

## THE WORKS OF GIORGIO DE CHIRICO IN THE CASTELFRANCO COLLECTION. THE “DISQUIETING MUSE” *AFFAIRE*

*Giovanna Rasario*

### The Giorgio Castelfranco Archive

More than seventy photographs of works by Giorgio de Chirico are stored in Giorgio Castelfranco's Florentine archive at Villa I Tatti.<sup>1</sup> The rediscovered archive material, including photographs and documents, besides allowing us to reconstruct the multi-faceted figure of Castelfranco as *collector*, *art historian*, and trader, also give us important information regarding his collection<sup>2</sup> of paintings by Giorgio de Chirico, starting with *The Disquieting Muse* (figs. 1-2), and their movement through the most important galleries of the day. The papers, on the back of which Castelfranco drafted notes in pencil, also contain many clues regarding Castelfranco's role as a cultural organiser<sup>3</sup>, in time period from the 1920s to the 1970s. After the period in Florence where worked as an art historian at the Soprintendenza, Giorgio Castelfranco moved to the Capital and took on the position of director of the Galleries of Rome and Lazio (1956). The archive represents an opportunity to enrich our understanding of the relationships between Castelfranco and Giorgio de Chirico, Alberto Savinio, and Siviero (who would go on to buy Castelfranco's house). It is also an opportunity to investigate the relationships between Castelfranco and the artists of the time that he helped to make famous<sup>4</sup>, gallery

<sup>1</sup> The Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies. We would like to thank Paul Castelfranco for authorising the study of the documents belonging to his father Giorgio, which he donated to the Bernard Berenson Foundation upon his father's death, 25 years ago. We take this opportunity to thank Fiorella Superbi and Giovanni Pagliarulo for their warm hospitality. Special thanks to Marco de Pas and Gianni Trambusti for the photographic campaign, Katherine Robinson, Giuliana Lai, Marilù Cantelli and last but not least, Massimo.

<sup>2</sup> The entire Castelfranco collection of de Chirico paintings can be pieced together from the documents in his archives, (Castelfranco Archive, container 27 and the de Chirico Photo Archive). The Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies, Villa I Tatti.

<sup>3</sup> Giorgio Castelfranco was also an active critic; in numerous reviews of the Biennals and Quadrennials of those years he wrote on de Chirico's work. Castelfranco writes on de Chirico in *La XIV Esposizione d'arte a Venezia* in «La Rivista di Firenze», year I, n. 7, November 1924, pp 20-27; he continues on the same subject in 1948, for the review of the XXIV Art Biennial of Venice, in «Bollettino d'Arte del Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione» (which he directed for a long time) n. 3, July-September 1948, pp. 277-287, in which he published a photo of the de Chirico room (p. 278) where thirteen of the artist's paintings were on exhibit, including *The Disquieting Muse* (p.181). Castelfranco once again describes the *Muse*: “The spaces are dominated and interpenetrated fantastically, to such an extent that, at times, the lyric simultaneity of different coordinate systems is reached; this clearly happens in *Metaphysical Interior* and also in *The Disquieting Muse* where the box in the foreground is seen through the sitting Muse's perspective, and therefore, for the onlooker, in reversed perspective ... de Chirico's peculiar mindset and culture in those years, founded in a vein of art and thought that is definitely – broadly speaking – anti-impressionist: an idealistic critique on the categories of time and space, which had found pathetic, alluring terms in Schopenhauer's oneric-critique, and also that of young Nietzsche with regard to the interpretation of Greek tragedy, as well as German illustration tending to classicism, which also took the enigmatic side of ancient myths into consideration.”

<sup>4</sup> Morandi's letter dated September 23, 1953, in answer to the invitation to the Quadrennial that he received from Castelfranco (Castelfranco Archive, containers 25-26): “Bologna, September 23, 1955 / Dear professor / I received your kind express letter / Unfortunately, I am unable to withdraw my decision not to take part to the upcoming Quadrennial. I believe it costs me great sacrifice having to say this to you and I am also very sorry for our friends Baldini and Valsecchi. / Tranquillity is essential to me right now and I desire nothing but a little silence around me. You, dear Castelfranco,

owners (Barbaroux, the Ghiringhelli brothers), and indirectly, the collectors. The Castelfranco Archive conserves double typewritten copies of de Chirico's texts for «Valori Plastici», in particular *Zeus the Explorer*, 1918, *On Metaphysical Art*, 1919, and the text on *Seventeenth Century Mania*.<sup>5</sup> It is interesting to note that the text contains corrections. It is possible that Castelfranco made these corrections himself, indicating that the critic checked over the texts by his artist friend.<sup>6</sup> In any case the presence of these typescripts (fig. 3) is particularly interesting in that it denotes a certain closeness between the two from as early as 1918 and a definite interest on Castelfranco's part towards Metaphysics and the work of the artist, even as a theorist.

The drawings for *Siepe a Nord-Ovest* (fig. 4) for the 1922 editions of «Valori Plastici», appear in photographs among Castelfranco's papers, and even in the form of a small lay-out ready to be printed, kept in a little folder tied with string, possibly as an indication of the work in preparation. De Chirico was closely acquainted with the works of Bontempelli, and his drawings for the 1922 volume with illustrations inspired by puppet figures<sup>7</sup> placed in a particular atmosphere which can easily be linked to texts by the metaphysical poet and the magic realism of which Bontempelli was bearer. What is most striking is precisely this ambivalence between the man and the mask, the mannequin, the man moved by strings, human and at the same time an element dominated by chance and manoeuvred from above (figs. 5-6). This idea seems to be confirmed by Claudio Crescentini<sup>8</sup>, who writes of the two artists de Chirico and Bontempelli: “[...] they seem *to stage* the sense of human precariousness [...] – the intertwining of the strings are visible in scenes with many characters [...] – and the psycho-physical unbalance of many intellectuals of that period, who had only just come through the trauma of the First World War”.

In 1923, Castelfranco received as a gift from de Chirico a number of drawings of 1920-22, as is noted on the back of some of the corresponding photographs (figs. 7, 8, 9, 10).

The year 1922 was also the time of the *Fiorentina Primaveraile*<sup>9</sup> exhibition where Mario Broglio pre-

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surely understand me and will be so kind as to excuse me. I assure you it will always be a great pleasure for me to see both you and Valsecchi. / I thank you kindly for your interest in me. / I apologise again. Many warm regards from your most affectionate Giorgio Morandi”.

<sup>5</sup> References of Mario Broglio's archive are also found in the Castelfranco Archive: there is a letter from Edita Broglio to Castelfranco dated 1/6/1951 indicating the paintings in the «Valori Plastici» collection and their latest buyers (figs. 57-59). For the publication of «Valori Plastici» archives, see: M. Fagiolo dell'Arco, *Et quid amabo nisi quod aenigma est?*, vol. II, *Giorgio de Chirico. Il tempo di «Valori Plastici», 1918-1922*, De Luca Editore, Rome, 1980. *De Chirico al tempo di «Valori Plastici». Note iconografiche e documenti inediti in «Scritti di Storia dell'arte in onore di Federico Zeri»*, Milan, 1984, p. 920. Broglio also edits monographs on art and the first is on Giorgio de Chirico in 1919, with 12 large colour reproductions of unpublished works, introduction critiques by Soffici, Apollinaire, Solomon, Étienne Charles, Roger Max, Maurice Raynard, Carrà, Papini and Jacques Emile Blanche. Giorgio de Chirico's commitment to cooperate exclusively with the «Valori Plastici» magazine is dated October 23, 1919, and was published by Maurizio Fagiolo dell'Arco (op. cit. 1980, fig. 9). From the same document we learn that contract for the paintings was valid for one year only. The metaphysical artists go to Germany with «Valori Plastici». The first stop is in Berlin in 1921 (P. Fossati, *La Metafisica*, Einaudi Turin, 1988, p. 177). In the Castelfranco archive there are news clippings of reviews concerning of the German tour.

<sup>6</sup> Giorgio de Chirico, *Il meccanismo del pensiero. Critica, polemica, autobiografia, 1911-1943*, edited by M. Fagiolo dell'Arco, Einaudi, Turin, 1985, As a matter of fact the text is published with all the corrections except one, which the typographer may have overlooked. Also note that the “sic” on the third line may be an indication that the correction was made by Castelfranco, not de Chirico.

<sup>7</sup> The libretto of *Siepe a Nord-Ovest* reproduces the following illustrations: *Napoleon and Colombine, The King, The Hero, Head Workman and Four Workmen, Two Ministers, Group of Puppets, Laura e Mario, Scene from the number one Loved one, Scene from the number two Loved one, The Gypsy's Entrance*.

<sup>8</sup> C. Crescentini, *De Chirico e le avanguardie* in C. Crescentini, G. de Chirico, *Nulla sine tragedia gloria*, Proceedings of the Study Convention, Rome, 2002, p. 86. See also F. Benzi, *Alcune note sul disegno di de Chirico* in F. Benzi, M. G. Tolomeo Speranza (edited by), *Giorgio de Chirico pictor optimum*, exhibition catalogue, Edizioni Carte Segrete, Rome, 1992, p. 247.

<sup>9</sup> The enterprise of «Valori Plastici» concludes with the massive presence of the group at “Fiorentina Primaveraile”: *La Fiorentina Primaveraile. Prima esposizione nazionale dell'opera e del lavoro d'arte nel Palazzo delle Esposizioni nel Parco di San Gallo*, 1922. The commission that chose the works was composed of Sam Benelli, Count Gino Capponi and Rodolfo Sabatini.

sented Giorgio de Chirico in the catalogue as part of the «Valori Plastici» group, the wording of which should be underlined as it clearly depicts de Chirico's move, within the continuity of metaphysical thought, toward a new way of making art, coinciding with the new Florentine-Roman period dominated by the figures of Broglio and Castelfranco: "[...] Giorgio de Chirico is an artist entirely enclosed in the fortress of his misanthropic nature, from which he attains the most extraordinary surprises, contributing with unforeseeable originality toward the creation of wonder and amazement [...] in the early period his painting suffers from a kind of drowsy romanticism which, in fact, turns into a tragic waiting, a dark angst that weighs upon us like the foreboding of tragic events [...] for de Chirico, certain moods would be metaphysical, moods more spiritualistic than transcendental in nature [...] now his representations are brightened up by the natural aspects of things engaging the artist in the solution of the more substantial needs of painting without a consequent dulling of his ardent imagination and the overriding will to subordinate painting to the poetic aspect of an object: subjects that manage to take us back to a heroic, mythological, historic world [...]".

After the *Fiorentina Primavera* exhibition in 1922<sup>10</sup>, some paintings such as the *Niobe* became part of Castelfranco's collection, while the exhibition included pictures already belonging to him. As we have already seen, many paintings are dictated by a love for the Seicento (17<sup>th</sup> Century), a century that was beginning to interest even art historians, in particular Roberto Longhi<sup>11</sup>.

However it is a little more difficult to understand de Chirico's unexpected change of mind, after having argumentatively attacked the *Seicento* in «Valori Plastici» in 1921<sup>12</sup> – creating a controversy to which a great many art historians and critics reacted, from Lionello Venturi, with his extremely balanced response, to Margherita Sarfatti<sup>13</sup> –, the artist overturned his opinion with a strong interest for the Seicento, which is evident in his paintings of 1922-23. This observation is of course relevant here in that it is prompted by the group of works, in particular still lifes, that de Chirico painted around 1922-23 which are part of Castelfranco's collection.

But the rediscovery of the *Seicento* began as early as 1919. Let us consider Ugo Ojetti's letters dating back to 1919, discovered in the Historic Archive of the Florence Superintendence and addressed to

<sup>10</sup> *La Fiorentina Primavera*. 1922, cit., foreword by Mario Broglio, pp. 73-76. Broglio quotes among metaphysical paintings *Hector and Andromaca*, *The Troubadour*, *Evangelic Still Life*, *The Great Metaphysician*.

<sup>11</sup> *Piero della Francesca e il Novecento*, edited by M.M. Lamberti, F. Fergonzi, G. Agosti. Foreword by P. Barocchi. Exhibition catalogue, Borgo San Sepolcro 1999. Roberto Longhi's "crushing" review of de Chirico's show at Anton Giulio Bragaglia's in 1919, *Al Dio Ortopedico*, published in *Tempo* on February 22, 1919, must have contributed to the research on painting technique, and to the rediscovery of "painting" which de Chirico delves into in 1920-1922. Such research is almost a response to Longhi's words: "If it were not yet clear enough how such atrocious, weird illustration has forgotten what painting is, one would almost ask just how does de Chirico paint. As such, we must say that we do not like this painting, which is poor painting".

<sup>12</sup> In the same issue of «Valori Plastici» year III, n. 2, dated 1921, in which Savinio publishes *Primi Saggi di Filosofia delle Arti (per quando gli italiani si saranno abituati a pensare)*, and Giorgio de Chirico in the column *Opinioni e Fatti* writes *Seventeenth Century Mania*, pp. 60-62: "Luxury magazines dedicate the shiny pages of their glossy publication to study and reproduce *Seicento* painting as well as the praise-raisers, under the banner of a powerful word: *Tradition*, point to the smoky century of bitumen and cracking [...] we wish to study the phenomenon on a psychological level [...]. Most people see in this a matter of interest: paintings whose value someone wants raised [...] obscure, sly dealings between antique dealers and collectors [...]. The *Seicento* is a readily understandable century, easier to grasp than earlier ones [...] the habit of painting on canvas, which spread in *Seicento*, allows for all possible forgery today [...]. *Quattrocento* (15<sup>th</sup> Century) painting is based on tempera, more or less mixed with oils and resins, but never on pure oil paint: and nowadays painters no longer know what tempera is [...] moreover, we find the Italian spirit only in the *Quattrocento*. In this century [...] midnight dreams [...] are resolved in the still clarity and diamond like transparency of a happy, quiet painting that holds disquiet within, like a ship that reaches the serene port of a solitary, charming country, after sailing gloomy seas [...]. The *Quattrocento* offers this spectacle [...] of a clear, solid painting, whose figures and things appear as though washed and made pure, and shine from an inner light. A phenomenon of metaphysical beauty that has something that is both vernacular and autumnal".

<sup>13</sup> Lionello Venturi's response is published in «Valori Plastici» year III n. 4 *Opinioni e Fatti*. Others who published responses are Lionello Venturi, Carlo Carrà, C. I. Suckert, Emilio Cecchi, Cipriano Efisio Oppo, Massimo Bontempelli, Raffaello Franchi, Eva Tea, Margherita Sarfatti.

