

DE CHIRICO'S JEWELLERY: AN UNEXPECTED DISCOVERY

Susanna Misiano

“And do you love jewellery? You have often painted it. *I neither love it nor hate it. I don't think Morandi was crazy about bottles even though he painted them*”. This is how de Chirico replied during a long interview with the journalist Berenice, Jolena Baldini's pseudonym. In this detached way that was somewhat ironic and snobbish (as was his habit), he showed a neutral attitude towards jewellery, an object of desire *par excellence*, a symbol of love, wealth and power, to which he did however dedicate himself, even if it was in an impromptu and occasional way.¹ In fact de Chirico not only painted jewellery (mostly pieces worn by upper class women who loved to have their portraits painted), he also created jewellery, inventing pieces, developing their design or making models. In this way, the discovery of a production of ‘one-off pieces’ in precious metals, completely unknown until now, throws light on a new aspect of dechirican poetics, which can be included in the field of the research of ‘artists’ jewellery’ developed in Italy above all from the post Second World War period onwards, thanks to several goldsmiths in Rome. For de Chirico, jewellery represented on the one hand the completion and the natural extension of the activity of sculpture, and on the other, the extreme synthesis of reflections on ‘pictorial material’ which so impassioned him during the last decades of his working life.² In fact the ‘serial’ production of so-called ‘jewellery-sculptures’ in silver, gold-plated silver and gold was only known about until now. These were modelled in plaster and cast with the lost-wax method, adaptable mainly as pendants or brooches and produced at the beginning of the 1970s, parallel to the realization of small and large models in bronze.³

Exhibited as a complete collection on several occasions, the pieces display de Chirico's engraved signature. They are numbered from 1 to 150 and were produced even after his death, on the authorisation of his wife Isa who agreed to their completion within the specified limits of the editions.⁴

¹ The interview was published in: C. Siniscalco (ed.), *Incontro con Giorgio de Chirico. Ventisette poeti, ventiquattro disegni e una intervista*, Matera-Ferrara 1988, p. 105.

² The theme of the artist's jewellery is widely dealt with in: S. Misiano, *Il Gioiello e le Arti Visive, sviluppi e tendenze dall'inizio del XX secolo ad oggi*, in G. Giovannini Torelli, *Cultura del Gioiello. Lezioni di Sistemi e Tecniche del settore Gioielleria*, Rome 2006 (with previous bibliography).

³ The first editor of the *gioiello d'artista seriale* was Gian Carlo Montebello (Milan 1941), who in 1967 set up a laboratory of precious metallurgy with the aim of producing, based on the artists' project, multiples in precious metals with limited, numbered and signed editions, creating an alternative to the more expensive ‘one-off pieces’. Important figures such as Lucio Fontana, Piero Dorazio, the Pomodoro brothers, Man Ray, Hans Richter César and Sonia Delaunay worked with him for about ten years. For dechirican sculpture, see G. dalla Chiesa, *De Chirico scultore*, Milan 1988; P. Baldacci, *De Chirico. Le Sculture del Centenario*, Turin 1995; F. Ragazzi (ed.), *Il Grande Metafisico. Giorgio de Chirico scultore*, exhibition catalogue, (Cremona) Milan 2004.

⁴ The jewellery-sculptures have been shown at several exhibitions amongst which: *Atelier de Chirico*, Paris Artcurial, 1981; *De Chirico*, Ferrara, Palazzo dei Diamanti, 30 June - 6 October 1985; *Giorgio de Chirico. Opere su carta Multipli-Minisculture-Sculture gioiello*, Spello Vecchio Palazzo Comunale, August - September 1988; *Giorgio de Chirico I gioielli dalla pittura - dipinti, sculture, multipli, gioielli*, Vicenza Ente Fiera, January 1997; see C. Siniscalco, in *Giorgio de Chirico. Opere su carta Multipli-Minisculture-Sculture gioiello*, exhibition catalogue, Spello 1988, p. 34.

