

Giorgio de Chirico

Letters to André and Simone Breton

Rome

December 5, 1921

On writing paper with
the heading "La Ronda"

Dear Sir and friend,

*I received your very amiable letter, and it was a great consolation. I thought that that there were 3 or four people who wanted to buy these paintings but since it is you, I accept the 500 francs which you propose and hope that you will send them to me as soon as possible by check on a Rome bank; if you do not delay, I may be able to take advantage of the exchange rate which is quite favourable right now. My dear friend, with these 500 francs I will be able to work in peace for at least 40 days without thinking about anything else but painting, and I hope to produce at least two paintings of note to the history of art and of ideas. I am sorry to have to speak to you of such vulgar questions as money but I don't know why destiny has turned against me in the past few years; the more I advance in years and perfect myself, the more I feel that people turn against me and unfavourable circumstances and bad signs trace ugly spirals around me; I am —unfortunately!— not used to this; I have never to this day met a man or a woman with whom I could be sincere or into whose eyes I could look being sure of our value; with whom I could speak without hesitation or spite or walk together in the world and in life content and at ease in the serenity of alleviated distress and quiet curiosity. I would like to get to know you personally, my dear friend; and I would like to know your work; send me your books (I have not yet received the issue of *Littérature*) and a photograph. I will send you a reproduction of a Self-portrait. Thank you also for having insisted to Guillaume that he should hold a show of my works, but I doubt that he will do so. I asked him to send me some money and he responded with a letter written in such a tone that in a moment of anger I sent him a response full of insults. Afterwards I was sorry, but what's done is done. I would also be very thankful, my dear friend, if you know Rosenberg if you would speak to him of me and write to me if there are any prospects with him. I could send him photographs of my latest work. I am working a lot, even though I am practically homeless, and it is thanks to the generosity of friends that my easel and my canvases have the honour of a roof over them. I see Ungaretti regularly and he speaks often of you. Yet again, my dear friend, I thank you for your kind words; write to me when you can and I will do the same and perhaps one day we will meet in France or in Italy.*

Yours, G. de Chirico

"La Ronda", Trinità dei Monti, 18, Rome

Rome, January 12, 1922

My dearest friend,

*Thank you for your very kind and encouraging letter. Now, I count only on you. Publish my letter in "*Littérature*", but correct the style; I am very happy and flattered to be published. I will send you the portrait I spoke of before; it's a small painting, only the head, but*

it is a very precious, important object; I hope to be able to send it to you by post. Regarding the earlier works, the poissons sacrés have been sold, but I could send you "Le Revenant"; my monograph includes only a drawing of this work. I will send it to you in a week because it is quite large and in addition it is not at my place but in storage with a dealer; I will send both to your address; about the price, I would ask 600 francs for the portrait and 1,000 for "Le Revenant". Is this too much? In any case I leave it up to you to negotiate with whoever wants to buy them; I understand the importance of this and am extremely grateful. I have decided to come to Paris, hopefully in the first days of April; if this gentleman buys these paintings it will be a great opportunity, because I will be able to pay for my trip and the first days in Paris. I read your book and your texts in "Littérature", and I hold you in high regard and feel great love for you; I expect great things from you for art and for this renaissance (I must use this word) which we are working towards and for which we sacrifice ourselves. But I will write to you at length about all of this, my dear friend, of your poetry, of what I think, of my goals, etc., in a special letter which I will send you soon. I am writing an article for the journal "Valori Plastici" about the technical side (which is closely linked to the lyrical side) of my present work; I will translate it into French and send it to you. Send me the new issue of "Littérature." When will Paul Guillaume put on the show of my works? I wrote to him but he has not answered; I will try to be in Paris the first days of April and I will bring with me some new paintings which I would like to have included in the show. Whenever you can send me the 200 francs, it would be very much appreciated. Thank you my dear friend. I clasp your hand and am off to send the portrait. I have not yet had photos taken. But as I want to come to Paris I think that it would be better to bring the paintings directly to the dealers. It is difficult to manage these things from a distance.

