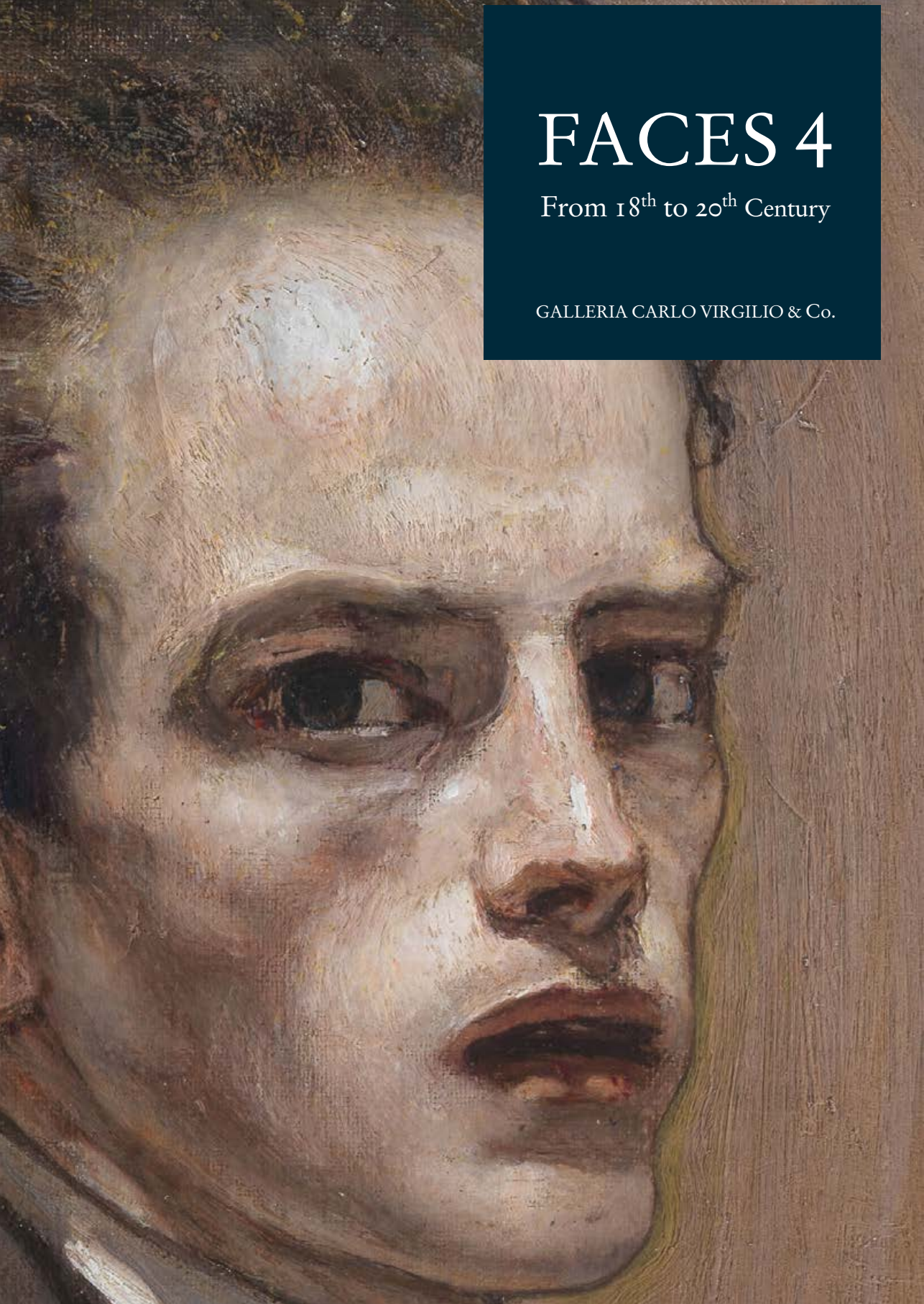
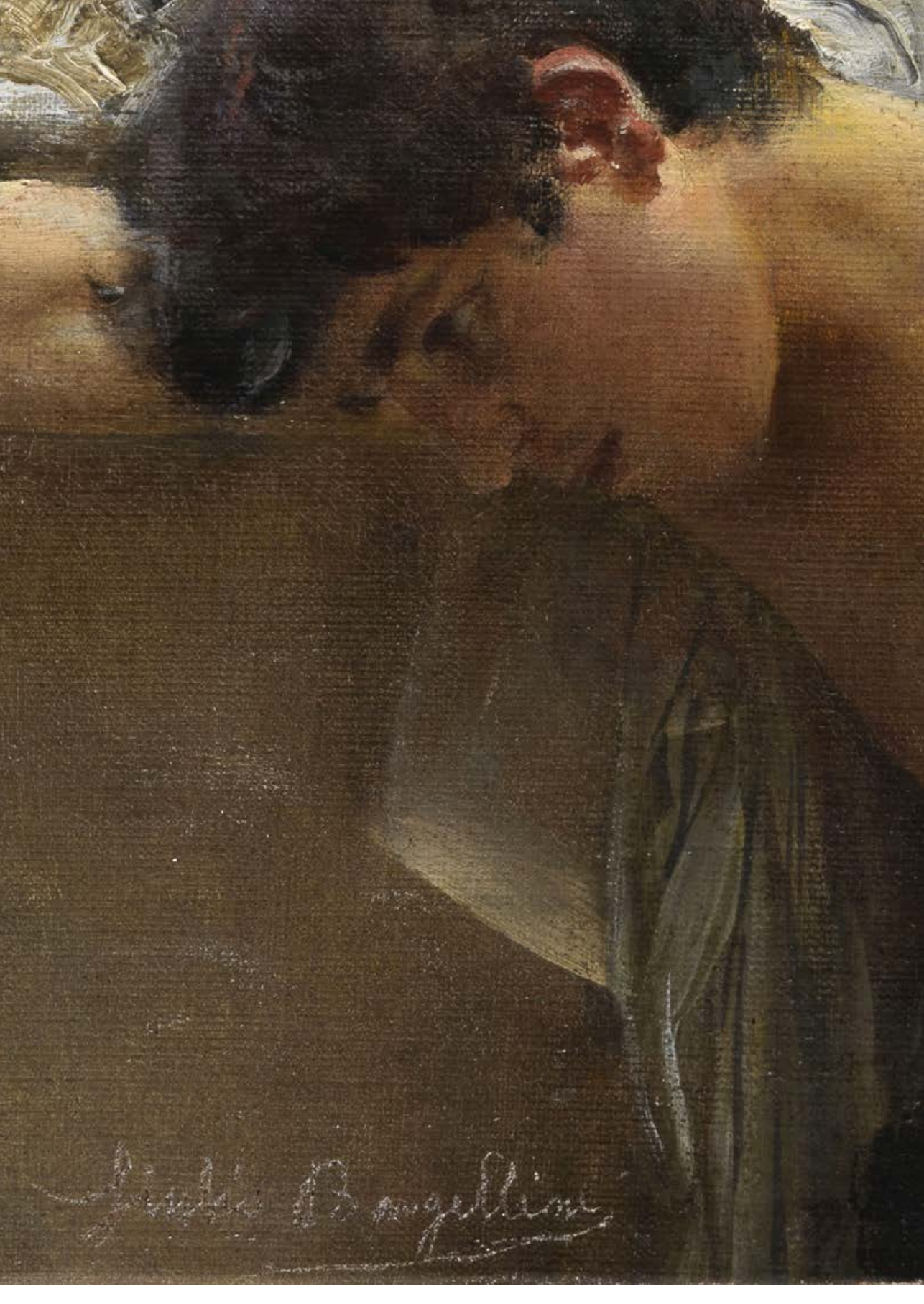


FACES 4

From 18th to 20th Century

GALLERIA CARLO VIRGILIO & Co.



GALLERIA CARLO VIRGILIO & Co.

Arte antica moderna e contemporanea

English Translations
Sophie Henderson

Photo Credits
Arte Fotografica, Rome

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ISBN 978-88-942099-9-0

FACES 4

From 18th to 20th Century

Catalogue entries
Giuseppe Briguglio, Angela Caròla-Perrotti , Manuel Carrera,
Eugenio Costantini, Massimo Duranti
Stefano Grandesso, Serenella Rolfi

LONDON ART WEEK
DIGITAL
July 3–10, 2020

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Arte antica moderna e contemporanea

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Catalogue

1. Filippo Tagliolini

Fogliano di Cascia 1745–Naples 1809

Portrait of Sir William Hamilton

1781–1783

Rectangular terracotta plaque, 43.5 × 30 cm

Coeval frame in veneered wood, probably southern

Provenance: Naples, private collection

Sir William Hamilton, Plenipotentiary Ambassador of His Britannic Majesty to the Kingdom of Naples, is depicted in profile, facing to the left and attired in full dress uniform. Strangely, research undergone for this work revealed that whenever William Hamilton had his profile taken he preferred to turn to the left, according to a tradition immortalised – perhaps for the first time - by Joachim Smith, a modeller at the Josiah and Thomas Wedgwood factory (ill. 1). A cameo in jasper of extreme sophistication and very "British" stylised elegance that portrays the ambassador with a slightly open mouth in the act of speaking in a manner of formal nobility, just as he is depicted in 1776 and 1777 by Sir Joshua Reynolds, but full figure and seated in an official pose in his study surrounded by some pieces from his collection of archaeological vases, with Vesuvius smoking in the background.