The most famous themes of his painting repertoire can be seen in these objects: triangles, set squares, gladiators, muses, archaeologists, i.e. themes that adapt best to the function of jewellery. For example, *Musetta (Small Muse)*, fig. 1 shows the bust of the famous mannequin modelled in the luminosity of noble metal.⁵ The piece contains the façade of a temple, representing as such the protagonists of the enigmatic piazza-squares (fig. 2). Keeping in close connection with the artist's poetic vision, this production in precious metals constitutes 'entertainment', an intellectual diversion, carried out with the utmost philological rigour and coinciding with the so-called *Neo-metaphysical* research in which the traditional themes of the Metaphysical period are resumed.⁶

However, there are only extremely rare references to the existence of 'one-off pieces' in bibliographical sources: in a fundamental text of 1963 the respected jewellery historian Graham Hughes includes de Chirico amongst the principle jewellery design artists, stating that: "he designed a small series of jewels as presents for his wife during the '50s".⁷ Later in the catalogue from the 1988 exhibition in Spello, in a footnote from the presentation, the 'private' nature of this production is repeated in the same way: "These sculpture-jewels are Giorgio de Chirico's first multiple pieces conceived with this aim after the artist made a few pieces from gold and precious stones as one-off pieces for his wife Isa". Even in the recent *Dizionario del Gioiello Italiano (Dictionary of Italian Jewellery)*, nothing new is revealed about them except that they were "probably produced by Roman goldsmiths".⁸ In the text dedicated to 'artists' jewellery' in the exhibition catalogue from the *Italian Metamorphosis 1943 - 1968*, we read: "Between 1948 and 1968, Jean Arp, Georges Braque, Giorgio de Chirico, Max Ernst, Man Ray, Meret Oppenheim, Pablo Picasso... worked on miniaturizing their images to transform them into earrings, necklaces, and pins bearing iconographic and linguistic motifs tied to the traditions of Cubism, Dada, Metaphysical Paintings...". The curator of this prestigious collection does not therefore ignore the existence of dechirican jewels but there is no trace of them.⁹ In reality the only piece of jewellery made by de Chirico for his wife which went on to become famous was the brooch *Gli archeologi (The Archaeologists)*, 1956 (fig. 3), published by Gregoriotti in 1969 and again in a newspaper article in 1979. Recorded in the caption as the property of Isa de Chirico, the jewel depicts male mannequins, one of the most famous dechirican inventions, developed during his Parisian stay between 1925 and 1932 and then portrayed over the course of time. The figures of the archaeologists with their featureless oval faces, busts which are disproportionate to their legs and their laps full of fantastical and surreal classical constructions were produced by lost-wax casting. Two branches of leaves surround them, which in reality were a pair of earrings with an 19th-century *pavé* of brilliants (circular-cut diamonds), the clips of which are used as a support for the composition. The three drop pearls which enrich the object at the bottom were

⁵ The consecutively numbered images pertaining to this essay are found in the Italian text *I Gioielli di de Chirico: Un'inaspettata scoperta* in this periodical, see pp. 393-411.

⁶ M. Ursino (ed.), *Giorgio de Chirico I gioielli dalla pittura*, exhibition catalogue, (Vicenza) Rome 1997, pp. 11-13, 46; On the Neo-metaphysical period, see M. Calvesi, M. Ursino (ed.), *De Chirico. La Nuova Metafisica*, exhibition catalogue, (San Marino) Rome 1995; M. Calvesi (ed.), *La Metafisica continua. Opere della Fondazione Giorgio e Isa di Chirico*, exhibition catalogue, (Palermo) Milan 2008.

⁷ G. Hughes, *Modern Jewellery. An International Survey 1890-1964*, London 1964 (2nd ed.), p. 225.

⁸ C. Siniscalco, in *op. cit.*, p. 34; L. Lenti, M. C. Bergesio, *Dizionario del Gioiello Italiano del XIX e XX secolo*, Turin 2005, p. 89.

⁹ P. Asbaghi Tabatabai, *Art in Jewels*, in G. Celant (ed.), *The Italian Metamorphosis 1943-1968*, exhibition catalogue, New York 1994, p. 232.

similarly 'salvaged': thus it is a sort of assembly of old and modern elements, in perfect harmony with metaphysical poetics and ideas.¹⁰

