

***Giorgio de Chirico – Catalogue of Works: why is Paolo Baldacci so annoyed by it?***  
***A Simple Truth***

1) *Foreword*

In 2013, Fondazione Giorgio e Isa de Chirico decided to resume publication of the artist's *Catalogue of Works* suspended in 1987 following the publication of volume n. 8 of Claudio Bruni Sakraischik's catalogue, a publication originally conceived by Giorgio de Chirico with the principal and declared objective of stemming the rampant spread of forged artwork. The Foundation held it urgent and necessary to provide scholars, collectors and professionals operating in the art field with an easily consultable format of volumes containing a significant number of artworks, including many extraordinary pieces, generally known in a limited manner to the public only from auction house catalogues or personal or group exhibitions, in which, on a few occasions, fake de Chirico paintings have been exhibited (thus destined in time to become authentic), especially when the endorsed by prestigious curators. One of the Foundation's prima activities, provided for in its Statute, entails "the identification and the recognition of authentic artwork by Giorgio de Chirico in order to stem the forgery of the artist's work". The publication of the *Catalogue of Works* edited by the Foundation and published in its name, is a fundamental aspect of this activity. In addition to being an important tool for knowledge, the *Catalogue* acts as a valid and unique means in the fight against forgery and against the dealers of forged artwork.<sup>1</sup>

The first two volumes of *Giorgio de Chirico – Catalogue of Works* were published by Maretti Editore in 2014 and 2015, and comprise 928 works registered in the Foundation's Archive. Each volume includes a praiseworthy introductory essay written, in the first volume by Claudio Strinati (former Superintendent of the Museums of Rome and a Consultant for the Ministry of Heritage, Culture and Tourism) and in the second volume by Fabio Benzi (Professor of Contemporary Art History and author of fundamental writings on 20<sup>th</sup> century art). A bibliographic annex, without claiming to be complete, provides references for the artworks in the catalogue (regarding auction house catalogues dating from the 1980s, exhibition catalogues and monographs), except for unpublished works of course.

The foreword written by the Foundation's President, Paolo Picozza, clearly illustrates the objective of the *Catalogue of Works*. As foreseen in the Foundation's Statute, the publication is purposefully meant as a *Catalogue of Works* and not as a catalogue raisonné, which is a specific genre of publication that would be difficult if not impossible to realise given the significant number of artworks executed by de Chirico in 70 years of incessant creative activity. A catalogue raisonné can difficultly include all works by an artist and tends to focus rather only on the finest and/or the most well-documented, leaving the rest in a state of limbo with easily imaginable doubt as to their authorship with the entailing the risk of the free circulation of fake works. In all events, the publication of a catalogue raisonné would have been materially impossible, given that 2600 artworks already appear in Claudio Bruni's catalogue, which despite a few critical aspects, still represents an essential consultation tool for orienting oneself in the *Pictor Optimus*' complex and variegated production.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> In order to fully document the threat the phenomenon of falsification, it was considered opportune to publish a section dedicated specifically to forgeries in the *Catalogue of Works*. The first volume presents a group of paintings and drawings, some of which have been confirmed, *res judicata*, as forgeries by the Judiciary. These are recent forgeries that appeared on the market after the artist's death. The second volume includes part of Oscar Dominguez's extensive production of fake metaphysical paintings, 20 of which were shown as authentic works in the exhibition *G. de Chirico* at Galerie Allard in Paris in 1946.

<sup>2</sup> The *Catalogo Generale* edited by Claudio Bruni Sakraischik (Electa, Milan 1971-1987), consists of eight volumes in which 2638 works are reproduced in three books divided by periods: 1909-1930; 1931-1950; 1951-1974. The sixth volume

It can be said with justified satisfaction that the first two volumes of the *Catalogue of Works* have received an extremely positive reception and have also stimulated a renewal of authentic interest for the *Pictor Optimus*' artwork.

## 2) Art dealer and critic Paolo Baldacci's false and presumptuous accusations of the *Catalogue of Works*

Paolo Baldacci's adverse voice was, as to be expected, not long in making itself heard and appeared in the form of a difficult to read, confused article steeped in falsehood and insults posted in the News section of the website of the *Archivio dell'arte metafisica* in November. Initially entitled *The Scandal of the new Catalogue of Works: Information Entries signed by the Experts have been Altered*, from which the word "scandal" was later prudently removed, and follows a brief article entitled *The Final Blow? Giorgio de Chirico's new Catalogue of Works* published in August 2014.

Baldacci's rash reaction to the first two volumes of the *Catalogue of Works* (as all of the Foundation's publications and initiatives), may astonish those who are unaware of the judicial history of an art critic who qualifies himself as *the biggest de Chirico expert in the world*. It is therefore difficult to understand the underlying motivations that now have driven Baldacci for quite some time now to verbalise incessant attacks against the Foundation, which he himself was part of for almost five years and on which he built his reputation as an important expert. The reason is simple. ***The Foundation became a civil plaintiff in the court case in which he was indicted for knowingly selling fake artwork attributed to Giorgio de Chirico, and as such substantially contributed to his conviction, and most importantly, to the seizure of the forgeries that he had put on the market and that the Foundation had denounced as fakes.*** As a whole, all of Baldacci's violent stances with regard to the Foundation and those who represent it are nothing other than attempts at reprisal, if not acts of vengeance against those who reported his illicit activity and against all those who have highlighted and documented his macroscopic errors as an art historian and expert.

