

ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF THE LETTERS FROM
GEMMA AND GIORGIO DE CHIRICO TO FRITZ GARTZ,
WRITTEN IN FRENCH AND GERMAN

This is the first complete English translation of the correspondence between Giorgio de Chirico and his friend Friedrich (“Fritz”) Gartz based on the original papers.¹ The letters, written entirely in German, are presented here in chronological order. There are a total of eleven documents, including the program for the concert Alberto de Chirico had intended to perform in Munich on 7 February 1911 (Attachment to Doc. 9). A letter in French, from Gemma de Chirico, the artist’s mother, to Gartz (Doc. 1) has also been included. Only one letter has been left out because, albeit written by Giorgio de Chirico, it is signed by his brother Alberto. The words and phrases which Giorgio de Chirico highlights in pen or pencil have been italicized. A few insertions in square brackets have been made for ease of comprehension, and punctuation has been added when missing. Finally, a few annotations have been included. All translations are by Francesco Caruso and Danila Moro.

1 A previous English translation, but based on barely legible photocopies, was published in the Italian-English edition of this journal, see «*Metafisica*», 7/8 (2008), pp. 559-567.

DOCUMENT 1

Gemma de Chirico, letter to Fritz Gartz, 7 July 1908

Terme d'Abano
Stablimento e Hotel
Todeschini

7 July 1908

Dear Mr. Gartz,

Would you be so kind to write me the reason why Georges does not answer to the letters that I have been sending to him over the last week? On Sunday I telegraphed him and he answered that "he is fine", but he keeps not writing to me. Please, write me the *whole* truth.

Please, send your reply to this address: Villa Berta, Gardone Lago di Garda.

I thank you in advance and send my kind regards to Madame and my very devoted friendship to you.

G.[emma] de Chirico

DOCUMENT 2

Giorgio de Chirico, postcard to Fritz Gartz, Milan, 15 June 1909

Milan

Dear friend!

It is very uncomfortable for me to write a letter, that is why I write so rarely. But I was told that you would be moving to a new apartment in the summer, so if you want to write me your new address, I will gladly read messages from you.

I am working hard. In September, I will probably travel to Rome. Please convey my heartfelt greetings to your wife, my mother and my brother send their regards. So do I.

Via Petrarca 13 – G. de Chirico

DOCUMENT 3

Giorgio de Chirico, postcard to Fritz Gartz, Milan, 6 July 1909

Milan

Dear friend!

A couple of days ago I wrote you a postcard, but since I did not get an answer I think you were not in Munich. I hope you are well.

If you write me a note, I will read [it] with pleasure. My greetings to you and your wife. Take care.

My mother and my brother send their regards.

G. de Chirico
Via Petrarca 13

DOCUMENT 4

Giorgio de Chirico, letter to Fritz Gartz, Milan, 27 December 1909

Milan, 1909
27 of the month of Poseideon²

Dear friend!

The day before yesterday I sent your esteemed and lovely wife a Milan specialty from the Cova bakery; I hope you received it and liked it.

Have you kept your old studio or are you working from your new apartment? I would be very pleased if you gave me news about your work.

In October I made a trip to Florence and Rome and in the spring I'll probably be staying in Florence, it is the city I liked the most. I worked a lot and studied a lot and now I have completely different goals than before.

I intend to exhibit in the upcoming Secession's spring exhibition, and therefore I'm asking you for a favor: if you would please send me the Secession's regulations, and if you could ask if foreign artists can exhibit without being invited.

When are you going to visit Italy again? In the fall of 1910, I will likely travel to Munich to exhibit a few paintings.

Take care.

My respectful regards to your wife.

G. de Chirico

² The original, in Latin, reads: "Mediolano / Anno Domini M.CM.IX / Possedizione XX VII". In the Greek calendar, "Poseideon" indicates the month of December.

DOCUMENT 5

Giorgio de Chirico, postcard to Fritz Gartz, Florence, 11 April 1910

Florence

Dear friend!

I have received your postcard and the paperwork of the Secession and I thank you very much for this... I am probably not going to use them, though... because I have decided not to exhibit there after all, since I would like to do a solo show later... and then the works that I am creating now are too deep and *would be out of place* in a Secession hall.

