

## GIORGIO DE CHIRICO – JULIEN LEVY ARTIST AND ART DEALER. SHARED EXPERIENCE

*Katherine Robinson*

One afternoon in the late autumn of 1930, while Julien Levy was busy planning the imminent opening of his gallery, he looked up from his work and saw a disparate collection of rulers and compasses hanging on the wall in front of him. These technical instruments, with which he was executing the gallery's architectural design, were casually positioned above a table upon which the remainder of a snack had been left: a couple of cookies and some wrapping papers. By means of this apparently accidental arrangement, Levy realized in a flash of intuition that a *Metaphysical Interior* by Giorgio de Chirico was in the process of inaugurating the gallery, well before the official opening. The aspiring art dealer considered the event a portent of good fortune and it is on this note that he began to tell the story of his gallery in *Memoir of an Art Gallery*.<sup>1</sup>

In the city that was to become the next capital of modern art after Paris, Julien Levy was debuting as an art dealer at twenty-four years of age.<sup>2</sup> When Giorgio de Chirico crossed the Atlantic at the end of the summer of 1936 to prepare his solo exhibition at the Julien Levy Gallery at 602 Madison Avenue, he had just turned forty-eight. In his pioneering endeavour to introduce the contemporary art of Europe to the American public, the young art dealer was guided by an inherent gift of sensitivity and intuitive discernment, not only for the art forms of his time but specifically concerning his relationship to individual artists.<sup>3</sup> A special rapport was to develop between Giorgio de Chirico and Julien Levy; although not necessarily intimate, it was one of trust and reciprocal esteem, qualities that are perceived in the written memoirs of both these protagonists.<sup>4</sup> Levy considered de Chirico to be one of the principal founders of 20th century art.<sup>5</sup> He recognized the pioneering value of his early meta-

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<sup>1</sup> J. Levy, *Memoir of an Art Gallery*, G. P. Putnam and Sons, New York, 1977, p. 12: "The discovery of such a ready-made paraphrase would auger well for my commitment. In such enigmatic still lifes the seed was germinated for the beginnings of the art of our day." Republished by MFA Publications, a division of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston 2003, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 13: "My dream was that America, so common-sensical, my country of pragmatism, would see more of that undoing (or should I say unravelling?) in my gallery if my efforts might persist over the next several decades. Such avant-garde experiments in remaking the whole face of modern art had been exhilarating in Europe in the early 1920s, but I had been too young and too far away to participate. Now they might be given continuity closer to home, and the thirties promised to be just as fabulous, and the forties, too, if rather more distantly fearsome."

<sup>3</sup> From the gallery's opening in 1931 to its closure in 1949, the numerous artists and photographers who exhibited at the Julien Levy Gallery include: Eugene Atget, Berenice Abbott, Eugène Berman, Alexander Calder, Massimo Campigli, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Jean Cocteau, Joseph Cornell, Salvador Dalí, Paul Delvaux, André Derain, Marcel Duchamp, Max Ernst, Leonor Fini, Alberto Giacometti, Arshile Gorky, Frida Kahlo, Fernand Leger, Mina Loy, Rene Magritte, Maholy-Nagy, Man Ray, Lee Miller, Pablo Picasso, George Platt Lynes, Georges Rouault, Pierre Roy, Arthur Stieglitz, Yves Tanguy, Pavel Tchelitchew.

<sup>4</sup> The chapter regarding Giorgio de Chirico in Julien Levy's *Memoir of an Art Gallery*, cit., is published in this Periodical, pp. 707-715.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 12: "Discrete discontinuity: de Chirico in Italy, Paul Klee in Germany, Picasso in Spain and Marcel Duchamp in France had since the year 1910 and thereafter, been preparing the future; each was about to undo his genius to find out how it ticked."

physical work and expressed great admiration for *Hebdomeros*, the artist's only published novel at the time. It is probable that, in Levy, de Chirico saw a spirit uncontaminated by a certain prejudice regarding his work, which was diffused among the principle players of Paris's art milieu in those years. For this and other reasons, the idea of exhibiting his work in New York was without doubt a prospect de Chirico would have found attractive at that moment of his career<sup>6</sup>, although, as we shall see, the collaboration between artist and gallery owner would not be exempt from misunderstandings resulting from their own ideas and aspirations, nor from preclusions orchestrated by third parties.

At the beginning of the 1930s, the majority of artists represented at the Levy Gallery lived and worked in Paris. In 1933, Julien Levy entrusted the representation of his gallery to poetess Mina Loy, who had the responsibility of dealing with the artists, choosing the artwork and organizing the shipments to the gallery twice a year in September and January, as well as keeping him informed of the latest artistic developments in the French capital. Mina Loy, who also happened to be the mother of his beautiful young wife Joella<sup>7</sup>, was someone in whom Levy had great trust and in addition to bestowing upon her *carte-blanche* in the choice of the artwork, he also encouraged her to look for new talent to exhibit. Mina would prove to be a sensitive filter for the humours of Paris's artists, as she confided their difficulties and precarious living conditions to her son-in-law, information she shared with a dose of psychology and an acute sense of humour. The two sustained a tight correspondence, exchanging letters two or three times a month.

Mina Loy's long letters, with flowing script spilling into the margins of the pages, contain conversations held with artists, technical information on practical matters as well as accounts, personal anecdotes and at times, news regarding the current political situation in France, which she related with irony. Once the gallery was up and running, Julien Levy's letters were frequently typewritten and along with detailed operative information, contain reflections on his life and work shared with Mina with honesty and humour. It is within this collection of correspondence that we find the first traces of a proposal for an exhibition of Giorgio de Chirico's work in the United States.<sup>8</sup> When the artist entered the picture, the planning was also influenced by the delicate context he was facing at the time on the Parisian art scene, a situation he tried in every way possible to prevent from being exported with his paintings. By following the tracks of the three-way correspondence between Mina Loy, Julien Levy and Giorgio de Chirico, this study endeavours to shed light on the preparation of the exhibition *Recent Paintings by Giorgio de Chirico*, inaugurated at the Julien Levy Gallery on October 28, 1936.

<sup>6</sup> From the mid 1920s, de Chirico's work was exhibited in a number of group exhibitions in the United States and in Canada. At the end of the decade four solo exhibitions were held in New York: *Paintings by Giorgio de Chirico* January 23 – February 19, 1928 and *Recent Paintings by Giorgio de Chirico* December 31, 1928 – January 26, 1929, Valentine Gallery, New York; *Paintings by de Chirico* May 20 – June 5, 1930, Balzac Galleries, New York; *Paintings by de Chirico* October 15 – November 15, 1930 Demotte Gallery, New York.

<sup>7</sup> Julien Levy and Joella Sinora Haweis were married in the summer of 1927 in Paris.

<sup>8</sup> The correspondence consulted in this study is part of the Julien Levy Archive of the Jean and Julien Levy Foundation for the Arts, Newtown, Connecticut. Founded after the death of Julien Levy in 1981 by his widow Jean Farley Levy, the Foundation's objective is to promote the memory of the art dealer and gallery owner through its support of projects related to the arts, particularly those relating to education. The organizing and archiving of the Julien Levy Gallery papers was curated by Marie Difilippantonio, to whom I owe my sincere gratitude for her generous collaboration and inestimable assistance. The Julien Levy Archival papers are published courtesy of the Jean and Julien Levy Foundation for the Arts. As of Spring 2009, The Julien Levy papers will be held in the Archives of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Pennsylvania.

The first suggestion of an exhibition of Giorgio de Chirico's work in New York did not originate with Julien Levy, nor was it an idea of Mina Loy's but, rather, was proposed by an art dealer by the name of Pierre Colle in the autumn of 1933.<sup>9</sup> At the time, Levy was already dealing with de Chirico's work with Mina's collaboration. In a typewritten letter written on gallery stationery – 'Julien Levy Gallery, 602 Madison Avenue, New York' – Levy wrote to his mother-in-law at the end of 1933 to tell her that a painting promised to an American collector would be consigned to her by Serge Lifar.<sup>10</sup> In a second letter dated December 20, 1933<sup>11</sup>, Levy instructed Mina to pay Lifar 4000 francs if the painting had been delivered, specifying, for its identification, that it was reproduced in the *Collezione Lifar* catalogue published by Quatres Chemins.<sup>12</sup> The painting in question, *Evangelical Still Life*, 1916, appears in the catalogue on plate I with the title 'Construction' (fig. 1 *Evangelical Still Life*).<sup>13</sup> With these instructions, Levy included another piece of information: "And now that I have given you all this marvellous work as my agent, please do not be upset if you hear that Pierre Colle says that he also is my agent. He proposes to collect two exhibitions for me next year which neither you nor I can easily get, and in a long conversation explained that he would have to perhaps term himself my agent to have authority in assembling those particular shows, and I agreed to back him that far. In fact he may prove quite useful, and if not I can always cancel him. He agrees to submit all the pictures to your approval (a la Berman) before sending anything on, so that you are my personal representative and his Gallery is my Gallery agent".<sup>14</sup> The news of the partnership between the two art dealers spread quickly in the French capital's artistic milieu. On January 5<sup>th</sup> Mina answered his letter and informed him that it seemed to her the news was the talk of the town, because when she went to Quatres Chemins to pick up a copy of the Lifar catalogue, the man with whom she spoke had asked "waving and eye-browing", if it was true.<sup>15</sup>

It was not long before Mina expressed her preoccupation with Colle's intervention in Levy's affairs. A woman of great intuition and common sense, she asked her employer how there could be any profit for an artist if his paintings had to pass through the hands of two art dealers.<sup>16</sup> She wondered if Colle was sincere or whether he was using Levy as a springboard to launch a business

<sup>9</sup> Levy met Pierre Colle in Paris in the summer of 1931 while Colle was preparing the first of two solo shows of Salvador Dalí held in 1931 and 1932 at his gallery in rue Cambacères. Through Colle, Levy met Dalí and successively held his first solo show in the United States in his New York gallery from November 21<sup>st</sup> to December 8, 1933. From this first encounter, Colle and Levy were to become associates. See J. Levy, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

<sup>10</sup> J. Levy to M. Loy, undated, copy of typewritten letter, Julien Levy Archive.

<sup>11</sup> J. Levy to M. Loy, December 20, 1933, copy of typewritten letter, Julien Levy Archive.

<sup>12</sup> *Collection de peintures de nos jours appartenant a Serge Lifar, a propos de l'exposition alla Galerie Vignon, Décembre 1929*, Éditions des Quatres Chemins, Paris, 1929, with texts by Jean Cocteau, Waldmar Georges, Serge Schoukine and B. K. In addition to *Evangelical Still Life* (with title 'Construction') the works by de Chirico included in the collection are: *Idéal*; a second opera entitled *Construction*; *Rideau pour le ballet 'Le Bal'* (plate II); *Décor pour le ballet 'Le Bal'*; *Détail pour le ballet 'Le Bal'* and *19 Costumes pour le ballet 'Le Bal'*. *Evangelical Still Life* was sent from Paris to Julien Levy in the January 1934 shipment. On February 26<sup>th</sup> Levy confirmed reception, adding that the sale went through "at a very nice price". The painting was bought by Sidney Janis, New York. In 1933, after having exhibited the *Serge Lifar Collection* comprising over 160 costumes and stage sets from Diaghilev's *Russian Ballets* in his gallery from November 2 to 18, Levy dealt with the sale of the collection, including 23 drawings, watercolours, gouaches e temperas by de Chirico of stage sets, costumes and backgrounds for *Le Bal* and *Bacchus et Ariane* to Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut. See E. Gaddis, *Magician of the Modern, Chick Austin and the transformation of the arts in America*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York 2000, pp. 222-224.

<sup>13</sup> The consecutively numbered figures pertain to images found in the Italian text *Giorgio de Chirico – Julien Levy. Artista – Gallerista. Esperienza Condivisa*, in this Periodical, pp. 293-325.

<sup>14</sup> In addition to his collaboration for a de Chirico exhibition, in a letter dated September 19, 1933, Pierre Colle proposed an exhibition of objects and drawings by Jean Cocteau. Handwritten letter, Julien Levy Archive.

<sup>15</sup> M. Loy to J. Levy, January 5, 1934, handwritten letter, Julien Levy Archive.

<sup>16</sup> M. Loy to J. Levy, January 25, 1934, handwritten letter, Julien Levy Archive.

of his own in America. She pointed out to her son-in-law that the agreement he had illustrated to her contradicted the actual situation in Paris: Colle had closed his gallery at the end of 1933 and was about to leave for America, a country that “delighted” him and in which he believed there to be a better working environment. Mina began calling him a nuisance, saying that he had begged her to come and see him, yet, when she arrived, had said absolutely nothing, trying instead to get her to talk about Levy’s business.

During the months that followed, Mina’s letters contain her careful consideration of the state of affairs and relate the current confusion in Paris regarding who exactly represented the Levy gallery. In these letters she beseeched Levy to provide her with precise indications on Colle’s role in relation to the gallery. With regard to the de Chirico exhibition, Mina assured Levy that his gallery had gained such a level of fame in Paris that he would have no trouble at all in obtaining “Cocteau’s & early de Chirico’s without Colle”.<sup>17</sup> The affirmation is important not only with regard to the reputation the Levy Gallery benefited from at the time, but more importantly for the specific indication that they were interested in acquiring paintings from de Chirico’s early metaphysical period. It is within this division of the Maestro’s periods of research that the dynamics of the moment developed, the implications of which were grasped by Mina with acuity and handled with her increasing capacity for public relations. The poetess added that she met the painter Giuseppe Capogrossi when he was in Paris, indicating that he was a “great pal” of de Chirico’s.