This paper was inspired by the vision of the person who wrote in the autumn of 2006 about an extraordinary object that chronologically anticipated de Chirico's jewellery-making: the brooch *Due cavalli accanto ad un frammento di colonna* (*Two horses next to a column fragment*), 1943 (fig. 4). It had appeared two years earlier in a blurry black and white photograph in Giovanna Rasario's article, *De Chirico pendant Bellini*, in which she analyses the birth of dechirican sculpture during his stay in Florence in the early 1940s. The creation of the piece dates back to wartime when de Chirico was a guest of the famous Florentine antique dealers, the Bellini family, who promoted his early works in terracotta. This environment gave him the opportunity to deepen his interest in manual ability in a general reassessment of applied arts, shared by other artists. In fact together with Saverio Bueno, Primo Conti, Pietro Annigoni, Luigi Bellini and his son Mario, de Chirico signed an agreement to set up C.E.A., an association founded to support artisan activity. The aim was to produce jewellery, blown glass and embroidered table-cloths, in line with a cultural project which must have particularly interested de Chirico as we can see in a letter of February 1948 when he asked Bellini to help him to "organise an important show in London with the exhibition of painting and artisan work". The brooch was commissioned by Mario Bellini as a gift for his wife, Adriana (Dodina) Manfredi and was produced by Ettore Mancini, a goldsmith who had worked for Cartier.¹¹ The production of the brooch was very accurate and refined in its details: the prong setting of the stones, 'triangular' in the case of the brilliants, the sanding of the gold, and the riveting along the edges. This is one of de Chirico's most famous subjects, developed in infinite variations from the 1920s onwards: a pair of horses, one fair and the other dark, with flowing manes and tails, on the seashore with a background of ruins that nostalgically evoke ancient Greece (fig. 5). "They seem fantastical horses" – according to the Swedish critic, Aspund – "modelled in plaster, with tails like crinoline. Ruins of ancient palaces and fragments of columns also form part of the composition, but the horses have a life of their own and seem to look, full of pride, backwards towards a great past or forwards towards a great future". Classical models offered de Chirico the ability to understand in the image of the horse the internal nucleus, both by the sign and "by the apparition that has already happened and that of the future". In particular, the brooch seems inspired by drawings collected in the volumes of *Répertoire* by the French archaeologist, Salomon Reinach, which document ancient sculpture and painting and provided de Chirico with many iconographic sug-

¹⁰ V. Gregoriotti, *Il gioiello nei secoli*, Milan 1969, p. 307; A. Zucchetta, *Il gioiello nell'arte. Suggestione e mistero degli Archeologi*, in "Il giornale di Vicenza", 18 August 1979.

¹¹ G. Rasario, *Giorgio de Chirico pendant Bellini* in: "Metafisica: Quaderni della Fondazione Giorgio e Isa de Chirico", n. 3-4, Rome, 2004, pp. 286, 287, fig. 30, note no. 45; p. 288 note no. 46; pp. 326-327; p. 332 no. 13; in note no. 45 the author mentions a second brooch with the same subject, decorated with emeralds. The brooch appeared on the occasion of the fair: *Collezione Internazionale a Palazzo Venezia*, Rome, 20-29 October 2006; in 2007 it was exhibited in Rome and in Cortina d'Ampezzo at *Daide Halevim Unique Auctions*. see G. Gallo, *E l'albergo diventa galleria. Con Picasso e Matisse*, in "Il Corriere della Sera", 20 August 2007; Various authors, *Daide Halevim Unique Auctions*, catalogue, Parma 2007, p. 14. I would like to especially thank Signora Luciana Baglioni for giving me the initial information about this piece of jewellery.

¹² L. Cavallo, M. Fagiolo dell'Arco (ed.), *De Chirico, Il Barocco. Dipinti degli anni 30-50*, exhibition catalogue, Florence 1991, p. 17; S. Reinach, *Répertoire de la statuaire grecque et Romaine*, Ernst Leroux, 6 volumes, Paris 1897-1930 and *Répertoire des Peintures Grecques et Romaines*, Paris 1922; see G. Roos, *Giorgio de Chirico e Alberto Savinio. Ricordi e Documenti Monaco-Milano-Firenze 1906-1911*, Bologna 1999 p. 377; P. Baldacci (ed.), *Giorgio de Chirico. Gladiatori 1927-1929*, exhibition catalogue, (Biumo Superiore) Milan 2003, p. 34 note no. 23; P. Baldacci, G. Roos (ed.), *De Chirico*, exhibition catalogue, (Padua) Venice 2007, p. 188.