### a) Legal Record

In the complex history of the falsification of Giorgio de Chirico's artwork, a problem the Judiciary has recently dealt with again, the name a well-known dealer and art critic comes to light: professor Paolo Baldacci (author of important books and prestigious exhibitions of de Chirico's art), who *knowingly sold* a number of fake early-period paintings signed "Giorgio de Chirico" (1922-1932, of a value of hundreds of thousands of Euro). Paolo Baldacci's criminal liability was proven by the Milan Judiciary at the Ordinary Court of Milan – 7<sup>th</sup> Criminal Section in the first instance in March 2009 [read] and later in a *res judicata* sentence issued by the Court of Appeal of Milan – 4<sup>th</sup> Criminal Section in May 2013 [read], to which the Statute of Limitations was ruled in effect (this is the second time Baldacci has benefited from this legal provision). Through extensive and analytical motivations, the sentence ascertained the full knowledge of the accused as to the non-authenticity of the paintings he sold. The seizure order for the fake paintings issued in the first instance trial was also confirmed, as were the auxiliary sanctions regarding the reimbursement of damages to Fondazione Giorgio e Isa de Chirico, who had become a civil plaintiff. In the first instance judgement of March 2009, the Court of Milan

---

dates to 1976 and was the last published while the artist was alive. Volume n. 7, published in 1983, benefited from the consultancy of Wieland Schmied and Giulio Briganti, whilst volume n. 8 enjoyed the consultancy of Wieland Schmied and Antonio Vastano.

sentenced Baldacci to 20 months in prison, a €7,000.00 fine and ordered the publication of the Sentence in the newspapers “Corriere della Sera”, “La Stampa” and “Il Messaggero” (See, *first instance sentence*, p. 347).

a1) *A fake metaphysical painting dated “1913” exhibited by Baldacci in the de Chirico exhibition in Dusseldorf in 2001; Gerd Roos’s position of support; Wieland Schmied’s attestation as to the non-authenticity of the painting and its unauthorised inclusion in the exhibition.*

During the investigation, the Judiciary issued a seizure order for additional artworks related to Baldacci’s activity, which despite the search carried out at the time could not be located and currently remain in circulation. Particular emphasis must be placed on the fact that the provision included a colossal **fake metaphysical painting of 1913** of the potential value of several million Euro, entitled *Die Melancholie der Abreise* (The Melancholy of Departure), shown in an exhibition in Dusseldorf of which Baldacci was one of four curators (*Die Andere moderne. De Chirico-Savinio*. Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen Dusseldorf 2001). The other curators included Maurizio Fagiolo dell’Arco, Wieland Schmied and Gerd Roos (Baldacci’s right-hand man), who hypocritically answered the investigators’ questioning thus:

“Painting number 12 was exhibited in the exhibition on de Chirico-Savinio in Dusseldorf: with regard to its colour, it differs from the group of works on show of the same genre; nevertheless it can be included in the context when put next to another work of the same period as the others: same tonality [sic!]. It was a painting that was unknown to us curators prior to that exhibition. None of us had seen the original. Only Baldacci, who was also a curator, had seen the original before the exhibition as he was the one who had proposed it for the exhibition. I repeat that concerning this work there is and will be a historical debate amongst us art historians”.

He reticently added the following by which he clearly showed how well informed he was of the events surrounding the painting:

“I don’t remember who the owner of the work is. It may have come from Israel: I think it was then sold to a New York gallery owner [who] by email made me understand that it is currently in Switzerland.”



Non-authentic: *The Melancholy of Departure*, “1913”, oil on canvas, 81x60 cm, signed and dated at bottom right “g. de Chirico 1913” [[enlarge image](#)]

Obviously, as he did not reveal the information in his possession the painting could not be seized and is still in circulation, presumably in the possession of an unknowing collector or an investment fund.

Wieland Schmied, curator of the legendary retrospective exhibition held in Milan in 1970, was a personal friend of the artist. He is the only German scholar of Giorgio de Chirico’s oeuvre worthy of this title. In a letter dated 31 October 2013 (a few months prior to his death on 22 April 2014) Schmied confirmed to Paolo Picozza, the Foundation’s President, not only that the painting was fake but that it had been *included in the exhibition without his knowing*: “For that which concerns the aforementioned painting presumably of 1913, *The Melancholy of Departure* **included in the exhibition without my**

**knowing, it is indeed a forgery”** (translated from German<sup>3</sup>). Of noteworthy interest is the fact that Baldacci gave the fake work, which was painted on a vintage canvas, the title “The Melancholy of Departure” (which appears in German in the catalogue), the same title of a painting exhibited at the Salon des Indépendants in Paris in 1913 that has not been identified historically, a piece of information specified in his 1997 monograph<sup>4</sup>. A mere three years later Baldacci “discovered” the painting on which the title LA MÉLANCOLIE DU DÉPART appears written on the crossbar at the centre back (as confirmation, in case there was any doubt, as to which painting it actually was). In March 2012, eleven years after the forgery was exhibited and *only* after its photograph was published in the Foundation’s periodical “Metaphysical Art – The de Chirico Journals” (n. 9/10), Baldacci was forced to admit that the painting – which only he had knowledge of – was a fake. This one episode alone, a true assault on de Chirico’s metaphysical iconography, suffices to discredit Baldacci also in the scientific and academic arena forever as well as an operator on the art market.