Superintendent Poggi, in which “the honorary inspector” proposes the big exhibition that would open in April 1922 at Palazzo Pitti. This extremely important exhibition<sup>14</sup> included masterpieces from the Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries, along with lesser-known works as still lifes from private collections. It would be most interesting to go into more detail and investigate the kind of influence this exhibition had on artists of the era. But let us focus on de Chirico who, despite having written the year before that he hated the “smoky *Seicento*”, changes his mind perhaps thanks to the influence of the paintings on display in the fifty rooms of Palazzo Pitti. By comparing the paintings exhibited with some of the still lifes in Castelfranco’s collection, such as *Fish* (fig. 11), we find suggestive analogies regarding theme as well as the images, as is also true for Rosenberg’s *Fish*. Many photographs of still lifes can be found in Castelfranco’s archive<sup>15</sup>, including those “with wild game” (figs. 12-13-14) painted by de Chirico for Giulio Forti, Castelfranco’s father-in-law, along with *Fish* of 1923-24 and the *Fish* from the Rosenberg collection<sup>16</sup>, painted at that time. Perhaps it was Giorgio Castelfranco himself to propose these themes to de Chirico, as indicated by the words on a postcard dated September 26, 1924 (fig. 15). A good fifty rooms of “painting” must have had some effect! Indeed the *Pesci*, with their specific composition of still life in the foreground, a depiction of eels overlapping each other, and the sea with boats and rocks in the background, recall Giuseppe Recco’s still life *Pesci con sfondo di mare*<sup>17</sup> published in the catalogue *Pittura italiana del ‘600 e del ‘700 a Palazzo Pitti* edited by Ugo Ojetti. The catalogue should be read carefully to glean the elements and references to the group of paintings that were part of Castelfranco’s collection, even if some of these were “metaphysicalised” with a marble head completing the composition.

Then there are the *Pumpkins* that can also be found in Giovanni Battista Ruoppolo’s<sup>18</sup> still life *Frutta*, or the still lifes with grapes<sup>19</sup> that recall Barbieris’s *Tralci di vite*<sup>20</sup>.

The motif of the curtain that frames the left side of the composition appears frequently in de Chirico’s works of 1923 such as *Balcony in Florence* and *Wine Glass*<sup>21</sup>, exhibited at the Rome Biennale of the same year and which he had perhaps recently seen in Baschenis’s “musical instruments” displayed at the Palazzo Pitti exhibition<sup>22</sup>. This desire to rediscover the *Seicento* through personal interpretation is a

<sup>14</sup> *La Mostra della Pittura Italiana del Seicento e del Settecento a Palazzo Pitti*, edited by Ugo Ojetti, Luigi Dami, Nello Tarchiani, Bestetti - Tumminelli, Milan-Rome, 1922, will be referred to hereafter as *Pittura italiana del Seicento e del Settecento*. The exhibition commission was composed of Ugo Ojetti as president, Carlo Gamba Ghiselli as vicepresident, Giovanni Poggi, Nello Tarchiani, Luigi Dami as secretary.

<sup>15</sup> M. Fagiolo dell’Arco, *De Chirico 1908-1924*, Milan, 1984, nos. 195-197.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 186, oil on canvas, 77 x 99 cm, signed G. de Chirico 1922.

<sup>17</sup> *Pittura Italiana del Seicento e del Settecento*, exhibition catalogue, Florence 1922, plate 24. It is interesting to present here some of de Chirico’s sentences referring to Recco. The text is published in M. Fagiolo dell’Arco, *Giorgio de Chirico. Il tempo di “Valori Plastici” 1918-1922*, Rome, 1980, pp. 92-94; was aimed to reply to the affirmations of various art critics in ‘Valori Plastici’ concerning de Chirico’s attack on the *Seicento*, which was written on twenty small sheets and is held in a private collection. De Chirico speaks about the only painting by Caravaggio that he considers worthy, *Narcissus*, for its colour “baked and warm rising in the twilight of a summer day” he compares it to “something sated and solitary which you can also find in some good still lifes with fish and fishing equipment, which are the pride and joy of the Neapolitan school. Such as the great ichthyic paintings made by Recco, in which, as well as the exuberance of colour of the various fish heaped on the shore, there are some details like the boat tied to the bank, with the edges of the harpoons that shine in the shadows on the bow, and, at the back, the bay like a quiet lake in the embrace of high, dark rocks”.

<sup>18</sup> *Pittura Italiana del Seicento e del Settecento*, exhibition catalogue, Florence, 1922, cit., plate 258, Cecconi Collection.

<sup>19</sup> M. Fagiolo dell’Arco, 1984, op. cit. n. 200-200<sup>a</sup>-204.

<sup>20</sup> *Pittura Italiana del Seicento e del Settecento*, cit., plate 10, P.A. Barbieri, Modena, Campori Collection.

<sup>21</sup> M. Fagiolo dell’Arco, 1984, op. cit., n. 202.

<sup>22</sup> Exhibition catalogue *Pittura Italiana del Seicento e del Settecento*, cit., tav. 11.

clear sign of de Chirico's intelligence and readiness to reconsider his point of view. It appears to me that the artist almost seems to follow the lesson of Lionello Venturi, who had replied to him in «Valori Plastici» underlining the great importance of knowledge, regardless of fashions and judgements of value. In the archive, there are documents regarding Castelfranco's work on de Chirico for «Der Cicerone», the German art history journal in which the critic, along with his article about the artist, also published photographs of works from his collection, including the *The Disquieting Muse*<sup>23</sup> (fig. 16), that were published for the first time in the monograph in «Valori Plastici».<sup>24</sup>

Castelfranco is also a contemporary art historian and the archive takes us through the birth of *La pittura moderna*, published at the Gonnelli printers. We also perceive the difficulties in distributing the volume, in fact the «Il Milione» gallery would go on to help Castelfranco to distribute the work both in Italy and abroad.<sup>25</sup>

The private history of the collection and of the *collector* is intertwined with «History»: indeed it was during the period of the racial laws that Giorgio Castelfranco decided to sell the works in his possession, and from 1939 he began to contact the major gallery-owners and traders of the time. His intention was to send his children to America to study, an idea that was shortly to be realised. Paul Castelfranco escaped to America at just sixteen years of age, together with his sister Giovanna who was not much older than him. Giorgio Castelfranco's first wife Matilde Forti, who was also his cousin (Giorgio's mother's surname was Forti), belonged to a family of Jewish ancestry.<sup>26</sup> In his *Memoirs*<sup>27</sup>, de Chirico recalls that his paintings were very useful to Castelfranco «to send his children to America at the time of the notorious racial laws».

The assiduity between the artist and the critic can be deduced from a letter dated August 16, 1923, sent from Florence to André Breton<sup>28</sup>, in which Giorgio de Chirico asks his poet friend to send the drawings back to the address «Castelfranco, 1 Lungarno Serristori, Firenze», and adds «Given that I have signed a contract with this gentleman, whereby I am committed to transfer my entire production of pictures and drawings to him [...]».

<sup>23</sup> «Der Cicerone», XVI, n. 10, Leipzig, 1924. The Muse photograph reproduced in «Der Cicerone» is published in our text (fig. 16), while the English translation of the original German text is found on pp. 614 ff. This is not the first time that «Der Cicerone» talks about de Chirico; in 1921 Theodor Däubler had reviewed the «Valori Plastici» exhibit held at the National Gallery in Berlin.

<sup>24</sup> *Giorgio de Chirico*. 12 tables in phototypy with various critiques, edited by «Valori Plastici», Rome, 1919.

<sup>25</sup> Letters from «Il Milione» gallery to Castelfranco requesting copies of the book, including the letter from «Il Milione» to Castelfranco dated October 24, 1941: «Dear Castelfranco. I received thirty copies of your book [...] how on earth does Gonnelli ship things?». «I will try to distribute your book as much as I can, especially abroad, where Gonnelli surely can not reach». The contract for the book *La pittura Moderna* with Gonnelli's publishing house is stamped January 23, 1934 (Castelfranco Archive). Specified in the contract is the fact that Castelfranco will pay the publishing expenses and Gonnelli will authorise Castelfranco to use the trademark and sell the work on his own as well. There is a later letter breaching the contract with the publisher as Castelfranco wanted all the remnants of the book.

<sup>26</sup> Although Matilde Forti, in her childhood – through the influence of a Swiss nursemaid – had become protestant, she was afraid for the safety of her children, whom she joined in America only after the war, when she was elderly and almost blind. We wish to thank Anna Terni for the information on Giorgio Castelfranco and his family. Sonia Oberdorf is a friend of Anna Terni, Sonia is a first cousin of Giovanna and Paul Castelfranco (Her mother was the sister of Giorgio Castelfranco's mother, thus she was a first cousin to the two of them). They were very close when young, and were very upset at the sudden departure of Paul and Giovanna who fled to American without even the time to say goodbye to their cousins. They met again only in 1942, when Paul returned to Italy as an officer in the American Army, when he landed in Naples on a merchant ship. On this occasion, Giorgio Castelfranco also saw his son again for the first time. The information on how a cousin of Sonia bought drawings by de Chirico from Castelfranco is quite interesting.

<sup>27</sup> Giorgio de Chirico, *Memorie della mia vita*, Bompiani, Milan, 2002, p. 215. On page 139 de Chirico states he met Castelfranco immediately after the first world war «[...] and he had bought one of my self-portraits. Later Castelfranco bought many of my paintings [...] I also made a beautiful double portrait of him and his wife.»

<sup>28</sup> Jole de Sanna, *Giorgio de Chirico-André Breton. Duel à mort*, in «Metafisica» n. 1-2, 2002 pp. 120-121.

In the previously cited unstamped postcard dated September 26, 1924<sup>29</sup>, the critic asks de Chirico how far he has gotten with *The Fish*, and for news of *Casella*. He writes: “Dear painter, I have found out from my wife that the August issue has reached you. Please give me some news about the Berger fish and about the Casella business. For the fish you have a week of time left, but not much more. I haven’t heard any more about the C. portrait. Ask Savinio to send me a few good pages. I have checked that in Bologna, Padova and Venice the launch of our magazine is going well. Yours, G. Castelfranco”. It is 1924, just after the postcard to Breton, and if there were no dates on the paintings the postcard would give us some good clues as to when they were executed. But this could also perhaps be a way for the critic to “check up” on de Chirico who, (as he wrote to Breton), had agreed to cede his entire production of pictures and drawings, as well as an indication of the close collaboration between de Chirico and Castelfranco in the 1920s at the time of publishing the «Rivista di Firenze».

### Castelfranco Art Collector and Patron

It is Castelfranco the *art collector* that emerges from these documents, attentive to the works and to the themes, almost to the point of requesting one subject rather than another for the paintings. And it is to the *critic* that de Chirico replies with a postcard sent from Paris probably in 1931<sup>30</sup>, saying that he was now painting female nudes and still lifes.

The artist addresses Castelfranco as “Dear Patron” (fig. 17), embarrassed about not having, as yet, paid his debt “but don’t worry, you will have it; I might pay in bits and pieces but I will pay”, and asking him to do some business on his behalf in Italy because “here business is still going badly, they say things will be better in spring, but we’re not there yet”. And he goes on: “In fact, I am prepared to offer friendly prices, very friendly prices”. Indeed a certain familiarity must have sprung up between them given that in 1929 Castelfranco asked Eugenio Belluomini to address a postcard “care of de Chirico, rue Messonier, Paris 17”, where he lived during his stays in Paris (fig. 18).<sup>31</sup>

In the years 1924-1925, the issues of the «Rivista di Firenze» were full of articles by Castelfranco, Giorgio de Chirico and Alberto Savinio.<sup>32</sup> The head office of «Rivista di Firenze», directed by Guido Gori<sup>33</sup>, was located at Castelfranco’s house at number 1, Lungarno Serristori. A careful reading of the texts, the journals of the time, the articles by Castelfranco, de Chirico and Savinio, shows us an interlacing of feelings, ideas, proposals which point towards a new world and a new way of making art. It is interesting to re-read in this light the texts published in the «Rivista di Firenze», especially those

<sup>29</sup> Castelfranco’s postcard to de Chirico (Castelfranco Archivi, container 27), Cf. fig. 15.

<sup>30</sup> Castelfranco’s postcard to de Chirico (Castelfranco Archive, container 33).

<sup>31</sup> Eugenio Belluomini’s postcard to Giorgio Castelfranco (Castelfranco Archive, container 33). The post stamp is hard to read but the postcard was sent from Venice with regard to the exhibition *Settecento italiano* held there from July 18 and October 4, 1929.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. «Rivista di Firenze», year II, no. 1. De Chirico publishes *Un Rêve* and *Armando Spadini*; Savinio *La morte di Niobe*; Castelfranco *Il culto del genio*. In issue no. 8 dated February 1925 Savinio published *Vita dei fantasmi*; Giorgio de Chirico *Vale Lutetia*; Giorgio Castelfranco *La scultura medievale tedesca*. In issue 7, year I (1924) Castelfranco publishes a review on the XIV Art Exhibit of Venice and writes (pages 20-27) on de Chirico and his “Ottobrata”. In the same issue 7 Giorgio de Chirico writes on Courbet while Alberto Savinio publishes a beautiful piece titled *Ottobrata* (pp. 16-19) on the long shadows of autumn. In issues 5 and 6 of 1924, year I, Savino publishes the piece *Icaro* and Castelfranco *Il ritorno alla tradizione*. «Rivista di Firenze» was published by A. Gonnelli and H. C. Brooks and the management was in 1 Lungarno Serristori, Florence, the same address as Castelfranco.

<sup>33</sup> AA.VV., *Giorgio de Chirico. Gli anni Venti*, exhibition catalogue, Verona, Palazzo Forti and Galleria dello Scudo, December 14, 1986 - January 31, 1987, Mazzotta, Milan, 1986, p. 216 (referred to hereafter as *Anni Venti*). Many of the paintings on display were part of the Castelfranco collection.

by de Chirico published under Castelfranco's "supervision", as may have occurred for «Valori Plastici».<sup>34</sup> In 1924 Castelfranco's important article *Return to Tradition* was published in number 6 of the «Rivista di Firenze», while in number 7 (1924) in a review of the XIV Biennale of Venice Castelfranco made some animated comments about the recovery of the "fifteenth century" by Italian artists<sup>35</sup> and about de Chirico he says: "We can say that he is here alone and unmistakable. What distinguishes him completely from the others is a superior poetic sense and a greater richness of, let's say, the naturalistic elements in his art; that is to say sureness of inspiration and love of nature. Painterly detail returns rich and happy in his *Ottobrata* (fig. 19): the tree painted rapidly with brush strokes that are clearly distinguishable but also perfectly give the idea of a leafy branch, how it lifts up and opens to the light, the deep red shadow of the vestibule [...] And at the same time he portrays a precise sense of spaces [...] to create a colourful, resonant, unique atmosphere which is the first voice in the fairytale: Mercury flying above a city from another era; in this harmony and depth of form, in this movement and sounding of colour, the god has good reason to return: here myth and modern spirit are effectively fused and unified".<sup>36</sup>

Almost as a compliment to Castelfranco's description of *Ottobrata*, Savinio's beautiful text of the same title was published in the same issue (November 1924).<sup>37</sup> Savinio expresses himself thus: "The most beautiful poetry, the most profound and sumptuous art is inspired by Autumn. I know entire poems, like *Jerusalem* and *Orlando Furioso* that unfold entirely under an Autumn sky". It seems like one is entering a painting by de Chirico when reading: "through the sky padded with white clouds rustled a flutter of wings in a parabola. Mercury was passing [...] on his way to milder climes together with the swallows: to the Island of the Sun, where, among the young poets of via Etnea in Catania, he can count more than one friend [...]".