gestions (fig. 6).¹² In its transposition into precious metals, the landscape-architectonic setting is resolved in the presence of the Ionic capital studded with rubies, sapphires and brilliants, which makes the base for the horses. The variety of colours of the stones and gold makes the object a sumptuous 'wearable sculpture', plastically pictorial and intensely coloured.¹³

The same theme characterises another splendid piece of jewellery published in 2007 in the catalogue of the London exhibition, *Surreal Things*. The piece is a bracelet attributed to the early 1950s, made up of four strings of pearls with a clasp formed by two facing horses separated by a column and resting on Ionic capitals decorated with brilliants (fig. 7). The piece which belonged to Isa de Chirico, draws its particularity from the clasp, made up in reality of a pair of earrings which, as Isa considered them too large, were adapted to this new purpose.¹⁴

In Rome, where he returned in 1943, de Chirico continued to express himself through this art form which is incorrectly considered 'minor'. His continuing was thanks to the constructive relationship that he shared with Enrico Galassi, an eclectic character, who set up a laboratory of applied arts specialising in mosaics at Via Margutta 48 in the 1940s. As well as de Chirico, who provided sketches for several mosaics (such as the 1940-41 *Piazza d'Italia* or *Italian Piazza*), Savinio, Ferrazzi, Carrà, Capogrossi, Maccari, and Mazzacurati also worked in the laboratory. Immediately after the Liberation of Rome in 1944, Galassi opened the so-called *Studio di Villa Giulia*: he furnished two laboratories in a wing of Villa Poniatowsky, one for mosaics and marquetry, the other for the embossing of metals and for jeweller's art. With financial support from Cesare Brustio and Aldo Borletti, the owners of the large department stores *La Rinascente*, who firmly believed in this project, Galassi had the intention of promoting modern works of applied art to be marketed, primarily in America.¹⁵ In my opinion, frequenting the *Studio di Villa Giulia* contributed to keeping de Chirico's interest in jewellery alive, an interest which would later be realised in a more complete way. There is however no documented relationship between de Chirico and the promoters of 'artists' jewellery', Mario Masenza and the Fumanti brothers, who as we have already noted, promoted a new creative project in the 1950s and 1960s, inviting the major artists of the period to make precious objects. Nor is there evidence of de Chirico's participation in various exhibitions of the field. What is certain however is that the climate set up by Masenza and the Fumanti brothers in Rome's artistic-cultural circle, did not leave the *Pictor Optimus* untouched: we can imagine how the elegant windows of jewellers' such as Masenza on the ground floor of the Fiano Palace in Via del Corso and Fumanti on Via Frattina, where pieces by Afro, Cannilla, Franchina, Mirko, Consagra and Capogrossi sparkled, would most certainly have caught his attention.¹⁶

¹² The statement with which de Chirico concludes his discourse on sculpture in the theoretical text *Brevis pro plastica oratio* published in 1940 in "Aria d'Italia" seems to suit the piece of jewellery: "If a sculpture is hard then it is not a sculpture. A sculpture must be soft and warm; and from painting it will not only have all the softness but also all the colours: a beautiful sculpture is always pictorial."

¹⁴ G. Wood (ed.), *Surreal Things. Surrealism and Design*, exhibition catalogue, London 2007, pp. 330-331. The information on the bracelet was supplied to the author as a direct testimony of facts.

¹⁵ Enrico Galassi (Ravenna 1907-Pisa 1980) painter, sculptor, architect, mosaicist: see I. De Guttry, M. P. Maino, *Le arti applicate a Roma negli anni Quaranta, i laboratori, gli artisti, gli imprenditori*, in *Roma sotto le stelle del '44*, various authors, exhibition catalogue, Rome 1994, pp. 67;147-155.

¹⁶ For the work of Mario Masenza (Rome 1915-1985), Danilo Fumanti (Rome 1934-1995) and Massimo Fumanti (Rome 1936), see S. Misiano, *op. cit.*, pp. 225-239.

