earlier as: 'Rythme', *Cahiers du mois 16/17* (1925): pp. 13–16.
[28] Clair, 'Rhythmus'.
[29] 'Why should images, which have no absolute value as such, burden themselves with logic?', *Ibid.*
[30] Elder, *Dada, Surrealism, and the Cinematic Effect*, p. 206.
[31] 'In promoting their view that films should be like dreams, the Surrealists supported the subversion of the classical realist style […] and they favored, if not the complete absence of narrative, at least a not coherent one, as well as discontinuous editing and a not unified and not linear space and time', Sharot, Stephan. 'Dreams in Film and Films as Dreams: Surrealism and Popular American Cinema', *Revue Canadienne d'Études cinématographiques* 24 (Spring 2015): p. 72.
[32] Elder, *Dada, Surrealism, and the Cinematic Effect*, p. 220. See also von Hoff, Dagmar. 'Träume zu verkaufen. Hans Richters filmische Reflexion der historischen Avantgarde', *Zeitschrift für Germanistik* 18 (2008): p. 137.
[33] Cohen, 'Scénarios, 'poèmes cinématographiques', 'ciné-poèmes', pp. 327-398.
[34] See Kyrou, Ado, 1979, pp. 28-29 and Hammond, Paul. 'Available light', in *The Shadow and Its Shadow. Surrealist Writings on the Cinema*, San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2000, p. 8.

enormously, so much I intended to make a film of one of his poems[35]‘. The presence of this large number of articles on recent French experimental filmmaking in Richter's journal confirms the role played by avant-garde films as a connector among nations and helps to understand the artistic trajectory Richter took from early abstract films to figurative films, as well as his controversial relationship with what was emerging as the Surrealist movement.

Richter's *Filmstudie* (1926) derives from his knowledge of the films by Duchamp, Léger, Clair[36] and Man Ray and was often described by him as a surrealist film.[37] It opens with an out-of-focus image, difficult to distinguish, followed by a collage composed of multiple eyes: disturbing eyeballs superimposed on a sequence of faces. The insistence on the image of the eye, besides being a tribute to French films (Léger's *Ballet mécanique* and Man Ray's *Emak-Bakia*), alludes to the phenomenon of vision, understood as an activity that is both organic (in the observer) and mechanical (thanks to technical instruments), and evokes the hoped-for ‘awakening’ to be generated in the spectators. Next comes a sequence organised around circular, rotating, spiralling and revolving shapes that call to mind Marcel Duchamp's *Anémic Cinéma* because they induce a similar optical distortion. The following sequence focuses on unrecognisable details from familiar objects, interspersed with the insertion of circular, rotating abstract figures that turn into orthogonal elements, which are taken from an earlier Richter film, *Rhythmus 25*. A cone of light expands and rotates against a black background and is suddenly interrupted by negative images of working men and groups of penguins. Using heterogeneous materials, Richter creates a collage in which he integrates figurative and abstract images, using devices that draw attention to photographic technique such as multiple exposures and negative images: as pointed out by Pollmann, ‘photographic objects are investigated as symbols and as forms, and montage—the juxtaposition, comparison, and evolution of images on the basis of editing—becomes a new mode of expression’.[38] A similar technique was used in Man Ray's *Emak-Bakia* (1926), a film advertised in the pages of the magazine *G.*.[39]

Ultimately, Richter's *Filmstudie* underlined the structural homologies between the functioning of the imagination, the technique of collage and film montage, and highlighted the German artist's interest in two specific research horizons: visual perception and fantastic images. As Richer himself explained in 1957: ‘I have always been especially fascinated by the possibilities of the film to make the invisible visible. That relates to the abstract as it does to ‘fantasy’, and the ‘inner-self’ – the functioning of the invisible ‘subconsciousness’, which no other art can express as completely, and as drastically, as the film’.[40]

A second film Richter made in 1928, *Ghosts before Breakfast* (*Vormittagsspuk*, 1928), can be related to this interest in fantasy, evoked in this case by a surreal and oneiric atmosphere staged through four flying hats, which refers to the topos of the mysterious life

[35] Richter, *Dada Art and Anti-Art*, p. 178.
[36] On the influence of Clair and Léger on Richter’s turn away from pure abstraction, see Westerdale, Joel. ‘3 May 1925: French and German Avant-Garde Converge at Der absolute Film’, in *A New History of German Cinema*, (eds.) Jennifer M. Kapczynski and Michael D. Richardson, Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2012, pp. 160–65.
[37] See Richter, Hans. ‘The Avant-Garde Film Seen from Within’, *Hollywood Quarterly* 4 (Autumn, 1949): p. 37.
[38] See Pollmann, *Cinematic Vitalism*, p. 89.
[39] ‘To make his next movie he [Man Ray] received a large sum from private patrons’ [Arthur Wheeler], *G: Zeitschrift für elementare Gestaltung* 5/6 (April 1926).
[40] Richer, ‘Hans Richter on the Nature of Film Poem’, p. 4.

of objects and the 'rebellion' [41] of objects against their function. The film's plot is reminiscent of Philippe Soupault's *scénarios*, but Richter employs a variety of 'poetic denaturalizations[42]', experimenting with the potential and limits of the camera to give greater emphasis to fantasy scenes. He thus uses techniques such as 'fast motion', 'slow motion', 'reverse film play', as well as frequent alternation between positive and negative images. These devices underline the dichotomy between the 'real world' and the 'fantasy world' and, in this sense, Richter departs from surrealist theories on cinema which, in order to bring out the dreamlike aspect of reality, did not foresee the use of specific techniques of the cinematographic language, such as complex editing sequences, excessive use of overlaps or peculiar camera angles, etc.[43]

After this 'proto-surrealist' period, at the end of the 1920s Richter used these same techniques in a more formalist and socially committed film practice, attentive to the needs of the collectivity and to modern progress, no longer following the French school but rather the examples of Russian filmmakers.[44] This possibility had been foreseen in the 1926 special issue of *G.*, in which an article by Ludwig Hilberseimer clarified the social duties of the new cinematography:

> Today, should not the only 'new' that concerns everyone, the most authentic task of our time, be the creation of a new form of society and the dissemination of the ideas on which it is based ? Alongside the press and radio, film is the largest means of propaganda. […] We therefore demand the political film. However, we mean by politics not some party point of view but the means for the realization of ethical intentions.[45]

The article was illustrated by stills from Sergei Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin*, described as 'the best film, the masses, no protagonist, a true story! No film (in as long as they have existed) has had such a spontaneous effect'.[46] As already mentioned, the first presentation of the film in Western Europe took place in April 1926 in Berlin. Within a few years, thanks to his direct contacts with Eisenstein, Richter transformed his filmmaking practice, replacing the previous collage of sequences of images with a more complex montage technique: in a Marxist spirit, the artist no longer limited his interest to the problems of visual perception and the subconscious, but now considered the possibilities offered by film as a new and powerful means of critical analysis of reality.

Richter was well aware, through his relations with the Berlin Dadaists, of the political potential of the collage technique and gradually left behind the 'Dada-Surrealist' spirit to concentrate on a more political use of montage in films of social denunciation aimed at changing society. Richter found himself working in a context he wanted to transform and found in montage a new way of generating change. As Inga Pollmann has pointed out, Sergei

[41] The original subject was in collaboration with Werner Graeff with the title 'Die Rebellion der Handfeuerwaffer' [The Rebellion of Small Arms]. See Breuer, Gerda (ed.), *Werner Graeff 1901-1978. Der Künstleringenieur*, Jovis: Berlin, 2010, p. 328.
[42] Richter, 'The Avant-Garde Film Seen from Within', p. 37.
[43] Finkelstein, Haim. *The Screen in Surrealist Art and Thought*, London-New York: Routledge, 2016, p. 40.
[44] The great attention paid to this country was also underlined by the magazine's advertisement for the film *Überflüssige Menschen* directed by Aleksandr Razumnyj, the first film made as a German-Soviet co-production for the communist production company Prometheus-Film.
[45] Hilberseimer, Ludwig. 'Nicht lesen, verbotener Film! [Not Read, Banned Film!]', *G: Zeitschrift für elementare Gestaltung* 5/6 (April 1926): p. 136.
[46] No title, *G: Zeitschrift für elementare Gestaltung* 5/6 (April 1926): p. 140.

Eisenstein's advanced theories emerged as a continuation of Richter's work on universal language, if one keeps in mind the centrality of 'rhythm' in formalist montage practice.[47]

Seeing Eisenstein's work convinced Richter of the social potential of the film medium for the collectivity, because when 'the desires and ideas of the individual can become practically identical with those of society; all the free creative energies will then flow together with the aims of the collective'.[48] In 1929, pursuing these utopian ideals, Richter curated the film section within the larger Stuttgart exhibition entitled 'Film und Foto'. In the selection of 15 films,[49] Richter did not include any work from the Surrealist group, not even the recent *Un Chien andalou* by Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí because of its lack of 'cinematographic language',[50] an absence that, according to Horak, marks Richter's theoretical distance from the Surrealist film experiments of Breton's group at this stage.

Selling Dreams in New York

During the 1930s, Richter worked primarily on documentary films, opting for a realistic style of *montage* and avoiding the realm of irrationality. It was only when he emigrated to New York in 1941 that the artist turned again to Surrealism and his interest in psychoanalysis not only to voice a melancholic presentation of Modernism's legacy in commodified American society, but also to express his difficult status as an immigrant artist which, as Alter points out, was 'more than a condition of external exile […] it was also characterized by a deep internal exile produced in the confrontation with a system of audiovisual production and conception of art that was radically at odds with everything that Richter had been striving to achieve previously'.[51]

After a few scenarios for documentaries, never produced, that reflected his earlier socio-political engagement (*The Role of Women in America*, 1941-1942; *The Accident*, 1945-46), Richter spent four years working on a surrealist work, *Dreams That Money Can Buy*, defined by Jacobs Lewis in the 'Hollywood Quarterly' as 'documentation on what the modern artist feels'[52]: funded by Peggy Guggenheim and Kenneth McPherson, the film won the Special Prize at the 1947 Venice Biennale as the best contribution to the progress of cinematography. It should also be remembered that from the beginning of the 1940s, in the wake of the Surrealist idea the liberating and subversive character of cinema was analogous to that of dreams and that cinema offered an experience comparable to that of dreams,[53] and

[47] See Pollmann, *Cinematic Vitalism*, pp. 90-91.
[48] Richter, 'The Avant-Garde Film Seen from Within', p. 40.
[49] See the reconstruction of the film program in Schleif, Helma (ed.), *Stationen der Moderne im Film I: FiFo – Film- und Fotoausstellung Stuttgart 1929,* Berlin: Freunde der Deutschen Kinemathek, 1988.
[50] Horak, Jan-Christopher. 'Entwicklung einer visuellen Sprache im Stummfilm', in *Film und Foto der Zwanziger Jahre. Eine Betrachtung der Internationalen Werkbundausstellung 'Film und Foto'1929,* (eds.) Ute Eskildsen and Jan-Christopher Horak, Stuttgart: Gerd Hatje, 1979, p. 49.
[51] Alter, Nora M. 'Hans Richter in Exile: Translating the Avant-Garde', in *Caught by Politics: Hitler Exiles and American Visual Culture*, (eds.) Sabine Eckmann and Lutz Koepnick, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, p. 225.
[52] Lewis, Jacobs. 'Experimental Cinema in America (Part Two: The Postwar Revival)', *Hollywood Quarterly*, 3 (Spring 1948): p. 290.
[53] For the Surrealists, the cinema experience was a direct evocation of the marvelous and of dreams, as Robert Desnos pointed out in a text written in 1927 (one of many possible examples): 'For us and us alone, the Lumière brothers invented the cinema. There we were at home. Its darkness was like that of our bedrooms before going to sleep. The screen perhaps might be equal to our dreams'. Desnos, Robert. 'Les Rayons et les ombres', *Le Soir* (February 1927), quoted in Haim, *The Screen in Surrealist Art and Thought*, p. 20.

thanks to the popularity of psychoanalysis in the United States, the representation of 'dreams' became a recurrent theme in commercial films of the Hollywood film industry that often adopted a 'Surrealist' style.

As Salvador Dalí's set design for Alfred Hitchcock's *Spellbound* (1945) testifies, 'American popular cinema appropriated psychoanalysis in the 1940's […] at about the same time as it appropriated Surrealism'.[54] However, as Richter himself had observed, the dreams proposed by Hollywood films differed radically from the Surrealist idea of dreams. In Hollywood, dreams were introduced to overcome neurosis and bring the protagonists back to normality and appropriate gender roles because in their narratives, as pointed out by Richter,

> all respect goes to the rational, to logic and chronology, and none to the irrational. In the industry's 'psychological' films the irrational is treated, at least by implication, as a kind of mental measles that healthy people, unlike drunkards and the insane, don't have. The unpredictable and irrational qualities of the surrealist films, of the experimental film as a whole, were unadaptable and unsuitable to the film industry. From the point of view of the industry the experimental film is a failure. [55]

Richter refers to dream very explicitly from the title, claiming that 'in the postwar New World of New York City, even the unconscious can be bought and sold[56]'. This commodification of art is underlined with dramatic irony in an early advertisement for the film in *Life* (2 December 1946): 'Surrealist Movie. *Dreams That Money Can Buy* is a surrealist movie whose producers expect to make money out of it'.[57] The whole article should be read through an ironic lens, because Richter is convinced that 'experimental and industrial film production are not different steps toward the same goal. They are different processes to reach different goals'.[58] The first question that arises concerns the meaning of the definition of 'surrealist film' in the United States of the 1940s. In an article published in 1949, Richter defines surrealist film as follows:

> Surrealism, a descendant of the more revolutionary dadaism, loaded with an appeal that reaches even practical minds: sex, as seen by Freud, and the subconscious. Its intention is not to 'explain' subconscious phenomena but to project them in the virgin state of the original dream. It seeks to re-create subconscious, using the original material of the subconscious and its own methods.[59]

The film opens with the statement: 'this is a story of dreams mixed with reality'.[60] The main character, Jack Bittner, a poet who has just returned from the war, plays the role of a 'dream reader': in the New World, the artist/poet sells not only his works, but also dreams and himself for money. Mocking psychoanalytic sessions, Joe receives several patients in

[54] Sharot, Stephan. 'Dreams in Film and Films as Dreams: Surrealism and Popular American Cinema', *Revue Canadienne d'Études cinématographiques*, 24 (Spring 2015), p. 80. On the American films that might have influenced Richter, see von Hoff, *Träume zu verkaufen. Hans Richters filmische Reflexion der historischen Avantgarde*, pp. 139-140. On Dalí's American period, see Schieder, Martin. 'Surrealistic Socialite: Dalí's Portrait Exhibition at the Knoedler Galleries in 1943', in *Networking Surrealism in the USA. Agents, Artists, and the Market*, (eds.) Julia Drost, Fabrice Flahutez, Anne Helmreich *et alii*, Paris: German Center for Art History in Paris, 2019, pp. 194-219.
[55] Richter, Hans. 'The Avant-Garde Film Seen from Within', *Hollywood Quarterly,* 4, no. 1 (1949), p. 38.
[56] Alter, Nora M. *The Essay Film After Fact and Fiction*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2017, p. 96.
[57] 'Surrealist Movie', *Life* 21 (December 2, 1946): pp. 86-88.
[58] Richter, 'The Avant-Garde Film Seen from Within', p. 40.
[59] *Ibid.*
[60] Hans Richter, Opening titles (transcript), *Dreams that Money Can Buy* (1947), DVD, British Institute, 2006.

his elegant studio and, by penetrating their gaze, manages to read their unconscious desires. Emphasising the appropriation of psychoanalysis and Surrealism by the American film industry, Richter used the theme of dreams to develop a series of seven different oneiric episodes that reproposed European modernist works of art (including some surrealist ones) more or less explicitly: Max Ernst's *Desire* was based on his 1934 novel-collage *Une semaine de bonté*;[61] *The Girl with the Prefabricated Heart* was inspired by Fernand Léger's idea of American Folklore and presented references to his *Ballet mécanique* (1924) and to paintings such as *La Grande Julie* (1945);[62] Man Ray's *Ruth, Roses and Revolvers* referred to an earlier short fantasy fiction by him published in *View* (1944);[63] Marcel Duchamp's *Discs* featured quotations from his well-known *Nude Descending a Staircase* (1913) and film footage of his *Rotoreliefs* (1926);[64] *Ballet* is a cinematic account of Alexander Calder's mobiles[65], which were 'made to appear as a sort of solar system, a ballet of the universe',[66] while *Circus* took up Calder's circus of wire figures made in Paris in 1927.[67] Richter adopted the Dadaist method of collage to stitch the different episodes together, as he later recalled: 'making Dreams was like jumping into a swimming pool with no water. I managed it all on a shoestring, in the Dada spirit'.[68] In this way he presented the American public with a series of European works revisited from an 'entertainment' point of view: each of the episodes could thus correspond to the secret fantasies of potential consumers of psychoanalysis. The choices made for the film were ideally connected to Richter's ideas of the 1920s: many of these artists, as mentioned, were already present in the double issue of the magazine *G*. One could also question the ways and purposes of an operation aimed at re-proposing modernist practices in a different context, in which works of art had been reduced to consumer goods.

Film and Psychoanalysis

At the same time, on a different level, Richter had also sought a more fruitful encounter between 'Film' and 'Psychoanalysis', as the last episode of the series, *Narcissus*, which was the only one entirely directed by him, clearly showed:[69]

[61] Bruce Elder describes Hans Richter's appreciation of the work and his idea for the film as follows: 'Hans Richter and Max Ernst recognized that film would allow them to carry further the project that *Une semaine de bonté* represents: scenes in the 'Lundi' cahier, especially those of the woman sleeping in a magnificent bed while a flood swirls about it, prompted Richter to propose to Ernst that he prepare a film script. In 1946, he filmed Desire (Ernst acted in the film); in 1947, he released it as the first part of the anthology film *Dreams That Money Can Buy*, whose musical direction was provided (without credit) by the Canadian composer and arts administrator Louis Applebaum.' Elder, *Dada, Surrrealism and the Cinematic Effect*, p. 555.

[62] Song Lyrics by John Latouche, Libby Holman and Josh White, accompanied by Norma Cazanjian and Doris Okerson.

[63] 'Ruth Roses and Revolvers. A Surrealist Fantasy', *View: the Modern Magazine* 4 (December 1944). Richter's film episode was made to music by Darius Milhaud.

[64] Richter's film episode was realized with music by John Cage. For a detailed analysis of Duchamp's contribution to the project, see Kauffman, Alexander. 'The Anemic Cinemas of Marcel Duchamp', *The Art Bulletin* 99 (April 2017): pp. 128-159. See also Marcel Duchamp, typescript of lecture regarding Hans Richter's *Dreams that Money Can Buy*, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives, Alexina and Marcel Duchamp papers: II. Lectures, Box 2, Folder 26, n.d.

[65] Richter's film episode was realized with music by Paul Bowles.

[66] *Dreams that Money Can Buy*, catalogue, 1947, no page.

[67] Richter's film episode was realized with music by David Diamond.

[68] Hans Richter in Abbott, Berenice (ed.), *Peggy Guggenheim and Her Friends*, Milan: Berenice Art Book, 1994, p. 89.

[69] Richter's film episode was realized with music by Louis Applebaum.

This is Joe's own dream, rendering his experience in drastic symbols. His face turns blue when he discovers his identity; and as he climbs a ladder, intent on following his destiny, one rung after another vanishes under his feet. Thus in pictures conspicuous for their fervor, the genesis of any creator is made manifest – his insistence on self-realization, his fight against indifference and his inexorable loneliness. At the end, a bust of Zeus, suggestive of Joe's dearest memories, shatters to bits, and Joe as a person dissolves. All that remains of him are his works, bright color compositions flowing through space.[70]

The shooting of *Narcissus* is a cathartic experience for Richter[71]. For the dialogues of this episode, Richter asked his friend Richard Huelsenbeck, a former Dadaist turned well-known psychiatrist in the United States, for help.[72] Richter stressed that these dialogues should be written in the form of 'poetry':

The main thing is that it becomes a 'poetry', that it has style, that it sounds + lives. The 'story' is just a sine qua non. [...] The text is not intended to illustrate the processes, but to deepen them on its own level. From no. 12 on (after the scene with the girl) I thought of introducing a kind of 'dialogue with the 'Echo' (very sparingly). As if he asks + a 'space (inner) _ echo answers'.[73]

Richter's *Dreams* was a landmark in the American experimental film movement. Being the first director of the new City College of New York's filmmaking program from 1942 to 1957, Richter became a prophet of the concept of 'film as art' and of 'film poetry' for the younger American generation of film makers[74]. One of the founders of the New American Cinema Movement, Jonas Mekas, interviewed Richter in 1957 for his magazine *Film Culture.* Retracing his thirty-five years in the experimental cinema, Mekas asked about the 'inner movement' and 'inner domain' present in Richter's films. In his answer, Richter underlined the Dadaist and Surrealist root of his ideas and the Surrealist early interest in psychoanalysis. He considered his *Dreams that Money Can Buy* a 'surrealist' film:

Surrealism owed so much to Dadaism that, in the beginning, it was indistinguishable from it, and the same artists were involved in both moments. Only later, with the accent upon modern psychology, especially Freud, and the moral desire to revolutionize society by the insight into the modern soul, the subconscious – only then did surrealism become something very definite. The characteristic surrealistic films are, historically speaking, the films by Buñuel and Dali [sic]. An Andalusian Dog and The Golden Age [sic], but that doesn't mean that a number of other films did not contribute to the same spirit, though with different general and personal accents. In that respect, Cocteau's Blood of a Poet and my Dreams [sic] are examples: they are not, though, in the academic sense of the term, surrealist. In short: a word is a word is a word, but only a word. But there is no

[70] *Dreams that Money Can Buy*, catalogue, 1947, no page.
[71] See Heyd, Milly. 'Hans Richter: Universalism vis-à-vis Particularism', *Ars Judaica* 7 (2011): p. 107. The study focuses on Richter's hidden Jewish origins. See also von Hoff, *Träume zu verkaufen. Hans Richters filmische Reflexion der historischen Avantgarde*, p. 145.
[72] Huelsenbeck was mentioned in the film under his new American name Richard Holback.
[73] 'Die Hauptsache ist dass es eine 'Dichtung' wird, dass es Stil hat, dass es klingt + lebt. Die 'story' ist nur eine conditio sine qua non. […] Der Text soll nicht die Vorgänge illustrieren, sondern auf einer eignen Eben vertiefen. Von nr. 12 an (nach der scene mit dem mädchen) dachte ich vie eine Art 'Zwiegerspräch mit dem 'Echo' einzuführen (sehr sparsam). Als wenn er fragt + ein 'hebt-Raum (innere) _ Echo antwortet', Hans Richter, Letter to Richard Huelsenbeck, March 10, 1947, Getty Institute, Huelsenbeck Collection, XVII, Correspondence from Hans Richter, 910082.
[74] Father-in-law, Hans Richter Standish D. Lawder.

doubt that the discovery of the soul has captivated the imagination of a whole generation of artists, including myself, although I am far more fascinated by Jung than by Freud.[75]

Richter's *Dreams* must therefore be read through his interest in Jung's theories.[76] The correspondence between Richter and Jung, held in the MoMa archives and in ETH-Bibliothek in Zürich,[77] informs us that by August 1949 Richter had sent to the renowned psychoanalyst a first letter: he wanted an opinion from him in order to develop his next film project entitled *Minotaur, the Story of the Labyrinth*. Jung responded but he did not help Richter in this project. Nevertheless, in 1961, Richter also gave four lectures at the Swiss Jung Institute on the relationship between psychology and modern art, describing the unconscious as a central category in the relationship between Dada and psychoanalysis: 'Of course we had heard already at the time, about 1916, somehow of the ideas of Freud and some of us also of Jung and Adler, but what we meant with the unconscious was not a clinical dimension but our personal and new discovery of unheard possibilities for creative expression'.[78]

As Veronika Fuechtner has pointed out: 'it was not the analytical look but the mechanisms of the unconscious, repression, and displacement, along with the temporal and sensory simultaneity and anarchy of the id, that inspired Dada aesthetics.[79] Indeed, Richard Huelsenbeck himself had repeatedly emphasized the 'overlap between the Dada avant-garde and psychoanalysis (or psychiatry)—for example, in his description of Dada as the precursor of psychoanalysis'.[80]

If the roots of Richter's attention towards psychoanalysis can be traced back to the beginning of his Dadaist period, in the 1950s this interest developed more consciously and gave rise to his 'film poetry' in which the reference to poetry leads back Richter's dialogues of the Narcissus episode. As he wrote in his personal notes:

> The style of the film poem in this new vein is to externalize inner happening and to continue the development and evolution of inner happenings as if they were outer ones. […] You have to count upon your spontaneous inspiration, your urges, coming out of the depths of your soul, your unconscious. In having the ear open to them, the conscious plans made before and in advance might suddenly and will often hamper the achievement of the work you really have in mind. The inefficiency of this production process therefore is more or less a conditio sine qua non [sic] of an art form which has to rely a great deal upon freshness of the unconscious imagery.[81]

Considering Philippe Soupault's usage of the word 'poem' to describe 'film', it can be understood the open way Richter refers to this term, with which he defined both his early

[75] Richter, 'Hans Richter on the Nature of Film Poem'.
[76] In his most famous book on Dadaism, *Art and Anti-Art*, describing the central role played by chance, Richter links the Dadaist chance to Carl Gustav Jung's theories and includes it in his concept of 'synchronicity'. See Richter, *Art and Anti-Art*, p. 57.
[77] Carl G. Jung, Letter to Hans Richter, October 17, 1949, Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY, Collection Hans Richter, Series Folder B.VII, 7. Hans Richter sent two letters to C. G. Jung, on August 4,1949 and on October 28, 1949. See ETH-Bibliothek, Zürich, Fonds_Jung_CG, Series Folder Hs 1056:16035 Hs 1056:16034
[78] Hans Richter quoted in Fuechtner, Veronika. *Berlin Psychoanalytic, Psychoanalysis and Culture in Weimar Republic Germany and Beyond*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011, p. 151. The title of the series of lectures was: 'Das Verhältnis zwischen moderner Kunst und moderner Psychologie'.
[79] Fuechtner, *Berlin Psychoanalytic,* p. 151.
[80] *Ibid*., p. 162.
[81] Hans Richter, Lecture notes, no title [pp. 11-14 of article dated February 13, 1957], Hans Richter Archive, The Museum of Modern Art Museum Archives, Articles/Writings by Richter (Not Published), C.XIV.8.

Avantgarde experiments of the Twenties and his American developments. Richter's renewed relationship with Surrealism in his American period meant a change of direction from the *Kollektivmensch* to the *Individuum*:[82] he was well aware of the opposition between these two conceptions, which he found exacerbated in modern American society.[83] Richter made such a change without renouncing his moral commitment, as he pointed out in one of his unpublished final essays written in 1960's entitled *30 years of Film Poetry*. In this text, Richter focuses on 'pure cinema' that considers synonym of Film Poetry. In his view, pure cinema must always express the freedom of the artist and contain a moral issue. According to Richter, the easiest way to deal with the moral issue in cinema is to express it through the lens of realism because it is a clear language that can be understood by everybody. Nevertheless, in Richter's view: 'the mission to speak to all, to be the enlightened priests of social message does not replace the necessity to speak to ONESELF and NOT [sic] to audience, imaginary or real. Realism does not open all roads … and for a number of reasons. The fact is that there are two 'realities' to be discovered and to be dealt with, two kinds of approaches to them as different as are the needs and desire [sic] of the collective on the one hand with its social, moral, and economics problems from the individual with its psychological, esthetic and ethical problems on the other'.[84] For Richter, Film Poetry can fulfill its moral duty to the collective also focusing on the most irrational, obscure and individual sides of experience that he calls 'Realm of the obscure' [85] It is with references to Jung's collective unconscious that Richter can develop these ideas. In his notes, Richter reveals his personal change as an exiled artist. The war experience had meant a traumatic disillusionment with his own utopian modernist project and generated the need to take refuge in the individual dimension through a new cinematic language that drew direct inspiration from both psychoanalysis and Surrealist examples. Richter considered his new orientation not to be in contradiction with his previous 'collectivist' artistic program because both developed a form of 'universal language' through the media of cinema. In the same text he further notes: 'The artist strives for a universal language in his work as near as he can reach the universal in this small mirror of his individuality. He certainly is not striving for obscurity but for clarity in following his inner voice but the only way to see the universal clear is to question his own inner mirror'.[86]

[82] *Dreams that Money Can Buy* demonstrates how Hans Richter refers freely to a Dadaist and Surrealist legacy, the meaning of his movie is recognized by André Breton. In his notes on the history of Surrealism, Breton mentions several Dadaist films related to Surrealism. The first to appear chronologically is the *Anémic cinéma* by Duchamp (1926), *Emak Bakia* by Man Ray (1926), *L'Etoile de mer* (1928) by Robert Desnos and Man Ray. Even if Breton makes no mention of Richter's *Filmstudie* (1926) and *Ghosts before Breakfast* (1928), he refers to Hans Richter's *Dreams that money can buy* 'film (thèmes de Max Ernst, Calder, Duchamp, Man Ray)'. For the exhibition 'Surrealisme en 1947', held at the Galerie Maeght, Breton asked that a 'decoupage' of the film be shown, as we learn from Marcel Duchamp's correspondence: Marcel Duchamp, Letter to André Breton, February 22, 1947, Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Fonds André Breton, Bret 1.8.

[83] 'Es könnte die Geschichte des modernen Menschen sein, wie durch den Einfluss und die Beherrschung (die heute das Kollektiv und der Kollektivmensch über das Individuum ausübt), das Individuum schmerzhafter Weise und übertrieben in die Individualreaktion gedrängt wird. Unser Thema wäre dem Kollektiv zu zeigen wie dem Individuum auf diese schmerzhafte Weise doch neue Schönheit und Leben offenbart wird, wie es Erleuchtung findet. (wieso ist heute ein so rasender Gegensatz zwischen Individuum und Kollektiv?)'; Hans Richter, 'Minotaurus', typescript project [1947], Getty Institute, Huelsenbeck Collection, XVII Correspondance from Hans Richter, 910082.

[84] Richter, Hans, *Thirty Years of Film Poetry*, Hans Richter Archive, The Museum of Modern Art Museum Archives, Articles/Writings by Richter (Not Published), C.XIV.8.

[85] *Ibid.*

[86] *Ibid.*

‘MR. BARR DROPPED BY : HE BOUGHT F2000 WORTH OF PAINTINGS. FANTASTIC’[1]

THE BRETON/ÉLUARD/BARR/MATISSE AFFAIR OF THE SUMMER OF 1935

Alice ENSABELLA

While the internationalization of surrealism from the early 1930s can be seen as the result of the efforts of André Breton and his friends to promote the movement via various initiatives and the cycle of major international surrealist exhibitions, the circulation of works within the art market also played a key role in the international enthusiasm for surrealist art.

This is true in particular with respect to France-United States relations and surrealism’s success in the US even before the group actually arrived in New York in 1940, where the network of artists, dealers and collectors facilitated the spread of the surrealist aesthetic on the other side of the Atlantic.

Research in questions of the art market and the circulation of works, seen as a key factor in the spread of surrealism in the US, is currently increasing.[2] Some of the dynamics initiated by participants in this system remain underresearched, however, and would merit further investigation: in particular, features of the spread of works not by artists themselves but via the network of collectors, galleries and museum directors who promoted the movement. While still small, the network formed around the surrealist movement between the end of the 1920s and the early 1930s proved to be central. Often hidden, this market, based on the knowledge and transactions of individuals, played a major role not just in the aesthetic but also the commercial success that greeted surrealism around the mid-1930s.

The Breton and Éluard collections as source of the surrealist art market

While the contacts established between American dealers and artists based in Europe were for the most part direct – the best known being Salvador Dalí and Julien Levy,[3] or Pierre Matisse and Joan Miró[4] – transactions between dealers and/or dealers and collectors must also be given a central role. This situation, in which the artists are in a more passive position, was not merely widespread but should come as no surprise, given the specific interest of the emerging American market. The actors on the American scene, be they curators (Alfred Barr), dealers (J. Levy, P. Matisse) or collectors (James T. Soby), were

[1] Letter from Paul Éluard to Gala, end July – beginning August 1935. Paul Éluard, *Lettres à Gala, 1924-1948*, Paris: Gallimard, 1984, p. 256.

[2] Cf. Drost, Julia, Flahutez, Fabrice, Helmreich, Anne, *et al* (eds.), *Networking Surrealism in the USA. Agents, Artists and the Market*, Paris: German Center for Art History in Paris, 2019 (Passages online, III), https://doi.org/10.11588/arthistoricum.485.

[3] Cf. *Matisse and his Artists* [exhibition catalogue], New York: Pierpont Morgan Library, 2001, or Schneider, Pierre (ed.), *Pierre Matisse, passeur passionné: un marchand d’art et ses artistes,* Paris: Hazan, 2005.

[4] Cf. Ingrid Schaffner and Lisa Jacobs, Lisa (eds.), *Julien Levy: Portrait of an Art Gallery*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998, or Anne Helmreich, ‘Julien Levy: Progressive Dealer or Dealer of Progressives?’, in *Networking Surrealism in the USA*, pp. 323-343.

especially interested in the first surrealist period, which they called 'Early Surrealism'. Works from that period were no longer (or rarely) in the hands of the artists; they were held either by their Paris dealers or the first collectors. And among the latter, André Breton and Paul Éluard stand out as the two most remarkable collectors of surrealist works of those years.[5]

The American market also generated an interest on the French side. While surrealism's success in the artistic and ideological fields is manifest, the same cannot be said of the economic field. In the early 1930s surrealism's commercial success in France was still negligible. Firstly, because the commercialisation of surrealist art in the French art market had not yet been structured. The two attempts at launching the movement undertaken in the second half of the 1920s by the Galerie Surréaliste and the Galerie Goemans had been a commercial flop.[6] Furthermore the 1929 financial crisis had a major impact on the Paris art market and, more especially, on the Left Bank galleries (Pierre Loeb, Jeanne Bucher, Van Leer, etc) promoting emerging artists including, of course, surrealist artists.[7]

Far from affecting only art market professionals, the crisis had a major impact on several members of the surrealist group and, in particular, André Breton and Paul Éluard who, from the early 1930s – while surrealism's key promotors in the international field – found themselves in a complex financial situation. Following divorces with Simone Kahn and Gala respectively, they were obliged to share their art collections with their former wives and faced considerable expenses. Given the situation, what remained of their collections constituted a potential source of income. Between then and the end of the decade Breton and Éluard regularly sold major pieces from their collections in order to deal with the financial difficulties encountered. By the end of the decade this amounted to the almost total dispersal of the magnificent collections of masterpieces of the early surrealist period.[8]

Even if one can understand that a shift in taste, both political and aesthetic, can explain the major auction of African art objects at the Hôtel Drouot salesroom on 2 and 3

[5] In the early 1930s several artists and writers arrived in Paris to meet the members of the surrealist group and discover their famous collections. In 1936, for example, the Czech poet Vitezslav Nezval recounts his stay in Paris in June 1935 : 'Paul Éluard has a collection of paintings, including some of de Chirico's finest pre-war paintings, including his dreamlike squares or his admirable still lifes unequalled to this day. Éluard has a lot of paintings by Max Ernst and a few very beautiful paintings by Salvador Dalí. He also has Picassos, of course.' Adolf Kroupa, 'Éluard et la Tchécoslovaquie', *EUROPE-Revue littéraire mensuelle* (November-December 1962): pp. 318-335. On Breton and Éluard's collections cf. *André Breton, la beauté convulsive* [exhibition catalogue], Paris : Musée national d'art moderne, 1991, and *Paul Éluard, poésie, amour et liberté* [exhibition catalogue], Evian : Palais Lumière-Cinisello Balsamo : Silvana Editoriale, 2013.

[6] Cf. Alice Ensabella, *L'arte dei* frères voyants. *Caratteristiche e dinamiche del mercato artistico attorno al movimento surrealista (1919-1930)*, Université Grenobles Alpes – Università di Roma 1 – La Sapienza, 2017.

[7] *Ibid.*

[8] These sales were held quite regularly throughout the 1930s. In 1938, Éluard sold the rest of his collection to Roland Penrose and Breton put several of his own works for sale at the Galerie Gradiva which opened the same year and which he ran. Cf. Renée Mabin, 'La Galerie Gradiva', *Mélusine* (December 2012), and Caterina Caputo, *Collezionismo e mercato. La London Gallery e la diffusione dell'arte surrealista (1938-1950)*, Florence: Angelo Pontecorboli Editore, 2018.

July 1931,[9] it can also be seen as the symbolic start of a campaign of sales throughout the 1930s.[10]

On this subject, two letters sent by Éluard in autumn of 1934 to his friend the gallery owner E.L.T. Mesens in Brussels shed more light on the situation of the two friends and the reasons behind their action, often dictated by need. In the first letter he writes:

(...) Do you think you could sell to Spaak for instance the Chirico (photo enclosed) that belongs to Breton, poorer than ever. He is looking for F1,500 net. I think it could easily go for a price like that. It would be a bargain !!!!
Let him know a.s.a.p.
I'll write again tomorrow.
Yours ever, Paul Éluard[11]

And in the second letter, dated October 1934:

(…) Crevel lent me some money today. Just in time. I'm not keen on bread and water. Here is the revised pricelist :

Max Ernst	: Eve, la seule qui nous reste	FF800
	: Oiseaux	500
	: Oiseaux	500
Paul Klee	: Scene aus Kairouan	600
G de Chirico	: Title ?	1500
H. Rousseau	: Watercolour (palette and flowers)	3.800

For this last one I'm waiting for Gala to see if she would accept a bigger reduction, but I doubt it. Breton is relying on the specially low price that he is asking for 'J'irai ... le chien de verre', to make ends meet. It's his only hope. He can't afford to eat every day either at the moment, and he's sad and tired.[12]

In the second letter Éluard insists on the offer of the de Chirico painting belonging to Breton and also offers for sale a metaphysical work from his own collection. The outcome of this transaction remains unknown. On the other hand, as regards Breton's proposal, we know for sure that it failed, because *J'irai... le chien de verre* was exhibited at the Tenerife exhibition the following year. [13]

The combination of these three factors – the drive to promote the movement on the international scene, the availability of such major works in their collections, and their financial problems – are the perfect mix encouraging Breton and Éluard to establish an increasing number of international connections in their efforts to promote and sell the movement's artists. It is obvious that such a promotional drive by the two was motivated primarily by their ideological convictions, and there is no suggestion that it was driven and

[9] *Sculptures d'Afrique, d'Amérique, d'Océanie. Collection André Breton et Paul Éluard*, auction catalogue, 2-3 July 1931, Paris, Hôtel Drouot.

[10] Éluard and Breton continued to buy works, however. Breton in particular started supporting new artists who joined the group and continued to acquire new works for his private collection. The sale of works belonging to the first phase of the movement allowed tham not only to solve their financial problems but also to continue supporting surrealist artists through their purchases.

[11] Letter from Éluard to Mesens, October 1934. E. L. T. Mesens-Papers, 1917-1976, Correspondance 1930-1935, Box 3, Folder 8, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

[12] Letter from Éluard to Mesens, October 1934. E. L. T. Mesens-Papers, 1917-1976, Correspondance 1930-1935, Box 3, Folder 8, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

[13] The painting was finally bought in 1937 by the New York gallery-owner Julien Levy for 8000 francs.

managed for speculative reasons. Nevertheless, as we shall see, their growing awareness of the historical and material importance of the works and documents in their possession, together with the growing interest in such items in countries where surrealism was to gain major recognition, had an exceptional impact on the circulation and export of major masterpieces from their collections to countries beyond France, to the USA in particular.

Alfred Barr and Pierre Matisse, two agents of surrealist art in New York

Various sales and transactions around the Breton and Éluard collections were held throughout the 1930s. However, with respect to the US, there is one particular case that illustrates the central role of these collections for the circulation of surrealist works across the Atlantic, namely the trip to Paris by Alfred Barr and Pierre Matisse in summer 1935. Barr was looking for works for the famous exhibition he was to organise at the MoMA, 'Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism'.[14] As for Pierre Matisse, his trip was motivated by the search for metaphysical works by the Italian artist Giorgio de Chirico, whose one-man show he was to organise in the autumn in his New York gallery.[15]

Alfred Barr was no newcomer to the Paris art scene. His trips in the late 1920s looking for the first acquisitions for the collections of the Museum of Modern Art that was about to open reveal how the young curator sought to found a body of work not merely through direct contact and purchases from artists, but also via other collectors and, above all, dealers. Where surrealist art is concerned, it has been possible to trace links for instance with the Jeanne Bucher Gallery whose archives record the purchase by Barr of André Masson's *La Bataille des poissons* in 1927.[16] The check-list of the works displayed at the 'Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism' exhibition is evidence of Barr's extensive network in the Paris milieu via the number of exceptional loans from both galleries and/or private collectors.[17]

As for Pierre Matisse, he is without doubt the person who played the central role in this story, but he should also be seen as a key actor in the spread of the popularity of surrealism in New York.

The son of the painter from Cateau-Cambresis began his career in the art world in Paris, working as assistant and dealer on behalf of major Right Bank galleries like the Galerie Barbazanges. In 1924 he moved to New York, and lived there for the rest of his life, preceding by more than a decade the migration of his Paris colleagues and finding/creating a fertile milieu for trading in modern French art. His early days in the New York milieu were linked to his collaboration with the Valentine Gallery, then directed by Francis Dudensing Valentine.[18] Trained in his father's gallery, Richard Dudensing & Son,

[14] *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism* [exhibition catalogue], New York: Museum of Modern Art Editions, 1936.

[15] *Giorgio de Chirico, 1908 – 1918* [exhibition catalogue], New York: Pierre Matisse Gallery, 1935. On the organisation of the Pierre Matisse exhibition, see also Katherine Robinson, 'Giorgio de Chirico – Julien Levy. Artista e gallerista. Esperienza condivisa', *Metafisica. Quaderni della Fondazione Giorgio e Isa de Chirico* 7-8 (2008): pp. 293-325. Https://fondazionedechirico.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/293-325-Metafisica-78-K.Robinson-Giorgio-de-Chirico-Julien-Levy.-Artista-e-Gallerista.-Esperienza-Condivisa-.pdf

[16] I would like to thank Emmanuel Jaeger (Galerie Jeanne Bucher Jaeger) pour this information.

[17] Cf. *Master Checklist*: https://assets.moma.org/documents/moma_master-checklist_325071.pdf.

[18] Cf. Julia May Boddewyn, 'Valentine Dudensing and the Valentine Gallery: Selling the US on the School of Paris', in *Pioneers of the Global Art Market, Paris-Based Dealer Networks, 1850-1950,* (ed.) Christel Force, London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2020, pp. 245-258.

he met Pierre Matisse there during preparations for an exhibition of Henri Matisse's works in 1927.

Following this first contact with the French painter, Francis Dudensing decided the same year to open his own gallery in partnership with Pierre Matisse, who served as his agent in Paris. During those early New York years, consequently, Matisse had close links with the Paris milieu, especially with a number of dealers like Pierre Loeb, and thanks to these contacts he was able to stage a series of exceptional exhibitions at the Valentine Gallery. Among the most significant for the surrealist movement, we would single out the first American exhibition of Joan Miró in 1927 and the first American exhibition of de Chirico in 1928.

As regards Joan Miró in particular, the Galerie Pierre archive confirms this collaboration organised by Pierre Matisse from May 1929 onwards, the date on which the first transactions with the Valentine Gallery are listed.[19]

In 1931 Matisse decided to open his own gallery, arranging contracts with a number of artists and, in particular, Joan Miró.[20] Links with Paris colleagues remained unaffected, nevertheless, and he continued to buy from other dealers or collectors. Pierre Loeb remained a key contact,[21] not just for Miró, but for other artists who joined the group from the early 1930s, Alberto Giacometti in particular, whose agent in Paris was Loeb, and in New York Matisse.[22]

Summer 1935. A. Barr's purchases for the 'Fantastic Art, Dada and Surrealism' exhibition

Let's now go back to summer 1935, the year the two Americans arrived in Paris, intending to borrow or even purchase surrealist and metaphysical works for the respective exhibitions they were planning. Given his links with the Paris milieu it was Pierre Matisse who seems to have managed relations with potential buyers. Hence his decision to get in touch with Paul Éluard who, as we shall see, was the main go-between in the matter, acting also on behalf of André Breton who was less at ease in such matters. The letters from Éluard to Gala at the time,[23] and the correspondance between Éluard and Matisse held by the Pierre Matisse Archives in New York,[24] provide the main sources of information when reconstituting this story. Éluard kept his ex-wife informed on an almost daily basis of the progress of negotiations, since she was still the owner of a number of the works requested by Barr and Matisse.

In early August Paul Éluard wrote to Gala voicing his enthusiasm after his first meeting with Alfred Barr:

[19] *Grand livre*, Galerie Pierre Archives, Archives 140, Carton 02, Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art, Paris.
[20] *Joan Miró, 1917-1934. La naissance du monde* [exhibition catalogue], Paris: Éditions du Centre Pompidou, 2004, p. 353.
[21] His name appears in the Galerie Pierre Archives from 1932. *Grand livre*, Galerie Pierre Archives, Archives 140, Carton 02, Institut National d'Histoire de l'art, Paris.
[22] Cf. Marianne Jakobi, 'The Commercial Strategy of the Pierre Matisse Gallery After 1945: Promoting Individual Artists' Careers at the Expense of the Careers of Surrealists', in *Networking Surrealism in the USA*, pp. 345-361.
[23] Éluard, *Lettres à Gala*.
[24] Pierre Matisse Gallery Archives, Clients – Paul Éluard, 1935-1936, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York.

Mr. Barr called: he bought F2000 worth of works, of which F700 for you (…) I sold for F1,400 Max Ernst's *La forêt* and *Les chapeaux* (collage), that were at your place. And Mr. Pierre Matisse will be coming to look at de Chirico's early works. Success too for the surrealist documents ($350), etc. Fantastic.
I've given Cécile F100 for her trip, without her grandmother knowing.
Breton sold for F4000 (2 Tanguys and some small documents) to Barr.[25]

The two Max Ernst works referred to are the famous 1920 collage *C'est le chapeau qui fait l'homme*[26] and *La Forêt* of 1926. They both appear in the list of works exhibited at the 'Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism' show as belonging to the collections of the Museum of Modern Art.[27] This is also true of the two Tanguys that Barr bought from Breton, which are most probably *Maman, papa est blessé!*[28] and *Extinction des lumières inutiles*[29], both from 1927 and the only two works by the artist listed as belonging to the Museum's collection.[30]

While it might seem irrelevant to talk of the art market in the context of purchases by a museum, the 'Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism' show is an exception because some of the works on show were for sale. This was probably true for Ernst's *La Forêt* from Éluard's collection, which is listed as belonging to the Museum at the time of the show but which is no longer in the MoMA's collection.[31] We can, therefore, be sure that the purchases by the MoMA for the exhibition and specifically for its permanent collections were essential elements in the circulation of, and interest in, surrealist art in the USA. Thus, just like Pierre Matisse, Alfred Barr figures as a key player in the promotion of surrealism in the US, and partly responsible for the economic success and increasing demand for surrealist art.

One further exceptional feature of the dealings among Breton, Éluard and Barr is the purchase by Barr of a number of original documents linked to the history of surrealism. Such a purchase is a sign of the philological intention behind Barr's exhibition project, since he wanted to reconstitute as precisely as possible the birth and ideological evolution of the surrealist movement, in part via documentary evidence. In attaching a price to such archive material it is also proof that Breton and Éluard were now conscious of the increasing historical significance of the material and, consequently, of the authenticity guaranteed by their being the authors. The prices attached to the works a few weeks later in negotiations with Pierre Matisse is further proof.

Summer 1935. Pierre Matisse's purchases for the 'Giorgio de Chirico 1908-1918' exhibition

Pierre Matisse's interest in the collections of Breton and Éluard was focused at the time on the works by Giorgio de Chirico. The gallery-owner was in the process of setting up a

[25] Letter from Éluard to Gala, August 1935. Éluard, *Lettres à Gala*, pp. 256-257.
[26] M. Ernst, *C'est le chapeau qui fait l'homme*, 1920, gouache, pencil, oil and ink on paper collaged on wood, 35,2 x 45,1 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York. https://www.moma.org/collection/works/35478?artist_id=1752&page=1&sov_referrer=artist.
[27] Cf. *Master Checklist*: https://assets.moma.org/documents/moma_master-checklist_325071.pdf.
[28] Yves Tanguy, *Maman, papa est blessé !*, 1927, oil on canvas, 92,1 x 73 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York. https://www.moma.org/collection/works/78701.
[29] Yves Tanguy, *Extinction des lumières inutiles*, 1927, oil on canvas, 92,1 x 65,4 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York. https://www.moma.org/collection/works/79178.
[30] *Ibid*.
[31] *Ibid*.

major exhibition devoted to the Italian artist's early period, precisely the period most appreciated and collected by the surrealists.[32] Breton, the first to discover the *pictor optimus,* owned an exceptional group of paintings from his metaphysical period, but it was Éluard's collection, even more impressive than that of Breton, that held a particular attraction for Matisse.[33]

On his arrival in Paris in early July 1935, Matisse got in touch with Breton, Éluard, Gala and Salvador Dalí, asking to see the de Chirico works in their collections. Two replies dated 2 July, one from Breton and the other from Éluard, confirmed that they were free, and Breton suggested that Éluard act as go-between.[34]

Consequently, it was to Éluard that Matisse wrote again on 15 August 1935 to ask the price of the works he had seen in the four collections during the visits organised the previous month. Matisse also took the opportunity to ask the poet for details of the prices Breton envisaged for his paintings:

I have not yet had a reply from Gala Dalí regarding the exhibition of de Chirico's works in the US. To save time, and to help me in settling a number of practical matters, could you also let me know what prices who may have in mind for your paintings. For example, among those I saw in your collection and in Dalí's:
Les deux sœurs
Le portrait de l'artiste
Le départ du Poète
(…) Since you see Mr Breton, would you be so kind as to ask him the price of the very large de Chirico and of *La Poésie du rêve* – I'm quoting this one at random, not knowing whether it is actually for sale (…)[35]

Éluard, clearly delighted by the interest shown by Matisse, immediately wrote to Gala to tell her the prices proposed to the New York gallery-owner:

A short message, my dear Gala, to tell you the prices that I've proposed to Matisse, so that there's no misunderstanding:
Le duo 25 000
Portrait de l'artiste (at your place) 6000
Le départ du poète 10 000
Le torse aux Bananes[36] 9000
Le grand intérieur métaphysique (at your place) 10 000
Petit intérieur métaphysique avec les objets de pêche 4000
Breton is asking 15,000 for the very large painting, and 12,000 for *Le Cerveau de l'enfant.* All prices quoted are net for us (…) Please let me know for Mr Barr the prices you would take for the

[32] On de Chirico and the surrealists, cf. Gerd Roos and Martin Weidlich, 'Giorgio de Chirico et la "Bande Breton"', *Ligeia* 177-180 (2020/2021), pp. 83-144.
[33] On de Chirico's works in Éluard's collection, cf. Alice Ensabella and Gerd Roos, *Les œuvres de Giorgio de Chirico dans la collection de Paul et Gala Éluard. Une documentation*, Milan: Allemandi, in press.
[34] Letter from Éluard to Matisse, 2 July 1935. Lettre from Breton to Matisse, 2 July 1935 : 'So that you don't feel obliged to answer me, I thought you would like to arrange a meeting through Éluard (*sic* !)'. Pierre Matisse Gallery Archives, Clients – Paul Éluard, 1935-1936, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York.
[35] Letter from Matisse to Éluard, 15 August 1935. Pierre Matisse Gallery Archives, Clients – Paul Éluard, 1935-1936, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York.
[36] G. de Chirico, *L'Incertitude du poète*, 1913, oil on canvas, 106 x 94 cm, Tate Modern, Londres. https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/de-chirico-the-uncertainty-of-the-poet-t04109.

de Chirico drawing (the Napoleon 3 pencil drawing in the bedroom) and your *Intérieur métaphysique* (very green) – which is quite beautiful, you know.[37]

On 23 August, while on vacation in Montfort-en-Chalosse, Éluard sent Matisse details of the prices:

Here are the de Chirico prices, net for Breton and myself:
Les deux sœurs (or Le Duo), reproduced in Le Surréalisme et la peinture and in Minotaure (in colour) ……..25.000 frs
Portrait de l'artiste …….. 6.000 frs
Le Départ du poète (reproduced in Le Surr. et la peinture)….. 10.000 frs
L'Énigme d'une journée (the very large painting reproduced by Breton in Le Surr. et la peinture)….. 19.000 frs
The small painting of metaphysical objects which I have, not near the window but at the back of the library, on the side of the bookshelf ….. 4.000 frs
The painting you call 'La Poésie du rêve' must be the large square canvas at Dalí's, representing the torso of a headless statue with bananas on a square (reproduced in Le Surr. et la peinture) …. 9.000 frs
If it is the large metaphysical interior with a landscape (houses) in the centre (on an easel) which is also at Dalí's (reproduced in Valori Plastici) .... 10.000 frs
Breton's painting 'Le Cerveau de l'enfant' (reproduced in Surréalisme et la peinture) …. 12.000 frs.[38]

As well as representing a precious wealth of information regarding the impressive corpus of de Chirico's works (both in quantity and in quality) still held by Breton and Éluard, this list gives rise to a number of additional remarks. Firstly, as one can see when comparing this letter to the one sent to Mesens only a few months earlier, the prices that Éluard, Gala and Breton propose to Matisse are much higher than what they proposed to their Belgian friend. Furthermore, Éluard's attitude is completely different : the almost desperate tone of his letter to Mesens has given way here to a much more decisive tone, evidence of the new awareness mentioned earlier that now gives Éluard a much more confident role in the negotiations. It is also worth noting that this list includes references to reproductions of these works – sometimes in colour – in the movement's official publications. What might seem a secondary matter actually shows, on the contrary, that Éluard is now aware of the increased value implied for the importance of the works, consequently justifying the higher asking price.

Here once again this behaviour is evidence that the surrealists had a real understanding of the significance that the historical period of the movement was beginning to acquire and rests on a series of practices seeking to legitimize their position as, simultaneously, collectors and promoters of surrealist art.

One last comment concerns Breton's offer to sell to Matisse *Le Cerveau de l'enfant*[39], a work which he maintained had never been for sale before 1964 because it was one of the major works in his collection and one that he did not wish to part with. Well, it

[37] Letter from Éluard to Gala, August 1935. Éluard, *Lettres à Gala*, pp. 257-258.
[38] Letter from Éluard to Matisse, 23 August 1935. Pierre Matisse Gallery Archives, Clients – Paul Éluard, 1935-1936, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York.
[39] G. de Chirico, *Le Cerveau de l'enfant*, 1914, oil on canvas, 80 x 65 cm, Moderna Museet, Stockholm. https://sis.modernamuseet.se/en/objects/3697/le-cerveau-de lenfant?ctx=a4c4350e6668e1e5689fc4daaf80bcf8e54a4f44&idx=6

now seems that the painting that brought de Chirico to the attention of the leader of the surrealists was offered to Pierre Matisse in 1935 for F12,000 and, to date, it has been impossible to find out whether Pierre Matisse did not take up the offer or whether Breton finally changed his mind.

Commercial consequences and conclusion

Breton, Éluard, Gala and Matisse finally reached an agreement,[40] and the exhibition 'Giorgio de Chirico, 1908-1918' opened at the Pierrre Matisse Gallery in New York on 19 November 1935.

The exhibition was a critical and commercial success. Matisse was able to secure a significant number of sales using a very precise strategy. The archives reveal in fact that the gallery-owner had not purchased outright the collectors' works, but that he paid the agreed prices only once the works were sold to one of his own clients. Several works belonging to Éluard and Breton were thus purchased by Matisse and immediately resold to purchasers at much higher prices. The following grid summarises the strategy.[41] The initial French Franc prices are given here in dollars to make the dealer's mark-up clearer.

Work	Price for Matisse	Purchaser	Price for purchaser	Added Value ($)	Added Value (%)
Le depart du poète	396 $ (6 000 FF)	Mrs. Leslie M. Maitland	1 050 $	654 $	165%
Portrait de l'artiste	264.20 $ (4 000 FF)	Carl van Vechten	1 200 $	936 $	355 %

[40] Confirmed by two deposit receipts for five works from Éluard's collection (*Le Départ du poète*, *Intérieur métaphysique*, *Le Duo*, *L'Ange juif*, *Paysage de rue*) and two from Breton's collection (*L'Enigme d'une journée*, *J'irai… le chien de verre*), kept in the Matisse archive and dated 23 September.

[41] This price grid is based on information found in the registers of the Pierre Matisse Gallery, held in the Pierre Matisse Gallery Archives, Business records, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York.

L'énigme d'une journée	660 $ (10 000 FF)	J. Thrall Soby	2 500 $	1 840 $	279%
Le grand interieur métaphysique	527.20 $ (8 000 FF)	J. Thrall Soby	1 200 $	673 $	128%
Le Duo	1 322 $ (20 000 FF)	J. Thrall Soby	2 500 $	1 178 $	89 %

When one considers that Breton and Éluard had already raised the prices they proposed to Matisse and that he then almost doubled them when selling on to his local clients, then one realises that within only a few months these metaphysical works had increased in value by some 350%. The case would suggest firstly a certain naivety on the part of Breton and Éluard, convinced that they had sold to Matisse and Barr at a good price, secondly a lack of understanding of the US art market, certainly less affected by the crisis than the Parisian market.[42] However, a series of telegrams between Matisse and Éluard show that there were multiple negotiations regarding a certain number of works, *Le Duo* in particular,[43] where Matisse had suggested a lower price, firmly opposed by Éluard.[44]

It remains true, nevertheless, that these transactions resulted in a significant rise in prices of surrealist works ; and this helps explain the sudden interest among dealers, collectors – and artists – in the US.

The dealings between Barr, Matisse, Breton and Éluard in the summer of 1935 represent merely one of the numerous transactions taking place in the 1930s between collectors of the surrealist group and US curators, dealers and collectors. It remains, however, a key example of how private collections constituted a major attraction in this

[42] The opening of several modern art galleries in the years following the crisis (Pierre Matise and Julien Levy opened their galleries in 1931) shows how the modern and contemporary art market was widespread and very much in demand in the New York milieu. Cf. Helmreich, 'Julien Levy: Progressive Dealer or Dealer of Progressives?', pp. 332-334.

[43] G. de Chirico, *Le Duo*, winter 1914-1915, oil on canvas, 81,9 x 59 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York. https://www.moma.org/collection/works/80588.

[44] Telegram from Éluard to Matisse, 13 December 1935 : 'IMPOSSIBLE LOWER PRICE DUO STOP'. Pierre Matisse Gallery Archives, Clients – Paul Éluard, 1935-1936, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York.

emerging market, foreshadowing the circulation of early period surrealist works in the USA and, consequently, an appreciation of the group's aesthetics.

These new links to the American market gave surrealist art a growing reputation, preparing the arrival of the surrealists themselves in New York during the war; in a word, preparing the ground. Thanks to these sales, a success that had been most certainly ideological and aesthetic at the outset, became a commercial success too, not just for the artists but for their collectors, leading to unprecedented consequences.

Translated by Elza Adamowicz and Peter Dunwoodie

THE CRITICAL RECEPTION OF SURREALISM IN THE ANGLO-AMERICAN LITTLE MAGAZINES IN EUROPE: BETWEEN ELECTIVE AFFINITIES, CULTURAL MISUNDERSTANDINGS AND ART MARKET ISSUES

Serena TRINCHERO

1. The Anglo-American Magazines in Europe

During the 1920s European-based American little magazines functioned as an important platform for the discussion on American identity in dialogue with European culture, cooperating to disseminate different movements and avant-gardes and establishing an important cultural bridge between the two continents.[1] For both the literary and artistic scene the experience of the expatriates seemed a fruitful exchange and produced a peculiar way to embrace Surrealism that influenced its historical development as represented by American writers and artists during the years of World War II.[2]

The debate about Surrealism involved numerous expatriate little magazines proving their ability to respond to cultural influences: *The Transatlantic Review*[3], *transition*[4], *Tambour*[5], *This Quarter*[6], as well as *The Little Review*[7], contributed to preparing the

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[1] Among the various magazines that contributed to the spread of the Surrealism in the United States is also worth mentioning *The Dial* and *Pagany*. See Pawlik, Joanna. 'United States', in *The International Encyclopedia of Surrealism*, (eds.) Dawn Ades, Krzysztof Fijalkowski, Steven Harris *et alii*, London-New York: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2019, p. 139.

[2] See Reynes-Delobel, Anne and Mansanti, Céline. 'Americanizing Surrealism: Cultural Challenges in the Magnetic Fields', *Miranda* 14 (2017): p. 9.

[3] Published only during 1924, the monthly magazine *The Transatlantic Review* represented the English writer Ford Madox Ford's attempt to create a cultural link among London, Paris and New York. See Gasiorek, Andrzej. '*Exiles*: *The Transatlantic Review* (1924) and *The Exile* (1927-8)', in *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines*, (eds.) Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, II, pp. 687-708.

[4] *transition,* founded in 1927 by writers Eugene Jolas and Elliot Paul, became an international forum for the arts. It was published in two series (1927-1930; 1932-1938) for a total of 27 issues. See Mansanti, Céline. *La revue* Transition *(1927-1938): Le modernisme historique en devenir,* Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2009.

[5] *Tambour*, a bilingual quarterly in French and English, was published by the writer and literary critic Howard Salemson in Paris from November 1928 to June 1930. See Morrisson, Mark and Selzer, Jack. 'Documenting Cultures of Modernism: Selections from *Tambour*', *PMLA* 115 (October 2000): pp. 1006-1031; Salemson, Harold James (ed.), *Tambour, Volumes 1-8, a Facsimile Edition*, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2002.

[6] The magazine, founded by the American poet Ernest Walsh in 1925, was run after his death by the publisher Edward Titus. See Baptista, Gregory. 'Between Worlds: *Gargoyle* (1921-2); *This Quarter* (1925-32); and *Tambour* (1929-1930)', in *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History*, pp. 282-292.

[7] Although only its 1929 last issue was published in Europe, *The Little Review* was one of the journals that best represented the modernist internationalization of American culture. See Aijmer Rydsjö, Celia and Jonsson, Annkatrin. *Exiles in Print. Little Magazine in Europe, 1921-1938*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2016, pp. 11-12. About the long editorial life of the magazine, which was founded in Chicago in 1914 by

American reception of the French avant-garde movement prior to its arrival in the Unites States which was marked by the first exclusively Surrealist exhibition at Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford in 1931 and by 'Surréalisme', the exhibition held at the Julien Levy Gallery in New York in the following year.[8]

In September 1932, the publication of an issue of *This Quarter* completely dedicated to Surrealism and orchestrated by André Breton gave the movement's founder the first opportunity to present the group's history and developments from 1924 that were previously narrated by American writers and artists who had encountered the avant-garde during their European sojourns. For Breton, the issue was an occasion to assemble a series of experimental texts that were translated into English and, as far as the visual arts were concerned, to present, on a rival front, Salvador Dalí, who had participated in the aforementioned exhibition at the Julien Levy Gallery.

These events marked a new phase in the spread of the Surrealist avant-garde in the United States, which continued with the exhibition 'Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism' (1936) at MoMA[9] (leaving Breton unsatisfied though) and was then consolidated with the arrival of many of its protagonists fleeing the war in Europe.[10]

As other studies have pointed out on both a literary[11] and a more general cultural[12] basis, the publication of texts by French writers in the context of the expatriate little magazines, both in French and in English translation, was accompanied by a constant commentary and reshaping of Surrealism for the American audiences, which encouraged transatlantic exchanges and stimulated the imagination of the younger generation of writers and artists. With regard to the visual arts, the attention of the expatriate magazines focused on a small number of artists, namely the precursor Giorgio de Chirico, together with Yves Tanguy, Max Ernst, Joan Miró and above all André Masson:[13] all artists who well represented the surrealist creativity and who were able to win the attention of the American audience, always interested in the novelties coming from Paris, as demonstrated by the fact that many of the paintings proposed in their pages were later acquired by American public and private collections. This perspective allows new considerations about the presence of the Surrealists in the pages of these magazines, which can be linked not only to the circles of the Parisian scene, which was characterised by constant rivalries, but also to issues

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Margaret Anderson, see Noyes Platt, Susan. 'Mysticism in the Machine Age: Jane Heap and *The Little Review*', *Twenty /One, Art and Culture* 1 (fall 1990): pp. 18-44; Golding, Alan. '*The Little Review* (1914-1929)', in *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History,* pp. 61-84.

[8] 'Newer Super-realism', November 1931, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford (CT, USA) featured the work of Giorgio de Chirico, Salvador Dali, Max Ernst, André Masson, Joan Miro, and Pablo Picasso. 'Surréalisme' was held at Julien Levy Gallery from January 29 to mid-February 1932.

[9] 'Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism', December 7, 1936–January 17, 1937, organized by the founding director Alfred H. Barr, Jr. at MoMA, New York.

[10] About the arrival of the surrealists in America and the peculiar aspects of the avant-garde in the country, see Sawin, Martica. *Surrealism in Exile and the Beginning of the New York School*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995; Loyer, Emmanuelle. *Paris à New York: Intellectuels et artistes français en exil (1940-1947)*, Paris: Hachette-Littératures, 2007; Flahutez, Fabrice. *Nouveau monde et nouveau mythe: Mutations du surréalisme, de l'exil américain à l' 'Écart absolu' (1941-1965)*, Paris: Les Presses du reél, 2007; Drost, Julia, Flahutez, Fabrice, Helmreich, Anne *et alii* (eds.), *Networking Surrealism in the USA. Agents, Artists, and the Market*, Paris: German Center for Art History in Paris, 2019.

[11] See Tashjian, Dickran. *A Boatload of Madmen. Surrealism and the American Avant-Garde, 1920-1950*, New York: Thames and Hudson, 1995.

[12] See Reynes-Delobel and Mansanti, 'Americanizing Surrealisms'.

[13] Man Ray's position was much more complex and would need a separate analysis.

related to the art market and the particular ways in which Surrealism spread internationally.

For the young American literati and artists, the European sojourn was both an 'exile' and a time to reshape American culture thanks to the many encounters made especially in Paris, the catalyst for the expatriate community.[14] The choice to live in the Old Continent was dictated not only by the desire to be inspired by European literature but also, and above all, to be able to create a new form of writing and a new artistic idiom capable of revitalising American literature and art: [15] this programme of profound transformation coincided chronologically with the arrival on the cultural scene of Surrealism in 1924.

The progressive disintegration of the Parisian Dada group and the birth of Surrealism were narrated by the magazines in question with the awareness that both avant-gardes were important for shaking up the stagnant American culture. Surrealism was recognised as having the potential to overcome some of Dada's limitations, especially nihilism, which did not fit a new culture still searching for its identity.[16] Even the writer Josephson, who joined Dada at his arrival in Paris in 1921 and later Surrealism,[17] agreed with this criticism, as evidenced by his first article published by an expatriate magazine, 'David and Goliath':[18] a position reinforced in 'After and Beyond Dada', [19] where he focused on the stylistic innovations brought by the young Philippe Soupault, Louis Aragon and Paul Éluard, forerunners of a new phase after Dada. Not surprisingly, the latter article followed the example of contributions by André Breton ('Après Dada', 1922) and René Crevel that had been published in the expatriate journals *The Little Review* and *The Transatlantic Review* as part of a programme of international dissemination of modernism.[20]

2. *The Little Review*'s updating of the American Scene

The Autumn-Winter 1923-1924 issue of *The Little Review*, where Crevel's article 'Which Way' was published, was the consequence of editor Jane Heap's long stay in Paris and functioned both as a support for Dada and as a call for the transformation of the avant-garde. Possibly influenced by the *Coeur à barbe* evening organized by Tzara at the Théâtre

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[14] About the idea of 'exile', see: Trinchero, Serena. *Alla ricerca di una nuova identità americana: modernismo e primitivismo nelle riviste statunitensi in Europa (1921-1932*), Florence: Angelo Pontecorboli Editore, 2020, p. 44.

[15] See Reynes-Delobel and Mansanti, 'Americanizing Surrealisms', p. 2.

[16] See Munson, Gorham. 'Vienna Letter', *Gargoyle* 5 (May 1922): s.p.; Sanders, Emmy Veronica. 'America Invades Europe', *Broom* 1 (November 1921): pp. 89-93; Loeb, Harold. *The Way It Was*, New York: Criterion Books, 1959, p. 77. As highlighted by Peter Nicholls, Dada stimulated a nationalist appreciation of the technological image of America, but the expatriated little magazines rejected anti-bourgeois extremeness and nihilism. See Nicholls, Peter. 'Life Among the Surrealists: *Broom* and *Secession* Revisited', in *Revues modernistes, revues engagées*, (eds.) Hélène Aji, Cécile Mansanti and Benoît Tadié, Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2011, pp. 247-267.