*Ottobrata* is the painting that is exhibited together with *Duels to the Death* (fig. 20) at the XIV Venice Biennale, where criticism remains hostile. Both of these works were part of Castelfranco's collection and are reproduced in numerous photographs in the critic's archive. *Ottobrata* is dated 1924 (as is Savinio's text) and is one of the so-called "Roman villas", a group of seven works painted between 1921 and the beginning of 1924 that many critics regard as landscapes associated with San Domenico near Fiesole, and to the rediscovery of Böcklin.<sup>38</sup> I put forth the theory here that the idea of the Roman Villa paintings was inspired by the real "Roman Villa" on Via Senese, where German artists stayed when in Florence and that Max Klinger, who was a major influence on young de Chirico, bought in 1905.

The two works are painted with oil tempera emulsion. The result is a luminous, light painting suffused with that special autumnal light that Savinio talks of: "golden last light [...] under this transluc-

<sup>34</sup> See note 5.

<sup>35</sup> G. Castelfranco, *La XIV Esposizione d'arte a Venezia*, in «La Rivista di Firenze», n. 7, November 1924, pp. 20-27, p. 21.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>38</sup> For example in: *Anni Venti*, cit., p. 82. The text mentions Florence and Böcklin's Villa, today the property of the Baccio Maria Bacchi heirs, situated "beside the Villa Romana where Max Klinger lived in 1905". Villa Romana is on Via Senese and hosted young German artists up until the end of 2006. It is currently undergoing renovation, and the archive has been transferred to Kunsthistorisches Institut of Florence. Concerning Villa Romana, see J. Baumeister, *Turismo in Arcadia in Arnold Böcklin e la cultura artistica in Toscana*, edited by C. Nuzzi, Fiesole, Palazzina Mangani, July 24 - September 30, 1980, Rome, 1980, pp. 66-82.

cent sky [...] Full, tranquil, quiet season of autumn, laid down like a god resting on the world[...] long are the autumn shadows, oblique the light also laid down [...] the most poetic of seasons because it protracts the future: because it consumes itself slowly and unwillingly, leaving us nostalgic for its return[...]”<sup>39</sup>.

It is in «Rivista di Firenze»<sup>40</sup> that de Chirico publishes *Vale Lutetia*, a text suffused with tender melancholy in the atmospheric setting of misty Turin “heartrendingly grey and mysterious like scenes from a photographer’s studio [...] all the strange lyricism of its geometric construction”. De Chirico continues with an image of Mediterranean Turin which also includes elements of its internal spaces: “The Mediterranean sky, the counter-ceiling par excellence...”<sup>41</sup>

In the first issue of «Rivista di Firenze» of 1925, the three – Castelfranco, de Chirico and Savinio – seem to help one another out with their articles. Let us begin with Castelfranco, who cites Nietzsche in his article, *Il culto del genio*<sup>42</sup> with words that could belong to Giorgio de Chirico: “He who compared art to dreams (Nietzsche) or used this as the expedient for his strange, lucid, prophetic vision (Dante) understood in part the reality of the artistic element [...] In plastic arts in which the work is vision and moment, the capacity of genius intensifies, almost to compensate for the impossibility of a succession, a development, the sense of illusion [...] Illusion is the primal foundation for lyricism, illusion and lyricism give the picture a sense of accomplished, resolved and extremely lucid magic [...]”. Castelfranco seems to have read with great care the texts that de Chirico published in «Valori Plastici», and of which, as we have already seen, there are typewritten copies in his archive. He understands the metaphysical artist’s way of making art, and in the same issue of the magazine he republishes de Chirico’s *Un Rêve* in French, taken from *Revolution Surrealiste*.<sup>43</sup>

Alberto Savinio’s *La morte di Niobe* is also published in the same issue: “Niobe [...] about forty years old, voluptuous and majestic, somewhere between a turkey and a guinea fowl [...]”<sup>44</sup>, which brings to mind Giorgio de Chirico’s painting *La Niobe*, also part of Castelfranco’s collection.<sup>45</sup> The painting recalls the group of Niobe exhibited at the Uffizi, and is one of the works linked to the “return to the Museum”, confirming the ongoing relationship between de Chirico and the Uffizi Gallery, possibly facilitated by Castelfranco.

Feelings, ideas and also images and places from sources other than memory. If we think of the works that passed through Castelfranco’s collection and specifically of those painted between 1921 and 1924, it seems that going to Castelfranco’s house (now Museo Siviero<sup>46</sup>) meant being a stone’s throw from

<sup>39</sup> A. Savinio, *Ottobrata*, in «Rivista di Firenze», year I, 1924, no. 7 p. 16. Castelfranco continues in «La Bilancia» magazine (1923) on the theme of *October Viens* and of the paintings made by de Chirico in this period: “In his earlier paintings one found a severe, simple reality, capable of moving the observer with a fabulous sense of its own simplicity; today it achieves a reality richer in form and in joy, we could call a classical reality, that acquires a sense of surprise and emotion”

<sup>40</sup> G. de Chirico, *Vale Lutetia*, in «La Rivista di Firenze», year II, 1925, no. 8, pp. 11-17.

<sup>41</sup> Regarding this period (1924-1925) see Franca Fioravanti’s summary published in *Anni Venti*, cit., pp. 211-230. De Chirico spends this time between Rome, Florence and Paris, and passed through Turin.

<sup>42</sup> «La Rivista di Firenze», n. 1, year II, 1925 p. 1.

<sup>43</sup> *Un rêve*, extract from «La revolution surrealiste», no. 1, year I, Dec. 1, 1924, Librairie Gallimard Paris. Republished in «La Rivista di Firenze», year II, n. 1, 1925, pp. 14-15.

<sup>44</sup> A. Savinio, *La morte di Niobe*, in «La Rivista di Firenze», year II, 1925, n. 1, pp. 7-12.

<sup>45</sup> We will see the various difficulties that Castelfranco encountered for the sale of *Niobe*. The painting, which entered «Valori Plastici» in 1921, will pass to the Castelfranco collection after being displayed at *Fiorentina Primavera* in 1922, *Anni Venti*, cit., p. 66.

<sup>46</sup> Castelfranco’s house on Lugarno Serristori is now the Siviero Museum and is open to the public. Siviero during the same year (1941) tried to sell

the banks of the Arno and imagining the departure of the Knights, Mercury in flight, the Metaphysicians, like inhabitants of an ideal little village between Lungarno Serristori and the nearby Lungarno Soderini, where in the 1930s Giorgio de Chirico would go to live, at antiquarian Bellini's house.<sup>47</sup>

*Roman Villa and Roman Rocks* (figs. 21-22) are some of the first works of his collection that Castelfranco would sell. *The Departure of the Errant Knight* of 1923 (fig. 23) recalls the architectural style "over the Arno", not far from the places in which Castelfranco lived and de Chirico had his Florence address.<sup>48</sup>

A psychic reality is manifested by the suggestion of a real place, as the buildings behind river Arno heading towards San Niccolò, or the "Roman Villa" can be identified, as we have already hypothesised, with the sunny "Villa Romana" on via Senese, the meeting place of German artists in Florence, rather than with Böcklinesque images of San Domenico in Fiesole. Imagination becomes image in the departing "medieval knight" on the shore of the Arno, from the places one sees when strolling on the Florentine "Lungarno" and that reappear in *The Departure of the Adventurer*, (II version, 1923) and in the above cited *The Departure of the Errant Knight* of 1923, which was part of Castelfranco's collection.<sup>49</sup>

The enigma becomes a fable, the Theatre is manifested as background, with images in which early Twentieth Century Florence is linked to images of Thessaly as occurs in the painting *The Departure of the Argonauts* of 1920. Among Castelfranco's papers there is a drawing with the same title<sup>50</sup>, which, with the left-hand figure depicted in various positions seems to be the "base" for *Mercury and the Metaphysicians* (1923) and for *The Departure of the Argonauts* (fig. 24). In this work an almost an "Urbino-quality clarity" constructs the linearity of the pictorial space. The architectonic composition appears to allude to fifteenth century piazzas, to Leon Battista Alberti's *Ideal City*, to Piero della Francesca's finished volumes and magical light, although warmed by the Mediterranean origins of the author.

Albeit with distant intuition, the image suggests a compositional reference to the Golden Ratio in Piero della Francesca's *Christ at the Column*; the figure standing with flag in hand divides the painting in two, constructing a masterly geometry of space. If the figure in the centre of the piazza reminds one of the quality of lightness found in certain figures by Masolino it is due to the perfection of the relationships and the immobility of the scene, while the hot midday sun speaks of other myths. The theme and the material substance of which it is made are described by de Chirico<sup>51</sup> who explains the

some of the paintings belonging of his own collection to "Il Milione" gallery, and the Ghiringhelli's asked Castelfranco information on their origin: "Rodolfo Siviero has offered me some old Sofficis, Carràs and 19<sup>th</sup> Century paintings. I believe this comes from you, and I thank you kindly..." (letter from Gino Ghiringhelli to Castelfranco, dated September 29, 1941).

<sup>47</sup> G. Rasario, *Giorgio de Chirico pendant Bellini*, in «Metafisica», n. 3-4, 2004, pp. 271-298; G. Rasario, *Appendice, Epistolario Giorgio de Chirico-Luigi Bellini*, Florence 1932 c.a. -1952 ibid., pp. 299-358. We take this opportunity of this citation to rectify an erroneous attribution to Giorgio de Chirico the autobiography published in n. 3-4 (2004) of this Periodical, pp. 337-340 and the photocopy of part of the typescript, p. 324. We thank P. Baldacci for the courteous indication.

<sup>48</sup> See postcard to Breton (Jole de Sanna, *Giorgio de Chirico- André Breton. Duel à mort*, in «Metafisica», n. 1-2, 2004, pp. 99-101).

<sup>49</sup> In a handwritten list, Castelfranco marks the place and date of the painting: Florence 1923 (Castelfranco Archive, container 27).

<sup>50</sup> Negatives of this drawing and of the others in Castelfranco's collection are held in the Castelfranco Archive and were published in M. Fagiolo dell'Arco (Photographic Archive of Villa "I Tatti", de Chirico-Savinio container). The drawing is published in *Catalogo delle Opere in Anni Venti*, cit., p. 58, with the following caption: "G. de Chirico, *La partenza degli Argonauti*, 1920, private collection". The painting *The Departure of the Argonauts* was part of the Vallecchi collection was sold at auction with another painting by de Chirico, *The Prodigal Son*. The two paintings are the only Twentieth century works included in the vast collection of Nineteenth century works sold at auction in 1929. Cf. *Raccolta Vallecchi*, presentation by Enrico Somarè, auction catalogue, Galleria Bardi, Milan, 1929 (plates 12 and 13).

<sup>51</sup> The text is republished in M. Fagiolo dell'Arco, *Catalogo delle Opere*, in Anni Venti, cit., p. 58.

paint and transparent colour, “that dry sense of painterly medium that I call *Olympic*, and that reached its climax in the work of Botticelli, and in Raphael’s Peruginesque style”. In any case, the style is one of plasticity, of clarity that is never maudlin, which bring to mind Piero della Francesca with regard to the composition as well, rather than the Peruginesque style that de Chirico refers to in his text.

The nervous and linear style of *Mercury and the Metaphysicians* (*The Statue that Moved*, 1920-21)<sup>52</sup> brings Luca Signorelli to mind, while the added charm of the image’s mysterious aspect leads us to Piero di Cosimo. In the painting of the same title, which at one time belonged to Alfredo Casella<sup>53</sup>, there is another Florentine landscape, another entrance-way (not complete on all sides) of a portico in via San Niccolò with the same red hues, and a tower (that of San Niccolò) and a hill (the one behind San Niccolò), that is, if one wishes to insist on the rather superficial exercise of pinpointing precise places and reasons of inspiration.<sup>54</sup> Even though the works were not all painted in Florence, but also in Rome and Paris where de Chirico happened to be in 1924, they have strong Florentine connotations. The many portraits of this era – the 1924 painting of Mr. and Mrs. Eluard (fig. 25), the 1923 *Self-portrait*<sup>55</sup>, the one of Castelfranco and his wife (fig. 26), the two versions of the Casella portrait as well as the one of Bontempelli’s wife –, seem to exude the same “aura”. The garden of Castelfranco’s house, represented by de Chirico in *Eco*<sup>56</sup> in 1923, is to this day full of plants and the laurel trees present in the paintings. An ideal reference to Böcklin’s *Self-portrait* of 1873, to the Medicean portraits by Lorenzo and Cosimo il Vecchio, as well as that of Pontormo, next to the “laurus” but also a common symbol for a special community of friends.

### Castelfranco the Merchant: The sale of The Disquieting Muse

Let us return to Castelfranco: he was also a generous patron that lent money to de Chirico who was always short of cash<sup>57</sup>, and helped him to build his artistic identity which lived through the sale and trading of his works. For de Chirico, Castelfranco and later Bellini, represented a sort of Italian Paul Guillaume and were without doubt among the first to discover an interest in Florence for the commercialisation of contemporary art.

After the «Valori Plastici» period (1919-1921)<sup>58</sup>, in the years 1924-1925 Castelfranco not only wrote about de Chirico in the «Rivista di Firenze» but also presented the artist in the catalogue of his exhi-

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>54</sup> Many critics have looked at the relationship between the cities of Turin and Florence and the *Italian Piazzas*. Maurizio Calvesi makes a rather interesting use of the influence of Turin and Florence on de Chirico in order to better understand the themes, figures and literary references in his work (M. Calvesi, *Firenze e Torino nella Metafisica di de Chirico*, in *Giorgio de Chirico Pictor optimus*, cit., 1992, pp. 37-46. We quote Nietzsche’s words which Calvesi reports (*ibid.*, p. 42); these words are well connected to the images of the northern city’s autumnal beauty, which certainly inspired Savinio and de Chirico’s comments in «La Rivista di Firenze» which are quoted above: “Marvellous clarity [...] autumnal colours, an exquisite well-being permeating all things, walks on the outskirts of Turin [...] everywhere, October’s most pure light [...] now I am full of autumnal feelings, in all of the best meaning of this word, this is the time of my great harvest, all becomes easy to me”.

