

## GIORGIO DE CHIRICO AND THE BIRTH OF METAPHYSICAL ART IN FLORENCE IN 1910

*Paolo Picozza*

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### **1. Introduction**

It is a well-established fact that Giorgio de Chirico's Metaphysical Art came into being in Florence in 1910.

No scholar of Giorgio de Chirico's oeuvre, unless biased or in search of a scoop, would ever think of challenging what the Maestro wrote, clarified and reaffirmed in a precise manner on various occasions and something all art historians have confirmed.

And yet, in my opinion, the inattentive reading of a number of letters Giorgio de Chirico wrote during the years 1909-1911 to his friend Fritz Gartz (recovered in 1979<sup>1</sup>) has allowed Gerd Roos, and to an even greater extent Paolo Baldacci, to elaborate an artful and objectively fragile theory regarding the supposed real genesis of de Chirico's Metaphysical Art.<sup>2</sup>

In brief, the two authors believe to have found evidence and undeniable proof (in their opinion) that de Chirico, who has always said that he executed his first metaphysical paintings in Florence in 1910, and not during his stay in Milan the year before, did so in bad faith with the aim of distorting the truth of the origin of Metaphysical Art, thus veiling the authentic and decisive contribution his brother Alberto (in art known as Alberto Savinio) provided him with.

According to this suggestive "theorem" de Chirico *consciously* altered historic truth regarding the place and the year of the birth of Metaphysical Art for the undeclared and unworthy objective of attributing to himself alone, the unique hero, the merit of this discovery, thus cancelling all trace of his brother Alberto's essential, if not prevailing, contribution to this breakthrough during the period in which they lived in Milan (1909).<sup>3</sup>

While Fondazione Giorgio e Isa de Chirico is fully conscious of Alberto Savinio's extraordinary greatness, do the two supposed "supporters" of Savinio not realize that by acknowledging him such a decisive role in the discovery of Metaphysical Art, the premise of which he then proved unable to develop, they actually attribute him very little honour?

In reality, Roos and Baldacci's lengthy argument is based, as they themselves admit, on a single source which they hold to be absolutely incontestable: a letter de Chirico wrote to Gartz that carries the date "Florence 26 *Januarii* 1910" on which the day is corrected from 24 to 26 and the month from *Juillet* to *Januarii* (erroneously copied by Roos as "Florence 26 *Januar* 1910"). In the letter, the artist speaks of "paintings that are the most profound that exist in the absolute" that he painted "this summer" (*diesem Sommer*).

In my opinion Roos and Baldacci correctly and without difficulty identified two of these "profound paintings" as the famous first Metaphysical Enigmas *The Enigma of the Oracle* and *The Enigma of an Autumn Afternoon*, which were painted in Florence in 1910. Then, according to the date that appears on the letter (the accuracy of which they are convinced) they consequently retrodated these paintings with uncritical judgement to the summer of 1909 and changed their place of execution to Milan. If the letter was written in January 1910, then the paintings de Chirico speaks of having painted "this summer" would thus refer to works executed in the summer of 1909.<sup>4</sup> "Elementary, my dear Watson" it would seem...

After arriving at this first conclusion the two scholars, basing themselves on personal criterion and deduction, and without documentation supporting a pre-dating of these paintings (not even the content of the letter in question allows for such), then *attributed* the theoretic base of Metaphysical Art to the artist's brother Savinio, due to the fact that in 1909 (from June onwards) he lived in Milan with Giorgio, who had just returned from Munich.<sup>5</sup>

By demonstrating that the letter can not, in fact, be dated January 26, 1910 (as it appears) but rather, must pertain to a date *after* July 24, 1910 (the date cancelled on the letter) or, more precisely, that it was actually written in Florence on December 26, 1910, the structure that supports their theory falls irremediably apart.

Believing in the 'solidity' of their theory, the two authors have since been engaged in the onerous and delicate endeavour, for an art historian, of taking apart piece by piece a significant part of Giorgio de Chirico's life (as he himself had reported) and rereading it through a filter based on the presumption that the artist was constantly deceptive in telling his life story. The motor of their probing is powered by affirmations, which although unverifiable, are presented as fact. In my opinion, they have done exactly what a historian must not do: base one's research on a preconceived idea and then work toward the confirmation of such an assumption. It seems they have succeeded.

Regardless of the fact that a number of voices have spoken out in opposition to Roos and Baldacci's action, including the greatest living de Chirico scholar and authoritative expert, Professor Maurizio Calvesi, who has objected to this theory on numerous occasions and showed its groundlessness through detailed argumentation<sup>6</sup>, during the last ten years Gerd Roos and Paolo Baldacci have not missed an occasion to play their tune, with small additions and variations, which they present every time as a recent discovery.<sup>7</sup>

Just recently, in the catalogue of an exhibition held in Winterthur, Paolo Baldacci affirmed with evident complacency that the theory (his theory) of the birth of Metaphysical Art in 1909 in Milan, is shared today by the majority of art historians.<sup>8</sup>

In the past, Fondazione Giorgio e Isa de Chirico has chosen to not take a stand in order to allow

scholars to conduct necessary investigation and evaluation. However, today the Foundation deems intervention necessary and denounces the absolute inaccuracy of this genuine and scandalous error, in order to re-establish the truth regarding Giorgio de Chirico. The error is significant if one considers the multiple negative consequences, which do not consist merely in the simple retro-dating of two of de Chirico fundamental works that mark the birth of Metaphysical Art, but especially as it significantly alters the Maestro's biography (by anticipating the move from Milan to Florence in 1910 by two months and considering the Florentine period as a moment of reduced, or even inexistent, painting activity, etc.). In addition, these unfounded assumptions, which lack any valid argument whatsoever, have permitted Baldacci and Roos to attribute the intellectual ownership of the discovery of Metaphysical Art to Savinio, or at least an equal, or prevalent contribution to this end during the Milanese period. They have proceeded with acrimony in this endeavour and cast a heavy shadow on the moral standards of de Chirico, whom they denounce with heavy accusations (a rare action for any art historian) and gravely offensive expressions.<sup>9</sup>

In order to restore the truth of the matter, the first thing that must be done is a simple presentation of the data itself, with the publication, in the original German and in full translation, *of all the de Chirico - Gartz letters* and their photographic facsimiles. From the advantaged viewpoint that de Chirico's friendship with Fritz Gartz provides, these letters are very important in understanding the evolution of the artist's thought process and his painting. The publication of this material provides scholars an opportunity to form autonomous judgement in this regard, by consulting and verifying the source upon which Baldacci and Roos' theory is founded.

Before proceeding with the reading of the letters, it is useful to consult three well-known texts the Maestro wrote regarding the birth of Metaphysical Art.

A comparison of these texts and the Fritz Gartz letters allows for an in-depth examination of the theme and provides us the opportunity to comprehend de Chirico's *mechanism of thought*. Such analysis will shed light as to whether de Chirico was really the cynical manipulator they have portrayed him as, or rather, is actually victim, *postmortem*, to a profound falsification of the facts and circumstances of his life, an event even more dangerous than that which his artwork has suffered and continues to suffer from today.

It is the Foundation's opinion that a simple and unbiased reading of the correspondence will further confirm the precision of what the Maestro had written in his autobiographical writings.

## **2. The Birth of Metaphysical Art in 1910 according to Giorgio de Chirico's writings.**

Giorgio de Chirico has illustrated on more than one occasion, in different forms and during different periods – 1912, 1929, and 1945 – how Metaphysical Art came into being.

*I will explain how I had the revelation of a painting which I exhibited this year at the Salon d'Automne entitled: The Enigma of an Autumn Afternoon.*

*On a clear autumn afternoon, I was sitting on a bench in the middle of Piazza Santa Croce in Florence. Indeed, it wasn't the first time I had seen this square. I had just recovered from a long and*



fig. 1 *The Enigma of an Autumn Afternoon*, 1910



fig. 2 *The Enigma of the Oracle*, 1910

*painful intestinal illness and found myself in a morbid state of sensitivity. All of Nature surrounding me, even the marble of the buildings and the fountains, seemed to me to be convalescing also. In the centre of the square stands a statue of Dante cloaked in a long robe, hugging his oeuvre to his body, thoughtfully bowing his pensive laurel-crowned head slightly toward the ground. The statue is of white marble, to which time has given a grey tinge that is very pleasing to the eye. The autumn sun, luke-warm and without love, lit the statue as well as the facade of the temple. I then had the strange impression that I was seeing everything for the first time. And the composition of my painting came to me and every time I look at it, I relive this moment once again. Still, the moment is for me an enigma, because it is inexplicable. And I like to define the resulting work as an enigma.*<sup>10</sup>

*During this first Italian period he continued to work silently and to live alone, without showing his work or taking part in the peninsula's artistic movements, of which, by the way, he knew nothing about. He spent his first year in Italy in Milan. During this period he painted works in which the influence of Böcklin was still quite evident. Moreover, he destroyed these paintings himself. After moving to Florence, where, thanks to the influence of the masters, whose work was gathered in the city's museums, his attraction to the Tuscan landscape and the natural evolution of his personal faculties, Giorgio de Chirico began discovering his own path.*

*It is to this Florentine period that works such as *The Enigma of the Oracle*, or *The Enigma of an Autumn Afternoon* belong. We speak of two works that, even if dated 1910, through their poetic power and the quality of innovation they manifest, are worthy of being placed on the same level as his later works.*<sup>11</sup>

*In Florence my health grew worse. Sometimes I painted small canvases. The Böcklin period had passed and I had begun to paint subjects in which I tried to express the strong and mysterious feeling I had discovered in the books of Nietzsche: the melancholy of beautiful autumn days, in the afternoon in Italian cities. It was the prelude to the Italian Piazzas painted a short time later in Paris and then in Milan, in Florence and in Rome.*<sup>12</sup>

The above texts, which are extremely precise and unambiguous, leave no doubt regarding the truth concerning the events the Maestro illustrated.

De Chirico's inscription of the date "1910" (along with his signature) on *The Enigma of an Autumn Afternoon* when the painting was exhibited at the Salon d'Automne in Paris in 1912 (together with *The Enigma of the Oracle*) confirms the precision of what the artist had said (it is a well-known fact that these paintings were not signed or dated originally, but carried only the monogram "GC"). (Figs. 1 and 2)

De Chirico would have had no reason to put a different date on the painting other than the true date. When de Chirico referred to the two paintings in the "Angelo Bardi" autobiography, his intention was not to "date" the paintings, but rather, to state that these works, even though executed in 1910, were at the same level and manifested the same quality, with regard to their poetic strength and innovation, of the later Parisian period masterpieces.

### 3. Letters written by Giorgio de Chirico, Gemma de Chirico and Alberto de Chirico to Fritz Gartz between 1908 and 1911.<sup>13</sup>

The letters, published in the original German by Roos<sup>14</sup>, who gave them an incorrect order, have been translated into English and placed in the correct sequential order, which has been established through careful consideration of the logical sequence of their content, in addition to formal elements, that have been completely neglected until now.

#### 1. Letter written in French by Gemma de Chirico (née Cervetto)

*July 7, [1]908*

*Dear Mr. Gartz*

*Please be kind enough to write and let me know the reason why Georges has not answered the letters I wrote to him a week ago. I telegraphed him on Sunday and he answered that he 'was fine' but he continues not to write to me. Please write the whole truth to me.*

*Address your letter to 'Villa Berta' Gardone Lago di Garda.*

*I thank you in advance.*

*My affectionate compliments to your wife, and my devoted friendship to you,*

*G. [Gemma] de Chirico*

#### 2. Italian postal card written in German by Giorgio de Chirico (first days of July 1909)

Postman's handwriting: *09-10 address Amalienstr. 19 unknown*

Stamp: *delivered late due to inexact address*

*To Mr. Fritz Gartz – Painter – Amalienstr. 19 II [cancelled by postman]*

Germany Munich Theresienstr. 9/11

Milan

*Dear friend!*

*Writing a letter is very unpleasant for me and this is why I write very rarely.*

*But as you told me that you would be moving to a new apartment in the summer, I would ask you to send me your new address. I would also like very much to have some news from you.*

*I'm working very hard. I will probably go to Rome in September...*

*I ask you to pay my heartfelt respects to your wife.*

*My mother and brother send greetings, as I also do.*

*Via Petrarca 13 – G. de Chirico*

3. Italian postal card by Giorgio de Chirico (first week of July 1909)

Stamp: [date of arrival July 8, 1909]

*To Mr. Fritz Gartz*

*Theresienstr. 19 II. [cancelled and added:]*

*Sieghfriedstr. 8III Munich / Germany*

Milan

*Dear friend!*

*I sent you a postcard a few days ago, but as I have not received an answer, I'm thinking that you haven't been to Munich. –*

*I hope you are well... If you write me a postcard I will be very happy to read it. –*

*Please accept my most sincere greetings and take care. –*

*G. de Chirico*

*My mother and brother say hello.*

*Via Petrarca 13*

4. Letter by Giorgio de Chirico on letterhead paper bearing the de Chirico family noble coat of arms (December 27, 1909)

*Mediolano Anno Domini M.CM.IX. Poseidione XXVII [in 1909 Poseidione XXVII corresponded to December 27]*

*Dear friend!*

*The day before yesterday I sent your honoured and kind wife a Milanese specialty from the Cova pastry shop. I hope you received it and that you liked it.*

*Do you still have your old studio or do you now work in your new apartment? I would be very happy*

*to receive news of your work. – I took a trip to Florence and Rome in October and in the spring I will probably go to Florence to live as it is the city I like the most. I have been working and studying a lot and I now have very different goals than before.*

*I intend to exhibit in the next springtime Secession exhibition, and therefore I would like to ask you a favour, if you could send me the Secession regulation form and if you could ask if foreign artists can exhibit without being invited? –*

*When will you be coming to Italy? I will probably go to Munich in the autumn of 1910 to exhibit a couple of paintings. Take care. My best regards to your wife.*