[17] Matthew Josephson was a writer participating in numerous expatriate journals such as *Gargoyle*, *Secession*, *Broom*, *transition*. About his life and work, see Shi, David Emory. *Matthew Josephson, Bourgeois Bohemian*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981.

[18] Josephson, Matthew. 'David and Goliath', *Gargoyle* 6 (December 1921): p. 14.

[19] *Id*. 'After and Beyond Dada', *Broom* 4 (July 1922): pp. 346-350.

[20] Crevel, René. 'Which Way', *The Little Review* 4 (autumn-winter 1923/1924): pp. 29-34; *Id.* 'Coups d'oeil', *The Transatlantic Review* 4 (April 1924): pp. 239-243; *Id*. 'Coups d'oeil', *The Transatlantic Review* 1 (July 1924): pp. 123-127. See Tashjian, *A Boatload of Madmen*, pp. 16-17; Witkovsky, Matthew S. 'Dada Breton', *October* 105 (summer 2003): pp. 135-136.

Michel on 6 July 1923, the issue contained texts by Soupault, Aragon, Éluard, Tzara and Ribemont-Dessaignes (along with reproductions of the works of Max Ernst, Hans Arp, Man Ray and André Masson), providing a picture of the cultural scene in the French capital but without a clear explanation of what was to happen next with the split within Parisian Dada and the subsequent birth of the Surrealist group. As outlined by Heap in her commentary, it was

> a comprehensive review, of the work itself, of the most energetic most untrammelled group of young men working in France today. They do not belong to any formal group…but they all amuse themselves doing very good work. [….] We will be accused of booming the Dadaists… why not (except that these men are not Dada).[21]

In Europe, Heap got acquainted with René Crevel, who was the Surrealist who had the most space in her magazine: the writer at the time was entering a few Parisian cultural circles that enhanced his reputation in the Anglo-American milieu and provided further opportunities to publish.[22] His friendship with Heap was nurtured by a shared love of the mundane, which caused him a tormented relationship with André Breton, but also by a mutual cooperation that was common in homoerotic circles.[23]

Among the various articles, *The Little Review* gave space to two contributions of art criticism by Crevel: one dedicated to Giorgio de Chirico (no. 1, 1924) and the other to Eugene MacCown (no. 1, 1925), a young American painter who was, at the time, the French writer's lover.[24] 'Acknowledgment to Georgio [*sic*] de Chirico', which previously appeared in French in *Le Disque vert*,[25] presented the Italian painter's work for the first time in an American publication except for Henry McBride's article in *The Dial*.[26] His contribution followed some of the ideas already expressed by Breton regarding the initiatory value of de Chirico's oeuvre,[27] which, in Crevel's opinion, represented a new cultural proposal based on a solid tradition as opposed to the negation of the past offered by Dada. De Chirico was also celebrated for his ability to propose an innovative vision of the cityscape based on incongruous juxtapositions, which was well represented by the four reproductions of his works from gallerist Paul Guillaume's collection that illustrated the article:[28] *Mistero e malinconia di una strada* (1914),[29] that entered Andrè Breton's

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[21] Heap, Jane. 'Comments', *The Little Review* 4 (autumn-winter 1923/1924): p. 35.

[22] See Devésa, Jean-Michel. 'René Crevel et le monde anglo-saxon', in *René Crevel, ou L'esprit contre la raison*, (ed.) Jean-Michel Devésa, Lausanne: L'age d'homme, 2002, p. 235; Nigro, Alessandro. ''Au carrefour de la poesie et de la revolution': la critica militante di René Crevel nella Parigi degli anni Venti', *Ricerche di storia dell'arte* 1 (2017): p. 21.

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 15; Trinchero, *Alla ricerca di una nuova identità americana*, p. 107.

[24] Crevel, René. 'Acknowledgement to Georgio [*sic*] de Chirico*', The Little Review* 1 (spring 1924): pp. 7-8; *Id.* 'Eugene Mac Cown, Peintre Ingénu', *The Little Review* 1 (Spring 1925): pp. 16-17.

[25] Crevel, René. 'Merci Georgio [*sic*] de Chirico'*, Le Disque vert* 3 (1923): pp. 1-2. In 1924 Crevel wrote a second contribution dedicated to de Chirico: *Id*. 'La minute qui s'arrête ou le bienfait de Giorgio de Chirico', *Sélection* 7 (1924): pp. 161-165.

[26] See Landes, Jennifer. 'Giorgio de Chirico and the American Critics, 1920-1940', in *Giorgio De Chirico and America* [exhibition catalogue], (ed.) Emily Braun, New York: Hunter College of the City of New York, Rome: Fondazione Giorgio e Isa de Chirico, Turin: Umberto Allemandi & C., 1996, p. 34.

[27] See Roos, Gerd and Weidlich, Martin. 'Giorgio de Chirico et la 'Bande Breton'', *Ligeia* 177-180 (2020/1): pp. 93-94.

[28] The provenance of the paintings is reported in Heap, Jane. 'Comments', *The Little Review* 1 (Spring 1924): p. 58. In the magazine the reproductions were not accompanied by the title but just by the line 'by Georgio [*sic*] de Chirico'.

collection; *La coppia* (1914-15),[30] later acquired by Paul Éluard, *Il vaticinatore* (1914-15)[31] and *L'ènigme de la fatalité* (1914).[32]

The interconnection between cultural motivations and the art market was a new and specific feature of *The Little Review* under the direction of Jane Heap, who at the beginning of 1924 started a new commercial venture in New York called The Little Review Gallery with the aim of selling American and European art thanks to the business relationships she had built up with Parisian gallerists: as happened for example with Henri Kahnweiler, whom she contacted thanks to Gertrude Stein's intermediation for some paintings by Juan Gris, which were also reproduced in the issue that followed the one with de Chirico's works.

As with Crevel's text dedicated to Eugene MacCown, which was in relation to the solo exhibition hosted at Léonce Rosenberg's Galerie de l'Effort Moderne,[33] the one regarding de Chirico, besides disseminating themes dear to surrealist poetics, appeared at a favourable moment for the Italian artist, in which he was receiving attention from American collectors such as Albert C. Barnes who, in 1923, at Guillaume's suggestion, purchased twenty of his paintings.[34] But while Barnes preferred works from the 1920s for his collection, the reproductions that accompanied Crevel's text all belonged to the artistic phase of the mid-1910s, whose works were partially in Guillaume's possession at the time and were coveted by the Surrealists, who had become keen collectors of de Chirico's works in those years.[35]

A new exploration into surrealist art and literature was represented by the famous Spring-Summer 1926 issue of *The Little Review*, which was put together with the help of Matthew Josephson and Malcolm Cowley, who, upon returning to the United States in

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[29] Giorgio de Chirico**,** *Mistero e malinconia di una strada*, oil on canvas, 1914, private collection.

[30] Giorgio de Chirico, *La coppia*, oil on canvas, 1914-1915, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. https://www.moma.org/collection/works/80588.

[31] Giorgio de Chirico, *Il vaticinatore*, oil on canvas, 1914-1915, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. https://www.moma.org/collection/works/8058.

[32] Giorgio de Chirico, *L'énigme de la fatalité*, oil on canvas, April-May 1914, Kunstmuseum Basel – Foundation Hoffmann. The images were probably provided by the editors of the magazine *Sélection* that published Crevel's article in May 1924, since both E.L.T. Mesens and Andrè de Ridder asked Heap to send the photographs of de Chirico's paintings back. See letter from E.L.T. Mesens to Jane Heap, 8th December 1924, Little Review Records, 1914-1964, UWM Manuscript Collection 1, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, Archives Department, box 8, folder 28; letter from Andrè de Riddder to Jane Heap, 6 July 1924; 22nd October 1924, *Ibid.*, box 9, folder 2.

[33] See Nigro, 'Au carrefour de la poesie et de la revolution', pp. 20-24; Trinchero, *Alla ricerca di una nuova identità americana*, pp. 101-105.

[34] See Boddwyn, Julia M. 'The First American Collector of de Chirico', in *Giorgio De Chirico and America*, p. 46.

[35] Numerous studies focus on the human, artistic and marketing relations between the Surrealists and de Chirico including: Fagiolo dell'Arco, Maurizio and Baldacci, Paolo. *Giorgio de Chirico. Parigi 1924-1929, dalla nascita del Surrealismo al crollo di Wall Street*, Milan: Edizioni Philippe Daverio, 1982; Fagiolo dell'Arco, Maurizio. *Giorgio de Chirico all'epoca del Surrealismo*, Milan: Electa, 1991; De Sanna, Joel. 'Giorgio de Chirico – André Breton: Duel à mort', *Metafisica* 1-2 (2002): pp. 17-61; Roos and Weidlich, 'Giorgio de Chirico et la 'Bande Breton'', pp. 83-144. It is interesting to note that the publication of Crevel's article coincided with the sale of part of the Éluard collection at Paris Hotel Drouot (3 July 1924) including paintings by Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque and eight works by de Chirico. About the Éluard sale, see Ensabella, Alice. ''Apparition à la cote du peintre italien Giorgio de Chirico'. La vendita della collezione Paul Éluard del luglio 1924', *Studi online* 4 (2015): pp. 39-45.

1924, attempted to establish a cohesive group of young writers inspired by those they had frequented in Paris.[36]

Looking at the issue in the context of the magazine's long history, it can be argued that Heap's intention was to inform about Surrealism, even if this movement was not close to her own feelings, as well as to more generally encourage a new social consideration of artists in the American context.[37] In her editorial comment, she pointed out that the issue had been structured on the one hand by Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes, who invited among others René Crevel, Michel Leiris and Georges Limbour, and on the other hand by Josephson, who involved Hart Crane, Gorham Munson, Edward Nagle and Malcolm Cowley with the aim of comparing the Parisian cultural scene with the New York one.

The American section of the issue focused only on literature and in particular on the contributions of Matthew Josephson who, as Tashjian has already argued, had planned an attack against Breton and his *Manifesto of Surrealism* (1924), probably on the basis of a misinterpretation.[38] The European section, largely of French origin, combined poems, fragments of fiction, art criticism and reproductions of paintings in order to offer a comprehensive view of the Surrealist movement. Although Heap implied that the 'Paris section' had been selected by Ribemont-Dessaignes, a letter from Tristan Tzara to the editor dated 28 May 1925 seems to describe a different scenario, suggesting that it was only after this communication that Heap decided to work on an issue devoted to Surrealism in response to Josephson's request for a dossier dedicated to the group that he was trying to create in New York.[39]

Tzara was an important contributor to *The Little Review* from 1923 onwards,[40] introducing Heap to the Parisian art scene and frequently sending material from Europe: in some ways he took over the role that Ezra Pound had played for the journal from 1917 to 1923. Along with his letter, the founder of Dada provided the rich iconographic apparatus of the issue, which included paintings by Pierre Roy, Louis Marcoussisis, Joan Miró and André Masson; the latter two artists were introduced by a commentary by Michel Leiris.[41] Tzara described each personality in the context of the Parisian scene and closed his report with a request, or rather by informing Heap that Masson, Mirò, Leiris, Viot, Baron, Limbour, Salacrou and himself preferred to see their works published together.[42]

It thus emerges that the image of Surrealism conveyed by the issue was not related to Breton, who at the time was trying to organise a cohesive group and who went so far as to publicly attack Leiris for his inclusion in *The Little Review*.[43] Moreover, a careful look at

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[36] See Shi, *Matthew Josephson*, pp. 77-108.

[37] See Heap, Jean. 'Contributors', *The Little Review* 1 (spring-summer 1926): p. 1.

[38] Josephson, Matthew. 'A Letter to my Friends', *Ibid.*: pp. 17-19. See Tashjian, *A Boatload of Madmen*, pp. 20-22.

[39] See Matthew Josephson's letter to Jane Heap, 11 November 1925, in Little Review Records, 1914-1964, UWM Manuscript Collection 1, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, Archives Department, box 7, folder 31; Jane Heap's letter to Matthew Josephson, 8 April 1926, in Matthew Josephson Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, box 7, folder 169.

[40] See Noyes Platt, 'Mysticism in the Machine Age', p. 29; Trinchero, *Alla ricerca di una nuova identità americana*, pp. 117-179.

[41] Leiris, Michel. 'Joan Mirò', *The Little Review* 1 (spring-summer 1926): pp. 8-9; *Id.* 'André Masson', *Ibid*.: pp. 16-17.

[42] Tristan Tzara's letter to Jane Heap, 28 May 1925, in Little Review Records, 1914-1964, UWM Manuscript Collection 1, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, Archives Department, box 9, folder 38. Armand Salacrou's contribution was not included in the final version of the issue.

[43] See Mansanti, *La revue Transition (1927-1938)*, p. 156.

the selection made reveals that Masson's presence, as will be explained later, was closely linked to the Anglo-American entourage; the same applies to Miró who, when the issue was published, was having a solo exhibition at the Galerie Pierre (12-27 June 1926) that included both of his works that were reproduced in *The Little Review*: *La terre labourée*[44] and *Paysage catalan (Le chasseur)*,[45] both datable to 1923-24. It is noteworthy to mention that at this time Miró was under contract with Pierre Loeb who boosted his international recognition, especially in America, as evidenced not only by the presence of the two reproductions in the pages of *The Little Review* but also by his participation in the Société Anonyme's 'International Exhibition of Modern Art' organized by Katherine Dreier and Marcel Duchamp at the Brooklyn Museum of Art in 1926.[46] Additionally, Jacques Viot's article focusing on Marcoussis can also contribute to clarifying the financial implications of the selected materials: Viot, described by Tzara as a poet of the post-Dada generation but not part of the Surrealist group,[47] was in fact at the time working as secretary of the Galerie Pierre but also as courtier for artists such as Max Ernst and Joan Miró.[48]

3. The Surrealist presence in *transition*

If Surrealism was a minority presence in the pages of *The Little Review*, this was not the case with another magazine with a long editorial history, *transition* (1927-1930; 1932-1938), which was founded by Eugene Jolas, an American journalist of Alsatian origin who moved to Paris between 1924 and 1925. In the columns of *The Chicago Tribune*, Jolas described the birth of the French avant-garde movement,[49] showing an interest in both the ideas of Breton, particularly regarding automatic writing, and those of the Alsatian Ivan Goll, who saw Surrealism as a movement with a distinctly international character.[50]

The editors of *transition* defined their external support for the movement in issue no. 9 (1927): in 'First Aid to the Enemy'[51] they described Surrealism as an energetic force capable of reviving the literary scene and an interesting example for the American cultural reality. However, the editorial line of the magazine differed from the French movement in its evaluation of the role of the artist's imagination and was characterized by the preference

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[44] Joan Miró, *La terre labourée (The Tilled Field)*, 1923-4, oil on canvas, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York. https://www.guggenheim.org/artwork/2934. The painting was presented in the pages of *The Little Review* under the incorrect title *Terre la sourée.*

[45] Joan Miró, *Paysage catalan (Le chasseur)*,1923-1924, oil on canvas, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. https://www.moma.org/collection/works/78756. The painting was bought by André Breton in 1925 and in *The Little Review* was presented under the title *Le chasseur*.

[46] See Drost, Julia, Flahutez, Fabrice, Helmreich, Anne *et alii.* 'Avida Dollars! Surrealism and the Art Market in the United States, 1930–1960', in *Networking Surrealism*, pp. 14-15. International Exhibition of Modern Art, November 19, 1926, to January 10, 1927, Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York.

[47] See Tristan Tzara's letter to Jane Heap, 28 May 1925, in Little Review Records, 1914-1964, UWM Manuscript Collection 1, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, Archives Department, box 9, folder 38.

[48] See Drost, Julia. 'Il sogno della ricchezza: Surrealismo e mercato dell'arte nella Parigi tra le due guerre', *Ricerche di storia dell'arte* 121 (2017): p. 11.

[49] Tashjian, *A Boatload of Madmen*, pp. 12-13.

[50] Mansanti, Céline. 'Présence du Surréalisme dans la revue *Transition* (Paris, 1927-1938): Eugéne Jolas entre André Breton et Ivan Goll', *Mélusine* 26 (February 2006): pp. 278-279; *Ead.*, *La revue Transition (1927-1938)*, p. 159. On the opposite Breton was considered a restricting force for the movement, see Jolas, Eugene. *Man From Babel,* New Haven–London: Yale University Press, 1998, pp. 80-81.

[51] Jolas, Eugene, Éluard, Paul and Sage, Robert. 'First Aid to the Enemy', *transition* 9 (December 1927): pp. 161-176.

for neologisms and a literature free from grammatical formalization, as evidenced by the manifesto 'Revolution of the Word' (1929).[52]

Although *transition* had to contend with Breton's distance and even indifference,[53] the magazine was nonetheless an important vehicle for the dissemination of Surrealism, as is well evidenced by its illustrative apparatus that frequently featured works from the Galerie surréaliste's stock, probably selected because of Jolas's relationship with both Paul Éluard, whom he appreciated for his poetic gifts, and the Dadaist and anarchist Marcel Noll, who was later involved as director of the gallery.[54] *transition* reproduced works by Yves Tanguy, Joan Miró and Man Ray, artists who were also present in the gallery's projects: a cultural consonance that perhaps concealed a commercial agreement, as the advertisements that appeared in the magazine may also suggest.[55] This hypothesis is supported not only by a letter from Jolas to Matthew Josephson, in which he informed him of the future closure of the gallery and the consequent need to reformulate the magazine's illustrations,[56] but also by Maria MacDonald's trip (Jolas' wife) to the United States, who tried in vain to publish an anthology of Surrealist art and literature overseas.[57]

The reproduction of Yves Tanguy's and Giorgio de Chirico's paintings in the magazine may help to understand such a close relationship.[58] Tanguy's works were presented for the first time in issue no. 2 (May 1927), in conjunction with the opening at the Parisian gallery of 'Yves Tanguy et objets d'Amérique' (27 May - 15 June 1927), which was followed in the September issue by the reproduction of *Un grand tableaux qui représente un paysage*,[59] a 1927 painting displayed in the aforementioned exhibition that remained unsold.[60] Even more revealing is the fact that in the second issue, Tanguy's work was published together with a reproduction of *Le Grand Automate* (1925)[61] by Giorgio de Chirico, an artist who had a prophetic and initiatory role for the Surrealists and particularly for Tanguy. The presence of this painting, presented with the title of *Au bord de la mer*, can perhaps be explained by its parallel presence in Roger Vitrac's book *Georges de Chirico: vingt-neuf reproductions de peintures précédées d'une étude critique*, which was published that same year.[62]

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[52] S.n. 'The Revolution of the Word', *transition* 16-17 (spring-summer 1929): p. 13. See also Mansanti, *La revue Transition (1927-1938),* pp. 163-192.

[53] *Ead.*, 'Présence du Surréalisme dans la revue *Transition*', pp. 275-285.

[54] Jolas, *Man From Babel*, p. 90.

[55] About the advertisement see also, Cushing, C. Douglas. 'A Version of Surrealism: *Transition* and its Romantic Legacy', *The Space Between: Literature and Culture 1914-1945* 14 (2018): p. 6. http://scalar.usc.edu/works/the-space-between-literature-and-culture-1914-1945/vol14_2018_cushing.

[56] See Eugene Jolas' letter to Matthew Josephson, 20 July 1928, in Eugene and Maria Jolas Papers. General Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, box 6, folder 136.

[57] Jolas, *Man From Babel*, p. 90.

[58] The support was not limited to the gallery activities but more generally to all surrealist artists, as evidenced for example by the reproduction of Max Ernst's paintings in *transition* (2 May 1927) on the occasion of his solo exhibition at the Galerie Van Leer (14 March – 5 April 1927), which was also mentioned in the editorial introduction to the illustrations.

[59] Yves Tanguy, *Un grand tableaux qui représente en paysage,* 1927, oil on canvas. For the reproduction in *transition,* where it is presented under the title *Landscape*: https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k6458020s/f123.item.

[60] See *Yves Tanguy et objets d'Amérique* [exhibition catalogue], Paris: Éditions Surréalistes, 1927, p. 7.

[61] Giorgio de Chirico, *Le Grand Automate,* 1925, oil on canvas. For the reproduction in *transition*: https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k64362061/f110.item.

[62] Vitrac, Roger. *Georges de Chirico: vingt-neuf reproductions de peintures précédées d'une étude critique,* Paris: Gallimard, 1927. Fagiolo dell'Arco noted that that the picture was one of the few paintings

The interest in the surrealist interpretation of de Chirico's first phase, but also an attention to market strategies, seem to be reflected in the choice of reproductions (both provided by the Galerie surréaliste) of the artworks for the January and March 1928 issues respectively: *La révélation du solitaire*[63] (1916) and *L'arc des échelles noires*[64] (1914). 1928 was an important year, marked by numerous exhibitions of the Italian painter's work, including his first solo show in New York and the well-known rival Parisian exhibitions held at Galerie de l'Effort Moderne owned by Léonce Rosenberg and the Galerie surréaliste respectively:[65] the New York exhibition, organised in collaboration between the American gallerist Valentine Dudensing, Paul Guillaume and Pierre Matisse, brought together a selection of recent and historical works; on the other hand, the rue Caillot one only exhibited paintings from the 1910s, many of which had entered the Surrealists' collections, like the two works presented in the magazine.

But it would be restrictive and misleading to describe the complex connections between the magazine and the avant-garde only in terms of an interest in contemporary art and related market issues. More broadly, the editors of *transition* were in fact able to translate the multiple influences experienced on the Parisian scene and reshape them for the American public, thus creating their own distinctive cultural proposition that also included the surrealist interest in non-European art, with a focus on pre-Columbian artefacts, combined with the theme of exploring American identity. This focus responded to a narrative already present in the United States,[66] which was further solicited in Europe not only by the exhibitions hosted at the Galerie surréaliste ('Man Ray et les objets des îles', 1926; and 'Yves Tanguy et objets d'Amérique', 1927),[67] but also by 'Les Arts anciens de l'Amérique', organised by Georges-Henri Rivière at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris (1928), the first exhibition on the subject with a properly scientific purpose, which was matched, overseas, by the one at the Toledo Museum of Art.[68] On a

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from the Twenties reproduced in the 1966 MoMA de Chirico catalog curated by James Thrall Soby. See Fagiolo dell'Arco, Maurizio. 'Vita e opere di G. de Chirico, 1924-1929', in *Giorgio de Chirico. Parigi 1924-1929*, p. 486.

[63] Giorgio de Chirico, *La révélation du solitaire,* 1916, oil on canvas. For the reproduction on *transition*, where is presented as 'Painting', see: https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k64480490/f94.item.

[64] Giorgio de Chirico, *L'arc des échelles noires,* 1914, oil on canvas. The reproduction on *transition* reports the same title, see: https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k64480512/f112.item. The painting was bought by Breton at the 1924 sale of the Éluard collection at the Hotel Drouot. See Ensabella, 'Apparition à la cote du peintre italien Giorgio de Chirico', p. 43.

[65] 'Paintings by Giorgio de Chirico' was held from 23 January to 11 February 1928 at Valentine Gallery, New York; 'Œuvres anciennes de Georges [*sic*] de Chirico' opened at Galerie Surrealiste from 15, February to 1, March at the same time as the Galerie de l'Effort Moderne presented the solo exhibition of the artist. 1928 marked the flourishing of personal and retrospectives dedicated to de Chirico; see Fagiolo dell'Arco and Baldacci, *Giorgio de Chirico all'epoca del Surrealismo*, pp. 7, 10-13; De Sanna, 'Giorgio de Chirico – Andrè Breton: Duel à mort', pp. 44-53; Chierici, Giorgia. 'Giorgio de Chirico e l'America. La prima personale alla Valentine Gallery di New York', *Metafisica* 19 (2019): pp. 294-339; Roos and Weidlich, 'Giorgio de Chirico et la 'Bande Breton'', pp. 136-142.

[66] Braun, Barbara. *Pre-Columbian Art and the Post-Columbian World, Ancient American Sources of Modern Art*, New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1993, pp. 38-46.

[67] Gilbert, Courtney. *The (New) World in the Time of the Surrealists: European Surrealists and their Mexican Contemporaries*, PhD thesis, The University of Chicago, 2001, p. 37; 76.

[68] See s.n. 'Glossary', *transition* 14 (fall 1928): p. 278. About the two exhibitions and their cultural and scientific aspects, see Fee, Sarah. 'Not for Art's Sake: An Early Exhibition of Pre-Columbian Objects at the Toledo Museum of Art, 1928–1929', *Museum Anthropology* 1 (2011): pp. 13-28; Faucourt, Camille.

cultural and political level, these exhibitions were part of a complex system of international relations involving France, the United States and Mexico, which was the result of the rediscovery of native cultures and their re-elaboration.[69]

As early as issue no. 5 (August 1927) *transition* featured contributions on Mexico and pre-Columbian cultures, [70] frequently described in tones that accentuated the connections with violence, blood, references to life and death and in ways that recalled surrealist models, starting with André Breton's 'Introduction au discours sur le peu de réalité', which was published in English in the magazine.[71]

As had happened with contemporary artists, *transition* contributed to spreading the knowledge of these artefacts but was also well aware of their market value: these objects were in fact often exhibited at the Galerie surréaliste,[72] or were part of the collections of Charles Ratton or Paul Éluard, as in the case of the statues and bowls reproduced in issue no. 14 of autumn 1928. As studies have made clear, the market for non-European art was an important source of income for the Surrealists: especially for Paul Éluard - whose collection was known to Jolas -[73] who was always on the lookout for such artefacts to sell to Parisian dealers, including Charles Ratton.[74]

The mythological aspect of these objects was used by Jolas as a function of his reworking of artistic language in humanist and universalist terms, looking in particular at Latin America as a reservoir of expressions strongly connected with North America. Even when the influence of Bretonian Surrealism was losing strength in favour of a dialogue with Carl Einstein and the journal *Documents*, *transition* kept maintaining a similar attitude. Issue no. 20 of 1930, which closes the first series, features images of pre-Columbian artefacts that present numerous affinities both with the objects displayed in the exhibition 'Les Arts anciens de l'Amérique' and with those reproduced in *Documents*: but if in Bataille's magazine they were used to undermine the foundations of Western superiority thanks to their uncanny power, for *transition* they represented instead a powerful and vital element useful for the construction of a new society born from the unification of the cultures of North and South America.[75]

'L'annonce d'une renaissance: l'exposition 'Les Art anciens de l'Amérique'', in *Les années folles de l'ethnographie. Trocadéro 28-37* [exhibition catalogue], (eds.) André Delpuech, Christine Laurière and Carine Peltrier-Caroff, Paris: Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle 2017, pp. 51-77.

[69] Vaudry, Élodie. *Les arts précolombiens: transferts et métamorphoses de l'Amérique latine à la France, 1875-1945,* Presses universitaires de Rennes: Rennes, 2019, pp. 85; 140-141.

[70] See Jolas, Eugene. 'Almanach', *transition* 13 (summer 1928): p. 75; and the captions referring to the reproductions 'Statue de la Mort Violente, Aztèque, Zapotheque', *transition* 5 (August 1927): pp. 96-97.

[71] Breton, André. 'Introduction to the Discourse on the Dearth of Reality', *Ibid.*: pp. 129-145. On the essay, see also Tythacott, Louise. *Surrealism and the Exotic*, London: Routledge, 2003, pp. 39-45; Conley, Katharine. 'Surrealism and Outsider Art: From the 'Automatic Message' to André Breton's Collection', *Yale French Studies* 109 (2006): pp. 138-140.

[72] The 'Statue de la Mort Violente, Aztèque', reproduced in the issue no. 5, 1927, was also present in the catalogue *Yves Tanguy et objets d'Amérique.*

[73] See Jolas, Eugene. 'Surrealism: Ave atque Vale', *Fantasy. A Literary Quarterly with an Emphasis on Poetry* 1 (1941): p. 24.

[74] See Drost, 'Il sogno della ricchezza', p. 8; Saint-Raymond, Léa and Vaudry, Élodie. 'The Vanishing Paths of African Artefacts: Mapping the Parisian Auction Market for 'Primitive' Objects in the Interwar Period', *Journal for Art Market Studies* 1 (2020): pp. 3-4.

[75] Rumold, Rainer. *Archaeologies of Modernity. Avant-Garde Bildung*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2015, pp. 120-131; Trinchero, *Alla ricerca di una nuova identità americana*, pp. 289-291.

4. The André Masson Case

In order to understand the way avant-garde art was presented in the expatriate journals, it is also interesting to examine the case of André Masson, who represents an important link between the post-Cubist idiom spread by such publications before 1924 and the introduction of Surrealist art on those pages, which took place in close connection with a series of written contributions.

Masson had devoted himself assiduously to painting after his return to Paris in 1922, frequenting the studios of Juan Gris and André Derain and meeting with Antonin Artaud, Michel Leiris, Joan Miró and Louis Aragon in his atelier in rue Blomet. The reshaping of the Cubist idiom he developed during these years won him the appreciation of Gertrude Stein: she bought in fact three paintings,[76] some of which were later exhibited in the important solo show at Galerie Simon (1924), which was remembered by Ernest Hemingway in the pages of *The Transatlantic Review*.[77] If for Hemingway, who shared with Masson the experience of war and the search for new typologies of expression, his art represented a new idiom that marked the end of Dada and the beginning of Surrealism,[78] for Stein it was his understanding of Gris' lesson that created a common field of study.[79]

In light of these relationships, it is not unexpected that some of Masson's paintings were reproduced in the pages of *The Little Review*, first in the autumn-winter 1923-1924 issue, where they dialogued with both Gris' works and a text by René Crevel; later, in 1926 (as already mentioned), *Nu dans un intérieur* (1924),[80] which was part of Éluard's collection, was reproduced along with an article in which Leiris traced close similarities between automatic writing and Masson's style and ratified his leading role in the Surrealist avant-garde.

Even *transition* looked to Masson's work, not only for its connections with the art market, as in the case of the reproduction (no. 3, 1927) of *Le combat des poissons* (1926),[81] on the occasion of his solo exhibition at the Galerie Simon,[82] but also as an example of the revolutionary automatic writing that was advocated by the magazine. The connections

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[76] Gertrude Stein, among the first to be interested in his works, bought three paintings from the Galerie Simon in 1923. See Mendillo, Kate. 'Chronology', in *The Steins Collect: Matisse, Picasso, and the Parisian Avant-Garde* [exhibition catalogue], (eds.) Janet Bishop, Cécile Debray and Rebecca Rabinow, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011.

[77] Hemingway, Ernest. 'And to the United States', *The Transatlantic Review* 5 (May 1924): p. 356.

[78] About Hemingway and his Parisian sojourn, see Reynolds, Michael. *Hemingway: the Paris Years,* New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1999, pp. 172-174.

[79] Hemingway's friendship with Masson and Miró was strengthened by his purchase of some of their paintings, such as the latter's *La ferme* (1921-1922). See O'Rourke, Sean Evan. 'Shipman and Hemingway's Farm', *Journal of Modern Literature* 1 (1997): pp. 155-159. The painting was reproduced in *The Little Review* in the number of Spring 1923*,* together with Masson's *Les corbeaux* (1922).

[80] André Masson, *Nu dans un intérieur,* oil on canvas, 1924, Musée d'Art modern de Paris. https://www.parismuseescollections.paris.fr/fr/musee-d-art-moderne/oeuvres/nu-dans-un-interieur#infos-principales. The reproduction on *The Little Review* had the following caption: '*Figure* by André Masson (Property of Paul Eluard)'.

[81] André Masson, *Le combat des poissons*, sand, gesso, oil, pencil, and charcoal on canvas, 1926, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. https://www.moma.org/collection/works/79309. For the reproduction on *transition*, see: https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k6436207f/f112.item.

[82] It is important to notice that Elliot Paul, one of the editors of *transition*, was a close friend of Gertrude Stein's, sharing her views on art. See Stein, Gertrude. *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, New York: The Literary Guild, 1933, p. 293.

between his painting and writing, already suggested by Breton, were underlined with a series of poems, such as those by Evan Shipman, an American poet based in Paris. If the composition 'To a Second Picture by André Masson' was inspired by the artist's works on the subject of forests in the mid-1920s, 'Premonition (to André Masson)', published together with the reproduction of *Le couteau*, 1926,[83] shaped the relationship between writing and drawing through a series of images that evoked the disintegration of form through the staging of impulses and emotions.[84] A similar approach is recognisable in Masson's stance on the occasion of his 'excommunication' by Breton: see for instance issues no. 15 and 19-20 (1929-1930), in which *transition* progressively transformed his editorial line in accordance with the poetics of Carl Einstein and the journal *Documents* in terms of a deconstruction, transformation and recreation of forms.

The relationship between word and image was at the heart of the value of the French painter's work, as was emphasised by Jolas in a poem written under the nom de plume of Theo Rutra:[85] the verses, inspired by the painting *Le combat des poissons* and by an unconscious automatism,[86] reinforced the proposition of a new language devoid of formal rules in accordance with the manifesto 'Revolution of the Word', which was to appear shortly afterwards. As Rainer Rumold has outlined, Jolas was in dialogue with Carl Einstein, as evidenced by the reproductions of *Le chiffre cinq* (1928)[87] and *Le piège et l'oiseau* (1928)[88] in the issue no. 15 of *transition*, that also accompanied 'André Masson, étude ethnologique', Einstein's contribution published in *Documents*.[89] The American writer and the German critic were united by a reading of Masson that was indebted to the thought of Carl Gustav Jung,[90] but declined in different ways: for Einstein in an anthropological key, for Jolas in a humanistic approach to a new renaissance.[91]

Reproductions of Masson's paintings were also included in the last issue of the magazine's first series (no. 19-20, 1930), a dense and complex issue whose illustrative apparatus highlighted numerous connections with Einstein's vision: for example, the pastel *La rencontre*[92] followed Jolas' text inviting the abandonment of naturalism in writing in

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[83] André Masson, *Le couteau*, oil on canvas, 1926. For the reproduction on *transition*, where was presented under the title *The Knife*, see: https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k64480512/f111.item.

[84] Shipman, Evan. 'To a Second Picture by André Masson*', transition* 9 (December 1927): p. 123; *Id.* 'Premonition (to André Masson)', *transition* 12 (March 1928): p. 135. About Shipman, see O'Rourke, 'Evan Shipman and Hemingway's Farm', p. 156.

[85] Rutra, Theo (Eugene Jolas). 'André Masson', *transition* 15 (fall 1929): p. 101.

[86] See Rumold, Rainer. 'Archeo-logies of Modernity in *transition* and *Documents* 1929/30', *Comparative Literature Studies* 1 (2000): pp. 58-60.

[87] André Masson*, Le chiffre cinq*, oil on canvas, 1928. For the reproduction on *transition*, see: https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k62414897/f273.item.

[88] André Masson, *Le piège et l'oiseau,* oil on canvas, 1928. For the reproduction on *transition*, see: https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k62414897/f275.item.

[89] Einstein, Carl. 'Andrè Masson, étude ethnologique', *Documents* 2 (1929): pp. 93-105. See also Rumold, 'Archeo-logies of Modernity', p. 58.

[90] About Einstein and his reading of Jung, see Didi-Huberman, Georges. *Storia dell'arte e anacronismo delle immagini,* Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2007, pp. 180; 213-214.

[91] See Cushing, 'A Version of Surrealism', pp. 10-12. See also Camilla Froio's 'Clement Greenberg and the Surrealist Question: Politics, Eccentricities, and Misconceptions' in this issue of *Mélusine*.

[92] André Masson, *La rencontre*, pastel, [n.d.]. For the reproduction on *transition*, see: https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k6436280k/f113.item.

favour of the exploration of 'one's own inner life, as well as the mysteries of the people he [the writer] is interested in'.[93]

Jolas, however, was not the only expatriate to praise Masson, as evidenced by the contributions of Harold Salemson, American writer and founder of the expatriate magazine *Tambour*, who in the pages of *transition* (no. 15, 1929) described the French artist as sincere because he had never abandoned the founding concepts of Surrealism, helping to develop new types of pictorial expression.[94] For Salemson, Masson was a 'pure artist'[95] who had achieved a figuration at the limit of abstraction, without ever being decorative, in a process of continuous and independent research in the use of automatism; Masson's art was, in his eyes, a flow that proceeded directly from the mind to the canvas, similar to writing, which made him capable of representing interiority.

Masson's celebration continued in the pages of *Tambour* where only graphic works were reproduced: this was in fact the only type of art hosted by the magazine, both for reasons related to the cost of reproductions and to highlight the relationship between writing and visual art. Salemson, who upheld the centrality of the image over the word,[96] identified Masson as the artist capable of best representing his own research and considered him to be the initiator of a new path: he likened him to a human god capable of thinking in images, to a master who was able to best embody the post-war period and propose a new way, as Michelangelo, Raphael and Leonardo had done in their time;[97] a 'spiritual' painter, eager to look at humanity and its condition, who represented the only remaining valid aspect of Surrealism.[98]

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[93] Jolas, Eugene. 'Towards New Forms?', *transition* 19-20 (June 1930): p. 104.
[94] Salemson, Harold James. 'Paris Letter*', transition* 15 (fall 1929): pp. 103-112.
[95] *Ibid.*, p. 104.
[96] *Id.* 'Essential: 1930', *Tambour* 7 (1930): pp. 1-4.
[97] *Id.* 'Artistes II. André Masson', *Tambour* 8 (1930): pp. 64-65.
[98] *Id.* 'Littérature et esprit', *Tambour* 2 (1930): pp. 80-82.

SURREALIST ARTISTS AT MONROE WHEELER'S MOMA '20TH CENTURY PORTRAITS' EXHIBITION (1942-1943)

Valeria ROMANO

1. '20th Century Portraits': A Wartime Exhibition. Organizational and Curatorial Issues

The '20th Century Portraits' exhibition, curated by Monroe Wheeler at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, was open from 9th December 1942 to 24th January 1943 and was successively presented in a number of American venues.[1] The event intended to present an overview of the developments of portraiture in the first four decades of the Twentieth Century showing a wide and international range of artists, movements, and media. It cannot be stressed enough that the exhibition took place against the background of WW2: an event focusing on portraiture could also be seen as an endeavour to establish a renewed sense of confidence in individuals in such a dramatic context. As a matter of fact, about half of the exhibits was the work of USA artists and could be therefore read on a more general basis as a sort of portfolio of the American identity at the time while the remaining portraits belonged to European and Latin American ones.

In his text for the catalogue, Monroe Wheeler expresses his view on the genre of portraiture in the contemporary world.[2] In his opinion, the institutional value of portraiture, which was once so important, has been replaced by a tendency to privilege a private, unofficial, and sentimental aspect of the genre: artists now seem to emphasize their bond with the portrayed person rather than their social role. Secondly, it has become essential for the artist to imprint his personality on portraits, even at the cost of distorting the sitters' appearance.[3]

Both the curator's opinions and a series of expectable restraints due to war contributed to shaping the exhibition. Some of Wheeler's ideas concerning the exhibition's concept and staging are easily detectable. He certainly liked working based on comparisons and contrasts, which for example could include the display of a group of portraits by the same artist or a group of portraits of the same person portrayed by different artists.

On the other hand, Wheeler's ideas were inevitably confronted with circumstances which were beyond his control: the previously mentioned wartime logistical and financial constraints, of course, but also MoMA's rich record of exhibitions, which could not be ignored and exerted an inescapable and authoritative influence. As far as the former are concerned, it must be remembered that loan and purchase of European works of art were

[1] MoMA's Department of Circulating Exhibitions already announced four more venues in the press release: Baltimore Museum of Art, Worcester Art Museum, Chicago Arts Club of Chicago and San Francisco California Palace of the Legion of Honor. Archival documents reveal that more circulating editions of the exhibition were held up to 1944 including Utica Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute, the Norton Gallery and School of Art in West Palm Beach and the Rollins College in Winter Park. Other cities hosting the show were Denver, St. Louis, Toronto, and Providence, but it was not possible to find more specific details about the venues involved. See Department of Circulating Exhibitions Records, II.1.114.1-4, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. Permission was granted from the MoMA Archives to cite their documents.

[2] See Wheeler, Monroe (ed.), *20th Century Portraits* [exhibition catalogue], New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1942, p. 9. The exhibition catalogue is available online at https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/1732.

[3] See *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10, 31-32.

difficult at the time, not to mention communication problems across the Atlantic.[4] Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that the purchase of American art was promoted by the Government as a truly patriotic action.[5]

Consequently, only a minimal part of the 153 exhibition lenders (museums, galleries, private collectors, artists, etc.) was located overseas. A further evidence is to be found in the exhibition catalogue, in which curator Monroe Wheeler himself regrets not being able to do justice to South American portraiture due to the already mentioned wartime logistical difficulties.[6]

Financially speaking, MoMA's purchase funds were reduced by approximately 5% due once again to wartime restrictions but also to the maintenance costs of the new museum building on the 53rd Street.[7] In such circumstances it is not surprising that Wheeler's selection of exhibits came mainly from national institutions and collections and largely from New York itself.

2. About the Curator Monroe Wheeler

Monroe Wheeler was born in 1899 in Evanston, Illinois, to a middle-class, wealthy, art-enthusiastic but conservative and religious family. His father Fred Monroe was a bibliophile and book collector passionate about painting and bookbinding who established the local Businessman's Art Club. During his childhood, Monroe used to attend all kinds of cultural events and he then left school as a teenager against the will of his parents. For his eighteenth birthday, his father offered him a small printing press[8]; this experience got him jobs in advertising, but above all laid the foundations for his deep knowledge of reproduction techniques, layout, fine arts printing, and typography, which made the fortune of the MoMA's Departments of Publications.[9]

Wheeler and Glenway Wescott travelled to Europe twice during the 1920s[10], settling down in Paris in 1929. In 1926, the photographer George Platt Lynes entered the relationship and their love triangle survived in harmony for many years. It was especially during that time in France that Wheeler made lifelong friendships with artists and intellectuals like Gertrude Stein, Jean Cocteau, Ernest Hemingway, and William Somerset Maugham. In Paris, during 1930, he established with Barbara Harrison the publishing house Harrison of

[4] See 'The Minutes of the Sixteenth Annual Meeting of the Board of Trustees and Members of the Corporation of the Museum of Modern Art Held on Thursday, November 15, 1945 at 5 o'clock in the Trustees' Room', *The Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art* 13 (1946): pp. 5-18.

[5] See Paquette, Catha. 'Critical Consequences: Mexican Art at New York's Museum of Modern Art During World War II', in *El Proceso Creativo*, (ed.) Alberto Dallal, Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2006, p. 555.

[6] See *20th Century Portraits*, p. 28.

[7] See Barr, Alfred H. *Painting and Sculpture in the Museum of Modern Art 1929-1967*, New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1977, p. 634.

[8] See Platt Lynes, George, Pohorilenko, Anatole, Wheeler, Monroe, *et alii*. *When We Were Three: The Travel Albums of George Platt Lynes, Monroe Wheeler, and Glenway Wescott 1925-1935*, Santa Fe: Arena Editions, 1998, p. 20.

[9] For the Mannequin Press editor, Monroe published short poetry books written by some of his friends, among which *The Bitterns* by his future life partner, Glenway Wescott. See 'Profile: Monroe Wheeler', *Apollo. The Magazine of the Arts* 79, 28 (1964): p. 503.

[10] See Benfey, Christopher. 'Bright Young Things', *The New York Times* (March 21, 1999): p. 9.

Paris, for which he printed limited editions of highly refined taste and materials.[11] They ran it until 1934, when the political instability in Europe forced its closure.

In 1935, Wheeler entered the Museum of Modern Art becoming a member of the Library Committee and curating the 'Ignatz Wiemeler, Modern Bookbinder'[12] exhibition[13]; in 1939 he was appointed Director of Publications and in 1940 the first Director of Exhibitions.[14] Actually, Monroe was a member of many internal committees, a Trustee, and he managed all the MoMA's operating outreach programs (education, circulating exhibitions, library).[15] He largely contributed to raise the museum publications quality to such a standard to be internationally recognized.[16]

Monroe was said to be especially fawning toward the Rockefeller family; someone even pointed him out as involved in the dismissal of Alfred Barr from the MoMA because of his feeling of competition regarding Barr's consultancy to Nelson A. Rockefeller.[17] Despite this, the two always worked side by side for the good of the institution. Wheeler carried on his expertise inside the MoMA even after his retirement in 1967.[18]

Wheeler seemed to be not a huge fan of the School of New York painting, while the Museum of Modern Art holds a great number of pieces of the movement in its collection. Indeed, his private collection revealed a traditional, poetical, and refined taste: it included works by Courbet, Marsden Hartley, Matisse, Klee, Morris Graves, Morandi, Tchelitchew and Loren McIver, plus Japanese and Greek sculptures and a Vollard edition of Paul Verlaine's *Parallèlement* illustrated by Pierre Bonnard.[19] Monroe was a socialite who certainly knew how to make the most of his wide network of acquaintances. As a real New Yorker, he proved to be able to overcome geographical barriers and cultural differences with extreme ease. He was a man of great diplomatic skills, a captivating storyteller, and a person of refined culture; on behalf of the MoMA, he was constantly in contact with artists, collectors, institutions, foundations, and Boards of Directors members: his natural dialectical and persuasive skills made Wheeler very successful in the difficult task of fundraising and earned him the nickname 'Money'.

Monroe Wheeler died in New York in 1988, a year after the man who stood by his side for sixty-eight years, Glenway Wescott, passed away.

[11] Among the house best productions were *Venus and Adonis* by William Shakespeare bound in velvet, a translation of *A Sketch of My Life (Lebensabriss)* by Thomas Mann, Glenway Wescott's *A Calendar of Saints for Unbelievers* illustrated by Pavel Tchelitchew and *Aesop's Fables* with drawings by Alexander Calder.

[12] See *Profile: Monroe Wheeler*: p. 504.

[13] See *Ibid*.

[14] See Monroe Wheeler Papers, Biographical Note, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, 2008, http://www.moma.org/learn/resources/archives/EAD/wheelerf <March 10, 2021>.

[15] *Ibid*.

[16] *Ibid*.

[17] See Wynhausen, Elisabeth. 'The Persuader: a Great Museum's Hidden Asset is Monroe Wheeler's Prodigious Charm', *The Connoisseur* 213 (1983): p. 113.

[18] Among his most important exhibitions are listed: 'Chaim Soutine' (1950), 'Georges Rouault' (1953), 'Pierre Bonnard' (1948 and 1964), 'Cézanne to Mirò' (1965) and 'Turner: Imagination and Reality' (1966). See Monroe Wheeler Papers, Biographical Note, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, 2008, http://www.moma.org/learn/resources/archives/EAD/wheelerf <March 10, 2021>.

[19] Monroe himself defined Vollard one of his 'principle friends and helpers', to whom he dedicated his first MoMA publication. See Oral History Program, Monroe Wheeler, 1987, pp. 38-39, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

3. Reading Between the Lines of the Exhibits' Provenance

A careful examination of the provenance of the selected works of art can help shed light not only on practical aspects of the organization but also on the general curatorial project.

68 exhibits came from private collections, 66 of which were American, one French and one Mexican; 43 works of art were lent by the artists themselves including 17 Americans and 6 Mexicans; the lending museums (13) and galleries (21) were all located in the United States. Finally, 30 exhibits came directly or indirectly from the MoMA's own collections.

As far as artists' provenance is concerned, there were 84 North Americans, 61 Europeans and 14 South Americans; more specifically, the following nations were mainly represented (the number of artists follows in brackets): France (25), Mexico (12) Germany (8), UK (6), Italy (4), Spain (3), Switzerland (3).

34 artists belonged to 20th Century and 124 to 19th Century; in terms of gender, there were 19 women out of 159 participants. The artists with more than one exhibit were the following: Picasso (9); Matisse (8); Dalí, Lachaise and Renoir (5 each); John, Lipchitz, Rouault, and Sargent (4 each); Abbot, Balthus, Canadé, Chagall, Despiau, Epstein, Kokoschka, Kollwitz, Modigliani, Noguchi, Orozco, Pascin, Rivera, Soyer, Stieglitz, Tchelitchew, Young (3 each); the list of artists showing one or two works is even longer of course. These figures are significant because they show that although the United States was the most represented country in terms of number of artists involved, some European artists distinguished themselves as to the number of exhibits, thus appearing as an obvious reference point in the international art debate.

4. The '20th Century Portraits' Exhibition: Design Issues

The display of '20th Century Portraits' is a clear example of the display methods of the Museum of Modern Art of the time, which had been initiated by Alfred H. Barr and had become its hallmark. Wheeler's exhibition project fitted into this context of formal clarity but at the same time presented some peculiarities in the distribution and arrangement of the works within the museum rooms. His curatorial activity can be reconstructed mainly thanks to the photographic documentation of the exhibition[20] and a series of typed notes on documents in the Museum of Modern Art Archives.[21]

The first peculiarity to be noticed when looking at the photographic documentation is the arrangement of the works at a low height, a display feature that had become popular in the 1930s to establish a closer contact between the work and the visitor[22] and that Barr had learnt while attending the course on museum professions held by Paul J. Sachs, his mentor at Harvard University. However, it can be observed that this rule is not always strictly applied in Wheeler's exhibition: in '20th Century Portraits' the works are not always hung in the same row but are also arranged in asymmetrical groupings and at different heights. It was Barr himself, moreover, who broke away from this method of display at a later stage of his career and, by his own admission, experimented with an asymmetrical hanging of exhibits.[23]

[20] See https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/1732 <December 20, 2020>.

[21] See Department of Public Information Records, II.A.17, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

[22] See Kantor, Sybil Gordon. *Alfred H. Barr, Jr. and the Intellectual Origins of the Museum of Modern Art*, Cambridge (Mass.)-London: MIT Press, 2002, p. 358.

[23] *Ibid.*

Despite being in black and white, the photographs reveal a careful direction in the chromatic choices of the exhibition layout: from the walls, to the pedestals, to the furniture, not forgetting curtains, frames and captions, everything tended to construct the exhibition space and direct the visitor towards an ideal reading order of the works on display. Wheeler paid equal attention to the tonality of the works, alternating sculptures in bronze or dark material with works in lighter-coloured materials; the same exhibition criterion can also be found for canvases, drawings, and prints. The photographs in the exhibition highlight the refined harmony of the layout, which stimulated both the eye and the mind of the visitor, who was engaged in responding to the stimuli coming from the formal and chromatic assonances and the affinities of content they revealed.

Thanks to the careful selection of groups of works depicting the same subjects, or executed by the same artists, and the choice of wall colour which, by similarity or contrast, related to that of the frames and certain details of the works on display, the exhibits were in continuous dialogue with each other without any possibility of disruptive elements interrupting this exchange. Bearing in mind his editorial experience, it seems possible to argue that Monroe Wheeler, in setting up the works for the exhibition in the MoMA galleries, elegantly 'paginated' them as if he were working on one of his refined publications, treating the walls as sheets of paper, the exhibits as illustrations, and the furniture and decorations as 'typographic friezes'. In the exhibition rooms, just as in the illustration section of the catalogue, Wheeler created groups of portraits of the same person, or of portraits by the same artist, or a mixture of both possibilities: see the comparisons proposed for Albert Einstein, Salvador Dalí, Joella Lloyd and Otto Dix, shown both in the exhibition and in the catalogue.

The curator also considered a chronological criterion[24], by schools or currents, when grouping works in the same room. Wheeler therefore used more than one criterion in the arrangement of the works, sometimes creating, within the group of a room ordered according to chronology or school, a sub-group elaborated according to the principles set out above. It is clear that Wheeler was following in the tradition established by Barr, who had also used these two different criteria for organizing museum rooms and groupings of works, although perhaps not within the same exhibition: two examples such as 'Vincent Van Gogh' (1935) and 'Cubism and Abstract Art' (1936) are well illustrative of these two tendencies.

In the first of these exhibitions, the works were arranged in strict chronological order and the painted landscapes were often accompanied by photographs of the places depicted on the canvases, together with descriptions of these places that Van Gogh had provided in letters to his brother Theo.[25] Essentially, therefore, the same comparative attitude can be found in this exhibition as in Wheeler's exhibition '20th Century Portraits'. In 'Cubism and Abstract Art', Barr favoured the use of a formal exposition criterion to make clear to the public the artistic developments in question[26]; here too, a parallel can be drawn with Wheeler's curatorial work, and it therefore seems possible to say that he had fully assimilated Barr's lesson.

[24] See Department of Public Information Records, II.A.17, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

[25] See Forti, Micol. 'Le forme dell'astrattismo: Meyer Schapiro, Alfred H. Barr Jr., e il dibattito negli USA alla fine degli anni Trenta', in *Meyer Schapiro e i metodi della storia dell'arte*, (eds.) Luca Bortolotti, Claudia Ceri Via, Maria Giuseppina di Monte *et alii*, Milan-Udine: Mimesis, 2010, p. 155.

[26] *Ibid.*.

5. The Presence of Surrealism in the Exhibition

If the already mentioned Salvador Dalí takes third place in terms of the number of works exhibited (5), the presence of artists who can be defined as Surrealist or close to Surrealism in the exhibition is not limited to his figure as the following personalities, some of whom were in exile in New York at the time, were also involved with one or two works (or as subjects in other artists' portraits): Leonora Carrington, Paul Delvaux, Marcel Duchamp, Max Ernst, Frida Kahlo, Man Ray, André Masson, Joan Miró and Kurt Seligmann.

As stated before, these works too were loaned by American art museums and galleries or by private collectors[27]: the MoMA, which had hosted Alfred H. Barr's famous 'Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism' exhibition only a few years earlier (1936-1937)[28], provided three works from its collections (Dalí's *Portrait of Gala, Mme. Dalí*, 1935; two Man Ray's photographs, *Salvadori Dalí* and *André Derain,* both 1932). New York was also represented by the Buchholz Gallery (Masson's *Self-Portrait*, 1940, and *André Breton*, 1941).

Other loans came from collectors or galleries who played a seminal role in the spread of Surrealism (and more generally of the avant-garde movements) overseas: Pierre Matisse, in the first instance, but also Gordon Onslow-Ford, not to mention that the two Duchamp's exhibits (*The Artist's Father* and *The Sonata. The Artist's Mother and Three Sisters,* dated respectively 1910 and 1911) belonged to the famous collection of Louise and Walter Arensberg, which was in Hollywood at the time.[29] The figure of Marcel Duchamp provides an opportunity to recall that '20th Century Portraits' also featured a work by the American Surrealist Joseph Cornell, who was strongly influenced by the French artist at the time of the New York exhibition 'First Papers of Surrealism' (1942)[30] and who was also a contributor to the *View* magazine for the 'Americana Fantastica' edition: his photomontage *Greta Garbo in 'The Crystal Mask'* (1940-1942) evokes his fascination for the divas of early cinema.

Some of the lenders were the artists themselves, explicitly mentioned (as in the case of Dalí, Kahlo and Seligmann) or indirectly evoked by their collections, as in the intertwined example of Carrington's works coming from the Ernst collection in New York and Ernst's ones belonging to the Carrington collection: the presence of Max and Leonora's portraits and self-portraits in the exhibition, all dating from 1940, was therefore also a testimony to their recently ended relationship. Finally, some of the lenders of Dalí's exhibits help shed light on the presence of his works in American public and private collections, such as the Joella Lloyd collection (New York)[31], the Lieut. Henry P. McIlhenny of the United States Naval Reserve collection (Philadelphia) and the Edward James collection (South Laguna, California).

[27] See *20th Century Portraits*.

[28] On this seminal exhibition see, most recently, Umland, Anne and Kwartler, Talia. 'Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism: 'A Serious Affair'', in *Networking Surrealism in the USA. Agents, Artists, and the Market*, (eds.) Julia Drost, Fabrice Flahutez, Anne Helmreich *et alii*, Paris-Heidelberg: Deutsches Forum für Kunstgeschhichte, 2019, p. 350.

[29] The Arensbergs lent two more exhibits: *Mlle. Yvonne Landsberg* (1914) by Henri Matisse and *D. H. Lawrence* (undated) by the Danish painter Knud Merrild.

[30] See Hopkins, David. 'Duchamp, Childhood, Work and Play: The Vernissage for First Papers of Surrealism, New York, 1942', *Tate Papers* 22 (Autumn 2014): https://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/22/duchamp-childhood-work-and-play-the-vernissage-for-first-papers-of-surrealism-new-york-1942 <November 18, 2020>.

[31] Joella Lloyd was the wife of the gallerist Julien Levy, about whom more will be said in a moment.

It is worth taking a closer look at the list of the lenders of the surrealist exhibits because it provides a useful picture of the main people and institutions that were interested in Surrealism in the United States at the time. The two galleries that were a landmark for such a movement and more generally for the avant-garde took part in the exhibition, i.e. the Julien Levy and the Pierre Matisse galleries.[32]

Pierre Matisse, who lent Wheeler one of his Mirós, had organized an exhibition shortly before (March 1942), in which any artist in exile from Europe was invited to contribute with one work, provided it was completed after their arrival in the United States.[33] Pierre's interest in Miró dated back to 1932 when he began to organize solo exhibitions of the Catalan artist on an almost annual basis in the inter-war period.[34]

It should also be noted that portraits of surrealist artists were also on display, including two Hermann Landshoff photographs dated 1942 (*Max Ernst* and *Leonora Carrington*), a Balthus painting (*Joan Miró and his Daughter Dolores*, 1937-1938) and Florine Stettheimer's *Marcel Duchamp and Rose Selavy* (1923).

6. Salvador Dalí's Predominant Presence in the Exhibition

The particular attention that was paid to the figure of Dalí in the exhibition is not surprising: the artist was certainly no stranger either to MoMA or to the American public, on whom he exerted a great deal of fascination. As Schieder has noted, 'while Dalí's art in Europe was supported only by intellectuals, in the United States everyone would understand it: [I]n this country, he has wide popular appeal; the people like him, and even if they don't understand his works, the poetry and emotion in the paintings appeals to them.' In fact, Dalí's American oeuvre, with its academic style in the manner of the old masters, offered a lithesome approach to an audience unfamiliar with the aesthetic and intellectual ideologies of the Parisian avant-gardes. And even though his pictorial symbolism was complex, bizarre, and occasionally 'shocking,' the dream world of Salvador Dalí could be easily explained as 'Freudian' and decoded as 'personal symbology'.[35]

Dalí had been in exile in New York since August 1940 but his name had been familiar to American art lovers since the previous decade. He had been exhibiting frequently at the Julien Levy Gallery; furthermore, in January 1935, the artist was invited by Alfred H. Barr to give a lecture ('Surrealist Paintings and Paranoic Images') at the MoMA, which Barr

[32] For the Pierre Matisse Gallery, see Jakobi, Marianne. 'The Commercial Strategy of the Pierre Matisse Gallery After 1945: Promoting Individual Artists' Careers at the Expense of the Careers of Surrealists', in *Networking Surrealism in the USA*. For the Julien Levy Gallery, see Helmreich, Anne. 'Julien Levy: Progressive Dealer or Dealer of Progressives ?', *Ibid*.

[33] 'Artists in Exile', Exhibition at Matisse Gallery, March 3-28, 1942. See Pawlik, Joanna. 'Exile', in *International Encyclopedia of Surrealism*, I, (eds.) Michael Richardson, Dawn Ades, Krzysztof Fijalkowski *et alii*, London-New York: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2019, p. 141.

[34] See Jakobi. 'The Commercial Strategy of the Pierre Matisse Gallery After 1945: Promoting Individual Artists' Careers at the Expense of the Careers of Surrealists', p. 350. He contributed to the exhibition with other loans, including two paintings by his father Henri (*Pierre Matisse*, 1905; *The Artist's Son*, *Pierre Matisse*, 1906) as well as *Self-Portrait* (1939) by David Alfaro Siqueiros and *Double Portrait* (*The Artist and his Wife,* 1917) by Marc Chagall.

[35] See Schieder, Martin. 'Surrealistic Socialite: Dalí's Portrait Exhibition at the Knoedler Galleries in 1943', in *Networking Surrealism in the USA*, pp. 201-202. For the quote inside: Keyes, Emilie. 'Artist Salvador Dali Would Rather Paint His Wife Than Any Of Hollywood's Fairest', *Palm Beach Post* (April 21, 1942): p. 5.

himself translated from French into English.[36] Dalí's popularity in the United States continued to grow in the following years. In 1939, he designed the *Dream of Venus* pavilion for the New York World's Fair and set up a shop window for the Bonwit Teller luxury department store on Fifth Avenue.[37] In April 1941 *Life* magazine published an article about Dalí, illustrated by many reproductions of his works[38]; the magazine dedicated another article to the artist in 1945.[39] At the end of 1941, a Dalí retrospective was opened at MoMA in conjunction with a Miró one; both exhibitions were presented in other American cities, either together or separately.[40] In October 1942, his autobiography *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí* was published simultaneously in London and New York and was a huge success with the public.[41]

Indirectly, Dalí was in some ways a response to Wheeler's aforementioned remark about a lack of portraits of the great personalities of the time: indeed, in the 1940s he had portrayed many members of American high society, especially women; this was also made possible by his financially lucrative decision to tie himself to the Knoedler Gallery, which provided him with a substantial network of commissions from art collectors and wealthy philanthropists, as Schieder has analysed in detail.[42]

7. On the Trail of André Breton in the MoMA Exhibition

Finding traces of André Breton in the MoMA exhibition may cause some perplexity and surprise for more than one reason: participating in a refined and elegant event dedicated to portraiture was certainly not a primary objective for the leader of Surrealism, and even less so sharing the stage with the detested Dalí, to whom, as we have seen, ample space had been dedicated. Moreover, one cannot fail to notice that Wheeler's '20th Century Portraits' was opened just one month after another, and today much more famous, exhibition event: 'First Papers of Surrealism' was held from 14th October to 7th November 1942 at the Whitelaw Reid Mansion in midtown Manhattan.[43]

[36] See Verhaar, Marijke. *Salvador Dalí et le mécénat du Zodiaque*, PhD Thesis, Utrecht University, 2008, p. 107. Alfred H. Barr and his wife had first met the Catalan artist in June 1930 in Paris, at a dinner given by viscount Charles de Noailles, and were immediately impressed by his personality (see *Ibid*., p. 211).

[37] See Schieder. 'Surrealistic Socialite: Dalí's Portrait Exhibition at the Knoedler Galleries in 1943', p. 195.

[38] See Verhaar. *Salvador Dalí et le mécénat du Zodiaque*, p. 219.

[39] See Schieder. 'Surrealistic Socialite: Dalí's Portrait Exhibition at the Knoedler Galleries in 1943', pp. 200-201.

[40] See *Museum of Modern Art Opens Dalí Exhibition*, Exhibition press release, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York, https://www.moma.org/documents/moma_press-release_325277.pdf <September 12, 2020>.

[41] See Verhaar. *Salvador Dalí et le mécénat du Zodiaque*, p. 220.

[42] See Schieder. 'Surrealistic Socialite: Dalí's Portrait Exhibition at the Knoedler Galleries in 1943', p. 200.

[43] The link between the Paris exhibition and 'First Papers of Surrealism' has often been noted by critics. As for the latter, it has been the subject of multiple and often conflicting interpretations: see Kachur, Lewis. *Displaying the Marvelous: Marcel Duchamp, Salvador Dalí, and Surrealist Exhibition Installations*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001; Mahon, Alyce. *Surrealism and the Politics of Eros, 1938-1968*, London: Thames and Hudson, 2005; Flahutez, Fabrice. *Nouveau monde et nouveau mythe*: *Mutations du surréalisme, de l'exil américain à l'«Écart absolu» (1941-1965)*, Dijon: Les presses du réel, 2007, pp. 70-84; Vick, John. 'A New Look: Marcel Duchamp, His Twine, and the 1942 First Papers of Surrealism Exhibition', *Toutfait Marcel Duchamp Online Journal* (2008), https://www.toutfait.com/a-new-look-marcel-duchamp-his-twine-and-the-

How is it possible, then, that after having just created this provocative exhibition with Marcel Duchamp, which creation ideal link with Paris 1938 International Surrealist Exhibition, Breton agreed to contribute to Wheeler's exhibition, which was so different in terms of content and display design?

A closer look at what this collaboration consisted of may help to better clarify the issue at stake: 1. Breton is mentioned in the acknowledgements of the exhibition catalogue. Wheeler expresses his gratitude to a number of personalities for their invaluable advice and collaboration in the organization of the exhibition; at the beginning of this list, after Walter C. Arensberg and Alfred H. Barr, Jr., and before such important names as Lincoln Kirstein and James Thrall Soby, is the name of André Breton.[44] 2. Breton is also thanked for the loan of *Woman before a Mirror*, a 1936 painting by Paul Delvaux from the Gordon Onslow-Ford collection.[45] 3. Breton was also indirectly present in the exhibition thanks to the display of his 1941 portrait by André Masson.[46] 4. Finally, the catalogue includes several works not on display, which Wheeler used to establish comparisons with some of the exhibits: among these is Giorgio de Chirico's famous *Le Cerveau de l'enfant*, which was a highlight of André Breton's collection.

To return to the issue of his participation in the exhibition, it should be remembered that the exiled Breton was no longer the self-confident intellectual of his Paris days: in New York he was facing a period of difficulty and isolation, and even the 'First Papers of Surrealism' exhibition has been interpreted in the light of this particular and difficult situation. As has been noted,

> Breton (…) was not especially at ease in American society, in comparison to Duchamp, who had lived in New York since the 1920s. Breton worked as a radio announcer for the United States Office of War Information, but unlike in Paris, he had little success in New York in forming around him a tight-knit group of surrealist intellectuals. His efforts to maintain the cohesion of the movement in exile are borne out by the founding of the magazine *VVV*, which he edited in conjunction with David Hare from 1942 to 1944, and his collaboration with Charles Henri Ford on several issues of the American avant-garde magazine View. Scholars have also tended to view the exhibition 'First Papers of Surrealism' in this light.[47]

Although far removed from the ideals of Surrealism in its glossy and refined guise, which rather harked back to the equally formalistic precedent of Barr's exhibition, Wheeler's show nevertheless seems to have been able to count on Breton's support, perhaps explainable by the institution's fame or perhaps also by his desire not to completely leave the field to the hated Dalí. This apparent contradiction can also be explained by the fact

1942-first-papers-of-surrealism-exhibition/ <March 11, 2021>; Tsai, Jaime. 'Deranging the Senses: Surrealist Exhibition and Display', Lecture given at the Art Gallery of New South Wales (2014), pp. 4-13, https://www.academia.edu/13041112/Deranging_the_Senses_surrealist_exhibition_and_display <September 4, 2020>; Floyd, Kathryn M. 'Writing the Histories of Dada and Surrealist Exhibitions: Problems and Possibilities', *Dada/Surrealism*, 21 (2017): pp. 1-19.

[44] See *20th Century Portraits*, p. 6.

[45] See *Ibid.*, p. 135.

[46] See *Ibid.*, p. 140.

[47] Drost, Julia, Flahutez, Fabrice, Helmreich Anne *et alii*. 'Introduction. Avida Dollars! Surrealism and the Art Market in the United States, 1930–1960', in *Networking Surrealism in the USA*, pp. 20-21. Among the main recent publications on the subject of the surrealists in exile in the United States, see Sawin, Martica. *Surrealism in Exile and the Beginning of the New York School*, Cambridge (Mass.)-London: MIT Press, 1995; Loyer, Emmanuelle. *Paris à New York: Intellectuels et artistes français en exil (1940-1947)*, Paris: Hachette Litteratures, 2007; Flahutez. *Nouveau monde et nouveau mythe*.

that, since Barr's famous exhibition in 1936-1937, the presentation of Surrealism in the United States had been the prerogative of museums and several gallery owners rather than of the artists themselves: this institutionalization of the movement had certainly contributed to weakening Breton's authority during his period of exile.[48]

[48] See Drost, Flahutez, Helmreich *et alii*. 'Introduction. Avida Dollars! Surrealism and the Art Market in the United States, 1930–1960', pp. 33-35.

CLEMENT GREENBERG and the SURREALIST QUESTION: POLITICS, ECCENTRICITIES, and MISCONCEPTIONS

Camilla FROIO

Demythologizing Clement Greenberg

In 1984, Mark Tansey gave birth to one of his most esteemed pictures, an oil on canvas called *The Triumph of the New York School*.[1] Set against the backdrop of an unknown battle, two military divisions are signing a peace treaty: it immediately becomes clear that the group on the right represents the vanquisher, while the one on the left, the vanquished. In his 1992 volume dedicated to Tansey's art works, Arthur Danto praised the 'simple photographic honesty' and the 'flat, descriptive didactic style, suited to communicating visual information' that characterized the painter's production, especially the aforementioned masterpiece.[2] At the same time, as stated by Danto, Tansey has given form to a sort of historical puzzle: the painter's mimetic style and his craftsmanship challenge the viewer, intent on understanding when and where this battle actually took place and, most importantly, who was the enemy.