**Those who wish to have further information on Paolo Baldacci’s mercantile activities are invited to read *The Constants of History – Old and Recent Falsification of Giorgio de Chirico’s Artwork: Paolo Baldacci, A Case Study* [read].**

## a2) *After Conviction: the Archivio dell’arte metafisica*

In April 2009 – one month after the Court of Milan’s first instance sentencing to 20 months in prison by the Criminal Court of Milan –, having realised that his reputation was irremediably damaged, Baldacci founded an association named *Archivio dell’arte metafisica* (Archive of Metaphysical Art that is actually a simple information centre), which he is the President of (and Gerd Roos vice-president), in order to operate behind a more presentable countenance. He also secured the participation of a number of scholars with greater qualifications than his own, although lacking in specific competencies regarding Giorgio de Chirico.

It comes as no surprise that Baldacci proceeded to use the Archive as a means to convey rash insistent attacks, firstly against Giorgio de Chirico and his widow, secondly against the Foundation that safeguards the artist’s name and its representatives, such as the President, Professor Paolo Picozza, a target of obsessive insults and false accusations by Baldacci, who has gone so far as to aspire for his physical demise. Following are the Judges who sentenced him (who understand nothing), the Technical Consultants appointed by the Court (who had it in for him and wanted to damage him). As could be expected, he also had it in for other scholars, including professor Maurizio Calvesi, an *Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei* scholar, who advanced well-founded and articulate criticism towards Baldacci’s 1997 monograph and its many errors. Lastly, Baldacci has afforded low-level insults to each and every scholar or researcher who has spoken out in defence of de Chirico’s oeuvre and in the name of historical truth. The same occurred to those who are no longer with us, such as Jole de Sanna (a professor of Brera Fine Arts Academy of Milan, deceased in 2004), whose analytical reports on the fake paintings Baldacci sold weighed in significantly on the Magistrate’s investigation and contributed to his conviction. Indeed, Baldacci recently attributed professor de Sanna with false, idiotic affirmations such as: “to buy Bologna chalk one must travel to Bologna”<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> “Bei dem erwähnten Bild von angeblich 1913 »Die Melancholie der Abreise« das ohne mein Wissen der Düsseldorfer Ausstellung 2000 hinzugefügt worden war, handelte es sich in der Tat um eine Fälschung.”

<sup>4</sup> P. Baldacci, *De Chirico – The Metaphysical Period, 1888-1919*, Bulfinch, New York 1997, pp. 195 and 430.

<sup>5</sup> See. P. Baldacci, *Bianco di Spagna gesso di Bologna*, in “L’indice dei libri del mese”, n. 4, April 2015. The following epithets have been used with regard to Giorgio de Chirico in other, various articles and publications by Baldacci: liar, fabulist, cunning, prevaricator, ungrateful, lack of moral character, the existential failure of de Chirico as a man; whilst the

Lastly, although in an expectably more cautious manner, Baldacci's sporadic and transversal attention has fallen upon cav. **Antonio Vastano**, a Carabinieri Marshal (now retired), who at the end of the 1970s strengthened the case regarding the Peretti forgery scandal that involved well-known, above-suspicion gallery owners. To a certain degree, Vastano had guaranteed and imposed Baldacci's presence as an expert on the Foundation's Authentication Committee, despite the perplexity of the President who saw a potential conflict of interest in Baldacci's mercantile activity, something that in time proved true.

Nevertheless, to Vastano's credit is the fact that in the year 2000, upon seeing two fake paintings published in an Italian weekly (*Panorama*) he was the first to warn the Foundation, having immediately understood a new attempt to introduce fake works attributed to de Chirico on the market was taking place (not the well-known Peretti forgeries but commercially more significant ones) and who was behind the operation, as he has stated on more than one occasion.

Today, rather than being repentant with regard to his illegal actions, Baldacci has *focused negative attention on those who nipped such activity in the bud* and who did not turn a blind eye (something he may have expected after having acted as a member of the Foundation's Authentication Committee and Board of Directors), and in particular on the Foundation who became *a civil plaintiff in the legal action against him*.

In an exasperating escalation from 2009 (immediately after the first instance sentence) to present, Baldacci has posted circa **40 articles** in the *News* and *Opinions* sections of his website, without counting various other publications (books and articles) and even a conference held in 2010, organised exclusively in order to support his preposterous theory that Metaphysical Art came into being in Milan, where de Chirico would have painted his first two metaphysical paintings. Due to the motives that drive it, it is clear that Baldacci's criticism, including the inconsistent and libellous criticism directed at the *Catalogue of Works*, is totally lacking in scientific validity and is proof, rather, of his acrimony towards those he holds responsible for his condemnation and, *above all*, towards the artist himself. Even today, in 2015, he writes: "The failure of *Dudron* as a literary exploit is parallel and analogous to the story of the existential failure of de Chirico as a man". The affirmation and its analogies give cause to reflection, although not with regard to the artist.

Faced with such paranoia, the Foundation reserves the right to provide definitive clarification regarding Paolo Baldacci and Gerd Roos' incessant outpourings, accusations and insinuations, through the publication of the proceedings of Baldacci's criminal court case, which, after announcing that he himself would publish them, did not.

### 3) *The New Catalogue of Works: Who it Bothers and Why*

Following the umpteenth attack by Baldacci and Roos in 2013 on the Authentication Committee<sup>6</sup>, it was Antonio Vastano who with determination and far-sightedness emphasised the need to resume the publication of the *Catalogue of Works* as an efficient means of contrasting old and recent forgery of de Chirico's artwork. In his challenge to the work of the Foundation's Authentication Committee,

---

subsequent terms have been directed at the Foundation: "Picozza & co.", "Picozza gang", "Picozza model", "misunderstood and altered by the Picozzians", "Picozza likes nomenklatura", "his trian-bearers", "pseudo-researchers", "kindergarten for the mentally disabled", "trained dogs" and "trained monkeys". We shall spare the reader further.