In an undated letter subsequent to this matter, Levy answered: “about Colle, I wouldn’t worry for the moment. I knew that he was planning to close his Gallery, and knew that he hoped to return to New York. I understood that he was only returning to N.Y. for a few weeks. His idea is to buy and borrow pictures and sell them both in Paris and N.Y. without keeping a Gallery. Therefore I was to be his Gallery address in New York and receive a percentage for anything of his property that may be sold here. Independent of that, with or without a percentage to Colle depending on the individual circumstance, he is willing to assemble for me in Paris anything that I might request that he could collect, because of his closer touch with the Galleries etc. over there, collect in some instances more easily than you could. [...] At any rate, after knowing him better, I believe that he is much too pleasant and lazy to be the rascal he looks. About de Chirico’s I am very anxious to give an exhib[ition] next year if the very newest de C’s are very good, and [an] exhib[ition] of the early de C’s which I think marvellous, and the newest de C’s to prove that he is still working and consequently still interesting, skipping the middle ‘pot boiler’<sup>18</sup> period of 1923-33 horses and all. Colle was to report to me all the old ones he might find. I am also getting some on this side. Would be delighted if you could get a line on others through Capogrossi. Have myself written to Chirico (through Léonce Rosenberg) re. the recent work, but perhaps Capogrossi could better that? And by the way, how is Capogrossi’s painting? His own I mean?”<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> M. Loy to J. Levy, January 19, 1934, handwritten letter, Julien Levy Archive.

<sup>18</sup> ‘Pot-boiler’ is a pejorative term referring to an artwork of scarce quality, rapidly executed by an artist in order to earn a living.

<sup>19</sup> J. Levy to M. Loy, undated letter, copy of typescript letter, Julien Levy Archive.

Julien Levy's positive attitude toward Colle was undoubtedly due to their winning collaboration for the recent Dalí exhibition at Levy's gallery.<sup>20</sup> In his memoir, Levy writes that Colle had sent him his first Dalí exhibition, with no guarantee of sales on his side, no money up-front, the shipment pre-paid and the paintings framed. All he had to do was sell out the show, which he did.<sup>21</sup>

The month of January was not yet over when Mina Loy provided Levy with a rundown of her visit to the home of Dalí and Gala, whom she found in great shape due, in her opinion, to the success of the recently closed New York exhibition. Mina related that Gala had spoken about Colle, a fact she admits had not surprised her. She informed Levy that Dalí had terminated his verbal agreement with Colle at the end of 1933 and that the artist intended to deal directly with Levy in the future. During her visit, Mina noticed two de Chirico paintings hanging on the wall and had asked herself if she had indeed found where the de Chirico exhibition might be coming from (at the time Dalí was in possession of a considerable number of works by the artist).<sup>22</sup> Gala seemed to have read her mind, and mentioned that Pierre Colle had gotten in touch with her regarding the possibility of a de Chirico show. Gala also informed her that Levy had suggested the idea when he visited them the previous year. She expressed her gratitude to Mina for all Levy had done for them and added that the art dealer did not realize the fame he had acquired in Paris, and that, in her opinion, he could obtain any exhibition he wanted with a simple wave of his finger. The very first mention of a meeting between Levy and the Dalís is found in a letter the art dealer wrote to Mina a year and a half earlier, on June 9, 1932, in which Levy wrote: “[I] visited Dalí and Gala Eluard yesterday. They have a lovely apartment with some of the best Max Ernst's and de Chirico's. They will sell [the] de Chirico's quite cheaply and I arranged to wire for any that I might want in the course of the year. Lunched with Leger who was amusing and cheerful”.<sup>23</sup> (figs. 2 and 3).

At the beginning of April, while updating Mina on their current projects, Levy provided a list of collectors who owned de Chirico paintings, citing Colle, Dalí and Breton, as well as the galleries of Paul Guillaume and Léonce Rosenberg, specifying that those of Rosenberg were for the most part, of the “bad period”.<sup>24</sup> On May 24<sup>th</sup>, Mina informed Levy that an exhibition of de Chirico's recent work was about to open<sup>25</sup>, which she intended to see and would let him know what the paintings were like, informing him that they were unanimously considered to be “too foul to be possible”, although adding that she did not know anything yet. She mentioned she had seen a few paintings at Rosenberg's gallery, which she had considered not very good.<sup>26</sup>

In a letter dated July 25, 1934, the poetess referred that a few days before during a visit to Léonce Rosenberg's gallery, he mentioned in a serious manner that he had heard Levy was in business with Colle and how he found this very strange, specifying that he liked to do business with serious com-

<sup>20</sup> See note 9.

<sup>21</sup> Levy, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

<sup>22</sup> M. Loy to J. Levy, January 25, 1934, handwritten letter, Julien Levy Archive. Mina identifies the paintings as being of the same period as the one from the Lifar collection, which she was about to send to Levy (*Evangelical Still Life*, 1916).

<sup>23</sup> J. Levy to M. Loy, June 9, 1932, copy of typewritten letter, Julien Levy Archive.

<sup>24</sup> J. Levy to M. Loy, April 2, 1934, copy of typewritten letter, Julien Levy Archive.

<sup>25</sup> *Giorgio de Chirico – Oeuvres récentes*, May 25 – June 1934, Galerie Paul Guillaume, Paris.

<sup>26</sup> M. Loy to J. Levy, May 24, 1934, handwritten letter, Julien Levy Archive.

panies. Rosenberg told Mina that a few months earlier de Chirico had come to see him, furiously declaring that Colle had taken six paintings from him for the Julien Levy Gallery which he had not managed to get back.<sup>27</sup> Mina also informed Levy that she had met with de Chirico and had obtained very good terms. During their meeting, which presumably was their first encounter<sup>28</sup>, de Chirico suddenly said: “I must tell you that a certain Colle has already approached me for the Julien Levy Gallery”. Mina answered that if that was the case, it would be better if she did not interfere, to which de Chirico answered: “Oh, he never came back”. Mina suggested de Chirico come to an agreement with him if Colle were to return within a reasonable period of time, as both she and Colle represented the Julien Levy Gallery. She confided to Levy in the letter that de Chirico, like other artists, had expressed a preference of dealing with her rather than with Colle, but that, as she wanted to be discreet, she had told him it would be possible only if Colle did not get back to him. At this point de Chirico, who was probably confused about how to proceed, answered that Colle had come to him as Julien Levy’s representative and obtained six paintings that he had not managed to get back. Mina, trying to be as precise as possible, had asked him if the paintings were destined for the Julien Levy Gallery, to which de Chirico had apparently shrugged his shoulders and said “for this gallery and two others”. In his pitch to de Chirico on the prospect of an exhibition in New York, Colle had apparently told him that Julien Levy was a boy whose father had forty million dollars. Possibly with this idea in mind, the artist suggested to Mina that it would be a good idea if Julien Levy bought all the paintings outright, an idea which, as Mina referred to her boss, she promptly “nipped in the bud”.

By chance, a few days later Mina ran into de Chirico, who informed her that he had seen Pierre Colle, who had confirmed the double representation of the Levy gallery. De Chirico specified that he had come to an agreement with Colle. But the situation seems to have changed very quickly, because on July 30<sup>th</sup> Mina wrote Levy saying she had just received a letter from de Chirico informing her that he had cancelled the exhibition Colle had proposed (scheduled for the autumn of 1934), and asking if he could have an exhibition in 1935, instead. It would seem that de Chirico had realized the complexity of preparing an exhibition in such a short time and had opted not only for a later date, but also for more direct contact with the gallery. But as we shall see, his true motivation proved to be other than a mere question of practicality. A few days later, he took the situation into his own hands and wrote directly to the art dealer in New York:

Paris, July 30, 1934<sup>29</sup>

Sir,

Since last fall, I have been talking with Pierre Coll regarding the possibility of holding a personal exhi-

<sup>27</sup> M. Loy to J. Levy, July 25, 1934, handwritten letter, Julien Levy Archive.

<sup>28</sup> See below, letter G. de Chirico to J. Levy, July 30, 1934.

<sup>29</sup> G. de Chirico to J. Levy, July 30, 1934, copy of handwritten letter in French, Fondazione Giorgio e Isa de Chirico Archives. This letter is one of a group of 12 handwritten letters from Giorgio de Chirico to Julien Levy, dating from 1934 to 1948, and the French manuscript of de Chirico’s introduction to Leonor Fini’s exhibition held at the Julien Levy Gallery. These documents were found in a trunk in an outbuilding on Julien Levy’s farm in Connecticut, after the property had been sold. The trunk was discovered during the demolition of the building. The correspondence and the manuscript, which are not part of the official Julien Levy Archive, were sold by auction by Sotheby’s in Paris in December, 2007. All of de Chirico’s letters written in French, which this article refers to, are transcribed in this Periodical, many of which are also reproduced as images, pp. 645-678.

bition of my works in your gallery. It was Pierre Coll himself who proposed it to me. But I haven't managed to settle anything definitely yet. I also made the acquaintance of Madame Looyd<sup>30</sup>, and she too, asked me to have an exhibition in your gallery after she saw my exhibition at Galerie Paul Guillaume in May. But I was unable to get what I wanted from this woman either, that is, a letter from you guaranteeing the exhibition and setting the conditions and the date. Both Pierre Coll and Madame Looyd proposed a date for the coming fall. I would prefer to it to be later on, that is, not before March 1935. Therefore, I thought that by addressing myself directly to you, I would be able to obtain a clear idea of what it is I can count on because, before making other arrangements, I would like to know if I can or cannot count on an exhibition in your gallery. If March doesn't work well for you, it could be held in February, but any earlier would be impossible for me.

I ask you, Sir, to please be sincere and let me know if by chance you absolutely cannot hold my exhibition, because in that case, I will have to consider other offers which have been made to me. But I do not hide from you that I would like very much to hold an exhibition with you, as I have heard from a number of people the most flattering things about your gallery.

While waiting to read a letter from you, I ask you, Sir, to accept my distinguished greetings.

Giorgio de Chirico  
9 rue Brown Séquard  
Paris XV

Levy answered Mina's letter of July 25th as follows: "Disregard Colle. If anyone asks about him you can say that he is not my representative but merely authorized to suggest shows to me that I couldn't get without him, and if I accept his proposal he assembles that show as a commission agent (e.g. Bérard). As a matter of fact I have heard nothing from him. Have written to him that I have completed my schedule without him, only saving open a date for a Bérard show that I still hope for but do not count on. Will wait until that is settled before giving him final demission. Can not believe that he does me any real harm. He is more futile than evil, and that kind of sloppiness destroys its own credit faster than another's. Paris is quick to gossip and quick to forget. The Cocteau show I had already refused. Tell de Chirico that I wrote him care of Rosenberg long before calling in Colle. de Chirico never answered. Colle offered to establish contact. He did bring over six de Ch's last winter, not enough for a show, but I tried to sell them on the side. Unsuccessful – they were bad pictures. There were two at which I had nibbles and suggested Colle leave them with me over the summer. C. said he would have to get permission from de Chirico. He wrote, I saw the letter. By the time Colle was leaving N.Y. he had no answer from de Ch. And so would not leave any of the pictures with me. Took them back with his stock. The rest is between him and de Ch. Assure Rosenberg that I am not Colle's partner. Shall I write to R. myself? He is a more important dealer than Colle and I want to keep relations with him."<sup>31</sup>

<sup>30</sup> The lack of an 'e' at the end of Pierre Colle's name is an error that is also seen in Mina Loy's letters. The spelling of Mina's Loy's name is somewhat more complicated. Born Mina Gertrude Lowy, the poetess chose 'Loy' as her professional name. Her second husband's name was Fabian Avenarius Lloyd, in art known as Arthur Cravan. Mina chose to use her married name 'Lloyd', because she felt that 'Loy' was held within it. De Chirico makes the simple mistake of doubling the vowel 'o' instead of the consonant 'l'. See: C. Burke *Becoming Modern. The Life of Mina Loy*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 1996.

<sup>31</sup> J. Levy to M. Loy, undated, copy of typewritten letter, Julien Levy Archive.

Before dismissing Pierre Colle from this historical reconstruction, it must be said that the two art dealers remained in good relations and in his memoir Levy speaks of him as a person of great perception and honesty who became his close collaborator in Paris, while Levy acted as Colle's non-official partner in New York. Their collaboration seems to have continued for many years.<sup>32</sup> The fact Colle was not involved in the organization of de Chirico's exhibition is due not only to de Chirico's decision not to work with him, but also to a more complex situation in which Colle found himself unable to act. Budget permitting, Julien Levy would go to Paris each year to take care of gallery business and acquire paintings. During his visit in 1932, Levy had mentioned to Dalí that he would like to exhibit some of the de Chirico paintings in his collection. It seems Dalí was willing to provide him with works in his possession as well as those in Paul Eluard's collection. Levy had then explained to Mina that he had found the prices too high and that Colle had offered to find less expensive ones.<sup>33</sup> While summing up the situation in July of 1934, Mina pointed out to Levy that Dalí and Eluard owned the majority of de Chirico's early works and since Dalí had refused Colle the possibility of handling them, Mina asked Levy how it could be possible for Colle to find less expensive works, if it was indeed the early paintings he intended. It is obvious that Levy did not possess enough elements to judge the situation from afar, had overestimated Colle's ability to act and underestimated Dalí's strategic position with regard to the collections of early de Chirico paintings at the time.<sup>34</sup>

Before receiving Mina's summary of her meeting with de Chirico, Levy wrote to her on August 3<sup>rd</sup> saying that he did indeed want the de Chirico exhibition, as he had already told a great number of people that he would be holding it. Levy must have promptly answered de Chirico's letter of July 30<sup>th</sup>, but this letter is missing from the archival documents. We can get an idea of their exchange from references he makes to Mina on August 27<sup>th</sup>: "De Chirico has written to me regarding an exhibition for after February and I replied explaining the mix-up, telling him I probably had no date for a show after Feb. and suggesting he prepare with you a show for next fall. Also explained that you were my representant and Colle need not be involved as he had never given me a final report on any de Chirico show."<sup>35</sup> He also asked her if she would go by Quatre Chemins to take a look at an album of de Chirico lithographs, and, if she liked it, to order two copies.<sup>36</sup> From a postcard de Chirico sent to Levy on August 25<sup>th</sup>, we have an outline of their exchange:

Paris, August 25, 1934<sup>37</sup>  
 Julien Levy Gallery  
 602 Madison Avenue  
 New York City  
 (America)

<sup>32</sup> J. Levy, *op. cit.*, p. 70. Two letters, dated March 25, 1947, on Julien Levy Gallery letterhead paper, show that Pierre Colle and Julien Levy co-owned of 33 paintings by Leonid Berman, typewritten letter signed Pierre Colle and copy of typewritten letter, Julien Levy Archive.