Yet, as the title highlights, the painting is not what it might seem, i.e. the visual reportage of a historical peace treaty: instead, it is the depiction of the victory of an art movement against another, the success of a critical stance, namely the triumph of 'an idiom'. Guided by a smiling Clement Greenberg, the New York School defeated its enemies, the militia standing on the opposite side, commanded by the signatory of the surrender, André Breton. Beside the two leaders, Tansey carefully portrays the members of each contingent: on the right, close to Greenberg, stands Harold Rosenberg, pleased with the outcome of the battle, and, slightly apart from the group, Jackson Pollock, with a cigarette in his mouth, observes the scene. On the opposite side, near Breton, we can identify Pablo Picasso, portrayed as a fighter pilot in a fur coat, as well as an unsmiling Henri Matisse; on the far left, Salvador Dalí, wearing a flashy uniform, is talking with the other commanders.[3]

The Triumph of the New York School may be interpreted as the triumph of the American art over the European pictorial tradition, seen as the triumph of the 'new' over the 'old': the New Yorkers are equipped with a modern tank while the surrealist contingent still relies on the mounted troops. Clement Greenberg's privileged position remains unquestionable: namely the head of the winning contingent, he doesn't share his pedestal with André Breton. As a matter of fact, the surrealist leader, whose face is hidden, potentially becomes an anonymous figure: it is difficult for the viewer to identify him without the support of a caption or a clue.

[1] See Mark Tansey, *Triumph of the New York School*, oil on canvas, 1984, The Whitney Museum of American Art. Promised gift by Robert M. Kaye. For the reproduction, see Https://bombmagazine.org/articles/two-paintings-39/.

[2] Danto, Arthur (ed.) and Tansey, Mark. *Mark Tansey: Visions and Revisions*, New York: Harry N. Abrams Publishers, 1992, pp. 12-14. The painting is cited as well as reproduced in Jones, Caroline A. *Eyesight Alone. Clement Greenberg's Modernism and the Bureaucratization of the Senses*, Chicago-London: University of Chicago Press, 2005, pp. 354-355.

[3] For the identification of each artist portrayed in the picture, see Danto, *Mark Tansey*, p. 136.

And yet, the painting is far from being a celebration of Greenberg's eminence: instead it represents 'an act of disobedience' and a visual rejection of the critic's pictorial commandments. Still according to Danto, Tansey's work actually is 'a kind of refutation of Greenberghian propositions',[4] as the painter challenges Greenberg's main assumptions about the necessary flatness of the medium by giving the illusion of a tridimensional space, inhabited by the critic himself and his group. In a sort of way, Tansey managed to create a sort of visual paradox: he chose to represent the triumph of the Modernist idiom but, at the same time, he contradicted the content of his painting by using those pictorial devices (i.e. the optical illusion of pictorial depth and the mimetic representation) extraneous to Greenberg's aesthetic vocabulary.

Tansey's painting is particularly successful in addressing a specific issue, that is the question of the notorious, almost legendary, antagonism between Greenberg and the Surrealist art movement, its former representatives and its further legacy. As a matter of fact, one of the most intriguing aspects of *The Triumph of the New York School* is the literal identification of one of the 'sites of the conflict' that would lead to the final isolation (or defeat?) of Greenberg's authoritarian voice during the 1970s and the 1980s.[5]

As a matter of fact, Tansey's picture can be seen as an exemplary representation of the tone and rhetoric of the type of writings addressed to Greenberg between those decades. For instance, the following paragraph of the widely known article by Barbara Cavaliere and Robert C. Hobbs, 'Against a Newer Laocoon' (1977), may be taken as a fitting caption for the painting:

> [m]ost of Greenberg's criticism is prescriptive. He assumes the role of coach. Standing on the sidelines, he urges his favorites on to further feats. Rather than dealing with each painter individually and assessing their paintings in light of their intentions, he programmatically evaluates them according to his own standards and tries to persuade them to follow his own theories.[6]

Around the same years, Annette Cox's volume, *Art-As-Politics: The Abstract Expressionist Avant-Garde and Society* (1982), reinvigorated the critics' debate around Greenberg's supposed prescriptive role. The book addressed what was to become a common topic among the art critics throughout these decades, that is the weight of Greenberg's involvement in 'the strategical promotion' of the New York School during the Cold War era. In the aftermath of the Second World War, by advocating Abstract Expressionism as the symbol of a democratic nation, America's new cultural flag, Greenberg was contributing to the creation of an international image of the U.S. by implicitly differentiating the country from its political and cultural antithesis, Soviet Russia.[7]

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 20.

[5] On this later phase of Greenberg's life, see Rubenfeld, Florence. *Clement Greenberg: A Life*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997, pp. 299-306; Jones, *Eyesight Alone*, pp. 347-386; Goldfarb Marquis, Alice. *Art Czar. The Rise and Fall of Clement Greenberg*, Boston: MFA Publications, 2006, pp. 205-233, 234-259.

[6] Cavaliere, Barbara and Hobbs, Robert C. 'Against a Newer Laocoon', *Arts Magazine* 51 (April 1977): p. 115.

[7] See Genter, Robert. *Late Modernism. Art, Culture, and Politics in Cold War America*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010; Fox, Claire F. *Making Art Panamerican. Cultural Policy and the Cold War*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013; Barnishel, Greg. *Cold War Modernists. Art, Literature, and American Cultural Diplomacy*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2015.

During these crucial years, the process of historical revaluation of Greenberg's aesthetics reached its apex. Influenced by the troubled political climate of the 1970s and 1980s, the critics have tended to interpret Greenberg's aesthetic stances mainly through the lens of politics and propaganda. The acknowledgment of the ideological and political ramifications of the critic's later essays soon became one of the primary interests of this new cultural era.[8] Following the leading example of Serge Guilbaut's *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art* (1983), the common tendency had been to consider Greenberg's articles as part of a wider project aimed to support and then to celebrate the new cultural superiority of New York over Paris, the former capital of the avant-garde - in this regard, Greenberg's 'American Type Painting' (1955) naturally became a key essay for the skillful rhetoric here displayed.

In this wide discourse around Greenberg's evolving perspective, the critic's well-known attitude towards Surrealism played a pivotal role. The aforementioned article by Cavaliere-Hobbs particularly emphasized Greenberg's resistance to acknowledge the direct/indirect influence played by the surrealist *émigrés* on the birth of the New York School. The reason of this long-standing attitude was to be found in Greenberg's aims and personal interests: the critic's main concern, according to Cavaliere-Hobbs, had been to trace and then define the peculiar characteristics of a 'purely' American art. According to this view, Rosalind Krauss and Michael Leja stressed Greenberg's seeming reluctance to recognize the residues of primitivism, subjectivity and automatism that characterized the main representatives of the Abstract Expressionism avant-garde.[9] Both Krauss and Leja highlighted how painters as Adolph Gottlieb, Mark Rothko and Jackson Pollock, gradually became the legitimate heirs of the surrealist school abroad, while laying the foundations of the very first American vanguard movement.[10] Acknowledging and outlining the *fil rouge* of a surrealist legacy was far from Greenberg's interests: as Krauss remarked on several occasions, the critic's eye was trained to focus on other qualities that were unrelated to the surrealist agenda, as the painting's optical flatness and its literaliness.[11]

Throughout the decades, what we may define as a 'battleground' mentality of disputation was gradually surrounding the birth and the later developments of Greenberg's aesthetic. Yet, in order to move beyond the limits of one-sided interpretations and standard

[8] About the link between art, criticism and politics in the 1970s and the 1980s, see Frascina, Francis. 'Looking Forward, Looking Back: 1985-1999', in *Pollock and After: The Critical Debate*, (ed.) Francis Frascina, London-New York: Routledge, 2000, pp. 5-9.

[9] About Krauss' reading of Surrealism, see Krauss, Rosalind. ' Photographic Conditions of Surrealism', in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985, pp. 87-118. In addition, see Leja, Michael. *Reframing Abstract Expressionism. Subjectivity and Painting in the 1940s*, New Haven-London: Yale University Press, 1993; Sawin, Martica. *Surrealism in Exile and the Beginning of the New York School*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995; Javault, Patrick and Parsy, Paul Hervé (eds.), *Les Surréalistes en exil et les débuts de l'école de New York* [exhibition catalogue], Strasbourg: Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain, 2000.

[10] It is difficult to give account of the vast literature concerning this particular aspect of the New York School. The following essays offer a preliminary but still consistent outlook: Gibson, Ann. 'The Rhetoric of Abstract Expressionism', in *Reading Abstract Expressionism. Context and Critiqu*e, (ed.) Ellen G. Landau, New Haven-London: Yale University Press, 2005, pp. 442-486; Kuspit, Donald B. 'Symbolic Pregnance in Mark Rothko and Clyfford Still', *Ibid*., pp. 361-380; Wolfe, Judith. 'Jungian Aspects of Jackson Pollock's Imagery', *Ibid*., pp. 293-312.

[11] In this regard see Krauss, Rosalind. 'Greenberg on Pollock', in *Pollock and After*, pp. 361-366.

rhetoric, it is necessary to demythologize Greenberg's criticism of Surrealism and to open the way for further reflection: as we have gained distance from the 1970s-1980s critical milieu, the aim of the present paper is to complement existing studies on this particular subject by proposing a contextual interpretation starting from two of Greenberg's most renowned essays, 'Avant-Garde and Kitsch' (fall 1939) and 'Towards a Newer Laocoon' (summer 1940).[12] A major part of Greenberg's assumptions and considerations was deeply rooted in the context of the American reception of Surrealism between the end of the 1930s and the beginning of the 1940s. Both essays are usually related to the political circumstances that surrounded the outbreak of the Second World War: it is impossible to undervalue the influence, albeit indirect, of these events on Greenberg's ideas and general perspective. However, an overview of the critic's relationship with the surrealist painters, and, as we will see, poets, requires to explore the issue from a different angle, which happens to be, in some ways, more personal and biographical.

Between April and May 1939, a young and inexperienced Clement Greenberg was in the throes of his first European experience. His new life abroad, especially the days spent in Paris, here retraced on the basis of archival materials, might offer a different take on the critic's personal attitude towards the French cultural milieu, that native soil that years before had given birth to the surrealist movement.

Greenberg's Journey Across Europe (April-May 1939): the Parisian Days

As the majority of young American intellectuals, Greenberg longed to visit Europe. For several years, the future art critic devoted himself to a kind of 'self-feeding' habit which involved reading essays and novels of the most prominent European writers. The occasion to leave was given by the *Partisan Review*'s editorial board: since winter 1939, with the publication of his very first piece on Bertolt Brecht, Greenberg was acknowledged to be one of the most promising young intellectuals of his generation.[13] A few months later, the editorial board offered him the opportunity to interview Ignazio Silone in person in Switzerland, where the Italian writer had retired in exile.

On April 20th 1939, Greenberg boarded a ship for Plymouth, England, and officially began his journey. A little information comes from the critic's personal correspondence with his dear friend Harold Lazarus: Greenberg sent him one handwritten letter and five postcards from the various cities he visited during the trip - Tintern Abbey, Paris, Avignon then Genoa and finally Rome.[14] Despite its conciseness, the postcard sent from Paris is quite revealing: 'Paris is yes – but there is also a no therein. J'ai rencontré Arp, Éluard,

[12] Greenberg, Clement. 'Avant-Garde and Kitsch', *Partisan Review* 6 (fall 1939): pp. 34-49; *Id*. 'Towards a Newer Laocoon', *Partisan Review* 7 (July-August 1940): pp. 296-310. Reference edition: *Id*. 'Avant-Garde and Kitsch', in *Clement Greenberg. The Collected Essays and Criticism*, (ed.) John O'Brian, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988, I, pp. 5-22; *Id*. 'Towards a Newer Laocoon', *Ibid.*, pp. 23-38. For the French translation: *Id*. 'Avant-garde et kitsch', in *Clement Greenberg. Écrits choisis des années 1940. Art et Culture*, (ed.) Katia Schneller, Paris: Éditions Macula, 2017, pp. 211-229; *Id*. 'Pour un Laocoon plus actuel', *Ibid.*, pp. 64-80.

[13] Greenberg, Clement. 'The Beggar's Opera: After Marx', *Partisan Review* 6 (winter 1939): pp. 120-122.

[14] The postcards are reproduced in Van Horne, Janice (ed.), *Clement Greenberg. The Harold Letters: 1928-1943. The Making of An American Intellectual*, New York: Counterpoint, 2003, p. 202.

Hugnet, Man Ray, Virgil Thomson, etc'.[15] As we may presume, once arrived in Paris, Greenberg had the opportunity to spend time with the Franco-American clique of artists and writers living in the capital. It might be possible that Greenberg made their acquaintance through Sherry Mangan: as he writes in his letter to Lazarus, the young intellectual had become friendly with the well-known Trotskyist journalist during the long crossing of the Atlantic.[16]

Quite surprisingly, Greenberg's personal correspondence with his family is quite rich: the long hand-written letters describe in detail the critic's first journey abroad, his several stop-offs and general impressions.[17] Once arrived in France, Greenberg gave copious details of his very first meeting with an aunt he had never met, and who hosted him in Paris. Unfortunately, the critic reserved very few space to describe his encounters with the Franco-American intellectuals, possibly because he knew his father wouldn't care much about someone named 'Hans Arp' or 'Man Ray'. A second source of information gives more details about Greenberg's stay. During the whole journey through Europe, the young intellectual kept a travel diary, where he took note of the addresses, occasionally phone numbers and hours of departures.[18] Despite its conciseness, the notebook is an invaluable source: it sheds light on this short period of time of Greenberg's life, only a few months before the conclusion and then the publication of 'Avant-Garde and Kitsch'.

In his travel diary, Greenberg took note of his meetings. Except a traditional touristic excursion (one trip to Versailles, a visit to the Tour Eiffel etc.), Greenberg seems to have spent more time with the Franco-American intellectual clique. On Monday he had lunch with Hugnet and the following day an informal *rendezvous* with Jean-Paul Sartre and Man Ray, partly dedicated to the purchase of books. Then, still according to the diary, Greenberg had a second dinner at Mangan's end with other guests including Virgil Thomson. On Friday he left Paris for the countryside: he was invited to Paul Éluard's house, where he spent the whole day with Mangan, Georges Hugnet, Hans Bellmer, Arp and his wife, Sophie Taeuber Arp. After a few days, Greenberg left Paris: he continued his European tour and, before meeting Silone in Switzerland, he visited Avignon and then Italy (Genoa, Florence, Rome and Milan). According to the diary, once he interviewed Silone, he came back to Paris and had lunch with Mangan and Hugnet.

Despite the recurring meetings and dinners, Greenberg's first impressions of the Parisian intellectuals were quite negative. In a postcard sent to his family, he dismissed them with the unflattering epithet of 'crackpots', depicting the group as 'a bunch of eccentrics'. The vitriolic comment accentuated the sense of unfamiliarity and incompatibility between the young American and the French intellectual community. Greenberg immediately found himself uncomfortable with the strangeness and eccentricity of those writers, poets and artists, all gathered together in the French capital. Not even the gift of the volume *Donner à voir,* sent by Éluard himself with the affectionate dedication

[15] Postcard from Clement Greenberg to Harold Lazarus, May 11, 1939, *Ibid*., p. 202.

[16] Letter from Greenberg to Lazarus, April 26, 1939, *Ibid*., p. 201.

[17] Greenberg's letters from Europe are preserved at the Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, as part of the critic's personal archive. The folder consists of five letters and nine postcards addressed to Greenberg's family (Brooklyn, New York City). See Clement Greenberg, Letters from Europe, Series I, box 4, folder 2, in Clement Greenberg Papers (1928-1995), GRI. The funding aid is available on line: http://archives2.getty.edu:8082/xtf/view?docId=ead/950085/950085.xml;chunk.id=headerlink;brand=default.

[18] The notebook is a 1935 agenda, still part of the Clement Greenberg Papers: Series II, box 14, folder 7.

'fraternellement', could change Greenberg's opinion: '[i]t's a dull book, however, full of the usual surrealist song and dance'.[19]

Given his opinions on the French group, Greenberg's lack of nostalgia for his Parisian days is not surprising: and in fact, once back in New York, his thoughts turned not to France but to England, with which he had been immediately in tune. 'My heart longs for England more than for France - he wrote in a missive - It's curious: there were in France things too resistant, too inexplicable, diet, logic, lighting, which in England were not. Therefore, while England is much drearier and emptier, its sense is more my own and I'm more comfortable'.[20] With these last words, Greenberg closed a short but still essential chapter of his life, which left him unexpectedly dissatisfied and profoundly disillusioned.

Reframing Greenberg's View of Surrealism: the Birth of a Canonical Narrative

As evidenced by a letter to his family, Greenberg brought the first draft of 'Avant-Garde and Kitsch' with himself and found some time to work on it during his long journey abroad. Actually, he was encouraged to do so by Macdonald: the editor reviewed the paper just a few days before Greenberg's departure, finding it quite promising but still incomplete.[21]

The renowned essay may be regarded as the exemplary product of a particular historical moment: the Second World War was about to break out and, in this particular context, the ideological character of art was constantly reinvigorated by both American and European critics, two simultaneous conditions that gave to the essay its 'militant' overtone. However, 'Avant-Garde and Kitsch' was also enriched by Greenberg's invaluable experience in Paris: the paper was literally written crossing both a geographical and a cultural frontier. As we may presume, in the aftermath of this European parenthesis, some of the young critic's convictions and prejudices were reinforced, others were dismissed – in both ways, Greenberg was in the midst of a process of creation and then formalization of a distinguished aesthetic paradigm, soon to be crystallized as the Modernist idiom.

According to one page of the aforementioned travel diary, Greenberg concentrated his efforts on the proper definition of *kitsch*: he was meditating on the strict connection between *kitsch* commodities and the international market system, especially on how the two affected each other and gave form to such a pervasive counterculture. The rhetorical efficacy of 'Avant-Garde and Kitsch' laid on Greenberg's capacity of entwining two main strands: the political and sociological survey with the analysis of modern cultural representations. The essay interrogated the new conditions of the practices of art and evaluated the influence of the capitalist system on the development of Western culture. Here Greenberg provided a historical explanation to the birth and progression of the avant-garde beginning from the mid-nineteenth century to the present. According to Greenberg's thesis, along with the advancement of capitalism, an antagonistic cultural expression gradually arose and soon began to question the social and political role of the avant-garde. Greenberg chose to name it *kitsch*: the German word identified a new counterculture originated from the confluence of capitalism's representations with the very first forms of

[19] Letter from Greenberg to Lazarus, June 27, 1939, in *Clement Greenberg. The Harold Letters*, p. 203.
[20] *Ibid.*, p. 204.
[21] Letter from Greenberg to Lazarus, April 18, 1939, *Ibid*., p. 200.

populism.[22] Since its beginnings, *kitsch* managed to ride the changing conditions of the modern working class: the first urban drifts and the consequent spread of literacy offered to the masses the illusion of a new era of prosperity and advancement. Under the spell of this delusion, the ex-peasants, now urban citizens, tried to emulate the bourgeois customs and traditions: they began to yearn for amusement and joy fit for their living conditions and economic possibilities – hence the proliferation of *kitsch* commodities, the only form of culture that could satisfy their needs.[23]

Further in the essay, Greenberg made a sharp distinction: he isolated the phenomenon of abstraction in the ivory tower of formalism by separating it from any other visual model of representation. According to the critic, abstract art was defined by its adherence to an aesthetic rule, that is the adherence to the bidimensionality of the medium. Abstract art had always showed a lack of interest in what wasn't directly implicated in the relationship between the plastic elements (i.e. space, color and line). The other non-formal qualities, as mimesis and narration, were extraneous to the abstract artist.

In this early phase of his argument, Greenberg had already developed a systemic framework: if abstract art represented the only idiom that could be regarded as modern and innovative, its counterpart, figuration, instantaneously becomes a synonym for cultural conservatism. Accordingly, Surrealism, considered as one of the epigones of Romanticism, was denied the capacity for formal innovation and self-exploration. Greenberg regarded it as a tendency difficult to categorize not only for its predilection for figuration, but also for its general indifference to the medium's identity, two elements that strictly linked the movement to the context of XIXth century painting. From Greenberg's point of view, the surrealist inclinations towards subject matter had to be interpreted as the clear symptom of a threatening diehard tendency that was paving the way to a renewed form of academicism.[24] One of Surrealism's primary aims was to counterbalance the aesthetic achievements of abstract art:[25] instead of taking inspiration from the organic structure of the medium, a painter like Salvador Dalí was clearly hostile to any idea of flatness and literalness. Cut loose from the physical bi-dimensionality of the canvas, the painter was buoyed by nothing else than the multiple ramifications of his subconscious.

In his very first essay, Greenberg already outlined a set of basic and consequential polarities that would continue to influence his perspective: the juxtaposition of abstract art and Surrealism, which is parallel to a second polarity between avant-garde and *kitsch*. What was suggested by Greenberg was the similarity between the figurative inclination of one side of the surrealist movement, clearly represented by Dalí's pictorial manner, and *kitsch* itself.[26] As carefully emphasized by Katia Schneller, Greenberg's interpretation of the art of the Spanish painter was evidently influenced by a widespread trend shared by the

[22] A comparison between Greenberg's notion of *kitsch* and Walter Benjamin's concept of reproduction is suggested by Jones, *Eyesight Alone*, pp. 364-374.

[23] See T.J. Clark's definition of *kitsch*: Clark, T.J. 'Clement Greenberg's Theory of Art', in *Pollock and After*, p. 77.

[24] '[A] reactionary tendency'. Greenberg, 'Avant-Garde and Kitsch', in *Clement Greenberg. The Collected Essays*, I, p. 9, note 2.

[25] *Ibid*.

[26] A few years later, Greenberg will condemn the surrealist proclivity to the popularization and then to the commercialization of its representations and images, soon to become iconic, in a further essay, 'Surrealist Painting', published in 1944: Greenberg, Clement. 'Surrealist Painting', in *Clement Greenberg. The Collected Essays*, vol. I, pp. 225-231. The essay will be cited again further on.

American critics in the second half of the 1930s. As a matter of fact, it is impossible to undervalue the loud echo of Dalí's majestic pavilion made for the 1939 World Fair in New York: the so-called *Dream of Venus* was described by the American press more as a source of popular and extravagant entertainment rather than as the display of a genuine avant-garde creation.[27] This characterization, which emphasised the eccentricity of Dalí's artworks, was the natural extension of Dalí's persona: since his very first arrival on the U.S. shores, the painter gained a celebrity status, as attested by the renowned 1936 *Time*'s cover. The association of Dalí's art and lifestyle with extravagance, ostentation and fame, was soon to become more than immediate, almost mechanical.

The sideshow that surrounded the new American life of the Spanish painter inevitably informed the collective perception and general expectations of the French movement. In a recent study (2015), Sandra Zalman has dwelt on the natural or prearranged disposition that encouraged the American audience to relate surrealist art to modern popular culture.[28] Alfred H. Barr's landmark exhibition, 'Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism' (9 December 1936 - 17 January 1937), had already strenghtened the simplistic association by making confrontations between the chosen art works and an array of comparative objects of 'Surrealist character', as the famous Walt Disney's cartoon drawings.[29] These miscellaneous representations were addressed to the collective imagination as they embodied popular forms of entertainment and commonly shared visual symbols.[30]

[27] Schneller, Katia. 'Notice à *La peinture surrealiste*', in *Clement Greenberg. Écrits choisis*, p. 122. Apropos of Dalí's 1939 pavillion, see Kachur, Lewis. *Displaying the Marvelous. Marcel Duchamp, Salvador Dalí, and Surrealist Exhibition Installations*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001, pp. 104-163; Schaffner, Ingrid. *Salvador Dalí's Dream of Venus. The Surrealist Funhouse from the 1939 World's Fair*, New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2002. About Dalí's experience in the U.S., especially around the articulated debate on the painter's controversial self-promotion abroad, see Lubar, Robert. 'Salvador Dalí in America: The Rise and Fall of an Arch-Surrealist', in *Surrealism USA* [exhibition catalogue], New York: National Academy Museum, 2004, pp. 20-29; Schieder, Martin. 'Surrealist Socialite: Dalí's Portrait Exhibition at the Knoedler Galleries in 1943', in *Networking Surrealism in the USA. Agents, Artists, and the Market*, (eds.) Julia Drost, Fabrice Flahutez, Anne Helmreich *et alii*, Paris: German Center for Art History in Paris, 2019, pp. 195-219.

[28] See Zalman, Sandra. *Consuming Surrealism in American Culture. Dissident Modernism*, Farnham-Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2015, pp. 11-46.

[29] Barr, Alfred H. 'Preface to the Catalogue of the Exhibition', in *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism* [exhibition catalogue], (ed.) Alfred H. Barr, New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1937, p. 7.

[30] In the same way, the broader category chosen by Barr, 'fantastic', accentuated the false connection between surrealist art and lowbrow culture, seen in a pejorative sense (i.e. strangeness and ridiculousness), which led to a general misinterpretation of the movement in the U.S. As an example, Holger Cahill, in his essay for the 1939 *American Art Today* exhibition catalogue, stressed the 'warmth of fantasy' that distinguished surrealist art. Cahill, Holger. 'American Art Today', in *American Art Today. New York's World Fair 1939* [exhibition catalogue], New York: National Art Society, 1939, p. 27. About how the U.S. commercial culture assimilated the surrealist visual aesthetic by accentuating its more popular aspects, rapidly absorbed by the American media system, see Zalman, *Consuming Surrealism*. A detailed account of the 1936 exhibition, its planning and installation, as well as the reason why it was regarded as a 'serious affair', is provided by Umland, Anne and Kwartler, Talia. 'Fantastic Art, Dada and Surrealism: 'A Serious Affair'', in *Networking Surrealism in the USA*, pp. 40-76.

Miró and Dalí, or the Surrealist Polarity

Just one year after the publication of 'Avant-Garde and Kitsch', a new essay, 'Towards a Newer Laocoon', made its appearance on the pages of the 1940 summer issue of *Partisan Review*.[31] With this new paper, Greenberg resumed his former considerations around the development of the avant-garde throughout the centuries: he traced its historical trajectory from its very beginnings, passing through the Romantic Revolution, till the advent of abstract art. As Greenberg implied, the advancement of the avant-garde had always been obstructed by a cultural menace, older than *kitsch* itself, namely the tendency to hybridize the visual arts with their verbal counterparts, i.e. poetry and literature. The Romantic movement reinvigorated this long-lived practice: the painter indulged in giving visual form to his imagination and dreams; thus the bi-dimensionality of the medium soon became an obstacle: the artist perceived the flatness of the canvas as a limit to the free expression of his inner self. In order to communicate his genuine feelings to the audience, the Romantic painter concealed the medium and pretended to create a surrogate of reality, filled with delusions and visions. He emulated the poet and the novelist, who had always tried to go beyond the limits dictated by the written page guiding the reader to a non-physical dimension and pretending the nonexistence of the medium. 'Towards a Newer Laocoon' argues already for what was to become the critic's primary concern: the strict separation of the domains of each art according to their mediums of craft. Given this rule, painting is defined by the flatness of the canvas, therefore the artist's aim is to emphasise the bidimensionality of the medium by avoiding the illusion of pictorial depth.

It is from these early essays that Greenberg began to advocate abstract art and to underestimate figurative art: the practice of realism and the involvement of a distinguishable subject matter were to be interpreted as the recognizable symptoms of cultural decadence. As Greenberg states, since the times of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's *Laokoon* (1766), the hybridity between the arts had always represented a rooted tendency, whose birth could be traced back to Horace's ancient simile, known as the motto *ut pictura poësis* (as is painting so is poetry).[32] In modern times, a new art movement was following this path, producing 'a confusion of literature with painting as extreme as any of the past'. Near the end of his 'Laocoon', Greenberg gives voice to his contempt for those art practices of some unnamed 'young orthodox surrealists':

> [b]y 1939 the center of abstract painting had shifted to London, while in Paris the younger generation of French and Spanish painters had reacted against abstract purity and turned back to a confusion of literature with painting as extreme as any of the past. These young orthodox surrealists are not to be identified, however, with such pseudo- or mock surrealists of the previous generation, as Miró, Klee and Arp, whose work, despite its apparent intention, has only contributed to the further deployment of abstract painting pure and simple.[33]

[31] About the essay's main sources, its genesis and editing process, see Froio, Camilla. *Verso un* Laocoonte *modernista: temi, immagini e contesti del* Laocoonte *di Clement Greenberg*, Florence: Angelo Pontecorboli Editore, 2020, pp. 205-300, 301-391.

[32] About the critical reception of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's *Laokoon* in America, see Froio, Camilla. 'La cultura nord-americana e il *Laokoon* di G.E. Lessing: premesse di una fortunata ricezione critica (1840-1874)', *Studi di Memofonte* 24 (2020): pp. 23-44.

[33] Greenberg, Clement. 'Towards a Newer Laocoon', in *Clement Greenberg. The Collected Essays*, I, pp. 36-37.

Only a few months after the publication of the new American 'Laocoon', a careful reader, the Greek poet Nicolas Calas, publicly challenged Greenberg's definition of Surrealism.[34] On the pages of a newly born American magazine inspired by Breton's *Manifesto* and called *View: Through the Eyes of Poets* (then known only as *View*),[35] Calas was openly scathing Greenberg's 'Laocoon'. The poet remembered a meeting where a fellow artist, Kurt Seligmann, tried to educate an unaware and young Greenberg on the various and heterogeneous ramifications of the surrealist movement.

> In Mr. Greenberg's article on art we read that Arp, Klee and Miró are pseudo-surrealists. I would like you readers to know that before my friend the surrealist painter, Kurt Seligmann, told Mr. Greenberg that these three artists used to take part in Surrealist exhibitions, he did not seem to be aware of the fact that the Surrealists could admire any of these painters. By calling them pseudo-surrealists Mr. Greenberg only proves his weakness as a critic of modern art and his total ignorance of the various tendencies in surrealism.[36]

As a matter of fact, Greenberg seemed to have followed Seligman's advice. In the conclusive statement of his 'Laocoon', he implicitly distinguished two main directions: the one represented by Hans Arp, Paul Klee and Joan Miró, and the second one by the so-called 'younger generation of French and Spanish painters'.[37] It is quite unmistakable that in Greenberg's mind the leading artist of this latter group was Dalí. As Martica Sawin stressed in her essay 'Surrealism without Surrealists' (1999), at that time '[f]or most Americans, Surrealism was personified by Salvador Dalí thanks to his visits to the United States in 1936 and 1939 […]. It mattered little to the American public that by 1939 Dalí had been excommunicated by Breton'.[38] It took a while for a part of the American critics to become more aware of the coexistence of heterogeneous tendencies within the surrealist universe. In other words, the idea of the impossibility to reduce the movement to a simple formula was gradually taking hold. On one hand, this renewed familiarity with the surrealist aesthetic brought forth a less one-sided perspective, but on the other, it gave rise to a new and yet still conventional narrative. It rested on the simplistic idea of the existence

[34] On the life and works of Nicolas Calas (born Nikos Kalamaris), see Hoff, Lena. *Nicolas Calas and the Challenge of Surrealism*, Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2014, in part. pp. 169-223.

[35] See Latimer, Tirza True. *Eccentric Modernisms. Making Differences in the History of American Art*, Oakland: University of California Press, 2017, pp. 78-110. For an introduction to the history of *View* as well as a selection of the most notable articles, see Ford, Charles Henri (ed.), *View. Parade of the Avant-Garde, 1940-1947*, New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 1992; Dimakopoulou, Stamatina. 'Europe in America. Remapping Broken Cultural Lines: *View* (1940-7) and *VVV* (1942-4)', in *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines*, (eds.) Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, II, pp. 737-758. About those American reviews that, in the 20s and 30s, paved the way to the creation of *View*, see Trinchero, Serena. *Alla ricerca di una nuova identità americana: modernismo e primitivismo nelle riviste statunitensi in Europa (1921-1932*), Florence: Angelo Pontecorboli Editore, 2020.

[36] Calas, Nicolas. 'View Listens', *View: Through the Eyes of Poets* 1 (October 1940): p. 1. On Calas' criticism of Greenberg's essay, including a wider account of the difficult relationship between *View*'s editorial board and *Partisan Review*'s editors, see Froio, *Verso un* Laocoonte *modernista*, pp. 291-300.

[37] Greenberg, 'Towards a Newer Laocoon', p. 36. In his volume dedicated to Miró (1948), Greenberg finally acknowledged the importance of the influence of Surrealism on the painter's move toward abstract art. See Greenberg, Clement. *Joan Miró*, New York: The Quadrangle Press, 1948, pp. 23-28.

[38] See Sawin, Martica. 'Surrealism without Surrealists', in *Surrealism in America During the 1930s and 1940s: Selections from the Penny and Elton Yasuna Collection*, (ed.) William Jeffet, St. Petersberg: Salvador Dalí Museum, 1999, p. 12.

of a polarity which reduced the ramifications of the surrealist art practices to two main directions: the first one generally exemplified by Dalí and the second one by Miró.[39] The two artists were chosen as the leaders of two opposed pictorial schools: the first one known as figurative or illustrational, the second one as abstract; the first one focused on the submerged foundations of the human unconscious, the second one on the formal qualities of the pigment, the line and the canvas.

Greenberg's position seems to reflect a common mindset shared among the majority of the New York art critics of the time. As the 'Laocoon' implies, by 1940 this model of thinking, based on a oversimplified juxtaposition, not only had already entered the American critical vocabulary, but had finally become effective.[40] As an example, in the October 1939 issue of *Parnassus*, John G. Frey made a distinction between two aesthetic directions, both regarded as equal parts of the surrealist discourse on art. He distinguished a first type of Surrealism, whose aesthetic orientation was defined by the 'literary manner' of Dalí, in other words a technique 'of pure literalism, of exact transcription of the personal hallucination'.[41] Its antithesis was represented by a second school, which developed a different type of painting given the label 'plastic lyricism'.[42] Artists such as Arp and Miró successfully exemplified this pictorial tendency: diverging from the first group of surrealists, indifferent to the special qualities of the canvas, they aimed to emphasize its peculiar materiality and physical dimension.

This form of aesthetic discrimination was deeply grounded in Alfred H. Barr's well-known introduction to the 'Fantistic Art, Dada, Surrealism' exhibition catalogue. As already mentioned, the 1936 exhibit provided the basis for the interpretation of Surrealism overseas, setting a standard that had been partly followed by critics as Frey and Greenberg. Barr's introduction did affirm the necessity of distinguishing two main pictorial expressions within the surrealist domain: the first one, characterized by the tendency of creating 'hand-painted dream photographs' with extreme precision, was preferred by painters such as Dalí, Tanguy and Magritte.[43] On the contrary, the second one belonged to 'the tradition of automatic drawing and painting', whose source could be traced back to the pictorial manner of Kandinskij, Klee, and Arp. While Dalí's art was defined by an insistent and rigorous realism, Miró and Masson pointed to a 'complete spontaneity of *technique*', suggesting naturalness and immediacy.[44] This second group, as Barr seems to suggest between the lines, performed a process of creation which was more 'raw' and authentic than the first one, which tended to veil the pictorial surface with fine layers of illusory artifices.

Notwithstanding this general acknowledgment of the innate fluidity of the surrealist art practices, a number of American critics were still considering Surrealism and abstract art as two radically opposed categories. Holger Cahill, the national director of the Federal Art Project, was a representative voice in this regard. On his introductory essay to the

[39] Apropos of the critical reception of Miró in America, see Rose, Barbara (ed.), *Miró in America* [exhibition catalogue], Houston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1982.

[40] About this peculiar aspect of the critical reception of Surrealism in America, see Froio, *Verso un* Laocoonte *modernista*, pp. 283-290, particularly in relation to Greenberg's 'Laocoon'.

[41] Frey, John G. 'Miró and the Surrealists', *Parnassus* 8 (October 1936): p. 13.

[42] *Ibid*.

[43] Barr, Alfred H. 'Introduction to the Catalogue of the Exhibition', in *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism*, p. 11.

[44] *Ibid*., p. 12.

exhibition 'American Art Today' (30 April 1939 – 31 October 1940), Cahill clearly relied on an oversimplified paradigm which was gradually taking shape and significance. According to the critic, if the surrealist painter was implicated in the literal depiction of 'everyday actuality, dream, hallucination, and the unconscious' using 'the driest and the most deliberate academic technique',[45] the abstract artist followed a completely different path. He was concerned with 'the immediate, physical material of art, the painted surface, the carved stone', giving form and substance to the very idea of a 'concrete art expression'.[46]

Towards a New Model of the Avant-Garde

Before 1944, Greenberg hadn't written anything about Surrealism *per se*: all we have are footnotes and brief considerations - in a way, merely fragments. Those are filled with skepticism and several misreadings, following the general attitude that accompanied the American reception of the French movement through the 1930s and the beginning of the 1940s. However, between 1939 and 1944, Greenberg's growing awareness of Surrealism provided the basis for a more open and mature view of its principles and ideas. With a new essay called 'Surrealist Painting', published on the 1944 August issue of *The Nation*,[47] the author left behind the facile generalizations and stereotypical views that characterized the aforementioned remarks.[48] Nevertheless, between 1939 and 1940, Greenberg's criticism was still in the making, but by March 1942 he was already appointed regular art critic for *The Nation*, which guaranteed him a position of influence over the New York art world. In other words, he was no more the young and inexperienced intellectual who visited Paris for the first time in his life and came back with disillusionment and resentment.

In his new 1944 essay, Greenberg distinguished two groups of surrealists according to their respective interpretations of automatism. If the second group, which included Max Ernst, Yves Tanguy, Pierre Roy, René Magritte, Richard Oelze, Leonor Fini and Dalí, regarded automatism only as 'a secondary factor' because the illusory depiction of identifiable figures and scenes was its primary aim;[49] the first one, represented by Arp, Miró, Klee, André Masson and Pablo Picasso, looked at automatism as a formal rule but not as an end in itself. They relied on the effects of automatism but with the avant-gardist intent of abandoning those formal and physical limits 'that prevent the artist from surrendering […] to his medium'.[50] Here the signs of an unprecedented negotiation are clear and detectable: Greenberg not only abandoned his former clichés but also tried to reconcile his idea of the avant-garde, seen as a phenomenon that led the painter to

[45] Cahill, 'American Art Today', p. 27.

[46] *Ibid*.

[47] For a detailed critical analysis of the essay, see Schneller's comment and notes: Schneller, 'Notice à *La peinture surréaliste*', pp. 122-126.

[48] Part of the reason for this changing of perspective was the new political and cultural conditions brought about by the arrivals of Breton and other surrealists by 1941. Apropos of the exile of the surrealist artists and intellectuals in the U.S., see Tashjian, Dickran. *A Boatload of Madmen: Surrealism and the American Avant-Garde, 1920-1950*, New York: Thames and Hudson, 1995; Sawin, *Surrealism in Exile*; Loyer, Emmanuelle. *Paris à New York. Intellectuels et artistes français en exil*, Paris: Hachette-Littératures, 2007; Flahutez, Fabrice. *Nouveau Monde et nouveau mythe. Mutations du surréalisme, de l'exil américain à l' 'Écart Absolu', 1941-1964*, Paris: Les Presses du réel, 2007.

[49] See Greenberg, 'Surrealist Painting', p. 228.

[50] *Ibid*.

emphasize the medium of his own craft, with one of the most representative elements of the surrealist aesthetic horizon, the one that allowed the artists to leave behind the restrictions of the conscious mind. At the base of this partial counter-revision lay a different interpretation of automatism: instead of considering it as a psychic device, Greenberg regarded it as a plastic technique that could open new possibilities in terms of plastic creation alone.[51]

In running its course, Greenberg's view of Surrealism went beyond the Manichean polarity of abstract art-figurativism and overshadowed the simplistic interpretations of the beginnings. Greenberg finally accounted for the impossibility of considering Surrealism as a compact and homogeneous movement: he eventually elaborated new parameters for the definition of the avant-garde, based upon progress instead of conflict.

[51] Greenberg's late reflections on Miró's automatism and the painter's 'exploitation of accidents', are part of the same discourse on the general development of the critic's positions about Surrealism and its conditioning effect on the course of abstract art. In this regard, see Greenberg, *Joan Miró*, p. 26. These observations on Miró, included in the aforementioned 1948 monograph by Greenberg, were partly inspired by the display of one of the painter's latest works, the mural for the Terrace Plaza Hotel in Cincinnati, an oil on canvas shown at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, in the same year. Further on, Robert Motherwell and other American artists promoted a formalistic interpretation of automatism which was mostly conditioned by Greenberg's late positions. See Sawin, 'Surrealism without Surrealists', p. 12.

NEW YORK IN THE FORTIES: MILTON GENDEL AMONG THE SURREALISTS IN EXILE

Barbara DRUDI

Between 1990 and 2005, photographer and art critic Milton Gendel (1918-2018)[1], wrote a series of works dedicated to his direct experience with the New York surrealists in the 1940s[2]: 'Immagine indelebile', a text on Stanley William Hayter and Atelier 17 transferred overseas (1990); *The Margin Moves to the Middle* a small pamphlet on the life of André Breton and his circle in New York, published by the 2RC art printing house in Rome (1993); 'Kiesler Helped Me Go To War', a tribute to the architect of Austro-Hungarian origin published in the catalog of the exhibition *Friedrich Kiesler: Art of this Century* (2002); 'David Hare surrealist', peer and friend of Gendel from the early1940s, published in the catalogue of David Hare's exhibition at the La Scaletta in Matera (2005).[3]

Gendel, an American by birth and Roman by adoption after 1949, had the opportunity to retrace his artistic youth in these four short essays: a sort of memory - both individual and collective - through which he relived the years of his training and portrayed various personalities of the European surrealist artists in a truly unique fashion. He had met all of these artists shortly before or during the Second World War, in New York. Although the tone of these testimonies is in some regards irreverent, being not too laudatory and a little light-hearted, they do reveal the cultural debt that Gendel undeniably had towards Surrealism and its various ramifications, even if he was conscious of the paradoxical nature of it and reluctant to admit it. The style of these writings echoes the surrealist prose and simulates the unconventional climate of New York at that time.[4] Reading these texts it becomes clear how much of a role was played by the concept of the so-called 'artists in exile' in the work of Gendel. It permeated much of his photographic work, although transposed to a more personal environment, as early as his New York period.[5] That concept, perhaps even *malgré soi*, did not diminish at all over time, on the contrary, it evolved assuming peculiar characteristics, it became even more established in Roman shots starting from the 1950s, and developed fully as the years passed. If we observe for example shots such as Panza di Biumo, Varese 1978 (fig. 1) or Madama Lucrezia, Rome 1983 (fig. 2), we clearly notice some elements that recall surrealist poetics. In the first figure, the main subject on the right seems to be the work of

[1] Drudi, Barbara. *Uno scatto lungo un secolo*, Macerata: Quodlibet, 2017.

[2] Some references to the compilation of these texts can be found in the rich diary that Milton Gendel kept from the 1960s to the last days of his life. In that diary Gendel noted the details of his days, the meetings, his thoughts and reflections, thus it was possible to find his contacts with David Hare in 1990 and 2005 and still some references to the text on Kiesler in 2002. Now the diary is kept by Gendel's daughter, Anna Gendel Mathias in her home in Essex, England, it is thanks to her that I was able to consult it.

[3] Gendel, Milton. 'Immagine indelebile', in *Hayter e l'Atelier 17*, (ed.) Carla Esposito, Rome: Istituto Nazionale per la Grafica, 1990; *Id*. *Da margine a centro*, (eds.) Gabriella Drudi and Simona Rossi, Rome: Galleria 2RC, 1993; *Id*. 'Kiesler Helped Me Go to War', in *Friedrich Kiesler: Art of This Century* [exhibition catalogue], (eds.) Dieter Bogner, Udo Kittelman and Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2003; *Id.* (ed.), *Born Again Surrealist* [exhibition catalogue], Matera: La Cometa, 2005.

[4] 'An artist is a precious vessel who should preserve himself alive, said Motherwell. Was a real man talking like this? What was a real man. Wasn't Motherwell real? My blond friend from California, who looked as he had just come off a tennis court, might have been the ideal American male of the time: self-possessed, firm and practical, a business man or at least a professional'. *Id. Da margine a centro*.

[5] Benson Miller, Peter. 'A Surrealist in Camouflage', in *Milton Gendel: una vita surreale*, (eds.) Peter Benson Miller and Barbara Drudi, Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2011.

American artist George Segal: *Man in the armchair* of 1969 (one of the celebrated plaster casts). When I say it 'seems' the work of Segal, it is precisely because of the ambiguity ingrained in this Gendelian picture. On the left side, framed by a door, in the background, an indistinct shape appears against the light, as motionless as Segal's plaster. The silhouette belongs to the famous Varese collector Giuseppe Panza di Biumo, owner of the sculpture. The enigmatic snapshot of Gendel, (taken during a service for *ARTnews* on the famous American art collector of the sixties and seventies)[6], seems to pose some curious questions to the viewer: what is the real subject of the photograph? which of the two immobile figures is the sculpture? Like an ironic, almost Duchampian riddle, it leaves the viewer a little suspended and amused, when faced with the representation of a reality that may not be quite as it appears to us.

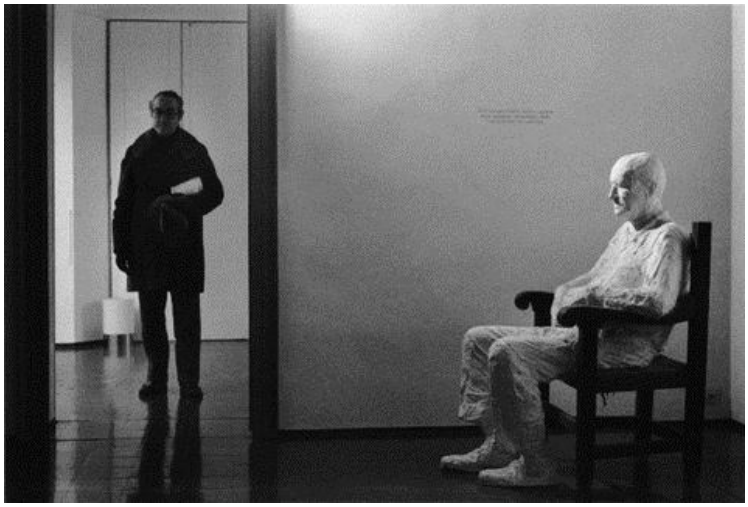

Figure 1 Milton Gendel, Panza di Biumo, Varese 1978, © Fondazione Primoli

In the second image, the memory of ancient Rome, represented by the monumental and almost abandoned statue of Lucretia, is curiously compared with the modern world, mirrored in the Fiat 500, symbol of Italy's mass welfare.. The amusing and random coincidence of the large statue right by the small car truly underlines the coexistence of two very distant worlds in the same city. The incongruity of this chance combination captures the essence of the absurd reality that surrounds us, while the peaceful coexistence of apparently involuntary opposites undermines common sense.

[6] Gendel, Milton. 'The Panza Collection of Contemporary American Art at Biumo', *ARTnews* 78 (Dec. 1979): pp. 44-49.

Figure 2 Milton Gendel, Madama Lucrezia, Rome 1983, © Fondazione Primoli

Not only photography, but also other aspects of Gendel's artistic expression - even the places he chose as his residences throughout his life - seem to resonate with the climate that arose in France in the 1920s. After living in various historic residences such as Palazzo Costaguti in Piazza Mattei and Palazzo Doria Pamphili, Gendel's last apartment was located in Palazzo Primoli[7] (also seat of the Mario Praz Museum) and housed his home-studio and a collection, extremely heterogeneous and bizarre, of paintings, sculptures and objects from various historical periods; collected by Gendel – 'accumulated' as he preferred to say, with detached humor – in the years of his long life.

As evident in his photographs, Gendel also sought the grotesque element of reality in the furnishings of his houses, accepting 'chance', in a surrealist manner, as an essential component of existence. In fact, Gendel loved to juxtapose works of art and various objects from Etruscan to contemporary, sometimes with irreverent irony and always subverting any hierarchy between 'sacred' and 'profane', between above and below, following his own extravagant scale. He purchased most of his objects and works of art both during his wanderings among Roman antique dealers and the stalls of Porta Portese, imitating in his own way Breton and Giacometti's *Marché aux puces*.[8]

[7] The building is the seat and property of the Primoli Foundation, commissioned by Count Giuseppe Primoli himself, a photographer active between Rome and Paris since the end of the 19th century, and established in 1927. Gendel in exchange for the donation of his photographic fund to the foundation had an apartment on loan for use in the building from 2011 to 2018. Druidi, Barbara and Rosazza-Ferraris, Patrizia, (eds.), *Visitors Book: Ospiti a casa Praz. Ritratti fotografici di Milton Gendel, lettere, dediche e recensioni*, Rome: Peliti, 2012; Lavezzari, Paolo. 'All the Best', *AD* 463 (June 2020): pp. 162-168.

[8] Sawin, Martica. *Surrealism in Exile and the Beginning of the New York School*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995, pp. 183-185: 'Breton's own apartment in the rue Fontaine conteined carefully culled flea market

Even Gendel's way of conversing used paradoxes and eccentricity in a surrealist manner: he liked puns, effective and realistic expressions, jokes, displacement of meaning. I met Gendel as a child, because he was a good friend of my aunt Gabriella Drudi (writer and art critic) and her husband Toti Scialoja (a famous Italian painter and poet of the twentieth century).[9] I frequented him for a long time, but after Scialoja died in 1998, we drifted apart. When I returned to see him in 2010, accompanied by my colleague and friend art historian Peter Benson Miller, I had not seen him for several years. It was raining outside, so when I entered his Roman studio in Palazzo Doria Pamphili, with a small umbrella under my arm, I asked him where I could place it. Milton hesitated a moment, then pointed to a corner and slyly said: 'I thought it was a doll!' It was both a reference to the constant deception in which our eyes can fall when looking at reality - a circumstance explored and much loved by the surrealists -, and at the same time a veiled allusion to the fact that he had known me as a child. He subsequently kept remembering things about me in a similar way: as if I was still a little girl walking around with dolls. The misunderstanding was almost magically interpreted by Gendel with amused detachment, and it was expressed in a very short sentence, though full of references and implications.

Irony and *souplesse,* inspired by a surrealist attitude, characterized the artistic work and daily life of Milton Gendel. But to what extent did Gendel himself choose to draw inspiration from Surrealism and how consciously was he influenced by it? As a matter of fact, Surrealism penetrated his core deeply, even if Gendel himself tended to minimize its influence; it permeated his entire existence, making him, in my opinion, the perfect incarnation of a singular and captivating reading of the artistic movement conceived by Breton. To better understand his role, it may be useful to see in detail how Gendel's artistic training took place in New York in the 1940s.

After earning a degree in Chemistry, Gendel - curious about everything that was taught at Columbia University – began to attend almost by accident the lessons of art historian Meyer Schapiro. He was so fascinated by them that he decided to major in Art History and Archeology under the famous professor. Once he finished his studies, having a somewhat surreal expertise in both Chemistry and Art History and Archeology, Gendel continued to attend Columbia University as Schapiro's assistant.[10]

The relationship between Gendel and Schapiro would last until the latter's death and was not limited to that between professor and student; and over the years it would turn into a real friendship also due to the not excessive age difference. As Gendel recounted, Schapiro was 'deeply involved in contemporary art', although surprisingly Shapiro never actually devoted any theoretical writing to Surrealism in general, except for a catalogue introduction

objects in provocative arrangements in every available horizontal surface, while the walls were covered with African and South Pacific masks and paintings by Picabia, Mirò and other colleagues'.

[9] D'Amico, Fabrizio (ed.), *Toti Scialoja: opere 1955-1963*, Milan-Verona: Skira-Galleria dello Scudo, 1999; Lauter, Rolf and Vallora, Marco (eds.), *Toti Scialoja: opere 1983-1997*, Milan-Verona: Skira-Galleria dello Scudo, 2006.

[10] 'At this time, while studying at Columbia under the inspiring Meyer Schapiro, I made friends with Robert Motherwell, fellow graduate student, who had spent a year in Paris thinking to become a painter, before turning to philosophy and art history. Schapiro, not only a highly creative medievalist but also deeply involved in contemporary art, advised him to return to painting and sent him for tutelage to Kurt Seligmann, the surrealist painter and authority on magic and its history. His studio off Bryant Square was attended by another disciple, the seductive Barbara Reis, daughter of Bernard and Becky Reis, who were patrons of the arts. Through Seligmann and other connections, since the social fabric of the art world by then was interwoven with sessions at the Bretons' alternating with evenings at the Reises' or at Peggy Guggenheim's, as well as at Hayter's studio, Motherwell, Barbara and I found ourselves included, as young recruits - we were in our early twenties - in the ambit of the surrealists'. Gendel, Milton. *Born Again Surrealist*.

for his friend Kurt Seligman in 1964.[11] He was nevertheless amused and interested in this new French poetic. Before the arrival of Breton and his circle in New York, Schapiro had established a sincere friendship with Kurt Seligman (who had arrived in 1939) and he wrote a text for Seligman's series of six etchings dedicated to the myth of Oedipus (1944). Furthermore, Schapiro lived in Greenwich Village, close to many surrealists and he had frequent meetings at Breton's house[12] to discuss the themes of Surrealism. In particular, the famous art historian seemed attracted by the heterodox doctrines proposed by Wolfgang Paalen, so much so that he organized a meeting at Breton's house with the Austrian artist to comment on the article 'Farewell to Surrealism' published in 1942 by the magazine *Dyn*, directed by Paalen himself.[13]

New York, as we know, was then on the verge of wresting the role of centre of the art world from Paris [14], and was pervaded by many different currents and trends. Themes and instances of French Surrealism had in fact already landed overseas in the previous decades; a clear example is the exhibition 'Dada, Surrealism and Fantastic Art', organized by the MoMa, it dates back to 1936. It was perhaps also for this reason that in 1942, when almost all the group of artists in exile had settled in America, Surrealism's impact on the overseas cultural fabric intensified and diversified. As can be seen in the press of the time, in the 1940s Surrealism aroused very contrasting reactions in the New York art world of the time. Many American artists took inspiration from surrealist visual models and techniques,[15] but in some respects Surrealism was seen as a movement of the past, by some, as 'a subversive artistic threat',[16] or even as a group of nice playful people who avoided the horrors of the world and of war with funny jokes, certainly not to be considered an artistic movement.[17]

Starting from 1939, Gendel rented an apartment in a historic building at 61 Washington Square with Evelyn Wechsler (who would soon after become his wife), in the heart of Greenwich Village. Milton and Evelyn, exuberant, young and strongly inclined towards worldliness, established in that house a whimsical living room, open above all to artists and intellectuals and characterized by a lively and informal atmosphere. In a short time, that living room became a meeting place for the New York art scene. An environment at that time still quite restricted. Thus, when the French surrealists landed across the ocean between 1939 and 1942, it was almost inevitable that they too would become frequent visitors to Milton and Evelyn's house. 'In the various meetings, Breton, of course, was the most talkative, followed by the irrepressible Matta and the most judicious Lionel Abel and Nicolas

[11] Https://issuu.com/weinstein_gallery/docs/kurt-seligmann-first-message-from-t/66 visited 09/25/2020. In fact, Schapiro also wrote a presentation for the French painter Jean Hélion in 1940, who was also in some respects close to the group of surrealists.

[12] Sawin, *Surrealism in Exile*, p. 185.

[13] Lionel Abel. *The Intellectual Follies: A Memoir of the Literary Venture in New York and Paris*, New York: Norton, 1984, p. 89; Leddy, Annette and Conwell, Donna. *Farewell to Surrealism: The Dyn Circle in Mexico*, Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2012.

[14] Guibault, Serge. *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.

[15] Sawin, *Surrealism in Exile*.

[16] Https://web.archive.org/web/20070328155357/http://www.heyotwell.com/work/arthistory/view.html visited 09/25/2020.

[17] Boswell, Peyton. 'Sometimes We Wonder', *Art Digest* 15 (March 1941): p. 3. 'The editor of Art Digest already saw Surrealism as a thing of the past in 1941: Definitely wacky.. but a respite from boring stodgy art… [It] at last brought imagination into full play and… contributed a refreshing not of escape from a world so sane that it has practically committed suicide. Maybe they were the voice of their age'. Cited in https://web.archive.org/web/20070328155357/http://www.heyotwell.com/work/arthistory/view.html, visited 09/10/2020.

Calas. Max Ernst, Marcel Duchamp and Hare were usually reserved and silent presences, also because they were the latest arrivals'.[18]

The writer Anaïs Nin also recalls in her diary[19] that effervescent atmosphere of the intellectual New York of the 1940s, evoking a bohemian atmosphere, in which many were inspired to become makeshift artists. It was an environment in which everyone felt equal: it seemed there were still no hierarchies between famous and unknown. The eclectic band of surrealists, headed by André Breton, nevertheless exercised an indisputable appeal on young (and even older) American artists, inducing in them a certain awe beyond the apparent and exhibited egalitarianism. It was not, as we know, the only transmigration of Europeans in the American artistic field: there was the already very influential community - hard and pure - of Bauhaus ancestry: more inclined to attend university classrooms rather than salons and more scattered in the States (especially in Chicago). The Bauhaus current had little influence on the young Gendel, although the *Gestaltpsychologie* they introduced in America was an integral part of any Art History study. Those sophisticated intellectuals of the surrealist area, so out of the ordinary and on a mission to be always unconventional, were much more fascinating to Gendel: despite the slightly festive and goliardic atmosphere, they were considered real masters. Indeed, both Gendel's work and lifestyle, made it difficult not to be influenced by them; for a young Gendel and his wife having them as guests in their own living room was undoubtedly - despite the apparent understatement - a reason for prestige.[20]

This is how Gendel describes the surrealists in *The Margin Moves to the Middle*, with a subtle indifferent irony, worthy of the best surrealism:

> A good number of elective vessels had found a way out of Europe by landing in New York and André Breton, their major spokesman, he was preaching to the four winds that even if art was to be considered a specific ego trip it was in any case a spiritual activity rather than a craft. Rhetorical and evangelical, Breton took it for granted that art required a priesthood from theorists and critics as he himself was. A matter of mind and heart, art, more than eyes and hands. With the escort of that unlikely guardian angel that was Peggy Guggenheim, an airplane overloaded with artists and writers had taken flight from the darkness of the old world. Thus New York, once a bridge to European culture, became its outpost. […] The patrol of European emigrants, on the other hand, was on average in their forties, if not older. The personality of André Breton dominated, a chubby fellow with a great mane of wavy hair and ostentatiously histrionic manner. Standing, with his leg forward, he began to declaim - poems and poetic statements - accompanying the speech with great gestures of an orator. I imagined that this style dates back to the times of the States General during the French Revolution. An appropriate meeting place was the Café Lafayette, as well as the Brevoort, which took us even further back to the Dutch origins of the city.

Thanks to the example of the surrealists, the idea that art was born mainly from an unconscious and dreamlike repertoire was increasingly affirmed in New York: reality in itself could not have an objective value. This was a very different approach from the scientific one, typical of the currents of Bauhaus derivation; the artist's task was to reveal the

[18] Gendel, *The Margin Moves to the Middle*.

[19] Nin, Anaïs. *The Diary of Anaïs Nin*, New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1969.

[20] 'We were not displeased to enter the history of surrealism, if only as convenient ciphers. To celebrate we did surrealist engravings at the Atelier 17 and printed them as Christmas cards the winter of l94l. When we took them around to Breton one evening, instead of complimenting us he turned red and with his eyes bulging screamed that he had fought the bourgeoisie all his life and now, like serpents in his bosom, we had brought him Christmas cards! There was nothing more bourgeois than a Christmas card, he shrilled, and flung our engravings on the floor. Motherwell's French was not up to this tirade, and he kept saying, 'What did he say?'. It was all too clear when Breton opened the door and pushed us out'. Gendel, *Born Again Surrealist*.

extravagant and incongruous sides of reality, the most important qualities of it from their point of view.

In that climate, many young people, exalted by these new creative openings, attempted the hard but attractive road of art, probing the technical possibilities of different means of expression in the manner of the surrealists. For example, Gendel and Motherwell created a two-handed drawing, a sort of *cadavre exiquis*, entitled *Turkish Fantasy*, inspired by the ambiguous and vaguely erotic human forms of Max Ernst. But, for the experimenters of the time, it was photography and its new and unexpected technical creativity that constituted one of the most fascinating challenges.

The surrealists had always shown great interest in the new means of expression available to the masses; to their credit, for example, the photographs of Eugène Atget were published in 1926 in the magazine *La révolution surréaliste*, and, in the June issue, a photo of Atget was put on the cover. It was a tribute to the then almost forgotten Parisian photographer, even though Atget never wanted to be associated with the group of surrealists, and died in 1927. This reinterpretation was undoubtedly relevant in the formation of the new American artistic trends; the renewed appreciation of the work of the French Atget in a surrealist key actually took place in America, through the decisive intervention of Man Ray (who had his studio in Paris next to that of Atget) and his pupil Berenice Abbott: much of Atget's archive was purchased in 1958 by the MoMA of New York, where it is still preserved today. Similarly André Breton deserves credit for having supported the work of Henri Cartier-Bresson, and for having left an indelible imprint on his work, even after HCB's turn towards photojournalism - an explicitly more professional kind of photography - induced by his meeting with Robert Capa (in 1947 they alongside others founded the famous Magnum Photos together).

At first Gendel's idea was to propose himself as an artist or art historian and in those years, he too tried his hand at photography. Some of the first images taken by Gendel are fascinating, such as the triple exposure public self-portrait of 1942 (fig. 3),

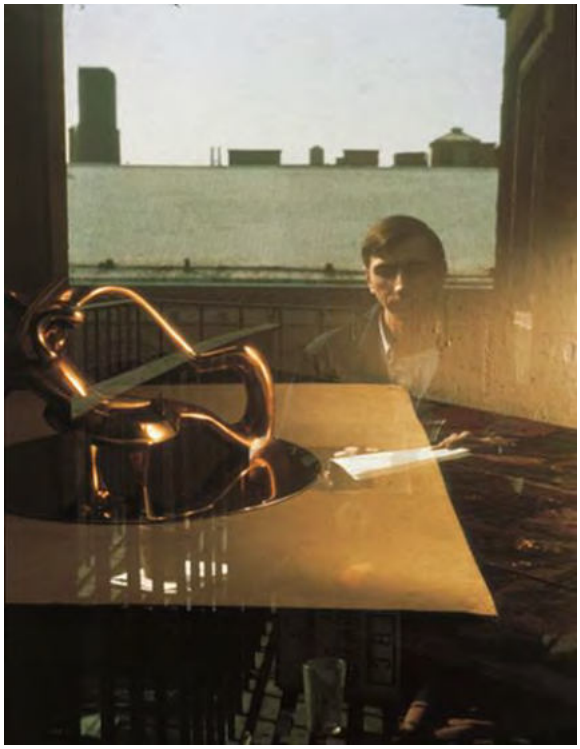

Figure 3 Milton Gendel, *Triple Public Exposure*, New York 1942, © Fondazione Primoli

which again reflects an undeniable surrealist tone. In the triple exposure game, a melancholy Gendel at his typewriter looms in side lighting with the city as background, followed by a superimposed sculpture of his friend Helen Phillips (wife of Stanley William Hayter) appropriating the foreground; on a third plane lies the balcony railing which illusively intersects with the sculpture. In this self-portrait, Gendel uses the technical device of multiple exposure to create an alienating perspective, made up of overlapping spaces, built ad hoc. The game of multiplication of space serves to displace the logical sense of vision, to create an ambiguity of image that in some respects recalls Man Ray.

It is curious to note how, many years later, the echoes of surrealism returned in other moments of his visual production. If we look at *Triple Mug Shot* (fig. 4), another self-timer from 2006, we find the same type of research: here it is no longer the exposure that is tripled but Milton's portrait. Gendel's face is reflected on the glass of the case that preserves and protects a work by Alexander Calder: two shoe soles on which Gendel's face appears drawn full face and in profile.[21] It is an actual triple portrait, in which however no direct image of the photographer appears: Gendel portrays himself reflected and drawn (remembering other masters of photography from Atget to Cartier Bresson). There's a magic in photography's ability to confuse real space, multiplying it in a game of different truths, so much so that after six decades Gendel's imagination still explored this surrealist concept.

Figure 4 Milton Gendel, *Triple Mug Shot*, Rome 2006, © Fondazione Primoli

Going back to 1940's New York, David Hare, a then young American with high hopes, was hired by Breton for the magazine *VVV*[22], and was starting his artistic career as a

[21] Drudi, Barbara. 'L'occhio e la fortuna', in *Milton Gendel: una vita surreale*.

[22] 'Although David Hare when writing spelled by ear and was indifferent to grammatical rules, he was a citizen, an agreeable member of the group, and his photography was eminently surreal. His name accordingly went on

photographer and then as a sculptor. Although in 1949 Gendel had flatteringly reviewed Hare's second exhibition on *ArtNews*[23] - the prestigious magazine with which Gendel had begun to collaborate precisely in July of that year -, when he wrote again about it for the catalogue of the 2005 exhibition in Matera, his tone would have shifted completely to an ironic view of his young friend Hare's beginnings as a photographer.[24]

In Gendel's last writings on Surrealism we find markedly sarcastic, almost caustic descriptions. He highlights the more grotesque sides of the surrealists, without hypocrisy or reverence, but impacted by how art history now considers surrealists as untouchable protagonists of the twentieth-century avant-garde. Although those same characters are described by Gendel with acute irony, as unconventional, as seen in his artwork, they definitely had a positive persistent creative influence on him.

Again, among the characters known by Gendel in New York we must remember Frederick John Kiesler, a Viennese architect, friend and companion of the surrealists in Paris, who moved to New York as early as 1926. Known in Italy above all for his 'biomorphic' installation created for the gallery by Peggy Guggenheim in 1942, Kiesler was already well established in New York when Gendel had the opportunity to meet him. The Viennese architect had in fact designed the famous Film Guild Cinema, built in 1929, and located at 52 West 8th Street. The avant-garde peculiarity of this space was that the screen on which the film was projected had the shape of a large closed eye (an evident surrealist suggestion) whose eyelid opened as soon as the show began. That cinema no longer exists, but Gendel often liked to remember it as a curious place, unusual for New York at the time. Gendel, in addition to friendship, also held Kiesler in sincere esteem, perhaps because Kiesler, distinguishing himself from the disengagement of the other surrealists, had shared Gendel's choice to enlist in the army.[25] In addition to Kiesler, known through the architect Percival Goodman, another one of Schapiro's contact, Gendel also met and became friends with Stanley William Hayter, attending his legendary Atelier 17 assiduously (Hayter had moved it from Paris to New York), where European and American artists circulated. Gendel worked with Hayter on two camouflage projects for the Camouflage Engineering Company, a

the masthead of *VVV* as editor, below; André Breton and Max Ernst, though completely in charge of editorial, figured as advisory editors'. Gendel, *Born Again Surrealist*.

[23] Gendel described his young friend as 'one of the most imaginative and skilful of young sculptors working in America today'. *Id*., *ARTnews* 48 (8 December 1949)

[24] 'At the time he was known more as a photographer than as a sculptor, but even in photography he was not content to record what the lens took in. He would use flame to alter his negatives so that the forms portrayed would become mysteriously indeterminate, with the blacks and whites dissolving and melting into each other. Most likely he was then unaware that this aleatory device, known to the surrealists as fumage, was used in different form as part of their battery of automatic effects, such as dripping, *frottage* and the game of *cadavre exquis*'. *Id.*, *Born Again Surrealist.*

[25] 'I began to appreciate more and more Kiesler's feet-on-the-ground rationalism combined with leaps of fantasy. Like the wonderful Art of This Century gallery he designed for Peggy Gughenheim, his eye-opening architectural projects eschewed the standard box formulas and treated space as organic creations. (…) But firm moral support came from Kiesler and Jean Hélion. Kiesler saw that the only way I could resolve my moral dilemma was by signing up, and encouraged me to do so. Hélion of course, having been in the war and written his They Shall Not Have Me, which described his capture by the Germans, imprisonment and escape, was also all in favor. Their letters to me during my time in the Army were a constant reassurance that I was where I should be'. Letter written by Gendel, 28 March, 2002. In the Gendel archive, kept by his daughter Anna, there is also the correspondence between Gendel and Kiesler in the 1950s and 1960s, as Gendel himself recalls in a page of his diary dated March 28, 2002.

company that used the aesthetic inventions of Surrealism and put them at the service of industry in wartime.[26]

In 1942, shocked by what was happening in Europe, Gendel decided to join the army, arousing the disappointment of Breton who at the news of his voluntary enlistment said to him with detached irony: 'Ah oui? Je trouve ça vraiment con!'.[27] Gendel was sent to serve in China in 1945, first to Shanghai and then to Formosa (now Taiwan) to follow the withdrawal of the Japanese troops. Here Gendel partially transformed his approach to the photographic image by turning to photojournalism, more precisely street photography. One could say that he will gradually refine a vision of photography that applied surreal suggestions to reality.

Fascinated by the East, Gendel began taking photographs in China with the legendary Leica, the suggestive stimuli he was exposed to were very impactful on him. He abandoned his first attempts at a 'posed' surrealist photography to seek his own more personal style in which to combine that taste for the absurd unusual, with a more direct representation of reality. What happens in the real world, according to Gendel, can sometimes be more extravagant than any a priori construction.