<sup>6</sup> Cristina Ruiz, *Challenge to the De Chirico Authentication Board*, "The Art Newspaper", September 2013, n. 249, Art Market, p. 3.



Baldacci, a person who *knowingly sold fake de Chirico paintings*, proposed himself as a substitute to the impartial judgements issued by the Foundation's Authentication Committee to act in favour of collectors and art dealers.

The first volume came into being in just over eight months thanks to Vastano's generous, unbiased contribution and Giorgia Chierici's dedication and capability. The second volume was published one year later in May 2015. It is easily understandable how a consultation tool such as the *Catalogue of Works* significantly narrows the range of action of forgers, sellers of forged artworks and art dealers who are not sufficiently careful as to what they sell. Once the publication of the *Catalogue of Works* (that encompasses the most wide-reaching framework possible) is complete, it will undoubtedly be more difficult to sell and asseverate early-period fake paintings (1910s-1940s). Indeed, it was the lack of an updated research tool such as the *Catalogue of Works* that allowed Baldacci, at the end of the last century and start of the present, to put fake paintings into circulation dating to de Chirico's early periods without any doubt being raised. An operation facilitated by the fact that the Foundation's Authentication Committee was suspended at the time. Baldacci had been part of this committee from 1993 until July 1997, when he decided to step down due, according to his inexact version, to alleged generic disagreements regarding the Foundation's cultural agenda. It must be noted that Vastano has repeatedly motivated his own withdrawal from the Committee in stating that he no longer felt confident authenticating with Baldacci as the latter would often insist on authenticating works that had already been rejected. Is it only a coincidence that Baldacci went on, bolstered by the credit afforded to him through his presence on the Foundation's Authentication Committee, to sell fake paintings soon after his resignation, paintings that Vastano would never have passed?

It is necessary to specify that in the new *Catalogue of Works* there are a number of paintings Baldacci participated in the authentication of, although these have been included only after careful verification was carried out. Works that raised doubts were consequently omitted, such as the "third version" of a painting from the 1920s, a circumstance that brings to mind, through its analogies, the "third version" of a *Still life with Pineapple* that was published in the section dedicated to fake paintings in the first volume of the *Catalogue of Works* and which can be referred to Baldacci. A careful verification was also carried out with regard to works Bruni had expressed positive evaluation on but that were not published in the eight volumes of his catalogue (1971-1987).

The publication of a *Catalogue of Works*, which, as explained above, has no pretence of presenting itself as a catalogue raisonné, has annoyed Baldacci so profoundly to the extent that he took the initiative today (in a paid advertisement in the November issue of "Giornale dell'arte") to announce the "forthcoming" publication of a general catalogue raisonné of his own, which by his own admission "would require decades of patient work" (something he specified in the abovementioned article). It is not difficult to understand the difference between these two publications, the first, which provides answers *today* to scholars, collectors and gallery owners, thus limiting the circulation of fakes, and the second, a catalogue announced by Baldacci (when it will indeed see the light "decades" from now), and that will, in any case, not be a "general" catalogue including all de Chirico's known work, but will limit itself to a discretionary, if not arbitrary, choice of works by the artist. A catalogue raisonné would certainly be beneficial, although only on the condition that it is edited with truly scientific criteria and is impartial, without false provenances (as occurred in reference to the Trissino collection) and labels feigning as "certification".

One must also ask from what pulpit and with what credibility do Baldacci and Roos speak and rant, affirming, *on one hand* that they want to defend Giorgio de Chirico's art, whilst on the other, it is documented that **the former** knowingly sold fake paintings attributed to Giorgio de Chirico and that **the latter** defended these forgeries before the investigators, even though he knew they were fakes (although today he claims the contrary!). The doubt arises whether we are witness to split personalities similar to that of the protagonist of Robert Louis Stevenson's famous novel.

It will surely not be the *Catalogue of Works*, as Baldacci has written, that “massacres” de Chirico or that gives him the “final blow”. For almost 20 years now Baldacci and Roos have been trying to do just that and would have even succeeded had it not been for the Foundation’s strong opposition, together with that of a number of serious scholars sincerely interested in safeguarding the historical truth surrounding de Chirico’s life.

**The manipulation of the history and of concepts of de Chirico’s art carried out by these two authors is clearly outlined in the article, *Betraying de Chirico – The Falsification of Giorgio de Chirico’s Biography in the last Fifteen Years* [2011 – [read](#)] and *Giorgio de Chirico’s Neometaphysical Paintings – The Foundation’s Response to Gerd Roos’ Article: “When did de Chirico Retire?”* [2013 – [read](#)]**

4)

True damage was indeed carried out under the guidance of the *Archivio dell’arte metafisica* through Baldacci’s recent restoration of the ***Mysterious Baths Fountain in Milan***, which is no longer the same as is plain to see, insomuch as de Chirico’s original depiction of “water-parquet” has been completely falsified. Not satisfied with this stunt, Baldacci went on to boast about it in a paid advertisement in “Giornale dell’Arte” (September 2015). The Foundation will deal this matter on another occasion.