It is particularly interesting to begin by drawing a comparison between the plaque by Tagliolini - datable to between 1781 and 1785 – and the small medallion carried out about a decade earlier, in 1772, by Joachim Smith. The two portraits are apparently similar; both show Hamilton in profile turned to the left, they deliberately share details of the hairstyle, are alike in the flourish of the knotted tie at the nape of his neck and the three curls at his temple, identical in tiny details of the cut of the coat, the number of buttonholes, the medal pinned to his chest, the jabot at his neck and the draping of fur that finishes the elegant figure below. And yet how different the man portrayed by Tagliolini. Ten years have passed, Hamilton has put on weight. His neck, no longer slender, rises from a more voluminous chest and his characteristic profile with pronounced nose is drawn without indulgence but to the undoubted advantage of the expression; the lips are now closed with the slight smile of authority and satisfaction of a confident man. The cameo by Smith was carried out in the period in which Hamilton seems to have collaborated a great deal with the Wedgwoods, providing models for the reproductions of Greco-Italic vases that from 1769 were put into production in their Etruria factory in Staffordshire. It is a portrait that seeks to bring out the cultured refinement of the personage and it is not surprising that Smith – like other artists of

Fig. 1

the same period – had not rendered the full prominence of the nose, which Tagliolini on the contrary, perhaps more intimate and less inclined to pay compliments, had chosen to reproduce by relying on what he saw. A choice, furthermore, previously made in an almost caricatural manner by Dominique Vivant-Denon, again setting out from Smith's portrait and aiming to provide the maximum expressivity to his sketch by giving the noble ambassador the profile of a bird of prey (ill. 2).

In the case of Tagliolini, nothing is further from his style than to pursue caricature. A moderate artist, he trained in Rome in the difficult moment of transition between baroque and neo-classicism, in his early works carried out for the Real Fabbrica Ferdinandea he still expresses himself, especially in portraiture, in the elegant "Neapolitan *barocchetto*" in which relief is still given to the movement of drapery but when it came to the facial peculiarities of personages' likenesses are reproduced with clear veristic reference. For example,

Fig. 2

in making portraits of the king and queen of Naples, he did not hesitate to produce their realistic profiles, not lacking regality – impressive nose and prognathism in Ferdinand IV, hard expression and obvious undershot jaw in Maria Carolina – reproduced in two splendid plaques in biscuit sent as a gift to Charles III in Spain in 1782 and today conserved at the Royal Palace of Madrid (ill. 3 e 4).

It should be noted that the relationship between Hamilton and the Wedgwoods in the 1860s/70s and the relationship he had with the Director of the Real Fabbrica Ferdinandea della Porcellana, Domenico Venuti, between 1780 and 1790 were diametrically opposite. The Wedgwoods depended on his patronage for their production, needing his consent to reproduce his precious archaeological finds as well as to act as go-between for objects that he found in the antiquities markets of Naples and Rome. It must not be forgotten that Hamilton was the person who bought, besides the fragments of the famous Warwick vase, the Barberini vase that was later sold to the Duchess of Portland, taking her name, and that she is supposed to have lent to the Wedgwoods on Hamilton's advice. So, the English industrialists must have shown an obsequious recognisance towards Hamilton and felt that a cameo with his portrait would give him pleasure from every point of view. Whereas at the Bourbon factory, it was Hamilton who had to persuade Venuti, who besides being Director of the porcelain factory was also Director General of Excavations in the Kingdom. Thus, Hamilton also needed his indulgence to buy new finds, bypassing the restrictions that prevent the sale of objects found underground, by law the property of the State, except those considered to be less significant or similar to others already present in the royal collections; all at Venuti's total discretion.

To interpret a work of art is always

Fig. 3

problematic when various personalities and situations are involved. In our case: the subject, William Hamilton; the artist, Filippo Tagliolini and the Real Fabbrica Ferdinandea.

William Hamilton (1740-1803) arrived in Naples as the plenipotentiary ambassador in 1764 accompanied by his first wife, Catherine Barlow, an heiress of delicate health he had married in 1758, brilliantly resolving the critical financial situation he had as younger son of Lord Archibald Hamilton. He was nonetheless rich in a thorough and cultural education and in his social connections; he was foster brother to George III, King of England, which should not be underestimated. At the time of his appointment Naples was already enjoying the happy situation of being the latest destination on the Grand Tour in the wake of the spectacular archaeological digs launched by Charles of Bourbon and the scientific interest in volcanology due to the intense activity of Vesuvius at the time (1), which happened to be Hamilton's two great passions alongside music. It is known that when his predecessor James Gray stepped down in Naples giving poor health as his reason when in fact he was afraid of the epidemic with a high death rate that was spreading through the city, Hamilton put himself forward with insistence, like his successor, for a position that was not very popular at the time. Thanks to his prestigious official role, his financial means and his love for antiquities he managed to put together a first large collection of vases that was brought out in print after much trouble in four volumes with comment by d'Hancarville, a true

Fig. 4

publishing jewel, the *Antiquités Etrusques, Grecques et Romaines.* It was a publication that would almost become a sale catalogue (2). Hamilton can be said to have been the forefather of the gentleman-merchant, with all the qualities and defects that entails, who not surprisingly ended up spending most of his life in Naples, a transgressive and difficult city, inspiring Francis Haskell to entitle his piece about him as *Charlatan or Pioneer?...* (3). In the early 1880s, the likely dating for this terracotta plaque, Hamilton was still almost entirely focussed on the hunt for the great archaeological find and research into volcanoes that would also result in an editorial masterpiece, *Campi Phlegraei,* splendidly illustrated by Pietro Fabris (4). They are the years in which he was visited by Winckelmann, d'Hancarville, Pietro Fabris, Goethe and the most important men of letters and musicians who were passing through Naples. His wife Catherine died in 1782 and Emma Hart – whom he would marry in 1791- only arrived in Naples in 1786. However, the '90s would be considerably harder years for Hamilton despite the famous *Attitudes* by Emma and the fact that his collections continued to constitute a mandatory stop for gentlemen passing through Naples; the prestige of his name inevitably being tarnished by Emma's liaison with Admiral Horatio Nelson becoming public. The catalogue of his second collection illustrated by the sketches of Wilhelm Tischbein – Goethe's travelling companion in Italy - published in 1795 would not bring the expected economic return following the sinking of the naval ship *Colossus* heading for England and the loss of the whole collection that had been

taken on board with the help of Nelson (5). In 1800, when the French arrived in Naples, Hamilton would leave the city and just two years later he would die in London.
And now for the artist, Filippo Tagliolini. Little is known of his private life preceding his arrival in Naples in 1780 except the details enthusiastically gathered by one of his early admirers, Amerigo Montemaggiori, recorded in the register compiled by Roberto Valeriani and published as a note in the well-known volume by Alvar Gonzàlez-Palacios (6). In a recent study of the porcelain belonging to the Marchese della Sambuca – the minister appointed to the position of Secretary of State in 1776 at the time of Tanucci's fall into disgrace at the behest of Maria Carolina as being a person welcomed at the court of Vienna where Sambuca had previously had the position of Plenipotentiary Envoy for the King of Naples – it was possible to reconstruct the facts that both the appointment of Venuti as Director of the porcelain factory and the request for Tagliolini to move from Vienna were the direct consequence of the substitution of Tanucci with Sambuca. Sambuca's appointment represented a clear turning point not only in the modernisation of the royal porcelain factory (Real Fabbrica Ferdinandea della porcellana), his wide-ranging reforms were central to a modern liveability throughout the kingdom, for example the great transformation of the university that not even the Genovese managed to achieve and the launch in 1777 to the creation of the Real Museo Borbonico, the current Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli (7). Hence, it is in 1780 that Tagliolini travels "on loan" from Vienna with the furnace technician Magnus Fessler to give an artistic and technical shake-up to the Neapolitan porcelain factory until then conducted on more or less amateur lines. Tagliolini would never again leave Naples and in complete accord with Venuti would transform the factory's production – well supported financially by the new administration of Sambuca - into what would be a royal factory, calling card of the kingdom. Given this development, the miniatures that exalted the natural beauty of the Two Sicilies became very important whilst Tagliolini dedicated himself to reproductions of the archaeological heritage of the house of Bourbon and to the official portraits of sovereigns and the kingdom's illustrious people.
We believe that the terracotta plaque with Hamilton's portrait could be the prototype for a later version in biscuit that, if it were made, must be supposed to have been among the objects that he took with him when he left Naples. Comparison with the two medallions of the sovereigns leads one to believe that Hamilton's portrait would also have been shaped in an oval and that in this case the dimensions would have been the same, 43 x 33 cm, using the mould at the factory that had been fine-tuned for the medallions sent to Madrid. It is likely that Tagliolini made a first model in terracotta since we know of at least three other large groups with several figures and a fourth smaller one, all in terracotta: the so-called Montemaggiori group, not coloured and signed by Tagliolini, shown in 1980 by Alvar Gonzàlez-Palacios at the Eighteenth century Neapolitan exhibition (8), the cold painted group at the Museo Correale in Sorrento and the further unpublished work, also cold painted, conserved in a private collection, as is the smaller group. Moreover, our plaque suggests that it would be useful to go further into the role carried out by Hamilton in Naples and find out how close his relations with Venuti as director of Real Fabbrica Ferdinandea actually were. One shouldn't exclude the possibility that behind the decorative choice of the Etruscan service sent as a gift to George III, King of England, in 1787– with the most interesting pieces of the Bourbon vase collection miniated (9) – was

