

GIORGIO DE CHIRICO.  
ANSWERS TO THE REFERENDUM, «L'AMBROSIANO», 1938\*

*What meaning does tradition have for you?*

For me, tradition means pictorial temperament linked to skill, to clairvoyance, to a high poetic and moral sense of life and the world, and to a firm desire – avoiding every loophole – to always improve the quality of one's own painting.

*How do you consider the present state of contemporary European painting?*

We are living in a moment of slow but secure evolution. The boredom felt in France, England and America with certain pseudo-spiritual forms and the dangerous comparison with masterpieces of ancient art which, especially in America, a great part of modern painting suffers, in both public and private galleries, the recent collection in Paris of the exhibition called *Les chef-d'œuvre de l'art français* which has aroused the suspicions of many people with regard to the present state of painting, (all) have things in such a way that the attention of those who deal with the seriousness of art problems, and especially the attention of those who purchase and collect, is oriented forever more towards appearances of perfection, beauty and preciousness in the pictorial quality of a painting. As far as Italy is concerned, it must be said that certain behaviour of people who are involved in important situations in the field of art and criticism today and who, instead of supporting our present-day values, seek – out of opportunism and envy – to disparage them, immensely damage Italy's reputation in the artistic field abroad. And I am particularly anxious to declare and point this out in my position as a world-famous Italian artist.

*What consideration pushed you most to leave the avant-garde?*

I have never entered nor left the avant-garde.

\*Answers to the referendum edited by Vittorio Barbaroux in «L'Ambrosiano», Milan, 23<sup>rd</sup> February, 1938.

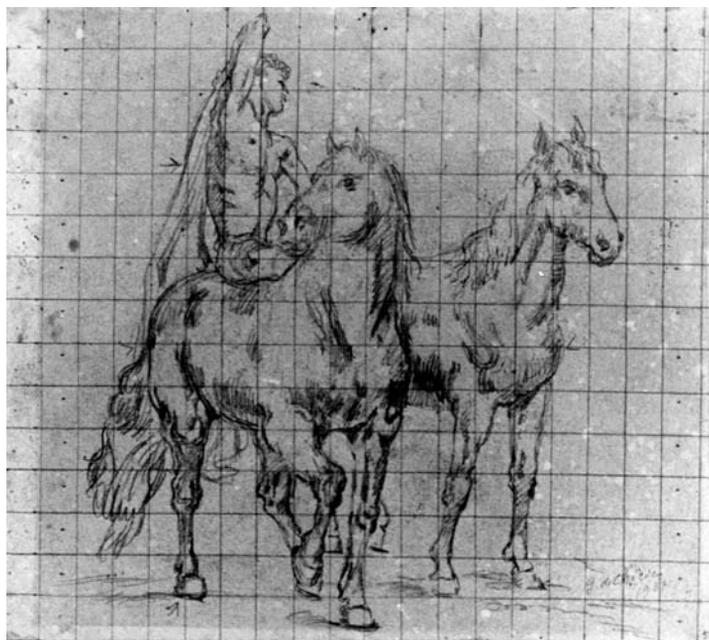
*What meaning does the 19th Century have for you?*

For me, the 19th Century has the sense of a century in which artists painted very well, with virile warmth, skill and poetry. I am only sorry that campaigns with aims that are extraneous to art have put several great Italian and German artists of this century in the shade: for example, Böcklin, Carnevali, Previati and Segantini.

*What value does very young art have? Who, among the very young artists, do you consider the best?*

Since I live almost always outside of Italy, I am little, indeed very little, acquainted with youthful painting in our country. I therefore cannot express a judgement.

*Translated by Carolyn Cotchett*



*Study for a painting* by Giorgio de Chirico (1937, pencil on squared-up paper, 28.5 x 24 cm) was published at the end of the article, «L'Ambrosiano», 23<sup>rd</sup> February, 1938