5)

In refutation of the false allegations, fantasies, hyphenated phrases and stupidities contained in Baldacci’s recent article on the *Catalogue of Works* (as well as other articles by Baldacci and Roos), only two necessary clarifications will be made for the time being.<sup>7</sup> The first regards the painting *St. George (after Mantegna)*, which constitutes the scandal-driven motor of Baldacci’s article. The second deals with a newspaper article published in “Sole24Ore”.

a)

The painting *St. George (after Mantegna)*<sup>8</sup>, authenticated by Baldacci together with Pia Vivarelli and Antonio Vastano, **has never been bought or owned by Giorgio Chierici or by Galleria La Scaletta**. In the Foundation’s archive it is noted that the authentication certificate was issued to a gallery in Florence. The painting then became the property of the lamented gallery owner Claudia Gian Ferrari, who sold it to a well known Milanese collection on 22 February 1996. The accusation made to Giorgio Chierici, who with the complicity of his daughter Giorgia (the editorial coordinator of the *Catalogue of Works*) would have falsified the painting’s date and technique for who knows what commercial purposes, is not only absolutely unfounded but indeed nauseating. Such an accusation actually gives a glimpse of Baldacci’s personality, illustrating better than any other his way of thinking and operating.

---

<sup>7</sup> This is not the place to respond to all the false affirmations and insinuations made by Baldacci regarding “the omission of information” which the *Catalogue* would be subject to. It is important for readers to know that the names of owners of the artworks (when they are known) cannot be published as the Privacy Law prohibits it.

<sup>8</sup> On the back of the photograph where the Authentication Committee’s judgement is indicated, a handwritten note by Baldacci reads: TITLE: “copy from Mantegna ‘St. George’” TECHNIQUE: “watercolour on cardboard” SUPPORT: “Windsor&Newton cardboard” MEASUREMENTS: “cardboard 58.2x28.5 cm painting 58.2x27.3 cm” SIGNATURE: “lower right” EXAMINED ON: “28.11.94” JUDGEMENT “authentic” NOTE: “to confirm the date research must be carried out on the store that sold the cardboard (Emilio Aikelin [sic!] Via 22 Marzo Venice)”. The date “second half of the 1950s” and “the date of execution does not correspond to the date written on the painting” were written by the secretary.

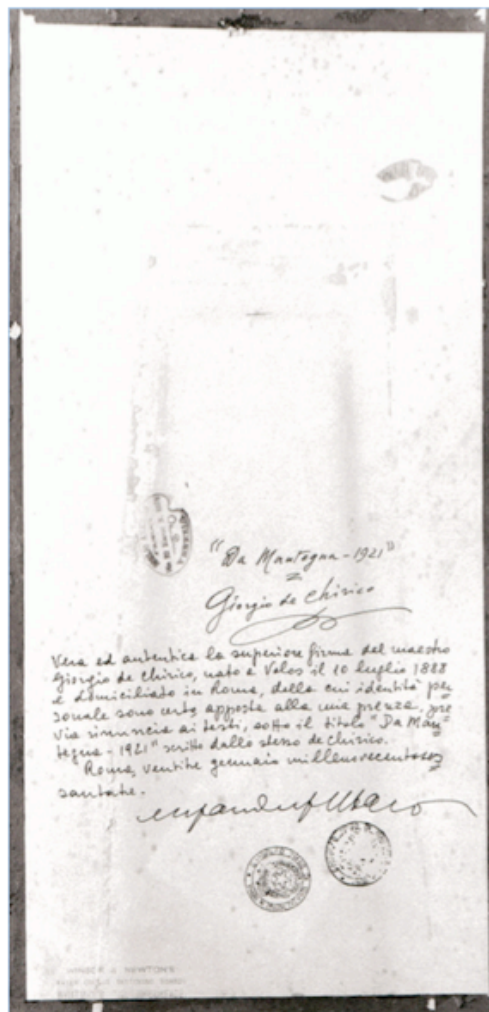


fig. 1 G. de Chirico, *St. George (after Mantegna)*, 1921, tempera on cardboard, 58.2x27.3 cm., bottom right: "G. de Chirico 1921 da Mantegna"

fig. 2 black & white photograph of the back of the painting with stamp of the art supply store EMILIO AICKELIN Via 22 Marzo N. 2578 VENEZIA; the title "*Da Mantegna – 1921*" and signature by the artist; authentication certification handwritten by Notary Public Diego Gandolfo with notary stamps; at lower left: Windsor&Newton factory trade mark (Archives of Fondazione Giorgio e Isa de Chirico).

With regard to the painting's date (which Vastano has always held as 1921 and it was indeed published with this date in the first volume of the *Catalogue of Works* under his supervision), to the second half of the 1950s, a dating Baldacci supports still today, one must observe on the basis of the following elements that Baldacci has committed another error. What follows sheds light more than anything upon the recurring shallowness of his historical research.