A photographer's task to him is therefore to reveal the whimsy that surrounds us, to capture decisive moments that make an instant expressive and eternal.

After being a part of that unconventional world of European intellectuals settled in Greenwich Village, Gendel had always kept in mind another possible approach, simpler and more direct: the observation of reality. The idea that an artist is firstly a man of his time and must live immersed in his own reality was (and always had been) deeply present in him and in his work; an artist must not, and in some way cannot, ever disregard current reality. He himself recounted and testified with his work how visual and intellectual attention at that time was attracted above all by photographic images, which he considered to be the most poignant reliable representations of reality. A famous reference are the photographic images that appeared on the pages of the magazine *Life*. Those photographs, faithful yet evocative, in parallel with the progress of photographic technique, can function as documents of real extracts of reality itself. Those images offered the viewer a clear vision, albeit the result of the photographer's subjective point of view, of a precise place in the world and a precise point in history. Among the main authors of the photographic stories published by *Life*, we find among others the names of W. Eugene Smith, Alfred Eisenstaedt, Lewis Hine, Dorothea Lange, Walker Evans, and Robert Capa.

Life magazine was launched in 1936, precisely to spread photojournalism, and over the years became one of the most interesting and effective vehicles of photography of the twentieth century. It gave many the possibility of expressing themselves through a photographic genre of great success and of undoubted social and historical incisiveness. Gendel told me that, alongside *Life*, another magazine, in which Henri Cartier-Bresson and Brassaï had also published their photographs, attracted his attention: the famous *Harper's Bazaar*.

[26] Benson Miller, Peter. 'A Surrealist in Camouflage', in *Milton Gendel: una vita surreale*. 'In an indelible image by Bill Hayter from 1942, I see him sitting astride the sloping roof of a Staten Island barn, painter's brush in hand, finishing the building's camouflage as he exchanged jokes with an assistant: 'I'll be grateful if you keep your tongue in place. In your mouth? In my mouth? In my eye? Where is it?'. The laughter rolled pleasantly on the greens and browns of the abstract design designed to blend the building into the landscape and conceal it from the air attack'**.** Gendel, 'Immagine indelebile'.

[27] 'Breton's pronoucement when I finally told him that I was going into the Army was, 'Ah oui? Je trouve ça vraiment con''. Gendel, *Da margine a centro*.

In the 1940s a strong interest in photography was consolidating in New York, much more than in Europe. Although Gendel did not like to speak about and qualify his masters and origins, it can be said that this New York environment, both before and after his trip to China, determined his training in the photographic field. The names that circulated at the time, in addition to those already mentioned, were Paul Strand, Walker Evans (who linked his name to the Farm Security Administration); they were all direct interpreters of the same artistic current, the so-called ‘straight photography’. It is also possible that the shots of New York taken by Berenice Abbott or Margaret Bourke-White also influenced Gendel's imagination, his way of thinking about images. Certainly, as we said, the Surrealists had done their part regarding Gendel’s photographic imprinting; during those meetings at 61 Washigton Square or at Breton's house in 11th Street, Gendel could have been found conversing with some of them, precisely about new photographic research and experiments. However, the fascination of being able to capture a significant instant of reality and eternalizing it in the shot was equally pervasive.

On a final note, the transfer of many protagonists of Surrealism to New York in the early 1940s helped shape Gendel's artistic and existential action which remained consistent until recent years, both in his life and work. However, a deeper analysis cannot omit his debt to photojournalism, a movement that was unavoidable in Gendel’s formative years as an artist and intellectual. The red thread that guided and linked Gendel’s interests was and always had been his knowledge and passion for art history. His desire to make sense of his photography in a personal and unconventional way was undoubtedly the solid ground on which Gendel's photographic practice was founded and proliferated.

SURREALISM IN VENICE AND MILAN: THE CAVALLINO AND NAVIGLIO GALLERIES IN THE 1940S AND 50S: EXHIBITIONS AND PUBLICATIONS[1]

Caterina CAPUTO

The 1940s: the Precursors

> Rereading the first Surrealist Manifesto after twenty years does not so much mean commencing a posthumous evaluation, which is perhaps still as difficult a task as tracing the origins of the movement, to understand those of its ideas and rationales which have borne fruit, overcoming even its programmatic bottlenecks. […] And although Surrealism has found a shelf in the immense ideal archives of our century, its loftiest and truest concepts, those proper to the substance of art, remain topical and always open to study and useful reflection even as times and aesthetics change.[2]

It was with this warning that translator Beniamino Dal Fabbro introduced the *Primo Manifesto del Surrealismo* (First Surrealist Manifesto) (fig.1), published in 1945 by the Edizioni del Cavallino publishing house – founded in Venice in 1935 by Carlo Cardazzo (Venice 1908 – Pavia 1963)[3] – in its *Letteratura straniera* (Foreign-language literature) collection.

The decision to publish the manifesto in Italy for the first time was anomalous in a cultural context which had always been hostile to this avant-garde; unlike in other countries

[1] All translations into English unless otherwise specified are the author's. My heartfelt thanks go to the staff of the archives who made their materials available to me, in particular the Giorgio Cini Foundation in Venice. Additionally, I would like to thank Fariba Bogzaran, Fabrice Flahutez, Anne Foucault, Alisée Matta, Federica Matta, Luca Pietro Nicoletti, and Claudio Zambianchi.

[2] 'Rileggere dopo vent'anni il primo manifesto del Surrealismo significa non tanto avviarne una postuma valutazione, forse ancora difficile quanto risalire alle origini stesse del movimento, per comprendervi idee e motivi che hanno dato frutto, anche fuori dalle strettoie programmatiche. […] E se anche il Surrealismo ha trovato posto negli immensi archivi ideali del nostro secolo, i suoi concetti più alti e veri, ovvero quelli propri alla sostanza stessa dell'arte, rimangono tuttavia attuali, sempre suscettibili di studio e d'utile riflessione nel trascorrere degli anni e delle estetiche.' Breton, André. *Il Primo Manifesto del Surrealismo*, Venice: Edizioni Il Cavallino, 1945, s.p. For an overview of André Breton's writings translated in Italian see Collani, Tania. 'André Breton en Italien: le surréalisme au service de l'art et de la politique', *Synergies Pologne* 10 (2013): pp. 27-39.

[3] Carlo Cardazzo was an editor, collector and gallerist; he became a central figure of the Italian and international artistic scene of the twentieth century. On Cardazzo, see Fantoni, Antonella. *Il gioco del paradiso: la collezione Cardazzo e gli inizi della Galleria del Cavallino*, Venice: Edizioni del Cavallino, 1996; Bianchi, Giovanni. 'Carlo Cardazzo, profilo di un collezionista, editore e gallerista', in *Donazione Eugenio Da Venezia*, (eds.) Giuseppina Dal Canton and Babet Trevisan, Venice: La Biennale, 2006, pp. 67-79; Cardazzo, Angelica (ed.), *Caro Cardazzo…Lettere di artisti, scrittori e critici a Carlo Cardazzo dal 1933 al 1952*, Venice: Edizioni del Cavallino, 2008; Barbero, Luca Massimo (ed.), *Carlo Cardazzo: una nuova visione dell'arte* [exhibition catalogue], Milan: Electa, 2008. On the Cavallino publishing house, see Bianchi, Giovanni. *Un cavallino come logo*, Venice: Edizioni del Cavallino, 2006.

tied to France by proximity and cultural tradition, Surrealism had never taken root in Italy.[4] The reasons for such ostracism were multiple: the prevailing political ideology, criticism of a Crocean and formalist matrix disinterested in the poetics of the irrational and the unconscious, the mistrust of the left-wing towards a movement perceived mostly as bourgeois,[5] and not least, Italy's entrenched Catholic culture.[6]

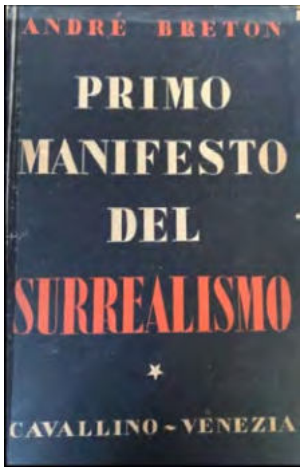

Fig. 1 – André Breton, *Primo Manifesto del Surrealismo*, (Venice: Edizioni del Cavallino, 1945). Cover.

The decision to publish an Italian translation of Surrealism's first programmatic text was taken immediately following WWII and ultimately arose from a personal quirk of Cardazzo which dated back to the 1930s. At times flying in the face of Fascist censorship, he purchased numerous volumes for his eclectic library directly from France, contents which

[4] For more in-depth information on Surrealism and post-WWII Italy, see Casamassima, Mirella. *Il surrealismo e l'arte italiana*, Bari: Edizioni dal Sud, 1984; Sanna, Angela. 'Enrico Baj et le surréalisme: de l'exposition Éros à la querelle de l'anti-procès', *Studiolo* 3 (2005): pp. 247-268; Décina Lombardi, Paola. *Surrealismo, 1919-1969: ribellione e immaginazione*, Milan: Mondadori, 2007, pp. IX-XV, 299-305; Tomasella, Giuliana. 'La mostra del Surrealismo alla Biennale del 1954 attraverso la stampa periodica', in *La consistenza dell'effimero. Riviste d'arte tra Ottocento e Novecento*, (eds.) Nadia Barella and Rosanna Cioffi, Naples: Luciano Editore, 2013, pp. 383-400; *Ead.*, 'La mostra del Surrealismo alla Biennale del 1954: problemi organizzativi e riflessioni critiche' in *Crocevia Biennale*, (eds.) Francesca Castellani and Eleonora Charans, Milan: Scalpendi, 2017, pp. 171-180; Tulino, Giulia. *La Galleria L'Obelisco. Surrealismo e arte fantastica (1943-1954)*, Rome: De Luca Editori D'Arte, 2020; Drost, Julia. ''Trop dangereux, trop inquiétant, trop incertain'. Le surréalisme à la XXVIIe Biennale de Venise en 1954', in *Le surréalisme et l'argent*, (eds.) Julia Drost, Fabrice Flahutez and Martin Schieder, Paris-Heidelberg: DFK Paris-Université de Heidelberg 2021, pp. 357-381; Nigro, Alessandro. ''Le Muse inquietanti. Maestri del surrealismo' à Turin en 1967. Histoire d'une exposition surréaliste mémorable', *Ibid.*, pp. 382-401.

[5] See Tomasella, 'La mostra del Surrealismo alla Biennale del 1954 attraverso la stampa periodica', pp. 383-400; *Ead.* 'La mostra del Surrealismo alla Biennale del 1954: problemi organizzativi e riflessioni critiche', pp. 171-180.

[6] Alberto Savinio wrote in 1940: 'You cannot say 'Italian' without thinking 'Catholic'. To understand Surrealism, one must distance oneself from Catholic teachings, just as to sail one must leave the shore.' ('Chi dice italiano sottintende cattolico. Per capire il surrealism bisogna sciogliersi dalla disciplina Cattolica, come per navigare bisogna staccarsi dalla riva.') Savinio, Alberto. 'Della pittura surrealista', *Prospettive* 13 (January 1940): p. 24.

ranged from the 'earliest Christians to the latest modern Surrealists.'[7] Cardazzo's own literary preferences inevitably influenced his selection of works for publication by the publishing house he managed, as in the case of the *Letteratura straniera* (Foreign-language literature) series which delivered almost exclusively French texts to readers on what amounted to an 'initiatory' path that set out from Mallamé's *Lettre à Verlaine* and went on to *Cors de Chasse* and *Poète assassiné* by Guillaume Apollinaire, *Les Chants de Maldoror* by Isidore Duchasse Comte de Lautréamont, Valery's *Monsieur Teste* and *Propos sur la poésie*, Jean Cocteau's *Plain-Chant,* until arriving at the already-mentioned *Manifeste du surréalisme.*[8]

Cardazzo wrote, 'I am as proud of having been the first in Italy to have published works by Apollinaire, Proust, Gide, Éluard and so many others as I am of my best exhibitions.'[9] The young editor's passion for literature was matched by his interest in art, which he cultivated as an amateur and collector since the Twenties. His vocation strengthened in 1942, when he decided to undertake a new and ambitious project to open the Galleria del Cavallino on Riva Degli Schiavoni in Venice; two further galleries soon followed: the Galleria Il Naviglio in Milan (1946) and the Galleria Selecta in Rome (1955).[10] The publisher's new entrepreneurial venture as a gallerist marked his official entry into the art market system. It wasn't long before the activities of the publishing house began to be strictly correlated with Cardazzo's exhibition work which, from the very start, targeted not only promotion of well-established names on the Italian art panorama – such as Carlo Carrà, Giorgio de Chirico, Filippo de Pisis or Giorgio Morandi – but also little-known painters and sculptors.[11]

One emblematic example of this union of exhibition and publishing was the dust jacket of *Canti di Maldoror*, which reproduced a lithograph by Mario Deluigi (fig. 2), a painter from Treviso whose works Cardazzo had exhibited at the Galleria del Cavallino in 1944, a

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[7] Cantatore, Dino. 'Pittura d'oggi: un suo collezionista', *Domus* 121 (1938): p. 30. The books purchased by Cardazzo in France in the Thirties included volumes of poetry by Jean Cocteau, Stéphane Mallarmé and Paul Verlaine. See Cardazzo's letter to Giuseppe Santomaso, 26 April 1939, cited in Bianchi, *Un cavallino come logo*, p. 5.

[8] Edizioni del Cavallino inaugurated its *Letteratura straniera* series in 1943. Publication was suspended in 1945, perhaps for financial reasons; the upshot was that several titles originally intended for publication were not printed; these included: Pierre Réverdy, *I fantini mascherati*; Louis Aragon, *Aniceto o il panorama*; Stéphane Mallarmé, *Le tre ariette*; Blaise Cendrars, *L'Eubage.* The series returned a decade later, in 1956, with Peggy Guggenheim's *Una collezionista ricorda*, (Venice: Edizioni del Cavallino, 1956). For the complete list of the Edizioni del Cavallino publications, see Bianchi, *Un cavallino come logo*, pp. 135-178.

[9] 'L'aver pubblicato per primo in Italia opere di Apollinaire, Proust, Gide, Éluard e di tanti altri è una cosa di cui sono orgoglioso quanto delle mie migliori mostre.' Le Noci. 'I mercanti d'arte', *Domus* 395 (October 1962): p. 29.

[10] For more in-depth information on the Galleria del Cavallino, see Bianchi, Giovanni. *Galleria d'arte a Venezia 1938-1948. Un decennio di fermenti innovativi*, Venice: Cicero, 2010, pp. 45-51; Fantoni, *Il gioco del paradiso*; Bianchi. 'Carlo Cardazzo, profilo di un collezionista', pp. 67-79; *Id.*, *Galleria d'arte a Venezia 1938-1948*, pp. 45-78; *Id.*, 'Il Cavallino, 'vibrante centro veneziano di arte moderna'' in *Carlo Cardazzo: una nuova visione dell'arte*, pp. 119-164. On the Galleria del Naviglio, see Barbero, Luca Massimo and Pola, Francesca. 'Una 'centrale creativa' a Milano. La Galleria del Naviglio di Carlo Cardazzo 1946-1963', *Ibid*., pp. 165-185.

[11] Cardazzo wrote: 'In addition to established artists, above all the Cavallino gallery showed young, even un-known artists, for some of whom a rosy future should be expected. Also held were conferences, cultural gatherings, poetry readings, presentations of artists and writers' ('Oltre ad artisti già affermati la galleria del Cavallino ha esposto soprattutto giovani anche se sconosciuti per alcuno dei quali è da attendersi un sicuro avvenire. Inoltre hanno avuto luogo conferenze, incontri culturali, lettura di versi, presentazione di artisti e letterati.') In *Le Noci*, 'I mercanti d'arte' p. 29.

short time before the book's publication the same year.[12] Deluigi's biomorphic, 'organic' painting was certainly seen by the gallerist as a stylistically-suitable introduction to the text which had 'guided' and 'inspired'[13] Breton's Surrealist movement. However, this 'promotional' choice collided with the interpretation of Deluigi's vitalist canvases presented by Carlo Betocchi in the catalogue of the Cavallino exhibition, which saw the painter well distanced from any Surrealist odour and in particular from Surrealist automatism.[14]

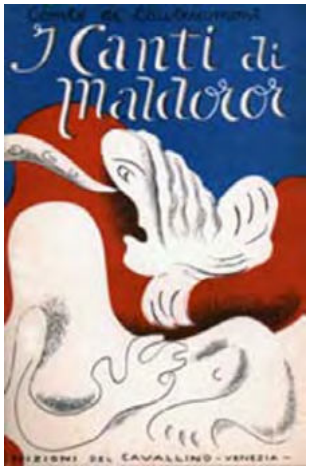

Fig. 2 - Isidore Ducasse Compte de Lautréamont, *I Canti di Maldoror*, (Venice: Edizioni del Cavallino, 1944). Cover.

In Deluigi's plastic modulation of volumes and forms (fig. 3-4), Betocchi saw in the 'identity of space and non-time' a 16th century model,[15] glossing over the evident formal debt instead owed by the Venetian painter and his corpus of vitalist paintings to international abstract-concrete experimentation and in particular to Jean Arp and Kurt Seligmann:[16] in the Thirties, their works appeared on more than one occasion in exhibitions at Milan's Il Milione gallery[17] (fig. 5) – where Deluigi had also exhibited in 1933.[18]

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[12] See *Opere di Mario Deluigi* [exhibition catalogue], Venice: Edizioni del Cavallino, 1944. The show at the Galleria del Cavallino was the first solo exhibition dedicated to Deluigi in Italy. The artist remained faithful to Cardazzo throughout his career; in the early Fifties he joined the Spatialist movement founded by Lucio Fontana and promoted by Cardazzo.

[13] Comte de Lautréamont, Isidore Ducasse. *I Canti di Maldoror*, Venice: Edizioni del Cavallino, 1944. Dust jacket flap.

[14] Betocchi, Carlo. 'Dell'uomo e dell'arte. A proposito della mostra del pittore Mario Deluigi', in *Opere di Mario Deluigi*, s.p. Carlo Betocchi was an Italian poet and writer with leanings toward literary Hermeticism. For more on Betocchi, see Macrì, Oreste. *La vita della parola. Da Betocchi a Tentori*, Rome: Bulzoni, 2002.

[15] Betocchi. 'Dell'uomo e dell'arte', s.p.

[16] Jean Arp and Kurt Seligmann had gravitated toward Paris' Abstraction-Création group and later, in the second half of the Thirties, adhered to the Surrealist movement.

[17] See 'Seligmann, Furigà', Milan, Galleria Il Milione, April 1934; 'Seligmann', Milan, Galleria Il Milione, January-February 1935; 'Arp, Domela, Kandinsky, Magnelli, Seligmann, Taeuber-Arp, Vézelay', Milan, Galleria Il Milione, March 1938. Seligmann's introduction to the Galleria Il Milione came about through Gualtieri di San Lazzaro, who had published the artist's etchings in *Les Chroniques du Jour* magazine in Paris in 1934: see the *Bollettino della Galleria del Milione* 24 (1934). For more information on Gualtieri di San Lazzaro, see Nicoletti, Pietro Luca. *Gualtieri di San Lazzaro. Scritti e incontri di un editore d'arte a Parigi*, Macerata: Quodlibet, 2014. Cardazzo also frequented the Galleria Il Milione in the Thirties; see letter from Peppino Ghiringhelli (Il Milione gallery owner) to Carlo Cardazzo, 6 March 1935 (Archivio Cardazzo, Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Venice).

[18] See 'Pinto, Chyurlia, Mario De Luigi [*sic*], Bruno Ferrario', Milan, Galleria Il Milione, January 1933.

The evident antinomy which came to be created between Deluigi's plastic works and Betocchi's critical text only confirmed how in the aporetic context of post-WWII Italy, art was split between the artists' leanings toward avant-garde plastic research and the stance taken by idealist and apologetic criticism, ever tenaciously anchored to national tradition.

However, the Deluigi exhibition was a significant event for the Galleria del Cavallino, in that it inaugurated an exhibition program that was designed to launch young Italian artists interested in experimenting with a new figuration,[19] which shortly thereafter gave rise to the Spatialist group, as well as to Italian art informel.[20] In this programmatic perspective of renewal of Italian art on the one hand, and creation of a new market supporting that art on the other,[21] Surrealism – which already had a firm network of international dealers and galleries in support – showed up in Cardazzo's galleries in the Fifties, so much so that the Cavallino and Naviglio galleries became significant centres for the spread, in Italy, of artists who gravitated in the Surrealist movement.

Fig. 3 – Mario Deluigi, *Donna Innamorata*, monotype, 1943-44 © Deluigi Estate.

[19] Carlo Cardazzo was looking for new artists to present to the art market as early as 1943; this is made clear in a letter from Vittorio Emanuele Barbaroux, owner of the gallery of that name in Milan, who wrote: 'I will be happy to see you […] not least to be able to look into the launch program for our 'new recruit' [Cesare Zavattini]. We must begin with a slim volume […] and then we could get the press talking. But together, we'll work out what it will be useful to do' ('Sono lieto di vederla […] anche per poter studiare il programma di lancio della nostra 'recluta' [Cesare Zavattini]. Bisogna cominciare con un volumetto […] e poi se ne potrebbe far parlare molto la stampa. Insomma studieremo assieme quello che sarà utile fare.'). Letter from Vittorio Emanuele Barbaroux to Carlo Cardazzo, 29 June 1943 (Archivio Cardazzo, Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Venice).

[20] On Cardazzo and the Spatialists, see Barbero, Luca Massimo (ed.), *Lucio Fontana e gli Spaziali. Fonti e documenti per le gallerie Cardazzo*, Venice: Marsilio, 2020. On Cardazzo and art informel, see Bertolino, Giorgina. 'Il territorio indefinito dell'Informale: le mostre e le edizioni di Carlo Cardazzo negli anni Cinquanta', in *Carlo Cardazzo: una nuova visione dell'arte*, pp. 299-310.

[21] On the Italian and Venetian art scenes in the Fifties, see Messina, Maria Grazia. 'Venezia anni Cinquanta: il turbamento della pittura', in *Venezia 1950-59. Il rinnovamento della pittura in Italia* [exhibition catalogue], (ed.) Maria Grazia Messina, Ferrara: Ferrara Arte, 1999, pp. 17-32. On the Milanese context see Pola, Francesca. 'Gli anni Cinquanta a Milano', in *Pittura degli anni Cinquanta in Italia* [exhibition catalogue], (ed.) Pier Giovanni Castagnoli, Turin: GAM, 2003, pp. 51-64.

Fig. 4 – Mario Deluigi, *Uomo sdraiato*, monotype, 1943-44 © Deluigi Estate.

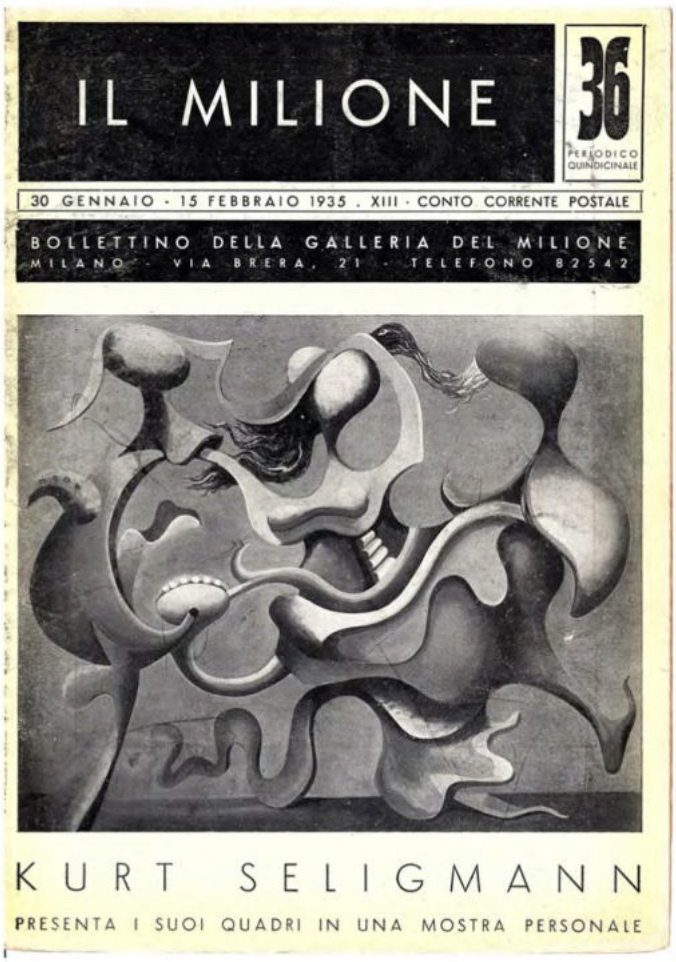

Fig. 5 – *Bollettino della Galleria del Milione*, no. 36 (1935). Cover.

The 1950s: Surrealism and Spatialism

In the Fifties the Carlo Cardazzo galleries opened with a rich exhibition program that promoted the Spatialist movement on the one hand, and the new abstract forms of Italian and international *art informel* on the other, both gestural and textured. In the space between these two main lines, Cardazzo wove together a series of shows that presented to the Italian public several artists from the Surrealist fringes: Victor Brauner, Enrico Donati, Leonor Fini, Wifredo Lam, Roberto Matta Echaurren, and Yves Tanguy, all of whom were active members of Breton's movement until at least the end of the 1940s.[22]

The arrival of the surrealist artists in Italy coincided with the end of the war and the return to Europe of several members of the group from their U.S. exile, including of course André Breton, who validated the group's new programmatic lines[23] as well as most recent affiliations with a great exhibition organised at Paris' Galerie Maeght: 'Le surréalisme en 1947'.[24] That same year, new ferments in art were rising up in Milan, at the Galleria Il Naviglio, where a group of artists – Lucio Fontana, Beniamino Joppolo, Giorgio Kaisserlian and Milena Milani – signed the first *Manifesto dello Spazialismo* and elected Cardazzo's gallery their official group headquarters.[25] The Spatialists' artistic research called for art that would go beyond the static plastic form and embody an active spatial concept such as to determine the compositional space itself, in which a peculiar role was played by light and movement: 'We conceive of art as a sum of physical elements, colour, sound, movement, time, space, conceiving a physical-psychic unity, colour the element of space, sound the element of time, and movement something that develops in time and in space. These are the fundamental forms of Spatial art'.[26] His reflections on the possibility of a new spatial dimension in the name of a simultaneity of the artistic process (during both production and reception) attracted Fontana to the art of Enrico Donati and Roberto Matta, so much so that he included artworks by the two artists in the Spatialist movement's collective exhibitions. In this regard, Donati wrote: 'Another fellow that I am very fond of is Lucio Fontana, who is an imaginative artist. I was very close to him at the beginning of spatzarismo [*sic*]. And he added my name to the list of his friends at the moment in which he started to launch the idea of spatzarismo [*sic*] in Italy'.[27]

Milanese by birth but a New York resident, in 1950 Donati was invited to participate in the Italian section at the XXV Venice Biennale, at which he presented his recent paintings: *Sangue di Lucrezia* (1948), *Lambicco Ermetico* (1948), *Le vene del ragno*

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[22] Roberto Matta and Victor Brauner were both expelled from the Surrealist group in 1948, the former 'pour disqualification intellectuelle et ignominie morale', the second 'pour travail fractionnel;' see Surrealist group members' communication, November 1948 (Donati Papers, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles; henceforth GRI).

[23] See Breton, André. 'Prolégomènes à une troisième manifeste du surréalisme ou non', *VVV* 1 (June 1942): pp. 18-26.

[24] Victor Brauner, Enrico Donati, Roberto Matta Echaurren and Yves Tanguy took all part in 'Le surréalisme en 1947' exhibition in Paris. See Breton, André (ed.), *Le surréalisme en 1947* [exhibition catalogue], Paris: Pierre à feu-Maeght, 1947.

[25] See 'Primo Manifesto Spaziale (1947)', reprinted in *Lucio Fontana e gli Spaziali*, p. 34.

[26] 'Concepiamo l'arte come una somma di elementi fisici, colore, suono, movimento, tempo, spazio, concependo un'unità fisico-psichica, colore l'elemento dello spazio, suono l'elemento del tempo, e il movimento che si sviluppa nel tempo e nello spazio. Sono le forme fondamentali dell'arte spaziale.' Talk by Lucio Fontana at the conference organised on occasion of the 1951 Milan Triennale, in Sanna, Angela (ed.), *Lucio Fontana, Manifesti Scritti, Interviste*, Milan: Abscondita, 2015, p. 47.

[27] Oral history interview with Enrico Donati, 9 September 1968. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

(1949).[28] While awaiting the June opening of the authoritative Venetian event, the artist was the protagonist of at least two solo exhibitions in Italy, between Milan and Rome: at the Galleria Il Milione,[29] and at the Galleria L'Obelisco.[30] At that time, he already relied on reference galleries that promoted his production abroad, such as the Galerie Maeght in Paris, [31] and New York's Durand-Ruel Gallery. [32] In Italy, instead, after Donati's participation in the XXV Biennale, and his solo exhibition in 1951 at the Galleria Amici della Francia in Corso Vittorio Emanuele in Milan,[33] Cardazzo took part in launching the artist on the national exhibition and collecting circuits. Thus, beginning in 1952, the painter became a significant presence at the Galleria del Cavallino, where he was welcomed with two personal shows –the first one in 1952, the second in 1954 (fig. 6) – and inclusion of his works in several collective exhibitions of Spatialist art.[34]

Fig. 6 –*Pitture di Donati*, exhibition catalogue (Venice, Galleria del Cavallino, 19-28 September 1954), Venice: Edizioni del Cavallino, 1954. Cover.

[28] See *XXV Esposizione Biennale Internazionale d'arte di Venezia* [exhibition catalogue], Venice: Alfieri, 1950, p. 199. For further information on Enrico Donati, see the essay by Zambianchi, Claudio. 'Enrico Donati in 1950: Three Italian Exhibitions', in this same issue of *Mélusine*.

[29] M.N. 'Enrico Donati al Milione', *Domus* 246 (May 1950): p. 34. The exhibition was organised by the Italian editor Daria Guarnieri.

[30] The show in Rome at the Galleria L'Obelisco ran from 1 through 10 November 1950; for the complete list of the works on show, see Caratozzolo, Vittoria Caterina, Schiaffini, Ilaria and Zambianchi, Claudio (eds.), *Irene Brin, Gaspero del Corso e la Galleria L'Obelisco*, Rome: Drago, 2018, p. 275; and Zambianchi, 'Enrico Donati in 1950: Three Italian Exhibitions.'

[31] 'Je vous précise encore mon désir de défendre votre œuvre en France avec tout le sérieux qu'elle mérite.' Letter from the Galerie Maeght to Enrico Donati, 3 February 1947 (Donati Papers, GRI).

[32] Donati had several solo shows at the New York's Durand-Ruel Gallery between 1947 and 1950.

[33] What remains of the show is a photograph immortalising Enrico Donati, Roberto Matta, Lucio Fontana, Roberto Crippa and Cesare Peverelli at the gallery in Corso Vittorio Emanuele during the event. See F. Wolff, Theodore. *Enrico Donati. Surrealism and Beyond*, New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1996, p. 145. I would like to thank Claudio Zambianchi for providing me with the Amici della Francia exhibition catalogue.

[34] See 'Enrico Donati' (Venice, Galleria del Cavallino, October 1952); 'Pitture di Donati' (Venice, Galleria del Cavallino, 19-28 September 1954); 'Arte Spaziale: Guidi, Bacci, Morandi, Crippa, Dova, Donati, Deluigi, Capogrossi, Tancredi, Vinicio' (Venice, Galleria del Cavallino, March 1953); 'Artisti Spaziali' (Vicenza, Galleria del Calibano, June 1953). It significant that in 1952 Donati signed Fontana's *Manifesto del movimento spaziale per la television*; see *Lucio Fontana, Manifesti Scritti,* pp. 33-34.

The primordial forms and the 'organic' references, incorporated in Donati's canvases at the end of the 1940s and exhibited in Milan in 1950, were not really appreciated by critics: the press even accused the artist of aestheticism and decorativism.[35] Nonetheless, Donati's paintings were favourably received by the public at the 1954 show at the Cavallino gallery: Cardazzo telegraphed to Donati, 'Crowd of artists and cultural personalities attending. Show inaugurated. Great success.'[36] The introduction to the exhibition catalogue was penned by publisher and art critic Giampiero Giani, who gave his text the emblematic title *Spazio-Materia-Luce* (Space-Matter-Light). Giani presented a reading of Donati's works that while glossing over his Surrealist automatism side,[37] exalted the textured and gestural aspect of his canvases instead: their union of the 'chromatic vibration of painting' on the one hand, with the 'ungentle action of modelling' on the other.[38] The exhibition catalogue indicates that the *corpus* showed at Cardazzo's gallery focused on Donati's newer experimentations, the *Moonscape* series, such as the painting *Noir et blanc* (1953) (fig. 7), based on the tactile possibilities of matter and light in painting.[39] Although Giani did not consider at all the surrealist side of Donati's 'lunarian deserts', Nicolas Calas, on the other hand, emblematically wrote with regards to Donati's new *corpus* of paintings: '[Donati's *lunarian deserts*] are the temptation set on the path of abstractions, a compensation for severe bituminous, molybdenous, glacial or volcanic fragments. […] These paintings are poetry for they create the illusion that assuages our thirst for the not there. Never before has abstract painting been so surrealist.'[40] The directions explored by Fontana's Spazialist group – in which Donati took part starting from 1952[41] – also appear in the 1954 solo-show at the Cavallino gallery which aimed to highlight the textured side of Donati's paintings, along with the plastic use of light and colours: 'through his own 'spatialist' method – wrote Giani – Donati suggested 'the spiritual order'.[42]

A path through the Cardazzo galleries analogous to Donati's was the one followed by Roberto Matta, who in 1949, following his New York exile and excommunication from the surrealist movement, decided to move to Italy, where he remained until 1954. He immediately made contact with the local art scene in Rome, where he lived, and a few months after his arrival inaugurated his first personal shows there, at the L'Obelisco

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[35] See L.B. 'Mostre d'arte', *Corriere della Sera* (9 May 1950): p. 3.

[36] Telegram from Carlo Cardazzo to Enrico Donati, 21 September 1954 (Donati Papers, GRI). Donati's success in the artistic entourage that orbited around Cardazzo's galleries was reconfirmed later in that same year, when Fontana decided to invite the artist to take part in the Milan Triennale event he was organising.

[37] In the 1950s, Donati was still in direct contact with André Breton, often sharing with him his new research in painting. See transcriptions of letters from André Breton to Enrico Donati, in Breton, André. 'Lettres à Enrico Donati', *Pleine Marge* 7 (1988): pp. 9-26.

[38] Giani, Giampiero. 'Spazio-Materia-Luce', in *Pitture di Donati* [exhibition catalogue], Venice: Galleria del Cavallino, 1954, s.p.

[39] See *Donati,* Venice: Ed. del Cavallino, 1954, s.p. The painting *Noir et blanc* was reproduced in the exhibition flayer published by Cardazzo.

[40] Nicolas Calas' text dated 25 September 1953 (Donati Papers, GRI).

[41] See note 34.

[42] Giani, *Spazio-Materia-Luce*, s.p.

gallery.[43] In the same period, Matta also travelled for the first time to Milan and Venice.[44] Once in Italy, the artist was searching for an exhibition network that could represent him[45] and, like Donati, was picked up by Cardazzo and the Spatialists, who included his works in the numerous collective showings of Spatialist art he organised in those years, including 'Sei Artisti Spaziali' at the Galleria del Cavallino (September 1952),[46] and the great collective show of the works of Spatialist artists presented at the Sala degli Specchi of Palazzo Giustiniani in Venice in 1953.[47]

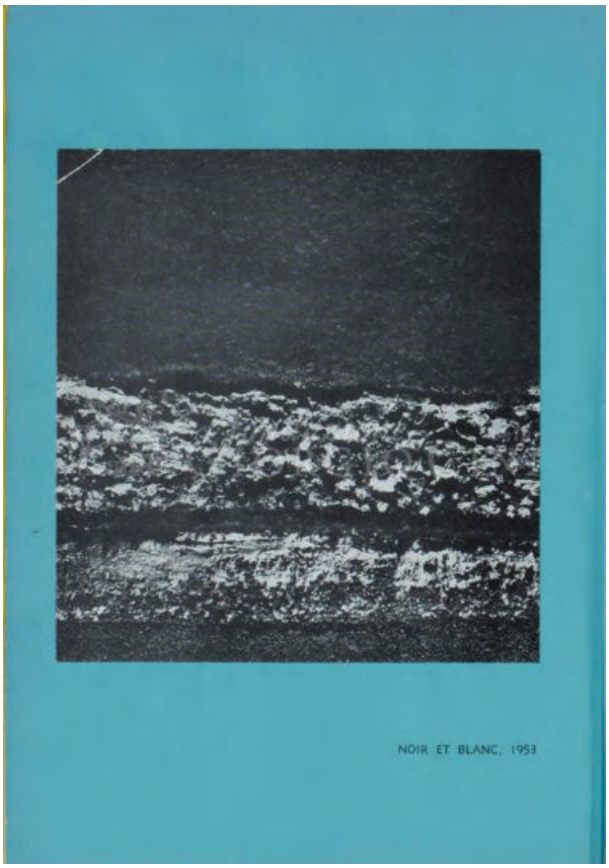

Fig. 7 – *Pitture di Donati*, exhibition catalogue (Venice, Galleria del Cavallino, 19-28 September 1954), Venice: Edizioni del Cavallino, 1954, s.p.

[43] Matta held his first solo exhibition in Italy in January 1950 at the Galleria L'Obelisco; it was followed, in March of the same year, by a show at the Galleria del Secolo in Rome. On the Galleria L'Obelisco exhibition, see Tulino, *La Galleria L'Obelisco*, pp. 85-89. On Roberto Matta and Cardazzo, see De Sabbata, Massimo. 'Carlo Cardazzo e Sebastian Matta', in *Carlo Cardazzo: una nuova visione dell'arte*, pp. 325-332. On Matta and Italy, instead, see Salaris, Claudia (ed.), *Matta: un surrealista a Roma* [exhibition catalogue], Florence: Giunti, 2012, pp. 9-33.

[44] See *Ibid.*, p. 16. It is unclear on what occasion Matta met Fontana for the first time; nevertheless, it is known that by 1950 the two artists frequented one another (see note 33).

[45] In New York, Matta was supported by the Pierre Matisse Gallery in the 1940s and, in the following decade, by Alexander Iolas' galleries: 'Iolas is giving me 150 a month on 19 pictures he wants to show', Matta wrote in a undated letter to Angela Faranda, in *Matta: un surrealista a Roma*, p. 33.

[46] See *Sei artisti spaziali: Capogrossi, Crippa, Dova, Joppolo, Matta, Peverelli* [exhibition catalogue], Venice: Galleria del Cavallino, 1952.

[47] The great exhibition brought together Edmondo Bacci, Giuseppe Capogrossi, Roberto Crippa, Mario Deluigi, Bruno De Toffoli, Enrico Donati, Gianni Dova, Lucio Fontana, Virgilio Guidi, Roberto Matta, Gino Morandi, Tancredi Parmeggiani, Cesare Peverelli, Iaroslav Serpan, and Vinicio Vianello.

Matta was an ongoing presence at the Cavallino and Il Naviglio galleries thanks to a contract signed by the artist with Cardazzo in late 1952.[48] Shortly thereafter, the gallerist organised a retrospective, in the rooms of the *Sala Napoleonica* of Venice's Museo Correr,[49] which presented more than forty of Matta's artworks to the Italian public, including the canvas *Le De-Nommeur Re-Nomme*, then acquired by Peggy Guggenheim.[50] This early success was followed by that obtained by the show held at the Galleria del Cavallino in 1954, perhaps the most significative of the artist's exhibitions, the one at which much experimentation launched many years earlier came to concrete fruition. With the aim of enhancing the arbitrary nature of the artistic language and its changes in response the 'observer's stance',[51] at Cardazzo's Venice gallery Matta – who also wrote the introduction to the catalogue – staged an environmental work, a de facto radicalisation of research for a project published in 1938 in the French magazine *Minotaure* (fig. 8): a visionary architectural space in which the walls were conceived 'comme des draps mouillés qui se déforment et épousent nos peurs psychologiques'.[52]

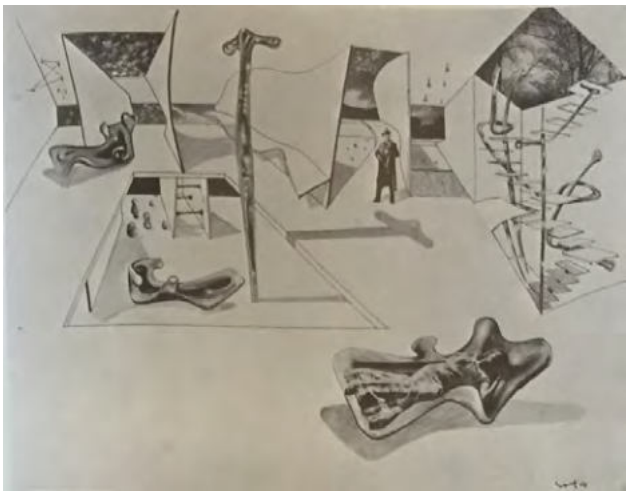

Fig. 8 – Roberto Matta Echaurren, *Mathématique sensible – Architecture du temps*, 1937, pencil and pen on paper © Roberto Sebastian Matta-Echaurren, by Siae 2021.

[48] 'Je suis sous contrat avec Cardazzo. Il s'occupe de mes tableaux. Je suis assez content', Matta wrote in a letter to Alain Jouffroy, dated 15 December 1952, transcribed in Demare, Christian (ed.), *Roberto Matta, Alain Jouffroy: correspondance 1952-1960*, Paris: Arteos-Galerie Diane de Polignac, 2018, pp. 109-110. The author has been unable to date to find documents concerning the duration of the contract.

[49] See *Matta* [exhibition catalogue], Venice: Edizioni del Cavallino, 1953, s.p. The exhibition was organised with the collaboration of the Allan Frumkin (Chicago), Sydney Janis (New York), and Hugo-Iolas (New York) galleries. The City of Venice granted use of the Napoleonic Wing in the Museo Correr to Cardazzo for staging large-scale events, most often in the 'stasis years' between one Biennale and the next. Among the exhibitions inaugurated prior to the 1953 showing of Matta's works were one dedicated to painter Eugene Berman in September 1950; the show by Surrealist painter Leonor Fini in September 1951; and finally, the exhibition of Picasso's ceramics.

[50] See De Sabbata, Massimo. 'Carlo Cardazzo e Sebastian Matta', in *Carlo Cardazzo: una nuova visione dell'arte*, pp. 327-328.

[51] Matta, Roberto. 'Presentazione', in *Pitture di Matta* [exhibition catalogue], Venice: Galleria del Cavallino, 1954, s.p.

[52] *Id*. 'Mathématique sensible – Architecture du temps', *Minotaure* 11 (Spring 1938): p. 43. Of the same project exists another version in pastel and pencil on paper dated 1937, see Ferrari, Germana (ed.), *Matta: Entretiens Morphologique. Notebook n. 1, 1936-1944*, London: Sistan, 1987, p. 28.

In Venice, the signifying space projected in the Thirties was ramped up to the level of actual build: four panels erected in the room created 'une coupe pratiquée dans le réel. Ils [the panels] montrent qu'il suffit d'un instant de grande émotion pour nous changer et bouleverser la vision de l'espace où nous vivons.'[53] Unlike what happened in Donati's case, even at Matta's very first show in 1953 the press immediately grasped the 'physicality of nature and man'[54] synthesised by the artist's well-structured 'architecture of volumes;'[55] it was also clear to critics how Matta's 'explorations in space' were, in truth, 'relationships between man and man, between man and nature, between today and tomorrow.'[56] And it was most certainly, and exactly, this 'spatiality', understood as 'simultaneity of the process of articulation of man in nature and vice versa',[57] that attracted the artist to the Spatialist group – although his results always maintained a certain autonomy.

In Italy, Matta found fertile terrain for his research projects, 'My new pictures are synthesis [*sic*] of the very first', he wrote in 1950 to his close friend Gordon Onslow Ford;[58] additionally he sent an enthusiastic note to Victor Brauner, at that time living in Paris: '1950 l'année que nous unirà par la fluorescence de l'ordre emotionel original. L'attention creative [*sic*], mon cher Victor, j'ai veçu [*sic*] à Rome comme un terre que se selvage [*sic*], tout porisse [*sic*] en moi, comme à l'origine. […] L'age arrive en pulverisant [*sic*] l'Arc de Trionphe [*sic*].'[59]

In September 1953, right on the heels of Matta's show, Brauner also held a solo exhibition at the Galleria del Cavallino,[60] staged by Cardazzo in collaboration with New York's Alexander Iolas Gallery (fig. 9), which at that time had the artist under contract;[61] among the works shown: *Acqua fuoco dell'amore*; *Il grande ritratto; Quadro pessimista; Il poeta assassino*.[62] Brauner's 'graffito painting technique, […] geometrised, arabesqued, […] a synthesis of all the ancient civilisations',[63] heavy with 'restlessness pushed to paroxysm',[64] was attributed to the existentialist milieu by a local press unmindful of every and any reference to the alternative creative processes of surrealist origin that the painter

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[53] *Pitture di Matta*, s.p.
[54] G.S. 'La mostra di Matta in Sala Napoleonica', *Minosse* 5 (1953): s.p.
[55] *Ibid*.
[56] Cast. [Castellani], F. 'Il pomo di Adamo ritorna nelle tele di R.E. Matta', *Il Gazzettino* (27 August 1953): s.p.
[57] Letter from Roberto Matta to Gordon Onslow Ford, 19 September 1942 (Inverness, Lucid Art Foundation).
[58] Letter from Roberto Matta to Gordon Onslow Ford, 4 September 1950 (Inverness, Lucid Art Foundation).
[59] Letter from Roberto Matta to Victor Brauner, undated but attributable to 1950 (Centre Pompidou/MNAM-CCI/Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Fonds Victor Brauner).
[60] 'Victor Brauner', Venice, Galleria del Cavallino, 29 September- 8 October 1953.
[61] The contract between Victor Brauner and the Hugo Gallery was renewed several times between 1952 and 1955, the year in which the gallery shuttered its doors. Meanwhile, in November 1951, Iolas had opened a second gallery in New York at 46 East Fifty-Seventh Street. From 1963 onward, he opened other exhibition venues in Paris, Geneva and Milan and collaborated with galleries in Rome (Iolas-Galatea), Athens (Iolas-Zoumboulakis) and Madrid (Iolas-Velasco). On Alexander Iolas, see Fotiadi, Eva. 'Alexander Iolas, the Collectors John and Dominique de Menil, and the Promotion of Surrealism in the United States', in *Networking Surrealism in the USA. Agents, Artists, and the Market*, (eds.) Julia Drost, Fabrice Flahutez, Anne Helmreich *et alii*, Paris-Heidelberg: DFK-Universität Heidelberg, 2019, pp. 119-134.
[62] Cast [Castellani], F. 'Il rumeno Victor Brauner pittore dell'esistenzialismo', *Il Gazzettino* (2 October 1953): p. 3.
[63] *Ibid*.
[64] *Ibid*.

might have exploited.[65] This first exhibition was followed in 1958 by a second, monographic show,[66] proposed to Cardazzo by Brauner himself, as by that time, the artist was no longer bound by contract to Iolas' New York gallery.[67] The ensuing agreements between Brauner and Cardazzo called for the gallerist to purchase of a block of works and for a second lot of paintings to be shipped and left in storage at the Galleria Il Naviglio.[68] The exhibition was initially planned for the month of August at the Galleria del Cavallino – concurrently, that is, with the Biennale – but logistics delays forced the show to be rescheduled for the Milan venue alone[69]. The event was so successful with the public and criticism that Cardazzo decided to immediately restage it at the Galleria Selecta in Rome,[70] and even to schedule a date at the Galleria Galatea in Turin.

Fig. 9 – *Victor Brauner*, exhibition catalogue (Venice, Galleria del Cavallino, 4-20 October 1958), Venice: Edizioni del Cavallino, 1958. Invitation Card.

A Few Conclusions

Thus, by 1958, Surrealism had established an exhibition network in Italy as well as abroad. The Surrealist movement had travelled to Milan and Venice via Cardazzo's venues early in the decade, initially thanks to contacts established by him with several international galleries which at that time supported the group in other countries: these included the Galerie Maeght in Paris,[71] and the Durand-Ruel's and Alexander Iolas' galleries in New York; the latter were

[65] For more information on Brauner's activity as an artist, refer to the catalogue of *Victor Brauner: Je suis le rêve - Je suis l'inspiration* [exhibition catalogue], Paris: Musées Editions, 2020.
[66] See *Victor Brauner* [exhibition catalogue], Venice: Edizioni del Cavallino, 1958.
[67] Letter from Carlo Cardazzo to Victor Brauner, 9 January 1957 (Centre Pompidou/MNAM-CCI/Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Fonds Victor Brauner).
[68] The works acquired en bloc by Cardazzo for a total of 1,999 francs were *Bruit de la Mer* (1956); *Labyrinthe* (1956); *Les Hommes* (1950); *Le Monde* (1950); *Transmutation* (1950); *Perdu dans les hautes herbes* (1956).
[69] The Brauner show at the Naviglio Gallery was followed by an exhibition dedicated to Matta, see *Matta* [exhibition catalogue], Venice: Edizioni del Cavallino, 1958.
[70] See *Brauner* [exhibition catalogue], Rome: s.n., 1958.
[71] In 1951, at the Galleria del Cavallino, Cardazzo organised a show devoted to the graphic works of Joan Miró with the collaboration of the Galerie Maeght. In 1953, Matta wrote in a letter to Alain Jouffroy dated March 1953, 'Il [Cardazzo] pense être en rapports d'affaires avec Maeght, etc.' In *Roberto Matta, Alain Jouffroy,* p. 120.

in contact not only with the Milan milieu,[72] but also and foremost with Rome, in particular with L'Obelisco Gallery.[73]

In search for international (and national[74]) recognition, as well as in line with the modus operandi of the most modern of the galleries showing the avant-gardes in Paris and New York, Cardazzo strove to become the exclusive representative in Italy of the Surrealist artists who most closely adapted to the line of action that distinguished his galleries,[75] which he had moulded around the researches of Spatial Art and the *art informel* movements, experimenting with the notions of time, matter and gesture. The Surrealists, on their part, at a moment when Italy was experiencing lively cultural ferment ('La péninsule glisse peu à peu au centre des préoccupations artistiques', Iaroslav Serpan wrote to Donati in 1954[76]) strove to create a network of contacts which could amplify their exhibition circuit on the peninsula and – as they had already done in Paris and in New York – to identify a merchant-gallerist who could act as a point of reference at a moment, in Italy, when the galleries not only shaped the market and the world of collecting, but also actively contributed to delineating the directions taken by new experimentations in art.

[72] Brauner wrote that he met with Iolas on the fly in Milan on the occasion of his exhibition at the Galleria Il Naviglio. See letter from Victor Brauner to Patrick O'Higgins, undated (Centre Pompidou/MNAM-CCI/Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Fonds Victor Brauner).

[73] See Schiaffini, Ilaria. 'La Galleria L'Obelisco e il mercato americano dal dopoguerra alla fine degli anni Cinquanta', in *Irene Brin, Gaspero del Corso e la Galleria L'Obelisco*, pp. 125-144.

[74] Cardazzo, from the beginning of his activity as a gallerist, collaborated with many Italian galleries of modern art, among them: the Barbaroux, Il Milione, L'Obelisco, and Selecta galleries, soon later Galatea and La Tartaruga galleries, with the latter in 1958 he organized the Cy Twombly's exhibtion, both in Milan and Venice.

[75] Matta wrote to Jouffroy in March 1953, '[Cardazzo] m'a fait voir ce que [*sic*] doit être lui-même qui doit s'occuper de me trouver une galerie à Paris'. In *Roberto Matta, Alain Jouffroy*, p. 120.

[76] Letter from Iaroslav Serpan to Enrico Donati, 7 January 1954 (Donati Papers, GRI).

ENRICO DONATI IN 1950: THREE ITALIAN EXHIBITIONS[1]

Claudio ZAMBIANCHI

In September 1949, Daria Guarnati (1891-1965), née Lapauze, publisher and graphic art director, is in New York, having been invited by Fleur Fenton to help her design the first issue of *Flair*, the short-lived luxury magazine inspired by Guarnati's *Aria d'Italia* (1939-1941)[2]. In a letter to her friends, the Pallucchinis (Rodolfo Pallucchini was then Secretary-General of the Venice Biennale), she writes that she would like to do something to return the help offered by the painter Enrico Donati (1909-2008)[3] during her stay in New York. Apparently, Donati assisted Guarnati in trying to obtain better wages for her job at *Flair*[4], and, in particular, she wanted to support him in making his work known in Italy. This is the first of many letters in which Daria describes her friend Enrico[5]: we learn that Donati is a bright, charming, and even seductive forty-year-old Italian painter who has been living in New York since 1940, after having spent some years in Paris. He is the son of a wealthy attorney in Milan and has started painting only recently[6]. The art historian and anti-fascist

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1 Many people helped me generously with the research for this paper: I want to thank Mme Aube Breton Elléouët for permission to quote a passage of a letter written by her father André Breton to Donati; Caterina Caputo, for having shared with me unpublished materials on the Breton-Donati friendship; Cecilia Rostagni for telling me about Daria Guarnati's friendship with Donati and suggesting to read her 1949-1950 letters to Rodolfo Pallucchini; Silvia Bignami, Linda Borean, Maria Caterina Caratozzolo, Giulia Tulino; Gabriella Della Bianca, of the Biblioteca umanistica e della formazione, Università degli Studi di Udine, Claudia Palma, of the Archives of the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, Rome; the Archivio Storico della Biennale - ASAC, in particular Alice Scandiuzzi; The Getty Research Institute, in particular Virginia Mokslaveskas.

2 On Guarnati and *Aria d'Italia* see Silvia Bignami, (ed.) '*Aria d'Italia*' *di Daria Guarnati. L'arte della rivista intorno al 1940*, Ginevra-Milano, Skira, 2008. Cecilia Rostagni talked about Guarnati and *Flair* in a paper 'Daria Guarnati: una professionista del libro' read on November 26th, 2020 at the symposium 'L'altra metà dell'editoria. Le professioniste del libro e della lettura'. Milan, Università degli studi di Milano, Fondazione Apice, see: https://www.apice.unimi.it/news-ed-eventi/video-4-disegnare-il-libro-quarta-sessione-del-convegno-laltra-meta-delleditoria/ [last checked February 5th, 2021]).

3 Daria Guarnati to Rodolfo Pallucchini, September 15th, 1949. Università degli studi di Udine, Biblioteca umanistica e della formazione, Archives of Rodolfo Pallucchini (henceforth ARP) - 1. Carteggio - 1.1 Corrispondenza con enti e persone - 4. Corrispondenza degli anni 1949-1950 e relativa alla collezione Restelli di Como - Corrispondenza del 1949 - Guarnati Daria, box 4, folder 1 (the letters between Guarnati and Pallucchini are online at the following address: http://teche.uniud.it/list/list_ad?p=1&s=5SFJPT7ok2sFNIWK%2bdakIhqL0XVrRtk6gUHRfwUFpra38OnAGRjILVfcvisaeL3xONZyqz%2b4kiOiOIfHIZWiga%2fEnFb03Rkc7CnOD0f9gwo%3d [last checked February 5th, 2021]).
On Donati's life and work see Peter Selz, *Enrico Donati*, Paris, Editions Georges Fall, 1965;
Theodore F. Wolff, *Enrico Donati. Surrealism and Beyond*, New York, Hudson Hills Press, 1996;
Timothy Anglin Burgard, (ed.), *The Surreal World of Enrico Donati*, [exhibition catalogue], Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco, de Young Museum, (in association with Weinstein Gallery), 2007;
Dawn Ades (ed.), AnnTemkin, Marie Mauzé, and Cynthia Albertson, *Enrico Donati*, Skira Rizzoli, 2015;
Transcript of the interview by Forrest Selvig to Enrico Donati: *Oral history interview with Enrico Donati*, September 9th, 1968. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution (https://sirismm.si.edu/EADpdfs/AAA.donati68.pdf).

4 Guarnati to Pallucchini; October 8th, 1949; ARP (series and subseries as in note 3), box 4, folder 2. Things probably did not work out the way she wanted, because Guarnati left the US after a few months, though she maintained her honorary position as *Flair*'s 'Representative for Italy'. See Amy Ann Collins, 'A *Flair* for Living', *Vanity Fair*, October 1996; online: https://www.vanityfair.com/magazine/1996/10/fleur-cowles199610 (last checked February 5th, 2021).

5 Guarnati to Pallucchini, October 8th, 1949; ARP (series and subseries as in note 3), box 4, folder 2; Guarnati to Pallucchini, undated (1950); ARP (series and subseries as in note 3) box 4, folder 2.

6 Guarnati says that he began painting in 1942, in New York, but we know from Wolff (*Surrealism and Beyond*, p.16) that Donati started studying painting in Paris, in the second half of the 1930s.

emigré Lionello Venturi encouraged his first steps and introduced him to André Breton, who supported him during his stay in New York. In recent years he held one-person exhibitions in both New York (at Durand-Ruel) and Paris (at André Weil and Drouant-David) and in 1947 he took part in *Le Surréalisme en 1947* exhibition, held at the Galerie Maeght in Paris (the first major surrealist exhibition after the end of WW2, organised by Breton and Duchamp, to which we will return shortly). We also learn that Daria was planning one-person exhibitions of Donati for the following year in two of the major Italian galleries, the Galleria del Milione in Milan, and the Galleria L'Obelisco in Rome and she asked Pallucchini to invite Donati to the 1950 Biennale.

Guarnati describes Donati as a man about town, well-mannered and familiar with the artistic and high society circles of New York. Overall, her information is reliable and the picture she gives us needs only some extra details. Born in 1909, after graduating from the University of Pavia, in 1934 Donati moved to Paris, where he devoted his interests mostly to music. After a trip to Canada and the South West in search of Native American art (1934), he settled in New York, and in 1936 he went back to Paris, where he started studying painting. He then moved to New York again in 1940 and took painting courses with the Ecuadorean artist Camilo Egas, at the New York School of Social Research, a 'hub for European *emigrés*'[7]. In May 1943 Donati held his first one-person exhibition at the aforementioned School, a show of sixteen oils and watercolors, many bearing titles related to music (e.g. *Chromatic Symphony*; *Emotion 7 con moto*, *Nocturne*). His work drew the attention of Venturi who, seeing a surrealistic quality in his work, addressed him to André Breton[8]. Although it is difficult to imagine personalities as far apart as those of Venturi and Breton, they knew each other and shared the condition of European intellectuals exiled in New York. Breton liked Donati's paintings and, for his next one-person exhibition, at the Passedoit Gallery, in February 1944, Donati had a marvelous introductory text by Breton[9], dated January 15th, 1944, so inspired it was considered 'too good for the occasion'.[10] Perhaps the author was writing under the spell of his new love for Elisa Claro[11].

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7 Romy Golan, 'The Critical Moment: Lionello Venturi in America' in Karen Remmler and Christopher E. G. Benfey, *Artists, Intellectuals and, World War II: the Pontigny Encounters at Mount Holyoke College, 1942-1944*, Amherst, University of Massachusetts Press, 2006, p. 123. On a more specific issue, see also See also Caterina Caputo, "Toward a New "Human Consciousness": The Exhibition "Adventures in Surrealist Painting During the Last Four Years" at the New School for Social Research in New York, March 1941", in *Networking Surrealism in the USA. Agents, Artists, and the Market*, Conference proceedings curated by J. Drost, F. Flahutez *et alii*, Paris Heidelberg 2019, pp. 151-170.

8 Traces of Venturi's continuous interest in Donati's work are the catalogues of the exhibitions held at the New School of Social Research (1943), Passedoit (1944), and Obelisco (1950) which are kept in the Archive of Lionello Venturi at the Sapienza University of Rome. In a postcard in Donati's papers at the Getty Research Institute, dated December 1950, Venturi congratulates the artist for his success (The Getty Research Institute. Special Collections. Enrico Donati letters received and manuscripts, 1943-1963. Series I. Letters received, 1943-1963, Box 1, Folder 5. Venturi, 1950). Writing to Guarnati in 1949 Pallucchini says that he was helped by Venturi (then a member of the 'Commissione per l'Arte Figurativa' (Commission for figurative art) in overcoming some difficulties concerning Donati's participation (see below, note 46). Venturi includes Donati in his book *Pittura contemporanea*, Milan, Hoepli, 1948, p. 57.

9 Breton also suggested titles for the works exhibited: see André Breton, 'Lettres à Enrico Donati', in *Pleine marge. Cahiers de Littérature, d'arts plastiques & de critique*, n. 7, June 1988, p. 11, and Dominique Bozo, (ed.), *André Breton, La Beauté convulsive*, [exhibition catalogue], Paris, Centre Pompidou, 1991, photo p. 356.

10 By Isabelle Waldberg; see André Breton, *Écrits sur l'art et autres textes*. *Œuvres complètes*, IV, Etienne-Alain Hubert (ed.), Paris, Gallimard, 2008, p. 1320.

11 *Ibid.*

Breton describes the artist as a sort of mediator between two clashing trends of Surrealist art: one abstract and another reliant on the appearances of the world[12]. Donati's painting is placed instead under the aegis of 'harmony', because,

> even when it is completely detached from the shape of things surrounding us, it is at the antipodes of the abstract by means of the fidelity it displays towards the texture of things lovingly caressed, invited to yield the secret of their charms.[13]

It comes as no surprise that Donati used Breton's beautiful text every time he had the chance to do so, also in later years, when his style had changed so much that Breton was left in doubt about Donati's paintings of the late 1940s. For example, Breton's introduction was reused, alongside Maurice Nadeau's 'Enrico Donati' (originally published in the legendary 1945-1946 *rentrée* issue of the 'Cahiers d'Art' after the end of the war)[14], in the catalogue of the exhibition *Peintures de Donati* at the Galerie Drouant-David in Paris (November 1946). Both texts, together with a third one by Nicolas Calas, introduced the catalogue of the one-person exhibition *Donati*, held at the Galerie André Weil in Paris in 1949. Breton's text was reprinted again (in French) in the catalogue of the exhibition at the Galleria L'Obelisco in Rome, in November 1950. Breton, for his part, republished his text in *Revue d'Alger*, no. 3 (1944). The year after, Breton's *Enrico Donati* was included in the Brentano edition of *Le Surréalisme et la peinture*, where it immediately precedes the text written for Arshile Gorky's exhibition at the Julien Levy Gallery (1945)[15].

The artistic milieu around which Donati gravitated in New York in the early and mid-1940s was mostly formed by Surrealist *emigrés*, who also greatly influenced the young Abstract Expressionists. In a 1943 issue of the magazine *View* [III, n. 3] Donati's *Narcissus* (1942) was reproduced on the same page as Jackson Pollock's *Male and Female* (1943). Donati and Pollock were then young artists, both trying to make their names.

In 1943-1944 Donati became an *habitué* of Breton's lunches at the Larré Restaurant[16]. It was here that Donati was introduced to Marcel Duchamp, one of the few people towards whom Breton showed some degree of 'reverence'[17]. Donati and Duchamp became friends. Donati helped Duchamp in setting up the window display of Brentano's bookshop for the 1945 edition of *Le Surréalisme et la peinture*[18], and provided a pair of boots with toes for it (*Shoes*, 1945), the 3D translation of René Magritte's *Le Modèle*, reproduced on the cover of the book[19].

The grounds for the Donati-Duchamp friendship were not as much art as a shared gift for *savoir vivre* and irony, as we shall see in a moment[20]. Donati's peculiar gifts for human

12 André Breton, 'Enrico Donati', in Id., *Le Surréalisme et la Peinture*, in Id., *Écrits sur l'art*, p. 586.

13 *Ibid.,* p. 587 (I quote from the English translation by Bravig Imbs for the Passedoit 1944 catalogue).

14 Maurice Nadeau, 'Enrico Donati' in *Cahiers d'Art*, 1945-1946, pp. 418-420.

15 For the editorial history of Breton's text see Breton, *Écrits sur l'art*, note 1, p. 1320 (the Obelisco and the 'Amici della Francia' catalogues [see below] are not mentioned).

16 Calvin Tomkins, *Duchamp. A Biography*, New York, Henry Holt and Company, 1996, p. 340.

17 *Ibid.*

18 André Breton, *Le Surréalisme et la peinture*, New York, Brentano, 1945. A photograph of the display at Brentano is published in Paris, Galerie Maeght, *Le Surréalisme en 1947*, [exhibition catalogue], 1947, plate XLI.

19 For Duchamp's window display for *Le Surréalisme et la peinture*, see Thomas Girst, 'Duchamp's Window Display for André Breton's *Le Surréalisme et la Peinture* (1945)', in *Toutfait.com. The Marcel Duchamp Studies Online Journal* (published 2002/01/01, updated 2019/06/03); address: https://www.toutfait.com/duchamps-window-display-for-andra-bretons-le-surraalisme-et-la-peinture-1945/ (last checked February 5th, 2021).

20 See for instance Kim Whinna, 'A Friend Fondly Remembered – Enrico Donati on Marcel Duchamp', *Toutfait.com. The Marcel Duchamp Studies Online Journal* (published 2000/12/01, updated 2019/05/17);

relationships transpire also in a letter written to him on December 5th 1949 from Paris by Breton, who says: 'You are one of the too-rare friends one feels the need to see regularly: human warmth is actually at stake here'[21]. Duchamp and Donati were responsible for the famous *Prière de toucher* catalogue cover of *Le Surréalisme en 1947* exhibition, held at the Galerie Maeght in Paris, a show with which Breton wanted to re-establish his role as a leader of Surrealism in Europe after his exile in the US. Breton worked on the project in Paris while Duchamp took care of the New York end of the show. For the deluxe edition of the catalogue (printed in 999 copies), Duchamp conceived a cover with, on the *recto*, a female breast in relief (a foam rubber 'falsie') and, on the *verso*, the notice *Prière de toucher* [Please touch]. Donati helped Duchamp in finding and purchasing the foam falsies; it was he who had the idea of placing them on a black velvet base before gluing them on the cover (an operation that had to be carried out in Paris). Interviewed by Calvin Tomkins for his Duchamp biography Donati recalled:

> We painted every nipple ourselves. We had them all laid on the floor of my studio, prior to packing them in corrugated cardboard boxes to send to Paris. As I was closing one of the boxes I noticed that when the top was lifted they all sprang up – whoof! I showed Marcel, and he wrote to Breton, telling him to bring a photographer and get him to take a picture of the customs inspector opening a box[22].

In a letter from New York, dated April 28th, 1947, concerning the organization of the Maeght show, Duchamp asked Breton to mention Donati for the work done, not only to please him but also to give him due recognition[23]. Donati not only took care of the catalogue cover, but also sent works to the exhibition (two sculptures, including the *Evil Eye* [1946, *Le Mauvais œil*; Philadelphia Museum of Art[24]], in the 'Salle des Superstitions', designed by Frederick Kiesler, and *Pour un autel* [*For an Altar*], 1947[25], and two paintings, *Les Hauts de Hurle-Vents* [*Wuthering Heights*, 1946][26] and *Carnaval de Venise* [no. 48, *Carnival of Venice*, 1946, Philadelphia Museum of Art][27]). Donati also produced a lithograph for the deluxe edition of the catalogue, *Nid de Mandragore* [*Mandragora Nest*] (1947)[28], based on a drawing of 1946[29], inspired by the metamorphic motif of the mandrake root as a metaphor for death and regeneration that was a favorite subject of Donati's work in the mid-1940s.

In the many letters that Breton addressed to Donati after his return to France, he not only almost invariably asked for favors but also offered to help him exhibit his works in Paris. In November 1947, Breton tried with René Drouin, owner of an important Paris gallery, who at that time had Leo Castelli as his correspondent in America. Castelli too, who knew

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address: https://www.toutfait.com/a-friend-fondly-remembered-enrico-donati-on-marcel-duchamp/ (last checked February 5th, 2021).

21 Breton to Donati, from Paris, December 5th, 1949; Breton, 'Lettres à Enrico Donati', p. 25.

22 Tomkins, *Duchamp*, p. 361.

23 Duchamp to Breton, April 28, 1947; Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Centre Pompidou, Paris: BRET 1.8, published online: https://www.andrebreton.fr/en/work/56600100999952 (last checked February 5th, 2021). Donati is given credit for the cover in the colophon of the catalogue.

24 https://philamuseum.org/collections/permanent/308359.html?mulR=1849534356|2# (last checked February 5th, 2021).

