



La consolatrice, 1972, pencil and charcoal on Fabriano paper, 52 x 34.5 cm

GIORGIO DE CHIRICO'S METAPHYSICAL REALITY

Paolo Picozza

But she spoke no further. Seated on the trunk of a broken column, she placed a hand gently on his shoulder and with the other she clasped the hand of the hero. Hebdomeros, his elbow on the ruin and his chin in his hand, pondered no longer... His thoughts, in the pure breath aura of that voice he had heard, yielded slowly and ended by abandoning him altogether. They surrendered to the caressing waves of unforgettable words, and on these waves floated towards strange and unknown shores. They floated in the warmth of the setting sun, smiling in its descent in the cerulean skies... Meanwhile, between the sky and the vast stretches of the seas, green islands, marvelous islands, passed slowly, as pass the ships of a squadron before the vice admiral, while a long sacred procession of heavenly birds, of immaculate whiteness, flew by singing (...)

G. de Chirico, *Hebdomeros*

In the last two years, which we can see as the continuation of the Fortieth anniversary of the death of the Maestro (1978-2018), the Foundation has undertaken many endeavors. Thus, driven by celebratory enthusiasm, as “family” of the artist and posterity, we felt compelled to pay our tribute of esteem to him. His legacy, enriched with memories, unveiled enigmas and significant documentary sources, has converged, for the most part, in the various issues of this journal that year after year continues to make available unpublished materials and scholarly contributions on particular aspects of Giorgio de Chirico's life and thought.

This issue presents a particularly interesting essay by Fabio Benzi (*New Evidence on the Origin of the Influence of Nietzsche and of the Idea of Immanent Myth in Giorgio de Chirico: Mavilis, Palamàs and the Early XX Century Athens Literary Scene*), who acutely conjectures that de Chirico familiarized with Nietzsche, albeit superficially, during his juvenile years in Athens. Ara H. Merjian's essay (*Superstructure: Neue Sachlichkeit, Metaphysical Painting, and Leftist Visions of Labor in 1920s Weimar*) explores how de Chirico's Metaphysical imagery, together with the work of Carrà and Sironi, profoundly influenced politicized representational strategies between the World Wars, with a specific focus on the less comprehensively studied rapport between Metaphysical aesthetics and left-wing, avant-garde experiments and visions of labor in Germany, particularly 1920s Weimar, which developed parallel to the Surrealist Revolution in France and Italian Fascism. Of great interest is Victoria Noel-Johnson's article (*De Chirico in the René Gaffé Collection & the Role of E.L.T Mesens [Brussels – London]*), which constitutes the first in-depth analysis of de Chirico's rapport with the Belgian collector, critic and patron of Belgian Surrealism, René Gaffé. By establishing Gaffé's interest in de Chirico much earlier than previously known through correspondence with Dadaist's

Tristan Tzara, Noel-Johnson reconstructs details regarding Gaffé's impressive collection of works by or attributed to de Chirico (numbering at least 12 paintings, 1 drawing and the 1930 publication of Apollinaire's *Calligrammes*), which were acquired between c. 1915 and the early 1930s. Maurice Owen's and Russell Richards's innovative and original vision informs their interactive *Hebdomeros + KikiTVisuoSonics* – an interpretation of Giorgio de Chirico's novel *Ebdòmero*, which couples an in-depth scholarly analysis with a pioneering use of digital technology. A video-only version of this work, compelling and utterly fascinating, was on preview in the exhibition *Giorgio de Chirico. Ritorno al Futuro* at GAM in Turin in 2019, demonstrating that de Chirico is still capable of exerting an influence on several international artists experimenting with the most contemporary expressive codes. Once again, archaic and Christian symbols coalesce in the philosophical study conducted by Roberta Di Nicola (*Giorgio de Chirico: The Lesson of the Greeks for a New Staging of Gabriele D'Annunzio's The daughter of Iorio*), which deals with the relationship between the painter and the poet, and acutely identifies the interest they shared in some aspects of classical Greek culture, notably tragedy, and their impact on their training as artists. Finally, Giorgia Chierici (*Giorgio de Chirico and America: The Artist's First Solo Show at the Valentine Gallery in New York*) accurately reconstructs de Chirico's first solo show in America, at the Valentine Gallery in New York. This is an important contribution, as it makes available archival materials discovered in the Morgan Archives in New York and, also thanks to the sales records kept at the MoMA, not only allows to identify the works on display in the exhibition, but also helps trace down the Master's other works gravitating around the Valentine Gallery and its merchants-owners: Valentine Dudensing and Pierre Matisse.