Upon the direct verification of the painting *St. George (after Mantegna)* on 28 November 1994, the Authentication Committee had no doubts as to its authenticity and to the fact that the painting was an extraordinary masterpiece. At a certain point, Baldacci put forth the idea that the painting was not of 1921 (or dated to the 1920s at all), without proposing an alternative date but only saying that it could have been a later work. He immediately gained Pia Vivarelli's acritical support but not that of Antonio Vastano, who Baldacci did not consider as equally competent with regard to that particular historical



period. Baldacci then resorted to an auxiliary form of research (useful but potentially precarious) that dealt with elements parallel to the painted artwork itself, in this case the cardboard on which it had been executed<sup>9</sup>. On the back of the cardboard, in fact, there appeared **a stamp** (not a “label” as Baldacci indicates in his article), in the form of a painter’s palette, of the store where it had been purchased that reads: “EMILIO AICKELIN, Via 22 Marzo N. 2578 VENEZIA”. The Winsor&Newton factory is also indicated at the bottom of sheet. The committee was adjourned at this point and Baldacci proceeded to ask Ilaria Uziello (a close collaborator of his) to research the matter at the Venice Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber responded on 5 December, three days after the request for information had been made, by sending a fax certifying that the de facto company Ars of Aickelin Emilio and Frieda was founded on 14 July 1955 and ceased activity on 1 December 1971. This was all Baldacci needed, without further research, in order to establish that the painting was executed *during the second half of the 1950s*. If the company that sold the cardboard was founded in 1955, the painting must have necessarily been executed after that date and, since the cardboard was bought in Venice, de Chirico must have painted it in Venice. Elementary, my dear Watson! That very evening, as if it was a personal matter with Vastano, Baldacci wrote a triumphant letter to Ilaria Uziello: “Dear Ilaria, I am very satisfied that I ‘sniffed’ out that the watercolour after Mantegna was a later work. I have spoken to Antonio and he will come by and sign the photograph. On the authentication certificate it must be written: the date of execution does not correspond to the date written on the painting – executed during the second half of the 1950s. Ciao Paolo”. One can deduce from this that any piece of paper at all is sufficient in order to date a painting and that one needs a good nose rather than a sharp eye! Vastano, although not fully convinced, signed the photograph. Baldacci must have had second thoughts, as seen by a handwritten note by Ilaria Uziello of 2 October 1995 specifying that Baldacci had taken a photograph of the painting to show to Maurizio Fagiolo dell’Arco, someone he often consulted with, and who alternatively dated the painting as 1921 and described its technique as tempera.<sup>10</sup> In publishing the painting in the first volume of the *Catalogue of Works*, the Foundation felt it its duty, as the *Catalogue* is edited under its name, to correct an obvious error (a late 1950s date is in all events impossible to uphold for those who are familiar with de Chirico’s artistic history). After carrying out research with regard to the Venetian Company, it was easily ascertained that the company owned by Emilio Aickelin was active at the same address and used the same stamp since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and that the Winsor&Newton materials it sold were marked with the same trademark found on de Chirico’s *St. George (after Mantegna)* (fig. 4)<sup>11</sup>. This is, in fact, the original company founded by Emilio and his wife Berta Aickelin, from which the 1950s company owned by Emilio and Frieda descends.

<sup>9</sup> A re-examination of the archived documentation shows that the owner of the gallery in Florence had specified in a letter that the technique used in the painting was tempera on paper applied to cardboard, an element that Baldacci did not take into consideration when focusing on the cardboard as material proof of the painting’s date. Even though he noted that the cardboard’s width was 1.2 cm larger than the painted area (see previous note), he did not take into consideration this alternative possibility, which remains to be verified. Should it be confirmed, the Foundation will publish a *corrigé erratum* in the third volume of the *Catalogue of Works*.

<sup>10</sup> The abovementioned documents are conserved in the Foundation’s Archive.

<sup>11</sup> As can be read on the website of the National Portrait Gallery on the page *British artists’ suppliers, 1650-1950*: (<http://www.npg.org.uk/research/programmes/directory-of-suppliers/a.php>): “Aickelin was one of two artists’ suppliers listed in Venice in John Murray’s *Handbook for travellers in Northern Italy* in 1897”. Artists including Emma Ciardi, Loisa Starr Canziani, Alessandro Milesi and John Singer Sargent bought supplies at Emilio Aickelin’s art supply shop. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, conserves in its collection a watercolour by John Singer Sargent, *Sky*, c. 1907, painted on cardboard from Emilio Aickelin’s store. (See S.L. Herdrich and H.B. Weinberg, *American drawings and watercolors in the Metropolitan Museum of Art: John Singer Sargent*, 2000, p. 294). Paris’ Marmottan Monet conserves a sketchbook of Claude Monet with the Aickelin label, which is also found on the stretcher of the painting *San Giorgio Maggiore al crepuscolo*, 1908, conserved at the National Museum of Wales.

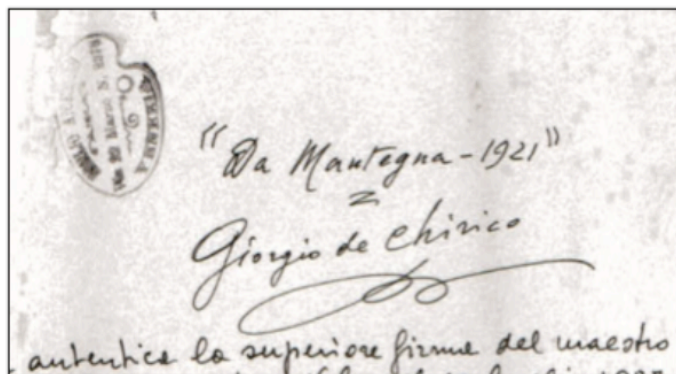


fig. 3 detail of the back of the painting *St. George (after Mantegna)*, 1921, with stamp at upper left  
 fig. 4 stamp of the EMILIO AICKELIN art supply company on the back of a painting by E. Phillips Fox, *Venetian Boats*, 1906-7 (National Gallery of Victoria)

The cardboard stamped with the Aickelin trademark was therefore readily available at a much earlier date than the mid-1950s limit date hastily and arbitrarily indicated by Baldacci in order to support his erroneous dating. After 21 years from his initial erroneous judgment, it would have been advisable for Baldacci to exercise prudence prior to formulating such grave accusations towards Giorgio Chierici and the Foundation, something he could have done by carrying out a simple Internet search on his own. He would have derived different conclusions.