the decisive contribution of Hamilton, in a role not unlike the one he had at Wedgwood, given that if the choice of gift had been left to Ferdinand IV it would certainly have been different.

Angela Caròla-Perrotti

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1. J. Jenkins – K. Sloan, *Vases and Volcanoes: Sir William Hamilton and his Collection*, Exhibition Catalogue, London 1996
2. *Antiquités Etrusques, Grecques et Romaines, tirée du cabinet de M. Hamilton, envoyé extraordinaire de S.M. Britannique en court de Naples*, Naples 1776-1777, vv. 4 in folio.
3. F. Haskell, *Ciarlatano o pioniere? Uno storico dell'arte a Napoli nel Settecento*, in, *Arti e Civiltà del Settecento a Napoli*, ed. by C. De Seta, Bari 1982. On Hamilton see also: C. Knight, *Hamilton a Napoli. Cultura, svaghi, civiltà di una grande capitale europea*, Naples 1990.
4. W. Hamilton, *Campi Plegraei. Observations on The Volcanos of the Two Sicilies, as they have been communicated to the Royal Society of London by Sir William Hamilton K.B.F.R.S. his Britannic Majesty's Envoy Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary at the Court of Naples*, Naples 1776; a publication to which followed a supplement including a description of the eruption of 1779, Naples 1779.
5. *Collection of Engravings from Ancient Vases mostly of pure Greek Workmanship discovered in sepulchres in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies but chiefly in the neighbourhood of Naples during the course of the years 1789 and 1790, now in the possession of Sir William Hamilton, His Britannic Majesty Envoy Extr. and Plenipotentiary at the Court of Naples, with remarks on each vase by the Collector*, Naples 1791-95, vv. 4 in folio.
6. A. Gonzàlez-Palacios, *Lo scultore Filippo Tagliolini e la porcellana di Napoli*, Turin 1988.
7. A. Caròla-Perrotti, *Le porcellane del Marchese della Sambuca*, in: *Gli amici per Nicola Spinosa*, ed. by F. Baldassarie M. Confalone, Rome 2019, pp. 217-229
8. A. A., *Civiltà del '700 a Napoli 1734 -1799*, Florence 1980, p. 154. The group was successively bid for at Christie's Italy, Rome 24/4/1991, lot 325.
9. For documents on the Servizio Etrusco cfr. A. Caròla-Perrotti, *La Porcellana della Real Fabbrica Ferdinandea*, Cava dei Tirreni 1978, p. 210-212; for the story of the service cfr. A. Caròla Perrotti, ed. by, *Le Porcellane dei Borbone di Napoli, Capodimonte e Real Fabbrica Ferdinandea 1743 -1806*, exhibition catalogue, Naples 1986, pp. 352 – 375.

2. Gaetano De Simone

Naples 1747–1822 ca.

Portrait of the Astronomer Giuseppe Cassella

1789

Oil on canvas, 66 × 52 cm

Signed and dated on the back of the frame, top: "Gaetano De Simone 1789 Napoli"; lower left: "Gaetano De Simoni"

Provenance: Italy, private collection

Gaetano De Simone was rediscovered only recently as a protagonist of aristocratic Neapolitan portraiture around the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Massimo Pisani, "Gaetano De Simone, un ignoto pittore napoletano della seconda metà del Settecento", *Prospettiva*, 47, 1986, pp. 69-74; Id. "Ancora su Gaetano De Simone", *Prospettiva*, 64, 1991, 83-87).

In this portrait he owes a debt to the illuminist simplicity of Mengsian models, concentrating on the face of the sitter seen against an abstract background. The work is an exceptional iconographic record, it represents the illustrious Neapolitan astronomer Giuseppe Cassella (or Casella, Cusano Mutri 1755-Naples 1808), accompanied by the attribute of the telescope. The scholar lectured in astronomy and nautical studies, was author of "Astronomical Ephemera", published annually from 1788 and designer of the first public Neapolitan observatory in 1791 at Palazzo degli Studi, then Museo Borbonico, where he and the architect Pompeo Schiattarelli made the famous meridian in the room of the same name. At the time the painting was made Cassella made use for his astronomical research of the apparatus at the private observatory belonging to Lord Acton at San Carlo alle Mortelle (Ugo Baldini, *Giuseppe Casella*, in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 21, 1978, *ad vocem*).

Stefano Grandesso

3. Lombard Anonymous

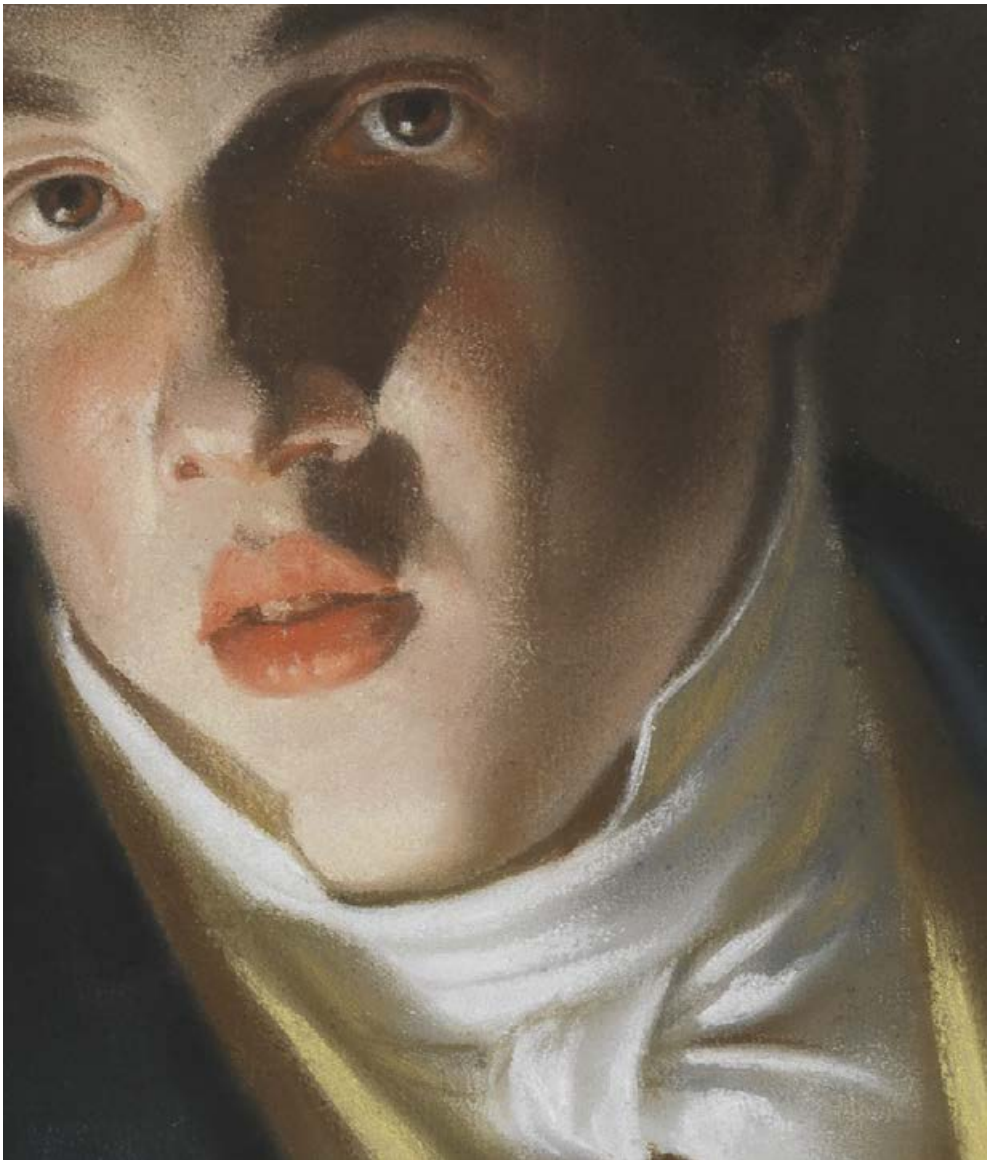
First Half of 19th Century

Portrait of a Young Man

ca. 1820-30

Pastel on paper, 555 × 450 cm

Provenance: Milan, private collection



4. Giulio Bargellini

Florence 1875–Rome 1936

Study for Idyll (Self-Portrait)

