

LETTERS BY GIORGIO DE CHIRICO TO JULIEN LEVY
1938-1948¹, PERTAINING TO THE TEXT:

MILAN – PARIS – NEW YORK, 1938
A MISSED EXHIBITION

Katherine Robinson

1. Postcard (25 January 1938)

Mr. Julien Levy 15 East 57 Street New York (E. U. d'Amérique)

Postmark: X.I.1938

All the best from Isabella

I hope things are improving in New York

Paris 25 Jan. 37

Dear Mr. Levy,

I am in Paris for a couple of days. Here, the price of my paintings has risen a lot. Generally speaking my position in Europe has improved 100%. Can you imagine that in Italy, nine business deals were proposed to me in the space of a week. I am going to return to Milan now, to work on a number of commissions. I will send you my address from Italy. –

There are almost no paintings of mine on the market in Paris. –

Cordially yours,

G. de Chirico

2. Handwritten letter (21 April 1938)

Milan 21 April 38

Dear Mr. Levy,

I am in Milan, but only for a few more days as at the end of the month I am going to Paris.

I exhibited by work in Milan with success and sold many works; I had also planned an exhibition at Renon and Colle but postponed it as the situation in Paris is very bad. In June there will be an

¹ In the spring of 2009, the Jean and Julien Levy Foundation for the Arts, Newton, Connecticut, donated the Julien Levy archival papers to the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Pennsylvania, where they are presently conserved. The letters by de Chirico are handwritten in French.

exhibition of mine in London. My prices in Europe have gone up and I want to keep there at all cost. I have heard and read in the newspapers that the situation in America is very bad. It is a real shame that a big and rich country like America cannot find its balance. – If you have sold anything of mine please send me the money with a cheque payable at a bank in Paris, to the address I will give you in this letter.

Will you come to Europe this year; where are you planning to go? We will be in Paris until 15 July. – I hope to have news from you and I send you my most cordial greetings, and those of Miss Pakszwer.

Yours,

Giorgio de Chirico

Chez Mons. Magnelli

20 Villa Seurat

(100 rue de la Tombe Issoire)

Paris

3. Postcard (7 June 1938)

Letterhead paper: Victoria Palace, 6, Rue Blaise Desgoffe, Paris VI^e

S.S. Normandie via Havre

Mr. Julien Levy 15 East – 57 Str. New York City (Amérique)

Postmark: 7.VI.1938

Paris 7 June 1938

Dear Mr. Levy,

I did not receive an answer to the letter I wrote you from Milan. –

I am in Paris at the address of this hotel until 1 July. I hope to see you in Paris; in the meantime, please give me news of my paintings.

I have been told that things are not going well in America. In any case, if you have sold anything, please send my part in dollars in a cheque payable in Paris.

Sincerely yours,

G. de Chirico

4. Handwritten Letter (25 October 1938)

Letterhead paper: Victoria Palace, 6, Rue Blaise Desgoffe, Paris VI^e

Postmark: 27.X.38

All the best from Miss Pakszwer

Paris 25 Oct. 1938

Dear Mr. Levy,

I have written twice to you this last summer, but I have not received an answer from you. I hope you are all right. As for me, I am settled in Paris again. I exhibited my work with great success in Italy, in Paris and in London, and did some work for the theatre. If you have sold any of the paintings I left with you, please send my part in dollars in a cheque payable in Paris. – I would also like to ask you if you would be willing to organise an exhibition of gouaches and small paintings of mine sometime around May next year.

I hope I will receive news from you this time.

Cordially yours,

Giorgio de Chirico

5. Handwritten letter (26 November 1938)

Letterhead paper: Victoria Palace, 6, Rue Blaise Desgoffe, Paris VI^e

Paris 26 Nov^{ber} 38

Dear Mr. Levy,

I received your kind letter. – I am happy you want to hold an exhibition of mine in May; as I think there will probably be quite a lot of movement in New York for the great American Exhibition of 1939. – I would like to hold a retrospective exhibition with paintings from all periods, well chosen and handsomely framed; I will also get hold of a few of my paintings from before the war (I found a number of them in Italy). I think we could do some very good business and I would come for the exhibition; I count on arriving in New York during the first half of April. –