*G. de Chirico*

5. Italian postal card written by Giorgio de Chirico (April 11, 1910)

Two stamps: *Florence 11.4.10.11 / Arrivals and Departures*

*Sender Viale R. Vittoria 3 Firenze*

*To Mr. F. Gartz Painter*

*Thomaestr. 29 Germany Soest*

*Florence*

*Dear Friend!*

*I received your postcard and the documentation regarding the Secession and I thank you for this.*

*I probably won't use it though... because I have decided not to exhibit after all, as I would like to hold a personal exhibition later on... and also because the works I am creating now are too profound and would appear out of place in a Secession hall.*

*Florence is very pretty in the spring... I have found a beautiful studio... please give your wife my greetings and take care.*

*G. de Chirico*

6. Letter by Giorgio de Chirico on letterhead paper bearing the de Chirico family noble coat of arms (December 26, 1910)

*Florence 26 [24 Juillet cancelled] Januarii 1910*

*Via Lorenzo il Magnifico 20 Florence*

*Dear friend!*

*Firstly, I want to wish you and your kind wife a happy new year.*

*I have not been able to write until now due to my many engagements and also my health, which has unfortunately not been very good this last year. Please be patient, as I will now tell you a bit about myself.*

*What I have created here in Italy is neither very big nor profound (in the old sense of the word), but formidable. This summer I painted paintings that are the most profound that exist in the absolute. Let me explain these things somewhat, because surely you have never heard anything like it.*

*Do you know for example what the name of the most profound painter who ever painted on earth is? You probably do not have an opinion on this. I will tell you: his name is Arnhold Böcklin, he is the only man who has painted profound paintings.*

*Now, do you know who the most profound poet is? You will probably say right away Dante, or Goethe or yet others. – This is totally misunderstood – the most profound poet is Friedrich Nietzsche. – When I told you my paintings are profound, you must have thought they were gigantic compositions, with many naked figures, trying to overcome something, like those painted by Michelangelo, the stupidest of all painters.*

*No, my dear friend, it is completely another matter – profoundness as I understand it, and as Nietzsche intended it, is elsewhere than where it has been searched for until now. My paintings are small (the biggest 50-70 cm), but each of them is an enigma, each contains a poem, an atmosphere [Stimmung] and a promise that you can not find in other paintings.*

*It brings me immense joy to have painted them – when I exhibit them, possibly in Munich this spring, it will be a revelation for the whole world.*

*I am studying a lot, particularly literature and philosophy and I even intend to write books in the future (now I will whisper something in your ear: I am the only man who has understood Nietzsche – all of my paintings demonstrate this).*

*I have many other things to tell you, for example that now, my brother and I have composed the most profound music. I will sign off now, as I have already said too much. You will see and hear for yourself and will be convinced. Won't you take a trip to Rome this spring to see the exhibition? Even here in Florence an exhibition will be opened in April. If you come to Florence, we will be very happy to host you and your kind wife – the room is already ready.*

*I would be very happy if you wrote me a letter. [? illegible-cancelled] Give your wife my regards.*

*[? cancelled] My mother and brother say hello and wish you a happy new year.*

*G. de Chirico*

## 7. Letter by Giorgio de Chirico

*Florence December 28, 1910*

*Dear Friend!*

*My brother and I would like to ask a favour of you. I know how kind you are and I am sure you will help us. – My brother wanted to hold a concert of music he has composed, here in Florence on January 9<sup>th</sup>. Everything was already organized, but when he saw how inept the orchestra was he decided to hold the same concert in Munich. He has written to the Tonhalle cultural association to*

ask about the price of renting the concert hall and the orchestra. The management sent a brief letter with the following prices:

Orchestra with usual number of instruments:

including 1 rehearsal DM:600

concert hall, including heating and lights id:300

“ 900

Additional rehearsals DM: 150

In the morning the length of the rehearsal is a maximum of 3 hours – the afternoon, 2 hours. –

We have written to the management in order to reach an agreement, although my brother thinks it might be better if you would be kind enough to go and speak personally with the Tonhalle management, and ask if 900 Marks is their final price, or if it would be possible to have a lower price. Regarding the rehearsals, the concert management wrote that the rehearsals are three hours long in the morning and two in the afternoon; does this mean that a complete rehearsal is 5 hours, or that one rehearsal is 3 hours and the other is 2 hours? We hope you would be kind enough to enquire about these things, and we thank you in advance for your help in arranging our affairs. Please be kind enough to let us know as soon as possible what the answers are. My mother sends greetings to you and your kind wife.

Take care,

Georg de Chirico

Via Lorenzo il Magnifico 20 Florence

P.S. Please, when you ask about the rehearsals, do not formulate the question as I have written, that is, if a rehearsal lasts 5 hours or less, but if you could find out for sure what the length of the rehearsal is without them thinking that we thought that one rehearsal was 3 hours long and the other 2 hours.

#### 8. Letter by Giorgio de Chirico, with postscript by Alberto de Chirico (Savinio)

Florence January 3, 1911

Dear friend!

I received your letter today. My brother and I thank you very much for what you are doing for us and hope you will be kind and help us complete the arrangements. –

My brother has decided to hold the concert on January 24<sup>th</sup> or 23<sup>rd</sup>. However, the management wrote to us that they weren't sure if the concert hall was available on those dates. Would you please be so kind to go and ask the management if the 23<sup>rd</sup> or 24<sup>th</sup> of January can be agreed upon (either is fine for us). I think it would be better if we had a written answer from the management as my brother is already preparing for the trip. So, dear friend, please ask and arrange things as you think best. – We would simply like to have a guarantee that the Tonhalle management will give us the Tonhalle concert hall for an evening concert on January 23<sup>rd</sup> or 24<sup>th</sup> with an orchestra of 60 instruments at the price we know already. –

*You can tell the Director that you speak in the name of my brother, from whom he received the letter. – My brother will leave on January 15<sup>th</sup> and will be in Monaco on the 16<sup>th</sup>. – With regard to the advertising and the programs, my brother will speak directly with them – he only wants a guarantee to have the concert hall and the orchestra for January 23<sup>rd</sup> or 24<sup>th</sup>. The management will surely ask my brother for a guarantee also. Please do everything that needs to be done and if there is anything that requires payment, please write and we will send the necessary funds. Of course, if the concert hall is not free on January 24<sup>th</sup>, the concert will be held on February 7<sup>th</sup>. – But we hope it will be free.*

*As soon as my brother arrives in Munich, he will sign the contract with the management. My mother will be coming with my brother, as she is better at dealing with these things and I can not interrupt my studies and my work at this time. – I will be obliged to go to Munich at the end of March to see about my exhibition. If you have a spare bed I would be very happy to accept your kind hospitality. My brother and my mother would like to stay at an inn very close to the Tonhalle. – Would you be kind enough to see if there is one nearby and also enquire how much this would cost? I thank you very much for your kindness. I hope to receive an answer from you soon. With my best respects to your wife and cordial greetings from my brother.*

*Your friend G. de Chirico  
Via Lorenzo il Magnifico 20*

*P.S. I wrote to the Tonhalle today that you would deal directly with them on my behalf. We believe that this way everything will be settled more quickly... Many thanks and greetings, Alberto de Chirico.*

#### 9. Letter by Giorgio de Chirico (undated; January 5, 1911)

*Florence*

*Dear friend!*

*The news of your brother's death hurt me very much. I therefore ask you, dear friend, to accept my condolences and those of my mother and my brother. If I had known, I wouldn't have bothered you with my second letter. If you haven't gone to the Tonhalle management yet, don't go. Please, it is not really important, my brother will arrange things with them. – I'm sending you the program of the concert that was planned for Florence with this letter. My brother will perform the same Program at the Tonhalle in Munich probably on February 7<sup>th</sup>. –*

*Yesterday, I thought about your brother's psychological drama almost all night long – it is terrible that only in Germany there are people who live in such a state of being – he was too weak! If only more people could be as weak! The terrible thing, in fact, is the stupidity, the lack of conscience in people – no one is capable of understanding an important piece of news – everyone looks at it in a terribly tranquil manner. Can you imagine that no one noticed that my brother wrote "the most profound music" in the concert program – and no one noticed it or understood what courage and what a marvellous promise these words contain. – Let us hope the people of Munich are not so laid-back and stu-*

*pid. My brother also wrote a lesson on his music, which I am in the process of translating to German with the help of a German professor whom I met in Vallombrosa (he is a very stupid fellow). My brother will read this lesson prior to the concert. –*

*You misunderstood my words when I said that Michelangelo was a stupid artist. – He is for me because I now know a new world and everything else seems too coarse and too insignificant. Because I have drunk from another source and a new and marvellous thirst burns my lips – how can I still believe in such artists?! I know what you are thinking when you ask me: ‘isn’t David a superman?’ This is how I used to feel, this is what I used to think. The majority of the world’s great spirits thought it so. – The young hero that has overcome everything, a free spirit, without dogma – certainly this is better than all the stupidity of modern life and of life in the past – but now a new air has entered my soul, a new song has reached my ears and the whole world appears totally changed – the autumn afternoon has arrived, the long shadows, the clear air, the serene sky –, in a word: Zarathustra has arrived, do you understand??*

*Do you understand the enigma this word holds – the great cantor has arrived, he who speaks of eternal return, he whose song has the sound of eternity. – It is with a new magnifying glass that I now examine the other great men and many appear small and coarse, some even smell bad – Michelangelo is too coarse – I have thought about these questions at length and can no longer be mistaken. –*

*It is only with Nietzsche that I can say I have begun a real life. –*

*Believe me, my dear friend, when I say it would be a great pleasure for us if you and your kind wife would come to visit us in the spring. – We have enough room in this house and it would be a great pleasure for my mother to have such pleasant company. – If you like, we could go to Rome and visit the exhibition, as my mother would also like to see it.*

*Give my regards to your very kind wife and take care.*

*G. de Chirico*

*Via Lorenzo il Magnifico 20*

*Florence*

## 10. Letter by Giorgio de Chirico

*Florence, January 8, 1911*

*Dear friend!*

*I received your very kind letter yesterday – and I thank you very much for the work you have been doing. Just today I wrote the Tonballe that my brother is leaving on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> and will be in to speak to them first thing Sunday morning of the 15<sup>th</sup>.*

*We were going to send the money for the deposit to the organization in the middle of the week, but as my brother and mother will be in Munich on Sunday morning (January 15<sup>th</sup>), they felt it better to pay the deposit at that time. – We even wrote to the management about this – I hope it doesn’t make a difference to them. –*

*Could you pass by once again this week to make sure nothing unpleasant happens? We wrote to the Tonballe that if they have any objections to write to us before we leave. My brother and my mother would like to have two rooms at the inn. – Please inform us of the prices and give us the address of the inn.*

*Regarding what you wrote about “the most profound music”, you will have to speak to my brother. I knew it would have seemed a bit strange to you, but...*

*Thank you once again for your kindness. – My brother and my mother send you and your wife their greetings and hope to have the pleasure of seeing you on Sunday.*

*Take care,*

*G. de Chirico*

*Via Lorenzo il Magnifico 20*

**11.** Italian postal card by Alberto de Chirico (in Giorgio de Chirico’s handwriting)

Two stamps: *Florence 9 I– II 17 Ferrovia*

*To Mr. Fritz Gartz*

*Siegfriedstr. – 8 III Bavaria Munich*

*Florence, January 9, 1911*

*Dear friend!*

*Today I received your letter in which you ask about the publicity– thank you very much for your kindness – but as my brother wrote to you yesterday, I will be in Munich on Sunday January 15<sup>th</sup>. I think 8 days are sufficient for the publicity, Munich is not a big city – and in any case we will have an extraordinary publicity campaign. – Please, if you find an inn, make a reservation for two rooms for Sunday – even if it is not very close to the Tonballe – for example, I think Pensione Norden in Schellingstrasse is a nice inn. – My mother doesn’t want to spend more than 4,50 marks a day per person, dinner included of course, but as you have kindly invited us to have dinner at your house, the price should be less. I don’t think I will decide to have photographs taken.*

*Thank you once again for the care you have been giving. – My most cordial greetings,*

*Alberto de Chirico*

*Via Lorenzo il Magnifico 20.*

**12.** Italian postal card written by Giorgio de Chirico (January 28, 1911)

Italian postcard, two stamps: *Florence 28 I-II Ferrovia*

*To Mr. Fritz Gartz Siegfriedstr. – 8 III Bavaria Munich*

*Florence Friday / Via Lorenzo il Magnifico 20*

*Dear friend!*

*My mother and my brother wrote to tell me how kind you and your wife have been and I want to thank you very much for this. I read a very stupid review about my brother in M Neusten Nachrichten.*

*That man has understood absolutely nothing! But as a philosopher said: Veniet melior aetas!*

*I hope to come to Munich mid-March to see about the exhibition. Please give your wife my regards.*

*Take care,*

*Giorgio de Chirico*

#### 4. The correct sequence of Giorgio de Chirico's letters

4.1 The order in which the above letters have been placed dates the letter on which "Florence 26 Januarii 1910" appears, as December 26, 1910, thus positioning it *after* the postcard stamped 11/4/1910 sent from Florence in which Giorgio de Chirico communicates the address of his studio in Florence. The reasons for placing the letter as such will be illustrated with the following:

Leaving aside Gemma de Chirico's letter of July 7, 1908 to Fritz Gartz for amoment, we see how the letters, which are to be considered as the complete de Chirico-Gartz correspondence of the period<sup>15</sup>, pertain to two periods: the first, from **July 1909 to April 1910**, and a second period in which a more intense exchange of letters took place, from **December 26, 1910 to January 28, 1911** ending with de Chirico's thank you note to Gartz for the kindness the latter showed to his mother and brother on occasion of Savinio's concert in Munich.