25 No. 112, plate XXVIII.

26 Probably as *Composition*, no. 114, Plate XXV.

27 See https://philamuseum.org/collections/permanent/197329.html?mulR=25601585|1 (last checked February 5th, 2021).

28 See https://www.moma.org/collection/works/16029?artist_id=1585&page=1&sov_referrer=artist (last checked February 5th, 2021).

29 Private collection; reproduced in Ades, *Enrico Donati*, p. 149.

Donati and his work, supported (so Breton writes) the plan of an exhibition at Drouin's; the project, however, did not go through[30]. Breton also tried with Maeght[31], before *Le Surréalisme en 1947* exhibition, but again he failed because the dealer (and Breton himself) reproached Donati for doing business with the Galerie Drouant-David, where he had held a one-person exhibition the year before[32]. Breton's attempts, however, seem, overall, timid and listless, probably because Donati's work between 1947 and 1948 was changing considerably, shifting from the liquid[33], mutable and suggestive world of mandrake roots to the more rigid, petrified realm of fossils. Breton, who periodically had Donati send him photographs of his works, expressed growing doubts about his works of 1948-1949, mostly because he perceived in them an abstract quality that seemed to contradict the open and harmonious nature of the previous phase, happily poised between figuration and abstraction. This can be deduced from some of Breton's letters, kind in tone, less so in substance. For example, in a letter to Donati of May 9th 1948 Breton regrets not being able to see the colors of the works; however, the b&w photographs suggest a 'leap towards rigor', which he needs to become acquainted with, and this can only be done in front of the works themselves. He then declares his 'little resistance' to Donati's move consisting of 'great strides towards abstraction'[34]. His resistance seems to be 'little' only out of politeness.

The Bretons were probably out of town when Donati's Paris exhibition at the Galerie André Weil opened on May 29th 1949[35]: the minuscule but elegant catalogue was introduced by Breton's (1944) and Nadeau's (1946) texts, which both supported the former, more fluid phase of Donati's work, and by a newer text by Nicolas Calas, written in New York in February 1949. Calas seems to be aware of Breton's reservations and defends the artist's recent works: 'As long as abstraction does not become an end in itself, it remains the essential means to convey a subtler expression of the subject matter'[36]. He then insists on the alchemical quality of Donati's paintings[37]. The comparison between the titles of the works shown and a group of photographs of Donati's paintings kept in Breton's archives[38] allow us to form a reliable idea of the Weil and then of the Milione, Biennale, and Obelisco exhibits. The photographs bear on the back the stamp of a New York photographic studio, Peter A. Juley and Sons, specialized in fine art photography, and, in pencil, the title, date, and size (in inches) of the works. We have reproductions of all the

30 Breton to Donati, Paris, November 19, 1947; in Breton, 'Lettres à Enrico Donati', pp. 23-25.
31 *Ibid.*
32 Breton to Donati, from Paris, February 4, 1947: The Getty Research Institute (as in note 8). Box 1, Folder 2, André Breton and Elise Breton, 1943-1953.
33 As Nadeau writes, in Donati's works 'the humors and the humid part of things decompose their primary elements and form new miraculous creations'. Nadeau, *Enrico Donati*, p. 420.
34 Breton to Donati, from Paris, May 9, 1948; The Getty Research Institute (as in note 8). Box 1, Folder 2, André Breton and Elise Breton, 1943-1953.
35 See Breton to Donati, from Paris, February 7, 1949, and Breton to Donati, from Paris, July 11, 1949: both The Getty Research Institute (as in note 8). Box 1, Folder 2, André Breton and Elise Breton, 1943-1953.
36 Nicolas Calas, introductory text to *Donati*, [exhibition catalogue], Paris, Galerie André Weil, 1949, p. 59.
37 *Ibid.*, pp. 72-73.
38 Ensemble de photographies d'œuvres d'Enrico Donati et de Jean Guerin; published online (*recto* and *verso*) at the address: https://www.andrebreton.fr/en/work/56600100031410 (last checked February 5th, 2021).

fifteen paintings of the Weil exhibition[39], of two of the three works sent to the Venice Biennale, and of eleven of the fourteen paintings shown at the Obelisco[40].
The core of Donati's French and Italian shows of 1949-1950 seems not far in iconography from Surrealist and early Abstract Expressionist painting: elementary creatures, spirals, symbolic forms, references to alchemy, and possibly to Native American art. Donati's interests in Native American art dated to the 1930s, years before he decided to be a painter, an interest matured first through visits to the Museum of Natural History in Milan, then to the anthropological collections in Paris, and through a trip to New Mexico and Canada in 1934, where he came in touch with the Natives and bartered objects brought from France with kachina dolls and other artifacts, starting a rich and interesting collection that expanded in time[41]. Donati became an expert and in the late 1940s Breton himself asked for his help, from France, in finding works of Native American art in New York[42].
In the late 1940s, the paintings through which Donati wanted to be known in France and Italy were close to the works by André Masson, the surrealist who moved to the U.S. in 1941 to escape the Nazi occupation and whose paintings influenced Jackson Pollock, and by Pollock himself. More than to any other, though, Donati's paintings of 1948 and 1949 are close to Adolph Gottlieb petroglyphs and Mark Rothko's works of the early and mid-1940s. While the Abstract Expressionists, however, as the decade progressed, were moving towards spatial fluidity and all-overness, Donati's images, that in the mid-1940s were liquid and metamorphic, influenced probably by Roberto Sebastian Matta and Arshile Gorky's work, now look somewhat petrified, with linear cobweb-like patterns, often arranged in spiraling and cochlear rhythms. Fossils had become the new imaginative referent for Donati's work, replacing the mandrake root:

> When Donati abandoned the mandrake – says Carter Ratcliff –, his art became entirely his own, as if he arrived at his identity by conceiving of it as a fossil, a bio-geological imprint, buried by history and lying-in wait for discovery - or, in the terms of the artist's personal myth, waiting to be reborn[43].

The paintings of the Weil-Milione-Biennale and Obelisco group, now almost forgotten by the literature on the artist, are the first evidence of the interest in fossils that Donati pursued thoroughly only in the early 1960s[44].
In the years that followed *Le Surréalisme en 1947* show, therefore, Donati had decided to propose his work in Europe through a brand-new group of paintings. After the Weil

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39 *Flammes de bengale** (1949), 2 *Valet de pique* (1947); 3 *Le Nombril de la mer** (1948); 4 *L'oeil de Pythagore** (1947); 5 *Le Bateau ivre** (1948), 6 *Prière de toucher (pour Marcel Duchamp)** (1948), 7 *Chez l'Alchimiste: 'fragment'* (1947), 8 *L'Écusson de Paracelse* (1948), 9 *Le Messager du Sphinx* (1948), 10 *L'Opale** (1948), 11 *Le Coq** (1948), 12 *Le Grand Métronome** (1948), 13 *....ainsi disait Tiepolo* (1948), 14 *Les Vaisseaux de l'araignée* (1948), 15 *Le Saphir merveilleux* (1949) (the works exhibited also at the Obelisco are marked by an asterisk).
40 See below.
41 See transcript of the interview by Forrest Selvig with Enrico Donati (1968); and Marie Mauzé, 'Under the Spell and the Seal. Enrico Donati and Native North American Art', in Ades, *Enrico Donati*, pp. 75-93.
42 In a letter to Donati of April 28th, 1947, Breton asks him to buy for him and deliver an ancient kachina to the Carlebach Gallery in New York; The Getty Research Institute (as in note 8). Box 1, Folder 2, André Breton and Elise Breton, 1943-1953.
43 Carter Ratcliff, 'Enrico Donati, Manhattan Transfer' in *Art in America*, 77/5 (May 1989), p. 176.
44 For a statement by Donati on his fossils, see Selz, *Enrico Donati*, pp. 22-24. In 1961 Duchamp made a pun on Donati's fossils as an introduction to Donati's exhibition at the Brussels Palais des Beaux-Arts; see Duchamp to Donati, from Cadaquès, June 29th, 1961, in *Plein marge*, n. 7, June 1988, p. 33. For a reproduction see: https://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2018/livres-et-manuscrits-pf1813/lot.81.html (last checked February 5th, 2021).

exhibition, in 1949, Daria Guarnati, through her relationships, had a crucial importance in selecting the Italian venues for Donati's works, not only out of gratitude but also because she was convinced of the importance of Donati's painting to the point that she even thought of writing a monograph on the artist herself. [45]

Wishing to promote Donati's art in Italy, Guarnati was active in two fields: the institutional art system, managing, thanks to her friendship with Pallucchini, to obtain an invitation for Donati to the 25th Venice Biennale; and the art market, organizing shows at the Galleria del Milione and the Galleria L'Obelisco, held respectively in the spring and in November 1950, one before, the other after the Biennale.

At the Biennale Donati exhibited three works, two of them known through Breton's photographic archive, *The Blood of Lucretia* (1948) and *Les Vaisseaux de l'araignée* (*The Veins of the Spider,* 1949), the latter shown also at the Galerie André Weil. So far I have been unable to trace the third work, *Lambicco ermetico* (*Hermetic Alembic*, 1948) (a good candidate is the *Still Life of the Alchemist*, 1948, reproduced in one of the Breton photographs). Guarnati, through Pallucchini, also managed to solve the problem of Donati's citizenship. Born in Italy, Donati had been a naturalized US citizen from 1948, and could therefore exhibit his works at the Biennale only if selected by the curator of the US national pavilion. Pallucchini eventually decided to ignore the issue[46] and Donati's three works were shown in room 46[47], together with paintings, among others, by Alberto Savinio and Osvaldo Licini, both influenced at different stages of their career by Surrealism. Guarnati not only took care of the delivery of the works, but she was also in close contact with the head of the sales office of the Biennale, Ettore Gian Ferrari. The latter informed Guarnati that an important American art collector, Robert B. Eichholz, a high ranking official of the American Embassy in Rome, wanted to buy one of the works, *The Veins of the Spider* (1948). In the end, however, the sale did not go through, to Gian Ferrari's disappointment. He suggested to Guarnati to turn to Gaspero del Corso, the art dealer of the Galleria L'Obelisco also well acquainted with Eichholz, to seek help in trying to convince the collector to buy the painting[48].

Donati's exhibition at the Galleria del Milione opened in spring 1950, a couple of months before the inauguration of the Biennale. No catalogue was published[49], but some clues allow the reconstruction of at least part of the show. In his review of the exhibition in the *Corriere della sera* of May 9th 1950, Leonardo Borgese mentions three works[50], also exhibited at the Galerie Weil and that would be part of the Obelisco show; a fourth, *Le Bateau ivre*, is reproduced in the April 1950 issue of the magazine *Domus*, as an advertisement for the Milione show. Since they were delivered from the Galleria del

45 She also thought of leaving the task to 'the young [Bruno] Alfieri'; Guarnati to Pallucchini, undated [1950]; ARP (series and subseries as in note 3), box 4, folder 2.

46 See Pallucchini to Guarnati, November 4th, 1949; ARP (series and subseries as in note 3) box 4, folder 2; Pallucchini had Venturi's help. See the official letter of invitation to the 'Italian section' of the Biennale (December 12th, 1949) from Pallucchini to Donati is in the Donati's papers at The Getty Research Institute (as in note 8). Box 1, Folder 5. Venice Biennial, 1949-1950.

47 See *25. Biennale di Venezia*, [exhibition catalogue], Venezia, Alfieri, pp. 193-194.

48 Two letters from Gian Ferrari of September 21st and 22nd, 1950, inform Guarnati of the sale to Eichholz of the painting *Le vene del ragno* (*Les Vaisseaux de l'araignée*) [The Getty Research Institute (as in note 8). Box 1, Folder 5. Venice Biennial, 1949-1950; another copy of the letter of September 21st in the Archivio Storico della Biennale - ASAC, serie Ufficio vendite, b. 08]. With a letter dated October 17th, 1950 Gian Ferrari informs Guarnati that the sale did not go through, and suggests she turn to del Corso for help [*ibid.*].

49 Nor does the Galleria del Milione have any archival material for those years.

50 L[eonardo] B[orgese], 'Mostre d'arte', in *Corriere della sera*, May 9th, 1950; newspaper clipping in the Archivio bio-iconografico; Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, Rome. The works mentioned are *L'ombelico del mare* (*Le Nombril de la mer*), *L'occhio di Pitagora* (*L' œil de Pythagore*) and *Il Grande Metronomo* (*Le Grand Métronome*).

Milione, we can assume that the three works exhibited at the Biennale the following June – *The Blood of Lucretia* (1948) and *Les Vaisseaux de l'araignée* (*The Veins of the Spider,* 1949), and *Lambicco ermetico* (*Hermetic Alembic*, 1948) – were part of the show as well[51]. While I assume that *Le Carnaval de Venise*, reproduced in a large and charming color reproduction as an illustration for the review of the exhibition written by the sculptor Mario Negri for the May 1950 issue of *Domus*[52], was not part of the show, because it is too different from the recent paintings Donati wished to exhibit in Italy that year. Negri, who does not mention any specific work, talks at length about the limited success of Surrealism in Italy and gives Daria Guarnati credit for having organized Donati's Milione exhibition as a 'generous patroness' of the artist.

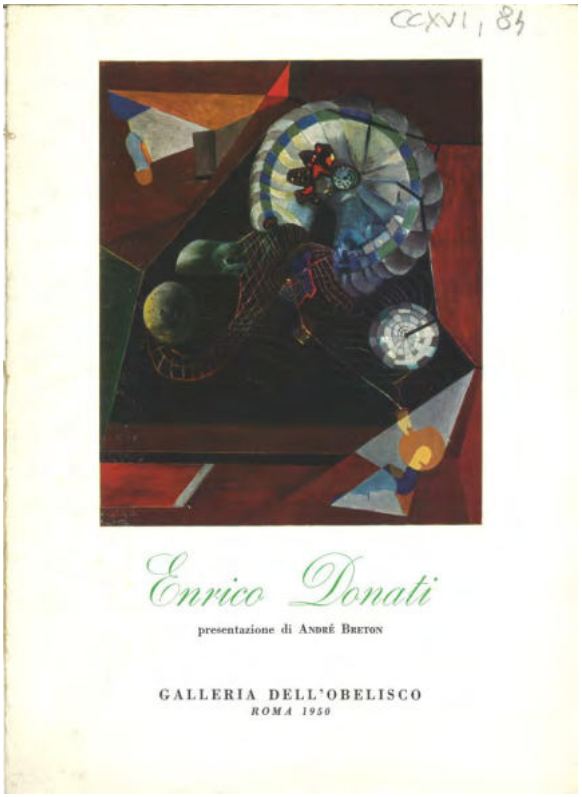


Fig. 1: Cover of the catalogue of Enrico Donati's exhibition at the Galleria L'Obelisco, Rome (November 1950). The work reproduced is *Plumed Butterfly* (1948). Archivio di Lionello Venturi, Dipartimento SARAS, Sapienza Università di Roma.

The Galleria del Milione and the Galleria L'Obelisco, where a Donati exhibition opened on November 1st 1950 (*fig. 1*), were very different venues. Since 1930 Il Milione had been one of the most important Italian galleries for modernist and abstract art and Guarnati had been in touch with them since the 1930s through her publishing business[53]. The Galleria

51 The three works were delivered to the Biennale by the Galleria del Milione, through Daria Guarnati; see 'Scheda di notificazione delle opere degli artisti invitati', April 15th, 1950; Archivio Storico della Biennale - ASAC, serie Ufficio vendite, b. 08.

52 M[ario] N[egri], 'Mostre d'arte. Enrico Donati al Milione' in *Domus*, n. 246, May 1950, p. 34. *Domus* was then edited by Gio Ponti and probably both the mention [in *Domus*, n. 246, April 1950, p. 44] and the review of the exhibition were a favour to Daria Guarnati.

53 See Bignami, *'Aria d'Italia'*, pp. 32, and notes 16, p. 35, and 66 p. 37.

L'Obelisco was instead a fairly new gallery, opened in 1946, and directed by an interesting couple, husband and wife, Gaspero del Corso, who ran the space; and Irene Brin, the brilliant writer and fashion journalist who in 1952 would become Rome Editor of *Harper's Bazaar*. Maria Vittoria Caratozzolo suggested to me that the modernist architect Gio Ponti, with whom Guarnati worked closely in the 1940s and 1950s, might have been her link with Irene Brin, who had written for Ponti's magazines of the 1940s, *Bellezza* and *Stile* (Guarnati worked for both)[54]. Ponti held an exhibition at the Galleria L'Obelisco in 1949. Whatever the reason for the choice of the gallery, an exhibition of the works of Donati at that time fitted well in what the art historian Carlo Bertelli called a belated 'gust of Surrealism' in Rome, supported by the Obelisco with one-person exhibitions of Giorgio de Chirico (1947, 1949, 1950), Salvador Dalí (1948, his first Italian show), Fabrizio Clerici (1949), Alberto Savinio (1949), Eugène Berman (1949), Roberto Sebastian Matta (1950), Pavel Tchelichew (1950), Yves Tanguy (a close friend of Donati's in the United States) in 1953, Kay Sage (1953)[55].

The show at the Obelisco included fourteen paintings, eleven had been part of the Galerie Weil exhibition: *Flammes de bengale** [1949], *Le Nombril et la mer** (*sic*) [1948], *Le bateau ivre** [1948], *Prière de toucher (pour Marcel Duchamp)** [1948], *L'Opale** [1948], *Le Coq** [1948], *Le Grand Métronome** [1948], *The Star Dial** [1948], *Inquiet Sill Life*, *Plumed Butterfly* (chosen for the catalogue cover)* [1948, *fig. 1*], *The Moss Agate**, *Still Life*, *L'Occhio di Pitagora** [1948], *La torre dell'alchimista*.[56] We don't know about the two still lives exhibited (*Still Life* and *Inquiet Still Life*). The exhibition should also have included the three pictures of the Biennale, but they arrived too late[57]. We can form an idea of the dark gamut of colors employed by Donati in these works from the reproductions collected in a portfolio published by the Galleria del Milione in 1954[58], where *The Moss Agate*[59], *The Cock*, and *Plumed Butterfly* were included. With two exceptions, the works

54 Cecilia Rostagni, 'Bellezza' della vita italiana. Moda e costume secondo Gio Ponti'in *Engramma*, no. 175, September 2020: http://www.engramma.it/eOS/index.php?id_articolo=4017#_ftnref1 (last checked February 5th, 2021). Cecilia Rostagni, 'Gio Ponti's *Stile*', in Michela Rosso (ed.), *Investigating and Writing Architectural History: Subjects, Methodologies and Frontiers. Papers from the third EAHN International Meeting*, Torino, Politecnico di Torino, 2014, pp. 316-325, see in part. pp. 317 and 321; Guarnati visited the Galleria L'Obelisco together with Ponti on March 31, 1953, as noted by Gaspero del Corso in his diary; see Ilaria Schiaffini, 'Between Fashion, Art and Photography: Irene Brin and the Early Activities of the galleria L'Obelisco', in Giovanna Motta and Antonello Biagini, (eds)., *Fashion Through History*, Vol. 2, *Costumes, Symbols, Communication*, Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017, note 4, p. 595; on Brin and Ponti see also *ibid.*, p. 594. Cecilia Rostagni has been so kind as to inform me that Irene Brin wrote a lively portrait of 'my friend' Daria Guarnati in 'I libri che ho letto', *Almanacco della donna italiana*, 23 (1943), p. 173, and that they were in touch since 1941.

55 Rita Camerlingo and Maria Dalesio, eds., 'Regesto delle mostre de L'Obelisco', in Maria Vittora Caratozzolo, Ilaria Schiaffini, and Claudio Zambianchi, (eds, *Irene Brin, Gaspero Del Corso e la Galleria L'Obelisco*, Roma, Drago Editore, 2018, pp. 266-303. On the Galleria L'Obelisco and Surrealism see Giulia Tulino, *La Galleria L'Obelisco. Surrealismo e arte fantastica (1943-1954)*, Roma, De Luca, 2020.

56 Titles are given in English, French, and Italian, as they appear in the catalogue. The works reproduced in the photographs by Breton are marked by an asterisk.

57 Guarnati to Pallucchini, November 29th, 1950; ARP (series and subseries as in note 3) box 4, folder 2.

58 The portfolio *Donati. Sei tavole a colori*, published in 1954 by the Galleria del Milione, is a late (and updated) outcome of the Milione and Obelisco exhibitions: the six color reproductions are introduced by a text by Umbro Apollonio (an art critic close to the Obelisco) that, judging from the date of the original publication (December 1950) should be a review of the Obelisco exhibition. The portfolio includes also excerpts of the texts by Breton, Nadeau, and Calas of the 1940s, a few lines by Clement Greenberg, dated 1953 and written expressly (or so it seems) for the occasion, and a quotation from a new text by Calas, written in January 1954 that deals with the painter's latest works.

59 Donati shared a love for agate with Breton; Breton to Donati, from Percé, September 1st, 1944; The Getty Research Institute (as in note 8). Box 1, Folder 2, André Breton and Elise Breton, 1943-1953.

exhibited at the Obelisco (and at the Milione gallery and the Venice Biennale), form a rather compact group, the exceptions being *Le Bateau ivre* (that seems to be closer to Tanguy) and *The Tower of the Alchemist*, not reproduced in Breton's photographic archive, but very likely part of a group of paintings devoted to this subject, where fantastic architecture is combined with biomorphic images, some of them reproduced in Wolff's and Ades' monographs on the artist[60]. In these years Donati was experimenting in different directions: for example, there is also a group of geometric paintings, that he kept for himself and exhibited only decades later, in which he makes use of a decidedly abstract and geometric style, described by Martica Sawin as 'linear, hard-edged, and resistant to interpretation'[61].

According to Guarnati the show in Rome was a success, and two, maybe three paintings were sold[62]. We do not know much about the one-person exhibition that in 1951 Donati held at the Amici della Francia gallery, in Milan. It was introduced by Breton's and Nadeau's texts and three out of fifteen of the works shown belong to the group of paintings exhibited the year before in Italy, *La torre dell'alchimista vista dall'alto* [*The Alchemist Tower Seen From Above*], *L'occhio di Pitagora* [*The Eye of Pythagoras*], and *Alambicco ermetico* [*Hermetic Alembic*]; another, *The Moss Agate*, is reproduced in color in the catalogue (but it is not listed among the works exhibited).

In one of the sudden moves characteristic of his artistic life in 1952, the year after the Amici della Francia exhibition Donati signed the 'Manifesto Spazialista per la televisione' (The Manifesto of the Spatialist Movement for Television) and, for a while, he was part of the Spatialist movement. His paintings, which he had the chance to exhibit several times in Italy in one-person and group shows in the 1950s, were now closer to Alberto Burri and Lucio Fontana[63]. After having been the isolated Italian American Surrealist Donati for some time was on the cutting edge of modern art, exhibiting in Italy and New York, at the Betty Parsons' Gallery. In the following decades, he continued as a painter, an entrepreneur[64], and a witness of the extraordinary season of 'Surrealism in exile'[65] until his death, at the age of 99, in 2008.

60 Wolff, *Surrealism and Beyond*, pp. 56-57, and Ades, *Enrico Donati*, pp. 40-41.

61 Martica Sawin, 'Spiritual and Electric Surrealism: The Art of Enrico Donati', in *Arts* 61/8, May 1987, p 27.

62 Guarnati to Pallucchini; November 29th, 1950; ARP (series and subseries as in note 3), box 4, folder 2.

63 Transcript of the interview by Forrest Selvig with Enrico Donati (1968) ['Eury' is of course Alberto Burri, whom Donati defines as 'his closest friend' among the Italian artists].

64 Frank J. Prial, 'Enrico Donati, Surrealist Artist, Dies at 99', in *The New York Times*, April 26th, 2008, online: https://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/26/arts/26donati.html?ex=1366948800&en=086840e5ddb90d41&ei=5088&partner=rssnyt&emc=rss (last checked February 5th, 2021).

65 The title is borrowed from Martica Sawin's book (*Surrealism in Exile and the Beginning of the New York School*, Cambridge, Mass, and London, The MIT Press, 1995) where Donati is repeatedly mentioned.

NEO-ROMANTICISM, FANTASTIC ART and SURREALISM BETWEEN the UNITED STATES and ITALY: PAVEL TCHELITCHEW in ROME

Giulia TULINO

Pavel Tchelitchew was one of the protagonists of the European and American artistic context of the first half of the twentieth century. He is also known for the long-standing relationship (lasting about twenty years) with the American surrealist poet Charles Henri Ford. Both decided to leave the United States in 1952 and move to Italy, choosing to live in Frascati and then Grottaferrata, near Rome. This period of the artist's life is probably the least documented but thanks to new archival documents[1] it has now been possible to deepen the knowledge of the last period of his activity and investigate his circle of contacts (artists, critics, patrons, gallery owners) until 1957, the year of his death.

Tchelitchew and Neo-Romanticism: from Paris to New York

Born in Russia to an aristocratic family, Pavel Tchelitchew showed an inclination for figurative art, theatre, and dance from an early age. In 1918, due to the Russian Revolution, Tchelitchew fled to Kiev with his family where he met the artist Alexandra Exter:[2] he studied with her for a short time, being introduced to Constructivism.

Pavel decided to continue his journey alone, arriving in Odessa, and from there proceeding to Istanbul and Sofia, to finally settle, in 1921, in Berlin, where he devoted himself entirely to theatre. In 1923 he left Berlin for Paris where, thanks to his friendship with Gertrude Stein, he began to attend the artistic and cultural *élite* of the French capital establishing himself as a set and costume designer working with the likes of Sergei Diaghilev, Leonide Massine and George Balanchine. In the pictorial field he established himself as a member of the group of painters called 'Neo-Humanists' by the critic Waldemar George and subsequently identified as 'Neo-Romantic' by J.T. Soby.[3] The proximity to Waldemar George was confirmed by the group's first exhibition at the Galerie Druet, in the winter 1926, which gave them visibility and recognition.[4] However disparate their talents and ambitions, they were united by the conviction that art should once again express emotions and feelings. Waldemar George, writing about the exhibition, praised them for the way

[1] Fondo Irene Brin, Gaspero del Corso e La Galleria L'Obelisco, Galleria Nazionale di Arte Moderna e Contemporanea of Rome and Archivio Fabrizio Clerici of Rome. I would like to thank Eros Renzetti (Archivio Fabrizio Clerici) for the collaboration and the information provided during my research.

[2] Alexandra Exter (1882-1949) was a Russian painter and set designer. During her apprenticeship in Paris, she was a pupil of Fernand Léger. Back in Russia, she became director of the Kiev school of painting where Tchelitchew had also studied. J.T. Soby wrote in the catalogue of the 1942 Tchelitchew's solo exhibition at MoMa, Soby; James Thrall, (ed.), *Tchelitchew: Paintings and Drawings,* [exhibition's catalogue], New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1942, p. 10: 'Exter that made him one of the few great scenographers of his time.'

[3] For Soby the group 'represented the naturalistic side of a romantic revival for which the Surrealists were providing a somnambulist complement'; in Soby, James Thrall, (ed.), *Tchelitchew: Paintings and Drawings,* [exhibition's catalogue], New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1942, p.14.

[4] The group was composed of the Berman brothers, Leonid and Éugene, Christian Berard, Kristians Tonny, J.F. Laglenne, Pierre Charbonnier, Luigi De Angelis, Therese Debains and Tchelitchew himself.

they treated figures and for their ability to conjure up nostalgic atmospheres and to 'italianizzare'[5] their themes.

For a time Tchelitchew was considered their *chef d'école*,[6] being the most experienced among them; but group cohesion was short-lived and individualism soon took over. As for Tchelitchew, he stood out from the other members because of his lively and sharp intelligence.

The Neo-Romantics were also close to the positions of the group *Les Italiens de Paris* which counted among its ranks Alberto Savinio, Massimo Campigli, Filippo De Pisis, Mario Tozzi, Renato Paresce and Gino Severini: although different from each other, these artists shared a common identity based on classical culture and the same metaphysical pictorial conception, which drew on their Mediterranean roots. It is therefore clear that the Neo-Romantics shared many aspects of their poetics with their Italian fellows, but different tendencies emerged within the group.
Some of them such as Berman and Berard, had been visiting Italy since 1926, forging their style on the example of great Renaissance artists such as Piero della Francesca and Raphael. Tchelitchew, on the other hand, went to Italy for the first time in 1935 and had instead developed a 'Nordic' neo-Romanticism with a metaphysical approach, which was based on Flemish and German masters such as Grünewald, Altdorfer and Brüegel. As Soby points out:

Although there are certain Italian artists to whom his affinity is apparent - notably Tintoretto and, above all, Paolo Uccello whose influence on Tchelitchew's arbitrary distortions of perspective is not to be minimized - his relation to the early Germanic and Flemish masters, even to a later English fantasist like Richard Dadd, often seems closer. In thinking of Tchelitchew's art in terms of direct analogy, the name of Grünewald comes to mind rather than that of Raffaello; that of Altdorfer or Bruegel rather than that of Piero della Francesca or Titian. Tiepolo, profoundly admired by Berard and Berman, has never been one of Tchelitchew's favorite artists. Instead Tchelitchew's inspiration carries strong traces of the diabolism which welled up in England and Germany in Tiepolo's time.[7]

From this moment Tchelitchew and Ford would intensify their stays in Italy, even if interspersed with frequent returns to New York, where Ford launched in 1940, with Parker Tyler the editorial staff of *View*[8]: a magazine that would play an important role in the artistic and cultural exchanges between Italy and the United States.[9]

Although the main contact between the Neo-Romantics and Italian artists such as Corrado Cagli, Leonor Fini and Fabrizio Clerici was the Julien Levy gallery in New York, other important channels for these relationships existed: the Hugo Gallery, managed by Alexander Iolas[10] and the Wadsworth Athenaeum Museum of Art (Hartford, Connecticut) directed between 1927 and 1944 by

[5] The critic meant to highlight their reference to the Italian tradition of perspective and sense of proportions as well as their interest in classical themes. George's ideas were realized thanks to his relationship with Giorgio de Chirico, with whom he shared a conservative position aimed at recovering classical themes as an 'antidote' to the decadence of a part of contemporary art.

[6] Soby, James Thrall, (ed.), *Tchelitchew: paintings and drawings,* [exhibition's catalogue], New York: Museum of Modern Art, p. 42.

[7] Soby, *Tchelitchew*, p. 27.

[8] See Ford, Charles Henri, *View: Parade of the Avant Garde 1940-1947*, New York: Basic Books, 1993.

[9] The magazine is best known for introducing Surrealism to the American public and covered the contemporary avant-garde and surrealist scene until 1947. In the 1940s, *View Editions*, the associated publishing house, came out with the first monograph on Marcel Duchamp and the first book translations of André Breton's poems.

[10] The Hugo Gallery, directed by Iolas until 1955, was founded between 1944 and 1945 by Robert Rothschild, Elizabeth Arden and Maria Ruspoli Hugo and was inaugurated in 1945.

Everett 'Chick' Austin.[11] The museum's director collaborated with members of the Harvard Society for Contemporary Art such as Alfred Barr, Julien Levy and Lincoln Kirstein, contributing significantly to the promotion of contemporary art, dance and performing arts in America.[12] Everett 'Chick' Austin in 1931 organized at Hartford the first exhibition of the surrealist movement in the United States: his work and that of Julien Levy were instrumental to promoting Surrealism and Neo-Romanticism. Tchelitchew and Ford's involvement in the activities of the Wadsworth in Hartford in 1936 consisted of decoration of the entire courtyard of the museum and some costumes for the annual ball entitled *Paper Ball.*[13] Alexander Calder was also involved in the project.[14] Another important figure gravitating around Tchelitchew was the Los Angeles artist Carlyle Brown, who admired his work and can be considered his pupil. The critic and curator Alan Rosenberg, a collector of Brown's works, wrote:

From 1942 to 1945 Brown served in the U.S. Navy. During his Navy service Brown wrote a fan letter to the Russian painter, Pavel Tchelitchew, who had immigrated to New York City just before the outbreak of World War II. Brown's letter initiated a very intense relationship, with numerous letters exchanged during the four years of service. Tchelitchew urged Brown to draw as much as possible and to experiment with different methods of artistic creation. […] The beginning of 1946 encouraged by Tchelitchew; Brown moved to New York City. […] Immediately immersed himself in the New York scene, meeting numerous artists and personalities in the circle around Tchelitchew: poets Charles Henri Ford and W.H. Auden; painters Eugene Berman, Corrado Cagli and Morris Graves; and from the music and dance scene Leonard Bernstein, Lincoln Kirstein, and Gian Carlo Menotti. Kirk Askew, director of Durlacher Brothers Gallery (Tchelitchew's representative) gave Brown his first one-man show in October of 1947.[15]

Their correspondence confirms the mentoring influence Tchelitchew had on his art.
Carlyle Brown, encouraged by the famous collector Edward James, decided to move to Italy as well;[16] during the 1950s he continued to exhibit extensively in the United States, including Catherine Viviano's gallery in New York, while his first solo exhibition in Italy took place in Rome, at L'Obelisco gallery in 1954.[17]

The role of La Margherita and L'Obelisco Galleries in Rome.

Since 1944, L'Obelisco's owners, Irene Brin and Gaspero del Corso, were among the first Italian gallerists to have cultural and commercial exchanges with the USA[18] and in fact recent studies have shown that they were acquainted with members of the *Psychological Warfare Branch,* a section of

[11] Bedarida, Raffaele, *Corrado Cagli. La pittura, l'esilio, l'America (1938-1947)*, Roma: Donzelli Editore, 2018, pp. 191,192.
[12] *Ibid*., p. 223.
[13] See http://www.sleepinanestofflames.com/The_Paper_Ball.htm. [last checked February 8, 2021].
[14] Alexander Calder, as Tchelitchew, had his first exhibition in Rome, in 1956, at L'Obelisco.
[15] Rosenberg, Alan, 'Carlyle Brown. Under the Influence of the Fantastic'*, The Journal of Cornwall Contemporary arts*, Spring 2021, I, pp. 6-8.
[16] Rosenberg, *Carlyle Brown*, s.p.
[17] In his 1954 diary Gaspero del Corso wrote of a visit Catherine Viviano and Carlyle Brown payed to their gallery. Their meeting taking place before Brown's exhibition, it may be assumed that Viviano was there to officially present Brown. In Fondo Irene Brin, Gaspero del Corso e la galleria L'Obelisco, Galleria Nazionale di Arte Moderna of Rome.
[18] Schiaffini, Ilaria, 'La galleria L'Obelisco e il mercato americano dal dopoguerra alla fine degli anni Cinquanta' in Maria Vittoria Caratozzolo, Ilaria Schiaffini, Claudio Zambianchi (eds.), *Irene Brin, Gaspero del Corso e la Galleria L'Obelisco*, Drago, Roma, 2018, pp. 125-141.

the American army including journalists, photographers and writers who had been sent to Italy to document the 'cultural liberation' taking place in Italy at the end of World War II.

Between 1944 and 1945 Brin and del Corso operated in Rome in an antiquarian bookshop and gallery, La Margherita, just opposite the United Nations headquarters: as a consequence, their venue was frequented by many Americans belonging to diplomacy and the army.[19] La Margherita became a reference point for the artistic and cultural environment of the capital and the presence of artists such as Giorgio de Chirico, Alberto Savinio, Leonor Fini, Filippo De Pisis, Toti Scialoja, Fabrizio Clerici, Tono Zancanaro and Renzo Vespignani, shows that it was oriented towards figurative art with metaphysical and surrealist tendencies. Here, in January 1945, Mario Praz presented what can be considered the first post-war surrealist exhibition in Italy: *Leonor Fini, A. Beloborodoff, F. Clerici, S. Lepri, A. Savinio, T. Zancanaro e antiche fantasie della collezione Fiorini*.[20]

Tchelitchew and Ford interacted with this context thanks to two figures: Leonor Fini, who had first met them in New York in 1936, during her first trip to the United States[21], and Peter Lindamood, a member of the previously mentioned *Psychological Warfare Branch* but also a collector and a dealer[22], who was a permanent presence at La Margherita and who promoted Italian 'surrealist' artists in the United States.[23] Lindamood, having consolidated his relationships in New York with the surrealist milieux, had curated the first American exhibition of Fabrizio Clerici and Giuseppe Viviani at Julien Levy's on his return from Italy in 1945[24], besides contributing to *View.* The magazine's February 1946 issue, entitled *Italian Surrealists*, is particularly interesting in this context because Ford decided to entrust it entirely to Lindamood, who wrote about the artists seen at La Margherita's 'surrealist' exhibition.[25]

As mentioned above, in addition to Levy's gallery, Alexander Iolas' Hugo Gallery also played an important role for the diffusion of surrealist and fantastic art: Iolas had contacts with Gaspero del Corso, Tchelitchew and Ford since 1945. The gallery's inaugural exhibition, *Fantasy*, was curated in 1945 by Charles Henri Ford and Parker Tyler, while the same year's Christmas show featured works of Tchelitchew, Dalí and Cornell. A 1945 telegram addressed by Alexander Iolas to Gaspero del Corso and Irene Brin[26] forwarded requests for the Hugo Gallery, for 'Italian surrealists' in particular. Iolas's list included the names of Fini, De Pisis, Clerici and his request is a further confirmation that their gallery was a reference point for surreal and fantastic art. The same can be said for L'Obelisco's first ten years of activity.[27] In addition, Brin and del Corso worked with the American Federation of Arts (AFA) and maintained professional and friendly relations with Laurance P. Roberts, director of the American Academy in Rome, and his wife Isabel: between 1946 and 1959, the American couple gave an imprint of great vitality and international openness to

[19] Tulino, Giulia, *La Galleria L'Obelisco. Surrealismo e Arte Fantastica. 1943-1954*, De Luca Editore, Roma, 2020, p. 35

[20] Praz, Mario (ed.), *Leonor Fini, A. Beloborodoff, F. Clerici, S. Lepri, A. Savinio, T. Zancanaro e antiche fantasie della collezione Fiorini*, [exhibition catalogue], s.e., Courtesy Archivio Fabrizio Clerici of Rome.

[21] Leonor Fini came to New York in 1936 to participate in two exhibitions: the first one was at Levy's gallery, with Max Ernst, and its preface was written by Giorgio de Chirico; the second one was MoMa's famous exhibition *Fantastic Art: Dada, Surrealism,* curated by Alfred Barr.

[22] On Peter Lindamood's business card was written: *Antiques, interiors, with accent on fantasy – Period and Contemporary Paintings – Primitives Antique Flowered Carpets and a unique stock of ornamental iron, tin and woodwork from the Grand Union Hotel, Saratoga – shutters all size*. Courtesy Archivio Fabrizio Clerici of Rome.

[23] Tulino, *La Galleria L'Obelisco. Surrealismo e Arte Fantastica*, pp. 40-50.

[24] Riley, Maude, 'Italian Surrealists'*, Art Digest,* New York, (March 1945), s.p.

[25] Lindamood, Peter, 'The Italian surrealists', *View*, New York, (February 1946).

[26] Agenda of 1953 belonged to Irene Brin and Gaspero del Corso, Fondo Irene Brin, Gaspero del Corso e la Galleria L'Obelisco, Galleria Nazionale di Arte Moderna of Rome.

[27] Claudia Palma and Simona Pandolfi (eds.), 'Fondo Irene Brin, Gaspero del Corso e L'Obelisco', inventario I e II in *Belle Arti 131* n. 1*,* 2012, p. 12.

the cultural programming of the American Academy, which was characterized by a particular attention to young Italian artists.[28]

Pavel Tchelitchew's first exhibition at L'Obelisco was held on 15 April 1950 and was introduced by Clerici, whose correspondence with the artist sheds light on many details of this and the following March 1955 exhibition at the same venue.[29] For example, in June 1950 Tchelitchew wrote to his friend:

It is certainly a pity that we, the only representatives of that shell called eternity, are forced to replicate it through a canvas. [...] Dear Fabrizio, you have centered *[sic]* the sense of my drawings and gouache, I hope I can pay you back some day.[30]

It should be noted that at the time Clerici wrote his text for Tchelitchew the artist was at the peak of an important career that had been distinguished by a need to progressively modify pictorial methods, a continuous theoretical research, and a restless intellectual enquiry. Tchelitchew, believing that simultaneous representation was the essential problem of the previous generation of painters (particularly Picasso), wanted his pictorial research to move forward: in line with Waldemar George's ideas, he recognized that the ultimate solution was to be found in the example of the early Renaissance masters and theorists of perspective. Following his neo-Romantic idea of the artist as an 'inventor', Tchelitchew believed in philological research and in the investigation of themes a long art tradition had bequeathed to posterity.

Clerici put it this way in the catalogue of the 1950 exhibition:

It will have already been understood that the Renaissance to which I allude is to be found more in the treatises than in the art galleries, just where the scientist and the artist, made unique entity, balance their research between geometry and utopia in a golden climate. It is the crystalline renaissance of Fra Luca di Borgo, [...] it is the spatial renaissance of Piero della Francesca [...]. And still, it is the rarefied renaissance of the drawings of Paolo Uccello, the pages of Marsilio Ficino [...] and the light, this strength to which Savonarola refers in his 'Italian sermons' [...]. Starting from such interests and not from the game too many times today arbitrarily tempted by others, Tchelitchew arrives at the peak of the search with a series of drawings in which line, color and shape identify with space and with space [...]. Under the skin he investigates the labyrinth of venous and arterial pathways [...].[31]

Mutations of Tchelitchew's Double Images in Rome: from Picasso to the Renaissance.

While Tchelitchew often chose the portrait and still life as the subjects of his works, thus showing a considerable interest in the representation of reality, during the 1920s and 1930s he began to experiment with a new kind of 'simultaneous vision' of objects and of the human body, which was the result of two different points of view integrated into a single image: such works, stylistically close to Chirico's metaphysical mannequins, were devoid of physiognomic connotations and appeared to belong to a suspended time and a 'romantic atmosphere'. From such simultaneous visions the artist subsequently moved to a system of 'laconic compositions' that meant to show

[28] Schiaffini, *La Galleria dell'Obelisco e il mercato americano,* p. 141.

[29] Correspondence between Pavel Tchelitchew and Fabrizio Clerici (from 1950 to 1955). 'Courtesy Archivio Fabrizio Clerici of Rome.

[30] Correspondence between Pavel Tchelitchew and Fabrizio Clerici, June 18, 1950. 'Courtesy Archivio Fabrizio Clerici of Rome. Tchelitchew wrote in French, English and occasionally Italian, and his handwriting is often hard to decipher. Here 'centered' may mean 'sensed'.

[31] Clerici, Fabrizio, *Pavel Tchelitchew,* [exhibition catalogue], April 15, 1950. Courtesy Archivio Fabrizio Clerici of Rome.

simultaneous aspects of a single piece of reality: the result was most surprising thanks to his masterful pictorial ability. Soby, commenting on Tchelitchew's experiments, spoke of an unprecedented artistic originality that had been prefigured only by Dürer's studies on human proportions and Paolo Uccello's research into perspective.[32] The artist theorized two representative methods at the end of the 1920s: one relying on the perspective's distortions of the body and another on the metamorphosis of the compositions. The surrealist theories on the ambiguity of images together with the metaphysical approach of the de Chirico brothers certainly contributed to Tchelitchew's theoretical investigation; finally, his complex research on color was a further aspect of his artistic development. (Figg. 1,2,3,4).

Fig. 1, Pavel Tchelitchew, Green Venus, oil on canvas, 1928

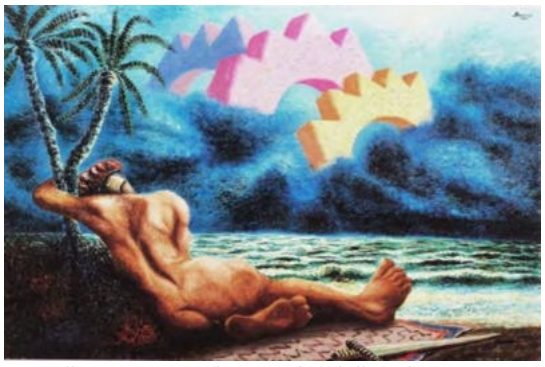


Fig. 2 Alberto Savinio, Il sogno di Achille, oil on canvas, 1929

Fig. 3 Pavel Tchelitchew, The Harvester, oil on canvas, 1928

Fig. 4 Alberto Savinio, Oreste e Pilade, oil on canvas, 1930

[32] Soby, *Tchelitchew,* pp. 16,17.

At the beginning of his career the artist had Rouault as a reference, he later began to look at Toulouse-Lautrec for his ability to synthesize the characterization of faces and the use of luminescent and evanescent colors at the same time. Tchelitchew's aim was to bring out the internal phosphorescence from the pigments to make the images appear illuminated from below the surface. In this regard it is important to remember the arrival in New York of Roberto Sebastian Matta Echaurren in 1939: like many other prominent artists of the period, Tchelitchew recognized originality in the use of color despite his youth. Looking at Matta the artist decided to renew his painting technique and Soby in 1942 wrote that:

To some extent, Matta's influence on Tchelitchew is unmistakable. It manifests itself in the fluidity of color, in the amorphous manipulation of pigment, in the brilliance of tropical tones and in particular yellows, reds and greens. [33]

This influence emerges in a substantial way in the realization of an emblematic work entitled *Phenomena* (1938): the use of color, unreal and shocking was associated by the artist with the Italian art pre-Renaissance and, always maintaining a marked originality, was reflected in some works by the *Italiens de Paris* such as Tozzi and Savinio, while also focusing on artists with more expressionistic characteristics as Rouault and Soutine. As for the formal aspect of the work, Tchelitchew stated that the idea behind this work was born after seeing the door of the church of San Zeno in Verona.[34] *Phenomena*, begun in 1935, was finished in 1938 but gave birth to a series of preparatory works that announced a series of works completely different from the previous production of the artist.[35] Exhibited for the first time in England, *Phenomena* aroused many reactions, most of them negative, while it was defended and supported in the United States where J.T. Soby, in 1942, organized the solo show of the artist at the Museum of Modern Art. Soby edited the texts in the catalogue, which, to date, still seem to be the most complete and effective critical apparatus for the study of the artist's works starting from his beginnings.

Tchelitchew and the Italian Art Market

About twelve years later, in a letter to Clerici dated 29 April 1951, the artist wrote that the Ringling Museum in Sarasota, Florida had asked him for one of his versions of *Phenomena*. Ringling's director was Everett 'Chick' Austin, whose term of office at Wadsworth ended in 1944. Although Tchelitchew knew Austin, he wrote to Clerici that: 'The director of the Ringling Museum in Sarasota is Everett Austin and I think it is thanks to Gaspero del Corso, who knows him very well, that he asked me for the work'.[36] While it is not possible to ascertain the actual involvement of Gaspero del Corso, it is more likely that Austin, knowing the artist's work and loving neo-Romantic painting, had decided to acquire one of his works for his museum.

Going forward with the correspondence between Clerici and Tchelitchew there emerges between the two artists a dialogue concerning not only formal problems but also art market issues. In fact, Tchelitchew explains that he and Ford cannot estimates his work and that he would like to meet Gaspero del Corso to talk about this and to show him and Clerici his new works.[37] Gaspero del Corso wrote:

[33] Soby, *Tchelitchew*, p. 31

[34] Soby, *Tchelitchew*, p. 28.

[35] Kirstein, Lincoln, 'The Position of Pavel Tchelitchew', *View,* n. 2, (May 1942), s.p.

[36] Correspondence between Pavel Tchelitchew and Fabrizio Clerici, April 29, 1951. 'Courtesy Archivio Fabrizio Clerici of Rome.

[37] Correspondence between Pavel Tchelitchew and Fabrizio Clerici, October 19, 1952. 'Courtesy Archivio Fabrizio Clerici of Rome.

I go with Estorick to Grottaferrata to see Tchelitchew: his new things are a development of those shown at L'Obelisco two years ago. Tchelitchew speaks for three hours about the mysteries of his art. He asks Estorick unreal prices: seven hundred thousand lire for a color drawing. Nothing will happen, I am afraid. [38]

The gallery owner confirmed the inaccuracy of the prices of the works and regretted the failure to sell to a collector of the caliber of Eric Estorick. But, apart from such problems, Gaspero del Corso promoted the Russian artist's work. In December 1952 he presented Tchelitchew to the gallerist Carlo Cardazzo. Cardazzo had two galleries: Il Cavallino in Venice and Il Naviglio in Milan. Since 1953 Gaspero del Corso presented the most famous international surrealists in Rome and, in agreement with Cardazzo, after L'Obelisco they were exhibited at the Naviglio in Milan.[39] Tchelitchew initially expressed reservations about Cardazzo because, in his opinion, he was a lesser-known gallerist owner abroad than del Corso[40], but in 1955, following a well-established pattern for L'Obelisco, he moved the exhibition to Milan. Between the two exhibitions organized at L'Obelisco Tchelitchew participated in two further exhibitions in Rome, at the Schneider Gallery.[41] The first one, in 1953, was the collective with which the gallery was inaugurated and was entitled *Three Americans in Rome,* [42] followed in 1954 by the exhibition *Matta and Tchelitchefw.*[43] In 1953 Tchelitchew exhibited two drawings and a gouache of the new production while there is no information about the exhibition with Matta. In March 1955 L'Obelisco organized an important solo show of the artist. The catalogue presentation was written by the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard,[44] fascinated by the geometry of his forms, the intersection of lines and his research on colour:

In Tchelitchew colour puts the world into action; it encloses the secret of dynamic interests. [...] For an authentic artist colour is not a surface phenomenon. It is present in every depth. The colours compete to figure, to come out of darkness and thus bear witness to the secret being of things [...] Tchelitchew's canvases are somehow cosmological objects, germs for individualized worlds. There is a kind of resonance that starts from the object made dynamic up to an evoked world. […] It seems that Tchelitchew has found the secret of a subtle harmony of forms, colour, and movement.[45]

As already mentioned, the same exhibition was presented in April 1955 also in Milan at the Galleria del Naviglio by Cardazzo and in the catalogue was published the essay by Bachelard written for L'Obelisco. Having lost all figurative contours, Tchelitchew's canvases of the last few years presented pure intertwining of lines, complex geometric abstractions, bright spiral webs. In 1954, in a letter to Olga Signorelli the artist wrote:

When you see my paintings and drawings, you will understand why I live like a trappist in the monastery, without seeing anyone. These works occupy my whole life, but they are complex,

[38] Del Corso's agenda, year 1953. Fondo Irene Brin, Gaspero del Corso e La Galleria L'Obelisco, Galleria Nazionale di Arte Moderna of Rome.

[39] L'Obelisco, in 1953 hosted, for example, the first Italian exhibition of Magritte and Tanguy.

[40] Correspondence between Pavel Tchelitchew and Fabrizio Clerici, December 8, 1952. 'Courtesy Archivio Fabrizio Clerici of Rome.

[41] The gallery, opened in 1953, was owned by Robert Schneider.

[42] Correspondence between Pavel Tchelitchew and Fabrizio Clerici, November 16, 1953. 'Courtesy Archivio Fabrizio Clerici of Rome.

[43] Salaris, Claudia (ed.), 'Tutte le strade portano a Roma' in *Matta. Un surrealista a Roma,* [exhibition catalogue], Giunti Editore, Firenze, p. 28.

[44] Bachelard, Gaston, *Pavel Tchelitchew*, [exhibition catalogue], L'Obelisco, Roma: s.e., April 15, 1955.

[45] Bachelard, *Pavel Tchelitchew*, pp. 5-6.

compliqués - pour une plus grande simplicité. If you look at them serene, in silence, suddenly they will 'come to life' and begin to move rhythmically.[46]

Tchelitchew explained to Gaston Bachelard, who wrote the catalogue's text for L'Obelisco in 1955, how he had devised his pictorial method. The artist exhibited some drawings of anatomical heads, which could be considered an evolution of the works produced in 1950 for the preceding exhibition at the same gallery.[47] Tchelitchew decided to represent the objects as if they were transparent with the aim to purpose the internal geometries that composed them. The investigation for an essential and totalizing form, unlike the other neo-Romantic artists, resided in the attempt to purify the form, by detaching itself from the past and creating a contemporary figurative painting.[48] He focused on the internal structures of human figures and objects, arriving at the abstraction of the shapes. The human figure is presented as 'the new perspective figure', an ideal figure devoid of feeling. Despite being considered a neo-Romantic painter, Pavel Tchelitchew is considered one of the most original artists of the group: an artist who had tried to create a new aesthetic based on the study of the artistic theories of the past. (Figg. 5,6,7,8,).

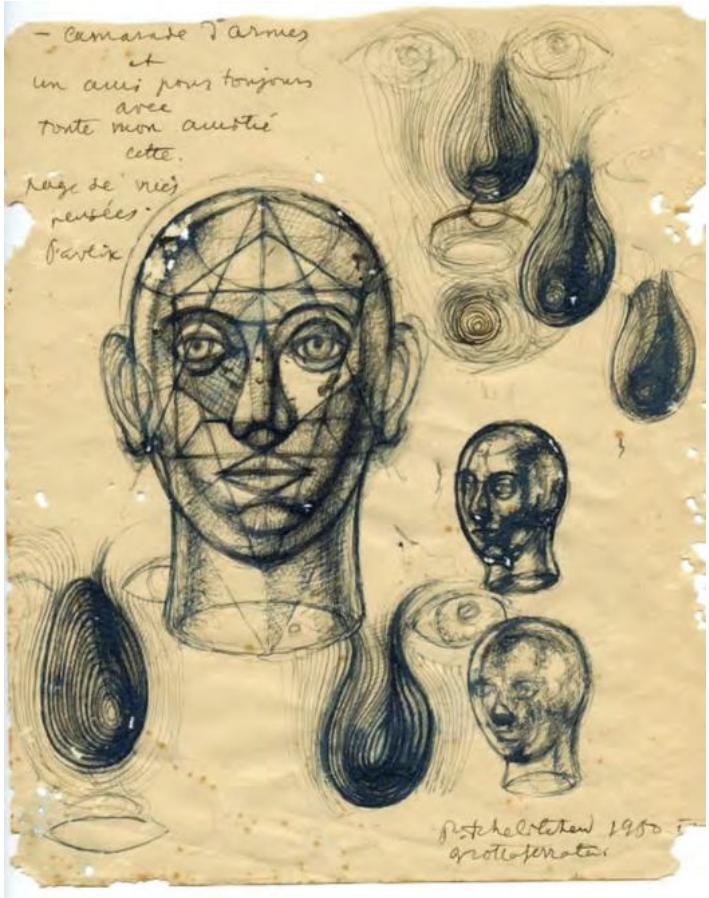
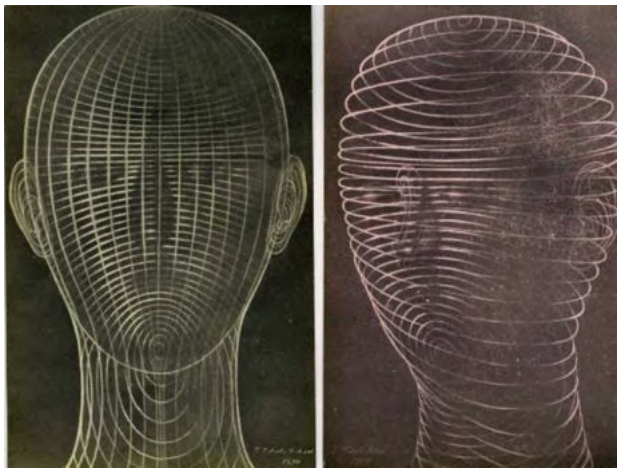
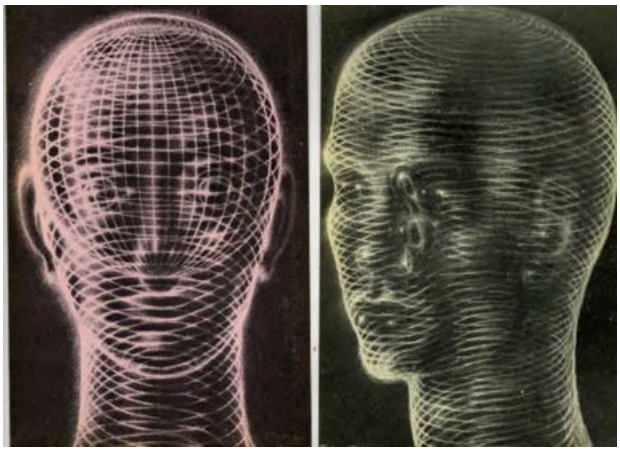


Fig. 5, Pavel Tchelitchew, Heads, 1950, ink on paper, 1950.
The artist gave the sketch to Fabrizio Clerici.
Courtesy Archivio Fabrizio Clerici of Rome.

[46] Russian Italian Archive IX: *Olga Resnevič Signorelli e l'emigrazione russa: Corrispondenze*, E. Garetto, A. D'Amelia, K. Kumpan and D. Rizzi (eds.), Salerno: Collana di Europa Orientalis, 2012, vol. II, p. 32.
[47] Bachelard, *Pavel Tchelitchew*, p. 6.
[48] Tulino, *La Galleria L'Obelisco. Surrealismo e Arte Fantastica,* p. 98.





Figg. 6, 7, Pavel Tchelitchew, Heads, 1950, single sheets in the exhibition catalogue with reproductions of the exhibited works, Galleria L'Obelisco, April 15, 1950. Courtesy Archivio Fabrizio Clerici of Rome.

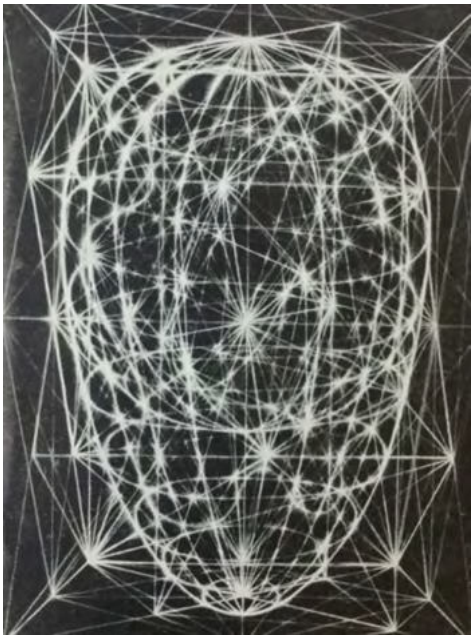


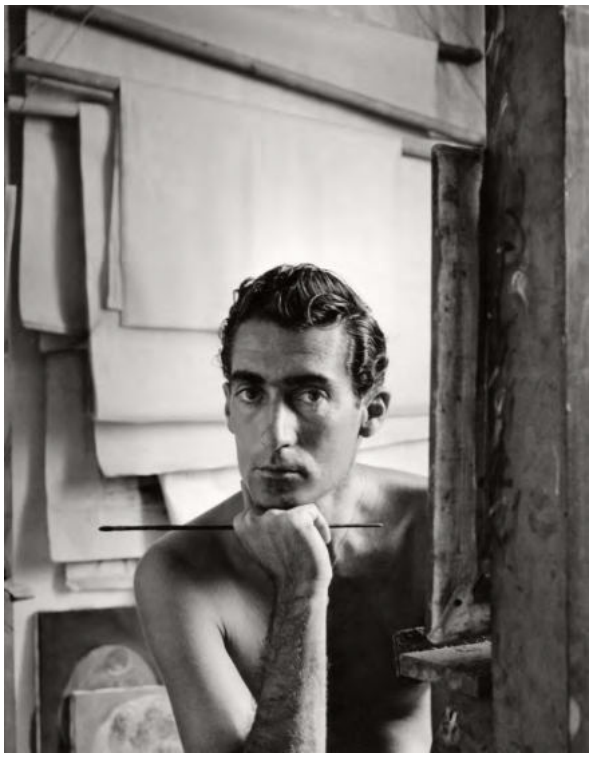
Fig. 8, Pavel Tchelitchew, Heads, 1955, reproduction of the exhibited works published in the exhibition catalogue, Galleria L'Obelisco, March 1, 1955. Courtesy Archivio Fabrizio Clerici, Rome.

The years that Pavel Tchelitchew spent in Rome, despite the isolation of his suburban residence he had chosen in order to be able to work without being disturbed, were rich in events and expanded his network of collectors and patrons. The artist had a good following in Europe and his greatest collector was Edward James, who had a considerable impact on his life: he regularly bought works from both him and his gallerists and was the principal lender for Tchelitchew's solo exhibition at the MoMA in 1942. James's name is associated with other collectors and patrons of the artist such as Gertrude Stein, Cecil Beaton, Edith Sitwell, and Peter Watson. The fact of being present with his works in the main European collections was certainly a reason for prestige and helped Tchelitchew to fit into the Italian artistic context. In Rome he met his Parisian friend Eugene Berman again, who had settled in the Italian capital since the early Fifties. Thanks to Clerici, he also met Olga Resnevič Signorelli who introduced him among her friends and was close to him in the last period of his life.

EGGHEADS: CARLYLE BROWN, PAVEL TCHELITCHEW AND MUTATIONS OF SURREALISM IN POSTWAR ROME

Peter Benson MILLER

In 1948, self-taught American artist Carlyle Brown (1919 – 1963), a protégé of Pavel Tchelitchew's, moved to Italy, where his work went through a profound change. Leaving behind surrealist allegories, he developed a meticulous technique rendering objects – eggs, bottles, glasses, goblets, lemons – gathered on tabletops or in cabinets and bathed in supernatural light. Eggs occupied a privileged position; in Herbert List's portrait of Brown in his studio in Via Margutta in Rome, taken in 1950, two still life paintings of eggs lean against the wall behind him. At least eight out of fifteen paintings shown at Catherine Viviano's New York gallery later the same year featured eggs, including *Plate of Eggs #1* and *Plate of Eggs #4*.[1]

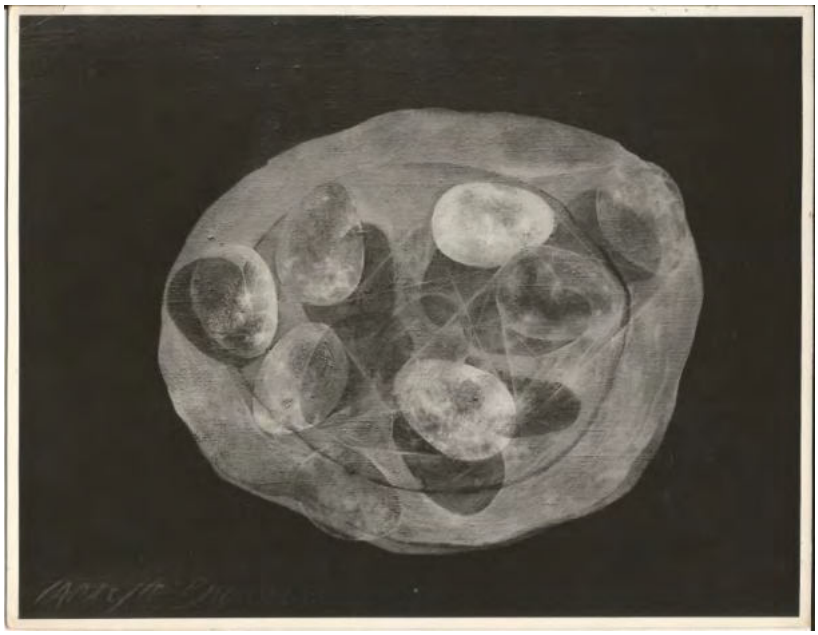


Herbert List, *Carlyle Brown at his Studio in Via Margutta*, *Rome,* 1950

[1]I am grateful to Joseph Cardas for permitting me to reproduce excerpts Brown's diaries and letters, as well as images from the Carlyle Brown Archive. Peer-Olaf Richter offered valuable insights about List in Italy in the 1950s. Hugh Morrison, Collections Manager, and Simon Coleman, Archivist, kindly shared the correspondence between Brown and Edward James conserved at West Dean College. Thanks to Peter Barberie, Raffaele Bedarida, Davide Colombo, Barbara Drudi, Lindsay Harris, Sebastian Hierl, Alessandro Nigro, Alan Rosenberg, Ilaria Schiaffini and Giulia Tulino. This article is excerpted from a longer chapter in my forthcoming book about exchanges between American and Italian artists in postwar Rome.

See *Carlyle Brown*, Catherine Viviano Gallery [exhibition catalogue], New York, Nov. 14 – Dec. 2, 1950: *Bowl of Eggs* (cat. 5); *Fish and Black Egg* (cat. 6); *Fish with Eleven Eggs* (cat. 7); *Plate of Eggs # 1* (cat. 9); *Plate of Eggs # 4* (cat. 10); *Plate with Gold Fish* (cat. 11); *Eggshells* (cat. 14); *Glasses and Bottles* (cat. 15; repr. on cover).

To contemporary viewers these works exuded an undercurrent of disquiet. Anchored in the real world, they synthesized an eclectic mix of fantasy, metaphysical enigma, and abstraction. An obituary in the *New York Times* described Brown's work as 'an effort to combine realistic detail with magical effects, which brings him close to Surrealism'.[2] Critics discerned the influence of both Tchelitchew and visionary American painter Morris Graves, situating Brown at the intersection of a romantic iteration of European modernism and mystical American Transcendentalism. Brown's depiction of light and iconographical motifs drawn from an updated still life tradition, however, also reflected contemporary currents in Italy. Tracing the arc of Brown's career from New York to Rome, as he transposed surrealist impulses into still life paintings, provides a barometer of the reception of variants of Surrealism and their mutations in the postwar period.



Carlyle Brown, *Plate of Eggs #1*, 1950, oil on canvas. Location unknown.

'Indefinite shapes'[3]

During the war, Brown wrote a letter to Tchelitchew, initiating an intense friendship lasting until the latter's death in 1957.[4] In early works Brown adhered to the heterogeneous brand of Surrealism espoused by the avant-garde journal *View* edited by Tchelitchew's companion Charles Henri Ford and his biographer Parker Tyler.[5] Their ideas had coalesced in the interwar years in Paris where Tchelitchew rose to prominence as part of the Neo-romantic group comprised of Christian Bérard, Eugene Berman and his brother Leonid. Melancholy figures

[2] 'Carlyle Brown, 44, U.S. Artist in Rome', *New York Times*, (January 5, 1964), p. 92.

[3] Abbreviations: CB: Carlyle Brown, MB: Margery Brown, PT: Pavel Tchelitchew, KA: R. Kirk Askew, EJ: Edward James, AAA: Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

[4] PT to CB, December 12, 1942. All citations of Brown's diaries and Margery's Brown's letters to Tchelitchew are copyright Carlyle Brown Archive, Courtesy Joseph Cardas.

[5] On *View*, which ran from September 1940 to mid-1947, see Reynolds, Ann, 'No Strangers', in Earnest, Jarrett, [ed.] *The Young and Evil: Queer Modernism in New York*, 1930 – 1955, New York: David Zwirner Books, 2019, pp. 24–35.

and landscapes by these artists offered an alternative to Cubist formal experimentation. Less dogmatic than Bretonian Surrealism, *View* and its editors provided the permissive atmosphere for Brown's artistic education. In 1942, when Brown sent his letter, Tchelitchew was at his zenith, thanks to a retrospective curated by James Thrall Soby at the Museum of Modern Art. In diary entries, Brown records 'Pavlik's' comments about technique word for word, including the exhortation 'to paint from [his] inner voice, [his] subconscious' without premeditation.[6] Kirk Askew, Tchelitchew's dealer, gave Brown his first exhibition in 1947. Responding to the figurative works on display, critics agreed that Brown was 'affiliated with the processes of Surrealism'. One critic explained: 'Brown's pictorial ideas derive from a dream zone, whether associated with sleep or with the ever-wakeful psyche'.[7] Despite a promising debut, critics felt that the works in Brown's debut were 'slightly overwrought'.[8]

Corrado Cagli, linked to the Neo-romantic circle, was another trusted advisor. In exile following the racial laws enacted in Italy in 1938, Cagli returned to New York in November 1945 after his military service in the United States Army during the war. The two artists had intense discussions in Brown's studio stretching long into the night. 'I knew we were in for a long session', Brown wrote in his diary, regarding one of these encounters, 'and though tired, I felt the need for the stimulus of his conversation'.[9] On that occasion, Brown showed Cagli two portraits, and a painting begun only the night before Cagli's visit. They resumed close contact when Brown arrived in Italy; it was most likely Cagli who paved the way for Brown to show his still lifes with Viviano in 1950.[10]

In March 1948, eccentric English collector Edward James invited Brown and his wife, Margery, to West Dean, where Brown worked in a studio previously occupied by both Tchelitchew and Salvador Dalí. Before they left New York, Brown made a gouache of Margery 'with a nest of eggs in her hair'.[11] Another work begun before their departure, a portrait of James – and the treatment of the face and head, in particular – generated a great deal of anxiety. Brown confessed to Tchelitchew 'how wretched I felt about Edward James' portrait in its current state', and Tchelitchew advised him 'to put 'milky washes' over the face, to play with the canvas by putting 'pools' of shadow, 'pools' of light – letting it grow out of *indefinite* shape'.[12] A few days later, Brown 'scarcely touched the face, and so avoided the frustration of the moment – my fear of making a likeness'.[13] The struggle with James's head and face intensified at West Dean.[14] Failing to find a satisfactory solution, and leaving a permanent trace of his frustration, Brown covered James's lower face with a mask. This tension between individual likeness and 'indefinite shape', the specific and the general, as will be demonstrated below, pushed Brown towards still life.