<sup>33</sup> See note 23. It is deducible that the prices asked by Dalí had risen in the meantime.

<sup>34</sup> M. Loy to J. Levy, July 24, 1934, handwritten letter, Julien Levy Archive.

<sup>35</sup> J. Levy to M. Loy, August 27, 1934, copy of typescript letter, Julien Levy Archive.

<sup>36</sup> Jean Cocteau, *Mythologie* with ten lithographs by Giorgio de Chirico, Éditions des Quatres Chemins, Paris, 1934.

<sup>37</sup> G. de Chirico to J. Levy, August 25, 1934, handwritten postcard in French, Julien Levy Archive.

Dear Sir,

I have received your letter. We agree then, to schedule my exhibition for November or December 1935. I think December would be better. Therefore, I ask you to please send me a letter in which you commit yourself to hold my exhibition on that date. I too, will send you a letter. Please include your conditions in the letter.

I will give Mrs. Looyd 2 or 3 metaphysical paintings from my recent production so she can send them to you. I will also try and find photos to give to her.

By chance, do you know an illustrator in New York by the name of Alajalov? Three years ago he took two paintings of mine to sell and I have seen neither the money nor the paintings since. I would like to have his address so I can hire a lawyer at the Italian consulate in New York to take care of this situation.

Please accept, Sir, my best wishes.

G. de Chirico<sup>38</sup>

In his answer to de Chirico's letter, Levy provided his conditions as well as instructions on how to proceed for the preparation of the exhibition. He also gave a detailed and reassuring answer concerning the delicate situation about which de Chirico had asked his help.

Dear Mr. de Chirico<sup>39</sup>

I have received your card of August 25<sup>th</sup> and am pleased to confirm my proposal of an exhibition of your pictures, to be held either in Nov. or Dec. of 1935. I cannot definitely promise the exact dates, as that will depend on the other arrangements for my schedule which may not be completed until next summer. But your exhibition will surely be about the time you wish. The pictures should be ready to show me during next summer, if I come to Paris, and otherwise to show Mrs. Lloyd so that a selection can be made, and arrangements for the invoice and shipping completed in time for my Fall shipment at the beginning of next September. I will pay all costs of transportation, insurance, publicity, and exhibition. Partly to recompense me for these preliminary expenses I ask for my choice of one painting. You also give me a special *prix de marchand* on all the paintings so that I am able to add the Gallery Commission *au dessus*. The price of the paintings can be discussed later when I have seen photographs, also the question of framing can be discussed when the time comes. We usually ask the artist to provide the frames, but I do not know if you can afford that?

I know Alajalov. He is very nice and I am sure does not intend to do anything with your two pictures which you might not wish. I know he has not yet sold the two pictures. He lent them to me last winter and asked me to try to sell them. I did not think they equalled your best work, and so found them difficult to sell, and returned them to him. He doesn't know your present address. You might write to him. He is at 345 East 57<sup>th</sup> St. New York City.

Regards,

Julien Levy

Levy wrote again to the artist on October 17:

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<sup>38</sup> Constantin Alajalov (1900-1987) illustrator. Known for his cover illustrations of "The New Yorker" and "The Saturday Evening Post".

<sup>39</sup> J. Levy to G. de Chirico, undated, copy of typewritten letter, Julien Levy Archive.

Giorgio de Chirico<sup>40</sup>  
 9 rue Brown Séquard  
 Paris 15e

Dear Mr. de Chirico

I have received your two pictures in good condition and have taken note of your prices: 2000 Francs for *The Pool* and 3000 Fr. *The Mysterious Ruins*.

I particularly like *The Pool* and consider both as very beautiful paintings.

I hope the season will be a good one and that sales will go well and be plentiful.

I await photos of your recent work for next year's exhibition.

My most sincere greetings,

J. Levy

Having established direct and seemingly promising contact with Julien Levy, de Chirico took pen in hand again, this time with the intention of sharing with the art dealer the difficult situation in Paris in which he had found himself for some time:

9 rue Brown Séquard<sup>41</sup>

Paris XV

Paris, Nov. 34

Dear Sir,

I have received your letter and am very happy that you like my paintings.

I am writing to you at present with regard to a matter of great importance to me. I do not like to speak of these kinds of things, but now that I am going to have an exhibition in your gallery, have already sent paintings to you and you are handling my work in general, I feel I must warn you. This is the situation. Here in Paris, like all well-known painters and men of value, I have a large number of enemies who are attempting to harm me. The Surrealists are among the most perverse of these enemies and are those who employ the most perfidious and dishonest means against me. This hostility originated with the two leaders: Breton and Eluard who, right after the war, managed to accumulate very inexpensively and at times even for nothing, a certain number of paintings which I had painted before the war. With these paintings [in their possession] and taking advantage of the fact that I was in Italy, they hoped to stage a coup like the kind that was staged against Rousseau, the Customs Officer. They began talking about me in their review, describing me as some kind of hallucinated person who painted a number of paintings that only they owned... etc. etc. Then, in 1925 when I returned to Paris and started selling my new paintings to art dealers and exhibiting my work and getting people to talk about me, they became furious because they understood that I was going to spoil their business which, by the way, is exactly what happened.

Since then, they have not stopped boycotting me and using the worst and most dishonest methods to denigrate my recent work. It is true that they have a very limited range of action and are constantly losing terrain because people are starting to have enough of their stories and everyone understands that they are a band of good-for-nothing individuals with no talent who try to get attention by creating small scandals

<sup>40</sup> J. Levy to G. de Chirico, October 17, 1934, copy of typewritten letter in French, Julien Levy Archive.

<sup>41</sup> G. de Chirico to J. Levy, November 10, 1934, copy of handwritten letter in French, Fondazione Giorgio e Isa de Chirico Archives.

and intrigues etc. Now, I happen to know that the painter they support the most at the moment, Mr. Salvador Dalí, is going to have an exhibition at your gallery and that he has even departed for America.

I know that his wife, who used to be the wife of Eluard, has gone with him. I have known this for a long time, and I am mentioning it to you now as it is one of the principal reasons why I asked to have my exhibition postponed to next year, because I am sure that Dalí and his wife will endeavour to speak badly of me in New York and ruin my reputation with your clients. I am telling you this to warn you, and it is important for me that you be aware of these goings-on. Recently, I had an exhibition in Amsterdam which had a lot of success. I sold 7 paintings, of which 2 to museums. But I kept the announcement of the exhibition secret until the last minute because of the Surrealists. Consequently, I ask you not to speak to Dalí of my exhibition at your gallery and if you have already told him, tell him you have cancelled it. Please forgive me for this long letter, but it was necessary,

With my best friendship,

G. de Chirico

P.S. I ask you, please, not to speak to anyone about what I have told you. I have only mentioned this to you in order for you to be up-to-date on the intentions of these people so you can defend my interests if necessary.<sup>42</sup>

From reading these lines, we become aware that de Chirico had postponed his commitment to the gallery to spring 1935 in order to avoid having his exhibition coincide with that of Dalí, which was held at the Julien Levy Gallery from November 21<sup>st</sup> to December 10, 1934. It is also possible that the artist's decision, in July, not to work with Pierre Colle was based on what he judged as too close a proximity between Colle and Dalí, even if, at the time Dalí had already dismissed Colle from the charge of representing him.

Mina wrote to Levy at year's end, informing him that de Chirico had told her of other “naughty doings” by the “little brother surrealists” and that these were even worse than those described in the artist's letter of November 10<sup>th</sup>. In closing, she provided an analysis that emphasises her insight as an art critic: “Going back to de Chirico you know he is the most extraordinary accident – perhaps the only one – that has happened in Art. I knew it from seeing the show of his early work and his new stuff proves it.”<sup>43</sup>

Two letters crossed paths in the mail in mid-January 1935, one from Levy dated the 13<sup>th</sup>, in which he admitted to having just realized that he had not answered de Chirico's letter concerning Dalí, and a letter from the artist dated the 18<sup>th</sup>, soliciting news with regard to this specific issue. De Chirico obviously received a rapid answer, seeing the letter was already on its way:

January 13, 1935<sup>44</sup>

Mr. de Chirico

9 rue Brown Séquard,

Paris

<sup>42</sup> Regarding de Chirico's relationship with the surrealists, see J. de Sanna *Giorgio de Chirico – André Breton: Duel à mort* in “*Metafisica. Quaderni della Fondazione Giorgio e Isa de Chirico*”, n. 1-2, Milan, 2002, pp. 62-87.

<sup>43</sup> M. Loy to J. Levy, December 26 (the content of the letter dates it to 1934). Handwritten letter, Julien Levy Archive.

<sup>44</sup> J. Levy to G. de Chirico, January 13, 1935, copy of typewritten letter in French, Julien Levy Archive.

Dear Mr. de Chirico,

I have just realized that I haven't yet answered your letter concerning Dalí. It goes without saying that this matter remains between us, and I am fully aware of what it is you would be complaining about. I assure you that nothing that the Dalí's tell me would have the slightest influence on my way of thinking; the only thing that counts in the long-run is whether something is or is not well-done.

I am extremely curious to see the photographs of your recent paintings, but to be frank with you, I would say that I prefer your older paintings; I find there are too many repetitions in these last ones. Is it Rosenberg's influence? And, 'too many horses'.

With my best friendship,

J. Levy

Paris, January 18, 1935<sup>45</sup>

Dear Mr. Levy,

I have not had any news since my letter to you in which I spoke of the Surrealist's persecution and put you on guard against their action towards me. I am told that Dalí has taken advantage of his stay in New York to speak badly of my painting to journalists. Is this true? To tell you the truth, it only affects me to a certain extent.

Now, I would like to know if my exposition is to take place at the end of this year. To date, I have not received a letter from you confirming this. Consequently, if you are still planning to do my exhibition I ask you to please send me a letter in which you set the conditions and the approximate dates. Even if it is not yet possible to set the month, you might set a rough date (November, December or January). I need to know this in order to be able to schedule my other engagements.

An exhibition of my recent work is about to open in Rome: 45 paintings displayed on 35 meters of cymatium.<sup>46</sup>

Did you sell the two paintings I sent to you?

While I await your reply, I ask you, dear Sir, to believe in my most devoted sentiment,

G. de Chirico

9 rue Brown Séquard, XV

De Chirico's formal tone in this letter differs from that of the preceding letter, in which he shared his problematic situation in a frank and trustful manner. The fact that he had not received a reply from Levy regarding a problem of such personal importance may have made the artist feel somewhat hesitant towards the art dealer. During the two months of silence regarding his fear of Dalí speaking badly of him in New York, de Chirico would only have had word-of-mouth information to go by. Levy's cordial and reassuring letter must have had a calming effect on his unease. Curiously enough, one of Levy's phrases sounds identical to a statement very dear to de Chirico, which he repeated

<sup>45</sup> G. de Chirico to J. Levy, January 18, 1935, handwritten letter in French, Julien Levy Archive.

<sup>46</sup> The original French term '*cimaise*' refers to an 'architectural moulding'. It is used here to signify 'having one's paintings exhibited in the best place (in an exhibition or in a gallery)'.

throughout his career: “the only thing that counts in the long-run is whether something is or is not well-done.” Artist and art dealer begin to speak the same language. De Chirico replied immediately:

January 26, 1934 [1935]<sup>47</sup>

Dear Mr. Levy,

I have received your letter. I am sending you 4 photos of my recent work by the same post. As soon as I have other photos, I will send them to you.

I don't understand what you mean about my paintings when you talk about repetitions and too many horses. My production is very varied and art dealers in America have sold paintings of all kinds; I have many other subjects: gladiators, chariot races, mannequins, ruins and landscapes in rooms, etc, etc. There exist few painters who have the varied production that I do. In the 4 photos I'm sending you, there are two that are of a new kind that I have rarely exhibited. These are: *Return to the Country of Birth* and *The Puritan's Combat*. (fig. 4) I would like you to be specific about which paintings, or rather, which subjects, I should send for the exhibition. Which are the subjects that will be the easiest to sell? I ask you to indicate this to me very clearly, so the exhibition can be assured the maximum chance of success. I also ask you to tell me how many paintings I am to send.