Florence is so beautiful in springtime... I have found a beautiful atelier... Please send my regards to your wife and take care.

G. de Chirico

DOCUMENT 6

Giorgio de Chirico, letter on crested letterhead to Fritz Gartz, Florence, 26 December 1910

Florence 26 [*erased* Juliet] Januar 10 [but December 1910]³

[*Erased words*] Dear friend!

First of all, I want to wish you and your lovely wife a Happy New Year. Many occupations, and my health, which unfortunately has not been very good for a year, have prevented me from writing to you earlier. Now I'm going to talk a bit about myself and ask for you to be patient.

What I've created here in Italy is not great or deep (in the old sense of the word), but *formidable*. This summer I painted paintings that are the deepest that exist. I've to explain this to you because I'm sure no one has ever told you anything like this in your entire life.

First of all, for example, do you know who the deepest painter ever is? Perhaps you don't have a precise opinion about it. I'll tell you: his name is Arnhold [*sic*] Böcklin, he is the only man who has ever painted *deep* paintings.

Now, can you tell me who the deepest poet is? Probably you'll speak to me immediately of Dante, of Goethe, and of other people. These are all misconceptions. The deepest poet is named Friedrich Niet[z]sche.⁴

When I told you that my paintings are deep, you must have thought of huge compositions with a lot of naked people striving to *overcome* something, as those painted by the most obtuse artist: Michelangelo.

No, dear friend, we are talking about entirely different things. Depth as I have understood it and as Niet[z]sche understood it is to be found in a completely different place from where it has been sought until now.

My paintings are small (the largest are 50-70 cm), but each of them is an enigma, each contains a poem, an atmosphere,⁵ a promise [*erased so that*] that you will not be able to find in any other painting. It has been a terrible pleasure for me to have painted them. When I exhibit them, it will be a revelation for the whole world, something that will probably happen in Munich next spring.

3 Originally, it read «Florence 24». For the date, see the *Notes on the English Translation of the de Chirico-Gartz Correspondence (1909-1911)* in the next pages.

4 Throughout the whole letter, the philosopher's last name is misspelled in "Nietsche".

5 De Chirico here uses the word *Stimmung*, which is key to his theoretical reflections. In his *Memoirs* (1945), he will define *Stimmung* as "atmosphere in the moral sense".

I also study a lot, particularly literature and philosophy, and I plan to write books in the future (I want to say something in your ear right now: I'm the only man who has understood Niet[z]sche: all my works prove it).

I would still have many things to tell you, for example, that my brother and I have now composed the deepest music... But now I want to stop, I've already said too much. Soon you'll see, listen and be convinced.

Are you traveling to Rome for the exhibition in the spring? An exhibition will also open here in Florence in April. When you come to Florence, we'll be delighted to have you and your lovely wife as guests. Your room is already ready.

I would be very pleased if you wrote me a letter. [*Erased* Please] I send my regards to your lovely wife.

[*Erased word*] My mother and my brother send their regards and wish you a Happy New Year.

G. de Chirico

DOCUMENT 7

Giorgio de Chirico, letter to Fritz Gartz, Florence, 28 December 1910

Florence, 28 December 1910

Dear friend!

My brother and I would like to ask you a favor. I know how kind you are and I am sure that you will help us.

My brother wanted to give a concert here in Florence, with music he composed, on 9 January. It was all set, but when he realized that the orchestra was terribly clumsy, he decided to have the same concert performed in Munich. He has already written to the Kunstverein to know about the rental rates for the hall and the orchestra. The management has sent us a reply that includes the following rates:

Orchestra in its standard formation, including one rehearsal:	M. 600
Hall, including heating and lighting:	<u>id. 300</u>
	“ 900

Each additional rehearsal: 150 M.

The maximum duration of the rehearsal is 3 hours in the morning and 2 hours in the afternoon.

We have already written to the management in order to come to an agreement, but my brother thought it would be better if you would be so kind as to go to the Tonhalle Management Offices and ask if the 900 M. is their final price, or if it would be possible to get a cheaper rate.

Also, as for the rehearsals, the Kunstverein writes that they last 3 hours in the morning and 2 in the afternoon. So is it that each rehearsal lasts 5 hours, or that there is one rehearsal lasting 3 hours and another lasting 2 hours?