1892-95

Oil on canvas, 21 x 38 cm

Signed lower centre: "Giulio Bargellini"

Provenance: Rome, heirs of the artist; Rome, Galleria dell'Emporio Floreale, 1982; Rome, private collection

Bibliography: Pasqualina Spadini, *Opere inedite di Giulio Bargellini: oli-pastelli-carboncini-studi di architetture e progetti per mosaici dal 1980 al 1936*, Galleria dell'Emporio Floreale, Rome 1982; Serenella Rolfi, in *Quadreria 2001. Arte in Italia 1780/1930, tradizione e continuità*, exhibition catalogue, Rome, Galleria Carlo Virgilio, edited by Stefano Grandesso, with an introduction by Roberta J.M. Olson, Rome 2001, pp. 90-91.

Bargellini would return repeatedly to the theme of the *Idyll*, first along the lines of Alma Tadema and then adhering to the iconic matrix of Gustav Klimt's Jugendstil, probing the image's potential to translate a state of mind. He would put forward several variations: in 1895 for Galleria Hauptmann of Florence, again in 1896 for the Esposizione fiorentina della Festa dell'Arte e dei Fiori (*Festa dell'Arte e dei Fiori. Catalogo della Esposizione di Belle Arti*, Florence 1896, no. 213) and in 1897-99 (all canvases of unknown whereabouts). The theme returns, complicated by literary references, in the mural decoration of Villa Targioni in Calenzano (1906 – 1908). The study presented here, from the years 1897-99, is also part of a well-documented series of sketches, analogous in theme and compositional research, of which we know of a tempera and charcoal on canvas of circa 1892 and a pen sketch on which Bargellini notes in the right side margin "6 February 1895", adding the comment: "commercial subject found non-commercial due to a lack of frills and ornament to divert the profane" (cit. in P. Spadini, *Opere inedite*, cit.). This hermetic and uncommercial character in the artist's images, also evident in the *Pygmalion* with which he won the Pensionato artistico Nazionale in 1896, is already clear in the close-up, suspended objectivity of the figure depicted. The compositional instruments used by Bargellini in this canvas show a clear autobiographical desire, given that it is the painter himself wearing the clothes of the *Idyll*; the photograph used to monitor the ideation process, the correctness of the drawing and the experimental use of the medium (tempera and charcoal), are the manner in which the painter catches his own image asking the painting "that which the word and other arts could never do" (Bargellini in G. Bistolfi, "Il poeta dell'ombra dorata", in *Noi e il mondo*, III, 1913, 1, p. 56). This fragment of a scene allows us to make out few elements of the surroundings and costume that in the finished painting are amplified in the Attic frame like that of Alma Tadema, a painter that Bargellini must have known through the Roman exhibition of 1883 and the review by D'Annunzio on *Il Fanfulla della Domenica* (1 April 1883), denouncing in his working method the training with Francesco Vinea in Florence, and above all later in Rome his relationship with Cesare Maccari and Francesco Paolo Michetti (G. Gentilini, "Attraverso lo specchio. Giulio Bargellini, la fotografia, il simbolismo", in *L'Artista*, 1, 1989, pp. 154-67).

Serenella Rolfi

5. Cesare Laurenti

Mesola, Ferrara 1854–Venice 1936

Study of Head: Elegiac Motif

1895

Oil on canvas, 58,5 x 96 cm

Signed lower right: "C. Laurenti"

Provenance: Rome, private collection

Bibliography: Mario Morasso, "Artisti contemporanei: Cesare Laurenti", in *Emporium*, January 1902, vol. XV, nr. 85, p. 13 (ill.), 14; Cristina Beltrami, "Cesare Laurenti: dalla pittura di genere all'idea", in *Cesare Laurenti (1854-1936)*, edited by Cristina Beltrami, Quinto di Treviso 2010, p. 14 (vintage photo ill.).

After wandering among the various different artistic schools of Ferrara, Florence and Naples, Cesare Laurenti settled in the Venice of Favretto, Ciardi and Nono, where he initially established himself as a genre painter of popular subjects. After this fortunate season of anecdotal pictorial realism, Laurenti experimented with a more difficult thematic range, still realistic in structure but of subject matter that was allegorical and moral with academic intentions. This he did from the second half of the eighteen eighties (*Frons Animi Interpretes*, *Le Parche*, *La Capinera*, *Epilogo*, *Parabola*, from the years 1887 and 1894), until he reached an idealist painting, populated by symbolic figures that were often female, in dialogue with the European examples of the time exhibited at the Venice Biennales, where Laurenti always participated as a protagonist, and that expressed feelings, existential conditions and literary allegorical visions tied to symbolism (*Fioritura nuova*, *Armonie della sera*, *Metamorfosi*, *Foglie cadenti*, *Via aspra*). Over the following years, before he withdrew in order to dedicate himself above all to collecting and antiques, Laurenti interpreted the role of multi-faceted artist of neo-Renaissance inspiration, employing various mediums, from ceramics, to sculpture, to decorative painting and architecture, responsible for the notable project to design the new Pescheria di Rialto in Venice.

Among the emblematic half figures of symbolic and sentimental character, the newfound *Study of a Head: Elegiac Motif* stands out, until now known from period photographs and in a second version in pastel dedicated to the critic Ugo Ojetti (private collection). According to its own collectors' tradition, the painting was exhibited ex catalogue at the Venice Biennale of 1895 and was then published by Mario Morasso in 1902 in a monograph essay in *Emporium*. The work fully interprets the symbolist poetic of the author at that time, through an iconic figurative and expressive synthesis. The female profile, suggestive of the pre-Raphaelites, stands out against a bare landscape at dusk, bent in on herself. Thus the figure expresses existential discomfort and desolation; ultimately the condition of modern man. Morasso described it thus: "*Elegiac Motif*, in which mournfulness becomes desperation, in which desperation has devastated and hunched the human being; a person defeated and bereaved bends towards the ground with thick hair tilting heavily, like a dense sheaf of tears, like a sheaf of misfortune." The experimental pictorial technique is conveyed through the thick preparation by means of dense and filamented brush strokes, that have nonetheless moved on from the recent tradition of "divided colour", from Segantini to Previati.