While I await your reply, I ask you, dear Sir, to believe in my most devoted sentiment,

Giorgio de Chirico

On the back of de Chirico's January 18<sup>th</sup> letter, Levy wrote a note: “hoping to visit Paris this summer – given you my terms long ago – (look in file) nothing to journalists”. Having already answered the letter concerning Dalí, these are obviously further points Levy had made note of to communicate to de Chirico. In a letter to Mina dated February 6<sup>th</sup>, Levy adds in closing: “And finally will you let me know [what] if any terms, you have arranged with Chirico, as he [wan]ts me to send him a letter confirming my terms for next year.”<sup>48</sup>

On May 3<sup>rd</sup>, Levy wrote two letters, one to Mina in which he detailed instructions to clear a group of paintings through customs and to return them to a number of artists, indicating that the small de Chirico belonged to André Breton, 42 rue Fontaine.<sup>49</sup> In his letter to de Chirico, Levy wrote that it was impossible for him to come to France that year and that he infinitely regretted not having the pleasure of meeting him and seeing his paintings. This being the case, Levy informed him that Mrs. Lloyd would act as his exclusive representative and would take care of choosing the works for the exhibition as well as settling the conditions and details with him for the shipment.<sup>50</sup>

De Chirico had obviously not received Levy's letter before he decided once again to solicit confirmation of his exhibition on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of May:

<sup>47</sup> G. de Chirico to J. Levy, January 26, 1935, copy of handwritten letter in French, Fondazione Giorgio e Isa de Chirico Archives. Erroneously dated 1934, the year is 1935.

<sup>48</sup> J. Levy to M. Loy, February 6, 1935, typewritten letter on letterhead paper 'The Film Society', an initiative of Julien Levy, supported by various professionals in the art field, which consisted in the showing of avant-garde films in the gallery. The letter has a small rip in the area where de Chirico is mentioned. The term 'year' applies to the gallery season from September to May.

<sup>49</sup> The title of the painting is *The Bride*, of 1926, see note 70 below.

<sup>50</sup> J. Levy to G. de Chirico, May 3, 1935, copy of typewritten letter in French, Julien Levy Archive.

Paris, May 22, 1935<sup>51</sup>

Dear Sir,

I have received no answer to my letters written many months ago. I don't know what to attribute this silence to, but I have a feeling that someone has put you against me. Dalí and others of his kind. It doesn't matter what the reason behind your silence is, I just ask you to please reply by return post what exactly it is you intend to do about my exhibition. If you have decided against it, or if it is put off indefinitely, I ask you to return the two paintings I lent to you.

As I have already written a number of times, I have to settle the question of my exhibition in order to make other arrangements, accordingly. Would you please ask Mr. Berman to bring me the two paintings I lent to Sig. Alajalov four years ago?

My best greetings, and hoping to hear from you promptly, yours,

Giorgio de Chirico

9 rue Brown Séquard

Paris XV<sup>52</sup>

The artist still harboured his preoccupations regarding Dalí and considered the non-definition of his exhibition as a symptom of a denigratory campaign perpetrated against him by Dalí and his wife Gala. If de Chirico had only been aware of the antics Dalí was up to at the time in New York, he would have understood that the art dealer had had other things to worry about during the winter of 1934-1935. In an undated letter concomitant with Dalí's stay in New York, Levy mentioned to Mina that Dalí's reputation at the time was terrible, although knowing how fickle-minded New Yorkers were, he felt this could soon dispel and even develop into an opposite reaction. In the same letter, he told Mina that he would like to see the de Chirico paintings before accepting them definitely.<sup>53</sup>

At the end of May, Levy finally provided some kind of definition, although to Mina rather than to de Chirico. The letter, dated May 27<sup>th</sup>, shows to what extent the artist was correct in feeling the situation was stalled and that the exhibition was far from being settled: "Now as regards my exhibitions for next year. In general please consider that you have full authority as my rep. Don't let anyone tell you that even if you don't like a picture 'Julien said he was interested in it'. I have full confidence in your judgement, and you now have plenty of experience from last year as to what is costly and what is worth trying out. This applies particularly to the de Chirico show. I will write to him myself and confirm it. I would like a show, but only if it is good, otherwise it is not worth the expense even tho I have already half promised him one, sight unseen. This is the situation. His early metaphysical work, pre-surrealist, is being taken more and more seriously here. The time is ripe to revive him with profit by showing a group of old pictures illustrating his pioneer qualities and influence, and a group of his latest pictures to show that he continues [to be] interesting and is not stagnating (skipping the middle period 1920-34 which is not at all admired) The difficulty is that I am given to understand 1. that he himself dislikes the 1910-1920 pictures 2. that he likes the stupid pot boiling pictures of 1920-34 and

<sup>51</sup> G. de Chirico to J. Levy, May 22, 1935, copy of handwritten letter in French, Fondazione Giorgio e Isa de Chirico Archives.

<sup>52</sup> Eugene Berman exhibited at the Julien Levy Gallery from April 2 to 22, 1935.

<sup>53</sup> J. Levy to M. Loy, undated, copy of typewritten letter, Julien Levy Archive.

is very touchy on the subject 3. that he might readily offer to repeat the superficial appearance of the earlier pictures, but would do them lifelessly as new pot-boilers 4. that he probably is stagnant.

Now a good show would put him on the map again, and a mediocre show would kill him for good. I can borrow here enough of the early work to make up that section (tho one or two for sale if you find any e.g. from Breton, would help) But the new group must meet your approval (they don't need to have any relation with the earlier pictures so long as they are good) otherwise you must tell him that the whole show is off (or notify me and I will tell him in a letter) [...].

Lots and lots of love and gratitude. Am sending you Soby's book 'After Picasso'. Almost a day book of the J. L. Gallery and might amuse you. Notice the attitude towards de Chirico in the book."<sup>54</sup>

The title of the first of many publications by James Thrall Soby, *After Picasso*<sup>55</sup>, holds a double meaning. In his consideration of contemporary artistic movements, the author affirms that Picasso, possibly despite himself, should henceforth be referred to as an 'old Master', considering that at the time the book was written he had already been known as the greatest contemporary artist for 30 years. The book brings to the fore the work of a new generation of artists, the majority of whom were trained in Paris and whose art, deriving also from Picasso's influence, represented the latest developments in modern art (as Levy points out, many of these artists – Dalí, Ernst, Eugene and Leonid Berman, Pavel Tchelitchew and Christian Bérard – were protagonists of the Julien Levy gallery). The title *After Picasso*, would therefore indicate both a changing of the guard, which risked leaving Picasso behind, and the heralding of new talent, which, inspired by his art, was to renew forms suggested by him through their own work, following ideally in his footsteps.

In *After Picasso*, the author presents de Chirico and Picasso in perfect parallelism as the two founders of 20<sup>th</sup> century art. Their names are placed side by side each time he refers to their influence on the younger generation, whose profound admiration for both artists constitutes the book's leitmotif. Soby holds that, while the contribution of painters of fantasy such as de Chirico and Paul Klee was acknowledged at the time, Picasso and Braque's cubism had seemed more important due to its contribution to the formal order of painting. Few would have foreseen that the literary painting of de Chirico and Klee would supply the key for the revolt against cubism set in motion by the neo-romantics and the surrealists.

In the neo-romantics, the meditative pathos of de Chirico's paintings inspired a profoundly emotional, rather than intellectual, kind of painting. The surrealists employed the infinite world of dreams and found, in what the author refers to as 'technical romanticisms' in de Chirico's painting (an illusion of silence and isolation, long perspectives accentuated by vertical lines in rapid reduction), a means of giving form to their nightmares. While the grouping together of incongruous objects in the paintings of the Ferrarese period – thanks to de Chirico's talent – produced compositions permeated with a profound sense of rest and conviction, the surrealist image expressed deliberate violence. Soby notes that it is for this reason that the unreality of de Chirico's world was more acceptable than that of the surrealists.

<sup>54</sup> J. Levy to M. Loy, May 27, 1935, copy of typewritten letter, Julien Levy Archive.

<sup>55</sup> James Thrall Soby, *After Picasso*, Edwin Valentine Mitchell, Hartford, Dodd, Mead and Company, New York, 1935.

The author proposes that, in revitalizing objects and words through subconscious association, the surrealists based themselves upon principals exempt from considerations of reason, aesthetics and morality. He sustains that Surrealism was, above all, a literary movement and, only in a second instance, artistic. It was precisely for the scarce results in the plastic arts that Surrealism had to propagandistically annex artists such as de Chirico to their movement. The book was written during a moment of great success for Dalí, who, according to Soby, was the artist who had the ability to redeem Surrealism's artistic innovation. But, up until that time, the movement had not produced anything equal to the quality of a de Chirico or a Picasso.

If Soby bestowed (in a rather conclusive manner) the title of 'old Master' on Picasso in 1935, in time he would assign de Chirico the qualification of 'fallen young genius'. For the time being, he sustained that the artist had suddenly become tired and that a fatal attraction for the horses of Normandy had gotten the better of him, stimulating an infinite production, followed by a period of "Italian nudes, arching their academic eyes at Il Duce".<sup>56</sup> After praising the strength of de Chirico's early period, the author of *After Picasso* established a precedent by publishing a condemnation of an artist who, not yet fifty years of age and in full productivity, was about to exhibit his recent work in the United States. The surrealists' negative attitude toward de Chirico's recent work, which the artist had warned Levy about, was expressed and published at the time by Soby, an esteemed art critic and collector.<sup>57</sup> This attitude, which Levy pointed out to Mina, would be confirmed in *The Early Chirico*, published by Soby in 1941.<sup>58</sup> As the only monograph in English at the time, it would be the last word on de Chirico for decades to come.

Leaving aside Levy's hypotheses and Soby's art theory for a moment, let us see how de Chirico lost his patience and wrote to New York once more:

Paris, June 13, 1935<sup>59</sup>

Dear Sir,

I met with Madame Looyd but she spoke in such a vague manner that I have come to the conclusion that nothing can be done about it. I just don't understand why you waited so long. Due to your hesitations, I missed an exhibition in Switzerland. Actually, it is probably better that I don't do an exhibition in America. The manner in which I am working at present is too serious, and from what I hear, your clientele is composed mostly of snobs, aesthetes and other such people, that is, people who understand nothing about painting.

I only ask you to tell Mr. Berman to write to me about the exhibition in Bucharest, of which I have no news, and to tell me who it is I need to write to.

With my best greetings,

G. de Chirico

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.

<sup>57</sup> Regarding James Thrall Soby's critique, see P. Koob *James Thrall Soby and de Chirico in De Chirico and America* exhibition catalogue edited by Emily Braun, The Bertha and Karl Art Gallery of Hunter College of the City University of New York, September 10 – October 26, 1996. Fondazione Giorgio e Isa de Chirico, Rome, Umberto Allemandi & C., Turin 1996, pp. 111-123.

<sup>58</sup> J. Thrall Soby, *The Early Chirico*, Dodd, Mead and Company, New York, 1941. Second edition *Giorgio de Chirico*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1955.

<sup>59</sup> G. de Chirico to J. Levy, June 13, 1935, copy of handwritten postcard in French, Fondazione Giorgio e Isa de Chirico Archives.

On September 9<sup>th</sup>, Levy provided Mina with an update of the work in progress, and informed her on the exhibitions the gallery could count on for the upcoming season, adding that: “De Chirico has satisfactorily cut his own throat with me by correspondence, unless you have arranged something with him subsequently – we can forget him”.<sup>60</sup>

In a letter dated October 11<sup>th</sup>, the poetess brought Levy up to date on various current situations, beginning with the development of Dalí’s work. At that time, Dalí was seemingly selling paintings with such speed that he had to postpone an exhibition he was to have had in London in July. Dalí and Gala had just returned to Paris from Spain. Mina wrote that she had been to visit them at their home and had seen three recent paintings reserved for the gallery, which she had found very beautiful. Speaking of Gala brought de Chirico into her thoughts, and she expressed her surprise that Levy had heard from him, telling him that de Chirico had bawled her out on the telephone at the time, saying that Julien Levy did not know his own mind. Mina asked Levy if he remembered how it was specifically due to de Chirico’s fear of Gala that he had postponed his exhibition. In conclusion, she wrote that since she was unable to guarantee the artist had something worth looking at, she felt it better not to “mollify” him.<sup>61</sup>

Levy opened the 1935-1936 season with a strong presence of American artists: the young photographer Brett Weston, expressionist painter Abraham Rattner, Walter Quirt who was a representative of America social Surrealism, and Isabel Carleton Wilde’s folk art collection. The old continent was represented by Marcel Vertès’ drawings and watercolours, as well as by Juan Gris, Henri Magritte, Massimo Campigli, Yves Tanguy, the neo-romantics Leonid and Eugène Berman, and master of photography Eugène Atget.

After de Chirico’s strong presence at the Seconda Quadriennale d’Arte in Rome in the Spring, his work was exhibited in Lucerne, Prague, Warsaw and Milan during the course of 1935. In the French capital he was represented at the Salon de la Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, Jeu de Paume, Le Louvre, Petit Palais, Aux Quatres Chemins, la Galerie Le Niveau, and Gazette des Beaux Arts. But the exhibition that made the greatest historical impact was *Giorgio de Chirico 1910-1918* at the Pierre Matisse Gallery in New York from November 16<sup>th</sup> to December 15<sup>th</sup>. A group of twenty-six paintings from de Chirico’s early period were exhibited, the majority of which were on loan or consignment from André Breton, Paul Eluard, Simone Kahn (Breton’s first wife) and Mrs. Paul Guillaume.<sup>62</sup> The event generated enormous attention in the press and was reviewed in “Art Digest” under the title *Exhibition Reveals Chirico as First Surrealist*.<sup>63</sup> The American public was unfamiliar with the subject of the paintings exhibited, except for *The Endless Journey* of 1914, which had been shown alongside four paintings from the pre-war Parisian period in an exhibition centred on eighteen works of the 1920s, at the Valentine Gallery in 1928.<sup>64</sup> In the United States of the mid-1930s, the critical success de

<sup>60</sup> J. Levy to M. Loy, September 9, 1935, copy of typewritten letter, Julien Levy Archive.

<sup>61</sup> M. Loy to J. Levy, October 11, 1935, handwritten letter, Julien Levy Archive.

<sup>62</sup> Paul Guillaume, the art dealer who had followed de Chirico’s career since 1914, died on October 1, 1934.