A series of 'one-off pieces' are presented in this paper, unedited and produced between the mid-1950s and the beginning of the 1960s using lost-wax casting: de Chirico would supply the three-dimensional models, the goldsmith would put the finishing touches to the object with embossing and chiselling, and in some cases spreading a patina of oxidation on the gold to obtain a greater decorative effect. De Chirico almost exclusively produced brooches, a type of jewellery which, developing a two-dimensional space, is the best type of jewellery for transferring the signs and the colour combinations of the painted surface into the shine of metals and precious stones. The objects which achieved the admiration of one of the most famous jewellers of the time, Giorgio Leonida Bulgari, show technical-compositional differences to the Bellini brooch (fig. 4), in that they are more 'sculptural' and less finished off, and they were characterised by being made only occasionally for the private realm, at a time when the artist was achieving commercial and world success. A document from the Fondazione Giorgio e Isa de Chirico archive testifies to the existence of other pieces, publicly exhibited on at least one occasion: there is a brochure from the Galleria Barbaroux in Milan dated 1954 with a dedication that "invites a visit to the exhibition of paintings, drawings and miniatures by Giorgio de Chirico and several pieces of jewellery conceived, designed and signed by the Master". This last passage underlines the total belonging of the jewellery to dechirican creativity, considering them in the same way as a work of art. Most of the jewellery repeats, in some cases with small variants, the iconography of so-called 'Neo-baroque' painting, a creative period which began in Milan in 1939, continued in Florence at the beginning of the 1940s and was then consecrated in Rome where the artist moved once and for all in 1947. It is a style which interprets the desire for exaltation, opulence and 'theatricality'. All of these elements are found in his chosen subjects: myths, Greek tragedy, chivalrous poems, battles, and landscape, i.e. the settings of the only possible reality: a reality evoked by examples of the classical world, almost a nostalgic dream, lived by de Chirico in the first person.

The new language was born from a deep reflection on the importance of chromatic material, which was revealed to him in a sudden and disturbing way. In *Memorie (Memoirs)* he recounts how, in Paris during the winter of 1938-39 standing in front of a Velázquez at the Louvre, his wife Isabella told him "This is not dried up colour but beautiful coloured material". It was in fact from this material, used by painters from previous centuries, which is consistent and full of pigment and made from dense and oily emulsions, that these inventions and compositional solutions which could exalt the pictorial medium would take life. De Chirico then developed the so-called 'emplastical oil', a transparent and viscous coloured paste, obtained by studying French painters from the 18th and early 19th centuries.¹⁷ This oil, which dries instantly without losing its transparency, allowed brushstrokes to be overlapped very quickly resulting in an effect similar to pieces of glass lying one next to the other. De Chirico wrote at length about the *beautiful material*, constructing on

¹⁷ The recent publication of the unedited text: *Pro tempera oratio* of 1920 in "Metafisica: Quaderni della Fondazione Giorgio e Isa de Chirico", n. 5-6, Rome, 2006, pp. 467-471, shows how de Chirico's interest in painting techniques dates back to his stay in Ferrara. It was then that de Chirico abandoned commercially available tubes of paints in order to use powder pigment mixed with linseed oil following research that he did between 1919 and 1920 with the aim of discovering 'greasy tempera'.

this pearly and incandescent material a narrative and iconographic framework which, in a nutshell, contains the idea of the jewel, or rather the sense of preciousness intended as a category of the spirit. Thus the jewel, a unique and extremely desirable object, can be considered the piece which completes, in my opinion, the grandiose puzzle of 'dechirican baroque'. What else greater than gold or precious gems could have translated and almost perfected the "*beautiful painting*"? And again, mixing the ingredients the artist intended to create the material, the 'pulp of colour', like an alchemist looking for the philosopher's stone, chasing gold, the agent of universal transmutation to penetrate the enigmas of nature.¹⁸

Past tradition is a constant reference point in this continuous investigation: "All of de Chirico's technical and pictorial research, all his calculations of alchemy and magic made on colouring material find their greatest expression in Rubens. Heaven forbid we should call him a magician. He just wanted to be a worker: the worker-dreamer bends over the palette. The colours shown there are like a miniature rainbow composed of many half balls of topazes, sapphires, emeralds, turquoises and rubies".¹⁹

It is interesting to observe how critical thought on Neo-baroque painting has often associated painting material with noble metals, with gems and thus with the jewels which have always fascinated man, in poetic similarities. De Chirico, 'the Argonaut at the conquest of the Golden Fleece', is not immune to this attraction: "We live with him in the land of Eldorado, dazzling and bejewelled"; "The painting is a refined cloth of paints, a luxurious piece of clothing not a sparkling object. But a jewel, capable of catching your eye, keeping it and projecting it into an unlimited space, without moorings, far from reality, from banality, from malice, from stupidity, far from the earth".²⁰