Stefano Grandesso

6. Galileo Chini

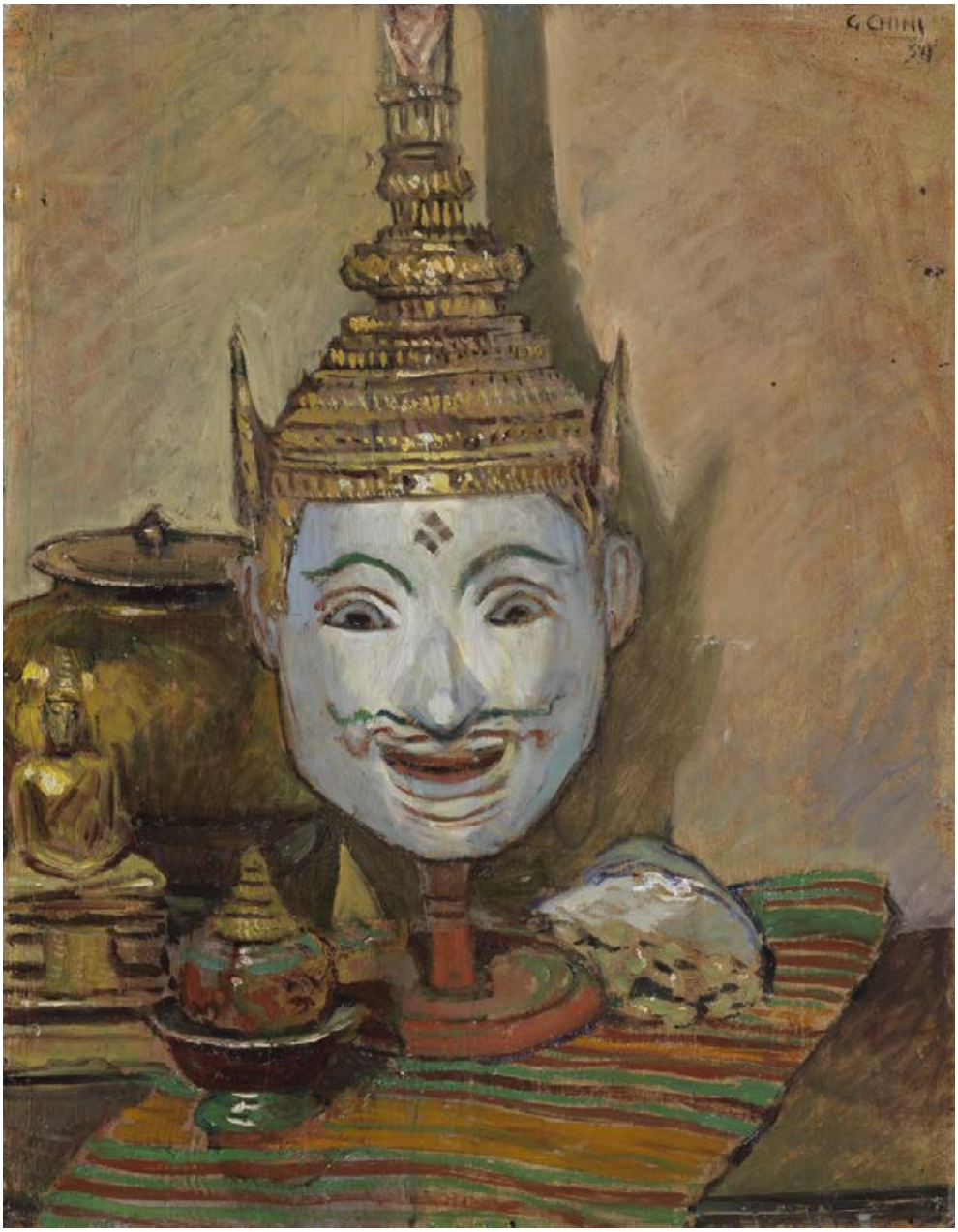
Florence 1873–1953

Mask of the Siamese Theater

ca. 1913-14
Oil on board, 60 × 47.5 cm
Signed and dated: "G. Chini […]4"
Provenance: Galileo Chini's heirs, Florence; Galleria Arco Farnese, Rome; Collection Lucia Stefanelli Torossi, Rome; Private collection, Rome.
Exhibitions and Bibliography: *Galileo Chini. Mostra retrospettiva*, Milan, Società per le Belle Arti ed Esposizione Permanente, Milan 1977; *Galileo Chini e l'Oriente*, exhibition catalogue, Salsomaggiore Terme, Rome 1995.

Established painter, interior decorator and ceramicist, in 1907 Chini was commissioned by the Venice Biennale to decorate the Dome Room. Among the final examples of the prevailing symbolist taste, the room attracted the attention of Chulalongkorn, King of Siam, who wanted the painter for the Throne Palace that was being built in Bangkok, designed by Annibale Rigotti and Mario Tamagno. Spending three years (1911-1914) in Siam, Chini explored the country's complex culture, transferring onto the canvas the splendour of light, colour and symbols of that exotic land. From the start, the emotional strength of reality caused him to move away from divisionism to embrace a looser expression and more brilliant palette from which the inner dimension rings out more clearly. Painted at the end of his stay in Siam, the work belongs with others of a similar subject where in the exaggerated expression of the mask, standing out in part due to the other objects being slightly 'out of focus' and of a more definite linearism, one feels the suggestion of the magical vision of the Orient.

Eugenio Costantini



7. Gerardo Dottori

Perugia 1884–1977

Portrait of the Futurist Poet Alberto Presenzini Mattoli

1914-1929

Pastel onolive paper, 620 x 435 mm

Signed and dated, top right: "G. Dottori – 1929"

Bibliography: Guido Ballo, *Dottori. Aeropittore futurista*, Florence 1970, p. 54, fig. 2; *Gerardo Dottori, catalogo generale ragionato*, edited by Massimo Duranti, Perugia 2006, vol. 2, p. 703, cat. nr. 1160-362.

The practice of drawing - in pencil, pen, Indian ink, pastels and even with a biro - was for Gerardo Dottori a constant throughout his long artistic career. Within this technique cum language, the portrait has a privileged position, in drawing but also in painting.

At the turn of the twentieth century Dottori trained at the Academy of Fine Arts in Perugia, a glorious institution that the trainee futurist soon criticised for its antiquated teaching, in fact learning a great deal more than the rudiments of drawing and painting, to the extent that later he had to recognise that the school had taught him a "trade," thus allowing him to support himself from a young age by painting putti and grotesques for interior decorators. Besides having innate skill, he initially learnt drawing by copying the plaster models in the shop belonging to an antique expert where he was employed as an assistant when little more than adolescent, and afterwards at the academy in the continual copying of German prints, when in vain he would implore his teacher to let him copy leaves and flowers direct from nature.

As is well known, by 1911-12 Dottori would already be a futurist and from the early twenties a prominent futurist, because in between the Great War broke out. He took part in the war, but without any enthusiasm for "the cleansing of the world."

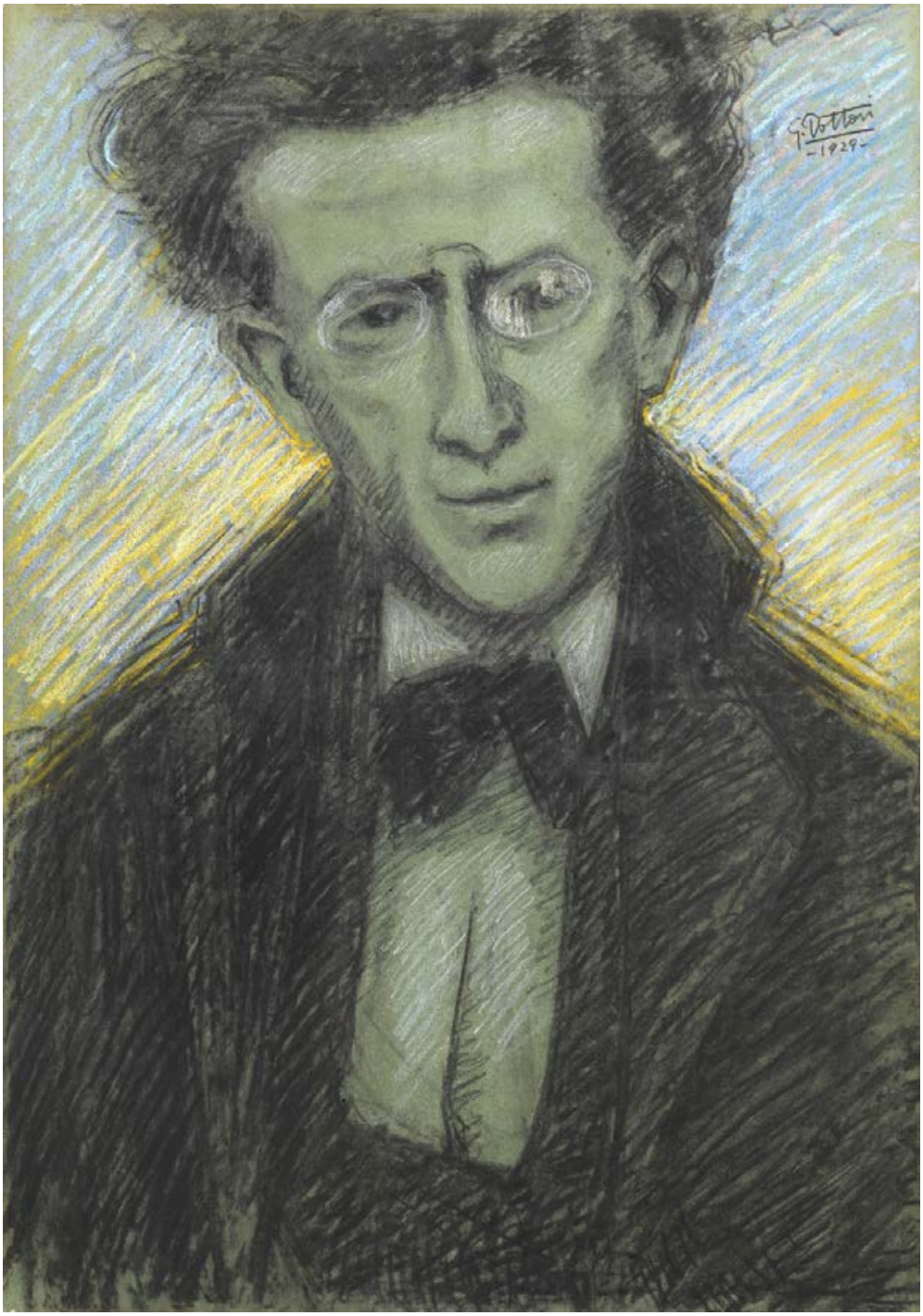
The futurist explosion and the establishment of Aeropainting, of which he was one of few "inventors" and then the central figure, certainly did not induce him to abandon drawing and among his papers there are not only portraits and landscapes, but also futurist compositions (cyclists and motorcyclists) as well as Aeropaintings (landscapes with lakes and rivers seen from above and in movement).