<sup>63</sup> *Exhibition Reveals Chirico as First Surrealist* in “Art Digest”, December 1, 1935.

<sup>64</sup> *Paintings by Giorgio de Chirico* January 23 – February 19, 1928, Valentine Gallery, New York. A small number of paintings from the first period were presented to the New York public in various group exhibitions in the 1920s.

Chirico's art enjoyed was based exclusively on his themes from the 1920s such as the *Horses*, *Gladiators* and *Archaeologists* (fig. 5, *The Confession*, signed photograph, Julien Levy Archive). These were the first themes seen by the general public in America and, acclaimed by art critics who focused their attention on what they defined as the artist's irreverent attitude towards classicism, were the first paintings to enter American collections.<sup>65</sup>

The exhibition at the Pierre Matisse Gallery steered the public towards a new perspective on the artist. In addition to presenting works which were almost unknown at the time, the event would prove to be the coronation of a critical distinction which established de Chirico's 'good' paintings from 'the others'. Along with the definition of an era '1910-1918' – featured directly in the title of the exhibition – Pierre Matisse promoted the surrealist point of view, sustaining that the artist had repudiated the ingenious work of his youth and that his post-1918 work was of very poor quality.

Having supplied paintings in their possession, it is obvious that the surrealists had a say in the critical line promoted by the exhibition. This presumption was accepted by the press in general, and, even if a certain number of art critics hesitated to follow this re-interpretation of the artist's work<sup>66</sup>, the impact of a group of paintings defined by a specific theme and time period would have significant power of conviction. The sentence laid down would be reinforced by the institutionalisation, both through Soby's critical approach (which favoured a theory of art history based on the progressive influence of artists and movements) as well as by the acquisition of these works by important museum collections, such as the Metropolitan and The Museum of Modern Art.<sup>67</sup>

In his memoir, Levy wrote that a friendly rivalry had existed between his gallery and the Pierre Matisse Gallery throughout the years. Generally speaking, the Julien Levy Gallery was more innovative, including international publications and periodicals as well as avant-garde films in its cultural program. Levy exhibited artists who were unknown to the general public, while Pierre Matisse, assisted by his artistic royal-blood, could afford to exhibit internationally famous artists like Picasso and Mirò.<sup>68</sup> It is difficult to know to what extent Julien Levy was informed about the preparation of the de Chirico exhibition at the Pierre Matisse Gallery. Although, at year's end, among the artist's works on show, two drawings of 1918, *The Solitary* and *Les Fiançailles*, were featured in the exhibition catalogue as on loan from the Julien Levy collection. Of the group of Parisian collectors, André Breton was the only one with whom Levy was likely to have been in epistolary contact, having done business with him in 1933.<sup>69</sup> On February 19, 1935, Levy had written to Breton with the idea of publishing a 'booklet' on Surrealism in English, illustrating to him the necessity, after Dalí's

<sup>65</sup> See, J. Landes *Giorgio de Chirico and the American Critics, 1920-1940*, in *De Chirico and America*, cit., pp. 33-44.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>67</sup> In 1940, J. Thrall Soby was appointed to The Museum of Modern Art's Acquisitions and Photography committees and also served as Director of the Department of Painting and Sculpture from 1943-45. His principal roles at the museum included that of Trustee from 1942-79 and advisor to the Committee on the Museum Collections, 1940-67. During his tenure, Soby curated over fifteen major exhibitions at MoMA. After his death in 1979, his important de Chirico collection was willed to the museum.

<sup>68</sup> Levy, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

<sup>69</sup> In her letter of January 5, 1934, Mina mentioned a payment made to Breton. Two years earlier, on January 28, 1932, Breton wrote to Levy requesting ten or so copies of *Surréalisme*, the catalogue of the exhibition held at the Levy Gallery, January 9 – 29, 1932. Levy answered his request on February 10<sup>th</sup>, saying he was sorry but that he could only send one copy of the catalogue as the exhibition had had such a success that the catalogues had run out in two days. A. Breton to J. Levy, January 28, 1932, handwritten letter in French, and J. Levy to A. Breton, copy of typewritten letter in French, Julien Levy Archive.

recent success, to providing the English-speaking public with information regarding the movement and surrealist writings. The art dealer proposed translating some of Breton and Eluard's texts and poems and asked for advice about other authors of interest belonging to the movement and who, in his opinion, were the most important artists to be mentioned in the book. Breton replied in support of this initiative in a long letter dated March 2<sup>nd</sup>, in which he also offered advice on copyright issues. He indicated the poets, painters and sculptors whom he felt should be taken into consideration, asking Levy to keep this advice confidential. De Chirico was not among the artists mentioned. In closing, Breton asked Levy if by chance he had sold "the other small drawing by de Chirico, or the canvas *La Mariée* by the same painter?"<sup>70</sup> Levy wrote back to him on April 5<sup>th</sup>, thanking him for his advice and informing him that he had sold neither of the two works. He told him he would return the painting to him on his trip to Paris in May and mentioned that he would like to keep the small drawing in hope of selling it or, if Breton was willing to make him a good offer, to buy it himself.<sup>71</sup> It would seem from the gallery ledger that Breton responded quickly to Levy's proposal, because beside entry 'n. 412 de Chirico – pencil drawing' we find a handwritten note in the purchaser column: '12 April 1935 Julien Levy'. The drawing in question is in all probability *Les Fiançailles*, 1918, one of the drawings lent to the Matisse exhibition.<sup>72</sup>

Less than two months after the show's closing, Levy received a letter from Mina Loy in which she revealed the complex behind-the-scenes manoeuvring which had taken place in Paris. Dated February 4, 1936, the letter shows just how refined the perception and critical eye of the Parisian representative had become, as she disclosed the multi-faceted aspects of the preparation of the Pierre Matisse exhibition, including power plays, strategic scheming and psychological factors: "Re Chirico. You are quite right – why should you have sent back the pictures. But I don't understand your saying he might have co-operated with you about the (or an) Exhibition comprising his early work. I wrote you once explaining the psychology of the whole matter. The Exhibition Matisse had – was the one I offered you ages ago. I had had a long pow-wow with Gala & wrote you the same evening I was enthusiastic – But you only answered that she had already proposed it to you & that you had refused because they priced the pictures too high. You couldn't have got Mme. Guillaume to separate from the other owners – they had always been moving towards that exhibition en bloc. And remember Chirico's persecution mania on that very subject – how frightened he was. [...] Dalí was talking about it, mentioned how disappointed he was you didn't have the show – he said he pressed you to have it when he was in New York [...] he also said that it was not he or Gala who gave it to Matisse they were still hoping for you – But Matisse addressed himself to André Breton. I have to clarify this in self justification because if you could have got a decent show with Chirico as I was treating with him – it would have been rank disloyalty on my part to have neglected the matter – I let him remain 'fâché' when he insulted you by letter & me by phone – because I felt it was letting

<sup>70</sup> A. Breton to J. Levy, March 2, 1935, copy of handwritten letter in French, Fondazione Giorgio e Isa de Chirico Archives. Levy did not go to Paris in 1935. He gave instructions to Mina to return the "small de Chirico which belongs to Breton" (*La Mariée*, 1926) included in the shipment. See note 49.

<sup>71</sup> J. Levy to A. Breton, April 5, 1935, copy of typewritten letter in French, Julien Levy Archive.

<sup>72</sup> Today the drawing is part of the The Menil Collection, Houston, purchased from Alexandre Iolas, who had obtained it from Levy in 1938.

you well out of the complications that were arising from you offering him a show – in that way he broke off in a huff. / He had nothing that you could possibly want. He had a show at a third rate gallery here this winter. He has a wife with yellow hair with black roots & his new pictures are just like that. I would not even accept their invitation for dinner – so sure was I there would be trouble. / Just as you speak of under & over statement – my ‘business’ letters are too long - & yours are too short - & I always feel you have not time to read mine. I was sure I analysed Chirico for you.”<sup>73</sup>

It would be interesting to read the letter to which Mina’s passionate and illuminating report refers, but, unfortunately this letter has not been found among the Foundation documents. Whatever it was Levy had commented on with regard to the Matisse exhibition, what is becoming increasingly evident is the extreme difference between their points of view: the art dealer, steeped in the New York art scene of the moment and in the cultural and commercial role of the artistic choices in which he was investing the gallery’s future; Mina, intimately involved in the complex and inevitable system of power in Paris, the established capital of art. In the second part of this study, we will see to what extent Julien Levy applied himself to liberating de Chirico from that system, by successfully exhibiting his recent work to the public of his gallery. Unfortunately, in the years to come, Surrealism’s strong shadow would continue to fall across the course of de Chirico’s luminous painting of the 1930s.

On August 27, 1936, de Chirico embarked on the transatlantic *SS Roma* destination New York,<sup>74</sup> where the exhibition, *Recent Paintings by Giorgio de Chirico* would see the light of day on October 28, 1936 at the Julien Levy Gallery (fig. 6 *Mysterious Baths with Manhattan*, 1936ca). Three years had past since the initial proposal for an exhibition of the artist’s works at the Levy Gallery, launched in the Autumn of 1933 by Pierre Colle. After the false start with Colle, followed by de Chirico’s request for a postponement of the exhibition to avoid having it coincide with Dalí’s arrival in New York in 1934, the scheduling suffered a further delay due to Levy’s uncertainty. Perceiving the art dealer’s change of mind, de Chirico lost his patience and wrote the famous letter of June 13<sup>th</sup>, in which he communicated that he had come to the conclusion “nothing can be done about it”. The epistolary exchange between artist and art dealer seems to have been interrupted at that moment, as no letters or documentation pertaining to a re-scheduling of the exhibition, in the period between June 1935 and August 1936, were found in Julien Levy’s papers.<sup>75</sup> The date of the first meeting between de Chirico and Levy is also unknown.

In the Summer of 1936, Levy was indeed in Paris buying paintings and taking care of gallery business, although no proof of a meeting between the two at that time has been found. Back in New York, on September 29<sup>th</sup>, Levy sent Mina the program for the imminent gallery season of 1936-1937, which happened to include a de Chirico exhibition: “We open with a show of early Berman’s Bérard’s, etc. from the Bonjean Collection. The[n] a double show of Strecker and Di Pisis then (don’t

<sup>73</sup> M. Loy to J. Levy, February 4, 1936, citation from a handwritten letter, Julien Levy Archive. Published with the permission of Roger Conover, Mina Loy’s editor and literary executor.

<sup>74</sup> See G. de Chirico, *The Memoirs of Giorgio de Chirico*. The chapter dedicated to de Chirico’s stay in America starts thus: “I was disgusted by the low level, material and moral, to which painting in Paris had sunk. I therefore followed the advice of a friend and after a short rest in Tuscany I had a certain number of canvases packed up and left for New York”, Peter Owen, London 1971, pp. 130-135.

<sup>75</sup> In the gallery ledger there is an entry that in May 1936 Levy returned the two paintings *The Mysterious Ruins* and *The Pool*, which he had had on consignment since October 1934.

faint) a de Chirico show. He is in town and behaving like a lamb. Made a lovely drawing in his book as a present for us. The pictures are neither perfect nor awful [sic!]. Much better than those he sent you, and he is doing more under my supervision. In any event we feel that as long as he is in America (and pays all the expenses) we should be the gallery to give the show. Q. E. D.<sup>76</sup>

At this point, a number of texts will help shed light on de Chirico's arrival in New York and his stay in America from September 1936 to the beginning of January 1938. Julien Levy's captivating account in *Memoir of an Art Gallery* reveals the particular circumstances of their collaboration as well as his psychological and intimate considerations of de Chirico on a personal level, perceived by Levy with great intuition and sensitivity.<sup>77</sup> The introduction of the exhibition catalogue, written by Albert C. Barnes on de Chirico's request, is a thorough account of the important collector's study of the artist's oeuvre, which at the time already dated back ten years.<sup>78</sup> The Julien Levy Gallery press release and citations from journalistic reviews portray the event from the general public's viewpoint. A beautiful text by de Chirico entitled *I have been to New York*<sup>79</sup> offers us his extraordinary considerations on what he defined as not "a new world", but "another world", permeated with a dream-like softness, inherent in the very physical substance of things, the streets, houses, cars and people. Finally, letters the artist wrote during his stay in New York narrate his personal outlook on the situations he was experiencing.

In his memoir, Levy speaks of his collaboration with the artist and Albert C. Barnes's passionate contribution to the exhibition's realization. In 1923, Dr. Barnes bought de Chirico's painting, *The Arrival*, 1912, from Paul Guillaume and two years later met the artist and became a great collector and supporter of his work<sup>80</sup> (fig. 7 *Portrait of Dr. Albert C. Barnes*, 1926 coll. The Barnes Foundation). Barnes had, in fact, spent time in Paris in the summer of 1936 and it is possible that, based on advice received from his patron, de Chirico finally decided to take the initiative and try his luck in New York.<sup>81</sup> In his memoir, Levy narrates the adventurous evening spent driving around New York with de Chirico, in the company of Chick Austin.<sup>82</sup> De Chirico had just arrived in New York for the first time when Levy offered to show him the city 'by night'. The excursion by car up and down Manhattan was full of thrills, trepidation and marvel at scenes of the metropolis's nocturnal life. Levy wanted to show de Chirico a certain place in the city where, according to him, a mix of artificial light and moonlight cast shadows which were even more enigmatic than those found in the artist's paintings. As

<sup>76</sup> J. Levy to M. Loy, September 29, 1936, copy of typewritten letter, Julien Levy Archive. 'Q. E. D.', from latin "*quod erat demonstrandum*" or "what was to be proven" is an abbreviation often interpreted in English with "quite easily done". No information exists that an exhibition of Filippo De Pisis' work was ever held at the Levy Gallery.