Your friend, G. de Chirico

"La Ronda", Trinità dei Monti, 18, Rome

My dear friend,

I didn't write to you because I was expecting the letter you announced in your dispatch; your long silence worries me. I hope your health is not the cause. Yesterday, I received the issue of "Littérature"; thank you for everything you are doing for me; I was moved and happy, and I want to tell you also that your "dreams" are extraordinary; I have never read anything so much like a dream in the most metaphysical and solid sense. How is the exhibit of my works at the Guillaume gallery doing? I am waiting for payment of the sale to Doucet in order to come to Paris. I hope my dear friend that you will send it as soon as possible. Send me half and I will collect the other half once I am in Paris. Send some copies of "Littérature" to the Libreria Internazionale Saeber. Via Tornabuoni. Firenze. Write soon.

My warmest salutations, Yours, G. de Chirico

Say bello to Guillaume and tell him not to forget me.

"La Ronda", Trinità dei Monti, 18.

André Breton

42 rue Fontaine

Paris

Rome, March 25, 1922

André Breton
42 Rue Fontaine
Paris

Rome June 17, 1922

My dearest friend,

I received the money. You needn't wire me, my dear friend; I appreciate your haste and your looking after me. However you've forgotten again to send me the money by check; even though I'd written to you about it several times; because through the post, I lose 100 Italian lire out of 1,400 francs. In any case, let's speak no more about this disagreeable subject. I would like to know how the two paintings I sent you are doing; are they well framed? What do people think of the painting? I hope M. Doucet will take more care of my canvases than that agitated scamp Paul Guillaume; it truly upsets me to think of all those paintings which represent a very characteristic period of my artistic life, in the hands of this man who has no faith or modesty; but this will serve as a lesson and from now on I will take care not to make contracts and will sell my paintings at value, to the first bidder. I've pushed back my trip to Paris for several reasons; I am afraid that I will not find a place to stay, that I will spend too much and waste time; and today what a painter needs is work and continual progress; this is what I am doing. Luckily, after my return from Florence where I had a great success and sold a few paintings, I have been able to move into a studio left for me by a sculptor friend. I work there for about 10 hours a day; the place is romantic and full of kind demons; it is on the Campidoglio, on the foundations of the Temple of Jupiter in the middle of a park of oaks and laurel. I hope that by the end of this year I will have painted several canvases with profound ideas and I hope to paint according to what I consider to be my concept of good painting; I continue my technical experiments and discover new secrets which have been lost for a long time. I will send you photos of my latest works; would you like to reproduce them in "Littérature"? Also, tell me my dear friend whether you might be able to get me invited to the Salon d'Automne. Send me your news and the magazine. I still have the same solitary life and your friendship – even at a distance – is a consolation. Send my greetings to M. Paulhan; we often speak of you with Ungaretti. My brother also sends his greetings; he is working on a book and he hopes that it will be translated into French. I hope that your wife is better now. Will you ever come to Italy?

*Thank you again, my dear Breton
Write to this address; the studio address is too complicated.
Your friend, G. de Chirico*

André Breton,
42 Rue Fontaine, Paris;
forwarded to
24 Rue Admiral Courbet,
Lorient-Morbihan

Rome August 16, 1922

My dearest friend,

Why have you not written? I've again decided to come to Paris and this time I think it will happen. I am planning to depart on October 1. Would you have the kindness of letting me know how one lives today in Paris; will I be able to find a furnished or unfurnished apartment, a studio or a place to work? I want to go at any price, this time. Will you be in Paris in October? What is Guillaume up to? I will write to him and I hope he will answer. I await a good and encouraging response.