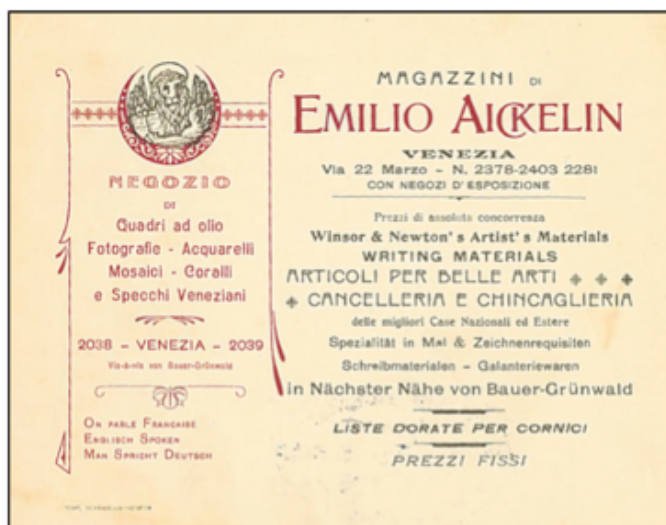


fig. 5 EMILIO AICKELIN trade card inserted in a copy of Lefranc & Cie's trade catalogue, *Fabbrica di Colori e Vernici*, 1902, advertising materials for artists and writers

The moral to be derived from the above-illustrated event is that there is a need for greater humility, less prejudice and especially greater attention and accuracy in the examination of documents. Without such care, one ends up, as Baldacci has, by dating a letter Savinio wrote in 1916 as 1918, despite the fact that in the letter Savinio mentions an article of his soon to be published in "La Voce" a periodical that

closed in 1916, as every one knows (except Baldacci?)<sup>12</sup>; by confusing the single and double family names of the forbearers of the de Chirico family (in order to assert that an interfamily marriage took place and that the de Chirico's were all crazy as a result)<sup>13</sup>; by authenticating a print as a drawing<sup>14</sup>, and by dating as 1926 a painting published in the January 1925 issue of "La Révolution Surréaliste"<sup>15</sup>, and so forth, to a point of abandoning all prerequisites of historical research for the benefit of making a scoop by upholding the erroneous dating of January 1910 of a letter de Chirico undoubtedly wrote in December of the same year, allowing for an arbitrary and historically impossible predating to 1909 of de Chirico's first two metaphysical paintings (executed in Florence in 1910), and to consequently affirm, based on pure hypothesis (although elected by Baldacci as documented fact), that Metaphysical Art was invented through the prevailing contribution of de Chirico's brother Savinio and inevitably in Milan.

<sup>12</sup> Baldacci lost no time in writing to the newspaper "Giornale dell'Arte" to denounce, in a typically scandalistic tone, the Foundation's ineptitude in not having credited Savinio with the authorship of the conference given by Paul Guillaume on-stage at Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier in Paris on 3 November 1918, flaunting as proof (also of the Foundation's ignorance and inexactness), a letter by Savinio to Guillaume which begins with: "Here is your conference..." and finishes with a mention of an article he was about to publish in "La Voce". The reference to the periodical, which closed at the end of 1916, dates the letter without a shadow of a doubt to 1916. The historiographical error is such that had a student made it, they would have failed immediately. The Vieux-Colombier conference was written, as correctly indicated by Katherine Robinson who discovered and published the extraordinary unknown discourse that Guillaume delivered on-stage surrounded by 11 of de Chirico's paintings during the intermission of a Sunday afternoon show to a crowd in agitation. (See K. Robinson "Allocution à l'occasion de l'exposition Chirico" in «Metafisica. Quaderni della Fondazione Giorgio e Isa de Chirico» n. 7/8, 2008, pp. 383-392.

<sup>13</sup> See N. Velissiotis, *The Origins of Adelaide Mabili and her Marriage to Giorgio de Chirico. Restoration of a Historical Truth*, in "Metaphysical Art – The de Chirico Journals" n. 11/13, 2013, pp. 88-110.

<sup>14</sup> In February 2014, Baldacci published in the News section of his website a long-winded article entitled *Il rischio delle autentiche. A proposito di un recente episodio che ha portato alla scoperta di un falso "disegno" di Giorgio de Chirico* (The Risk of Authentication: a recent episode that brought to light the discovery of a fake Giorgio de Chirico "drawing"), to try to justify having mistaken a print for a metaphysical drawing by de Chirico (dated late 1930s). Anyone at all can realise that in order to avoid such an inexcusable error there is no need for a catalogue raisonné, even whilst "in the making". What leaves one completely *dumbfounded*, is not so much the error Baldacci incurred in on 30 October 1993 when he wrote the following authentication certificate: "the drawing is authentic, but not referable to the date written on it [1917 *ed.*]. It is datable to the end of the 1930s" (issued by the Foundation's Authentication Committee of which he was a member at the time) and not even the fact that he went on to make the same error again when he had the opportunity to re-examine the original artwork (a rare event in itself). What is indeed completely *dumbfounding*, is the advice he gave, as written in his article, to the "conscientious art consultant" (mysteriously named only "Antonella", in fact, not very mysterious at all) who brought the "drawing" to him in the summer of 2013. After expressing his grave doubts as to the authenticity of the work (which he specifies in the article) and his conviction that the drawing was in all probability fake, he did not hesitate in advising her: "to take it to an auction house and not to give much thought to our doubts and problems seeing that you can in no way be held responsible because it is a work authenticated by the Foundation", namely, authenticated by Baldacci himself in the name of the Authentication Committee, comprising at that time of Baldacci (for that which concerned the pre-1940s period, thus the "drawing" in question), Pia Vivarelli and Antonio Vastano. We shall spare readers any comment on the morality behind such advice. As would come to pass, the auction house Sotheby's to whom the conscientious art consultant entrusted the drawing, discovered that it was a print.