In December there will be a small exhibition of mine at Seligmann's. Please do not get upset about this, as I had promised to exhibit in his gallery when I was still in America. This does not exclude the exhibition I want to do with you, which I want to prepare very well. –

Please send me a contract-letter (you can write it in English) stating the date and conditions of the exhibition. –

Sometime between the 3 or 5 May, to 25 May 1939, would be good. –

I await your letter.
Cordially yours,
Giorgio de Chirico

P.S. If you have sold anything, please send my part in dollars in a cheque payable in Paris. –

6. Handwritten letter (27 December 1938)

Letterhead paper: Victoria Palace, 6, Rue Blaise Desgoffe, Paris VI^e

Paris 27 December 1938

Dear Mr. Levy,

I did not receive an answer to my last letter. My exhibition that was to take place at Seligmann's this month will not take place. This can only be to the advantage of the exhibition we are planning to hold in the spring. This is why I would like you to write me something definitive; please also tell me if you have sold any of the paintings that I left you. I count on being in New York towards the end of March or the beginning of April. I will entrust this letter to Jolas who will be coming to see you. – Awaiting news from you dear Mr. Levy, I am, cordially yours,
Giorgio de Chirico

7. Handwritten letter (18 January 1939)

Letterhead paper: Victoria Palace, 6, Rue Blaise Desgoffe, Paris VI^e

Paris 18 January 1939

Dear Mr. Levy,

I would like to ask a great favour of you; it concerns twenty paintings (gouaches and paintings) that I sent to New York for an exhibition that was to take place at Seligmann's gallery (3 E. 51 Street) and which, as I have already written to you, did not take place. Properly stored, they should not take up much space in your gallery; they could be included in the solo show I will be holding in May and in the meantime, you could show some of them to your clients. I will attach a list of the paintings with the numbers, titles and price in dollars. I do not know if these paintings are still in customs or at the shipping company that works with the company that sent the paintings from Italy, but in any case, all the papers are with Mr. Seligmann and I am including a letter for him so that you can pick up the paintings. I hope you are willing to do this favour for me. The shipment has been paid to New York. There will naturally be some expenses with customs, crate depositing, etc; but this will not be very much; if you would kindly write to me and let me know what expenses you have incurred I will reimburse you with a cheque to New York.

Please let me know as soon as possible if you cannot or do not want to do what I am asking of you so, if necessary, I will be able to ask someone else to take care of it.

Sincerely yours,
Giorgio de Chirico

8. Handwritten letter (7 February 1939)
Letterhead paper: Victoria Palace [cancelled]

Paris 7 February 1939

Dear Mr. Levy,

By now you will have received my letter in which I wrote about the paintings that I have asked you to pick up at Seligmann's so they can be exhibited in your gallery next May. – On the back of this letter I wrote a detailed list of the paintings with the numbers and price in dollars. This week I am leaving for Italy where I will stay for two months. As you know, it is difficult to write from Italy for various reasons; this is why I am not giving you an address in Italy, but I ask you rather to write to me at the address of a friend of mine in Paris, who is taking care of my business: here is my address in Paris: G. de Chirico c/o Magnelli, 20 Villa Seurat (100 rue de la Tombe Issoire) Paris.

From Italy I will send another 8 or 10 paintings from the periods of 1913-1915 and 1925-1930. I do not own these paintings but they will be lent to me to be shown and eventually sold in America. – A friend of ours, Mrs. Wagner, who lives in New York will come and meet with you to talk about the price of the paintings that you will be receiving and other matters. –

We must endeavour to prepare my exhibition so that it will be successful. – If by chance, you have sold anything of mine please deposit the money in the account of Miss. Isabella Pakswer at the Chemical Bank (Waldorf Astoria Office).

I hope to have good news from you.