Despite de Chirico's initially declared difficulty in writing letters, it must be noted how he is always the one who takes the initiative to write, while soliciting an answer from his friend, which unflinchingly arrives by immediate return of post.<sup>16</sup>

The re-established order of the second group of letters reveals their logical and temporal concatenation. This sequence is so concentrated and evident that it is truly difficult to understand how Roos and Baldacci could have been set off track by misreading a simple date (corrected from a *later* date), which even at first glance could not have been what it appears on the letter, especially when examined in relation to the rest of the correspondence. Even more perplexing, is the fact that based on this date, they then constructed their entire erroneous theory of the birth of Metaphysical Art and the role Alberto Savinio played in Milan, especially due to the fact the content of the letter "dated" January 26, 1910 (which contains no hint of an effort to block Savino) does not call, in my opinion, for the deductions and conclusions these authors have drawn.<sup>17</sup>

4.2 The postcard stamped 11/4/1910 constitutes a key element in the correspondence we are about to examine insomuch as it contains a telegraphic list of what de Chirico was doing at the time. In it, the artist limits himself to saying that he would not be exhibiting at the Secession exhibition as he intended to hold a personal exhibition and states that the works he was *painting at the time* were

too profound and would look out of place in that context, adding that Florence is beautiful in the *spring* and that he has found a beautiful studio.

The fact that de Chirico communicated his studio address “Viale R. Vittoria 3 – Firenze”, written on the front left side of the postcard, is significant and indication that the de Chirico family, possibly hosted temporarily at their aunt and uncle’s house, did not yet have an apartment of their own and that on April 11, 1910 had not yet rented the house at 20 via Lorenzo il Magnifico.<sup>18</sup> Instead, we find this address written below the date and the city on the 26 *Januarii* 1910 letter.

The content of the postcard is perfectly coherent with both the letter dated December 27, 1909 (Poseidon XXVII) in which de Chirico announces his decision to move to Florence “in the spring”, and the Angelo Bardi autobiography in which de Chirico wrote that he spent “the first year in Italy in Milan”. Considering that he arrived in Milan at the end of May - beginning of June 1909<sup>19</sup> and left for Florence sometime during the second half of March 1910, the affirmation fits perfectly, as does a further declaration the artist made in his Memoirs, where he wrote that he spent “a little more than a year” in Florence. The content of the successive letter of “*Januarii* 26, 1910”, which broke a silence lasting *eight months*, is absolutely coherent. This letter provides a detailed account of what de Chirico achieved over the course of a year of extraordinary activity (from 27/12/1909 to 26/12/1910).

While the de Chirico-Gartz correspondence is particularly important in understanding the development of the Maestro’s thought process from a conceptual point of view and the transposition of his ideas into paint, the letters also contain extremely important historical information by providing close, “real-time” testimony on Giorgio de Chirico’s activity that permits the reconstruction of the exact course of events.

One of the most predominant aspects that emerges from these letters is the close friendship that de Chirico and Fritz Gartz enjoyed, a friendship which began at the Munich Academy of Art and was extended to their respective families, including Giorgio and Alberto’s mother Gemma de Chirico, to a degree that when concerned about her son, she contacted his friend directly, asking him in a worried manner: “Please write the whole truth to me” (letter n. 1).

This letter, for a reason that has nothing to do with its content, holds important meaning, as we shall see.

4.3 We will now take a look at the letters, not for their theoretic content<sup>20</sup>, but rather, for the important role they play with regard to the temporal sequence of events.

The letter dated *Mediolanum Poseidione* XXVII 1909 that Giorgio de Chirico wrote to Fritz Gartz from Milan on letterhead paper bearing the de Chirico family coat of arms is of definite interest.

The month of Poseidon can vary as it derives from the lunar-based Attic calendar. In 1909, the 27<sup>th</sup> of Poseidon corresponded to December 27<sup>th</sup>.<sup>21</sup>

The letter also contains a precise reference to an event that confirms this date. The Milanese specialty (*Spezialität von Mailand*) that the artist mentions having sent to Gartz’s wife for the season’s festivities, can be non-other than Milan’s famous panettone, a typical Christmas season cake, which he bought at the well-known Cova pastry shop in Milan (the shop, founded in 1817 and still active today, is particularly famous for its panettone): “I hope you received it and that you liked it”<sup>22</sup>.



fig. 3a

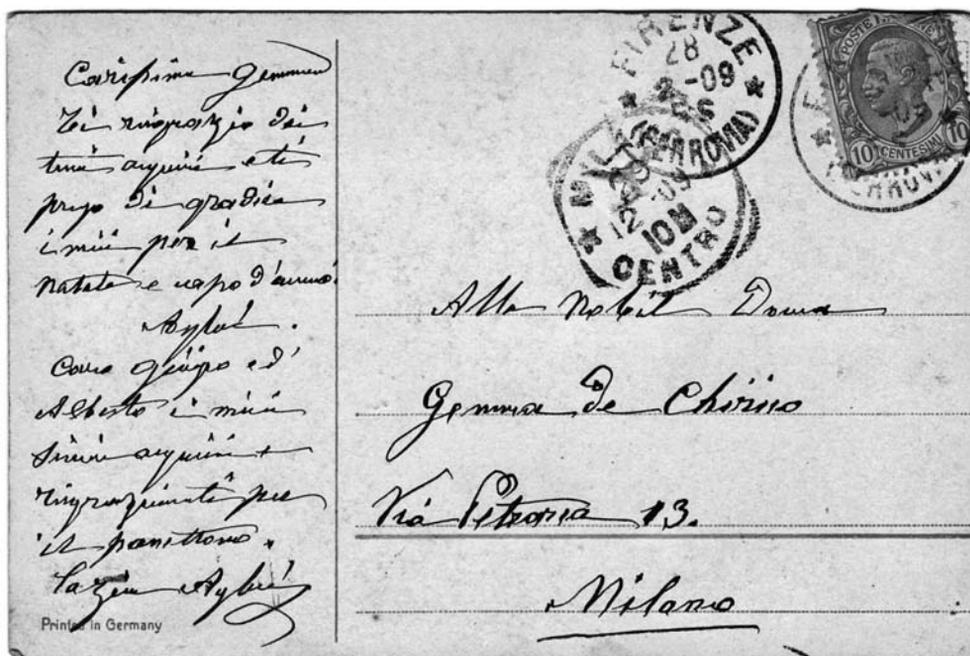


fig. 3b Postcard from Aunt Aglae, Florence, December 29, 1909

Contemporarily, de Chirico and his brother Alberto had also sent a panettone to their aunt Aglae in Florence, who thanked them in a postcard illustrated with a Christmas scene dated December 29, 1909, addressed to their mother. It is significant that no mention at all is made in the card of an imminent move of the de Chirico family to Florence (fig. 3a-b).<sup>23</sup>

The content of the December 27, 1909 letter is of utmost importance both for its reference to the trip de Chirico took to Florence and Rome in October 1909 and for the communication regarding his intention to move to Florence “in the spring”. In addition, whilst telling his friend that he has been working and studying intensely, the artist speaks of the change in his interests and the resulting transformation in his objectives. Rome and Florence had surely opened new horizons and new areas of research for Giorgio de Chirico.

Not only did de Chirico's objectives begin to change in this period, but it also seems he was cultivating two aspirations for the coming year: the first, to participate at the Secession exhibition that was to be held in Munich in the spring (asking his friend to send the regulation form), and the second, to exhibit “a couple of paintings” in Munich the following October.

The letter indirectly informs us of various aspects of de Chirico's activity. On one hand we learn that the artist had made, or was continuing to make, paintings that he considered appropriate for the Secession exhibition. On the other hand, we learn that he was in the process of creating something new and different, which he felt deserved a *different* presentation. Here, de Chirico does not yet speak of profound works, as he would later on, but states that his objectives have changed with respect to those he used to have.<sup>24</sup>

4.4 De Chirico evidently set to work on these objectives over the course of months that followed, as the postcard dated April 11, 1910 reveals. In addition to the tardy thank you to his friend for having sent the Secession exhibition regulation form, the artist announced that he no longer intended to participate in the exhibition and motivated his decision by explaining that the paintings he was creating at the time were “too profound” and would look out of place in the Secession exhibition context. He is firmly convinced of his intention to exhibit his work in a new and different context: not just a couple of paintings, but a personal exhibition, although without specifying when and where (obviously Munich).

4.5 Let us now examine the letter dated “*Florence 26 Januarii 1910*” (with the original day and month “*24 Juillet*” crossed-out). For reasons pertaining to the correct consecution of the content of the correspondence with regard to the April 11, 1910 postcard and the successive letters, and particularly to the letter with no date (but datable to January 5, 1911), and for formal reasons which we will now analyse, this letter was undoubtedly written *after* the April 11, 1910 postcard and can be dated with certainty to December 26, 1910, even though de Chirico purposely used the Latin word *Januarii* to indicate the month (affording it strong symbolic meaning).

If in other instances the brothers were inspired by the Attic calendar and by Greek divinities (Poseidon, Gamelion), it can be noted that the name of the month “*Juillet*” is crossed-out and the new month is written, not *Januar* in German as Roos has transcribed it, but *Januarii* in Latin (genitive case), that is, the month dedicated to Janus the two-faced god (*ianua*: door), which symbolical-

ly indicates the passage between one year coming to an end and a new year about to begin. It is for this reason that de Chirico offers New Years greetings, as even today it is customary to send New Years greetings *before* the new year actually begins.<sup>25</sup>

In his analysis of the painting *Serenade*, which looks at the question from another angle, Professor Calvesi also reached similar conclusions regarding the significance of de Chirico's use of the term *Januarii* (but not the date). Professor Dottori, in his article *From Zarathustra's Poetry to the Aesthetics of Metaphysical Art* in this Periodical, while referring to this same painting, and making other considerations, agrees that the date can be identified as December 26, 1910.<sup>26</sup>

Unlike the previous year, there is no sending of the traditional panettone due to the fact that at the time de Chirico was no longer in Milan but in Florence, where he had been living since March.

Let us examine this letter carefully.

Giorgio de Chirico demonstrates a strong desire to transfer his recent philosophic and painterly discoveries to his friend and, after conveying his wishes for the coming New Year at the start of the letter (those of his mother and brother are offered at the end), he excuses himself for not having written earlier (for more than eight months) due to his many work commitments and his "health which has unfortunately not been very good this last year"<sup>27</sup>, he gets right to the point and asks his painter colleague to listen attentively, due to the importance of what he has to say to him.

From a stylistic-methodological point of view, it is also interesting to note that at the time de Chirico was already using the rhetorical procedure that he would later use in his writings, that is to ask questions and then provide the answer himself.

First of all, it must be noted how de Chirico does not use the present verb tense he had used in his April 11, 1910 postcard ("the works I am creating now are too profound") but the past tense: "What I have created here in Italy is neither very big nor profound (in the old meaning of the word), but *formidable* (*furchtbar*). This summer (*diesem Sommer*) I painted paintings that are the most profound that exist in the absolute". A comparison of the verb tense underlines a significant difference: "I am creating", "This summer I painted paintings". These works "are the most profound that exist in the absolute" (not only with respect to his paintings, but to all of painting, including Michelangelo) and what "I have created" is formidable (beyond human measure, abyssal, terrifyingly profound: in other words, metaphysical).<sup>28</sup>

It would be completely illogical to consider this letter's temporal position in relation to the postcard dated April 11, 1910 and the December 27, 1909 letter as any different. If the metaphysical paintings had already been painted in the summer of 1909 (or, to make Roos happy, the end of 1909), there is absolutely no mention of this in the December 27, 1909 letter. Nor is it possible to think that in less than a month's time (which would have included the move to Florence), such a radical and profound change could have occurred. Additionally, in the April 11, 1910 postcard the artist says "I am creating" profound works, but does not use the extraordinary meaningful and evocative language he would later use. In other words, if one were to indulge Roos and Baldacci, we would be face to face with an actual regression in de Chirico's painterly activity.

I would like to underline the fact that the artist believes he has reached the vertex of his painting and intends to communicate his discoveries to *the world* as soon as possible, by means of an

exhibition the following spring (1911) in Munich, which was still considered the cultural capital of Europe at that time.<sup>29</sup>

This is not all. Exactly one year from the December 27, 1909 letter, while informing his friend of his readings in literature and philosophy and of his intention to write books in the future, de Chirico whispers to him: "I am the only man who has understood Nietzsche – all of my paintings demonstrate this."

The **only** reference to his brother Alberto's work stands out interestingly and refers to the composing of the most profound music, to which he also had contributed. The words chosen by de Chirico in reference to this: "You will see and hear for yourself and will be convinced" confirm the event that Alberto, faced with the difficulty he incurred in trying to hold his concert in Florence (programmed for January 9<sup>th</sup>), had not only decided to perform the concert in Munich instead, but also to ask his brother's friend who lived there for help. All the more reason as it was in this city that Giorgio was thinking of holding his exhibition in the spring.

In fact, the mention of the most profound music seems to be almost a predestined introduction to the letter of December 28, 1910<sup>30</sup> with its direct request to Fritz Gartz to take an interest in the project and obtain information from the Munich Tonhalle regarding Alberto's concert. Gartz would, in fact, soon be able to listen to "the most profound music", just as he would have been able (in the spring of 1911) to see the paintings de Chirico had written to him about.<sup>31</sup>

Another significant element in support of the letter's date "December 26, 1910", is found in the invitation de Chirico made to Gartz to come to Italy to see the exhibition scheduled to be held in Rome in the spring (as well as the exhibition scheduled for April in Florence). De Chirico added that a room in his house was ready and waiting to host him and his wife. If indeed the letter was dated "January 26, 1910", as Roos and Baldacci claim, it is quite impossible that the de Chirico family, who would have had to face a laborious move (due to the furniture, glassware and carpets that Gemma de Chirico, as noted by Savinio, took with her on every change of residency), would have already been so well settled in Florence as to be able to offer such hospitality, seeing that from the letter dated December 27, 1909, in which de Chirico spoke of his intention to move to Florence "in the spring I will probably go to Florence to live" and this invitation, only a month would have past.