[6] CB diary, December 5, 1947.

[7] E. A. J., 'Shahn, Pippin, Laurens and Others', *New York Times,* October 5, 1947, p. 19.

[8] 'In the Art Galleries', *New York Herald Tribune*, October 5, 1947, p. 4

[9] *Ibid.*

[10] CB to KA, March 21, 1949. Askew, R. Kirk papers, Box 1, folder 6. AAA: "Also in Rome, and at our hotel, I saw Corrado, who seems involved in several simultaneous 'exhibitions' throughout Italy!"; MB to PT, December 5, 1949, reports that Cagli took the Browns to a cocktail party in Rome where they met Carlo Levi, Renzo Vespignani, Mirko Basaldella and Gaspero Del Corso.

[11] CB diary, January 21, 1948.

[12] *Ibid.*, December 3, 1947. Brown's emphasis.

[13] *Ibid*., December 7, 1947.

[14] MB to PT, April 15, 1948: 'He makes the most progress on Edward's portrait, as Edward has posed for him this afternoon and he has done a lot on the face, which had been left vague'.

Carlyle Brown, *Portrait of Edward James*, 1946-1948. Oil on canvas, 116 x 100 cm. West Dean College of Art and Conservation.

Turbulent Still Lifes

In Italy, the changes brewing in Brown's work became more apparent. In January 1949, Brown wrote to Askew that he was 'working faster than before and on a much smaller scale'. He revealed that he had changed his technique and his subject matter: 'there are no longer involved literary subjects in my pictures. I paint a lot from nature and the forms, the subjects, stand on their own without any great assistance from ideas.'[15] Among the ten gouaches that he sent to Askew in early February 1949, six were still lifes.[16] Askew initially praised the gouaches, calling them 'tender, subtle and evanescent.'[17] After Tchelitchew saw them, he wrote to Brown, lauding the new direction: 'Finally your revenge on the artificial ideas and looks as in the canvases of N.Y.'.[18] When Brown forwarded a second batch of new oils and gouaches in late May, he included the finished portrait of James as a benchmark to emphasize how much his work had changed.[19] The new works provoked a break with Askew, who confessed that they left him 'cold'. Brown was mystified.[20] In a letter explaining the rift to Tchelitchew, Margery announced the 'marvelous new beginning in [Brown's] painting, a clearing away of all the hindrances of story-telling and 'plots' to make way for the development of painting with freedom and the clarity that only comes from within'.[21] Critics picked up on the change immediately; the 'innuendoes' of his show with Askew had been replaced by 'luminous' compositions 'free of any desire to startle or shock'.[22] According to another critic, the poetry suffusing the objects in Brown's still lifes came 'not from subject or literary allusion, but from paint itself and its application as delicately as spiders' webs, yet with cleanly defined spatial depth and structural solidity'.[23] Brown's still lifes nonetheless retained a potent emotional charge and a clear association with Surrealism.[24] 'Brown's engagement with subject matter extends far beyond representing its appearance', according to one critic, lending his objects 'a distinct and often disturbing personality'.[25] Among other qualities, Brown's treatment of light contributed to this impression: 'Carlyle Brown's still-life shines darkly'.[26]

[15] CB to KA, January 4, 1949. Askew papers, AAA.

[16] CB, 'Pictures sent to R. Kirk Askew through Morris Graves, sent on February 9, 1949, from Villa Volpaia, Siena, Italy', in Askew papers, AAA. The list includes: 4. *Cauliflower;* 5. *The Cold Bouquet*; 6. *Rose*; 7. *White Carnations*; 9. *The Wild Bouquet.*

[17] KA to CB, March 5, 1949. Askew Papers, AAA.

[18] CB to KA, March 21, 1949. Askew Papers, AAA.

[19] CB to KA, May 29, 1949. Askew papers, AAA: 'I would like you to see it as it will show you how differently I feel about my pictures now'.

[20] KA to CB, July 7, 1949. Askew papers, AAA: 'the present group of pictures leaves me completely cold. […] Under the circumstances, I am afraid that it would be impossible for me with any integrity to continue dealing in your work.' For the artist's response see CB to KA, July 18, 1949.

[21] MG to PT, August 10, 1949.

[22] Preston, Stuart, 'Artists of Today', *New York Times*, November 19, 1950, p. 10.

[23] E. G., 'Art Notes' in *New York Herald Tribune*, November 19, 1950, p. 5.

[24] Coates, Robert M., 'The Art Galleries' in *The New Yorker,* November 17, 1951, p. 99.

[25] Preston, Stuart, 'First Moves on the 1962 Exhibition Front' in *New York Times,* January 7, 1962.

[26] 'New Art Displays Open for the Holidays' in *New York Times*, December 16, 1950, s.p.

Margery and Carlyle Brown standing in front of *The Red Cabinet*, at the opening of Brown's exhibition at Galleria L'Obelisco, November 16, 1954

Italian reviews agreed; when Brown's still lifes, including *The Red Cabinet*, were shown at L'Obelisco in Rome in 1954, one writer noted how he attempted to reconcile different registers in claustrophobic compositions, passing from 'a dark crowd of objects breathlessly jumbled together' to 'a luminous and transparent atmosphere.'[27] An article in *Harper's Bazaar* summed up the transition: 'Brown's first show had, one not unfriendly critic said, a vivid, repulsive quality, but enormous vitality. By his second show, he had switched to the calmer but nonetheless turbulent still lifes which are his specialty now'.[28]

The experience at West Dean played a crucial role; during his stay he studied works in James' collection, including those by Tchelitchew and Dutch still lifes.[29] Eggs are the central motif in Dalí's *Metamorphosis of Narcissus* where they stand in for both Narcissus' head and its reflection.[30] Together they enshrine one of the defining episodes in the history of Surrealism: after reading Sigmund Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*, Dalí brought his painting to a sitting with Freud in London in 1938, organized by Stefan Zweig, with James in attendance. Dalí questioned Freud about the psychoanalytic theory of Narcissism and presented his own notion of 'critical paranoia'.[31] Dalí's painting must have touched a nerve with Brown, given that Tchelitchew's training emphasized intense self-regard, urging him to draw from his own body

[27] P. S. 'Mostre d'Arte: Carlyle Brown', *Il Messaggero*, November 20, 1954: 'La prima impressione che il visitatore prova osservando le opera di questo pittore nato a Los Angeles nel 1919 è sconcertante perché dall'affollamento tenebroso di numerosi elementi figurativi che compongono il quadro (collegati tra loro senza pause se senza respiro), l'artista, più cerebrale che sensitivo, passa indifferentemente a creare pittoricamente con qualche variazione sul tema 'Natura morta' da lui preferito, un'atmosfera trasparente e luminosa'.

[28] 'Carlyle Brown of Ischia', *Harper's Bazaar*, (March 1953), p. 148.

[29] MB to PT, June 20, 1948.

[30] https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/dali-metamorphosis-of-narcissus-t02343

[31] Ades, Dawn, *Freud, Dali & the Metamorphosis of Narcissus* [exhibition catalogue], London, 2019.

in a mirror. This process had informed his *Adam and Eve*, the painting, purchased by James – paving the way for Browns' invitation to West Dean – in which Brown and his wife appear as the biblical couple.[32]

Yet, in his transition to still life, Brown had no further to look than Tchelitchew's essays in the genre from the 1920s.[33] Writing from Italy following the sojourn at West Dean, Brown told James that 'the only moment my work has ever resembled [Tchelitchew's] earlier work is the present moment.'[34] Eggs appeared in numerous works, including one in which Tchelitchew explored the rhyming shapes of three eggs and the head of a young boy resting on a tabletop.[35] Tchelitchew returned to these conjoined shapes in the late 1940s and 1950s; in Italy, a series of heads begun in New York morphed into eggs and other objects. As Tchelitchew told Dore Ashton in 1955 during her visit to his studio in Frascati, 'we must try and find essences, but of NATURE. So, I experimented and found the egg. A cube in rotation'.[36] Tchelitchew recounted an episode from 1925, the year he was discovered by Stein: 'Pussy,' she said when she saw my work – Pussy was Alice B. [Toklas] – 'Pussy, he does eggs! Isn't that marvelous.'[37] 'It was [Stein], [Tchelitchew] explained, who knew that the egg was indeed a perfectly simple form from three points of view'.[38] At the same time, Tchelitchew experimented with multiple forms and perspectives in a portrait of art critic René Crevel, another work that entered Stein's collection.[39] Brown's still lifes with eggs thus adopt a personal emblem of Tchelitchew's ongoing formal and metaphysical investigations.

As he struggled with the portrait of James at West Dean, Brown would have recalled Tchelitchew's advice, recorded word for word in his diary. Encouraging Brown to let the face 'grow out of an indefinite shape', Tchelitchew distinguished his own 'search for the integrated, poetic, latent poetic images' from Dalí 's interpretation of the 'double image'.

> Truly 'double' image is incorrectly used where Tchelitchew is concerned. His second, third and further images arise like discoveries out of the originally perceived form. Dali used the double image as a 'shock' by trickery. Tchelitchew lets them arise where they present themselves out of his imagination, […]. This way Tchelitchew's world is forever changing, inter-changeable. This makes the superficial Dali manifesto for his new show at Bignou [Gallery] (a horror room of hard, slick, movie-still like pictures) laughable. All hinged to a stupid idea about an 'ultra-atomic' theme.[40]

Brown considered *Metamorphosis of Narcissus* a failure, proof of Tchelitchew's dismissal of Dalí's attempt to represent multiplicity. We should understand Brown's eggs in light of what Tchelitchew said next in the impromptu lesson sparked by James' face.

[32] CB diary, Feb. 21, 1947: 'Bought a horizontal canvas today […], in order to make a start on an 'Adam and Eve.' Hope to have Margery pose tomorrow. I may proceed directly on the canvas from the nude'.

[33] According to a letter from CB to KA, March 8, 1948, Askew Papers, AAA, James had works by Tchelitchew from the Paris period hung in the Brown's suite at West Dean, with 'more to be appropriated from Monkton very soon.' Before his departure from New York, Brown visited the exhibition of works from Tchelitchew's Paris period (1923-1933) at Durlacher's. See CB diary, Jan. 9, 1948.

[34] CB to EJ, Nov. 23, 1948. West Dean College of Art and Conservation Archive, EJA-1-15-27.

[35] The work *Head of a Young Boy with Floating Eggs*, 1926, is reproduced in Kuznetsov, Alexander, *Pavel Tchelitchew: Metamorphosis*, Arnoldsche, Stuttgart, 2012, p. 71.

[36] Ashton, Dore, 'Report from Rome: Tchelitchew', February 1955, 2. Dore Ashton Papers, box 5, folder 39, AAA.

[37] *Ibid.*

[38] *Ivi*, p. 3.

[39] Nigro, Alessandro, ''Au Carrefour de la poésie et de la révolution': la critica militante di René Crevel nella Parigi degli anni Venti'in *Ricerche di storia dell'arte*, 121, 2017, p. 18.

[40] CB diary, December 3, 1947.

Tchelitchew arrived at his signature motif through 'accidents' as they materialized into suggestive forms:

> Tchelitchew presaged the atomic preoccupation long ago in a deviously 'unconsciously aware' manner. His Chinese-like toy (egg) which interlocks, opening always, continuing, penetrating, latching and unlatching, shows the consciousness of a painter of the relationships of molecules, protons, electrons, atoms.[41]

The preoccupation with cosmological phenomena, limitless space and temporal continuity crystallized around the egg. Brown, foregoing esoteric allegory, concentrated instead on these specific objects. He sought to marry narrative richness, formal complexity, movement, and multiple perspectives in these elemental forms.

Following a similar trajectory, Cagli shifted from figurative painting in the 1930s to the 'astrazioni surrealisteggianti' he exhibited in 1947 upon his return to Rome.[42] These works shared Tchelitchew's concern with metamorphosis, simultaneity, and fluidity. In 1950, reviewing the latter's exhibition at L'Obelisco, a critic insisted on the affinities between the two artists: 'Cagli returned from America with the belief that painting should align itself with the problems presented by the modern world: Einstein's theories, the Atom bomb, and experimental psychology'.[43] Like many artists on both sides of the Atlantic, Cagli was interested in Jungian psychoanalysis, which he explored along with non-Euclidian geometry, to unlock the mysteries of the unchartered realms in the human mind as thresholds to other spatial dimensions.[44] Jung proposed that archaic signs derived from a universal unconscious. During his American exile, in collaboration with the poet Charles Olson, Cagli investigated the possibilities offered by Jungian archetypes as vehicles to convey his ideas.[45]

'The Metaphysical School'

Brown gravitated to still life for similar reasons: 'I like the discipline and restraint imposed by the few forms I allow myself to use', he stated. 'A strong objectivity is developed when the painter uses objects so frequently that they become almost abstraction.'[46] In postwar Italy, many artists used still life to experiment with abstraction, even as art historians retrospectively reconsidered the genre and its modern offshoots. Roberto Longhi, for example, presented Caravaggio in *Paragone* in 1950 as the progenitor of modern realism and the forerunner for subsequent still life painting by such artists as Édouard Manet.[47] Critics cited Caravaggio when they pointed to the juxtaposition of 'pools of effulgent light with areas of deep, mysterious

[41] *Ibid.*

[42] Perilli, Achille, 'Lettera al direttore' in *La Fiera Letteraria*, November 13, 1947; see Bedarida, Raffaele, *Corrado Cagli: La pittura, l'esilio, l'America (1938 – 1947),* Donzelli editore, Roma, 2018, pp. 3-28.

[43] Mezio, Alfredo, 'Gallerie: La Pittura e i Teologi', *Il Mondo*, May 15, 1950: 'Dall'America Cagli è tornato con la idea che la pittura deve mettersi in linea con i problemi posti nel modo modern dalle proposizioni di Einstein, dalla bomba atomica, e dalle ricerche della psicologia sperimentale'.

[44] Bedarida, *Corrado Cagli*, pp. 212-213.

[45] *Ibid*., p. 237; see Colombo, Davide, 'Geometria non-euclidea e quarta dimensione nello scambio intellettuale tra Charles Olson e Corrado Cagli' in *L'Uomo Nero* anno X, no. 10, December, 2013, pp. 167-197; and Castellani, Carlotta, 'Corrado Cagli e Charles Olson: la ricerca di nuovi linguaggi tra esoterismo e geometria non-euclidea', *Mitteilungen Des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* LVI, 2, 2014, pp. 215-235.

[46] Brown, Carlyle, 'artist's statement' in Baur, John I. H. (ed.), *The New Decade: 35 American Painters and Sculptors*, [exhibition. catalogue]. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1955, p. 17.

[47] Longhi, Roberto, 'Un momento importante nella storia della natura morta', *Paragone*, 1, Jan. 1950.

shadow' in Brown's works.[48] The response to Brown's show at L'Obelisco in 1954 noted obvious references to 17th century Flemish still life filtered through a superficial form of cubism.[49] In Rome Picasso-esque Cubism held sway for a time as Italian artists abstracted conventional motifs. Even those distancing themselves from Picasso's example, such as Forma I, elaborated a form of abstraction anchored in observable facts. Still life assumed an important role in their manifesto: 'in our work we use the forms of objective reality as means to attain objective abstract forms; we are interested in the form of the lemon, and not the lemon'.[50] Discerning abstract elements in his still lifes, critics also stressed that, in Italy, '[Brown] seems to have fallen under the spell of the metaphysical school', a 'predilection [that] has led to his portraying eggs, fish, and bits of broken crockery in unfamiliar contexts'.[51] In 1947, Brown quoted de Chirico in his diary: 'To become truly immortal a work of art must escape all human limits.''[52] Metaphysical figures, such as those in de Chirico's *Seer* and *Grand Metaphysician*, featured egg-shaped heads on the bodies of a tailor's dummy. This ambiguous egg motif carried over into still life paintings, including Carlo Carrà's *Still Life with Triangle* (1917), which guided Brown as he distilled figural narratives into concrete objects. Brown's subsequent, obsessive focus on still life motifs, endlessly reshuffled in different configurations, aligns him with the Italian metaphysical painters.

[48] Genauer, Emily, 'Art Week's Varied Fare: Stage Sets, Poetic Abstracts, Americans in Italy', *New York Herald Tribune*, (March 6, 1955).

[49] P.S., 'Mostre d'Arte: Carlyle Brown', *Messaggero*, (20 nov.1954): 'I suoi olii hanno evidenti riferimenti all'arte fiamminga del 'Seicento' interpretata da un artista che ha anche studiato, ed ammirato, il cubismo senza però impegnarsi a seguire scrupolosamente le postulate di tale maniera'

[50] Ingrams, Catherine, 'A Kind of Fissure: Forma (1947 – 1949)', *Object*, no. 20, 2018, p. 61, Ingrams cites: Carla Accardi, Ugo Attardi, Pietro Consagra, Piero Dorazio, Mino Guerrini, Achille Perilli, Antonio Sanfilippo, Giulio Turcato, *Forma I*, Roma, 1947.

[51] Preston, *Artists of Today*, s.p.

[52] CB, diary entry, Dec. 5, 1947.

Carlyle Brown, *The Red Cabinet*, 1954, oil on linen, 50 15/16 × 36 11/16 in. (129.4 × 93.2 cm). Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; purchase inv. 55.21.

Brown's appreciation of the *metafisici* was filtered through midcentury attempts to distinguish the Italian 'fantastic' artists from Bretonian Surrealism, which had its origins in France. Irene Brin and Gaspero del Corso, who showed Brown's works at L'Obelisco in 1954, were instrumental in reviving aspects of the *scuola metafisica* among 'The Fantasts', led by Argentine-born artist Léonor Fini.[53] Thanks to Peter Lindamood, a contributor to *View*, Fini and her circle were well known in the United States. In 1948, the Browns were invited to Lindamood's 'cluttered Victorian apartment' in New York where Brown studied works by Fini, Fabrizio Clerici, and Stanislao Lepri. Looking at a work by Fini, *Little Girl of the Island*, which he had liked 'very much in reproduction', he admired 'the face and the artifice of the eggshells'.[54] In April 1948, the Browns visited Fini her Paris studio, 'where [they] had a chance to see it and also the things she is working on now'.[55] In *Harper's Bazaar*, Lindamood wrote 'the works of [Fini and her circle] remind us that the fantastic, the elegant, the technically

[53] Schiaffini, Ilaria, 'L'arte sullo sfondo de L'Italia esplode', Claudia Palma (ed.) Irene Brin, *L'Italia esplode: Diario dell'anno 1952*, Roma: Viella, 2014, pp. 183-189; Tulino, Giulia, *La Galleria L'Obelisco: Surrealismo e Arte Fantastica 1943-1954*, Roma: De Luca, 2020, pp. 40-49; and Rosenberg, Alan, 'Carlyle Brown, Under the Influence of the Fantastic', *The Journal of Cornwall Contemporary Arts*, Spring 2021, p. 1.

[54] CB diary, in a previous entry, dated Jan. 21, Brown indicated that the night before he had attended the vernissage of Lepri's work at the Hugo Gallery: "what an amusing imagination. Very beautiful and sensitive drawings".

[55] MB à PT, April 1948.

polished, and the progressively traditional in painting have not disappeared'.[56] These are traits that critics singled out in Brown's Italian still lifes; he was 'a fine technician', his paintings and drawings 'carefully executed', and his process 'exacting and realistic'.[57] The stylistic qualities characteristic of the 'Fantasts' were also associated with Cagli's 1947 neo-metaphysical works, inspired by Carrà and Morandi. In them, Cagli used refined execution and pictorial precision to explore his spatial conundrums. As Raffaele Bedarida makes clear, in Italy, where all the components of Brown's transition came together, the fluid, metamorphic representation of space and temporal continuity, uniting concave and convex forms, offered a marked alternative to post-cubist 'discontinuity' and 'fragmentation'.[58]

Still life motifs by Giuseppe Viviani, another artist associated with Fini, reinterpreted those of his metaphysical forebears; one critic asserted 'there is the nostalgia of Chirico in his still lifes'.[59] At the Museum of Modern Art in 1949, Clerici and Viviani's graphic work was presented as 'a continuation of the native 'metaphysical' school'.[60] Brown took up elements in compositions by Viviani published in 1947 by Libero de Libero in several works.[61] *The Red Cabinet* incorporates the objects from Viviani's *Watermelon and Knife* into a crowded kitchen larder painted in smoldering red and amber tones. There, a large cutting knife appears stuck into the pink flesh of a half-carved watermelon.

Giuseppe Viviani, *Watermelon and Knife*, engraving, from Libero de Libero, *Sei incisioni di Giuseppe Viviani*, 1947

[56] Lindamood, Peter, 'Italian Painting Today', *Harper's Bazaar*, April 1946, p. 131 in Tulino, *La Galleria L'Obelisco: Surrealismo e Arte Fantastica*, p. 44.
[57] Burrows, Carlyle, 'The Gallery Goer: Flavor of Marsh', *Herald Tribune*, (1962).
[58] Bedarida, *Corrado Cagli*, p. 251-252.
[59] Riley, Maude, 'Italian Surrealists', *Arts Digest*, March 1945 in Tulino, *La Galleria L'Obelisco: Surrealismo e Arte Fantastica*, p. 46.
[60] James Thrall Soby and Alfred H. Barr, Jr. *Twentieth-Century Italian Art*, [exhibition catalogue], Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1949, p. 31.
[61] Libero de Libero, *Sei incisioni di Giuseppe Viviani*, Milano: All'Insegno del Pesce d'Oro, 1947. See, for example, Brown's *Table with Figs and Lemons* (1952): www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/488685

‘Powers of luminous design’

In the synthesis of his surrealist origins and metaphysical aspirations, Brown suffused compositions in otherworldly, shimmering light. Emanating from within his objects, the light derives, in part, from the tutelage of both Tchelitchew and Graves. The two artists exerted strong, at times contradictory, influences over Brown as he moved from the figure toward still life, but they steered Brown to trust his ‘inner eye’. Radiant moonlight illuminated Graves’ mystical visions exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art in 1942. In the series of gouaches, he sought to go beyond ‘the phenomena of the external world’, to paint ‘notations of its essences’.[62] When these works were shown again in 1944, Clement Greenberg, reviewing Soby’s exhibition *Romantic Painting in America*, called Graves a ‘‘fantasist.’’[63] In a public acknowledgment of Graves’ counsel, Brown exhibited his portrait of the artist in 1950, the same show in which he debuted the still lifes.[64] On a visit to Brown in his studio outside Siena in 1949, where the portrait was painted, Graves had noted a ‘staggering change and development from the work at West Dean’. As Brown tells it, Graves remarked that ‘instead of being interested in the glow of jewels or a light, I am now interested in ‘glow,’ the abstract frame that lies behind all surface experiences.[65] The ‘jewels’ refer to the grotto of crystals surrounding James’ head in the portrait, which Tchelitchew had counseled Brown to make more indistinct. In other words, inner light, or ‘glow’, emerged as a means to get beyond appearances to the fourth dimension.

Herbert List, *Moving Eggs (Bewegliche Eier)*, Unknown Location, 1952.
Carlyle Brown Archive, courtesy Joseph Cardas

[62] See Graves, Morris, artist’s statement in Miller, Dorothy (ed.), *Americans, 1942: 18 Artists from 9 States*, [exhibition catalogue], Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1942, p. 51.
[63] Greenberg, Clement, ‘Review of the Whitney Annual and the Exhibition Romantic Painting in America’, *The Nation* (Jan. 1, 1944), reprinted in Greenberg, Clement, *The Collected Essays and Criticism*, Vol. I, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1986, p. 174.
[64] *Carlyle Brown*, Catherine Viviano Gallery, [Catalogue], New York, Nov. 14 – Dec. 2, 1950. Fig. 22. *Portrait of Morris Graves*, gouache, lent by Morris Graves.
[65] CB Journal, Dec. 20, 1949.

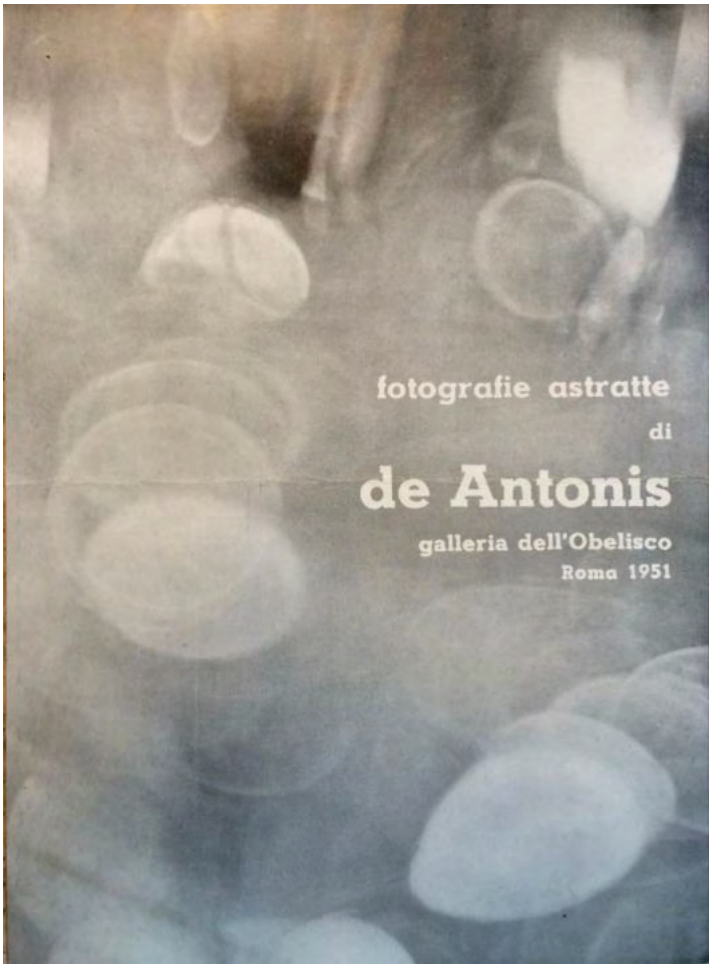
In 1950, Brown was not the only artist with links to the surrealists employing light to convey the fourth dimension. Roberto Sebastián Matta, who moved to Rome in 1949 after his ex-communication by Breton, exhibited a series of luminous canvases in a show entitled *Fosforesciamo* at L'Obelisco.[66] Authorized by one critic's observation that 'Brown's amalgam is free of any exclusive attachments', we can also look beyond painting to grasp the role of light in the still lifes.[67] Among other sources, Surrealist still life photography provided a guide to defining objects principally in terms of their uncanny, luminous presence. Man Ray, in his Rayographs, placed objects on or above photosensitive paper so that the images were created directly by light alone. In 1952, on a visit to Ischia, German photographer Herbert List gave Brown a photograph of 'moving eggs' on a plate. It testifies to conversations between the two men beginning in 1950 when List photographed Brown in his studio in Rome. Like the eggs in Brown's *Plate of Eggs #1*, List's radiant, pulsing ellipses – products of a deliberate double exposure – echo the Rayographs, Tchelitchew's early still lifes, and List's own metaphysical photography.

They may also refer to an exhibition of abstract photographs by Pasquale de Antonis at L'Obelisco in 1951 presented by Brown's friend Cagli.[68] Discussing the close dialogue between abstract painting and photography in Rome in the late 1940s, Cagli underlined de Antonis' exploration of the fourth dimension. After his return from the United States, Cagli synthesized aspects of post-surrealist abstraction by engaging indexical processes similar to those used by Man Ray to represent a spatial consciousness transcending observable reality. It is likely that Brown's final leap from surrealist allegory towards a radiant metaphysical still life emerged out of conversations with Cagli and List in 1950. His still lifes were the result of two parallel developments in his work that converged in Rome: the progressive distillation of narrative into Jungian archetypes and the representation of what Brown called 'glow': the 'abstract frame behind all appearances'.

[66] *Matta: Fosforesciamo, Erosamente, Castinando, Besuriamente, Veltrando*, Galleria dell'Obelisco, Roma, Jan. 12, 1950. On Matta in Rome, see Salaris, Claudia, ed. *Matta. Un Surrealista a Roma* [Catalogue], Rome, 2012. In 1954, Parker Tyler, Tchlitchew's biographer, reflected on the different ways in which Matta and Tchelitchew depicted "the vortex." See Tyler, Parker, "Two Americans in Rome," *Arts Digest* 28 (juillet 1954), p. 12.

[67] Preston, *Artists of Today*, s.p. on Cagli's eclecticism, and the co-existence of different strategies in his work, see Bedarida, *Corrado Cagli*, 58-59.

[68] Schiaffini, Ilaria, 'La Fotografia alla Galleria L'Obelisco: Documentazione, Comunicazione, Esposizione', (ed.) *Archivi Fotografici e Arte Contemporanea in Italia: Indagare, Interpretare, Inventare*, Scalpendi, Milano, 2019, pp. 90-91. See also Schiaffini, Ilaria, 'La mostra Fotografie astratte alla galleria L'Obelisco nel 1951: il sodalizio fra Pasquale de Antonis e Corrado Cagli', *Rivista di Studi di Fotografia*, n. 6, 2017, pp. 28-49.



Pasquale de Antonis, *Fotografie astratte*, catalogue cover, Galleria dell'Obelisco, 1951.

The cover of the catalogue to de Antonis' exhibition presents a black and white photograph with ghostly, overlapping ovoid shapes. Part of a series depicting 'light in movement [luci in movimento]', the echoing elliptical forms, in varying degrees of focus and brightness, recall the transparent eggs and their uncanny shadows in *Plate of Eggs #1*. De Antonis' abstracted forms simultaneously suggest cosmic expanse and micro-cellular organisms.[69] As early as 1946, Brown had been interested in the 'molecular construction of the universe'.[70] Cagli almost certainly had Brown's still lifes in mind when he wrote his text presenting de Antonis' work. An homage to Brown's eggs as a manifestation of this theory, List's photograph, shot with a hand-held camera, brought de Antonis' luminous abstractions back to earth, reconnecting them to physical objects. In Brown, List found a kindred spirit who sought to convey on canvas what List aspired to in photography, a hybrid mix between objective fact and fantasy, what List called his 'secret marriages' between photographs and paintings by surrealists and the *scuola metafisica*. [71] They were united in the effort to depict objects 'with their real presence and their mystical charge'.[72] As Brown boiled down narrative

[69] Schiaffini, *La mostra Fotografie astratte*, p. 31.

[70] CB, Journal, Feb. 10, 1946.

[71] For the surrealist and metaphysical aspects of List's art, see Gunter Metken, 'Fotografia Metafisica: Pictures, Symbols, Correlations', in Max Scheler and Matthias Harding [eds.], *Herbert List: The Monograph*, Munich, Schirmer-Mosel, 2000, pp. 31-40.

[72] *Ibid.*

into still life, List's photographs – and the inherent indexical properties of photography – showed him how to convey Tchelitchew's essences 'in nature'.

Expanding Brown's visual horizons deepens our understanding of Rome as a laboratory for surrealist and neo-romantic ideas as they cross-fertilized with other forms, techniques, and genres in the postwar period. Brown surely understood how light enhanced the mystery in works by the metaphysical painters. In the catalogue to *Twentieth Century Italian Art*, Soby maintains: 'One of the cardinal points of emphasis in *pittura metafisica* was atmosphere that is the manipulation of texture, light and form to create a mysterious ambiance for the enigmatic objects.' Differentiating between de Chirico and Carrà, Soby states that 'Carrà's light is often an incandescence, a soft inner radiance, supplemented by glowing reflections on the surface'. Instead, de Chirico's objects 'do not suggest translucence, as with Carrà, but are quite opaquely painted and thrown into relief by vigorous cross lighting'.[73] In other words, Brown adopted a method of illuminating his objects from within associated with Carrà's technique. One critic praised Brown's 'strange presences, mystical private emblems caught in a net of thoughtfully focused submarine light'.[74]

Il Professore

From his perch in Grottaferrata, and then Frascati, overlooking Rome, Tchelitchew dispensed advice liberally, even when Brown didn't ask for it.[75] Friends and rivals talked about Tchelitchew's ambition 'to be hailed as a great metaphysical thinker of all ages.'[76] Despite occasional friction, Tchelitchew and Brown were pursuing similar goals, harnessing light as an unmediated medium, an indexical trace of meta-reality. Tchelitchew's paintings in Rome stripped away descriptive detail, reducing his compositions to isolated ovoid shapes defined entirely in interlocking webs of illuminated lines. Tchelitchew described these works as 'knitting threads of light'.[77]

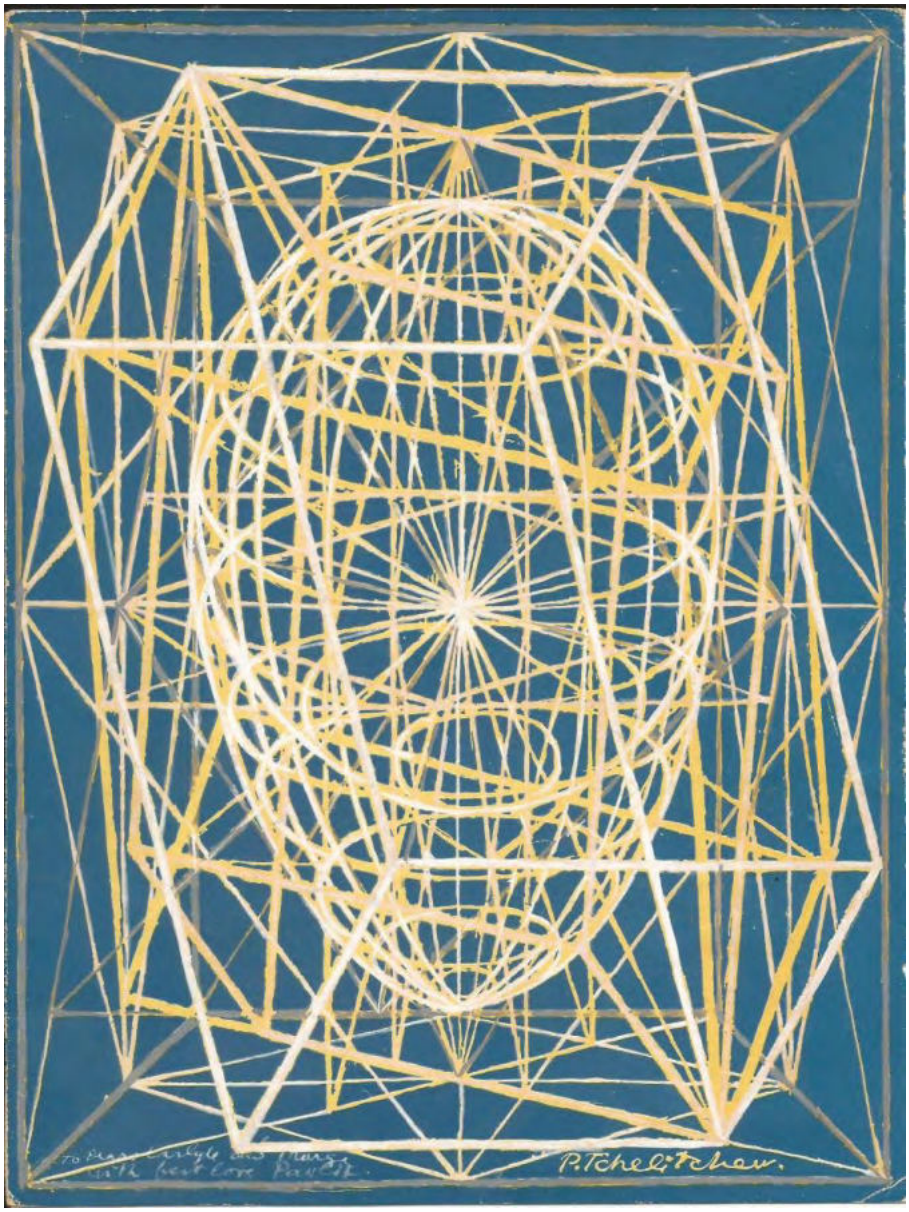
[73] Soby, *Twentieth Century*, p. 22.

[74] Preston, *Artists of Today*, s.p.

[75] Tyler, Parker, *The Divine Comedy of Pavel Tchelitchew*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967, p. 484. "When displeased with Brown, [Tchelitchew] does not hesitate to give him a violent scolding and the younger man does not always take it lying down".

[76] Janet Flanner to Natalia Danesi Murray, (July 8, 1950), in Murray, Natalia Danesi, (ed.) *Darlinghissima: Letters to a Friend*, New York: Random House, 1985, p. 129. Flanner repeats a comment made by Eugene Berman.

[77] Ford, Charles Henri, *Water from a Bucket: A Diary 1948 – 1957*, New York: Turtle Point Press, 2001, p. 165.



Pavel Tchelitchew, *Untitled gouache*, c. 1955. Carlyle Brown Archive, Courtesy Joseph Cardas

The convergences between Brown and Tchelitchew in Rome were the logical conclusion of their discussions about the egg in New York in 1946. In his decisive shift to still life, Brown refined complex figurative compositions into elemental forms defined by glowing inner light. Heeding Tchelitchew's advice to make James' head more indefinite, Brown abandoned likeness completely and explored the abstract qualities of the egg. In his 'Celestial Physiognomies', Tchelitchew – returning to the head-egg relationship to explore simultaneity and reversibility – painted the same objects as Brown: chestnuts, oranges, eggs, and vases. Tchelitchew expressed their instability as spatial-temporal constructs in terms of light alone. Testifying to these affinities, Tchelitchew gave Brown a gouache of an egg-shaped tracery of white and yellow lines against a blue background. It is closely related to the works, including *Apoteosi*, *Castagna*, and *Il vaso d'oro*, from Tchelitchew's show at L'Obelisco in 1955. List was clearly in on the game; his photograph of the moving eggs on a plate underlines the way all three artists used light to explore abstract metaphysical realms. List's eggs moreover point

to how they conceived of the egg as the result of a formal process of distillation, an archetype uniquely capable of conveying multiple points of view as a gateway to the infinite.

FROM NEW YORK TO ROME: EUGENE BERMAN'S 'JOURNEY TO ITALY' BETWEEN REALITY AND IMAGINATION

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According to birth records, Eugene Berman was born in Russia in 1899, but I believe he was actually born in Italy, at the time of his first trips to Vicenza or Venice, where he met Bérard and Leonid, Palladio and Serlio. This encounter allowed him to discover the first seed of himself and he began to shape his Italian style, which isolated him among his contemporaries but that has also given us unforgettable canvases and stupendous drawings from 1928 to the present day.[1]

The words written by Corrado Cagli in 1949 for the first Italian solo exhibition of Eugene Berman (Petersburg, 1899 – Rome, 1972) confirm his deep-rooted interest in the artistic culture of Italy. This interest dates to his early studies in St. Petersburg, where the Italian spirit transpired already in his neo-Palladian architecture, and developed in Paris in the 1920s in the footsteps of Giorgio de Chirico. Here he made his debut in 1926, together with Christian Bérard, Pavel Tchelitchew and others – the "neo-Romantic" or "neo-humanist" group, as it was baptised by Waldemar George. In his American period, which began in 1935, the fantastical element characterising the revival of pictorial tradition was emphasised thanks to the critical contribution of James Thrall Soby, who saw in "neo-Romanticism" a tendency parallel to Surrealism, which had also originated in metaphysics (*After Picasso*, 1935). Soby's association with John Everett Austin and Julien Levy was at the origin of Berman's first institutional and, above all, commercial success. In the United States he launched a successful career as a set and costume designer for which he is still best known today.

Wishing to reconnect with his primary source of inspiration, the great civilisations of the past, from antiquity to the Renaissance and the Baroque, and to consolidate his career as an artist, Berman intensified his collaboration with Italy starting with his debut in 1949 at L'Obelisco gallery in Rome, where he settled definitively following the suicide of his wife Oma Munson in 1955.

The aim of this contribution is, on the one hand, to reconstruct the beginnings of his Italian period, which is still little explored, and, on the other, to investigate the symbolic meanings of his "journey to Italy", taking as a case study his lithographs published in the homonymous book (*Viaggio in Italia*), which came out in 1951 with a text by Raffaele Carrieri. The survey of Berman's exhibitions and of his main artistic points of reference in his first Italian period allow us to include him among the Surrealist and neo-Romantic wave that swept through Rome after the Second World War, of which L'Obelisco gallery was the main catalyst.

From New York to Rome: the first solo exhibition at L'Obelisco gallery (1949)

Berman's Italian debut was carefully planned, as a letter to Fabrizio Clerici dated May 1949 reveals: "It may be ridiculous at my ripe old age – however the truth is that, although I feel spiritually Italian, I have never exhibited in Italy (apart from two or three paintings exhibited at a Biennale in Venice

[1] Cagli, Corrado, preface,*Prima mostra in Italia di Eugene Berman*, Galleria L'Obelisco, 1949. I would like to thank Giulia Tulino for her advice and research support. My sincere gratitude for allowing me to access unpublished materials in their possession goes to: Eros Renzetti of the Fabrizio Clerici Archive in Rome, Jaja Indrimi of La Centrale dell'Arte of Rome, where part of L'Obelisco collection is held, and Giuseppe Briguglio of the Corrado Cagli Archive in Rome. Also, I am really grateful to Sebastian Hierl, Drue Heinz Librarian and Lavinia Ciuffa, acting curator of the Photographic Archive of the American Academy in Rome, for allowing me to consult part of the valuable Eugene Berman collection preserved there; Claudia Palma, responsible of the Archives of the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Roma, where the other part of L'Obelisco collection is stored; the Oral History Program - Smithsonian Archives of American Art for kindly providing the interview with Berman; Irene Caravita for her help in finding Berman's *Journey to Italy*.

around 1930 in a French section presented by Waldemar George). I feel a bit like an old singer in her fifties who finally makes her début on a larger stage."[2]

Berman refers to his participation in the *Appels d'Italie* room of the Venetian exhibition, where Waldemar George had included the group of neo-humanist painters among the *Italiens de Paris* as part of a cultural and political plan to support Fascism. In Berman's opinion, his participation was not significant, partly because it was instrumental in a critical project that was foreign to him, and partly because of the heterogeneous nature of the group of painters who had made their debut at Druet's in 1926. Berman's "journey to Italy" coincided with his need to seek recognition for his artistic career. His 1941 retrospective exhibition in Boston, the only one held during his lifetime, had come too soon and had left him feeling unsatisfied. The longed-for reunion with his ideal homeland had the flavour of a life choice: living in the places that inspired his art, evoking remote places and characters through the vestiges of the past, would lead him to project his own daily life into a dimension suspended between reality and imagination. In the Doria Pamphili palace, where he settled in 1958, he set up his famous collection of Greek, Egyptian, Etruscan and pre-Columbian sculptures in a sort of *Wunderkammer*.[3] His solo exhibition, which opened at L'Obelisco in May 1949 [*Fig. 1*], was introduced by a text by Cagli.

Fig.1 - Catalogue of *Eugene Berman's first Italian Exhibition*, L'Obelisco Gallery, May-June 1949

Having returned to Italy a year before, after a long period spent in the US, Cagli had displayed his works at the Galleria del Corso in October 1948, with an exhibition titled *Disegni e monotipi* (Drawings and monotypes). There were many points of contact between Berman and Cagli: in addition to their collaboration on ballets (with choreographer Balanchine and the impresario Lincoln Kirkstein), both had connections with Julien Levy's gallery, where Berman exhibited regularly from 1936 to the mid-1940s and where Cagli also held a solo exhibition in 1940. The Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, directed by John Everett Austin, which had already exhibited Berman in 1931, hosted a solo exhibition of Cagli's drawings ten years later.[4] Cagli's admiration for the Russian

[2] Eugene Berman to Fabrizio Clerici, May 2nd, 1949 (Fabrizio Clerici Archive, Roma, henceforth FCA).
[3] See Rosamond Bernier, "L'appartement d'Eugène Berman et ses objets", in *L'Oeil*, 1965, 124, pp.49-55; *Egizi Etruschi: da Eugene Berman allo scarabeo dorato*, Simona Carosi, Massimiliana Pozzi Battaglia, Alfonsina Russo (eds.), [exhibition catalogue], Rome, Gangemi 2017.
[4] Fabio Benzi underlines the influence the neo-Romantic circle had on Cagli, an influence favoured by the prevalent homosexual connotation of the group, and concludes that Berman was a sort of protector and "maieute" of Cagli in the

painter is evidenced by the highly laudatory tone of his text on the latter, which sounds like a heartfelt tribute to "a painter whose life is a continuous homage to the sources of great Italian painting".[5]

In Rome, Berman exhibited many recent works inspired by Mexican themes, created following two extended stays in the country that had been financed by Guggenheim Fellowships (awarded in 1946 and 1948). The titles of other works contained references to the Italy of the past, mainly filtered through art, architecture, history and literature – *Scena per un balletto immaginario (Rinaldo e Armida)*; *Spring music for Isabella d'Este, Ariadne* – together with memories of travel – *Monumento equestre (ricordo di Venezia)*, *Paesage napolitain*, *Souvenir de Vicenza*). The projection into a mythical past, observed with a loving and melancholic gaze, was reinforced by the 15th, 16th, 17th and 19th century frames, selected by gallery owners for the occasion. The exhibition went well: it was seen by many visitors from the art scene and fifteen drawings were sold.[6]

The Galleria del Corso was to remain a privileged point of reference for Berman at least until the late 1950s: not only because it was the main centre for the promotion of Surrealist and neo-Romantic artists in Italy, but also because it based part of its business on intense commercial exchanges with the United States.[7] In December 1955, Berman again asked Gaspero del Corso to display the costumes and sets he designed for Mozart's *Così fan tutte*,[8] which was to be staged at the Piccolo Teatro della Scala in Milan under the direction of Guido Cantelli on 27 January 1956. Del Corso, however, directed him to Sagittarius, a sort of satellite gallery of L'Obelisco, directed by Princess Stefanella Sciarra in Rome and in New York by Count Lanfranco Rasponi. Encouraged by his friend Clerici's debut a month earlier at the American venue**,** Berman inaugurated his exhibition at the Roman one on 5 December. Despite the success of the sales, when the exhibition was over, Berman told Gaspero he was disappointed by the choices made by Sagittarius, which he accused of being a nice, unprofessionally run boutique. Most of the sales had taken place before the opening thanks to his personal connections: nothing like his first exhibition at L'Obelisco.[9]

At the latter Berman held two more solo exhibitions: in 1959, *Disegni, guazzi, tempere e inchiostri*, while at the same time the Galleria San Marco exhibited his larger paintings, and in 1961 *Acquarelli, caseine, disegni, guazzi, inchiostri, pastelli, tecnichemiste*. He also introduced artists to the del Corso such as his brother Leonid (who exhibited in April 1954) and the young Leonardo Cremonini (who exhibited in December 1954), whose works he had just presented at the Pearls Gallery in Beverly Hills.[10] He also wrote the text for Vera Stravinsky's solo exhibition in November 1958. Berman was a good friend of Vera and Igor Stravinsky, the three shared Russian origins, and Berman collaborated professionally with the great composer: in 1949, the couple hosted Berman and Oma Munson's wedding ceremony at their Beverly Hills villa. Berman also had close relations with the American community living in Rome, who supported him when he decided to settle in the capital.

US. See Fabio Benzi (ed.), *Corrado Cagli e il suo magistero. Mezzo secolo di arte italiana dalla Scuola Romana all'astrattismo*, [exhibition catalogue], Pordenone, Milan: Skirá 2010, pp. 37-38. Bedarida sees a sort of elective brotherhood with Berman in some of Cagli's studies of 1947 for the sets of Darius Milhaud's *Suite Francaise*. Raffaele Bedarida, *Corrado Cagli. La pittura, l'esilio, l'America (1938-1947*), Rome: Donzelli 2018, p. 282.

[5] Cagli, preface to *Prima mostra in Italia di Eugene Berman*, cit.

[6] Berman to Gaspero del Corso, undated (but December 1955 or January 1956), in La Centrale dell'Arte Archive, Rome (henceforth CAA).

[7] I. Schiaffini, "La Galleria L'Obelisco e il mercato americano dal dopoguerraalla fine degli anni Cinquanta", in *Irene Brin, Gaspero del Corso e la galleria L'Obelisco*, edited by V. C. Caratozzolo, I. Schiaffini, C. Zambianchi, Rome, 2018, pp.125-144 and "It's A Roman Holiday For Artists: The American Artists Of L'obelisco After World War II" in *Methodologies of Exchange: MoMA's "Twentieth-Century Italian Art"* (1949), "Italian Modern Art", Issue 3, January 2020 (https://www.italianmodernart.org/journal/issues/methodologies-of-exchange-momas-twentieth-century-italian-art-1949/)

[8] Berman to del Corso, November 11th, 1955 (CAA).

[9] Berman to del Corso, undated (but December 1955 or January 1956; CAA). Among his art collectors he mentions Hugh Chisholm, Piero Mele and L. P. Roberts. On the contrary, "at the Obelisk about fifteen drawings were sold to different people and I know that the exhibition was seen by many different people, as was the one in Venice".

[10] It is Berman who suggests to Gaspero to organise an exhibition of Cremonini. Berman judged Cremonini to be "the best of the young Italians". (Berman to del Corso, July 25th, 1954, CAA). The Roman exhibition opened on December 2nd, 1954.

Among these acquaintances was Lawrence Roberts, a friend of del Corso's and director of the American Academy, which granted Berman a resident fellowship in 1959.

Berman and Clerici between New York and Rome

Based on this picture, Cagli's decision to introduce Berman's first solo exhibition in Italy would seem entirely consequential and natural. One might even speculate that it was Cagli who introduced Berman to the del Corso. However, it was not him, but a little more than thirty-year-old student of Savinio's, also active as a theatrical set designer and gaining increasing visibility on the American market: Fabrizio Clerici.

In a letter dated 9 May 1949, Berman congratulated Clerici for writing the introduction to his first exhibition in Italy: "And as this whole idea came from you (to organise this exhibition at L'Obelisco gallery), I am very pleased that it is also you who are introducing me to the Roman public and acting as my patron in Italy!".[11] The first contact between the two dated to a few months earlier, and took place thanks to Ramy Alexander, who remained one of Berman's privileged points of contact with Italy and with Clerici.[12]

Ramy Alexander was the assistant of Max Ascoli, a philosopher of law and Jewish anti-fascist forced into exile in the United States. Ascoli was involved in promoting Italian craftsmanship in the United States together with Carlo Ludovico Ragghianti. In 1945, Ragghianti set up the Commission for the Distribution of Crafts Materials (Cadma) in Florence, in partnership with Handicraft Development Inc., which was directed in New York by Max Ascoli. In 1948, Cadma was taken over by the National Craftsman Association, based in Rome, and Ramy Alexander was appointed vice-director. Among their various famous promotional initiatives were *Handicrafts as a Fine Art in Italy*, curated in NY in 1947 and *Italy at work. Her Renaissance in Design today*, a major exhibition that opened at the Brooklyn Museum in New York on 29 November 1950 and toured for three years.[13]

Going back to the contact between Berman and Clerici, on March 1, 1949, Ramy Alexander wrote Clerici a postcard from Hollywood in which he enthusiastically welcomed his success. This esteem would be confirmed by the fact that a year later Clerici was entrusted with one of the five environmental productions around which the above-mentioned *Italy at work* revolved. Alongside Clerici and the 30-year-old Roberto Menghi there were much more established architects such as Giò Ponti, Luigi Cosenza and Carlo Mollino. In the postcard, Berman added a brief comment: "Dear Clerici, myself and Ramy always talk about you and your works and scenes. I hope to meet you one of these days and see your work, and I want to come back to Italy… Best wishes for more success and many greetings".[14]

In fact, over the past year Clerici had become very successful as a stage designer: in the autumn of 1948 he had signed his first collaboration with the Hungarian choreographer Aurel Milloss for the European premiere of Stravinsky's *Orpheus*, staged at the Teatro La Fenice in Venice that autumn, followed by two commissions for the Teatro di Roma at the beginning of the following year, Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* and Benjamin Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia*. Even more sensational, however, was his success as an artist in the United States: the exhibition at Julien Levy's in March 1945 laid the groundwork for his inclusion in the 1948 *XX Century Italian Art* exhibition at the

[11] Berman to Clerici, May 9th, 1949 (FCA).

[12] In the correspondence between Berman and Clerici Ramy is repeatedly mentioned over the years, and with him Iolanda, described as "the mother of all". I have not yet been able to identify the latter. Other common acquaintances mentioned are Raffaele Carrieri and Federico Veneziani, ex-husband of Leonor Fini. Berman dedicated to Federico his *Journey to Italy*.

[13] Claudia Marfella, "Italy at Work: Her Renaissance in Design Today, New York 1950*",* in *Annali delle Arti e degli Archivi, Pittura, Scultura, Architettura, Accademia di San Luca*, 1 | 2015 pp.41-48. The exhibition was curated by Charles Nagel, Meyric R. Rogers, Walter Dorwin Teague and Ramy Alexander, who in the previous three months carried out an extensive reconnaissance in Italy (ivi, p.44). See also: Elena, Dellapiana, "Italy Creates. Gio Ponti, America And The Shaping Of The Italian Design Image", in *Res Mobilis*, 7, n.8, 2018, pp. 20-48.

[14] Ramy Alexander and Berman to Clerici, 1 March, 1949 (FCA).

MoMA as one of the four "Fantast" artists.[15] Clerici's art began with a visionary approach inspired by Alberto Savinio, his mentor in Milan before the war, which was enriched by his encounters with de Chirico, Leonor Fini and Salvador Dalí (he had met the latter personally at the 1948 Biennale). These ingredients were perfectly in line with the Surrealist and Neo-Romantic orientations of Julien Levy on the one hand and James Thrall Soby on the other, to whom both Clerici and Berman owed their American success.

Berman and Clerici shared a number of passions throughout their lives: an interest in architecture and decoration, which influenced their work as theatre costume and set designers, a metaphysical approach to the past, a fascination with ruins and a love of travel.[16] An important common acquaintance of Berman and Clerici was Leonor Fini,[17] a close associate of Clerici during her brief Roman stay in 1945. Four years later Soby defined her as the promoter of the school of Roman "Fantasts". In the autumn of 1936, Fini and de Chirico found themselves living in New York in the same building that Berman had rented from Alexander Iolas near the Julien Levy Gallery.[18] It was here that de Chirico exhibited for the first time in October[19] and Leonor Fini in November: shortly after both were included in Alfred Barr's seminal historical retrospective of Surrealism at the MoMA, *Fantastic Art Dada, Surrealism*, which opened in December 1936.

The personal relationships that also revolved around exhibitions and commercial aspects confirms the coherence of an international neo-Romantic genealogy on both sides of the Atlantic, a trend born in the United States around de Chirico's legacy. This critical approach, structured during the 1930s thanks to the encounter of the "Harvard modernists" (Austin, Levy and Soby), was echoed by the "Fantasts" group, as they were called by Soby and Barr on the occasion of the *XXth Century Italian Art* exhibition held at the MoMA in 1949. At this point, in Italy the Galleria L'Obelisco was already playing a major role. Until the middle of the following decade, it was the main Italian reference point for the neo-Romantic and Surrealist painters exported from the United States.

Against Modernism

On 26 May 1949 Bermans wrote to Clerici saying he understood the various considerations that had led "them" (presumably the gallery owners, in agreement with Clerici) to entrust Cagli instead of Clerici with the text presenting his exhibition, as was the original intention: "Corrado has always been a very good friend of mine; I am fond of him and greatly admire him, and they have decided that it is better this way – I am sure they did the right thing!"[20] However, he raised an objection, which he called ideological: "Corrado has moved away from our world and has turned towards an aesthetics

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[15] G. Tulino, "Alberto Savinio, Critic and Artist: A New Reading Of Fantastic And Post-Metaphysic Art In Relation To Surrealism Between Rome And New York (1943–46)", in *Italian Modern Art*, 2, July 2019 (https://www.italianmodernart.org/journal/articles/alberto-savinio-critic-and-artist-a-new-reading-of-fantastic-and-post-metafisica-art-in-relation-to-surrealism-between-rome-and-new-york-1943-46/); Tulino, *La Galleria L'Obelisco. Surrealismo e arte fantastica, 1943-1954*, Roma: De Luca 2020, pp. 41-47; Schiaffini, "La Galleria L'Obelisco e il mercato americano", in *Irene Brin, Gaspero del Corso e la galleria L'Obelisco*, eds. Caratozzolo, Schiaffini, Zambianchi, pp. 127-128.

[16] *Fabrizio Clerici nel centenario della nascita 1913-1993*, Fabrizio Clerici Archive (ed.), Milano, Skirá, pp. 311-318.

[17] In the correspondence between Fini and Pieyre de Mandiargues there are frequent references to Berman ranging from 1935 to 1944 (Leonor Fini, André Pieyre de Mandiargues, *L'ombreportée*. *Correspondance 1932-1945*, Paris, Gallimard - Editions Le promeneur, 2010). I thank Alessandro Nigro for the information.

[18] See "Oral history interview with Brooks Jackson by Paul Cummings", Mar. 22th, 1976, Smithsonian Archives of American Art (https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-brooks-jackson-12916); "De Chirico and Soby", in *De Chirico and America*, ed. Emily Braun, [exhibition catalogue], Torino: Allemandi 1996, p.116-117. Karen Kundig questions the reliability of these memories in "Giorgio de Chirico, Surrealism and Neoromanticism", in *De Chirico and America*, p. 109.

[19] K. Robinson, pp. 313-314.

[20] Berman to Clerici, May 26th, 1949 (FCA).

of formal modernism, which has long been surpassed." He also referred to "the difference between myself and Corrado concerning ideas and feelings."[21]

It is easy to image what the considerations in favour of Cagli were: the artist, already a leading figure in the Italian artistic culture of the 1930s, had returned after his exile and become a point of reference in Rome for new non-figurative research. While he turned his personal artistic research towards abstraction, with the cellular motifs created in 1949 and the automatic prints of surrealist inspiration, he also presented himself as a sensitive interpreter of the new informal explorations in Rome: it was Cagli who presented the first abstract chains of signs by Capogrossi, who had already been his companion during the phase of plastic primordialism, at the Galleria del Secolo in Rome in January 1950. It was precisely Cagli's modernist turn, which was moreover discontinuous and never definitive, that did not convince Berman, who remained throughout his life loyal to a figurative and metaphysical vocabulary.

His claim to be "out of synch" and unclassifiable, but immersed in his own dream world on the ruins of a vanished classicism, led Berman to reaffirm his distance from modernist research. In November 1955, Berman offered his solidarity to Clerici – who complained of an unsatisfactory personal success – and spoke against the urge "to label everything as avant-garde, use abstract formulas, etc., etc." on the part of many museums, collectors and so-called intellectuals. In support of this, he cited a personal example involving his own American critical patron and "dear and faithful friend": James Thrall Soby. Soby had been his first major client, met through Levy: he had bought 20-30 paintings,[22] and was a loyal friend, at least until the early 1940s.In fact,Soby and Levy had a commercial partnership to support the neo-Romantic painter Eugene Berman, from 1932 to 1943[23].

Now things had changed**,** continued Berman in 1955: "He no longer invites me to his home, he doesn't answer letters or questions that are merely technical and professional and he keeps my paintings, except for maybe one or two, in the cellar! The Museum of Modern Art, which has five or six of my paintings (all given to the Museum as gifts – none were purchased!) has only one on display. It didn't even want to accept the last one, also given by Soby several years ago, and a big argument almost broke out!"[24] In 1972 Berman attributed this betrayal to the influence of Alfred Barr.[25] The neo-Romantics were less fortunate in the United States after the Second World War, and this reflected the progressive affirmation of Abstract Expressionism. The modernist critic of reference, Clement Greenberg, for instance, did not appreciate such an "impure" art for stylistic reasons, as it was grounded in figuration and, moreover, had a citationist nature; he also openly railed against the neo-Romantics' connections to fashion and high society, not to speak out against the open homosexuality of some of them (Bérard and Tchelitchew).[26]

The situation in Italy was somewhat different, here the debates between realists and abstractionists were intertwined with the establishment of different lines of informal research in the various Italian centres. Due to its eclectic nature, L'Obelisco was the first gallery in Italy to intercept this neo-Romantic and Surrealist wave and revival, and to support, until the end of the 1950s, a series

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[21] Ibidem.

[22] Berman to Clerici, November 11th, 1955 (FCA). See also: "Oral history interview with Eugene Berman by Paul Cummings", June 3-October 23, 1972, American Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC (henceforth OHI).

[23] Oliver Tostmann, "Collecting Modern Art in Hartford: James Thrall Soby, the Wadsworth Atheneum, and Surrealism", in *Networking Surrealism in the USA. Agents, Artists, and the Market*, Julia Drost, Fabrice Flahutez, Anne Helmreich, Martin Schieder (eds.), Paris-Heidelberg: DFK-Universität Heidelberg, 2019, pp. 87-87. Tostmann asserts that according to Lynes, Soby had a 49 percent business interest in the Levy Gallery, "but stayed in the background." When Soby became a member of the Advisory Committee at MoMA in 1940, he sold his interest back to Levy (ivi, note 24, p. 84).

[24] Berman to Fabrizio Clerici, November 26th,.1955

[25] OHI, October 20th and October 23th, 1972.

[26] Michael Duncan (ed.), *High Drama. Eugene Berman and the Legacy Of The Melancholic Sublime* [exhibition catalogue], San Antonio, Texas, The McNay Art Museum, New York and Manchester: Hudson Hill Press, p.10.

of researches into Italian fantastic art which, for various reasons, both cultural and political, had not succeeded in establishing itself in Italy before the war.[27]

Berman's participation therefore seems entirely consequential. In his self-presentation for his solo exhibition at L'Obelisco in 1959,[28] the Russian artist nevertheless aimed to clarify his individual position, rejecting all the labels that had been attributed to him at different times: neo-Humanist, neo-Romantic, surrealist. In defining himself as an Italian Stendhal – or, rather, Roman, Venetian, Vicentine or Neapolitan - Berman was also defending both the great art of the past and its "poetic destruction" for the purpose of a new creation. Like the great architects of the past, Berman defined himself as an "inventor". However, he also emphasised that he was an artist of the 20th century: whereby, for example, his "linear composition was no less precise, calculated and controlled than an abstract painting by Mondrian", with reference to his painting of the ruins of Paestum; also, his "attention to matter, texture, organic and clay-like modelling is very similar to the search for matter and texture of young French and Italian painters", visible in his views of coliseums, amphitheatres and other more recent paintings.[29] One of the critics most sensitive to a fantastic and visionary tendency in Italy, and Berman's first reference in Italy, Raffaele Carrieri, had indeed grasped this element.

From Reality to Imagination: The Illustrations for Raffaele Carrieri's *Viaggio in Italia*

While his exhibitions in Italy remained limited due to logistical difficulties until he moved to Rome in 1958[30], Berman worked in parallel on a number of editorial projects. His privileged interlocutor was Raffaele Carrieri, a poet, critic and journalist from Puglia who later moved to Milan. In his book *Arte Fantastica* of 1939, he was the first to attempt to define a tradition of Italian Fantastic art as a forerunner and alternative to Surrealism.[31] Going back to the Italian Primitives of the 15th century, through Tiepolo, Arcimboldi and popular art, to Futurism and Metaphysics, Carrieri reconstructed the "plastic imagination of the Italians", that is, the ability to render imagination concretely through shapes and colours. In his overview, Carrieri showed an insightful conception of the idea of plastic fantasy which, while including the great Italian avant-gardes, placed it beyond an alternative between modernism and tradition understood as a schematic opposition between abstraction and figuration.[32]

It was Carrieri who wrote the text for Berman's first Italian editorial venture, the 1951 limited edition of lithographs titled *Viaggio in Italia*, published by Fornasetti [*Fig. 2*].

[27] Tulino, *La Galleria L'Obelisco. Surrealismo e arte fantastica*.
[28] Berman, "Appunti per un autoritratto", in *Berman. Disegni guazzi tempere inchiostri 1954-1959* [exhibition catalogue], Rome, Galleria L'Obelisco, 1959.
[29] Berman, "Appunti per un autoritratto".
[30] Berman, "Appunti per un autoritratto". In addition to the those mentioned in the text, an exhibition of Berman's works held in 1950 at the Ala Napoleonica in Venice is reported.
[31] Tulino, *La Galleria L'Obelisco. Surrealismo e arte fantastica,* pp.19-22.
[32] See Carrieri, *Pittura e scultura d'avanguardia in Italia (1890-1950)*, Milano: Edizioni della Conchiglia, 1950. He would dedicate a monograph to Futurism in 1961, at a relatively early date for the rediscovery of the movement.

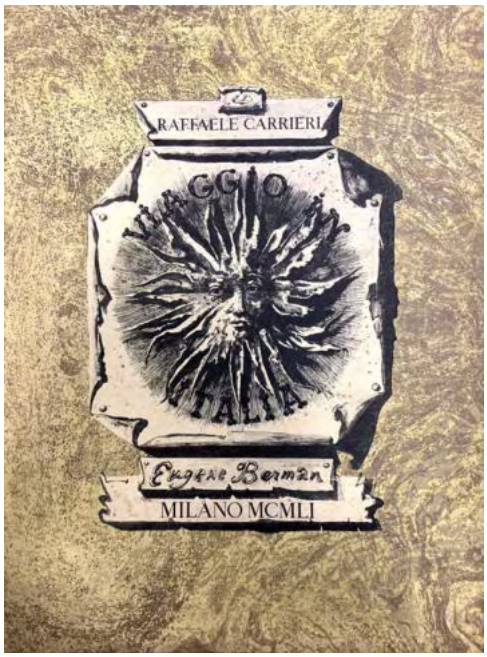

Fig. 2. *Viaggio in Italia*, text by Raffaele Carrieri, illustrations by Eugene Berman, Milan, Fornasetti 1951 (frontispiece)

In 1956 the same critic edited the second precious edition, *Mozartiana*,[33] and the introduction to the exhibition *Omaggio a Mozart* held at the Galleria L'Ariete in Milan between January and February. On the occasion of the publication of the last two works Carrieri spent six months in Berman's "marvellous workshop", where he was able to observe how behind each picture there was "an encyclopaedia of images, fragments and details that accumulate on the tables and in the rooms where Berman works frantically: frantically until he reaches perfection".[34] Carrieri noted that: "Berman appropriates Epochs, Styles, Places, Semblances, Appearances. Through Berman's scenic creations, Music becomes image and visible space: it becomes colour and form." Each drawing, different from the other, became a musical variation on the theme, a stage in an inner journey through remote real and imaginary epochs.

However, it was the theme of the "journey to Italy" that presented Berman with a lasting source of artistic inspiration. His research culminated in the 1956 volume *Imaginary Promenades in Italy* for Pantheon Books, which is a sort of artistic testament to his creative relationship with the country.