<sup>77</sup> Levy, *op. cit.*, *Giorgio de Chirico* pp. 183-196, republished in this Periodical, pp. 707-715.

<sup>78</sup> A. C. Barnes, *Giorgio de Chirico*, introduction for the exhibition catalogue, *Recent Paintings by Giorgio de Chirico, Julien Levy Gallery, New York, October 28 – November 17, 1936*. Julien Levy Gallery, New York, 1936. Reprinted in this Periodical, pp. 725-727. Barnes financed the publication of the catalogue.

<sup>79</sup> G. de Chirico, *J'ai été à New York*, originally published in "XX Siècle" March 1938. Republished in "Omnibus" October 8, 1938; In *Il meccanismo del pensiero. Critica, polemica, autobiografia, 1911-1943*, edited by M. Fagiolo dell'Arco, Einaudi, Turin 1985, pp. 349-356; Now in Giorgio de Chirico, *Scritti/1 (1911-1945). Romanzi e scritti critici e teorici*, edited by A. Cortellessa, Bompiani, Milan 2008, pp. 853-855. English translation *I have been to New York* in *De Chirico and America*, cit., pp. 136-138. Original French text reprinted pp. 679-680, English translation pp. 683-684 in this Periodical.

<sup>80</sup> A. C. Barnes established The Barnes Foundation in 1922, in Merion, Pennsylvania to promote the advancement of education and the appreciation of the Fine Arts. Today The Barnes Foundation collection includes 13 of the Maestro's paintings.

<sup>81</sup> See L. Klich *De Chirico and Dr. Barnes* in *De Chirico and America*, cit., pp. 59-72. In note 9, p. 68, Klich reports that de Chirico declared on the customs entry forms to have paid for his own passage.

<sup>82</sup> Arthur Everett 'Chick' Austin Jr., Director of Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford Connecticut from 1927 to 1944.

Levy reveals, the intense experience united the two men in the “affectionate equilibrium of a shared experience”.<sup>83</sup> A few days, later de Chirico asked to borrow Levy’s copy of *Hebdomeros*, which he returned with a dedication and a small drawing on the end paper, together with a note:

New York 16 Sept. 1936<sup>84</sup>

Dear Sir,

Here is your book with a dedication and a small drawing. If you need to write to me or telephone me, please do so at the above address, as I am not at home during the daytime.

With my high regard for Madame, please accept, dear Sir, my most devoted sentiment,

Giorgio de Chirico

P.S. Would you mind lending me your ordinary edition of ‘Hebdomeros’ for a few days, because I would like Colin to read it and I don’t have a copy here with me.

Thank you in advance.

The note is written on the letterhead paper of ‘Inter-Continental Productions, Inc. Rockefeller Center’, a company presided over by Saul C. Colin, who acted as de Chirico’s agent during the first four months of his stay in New York. Colin coordinated the preparation of the catalogue’s introduction with Dr. Barnes and organized a private viewing of de Chirico’s work for him in mid-October, in time for him to write the text.<sup>85</sup> On October 19<sup>th</sup>, Colin wrote to Barnes to thank him for the exhaustive essay, specifying that he had translated it for the artist, who was elated.<sup>86</sup> In regards to which, de Chirico wrote to his patron directly:

To Doctor A. Barnes<sup>87</sup>

Merion P.A.

My dear friend,

I should have written to you many days ago, but I have been very busy with my exhibition, as well as being under the weather with a bothersome cold, and haven’t found the time nor the tranquillity to tell you how touched I am by your benevolent and intelligent friendship, which is not only a strong incentive for me, but I am also aware of the pleiad of other painters who have found vital and necessary encouragement in you.

It is said that painting has died of old age and of overproduction, but I am sure that if there is in each century a man such as you, who puts himself at the head of painting, it will last as long as the earth. I shake your two hands,

Yours,

G. de Chirico

<sup>83</sup> J. Levy, *op. cit.*, p. 190.

<sup>84</sup> G. de Chirico to J. Levy, September 16, 1936, handwritten letter in French on ‘Continental Productions’ letterhead paper, Julien Levy Archive.

<sup>85</sup> A. C. Barnes to S. C. Colin, October 12, 1936, copy of typewritten letter, President’s Files, Albert C. Barnes Correspondence. The Barnes Foundation Archives, Merion, PA. In a letter dated October 2, 1936, Colin thanks Barnes for the “wonderful reception you gave us in Merion”. Implicitly, the visit took place with de Chirico.

<sup>86</sup> This is an indication that de Chirico did not understand English at the time. He became fluent in the language during his stay.

<sup>87</sup> G. de Chirico to A. C. Barnes, undated (October 1936), handwritten letter in French, The President’s Files, Albert C. Barnes Correspondence. The Barnes Foundation Archives, Merion, PA.

Colin asked Dr. Barnes's advice regarding the idea of publishing a booklet on the artist, to be sold during the exhibition.<sup>88</sup> Barnes advised him against it as he felt it would be seen as "ballyhoo", stating that his catalogue introduction was sufficient to bring de Chirico's work "to the intelligent attention of the kind of people you want to reach".<sup>89</sup> The catalogue text recapitulates some thoughts expressed ten years earlier by Barnes in his introduction to de Chirico's exhibition at Galerie Paul Guillaume in Paris in 1926<sup>90</sup>, but was contextualized in the present by the affirmation that de Chirico, "a mystic poet", was not affiliated with any artistic movement and had rejected the title conferred on him by the surrealists. This specification was supported by Julien Levy in his book *Surrealism* published in the Autumn of 1936 at the same time as the exhibition: "Giorgio de Chirico must be considered apart from the others, because for many years he has violently objected to being included among the surrealists".<sup>91</sup>

An error occurred in the publication of the catalogue which triggered a series of telegrams and letters of apology from Colin and Levy, and called for reprinting the catalogue on October 28<sup>th</sup>, the very day of the exhibition opening. The problem occurred when an entire printed line was cut from the second paragraph of the text changing the essay's meaning, a mistake that, according to Barnes did irreparable damage both to de Chirico and to himself. Following the affirmation regarding de Chirico's non-involvement with other modern art movements, the passage which should have read: "He has simply continued the efforts to express in his own way his own reaction to the world of the past and present. One need but be familiar with the work of the outstanding contemporary painters, including Matisse and Picasso, to identify in their pictures ideas which were introduced for the first time by de Chirico" had become: "He has simply continued the efforts to express in his own way his own reaction to the world of the outstanding contemporary painters, including Matisse and Picasso, to identify in their pictures ideas which were introduced for the first time by de Chirico".<sup>92</sup> On October 26<sup>th</sup>, Levy sent Barnes a letter of sincere apology for the error, informing him that the catalogue would be reprinted in time for the opening. Barnes demanded that the new catalogue be sent with an explanatory note to everyone who had received the incorrect version. Levy sent him the new version "still wet from the printers" on the morning of the opening.<sup>93</sup>

As revealed in his memoir, Levy and de Chirico were involved with Barnes in a furious re-installation of the exhibition right before the opening.<sup>94</sup> An enthusiastic supporter of the event, Barnes bought four paintings, two of which were already marked in the catalogue as on loan from The Barnes Foundation, Merion, Pennsylvania.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>88</sup> S. C. Colin to A. C. Barnes, October 19, 1936, typewritten letter, President's Files, Albert C. Barnes Correspondence. The Barnes Foundation Archives, Merion, PA.

<sup>89</sup> A. C. Barnes to S. C. Colin, October 20, 1936, copy of typewritten letter, President's Files, Albert C. Barnes Correspondence. The Barnes Foundation Archives, Merion, PA.

<sup>90</sup> A. C. Barnes, *Chirico* introduction to the exhibition *Exposition d'oeuvres de Giorgio de Chirico* at Galerie Paul Guillaume, Paris, June 4-12, 1926.

<sup>91</sup> J. Levy, *Surrealism*, Black Sun Press, New York, 1936, pp. 19-20; Republished by Da Capo Press, Inc. New York 1995 pp. 19-20.

<sup>92</sup> In addition to the unfortunate error, a mistake was also made in the spelling of Barnes's name: Albert 'G.' Barnes.

<sup>93</sup> J. Levy to A. C. Barnes, October 26 and 28, 1936, two typewritten letters, President's Files, Albert C. Barnes Correspondence. The Barnes Foundation Archives.

<sup>94</sup> See, J. Levy, *Giorgio de Chirico from Memoir of an Art Gallery*, ivi, pp. 707-715.

<sup>95</sup> The paintings acquired by Barnes are *Alexandros*, 1935; *Horses of Tragedy*, 1936; *The two mysterious cabins*, 1934; and presumably, *Mysterious Swan*, 1934. Nelle Mullen, Barnes personal secretary for many years, bought *Horses of the Hellespont*. Violette de Mazia, a teacher at The Barnes Foundation also bought a painting. In the third edition of *The Art in Painting*, 1937, Barnes reproduced *Alexandros* and *Horses of the Hellespont* re-titled *Horses near a Lake*, Hardcourt, Brace and Company, New York 1937, pp. 381 and 402.

In the gallery press release, Levy quoted from Barnes's catalogue introduction (fig. 8 *Recent Paintings by Giorgio de Chirico* exhibition catalogue):

Julien Levy Gallery<sup>96</sup>

602 Madison Ave., N.Y.

An Exhibition of recent paintings by Giorgio DE CHIRICO opens Tuesday, October 27<sup>th</sup> at the JULIEN LEVY GALLERY, 602 Madison Avenue.

De Chirico needs no introduction to the American public. He is one of the established masters of modern painting, and his work is well known here, if only for the almost too famous de Chirico horse. Regarding this, Dr. Albert C. Barnes writes, in his introduction to the catalogue: "De Chirico depicts horses so frequently that unless one identifies their varied compositional purposes, these paintings would be monotonous... De Chirico's horses are drawn in the best sense, that is, integrated units of light, line, color and space..." The same can be said of de Chirico's whole mythology, his vocabulary of personal images, half representation, half sombre fantasy, but always essentially plastic.

Giorgio de Chirico was born in 1888 at Volo in Greece of Italian parents. After his boyhood in Greece he remained in Italy till 1911, thereafter working for the most part in Paris. At present he is in New York for the first time, and will be here for the duration of his exhibition.

Again to quote from Dr. Barnes' introduction: "De Chirico's personality reflects the serenity, the equilibrium, the constant and well directed efforts of his great compatriots of the Italian Renaissance. And he has used legitimately this ancestral heritage in making meaningful his own poetic and mystic vision of the world today."

The Exhibition will continue through November 16<sup>th</sup>.

The Julien Levy Gallery

Knowing the art dealer's perplexity towards what he considered an overly abundant production of paintings on a horse theme (which he expressed to de Chirico in his letter of January 13, 1935), the reference in the gallery press release has an almost apologetic quality to it. However, it is a clear indication of Levy's sensitivity and courage that he openly presented a preconception about de Chirico's painting – the overabundance of horses – and transformed it into an invitation to observe and understand the very essence of painting: light, line, colour and space, which were in fact the founding principals of Barnes's approach.

The newspaper articles published after the exhibition opening belong to three general categories. The first: brief, mainstream and inviting; the second: medium length and informative, with the odd sardonic comment, published immediately after the opening; and the third: written by art critics and scholars with sincere and careful consideration published a few weeks later.<sup>97</sup> The first wave of comments on the event announced the arrival of the artist in New York for the first time and contained a dose of gossip, including an affirmation regarding Julien Levy's triumph at having "persuaded Chirico to come to this country... for he has been most reluctant to leave Europe".<sup>98</sup> After describing the artist

<sup>96</sup> Press release Julien Levy Gallery, October, 1935, Julien Levy Archive.

<sup>97</sup> The newspaper articles quoted from are held in the Julien Levy Archive.

<sup>98</sup> Unsigned article, *Giorgio de Chirico, Artist from Italy Feted as Elite's 'White-Haired Boy'*, in "New York Evening Journal" October 31, 1936.

as “around fifty, gray-haired, has large features, and looks quite typically Italian” comes the specification that “what makes him all the more desirable in New York... is that he is a single man”.<sup>99</sup> Another newspaper reported that de Chirico remained incognito prior to the exhibition opening and had “told ship reporters he was a wine merchant”.<sup>100</sup>

Of the twenty-one paintings on exhibit at the Julien Levy Gallery<sup>101</sup>, the reviews remarked on subject matter with which the public was already familiar: improvisations on classical Greek themes with broken columns, to which the artist had given new form, and his horses, which had acquired a careful and profound painterly rendering, bringing to mind Delacroix and Rubens. Automaton heads with egg-shaped heads and romantic landscapes are among the works presented, along with two well constructed youthful self-portraits. Attention is dedicated to the new fantastic figures of bathers as well as the gladiator theme, to which he “has given a fresh turn”.<sup>102</sup> Martha Davidson’s article, entitled *The New Chirico: a Classic Romantic*<sup>103</sup> will be remembered as an important account of the event. Published in “Art News” on November 28<sup>th</sup>, Davidson’s article presents a distinct and informative critique on the evolution of de Chirico’s oeuvre, with fundamental references regarding the *Mysterious Baths* theme, which she evidently gathered in a direct dialogue with the artist. According to Davidson, de Chirico’s canvases show the compatibility between two expressions: “each an escape from reality, the one into a different logic of a dream world, the other into the enchantment of an idealized reality. / The etherized solitude which de Chirico evoked in his paintings done roughly between 1910 and 1920 has completely vanished from these new canvases. [...] The paintings in a series called Mysterious Bathing are curious and puzzling. Like all de Chirico’s recent metaphysical paintings, they maintain the nostalgic mystery which pervaded his early works.” An article published on November 15<sup>th</sup> in “Art Digest” examines the subconscious aspect inherent in de Chirico’s painting, seen most notably in the *Mysterious Baths* theme and in the *Horses*, which are plausibly the kind of horses “that can be dreamed” and are “Proud narcissistic creatures, luxuriantly maned”. The author notes that de Chirico “extracts something universal from the highly personal realm of inner feelings”, which he expresses in his “refreshing, clean color, and in the drama of the combative lines, now vertical, now horizontal, sometimes parallel, often flame-like” (fig. 9 *Horses of the Hellespont*, 1935ca). The article ends on this note: “Jerome Bosch, the old Fleming, solved Surrealism but not all of the elements in the work of de Chirico, ultra-modern who sees with antique eyes”.<sup>104</sup>

The variegated collection of works on show encouraged one reviewer to comment in a rather blasé note that the tide seemed to have turned “against the French extremists: such a show as this of de Chirico’s recent work recalls to us that a return of the tide may bring in with it some very dubi-

<sup>99</sup> De Chirico separated from his first wife Raissa in 1930, at the same time he began his relationship with Isabella Pakszwer, whom he married in 1946. Isabella joined de Chirico in New York in mid-November, creating a situation which caused some confusion regarding his marital status, as Isabella was mistaken for his wife by a number of people.