The exhibition to which Giorgio de Chirico refers without specifying the name, can be non-other than the grand exhibition held in celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Unity of Italy: *Cinquantenario dell'Unità d'Italia*. Great expectation had been aroused in anticipation of this event in which almost every country in Europe was to participate, and which was considered the quintessential exhibition at the time.<sup>32</sup> Another two exhibitions were held in 1911 in celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Unity of Italy in the two ex-capital cities of Italy, Turin and Florence. The Florentine exhibition was inaugurated in April, as de Chirico had anticipated to Gartz, who indeed had a strong interest to see this exhibition due to its theme.<sup>33</sup>

4.6 The letter in question (26/12/1910) contains an additional and precise element that escaped the two authors who, justly identified *The Enigma of the Oracle* and *The Enigma of the Afternoon* in the group of the most "profound paintings", but failed to identify a very important third painting, the only one to which de Chirico made explicit and direct reference. In reading the letter in which

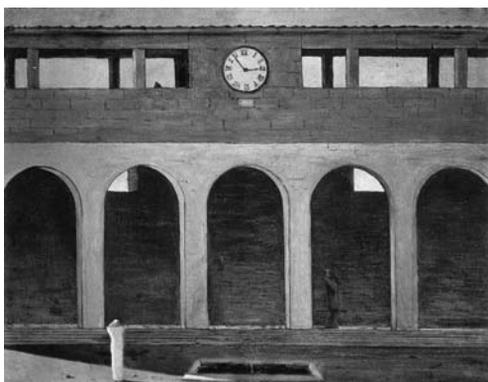


fig. 4 *The Enigma of the Hour*, 1910

de Chirico spoke of the paintings he had executed in the summer, one has the impression that he is not referring to only two paintings. He indicates that the works he has created are small, specifying that the biggest among these measures 50 x 70 cm.<sup>34</sup> He probably does this in order to reinforce his consideration that the profoundness of a work has nothing to do with the size of the canvas or the composition.

This painting can be identified as *The Enigma of the Hour* (fig. 4), the size of which is almost the same as the measurements provided

by de Chirico: 50 x 70 cm, written in brackets (it is obvious that de Chirico gave a standard measurement without going into specific detail). *The Enigma of the Hour* indeed measures 54,5 x 70,5. The other two paintings *The Enigma of the Oracle* and *The Enigma of an Autumn Afternoon* are smaller, and measure respectively 42 x 61 and 45 x 60 cm.

*The Enigma of the Hour*, which expresses the eternal present, was exhibited in Paris at the Salon des Indépendents in 1913 on which occasion de Chirico signed and dated the painting 1910. Baldacci, who, depending on the case, seems to attribute little value to dates that have been inscribed successively<sup>35</sup>, considers the period in which this painting was executed as: end of 1910 – beginning of 1911, in his monograph on de Chirico published in 1997.<sup>36</sup>

The extraordinary importance of these paintings amply justifies de Chirico's desire to show them as soon as possible in an exhibition where they would constitute a revelation to the entire world. The letter the artist wrote to Gartz on December 26, 1910 is nothing less than the first sincere and enthusiastic testimony of Giorgio de Chirico's discovery of Metaphysical Art, which came about with these first three Enigmas.

It must be noted that the problem pertaining to the close relationship between these three paintings did not escape the attention of Gerd Roos who, intent on sustaining that the other two works were painted in Milan rather than Florence, hypothesized that *The Enigma of the Hour* was also painted in Milan in 1909<sup>37</sup>. This is a thesis even Paolo Baldacci does not support.

The question can be raised as to why this painting, obviously fruit of the artist's new direction, was not exhibited in 1912 at the Salon d'Automne with the other two Enigmas. The answer to this can be found in de Chirico's Memoirs<sup>38</sup> in which he spoke of the help the painter Laprade afforded him in order to have his work accepted by the exhibition jury and recalled how he had suggested he send only three not very big paintings. Together with *The Enigma of an Autumn Afternoon* and *The Enigma of the Oracle*, de Chirico chose *Self-Portrait* (1911), which, by the way, together with his Metaphysical Painting, constituted an excellent means of making himself known.

4.7 The missive written on the family's noble coat of arms letterhead paper and dated "Florence 26 Januarii 1910" contains a significant detail that has not been properly evaluated by Gerd Roos.



written by de Chirico is different from the 'F' of *Florence*, written by his mother (figs. 8 and 9). It must also be noted that when de Chirico wrote his address, he punctiliously used "*Florenz*" when writing in German and "*Firenze*" in Italian.

There is also no doubt that the address is written in de Chirico's handwriting: Via Lorenzo il Magnifico, 20 Firenze, his actual residence, which I believe was communicated here for the first time and done so obviously to solicit an answer from his friend Fritz Gartz, regarding what he had confided to him ("I would be very happy if you wrote me a letter").

In conclusion, we find ourselves in front of a simple truth that can be summarized thus: Gemma de Chirico, who had already been in Florence for some time, took pen in hand on July 24, 1910 and began to write a letter to an unidentifiable French-speaking person (as the date and city are written in French) on letterhead paper bearing the family's coat of arms. For unknown reasons she abandoned her writing and saved the sheet of paper, with only the date marked on it, in the folder or envelope in which the letterhead paper was kept (as was customary).

It seems quite unlikely that Gemma de Chirico, who was very careful woman of lucid mind, could have mistaken January for July and even mistaken the day (24 instead of 26).

When Giorgio de Chirico sat down to write to Gartz he took the sheet of paper his mother had started to use, *and this could only have occurred after July 24, 1910*; in fact, he only corrected the day and the month from 24 *Juillet* to 26 *Januarii*, leaving the city and year as written. He then added the address in Italian and proceeded to write the letter in German.

The identification of this important and determining detail, which has gone unnoticed due to the silence of these two authors, annuls the hypothesis that de Chirico mistakenly wrote the name of a future month and then corrected it to an earlier month, and the number of the day, then corrected to later day, an action which, as Calvesi has remarked, would have indeed been very strange.

When writing to Fritz Gartz on December 26, 1910, Giorgio de Chirico simply recuperated the sheet of letterhead paper his mother had used, due to the fact such paper represented a certain value and was worth more than simple white paper as it carried the de Chirico family's noble coat of arms, which both Giorgio and Alberto held dear and which was surely not discarded light-heartedly.

As mentioned above, it is evident that de Chirico limited himself to correcting the day and the month, by using the symbolic Latin expression *Januarii*. He did not cancel the year 1910 because, in fact, it was *still 1910*, even if it was in the last days of that year.

This small formal detail strengthens and ratifies – if such ratification is still deemed necessary –, that which comes to light through a simple reading of the letters, in which everything fits together and is perfectly coherent.

In conclusion, on December 26, 1910 when de Chirico used the significant and symbolic Latin term *Januarii* to welcome of the month that would bring in the New Year, it is possible that he was inspired by a poem by Nietzsche entitled *Sanctus Januarius* (written in January 1882 in Genoa; *The Gay Science*, Book IV). After years of suffering, with this poem Nietzsche celebrates his return to health and his new found strength. He praises the month of January as the moment of the year when life flows forth once again, and evokes his soul's inner transformation towards clearness and health, free to celebrate "your miracles, Fairest month of January". [Nietzsche used the Latin term "*Januarius*" for January in the poem. Ed.]

A connection can be identified between the joyous celebration of healing evoked in Nietzsche's poem and the letter in which de Chirico announces his revelation to Gartz. Even though de Chirico had suffered intensely from intestinal disturbances at the time (in Milan and in Florence), the letter doesn't seem written by a sick person but rather, by someone who feels more alive than ever, enthusiastic for the future and profoundly satisfied by the effort sustained in painting his recent paintings – "It brings me immense joy to have painted them" – and considers them such as to become a revelation for the whole world. His intestinal upsets "I had just recovered from a long and painful intestinal illness" would continue, but would no longer be something that slowed his artistic activity down: the extraordinary and numerous metaphysical creations produced in his Parisian period amply confirms this.

If we take into consideration what he wrote years later in the autobiography signed "Angelo Bardi" in reference to his Florentine period – "After moving to Florence, [...] *Giorgio de Chirico began discovering his own path*" – we gather that his recovery occurred specifically thanks to the first Enigmas executed in Florence, with which he began to find his way. In fact, as he said in his letter of January 5, 1911: "It is only with Nietzsche that I can say I have begun a real life."

4.8 The letters immediately following the December 26, 1910 letter are also closely correlated to this letter. The missive dated December 28, 1910 for example (with the correct word in German for December), not only contains no New Years greetings (a sign that greetings had recently been sent), but the writer gets straight to the point in it, immediately raising the question regarding his brother Alberto's concert to be held in Munich instead of Florence. He asks Fritz Gartz for help and to let him know "as soon as possible" what the outcome is. He sends his mother's regards and adds his address at the bottom of the page. The letter is in fact too direct and to the point, especially after an epistolary silence of about eight months (with respect to the April 11, 1910 postcard), if this silence had not indeed already been broken.

Gartz took an immediate interest in his friend's problem and promptly replied by immediate return of post. His letter arrived on January 3, 1911; the date of reception is confirmed by the letter de Chirico wrote and dated the same day, January 3, 1911 in which, relying on his friend's kindness, he asked him to reserve the concert hall for January 23 or 24, 1911, or if this was not possible, for February 7.

This new letter is interesting because we find references in it to the December 26, 1910 letter. De Chirico mentions that he would not accompany his brother to Munich for the concert (adding that his mother was better at handling practical matters) and motivates his decision by saying that he could not interrupt his studies and work due to the exhibition he intended to hold in Munich in the spring (mentioned in the December 26, 1910 letter). As if to say "as I will be obliged to come to Munich at the end of March, I am not going to come now"<sup>41</sup>. If the December 26, 1910 letter is not taken into consideration, this affirmation comes totally out of the blue as it introduces the exhibition project without any explanation at all.

The letter de Chirico wrote on January 3, 1911 must have crossed Gartz's letter (in reply to de Chirico's letter of December 26, 1910) in the mail. De Chirico presumably received this reply on January 4<sup>th</sup>. He then answered this letter the following day (January 5<sup>th</sup>).<sup>42</sup>

It is interesting to note that in answering de Chirico's letters, Gartz gave priority to the practical matters contained in the December 28, 1910 letter. He then replied to the more conceptual content of de Chirico's December 26<sup>th</sup> letter in a second moment. Having read the two letters at the same time, or in the space of two days, he surely could have replied to both in one letter. With regard to this two considerations must be made. The first is that Gartz must have considered the letter regarding de Chirico's brother Alberto's concert a priority, as a response on his behalf had been solicited "as soon as possible" specifically for Alberto. It is very significant that in this letter Gartz made no mention of his brother Kurt's tragic death, which occurred one week earlier on December 23, 1910.<sup>43</sup> The second consideration to be made deals with the extremely personal quality of Gartz's answer to de Chirico's December 26, 1910 letter (in which de Chirico had asked for feedback from his fellow painter friend: "I would be very happy if you wrote me a letter"). Gartz's response is to be considered as confidential. This letter, as all of Gartz's letters, has been lost, although we gain an idea of the content of these letters based on Giorgio de Chirico's responses. In this letter, Fritz Gartz informed de Chirico of the tragic death of his brother Kurt, a dear friend of de Chirico's and of whom he wrote diffusely in his *Memoirs*.<sup>44</sup> In his reply, de Chirico offered his condolences and those of his mother and brother Alberto. He asks Gartz for forgiveness for having disturbed him with his second letter (January 3<sup>rd</sup>), adding that if he had not already done so, not to go to any further trouble. The content of Gartz's letter can be deduced from de Chirico's reply and is directly related to his December 26, 1910 letter, to which Gartz afforded careful evaluation.

De Chirico, in turn, speaks of his friendship with Kurt Gartz, taking into consideration Kurt's psychological drama and his soul's obsession with Nietzsche's ideas and desire for grand undertakings that are impossible, which no one has ever understood. Kurt's state of being could be described as grandiose, a condition that dominates a weak mind, destined therefore to succumb. This explains de Chirico's expression: "If only more people could be as weak!", which, in my mind, could be interpreted as the consequence of entertaining grand ideas and cultivating the desire to achieve impossible undertakings that no one is able to understand or appreciate. It is better to have great ideas and succumb, than not to have any at all.

To illustrate this widespread attitude de Chirico refers to his brother Alberto who had written in the program (which he includes) the sentence "the most profound music", noting bitterly how, of those who had seen the program, no one had noticed the expression or thought to ask what it meant.<sup>45</sup>

De Chirico responds to what must have surely been a reaction of disconcert on Gartz's behalf (which we "read" between the lines of the letter de Chirico presumably received on January 4<sup>th</sup>) by clarifying what he meant with his provocative statement "Michelangelo, the stupidest of all painters" (December 26<sup>th</sup> letter). In this important passage, de Chirico confidently clarifies his true and deepest thoughts, replying fully to Gartz's perplexities.

This dialogue evokes the lively exchange of the ideas and the perspectives of two friends who cultivate the same artistic vocation. It would be indeed quite strange, if one were to think the date of the letter was January 26, 1910, (as Baldacci and Roos have proposed) that Gartz, certainly shocked and in pain from the tragic death of his younger brother, would have found nothing better to do than raise a question regarding the theoretic content of a letter, which would have been written and received by Gartz eleven months earlier, at the beginning of 1910.

Maintaining that Fritz Gartz could have waited *a year* to comment on something of such extraordinary importance, especially after de Chirico had manifested his desire for feedback from his friend, is completely illogical, as is the affirmation that Gartz would also have had to wait a year before hearing Savinio's music on January 23, 1911, even without counting all the other correlations the correspondence offers, including the renewed invitation to come to Florence with his wife and the mention of taking a trip to Rome to see the exhibition "as my mother would also like to see it".

Not only. A further, precise correlation with the December 26, 1910 letter can be found in the January 5, 1911 letter, as it is in this letter that de Chirico mentioned his brother Alberto had composed "the most profound music" with him. In fact, as we have seen, when de Chirico took the title of his brother's concert *The Most Profound Music* as an example in an attempt to comfort his friend, he does not seem to be introducing a new theme, but referring rather, to something recently mentioned, using the same words he used in the December 26, 1910 letter. It must also be added that Gartz seized the theme of "the most profound music" with great sensitivity in his response to de Chirico's letter of January 5<sup>th</sup>, by enquiring further as to the meaning of this statement. De Chirico supposedly received this letter on January 7<sup>th</sup> and answered it on January 8<sup>th</sup>, saying that his brother would be able to explain it to him when he saw him in person, adding laconically: "I knew it would have seemed a bit strange to you", a statement that could very well raise some questions in our own minds.