<sup>55</sup> G. de Chirico, *Autoritratto*, 1923, private collection. Previously in the collection of Paul Eluard.

<sup>56</sup> M. Fagiolo dell’Arco, *Catalogo delle Opere*, cit., p. 64.

<sup>57</sup> Postcard from de Chirico to Castelfranco (fig. 17).

<sup>58</sup> The documents relating to «Valori Plastici» are out-and-out contracts between Broglio and de Chirico and were published by M. Fagiolo dell’Arco who retraced the movements of the works through the various exhibits (cf. footnote 6).

bition at Léonce Rosenberg's gallery in Paris (figs. 27-29). With regard to this catalogue, it is of great interest to speak of an unpublished document kept at the Rosenberg Archive in Paris<sup>59</sup>: a text signed G. Castelfranco published in the catalogue (fig. 29). The original text is written by hand by the artist on three sheets of paper.<sup>60</sup> The visible signature "G de Chirico" is crossed out and replaced with G. Castelfranco. A small slip of paper is attached to the document, signed by de Chirico which reads: "Dear Mr. Rosenberg / Here is the text for the Catalogue. Please/ let me know by return courier if it is/ ok. - I have received the magazine and thank you/ Yours de Chirico/ Via Appennini 25B" (figs. 30-33). The handwriting on the three sheets is de Chirico's and is the same hand of the two small autobiographical notes published (further on) in this Periodical.

At this point, this presentation is to be considered a rediscovered *self-presentation* that confirms de Chirico's habit of writing about himself, and signing with the name of someone else. Evidently, the artist preferred to write texts himself, on occasions such as this Parisian exhibition, when he wanted his work to be given the correct interpretation. In the exhibition, the artist showed 23 paintings. At number 9 on the list of paintings exhibited appears *The Disquieting Muse*.

At this point a few aspects concerning this painting must be made clear – which we will further expand on later –, with regard to the Rosenberg exhibition. The question of which "Muse" was shown in the Rue de la Baume gallery is pertinent.

As seen in the shipping documents held in the Rosenberg Archive<sup>61</sup> this painting was sent along with the rest by Giorgio Castelfranco. Also found in the archive is letter from Castelfranco to Rosenberg dated April 25, 1925<sup>62</sup>, from which one sees it was Castelfranco himself who took care of the shipment of the paintings with Danzas: "Please allow me to reply to you for Mr. De Chirico, as it is I who send the shipment of the cases of paintings that you have received."

These documents also show that *Metaphysical Interior* belonged to poet Paul Eluard, who lent it for the exhibition.<sup>63</sup>

In the archive, lists with the prices of the paintings have been saved. It is interesting to note how the price of *Muse* is relatively low – and not only the price indicated to the custom office<sup>64</sup> –, which brings one to hypothesise that the painting was not the original (Castelfranco himself had refused to sell the original to Breton for a price that wasn't high enough).

<sup>59</sup> The Rosenberg archive is currently held at the George Pompidou Centre in Paris. The de Chirico-Rosenberg correspondence kept here is particularly important as it allows us to put the years 1924-1929 into focus, years which were crucial for de Chirico. In a particularly interesting letter, dated 12/3/26 the gallery owner asks de Chirico to provide him with a biography "d'urgence": "Dear Mr. de Chirico, I would be obliged if you sent me a biographical note on yourself urgently, date and place of birth, expositions etc... your different periods... [...] Thank you, cordially yours." (Fond Léonce Rosenberg, Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Centre de Documentation et de Recherche du MNAM 9600.196). This request may refer to a manuscript that is something more than a biographical "note" and is in fact a small biography, published in this Periodical on pp. 508 with the transcription of the original French and English translation, in which de Chirico briefly but efficiently synthesises the characteristics of his painting (9600.197). A statement made in this biography helps us to understand when it was written, and it could, in reality, correspond to Rosenberg's request: "A few months ago I returned to Paris where I intend to live from now on." De Chirico moved to Paris in the November 1925, therefore "A few months ago" would bring us to the spring of 1926.

<sup>60</sup> The photographed documents (figs. 30-33) are kept in the Fond Léonce Rosenberg, Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Centre de Documentation et de Recherche du MNAM 9600.138. We would like to thank the Centre de Documentation et de Recherche du MNAM for the authorisation to publish the writings and in particular Anne-Marie Zucchelli and Brigitte Vincens. For the transcription of the original French text and English translation see pp. 501-503.

<sup>61</sup> Fond Léonce Rosenberg, cit., documents: 9600.142 del 14/4/1925; 9600.144 del 16/4/1925; 9600.146 del 27/4/1925.

<sup>62</sup> Id., 9600.145.

<sup>63</sup> Id., 9600.164, postcard from de Chirico dated 3/6/1925.

<sup>64</sup> Id., 9600.146.

Maurizio Fagiolo dell'Arco is also of this opinion: that the 1924 painting (the copy) was the one that was shown in the 1925 exhibition.<sup>65</sup> It may be for this reason that from 1925 on the copy circulated as if it were the original and its photo was in turn published as such, with the consensus of the Surrealists who owned the copy and had an interest in passing it off as the original.<sup>66</sup> A few years later in 1997<sup>67</sup> Paolo Baldacci, contrarily to Fagiolo dell'Arco, simply affirmed that the original, which he dates as 1918, was version was the work shown at Rosenberg's.

Fagiolo dell'Arco holds that even the painting *Hector and Andromaca* in its 1924 version was the one exhibited in Rosenberg's gallery.<sup>68</sup> Instead, Paolo Baldacci puts the first version of this painting, 1917, among the paintings shown at Rosenberg's without explaining the difference of opinion.<sup>69</sup>

The first contradictions: in a letter to Poissonier<sup>70</sup>, Breton affirms to have seen de Chirico replicate the famous *Muse* painting at the home of René Berger in Paris. Paolo Baldacci<sup>71</sup> states that *Hector and Andromaca* was also painted at René Berger's house in the winter of 1924 as well as *Il Condottiere*, between the end of 1924 and the end of 1925.

However, from what Berger wrote we know that he bought *Hector and Andromaca*, as well as *Condottiere*, from a collector in Germany. One reads: "I remained in friendly relations with Chirico, and, as I was working in Berlin for the Reparation Commission, between 1924 and 1930, he went to Berlin and stood (sic) at my place. One day he told me that a German collectorist (sic), who had two pictures of him (sic), was desirous to sell them. The price was normal and I bought these 2 pictures. I have not known the German owner of them as they were retired (sic) from his place by a friend of mine, also a painter, Hans Bellmer, who brought them to me.

They are:

ANDROMAQUE ET HECTOR: 90 cm x 50 cm. This picture figures in James Thrall Soby's Book, at page 232, as belonging to a German collection.

IL CONDOTTIERE: 75 cm. x 62 cm., evidently from the same periode (sic).

The names of the pictures were given to me by Chirico himself.

All these pictures remain with me, since that time (more than 40 years) and never went to any exhibition."<sup>72</sup>

<sup>65</sup> M. Fagiolo dell'Arco and P. Baldacci (edited by) *Giorgio de Chirico, Parigi 1924-1929. Dalla nascita del surrealismo al crollo di Wall Street*, Milan, 1982, p. 479, n. 1: "Le Muse Inquietanti", 1924-1925, exhibited in Paris (1925), Galerie Rosenberg, previously in the collection René Gaffe.

<sup>66</sup> P. Baldacci, *Betraying the Muse, De Chirico and the Surrealists*, New York, 1994, p. 116.

<sup>67</sup> P. Baldacci, *Giorgio De Chirico: The Metaphysical Period, 1888-1919*, translation by J. Jennings, Bulfinch, Boston, 1997, plate 139, p. 394. In the specification on the *Muse* (n. 139), Baldacci indicates that the painting of 1918 was exhibited in Berlin, Hannover and Dresden in 1921; Paris in 1925 (n. 9 in the catalogue), Dresden in 1926, Florence in 1932 and Milan in 1939. Cf. also *Ibid.*, p. 420, "Replicas made on commission".

<sup>68</sup> M. Fagiolo dell'Arco and P. Baldacci, op. cit., p. 479.

<sup>69</sup> P. Baldacci, op. cit., plate n. 134, p. 371.

<sup>70</sup> M. Fagiolo dell'Arco and P. Baldacci, op. cit., p. 479. The letter is quoted but the text is not transcribed.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. P. Baldacci, op. cit., pp. 420 and 419. Who rightly hypothesised that the painting was painted in Florence and that Breton's affirmation was unfounded, op. cit., 1994, p. 54 footnote 31.

<sup>72</sup> I would like to thank Victoria Noel-Johnson for advising me on the existence of this letter, kept at the Tate Gallery of London. Tate Archive (Tate Britain, London), TGA 4/2/188/1, pp. 17-18. In the same letter (written in English), we find further interesting information regarding the paintings in Castelfranco's collection: "In 1920, after the war, I went to Firenze to make a Doctor Thesis on economics (La politique annonaire des grandes villes italiennes pendant la guerre) and I spent 6 months in a small boarding house on the Lungarno Acciaoli, near Ponte Vecchio. In the same boarding house was living Giorgio de Chirico, with his mother, "Baronessa de Chirico" (a terrific woman, I am sorry to say).

Giorgio and I became good friends. In this time he was painting, in the Uffizi, a copy of a Michel Angelo (sic) painting, where they (sic) are a group of naked boys. The copy was for an American.

When I left, I bought, for a small amount of money, from Castelfranco, who in this time was the 'merchant' of de Chirico, the two pictures:

As such, Berger's affirmations distinctly contradict those of Breton and others, as it is difficult to understand for what reason Berger would have omitted such an important circumstance regarding paintings in his collection, which were supposedly painted at his own house.

Immediately after, in 1926, the *Muse* was exhibited in Dresden<sup>73</sup>, together with *Prodigal Son* and *Self-portrait with Mineura* of 1919. Fagiolo dell'Arco notes that these paintings belong to Castelfranco. And so, when did the *Muse* of 1924 arrive to Breton or, as others hold, to Eluard?

Let us take a look at other documents. The letter to Gala of June 4<sup>th</sup> was dated by Fagiolo dell'Arco in 1982<sup>74</sup> as 1925, while he had previously dated it 1924<sup>75</sup>. If one reads the document again, de Chirico speaks of the work *Duels to the Death* as being on show at that time ("du tableau que j'expose a Venise") at the Biennale of Venice, which occurred in 1924, like the article in «Der Cicerone» which he sent. Then, there is mention of *The Disquieting Muse* and of Breton, whom de Chirico claims not to have heard from in a while. In fact he writes: "It has been a very long time that I am without news of Breton. Could it be that he is angry with me for *The Disquieting Muse* business!"<sup>76</sup>

If the letter is dated June 1925, it could be that Breton is upset because he had seen the copy of the *Muse* at the exhibition – or – if we date the letter to 1924 – "fâché" because Castelfranco wants to sell the *Muse* for a price that is too high and de Chirico can not manage to obtain a reduction and proposes rather, to make a replica of it.<sup>77</sup> In fact, if we look back at the correspondence of 1924, published by Jole de Sanna<sup>78</sup>, in the February 23 letter to Madame Breton de Chirico, with regard to André Breton, uses the same words he expressed in the letter to Gala of June 4, which de Sanna dates 1924: "I haven't had news from Breton in a long time, I hope he is well and that he is not angry with me." One can therefore conclude with certainty that it was the copy of the *Muse* painted by de Chirico in Florence (or in Italy) that Castelfranco sent to Rosenberg. According to Fagiolo dell'Arco, it was also the copy of *Hector and Andromaca* that was exhibited in Rosenberg's gallery. This is the precise reason that in 1925 the photographic *cliché* of the 1924 *Muse* started circulating as the original. Even Ghiringhelli, of the Galleria "Il Milione" will have difficulty – as we shall see – because the painting in his possession, which was in fact the original, did not correspond to the photograph published right after.

This conclusion, besides being logical, certainly sticks more closely to the facts and to the existing documentation. De Chirico had the original *Disquieting Muse* on hand, from which he exacted the famous copy. He had no need to go to Paris to execute the copy of *The Disquieting Muse* nor did he need to paint it from a tempera and pastel cardboard model (94 x 62 cm), from which he then made a copy in Paris.<sup>79</sup>

1) SELF PORTRAIT: painted on wood, showing the corner of the Uffizi and bearing the inscription "Et quid ambo nisi quod rerum metafisica est". This picture, 48 cm. x 38 cm. is reproduced in an issue of the review «Valori Plastici» from Mario Broglio, in 1920.

2) ADIOS DEL POETA: This is a picture under the "Böcklin" influence, painted before 1920. This picture is 60 cm. x 48 cm." In *Anni Venti*, cit p. 82., the specification regarding this painting indicates that de Chirico gave Berger *The Salute of the Poet*.

<sup>73</sup> M. Fagiolo dell'Arco and P. Baldacci, op. cit., p. 219.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., pp. 577-578.

<sup>75</sup> M. Fagiolo dell'Arco, *Et quid ambo nisi quod aenigma est?*, vol. I, «Le rêve de Tobie». Un interno ferrarese, 1917 e le origini del Surrealismo, De Luca Editore, Rome, 1980, p. 20.

<sup>76</sup> M. Fagiolo dell'Arco and P. Baldacci, op. cit., p. 5.

<sup>77</sup> Letter to Madame André Breton dated February 23, 1924.

<sup>78</sup> Cfr. Jole de Sanna, Giorgio de Chirico - André Breton. Duel à mort, cit., pp. 151.

<sup>79</sup> P. Baldacci, op. cit., p. 420, under the title "Replicas made on commission" supplies the following version: "A6 *The Disquieting Muse*, 1924, 97 x 66 cm,

*The Disquieting Muse* is the first and most important work in the Castelfranco collection, and is quoted in letters kept in the archive. The documents relating to this painting also point to Castelfranco's role as a merchant, particularly the negotiations and sales beginning in 1939. *The Disquieting Muse*, first negotiated at 1700 lire with Gualtieri di San Lazzaro and Zwemmer, would gradually acquire a much higher value. Castelfranco came into possession of the *Muse*, not from de Chirico directly, but from Vallsecchi<sup>80</sup> in exchange for a work by Soffici. He first proposed it to Gualtieri di San Lazzaro, pseudonym of Giuseppe Papa, who, born in Catania in 1900, died in Paris in 1974<sup>81</sup>, and was the director of the magazine «XX Siècle». He replied from Paris on January 30, 1939 (figs. 34-35), on the magazine's headed notepaper<sup>82</sup>, saying that he had shown the reproduction to Zwemmer and that "He found the painting beautiful, sellable, and thinks he can get 1,700 lire (underlined twice) for you [...] The sum of 2000 lire that you suggest seems excessive, given that he also has to earn something". He adds that the painting should be sent to "London W. C. 2, A. Zwemmer 78 Charing Cross Road". From the letter, it can be deduced that Castelfranco was also interested in selling some drawings, as Gualtieri di San Lazzaro suggests "[...] it is better to wait for the painting to be sold before thinking about the drawings. In the meantime you could send me a few to reproduce in the magazine". The different roles of our *art collector* also become apparent. Indeed in a *post scriptum*, Gualtieri di San Lazzaro asks Castelfranco, in his capacity of *art historian*, for "an article on fourteenth century traditional Tuscan sculpture [...]"<sup>83</sup>.