<sup>100</sup> Unsigned article in “New York Woman”, November 4, 1936.

<sup>101</sup> Paintings listed in the exhibition catalogue: 1. *Alexandros*, 2. *Self-portrait*, 3. *The Artist and his Mother*, 4. 5. 6. and 7. *Mysterious Bathing*, 8. *Colonial Mannequins*, 9. 10. 11. *Horses of the Hellespont*, 12. *Bucephalos*, 13. *The Rebel*, 14. *Picador*, 15. and 16. *Flying Phantom*, 17. *The Artist in his Studio*, 18. *The Noble and the Shopkeeper*, 19. *Dioscures*, 20. *Heroic Combat*, 21. *Horses of Tragedy*. \*Lent by The Barnes Foundation, Merion, PA.

<sup>102</sup> Unsigned article, “New York Post”, October 31, 1936.

<sup>103</sup> Martha Davidson, *The New Chirico: a Classic Romantic* in “Art News”, November 28, 1936.

<sup>104</sup> Unsigned article, *Surrealism Makes its Bow in New York*, in “Art Digest”, n. 11, November 15, 1936.

ous flotsam and jetsam”.<sup>105</sup> The “World Telegram” began with a comparison between the exhibition of early work seen during the previous season at the Pierre Matisse Gallery by the “pillar of the School of Paris, Giorgio de Chirico” and his recent work on exhibit at the Levy Gallery, which, according to the author, composed a “heart-breaking picture of a man in whom the seeds of greatness germinated early, and then withered and died”.<sup>106</sup>

With his exhibition underway, de Chirico wrote to Léonce Rosenberg to bring him up to date on the state of his business in New York:

Intercontinental Productions, Inc.<sup>107</sup>

Rockefeller Center

30 Rockefeller Plaza

New York

November 7, 1936

Dear Mr. Rosenberg,

My exhibition in New York opened a week ago at the Julien Levy Gallery. It is a very big success. Barnes wrote the introduction for the catalogue and bought 4 paintings for his museum. Other paintings and gouaches have been bought by collectors in New York and Philadelphia. At present, 16 paintings have been sold and there are more sales in sight, as well as orders coming in from every direction. Vogue and Harper's Bazaar want me among their collaborators. I have also been asked to do portraits, stage-sets for the theatre and cinema etc. I am really very happy to have come here when I think of these last three years of pulling the devil by the tail amidst hostile indifference and stupidity. The success of my recent work in America is even more important since the surrealists and other such jealous scoundrels who gang together with the intention of bringing me down have conducted here, as they did in Paris, a violent campaign against my oeuvre. In addition to the [presidential] election, there were 6 other exhibitions of French painting opening almost at the same time as mine: 2 of Picasso, a Renoir exhibition as well as Derain, Vlaminck and Matisse, and despite all of this, the success was of the most complete sort. Now, I would like to ask you something. I left 2 paintings and 5 gouaches with you, at very low prices. I hope you haven't sold them at these prices. Because, really, 1500 Fr for a big painting like the one with the horses is unthinkable. Therefore, I would like to ask you to allow Jacques Bonjean, who is the manager's partner, to come pick up the two paintings and the gouaches. I will send Bonjean with receipts.

I hope you will send me some of your news. If by chance you have sold something of mine, please send my part to the address at the top of this letter. I may be mistaken, but I have the impression that the same atmosphere is being created here as there was in Paris before the crisis; everyone is coming here, even Vuillard has just arrived. And you, my dear Mr. Rosenberg, what are your projects? Does America tempt you? While waiting to hear from you, I ask you to believe in my sincere friendship,

Yours,

Giorgio de Chirico

<sup>105</sup> Unsigned article, *Chirico in Backwash*, in “New York Times”, October 28, 1936.

<sup>106</sup> Unsigned article, *De Chirico's Work Shown* in “World Telegram”, October 31, 1936.

<sup>107</sup> G. de Chirico to L. Rosenberg, November 7, 1936, handwritten letter in French, Fond Léonce Rosenberg, Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Centre de Documentation et de Recherche du MNAM/C.145.10422.91.

An overview of the Julien Levy/Jacques Bonjean correspondence will provide an insider perspective on business in progress. Levy opened the 1936-1937 season with an exhibition of the *Bonjean Collection* of Paris, from September 18<sup>th</sup> to October 27<sup>th</sup>, comprising the early work of Berman, Bérard, Tchelitchev and Leonid. Bonjean was in New York for the occasion and on returning to France, wrote a letter to thank Julien and Joella for the splendid hospitality offered to him during his stay.<sup>108</sup> In the letter, he also specified that one of the copies of Cocteau's big book [that he left in New York] was for Julien and suggested he ask de Chirico to write a dedication in it.<sup>109</sup> At the end of December, a letter from Bonjean draws attention to the recent split which had occurred between de Chirico and his agent Colin. Disturbed by the development, Bonjean specified that he did not know the reason behind the break-up and asked Levy for clarification. He also explained in an urgent tone that, of the group of paintings consigned to him, "five early de Chirico's" were not marked on the list as they were supposed to have been delivered directly to Levy during de Chirico's exhibition. He urged Levy to be especially careful not to give these paintings to de Chirico, as they belonged to him, and gave instructions to hold on to them until further notice.<sup>110</sup> Levy answered with two letters, one undated and the other dated January 27, 1937. In the first he explained that Colin had only delivered three of the five paintings, but assured him that this was uniquely due to the fact that the delivery boy could not carry all five paintings at one time, adding that Colin had no intention of hanging on to them and had promised to deliver the other two the same week. We understand from this that Colin was also acting as Bonjean's agent, although it becomes apparent that they, too, had gotten into a disagreement at this point, as Levy wrote that Colin seemed "upset to the point of tears over his rupture with you". Levy declared to have paid de Chirico in full and therefore Bonjean would have to address himself to the artist or to Colin for his commission. He asked him to not send him any more de Chirico's as he had to try and sell those he already had in the gallery.<sup>111</sup> The second letter is even more explicit:

<sup>108</sup> J. Bonjean to J. Levy, October 20, 1936, handwritten letter in French, Julien Levy Archive

<sup>109</sup> J. Cocteau, *Mythologie*, cit.

<sup>110</sup> J. Bonjean to J. Levy, December 28, 1936, typewritten letter in French, Julien Levy Archive. The titles of the paintings are not noted, although a clue to which paintings they were can be found in post-WWII correspondence between James Lipman, French Supply Council, 1800 Massachusetts Ave. Washington, D.C., and Julien Levy. On April 3, 1945 Lipman wrote to Levy on behalf of his brother-in-law, Jacques Bonjean, who had asked him to deal with the paintings left in deposit at the Julien Levy Gallery. The group of paintings included works by Berman, Bérard and Leonid, as well as two paintings by de Chirico which appear on the list as: n. 71. *Egg in the Street* e 72. *Plaster Head*. Lipman asked Levy which paintings had been sold and specified that his brother-in-law had told him "it was positively understood that no. 72 was not to be sold". From Levy's April 10<sup>th</sup> response it becomes apparent that the group of paintings was in co-ownership with Christian Dior. Levy explains to Lipman that at the beginning of the war, Dior had escaped to Switzerland and had sent him instructions through Max Kann, a friend of Bonjean's, to lower the prices and sell as quickly as possible, as he was in desperate need of funds. The impossibility of contacting Bonjean during the war forced Levy to rely on his own judgment. He decided to send \$250 to Dior, charging the amount to Bonjean's account. Levy wrote that he had no recollection of an agreement regarding *Plaster Head* and that he did not understand why he would have had a painting in the gallery that was not for sale. The painting was sold for \$200. Levy adds that during Bonjean's last visit, he had taken with him all the paintings he owned except for the ones he wished to sell. Contemporary to this exchange of letters, Levy closed the sale on *Egg in the Street* and wrote to Lipman on April 13<sup>th</sup>: "I am sorry (or glad?) to say that last Tuesday, April 10<sup>th</sup>, I concluded the sale for no. 71 on your list, de Chirico's *Egg in the Street*. Negotiations for the sale of this picture have been going on for the past several months". On April 25<sup>th</sup> he wrote to say he had credited his brother-in-law's account \$350 for the sale. The matter comes to a conclusion on September 25<sup>th</sup> with a letter signed by James Lipman, stating that all outstanding sums had been paid. The two paintings, *Egg in the Street* and *Plaster Head*, were exhibited in *A Distinguished Showing of Surrealistic and Neo-Romantic Works* at the Siegel-Antheil Gallery, Hollywood, February 23 – March 23, 1937, with a third painting entitled *Two Mannequins Standing*. J. Lipman – J. Levy correspondence, Julien Levy Archive.

<sup>111</sup> J. Levy to J. Bonjean, undated, copy of typewritten letter, Julien Levy Archive.

January 27<sup>112</sup>

Dear Jacques:

[...] I have paid de Chirico so far (by cheque to Colin who settled directly with de Chirico) \$1,633.75 and I still owe him \$120 after deducting expenses, framing bills etc. for which de Chirico was to pay by our agreement. i.e. total sales were \$1,753.75.

I have also paid Colin for your account \$360.00 as per the letter I sent you. i.e. 300 for the Berman and 100 for your de Chirico gouache, less 40 for expenses. [...]

I know very little about the break between de Chirico and Colin. I guessed that Mme. de Chirico was partly to blame as it all seemed to happen after she arrived. De Chirico spoke to me about a show next year, saying that he had split with Colin. I told him I might be willing provided I liked his pictures, and told him my terms. However I avoided discussing his break with Colin as I wanted to be sure not to become involved. He seemed to think mainly that Colin asked too large a commission for doing very little work; that Colin helped him find a room, restaurants, etc. and ran about a great deal but didn't actually [sic!] sell any pictures for him.

Voilà my personal and confidential opinion: De Chirico's worry is simply that he hates to give a commission and thinks that now that he is lancé in New York he can perhaps be his own dealer. Every painter thinks that at some time, and de Chirico will soon learn that he needs a dealer and will be coming back to you and me. As for Colin, naturally I have no idea how much commission he was asking de Chirico. He once told me 2%, and that seemed to me ridiculously small. I thought, as far as my experience with him went, that he was honest, but not a very good representative for you. He is somewhat of a bluff. He knows nothing about art, and he makes a nuisance of himself pretending to know too much. He annoys people. Otherwise he is a good fellow and I was perfectly contented dealing with him.

Very best regards. Will write again with more news as soon as I have some time. However I am very busy. Do not worry about your affairs with me. I will sell your pictures as quickly as possible (there are times when I can do absolutely nothing about them. For example during the Dalí show he refused to let me show other pictures that his own. When the Berman and Tchelitchev shows come along I will be able to show yours with greater success.)

J. Levy

On December 16<sup>th</sup>, Bonjean replied to a letter from Levy's assistant, Allan Porter, saying that he was happy to hear about the success of de Chirico's exhibition but was rather disappointed with how his own collection was selling and asked if there were any sales in sight in the weeks to come.<sup>113</sup> Dalí's exhibition ran from December 10<sup>th</sup> until January 9, 1937 in concomitance with The Museum of Modern Art's important *Fantastic Art Dada Surrealism* exhibition, from December 7<sup>th</sup> to January 17<sup>th</sup>.<sup>114</sup> Beginning with the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the ambitious exhibition endeavoured to outline five centuries of fantastic and marvellous subject matter in art by presenting the work of almost 200 artists, pertaining to

<sup>112</sup> J. Levy to J. Bonjean, January 27, 1937, copy of typewritten letter, Julien Levy Archive.

<sup>113</sup> J. Bonjean to A. Porter, December 16, 1936, typewritten letter in French, Julien Levy Archive.