Cordially yours,
Giorgio de Chirico

List of gouaches and paintings

N°	315	<i>Wandering Horseman</i>	(gouache)	Dollars	150
	26	<i>Landscape on the Seine</i>	(oil)		350
	283	<i>Phrygian Horseman</i>	(gouache)		300
	316	<i>Man Watering his Horse</i>	(gouache)		125
	312	<i>Summer Evening</i>	(gouache)		150
	111	<i>Horses with Green and Red Covers</i>	(oil)		500
	98	<i>Two Horses</i>	(oil)		350
	101	<i>Summer Evening</i>	(oil)		500
	324	<i>White Horse</i>	(oil 1938)		600

	242	<i>Antique Horses</i>	(oil 1938)	800
	89	<i>Men with Horse</i>	(gouache)	300
	325	<i>Two Horses (Temple in Flames)</i>	(gouache oil)	350
	309	<i>Phrygian playing a Horn</i>	(oil)	300
	269			
	310	<i>Man Watering his Horse</i>	(oil)	400
	34	<i>Italian Convent</i>	(oil)	600
	317	<i>Marina</i>	(oil)	250
N°	227	<i>Italian Riviera Landscape</i>	(oil)	Dollars 600
	83	<i>Phrygian in a Storm</i>	(oil)	350
	332	<i>Roses</i>	(oil)	150
	76	<i>Laocoon</i>	(oil)	200

The number of each painting is written on the back of the stretcher.

9. Postcard (15 March 1939)

Mr. Julien Levy 15 East 57 Street New York City (S. U. d'America)

Milan 15 March 1939

Dear Mr. Levy,

I am in Milan for a solo show. At the end of the month I will be in Paris again where you can write to me as usual at Magnell's, 20 Villa Seurat. Before leaving Italy I will send you 5 or 6 more paintings from the pre-war period and 1927-1928. –

Sincerely yours,

G. de Chirico

10. Postcard (17 April 1939)

Mr. Julien Levy 15 E. 57 Str. New York City (S. U. d'America)

Postmark: 17.IV.X

Milan 18 April 39

Dear Mr. Levy,

I am in Milan but in a few days I will be leaving for Paris. I think it would be better to postpone the exhibition that you wanted to hold in May, to November or December, as I hear that business in

America is not good at the moment, and in the autumn I will be able to come to America; I am unable to do so now. Write to me in Paris chez Magnelli 20 Villa Seurat.

All the best,

G. de Chirico

11. Handwritten letter (18 April 1939)

Milan 18 April 1939

Dear Levy,

I have just received your letter about the exhibition. I have already written to you on the subject. I am really sorry but I feel it would be too risky to come New York this spring; I have been advised by many not to go as business in America is bad due to the international situation, on top of this, I am afraid to incur a lot of expenses and not earn enough; you know how much the trip costs to America and the living expenses there. In addition, two people, here in Italy, who were supposed to sell me and loan me a number of old paintings are not in Milan at present; I can only meet with them in July; so I would like to postpone the exposition to November or December; if business is better in America then, I will come to New York, in any case by that time I will surely be able to send you some paintings from 1913, 1925 etc. – Now, if you have already announced the exposition and if postponing it to the autumn complicates your program, hold the exhibition all the same with the paintings you have on deposit and the paintings you retrieved from Seligmann; these are not big things, but are very sellable; there are also the two beautiful paintings of horses from 1928; by adding the canvases and gouaches of mine that are at your gallery and by borrowing two or three paintings from collectors, you could put together a fine exhibition. – In the end, do as you think best. –

I will be leaving for Paris in a few days where I will stay until July. Will you not be coming to Paris? Write to me as usual at Magnelli, 20 Villa Seurat.

I hope you will not be angry with me; I would be devastated. – I await a good letter from you.

Sincerely,

Giorgio de Chirico

12. Handwritten letter (13 January 1940)

Milan 13 Jan. 40

Dear Levy,

Today I received a letter from Carnegie Institute from which I understand that you cannot keep the painting I had sent to this institution. – So I ask you to do me a favour and send this painting to

me with those you got back from Seligmann's last year as well as those I left you upon leaving New York. – Only, it is necessary and very important that the paintings are embarked on an Italian boat taking the New York – Genoa route, that is, one of the three transatlantic ships: *Rex*, *Roma* or *Conte di Savoia*. –

For the packing and shipping expenses to the boat – as I have already written, you can compensate your costs through a sale, or by keeping one of the gouaches that you have of mine. Or otherwise, I can reimburse you myself with the sum of 50 Italian lira a month; this is the maximum that can be sent from Italy. –

But I ask you to do this so that the complication of my paintings comes to an end.

And please write to me telling me clearly what you have done and what the exact situation of my paintings is. I have settled in Milan for the time being and am working a lot. I count on remaining here until the situation in Europe clears up. – Later on we can hold a fine and complete exhibition of my work at your gallery. –

So, write to me, dear Levy, and give me news of you and of your work.