We hope you will be so kind to ask about these things, and we thank you in advance for that, so that we can make arrangements. Please, be so kind as to reply as soon as possible.

My mother sends her regards to you and your lovely wife. Take care.

Georg de Chirico
Via Lorenzo il Magnifico 20,
Florence

[*Erased* N.B.] P.S. When you ask about the rehearsals, please do not ask in the same way as I have written above [*erased word*], that is if a rehearsal [*erased of*] lasts 5 hours or less, but tell them that we would like to know the exact duration of a single rehearsal, so that people will not think [*erased or*] that we have understood that one rehearsal lasts 3 hours and the other one lasts 2 hours.

DOCUMENT 8

Giorgio de Chirico, letter to Fritz Gartz Florence, 3 January 1911, with a postscript by Alberto de Chirico

Florence, 3 January 1911

Dear friend!

Today I have received your letter. My brother and I thank you for your efforts, and now we hope you could be so kind until the end.

My brother has decided to have the concert on 24 [*erased* Ja] or 23 January. But the Management had already written to us that they were not sure if the hall would be free for that day. Would you please be so kind to go back to their offices and make an agreement for 23 or 24 January (for us either is fine)? But I think that it would be better to have a written guarantee [*erased words*] from them, because my brother has started to prepare for the trip. So, my dear friend, please inquire, and do as seems best to you. We just want to have a guarantee that the Tonhalle Management will reserve the *Tonhalle concert hall* for us on 23 or 24 January for an evening concert with a 60-piece orchestra at the price that we already know.

[*erased* Please, if you can, as if you the concert – Please, as always] Please, tell the Director that you are speaking on the behalf of my father, from whom he has already received a letter.

My brother will leave on 15 January and will be in Munich on 16. My brother will speak with the people [there] about advertising and the programs. Now he just wants to have this guarantee for the orchestra and the hall for the dates of 23 or 24 January. Of course, [*erased word*] the Management too will be able to obtain a guarantee from my brother, please do everything that is necessary, if there are some expenses, please write to us so that we can send the money to you. Obviously, if the hall is not free for 24 January, the concert will be held on 7 February. But let's hope it is free.

As soon as my brother is Munich, he will sign the contract with the Management.

My brother will travel together with my mother [*erased words*], for she is more expert in these things, and I cannot interrupt my studies and my work here. I will have to travel to Munich [*erased with*] at the end of March for my exhibition, if you still have a [spare] bed for me until then, I will be very happy to accept your kind invitation.

My brother and my mother would like to stay at a pension close to the Tonhalle. Will you be so kind as to see if there is a pension nearby and ask how much it costs?

We thank you very much for your kindness.

We hope to receive a reply from you soon.
 With best regards for you and your wife from me and my brother.
 Your friend,
 G. de Chirico

– Via Lorenzo il Magnifico 20

P.S. Today I wrote to the Tonhalle that they can make an agreement with you, as if you were me. We believe that in this way [this] matter will be resolved more quickly.

Many thanks and regards,
 Alberto de Chirico

21. morn.	10 – 1	150
aftern.	4 – 6	100
22.	10 – 1	150
23. [Haupt?]	10 – 1 ⁶	

[*erased word*]

⁶ These numbers obviously refer to the dates, hours, and fees for the concert rehearsals mentioned in the first part of the letter.

DOCUMENT 9

Giorgio de Chirico, letter to Fritz Gartz, Florence, undated, but likely written on 5 January 1911

Florence

Dear friend!

The news of your brother's death really hurt me, so please accept condolences from me, my mother and my brother. If I had known, I would not have bothered you with my second letter. If you have not gone to the Tonhalle Management Offices yet, please do not go at all, in fact, it is not that important because my brother will come to an agreement with those people anyway. Along with this letter, I am sending the program for the concert planned to be given here in Florence. It is the same program that my brother will perform in Munich, possibly on 7 February at the Tonhalle.