De Chirico also compares paint to gold in his *Discorso sulla materia pittorica (A Discourse on the Material Substance of Paint)*: "This emulsion was already the physical material of the painting, but still in its liquid state, just like gold is liquid before it is transformed into an object, or crystal before it becomes a goblet or jug." "The material substance of paint must be beautiful as a whole, from the surface to its very depths, like a gold object and not just the surface like a gold-plated object". And again "The work done with emulsion and emplastical oils made the fabric of the paint precious, luminous, transparent and at the same time dense, robust and resistant." "[...] to make a good painting you must be able to model, draw, blend and shade, basically work on the painting with ease [...]".²¹ But are these not the same steps that a goldsmith carries out when he creates a piece of jewellery? It is clear that de Chirico associates the birth of painting and that of decoration in one sole creative *iter*: for both it is necessary to have manual talent that can only be possessed by someone who knows how to 'return to craft'. The ability to mould, to soften and to infuse airiness into the coloured mass thus finds a further, if episodic, outlet in the development of jewellery, which, recalling the sense of abundance and of adorning oneself, falls completely into the multi-

¹⁸ V. Trione, *Atlanti Metafisici, Giorgio de Chirico. Arte, Architettura, critica*, Milan 2005, pp. 320-321; 330.

¹⁹ L. Cavallo, M. Fagiolo dell'Arco, (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 8.

²⁰ L. Cavallo, M. Fagiolo dell'Arco (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 23 note no. 6; V. Trione, *op. cit.*, p. 322.

²¹ G. de Chirico, I. Far, *Commedia dell'Arte Moderna*, (ed. by Jole de Sanna), Milan 2002, pp. 171-173. Full English translation in "Metafisica. Quaderni della Fondazione Giorgio e Isa de Chirico", n. 5-6, Rome, 2006, pp. 541-547.

form dechirican versatility. It thus becomes the final and immediately useable product, from the opulent and ephemeral universe of the Baroque, from the concept itself of decoration, of the frill. The subjects, borrowed from the mythical and fairytale world of painting, descend from the canvas to be crystallised in jewellery, to show themselves off, in self-congratulation and in homage to feminine grace, without losing their evocative fascination in any way.

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DESCRIPTIONS

fig. 9 *Adamo ed Eva (Adam and Eve)*, brooch, 1955-1960

Gold, coral branch, brilliants, emeralds, signed on the reverse side in the bottom right-hand corner:
G. de Chirico

The subject, which finds no references in painting, draws on the iconography of the female nude both from *Bagnanti (Bathers)* from the 1950s and from earlier figures of mythological inspiration. In particular, seen close up, Eve is very reminiscent of the 1946 *Nudo di Tetide (Nude of Thetis)*, in her bodily position sitting on a rock, long hair and cloth which covers her intimate parts (fig. 10). Next to her, Adam is depicted in the same way, sitting on a cloth which covers the rock, treated with a patina of oxidation, with the aim of extending the chromatic variety of the precious materials used. A branch of pink coral is placed at the centre on which a shoot in white gold clings, decorated with brilliants in a prong setting and engraved emeralds in the form of a leaf, which allude to the forbidden fruit.²²

fig. 11 *Eva (Eve)*, brooch, 1955-1960

Gold, coral branch, brilliants, emeralds, signed on the reverse side in the centre: *G. de Chirico*

The piece closely follows the iconography of the *Adamo ed Eva* brooch (fig. 9) in a more simplified version, without the male figure. The progenitress in this case is presented again by the *Bather* type figure sitting on the rock with the addition of a veil which covers her head and falls down to cover the whole of her back, an element also present in other female figures taken from the classical repertoire, such as *Le tre grazie (The three Graces)* from circa 1954, characterised by Neo-baroque opulence (fig. 12). Once again the patina of oxidation present on the veil as well as on the cloth laid over her intimate parts, contributes to enlivening the composition.²³

fig. 13 *Quadriga*, brooch, 1955-1960

Gold, emeralds, rubies, sapphires, signed on the reverse side in the bottom right-hand corner:
G. de Chirico

This brooch can be directly linked to the 1947 painting *Combattimento tra Ettore e Achille sotto le mura di Troia (Fight between Hector and Achilles at the walls of Troy)* which describes the battle between the heroes, according to Homer's text, in a scene of great energy (fig. 14). The piece, in

²² C. Bruni Sakraischik (ed.), *Catalogo Generale Giorgio de Chirico*, Milan 1971-1987, vol. V, tome 2, no. 410.