Dottori's debut not only included practical art but also artistic theory and group activity. One of the first futurist circles in Italy in the second decade of the twentieth century was that in Umbria and taking part were artists, aspiring artists, writers, poets and intellectuals.

He remained friends with many futurist colleagues for decades beyond the movement. Almost all of them had their portraits painted by him. Among the first to be rediscovered from his graphic repertoire are three intellectuals and "pre futurists", the Florentines: Carli, Settimelli and Scattolini, who ran "La Difesa dell'arte" (the defence of art) in which Dottori collaborated, drawn in 1908, demonstrating his precocious interest in the artistic avantgarde.

In Perugia, his closest companion was certainly Alberto Presenzini Mattoli, (Orvieto, 1892 – Rome, 1984). A student at the University of Perugia, in 1913 he promoted "The Refractory One" "against all the old, moth-eaten schools" but he did not agree with certain radical positions of futurism. With Dottori and the others in the group he opened a debate in the newspapers that would be won by the neo futurists.

Presenzini would become a tenacious promoter of futurism from the blazing futurist evening at the Politeama Turreno of Perugia with Marinetti and other figures


G. Dottori
-1929-

in the movement. He would then develop an intense journalistic activity, publishing "Parole in libertà" (words in freedom) and founding newspapers. At the end of the war, in which he could not take part because he was not eligible, he and Dottori would found "Griffa!" the futurist review - but not only - which had a national following and in which the major futurist exponents wrote, beginning with Marinetti. He published poetry books, theatrical texts and novels and wrote for reviews throughout Italy.

This fine portrait of the Umbrian writer, drawn in pencils and pastels, is the image of a young intellectual in a pensive attitude, wearing *pince nez,* elegantly dressed, with a loose black tie to close his shirt. The background of the portrait is stringily divisionist with diagonals in blue and yellow with white highlights that light up the face and capture the light that refracts on the lenses.

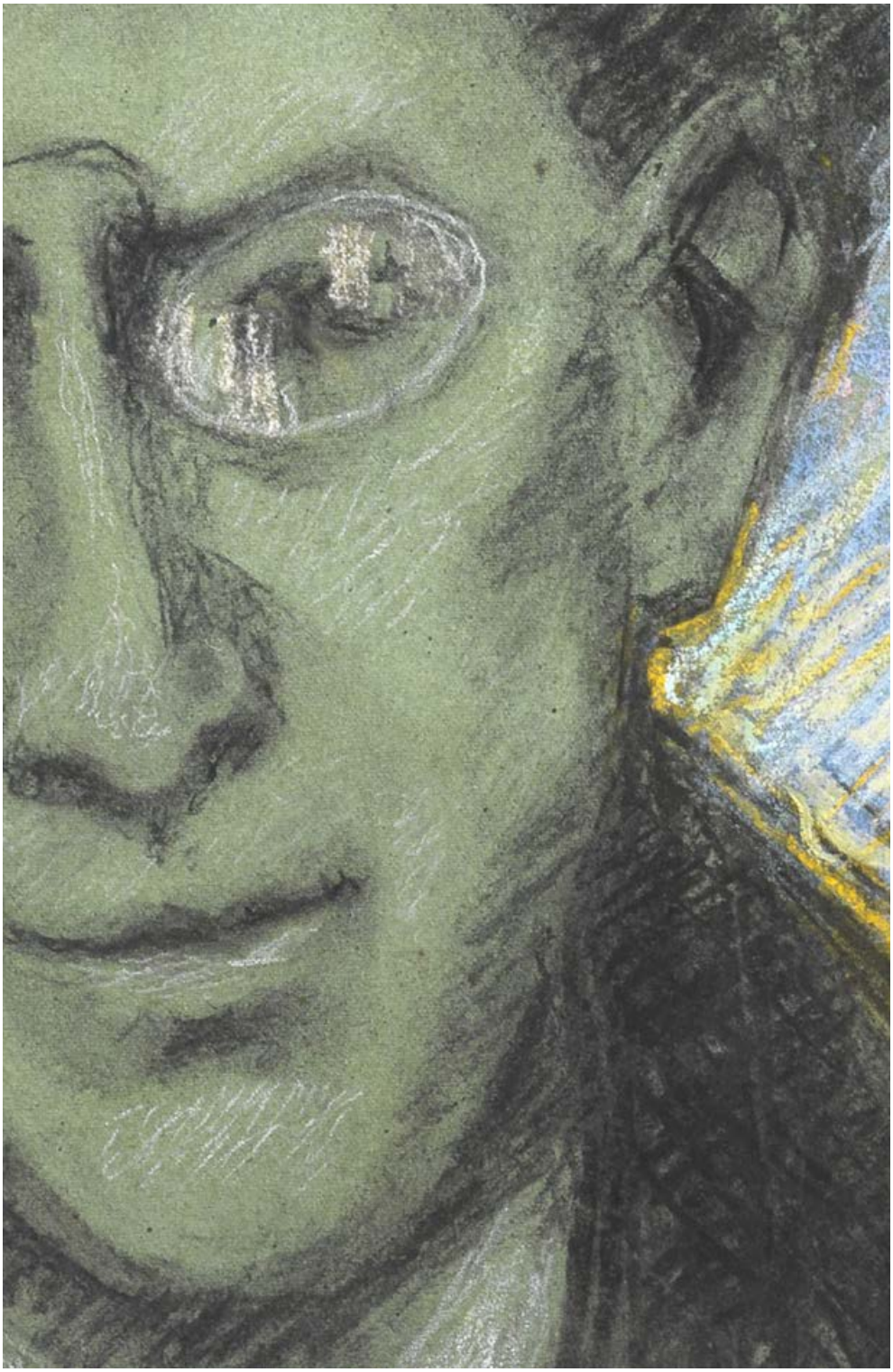
The work, of large dimensions, has a history that can today be definitively clarified.

In the large monograph by G. Ballo (Editalia, 1970) the original of this work is reproduced in black and white as an entry in the autobiographical notes with the caption: *A. Presenzini Mattoli*, pastel, 1926. It is the reproduction of a black and white photograph from the early nineteen hundreds (with no signature or date to be found), on the back, in the hand of the artist, are the words: "*Gerardo Dottori, portrait of the poet Presenzini Mattoli*, pastel 1914," hence, whoever compiled the catalogue did not read the handwritten text on the back of the photograph, today conserved in the Dottori Archives. In its current state the work has the signature of the artist at top right and the date 1929. The writer's daughters, who were in touch with Dottori, recount that he was asked, probably in 1929, to restore the paper because of what was described merely as damage. In fact the futurist did not limit himself to restoration, but took the opportunity to make some improvements that come to light in a comparison with the image in black and white of the original version: some highlights are accentuated and some background lines modified, while the highlights on the lenses have been scumbled and in the definitive version the signature and date 1929 appear at top right.

So Dottori wanted to underline the changes made fifteen years after execution by adding his signature and the date. The confirmation that the original version is from 1913 can be seen from Presenzini's face; when compared with drawings and photographs from different periods, it is most compatible with that of 1914.

This work is one of the six portraits that Dottori made of Presenzini Mattoli, and the most interesting for both size and use of colour. The others are caricatures, essential illustrations and contextualizations in rustic surroundings. That of 1924 reveals the face of a more mature man than the subject of this text. Hence the work should definitively be dated 1914 and 1929.