I spent all night yesterday thinking about your brother's psychological drama. It is truly shocking that only in Germany are there people capable of experiencing such states of mind. He was too weak! Would that more people were weak like this! What is shocking is this obtuseness, this lack of awareness in people – No one can [understand] the big news – all the faces look at you remain terribly calm. My brother had “the deepest music” written on the program, and no one has noticed that, no one has understood the courage and the strange promise that those words contain. Let us hope that the people of Munich are not so inert and obtuse. My brother has also written a conference paper about his music, I am now translating it into German with the help of a German professor I met in Vallombrosa (he is a very queer type), my brother will have this paper read in Munich before the concert performance.

You did not understand me well when I said about Michelangelo that he is an obtuse artist. To me he seems so [erased letters] because now I know a new world and everything seems to me too coarse and mute. Since I have drunk from a different spring and a new, special thirst burns my lips, how can I still believe in those artists?! I know [erased letters] what you are thinking about when you ask me: David is a super-human,⁷ isn't he? This was my first impression, I used to think so; most of the world's *greatest spirits* thought so. The young hero, who has overcome everything, a free spirit without dogmas, it is obvious that this is certainly better than all the stupidity of life, modern and past, but a new air

7 De Chirico here uses the Nietzschean term *Übermensch*.

[*erased word*] has flooded my soul, I have heard] a new chant and the whole world now appears completely different to me, the autumn afternoon has come, the long shadows, the clear air, the serene sky, in a word. Zarathoustra [*sic*] has come, you understand me? Can you understand what enigma this word contains? The new singer has come, who speaks of the eternal recurrence, and whose chant holds the sound of eternity, now I examine the other great men with new lenses, and many of them appear to me terribly small and coarse, some even reek, Michelangelo is too coarse. I have long thought over these problems, and I cannot deceive myself anymore. One can say that only with Nietzsche [*sic*] has a true life begun.

Believe me, my dear friend, it will be a great pleasure if you and your lovely wife will come [stay] with us in Italy in the spring. We have enough space in this house and for my mother it will be a great joy to be in such pleasant company. If you like, we can also go to Rome together and visit the exhibition, since also my mother wants to see it.

Please, send my regards to your lovely wife. And take care.

G. de Chirico
Via Lorenzo il Magnifico 20, Florence

ATTACHMENT TO DOCUMENT 9

Program of the concert that Alberto de Chirico planned to perform in Munich on 7 February 1911. It is the same program that was intended to be held in Florence on 9 January 1911. The annotations in German are the translation of the Italian text printed on p. 2.

DOCUMENT 10

Giorgio de Chirico, letter to Fritz Gartz, Florence, 8 January 1911

Florence, 8 January 1911

Dear friend!

Yesterday I received your most kind letter. We thank you very much for your efforts [*erased* written]. This very day I have written to the Tonhalle that my brother will leave on 14 January and on Sunday, early in the morning, he will be at the Management offices to speak with the people there. We would have sent the deposit money to the Management at midweek, but as my brother and my mother will be in Munich Sunday morning (15 January), they thought it would be better to pay the security deposit then. We have written this to the Management as well: I hope they have no objections.

Please, go there once again this week and make sure that unpleasant events do not occur, we have also written to the Tonhalle to write to us before we set off for the trip, if they have any objections.

In the pension, my mother and my brother would like to have [*erased* the room] two separate rooms, please send us the cost and the address of this pension. As for what you wrote to us about the program and “the deepest music”, you will be able to speak to my brother about it. I knew you would have found it strange, but...

Thank you very much once again for your kindness. My mother and my brother [*erased* say] send their best regards and hope to meet you on Sunday.

Take care.

Giorgio de Chirico
Via Lorenzo il Magnifico 20

DOCUMENT 11

Giorgio de Chirico, postcard to Fritz Gartz, Florence, 28 January 1911

Florence Friday
Via Lorenzo il Magnifico 20

Dear friend!

My mother and brother have written to tell me how kind you and your wife have been to them, and I want to express my heartfelt gratitude.

I have read a very stupid review of my brother's music in the *M[ünchner] Neuester Nachrichten*.⁸ The guy has understood *absolutely nothing*. But as a philosopher once said: *Veniet melior aetas!*

I hope to come to Munich at the end of March for the exhibition. Please, send my regards to your wife.

Take care

Giorgio de Chirico

8 German daily newspaper published in Munich between 1848 and 1945.