*Your friend, G. de Chirico
"La Ronda", Trinità dei Monti, 18*

My dearest friend,

**Florence August 16,
1923**

I have just received your letter here in Florence where I've been for the past four months. I had to leave Rome because I couldn't find a studio; luckily a friend of mine in Florence (who has become my patron) offered me his hospitality at his charming villa on the banks of the Arno; I can work here, and, taking advantage of the proximity of my favourite masters, continue my studies of figural technique. Your letter pleased me greatly. I have been thinking of you and was planning to write to you now that I am less worried about the material problems of life. I am very touched, my dear friend, by what you tell me in your kind letter. I do not know if I deserve such esteem and admiration. I have become a bit sceptical about questions of life and art, without having lost any of my lyrical self. But the exaltation of my early years has cooled somewhat; in the end, to be honest, I tell you frankly that today the only thought that dominates my mind and sharpens my determination is: to paint well. Even so and notwithstanding when words of esteem and friendship come from one such as you, whose mind and creative possibilities I am well aware of, I can only accept them with joy. I will gladly do three drawings for your book. I think that the best would be a photograph; plates are only necessary when the paper of the book is not good for reproducing photographs. I ask only that as soon as the drawings have been photographed you send them back to me to the following address: Castelfranco-Lungarno Serristori 1 Firenze, because I have signed a contract with this gentleman which obliges me to give him everything I produce (paintings and drawings).

I will try to send you the drawings as soon as possible.

I will be in Florence all of August and perhaps until September 10; then I will return to Rome where happily my brother is doing well and working and has been able to rent an apartment.

Ungaretti is also working and is about to publish a book of poetry; Savinio is about to publish two books: a novel, and a collection of philosophical writings.

Please write to me, my dear friend, I clasp your hand affectionately,

Yours, G. de Chirico

Villa Castelfranco, Lungarno Serristori, 1 Firenze

**André Breton,
42 rue Fontaine, Paris**

**Rome, September 19
1923**

My dearest friend,

Please excuse me for taking time in sending you the drawings. It has been impossible to do something original expressly for the book. I'm sending you three photographs of drawings which have never been seen publicly before, and which, I believe, will serve your purposes. Please do not be upset that I did not do something original; first of all, I wasn't exactly sure what you needed, as I haven't seen the book; and then there was resistance on the part of the person who is subsidizing me to the idea of my sending original drawings outside of Italy. But I am sure these three plates will do and this will also save you

the expense and time of having photographs made. I assure you that these drawings have never before been seen publicly and I chose them from the most characteristic group in my early style.

Write to me, my dear friend, and send me your books. I am permanently settled in Rome. I clasp your hand cordially.

*Your devoted, G. de Chirico
Via Appennini, 25b, Rome
(each photograph has a title written on the back)*

André Breton
42 rue Fontaine
Paris

Rome, September 21
[1923]

My dear friend,

I received your reproachful letter. You are right, but at the time I could not send you anything else and I thought that those photographs would do.

Understood, then: I will do three new drawings, in pencil or ink, in the style of my last paintings and I will send them to you as soon as possible, please have the patience to wait at least a week and above all, do not be angry; I have enough enemies in my own country and don't need more abroad.

*Your very devoted,
G. de Chirico*

André Breton
42 rue Fontaine, Paris

Rome, November 5
[1923]

My dear friend,

I have not yet heard from you about the drawings I sent you by registered mail. What is the reason? I hope you are well and that I will hear from you soon.

*Yours, G. de Chirico
Via Appennini 25b
Rome*

André Breton
42 rue Fontaine
Paris

Rome, November 18
1923

My dearest friend

I have only now received your letter because you did not use the address I sent you. I am sorry that the drawings can not be reproduced. Please keep them, my dear friend, I would like to give them to you, it's really nothing. I have received a notice from the post; I imagine it is the drawings that you've returned to me. If so, I'll send them to you tomorrow.