Cordially,

Giorgio de Chirico

Via Gesù 4 – Milan
(Italy)

13. Handwritten letter (31 January 1940)

Milan 31 Jan. 1940

My dear friend,

Here is "the artist certificate" you asked me for. There is also a list of the paintings. There are n° 20 paintings, between gouaches and oil paintings, almost all of which are framed. These are the 20 paintings that I ask you to return to me because I can no longer keep them in Italy². –

I beg you to be careful that the paintings are embarked exclusively on one of the big Italian transatlantic ships: *Rex*, *Conte di Savoia*, or *Roma*, because they have to come from New York to Genoa or Naples directly. Please take care that no mistakes occur that could cause me serious problems.

Regarding the painting I sent to Carnegie Institute, I wrote to them asking for it to be sent to you and from the answer they gave I understood that you are unable to keep it, so I told them to keep it.

It appears that America is literally flooded with paintings from Paris nowadays. The collectors must be suffering from indigestion from them. In reality, I am happy to be here, where there is a lot of interest and appreciation for my painting. I am working a lot and making great progress. I believe that presently, I have managed to become the best modern painter.

² Probable error by de Chirico who wrote "Italy" instead of "America".

I regret not seeing you. You know that despite the things separate us, I have high regard for you and like you very much. Let us hope that times will clear up and that we will be able to work together again. Regarding other matters, which would be too long to explain in a letter, there is a friend of my wife and I, Mrs. Herta Wagner, whom I believe you know. She will come and see you and you can do as she tells you.

Write to me, cordially yours,
Giorgio de Chirico

Via Gesù 4 Milan

14. Handwritten letter (8 October 1946)

Rome 8 October 1946

Dear Friend,

In the event that you have sold something of mine please deposit the sum of the sale in the account of Giuseppe Bellini – Manufacturers Trust Company – 741-5th Avenue. –

I hope you are well. As for me, I am working a lot and have made great progress. – I may come to New York with my wife at the end of the winter.

My fondest memories, and those of my wife,

Yours,

Giorgio de Chirico

Via Mario de Fiori 28 –

15. Handwritten letter (12 October 1946)

Rome 12 October 1946

Dear Friend,

Forgive me for bothering you again with my personal business, but something has happened that obliges me to do so.

Contrarily to what I recently wrote you, I ask you not to give anything (neither my paintings, nor sums deriving from sales) to Mr. Acquavella – and nothing to Mr. Bellini either. –

You would be most kind to hand the paintings of mine that are at your gallery, with the total of whatever has been sold, if there is anything, to Mr. Alexandre Jolas of the Hugo Gallery – 55 Str., naturally, he will take it upon himself to get in contact with you.

I hope my letter is not too late. –

Thank you. With my best memories,
Yours,
Giorgio de Chirico

16. Handwritten letter (undated but datable to the beginning of 1948)³

Monsieur Julien Levy New York

Dear Friend,

It is a long time since I have heard from you. I hope you are well and happy with your work. – I wrote a small introduction for the painter Usellini who will be exhibiting at your gallery. – I have also asked Usellini to bring me my paintings that are at your gallery, thus I ask you dear friend to be kind enough to give the paintings belonging to me that you have in your gallery. Usellini will give you receipt. –

I hope that if you come to Italy you will come and see us. I live in the centre of Rome: n. 31 Piazza di Spagna; I have an apartment with a studio. I am working a lot and am executing works of exceptional quality.

I hope to have news from you. I send my best greetings, and those of my wife.

Yours,
Giorgio de Chirico

17. Handwritten letter (2 December 1948)

Rome 2 December 1948

Dear Friend,

I have hired the New York shipping firm Gondrand to collect all of my paintings that are still in America and send them to me in Rome. I urge you, when the Gondrand employees come to you, to give them my paintings left in your gallery since 1937. –

I hope you are well and that we will have the pleasure of seeing you sometime in Rome. –

All the best, also from my wife,

Yours,
Giorgio de Chirico

³ The exhibition *Gianfilippo Usellini, Paintings*, was held from 23 March to 10 April 1948. There is no trace that a catalogue was published on occasion of Usellini's exhibition, nor was a text by de Chirico found in the Levy archive.