Massimo Duranti



8. Arturo Noci

Rome 1874–New York 1953

Girl in profile

1916

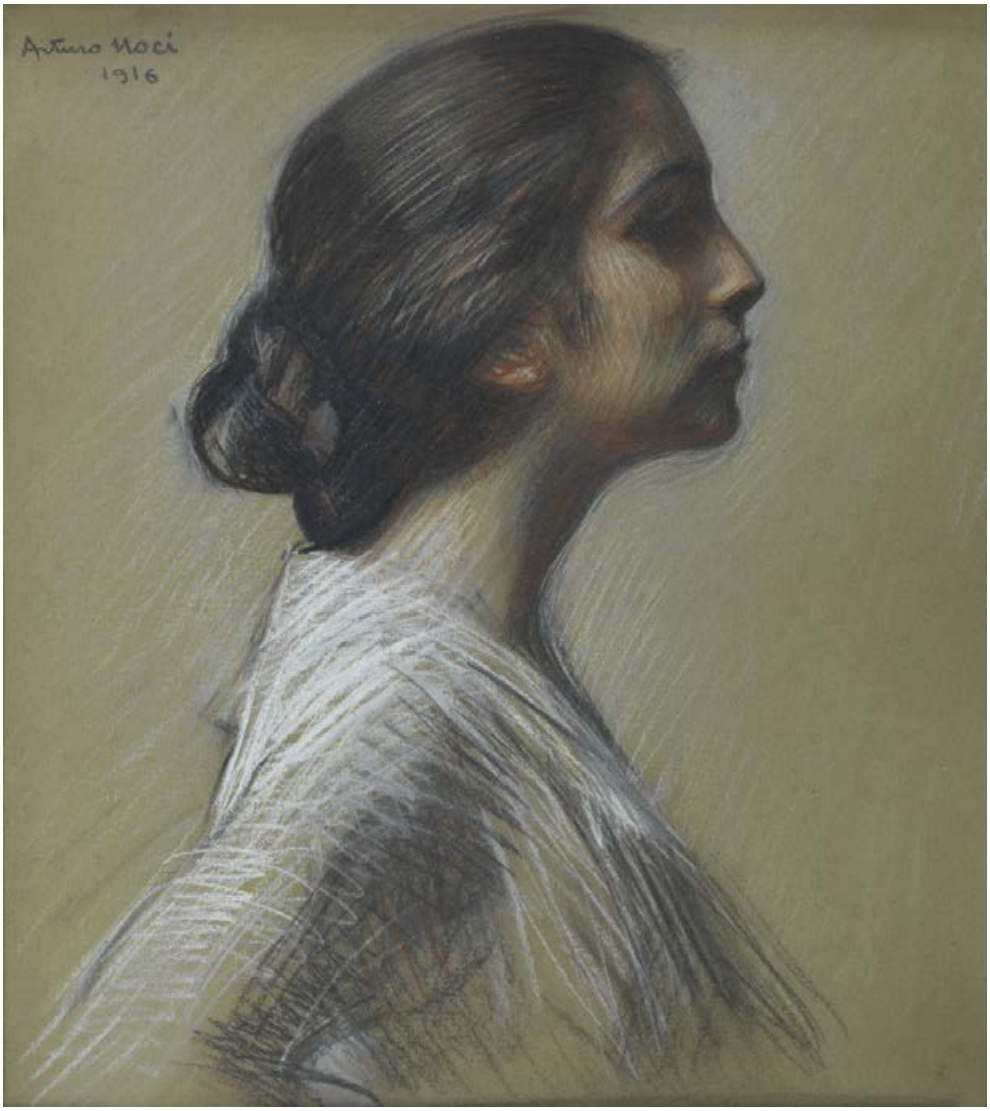
Pastel on paper, 54 × 50 cm

Signed and dated top left: "Arturo Noci 1916"

Bibliography: M. Fagiolo dell'Arco, P. Spadini, L. Djokic (ed. by), *Arturo Noci: un pittore tra Roma e New York 1874-1953*, Rome 1996, p. 106, no. 196; M. Carrera, *Arturo Noci (1874-1953) tra Roma e New York: dal divisionismo aristocratico al ritratto borghese*, Rome 2016, p. 78, fig. 44.

Arturo Noci is now recognised for his studies as a figure of great importance in the artistic panorama of Rome in the first two decades of the twentieth century. The critic Ugo Ojetti, in his review of the Fine Art Exhibition of Milan in 1906, where the artist presented the nude *Riflessi d'oro* (today in the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna collections), stated that Noci could by that time consider himself «the greatest, if not the only Roman portraitist.» (U. Ojetti, *Attraverso l'Esposizione: pittori e pitture*, in "Corriere della Sera", 23 maggio 1906, p. 3). Particularly appreciated by the international aristocracy and the jet set of the period – his portrait of the diva of silent movies Lyda Borelli was famous (1914, private collection) – for his modern and elegant painting, Arturo Noci had a thriving career as a portraitist that culminated in him moving to New York in 1923, where for thirty years he could count on the commissions of wealthy collectors from high society.

Although the artist carried out important portraits on commission from the very start of his career (for example the pastel *Portrait* or *Portrait in Yellow*, received to acclaim at the Venice Biennale in 1905), unanimous written opinion associates the success of Noci the portraitist to the experience of the Roman "Secession." When the disagreements in the "Società degli Amatori e Cultori di Belle Arti" led to a certain artists re-grouping to show autonomously in large international exhibitions, thus giving life to the "Secession," Arturo Noci was in the front line and on the board of directors from the start. Without a doubt the initiative was fuelled by a desire to update the artistic milieu of the capital, by then considered excessively provincial. However, Noci's search for modernity was somewhat moderate and, as was the case for many of his Secessionist colleagues, it found fulfilment in the haven of the divisionist technique, at that time back in favour among Roman painters. The divided touch was therefore used for the most part in the representation of interior scenes of an intimist flavour and in elegant portraits. Belonging to this phase is the expressive *Girl in Profile:* not a commissioned portrait, but an inspired figure study of one of his favourite models, painted at Noci's studio in via Margutta. The work is part of a rich series of portraits of women carried out in pastel, all characterised by a rapid and impressive rendering in which completed areas alternate with swiftly sketched areas, and by a filamentary style that seems to echo the divisionist paintings of the same period. In 1916, the year in which Noci produced this pastel, the fourth Roman "Secession" exhibition was held; it would also be the last, due to the outbreak of war. However, the hiatus of the Great War did not damage the Noci's artistic activity: on the contrary, he took to experimenting with more



audacious visual formulae, stimulated by a re-found creativity. These are the years in which the painter gives attentive consideration to the developments of international art, in particular German, which he actualises in a greater attention to drawing and fulfilled artistic maturity.

Manuel Carrera

9. Alberto Martini

Oderzo 1876–Milan 1954

Vanitas with Self-Portrait

ca. 1920

Pastel on paper, 54 x 46 cm

Signed "AM ALBERTO MARTINI"

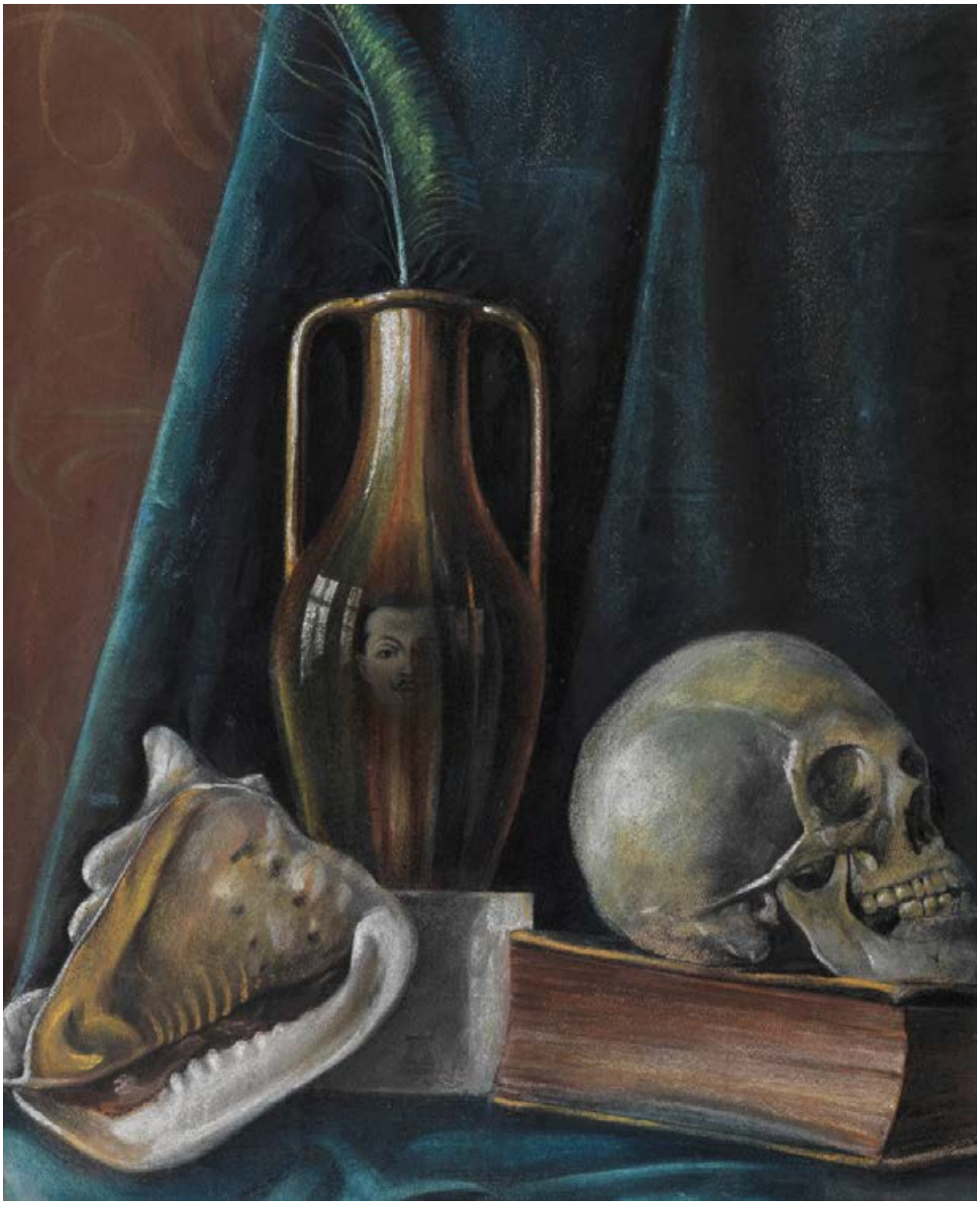
Provenance: Padua, private collection

Alberto Martini, the great imaginative designer and symbolist illustrator, who interpreted with aristocratic dandyism the figure of decadent artist, later recognised as precursor of surrealism, also experimented with more accurate and realistic visions in the nineteen twenties: works that in some sense are part of the Novecento return to order, above all in his portraiture and pictorial production in oil and pastels (*Alberto Martini mostra antologica*, ed. by Marco Lorandi, Milan 1985).