Thank you for the purchases you mention, I will send you some photographs soon along with some prices, including the price for "Muses inquiétantes". Send me your book or books. I am your very devoted friend,

G. de Chirico, Via Appennini 25b, Rome

My dearest friend,

The price for the "Muses inquiétantes" is 2,000 lire (1,900 French francs). I will send you the photographs of my latest paintings with the dimensions and prices the day after tomorrow. Write soon. I am your devoted

G. de Chirico, Via Appennini 25b, Rome

Ungaretti and Savinio send their best wishes. I received your letters. Thank you for everything. I will send what you ask for.

Dear Madam,

As soon as I received your lovely letter, I wrote to my friend in Florence, Mr Castelfranco, who owns "Muse Inquietanti", urging him to give you the painting at the price you propose of 1,200 francs. He may complain about the poor exchange rate – the franc is losing value – so that 1,200 francs may only be worth 1,200 Italian liras; but rest assured that I shall do everything possible to obtain for you the painting at 1,200 francs. I haven't had any news of André Breton in a long time. I hope he is well and that he is not angry with me. I still would like to know if he has decided to buy the painting, "La partenza dell'avventuriero". The other one, "L'après-midi d'automne" doesn't belong to me anymore. Please do say hello to André Breton for me. I shall be writing to him soon, and I wish to send you my most respectful greetings,

*your most faithful servant, G. de Chirico
Via Appennini, 25b, Rome*

Dear Madame,

I received your kind letter and also Breton's book: Les pas perdus, and I thank you for your interest in me. As for the purchase of the two paintings, the situation is as follows: my friend in Florence will not sell the "Muses" for less than 3,500 Italian lire; and as for "Pesci sacri", belonging to Signor Broglio, I believe he is asking 500 Italian lire. If you would like an exact replica of these two paintings, I could do this for 1,000 Italian lire

**André Breton
42 rue Fontaine
Paris**

**Rome, November 21
1923**

**Rome, February 23
[1924]**

**Madame André Breton
42 rue Fontaine Paris
[letter formerly believed
to have been sent to
Gala Eluard's address]**

Rome, March 10, 1924

each. These replicas will only bear the defect of being executed with higher quality and more knowledgeable technique. I hope, dear Madame, to hear from you soon. With my greatest devotion,

*Yours, G. de Chirico
Via Appennini, 25b*

André Breton
42 rue Fontaine, Paris

Rome Monday June 23
[1924]

My dearest friend,

Today my brother, Alberto Savinio, left for Paris where he will stay for about a week. He would like to have the pleasure of meeting you; I gave him your address. Would you have the kindness to receive him next Thursday afternoon, June 26th, at your house? Best wishes,

*Your friend, G. de Chirico
Via Appennini 25b*

André Breton,
42 rue Fontaine, Paris;
forwarded to
Hotel Chateau Chorene,
Alpes Maritimes (France)

Rome September 9
1924
[Illegible stamp]

My dear Breton,

I have waited in vain for a word from you. I know you are very busy and I am not reproaching you. Only, I ask that you not forget to send me the 500 francs. For the painting that is at your house. They would be of great use right now. I am coming to Paris at the end of October. I'm counting on your friendship. My best wishes to Madame, your (believe me) devoted

*G. de Chirico
Via Appennini 25b*

André Breton
42 rue Fontaine
Paris

Rome, December 2
[postmarked January
2nd, 1925]

My dearest friend,

I need your help with something very urgent and I hope you will be so kind as to do as I ask. My friend in Florence, M. Castelfranco, is gathering material for a monograph; we would like it to appear before the Rosenberg show; the only photos we still need are the ones from my Paris period; Ten would be enough. I already have "Cerveau de l'enfant" but I need the mannequins you have and architectural paintings; please send me all the photographs you have right away; I give you my word of honour that they will be returned to you in good condition as soon as the plates are made. If you could get some photographs from Guillaume that would also be very good; just don't tell him that it is for a monograph; otherwise he will never hand them over. I have not yet received the magazine.