Thanks to the scientific expertise of the many scholars who have worked over the years with the Foundation that I have the honor to chair, research has progressed, being also able to debunk some of the clichés that have characterized contemporary criticism of de Chirico and that, unfortunately, often resurface. The monograph on the life and work of the Maestro authored by Fabio Benzi (*Giorgio de Chirico. La vita e l'opera*, La nave di Teseo, Milan 2019), which will soon be translated into English, represents a cornerstone in the construction of an artistic identity no longer bent to the personal interests of some vain art critic, but grounded on clear, reliable sources and verifiable documentation.

Lorenzo Canova's book (*Il grande ritorno: Giorgio de Chirico e la Neometafisica*, La nave di Teseo, Milan, 2020) fills a scholarly gap in de Chirico studies and highlights the value of a splendid and culminating moment in the artist's long artistic career, allowing us to appreciate the outstanding pictorial quality of his oeuvre as well as its complex and rich texture of connections, symbols and allusions. Thus, this volume clears up the misunderstanding whereby Neometaphysics was a mere remake of the juvenile Metaphysical works, while in fact it remarkably displays its great transformative and innovative power. De Chirico's ultimate, great return to his new Metaphysics is thus celebrated in the luminous vision of a pictorial art that cast a light on itself and clarifies its own enigmas, according to that circular concept of time that connects the painter to the thought

of Nietzsche and Schopenhauer: it is a tribute to that most distinguished art historian Maurizio Calvesi whose book *La Metafisica schiarita* had intuited the importance of Giorgio de Chirico's Neometaphysics as early as 1982.

De Chirico's artistic and literary output is the object of an exhaustible narrative, now made more accessible also thanks to the Foundation's recent cultural partnership with the publishing house La nave di Teseo that, under the direction of Mario Andreose and Elisabetta Sgarbi, has helped disseminate the Master's writings and further an extensive knowledge of his oeuvre. From the collection of poems entitled *La casa del poeta*, edited by Andrea Cortellessa, to the new edition of the visionary short-novel *Hebdomeros*, with an introduction by Fabio Benzi, the artist's words convey the urge to make his thought visible not only through figuration, but through its very narration. Of paramount importance for the knowledge of de Chirico is the new edition of his memoir, *Memorie della mia vita* (2019), with introductory essays by Franco Cordelli, Elisabetta Sgarbi and the present writer. The story, whether in images or words, suspended between the Apollonian and Dionysian dimensions, between melancholy and nostalgia, is contained in the title, as in the artist's works. The title signifies almost a form of conceptual thought, adventurous journeys and metaphysical visions "where the poet exalts himself and kneels" in front of the enigma anticipated by the "disquiet" brought about by a "most beautiful rose".