<sup>114</sup> *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, December 7, 1936 – January 17, 1937, exhibition catalogue edited by Alfred H. Barr Jr., texts by Georges Hugnet. The Museum of Modern Art, New York 1936.

historical and contemporary art movements. Sixteen paintings and ten drawings from de Chirico's first period were exhibited<sup>115</sup> in the section *20th Century Pioneers*.<sup>116</sup>

In the years to come, the flow of attention surrounding de Chirico continued to broaden even further, although with a clear division between two distinct shores: the institutionalization and theoretical categorization of his youthful production and the fervent pulse of his work in progress. This division of the Maestro's oeuvre has been somewhat more marked in North America than in Europe, where art critics have taken his mature work into serious consideration.<sup>117</sup> In any event, the distinction of his art into separate periods is a definition which has primarily benefited the art market, at the expense of the artist and culture, in general. Art critic James Thrall Soby was decisive in confirming the bias instigated in the first place by the surrealists. In his research on de Chirico, Soby dedicated himself exclusively to the study and individuation of works from the early period, becoming an authority of this period to whom collectors, museums and amateurs have always referred. Following a critical approach based on painting's formal themes and concepts, it is conceivable that Soby may have failed to perceive the mysterious and spiritual element of artistic creation, which is something that eludes formal conceptualization. This unexplainable phenomenon is perhaps more easily grasped by a unique sensitivity congenital in artists themselves. A letter Soby wrote to Carlo Ragghianti on April 27, 1950, in which he speaks of the arduous task of dating de Chirico's early period paintings, is significant. In closing, he shares a perplexity he has: "What interests me very much is that de Chirico's reputation, here and in France, has survived the decline of interest in Surrealism. Oddly enough he is greatly admired by the more advanced younger American painters, though a principle premise of these painters – many of them abstract in the 'spontaneous' manner of the early Kandinsky – is that they insist on the two-dimensional limitations of the canvas and are opposed to illusionistic perspective, particularly when linear, as with the early de Chirico. They are especially contemptuous of the use of far perspective for emotional or poetic effect. And yet they seem to admire de Chirico! At least some of them do."<sup>118</sup>

The exhibition at the Julien Levy Gallery in 1936 provided continuity to the public's knowledge of de Chirico's recent work, as well as introducing the artist to the American art market. The exhibition's success, even in economic terms, permitted de Chirico to prolong his stay in America and to work with tranquillity in a land he had defined as "another world". Just as Julien Levy had perceived the unexpected apparition of a *Metaphysical Interior* on the wall of his gallery as a propitious sign<sup>119</sup>, for Giorgio de Chirico, the fortunate opportunity of working with an art dealer gifted with an authentic passion for artistic research and pronounced human sensitivity undoubtedly provided an important base for his American adventure.<sup>120</sup> While art critics, museums and merchants drew a distinct line between the artist and the paintings he had

<sup>115</sup> Along with two paintings from the Museum's collection and two anonymous loans, were works lent by James Thrall Soby, Cornelius N. Bliss, André Breton, Henry Clifford, Paul Eluard, Mario Broglio and René Gaffé (the painting lent by Gaffé, *Still Life*, was later disowned by de Chirico).

<sup>116</sup> In addition to de Chirico, the section *20th Century Pioneers* included the work of: Chagall, Duchamp, Kandinsky, Klee and Picasso. The section *Dada and Surrealism* comprised the work of over fifty artists.

<sup>117</sup> See. E. Adams, *Dealing Late de Chirico: The Julien Levy Gallery, 1936-37*, in *De Chirico and America*, cit., regarding the reaction of European art critics to the exhibition *De Chirico*, MoMA, March 30 – June 29, 1982, p. 84, note 44.

<sup>118</sup> J. Thrall Soby to C. Ragghianti, April 27, 1950, copy of typescript letter, James Thrall Soby Papers, VII.III.B.2.c.i. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

<sup>119</sup> See note 1.

<sup>120</sup> Levy continued to deal with de Chirico's art in the years that followed. Numerous sales of drawings, gouaches, watercolours and paintings of subjects presented in the 1936 and 1937 exhibitions at the Levy Gallery, are marked in the gallery ledgers. Levy also dealt with the sale of a number of works from de Chirico's first period. In addition to *Evangelical Still Life*, 1916 from the Lifar Collection, sold at the beginning of 1934 to S. Janis, we

painted in the first period, in Levy's observations and in the intuition he shares in *Memoir of an Art Gallery*, it is evident how he acknowledged de Chirico in his entirety – his artistic oeuvre together with his personal evolution –. Levy's sensitivity is perceivable in the way he observes the artist through his gestures: the contraction of an eye in a moment of discomfort, the trembling of his fingers while he presented him with the manuscript of *Mr. Dudron*, telling him he would be the first to read it.<sup>121</sup> Profoundly touched by the novel *Hebdomeros*, in 1942 Levy took on the task of translating it to English. Eleven typewritten pages of his translation are conserved in the Archive, left unfinished at the sentence: "At present he should get up and go out; this notion had preoccupied the thoughts of Hebdomeros for some time" Levy was the first to distinguish the parallelism, even time-wise, between the 'dream' in de Chirico's painting and Freud's theory of dreams, formulating his own innovative speculation on the evolution of dreaming, according to which the quality of dreaming changes over time. De Chirico was the first explorer to bring precise images back from the place Levy had named "the new continent of dreams", showing us the mysterious, grotesque, stupefying and fascinating atmosphere of this territory.

Rarely have such poignant considerations been made regarding the intimate and spiritual condition of de Chirico's artistic creation as those written by Julien Levy. What comes to light through the comparison of Levy's reflections in *Memoirs of an Art Gallery* and the examination of his papers carried out in this study is the profound transformation of Levy's consideration of the artist. Through de Chirico's paintings, but especially from Levy's fascination with de Chirico's writings and his personal experience with the artist, Levy formed an image of the artist steeped in the same mystery and nostalgia present in the much celebrated paintings. This is indeed an achievement in the relationship between an art dealer and an artist – beyond the artwork – into the sphere of unconditioned reality. De Chirico expressed his gratitude to Levy in a letter sent from Bayville, Long Island on September 9, 1937, asking him to accept "as a small memento" a gouache entitled *Les Nobles et les Bourgeoises*,<sup>122</sup> thus identifying perhaps in Julien Levy, a noble soul.<sup>123</sup>

In conclusion, the following events, occurring after the closing of the Levy Gallery Exhibition, relate to the continuation of de Chirico's sojourn in America. Isabella joined de Chirico in New York in mid November<sup>124</sup> and during the winter of 1936-1937 they found lodging in a residence at 7 East 62nd Street, a few blocks away from Levy's gallery.<sup>125</sup> Eugene Berman, Leonor Fini and "some ballet

find: *J'irai le Chien de Verre*, 1914, obtained from Breton in 1937, sold in 1943 to B. Reis; a drawing entitled *Le Nympe Echo*, obtained from Breton in 1937; *La Politique*, 1916, obtained from L. Kochnitzky in 1937, sold to G. O. Ford in 1941; *La Surprise*, 1913, obtained from R. Penrose, sold to Kay Tanguy in October 1946 (willed to Williams College Museum of Art, Williamstown MA by K. Tanguy in 1963).

<sup>121</sup> The manuscript in French is an early version of the novel *Monsieur Dusdron* (Mr. North-South) that the artist had surely copied page by page (with few corrections) to give to Levy. The twenty-page manuscript, including a cover page with title, is conserved in the Julien Levy Archive. A few small adjustments to the text prove it to be an earlier version of *Monsieur Dusdron* published in "Metafisica. Quaderni della Fondazione Giorgio e Isa de Chirico", n. 1-2, Milan, 2002, pp. 237-248.

<sup>122</sup> G. de Chirico to J. Levy, September 9, 1937, handwritten letter in French, Julien Levy Archive.

<sup>123</sup> See G. de Chirico, *The Memoirs of Giorgio de Chirico*, cit., p. 131. The passage dedicated to the artist's collaboration with Julien Levy begins thus: "I came to know a few art dealers and realised that there also, as in Paris, the disgraceful totalitarianism of those who trafficked in painting still persisted. Among those I met was Mr. Julian Levy, who was the classic type of good, well-educated American Jew and who, among all the art dealers I met in New York, Americans, Frenchmen, Germans, Poles, seemed to me the most honest and intelligent and, although in his gallery he often exhibited the 'daubs' of the modern painters, he was the least intellectual and the least snobbish of all of them. It was decided that Julian Levy would hold an exhibition of my work at the end of October."

<sup>124</sup> Isabella arrived in New York in time to see de Chirico's exhibition. See letter by G. de Chirico to painter Romano Gazzera, dated November 17, 1936: "Dear Gazzera, Isa has finally arrived and now I feel more tranquil", published in M. Fagiolo dell'Arco, *De Chirico. Gli anni Trenta: Parigi, Italia, New York, Berenice*, Milano 1991, pp. 259-260.

<sup>125</sup> On December 28, 1936, de Chirico sent Barnes his new address in case he needed to contact him. He also specified that he had discontinued his

dancers” lived in the same building.<sup>126</sup> De Chirico wrote the exhibition catalogue introduction for Leonor Fini’s show with Max Ernst, which took place immediately after his own exhibition closed. The text is an intense shake-up of images evoking the wild, the tempestuous and the stranger, in an intriguing context of intimacy, an apparition behind a curtain, eyes peaking through a keyhole, images which create an intriguing prelude to the two artists’s imminent cohabitation in the same brownstone.<sup>127</sup> In addition to painting, de Chirico worked on a number of unusual projects such as the design and installation of a dining room for the *Decorators Picture Gallery*, the decoration of a hatbox for Harper’s Bazaar, a large oil painting entitled *Petronius and the Modern Adonis in Tails* for haberdasher Benno Scheiner, as well as fashion illustration projects with Vogue.<sup>128</sup> An interdisciplinary approach to art was a philosophy promoted by Julien Levy, who encouraged artists in his gallery to take part in various non gallery-related activities.<sup>129</sup>

De Chirico participated in numerous group and solo exhibitions during his stay<sup>130</sup>, which was prolonged beyond his initial estimation.<sup>131</sup> The artist’s last engagement in New York was for his second solo show: *Recent Paintings and Gouaches – Giorgio de Chirico*, Julien Levy Gallery, New York, December 15<sup>th</sup> – 31, 1937<sup>132</sup>, held at Levy’s new gallery, located at number 15 on East 57<sup>th</sup> Street, home to New York’s most important galleries.<sup>133</sup> The artist congratulated Levy for his new gallery location “on classic 57<sup>th</sup> Street”.<sup>134</sup>

*Translated by Katherine Robinson*

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relationship with Colin and informed him of his intention to continue working in New York until the Spring. President’s Files, Albert C. Barnes Correspondence. The Barnes Foundation Archives, Merion, PA.

<sup>126</sup> J. Levy, from the second draft of *Memoirs of an Art Gallery*, Julien Levy Archive. The archive conserves two drafts of the chapter dedicated to de Chirico.

<sup>127</sup> G. de Chirico *Leonor Fini* introduction to the exhibition catalogue *Max Ernst and Leonor Fini*, Julien Levy Gallery, November 18 – December 9, 1936, in *Il meccanismo del pensiero*, cit., p. 335. Now in *Giorgio de Chirico Scritti/1 1911-1945*, cit., pp. 848-849. Manuscript in French, Julien Levy Archive, see note 29.

<sup>128</sup> De Chirico illustrated the November 15, 1935 cover of “Vogue”. He collaborated on two other projects with the magazine during his stay in America. See A. Finholt, *Art in Vogue: De Chirico, Fashion, and Surrealism in De Chirico and America*, cit., pp. 85-95.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 86. See also, Ingrid Schaffner, *Alchemy of the Gallery in Julien Levy: Portrait of an Art Gallery*, edited by Ingrid Schaffner and Lisa Jacobs, The MIT Press, Cambridge, MA – London, England, 1998, pp. 20-53.

<sup>130</sup> On April 25, 1937 de Chirico wrote to Barnes: “I will be leaving for Europe at the end of next month”, a trip he did not take. Handwritten letter in French, President’s Files, Albert C. Barnes Correspondence. The Barnes Foundation Archives, Merion, PA.

<sup>131</sup> The exhibitions held during the artist’s stay in the United States are: *Recent Paintings by Giorgio de Chirico*, Boyer Galleries, Philadelphia, December 11 – January 5, 1937, including ten or so of the paintings shown at the Julien Levy Gallery among the thirty-three works on show. A. C. Barnes’ text was published in the catalogue; *Paintings by Giorgio de Chirico*, Courvoisier Galleries, San Francisco, January 18 – 30, 1937; *Recent Paintings by Giorgio de Chirico*, Siegel-Antheil Gallery, Hollywood, May 8 – 31, 1937 to which Levy contributed by loaning paintings and allowing the publication of a catalogue similar to his own, in which quotations by H. McBride, Vogue, A. C. Barnes, G. Apollinaire, J. Cocteau and M. Davidson appear; *Recent Gouache Paintings by Giorgio de Chirico*, Reinhardt Galleries, New York, May 17 – June 17, 1937. De Chirico’s paintings were also seen in ten or so group exhibitions in the United States in this period. See *Giorgio de Chirico and America*, cit., p. 248.

<sup>132</sup> De Chirico proposed the exhibition in a letter sent from Bayville, Long Island, at the beginning of August. He then cancelled the proposal on the 25<sup>th</sup> of the month, due to complications he was encountering for the prolongation of his visitor’s permit, which were occupying him to a point where he felt he would not have sufficient time to prepare the exhibition. A series of letters exist regarding private matters relative to his situation and the documents he was putting together to apply for immigration in the United States, for himself and Isabella. Both Albert Barnes and Julien Levy wrote letters (on de Chirico’s request) declaring the artist’s present working situation, the sales of his paintings and the presence of his paintings in both private and institutional collections in the United States. His situation was complicated by the fact he was separated from his first wife Raissa, who was living in Italy at the time. The exhibition took place at the end of the year, after which, de Chirico and Isabella departed for Italy on the transatlantic *SS Rex* on January 5, 1938.

<sup>133</sup> Levy closed his gallery at this location at the end of the 1941 season. After a brief period in the army, he reopened the gallery in April 1943 at 42 East 57<sup>th</sup> street where he remained until its final closure in 1949, after which he based himself in Connecticut and continued to keep an apartment in New York. In the years that followed he dedicated his time to teaching and writing, and published monographs on Eugene Berman and Arshile Gorky, as well as his memoir.

<sup>134</sup> G. de Chirico to J. Levy, undated (early August 1937) sent from Bayville, Long Island. Copy of handwritten letter in French, Fondazione Giorgio e Isa de Chirico Archives.