

## WRITINGS BY GIORGIO DE CHIRICO

The recovery of archival documents is offering noteworthy leads capable of opening new perspectives for research.

We feel it is useful to publish a few recent acquisitions, which are compiled here in two sections: the first is united by a *fil rouge* which follows along the Maestro's the concept of Bio/Autobiography, while the second section proposes an anthology of heterogeneous texts, some with notable critical and theoretic power.

With the first group we are dealing with writings which appeared under various signatures but that careful investigation induces one to think that they were edited by de Chirico himself.

The use of pseudonyms to hide (or multiply) his identity, a custom the artist used frequently, is a practice that reveals various implications as A. H. Merjian's considerations on the concepts of paternity and "alter ego" have clarified in *A Lost Manuscript on (and by?) Giorgio de Chirico: Origins, Authorship, Implications*, the French typescript of which we are publishing here (in the same article we also discover the special emphasis the young de Chirico already afforded to "architectonic sense" a theme with regard to which we also indicate Vincenzo Trione's article *Metapolis: Metaphysics and the City*).

The subtle question of the greater or lesser implications of de Chirico's "hand" in the drafting of texts which are commonly attributed to other authors is also highlighted in de Chirico's biographical presentation signed Giorgio Castelfranco (in the catalogue of the exhibition held at Rosenberg's gallery in Paris in 1925). A copy of the manuscript acquired from the Rosenberg Archive (published in Giovanna Rasario's article) reveals the actual autograph of the artist.

There is another piece which can be traced back to de Chirico: a text signed Angelo Bardi, an unknown critic but a surprisingly expert connoisseur of the life, work (and even the Maestro's feelings!), which appeared in 1929 in «Sélection» as noted by Gerd Roos.<sup>1</sup> Even the unsigned article published in 1919 in the periodical «La Vraie Italie»<sup>2</sup> directed by Giovanni Papini, precisely for the strong stylistic assonance with other de Chirican writings and the distance from Papini's style, allows one to ascribe the piece's paternity to the artist with certain probability (or at least a substantial contribution on his part), unlike Maurizio Calvesi<sup>3</sup> who is of a different opinion.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. G. Roos, *La vie de Giorgio de Chirico* in «ON - OttoNovecento», 1/97, Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, Napoli, p. 32.

<sup>2</sup> Year I, n. 2 Florence, March 1919, pp. 56-57.

<sup>3</sup> M. Calvesi ascribes this text to Papini in *La metafisica scbiarita*; Feltrinelli, Milan, 1982, pp. 151-152.

In consideration of the ongoing battle he fought alone against mystification, it appears significant that de Chirico had a tendency to want to write his story with his own hand and also to lend his voice to different characters (from *Hebdomeros*, to Dudron, from Isabella Far to Giovanni Loreto and Angelo Bardi, etc.) even if this was achieved through a game of mirrors in which these different characters transmitted his thought.

It is to the archives that we owe another important discovery: the letters that de Chirico wrote to Giovanni Scheiwiller, the publisher of *Piccolo trattato di tecnica pittorica* (Small treatise on painting technique), which is important for revealing the completeness and complexity of the Maestro's personality, both painter and writer. In the letter dated July 14, 1928 we find a brief but engaging autobiographical note which deals with the artist's literary education ("my father gave me my first lessons in Italian literature by having me read Dante, Tasso, Ariosto and Ugo Foscolo. I then continued on my own and also studied Latin, ancient Greek, French and German").