Pursuant to this letter, Zwimmer's letter to Gualtieri de San Lazzaro (fig. 36) dated December 31, 1939<sup>84</sup>, is worth mentioning. The letter, dated the end of the same year as the one cited above, contains an offer for the *Muse* and shows a great increase in quotation of de Chirico's work. Zwimmer, director of the London gallery of the same name, declares to have lost an occasion to buy de Chirico's work, which had been offered to him by Castelfranco at extremely affordable prices... "Evidently, I missed an opportunity in not buying when Castelfranco offered me his de Chirico [...]". Now, he had been offered works for sale at prices that were too high and he also expressed that he didn't want to deal with copies: "[...] I refuse to deal with copies, even if they are made by the artist himself" and adds that de Chirico's action could end up damaging the artist himself. Worthy of consideration is the fact that de Chirico (fig. 37) was not included in the "Surrealism" exhibition held at Zwemmer Gallery (June 13-July 3), while he was present at the "International Surrealist Exhibition" of 1936, at the New Burlington Gallery in London.

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oil on canvas. Copy made for Paul Eluard in 1924 from the original belonging to Giorgio Castelfranco. A7 *The Disquieting Muse*, 1924, 94 x 62 cm, tempera and pastel on cardboard. Copy of the original painting owned by Giorgio Castelfranco, probably used as a model for the oil painting in Paul Eluard's collection." This painting is at the Haus de Kunst in Munich and was declared false by de Chirico.

<sup>80</sup> In an interview by Luciano Doddoli *Sono un prigioniero* in «Fiera Letteraria» dated 25/4/1968, elderly Castelfranco recalls the events of the transfer of ownership of *Muse*. Doddoli quotes in inverted commas the words of Castelfranco, who labels de Chirico "a pig"; causing legal action against the magazine by Castelfranco. The legal action – a copy of which is kept in the Archive – contains a note by the critic in which, among other things, he refers to de Chirico as: "A person which I hold in high regard and who helped me in my life and toward whom I feel I owe a considerable debt for the development of my sense of critical acuteness". The article also relates to the well-known incident of the acquisition of *The Disquieting Muse* by Castelfranco (in exchange for a painting by Soffici given to Vallecchi in place of the *Muse*).

<sup>81</sup> *Documenti. Il carteggio Belli-Feroldi 1933-42*, edited by G. Appella, Milan, 2003, p. 370. Gualtieri di San Lazzaro (colleague of publisher Scheiwer of Milan) edited the edition of the Giorgio de Chirico monograph, by Waldemar George, for Editions Chroniques du Jour in 1928.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 360.

<sup>83</sup> A slow comeback of interest for wooden sculpture began in the 20s with the magazine «Dedalo» which at that time had re-evaluated what was once considered mere craftsmanship. Cf. G. De Lorenzi, *Ugo Ojetti critico d'arte. Dal «Marzocco» a «Dedalo»*, Le Lettere, Florence, 2004.

<sup>84</sup> I would like to thank Victoria Noel-Johnson for advising me of the existence of this letter.

But let us return to Castelfranco the careful “salesman”. Of particular interest are the suggestions made to him by Peppino Ghiringhelli and his brother Gino, owners of the “Il Milione” gallery in Milan where Castelfranco was evidently negotiating sales of de Chirico’s work during the same period of the Paris and London negotiations. In his letter of February 4, 1939<sup>85</sup>, Peppino Ghiringhelli advises Castelfranco not to put too many de Chirico’s on the market at the same time “[...] since there are very active enthusiasts around and word spreads fast etc.” (Feroldi? Valdameri?). The gallery owner was very interested in the works in Castelfranco’s collection, partly due to the fact that “yesterday I received a local client, whom I know has wanted to buy de Chirico for some time, and he told me to wait before negotiating the prices of my pieces, to negotiate a few of yours”. Just nine days later, on the February 13, the market value of the *Muse* had risen to 25,000 lire.

The letters from “Il Milione” gallery to Castelfranco are interspersed with telephone conversations and letters of reply; we can get a clear idea of the situation from the notes Castelfranco wrote by hand on each letter from Ghiringhelli. Indeed it is following a telephone conversation that Gino Ghiringhelli, in his letter of February 13, 1939 specified the conditions “about the payment of the painting in your possession by G. DE CHIRICO entitled *The Disquieting Muse*”. As already mentioned, the agreed sale price was 25,000 lire. The payment was to be made in one instalment of 12,500 lire and two further instalments to the effect of 6,000 lire to be transferred by March 15, 1939, and 6,500 lire by 15, April 1939. This letter crossed an express letter sent by Castelfranco dated February 13<sup>th</sup> proposing equivalent payment arrangements. With a very fast exchange of correspondence<sup>86</sup> Peppino Ghiringhelli considered it a “done deal” and asked Castelfranco to “sort out the shipment as you see fit, taking into account the need to treat the work with the utmost care” and concludes: “We are pleased to have successfully closed this deal with you, and hope you are too. We will see about the possibility of doing business with you again”. The painting reached the gallery “Il Milione” on February 17<sup>th</sup> “at about midday, in perfect condition” as seen in the registered letter from Peppino Ghiringhelli to Castelfranco on the following day, February 18<sup>th</sup>.<sup>87</sup> The gallery owner communicated that he had proceeded with payment as agreed upon, and adds: “It goes without saying that the painting is amazing, I had never seen it and now I never tire of looking at it. It is in my house, and I would like to remind you that we absolutely do not want ANYONE to know its destiny. Absolutely. Thank you once more for your kindness in having repeatedly reassured us about this over the phone”. The request to keep the destination of the work secret is certainly food for thought.<sup>88</sup> From the letter it can be gathered that “we submitted the painting to a trusted restorer today, to remove the varnish and do whatever needs to be done to make the canvas and paintwork cleaner and more secure”. This was a “cleaning” that immediately led to doubts and problems about the authenticity or about which version of the work it was, at least between the Ghiringhellis and Castelfranco.

<sup>85</sup> The letters relating to the sale are in container 27 of the Castelfranco Archive. In this letter, Ghiringhelli probably also refers to the fact that Castelfranco offered de Chirico’s paintings to Barbaroux at the same time.

<sup>86</sup> Gino Ghiringhelli’s letter to Castelfranco dated February 14-15, 1939 (the date is corrected on the typescript).

<sup>87</sup> Peppino Ghiringhelli’s letter to Giorgio Castelfranco. Castelfranco archive, as are the other letters cited here.

<sup>88</sup> As it stands, the reproduction of the painting immediately afterwards in the catalogue of “Il Milione” gallery, contradicts what Ghiringhelli asked Castelfranco to do: hide the painting’s whereabouts from everyone.

Indeed, the correspondence continues with a letter dated March 18, 1939<sup>90</sup> in which Gino Ghiringhelli claimed he was shocked that the original of the *Muse* which he had acquired from Castelfranco did not correspond to the reproduction published in the little volume by Scheiwiller<sup>90</sup> or to the plate in the *Fantastic Art Dada, Surrealisme* catalogue of the American exhibition<sup>91</sup>. Ghiringhelli writes: "During my last visit to your house, I asked you about there being another version of the 'MUSE' in America which was published in the Dada, Art Surrealist volume. You explained the matter clearly to me, i.e. that DE CHIRICO, with your permission, had executed a copy of the original in your possession for the poet Eluard, in Paris in 1924. In fact you promised that you would have looked for the letters that could prove the veracity of the above". Indeed, it is well known that a copy from 1924 exists, but as demonstrated by Jole de Sanna, who published the Breton-de Chirico correspondence, de Chirico actually copied the work for Breton: the artist's letter proposing the duplication is made to look as though it was sent to Gala Eluard and then also to Eluard's mother, but the real addressee was Madame Breton.<sup>92</sup> In fact in a well-known interview even Castelfranco confirms this hypothesis<sup>93</sup>, saying: "In 1924 de Chirico had an exhibition in Paris and Breton was much enthused by the painting and the artist. He asked if I would allow a copy to be made and I, stupidly, said yes. I think Breton even wrote to thank me".

In a letter dated March 18, 1939, Ghiringhelli politely but firmly exhorts Castelfranco to provide documentation that the work in his possession "is the original bought from de Chirico in 1916"<sup>94</sup>. He continues by saying: "I do not know if you remembered or had time to look for these crucial documents, nor would I have bothered you had today's dispute not worried me and made it necessary for me to be able to prove tomorrow, in the face of any controversy, that the work I own is in fact the original bought from de Chirico in 1916". To this concern Castelfranco replies – probably with a telegram, as one sees in a note he wrote on the letter – "Shocked your letter. Suspend restoration. Will be Milan Thursday. Solution situation"<sup>95</sup>(fig. 38).

The problem must have been solved right away, because on March 24, 1939<sup>96</sup> Gino Ghiringhelli sent a postcard from "Il Milione" to Castelfranco in which he wrote: "We are pleased to have cleared this incident up (if that is what we can call it) and that you have been able to give us the details. If you could bring us something in merit the next time you come to Milan, all the better".

<sup>90</sup> Ghiringhelli's letter to Castelfranco dated March 18, 1939 (Castelfranco Archive, container 27).

<sup>91</sup> B.N. Ternovetz, *Giorgio de Chirico*, Arte Moderna Italiana n. 10, Milan 1928. Giovanni Scheiwiller Edition distributed by Hoepli.

<sup>92</sup> In the exhibition catalogue *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealisme*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, Dec. 1936 - Feb. 1937, New York 1936, the photo (the same as Ternovetz's), published at no. 214 does not match the painting in Ghiringhelli's possession. The work is cited in the catalogue at no. 214 as "*The Disquieting Muses*, oil on canvas, Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Henry Clifford Philadelphia", with no date. See also the 1946 edition, edited by Alfred H. Barr Jr. essay by Georges Huguette, New York 1946. In the 1946 edition the photo of the *Muse* is on page 123, with the caption "De Chirico: *The Disquieting Muses*, c. 1922 (?)". On page 249 the author writes: "*The Disquieting Muses*, c.1922 (?), after an earlier version of 1916, oil on canvas, 39" x 26 inches. Collection Hugh Christholm, Woodbury, Connecticut". In 1946 René Gaffé still uses the photo of the copy, but dates it 1917: R. Gaffé, *Giorgio de Chirico. Le Voyant*, ed. La Boetie, Bruxelles 1946, photo no. 17. Again Gaffé in *En parlant peinture*, ed. SNEV, Paris, 1960, republished the same photograph and adds: Gianni Mattioli collection, Milan.

<sup>93</sup> The publishing of the Breton-de Chirico correspondence by Jole de Sanna, 2002, cit. pp. 71, 151 is vital to the understanding of these issues. From Ghiringhelli's sentence it can be deduced that the copy of *Muse* was made in Paris, but the letter to Breton was written from Rome, not Paris.

<sup>94</sup> Interview by Luciano Doddoli with Castelfranco in "La Fiera Letteraria" cit., no. 17.

<sup>95</sup> Castelfranco Archive, container 27.

<sup>96</sup> Right beside the letter which is transcribed here for easier reading, Castelfranco adds a small sheet on which he handwrites "Phone / how many do they want? / of *Muse* Last / price. / Silva Giovanni / Nazario Sauro / 17 / Modena. Cf. fig. 39.

<sup>97</sup> Castelfranco Archive, container 27.

Let us reconsider the dates of the intense “Il Milione”-Castelfranco correspondence from 1939, published here for the first time: February 4<sup>th</sup>, February 13<sup>th</sup>, February 18<sup>th</sup>, March 18<sup>th</sup>, March 24<sup>th</sup>. The chronology is important because it intersects significantly with that of the Belli-Feroldi correspondence published in 2003.<sup>97</sup>

Att. Feroldi bought the painting from “Il Milione” for 45,000 lire<sup>98</sup>, almost twice the price Castelfranco sold it to the gallery, and he had it in his house by one o’clock on March 17<sup>th</sup>. The work obviously caused Feroldi immediate alarm given that at a quarter past one he wrote a worried telegram to Gino Ghiringhelli “because a careful comparison of the reproduction [the one published in Scheiwiller’s little book] and the painting provides a clear demonstration of the non-correspondence of many of the picture’s details, and it is therefore impossible that the painting bought from Castelfranco is the one reproduced. The fact that it is certain that Scheiwiller reproduced Castelfranco’s painting leads us to the fatal conclusion that Castelfranco already sold the original in Paris, making do with the copy that was made, so they say, for others”. This is what Feroldi wrote to Belli<sup>99</sup>, adding: “The *Muse* are therefore very disquieting [...] it seems most strange that Gino the painter did not notice [...] should it really have been up to a lawyer to bring up this sore point? And why didn’t you check the painting against the reproduction in Scheiwiller? At two o’clock, without delay, I sent Gino a succinct telegram soliciting an appraisal”. The alarmed letter of the following day, March 18<sup>th</sup>, from Gino Ghiringhelli to Castelfranco is therefore linked to the alarm shown to the Milanese gallery owner by Feroldi. The same day, March 18, 1939, Feroldi sent a laconic telegram to Belli<sup>100</sup> “we have decided to categorically request de Chirico’s intervention. Greetings - Feroldi”. Feroldi wrote to Belli on March 20<sup>th</sup><sup>101</sup> about the *Argonauts* and the *Muse*, as he was becoming convinced that those in his possession were from 1916 and that it was not a good idea to summon de Chirico, who “sick and tired of the market dealings of his metaphysical paintings, could be tempted to scorn the painting, and if his response was negative there would be no way out”<sup>102</sup>.