The postcard de Chirico wrote on January 28, 1911 to thank Gartz for the kindness shown to his mother and brother, also contains a reference to the December 26, 1910 letter, as the artist speaks of the exhibition he was planning to hold mid-March in Munich.

In conclusion, in de Chirico's correspondence dating from December 26, 1910 to January 28, 1911 there are: a) three references to the exhibition de Chirico intended to hold in Munich in March, 1911 in order for the whole world to see his paintings; b) three references to "the most profound music" of his brother's (and his); c) two precise references to the exhibition in Rome for the fiftieth anniversary of the Unity of Italy; d) two pressing invitations to Gartz and his wife to come and stay with him. Without forgetting the almost perfect measurements of the painting *The Enigma of the Hour*.

## 5. Conclusion

All of the above letters are closely and unequivocally related: their content clearly demonstrates their temporal sequence, thus confirming the logical succession of the topics of discussion.

The picture that emerges attests the truth of what de Chirico had affirmed more than once, without the least intention of distorting or delineating in bad faith the different periods of his life and his work.

Baldacci has asked: "It is obvious to ask oneself where the common conviction that Metaphysical Painting originated in Florence came from."<sup>46</sup>

The answer is simple. This conviction came about for the simple reason that it is none other than the truth, a truth to which de Chirico continuously testified, both in his "Angelo Bardi" autobiography and in particular, in *The Memoirs of Giorgio de Chirico*, which constitute the artist's professional response to misunderstandings regarding his art put forth by Breton and those close to him.

On one hand, it is precisely the letters de Chirico wrote to Gartz which, when read in their



fig. 10 Giorgio de Chirico, *Self-portrait*, 1911



fig. 11 Friedrich Nietzsche, photograph

correct consecutive order disperse all doubt regarding the correctness and intellectual honesty of the Great Metaphysician, giving justice its due regarding these rash and unfounded accusations. And on the other, the letters confirm beyond the shadow of a doubt specifically what de Chirico has always sustained and which all art historians have accepted as fact and that is that *Metaphysical Art came into being in Florence in the second half of 1910*. We are thus grateful to Gerd Roos for having discovered these important documents, even though he totally misinterpreted their meaning.

This is not all. For the study of the Great Metaphysician's oeuvre, it is of primary and absolute importance that the dates of the creation and number of the first metaphysical paintings executed in Florence be re-established with precision and that these remain facts which scholars can count upon. I believe the number of metaphysical paintings executed in Florence are only four (or five, if *Portrait of the Artist's Mother* is included, a painting which manifests noteworthy affinity to the *Self-Portrait* and could have been painted during the six-month period in which de Chirico lived alone with his mother in Florence). I do not believe that there are finished metaphysical paintings from the Florentine period that have been lost. As de Chirico recalled in his Memoirs, in Florence he sometimes "painted small canvases"<sup>47</sup>. This affirmation evokes a reduced production, even though one of extraordinary depth and intensity. The first three paintings were certainly painted in Florence, after April 11, 1910, and *Self-Portrait*, between the end of 1910 and the start of 1911.

The extraordinary philosophic and poetic content of the letters would have merited quite different research and in-depth examination, aimed, rather than searching for inexistent theoretic contribution on his brother's behalf, at examining the rapid evolution of Giorgio de Chirico's thought process – which we see translated into his paintings – in light of Nietzsche's ideas and his poem. "I am the only man who has understood Nietzsche – all of my paintings demonstrate this." This affirmation is absolutely true if one considers the first three Enigmas and, successively, the *Self-Portrait* in which de Chirico

drew inspiration from a photograph of the great philosopher and poet. In this *Self-Portrait* (fig. 10), executed after the first three Enigmas, the artist represented himself “mirrored” in the exact meditative pose of the poet in the photograph (fig. 11). In consideration of the strong significance the artist attributed to his recent transformation, this painting can be interpreted as a true manifesto in which he declared and acknowledged Nietzsche as the source of his new comprehension, and with which he announced the future of his research with the question: “*Et quid amabo nisi quod aenigma est?*”

An additional and important element emerges from the reading of these papers: the utter inconsistency of the theory that de Chirico was physiologically and intellectually dependent upon his brother Savinio “the true inventor of Metaphysical Art” according to Roos and Baldacci’s design based specifically on de Chirico’s letters published herein. It can be said that the structure on which they built this thesis did not stand up to a simple verification. And it is precisely the Milanese period that loses all the importance that has been attributed to it, confirming rather, and once more, what de Chirico wrote with equilibrium and precision in his *Memoirs* with regard specific to his activity during this period, as well as that of his brother and of their shared activity.<sup>48</sup>

It is true that when the brothers lived together in Milan and in Florence they shared great intellectual curiosity and interest for similar areas of research and enjoyed a constructive and open dialogue together, but this in no way means they created what has been called “the poetics of Metaphysical Art” the exact meaning of which, even semantically speaking, does not seem clear or definite.<sup>49</sup>

A thorough study on the real relationship existing between the two brothers during the Milanese and Florentine period, undertaken without prejudice, would certainly be desirable. For the time being, we limit ourselves to affirming that the December 26, 1910 letter examined here (as the entirety of the correspondence) in no way justifies the so-called Savinio-theory constructed by Roos and Baldacci in their writings. As Jole de Sanna observed, “documentation of Alberto’s theoretic contribution to Giorgio is in fact missing”.

Maintaining that the brothers sat down at the so-called drawing board and decided “to govern the phenomena of revelation” (!) together and to create something absolutely new, an archetype on which all future activity would be based, with an almost “entrepreneurial” attitude (the so-called “metaphysical poetics”), is a presupposition without any documental proof whatsoever but seems to be based, rather, on the extremely personal beliefs of these two authors.

The cautious and vague statements Savinio made after the two brothers’ relationship had broken down (this occurred at the beginning of the 1940s and is an issue yet to be investigated) regarding the role he played in his brother’s Metaphysical Art, still need to be evaluated. Even if this is not the place for a full examination of Savinio’s statements, it is necessary to affirm however, that they do not warrant the interpretation afforded them by these two authors. Rather, they need to be contextualized in the period in which they were expressed and especially in consideration of the denigratory attack – in this case pure distortion – enacted against Giorgio de Chirico by André Breton, who did not hesitate to exploit Savinio, by attributing him recognition for the invention of Metaphysical Art, a claim that Savinio himself never made.

It must be remembered that Savinio defended Giorgio de Chirico’s primacy regarding the discovery of Metaphysical Art in 1919. Later on, in his book *Tutta la vita* (1945), he seemed pleased to

accept, although without particular enthusiasm, the recognition afforded to him by surrealist leader André Breton (almost as if saying “if he says so, then ok”). He then thought it best to provide precise definition in this regard, which however, does not deal with Metaphysical Art but rather the way in which Surrealism is to be understood.<sup>50</sup> It really does not seem that a claim on the invention of Metaphysical Art on behalf of Savinio can be extrapolated from this passage.

It would bring well, once the truth surrounding the birth of Metaphysical Art is re-established and all elements are in their correct order, for a profound and objective study to ensue with regard to the Dioscuri’s true relationship. Such a study must be extended beyond the period taken into consideration here, which, as we have seen, has not been submitted to objective analysis, to include successive periods (first and second Parisian periods) in order to ascertain Alberto Savinio’s true points of originality.<sup>51</sup>

Today, in my opinion, the answer that continues to hold the most credibility is that which Giorgio de Chirico gave in 1971 in an interview when asked the question: “Were you influenced by your brother? Whom, I believe, you loved very much?”

Giorgio de Chirico: “Yes. [Answer to second question, Ed.] No, my brother did not influence me; I believe I did not influence him either. We both worked, each one on his own, without influencing one another.”<sup>52</sup>

*Translated by Katherine Robinson*

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> At an auction held at the auction house Hartung & Karl in Munich on May 15-17, 1979, two lots (2359 – 2360) were sold that contained books, photographs, documents and letters belonging to Fritz Gartz, a friend and schoolmate of Giorgio de Chirico's at the Munich Academy of Fine Arts.

The letters pertaining to this discussion (of which the present owner is unknown) are only available in poor quality photocopies that were kindly transmitted to Gerd Roos by Fritz Gartz's heirs. A second part of the correspondence is kept and can be consulted at Munich's Bayerische Staatsbibliothek.

Gerd Roos was the first to deal with the letters in a book published in collaboration with Wieland Schmied entitled *Giorgio de Chirico München 1906 – 1909*. In the third paragraph, *De Chirico in Mailand-Eine Bilanz des Jahres 1909*, the author exposed and analysed the content of the letter apparently dated "January 26, 1910", without questioning if this date was actually the date on which the letter was written. Nevertheless at the time the scholar demonstrated great prudence with regard to the possible interpretation to be given to the letter's content and the temporal order to assign the Maestro's pictorial activity. Such prudence would be later abandoned in successive writings.

See the image of the page in the auction house catalogue relative to this sale in the Italian text *Giorgio de Chirico e la nascita della Metafisica a Firenze nel 1910* in this Periodical, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> G. Roos, *La vie de Giorgio de Chirico. Un'autobiografia di Angelo Bardi del 1929*, in "ON - OttoNovecento" n. 1, 1997, p. 22; Id., *Giorgio de Chirico e Alberto Savinio, Ricordi e documenti. Monaco Milano Firenze 1906-1911*, ed. Bora, Bologna, 1999. The author states that both these studies were terminated in August 1996; P. Baldacci *De Chirico, The Metaphysical Period, 1888-1919*, translated by Jeffery Jennings, Bullfinch, New York, 1997. The author frequently cites Roos' publication (1999) as though it had been published in 1997. In the two monographs mentioned (1997 -1999), there is complete symbiosis between the two authors with regard to the period in question.

In the introduction to the Padua exhibition catalogue Baldacci and Roos wrote "Our two respective volumes which, although dated differently, (1997-1999) were both conceived and written in the same period (specifically between 1994 and 1997)", P. Baldacci – G. Roos, *De Chirico*, Marsilio, 2007, Padua, Palazzo Zabarella, January 20 – May 27, 2007.

In reality, Baldacci received the first draft of Roos' work in 1994 (as there was also a need to organize the Italian translation at the time). This is understood by Baldacci's review of W. Schmied – G. Roos' book cited in note 1: *Novità sul fronte de Chirico: la pittura metafisica è nata a Milano nel 1909, e non nel 1910* (News on the de Chirico front: Metaphysical Painting came into being in Milan in 1909 and not 1910) in "Giornale dell'arte", December, 1994, which announced the publication of this book for the coming year 1995. Baldacci finally acknowledged his debt to Roos (part of Baldacci's monograph is based on Roos' research, "carried out with meticulous detective work" in his article *Zum Gemälde L'enigme d'un après-midi d'automne*, p. 29, note n. 9 in *Giorgio de Chirico, Werke 1909 – 1971 in Schweizer Sammlungee*, Kunstmuseum, Winterthur, 2008, curated by G. Roos and D. Schweizer, ed. Bild-Kunst/ProLitteris. As Calvesi has already noted, ample reservations must be held regarding Baldacci's monograph. This is not the place for a detailed analysis of this publication; we merely state that it constitutes a true accusation of Giorgio de Chirico on an intellectual as well as a personal level, in that it does not acknowledge him the authorship of his ideas, which are instead entirely attributed to Savinio who supposedly gave them to him.

<sup>3</sup> In the Angelo Bardi autobiography (see note 11), the precise chronology supplied by the author, Giorgio de Chirico, has been manipulatively interpreted by Roos: "his detailed precision has an ulterior motivation, which is that of laying the foundation on which de Chirico could construct his Florentine Myth by furnishing plausible dates to which an absolutely fictitious dating of his paintings refer" (p. 29); "here the interpretive model was established to which later research would refer. The birth of Metaphysical Painting occurred in Florence in 1910" (pp. 29-30). In addition, for Roos, "recently discovered incontestable documents indicate without the shadow of a doubt that the two paintings *The Enigma of an Autumn Afternoon* and *The Enigma of the Oracle* were executed during the period between the end of the summer 1909 and the end of the autumn 1909 and were painted in Milan. Therefore, the birth of Metaphysical Art took place one year earlier." (p. 30). For Roos the Florentine myth comprises another essential factor: "the conception of this new art was the spiritual victory of a single person" (p. 30) and therefore, "this link offers the key to understanding the legend of the 'solitary hero' in the setting in which Metaphysical Art came into being. With this, the equally important role played by Savinio is hidden. In fact, Metaphysical Art came into being through the collaboration of the two brothers – and precisely in the autumn of 1909, and not the autumn of 1910, and in Milan, not in Florence, as de Chirico has wanted us to believe his whole life" (p. 30). The same affirmations are also found on p. 31, where in addition we read: "de Chirico dedicated his whole life to this myth" (!).

In the monograph published in 1999 the author dedicated uncountable pages to meticulous analysis in order to demonstrate this thesis, synthetically expressed in the article referred to above. What leaves one perplexed with regard to this study, edited in collaboration with the Foundation, which is aware of the importance of the documents that have come to light, is Roos' attitude toward de Chirico, which is indeed quite unfitting for an art historian. In presenting Gerd Roos'

research, the present writer would like to specify that as the keeper of de Chirico's home and memory, the Foundation has a responsibility in making the voluminous documentary material organised by Roos available to the public. The Foundation refers to other and opposing theses that contextualise, specifically in Florence, the decisive turning point that brought about the birth of Metaphysical Art. As observed by Wieland Schmied, not all the pieces have found their correct position in order for a definitive frame to be established with regard to de Chirico's life.