²³ C. Bruni Sakraischik (ed.), *op. cit.*, vol. II, tome 3, no. 172; S. Misiano, in M. Ursino (ed.), *Giorgio de Chirico et le mythe grec*, exhibition catalogue, (Andros-Volos) Turin 1995, p. 215 no. 4.

fact, reproduces the chariot with the warrior brandishing a lance, visible on the left of the canvas and, in the same way, he captures the dynamic movement of the horses which passionately push towards the assault on the adversary. The technique used shows great precision in the descriptive details, especially the shield and the horses' harnesses finished with oxidation, finely chiselled and decorated with precious stones in collet settings. The iconography of the battle chariots, which derives from examples of Roman bas-reliefs and developed by de Chirico in the 1920s in the 1928 decorative frieze *Cours de chars (Chariot race)* for Léonce Rosenberg's Parisian home (fig. 15), returns later on in the 1960s in his illustrations of the *Iliad*.²⁴

fig. 16 *Quadriga*, brooch, 1955-1960

Gold, brilliants, rubies, emeralds, signed on the reverse side in the bottom right-hand corner: *G. de Chirico*

The piece repeats the subject of the previous brooch with minimal variants (fig. 14). In this case the quadriga was produced using a rougher technique, above all in the details of the horse's tack, the shield and the warrior which look almost sketch-like. On the other hand, the presence of the precious stones is exalted: as well as the rubies and emeralds, the brilliants in collet settings which adorn the shield and the horse's mane augment the shine of the gold.

fig. 17 *Dioscuro con cavallo impennato (One of the Dioskouroi with rearing horse)*, brooch, 1955-1960
Gold, cabochon ruby, signed on the reverse side in the bottom right-hand corner: *G. de Chirico*

The brooch depicts a male character in the act of breaking a frisky horse: an exact iconographic correspondence to the 1954 painting *Castore con cavallo bianco (Castor with white horse)* identifies the subject of the piece (fig. 18). Castor, Pollux's twin born from the union between Jupiter and Leda, was in fact famous in mythological tradition as the expert breaker of horses. Like the canvas, the brooch depicts the young man who, reaching out to the animal in order to tame it, has a body position which is very dynamic and at the same time statuary, allowing him to keep his balance. A studied symmetry rules Castor's gestures: his left arm lifted up holding the reins corresponds with his right foot pushed forward, whilst his right hand holds the whip low down. The horse's muscular power and the hero's effort give the composition a vertical slant which, highlighted by the elliptical form of the painting, is also visible in the brooch through the volumetric modelling and the vibration of the polished surface. The scenery in the brooch is reduced to the presence of a sole shrub at the bottom, applied to the reverse side with soldering at two points making it a decorative and, at the same time, structural element.²⁵

²⁴ C. Bruni Sakraichik (ed.), *op. cit.*, vol. II, tome 2, no. 155; vol. I, tome 5, no. 332.

²⁵ C. Bruni Sakraichik (ed.), *op. cit.*, vol. IV, tome 3, no. 479; F. Ragazzi (ed.), *Il grande Metafisico. Giorgio de Chirico scultore*, exhibition catalogue, (Cremona) Milan 2004, pp. 104, 107.

fig. 19 *Efebo con cavallo (Ephebus with horse)*, brooch, 1955-1960

Gold, emeralds, brilliants, rubies, signed on the reverse side in the bottom left-hand corner: *G. de Chirico*

The piece can be directly linked to the 1954 painting of the same name *Efebo con cavallo (Ephebus with horse)*, fig. 20), in which the young man holds the reins of the pawing horse with one hand and a cloak in the other. Depicted in numerous variants from the 1940s onwards, the protagonist is often compared to Hippolytus, son of Theseus and the queen of the Amazons, or to Hector with his horse, Podargus. Like the painting, the brooch perfectly reflects the relationship between Man and Animal, their strength and plastic energy unleashed in a game of dynamic relationships: the twisting neck of the horse corresponds with the movement of the young man's face watching the horse and the jerk of his arm pulling the reins. The figures rest on a base decorated with precious stones in a collet setting and several details, such as the drapery and tack, are finished with oxidation.²⁶

fig. 21 *Testa di cavallo (Horse's head)*, earrings, 1955-1960

Gold, rubies, brilliants, signed on the reverse side on the right and the left: *G. de Chirico*