In the letter that followed on March 22<sup>nd</sup><sup>103</sup> the matter is cleared up: “De Chirico recognises the *Muse* of 1916, while the reproduction in Scheiwiller is taken from the 1924 photograph”. In the same letter Feroldi talks of the “events of the last few days [...] which have taken on a galloping rhythm: multiple telephone calls every day, night-time telegrams, express letters, sudden trips [...]”. He referred to Gino Ghiringhelli’s letter to Castelfranco on March 18<sup>th</sup>, discovered in the latter’s archive and discussed above, as well as the rough copy of the telegram we found.<sup>104</sup> Feroldi however, has more to say about the reason for the Milan visit by Castelfranco, who “[...] replied with an indignant telegram communicating that on Thursday (tomorrow) he would have come to Milan to pick up the picture”. It is not clear whether the telegram that was actually sent was different from the rough draft, or if

<sup>97</sup> *Documenti. Il carteggio Belli-Feroldi*, cit.

<sup>98</sup> Feroldi would like to buy the *Muse* by returning the *Argonauts* to “Il Milione” plus 25.000 Lira. *Ibid.*, letter no. 122 p. 152.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, letter n. 122 p. 152.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, letter n. 123 p. 152.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, letter n. 124 p. 153.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, letter n. 124 p. 154.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, letter n. 125 p. 155.

<sup>104</sup> Telegram of which we found the drafted note: “Interrupt restoration” cf. fig. 38.

the reference about picking up the painting was a conviction following the news, perhaps passed on by Gino Ghiringhelli, that in the meantime Castelfranco had renegotiated the 'Muse'<sup>105</sup> (fig. 39). Feroldi also wrote: "At the same time *Valdameri*<sup>106</sup> confided to Gino that he had bought the Muses by telephone from Castelfranco with a small increase in price to the 30,000 lire". All of this completes the idea we are forming of Castelfranco the *merchant*. Considering that his impelling necessity to procure a safe future for his children in America in a difficult moment of history explains his anxious need to sell, the scornful comment with which Feroldi closes the letter seems excessive: "and Castelfranco's change of mind smacks of a Jewish shop"<sup>107</sup>. As we have seen, the Belli-Feroldi correspondence, published in 2003 by Giuseppe Appella<sup>108</sup>, is useful to fill in the gaps in the Castelfranco-"Il Milione" correspondence, but also to find out about other important paintings by de Chirico linked to Broglio and Castelfranco. Furthermore, it gives us some clues about the personality of the collector Feroldi whose archive has been lost. A life characterised by longing for a desired painting, satisfaction in the result (acquisition, possession), then giving way to the search for something even more desirable because almost unreachable. Feroldi's letters overflow with an almost "Don Giovanni" style of anxiety for the list to be perfected, in a desire for ownership that emerges from between the lines of every letter. Feroldi is a compulsive collector, subject to a "repetition compulsion", so much that we seem to find the same layout in all his letters. Feroldi launches an idea (buying a painting) but he always needs to be supported during the operation; he therefore writes to Belli, who knows how to pluck all the strings that will lead the collector to the absolute need of possessing that particular piece. We can also read in Belli a capacity at not being prompt in his answers, to a point that he seems to want to make Feroldi, who craves for feedback, stew. The correspondence could even be one-sided, in that the number of Feroldi's letters, often sent even three times a week in the 1939-40 period, exceeds the number of those of Belli. Belli plays hard to get... then sends Feroldi a wonderful, long letter – which we consider useful to partially transcribe here, as it is important for the conclusion of the *Muse* episode –, as the letter serves the purpose of making Feroldi understand, as he had asked, "why is it that Madama Grossa is absolute poetry, whereas if the head were in place we would be confronted with something prosaic, unimportant?"<sup>109</sup>.

It is amazing to read how Belli brings Feroldi to understand the *Muse*. He starts off from the sensations arisen during the trip to San Sepolcro, which he seems to convey almost physically: "with Piero on one side and Luca Pacioli on the other [...] it seemed to me that those two great people were speaking to me [...] And I felt the sense of a higher measure sustain me [...] the air [...] the clouds were talking to me, and I could understand them in their own language and they were all advising me to change my life [...] to approach the sources of purity with greater devotion and deeper feel-

<sup>105</sup> Cf. footnote 95.

<sup>106</sup> *Documenti. Il carteggio Feroldi- Belli*, cit. letter no. 125 p. 155.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.* See also fig. 39 with regard to Castelfranco's memo, by which it is clear that he is putting *Muse* back on the market to look for the highest bidder.

<sup>108</sup> The Feroldi archive is said to have gone missing for the most part; the same is said for "Il Milione" archive. See Giuseppe Appella in the foreword to *Carteggio Belli-Feroldi*, 2003, cit., p. 14.

<sup>109</sup> The long letter by Carlo Belli to Feroldi, (letter no. 119 pp. 146-150) regarding the *Muse* was sent on 11/3/1939; a copy is kept in the Belli archive. This letter is the answer to the letter by Feroldi to Belli no. 117 p. 141 dated 21/2/1939.

ing [...] to consecrate my days to more fruitful activities [...] And here, your question on the *disquieting muse* comes to my mind.”<sup>110</sup> And adds: “No, it is not the strangeness of the subject that makes this work a great thing, but the marvel that can arise from the unusual positioning of the objects that make up the landscape which can determine the painting’s worth. It is the conscious elevation of the human spirit to a higher plane, the carrying of this life into a superior zone where everything is order and light, philosophical silence and measure [...]”, “put two human figures in place of the mannequins [...] the faces will have their own expression and that expression will inescapably drag the work on a lower plane [...] the chronicle of psychological palpitation [...] holds the place which should be held by the sublime [...] The fantastic creatures that dwell in the de Chirican landscape contemplate reality and pour into us the amazement they feel sitting at the edge of eternity”.

Belli then proceeds to make interesting comparisons with Masaccio, Piero della Francesca and Raphael, whose figures “neutralise the human charge of the painting with expressions as neutral as possible, that is to say the least expressive possible” and then reaches the subject of the *Muse* in a sublime, slow crescendo: “De Chirico finds the way to get around the psychological obstacle – eternal hindrance to the absolute – by placing a merely sufficient indication of a man, such as a mannequin. And thus the “The Disquieting Muse” is born, this work heavy with an eternal musical silence, of poetry of humanity rather than a human poetry, an apparition of truth, the substance of things that hide themselves”. From the same letter we know that “Gino, in my presence, bought it (the painting) for a relevant sum, but he was right to do so, and I myself am happy I encouraged him to take that step. Now you must see it”<sup>111</sup>.

From the same letter we know that an ugly yellowish varnish dampened the clearness of its colours. Belli’s letter exalting the *Muse* comes immediately after the Feroldi’s letter to Belli dated February 21, 1939<sup>112</sup>, in which the collector confesses that seeing the *Muse* has left him “quite disappointed”.

Belli’s letter achieves the desired effect: Feroldi sends an express letter to Ghiringhelli on March 13 of the same year<sup>113</sup> telling him: “[...] we are both in the same frame of mind, you in the desire that the painting come to me, and I, in the overpowering desire to have it [...] I share the arguments you gave to me that exalt the painting [...] and I do not hesitate in telling you that the ‘Muse’ completes and holds within itself all the experiences and orientations of its author.”

In the same express letter Feroldi wonders how to pay for the *Muse* and considers an exchange with the two paintings by de Chirico in his possession (*Argonauts* and *Spadini*) in order to make the acquisition possible. The deal is soon done. Feroldi writes to Belli on March 25: “The price is very high and, as well as things may go, I will never be able to recover a cent of interest. But the advantage that the collection acquires is worth the sacrifice made”<sup>114</sup>. Later he will write to Marchiori<sup>115</sup>: “Don’t be surprised, and don’t commiserate me: in front of *The Disquieting Muse* I fell to my knees

<sup>110</sup> Carlo Belli’s letter to Feroldi dated March 11, 1939 no. 119 p.148.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 148-149.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 21/02/1939, letter no. 117 p. 144-145.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, express letter from Feroldi to Ghiringhelli, letter no. 121 p.150.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, letter no. 126 p. 157.

<sup>115</sup> Laura Mattioli Rossi, *La collezione di Gianni Mattioli dal 1943 al 1953* in *La collezione Mattioli. Capolavori dell'avanguardia italiana*. (Peggy Guggenheim Collection), scientific catalogue edited by Flavio Fergonzi, Skira, Milan, 2003, p. 36 and footnote 112.

and I am the crazy man who paid 50,000 lira for the painting. But I can tell you that, together with Modigliani, it stands at the top of all that I value". And again, in another letter to Marchiori, dated March 29, 1939, he writes: "After the Muse I bought another two paintings from the Broglio collection: *Hector and Andromaca* which is, so to speak, the matrix of all the others that followed. A wonder. Strong tones like the 'Muse' and a faster rhythm"<sup>116</sup>.

In the «Bollettino della Galleria del Milione» dated October 26-November 15, 1939<sup>117</sup>, following the presentation of the de Chirico exhibition, we find the list of the works exhibited. At number six there is the indication "*The Disquieting Muse*, 1916, Att. Feroldi Brescia". The indication confirms the sale and yet the announcement in the catalogue seems to overcome the previous "we absolutely do not want ANYONE to know where it is", the statement included in Peppino Ghiringhelli's letter dated February 18, 1939. A memo dated a few days earlier, handwritten by Castelfranco in 1939 on the back of a letter from Barbaroux dated March 7, 1939<sup>118</sup>, is touching for the meaning hidden in the terse words "America, France, Geneva, bank, check, share, tourism, passport, Italy, school, boarding, doctor's dossier, deliver to Beppino" (fig. 40).

The following changing of hands of the *Muse* will further enrich a story that at times is "disquieting", although this particular "*affaire*" marks the beginning of a long correspondence between Castelfranco and the two brothers, owners of the "Il Milione" gallery, a correspondence which will accompany the sale of the outstanding Castelfranco collection and which will be concluded with the exhibit held in Milan during March 1941.<sup>119</sup>

There are several copies of the photograph of *The Disquieting Muse* in the Castelfranco archives; on the back, they carry handwritten notes by the collector recording author, title and date: 1916.<sup>120</sup> It is the same date that Soby mentions only in his first study on de Chirico, dated 1941.<sup>121</sup> The American critic adds: "Strangely enough, however, the picture by this name which has been included in numerous exhibitions and publications both here and abroad is not the original canvas at all, but a copy which was executed by Chirico himself, probably in 1921 or 1922. The two versions are readily distinguishable, a fact which has not prevented their being constantly confused. In the original version the painting is thinner in technique than in the copy and appears to have the biting quality so typical of the artist's early series of Italian squares". The *disquieting* matter of the original and the copies

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, footnote 113.

<sup>117</sup> *Diciotto opere di pittura "Metafisica" di Giorgio de Chirico dal 1912 al 1919*, in «Bollettino della Galleria Il Milione», no. 61, October 26 - November 15 1939. At no. 6 *The Disquieting Muse*, 1916, 65 x 97 cm (Att. Feroldi Brescia). In the same collection are listed: n. 1 *The Enigma of the Hour*, 1910, 72 x 56 cm and no. 13 *Hector and Andromaca*, 1917, 60 x 90 cm.

<sup>118</sup> Giorgio Castelfranco writes about de Chirico in the 1920s: *Giorgio de Chirico* in «La Bilancia», year I, no. 6, Rome 1923-24, pp. 200-204, then again in «Der Cicerone», May 1924, pp. 459-464, republished in «Jahrbuch der Jungen Kunst», Leipzig, 1924, pp. 128-132. As we have seen, he writes about him again in «La Rivista di Firenze» and later signs the presentation at Rosenberg's gallery in Paris in 1925. Castelfranco speaks of de Chirico at length in his volume on *La pittura moderna 1860-1930*, Gonnelli, Florence, 1934. And later in life, he looked at the artist again with the reviews for the XXIV Biennale of Venice. See P. Rizzi - E. Di Martino, *Storia della Biennale*, 1895-1982, Milan, 1982, p. 47.

<sup>119</sup> Exhibition at "Il Milione" Gallery, Milan, March 1941. See also Cesare Brandi's article, *De Chirico metafisico al "Milione"*, in «Le Arti», year II, fasc. II, Dec. - Jan. XVIII, pp. 118-121. An extract of the Review, kept at the Contemporaneo Gabinetto Vieusseux Archive, coll. Sav. 699, has a dedication by the author to Savinio: "Ad Alberto Savinio con viva cordialità / Cesare Brandi" (To Albert Savinio, with best regards Cesare Brandi).

<sup>120</sup> On the back of the *Muse* photograph in his archive, Castelfranco wrote in pencil: *Le Muse Inquietanti*, 1916, even though in his essay *Giorgio de Chirico*, published in «Der Cicerone», XVI, 1924, pp. 459-463, under the photograph of *The Disquieting Muse* published beside it on page 454, he does not indicate the date of the painting, as he did instead for the other five paintings photographed in the magazine.

<sup>121</sup> J. Thrall Soby, *The early de Chirico*, New York Dodd, Mead & Company 1941. In this volume Soby speaks of *The Disquieting Muse* as a 1916 painting, more or less isolated from other paintings of the same year, p. 70.

by the same author returns... a matter on which Carlo Ludovico Ragghianti published a long report.<sup>122</sup> Soby dates the Breton-Eluard copy to 1924.<sup>123</sup> As we have seen, in the Castelfranco Archive this version is spoken of in Ghiringhelli's letter of March 18<sup>th</sup>, 1939 with reference to Eluard as the recipient of the copy.<sup>124</sup> This version passed from hand to hand: from Breton to Gaffé, and then to the hands of American collectors. In 1927 the *Muse* are mentioned by Vitrac, as a painting belonging to the Castelfranco collection, and again in the small volume by Boris Ternovetz, published by Scheiwiller<sup>125</sup> in 1928, as a painting owned by Giorgio Castelfranco, but as we see, the *cliché* reproduced the 1924 copy. The error occurs again in the 1936 Lo Duca edition published by Hoepli-Scheiwiller, in which the 1924 copy is reproduced. However, in the second Lo Duca edition in 1945 the owner has changed: Feroldi, Brescia, and the reproduction is the original version.<sup>126</sup>

In America the photo of *Muse* is published again in Soby's book in 1941.<sup>127</sup> A colour photograph the *Muse* is published another time on the title page of the catalogue *XX Century Italian Art* for the exhibition organised by James Thrall Soby and Alfred H. Barr Jr.<sup>128</sup> at Museum of Modern Art in New York. The *Muse* did not appear in public again after the de Chirico exhibitions in Venice and at the Kestner Gesellschaft in Hanover, in 1970.<sup>129</sup> For the loan of the *Muse*, the owner Mattioli required, before the opening of the exhibit, that de Chirico commit to not contesting the authenticity of the painting.<sup>130</sup>

The entire Mattioli collection is held at the Guggenheim museum in Venice, where it is normally shown, and obviously, the de Chirico paintings that Mattioli bought from Feroldi in 1949 are not entered in the collection catalogue (edited by Flavio Fergonzi<sup>131</sup>) as these paintings are not kept at the Guggenheim Museum.