On 27 March 1951, Berman wrote to Cagli that the book he was working on with Carrieri and Fornasetti would not be ready by April, but did not know what the reasons for such a delay were, as communication with them had been "very irregular and unsatisfactory".[35] The letter reveals that an exhibition at the Milione with his illustrations was being also planned. It is not known how Berman came into contact with the other partners in this venture, but probably Clerici was the connection also in this case. Carrieri, Fornasetti and Clerici shared a visionary and almost Surrealist, erudite and refined *sensiblerie*, matured in Milan in the 1930s and 1940s and influenced by Savinio. Carrieri, who curated Clerici's first solo exhibition in 1943 and his first monograph in 1955, had also exerted

[33] *Mozartiana*, original lithographs by Eugène Berman; text by Raffaele Carrieri: Milan: Beatrice d'Este, 1956.
[34] *Omaggio a Mozart* [exhibition catalogue], Milan, Galleria L'Ariete 1956.
[35] Berman to Cagli, March, 27th, 1951, published in *Corrado Cagli e il suo magistero*, p. 275.

an important influence on Fornasetti, an eccentric artist with a protean talent much admired by Giò Ponti.[36] Also, Carrieri, Clerici and Fornasetti had already collaborated on several editorial projects.[37]

In *Viaggio in Italia*, Carrieri began by comparing Berman to Poussin, Callot and Claude Gelée, who had come to Rome with an idea based on books and treatises and who, on arriving, experienced a splitting sensation, the feeling they found themselves "in the reverse of places, people and things."[38] "Places had consumed Time over millennia, and everyone who arrived chose an era rather than a season. Nature favoured all sorts of illusionism."[39] Thus a dual scenario opens up, where reality and fantasy inextricably reflect each other and draw the boundaries of the scene in which Berman, "preceded by the Muses and chased by woodworms, visits the Provinces of Silence and Restlessness."[40] In Carrieri's poetic prose, Berman's figures, before being characters in an imaginary tragedy, were statues which, once thrown out of the rooms for which they were conceived, mourned their lost divinity by covering their faces with their hair so as not to be recognised. This is how the author interprets the figures with their backs turned or their faces covered, which recur in Berman's work as emotional echoes of a sentiment that dominates his work: melancholy.[41] Other variations of this sort of Warburgian *pathos formeln* are the wayfarer, the sleeping man or the figure protecting himself from adversity, embodied in *Viaggio in Italia* by the silhouettes of the rivers in Bernini's Piazza Navona Fountain [*Fig. 3*] .[42]

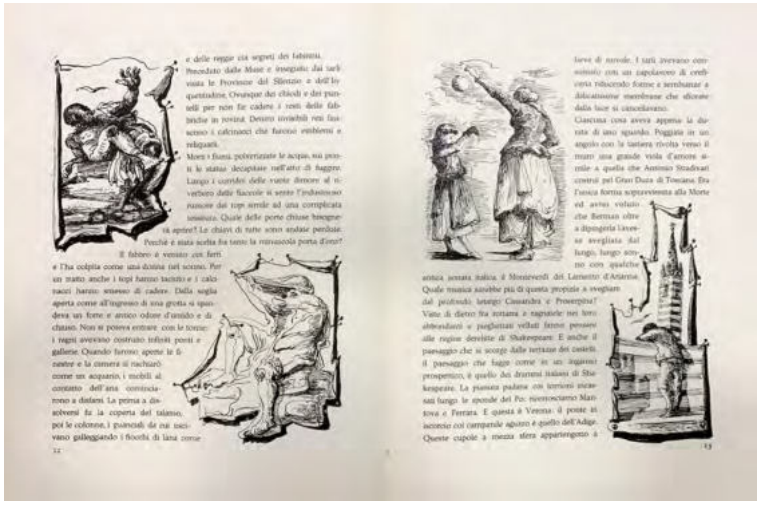

Fig. 3. *Viaggio in Italia*, text by Raffaele Carrieri, illustrations by Eugene Berman, Milan, Fornasetti 1951, pp. 12-13

Carrieri sees in Berman's work an unequivocal similarity with de Chirico's solitude of signs and with the idea of painting as revelation. "In Eugenio Berman's Italian evening, as in de Chirico's metaphysical evening, anything can happen… Eugenio Berman's images, like those of de Chirico, have no logical sequence. They do not follow one another: they manifest themselves from the inside out. They are revelations."[43] Different times and spaces are stratified in the scenes reconstructed by

[36] Patrick Mauriès, *Fornasetti. La follia pratica*, Turin: Allemandi 1992, p. 89.
[37] For the Fornasetti editions Raffaele Carrieri had introduced *Bestiario* by Fabrizio Clerici and Leoncillo Leonardi (1941), and the portfolio *Dieci litografie di Fabrizio Clerici e uno scritto di Alberto Savinio* (1942). In 1951 Fornasetti would edit *Lunario dell'anno 1951* by Fabrizio Clerici.
[38] Carrieri, *Viaggio in Italia*, Milano, Piero Fornasetti, 1951, p.8.
[39] Carrieri, *Viaggio in Italia*, pp. 8-9.
[40] Carrieri, *Viaggio in Italia*, p. 12.
[41] Duncan, *High Drama*.
[42] Carrieri, *Viaggio in Italia*, pp. 12 and 14.
[43] Carrieri, *Viaggio in Italia*, pp.15-16.

Berman, as Irene Brin also noted following in the footsteps of Julien Levy.[44] Cagli also highlighted the peculiar temporality in Berman's work, full of admiration. It resonated somehow with Cagli's reflections on the fourth dimension: "What I would like to honour above all here, more than his inventions and his mastery, more than his vast mythology of melancholic and desperate beings, is this aspect, unique to Berman, which reveals itself in the avoidance of time or in making time and many different times a support that hold up the spirit of a mental, heroic and enamoured painting."[45]

In Carrieri's erudite poetic walk along Berman's sources of inspiration, that is a fitting counterbalance to the artist's real and imaginary wanderings,[46] the writer also traces the cursive spatiality of the sign to a series of antecedents, from Guardi through the Impressionists to Matisse. Carrieri draws a musical comparison, according to which "Berman dialogues with Guardi in the 'pizzicato' register; again, Guardi is the harp and spinet, while Berman is a contrabass in a metaphysical key."[47] The rarefied nature of the sign is particularly evident in Berman's *Capricci*, a genre that in painting as in music indicates an unusual, bizarrely imaginative composition. The two *Capricci* included in the illustrations of *Viaggio in Italia* translate his favourite architecture into short dynamic strokes, almost into dots that seem to compose themselves over time, one point after another, only to unravel in an airy, impalpable vision [*Fig. 4*]. [48]

Fig. 4. Eugene Berman, *Capriccio*, in *Viaggio in Italia*, Milan, Fornasetti 1951, p. 48

[44] Irene Brin writes: "at the time of his first trips to Italy Berman was discouraged, because in each canvas he wanted to collect far more things than he could see, through his window, from a single point of view. Then he tried a different strategy: he drew from observation what interested him and then transported the different elements in pictures, using mainly his memory. It was de Chirico, as Julien Levy noted, who suggested he try this method: 'De Chirico, in his innocent, somnambulist way, had been able to arrange in a single painting apparently disparate elements of space and time' ": Irene Brin, "Eugène Berman e l'Italia", in *Domus*, VII, 1949, p.33. See also Julien Levy, *Eugene Berman*, New York and London: American Studio Books, 1946, p.VII.

[45] Cagli, preface to *Prima mostra in Italia di Eugene Berman*.

[46] Berman, *Imaginary Promenades in Italy*, New York, Pantheon Books1956.

[47] Carrieri, *Viaggio in Italia*, p.19.

[48] Carrieri, *Viaggio in Italia*, figg. pp. 48 and 51.

Back to Reality

Combining the different architectural typologies of his repertoire inspired by ancient treatises (Vitruvius, Serlio, Pacioli, Alberti, Palladio and others) with repeated travels to Italian cities, Berman rearranged the memory of the places he visited into fantastic visions. With a sort of *Ars combinatoria* comprising bell towers, palaces, fountains and statues, he sketched visions that were real and imaginary at the same time, plausible in their details and unreal on the whole. The result is a sense of familiarity one has looking at squares, palaces or statues, that is never complete; in other words, the effect is a disturbance that makes it impossible to fully recognise experiences. Berman was well aware of this, and in 1956 he wrote: "To paraphrase an expression often used in the presentation of movies: Any similarities between these drawings and specific places, sites and monuments which the viewer may be tempted to identify is almost purely accidental."[49] However, a fundamental means of activating Berman's creative imagination is travel, the experience of seeing the remains of the grandiose past come alive on the spot, which triggers a journey in time. This was in fact the profound motivation for his "journey to Italy", made permanent by his move to Rome. His creative procedure shows how important seeing places first hand was developed by Berman during his first stay in Mexico: he photographed places of interest and assembled the photos in albums, adopting a method for collecting and cataloguing already experimented with in his repertoire of set designs.[50] In this case, however, as Berman points out, inspiration from life was not fundamental, it was enough to travel in museums and books.[51] In order to create Art, on the other hand, it was necessary to romantically activate a *Sehnsucht* starting from ruins, from what remains of them today; it was necessary to breathe in the "aura" of the past in order to trigger the recovery of those lost moments. Romanticism, however, experiences comebacks depending on historical circumstances. Travelling to Italy had become fashionable again during the Second World War, also and perhaps above all for international visitors. The image of Italy as an open-air repository of a magnificent civilisation that had been destroyed, as the world had been devastated by the Second World War, was widespread in American perceptions. As early as 1940 Soby wrote about Berman: "Under the terrible reality of the war, the Romantic revival gains in force and relevancy. Berman's landscapes of ruin, which once seemed to belong to another world, are now the bitter theme of contemporary newsreels."[52]

The idea of reconstruction, or of an Italian Renaissance, was also the basis for the various policies of American cultural support that culminated in the Marshall Plan, and touristic interest in Italy was once again driving international Grand Tours. One example is *Rome and a Villa*, the book written in 1952 by the American Eleanor Clarke during her stay in Rome and illustrated by Berman.[53] The images convey Clarke's "long journey through time, space and events" in the eternal city with an unquestionably personal touch. With its monumental stratification, the city evokes historical figures from different eras, as well as travellers of the past and present, who mingle with today's folkloristic inhabitants in a crowd that is chaotic and surprisingly vital. Gaspero del Corso and Irene Brin were among the first to notice this interest on the part of the Americans at the time when Berman's volume was published. In January 1952, the exhibition *Viaggio in Italia* inaugurated at L'Obelisco: among the twenty authors chosen, all of whom were Italian (apart from the Slovenian Music), the name of Berman stood out. He also had the honour of illustrating the cover with *Souvenir d'Italie* [*Fig.* 5].

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[49] Berman, *Imaginary Promenades in Italy*.
[50] Lindsay Harris, "The Photographic Archive As Self-Portrait: The Eugene Berman Collection", in Barbara Cinelli and Antonello Frongia (ed.), *Archivi fotografici e arte contemporanea in Italia*, Milano: Scalpendi 2019, 167-183.
[51] OHI 19thOctober, 1972.
[52] James Thrall Soby, *Introduction*, Farmington, Conn., October 1940, clipping pasted in the scrapbook *Eugene Berman. Imaginary Rome II* (AAR Photographic Archive).
[53] Schiaffini, *"*It's A Roman Holiday For Artists".

The Tower of Pisa seen from above, animated, placed next to the cathedral and other fragments of Italian palaces and squares, resembled a touristic invitation to take part in the Grand Tour to visit the country and its capital, where the gallery would be awaiting its clients and where Berman would have chosen to settle, making Italy the centre of his life and work.

Fig. 5. Eugene Berman, Souvenir d'Italie, cover of the exhibition brochure
Viaggio in Italia, L'Obelisco Gallery, January 1952

COLLECTING LEONOR FINI IN 1950S AND 1960S ITALY: NOTES FOR A PORTRAIT OF RENATO WILD[1]

Alessandro NIGRO

Leonor Fini, an eccentric artist

It is well known that Leonor Fini, a fiercely independent artist with a fantastic and visionary vein, never joined Surrealism, although she took part in some important exhibitions of and about the movement, starting with the *International Surrealist Exhibition* in London (1936), followed by numerous post-war retrospectives, and despite the fact that in 1957 Arturo Schwarz had defined her, albeit with a few necessary caveats concerning some details, as one of the five Italian Surrealists.[2] It may therefore seem strange that the recent *Encyclopedia of Surrealism* devotes only a few lines to Fini,[3] but at the same time this is perhaps indicative of her singular position not only with regard to the French movement but more generally to the world of art and criticism, with which she had often clashed, for reasons having to do with her personality, but also for specific life and professional choices that did not always coincide with those of most of her colleagues. As Richard Overstreet writes in his introductory essay to the recent *Catalogue Raisonné* of the artist's paintings: 'Leonor is a committed artist and at the same time a budding celebrity and performance artist [...] This does not always play in her favor with the art establishment, which largely fails to take her seriously.'[4]

As we will see, the worlds of literature and performing arts, rather than artistic circles, were in fact a constant point of reference for the artist, who in the post-war years also worked as a set and costume designer for the theatre. Histrionic and narcissistic, irascible and proud, Fini was a protagonist of the high society chronicles of the 1950s in Italy, a country she had nevertheless left

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[1] ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS. This article, the first on the figure of Renato Wild, has been made possible by the extraordinary generosity of Valentina Assandria, a descendant of the Swiss-Italian collector, who has allowed me to study some of the papers and documents in the Archivio Renato Wild, which is currently being reordered: I am therefore extremely grateful to her. Unfortunately, it has not yet been possible for me to consult the papers relating to Renato Wild in the Leonor Fini Archives due to their relocation in Yale (Leonor Fini Papers, Yale University Library, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library). Such papers will therefore be the subject of a future essay of mine. My deepest gratitude also goes to Gaetano Giacomelli, President of the Fondazione Enrico Colombotto Rosso, and to its curator Giorgia Cassini, who personally helped me to find my way around the archives and photo library in Camino Piemonte (Alessandria) and kindly authorized me to publish unedited photographs and documents. I am also very grateful to Paola Toso for her memories about her father Ugo's collection. I would also like to thank Clementina Conte and Giulia Talamo (G.N.A.M., Rome), Stefania Vasetti (Humanities Library, University of Florence), Alessandro Gallicchio and Giulia Tulino for their precious help in finding archive documents and bibliographic material. Last but not least, I would like to thank the Fondation Maison des sciences de l'homme in Paris for a fellowship that allowed me to extensively study the archives of the Galerie Pierre. Unless otherwise indicated, translations are by the author.

ABBREVIATIONS: AP: Archives de la galerie Pierre, Bibliothèque de l'Institut national d'histoire de l'art, collections Jacques Doucet, Paris, Archives 140; ARW: Archivio Renato Wild (private collection); CR: *Leonor Fini. Catalogue Raisonné of the Oil Paintings*, 2 vols., eds. Richard Overstreet and Neil Zuckerman, Zürich: Weinstein/Scheidegger & Spiess, 2021. In the notes, when referring to letters: LF: Leonor Fini; RW: Renato Wild.

[2] See Strukelj, Vanya. "Leonor Fini vista dall'Italia. Ricostruzione di un dibattito", in *Leonor Fini. L'Italienne de Paris* [exh. cat.], Trieste: Museo Revoltella, 2009, 37. The work referred to is: Sauvage, Tristan. *Pittura italiana del dopoguerra (1945-1957)*, Milan, Schwarz Editore, 1957, 167-175.

[3] 'A painter, novelist and costume designer on the margins of surrealism during the 1930s, Leonor Fini's early work has an attractive dreamlike atmosphere but her later theatrical and rather narcissistic paintings seem to have little in common with a surrealistic thematic […]'. *Encyclopedia of Surrealism*, eds. Michael Richardson *et al.*, II, London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 300.

[4] Overstreet, Richard, "Drawn from the Past", in CR, II, 63-133, quotation at p. 79. In 1998, Richard Overstreet founded the Leonor Fini Archives in Paris.

for France in 1946, resenting some criticism that had been directed at her: criticism that was only in part due to the difficulties with which Surrealism was received in Italy (a movement that had been opposed not only in the years of the Fascist dictatorship but also in the post-war period due to the cultural closure of both Catholic and Marxist critics), and that in Fini's case was rather connected to her non-conformist attitudes, perceived as alien to the Italian cultural world of those years.[5]

Collecting Leonor Fini in 1950s and 1960s Italy

Leonor Fini was a courageously independent artist, with an uncommon ability to control the market of her paintings right from her early years, when she already showed great confidence in the financial evaluation of her works.[6] Her difficult character also had repercussions on her relations with art gallerists, which were not always smooth; however, the artist was able to maintain direct contact with her collectors, who belonged primarily to the world of aristocracy and finance, as well as to the world of Italian and international show business (Anna Magnani, Alida Valli, Luchino Visconti, Valentina Cortese, Maria Félix, etc.). The presence of an autonomous and independent sales channel is also attested by the vast stock of paintings that the artist kept in her possession: for example, on the occasion of the major retrospective exhibition held in 1965 in Knokke-le-Zoute (Belgium) 44 of the 97 works on display came from her Paris studio.[7]

1. Mario Tazzoli, Turin, 1960s (Courtesy Colombotto Rosso Foundation)

During the 1950s and 1960s, apart from her participation in social events, Fini maintained visibility in Italy thanks to a series of exhibitions in public institutions (including her solo show in the Venice Napoleonic Wing of the Museo Correr in 1951 and her participation in the 1955-56 Rome *Quadriennale*) and art galleries. With the exception of more sporadic contacts with galleries in Trieste (Casanuova and Torbandena), Rome (Chiurazzi) and Milan (Montenapoleone), it was mainly in Turin that the artist formed a more continuous relationship not only with what was perhaps the city's most important gallery at that time, La Bussola, where she exhibited graphic

[5] On this point see, most recently, Natalini, Fabrizio. "Leonor Fini e la torre del surreale", *Sinestesieonline* IV/12 (2015): 1-22.

[6] See the strategy with which the artist set prices for her paintings on the occasion of the group show at Rome La Margherita bookshop-gallery in 1945 in order to keep for herself some of the canvases she wanted to take to Paris. See Fini, Leonor and Pieyre de Mandiargues, André. *L'ombre portée. Correspondance 1932-1945*, Paris: Gallimard, 2010, 414-415. From the point of view of sales, however, the exhibition was a failure (see Tulino, Giulia. "Dalla Margherita a L'Obelisco: arte fantastica italiana tra Roma e New York negli anni '40", in *Irene Brin, Gaspero del Corso e la Galleria L'Obelisco*, eds. V.C. Carattozzolo *et al.*, Rome: Drago, 2018, 121).

[7] See the list of exhibits in *Leonor Fini* [exh. cat. Knokke-le-Zoute, Casino Communal], Brussels: André de Rache, 1965, n.p.n.

works in 1960,[8] but above all with Mario Tazzoli's Galatea **(fig. 1)**. The latter gallery had specialised in a chronologically wide range of visionary and fantastic artists, among which Fini's works fitted perfectly. Tazzoli organized two exhibitions of her work, respectively in 1957 and 1966, which were in fact Fini's only major solo shows in Italy during that period. At the same time, the artist had entrusted her works to the art dealer Alexander Iolas to be sold abroad. Greek by birth but active on an international scale,[9] Iolas exhibited her paintings all over the world from 1963 to 1972 (New York, Paris, Geneva, Madrid, but also Milan in 1967-68).[10] On the other hand, Fini was rarely present in the new Milanese contemporary art auction market (Galleria Brera and Finarte), where she appeared only sporadically.[11]

The fact that Mario Tazzoli had begun his activity, as early as 1956, in collaboration with his companion, the artist Enrico Colombotto Rosso **(figs. 2-3)**, who by that time had already become a great friend of Leonor Fini, certainly contributed to her connection with the Galatea Gallery. However, her relationship with the gallery owner, who was also one of her important collectors,[12]

2. Enrico Colombotto Rosso at La Bussola Gallery, Turin; in the background, *Nudo di ragazza* by Felice Casorati, 1913 (Courtesy Colombotto Rosso Foundation).

3. Mario Tazzoli and Enrico Colombotto Rosso (Courtesy Colombotto Rosso Foundation)

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[8] But Fini's correspondence with Renato Wild also reveals a contact in 1955, when the artist went to La Bussola to collect 'certain drawings'. See letter from LF to RW, 30/09/1955 (ARW).

[9] Iolas had been a dancer, before becoming an art dealer, and appears, in tights, in Fini's 1938 painting *Figures on a Terrace* (CR 171).

[10] Iolas also opened the Iolas-Galatea gallery in Rome, in collaboration with Mario Tazzoli, from 1969 to 1971.

[11] During the 1960s, Fini was almost absent in these sales, with the exception of a drawing in the Finarte auction of April 1967. Isolated, but important, was the result of the Finarte sale of April 1970, in which a canvas by Fini coming from the Galatea Gallery fetched Lit. 5,200,000 (on the same occasion a Magritte fetched Lit. 9,500,000). Starting from that year, the prices of Surrealist works in the auctions of the two Milanese houses began to rise exponentially. The above figures are the result of my perusal of the Brera and Finarte auction catalogues held in the library of the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florence. On the birth of contemporary art auctions in Italy in the early 1960s, see Milan, Mariella. *Milioni a colori. Rotocalchi e arti visive in Italia 1960-1964*, Macerata: Quodlibet, 2015, 170-189 and 215-233.

[12] The following paintings were more or less permanently in his private collection: *L'Opération II,* 1941 (CR 241); *La Pensierosa,* 1954 (CR 498); *L'amour sans conditions*, 1958 (CR 576); *La gardienne des fleurs*, 1960 (CR 610); *Les étrangères*, 1968 (CR 737).

deteriorated, as confirmed by the fact that from 1969 to 1973 she was represented by another Turin gallery, Il Fauno. A glance at some of Fini's letters confirms that her relations with Tazzoli had become more distant in those years and that the cause was the crisis between the art dealer and Colombotto Rosso: if in 1955 she wrote to Mario Praz greatly praising Tazzoli, in a much later letter to Felicita Frai, in 1983, she described him with unrepeatable epithets, accusing him of being a pseudo-intellectual and of taking advantage of her defenseless friend Colombotto Rosso.[13]

As far as private collectors are concerned,[14] without taking into consideration people who were closely linked to the artist, such as Federico Veneziani, and leaving aside the specific case of Renato Wild for the moment, it should be noted that many were show business celebrities. In the Italian context one example is Anna Magnani, who was also Leonor Fini's neighbor in Rome during the war, at the time when they both lived at Palazzo Altieri. The actress asked Fini to paint her portrait (1950, CR 416) and also bought two important canvases: *Elles aiment se déguiser* (1948, CR 395) and *Les Fileuses* (1954, CR 501). Valentina Cortese also collected works by the artist in the 1950s and 60s: in her Milan apartment her portrait with her son Jacki was on display (1957, CR 566), the canvases *L'amitié* (1958, CR 573) and *Le retour des absents* (1965, CR 694). Finally, the film director Visconti, in his Roman villa on the Via Salaria, had collected not only his own portrait (ca.1955, CR 547), but also three portraits of the young Cesare Pavani dating from ca.1948. (CR 403, 404 and 405).

Turning to the world of industry and finance, in addition to some of Fini's works in the collections of Gianni and Marella Agnelli and Umberto Agnelli, it is worth mentioning the collection of the entrepreneur Ugo Toso, who in his Turin home brought together not only three important works by the artist (*La Pensierosa*, 1954; *L'amour sans conditions*, 1958; *Les étrangères*, 1968), but also a series of five paintings by Stanislao Lepri, thus demonstrating that he was perhaps the most important Fini collector in Italy after Wild.[15] The Toso collection, despite the limited number of canvases collected, well represented the evolution of Fini's painting in the 1950s and 1960s. The mysterious figure of *La Pensierosa*, in which the fantastic character conceived by the artist stands out against a gloomy black background, gave way to the new material and almost informal style of *L'Amour sans conditions*, which the artist practiced from the mid-1950s until the

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[13] Both letters are cited in Vacca, Valentina. *L'arte del tra(s)vestire in Leonor Fini. Un percorso nella costumistica scenica tra Roma e Parigi,* PhD thesis, Università della Tuscia, Viterbo, 2015, 336 and 342.

[14] It should be remembered that two important works from the 1930s were, according to the CR, in the collection of Marchesa Spinola of Viareggio, i.e. the twin canvases *D'un jour à l'autre I* (1938, CR 169) and *D'un jour à l'autre II* (1938, CR 170), probably purchased at an early date, if in 1941 Marchese Sergio Spinola had already had a portrait made by the artist (CR 249). So far I have not been able to find any further information on the Marquises Spinola (their surname, moreover, is Genoese and not from Viareggio) and their collection, apart from a mention in a letter from LF dated 16 February 1944 and written from Rome, in which she informs Pieyre de Mandiargues that she had received his letter of 29 December 1943 'par l'intermédiaire de Spinola', who must therefore have been a person able to provide her with protection (*L'ombre portée*, 373).

[15] The archive of the collector Toso has unfortunately been lost, but I have nevertheless been able to reconstruct the following provenance for the three canvases in question. 1. *La Pensierosa* (1954, CR 498): bought from Mario Tazzoli, it still belonged to the art dealer in 1965; it was from the latter that Ugo Toso probably bought it to lend it in 1983 for the solo exhibition of Fini at Galleria Comunale di Arte Moderna in Ferrara and then resell it no later than 1984, the year in which the painting appeared in the 1984 auction Champin, Lombrail & Gautier in Enghien-les-Bains. 2. *L'amour sans conditions* (1958, CR 576): the work already belonged to Mario Tazzoli in 1965; from the Galatea Gallery, that exhibited it in 1966, the painting passed to Il Fauno Gallery, where it was on display in 1970. It was here that Toso probably bought it to resell it in 1983, when the painting was exhibited in Ferrara and then sold at a Finarte Milan auction. 3. *Les étrangères* (1968, CR 737): it was probably bought at the Galerie Verrière in Paris in 1971 and was also exhibited in Ferrara in 1983; it is now in Turin, together with the paintings by Stanislao Lepri, in the collection of the entrepreneur's daughter, Paola Toso. Although the catalogue of the Ferrara exhibition mentions 'Collezione Toso' in one case only, there is no doubt that all three paintings were still in his collection at that date. See *Leonor Fini* [exh. cat.], Ferrara: Palazzo dei Diamanti, 1983, pp. 56-57, no. 5; pp. 62-63, no. 8; pp. 76-77, no. 15.

beginning of the following decade and which was also presented in Alexander Iolas's New York gallery in 1963; *Les Étrangères*, finally, is representative of the new sophisticated and elegantly illustrative style inaugurated in the mid-1960s, populated by women with large feathered hats, elegant, sometimes nude, haughty and mysterious, who also feature in enigmatic train scenes. It is not surprising that Dino Buzzati also purchased a painting from this particular creative phase of the artist, *La Nuit vaincue* (1966, CR 713).[16]

Biographical notes on Renato Wild

Renato Wild was born into a Swiss family of cotton industrialists. His father, Emilio Wild, expanded the business in Italy and moved to Turin, where Renato (René for his family and friends) was born on 19 December 1894. He studied in Bern until 1914 and then joined the Italian army, thus also acquiring Italian citizenship; during the First World War, while he was at the front as an officer, he applied to the Federal Court of Lausanne to renounce his Swiss citizenship, but his request was rejected.[17] Subsequently, from 1938 to about 1950, Renato was resident in Zurich, where he probably sheltered, if not his entire art collection, at least the most important pieces, which he brought back to Italy in 1950.[18]

4. Renato Wild in a boat in front of Villa Roccabruna, 1911 (Courtesy Renato Wild Archive)

It soon became clear that neither of the two sons of Emilio Wild and his wife Anna Siber (a descendant of Zurich steel industrialists), Enrico and Renato, had the inclination and interest to continue their father's industrial activities, which were instead taken up by their daughter Elena's husband, Edilberto Cavallo: the Wild company, an important point of reference in the Italian industrial scene of the first half of the 20th century, would continue its activities until it closed

[16] *La nuit vaincue* was exhibited in Fini's 1966 solo show at the Galatea. Another artist who appreciated this phase of Leonor Fini's painting, with its marked erotic vein, was Giorgio Griffa from Turin, who bought *Présence sans issue* (1966, CR 712), which was also exhibited by Tazzoli in 1966, and *Il s'agit sans doute d'Azraël* (1967, CR 720). Another famous canvas from this period, *Vesper Express* (1966, CR 707), became part of the collection of Romilda Bollati di Saint Pierre, widow of Turati, a leading figure in the intellectual and social life of Turin at the time, who bought it at the above-mentioned exhibition.

[17] See folder Registry Records (ARW).

[18] See *Ibid*. The first entry in the register of residents in Zurich is dated May 5, 1938, when Wild moved from Stockerstr. 23 to Tödistr. 9. During the war years there is evidence of Renato Wild's generous donations to the Italian community in Switzerland. Renato had married Geltrude Rotter, the daughter of a banker, in Vienna in 1926, from whom he later divorced.

down in the 1970s.[19]

Both Enrico and Renato Wild manifested intellectual interests from a young age and a lifestyle that was not only elevated, as was natural for the descendants of a rich industrial dynasty, but also rather extravagant. As for Enrico, after studying architecture at the Zurich Polytechnic, he developed eclectic and wide-ranging cultural interests, including the culture of ancient Egypt and spiritualism. He led a secluded life, among the books of his vast library, first in Turin and then at Villa Roccabruna in Blevio, the family residence on Lake Como, the only exception being his passion for long journeys.[20]

5. Renato Wild with two friends at Villa Roccabruna, before 1915 (Courtesy Renato Wild Archive)

6. The swimming pool under construction, Villa Rospini, Blevio (c. 1955) (Courtesy Renato Wild Archive)

Equally complex was the personality of his younger brother Renato **(figs. 4, 5)**: tall, handsome, elegant, he led a refined life between Turin, Milan and Blevio, on Lake Como, first in the family villa and then in Villa Rospini, which he had inherited from his father in 1941. Here, during the 1950s, he carried out important renovations and arranged the most important part of his art collection, as well as having a scenographic swimming pool built in 1957 **(fig. 6)** by Heinz Henghes, a sculptor he began to support as patron – as we will see – in the mid 1930s.[21]

Renato Wild lived in exclusive environments, not those that echoed the interests of the family but in his passion for the arts. It should also be remembered, however, that the experience at the front in the First World War had physically and psychologically marked the young René, who was wounded in the foot and soon became addicted to opiates to relieve the physical pain.[22] Several anecdotes can be recalled in this regard, such as the summers spent in Forte dei Marmi in a

[19] See Gütermann, Carla F., "Industriali svizzeri a Torino", in *ArteStoria* 52 (2011): 504-519.

[20] Married three times, Enrico later became involved with the pianist Magda Brard. See Festorazzi, Roberto. *La pianista del duce. Vita, passioni e misteri di Magda Brard...* Milan: Simonelli, 2000, 63-70. The author, who also devotes some pages to Renato Wild, relies mainly on the memories of Enrico Wild's descendants.

[21] For the moment I have not found confirmation of Festorazzi's statement (*La pianista*, 94) that the dove sculptures on the columns of the pool were designed by Pablo Picasso.

[22] His mother Anna Siber and his brother Enrico were also victims of opiate addiction. See *Ibid.*, 91.

luxurious tent by the sea **(fig. 7)**,[23] which served to avoid wearing shoes as much as possible. Or the

7. Guglielmo Ulrich, Tenda Wild, Forte dei Marmi, early 1930s.

1948 trip to London with Leonor Fini and the British collector Edward James, recounted by Peter Webb. Wild shared some traits and inclinations with James, who was famous for his collection of surrealist works, and both were among the most important Fini collectors at the time. In 1948, James had invited Fini to spend Christmas at his home in West Dean, West Sussex, and on this occasion Renato Wild travelled with them to London by train:

> He [Renato Wild] was a modern Des Esseintes, an aesthete with a love of collecting who lived in a beautiful house on Lake Como that was looked after by seven servants. Both men were homosexual, and fond of Leonor. She did not reciprocate their affections but accepted their friendship, as they were significant patrons or her art. They travelled in adjacent compartments of the wagon-lit. Wild had his own beautiful white silk sheets and silk handkerchiefs in a variety of colours so as not to confuse them with the sheets when in bed. When he opened his toiletries case, he was horrified to discover that he had no morphine; he telephoned his maid from the ferry terminal in Paris to instruct her to take a plane to London so that she would arrive ahead of them with the necessary supplies.[24]

Renato Wild and the sculptor Henghes

Wild dedicated his life to art patronage and collecting, passions that he shared with Virginia Bourbon del Monte Agnelli, with whom he developed a close relationship starting in 1930s: both, for example, were interested in the sculpture of Heinz Henghes (i.e., Gustav Heinrich Clusmann). Henghes, who would become a British citizen in the 1950s, was born in Hamburg and spent many years of his youth in the United States and France before settling in Italy for four years. In 1933 he landed in Rapallo, where Ezra Pound, who certainly sensed in him an affinity with the work of Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, helped him to organise his own studio. The following year, in Milan, he came into contact with Kay Sage (at that time Princess K of San Faustino) and with Renato Wild, who immediately became his patron; through the latter, Virginia Agnelli also supported him, starting to collect his sculptures. In Henghes's polished and refined modernism it was possible to read references to the art of Constantin Brâncuşi and Isamu Noguchi, among others.

Henghes presented his recent production in a series of exhibitions in Genoa and Turin, and

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[23] As will be seen below, the tent-home was designed in the early 1930s by the architect Guglielmo Ulrich, partner and friend of Renato Wild.

[24] Webb, Peter. *Sphinx: The Life and Art of Leonor Fini*, New York: The Vendome Press, 2009, 145.

above all in two shows at the Galleria del Milione in Milan, in June 1935 and November 1936 respectively. The bulletins of the Milanese gallery, as well as reporting some illustrations of the works on display and texts by the sculptor,[25] also list the artist's main collectors, among them the Prince of San Faustino and Ezra Pound (in Rapallo), donna Virginia Agnelli (in Turin) and Renato Wild, the architect Tomaso Buzzi and Carlo Carrà (in Milan). The 1936 exhibition was even more interesting in that it focused on another aspect of the collector Renato Wild, namely his passion for applied arts and furniture. On this occasion, in addition to the works by Henghes, the Galleria del Milione also presented six oil paintings by K.S.F. (the future Kay Sage) and some furniture designed by Renato Wild. In the accompanying text, quoting Alfred Barr and Lewis Mumford, Henghes argued in favor of breaking down the barriers separating art and life, and this idea became the premise for presenting Wild's furniture, whose beauty seemed to him to be merely the result of simplicity and functionality.[26]

The words of Henghes, who also dedicated a few lines to the geometric abstraction of K.S.F., represent an important testimony to Renato Wild's activity as a furniture designer and entrepreneur for his company Ar.Ca, which culminated in the same year as the Milione exhibition with his participation in the *VI Triennale* in Milan. Although unfortunately the gallery's bulletin does not reproduce any of the furniture designed by Wild, nor views of the installation, it is possible to form an idea of it from the words of Henghes himself, who in his search for an essential sculptural language had welcomed the juxtaposition of his works with the elementarism of Wild's design style.[27]

Renato Wild's passion for design, the collaboration with Guglielmo Ulrich and the experience of the Ar.Ca company

8. Ar.Ca Company logo, Milan

Renato Wild's design and entrepreneurial activities in the field of industrial arts developed thanks to his meeting with the young architect Guglielmo Ulrich, with whom he set up a studio for the design of furniture, *objets d'art* and furnishings, called Ar.Ca in the early 1930s: the company's logo **(fig. 8)** features a stylized Noah's ark, which one imagines was supposed to save humanity from rampant bad taste. In a handwritten notebook, found among the papers in his archive, Ulrich defines Wild, with whom he collaborated closely until the outbreak of World War II, as a 'gentleman who was then a dear friend.'[28]

At a time when the monumental 20th century style was triumphing, Ulrich seemed to

[25] The one published in Italian in the 1935 bulletin would also appear in the English magazine *The Studio*: Henghes. "And now...?", *Il Milione* 42 (June 1935): 3-4.

[26] See Henghes. "Untitled text", *Il Milione* 48 (November 1936): 5.

[27] *Ibid.*, 5.

[28] Ulrich, Giancorrado. "Words, he liked little...", in Scacchetti, *Guglielmo Ulrich*, 492.

reconcile the opposites of mass production and craftsmanship, paying great attention to materials. His ideal was that of a modern home, luxurious but functional, in which the family's antique furniture could harmonize with novelty. A certain monumentalism sometimes remained in the furnishing solutions of his initial phase but then disappeared in the 1950s.

Certainly Wild played an essential role in establishing the indispensable contacts with the Turin and Milan high-ranking and refined clientele who turned to Ar.Ca production (Agnelli, Mondadori, Pirelli, Visconti, Gavazzi, Dubini, etc.). It is more difficult to establish to what extent the conceptual aspects of the company's projects were actually influenced by Wild's ideas, who certainly found in this new creative dimension a first concrete result of his passion for the arts. According to De Guttry and Maino, Renato Wild 'was gifted with a particular talent for experimenting with unusual materials in furniture.'[29] From 1931 onwards, approximately twenty workers in a factory set up by Wild himself produced Ar.Ca furniture, which was then sold in a shop in Milan, in Via Montenapoleone, run by Baron Attilio Scaglia, a partner of Wild and Ulrich. Their line was characterized by strong chromatic contrasts, the use of exotic woods and newly produced materials, the use of leather as a decorative element[30] and a taste for contrasts (briarwood furniture with marble handles, dark rosewood desks with light leather inserts, light leather desks with ivory handles, etc.). It was precisely this experimentation with materials, in particular with leather (galuchat, snakeskin, parchment), that marked the style proposed by Ulrich and Wild; it is certain that the latter personally designed a number of objects. Some of their choices, such as the use of parchment, offered an example that was later widely taken up by the market.[31]

The Ar.Ca production was well reviewed by the architectural magazines of the time, starting with *Domus*,[32] and was present at the Monza *Triennale* in 1930 and at the subsequent Milan *Triennali* in 1933 and 1936. The latter exhibited a lady's bedroom with sitting room (which Renato Wild did not hesitate to turn into his own personal bedroom, a detail that helps understand a further facet of his complex personality), in which the aforementioned design features are once again highlighted. In the room in question, pieces such as the three-legged, marble-topped table **(fig. 9)**, and the larger dressing table, which combines shiny black wood with light leather and muslin, were contrasted with the emphatic verticalism of the monumental four-poster bed **(fig. 10)**; a chandelier consisting of three asymmetrically arranged metal circles and mirrors completed this scenographic and sumptuous ensemble, which seemed to eclectically merge modernism with an aristocratic taste that helps to identify the exclusive clientele of the Ar.Ca Company. Indeed, one might wonder how much the presence of Renato Wild, accustomed to a princely standard of living, had contributed to Ar.Ca's luxurious drift.[33]

As for the choice of unusual and exotic materials, these had already been experimented with for some time in France: the cabinetmaker Adolphe Chanaux had been experimenting with galuchat since 1913; the standard-bearer of this orientation had also been, since the 1920s, Jean-Michel

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[29] De Guttry, Irene; Maino, Maria Paola. *Il mobile déco italiano 1920-1940*, Ro me-Bari: Laterza, 1988, 246-276, quotation at p. 246..

[30] *Ibid.*, 246.

[31] *Ibid.*, 276.

[32] 'In 1932 Ar.Ca became a steady advertiser in *Domus*, and in that year their pieces of furniture were published as many as five times as examples of *luxury* and *modernity*'. Scacchetti, *Guglielmo Ulrich*, 41.

[33] In this regard it may be useful to recall that Wild and Ulrich's company was also at the centre of a controversy over luxury. If until 1936 the Ar.Ca. production line met with the full support of Giò Ponti, by 1933 there were already signs of rejection for what seemed to be an excessive ostentation of luxury bordering on bad taste: the defensive line of Ugo Ojetti, who defined it as 'necessary luxury', was countered by the attacks of Edoardo Persico, who defined Ulrich's projects as tawdry and exhibitionistic set designs. *Ibid.*, 42.

9. G. Ulrich and R. Wild, Ar.Ca bedroom (small table), VI Triennale di Milano, 1936

10. G. Ulrich and R. Wild, Ar.Ca bedroom (four-poster bed), VI Triennale di Milano, 1936

Frank, who promoted a new idea of conceptual luxury among Paris aristocracy and high society: an exemplary case, in this sense, was his restyling of the Paris residence of the Viscounts of Noailles, which featured a salon covered with simple parchment, a sycamore grand piano and a terrace illuminated by eighteen car lights.[34] There was a tribute to Frank in the November 1935 issue of *Domus*, but one wonders if Renato Wild, accustomed to a cosmopolitan and international environment and a frequent visitor to the French capital, had not already been aware of these experiments before that date. In any case, even if some of the choices of materials are similar, the approach of the Ar.Ca line, in which luxury was sometimes more ostentatious than nuanced, was different: the company's furniture consisted in unique pieces, the success of which depended on the skill of the company's carpentry department. It is probable that Renato Wild himself contributed considerably to the organization and management of these entrepreneurial aspects.

In short, the personality of Renato Wild as a decorator, at least in the light of current knowledge, appears to be articulated, if not actually split, on two fronts: the furniture exhibited at the Galleria del Milione in 1936, at least judging by the critical evaluation of his friend, the sculptor Henghes, spoke a language of simplicity and essentiality, while other outcomes, shared with the architect Ulrich, seemed to direct that taste towards pomp and luxury.

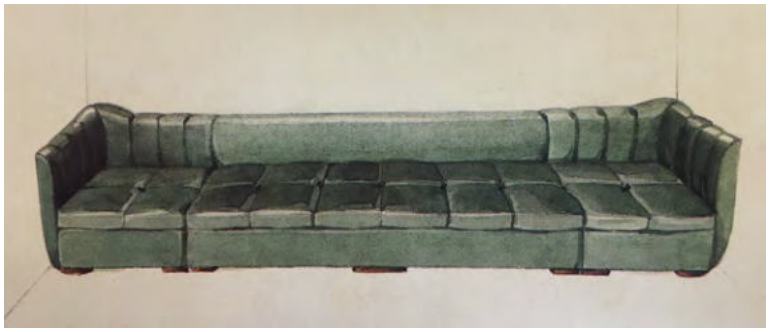
It was the outbreak of the war that put an end to the company's activities: Renato Wild fled to Switzerland, the shop in Via Montenapoleone was closed and Guglielmo Ulrich, when resuming his activity after 1945, opted for a less showy style, abandoning experimentation with exotic materials. At the time of the Ar.Ca Company, in the early 1930s, Ulrich designed (and in some cases realized), among other things, some furnishings for Enrico Wild's residence in Turin and for his brother Renato's flat in Milan, in viale Bianca Maria 24. The latter furnishings can in some way provide a further clue to ideally reconstruct the type of refined environment with which Wild surrounded himself: see, in particular, the wooden dressing table **(fig. 11)** and the linoleum wardrobe with details in mahogany (**fig. 12)** (1931); the chair in palm wood and brown calfskin (1933) (**fig. 13)**; and, finally, the silk sofa with walnut feet (1935) (**fig. 14).**

[34] See Benaïm, Laurence. *Jean-Michel Frank. Le chercheur du silence*, Paris: Grasset, 2017, 82-84 and 166-167.

11. G. Ulrich, Wooden dressing table (for Renato Wild), 1931

12. G. Ulrich, White linoleum wardrobe with mahogany details (for Renato Wild), 1931

13. G. Ulrich, Palm wood and brown calf leather chair (for Renato Wild), 1933



14. G. Ulrich, Silk sofa with walnut legs (for Renato Wild), 1935

Renato Wild as a Leonor Fini collector

No doubt Renato Wild was Leonor Fini's main collector, not only in Italy but probably also worldwide. He began to take an interest in the artist in the late 1930s and resumed frequenting her and buying her paintings in the post-war years. On the basis of the *catalogue raisonné* of the artist's paintings and of the earlier bibliography, it is possible to reconstruct the main core of Wild's collection consisting of about 20 works by Fini, for the most part paintings, but also drawings,

which were located mainly in Villa Rospini in Blevio but also in his Milan flat and partly, during the war years, in Zurich. It is worth remembering that the collection, as we will see later, also contained paintings by Leonora Carrington and Pavel Tchelitchew, thus presenting itself as a point of reference in 1950s and 1960s Italy as regards an artistic line linked to fantastic art.
The following is a list of the works by Leonor Fini owned by Renato Wild (for the most part until his death in 1965, with a few exceptions), accompanied by title, date and identification number given in the *catalogue raisonné* or, in the case of the drawings, with the reference to the publications that reproduce them (a list that is certainly subject to corrections, especially for a small group of problematic paintings, and to further additions, particularly as regards graphic works): *Portrait d'enfant*, 1935-40 (CR 144); *Portrait de Renato Wild I*, 1939 (CR 188);[35] *Femme assise sur un homme nu*, 1942 (CR 264); *Sphinx Regina*, 1943 (CR 292);[36] *Autoportrait au turban*, 1943-44 (CR 311); *La grande racine*, 1943-50 (CR 315); *Sphinx Philagria I,* 1945 (CR 330);[37] *Sphinx Philagria II*, 1945 (CR 332); *La Cible / The Target / Espagne / Crâne du poisson africain / Bersaglio*, 1945-50 (CR 336); *Le Tournoi / Petite divinité cthtonienne / Sphinx prisonnier / Torneo / Deux femmes dans un univers végétal*, 1946 (CR 353); *Portrait de Renato Wild II*, ca. 1946 (CR 369); *Stryges Amaouri*, 1947 (CR 370); *La fille du maçon*, 1950 (CR 415); *Portrait de Jean Genet I*, 1950 (CR 417); *Decorative panel I*, ca. 1950 (CR 439);[38] *Decorative panel II*, ca. 1950 (CR 440); *Decorative panel III*, ca. 1950 (CR 441); *L'Escalier dans la tour*, 1952 (CR 470); *Bagnard (*1950; gouache);[39] *Bagnard (*1950; gouache).[40]

Certainly many of these works were purchased by Wild directly from the artist: for example, in the case of the collector's first portrait, during a stay of Leonor in Milan; or, as far as *L'escalier dans la tour* is concerned, from her Paris studio. However, the overall chronology of the purchases remains to be clarified and whether some of them could also have been made on the occasion of the artist's exhibitions.[41] In any case, Wild's relationship with Fini began in the 1930s, certainly not after 1937, and then resumed after the war, at least from around 1946, intensifying during the 1950s.

In this regard, the episode of Leonor Fini's solo exhibition in Zurich, held in April 1942 at the Galerie Indermauer, also merits further investigation.[42] Did Wild, who resided in Zurich from 1938 to 1950, visit the exhibition or was he in any way involved in its organization? He certainly did not buy any of the important works on display, although some of the themes he would later

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[35] The date of this painting, as we will see, should be brought forward.

[36] This painting, as we will see, was finished two years later.

[37] This painting however, as we will see, did not remain in Wild's collection.

[38] This and the other two decorative panels, as we will see, were actually made later.

[39] See Brion, Marcel. *Leonor Fini et son oeuvre*, Paris: Pauvert, 1955, s.n.p.

[40] *Ibid*. Finally, it should be recalled that another graphic work depicting a sphinx, probably belonging to Renato Wild, is currently in a private collection, and that other drawings and watercolors must certainly have been part of the collection, even if they have not yet been identified. Among the latter, there must have been those depicting male nudes, which Fini showed during the above-mentioned 1948 train journey to Renato Wild and Edward James, who bought some of them. See Webb, Peter. "Leonor Fini's Life", in CR, 547.

[41] On this point the Leonor Fini Archives documents from Yale may open up new perspectives.

[42] In 1941, Fini also took part in a Zurich group show, entitled *Exposition surréaliste*, at a gallery that was somehow related to the one of the following year, the Atelier Boesiger & Indermauer. I have not yet been able to consult the relevant catalogue, assuming there was one.

favor were already present in the exhibition.[43]

Thanks to an examination of the books and catalogues devoted to Leonor Fini in the 1950s, it is possible to establish some reference points for the constitution of Renato Wild's collection, which already in 1951, the year in which two small monographs on the artist appeared,[44] certainly included the following paintings: *Sphinx Regina* **(fig. 15)**, *Sphinx Philagria II* and *Torneo*. The first

15. L. Fini, *Sphinx Regina*, 1943, private collection (© Leonor Fini, by SIAE 2021)

one was indicated as belonging to the 'Renato Wild Collection, Zurich', while the remaining two to the 'Renato Wild Collection, Blevio'.[45] This fact is also confirmed by the leaflet of the above-mentioned 1951 Venetian exhibition, in which the three paintings appear to be in the Wild

[43] According to the exhibition catalogue, which actually consists of two simple pages with a list of works and a text by Edmond Jaloux, 20 works were exhibited in Zurich, including the two versions of *D'un jour à l'autre*, *Opération* (i.e. the self-portrait with André Pieyre de Mandiargues) and the *Portrait of Count Giorgio Ottone*.

[44] The two volumes appeared simultaneously in Italian and French version for the same series ("Galleria", edited by Orio Vergani) and the same publisher, with identical illustrations (except for captions) but with different texts by the respective authors. See Carrieri, Raffaele. *Leonor Fini,* Milan: Editoriale Periodici Italiani, 1951; Messadié, Gérald. *Leonor Fini*, Milan: Editoriale Periodici Italiani, 1951.

[45] As already mentioned, it was at the beginning of the 1950s that Wild moved his household goods back to Italy, and his collection was probably divided between Italy and his Zurich home for a while.

collection and all three in Blevio.[46] Between 1946 and 1951 Wild had therefore bought the three paintings, while it seems that four more works that were to enter his collection were not yet his property, namely: *Stryges Amaouri; La cible; La fille du maçon*; *La grande racine*.[47]

Thanks to the captions of the subsequent 1955 Fini monograph[48], it can be deduced that in the period 1952-1955 Wild bought three other paintings (*La fille du maçon, La cible* and *La grande racine*) and the two *gouaches* entitled *Bagnard*. Moreover, thanks to some letters from Fini, which will be discussed in more detail later, we can add that the purchase of *L'escalier dans la tour* and the three decorative panels with mushrooms, butterflies and fish took place around 1953. The information given in the above bibliography is, however, only indicative and it cannot be excluded that in both the 1951 and 1955 monographs the location of the paintings was not always indicated so as not to give the reader the impression that most of the artist's works were in the possession of the same collector: this is proven by the fact that in the 1955 volume, *Sphinx Regina* and *Escalier dans la tour,* certainly in Wild's collection at that date, were reproduced without mentioning him. Further documentary evidence is therefore needed in order to move beyond the realm of hypotheses and establish a more precise chronology of purchases.

As far as the final arrangement of the collection is concerned, it is worth mentioning a letter of 1965, written by the caretaker of Villa Rospini after the death of Renato Wild and addressed to the collector's niece, in which all the Fini paintings in Blevio at that time are listed in order to identify those requested by the artist for her personal exhibition planned in Belgium in the same year. It emerges that of the paintings known to be part of the collection, 12 were at Villa Rospini with the exception of two that were in Wild's Milan flat. The caretaker explicitly mentions nine paintings (identifiable as *Portrait d'enfant*, *Femme assise sur un homme nu*, *Sphinx Regina*, *La grande racine*, *La cible*, *Stryges Amaouri*, *La fille du maçon*, *Portrait de Jean Genet I* and *L'escalier dans la tour*), refers to three others in the dining room of Villa Rospini (which could possibly be the three decorative panels), while, for those in Milan, he specifies: 'what they represent I do not remember exactly, nor could I say whether they remained there to furnish the so-called room of the Signore or were given away like so many other things.'[49]

The nine works indicated by the keeper, the three panels and two other paintings (*Autoportrait au turban* and *Portrait de Renato Wild II*) remained together in a group that still exists for the most part in private collection. However, four important Fini works were already missing, or had in any case been detached from the collection at the time of Wild's death or earlier (perhaps because they had been resold or donated by Wild or because they had gone to other heirs), and they present a series of problems that are still unsolved with regard to the reconstruction of their provenance: *Portrait de Renato Wild I* (current location unknown); *Le Tournoi*;[50] *Sphinx Philagria*

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[46] See *Leonor Fini* [exh. cat.], Venice, Galleria dell'Ala Napoleonica, 1951, 4.

[47] I have listed 1946 as the *a quo* term because it seems to me highly unlikely that such purchases could have occurred during the war years.

[48] Brion, *Leonor Fini*.

[49] Letter from Sabatino Bruni to Bianca Maria Cavallo, 13/02/1965 (ARW).

[50] The work was sold at auction on 23 October 2015 for € 187,500 (see Christie's Auction, Paris, Art moderne, Lot 109, https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-5941195). However, the two versions of the painting's provenance in the auction catalogue and in the CR are discordant: according to the former, the painting would have entered the Wild collection coming from the collection of Georges Sébastien (another major Fini collector) in Tunisia and then passed into two other private collections before the 2015 auction; according to the CR (p. 330, no. 353), *Le Tournoi* would have originally been in Wild's collection, then passing into G. Sébastien's and finally arriving in Karl Harrington's (the latter was Renato Wild's last companion and had his own room in the Villa Rospini). It seems strange, however, that the painting had arrived in Karl's hands not directly from Wild but from Sébastien. On the basis of the indications in the two monographs of 1951 and in Schwarz's essay (Sauvage, *Pittura italiana*, table 39), the work should have been in Blevio from 1951 to 1957.

I;[51] *Sphinx Philagria II*[52] (the last three are currently in an unidentified private collection).

The portraits of the collector Renato Wild

In the collection there were two portraits of Renato Wild, painted by Leonor Fini just before and just after the Second World War. It is the first of the two, *Portrait de Renato Wild I* (CR 188) **(fig. 16)**, that allows us to identify the date of the probable first meeting between the two, which took place in Milan towards the end of the 1930s, as revealed in a letter from the artist to André Pieyre de Mandiargues, undated but probably dating to late 1937 or early 1938. The artist complains about how complicated it is to give the last brushstrokes to complete a work and, entering into the specifics of the portrait in question, about the extreme difficulty of capturing the character of the sitter, who appeared, in the case of Renato Wild, extremely elusive and changeable:[53]

> Aujourd'hui, j'ai peint. Je déteste travailler aux tableaux presque achevés. C'est très énervant. Il y a toujours un petit détail qui se refuse à la perfection. Et puis ce Wild a 100 têtes. C'est affreux. Tantôt il ressemble au kaiser, tantôt à un Mongol, tantôt à un Suisse décadent. Il est très difficile de concentrer tous ces aspects. J'ai peint sa bouche au moins 30 fois. J'en ai assez. Il me tarde de l'avoir terminé.[54]

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[51] Leonor Fini complained that she no longer knew where *Sphinx Philagria I* was in an undated letter to Mario Praz (quoted in Strukelj, "Leonor Fini", 35), written while the artist was already working on the second version of the subject (i.e. around 1945, if one takes into account Fini's reference to a new *Philagria* in progress in a letter to Pieyre de Mandiargue dated 10/07/1945, while in an earlier letter dated 12/06/1945 the latter commented on the photo he had received of *Sphinx Philagria I*, which was therefore already finished at that date; see *L'ombre portée*, 447, 457). According to CR and several previous publications (Brion, *Leonor Fini*; *Leonor Fini* [exh. cat.], London, Kaplan Gallery, 1969; Jelenski, Constantin. *Leonor Fini,* Lausanne: Clairefontaine, 1968, 161; *Le livre de Leonor Fini*, Lausanne: Mermoud-Clairefontaine, 1975, 235), the painting, initially owned by Wild, would have entered the collection of Countess Solari in Rome before 1955 and remained there at least until 1975. For the time being I have not been able to find any trace of the aforesaid countess and her collection, which also included the *Sphinx amalburga* of 1941 (CR 245). As for the *Sphinx Philagria I,* the work then passed into the Parisian collection of Ertegun & Filippacchi and was subsequently sold at two auctions, respectively in Rome (Finarte, 1987) and in London (Sotheby's, 1988).

[52] This painting also presents a number of unresolved problems. On the basis of a letter from LF to B.M. Cavallo, the collector's niece, dated 23/04/1965 (ARW), it could be assumed that the painting was no longer in Blevio at the time of the collector's death: 'It is a pity that the Sphinx Philagria is missing [for the exhibition]. Who knows who has it'. Yet, in a 1975 monograph (*Le livre de Leonor Fini,* 234), the work appears in 'Collection Cavalli, Turin', an obvious misprint for 'Cavallo'. B.M. Cavallo also describes the work in a list of eight paintings, probably drawn up in February/ March 1965 to identify the paintings to be sent to the Belgian exhibition in preparation (ARW): a mere list for the purpose of recognizing the paintings, whose titles, as emerges from several documents, were misleading, or an inventory of the works still present in Blevio? Inconsistencies remain even with regard to the subsequent history of the work, which was sold in a Paris auction on 1 June 2016 for the price of € 255,000: see *Sotheby's Auction, Paris, Art impressioniste et moderne*, Lot 30 (https://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2016/art-impressionniste-et-moderne-pf1606/lot.30.html). The two versions of the painting's provenance in the auction catalogue and in the CR differ, however: according to the former, which does not mention the Wild collection, the painting would have belonged to Curtis Harrington (an American director of sophisticated horror films, who actually had relations with both Leonor Fini and her collector Edward James; see Harrington, Curtis. *Nice Guys Don't Work in Hollywood: The Adventures of an Aesthete in the Movie Business*, Drag City: Chicago, 2013); according to the latter, the painting would have passed from the Wild collection to his heir B.M. Cavallo and then into Curtis Harrington's collection (see CR, 325, no. 332).

[53] This classic theme of theories of portraiture had found its most famous example in the considerations of Diderot on his portrait painted by Louis-Michel van Loo in 1767. On the topic, see Bontea, Adriana. *Diderot et l'art du portrait*, in *Figurationen des Porträts*, eds. Thierry Greub and Martin Roussel, Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2018, 329-346.

[54] *L'ombre portée*, 223.

16. L. Fini, *Portrait de Renato Wild I*,
1937-38, current location unknown
(© Leonor Fini, by SIAE 2021)

The artist was annoyed by the elusiveness of her model, going so far as to evoke the 100 personalities of Max Ernst's famous *roman-collage*. Indeed, all three aspects evoked by the artist in her letter are present in the final result, from the austere and severe trait that Wild inherited from his Swiss origins and is enhanced in the portrait by the fur collar of the martial army general's coat, to the high cheekbones that give him a vague oriental *allure*; as for the refined, decadent elegance, it was certainly a fundamental distinguishing feature of Renato Wild, whose mysterious personality is also enhanced in the painting by a crystal ball reflecting a window, which the sitter explicitly indicates, and by a series of objects scattered on the table, where two shells stand out.

At this time Leonor Fini already had an important portrait production to her credit, which had certainly been, as for many other artists, a good source of income; at the same time, the artist had more than once expressed her disdain for this pictorial genre, aligning herself with an ancient tradition that considered it to be somehow of a lower level. If, for example, one leafs through her long correspondence with Pieyre de Mandiargues, one can find numerous passages in which the painter expresses her disappointment with portrait commissions, which also exposed her to the demands and harassment of those portrayed. In Milan, at the end of 1937, thus at the same time as she was executing Wild's portrait, she wrote to her friend that she was not interested in exhibiting at the Galleria La Cometa in Rome and that she would only do so because of a financial matter, which was however settled for the time being since 'je peux peindre tous les portraits que je souhaite. (Un tas de nouvelles crétines se sont présentées pour commander le leur).'[55] In 1944, moments of discouragement towards this remunerative activity alternate with bursts of enthusiasm for some portraits in which, on the contrary, she felt she had fully expressed herself: 'Pour le moment, je ne travaille qu'à des portraits et je n'ai pas commencé de nouveaux tableaux. Mais ces portraits sont une source de gain indispensable. Du reste, certains d'entre eux deviendront de vrais et beaux tableaux.'[56] Finally, a few more artistically elaborate portraits seem to give her greater satisfaction:

[55] *Ibid.*, 216. The fact that the artist uses the feminine allows us to exclude that the negative judgment was extended to Renato Wild.

[56] *Ibid.*, 379 (Rome, 16/03/1944). See also the letter dated 25/03/1944; *Ibid.*, 383.

'J'ai presque achevé le portrait de Manolo B. (avec les plumes). Il est magnifique, notamment parce que le modèle a un très beau visage. Quand je le regarde (il a un côté magnétique), je suis envahie par une immense tristesse. Jamais la beauté ne m'a causeé autant d'angoisse et de mélancolie. [...] j'ai peint un très beau drapé turquoise sur un buste violet (les couleurs des maniéristes !!).'[57]

If one flicks through the *catalogue raisonné* of the artist's paintings, one can immediately understand how vast Leonor Fini's portrait activity was and how unequal the results were: in fact, one goes from demanding and significant works to superficial portraits, made only to satisfy the demands of the sitter. The portrait of Renato Wild certainly belongs to the first category and is part of a group of ambitious portraits inaugurated towards the end of the 1930s,[58] in which the artist took up solutions of 16th century portraiture that had already been absorbed in the 1920s by Italian artists of the *rappel à l'ordre*, as for example her master Achille Funi (we may think of the *Portrait of Umberto Notari* and the *Portrait of Mario Chiattone*, respectively of 1921 and 1924) and which Leonor herself had already experimented with in her youth (*Portrait of Lino Saba*; *Portrait of Italo Svevo*).[59] But in this new phase the background becomes monochrome, the clothing is chosen with care and at times can become eccentric or showy (*Portrait d'André Pieyre de Mandiargues au grand col de léopard*, 1938-42)[60] and Fini's attention is concentrated on the psychological introspection of the portrayed, which is matched by a series of objects in the foreground aimed at evoking their interiority, according to a practice that had already been codified in the Renaissance period. This is the case with the portrait of Renato Wild, as we have seen, and with those of Jean Schlumberger and Roderick Cameron.[61] At the same time, the artist also kept alive a more canonical portraiture, for an aristocratic clientele with more traditional tastes: we may consider, to remain in the same period, the *Portrait of Count Giorgio Ottone*, of 1939.[62]

As for the date of the *Portrait of Renato Wild I*, which until now was considered to be dated 1939, Fini's letter would suggest that it was painted at the end of 1937 or the beginning of 1938. There is further evidence of this date in another document: Virginia Agnelli, the already mentioned friend of Renato Wild, wrote to him from London in October 1937 to inform him that she could not come to Milan and that the portrait she was planning to have made by Leonor Fini would have to be postponed to another date, asking him to inform the artist.[63] It can therefore be assumed that it was Renato Wild, who was in touch with Leonor Fini as early as 1937, who put the artist in contact with his friend, who then had her portrait painted twice: the first time in 1939[64] and the second around

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[57] *Ibid.*, 384 (Rome, 28/03/1944). The second portrait alluded to is that of Lino Invernizzi. See, respectively, CR 318 and 324. It should be remembered that Leonor Fini also practiced portraiture in a private dimension, for her friends, to whom the work was then donated. In this regard, the memory of her artist friend Enrico Colombotto Rosso (portrayed by Fini in 1956, see CR 550) is well known; see Webb, "Leonor Fini's Life", 550. Finally, it should be recalled that some of her exhibitions were entirely devoted to portraiture, such as the 1948 Los Angeles show at the Mid-Twentieth Century Art Gallery or the 2002 Cannes exhibition *Leonor Fini Portraits* at La Malmaison.

[58] See Webb, *Sphinx*, 66-68.

[59] See CR 10 and 31.

[60] CR 185.

[61] CR 191.

[62] CR 194.

[63] Letter from Virginia Agnelli to RW, London, October 1937 (ARW).

[64] See CR 216.

1944.[65]

17. L. Fini, *Portrait de Renato Wild II*, 1946, private collection (photo by the author) (© Leonor Fini, by SIAE 2021).

The second portrait painted by Leonor Fini in the early post-war period, *Portrait de Renato Wild II* (ca. 1946, CR 369) **(fig. 17)**, is much smaller and simpler than the first one. The compositional solution adopted here, centered solely on the head against a neutral background, becomes frequent in the artist's work from that date on.[66]

Lastly, it should be remembered that Renato Wild's collection also included a third important portrait of him, painted by Alberto Savinio around 1948, now in a private collection, which testifies to the collector's summer visits to the artist's house in Poveromo, in Versilia.[67]

Wild's Fini collection from a thematic point of view

Renato Wild put together a very important core of Leonor Fini's works from the 1940s as well as some from the very early 1950s: it is not by chance that the artist repeatedly asked her collector and, after his death, his heirs, to have them for exhibition purposes, believing them to be particularly

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[65] See CR 323. It should be noted, however, that in a letter to Pieyre de Mandiargues dated Rome, 01/05/1945, in which as usual she told her friend that she wanted to abandon portraiture altogether, Fini specified that she was working on a second portrait of Virginia Agnelli with her daughter. The portraits in question could therefore be three, or the project could have been transformed into a single portrait to be identified with no. 323 of the CR, in which case the date of the latter should be slightly modified.

[66] See CR 403, 410, and 412.

[67] See Vivarelli, Pia. *Alberto Savinio. Catalogo generale*, Milan: Electa, 1966, 192. The acquaintance between Wild and Savinio is confirmed by a brief note from the latter, dated 20/05/1950, concerning the purchase of a car owned by the collector (ARW).

significant for a period of her activity, as she wrote to the lawyer Ottolenghi in 1965.[68]

The prevailing themes in the works gathered in Blevio, apart from portraits and the isolated case of decorative panels, are variations of the *belle dame sans merci* (figures of domineering or protective women who take the shape of sphinxes or witches), or naturalistic-minerological investigations in which disturbing presences may appear. As for the former, we may think of the witches in *Stryges Amaouri* (one human with a bucranium like a diadem, the other feral, flaunting an egg), who watch over a naked man, asleep and defenseless, imprisoned by ivy wrapped around his sculptural body; or the *Femme assise sur un homme nu* **(fig. 18)**, vaguely inspired by Piero di Cosimo's *Cephalus and Procri* for the figures in the foreground, while the background presents a blue lake landscape. Certainly these paintings, which exalt the virile beauty dominated or watched over by female figures, very frequent in Fini's pictorial production of the 1940s, met Renato Wild's personal taste; the collector, who lived on Lake Como, must have also liked the lacustrine references in the landscape background of the second painting.

18. L. Fini, *Femme assise sur un homme nu*, 1942, private collection (photo by the author) (© Leonor Fini, by SIAE 2021)

As for the vegetable and mineral worlds of the second theme, reference can be made here to *Sphinx Regina*, which almost seems to be an illustration of a botanical treatise but then reveals a disturbing eye in the root in the foreground, or to the osteological investigations of *La cible*, or, finally, to the optical deception of *La grande racine*, which can appear as the head of a dragon.
The two previous themes could also be fused together, as in the two versions of *Sphinx Philagria*, in

[68] See letter from LF to Avv. Ottolenghi, 14/02/1965 (ARW).

which the sphinxes tower over a meadow dotted with skulls, fossils, insects, eggs, roots, while in the background a mysterious city can be glimpsed (going up in flames in the first version of the two); or as in *Le tournoi* **(fig. 19)**, in which the sphinxes appear symbiotically enclosed in bamboo roots, like chrysalides slowly transforming to take flight.

19. L. Fini, *Le Tournoi*, 1946, private collection (© Leonor Fini, by SIAE 2021)

The Fini collection in Blevio therefore consisted of a very coherent group of works of high quality, which Renato Wild must have chosen in person during his frequent visits to the artist's Parisian studio and which testifies to a precise orientation not only of his artistic preferences but also of his taste for collecting a dreamlike and fantastic naturalism. On this point there must have been full agreement with the artist, who on more than one occasion expressed her satisfaction with this phase of her painting in which she seemed to have finally reached full maturity. The way she expresses herself, with regard to *Sphinx Regina*, in a letter to Pieyre de Mandiargues in June 1945, written in Rome a few days before the vernissage of her exhibition at the Studio La Finestra, is indicative: 'J'ai terminé aujourd'hui un tableau qui est, à mon avis, le plus beau que j'aie fait. (Il s'intitule *Sphinx Regina* et représente des racines de formes étranges, des feuilles de choux, un chou à la crème, de nombreuses petites feuilles, des chaumes, des herbes sèches, etc. Tu verras).'[69] In the

[69] *L'ombre portée*, 433. The letter is dated 1 May 1945, but the curators believe that it was actually written on 1 June 1945. What the artist wrote raises questions about the dating of the work, which in the CR is dated 1943, but appears to have been completed two years later. The date (1945) given in the leaflet of the 1951 Venice exhibition seems correct: see *Leonor Fini*, Venezia, 1951, 4, no. 22. On this particular creative moment, see also Pieyre's enthusiastic reading of *Sphinx Philagria I* (12/06/1945); *Ibid.*, 447.

same year, such works were to be finely interpreted by Mario Praz, who wrote about them in an essay that appeared in the 1945 small volume dedicated to the artist and then in a contribution to the American magazine *View*, which was illustrated with *Sphinx Regina* and *Sphinx Philagria I*. In the reading of the famous literary critic, to whom Leonor Fini felt very attached and to whom she donated a painting on the subject of the *Sphinx*,[70] the artist appears to be a 'gothic' painter because of the lenticular and meticulous style with which nature is reproduced, which would suggest the late gothic tradition of the Flemish courts.[71]

Renato Wild was the collector who most enthusiastically took possession of the paintings from this particular creative period, perceiving its great importance in the artist's development. The works by Fini that became part of his collection, as we will see, merged into the eclectic space of Villa Rospini, becoming one of its distinctive features and perhaps its main attraction, evoking a primeval world dominated by a matriarchal society and characterized by rapacious and sterile love affairs and morbid and sadistic relationships that had as their background a luxuriant but eerie nature in the grip of an incessant process of metamorphosis.

The display of the Wild collection

20.Villa Rospini, Blevio: oriental screen

21.Villa Rospini, Blevio: oriental screen

The photographic documentation concerning the interiors of Villa Rospini and the arrangement of the paintings in the Wild collection is unfortunately not extensive. The two shots of the interiors currently available reveal sumptuously and densely furnished rooms, in which period furniture and decorations were seamlessly combined with oriental objects (vases and screens) **(figs. 20-21)** and

[70] CR 446, ca. 1950. On the iconography of the sphinx in Fini, see Mahon, Alice. "La Feminité triomphante: Surrealism, Leonor Fini, and the Sphinx", *Dada/Surrealism* 19 (2013), 1-20; Scappini, Alessandra. *Il paesaggio totemico tra reale e immaginario* […], Milan: Mimesis, 2017, 105-114.