The horse's head, a pictorial theme that de Chirico began in the 1940s and developed over subsequent decades, is used for these earrings decorated at the bottom with brilliants and rubies in a prong setting. In this transposition of the subject into jewellery, the intensity with which the artist closely analyses the power of the untamed horse, highlighted by the horse's lively gaze and the waving movement of its mane, is obviously toned down. It is in fact the mane which indicates the closest pictorial iconographic reference to the piece: in the small oil painting, *Testa di cavallo bianco (White horse's head)*, from the end of the 1950s, the mane, differently to how it is usually depicted, is sketched in a compact way, just as it appears in the earrings (fig. 22).

fig. 23 *Gladiatori (Gladiators)*, brooch, 1955-1960

Gold, rubies, emeralds, brilliants, signed on the reverse side in the bottom left-hand corner: *G. de Chirico*

This piece repropose the *Gladiatori (Gladiators)*, protagonists of the decorative cycle carried out in Paris in 1928 for the reception room at Léonce Rosenberg's house. The subject, a favourite of academic painting, was developed by the Master in numerous variants, with the aim of showing the sense of power and contrast between opposites: dynamism and immobility. The composition is completed with three nude figures standing with their backs towards us, one next to the other, with a lance and shields, one round (*parmula*) and the other rectangular (*scutum*), resting on a base decorated with gems in collet settings. This iconography, even if faithful in its details, does not find exact correspondence in any pictorial examples in which the gladiators, who are either fighting or resting, always appear facing one another. Their hairstyles are also different: in the piece of jewellery they have been greatly simplified in comparison to their curly hair in the paintings, echoing those of

²⁶ S. Misiano, in M. Ursino (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 221 no. 13; F. Ragazzi (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 102-103.

Roman sarcophagi. The compositional solution for the brooch, probably dictated by technical reasons, could derive from the extraction of single characters who appear close-up with their backs to us on canvases. (fig. 24).²⁷

fig. 25 *Gli archeologi (The Archaeologists)*, brooch, 1955-1960

Gold, rubies, emeralds, brilliants, signed on the reverse side in the bottom left: *G. de Chirico*

One of de Chirico's most famous themes is translated into jewellery in a design which renews traditional pictorial iconography. The *Archeologi (The Archaeologists)* are in fact depicted in their usual pose, sitting with their arms around one other, with their legs and shoulders covered with classical cloth, here resolved with the polished tone of the patinated gold. We do not, however, find the usual collections of ruins and architectonic elements located within their chests, but rather floral racemes engraved in a very simple manner, almost basic and as decoration, made precious only by the gems in prong settings.

fig. 26 *Manichini (Ettore e Andromaca) – Mannequins (Hector and Andromache)*, brooch, 1955-1960

Gold, emeralds, brilliants, signed on the reverse side on the left-hand side: *G. de Chirico*

In comparison with the pictorial versions (fig. 27), the extremely famous mannequins depicting the Trojan hero Hector and his wife Andromache are structured in a very simple way. In the figures' bodies, instead of the usual set squares and triangles, we find emeralds and brilliants in a collet setting placed in a vertical row like buttons. It is interesting to observe that there are traces of green in the upper part of Andromache's chest. This colour was originally spread entirely over the gold surface and was made up of oil-based pigments, used instead of the usual goldsmiths' enamel: the jewel was thus conceived by the Master as a pictorial work in all respects.

fig. 28 *Musica e luce (Candelieri con spartito) – Music and light (Chandeliers with music score)*, 1955-1960

Gold, brilliants, signed on the reverse side in the bottom right- and left-hand corners: *G. de Chirico*

This set is the result of a dechirican invention that finds no references in his painting. The earrings and brooch in white and yellow gold are made up of five candelabra resting on a music score and a branch of roses with leaves decorated with brilliants. The reference to music is a clear homage to operatic music, whilst the lit candles could allude to an atmosphere steeped in romanticism not devoid of that 'traditionalist' flavour that was so dear to the Master and intended in its highest meaning.

Translated by Rosamund King

²⁷ C. Bruni Sakraichik (ed.), *op. cit.*, vol. II, tome 1, no. 158.