Truthfully speaking, while reading Roos, one has the sensation (regardless of who elaborated, wrote or published his work first), of reading Paolo Baldacci, due to their identical affirmations as well as the similarity of their thesis: "At this point in the narrative we are compelled to inquire as to the origin of the widespread belief that Metaphysical Painting was born in Florence, and we will not be surprised to find that the precise point of origin is de Chirico himself who, by conscious choice, first created and then continued to fuel this myth, intentionally obscuring the intellectual debt to Savinio accrued during the Milan period. It is only thanks to documents recently unearthed by Gerd Roos that we now know the importance of this period, and we are thus obliged to re-examine the personal relationship between the two brothers in the light of Giorgio's wilful denial of it. All of the references to the years 1906-1911 in de Chirico's writings share the single aim of creating a chronology, false but seemingly precise, which assigns the Böcklinian paintings to the Milan period and the Metaphysical works to Florence. The reader will have already gathered that, when speaking of himself, de Chirico is not concerned so much with factual truth as with the construction of a conscious mixture of edited reality, manipulated meaning, and pure invention, the proportions of which vary according to his rhetorical exigencies."; "The myth of Florence as the birthplace of Metaphysical Painting and the implicit negation of the collaboration with Savinio in Milan assumes its definitive form in the autobiography of 1929, written under the pseudonym Angelo Bardi, merging here with another myth whose roots go back to the aforementioned catalogue of 1921: that of the solitary hero, free of all influence, sole creator of the new art."; "this mask behind which the author changes costume is his own 'constructed' truth, designed to give a particular meaning to a particular aspect of his own life. Perhaps the most dramatic of all the deliberate obfuscations practiced by de Chirico is his nearly total negation of the role played by his younger brother in formulating the theoretical foundation of Metaphysical poetics. As we have seen, his minimizing of the Milan period, during which the influence of Savinio was decisive, is a direct function of a desire to appear the sole inventor of the new aesthetic sensibility."; "It was only after Alberto's death that Giorgio began to repent, all too late, for his ingratitude, and indeed the second part of the *Memorie* is full of lengthy passages dedicated to Alberto which, like crocodile tears [!], are all but aimed at clarifying Savinio's determining contribution to the birth of Metaphysical Art." (Baldacci, 1997, p. 100-101)

<sup>4</sup> Roos, 1997, p. 30 "Therefore the birth of Metaphysical Art took place one year earlier." Roos realised that the simple act of retro-dating the event of Metaphysical Art by one year would create problems. Consequently he dates the event as having occurred sometime between the summer and the end of autumn 1909 (1997 p. 30). In the 1999 monograph he wrote: "The birth of Metaphysical Art took place exactly one year earlier than that which all scholars sustain in unison!" (prologue, p. 16) In a more hasty fashion Baldacci changed the content of the letter by sustaining "that Giorgio said he painted in the summer and the autumn of 1909, therefore during his Milanese period" (Baldacci "Ars" August, 1999, p. 68). The alteration is evident, as de Chirico neither used the word 'autumn', nor did he say "last summer" but rather "in the summer". If the letter in question was effectively written in January 1910, de Chirico would have indicated "last summer" and not "in the summer".

<sup>5</sup> Baldacci (1997, p. 100): "It is thanks to the documents recently unearthed by Gerd Roos that we now know the importance of this [Milanese] period, and we are thus obliged to re-examine the personal relationship between the two brothers [under a new] light" (!). The result of this necessary re-examination of the brothers' relationship is the following: "[...] his minimizing of the Milan period, during which the influence of Savinio was decisive, is a direct function of a desire to appear the sole inventor of the new aesthetic sensibility." (*Ibidem*). This thesis was further developed and amplified in 2007 to a point where Savinio's Milanese contribution was retro-dated to 1908 and unavoidably extended to also include the Florentine period, as the authors must have realized that it made no sense in affirming Savinio's contribution in Milan and not recognizing the same during the Florentine period: "The motivation that made Giorgio de Chirico decide not to return to Germany, besides the 'Munich fatigue' which he speaks of in his Memoirs, was because Alberto was working on his *Poema Fantastico*, the successive modifications of which were also very stimulating for de Chirico, in the same way the exchange of ideas and their respective reflections on the subjects they were studying were."; "from many certain indications [?] it is possible today to affirm that the intellectual scaffolding of the poetics of Metaphysical Art is the product of work effected in parallel by the two brothers, first in Milan and then in Florence, from 1909 to the start of 1911" (Baldacci – Roos, 2007, p. 8). In addition, once they moved to Florence, "their [the de Chirico brothers] energy was directed at that time to governing the phenomena of revelation and to putting a respective method of visual communication into place, whilst deepening the theoretical foundation by elaborating an out-and-out theory of the poetics of Metaphysical Art" (!) (p. 11). In my opinion, the letters de Chirico wrote to Gartz do not, in any case, allow for affirmations such as the above. If anything, the opposite comes to light, and that is the contribution the older brother afforded the younger in his musical research. There is no mention of any contribution by Savinio, even regarding theory, in favour of Giorgio de Chirico. What

other documentary source the authors develop such convictions from, is not to be known; without sources or documents the two authors rely on personal convictions, which they mistake for “certain indications”.

In their anxiousness to qualify Giorgio de Chirico as a parasite of his brother Alberto, they go so far as to affirm: “the work Savinio was undertaking in Milan at the time held fundamental importance that allowed de Chirico to go beyond Symbolism. This is work he could have become familiar with from the summer of 1908 onwards, which he spent with his brother on Lake Garda” (p. 6).

Roos seems to have forgotten what he wrote regarding the lack of documents relating to that period. At the time he had merely expressed the hypothesis that the family may have spent a few weeks on Lake Garda or in Milan where “the Dioscuri surely spoke of their respective experiences during the past months”, which seems pretty obvious, as it is something brothers tend to do (in regard, see also letter n. 1).

The tendency to reduce the brothers' ideas and activities to one activity, with the prevalent use of the plural (in order to unify them) causes complete confusion with regard to their respective roles and areas of interest, which results in the negation of their respective individuality and originality. The above-mentioned statement that “their energy was directed” is extremely perplexing, as it seems to infer that de Chirico and Savinio were not only fully conscious of their ‘discovery’ from the start, but that they had even first elaborated a general theory, which would serve as the base for their respective choices. Assigning such a theory to Giorgio de Chirico and Savinio is shocking, when one considers that Giorgio had shown a strong and deep-seated inclination for painting since he was a child and had accordingly attended the Polytechnic school of Athens and successively the Munich academy of fine arts. While Alberto, from a young age had shown a strong interest and pronounced talent for music and had attended the conservatory in Athens and in Munich had taken lessons with Max Reger, who in fact had very little to teach him as his preparation was already of an extremely high level. As seen in the de Chirico – Gartz correspondence, the respective choices of the Dioscuri had already been made. Savinio would later, and by his own decision, refrain from his musical research in order to dedicate himself to literature, a field in which he was very successful. He later dedicated himself to drawing and painting, on de Chirico's suggestion and with his help.

<sup>6</sup> M. Calvesi, *De Chirico dall'Arno alla Senna*, in “Ars” April, 1999, pp. 44-63. Baldacci's reply to Calvesi, as well as Calvesi's counter-reaction, were published in the following issue. *La metafisica in discussione*, August 1999, pp. 68-77. In his reply, Baldacci insisted that de Chirico constructed “a biography to suit his purposes and was a biography that cancelled Savinio's role, especially during the Milanese period, in the determination of the new artistic course. It's not my fault if the Pictor Optimus was a mystifier” (!) (p. 72). Baldacci does not manage to undo Calvesi's reasoning regarding the birth of Metaphysical Art. In fact Calvesi observed that: “The fact that *The Enigma of an Autumn Afternoon* is without doubt datable to the end of 1910 and not the end of 1909, as the date written on it correctly indicates, is substantiated by specific testimony. The famous painting was not inspired by a hasty visit effectuated by the painter in Florence in October 1909, but was executed a number of months after the artist's definitive move to that city. A well-known passage of another youthful manuscript is unequivocal: “I will explain how I had the revelation of a painting which I exhibited this year at the Salon d'Automne entitled: *The Enigma of an Autumn Afternoon*. On a clear autumn afternoon, I was sitting on a bench in the middle of Piazza Santa Croce in Florence. Indeed, it wasn't the first time I had seen this square. I had just recovered from a long and painful intestinal illness and found myself in a morbid state of sensitivity. All of Nature surrounding me, including the marble of the buildings and the fountains, seemed to me to be convalescing also” (p. 71).

Baldacci plays this down by saying: “In the famous passage in the Parisian manuscripts in which de Chirico describes the ‘revelation’ of *The Enigma of an Autumn Afternoon* that he had in Florence in Piazza Santa Croce and says that it was not the first time he had seen that piazza, only means that he went there more than once during his visit in October 1909” (p. 69). It might very well be that the profound meaning of what de Chirico wrote in 1912 escapes Baldacci.

Calvesi affirms, “in reality, it seems that the artist uses this statement (‘Indeed, it wasn't the first time’) to express the fact that he knew the piazza extremely well and for a long time, and had also seen it in other seasons” (p. 71).

See also M. Calvesi, *Firenze e Torino nella metafisica di de Chirico – Nulla sine tragoedia gloria*, Atti del convegno Europeo di studi October 15-16, 1999, curated by C. Crescentini, Maschietto, Rome, 2002, p. 37 ff.

<sup>7</sup> Baldacci – Roos, 2007, p. 8 ff; P. Baldacci, *De Chirico e Savinio, la parabola di una fratellanza intellettuale* in *Alberto Savinio*, November 29, 2002 – March 2, 2003, Milan, Mazzotta, p. 55 ff. The study was previously published in German in the catalogue *Die Andere Moderne. De Chirico und Savinio*, Dusseldorf, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein – Westfalen, September 15 – December 10, 2001, p. 45 ff, under the title: *Zu Zweit hatten wir einen einzigen Gedanken. Die Concordia Discors der Dioskuren*. It can be said that the Dusseldorf exhibition with its evocative title *De Chirico – Savinio. Another Modernity*, curated, amongst others, by Baldacci and Roos, attempted to demonstrate through images this recently elaborated theory. In a review with the meaningful title *A Gambling with Intellectual Ownership*, Jole de Sanna strongly objected to this attempt to confuse the brothers' ideas and affiliations. In anticipation of reading this review, which is still very pertinent today, two citations will be provided: “The director of the Dusseldorf Museum, Armin Zweite, declares that the title of the exhibition is equal to its program: the brothers de Chirico-Savinio as co-authors of a counter-revolution that transformed the art of the twentieth century; their common vision influencing modern trends up to the most recent, at the same time

taking an original place as a source of Modern Classicism. The curator of a museum of Modern Art, by taking such an angle, enlivens the exhibition panorama; in the first place by providing a diversion from the monotony of shows based on the usual model of Avant-garde vs. traditionalist art and vice versa, and secondly by demolishing one of the few certainties of twentieth century art: Giorgio de Chirico as the author of the equivalence of painting and philosophy called Metaphysical Art. Armin Zweite embraces the two authors in one gesture. He does not even question whether Metaphysical Art has a double paternity. [...] The presupposition is that the initial phase of Metaphysical Art, de Chirico had as a tutor his brother Andrea who, as it happened, was four years younger than him. However, the context is an exhibition in a museum, the purpose of which is to show paintings and sculpture. The visitor's task is to trace the methods of influence exercised on Giorgio de Chirico by Andrea. Not even the usual posters giving us an outline of the artist's culture come to one's aid in this endeavour. The documentation of Andrea's theoretical contribution to Giorgio is in fact missing. Neither Savinio's annotations on such a work as Apollonio Rodin's *Argonautiche*, nor those on Luigi Pulci's *Il Morgante Maggiore*, were taken into consideration as possible theoretical works useful to de Chirico. These are required reading for every high-school student just as are *Aeneid* and *La Divina Commedia*. The exhibition catalogue states that Andrea, who was a musician at the time, had a leading role in the building of the intellectual bomb that was Metaphysical Art. Thus the visitor sets out on the quest of identifying the support supplied to de Chirico by his brother." (p. 311) It is a shame that such a quest results unfruitful. In fact, as de Sanna stated "Finally, when the dates of the works by Savinio and de Chirico coincide, as from 1927, they are positioned on opposite walls of the room. In the text by curator Paolo Baldacci the third person singular is rarely used: "he thought", "he created", the subject is plural: "they thought", "they carried out", "they gave", as if the Dioscuri de Chirico and Savinio, as opposed to Castor and Pollux, were Siamese twins and granting that Siamese brothers think in unison. The visitor looks for references in support of this joint endeavour but only the events, exhibitions and writings of Giorgio de Chirico come to light. In reality curator Baldacci's assumption is more pronounced that Zweite's: "Giorgio de Chirico would never have conceived Metaphysical Art without his brother Andrea at his side." (p. 312) In "Metafisica" n. 1-2 (2002) under the pseudonym Viola Mangusta, p. 311 ff. See also R. Dottori, *De Chirico, Savinio and the other Face of Modernity*, *ibidem*, p. 321 ff.

\* Baldacci, 2008, p. 23. Contemporaneously, G. Roos in *The Enigma of an Autumn Afternoon at the end of the autumn of 1909. The Birth of "Metaphysical Art" in the artist's documents in Giorgio de Chirico A Metaphysical Journey. Painting 1901-1937*, Galerie Andrea Caratsch, April 18 – May 23, Zürich, Galerie Michael Haas, June 20 – August 2, 2008 Berlin, Walther König, Cologne, 2008, pp. 7 ff.

Ten years or so later, Roos became increasingly upfront in the very title of the article *The Enigma of an Autumn Afternoon at the end of the Autumn of 1909. The Birth of "Metaphysical Painting" in the Artist's Documents*, in that he no longer declared: "the two paintings were executed during the period between the end of the summer 1909 and the end of the autumn 1909", but decidedly at the end of the autumn 1909 (p. 123). This adjustment was necessary as it is impossible to speak of the summer or end of summer 1909 as de Chirico's trip to Florence and Rome, which according to Roos and Baldacci inspired the artist, took place in October 1909 (see letter to Gartz December 27, 1909). Unfortunately, in his letter "dated" January 26, 1910, de Chirico actually said that he painted the works "in the summer".