As in any Dechirican metaphor worthy of its name, the enigma is there on the threshold of an archway or in the enigmatic gaze of a period costume self-portrait from the 1940s. And it is precisely with the notion of enigma that Luca Massimo Barbero played as tasteful curator of the retrospective set up in Milan in the halls of Palazzo Reale (25 September 2019-19 January 2020; catalogue *de Chirico, Marsilio/ Electa*, 2019). An exhibition that I like to define "perfect", perfect as the narrative of the exhibition succeeded in its intent, namely, that of being appreciated and enjoyed even by the neophytes of Dechirican poetics. This exhibition attributes equal dignity to the whole of the Master's oeuvre, dissolving the rigid boundaries hitherto erected between the various stages his long pictorial career. In the exhibits on show, the depicted image is the sole interpreter of itself and its history: the educational displays and the open slits along the exhibition itinerary invite the viewers to focus on the long experiential journey of Nietzsche's Eternal Recurrence. The exhibition's rich catalogue contains a barely visible graphic enigma on the cover, which recalls those on the books portrayed in paintings such as *Le cerveau de l'enfant*, *Still lifes* and *Turin printanière*. The exhibition closes with three works depicting the Disquieting Muses, which keep alive the uninterrupted dialogue between Giorgio de Chirico and the creative offspring that continues to draw inspiration from his art.

Lorenzo Canova addressed this interesting and fruitful dialogue in the exhibition *Giorgio de Chirico. Ritorno al futuro* (GAM, Turin 18 April-25 August 2019, curated by Lorenzo Canova and Riccardo Passoni). The curator, through a direct comparison between the Master's works and the artists who were inspired by him from the 1960s to the present day, has made the metonymic and

metaphorical dialogue between the works visible and fascinating, so that in the Citazioni section of the exhibition, in the juxtaposition of a Metaphysical interior and a painting by Ugo Nespolo and among the allusions and the more explicit references to the Disquieting Muses present in the works of Andy Warhol, Emilio Tadini and Francesco Vezzoli, we can witness to the subtle dialogue between the contiguous and continuous dimensions of past and present.

Greedy-eyed and excited spectators in front of the mind-bending and dreamlike Metaphysical visions have also populated the rooms of the exhibition *Giorgio de Chirico. Il volto della Metafisica* (Palazzo Ducale, Genoa 30 March-7 July 2019). The show, curated by Victoria Noel-Johnson, has revealed the strength of De Chirico's artistic production from the beginnings of Metaphysical Art to Neometaphysical Art, through an ever compelling narrative in which the beginning and the end are apodosis and protasis of a single creative act.

It is interesting to note that during the lockdown of the Spring 2020, for a phenomenon that is easier to intuit than to explain, in order to illustrate the people's state of mind media have often mentioned or used the images of the Piazze d'Italia, which well represent the sense of loneliness and bewilderment dominating that historical moment. What could be seen in the de Chirico's eponymous paintings, was in fact visible in the squares of Italy. And still, despite the currently pending state of uncertainty, the exhibition *De Chirico e la Metafisica*, curated by Saretto Cincinelli and Lorenzo Canova has opened in Pisa (Palazzo Blu, 7 November 2020-9 May 2021, catalogue by Skira, produced and organized by the Pisa Foundation and Mondo Mostre S.r.l., in collaboration with the Giorgio and Isa de Chirico Foundation and the Galleria Nazionale). Particularly noteworthy is that the public is now able to see reunited together with the works of the Foundation some of the paintings that de Chirico's widow donated to the Italy in 1987 and now on display at the Galleria Nazionale di Arte Moderna e Contemporanea in Rome. This is a valuable nucleus of works, some of which are of exceptional importance and which the Master jealously kept for himself and constitute the most exclusive part of his collection.

“Then was the journey without end” writes prophetically de Chirico in the role of his alter ego Hebdomeros. The Foundation has embarked on this journey and with perseverance, scholarly rigor and enthusiasm never stops to investigate and further the knowledge of the art and life of one of the most complex and brilliant personalities of the twentieth century. So, without further delay, quoting de Chirico, we can say: “Dear friends, we still need to leave, to startle in anguish before the unseen. We still need to let the anchor chains screech together on the ships, and, in ports, untie the drenched hawser knots... On dry land, Zeuxes the explorers are ready to set off. May each of us be respectful of our companions' secrets. [...] It's time”.

