

## BIOGRAPHY FOR THE BIENNALE CATALOGUE

*Giorgio de Chirico*<sup>1</sup>

I don't think that any modern or ancient painter has had as many inexact, mistaken or even false things written or said about him as Giorgio de Chirico. It is true that he is a unique phenomenon in the entirety of modern painting; he attracts and sparks interest and friendship in those who understand and especially in those who have no bad moods to give vent to. Today, there is in fact a great genetic line of those who have bad moods to discharge, thus there are many who, faced with his strong personality, his complete independence of thought and action, the acumen of his judgement and especially with regard to the exceptional quality of his work and the untiring activity of his intense artistic life, become agitated, jitter, make faces and avoid contact.

This explains the continuous attacks, the hidden manoeuvres and the intentional silence of many people and of almost all of the official critics. Luckily for de Chirico, critics have very little influence today on the opinion and orientation of the public, especially with regard to the buyer. Giorgio de Chirico himself says laughingly that if the critics' influence was efficient, he should have already died of hunger at least ten times.

An artist in the deepest meaning of the word and indifferent to what is said about him, Giorgio de Chirico has always followed and listened to his own demon and done what he wanted to do and felt was his duty to do. He has never followed the latest modes, tastes, fashions and movements. He has always judged and always judges the events and men of his time and of other times according to his own personal criteria. The convictions he has formed and the conclusions he has arrived at are fruit of his very personal judgement, therefore, one could say that Giorgio de Chirico is an anti-conformist par excellence.

Some, due to dishonesty and others to superficiality or ignorance, have created the myth of his two styles: Metaphysical Painting and the way in which he presently paints. Many look at a painting of recent make and with ignorance or malignity declare with candid airs, but Maestro, have you changed your manner? To such people, one could respond by showing them reproductions of self-portraits, landscapes and still-lives executed in 1918 and 1919, that is, 38 years ago, and

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<sup>1</sup> Text by Giorgio de Chirico, signed Isabella Far with handwritten note by the Maestro: "Text by Isa for the 'Biennale' catalogue". Typescript datable to 1956 for the XXVIII Biennale and published with slight modifications and with the addition of the works at the exhibition, pp. 48 ff. The Giorgio and Isa de Chirico Foundation Archives.

tell them that it is impossible to speak of a new manner when, already at that time, Giorgio de Chirico produced works based on the canon of great painting. The legend of Giorgio de Chirico's repudiation of Metaphysical Painting was created afterwards. Now, our Maestro is ready to bet 5 million against 5 lira with whoever can prove to him that he reneged Metaphysical Painting. At times, chuckling quietly under his breath asks, but why don't they say that Picasso reneged his harlequin or acrobat period?

And so, de Chirico is similar to one of those famous musketeers or swordsman, who when attacked by more than one adversary, put their back up against a wall in order to hold them off and smite them all by himself.

Giorgio de Chirico has always considered quality the most important element of painting. He has developed themes and subjects which are absolutely characteristic to his imagination and his faculty of invention. Although above all, he has always endeavoured to paint well.

In painting his mannequins and his Italian piazzas, his archaeologists, his gladiators and his mysterious baths, his trophies and his ancient horses etc. etc. he knew that the subject in a painting is of secondary importance and that a work of art possesses multiple values of which the greatest is the excellence of its quality.

The subject, even if interesting, can not completely satisfy a true artist. Through his evolution, de Chirico has gained a greater understanding that only a painting which contains a profound pictorial value can be considered a real and true work of art. All the rest is nothing more than episodes of intellectual adventure that can also be curious and interesting at times, although this happens very rarely, but that have nothing to do with the fundamental values of painting.

Over the course of his evolution, Giorgio de Chirico has grasped even more deeply that the high quality of painting, the conquests resulting from long and systematic work and a certain intelligence regarding the art that one exercises, can only truly and completely manifest themselves in the representation of concrete images that show the reality that we commonly know, but corrected, purified, perfected and idealised by the magic of art.