<sup>15</sup> The painting is *Metaphysical Interior*, 1925, see P. Baldacci, *Giorgio de Chirico: Betraying the Muse - De Chirico and the Surrealists*, Paolo Baldacci Gallery, New York, 21 April-28 May, 1994, p. 68. In his essay in the catalogue, Baldacci was the first to speak of a surrealist conspiracy, which he delineated as: "**The Surrealist's misappropriation of de Chirico is one of the most extraordinary stories in the history of modern art**", and pointed out that on occasion of the exhibition: "**documents and important testimony chart the course of the relationship between de Chirico and the Surrealists, from initial friendship, to open warfare. It clarifies how, within the climate of disrepute created by Breton and his friends, fertile terrain was laid for the germination of the first forgeries. These were produced and sold, expressly within Surrealist circles**" (*ibidem*, p. 11). Baldacci seems today to have forgotten these affirmations and historical indications accusing instead professor Picozza of "using declarations by the artist in order to prove the existence of a 'surrealist conspiracy' against him and of the 'early forgery' of his art at the beginning of the 1920s". The contradiction is evident. Baldacci sustains today that the forgery of de Chirico's artwork began only in 1945.

b)

Gabriele Biglia's article, *Su de Chirico poche certezze* (Little Certainty regarding de Chirico) published 25 July 2015 in "Sole 24 Ore" and flaunted by Baldacci against the *Catalogue of Works* as an authoritative third party opinion, seems instead to have been inspired by Baldacci himself. The journalist, clearly in the dark about the abovementioned questions regarding Baldacci and Roos, merely repeated what they had referred to him. It is a shame that the distinguished journalist did not feel it his duty to *also* hear out the Foundation in regard, seeing the numerous times it is mentioned in the article. He would probably have written something different upon realising that one of the most important court proceedings regarding the forgery of de Chirico's art that the Magistrate has recently dealt with regarded Baldacci himself and was decided by the Criminal Court of Appeal of Milan. We believe he would have alerted his readers, prompting them to beware of certain unscrupulous art critic-dealers that benefit from trust in the market that they do not merit and by taking advantage of the "authority" this affords them illegally sell worthless fakes as authentic masterpieces. He would have also acknowledged the fact that the certification issued by the Foundation for works of art it deems authentic, even if not infallible, is in no way conditioned by the market or by conflict of interest.

In conclusion to what has been summarily expressed in this text, one returns with force to the question: can a person convicted in first instance by the Ordinary Court of Milan – 7<sup>th</sup> Criminal Section for selling fake paintings passed off as authentic artworks by Giorgio de Chirico **"for the purpose of procuring a profit for himself and or for other persons"** (a sentencing to which the Statute of Limitations was ruled in effect by the Court of Appeal of Milan, Judgement no. 3539, 19 July 2013, confirming the seizure of the paintings and damages fine to the Foundation<sup>16</sup>) and who has shown no sign of repentance and has instead shown anger to the Judges who sentenced him<sup>17</sup> and insulted everyone who contributed to the ascertainment of the non-authenticity of the artworks he sold, can raise himself today on a pulpit and have any say at all in matters regarding **the correct safeguarding and defence of the cultural legacy of the greatest Italian artist of the 20<sup>th</sup> century?**

---

<sup>16</sup> The Court responded to the various motivations put forth by the defence in the Act of Appeal, particularly the extensive and analytical motivations presented on behalf of Baldacci, who had contradictorily requested a new assessment [of the paintings, *ed.*] without relinquishing the application the Statute of Limitations. The Court reiterated the accurateness of the technical and artistic collegial expertise carried out by the technical consultants appointed by the Court in the first instance, who proved with absolute certainty that the paintings attributed to Giorgio de Chirico were forgeries. The judgement of guilt was based on: interrogations, facts and circumstances surrounding the origin of three works from persons who had died in the meantime, the changing of hands and commercialisation of the fake works, the exchange of communication between the various parties involved, as well as spontaneous declarations made by Baldacci in the courtroom during the reconstruction of the various transitions. Additionally, the expertise that had been issued for the paintings weighed in as decisive proof of the accused's full knowledge with regard to the non-authenticity of the works they commercialised (see, *The Constants of History - Old and Recent falsification of Giorgio de Chirico's Artwork, Paolo Baldacci: A Case History*, cit., p. 322).

<sup>17</sup> See P. Baldacci, *Conclusion del processo Baldacci. Lettera del Presidente ai soci* (Conclusion the Baldacci court case: letter to members), News section, September 2013. After the Statute of Limitations was ruled in effect, Baldacci continued to accuse the Technical Consultants appointed by the Court and the Judges, who had not accepted his request for a new assessment, something made impossible by his very acceptance of the Statute of Limitations provision. He then raised objection (thus falling into ridicule), to the fact that the Judges had published the Judgement a full 30 days prior to the 90 day deadline, that is, on 19 July rather than on 19 August 2013.