<sup>9</sup> For example Baldacci states: "de Chirico was a Levantine [], if he could trick someone, he did so without scruple" (p. 28) *Savinio e il surrealismo in Alberto Savinio*, *cit.*, 2002; "Crocodile tears" (1997, p. 209), "Cunning" (p. 27), "Liar" (1999, p. 74) and "Mystifier" (a term used frequently). Baldacci makes a moral judgment on Giorgio de Chirico and his mother "The fact that no negative judgement is made with regard to his brother and mother's lack of moral character, is significant in itself" (1997, p. 20). Here, Baldacci interprets, in his own way and with dispraise, an amusing article written by Savinio entitled *Capelli* published in "Corriere d'informazione", November 24-25, 1942 in *A. Savinio, Opere – Scritti dispersi. Tra Guerra e dopoguerra* (1943-1952), Bompiani, Milan 1989, p. 603 ff. With regard to the above-mentioned epithet "liar" with which Baldacci "compliments" the Maestro who, in an interview by Simongini (produced by Rai in July 1973), would have falsely stated that he met Apollinaire "a couple of months before the start of WWI". Firstly, it must be observed that Baldacci erroneously quoted this statement, as de Chirico said "some months before the war" and not two months (which makes quite a difference if one takes into consideration the precision with which de Chirico, at eighty-five years of age, remembered an event which occurred sixty years earlier. It must also be noted that the letters de Chirico wrote to Apollinaire beginning on January 21, 1914 (published for the first time in this Periodical) reveal that at that time their personal acquaintance must have been very recent. The second letter, dated January 26, 1914 de Chirico expressed that his brother Alberto desired to make the acquaintance of the great poet. The hypothesis that de Chirico met Apollinaire in 1912 is thus extremely improbable. See *Letters by Giorgio de Chirico to Guillaume Apollinaire* in this Periodical pp. 589-622.

<sup>10</sup> G. de Chirico, *Méditations d'un peintre. Que pourrait être la peinture de l'avenir*, in Giorgio de Chirico, *Scritti/1 (1911-1945). Romanzi e scritti critici e teorici*, edited by A. Cortellesa, Bompiani, Milan, 2008, pp. 649-652.

<sup>11</sup> G. de Chirico, *La vie de Giorgio de Chirico*, published in *Sélection. Chronique de la vie artistique*, signed "Angelo Bardi", Éditions Sélection, Anversa, 1929, pp. 20-26. Now in Giorgio de Chirico *Scritti/1... cit.*, pp. 830-837.

<sup>12</sup> G. de Chirico, *The Memoirs of Giorgio de Chirico*, Peter Owen, London, 1971, p. 61.

<sup>13</sup> I thank S. Tusi for the Italian translation of Gemma de Chirico's letter written in French. I thank R. Dottori for the Italian translation of the letters written in German by Giorgio de Chirico and Alberto de Chirico. The English translation of the German letters was effected from the above-mentioned Italian translations.

<sup>14</sup> It is even more necessary to publish the letters to Gartz in their entirety due to the fact Baldacci did not publish them in his 1997 monograph. The author refers only to the letters which are important to demonstrate his thesis. The same is true for Roos' 1997 article, while in his monograph of 1999, which is less widely available than Baldacci's book, the letters were published in the Appendix but only in German (p. 422 ff). The letters are presented only in function of the development of the narrative through out the book.

This circumstance, which is of no small importance, has had the result of leading astray other authors who have studied the question of the year of the birth of Metaphysical Art in light of the documents discovered by Roos. In other words, the fact that these documents were not correctly examined at the time, has caused other scholars to accept as correct the date of the letter in question which Baldacci and Roos ascertain as January 26, 1910, without even doubting that the date was the effective date of the letter. This has caused another negative consequence as, in considering this date as correct, energy has unproductively been spent in producing the most diverse interpretations, such as sustaining that in this letter de Chirico was not speaking about the first two Metaphysical paintings *The Enigma of the Oracle* and *The Enigma of an Autumn Afternoon*, but rather of the so-called Böcklinesque paintings. This was indeed Roos' initial hypothesis put forth in 1994.

Calvesi, even recently, endeavoured to work out the contradiction regarding the identification of the 'most profound paintings' to which de Chirico referred to among the paintings executed during the Milanese period, as he was justly aware that Metaphysical Art came into being in Florence in 1910. *De Chirico "florentinus". Dalla metafisica (1910) al museo*, in *De Chirico e il museo*, exhibition catalogue Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, Rome, November 20, 2008 – January 25, 2009, Electa, 2008, p. 35 ff.

<sup>15</sup> The fact that these letters represent the complete correspondence dating to the Milan-Florence period from de Chirico to Gartz, who carefully conserved them, with photographs, is deducible not only due to a typical sense of order relative to his German character in keeping the material that was significant to him, including the letter from the artist's mother Gemma, dated July 7, 1908 (confirmed by the two lots sold at auction in 1979) but also because the two groups of letters that refer to two distinct periods July 1909 – April 11, 1910 and December 26, 1910 – January 28, 1911, are closely related with regard to content and fully develop the arguments treated. The correspondence between de Chirico and Gartz is rather meagre and essential. It must be noted that in the first postcard (July 1909) de Chirico wrote: "Writing a letter is very unpleasant for me and this is why I write very rarely" (letter n. 2).

The fact that Roos constructed a theory of supposed 'lost' letters to fill in the empty spaces in his interpretation (a presumption he makes without any documentary evidence) infinitely complicates the question, the solution of which is in plain view.

An additional five later letters that de Chirico sent to Gartz from Paris in 1912-1914 are published in the section *Letters from Giorgio de Chirico to Fritz Gartz. Paris 1912-1914*, pp. 568-579.

<sup>16</sup> It is useful to note that at the beginning of the last century the postal system was the only means of communication and that delivery time was extremely brief, especially in areas serviced by direct railway routes, so that a letter sent one day was delivered the next, and mail was delivered twice a day. It was possible, at least in Italy where this service continued until recent years, for one to mail a letter directly at the train station, or directly on a train. It was also customary to answer a letter immediately upon reception or the day after at the latest. In the postcard de Chirico wrote, which Gartz received on July 8, 1909, he told his friend: "I sent you a postcard a few days ago, but as I have not received an answer...". This is proof that it was customary to respond immediately. The de Chirico – Gartz correspondence exchanged from December 26, 1910 to January 9, 1911 is proof that at the time the postal service was extremely rapid. See also note 23.

<sup>17</sup> What de Chirico had created, developed and brought to fruition emerges with clarity in his letter full of enthusiasm and youthful impetus. There is no reference at all to his brother Alberto when the artist speaks about his paintings. Even the expression "Now I will whisper something in your ear" when he says that he is the only man who has understood Nietzsche ("all of my paintings demonstrate this") confirm the exclusive authorship of what he has created and developed. The explicit reference to Alberto with regard to music is evidence that he attributes to Alberto, even if not exclusively, the merit of the recent accomplishment. In fact, in the letter written on January 5 (letter n. 9) he specifies that it is Alberto's concert.

<sup>18</sup> The postcard written on April 11, 1910, which bears the studio address and not the home address, confirms the fact that the de Chirico family moved to Florence in the spring of 1910 according to their plan. Having only recently established

himself in Florence, de Chirico offers his friend a brief greeting together with a thank you and brief news, as if to break a period of silence, which had lasted over three months.

It is quite plausible that the de Chirico family were guests at their uncle and aunt's home, as the building the family lived in was large, and also due to the close relationship between Gemma and her sister-in-law Aglae. Such kindness could also be a form of gratitude for the fact that Evaristo de Chirico had supported his brother Gustavo over a long period of time.

Savinio also spoke of the moment they arrived in Florence at 7.40 a.m. and took a taxi directly to via Ricasoli where their aunt and uncle lived (Roos 1999, p. 354). It seems likely from this that the family did not move into the apartment in via Lorenzo il Magnifico immediately. This apartment was probably rented by Gemma de Chirico, who took her time and thought the situation through thoroughly, before doing so. Savinio's account regarding his uncle Gustavo makes one think that their stay at their uncle's house was a lengthy one (Savinio, *Casa – La Vita*, ed. 1988 pp. 313-326). Since the date accorded to the 26 *Januarii* 1910 letter has been proven invalid (this letter's date is in fact December 26, 1910), the studio address takes on greater significance, in that it was the address where de Chirico would have temporarily received his mail. The reason the de Chirico family moved to Florence, even if de Chirico stated that there was no specific reason, other than that what he says in his letter to Gartz (letter n. 4) that he had decided to move to Florence "as it is the city I like the most", and without considering the cultural character of Florence, this decision was also due to the fact that their uncle and aunt lived there. Their paternal grandmother and their father Evaristo had also lived at length in Florence.

In addition, it must be pointed out that the photograph Albert Savinio had taken of himself at the Ganzini photography studio in Milan and sent to his aunt and uncle with a dedication reading: "Mediolano III Gamelionis decade MCMX" is further confirmation that the de Chirico family was still in Milan at the end of January, beginning of February, 1910 (the month of Gamelion began on January 11-12 and ended on February 9, in 1910), contrarily to what Roos sustains (1999 p. 337). Regarding this photograph and the meaning of Gamelion, see Calvesi, 2008, p. 38. Additionally, with regard to the two photographs of Giorgio and Alberto dedicated to Fritz Gartz and his wife, and dated respectively "Milano MCMX" and "Mediolano Gamelione MCMX", it must be pointed out that what Roos affirms, in order to sustain his theory: "even though the two dedications were written in Milan, the photographs were sent from Florence to Munich, in the first letter of the year [...]" (*Ibidem*), is completely without documentary evidence.

<sup>19</sup> De Chirico states that he went to Milan in the summer of 1909, even though with uncertainty: "I believe it was the summer of 1909" [the date is erroneously written as '1910' in *The Memoirs of Giorgio de Chirico*, cit., p. 60, Ed.] It is reasonable to believe that the move took place at the end of May or beginning of June. De Chirico was precise to a point of being punctilious when making a reference. When he was unsure of what he was saying, he would admit it. When he didn't want to speak of an episode of his life, he remained completely silent.

<sup>20</sup> The philosophic content of the letters and the question regarding the so-called "poetics of Metaphysical Art" are dealt with in this Periodical by Riccardo Dottori in his study *From Zarathustra's Poetry to the Aesthetics of Metaphysical Art*, pp. 117-138.

<sup>21</sup> See E. J. Birkman, *La cronologia nel mondo antico*, Florence, 1963, p. 14 ff.

<sup>22</sup> The word "panettone" can not be translated into German, hence de Chirico used the term "Milanese speciality". The seasonal greeting of sending a panettone is still used today. This explains why the letter written on December 27, 1909 does not contain seasonal greetings. De Chirico is concerned whether the package he sent as a festive gift to Mrs. Gartz had arrived and if it was to their liking. The letter also constitutes an update of the activities undertaken during the first seven months spent in Milan that year (1909).

<sup>23</sup> "Dear Gemma, I thank you for your greetings and offer you mine for Christmas and the New Year, Aglae. Dear Giorgio and Alberto, my sincere greetings and thanks for the panettone. Aunt Aglae". The postcard is addressed to "nobil Donna Gemma de Chirico, via Petrarca 13 – Milano" and displays a shipment postal stamp "Firenze ferrovia 28/12/09" and the arrival postal stamp for central Milan the next day 29/12/09.

<sup>24</sup> The exhibitions foreseen and not held by Giorgio de Chirico, or those in which he did not participate, are reassumed with the following:

- a) participation at the Secession Exhibition, spring 1910 (letter of 27/12/09); he renounced his participation (postcard 11/4/10);
- b) exhibition of two paintings in Monaco in October 1910 (letter 27/12/1909);
- c) solo exhibition (with no specification of date or place, although he obviously refers to Munich) (postcard 11/4/1910);
- d) exhibition in Munich in the spring of 1911 (letter 26/12/1910: "When I exhibit them, possibly in Munich this spring" and the more decisive confirmation of this intention "I will be obliged to go to Munich at the end of March to see about my exhibition." (letter 03/01/09) and "I hope to come to Munich mid-March to see about the exhibition." (28/1/1911) The fact

that this exhibition was no longer held is presumably due to the lack of success of his brother's concert held in Munich on January 23, 1911.

<sup>25</sup> Besides the fact that it is not at the end of January that one sends greetings for the New Year, it is obvious that greetings for 1910 had already been made with the sending of the panettone to Mrs. Gartz and her husband, mention of which is made in the letter dated 27/12/1909 in which de Chirico asks for confirmation that they had received and enjoyed the gift. To think otherwise would mean de Chirico sent New Years greetings for 1910 **twice**. (end of December 1909 - end of January 1910).

<sup>26</sup> Calvesi, 2008, p. 36.

<sup>27</sup> If the letter had effectively been written on January 26, 1910, de Chirico would not have had to ask for forgiveness for not having written sooner since his last letter to Gartz was sent on December, 27, 1909. The fact that the letter is indeed dated December 26, 1910 is all the more reason to ask for forgiveness as *eight* months had passed from his last letter (11/4/1910).

De Chirico asks for forgiveness, explaining that unfortunately his "health" had not been good for a year. In the letter of 27/12/1909 he did not make any mention of his poor health, even if we know from his Memoirs that he had started to feel unwell during his stay in Milan.

The reference to his poor health is coherent with the period in reference: "[...] while staying in Milan, I had had serious intestinal troubles [...]; as a result, I did very little work. I did more reading than painting; [...]. In Florence my health grew worse. Sometimes I painted small subjects [...]" (*Memoirs*, p. 61). This last affirmation, which is clear regarding the sequence of events, also reveals that de Chirico painted with greater frequency in Florence than he did in Milan. De Chirico's health must have improved when he wrote his December 26, 1910 letter as the above-mentioned text of 1912 indicates: "I had just recovered from a long and painful intestinal illness".