In her introductory essay to the father's collection<sup>132</sup>, Laura Mattioli Rossi carefully clarifies some passages regarding the history of the collections of Italian art of the Twentieth century, and retraces the history of the acquisition of the *Muse* by Feroldi through an interesting series of documents that were found in her father's archives, and those of Carlo Belli and "Il Milione" gallery. And yet another archive entwines with the Castelfranco Archive, concluding the exchange of correspondence that we have highlighted in this essay.

Laura Mattioli found copies of the Belli-Feroldi papers<sup>133</sup> concerning the purchase of the *Muse* in

<sup>122</sup> C. L. Ragghianti, *Il caso de Chirico*, in «Critica d'arte», year XLIV, new series, January-June, 1969, pp. 1-54. See also the table n. 139 in P. Baldacci, *De Chirico: The Metaphysical Period, 1888-1919*, cit., pp. 394 and 420, figs. A6 and A7.

<sup>123</sup> J. Thrall Soby, *Giorgio de Chirico*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Simon and Schuster New York, 1955, p. 134.

<sup>124</sup> Cf. footnote 89.

<sup>125</sup> G. Vitrac, *Georges de Chirico*, Gallimard, Paris, 1927, «Le peintres français nouveaux», n. 29, entitled «*The Alarming Muses; e Les Muses Inquietantes*», 1917. Boris Ternovetz, *Giorgio de Chirico*, Hoepli-Scheiwiller Milan 1928, p.15. In these two volumes the photograph is of the 1924 copy.

<sup>126</sup> G. Lo Duca *Giorgio de Chirico*, Hoepli, Milan (Arte moderna italiana n. 10) 1936, with a bibliographic note by G. Scheiwiller (the *Muse* are marked as belonging to the Castelfranco collection); II ed. G. Lo Duca, Hoepli, Milan, 1945 (the *Muse* are marked as belonging to the Feroldi collection).

<sup>127</sup> See the volume J. Thrall Soby, *The Early de Chirico*, cit., 1941. *The Disquieting Muse* are depicted on plate 62 with the caption «*The Disquieting Muses*, 1916, Collection Feroldi, Brescia, Italy, page XII».

<sup>128</sup> J. Thrall Soby - A.H. Barr Jr., *Twentieth Century Italian Art*, Museum of Modern Art, New York 1949, colour photograph on the title page. This time the photo matches Castelfranco's, and in fact on the painting there are, quite noticeable, the same stains as in the photo in the Castelfranco archive. The date recorded is 1916. On page 19 of the text is written: «*The disquieting Muses* of 1916 (color frontispiece) wherein the figures are hybrid sculptures-mannequin forms».

<sup>129</sup> Catalogue of the Kestner Gesellschaft exhibition in Hannover, fig. 38 note 10.

<sup>130</sup> From a statement referred by Professor Paolo Picozza, regarding information he received from Alberto Mugnai, a close friend of Mattioli's.

<sup>131</sup> *La collezione Mattioli. Capolavori dell'avanguardia italiana. Peggy Guggenheim Collection*, cit.

<sup>132</sup> Laura Mattioli Rossi, in *La collezione di Gianni Mattioli. Dal 1943 al 1935*, in *Ibid.*, pp. 13-61.

<sup>133</sup> The Belli Archive is kept at the Contemporary Art Museum in Rovereto.

Carlo Mattioli's archive. In 1971, in a letter to Gianni Mattioli, Belli speaks of Feroldi and recalls: "He hated me when I managed to stick *The Engineer's Lover* and *The Disquieting Muse* into the group. One and then the other were brought home and he rejected them and took them back twice, until I forced them on him with disgusting tantrums"<sup>134</sup>. Mattioli buys the Feroldi collection on May 4, 1949.<sup>135</sup>

### The Sale of the Collection

Castelfranco's papers allow for a reconstruction of the movement of his collection through the Barbaroux and the "Il Milione" gallery. In these papers, Castelfranco comes across, not only as a collector, but as a merchant as well. He manages to control the prices of paintings, to avoid yielding on the value of the canvases, as we can read in notes on the pages, such as "no less than 35,000"<sup>136</sup>, and, in a letter to Ghiringhelli, Castelfranco begs him to remember that he is a collector, not a banker (fig. 41). And again on a note in a letter to Barbaroux dated February 18, 1939: "The prices [...] are net [...] I already stated I was willing to make a discount of 500 on 3000 lira, which is roughly 17% of the whole [...] but I could not take 20% off this small group of paintings that are easiest to sell (fig. 42-43)." From the letters dating early 1939 to 1941, the intense correspondence makes the movements of the collection quite clear.

While dealing with the Milione gallery, Castelfranco also negotiated, with Count Vittorio Emanuele Barbaroux<sup>137</sup>, the sale of other paintings from his collection, namely *Eco*, *Diana* (fig. 44), *Casella*, *Hares*, *Orvieto*, *Female Portrait*, *Woman with violets*, *View of the Arno* and *Warriors* (fig. 45).<sup>138</sup> Several photographs of these paintings can be found in the Castelfranco archives. In the letter dated April 8, 1939, Barbaroux writes to Castelfranco that he is sorry he cannot send the outstanding balance for the paintings which were sold en masse for 25,000 lire<sup>139</sup>. He has troubles with debtors, as the de Chiricos he sold had not, as yet, been paid for. He also writes that – being born in 1901 – he will be called any time to serve as gunnery sergeant. "Under the circumstances – he adds – the little savings I have must do for those who will stay at home during my military recall service". Barbaroux sold *Eco*, *Hares*, *Portrait of a Young Girl*, *Woman with violets*, *View of the Arno* and the letter dated April 19, 1939 shows that *Diana*, *Orvieto*, *Warriors* and *Portrait of Casella* are still held at Barbaroux's. On May 2, 1939 Barbaroux writes to say that he sold the small painting *Warriors*, for which he sends

<sup>134</sup> Laura Mattioli Rossi, in *La collezione Mattioli. Capolavori dell'avanguardia italiana. Peggy Guggenheim Collection*, cit. p. 105, appendix I, document n. 90.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34. Private sale contract drafted May 4, 1949 (published on pages 74-75, doc. 23) in which Mattioli buys the collection. The contract states that the de Chirico's paintings bought by Mattioli are: *The Disquieting Muse* plate 10; *Hector and Andromaca* plate 11; *The Enigma of the Hour* plate 8; *The Great Tower* plate 9; *Self-portrait* plate 12; *Don Chisciotte*, *Grapes* plate 13; *Nôtre Dame* (crossed out). The plates are published in *Le grandi raccolte di arte contemporanea. La raccolta Feroldi presentata da Guido Piovene*, Il Milione ed., Milan 1942.

<sup>136</sup> Barbaroux's letter dated 7/3/1939. Barbaroux's states he is "willing to buy the block of paintings at 25,000 lira".

<sup>137</sup> Count Vittorio Emanuele Barbaroux (cf. the Belli-Feroldi correspondence, cit. letter n. 85 p. 345) married the daughter of textile industry entrepreneur Federico Gussoni, owner of the gallery by the same name, which later became *Galleria Milano*, located at 6 via Croce Rossa, Milan. *Galleria Milano* held "the first exhibition of Italian painters living in Paris" (Campigli, de Pisis, de Chirico) in 1930, and in 1932, a solo show of de Chirico. Feroldi labels Barbaroux "an insincere meddler, but decisive" (*Ibid.* p. 59) and looks for him to sell some paintings. His impression of Barbaroux is confirmed by Belli, who writes (*Ibid.* p. 63): "With regard to Barbaroux, I generally agree: nevertheless, with some allowance, he still is no exception to the rule. The Ghiringhelli are very ethical, and I never suspected any foul play; but Holy Mary, how slow".

<sup>138</sup> Cf. Barbaroux's note dated 4/2/1939 to Castelfranco, who received in deposit the de Chirico paintings listed above, beside the titles the prices are listed (fig. 45).

<sup>139</sup> Letter from Barbaroux to Castelfranco dated 8/4/1939 (Castelfranco Archive, container 27).

1,500 lire plus 2,500 lire to settle an old bill.<sup>140</sup> Despite difficulties, business went ahead, for other collectors and for works by other artists. In 1940, two paintings by Achille Lega, *Ponte Vecchio* and *Landscape* are sold. In the same documents of Barbaroux, we find a receipt for a 1,000 lire payment to Castelfranco for a third-party sale of a Rosai and a De Pisis.<sup>141</sup> In a letter dated January 16, 1940 (fig. 46), there is an agreement between Ghiringhelli and Castelfranco for the sale of two Soffici's owned by Braccio Agnoletti, as can be deduced from the check stub attached to the letter and subsequent postcards and letters from Braccio Agnoletti. He also negotiated, on behalf of Gonnelli, the sale of a few de Chirico paintings, such as: *Bathers* (900), *Puritans* (9,000), *Self-portrait* (15,000). Hence, Castelfranco figures as a mediator, a role he also played in dealing with old master works, as shown by a letter from Ugo Ojetti who, in financial difficulty, asks him to sell a Poussin he owns.<sup>142</sup> In these documents, we see once again great attention paid to money: it is impossible to give discounts or refund expenses. "The prices indicated are to be considered net".<sup>143</sup> On March 7, 1939 Barbaroux answers to the firmness of the collector and merchant with a proposal for an *en bloc* acquisition, with strict deadlines.<sup>144</sup> The great attention given to the value, including the economical value, of the paintings appears logical and necessary, given the difficult moment in which Castelfranco finds himself (and others, as we have seen), who lost his job as an art historian at the Soprintendenza during the period of "purging" following the racial laws; he was to be reinstated in this position only after the war.<sup>145</sup> The dealings with the "Il Milione" gallery come immediately after. After the *Muse*, among the de Chirico paintings belonging to Castelfranco which he tried to sell through "Il Milione" we find: *Roman Villa* and *Roman Rocks*. In a letter from Peppino Ghiringhelli to Silva, a middle-man from Modena acting between the "Il Milione" gallery and Castelfranco, dated November 26, 1940 and sent as courtesy copy to Castelfranco, Ghiringhelli specifies that the offer for both paintings is 45.000 lira. In the same letter to Silva he adds: "We are flattered that, with this deal, Castelfranco wishes to grant us, before the end of the current season all the works and drawings by de Chirico in his collection on free loan for an exhibition in Milan, purposefully set up and launched at our expense and in our rooms, in which the paintings and drawings are to be sold at adequate prices against a 20% commission for us"<sup>146</sup>. In a draft immediately following the letter (December 1940), the collector seems to be dealing with the sale of some paintings (*Players* 4,000 / *Puritans* 8,000 / *Fish with Curtain* 25,000) to Feroldi, as well as regaining contact with Ghiringhelli for the sale of *Big Factory* (40,000), *Small Factory* (25,000), *Waterfall* (30,000) (fig. 47), paintings which were taken on deposit by Broglio in April 1921 (figs. 48-49).

<sup>140</sup> Letter from Barbaroux to Castelfranco dated 2/5/1939 (Castelfranco Archive, container 27).

<sup>141</sup> From a handwritten note by Barbaroux: "I sent a Comit check for 1,000 lira for a Rosai and a De Pisis".

<sup>142</sup> Letter from Ugo Ojetti to Castelfranco (Castelfranco Archive, correspondence).

<sup>143</sup> A note written by Castelfranco on a letter from Barbaroux, dated 18/2/1939; Castelfranco clarifies that the prices are absolutely net, "i.e. without fee or refund of expenses" for the gallery owner.

<sup>144</sup> Letter from Barbaroux to Castelfranco dated 7/03/1939.

<sup>145</sup> This information comes to us from Luciano Berti, who was his young colleague at the time and who still today has nothing but praise for the art historian's fine intuition and human sensitivity.

<sup>146</sup> Concerning Giovanni Silva, who lived in Modena at n. 17 via Nazario Sauro. Dealings had already been held with Silva; in Castelfranco's papers, in fact, is a note: "Given to Silva 15.XII.1939, *Self*: 30 / *Fish* 30 / *Eels* 25 / *Bacchus* 15". In a note written shortly after the letter dated 26/11/1940, of which Castelfranco has a copy, the collector made a note of the prices he wanted to attain for the paintings (45,000 lire); the prices were confirmed again by Peppino Ghiringhelli on 4/12/1940. The works remained in the *Milione* deposit until the 31/1/1941.

In Peppino Ghiringhelli's letter to Castelfranco, dated February 6, 1941 the details of the collection transfer are established<sup>147</sup> and the gallery owner asks that the drawing be added, saying that he would exhibit "only seven or eight, but keep the others in store, so as to attempt a group sale". In the next letter, dated February 22, 1941. Peppino Ghiringhelli confirms to Castelfranco that for the exhibition "the name of the collection shall not be printed [...] of course, it will spread on its own, as it will have to be mentioned to the buyers [...]" and continues saying that he has a strong interest in "all the metaphysical drawings and others from the Florence period", for which he has an admirer willing to buy en masse. "If we had all of the above mentioned, we could relinquish the *Siepe a Nord-Ovest* series, which we could perhaps look after on its own, in the autumn". Ghiringhelli also explains that he would place the 1926 pieces and the *Ottobrata*<sup>148</sup> in the third room. The exhibition opens in Milan and to his letter dated March 5, 1941<sup>149</sup> Gino Ghiringhelli attached the list of paintings and drawings, with their respective prices (fig. 50).<sup>150</sup>

The letters continue with explanations on sales proceedings, such as the offer of 60,000 lire for *Duels to the Death*.<sup>151</sup> In a letter dated March 11, 1941, Peppino Ghiringhelli speaks of the offers for the sale of *Pumpkins* and *Prodigal Son* and Castelfranco assures him that the prices can not be reduced (fig. 51). From a later letter dated April 5 it is clear that the buyer of *Prodigal Son* (fig. 52) is Feroldi himself, whom we have mentioned, and from whom "an immediate settlement cannot be demanded as he is, after all, a person on whose correctness one must count"<sup>152</sup>. On April 14, Peppino Ghiringhelli writes that he is awaiting payment "from Valdameri and others" and adds that "on Wednesday I shall solicit the *Prodigal Son* 1926 buyer and see to sorting out the Drawings"<sup>153</sup>. The correspondence regarding the sale is completed on May 13, 1941<sup>154</sup>, when Peppino Ghiringhelli sends Castelfranco the sale statement, together with a list of all de Chirico's paintings and drawings and the book *La pittura moderna* in eight copies, which the Florence collector gave to "Il Milione" to sell. In the same letter Ghiringhelli is worried because *Prodigal Son* (dated 1926) has drawn very little interest and

<sup>147</sup> Letter from Peppino Ghiringhelli to Castelfranco dated 6/02/1941 (Castelfranco Archive, container 27).