*I am working a lot and I think that my new paintings would surprise you. Send news.
Best wishes to you and Madame and to our friends.*

*Your devoted, G. de Chirico
Via Appennini 25b
Happy new year.*

My dear friend,

In vain I have waited for the photographs I asked for; really I can not understand why you have not sent them. I know that you take great care of your photographic collection but I promised you, on my honour, that I would return them in good condition as soon as the copies are made. By tarrying you endanger the success of my monograph; in addition, my dear friend, it seems to me that it is also in your interest that this monograph included paintings from the Parisian period, since you own a significant number of these paintings.

I beg you then to send me ten photographs, as soon as possible. I will also be very happy to have news from you and to know how your magazine is doing; I have not yet received it but I imagine it has come out.

*Best wishes, G. de Chirico
Via Appennini 25b*

My dearest friend,

I received your reproachful letter; I had not noticed an unfriendly tone in my letter; this must be a result of my very approximate knowledge of the French language. I received the photographs; I have not yet received the magazine; please send some copies to the following address: Libreria La Modernissima. Via delle Convertite, Roma. They will be sold; they are eagerly expecting them. I am working a lot, but I don't have any drawings; I will send you 2 or 3 photographs of my latest paintings if you would like them for the magazine; I will be in Paris around April 15; my show at Rosenberg runs from May 5 to May 30. Pirandello is creating a completely modern theatre here; they will do 2 plays by Savinio, Niobe, for which I am designing the sets, and another work without music entitled Le Capitain Ulysse for which I am also designing the sets. Now that you are better, write to me sometime and tell me what you are doing.

*Yours, G. de Chirico
Have you gotten anywhere with Doucet?*

**André Breton
42 rue Fontaine
Paris**

Rome, January 10, 1925

**André Breton
42 rue Fontaine
Paris**

Rome, January 19, 1925

André Breton
42 rue Fontaine
Paris

Rome January 30th
[1925]

My dearest friend,

Today I sent you eight photographs of my latest works. I hope they will interest you and that you might be able to use some of them in the Magazine; I received the "R.S." sent to me by Madame Eluard. It's really very very, very good; very new, suggestive, encouraging, exciting. It is too bad that we don't see it in the Italian bookshops; launch it well; my brother and I will do everything to make it known here; we will dedicate an issue of the "Rivista di Firenze" to your movement. I also read the very good articles written by you and Desnos, Aragon, and Elaurd, for our magazine. It will be out soon. Send me a note and say bello to our friends.

*Yours, G. de Chirico, Via Appennini, 25b
Best wishes from Savinio*

André Breton
42 rue Fontaine
Paris
Rome, August 3, 1925

My dearest friend,

I received the "magazine" — thank you for thinking of me — and thank Morise as well for me. I regret only that you and your friends insist on recognizing only my work from before the war. You speak of me as a painter who in his earliest youth had a few moments of inspiration and then nothing. It is not so, my friend, it is not so, I assure you. But in any case, in these matters discussion is futile. I have decided to move to Paris. I will come at the end of October. I would appreciate if you would send me the 500 francs I asked for the Still life that is at your house. I do not want to sell anything right now because I want to bring everything I produced this summer with me to Paris. If you see Eluard, please tell him not to forget me. Many thanks in advance. Best wishes from my brother,

*Yours, G. de Chirico
Via Appennini 25b
My best wishes to Madame.*

Letter by Massimo Bontempelli to André Breton with a presentation by Giorgio de Chirico

André Breton
42 rue Fontaine, Paris
Hotel Bisson, 37 Quai de
Grands Augustins, Paris II

Paris, March 23, 1924
[postmark]

Sir,

Before leaving Rome, my friend Giorgio de Chirico gave me this note for you : be assured me that you would not be surprised by the sorry state of the note. I leave the responsibility of this affirmation to him. Even so, as I am very interested in meeting you, please let me know if I may come to see you some day and at what time.

*With my greatest regards,
Massimo Bontempelli*

I present to you my friend Bontempelli, a very talented writer. G. de Chirico