<sup>28</sup> There is an obvious transformation with respect to his last letter (11/4/1910): "What I have created in Italy is neither very big nor profound (in the old meaning of the word), but formidable." He describes a radical change here and begins to use the adjective "formidable" instead of "profound". De Chirico uses the word "formidable" (in Italian "terribile") numerous times in his writings. In *Noi Metafisici* for example, this word is used six times. "Formidable" is a synonym to "metaphysical" for de Chirico: "They have come back here; they stand in front of the rectangles of their plates and their walls, having surpassed the contemplation of the infinite. The formidable emptiness discovered is the very meaningless and tranquil beauty of matter" and "In France the misunderstanding went so far as to attribute the invention of Metaphysical Art to the Germans and I remember the struggle I had to sustain to make them accept the formidable word that caused even the most sagacious to become suspicious." *Noi Metafisici in Scritti/1...*, cit. 2008, pp. 271-272 and 274-275. In addition, in the *Autobiography*: "There was no lack of envious and irate people who tried, brandishing the formidable word 'metaphysical' as the *corpus delicti*, to attribute a German origin to de Chirico's art" *ibidem*, p. 679.

<sup>29</sup> It is obvious that with "this spring" de Chirico refers to the exhibition he would like to hold in the spring of 1911. Indeed, he uses the term "*Januarii*" symbolically in the letter, for the month of January that closes the old year and opens the new. Sustaining, as Baldacci does (2008, p. 29, n. 12) that de Chirico wanted to exhibit *The Enigma of an Autumn Afternoon* and *The Enigma of the Oracle* in the spring of 1910 at the Secession exhibition (letter 27/12/1909), and then changed his mind (see letter 11/4/1910) to then change his mind again and decide to exhibit these works in the Secession exhibition of 1911, to then change his mind once more, seems in obvious contradiction to what de Chirico said, which is that he intended to hold a personal exhibition. De Chirico's consideration that his paintings were "too profound" for a Secession hall, was interpreted by Baldacci in reverse in saying that de Chirico renounced exhibiting these paintings a "second" time because in the meantime "According to modernistic and avant-garde concepts, his paintings were obsolete by then" (!), without taking into consideration that he would then exhibit them the following year, 1912, in Paris.

<sup>30</sup> Savinio had already written the Tonhalle in Munich with the help of his brother. At this point, Fritz Gartz's help proved timely. In his Memoirs, de Chirico recalls the episode regarding the concert: "While we were there [in Florence] my brother had the idea of going to Munich to have his music played in a concert hall." (p. 61) without mentioning the fact that the concert was supposed to have been held in Florence on January 9, 1911 and that everything was ready and the concert program already printed. The expression used by de Chirico "my brother had the idea" is a hint that the sudden decision on the part of his brother had met some resistance in the family. In fact, at only twenty years of age young Alberto's musical sensitivity must have been such as to judge a proven orchestra as "inept".

<sup>31</sup> The reference to the content of the 26/12/1910 letter is evident. Sustaining, like Roos does, that Gartz would have had to wait a year to listen to Savinio's music is pushing the question a bit too far. (Roos, 2008, p. 14).

<sup>32</sup> The exhibition was announced on January 15, 1908 by the mayor of Rome and the mayor of Turin. The Italian State was presenting itself to the Nations as a kind of test as to what Italy had achieved not only economically, but also culturally, in the first 50 years of existence.

De Chirico undoubtedly visited the fiftieth anniversary exhibition. As I have written on other occasions, the *Italian Piazzas* provided the then young Italian State with an official image. In 1971, de Chirico made a celebratory lithograph for the one hundredth anniversary of the Unity of Italy with an *Italian Piazza* in the background. The image is reproduced in *Giorgio de Chirico, Catalogo dell'opera grafica*, edited by E. Brandani, Ed. Bora, Bologna 1990, p. 157.

<sup>33</sup> In addition to Turin, even Florence organized an extraordinary exhibition at Palazzo Vecchio in April in line with its true vocation as an artistic city, entitled *Mostra del ritratto italiano dalla fine del XVI secolo al 1861* (Italian portraiture from the end of the XVI century to 1861) in which circa 800 works were exhibited. Regarding the three exhibitions see G. Treves, *Le esposizioni del 1911 – Roma, Torino, Firenze. Rassegna illustrata dalla mostra indetta nelle tre capitali per solennizzare il cinquantenario del Regno d'Italia*, Treves, 1911. With regard to the exhibition on Italian portraiture from the end of the XVI century to 1861, see N. Tarchiani *La mostra del ritratto italiano dalla fine del XVI secolo al 1861 in Palazzo Vecchio a Firenze*, in "Rassegna d'Arte", a. XI, May 1911, n. 5, p. 77 ff.

In an effort to sustain that the date of the letter is January 1910, Roos identified two exhibitions of secondary importance held in Rome and Florence in 1910 as the two exhibitions de Chirico had referred to in a general manner. (1999, pp. 366-367)

<sup>34</sup> Both de Chirico's handwriting and the photocopy quality of the letter, make it difficult to read the artist's affirmation regarding the size of his paintings: "My paintings are small (the biggest [is] 50 – 70 cm)" could also be read as "My paintings are small (the biggest [are] 50 – 70 cm)". In German: "*Meine gemaelde sind klein (die grosste 50-70 cm)*"; or "*Meine gemaelde sind klein (die groessten 50-70 cm)*". In the first case, the article is feminine singular, and thus would be a mistake on de Chirico's behalf as the word *gemaelde* in German is neutral (while the word 'painting' in Italian 'pittura' is feminine). De Chirico's written German is good, but he did make mistakes such as this. In the second possibility, if the last letter of the adjective *groessten* is a 'n', the sentence would be grammatically correct, although to the detriment of the logic of the affirmation in which the object is a comparison between the general size of the paintings, not the number.

In the case that the sentence was indeed "the biggest are", the hypothesis can be made that, in addition to *The Enigma of the Hour* (54,5 x 70,5 cm) already identified, his *Self-Portrait* (70, x 54 cm) was included in this group, and therefore that this painting was already planned by de Chirico, even if not completed at the time.

I thank A. Kalsdorf for the German language consultancy.

<sup>35</sup> Baldacci 1999, p. 68.

<sup>36</sup> A careful examination of the canvas shows that the date, even though slightly covered by the pass-partout, should in fact be read as 1910 and not 1911. The same question arises with regard to the date of *The Enigma of an Autumn Afternoon*. Regarding this painting, see Baldacci 2008, p. 27. n. 12. *The Enigma of the Hour* was exhibited at the Il Milione gallery in Milan from October 26 to November 15, 1939 and was recorded in the catalogue (n. 61) as 1910.

<sup>37</sup> Roos 1999, p. 361. The necessity to make facts and dates correspond has caused Baldacci and Roos to modify, for example, the date of execution of *Portrait of the Artist's Brother*, without realizing that they themselves are actually "dating" the work. *Portrait of the Artist's Brother*, which is marked with the place Mediolano and the date M.CM.X (proof that de Chirico was in Milan at the beginning of 1910), has thus been predated to 1909, with regard to which they affirm that the date was "probably added around the time of de Chirico's move from Milan to Florence in January 1910" (Baldacci 1997, p. 68).

<sup>38</sup> *Memoirs* p. 65

<sup>39</sup> Roos, 1999, p. 191, note 2. Roos thanks Baldacci for making him aware of something absolutely obvious: "that the signature was not by *Giorgio*, but by *Gemma de Chirico*". The two letters, the first by Gemma de Chirico dated July 7, 1908 and the 26 *Januarii* 1910 letter are published in facsimile in the section of plates outside the text p. 17 ff in Roos' monograph (1999).

<sup>40</sup> Calvesi came close to the solution of this small enigma, although he was misled by the incomplete information published and assumed the entire letter in question was in de Chirico's handwriting: "[...] the text is in German, but above his address (via Lorenzo il Magnifico 20 Firenze) de Chirico wrote the name of the city and the date in French: Florence 24 Juillet 1910 (the first peculiarity). He then changed the 24 to 26 and above the word "Juillet", which was weakly crossed-out, and wrote 'lanuarius' or 'Januarii' (and not 'Janvier' as Baldacci sustains, or the German 'Januar' as Roos holds true)". "Thinking that de Chirico made a mistake and, although the current date was actually January 26, he wrote July 24 and then immediately

changed the day and the month, seems absolutely absurd. No-one, at the beginning of the year, could believe that it was summer time" (2008 p. 38), and let us add, even mistake the day.

<sup>41</sup> In the 26/12/1910 letter, de Chirico expressed himself thus: "It brings me immense joy to have painted them. When I exhibit them, *possibly in Munich this spring*, it will be a revelation for the whole world."

<sup>42</sup> The second group of letters can be dated as such: letter n. 6, December 26, 1910; letter n. 7, December 28, 1910. Gartz's reply to this letter arrived on January 3, 1911, to which de Chirico replied immediately ("I received your letter today"), letter, n. 8; Instead, Gartz's answer to de Chirico's letter of December 26, 1910 arrived probably on January 4, 1911, crossing his letter n. 8 in the mail. De Chirico answered this letter the next day ("Yesterday, I thought of your brother's psychological drama almost all night long") offering condolences for the death of his brother, he then speaks of the profound music written by his brother Savinio and in conclusion, provides explanation to the objections Gartz must have raised. This letter is undated, but it can be considered as having been written on January 5 (letter n. 9.). The speed of the sending and the delivery of mail, as noted previously, was such that mail sent one day was delivered the next. Gartz answered de Chirico's letter of January 5, a letter to which de Chirico replied on the 8<sup>th</sup> (saying "I received your kind letter yesterday") (letter n. 10).

As indicated above, the de Chirico – Gartz correspondence is very intense as they were dealing with the organization of Savinio's concert in Munich.

This is not all. It must be observed that letter n. 9 (which we have dated January 5, 1911) contains a double pertinent reference: not only to the second letter of January 3, 1911 "If I had known, I wouldn't have bothered you with my second letter" but also regarding "the most profound music" of his brother Alberto which he had spoken of in his letter of December 26, 1910 (it is obvious that de Chirico was taking up an argument which had already been expressed). Sustaining, contrarily, that this letter was written on January 26, 1910 would mean that Gartz would have suddenly (after a year and without considering the postcard of April 11, 1910) brought this subject up in his reply, all the while dealing with the organization of Alberto Savinio's Munich concert. This seems truly illogical.

<sup>43</sup> Kurt took his life on December 23, 1910 in Berlin. On Sunday, December 25<sup>th</sup> an announcement was published in the daily newspaper "Berliner Tageblatt und Handelszeitung" morning edition, n. 654 year 39, indicating that the funeral would be held on December 27 at 2:30 p.m. The necrology reads thus: "Friday, December 23, death relieved our dear son and brother Kurt Gartz unexpectedly from his suffering in his 24<sup>th</sup> year of life. For relatives, Mrs. Marie Gartz born in Weichhardt. Friedenau, December 24, 1910, registr. 30. The funeral will be held Tuesday, December 27 at 2:30 p.m.; departure from the Jerusalemer Friedhof nella Bergmannstrasse funeral home." It can be supposed that Fritz Gartz returned to Munich on December 29 or 30, 1910. He must have therefore read both of de Chirico's letters, dated December 26<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> at the same time. He replied first to the letter dealing with de Chirico's request for help in organizing his brother Alberto's concert to be held in Munich.

<sup>44</sup> *Memoirs* pp. 55-56.

<sup>45</sup> Although rather convoluted, due to his intense shock and confusion at the news of the death of a dear friend (which even caused him to omit dating the letter) de Chirico's thoughts are fully understandable and are in fact perceived with great sensitivity by Fritz Gartz, who, in his reply (which de Chirico received on the 7<sup>th</sup> of January and which was also an answer to his letter of January 3), specifically asks about the meaning of his brother Alberto's "most profound music". To which Giorgio de Chirico replied that his brother would be able to answer his questions soon, in person.

<sup>46</sup> Baldacci, 1997, p. 100.

<sup>47</sup> *Memoirs* p. 61.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 60.

<sup>49</sup> Regarding the question of "the poetics of Metaphysical Art" see R. Dottori in this Periodical, pp. 117-138.

<sup>50</sup> Savinio "One day in 1937 in Paris, André Breton gave me a page he had written to read, which said that in the period just before the First World War, at the head of that form of art which would take the name surrealism, there was my brother Giorgio de Chirico and also myself. We two brothers were therefore the initiators, however innocent, of surrealism. Brothers of the same mother and father, and brothers in spirit as well as in flesh. How can one contest affirmations regarding a matter of surrealism made by its very leader and acknowledged theoretician? As far as I am concerned, I accept the affirmation but feel the need to comment on it. Surrealism, as far as I see and know, is the representation of the formless

or rather, of that which has not yet taken form; it is the expression of the unconscious or of that which the conscious has not organized. As far as my surrealism is concerned, if it is the case to call it surrealism, it is exactly the contrary of what has been said, because surrealism, as many of my writings and many of my paintings demonstrate, is not content to represent the formless and to express the unconscious, but endeavours to give form to the formless and conscience to that which is unconscious. Have I explained myself? In my surrealism there is a formative will and, why not also say? A kind of apostle-like aim. With regard to my "poetry" of my surrealism, it is neither gratuitous, nor does it have an end in itself, but in its own way is a "civic" poetry, in that it operates in a public spirit that is higher and vaster, or rather, a super public spirit". *Tutta la vita*, Bompiani, Milan, 1945 pp. 4-5.

<sup>51</sup> A specific, in-depth study of Savinio's activity is needed with regard to the first Parisian period, in consideration of the fact that Savinio only met Apollinaire at the beginning of February 1914, as the letters de Chirico wrote to Apollinaire, published in this Periodical, confirm. J. de Sanna's comments in *A Gambling with Intellectual Ownership*, are still valid with regard to this period. *cit.*, p. 311 ff.

<sup>52</sup> Interview with Giorgio de Chirico produced by Philippe Collin, filmed in Rome in March and October, 1971. Interviewer: "Avez vous subit l'influence de votre frère? Que vous aimiez je crois énormément? Giorgio de Chirico: "Oui. Non, mon frère ne m'a pas influencé ; je crois que moi aussi je ne ai pas influencé lui non plus. Nous avons travaillé chacun de son coté sans influence réciproque." Questions by Giuliano Briganti, Archives du XXème siècle, INHA Archives, Paris.