<sup>148</sup> Letter from Peppino Ghiringhelli to Castelfranco dated 22/02/1941 (Castelfranco Archive, container 27).

<sup>149</sup> Price list *Galleria Il Milione*, Milan, March 5, 1941 (Castelfranco Archive, container 27).

<sup>150</sup> 1) *Ottobrata* (1924 on canvas); 2) *Duels to the Death* (1924 on canvas); 3) *Fish with Red Curtain* (1923-24 50 x 40 cm tempera on canvas); 4) *Fish* (painted in the winter of 1924-25 74 x 60 cm); 5) *Eels* (1924 85 x 70 cm); 6) *Head of Bacchus* (winter 1923-24 30 x 37 cm tempera on wood); 7) *Bust of Woman in Green* (1924 30 x 42 cm tempera on canvas); 8) *Grapes* (1924 or 1925 27 x 35 cm tempera on cardboard); 9) *Florentine Landscape* (37 x 97 cm tempera on canvas) or *Departure of the Errant Knight second version*, painted in Florence in the summer of 1923, also indicated as *Departure of the Adventurer second version* (cf. *Anni Venti* p. 80-81, where it is indicated as Oreste and Electa); 10) *Watermelon and Armour* (99 x 75 cm painted in Rome in the summer of 1928); 11) *Self-portrait* (76 x 81 cm executed in Milan in 1919); 12) *Pumpkins* (1919 80 x 60 cm oil on canvas); 13) *The Return of the Prodigal Son* (72 x 92 cm painted in Paris in 1925); 14) *Portrait of de Chirico and Savinio* (tempera on paper 68 x 72 cm painted in Roma in the winter of 1924. This painting has been cancelled out); 15) *Furniture in the Open* (painted in Paris in 1927 100 x 80 cm); 16) *The Return of the Prodigal Son* (1926 81 x 100 cm oil on canvas painted in Paris in 1925); 17) *Niobe* (1921 26 x 33 cm tempera on cardboard); 18) *Portrait of de Chirico and Savinio* (painted in Roma in 1924 69 x 87 cm).

Measurements taken from Castelfranco's handwritten list, which corresponds to the paintings shown in the "Il Milione" gallery have been integrated with the March 5, 1941 list of the gallery's works. The progressive numbers are the same on each document. In the March 5, 1941 price list there is also a list of drawings for sale: 12 illustrations (original) for *Siepe a nord-ovest* belonging to Massimo Bontempelli, 1922 (not to be separated). 4 on show, the others in Florence £ 36.000; / *Two Mannequin Heads* 1918 £4.000; / *Mannequins* 1918 o 1917 £ 4.000; / *Mannequins* 1918 o 1917 £ 4.000; / *Mannequins* 1918 o 1917 £ 4.000; / *Alexandros* 1921? £ 3.000; / *Self-portrait* 1921 not for sale.

<sup>151</sup> Gino Ghiringhelli's letter to Castelfranco dated 10/3/1941. For *Duels to the Death* see M. Fagiolo dell'Arco in *Anni Venti*, cit. p. 82.

<sup>152</sup> Letter dated 05/05/1941. For *Prodigal Son* of 1926 see M. Fagiolo dell'Arco *Et quid amabo... Le rêve de Tobia* vol. 1, Rome 1980, p. 41 and *Anni Venti*, pp. 100-101. De Chirico's masterpiece *Prodigal Son* was owned by Rosenberg in 1929, it then reappeared in London in 1931 and de Chirico, after re-acquiring it, delivered it to Castelfranco, in whose collection the painting remained until 1941. It is also published on plate LVII of the Castelfranco volume *La Pittura moderna* dated 1934, already referred to and is seen on plate LVII.

<sup>153</sup> On the de Chirico drawings owned by Castelfranco, see M. Fagiolo dell'Arco, *De Chirico 1908-1924*, cit., and Id. and *Il tempo di «Valori Plastici»* cit.

<sup>154</sup> Letter dated 13/5/1941.

states: “[...] based on this, it is our opinion that it is in your interest to accept (25,000£) otherwise you’ll be stuck with the painting for years, possibly for ever, whereas there is greater hope for *Big Fish* and for *The Departure of the Errant Knight* as well as *Duels to the Death*.<sup>155</sup> As for the *Niobe*<sup>156</sup> (fig. 53) no more than 10.000 lira can be made. Another letter from Castelfranco asks for net prices, and crosses a successive letter, dated June 3, 1941 (hence written after the end of the exhibition), still dealing with offers and negotiations for *Big Fish* and *Portrait of the Artist with Savinio* and the sale of *The Departure of the Errant Knight*.

It is useful, even if slightly boring, to follow the sales proceedings, which prove particularly interesting if analysed with regard to changing tastes. For example, today we see that there was a preference in the market for *Fish* over *Prodigal Son*, and that Ghiringhelli had difficulty in selling *Niobe*.

Everything is concluded with a letter dated June 17, 1941 (fig. 54) regarding the final sale to Ghiringhelli for 222,500 lire of nine de Chirico paintings, numbered 1-2-4-6-7-10-16-17-18 on the list of paintings dated March 5, 1941: 1 *Ottobrata*; 2 *Duels to the Death*; 4 *Fish*; 6 *Head of Bacchus*; 7 *Bust of Woman in Green*; 10 *Watermelon and Armor*; 16 *Return of the Prodigal Son*; 17 *Niobe*; 18 *Portrait of the Artist with Savinio*. On July 7, Peppino Ghiringhelli wrote to Castelfranco that he had shipped a crate with three paintings left over from the show to him, two metaphysical drawings and other traditional drawings, plus the tempera by Funi that Castelfranco bought in the gallery, adding that *Prodigal Son*, 1926 had been delivered to the customer. The episode does not close here; some issues remain unresolved and were dealt with in subsequent letters, such as the one dated September 17, 1941: “[...] we have high hopes for *Niobe*. Instead, for the two big ones we are constantly offered an exchange with a flat in Fiume square, which of course we don’t accept. Just to tell you the turn the sale is taking”<sup>157</sup>.

In Peppino Ghiringhelli’s letter of September 29, 1941 we understand the evolution of the market. Ghiringhelli thanks Castelfranco for his advice and tells him that he bought some of de Chirico’s work of 1928 at prices much lower than what he paid him for his collection and that they bought them “moreover to deflate the market of the period we have been interested in for so long, than for a question of our taste”. They are works that Ghiringhelli counted “on adding value to in the years to come”, “although without the hope that the works in your collection, or Broglio’s metaphysical works, hold [...]”

<sup>155</sup> Cf. M. Fagiolo dell’Arco in *Anni Venti*, p. 82. The author relates to Castelfranco’s text on the “Roman Villas” published in «La Bilancia» in 1923: “His creation becomes richer and easier, he has managed to fix certain plastic elements, the beauty of which consists especially in the complexity of form and variety of tone: the foliage of a tree, a foreshortened hill, a leaf [...]. In his previous paintings there was an austere and simple reality, capable of bringing emotion for the fabulous sense of its very simplicity, today it acquires the sense of surprise and emotion of a reality richer in form and joy, a classic reality one could say.”

<sup>156</sup> *Niobe* confirms the constant dealings between de Chirico and the Uffizi Museum in these years. De Chirico looked at the group of Niobid at the Uffizi gallery (the group was placed in a different location than its current one). The *Gabinetto di Disegni e Stampe dell’Uffizi* in Florence has a drawing by Zanobi del Rosso on the arrangement of the *Niobid* room that could have been a source of inspiration for de Chirico. Displayed in Florence in 1922, *Niobe* joined the Castelfranco collection and was one of the most difficult pieces to sell through the “Il Milione”. *Niobe* “Was meant as an exercise on the *Niobid* group... as if one of the figures, for an insidious happenstance, were alive, and as such observed and painted... The distance in time and the intellectual take on it, which place the figure at the limit of an apparition, gives the painting a sense of ‘ghostly absence’, which acquires almost an allegorical meaning, in line with de Chirico’s intention” (P. Fossati *La Metafisica*, Einaudi, Turin 1988, p. 180). Ugo Ojetti sarcastically criticises the exhibition in «Corriere della Sera» (Fossati 1988, op. cit. p. 181). Let us remember that the *Niobe* theme was used by Savinio for the music sheet of *Niobe* in 1914.

<sup>157</sup> In the letter, the preoccupation regarding military service and the necessity to reduce activities is perceived.

We see that Castelfranco, in 1951, and again in 1956-1957 when he became the director of the galleries of Rom and Lazio, looked at de Chirico with renewed interest. In these years Castelfranco seems to want to rebuild the history of his collection and that of Mario Broglio, or maybe of all the paintings and drawings that passed through his hands in one way or another.

Thus, he wrote to Scheiwiller, asking for news of the drawings made for Apollinaire's *Calligrammes* and the editor answered him<sup>158</sup> (fig. 55), offering his support in reconstructing the history of the collection and the photographic references. He also wrote to Edita Broglio<sup>159</sup>, trying to reconstruct the movement of works from the «Valori Plastici» period, who answered him with an important letter in which she included lists of Giorgio de Chirico's works (figs. 56-58) and those of other artists in the «Valori Plastici» group.

There are other photographs (figs. 59-63) in the Castelfranco Archive, some with expertise by Jean Paulhan, on paintings that can not be ascribed to de Chirico and even a fake made by Oscar Dominguez<sup>160</sup>, owned by Eluard (fig. 64).<sup>161</sup>

One can deduce, from the existence in his archive of photographs regarding paintings he did not own, that Castelfranco was considered an expert on de Chirico in those years.

Yet, when Michelangelo Antonioni requested his opinion, Castelfranco answered him by declaring himself not suited to grant expertise, and suggested he turn to Soby regarding a painting the director owned (fig. 65). The art critic writes: "Dear Sir James Thrall Soby, About six years ago, the famous director Antonioni showed me a metaphysical composition by De Chirico of quite considerable quality; the subject is not uncommon among the works of De Chirico's youth: a group of objects with architecture in marked perspective in the background, and I have not found any sign in it, not even in the smallest detail, that would make one think of a late painting, painted in the manner of his early work. The execution is sober and genuine much like the best things from the first years of the

<sup>158</sup> Letter Scheiwiller to Castelfranco in which the editor replies that he is able to take photographs or microfilms of the drawings de Chirico made for *Calligrammes*.

<sup>159</sup> Cf. footnote n. 6. Edita Broglio wrote: "In the years 1937-39, three lots of paintings were sold, achieving the complete depletion of the collection. Vittorio Bararoux of Milan was the buyer of two of the lots and the third lot went to Att. Rino Valdameri of Milan." A list of de Chirico's paintings was included in Edita Broglio's letter sent from S. Michele a Moriano (Lucca) on the 15/6/1951 to Giorgio Castelfranco at his new Roman address (11 via Fabrizzi). In the letter one reads: "Dear Castelfranco / I am sending you everything I have managed to find concerning the «Valori Plastici» paintings / With the help of Martellotti, Bararoux and the Valdmeri heirs, you will be able to reconstruct the entire picture. / If there are still some details that need to be clarified / please write to me again. For the time being, I give you my most heartfelt salutations and good wishes for your work, from Edita Broglio". Paintings by de Chirico are listed in the letter as well as paintings by other artists of the «Valori Plastici» group. Transcribed here are the indications regarding de Chirico's paintings (received by Mario Broglio in April 1921): "*The Great Metaphysician* (picked up on 15/4/1931 by Enea Girardon, 7 via Togni, Milan; *Il Ritornante*, Id.; *The poet*, Id.; two drawings, Id.; Number 3 other drawings must have passed to Girardon (no records remain). / eight drawings, at Edith Broglio's S. Michele di Moriano (with autographed titles by de Chirico); *Le caserme dei Marinai* must have been sold in 1936 at the MoMA exhibition, New York (no records remain). *The Loved Maiden*, taken on consignment by M. Gilardon and lost in Rome; *Hermetic Melancholy*, taken by M.me Matilde d'Amos, vice-president Des Amis du Louvre, rue d'Assas, Paris; *The Enigma of the Hour...*" For the following Edita Broglio does not specify their collocation: *The Troubadour*; *Hector and Andromaca*; *Self-portrait (Et quid amabo nisi...)*; *Metaphysical Interior* (with factory); *Metaphysical Interior* (with small factory); *Metaphysical Interior* (with waterfall); *Metaphysical Interior* (biscuits, donuts and Swedish box); *Evangelic Still life*, *The Sacred Fish*. To compare these documents see also M. Fagiolo dell'Arco, *De Chirico al tempo...*, cit. v. II, pp. 916-923.

<sup>160</sup> The images of the paintings with Paulhan's expertise on the back are photocopies that are almost illegible. The paintings can not be referred to de Chirico, who declared them fakes.

<sup>161</sup> The fact that in the Castelfranco Archive there exist expertises by Paulhan documenting fake de Chirico paintings, owned by Eluard, or that are affirmed as coming from Paul Guillaume, confirms the level of insistency that the Surrealists and in particular Paulhan, even in relatively recent times, attempted to supply with credentials "metaphysical paintings" that originated from the Surrealists, as they also tried to do with Soby. In relation to the images published (figs. 59-61), in the Giorgio and Isa de Chirico archive there exist two letters written by Madame Jean Walter (widow of Paul Guillaume) from Paris, respectively August 25<sup>th</sup> and September 17<sup>th</sup> 1965, which include small photographic reproductions (the same authenticated by Paulhan), with which the absolute authenticity and provenance of these paintings is maintained; paintings which were declared fake by Giorgio de Chirico.

big war. However, I do not intend to grant Antonioni, even though he has asked me, an appraisal on it; as the relationship I had with De Chirico was too familiar in the years followed immediately after, and I hesitate to use the knowledge of his work which I gained over the long years of our friendship. Therefore, I would be happy if Antonioni directed his attention to you, as you are a recognized expert on metaphysical painting. I would also be happy if my impression is confirmed and in any case I am very grateful to know your opinion, which is always enlightening.

With regards,

Your very Devoted<sup>162</sup>.

Our story of the Castelfranco Archive finishes with the interview in «Fiera Letteraria» that dealt with the relationship between Castelfranco and Giorgio de Chirico in which, once again, Castelfranco remembers de Chirico as the person who helped him understand contemporary art and is, once again, a demonstration of the how important and fruitful the relationship is between artists and art historians.<sup>163</sup>

*Translated by Hannah Chapman e Stefania Oggioni*

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<sup>162</sup> The painting *Metaphysical Interior* was authenticated by de Chirico who specified that he painted it in Rome in the 1950s.

<sup>163</sup> Cf. footnote n. 80.