[71] See Praz, Mario. "Leonor Fini: Gothic Painter", *View* VI/1 (February 1946): 5, 16. The text originally appeared in Italian in the magazine *Il Mondo* (4 August 1945). See also: *Id.*, "No Title", in Jaloux, Edmond *et al.*, *Leonor Fini*, Sansoni: Firenze, 1945, 19-22. On the issue of *View* devoted to the 'Italian Surrealists', see Schiaffini, Ilaria. "La Galleria L'Obelisco e il mercato americano dal dopoguerra alla fine degli anni Cinquanta", in *Irene Brin, Gaspero del Corso e la Galleria L'Obelisco*, eds. V.C. Carattozzolo *et al.*, Rome: Drago, 2018, 128; Tulino, Giulia. *La Galleria L'Obelisco. Surrealismo e arte fantastica 1943-1954*, Rome: De Luca, 2020, 47-50.

22. Villa Rospini, Blevio: salon

some surviving pieces from the previous experience of the Ar.Ca Company: see for example the table covered in ray skin **(fig. 22)**, half-hidden by the oriental panel, or the other **(fig. 23),** with even more essential lines, which serves as a console table in front of the main staircase and was part of the living room presented by Ulrich and Wild at the *V Triennale* in Milan in 1933 **(fig. 24)**. In this context of decorative opulence both the paintings of the antique collection and the works by Leonor Fini were inserted, probably in a seamless way.[72]

23. Villa Rospini, Blevio: the staircase

24. Ar.Ca. living room, V Triennale di Milano 1933

It was not unusual for *haute époque* furnishings to include both oriental pieces and

[72] See the document "Paintings Villa Rospini", undated (ARW).

contemporary works of art, and indeed in Europe, several decades earlier, there had been important examples of such taste orientation (think of the collections of Adolphe Stoclet in Brussels, Bernard Berenson in Settignano, and Riccardo Gualino in Turin): but if in those residences a rarefied and quintessential atmosphere reigned, at Villa Rospini, instead, at least judging from the surviving photographs, an abundance prevailed that may recall the decorative overcrowding that had characterized the interiors of Europe and the United States at the turn of the century.[73] One might wonder what had become of Renato Wild's search for essential furniture that had been praised at the Galleria del Milione in 1936, even if, as seen, eclecticism and the mixture of antique and modern had also been distinctive features of his collaboration with Ulrich.

In any case, Leonor Fini's works could easily fit into such a variegated and eclectic context, also because they were substantially naturalistic, although eerie; thanks to their abundance of references to the history of painting (the artist had never made a mystery of being inspired by the masters of the Italian Renaissance, from Piero di Cosimo to the Tuscan Mannerists, and by Nordic painters such as the Flemish primitives and Cranach), they could easily dialogue with the antique paintings and with the antiquarian furnishings in Wild's collection.[74]

Despite the lack of photographic documentation, some references in the archive documents allow the location of some of the Fini works inside the Villa Rospini to be clarified: of the twelve paintings that remained at Blevio after Wild's death, *Sphinx Regina* and *Portrait de Jean Genet I* were placed in the library, due to obvious thematic affinity in the case of the latter; *L'escalier dans la tour* and *Stryges Amaouri* were displayed in the room of Karl Harrington, Renato Wild's companion.[75] In the dining room, albeit with a margin of doubt,[76] there must have been the three decorative panels with a black background presenting subjects (mushrooms, fish and eggs) suited to the setting; but they could have fit into other rooms as well, given the numerous oriental panels with a black background spread throughout the villa. Of the other five Fini paintings, it can be assumed that they were divided between one of the salons and the collector's study and the bedroom.
Finally, as far as the frames are concerned, some of the paintings were certainly reframed (as in the case of *Stryges Amaouri* and *Sphinx Regina*),[77] while others, such as *Femme assise sur un homme nu* and the *Portrait de Renato Wild II*, feature *haute époque* gilded frames which could perhaps have been those chosen by Renato Wild and which would have contributed to creating an even greater fusion between the works of Leonor Fini and the decor of the Villa.[78]

Works by Leonora Carrington and Pavel Tchelitchew in the Wild collection

It is interesting to note that the collection of Renato Wild also included works by Leonora

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[73] See Strehlke, Carl Brandon. "Bernard Berenson and Asian Art", in *Bernard Berenson: Formation and Heritage*, eds. J. Connors and L.A. Waldman, Cambridge (MA): HUP, 2014, 222.

[74] For the problem of the display of contemporary art in Italian homes, see Fergonzi, Flavio. "I quadri in casa d'altri. Sull'ambientazione delle opere moderne nelle riviste italiane di interni e di moda dagli anni cinquanta ai settanta", in *Arte moltiplicata. L'immagine del '900 italiano nello specchio dei rotocalchi*, eds. B. Cinelli *et al.*, Milan: Bruno Mondadori, 2013, 301-320. The author, however, deals with a different context from the one considered here.

[75] This information is taken from the document quoted at note 52.

[76] See above discussion of Sabatino Bruni's letter to B.M. Cavallo of 13/02/1965.

[77] Oral communication from the collector's descendant (15/06/2021).

[78] A margin of doubt remains, however, as a series of photographs (ARW), probably taken in March 1965 at Villa Rospini by the collector's niece for the purpose of identifying the works to be sent to Knokke-le-Zoute, show several paintings by Leonor Fini unframed; it seems unlikely, however, that the works were exhibited in Blevio in their bareness and one can imagine that on that occasion they had been removed from their frames (and protective glass) in order to carry out the photographic reportage.

Carrington and Pavel Tchelitchew. As regards the former, a friend of Leonor Fini who painted her in 1939,[79] it is possible to reconstruct the presence of one of her paintings in Blevio, which could not be identified, thanks to a series of archive documents.

The reference context is Leonora Carrington's solo show at the Galerie Pierre in Paris in 1952, where 28 paintings were exhibited that are also listed in a document in the gallery's archives concerning the temporary importation of paintings from Mexico.[80] Although Pierre Loeb had often dealt with Surrealist artists (first and foremost Miró, whom he put under contract, but also Ernst, Brauner, Lam, Paalen) and had even hosted the movement's first exhibition (*La peinture surréaliste*) in December 1925, when the gallery was still in its first location in rue Bonaparte before moving, two years later, to rue des Beaux-Arts, it cannot be said that he had become the gallerist of reference for the Surrealists, and indeed he had strong reservations about the decisions taken by their leader, André Breton.[81]

Judging by an examination of archival documents, the Carrington exhibition was not a great commercial success: according to the above-mentioned import register, no. 8 and no. 18 only were sold, the former to an unknown purchaser, the latter to Marie Cuttoli, the well-known collector and modern tapestry entrepreneur; but an examination of the gallery's cash book shows that two further canvases from the exhibition, nos. 14 and 19 (together with a third unidentified one), were sold by Pierre Loeb to Inès Amor[82] for the Galeria de Arte Mexicano in Mexico City.[83]

In relation to the Carrington retrospective, a further document has emerged that leads back to Renato Wild: according to a pick-up coupon of the shipment company 'de la Rancherage', dated 16 June 1952, three paintings were collected from the gallery, one by Leonora Carrington and two by Leonor Fini, to be delivered in Italy to 'Monsieur Renato Wild'.[84]

It has not so far been possible to identify either the small painting by Leonora Carrington or

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[79] See CR 190. I believe this is the portrait that Pieyre de Mandiargues asked Leonor Fini to paint in 1939 in exchange for the sale of a de Chirico he owned at the price of 15,000 francs (sum he donated to the artist), and not *La chambre noire* (CR 222), as suggested in *L'ombre portée (*248, note 1). I have not been able to ascertain whether Pieyre actually received it.

[80] Only for some of them is the title given: *Orphée*, *La vache rouge*, *Figures*, *Le chien étoilé* and *La poupée*. See AP, Carnet noir, Livre d'admissions temporaires 1952 et 1955.

[81] See Loeb, Albert. "L'aventure de Pierre Loeb. La galerie Pierre, 1924-1964", in *Les artistes et leurs galeries. Paris-Berlin, 1900-1950. I : Paris*, eds. Denise Vernerey-Laplace and Hélène Ivanoff, Mont-Saint-Aignan: Presses universitaires de Rouen et du Havre, 2018, 213-231 (esp. 218-220); Drost, Julia. "Il sogno della ricchezza: Surrealismo e mercato dell'arte nella Parigi tra le due guerre", *Ricerche di storia dell'arte* 121 (2017): 5-14 (esp. 8).

[82] Amor, who founded the Galeria de Arte Mexicano in 1935, organized the Exposicion Surrealista Internacional in 1940 with Wolfgang Paalen.

[83] It was an 'affaire en commission' for which Loeb received 10% of the total amount, equal to 280,000 francs. See AP, respectively Livre de caisse 1951-1955, Livre de caisse et banque 1951-1955 and Grand Livre 1947-1955. The figures are given under the headings 'May 1952' and 'June 1952'.

[84] See AP, 140, 25b, Exportations 1939-1953. This *bon d'enlèvement* is matched by a series of documents in the Wild Archive relating to the clearance of the three above-mentioned works, which allow some, sometimes contradictory, details to be added: it is stated there that 'this supply was made by the Galerie Pierre as compensation for charitable donations that the writer [Renato Wild] had already had occasion to make in Paris' (24/09/1952); that 'three small paintings were sent to him [Renato Wild] by the Galerie Pierre in Paris as a gift from Leonora Carrington and also as a certificate of gratitude for acts of particular liberality and charity bestowed by the writer [R.W.] to French charities' (29/09/1952); and finally, that the works in question are 'three small paintings from France purchased at the Pierre Gallery in Paris [...] paintings by a modern artist who is not at all known to be of particular artistic interest' (15/12/1952) (ARW). I believe that Leonor Fini's name was not mentioned in these documents in order not to create further problems regarding the importation of the goods, which had been lying in customs for about six months. Fini asked the collector about her two paintings: see letter from LF to RW, 16/01/1953 (ARW).

the two by Leonor Fini,[85] but the important fact remains that Renato Wild was one of the rare Italian collectors to own a painting by Leonora Carrington. The three paintings he received were a gift that also sealed Carrington and Fini's reunion in Paris. The two artists had had the opportunity to meet on several occasions, even during the dramatic events of the Second World War, had loved the same man, Max Ernst (a brief *liaison* for Leonor, a longer and more complicated relationship for Leonora) and had approached Surrealism with different intensity.[86] In 1952, the year of the exhibition in question, a series of photographs **(fig. 25)** by Denise Colomb, Pierre Loeb's sister, captured their meeting in Paris after so many years apart (shots that feature a theatrical and masked Fini alongside a more fragile and evanescent Carrington).[87]

25. Denise Colomb, Leonor Fini and Leonora Carrington, Paris 1952

As for Tchelitchew, the Russian-born artist who had been his career in the circle of Waldemar George's neo-Humanists, it is a 1953 letter from him to Renato Wild in 1953 that sheds light on their contacts.[88] In addition to complaining about his difficulties in establishing himself on the French art scene, Tchelitchew asked Wild, among other things, to settle the purchases he had

[85] At the moment it is only a mere hypothesis that the two small paintings by Fini could have been the two *gouaches* entitled *Bagnard*, which, as we have seen, entered Wild's collection between 1951 and 1955. Another possible occasion for the purchase of the two aforementioned works could have been Leonor Fini's exhibition of graphics at the Galleria Montenapoleone in Milan in 1953, on which the artist had drawn the collector's attention. See letters from LF to RW dated 18/02/1953 and 20/02/1953 (ARW).

[86] On this very point, in a letter written in Rome in 1945, commenting negatively on the issue of the American Surrealist magazine *VVV* she had just received (and which in her opinion 'trahit l'aspect le plus masculin des surréalistes' and in which Max Ernst 'n'a rien pu imposer de moi à ce crétin de Breton, qui m'est hostile'), Fini had distanced herself from Carrington: 'Leonora y collabore avec des reproductions de tableaux très naïfs (genre Frida Rivera et les miens d'il y a 8 ans) et le récit, très excessif, de son séjour dans un asyle psychiatrique. [...] Leonora me paraît vraiment folle (raison pour laquelle elle enchante Breton) et un peu "bonne élève" surréaliste'. *L'ombre portée*, 429-430.

[87] The photograph reproduced here was also published in *Il mondo* IV/33 (1952) with the caption 'Parigi minore : le due Leonor'.

[88] See letter from Pavel Tchelitchew to RW, 08/07/1953 (ARW).

made during his stay in Paris some time earlier. It has not been possible to identify the work or works purchased by Wild, nor to identify the gift of an anatomical drawing mentioned in the letter.[89] Finally, the artist also hints at his plans to work in Italy, where he had already been and where indeed he did work from that year onwards, first in Grottaferrata and then in Frascati.[90]

It was Leonor Fini who had introduced Tchelitchew (an old acquaintance of hers from her stay in New York in 1936 on the occasion of her exhibition at the Julien Levy Gallery) to Wild, writing to him about her fellow artist on several occasions during 1953 and wishing that the two could meet and get to know each other better.[91]

Leonor Fini's relationship with Renato Wild

According to Peter Webb, Fini had accepted Wild's friendship more because he was one of her most important collectors than out of any real interest, in fact it seems she was basically not interested in him,[92] but the letters in the Wild Archive add new facets to the relationship between the artist and her collector.

There are in fact significant elements on Wild's part that underline how much he cared for Fini: for example, in September 1947 he wrote to Leonor insisting on paying her medical expenses for an operation she was to undergo;[93] or again, in the summer of 1953, he offered her the gift of precious earrings and a wonderful fabric in Venice.[94] Grandiose and perhaps somewhat excessive gestures, which could be misunderstood in the artist's entourage, as in fact happened with Jean Genet, who tried to take advantage of Wild's generosity.

From the collection of letters it emerges that Fini was a career artist who lived from her work and who had to carefully follow the financial aspects of her activity, dividing her time between her theatrical commitments, which tired her both physically and because of her complicated relations with the world of performing arts,[95] and her painting commitments, to which she would have liked to devote herself entirely. She mentions, for example, the difficulty of obtaining the agreed payments, for her paintings but also for royalties for the reproductions of her works and for her theatrical activity.[96] In this respect it is significant that she did not hesitate to ask

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[89] The latter actually intended for Wild's then partner, a doctor of medicine.

[90] The artist exhibited twice at the Galleria L'Obelisco, in 1950 and 1955 (see Schiaffini, "La Galleria L'Obelisco", 130; Tulino, *La Galleria L'Obelisco*, 98). The uncertainties and discouragements that characterised his artistic career since the 1920s re-emerge again in two letters from the artist to Enrico Colombotto Rosso in which he expresses his fear that the second of the two exhibitions would not meet with success with the public and that Mario Tazzoli, director of the Galatea Gallery in Turin and then Colombotto Rosso's companion, might not have appreciated his recent production. See letters from Pavel Tchelitchew to Enrico Colombotto Rosso dated 14/03/1955 and 23/03/1955, Archivio Enrico Colombotto Rosso, Camino Piemonte (Alessandria). Unlike Tchelitchew, Leonor Fini's relationship with Irene Brin and Gaspero del Corso was very bad and characterized by mutual antipathy, so much so that the artist exhibited only once at the Obelisco, in a group show (see Tulino, "Dalla Margherita a L'Obelisco", 118-121; *Ead*., *La Galleria L'Obelisco*, 42). The idiosyncrasy was immediate, as already emerges from Fini's recollection of their first meeting in July 1943, in a Rome under bombardment, in which Brin appeared to her 'malgré tout, terriblement artificielle et maniérée' (*L'ombre portée*, 332). See also the letter of 17/02/1945 in which the artist comments on the exhibition at the bookshop-gallery La Margherita, 'galerie soi-disant parisienne' and on her now closed relationship with Rome and Italy (*Ibid.*, 413-416).

[91] See letters from LF to RW dated 15/01/1953, 18/02/1953 and 25/03/1953 (ARW).

[92] See Webb, *Sphinx*, 145.

[93] See *Ibid.*, p. 133.

[94] See LF's letter to RW, 11/09/1953 (ARW).

[95] See letters from LF to RW dated 15/01/1953 and 18/02/1953 (ARW).

[96] See letter from LF to RW, 15/01/1953 (ARW).

Wild for the balance of an advance payment for her painting *L'escalier dans la tour* **(fig. 26)**, asking him four times within the space of a month.[97] The correspondence shows that Wild saw and reserved the painting in Fini's Parisian studio, further proof of his direct relationship with the artist.

26. L. Fini, *L'Escalier dans la tour*, 1952, private collection (© Leonor Fini, by SIAE 2021)

Fini must have been well aware of Wild's background in the world of architecture and design, as she wrote to him several times on the issue of decorative arts. Also emerging from the correspondence is a reference to a boutique, probably in Milan, involving a woman nicknamed Jonni (she lived at Villa Rospini, from what one can gather from the letters, and was probably in a relationship with Franco: friends, or perhaps employees of Renato Wild). In 1951, Leonor agreed, at Wild's suggestion, to paint Jonni's portrait, whom she considered very beautiful and nice.[98] According to her letters, it was Jonni and Franco who helped Renato Wild to overcome his depression.[99] In 1953, Fini designed the logotype of a star-flower-woman for the boutique in question, which may have been the result of an entrepreneurial initiative by Renato Wild. In order

[97] See letters from LF to RW dated 20/02/1953, 28/02/1953, 19/03/1953 and 25/03/1953 (ARW). The advance payment amounted to the equivalent in francs of 300,000 Italian lire.

[98] See LF's letter to RW, 01/08/1951 (ARW). Jonni's name also appears in the letters in the spellings Jonny, Gionni and Gionny.

[99] See LF's letter to RW, 18/02/1953 (ARW).

to reproduce the logo, she advised Wild against using the engraving technique and instead suggested the procedure for reproductions used by Piero Fornasetti, whom she recommended he visit. The advice was repeated a few months later, in a letter in which she told Wild about a day of shopping in Milan:

> Dearest Renato,
> […] I wanted to tell you, by the way, that I went to Fornasetti via Bazetti [actually: Bazzini] 14 (in Milan), whom you absolutely *must* know – look for him – call and go – he is in a sense a *genius* of techniques – *not everything* he does is beautiful (I don't like the shapes of his furniture) *and some things are monotonous* but he has some *splendid* screens and some things lacquered in new materials and marvellous *false marbles – magnificent porcelain* – and some fabrics – then trays etc. With you he could do things *suggested by you* – he can do *everything* – he could make a magnificent hanging room for clothes – bizarre things for bathrooms etc. etc. Go – you will see that you will have *a lot* of fun – I have told him about you – (he knows you by reputation). I advise you to have a *whole* set of porcelain plates made – he has very beautiful patterns. Let me know then and do not *forget* this advice. I was also at Toninelli's (via Bagutta) which makes the most beautiful fabrics (for clothes) I have ever seen. [...] I'm coming back with an enormous "booty" – who knows the customs –.[…]
> Goodbye now dear Renato – I hope to see you in Paris – call me immediately.
> I embrace you affectionately
> Yours Leonor[100]

Staying in the field of decorative arts, Leonor Fini often mentions in her correspondence the creation of three decorative panels (CR 439-441) which, as can be deduced from the context, must have been a specific commission from Renato Wild, who perhaps intended to create a modern *pendant* to the numerous oriental panels on a black background that enriched the furnishings of Villa Rospini. This was nothing new in the production of Fini, who had already executed decorative three-leaf panels on a black background several times during the 1930s[101] and was accustomed to expanding her creativity into the world of applied arts.

Judging from the references that have emerged from the correspondence, the execution of the three panels, currently dated around 1950, must have been completed in 1953, along with at least another series of panels with marble effects that have not yet been identified.[102] At the beginning of 1953 Fini sent Wild a photo of a panel already completed in the summer of 1952 and

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[100] 'Carissimo Renato […] Le volevo dire che tra l'altro fui da *Fornasetti* via Bazetti [*sic*] 14 (a Milano) che Lei *deve* assolutamente conoscere – lo cerchi – telefoni e vada – è in un senso un *genio* delle tecniche – non *tutto* quel che fa è bello (le forme dei mobili non mi piacciono) e *certe cose sono monotone* ma à alcuni paraventi *splendidi* e certe cose laccate in materiale nuovo e meravigliosi *finti marmi – magnifiche le porcellane* – e certe stoffe – poi vassoi etc. etc. Con Lei potrebbe eseguire cose *suggerite da Lei* – può far *tutto* – potrebbe fare un magnifico ambiente penderia [*sic*] per vestiti – cose per bagno strane etc. etc. Vada – vedrà che si divertirà *molto* – io le ò parlato di lei – (la conosce di nome). Le consiglio farsi fare *tutto* un servizio in porcellana – fa disegni bellissimi. Mi scriva poi e non *dimentichi* questo consiglio. Fui pure da Toninelli (via Bagutta) che fa le più belle stoffe (per vestiti) che ò mai visto. […] Torno con un "bottino" enorme – chissà la dogana.- […] La saluto ora caro Renato – spero di vederla a Parigi – mi telefoni subito. La abbraccio affettuosamente Sua Leonor'. Letter from LF to RW, 11/09/1953 (ARW). It appears that Fini had gone to Piero Fornasetti's home-studio, in Via Bazzini 14, used as a workshop and print shop, where the famous objects decorated with motifs that would become the trademark of the Milanese artist-designer were created. He would later open a series of shops, the first of which, towards the end of the 1950s, was in Via Bigli 24. See Mauriès, Patrick. *Fornasetti. La follia pratica*, Turin: Allemandi 1992; Maino, Maria Paola. *Piero Fornasetti*, in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* 49, Rome: I.E.I., 1997, 86-88. For Fornasetti's contacts with Raffaele Carrieri and Fabrizio Clerici, see Ilaria Schiaffini's essay in this issue of *Mélusine*.

[101] See *Paravent aux trois panneaux, fond noir, trois personnages, I* (ca. 1930, CR 142); *Paravent aux trois panneaux, fond noir, trois personnages, II* (ca. 1935, CR 143); *Paravent à trois panneaux* (1939, CR 197).

[102] The references in the following letters from LF to RW (ARW) seem to relate to the latter series: 28/01/1953, 18/02/1953; 20/02/1953.

she minutely described another panel that had just been finished (CR 440).[103] In May of the same year the artist announced that the second panel with mushrooms (CR 439) **(fig. 27)** would be finished in June and advised that the previously delivered panel should be plastered and varnished to prevent it from tearing; shortly afterwards, finally, in announcing the completion of the second panel she stated that she would make two more in purple, but probably only executed the third panel (CR 441) with marine fauna instead.[104]

Lastly, the correspondence reveals constant requests from Fini to borrow some of her works hanging at Villa Rospini for exhibitions she held in the 1950s and 60s, requests that were always granted by her trusted collector, which she could not help but appreciate enormously. Such exhibitions included the already mentioned 1951 solo show in Venice[105] and the third edition of *Peintres d'aujourdhui France - Italie* at the Palazzo delle Belle Arti in Turin (September-October 1953), for which she asked for *L'escalier dans la tour*, which Wild had just bought.[106] Two years later, for the *VII Quadriennale* in Rome, Fini asked to borrow five of the nine works on display; she exhibited in room 38, dedicated to fantastic art, in the company of Stanislao Lepri and Fabrizio Clerici; there was also a small retrospective of Alberto Martini, who had died the previous year, and one can imagine the surprise of the visitor in entering the exhibition space after having seen, in the previous room 37, works by Lucio Fontana, Emilio Vedova and Alberto Burri.[107] Finally, in 1955 she asked him to lend the *Portrait of Jean Genet I* **(fig. 28)** for an exhibition to be held in Paris the following year.[108]

27. L. Fini, *Decorative panel I: Mushrooms*, ca. 1953, private collection (© Leonor Fini, by SIAE 2021)

[103] See letter from LF to RW, 15/01/1953 (ARW). In another letter dated 16/01/1953 the artist states that she is thinking about the panels and on 25/03/1953 she writes that she will resume work after Easter.

[104] See letters from LF to RW dated 17/05/1953 and 29/06/1953 (ARW).

[105] See letter from LF to RW, 01/08/1951 (ARW), in which she thanks him for the loan of the works.

[106] See letter from LF to RW, 29/06/1953 (ARW).

[107] See letters from LF to RW dated 01/08/1955 and 08/09/1955 (ARW). Although the titles appear slightly changed in the catalogue, the works exhibited were *Sphinx Regina*, *La grande racine*, *La cible*, *La fille du maçon* (mistaken for a child) and *L'escalier dans la tour*. See *VII Quadriennale Nazionale di Roma,* exhibition catalogue, Rome: De Luca, 1955, 135.

[108] For lack of space it is not possible here to go into Renato Wild's relationship with Jean Genet, testified to, among other things, by the presence in his collection of one of the two portraits Fini painted of the Parisian writer and by a collection of letters (ARW) documenting the generous financing of the Swiss-Italian collector aimed first at supporting the film and literary projects of the author of the *Lettre à Leonor Fini* (Paris: Loyau, 1950), and then at relieving him of financial difficulties. On this subject, see for the moment Webb, *Sphinx*, 176-177.

28. L. Fini, *Portrait de Jean Genet I*, 1950,
private collection (© Leonor Fini, by SIAE 2021)

Renato Wild and Edward James, two collectors compared

As mentioned, through Leonor Fini, Edward James and Renato Wild had sometimes met and shared the position of major collectors of the artist, who always treated them with respect although her relationship with James was complicated.[109] Comparing their collections, which show traits of affinity but also of divergence, may therefore prove useful in bringing the figure of Renato Wild into sharper focus.

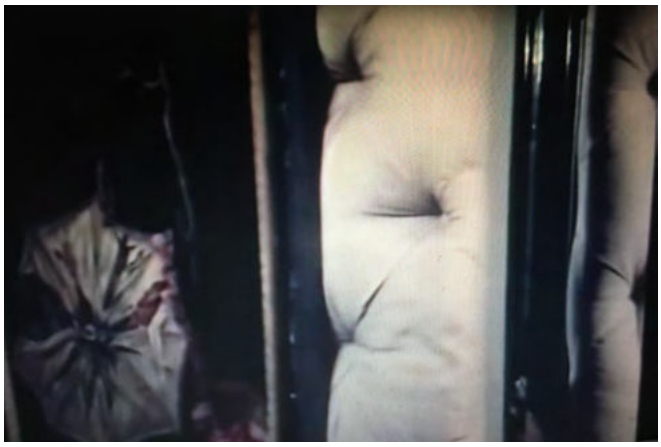
Edward James, born in England in 1907, grew up in the splendors of Edwardian times as heir to an enormous financial fortune **(fig. 29)**; his mother, who, according to gossip, was the mistress or daughter of King Edward VII, was one of the landmarks of the social life of the time. It was immediately evident that Edward had a problematic character and that he was not destined to fulfill the social and professional role to which his birth had predestined him. Collecting, therefore, together with poetry, was a way for him to unleash his eccentricity, to challenge social conventions and to express his creativity.

Although James never considered himself a surrealist, his closeness to the movement was evident from the 1930s, beginning with his presence at the *International Surrealist Exhibition* in London in 1936, where he was immortalized in a series of famous photographs. In addition to the great understanding and collaboration with some of the artists of the group, of whom he was one of the main collectors (he owned more than one hundred works by Salvador Dalí and 20 works by René Magritte including his two famous portraits *Le Principe du plaisir* and *La reproduction interdite*), James also showed a predilection for fantastic and visionary women artists: he owned about 70 paintings by Leonor Fini, Leonora Carrington and Dorothea Tanning.

As far as Fini is concerned, the following works, most of which show great thematic affinity with those acquired by Wild, certainly entered his collection: *Figures on a Terrace* (1938, CR 171); *Femme en armure I* and *Femme en armure II* (1938, CR 172 and 173), which take up the theme of the dominating woman, here clothed in armor and with an accentuation of sadistic and morbid aspects; *L'Alcôve* (1940, CR 222), of a similar theme to the previous two; *Portrait de Meret Oppenheim* (1938, CR 177); *La Racine aux coquilles d'oeufs* (1943, CR 295), which is almost a

[109] According to Webb's account, Leonor Fini's cohabitation with James in West Dean was problematic: 'She was amused by his surrealist garden [...], but she was horrified to see the displays of trophies shot by his father, and unhappy that he came into her bedroom every morning to shave and tell her long, boring stories of his attempts at sexual conquest'. *Ibid.*, 145.

29. Edward James (late 1920s)



30. Interior of Monkton House, West Dean (West Sussex). Frame from the film *The Secret Life of Edward James* by Patrick Boyle (1978)

pendant of *Sphinx Regina*; *Os ilyaque* (1943-48, CR 314), which is similar to *La Cible*; *L'Ombrelle* (1947-48, CR 376), which presents a dry tree from which fish are hanging, while an eye appears from the torn umbrella.[110]

James divided his time between his London mansion in Wimpole Street and Monkton House, a subsidiary building on the vast West Dean estate (West Sussex), which he inherited in 1912. For both residences, which were transformed during the 1930s, one can speak of a tendency towards a total work of art, in which the single works merged closely with the architecture and furnishings according to a unitary and all-inclusive concept of fantastic and surrealist taste: it is no coincidence that James collaborated with Salvador Dalí on the creation of both living spaces.

In James's residences, therefore, paintings were symbiotically inserted into contexts that seemed to be their ideal continuation, with effects tending towards wonder and estrangement: at Monkton House, for example, Fini's *L'Ombrelle* was attached to a door padded with capitonné leather, thus becoming mobile **(fig. 30)**; for Leonora Carrington's *Travelling Incognito*, James had designed a frame covered in black velvet, with a frayed and irregular border. In his London apartment, three Magritte works were placed in the ballroom behind mirrors surmounted by lunettes painted in the style of François Boucher: thanks to a special internal lighting system, the opaque mirrors could

[110] Of the above paintings the following are still in the Edward James Estate, West Dean: CR 177, 222, 295 and 376.

become transparent, thus revealing Magritte's paintings.[111] More in keeping with tradition was his London studio, the so-called "Tent Room", which 'with its heavy, luxuriant drapes suspended from the ceiling above free-standing columns with Ionic and Corinthian capitals, was clearly inspired by the tent rooms that were popular among members of the English aristocracy during the Regency period'.[112] In this eccentric but more traditional setting, James had placed the Picasso pastel *Woman Seated with a Hat* (1923) above his desk.

At first glance Edward James and Renato Wild may seem two distant personalities, who lived their diversity in different ways, the former exhibiting it as a badge of eccentricity, and the latter not hiding it but inserting it into the velvety context of a sumptuous and refined life. However, there are also some similarities: the difficulty in accepting their role in family and society; the brief parenthesis, for both, of marriage (which for James was however more dramatic and the cause of a long inner turmoil); both avoided the professional paths to which their births would have predestined them and for both art collecting represented a way of expressing their inner and ideal world. And more: while, differently from James, it makes no sense to speak of Wild's interest in Surrealism, for both of them the passion for fantastic and visionary painting was very strong and their collections, although in different percentages, included works by Fini, Carrington and Tchelitchew. Both, finally, were convinced patrons of the arts.

But there are also profound differences, especially in the way of expressing their passion for collecting: while James's living spaces were, as we have seen, a quintessence of whimsy and tended towards the idea of a total work of art under the banner of continuous surprise, Wild's passion for collecting gave life instead to sumptuously aristocratic contexts in which eclecticism prevailed over eccentricity. For this type of display, a possible comparison, rather than in the James collection, is to be found, going back in time, in the great hall of the Paris residence of the Viscounts of Noailles, where aristocratic furnishings blended with the essential design contributions of Jean-Michel Frank, a painting such as Salvador Dalí's *La Vieillesse de Guillaume Tell* surmounted a mantelpiece decorated with Renaissance bronzes and *Le Jeu lugubre* by the same artist was 'accroché à la cimaise entre un Cranach et un Watteau'.[113] Not dissimilarly, at Villa Rospini antique furniture coexisted with Ar.Ca's design tables and Leonor Fini's works shared space with the collection of antique paintings.

Finally, a substantial difference between the two collectors can be seen over the long term. Edward James, from 1938 onwards, began to spend long periods of time overseas and ended up devoting himself entirely to a new utopian project, Las Pozas, a garden with surrealist sculptures in a Mexican village in the subtropical rainforest, to finance which he did not hesitate to sell part of his collection at auction in England.[114]

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[111] On the collection of E. James, see: Kusunoki, Sharon-Michi. "Surrealism and 'The Golden Age': West Dean and the James Legacy", *Apollo* CXIX/448 (June 1999): 3-10; Gassner, Hubertus. "Edward James: the Pleasure Principle", in *Surreal Encounters: Collecting the Marvellous*, eds. A. Görgen *et al.*, exhibition catalogue, Edinburgh: National Galleries of Scotland, 2016, 200-211; De Chair, Désirée. "A 'Born' Surrealist. Edward James as Collector, Artists' Friend and Patron of the Arts", *Ibid.,* 196-199; Görgen-Lammers, Annabelle. "Un merveilleux été 1936. Salvador Dalí et Edward James, mécène, poète et partenaire", in *Le surréalisme et l'argent*, eds. Julia Drost *et al.*, Heidelberg: arthistoricum.net, 2021, 135-162; Turner, Christopher. "Dream Homes: Edward James", *Apollo* CXCIII/696 (April 2021): 44-51.

[112] Gassner, "Edward James", 207.

[113] Faucigny-Lucinge, Jean-Louis de. *Un gentilhomme cosmopolite. Mémoires*, Paris: Perrin, 1990, 78. For further examples of such mixing, see Görgen, Annabelle. "Discovering, Collecting, Staging, Selling the Marvellous", in *Surreal Encounters*, 26-39, esp. p. 31.

[114] West Dean was turned into a foundation and over time works from the collection were loaned and sold. See Van Kampen-Prein. "Now or Never. The Edward James Foundation makes Museum Boijmans van Beuningen a Unique Offer", in *Surreal Encounters*, 212-217.

Renato Wild, on the other hand, did not launch into such pharaonic undertakings: certainly, the swimming pool built at Villa Rospini by Henghes was an expensive and demanding project that combined art and nature, but it was substantially part of the embellishment of an aristocratic villa on Lake Como. As for his art collection, Wild remained closely attached to it until the end of his days. His way of expressing himself and transgressing social conventions, in a certain sense, had identified with that villa on Lake Como, which he had slowly transformed into his ideal environment, and with those paintings by Leonor Fini that seemed to stage, transfiguring them into a mythical and fantastic world, his most intimate and unresolved impulses and that he had chosen, from the artist's vast production, following without hesitation the criteria of his very personal taste. Balzac, about a century earlier, had written that collectors are 'les gens les plus passionnés de la terre'.[115] Beneath his icy armor of elegance and refinement, Renato Wild must certainly have been an equally passionate collector.

[115] Balzac, Honoré de. *Le cousin Pons* [1847], Paris: Gallimard, 1997, 162.

A FEW NOTES ON JOSEPH CORNELL'S EXHIBITION IN FLORENCE AND HIS CRITICAL RECEPTION IN ITALY

Eva FRANCIOLI

From New York to Florence

Joseph Cornell's 'magic' boxes and bizarre collages filled the austere spaces of the Sala d'Arme of Palazzo Vecchio, in the summer 1981. A 'small' great exhibition, dedicated to one of the masters of the 20th Century American art, was set up in the large medieval room on the ground floor of one of the most significant Florentine historical buildings, where the city government still has its headquarters today.

The exhibition was organized under the auspices of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, that devoted a great retrospective to Joseph Cornell less than ten years after his death, occurred in 1972[1]. The exhibit was curated by the MoMA's Senior Curator of Painting and Sculpture, Kynaston McShine, who wished to include that specific project within the Museum's 50th anniversary celebration. The idea of the exhibition took shape with the aim of promoting Cornell's original research in the United States and abroad[2].

The first major exhibition was set up at the MoMA galleries on second floor, from November 17, 1980 to January 20, 1981. On that occasion, about 200 boxes and 75 collages[3] were loaned from about 18 different institutions and 66 private collectors[4]. This Cornell retrospective was the most complete one, after the two main exhibitions organized at the Pasadena Art Museum and at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, in 1966-1967. Kynaston McShine wanted to explore Joseph Cornell's polyhedric imagination and to contextualise it within 20th Century art.

The exhibit was accompanied by a bulky and accurate catalogue, with a brief introduction by Kynaston McShine and writings by Dawn Ades, Carter Ratcliff, P. Adams Sitney, and Linda Roscoe Hartigan (of the Joseph Cornell Study Center). The publication mirrored the curatorial concept: McShine wanted to give new insights into Cornell's life and his creative and working methods. Both the exhibition and its catalogue drew attention to Joseph Cornell's research on the mechanisms of subconscious and the exploration of dreams and visions. Special attention was also paid to Cornell's biography and his interest in cinema and filmmaking[5].

The project let emerge different themes and fields of interest in Cornell's work (aviaries and exotic birds, constellations and the Italian Renaissance, among others), as well as his relationship with some artists and artistic movements (such as Surrealism, Romanticism and

[1] *Cf*. "Letter of Kynaston McShine to Joseph Cornell's sister and brother-in-law John A. Benton, August 8, 1980". Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution Washington, D.C. 20560 / Joseph Cornell papers, 1804-1986, bulk 1939-1972 / Series 10: Joseph Cornell Estate Papers / Box 21, Folder 2: Museum of Modern Art, 1973-1974, 1980, undated. [https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/joseph-cornell-papers-5790/subseries-10-1/box-21-folder-2] (last accessed on December 18, 2020).

[2] *Ibid*.

[3] "Joseph Cornell Retrospective to Open at the Museum of Modern Art, Press release n. 60", 5 ff. dss. [f.1]. [https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/1940] (last accessed on December 18, 2020).

[4] *Cf*. "Letter of Kynaston McShine to Joseph Cornell's sister and brother-in-law John A. Benton, August 8, 1980" [https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/joseph-cornell-papers-5790/subseries-10-1/box-21-folder-2] (last accessed on December 18, 2020).

[5] "Joseph Cornell Retrospective to Open at the Museum of Modern Art, Press release n. 54", 2 ff. dss. [f. 2] [https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/1940] (last accessed on December 18, 2020).

the American art of the second half of the 20th Century). In particular, Dawn Ades' essay discussed what many scholars agreed in defining Cornell's ambiguous relationship with Surrealism and its representatives in the U.S. As the critic recalled, Joseph Cornell was interested in their research, but he did not share many of the surrealist theories on subconscious and dreams. Cornell was never "an official surrealist", as he himself declared[6].

His 'constructions' – made of different materials, real objects and images taken from books and magazines – were all fragments from the everyday life that Cornell used to collect and archive in his 'home studio' in Utopia Parkway. He transformed them into special tools for a free exercise of the imagination[7]. In his boxes and collages, the artist wove enchanted scores that encompass the inscrutable threads of a delicate and fierce fantasy. Every composition was a sort of magical instrument, as the result of an impenetrable mental and emotional process, deriving inspiration from thematic or formal affinities.

In New York, all the artworks were presented in the Museum's classical white rooms. Cornell's boxes were displayed inside small wall vitrines or on white pedestals, often covered by a glass case. Sometimes, the objects were exhibited in recesses in the wall, in a serial and – at the same time – highly animated and diversified manner. They were shown at times as 'extrusions' of the walls and, at other times, as elements set in the partitions and pillars: a sort of modern icons or reliquaries under glass, offered as epiphanies for the respectful visitor's observation[8].

In one of the rooms, a peculiar system of shelves let emerge the ambiguous relationship between uniqueness and seriality, so characteristic of many of Joseph Cornell's works[9].

After the solo show in New York, an exceptional European tour was planned under the auspices of the International Council of the Museum of Modern Art. Kynaston McShine knew that Joseph Cornell was largely unknown in Europe, while his art was strongly influenced by European culture and art history[10]. That is why, soon after the New York exhibition's closure, a special version of the exhibit travelled to London, Düsseldorf, Florence, Paris and then back again to the U.S., in Chicago, with a very tight schedule.

McShine and his staff were directly involved in the coordination of the international programme, designed with different institutions and local curators. The Florentine exhibition, in particular, was organized together with the City of Florence and Giuliano Briganti, and with the important mediation of Laetitia Boncompagni Ludovisi, who was a member of the International Council of The Museum of Modern Art[11].

[6] "Letter of Joseph Cornell to Alfred Barr, November 13, 1936", quoted in Dawn Ades, "The Trascendental Surrealism of Joseph Cornell", in *Joseph Cornell*, exhibition catalogue, Kynaston McShine (ed.), The Museum of Modern Art, 1980, pp. 15-42 [p. 19].

[7] *Cf.* Dawn Ades, "The Trascendental Surrealism of Joseph Cornell", in *Joseph Cornell*, *op.cit*., pp. 23-24; Carter Ratcliff, "Joseph Cornell: Mechanic of the Ineffable", *Ibid*., pp. 43-68 [p. 43; 49].

[8] For more information, please see the photographs of the exhibition's layout: https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/1940 (last accessed on December 19, 2020).

[9] This display somehow recalled the layout of the *Aviary* exhibition, where twenty-six constructions were presented by Donald Windham at the Egan Gallery in December 1949. *Cf.* Egan Gallery, New York. Aviary by Joseph Cornell: December 1949, Egan Gallery, N.Y.C., 1949. Joseph Cornell papers, 1804-1986. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Digital ID: 16984 [https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/items/detail/aviary-joseph-cornell-december-1949-egan-gallery-nyc-16984] (last accessed December 19, 2020). An installation view of that solo exhibit was also included in the MoMA catalogue: Lynda Roscoe Hartigan, "Joseph Cornell: A Biography", in *Joseph Cornell*, *op.cit*., pp. 91-120 [p. 107].

[10] *Ibid*.

[11] *Cf.* Letter of Paola Pelanti to Waldo Rasmussen, September 29, 1980, 1 f. ds. ASCF, AV14/Pratica spazio (Pitti Sala d'Arme); Letter of Laetitia Boncompagni Ludovisi to Sergio Salvi, October 265 [1980] 1 f., ms., *recto-verso*. ASCF, AV14/Fotocopie contratto e condizioni (e corrispondenza relativa).

Coordination and Organization

The official correspondence between the Museum of Modern Art and the City of Florence probably started at the beginning of 1980. The Florentine Department of Culture communicated its intention to host and co-organize the travel version of the Joseph Cornell's retrospective on March 31, 1980, and a formal confirmation was sent at the end of May 1980[12]. The exhibition (at first scheduled from July 3 to August 24) was inaugurated on July 6 and closed on September 13, 1981.

According to the Councilor for Culture who first worked on the exhibition project, Franco Camarlinghi, the Joseph Cornell show was an important event, as well as an opportunity to collaborate with such an important institution as the Museum of Modern Art[13].

At first, the City of Florence had opted for the Sala Bianca of Palazzo Pitti[14]. According to a typed report of the Florentine Department of Culture, dating to the end of summer 1981, that gallery was considered at the very top ranking of the exhibition spaces in the town, together with other rooms in Palazzo Pitti[15]. So, when in September 1980 the announced venue had to be changed, because of a temporary unavailability of that prestigious location, the City of Florence proposed one of its most notable monumental spaces: the Sala d'Arme of Palazzo Vecchio[16]. Plans and images of the venue were sent to MoMA, and finally the updated loan agreement, indicating the new exhibition venue, was signed by Fulvio Abboni, the new Councilor for Culture, on January 5, 1981[17].

The original project included about 75 boxes and 50 collages, dating from the Thirties to the early Seventies. The loans were from the MoMA collections and other major museums, as well as from the Joseph Cornell Estate (with Leo Castelli, Richard Feigen, and James Corcoran as its representatives) and some private collectors (Lindy and Edwin Bergman, among others)[18]. The exhibit was completed by a special screening programme including films by Joseph Cornell or dedicated to his work.

All the artworks arrived after the end of the German exhibition. The organizers had about three weeks between the closing of the Düsseldorf show and the opening of the Florentine one: everything – including all the technical and architectonical aspects of the set-up – had to be completed before the artworks' arrival.

Even though the Sala d'Arme had been previously used as an exhibition venue, important inspection and renovation of the air conditioning and climate systems were put in place before the opening, in order to make that historical space suitable for hosting Cornell's fragile works and to guarantee a correct and constant level of humidity and temperature during all the exhibition period. Specific recommendations on this topic were shared by the MoMA's team, who wanted to be reassured about the climate control and maintenance in the gallery, in accordance with the museum's standards.

[12] Telegram of Franco Camarlinghi to Waldo Rasmussen. Archivio Storico del Comune di Firenze (henceforth: ASCF), AV14/Pratica spazio (Pitti, Sala d'Arme).
[13] Letter of Franco Camarlinghi to Waldo Rasmussen, March 31, 1980, 1 f., ds. ASCF, AV14/Pratica spazio (Pitti Sala d'Arme).
[14] Letter of Franco Camarlinghi to the Superintendence for Artistic and Historical Heritage of Florence, to the Superintendence for Environmental and Architectural Heritage of the provinces of Florence and Pistoia, and to the Direction of the Galleria Palatina, June 20, 1980, 1 f, ds. ASCF, AV14/Pratica spazio (Pitti Sala d'Arme).
[15] Report of the Department of Visual Arts of the City of Florence. ASCF, AV49/Mostre 1981. 12 ff. dss. [f. 8]
[16] *Cf.* Letter of Paola Pelanti to Waldo Rasmussen, September 29, 1980, 1 f, ds. ASCF, AV14/Pratica spazio (Pitti Sala d'Arme).
[17] Exhibition Contract, 1 f. ds. ASCF, AV14/Fotocopie contratto e condizioni (e corrispondenza relativa).
[18] *Cf.* "Joseph Cornell Checklist"37 ff. dss., ASCF, AV14/Elenco opere.

Due to the artworks' extreme fragility, the Museum of Modern Art also asked the City of Florence to foresee special courier's travel expenses. According with the lenders' request, only a small team – composed by Kynaston McShine, his assistant, and the Museum's Sculpture Conservator Patricia Houlihan[19] – had to oversee and manage all the incoming and outgoing phases, from the artworks' arrival, to their definitive dismantling. No one else would be admitted to the rooms during the set-up and the writing of the condition reports, because many artworks consisted of very small parts that had to be assembled on site[20].

MoMA's staff also wanted to know in advance the architect Walter Natali, who was appointed by the City of Florence and Giuliano Briganti to design the exhibition layout. The major museographical challenge was to facilitate the artistic experience of those special artworks, while preserving their breakable integrity and their magic aura of mystery[21]. Some pictures of the previous display and important details about every single part of the set-up were shared by MoMA[22]. Regarding the exhibition layout, Elisabeth Streibert, who oversaw the organization on behalf of MoMA, also specified that some of the works should be exhibited in display cases or on special wall supports. All the details relating to the exhibition of every single work were included in the artworks' checklist[23].

As we can infer from the estimates still preserved at the Historical Archive of the City of Florence, fifteen fir bases 100 cm high, covered with cotton fabric and surmounted by Plexiglas display cases, were produced. Five of them had a base of 80x80 cm, while ten of them had a base of 200x55 cm. A series of one-meter-high panels should also be deployed inside the gallery for a total length of about 90 linear meters, most likely intended to house the works on the wall, as shown in a photograph published in *La città* [Fig. 1]. There were no different small exhibition spaces, but a big gallery whose space was organized thanks to a series of panels and pedestals, distributed between the medieval pillars, for creating a simple and effective exhibition path.

Le mille sorprese di Cornell svelate a Palazzo Vecchio

Si è inaugurata ieri, nella Sala d'Arme di Palazzo Vecchio, una retrospettiva di Joseph Cornell. Dell'artista statunitense recentemente scomparso sono esposte opere eseguite fra il 1931 e il 1972.
A curare la mostra è stato Kynaston McShine, direttore del settore pittura e scultura del Museum of Modern Art di New York, insieme a Giuliano Briganti. Quella che vediamo a Firenze è la versione itinerante della stessa esposizione già allestita a New York nell'autunno passato.
È la prima volta che un museo americano dell'importanza di quello newyorkese fa un prestito in opere d'arte all'Italia. Sembra che il tramite più importante per questa delicata operazione sia stata la principessa Letizia Buoncompagni, romana di nascita, ma vissuta per lungo tempo negli Stati Uniti.

Fig. 1. "Le mille sorprese di Cornell svelate a Palazzo Vecchio", La città*, July 7, 1981. Archivio Storico Comune di Firenze.*

[19] Letter of Elizabeth Streibert to Fulvio Abboni, December 17, 1980, 3 ff. dss. ASCF, AV14//Fotocopie contratto e condizioni (e corrispondenza relativa).
[20] Letter of Elizabeth Streibert to Roberto Salvi, February 27, 1981, ASCF, AV14/Lettere da N.Y.
[21] Cf. Letter of Fulvio Abboni to Arch. Walter Natali, February 21, 1981. ASCF, AV14/Incarico architetto.
[22] *Cf.* Letter of Elizabeth Streibert to Fulvio Abboni, February 23, 1981, ASCF, AV14/Ordini; Letter of Elizabeth Streibert to Roberto Salvi, February 27, 1981, ASCF, AV14/Lettere da N.Y.
[23] Letter of Elisabeth Streibert to Fulvio Abboni, February 23, 1981, 3 ff. dss. *recto* [f. 3]. ASCF, AV14/Elenco opere.

As a monumental casket, the room was rearranged for the occasion and animated by Cornell's intriguing and intense compositions. Some of his works, both collages and constructions, recalled Florence's glorious past and the ancient splendour of the Medici family portrayed by the Italian masters of the Renaissance. The constructions *Untitled (Medici Boy)* (1942-52), *Untitled (Medici Princess)* (c. 1948), *Untitled (Medici Prince)* (c. 1952-1954)[24] were among them. Those artworks were presented alongside some of Cornell's most famous compositions, such as *Taglioni's Jewel Casket* (1940), *Untitled (Apollinaris)* (c. 1948), *Untitled (Hotel du Cygne)* (c. 1952-55) and some of his celebrated 'museums' and 'castles'.

Elisabeth Streibert of the Museum of Modern Art also asked for a suitable auditorium near the exhibition venue, where to arrange a special screening programme, in accordance with the technical requirements listed in the artworks' checklist. The projection was finally organized at the Cinema Alfieri Atelier, not too far from Palazzo Vecchio, in two distinct sessions scheduled on September 3: "Program 1" included *Rose Hobart* (c. 1936), *Cornell, 1965* (1965), *Bookstalls* (s.d.), *The Aviary* (1954), *GniR RednoW* (1970), *Angel* (1957); while "Program II" included *Cotillon, The Children's Party, The Midnight Part* (c. 1940-68), *New York-Rome-Barcelona-Brussels* (restored 1979), *By Night with Torch and Spear* (restored 1979), *A Legend for Fountains* (1957 or 1959), *Nymphlight* (1957)[25].

The Exhibition Catalogue

A special edition of the exhibit catalogue was published by the Italian publisher Centro Di, in its typical square format. A detail of *The Caliph of Bagdad* (c. 1954), whose title referred to the homonymous operetta by François-Adrien Boieldieu[26], was reproduced on the cover.

In his introduction, the Director of the International Program, Waldo Rasmussen, immediately underlined Cornell's connections with Europe and the Italian history and art. Rasmussen also highlighted the precious mediation of Laetitia Boncompagni and the support of Giuliano Briganti, and he finally thanked the architect Walter Natali for his "essential but highly sensitive project".

In his essay, Giuliano Briganti emphasised the uniqueness of Cornell's artistic experience. The author seems to partially recall Dawn Ades' thesis on Cornell's ambiguous relationship with Surrealism and the important role he had as a leading figure for the younger American artists. Briganti focused on Joseph Cornell's unclassifiable research, stating that he was not a surrealist, but he was not isolated either.

The Italian catalogue also contained a short version of Joseph Cornell's biography and a translation of Kynaston McShine's introductory text, where the curator briefly reviewed Cornell's creative parable and his main fields of interest. McShine celebrated Cornell's 'reliquaries', dwelling on the value of both collage and assemblage as poetic forms. According to the exhibition curator, Cornell used to celebrate fragmentation as a condition of modern life,

[24] According to the artworks checklist, this construction, from a private collection, would have been exhibited only in Florence.

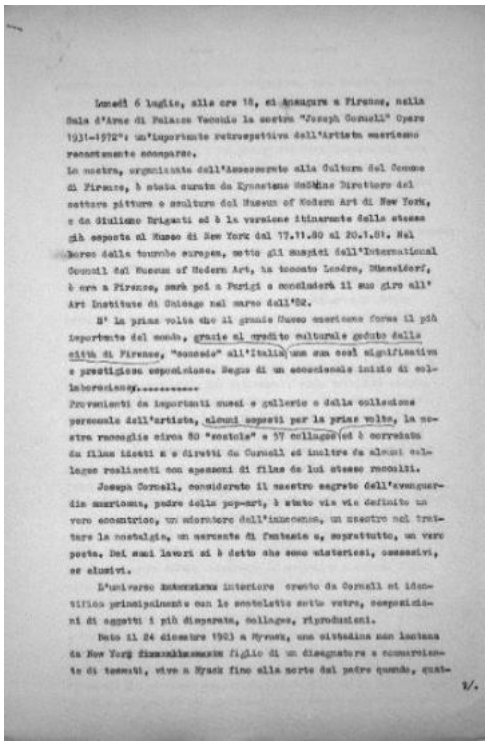
[25] *Cf.* Letter of Fulvio Abboni to the Cooperativa L'Atelier, July 24, 1981; Letter of Fulvio Abboni to the Studio Natali, July 25, 1981. ASCF, AV14/Ordini; "Joseph Cornell Checklist", 37 ff. dss. [f. 37], ASCF, AV14/Elenco opere.

[26] *Cf.* Joseph Cornell papers, 1804-1986, bulk 1939-1972. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Box 13, Folder 9: "The Caliph of Bagdad", 1952-1967, undated [https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/joseph-cornell-papers-5790/subseries-4-3/box-13-folder-9] (last accessed December 20, 2020).

like many other authors, artists, musicians of the early 20th Century[27]. McShine pointed out the complexity of Cornell's work and the search for purity and timelessness in the enchanted and magical atmospheres of his constructions. The original way of selecting and combining objects, materials and images was the result of a methodical procedure, that responded to some enigmatic rules and unconventional reasons. Therefore, Cornell's research was presented as quite a unique experience in 20th century Western art.

Critical Reception

All the communication aspects, including the Italian version of the catalogue, were regulated by a detailed loan agreement. Along with the clauses regarding such matters as the artworks' insurance, the travel conditions and the images rights, the Museum of Modern Art committed to submitting a draft press release[28]. Nevertheless, a specific press release was written for the opening [Fig. 2]; there, a particular emphasis was given to the collaboration between the MoMA and the City of Florence, and to Joseph Cornell's relationship with the recent American art, especially with the Pop Art movement.



Lunedì 6 luglio, alle ore 18, si inaugura a Firenze, nella Sala d'Armi di Palazzo Vecchio la mostra "Joseph Cornell" Opere 1931-1972": un'importante retrospettiva dell'artista americano recentemente scomparso.
La mostra, organizzata dall'Assessorato alla Cultura del Comune di Firenze, è stata curata da Kynaston McShine Direttore del settore pittura e scultura del Museum of Modern Art di New York, e da Giuliano Briganti ed è la versione itinerante della stessa già esposta al Museo di New York dal 17.11.80 al 20.1.81. Nel corso delle tournée europea, oltre gli musei dell'International Council del Museum of Modern Art, ha toccato Londra, Düsseldorf, è ora a Firenze, sarà poi a Parigi e concluderà il suo giro all' Art Institute di Chicago nel corso dell'82.
E' la prima volta che il grande Museo americano forse il più importante del mondo, grazie al credito culturale goduto dalla città di Firenze, "concede" all'Italia una mostra così significativa e prestigiosa espositivo. Segno di un eccezionale inizio di collaborazione.....
Provenienti da importanti musei e gallerie e dalla collezione personale dell'artista, alcuni esposti per la prima volta, la mostra raccoglie circa 80 "scatole" e 57 collages ed è corredata da films ideati e/o diretti da Cornell ed inoltre da alcuni collages realizzati con spezzoni di films da lui stesso raccolti.
Joseph Cornell, considerato il maestro segreto dell'avanguardia americana, padre della pop-art, è stato via via definito un vero costruttore, un sognatore dell'innocenza, un maestro nel trattare la nostalgia, un mercante di fantasia e, soprattutto, un vero poeta. Dei suoi lavori si è detto che sono misteriosi, commoventi, ed elusivi.
L'universo fantasmagorico interiore creato da Cornell si identifica principalmente con le scatolette sotto vetro, composizioni di oggetti i più disparati, collages, riproduzioni.
Nato il 24 dicembre 1903 a Nyack, una cittadina non lontana da New York [illegible] figlio di un disegnatore e commerciante di tessuti, vive a Nyack fino alla morte del padre quando, quat-

Fig. 2: Joseph Cornell Exhibition Press Release (Draft, f. 1).
Archivio Storico Comune di Firenze.

The text stated:

It is the first time that the great American Museum, perhaps the most important in the world, "grants" Italy such a significant and prestigious exhibition thanks to the City of Florence's cultural credit. [...] Coming from important museums and galleries and from the

[27] Kynaston McShine, "Introducing Mr. Cornell", in *Joseph Cornell*, Kynaston McShine (ed.), Florence, CentroDI, 1981, pp. 13-15.
[28] Conditions of Exhibition Contract, Section C. Publicity, n. 18, 2 ff. dss. [f.1] *recto-verso*. ASCF, AV14/Fotocopie contratto e condizioni (e corrispondenza relativa).

artist's personal collection, the exhibition includes about 80 "boxes" and 57 collages, some exhibited here for the first time. […] Joseph Cornell is considered the secret master of the American avant-garde and the father of the pop-art[29].

The information issued by the press release was mentioned in many Italian newspapers and magazines. In particular, looking at the reviews that were published soon after the opening, we can infer that some of them tended to present Joseph Cornell as the 'secret' precursor of the Pop Art. A few titles made explicit reference to Pop Art, albeit sometimes in an ironic or interrogative key. "È arrivata da New York la mostra della pop-art" (*La Nazione*, 7 July 1981), Gianni Pozzi, "Eccentricità ed ironia del padre della pop-art" (*Paese Sera*, 7 July 1981), Tommaso Paloscia, "Padre, figlio e nipote della pop-art" (*La Nazione*, 11 July 1981) were among them.

In this regard, it is worth recalling the analysis of Stefano Ghiberti (Enzo Fabiani's *nom de plume*), who overtly disapproved the definition of Cornell as "the master of Pop Art", the tender husband of metaphysical art, the tenacious and versatile son of irony and of the enchantment"[30]. In his writing, Ghiberti quoted the short description that was printed in the promotional brochure of *Firenze Artestate '81*, a broader program of exhibitions and events for the summer 1981 [Fig. 3-4].

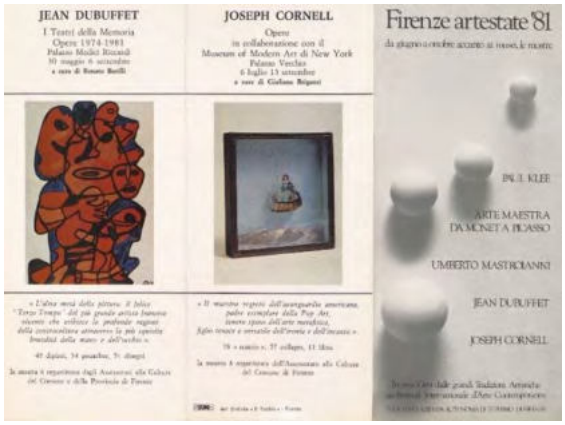


Fig. 3: Brochure of Firenze Artestate '81. Archivio Storico Comune di Firenze.

Fig. 4: Brochure of Firenze Artestate '81. Archivio Storico Comune di Firenze.

[29] Press release draft, s.d., 3 ff. dss. [f. 1]. ASCF, AV14/Comunicato stampa e materiale per catalogo (translated by the author).
[30] Stefano Ghiberti, "Ottime mostre per tutti", *Gente*, July 10, 1981, a. XXV, n. 28 (translated by the author).

Some interesting analyses were published in the following weeks. Roberto Tassi's review, published in *La Repubblica* on July 21, 1981, was among them. He wrote:

> *The City of Florence […] set up 130 wonderful "pieces" in Palazzo Vecchio, a reduced but essential edition of that great gathering of works that has been drawing crowds at the Museum of Modern Art in New York during all winter. We will never be grateful enough to the management of that museum, that allowed those works 'stay' in Florence, despite their extreme fragility and the dangers of transport, and to Giuliano Briganti who acted as a curator and intermediary. Together with that of Lotto – to which it is tied, I am sure, by long, thin and mysterious threads – this is the most beautiful exhibition of the year*[31].

Another fascinating article was published in the *International Daily News* on July 31, 1981. Here, the Cornell retrospective was related to the wider program of exhibitions organized in Florence between 1980 and 1981. The city, commonly known as the cradle of the Renaissance, was presented as a dynamic town that sought to open up to modern and contemporary art, by claiming its own importance in the national and international cultural scene:

> *Spotlighting artists and creative periods centuries apart from the Medici and the Renaissance, the current exhibits […] are putting Florence in an international light apart from the Patina and glow of the city's fame as cradle of the Renaissance. For the first time New York's prestigious and authoritative Museum of Modern Art has granted Italy, and moreover Florence, the privilege of displaying the superbly coordinated showing of Joseph Cornell's personal collection of boxes, collages and films directed by the artist himself. Many pieces are culled from private collectors and the museum's own impressive archives*[32].

That same article also highlighted Cornell's interest in the Italian Renaissance and the art linked to the Medici court, which offered, as the author recognised, "a pleasant allusion as to why Florence [had] been selected to be the Italian stop of the exhibit's impressive tour of Europe"[33].

A very positive review of the exhibition was also published by Mauro Corradini in *Bergamo Oggi*, on August 19, 1981. In this article "I misteriosi legami degli oggetti inutili", whose subheading was, significantly: "Joseph Cornell in Florence. An exceptional and unknown author, who, in contact with a dull and banal daily reality, builds, with his 'boxes', immense travel itineraries, traveled with his inexhaustible imagination", one could read:

> *For the first time, an important Cornell's retrospective is staged in Europe […]. We must therefore be grateful to Florence (Department of Culture) and Giuliano Briganti […] for this occasion: it can just be defined as unique. His works, mostly "boxes" built and assembled with precisely "useless" objects, are not suitable for transportation […]: so, only until September 13, we will have the chance to 'read' this exceptional "unknown" author*[34].

On August 20, 1981, a similar review was published in *La Repubblica-weekend*, as a part of a short guide on the exhibitions in Florence. The author, Valerio Eletti, significantly started his article "Firenze cinque occasioni d'autore" with an enthusiastic introduction on the Joseph Cornell's exhibition:

> *A single large exhibition hall, the Sala d'Arme of Palazzo Vecchio, and very few visitors: the Joseph Cornell exhibition is perhaps the most precious pearl to take home when*

[31] Roberto Tassi, "C'è un Castello in quella scatola", *La Repubblica*, July 21, 1981 (translated by the author).
[32] "Cornell exhibit travels to Florence", *International Daily News*, July 31, 1981.
[33] *Ibid*.
[34] Mauro Corradini, "I misteriosi legami degli oggetti inutili", *Bergamo Oggi*, August 19, 1981 (translated by the author).

returning from Florence. The fact that the exhibition is deserted by the general public [...] is basically an advantage: it derives from the lack of knowledge that generally exists in our country of this discreet and brilliant author [...][35].

Even though Joseph Cornell was almost unknown by the general public, the exhibition was also reviewed in such important weekly and daily newspapers as *Il Corriere della Sera* (Sebastiano Grasso, "La memoria chiusa in una scatola", July 17); *Il Giornale* (Lorenza Trucchi, "Joseph Cornell. La vita in Scatola", July 17); *l'Unità* (Dario Micacchi, "Benvenuto Mr. Cornell", July 22); *Il Secolo XIX* (Guido Arato, "Inscatolava i sogni "rubati" ai rigattieri", July 24); *Il Messaggero* (Vito Apuleo, "Le magiche scatole di Cornell", August 13); *Libération* (Daniel Soutif, "Joseph Cornell", August 4, 1981); *L'Espresso* (Renato Barilli, "Sorpresa: è una scatola", September 20, 1981, n. 37).

Close to the exhibition ending, the Department of Culture decided to issue a new press release concerning all of the exhibition projects that were included in *Firenze Artestate '81*. According to the estimates of the City of Florence, Joseph Cornell's exhibition attracted about 20,000 visitors, for a loss of ₤ 116.000.000. This led to a few criticisms by the local newspapers, that often underlined the deficit caused by the exhibition.

Although many favourable reviews were published in the national and international press, the exhibition had important feedback mostly from experts and professionals, while it did not have a considerable impact on the general public and the main tourist flows. In those same months, tourists and citizens preferred to visit the Paul Klee exhibition in Orsanmichele and the one dedicated to the masterpieces of the National Gallery in Prague, from Monet to Picasso, exhibited at Palazzo Pitti

Already at the end of August 1981, a brief article published in *La città* emphasized the difference between the audiences attracted by the various exhibitions, both in qualitative and quantitative terms:

Florence […] has set up [...] five truly exceptional exhibitions. […] The most popular ones are the Paul Klee exhibition and "From Monet to Picasso" […]. However, there is a notable difference between these two exhibits and the others of Dubuffet at Palazzo Medici Riccardi, Cornell in the Sala d'Arme of Palazzo Vecchio and Mastroianni at Forte di Belvedere. The turnout of the public in these cases drops sharply […]. The exhibition of Cornell, the big of the pop-art, also remains abandoned by the general public and it is mostly frequented by experts and connoisseurs[36].

Nevertheless, the City administration declared that Cornell's exhibition had been "a brilliant cultural operation, a success for visitors especially in the cultured tourism segment, an example of public management 'as concrete as it is truly rare in our country' and also a positive economic investment"[37].

Despite the success obtained in the United States, the City of Florence was probably aware that this exhibition, along with the ones dedicated to Dubuffet and Mastroianni, was not meant to reach the Italian mass public. That is why, at almost the same time, they also decided to invest in the two major exhibits dedicated to Paul Klee and to the great masters from Monet to Picasso[38].

[35] Valerio Eletti, "Firenze cinque occasioni d'autore" *La Repubblica-weekend*, August 19, 1981 (translated by the author).
[36] "Bene Klee Monet e Picasso. Un po' peggio per Mastroianni", *La città*, August 27, 1981 (translated by the author).
[37] *Cf.* "Ma queste mostre sono anche ottimi affari", *Paese Sera*, October 6, 1981 (translated by the author).
[38] Report of the Department of Visual Arts of the City of Florence, sd., 12 ff. dss. *recto*, ASCF, AV55/Mostre 1981.

Joseph Cornell in Italy

The Sala d'Arme exhibition was not the artist's first solo show in Italy. The American master had first 'landed' in our country as early as 1971, with a small exhibition of about twenty-eight works at the Galleria Galatea in Turin, that gave the Italian public the chance to learn more about his work[39]. The exhibition was presented by Luigi Carluccio, who pointed out the happy encounter with Cornell's work in Italy, where it was mostly represented only by the artworks of the Peggy Guggenheim Collection. Thanks to that show, Carluccio himself was finally able to directly see and analyse a conspicuous nucleus of boxes and collages, until then known only through reproductions[40].

A few years later, the *Joseph Cornell. Boxes & Films* exhibition was organized at the Galleria L'Attico in Rome (2-21 December 1977). On the occasion of this last exhibition, curated by Fabio Sargentini in collaboration with Isabella del Frate and Mitzi Sotis, a special catalogue was created in the form of a shaped 'leporello', containing texts by Jonas Mekas and Robert Motherwell, among others, and several black and white illustrations.

Even though the Florentine exhibit of 1981 was not the first Cornell monographic exhibition in our country, this itinerant version of the Museum of Modern Art exhibition was – and still is – his most important retrospective in an Italian public institution. Joseph Cornell's artworks were later exhibited in private galleries (at the Galleria Seno Milan, in 1989, for example) and they have been included in collective exhibitions. Anyway, the Italian public had no other opportunity to explore his work and imagination in such an extensive way.

Despite the apparent lack of success, that exhibition probably played an important role in the history of Joseph Cornell's critical reception in Italy. Maybe it was not by chance that, just a few years later, a small selection of Cornell's works was exhibited at the XLII Venice Biennale (1986), curated by Maurizio Calvesi. On that occasion, six of Cornell's boxes from 1930s-1950s – partly from the Peggy Guggenheim Collection – were included in the *Wunderkammer* and *Art and Alchemy* Sections, curated by Adalgisa Lugli and Arturo Schwarz, respectively.

To conclude, the Joseph Cornell's Florentine exhibition can be considered as a challenge but also as a great opportunity, maybe not fully exploited, to learn more about this enigmatic builder of images and worlds.

[39] Please see the positive review on *Domus*, n. 504, November 1971, p. 51.

[40] Luigi Carluccio, *Joseph Cornell, Presentazione alla mostra, Galleria Galatea, Torino, 15 ottobre – 13 novembre 1971* [https://www.luigicarluccio.it/images/carluccio/mostre/pdf/galatea/Joseph%20Cornell.pdf] (last accessed: October 9, 2020).

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