We come to the second group of texts, which consists of miscellaneous Writings by Giorgio de Chirico, with a letter to Scheiwiller dated a few days later on July 21, in which the artist manifests a fervent desire to see *Hebdomeros* published (which the author describes as "a sequel of metaphysical stories"). An analogously suggestive impression of the unity of inspiration in de Chirico's work within figurative art and literature, is found in his 1935-56 correspondence with Jean Paulhan, a man of letters, once again in sight of the possible publication of both some unpublished poems, and his *Mister Dudron* manuscript ("a kind of novel, *Hebdomeros* style, but possibly more refined and constructed"). In 1936-37, de Chirico presented the same novel to Julien Levy, as we learn from the latter's Memoirs.<sup>4</sup> The text is practically the same, except for a few variations, as the one published in the n. 1-2 of this Periodical (2002). The continuity between *Dudron* and *Hebdomeros* declared by de Chirico was clarified by Jole de Sanna in her introduction to the unpublished manuscript *Mister Dusdron* in the same issue 1-2 of this Periodical: "*Dusdron e Hebdomeros* have in common the collocation between sleep and wake, memory and sleep. The leitmotifs are the same". The manuscript, datable to 1928, is the first draft of the novel *Il Signor Dudron*.<sup>5</sup>

Here, two variations of the novel are presented, the first set in Ancient Greece and the second in Rome. De Chirico's production is extraordinarily varied and diversified, an aspect we are well aware of with regard to his pictorial production, but which is also true regarding his literary production. It is precisely this multiplicity of form that the texts proposed in this miscellaneous section want to emphasize, by publishing in unabridged form the extraordinary text *Pro tempera oratio*, a fundamental contribution in understanding the Maestro's interest in painting technique which, as emerges from this text, dates to the Ferrara period.<sup>6</sup> We are also pleased to offer the first English translation of *A Discourse on the Material Substance of Paint*, an article de Chirico wrote in 1942 for «Il Corriere Padano»; also in *Commedia dell'Arte Moderna*.<sup>7</sup> to defend and make known his intentions which are, as always, in balance between theory and practice: "The material substance of paint, which is the

<sup>4</sup> J. Levy, *Memoir of an Art Gallery*, Putnam Ed., New York, 1977, pp. 183-196. Tobias Garst has sent the Giorgio and Isa de Chirico Foundation the first part of a study in course on material kept in the Julien Levy Archive.

<sup>5</sup> The novel was published by the Giorgio and Isa de Chirico Foundation in 1998, Ed. Le Lettere, Florence.

<sup>6</sup> See note by S. Vacanti, pp. 479-480. In supplement to this number of «Metafisica», we are pleased to offer a facsimile of the Maestro's manuscript.

<sup>7</sup> G. de Chirico, I. Far, *Commedia dell'arte moderna*, 1945; republished in 2002, edited by J. de Sanna, Abscondita, Milan, pp.164-173.

body of great painting, possesses a deeply metaphysical side, and the metaphysical element of this substance is a mysterious and sacred phenomenon that puts Universal Talent in front of us and allows us to see a better world...”

Further speculation of an “archaeological” kind with regard to the origin and foundation of man’s way of being, his faculty for reason and the development of the human brain, in which de Chirico traces the origin to the conformation of the hand, is found in the evocative text *The Brain and the Hand (on drawing)*, commented on by Pierangelo Sequeri. We see the author fascinated and enticed by the “alliance between the brain and the hand in which the brain can ideate and the hand can create something to bring the idea into being”. It is interesting to note that de Chirico had planned a “Book on Drawings”, which went lost and was found again, although incomplete. In this regard we indicate Jole de Sanna’s analysis.<sup>8</sup> As a study, *The Brain and the Hand* could be considered the mirror image of other beautiful texts such as *Brevis pro plastica oratio*, *La forma nell’arte e nella natura* (Form in art and in nature) and *Il meccanismo del pensiero* (The mechanism of thought) in which de Chirico begins from drawing to arrive at thought, as Jole de Sanna said in summarising de Chirico’s definition of metaphysical drawing: “the drawing is the imprint of thought, cognitive revelation”.

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<sup>8</sup> J. de Sanna in *Giorgio de Chirico Disegno, Opere della Fondazione Giorgio e Isa de Chirico*, Electa, Milan, 2004, pp. 8-9.