This unpublished *Vanitas with Self-Portrait*, classically composed on decorative fabrics with metaphorical motifs, constitutes an example, where the various symbolic elements suggest the personality and vision of the artist. The shell is the emblem of the artist's esoteric knowledge as initiate and soothsayer. The skull does not allude only to the fleetingness of life but also to a taste for the macabre; it lies on the volume that recalls literary inspiration in the graphic series of the illustrator of Poe, Dante and Shakespeare. The peacock feather, symbol of the cosmic deployment of the spirit and the immortality of the work of the artist who craved recognition for his role in history, is inserted in the glass vase, recalling his adored Venice.

Martini's face is reflected in the vase, not dissimilar to the iconography of the *Self-Portrait* in pen of 1911 (Oderzo, Pinacoteca Civica "Alberto Martini"), and therefore from around that time. The likeness brings to mind Ettore Cozzani's famous description in the monograph number of the review *Eroica* of 1927: "Tall, reedy and pale, with the attire and pace of aristocratic composure. An immobile face looking straight ahead of him," "in an expression of proud impassivity" that is removed "from common life in a refined and cruel dream." The theme of the reflected apparition refers to the creative motif of the "inner mirror," the "revealing" mirror, into which the artist looks to draw out his surreal imagination.

Stefano Grandesso



10. Giannino Marchig

Trieste 1859–1933

Portrait of the Painter Gino Parin (pseudonym of Federico Guglielmo Jehuda Pollack, Trieste 1876- Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, Germany 1944)

ca. 1920-25

Oil on panel, 44,8 x 47,7 cm

Signed top left: "GINO PARIN ESEGUITO DA GIANNINO MARCHIG"

Provenance: Italy, private collection

Enfant prodige, Marchig trained in the complex and cosmopolitan Trieste of the early twentieth century at the ateliers of Gino Parin and Bruno Croatto, and in 1915 moved to Florence, where he frequented the Academy of Fine Arts. Setting out from an innate classical inclination, Marchig's research moved between academic rigour, an atmospheric articulation of Impressionist derivation, a full-bodied line and expressionist material mellowness, the sheen in drawing and extended brushstroke of Novecento influence. Winner of several awards, in the third and fourth decades of the century he took part in the main Italian and European exhibitions – for instance the Venice Biennale more than once, the Prima Mostra del Novecento italiano and the Universal Exhibition in Paris of 1937, the year in which he put aside painting to dedicate himself to restoration, achieving international fame. Lover of music and expert of the violin, he developed the idea of a chromatic harmony orchestrated around a dominant tone; a theory that, although with more programmatic intentions, linked him to Gino Parin. This portrait, coeval to the one Parin made of Marchig, seems to represent a sophisticated and recognisant tribute to his former maestro: the loose brushstrokes, light touch and palette that blends in with the panel making use of its relief as a Luminist diaphragm enveloping the sitter in a dream-like and suffused lyricism to render the intense and composed expression of the painter observed in the fullness of his maturity.

Eugenio Costantini

11. Vanni Rossi

Ponte San Pietro, Bergamo 1894– Milan 1973

Self-Portrait

1922

Oil on canvas, 44,7 x 34.5 cm

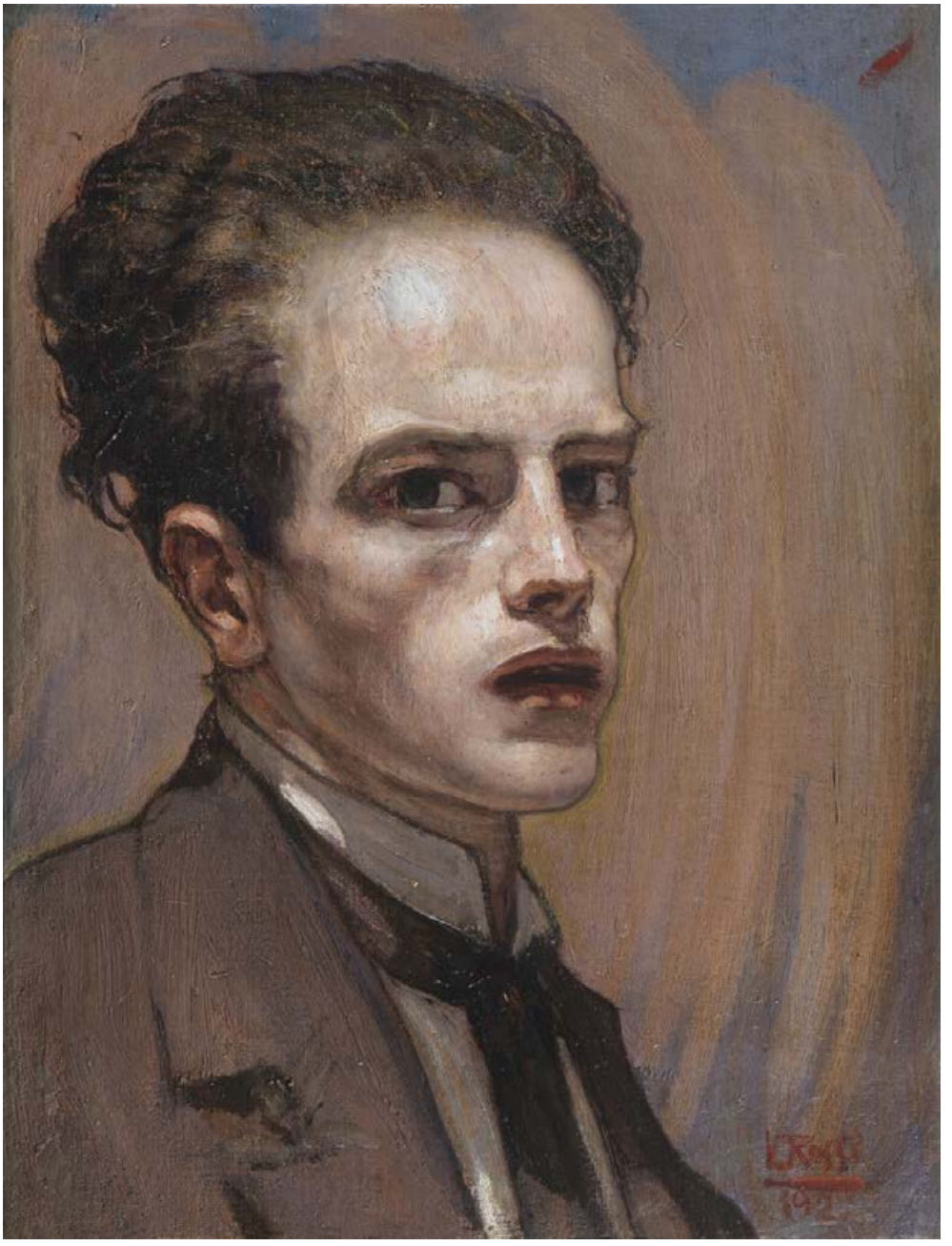
Signed and dated lower right: "V. Rossi 1922"

Provenance: Milan, private collection

Considered the last Lombard Divisionist, due to acquaintance in his youth with Alberto Grubicy de Dragon, who also supported him as a patron, with Carlo Fornara and participation in the Divisionist Group at the first Rome Biennale in 1921, Vanni Rossi was also influenced by the symbolist mysticism of Gaetano Previati when he embraced the great tradition of sacred mural painting, aiming over time to define his own golden formula, in opposition to current trends. Regularly present with his easel paintings at artists' reviews in Italy - from the Venice Biennale to the Permanente in Milan - and occasionally in wider Europe, he thus became a protagonist of religious art, painting frescoes in a large number of churches and sanctuaries with untiring dedication to artistic practice and its meanings.

The *Self-Portrait* presents us with the impression of the spiritual afflatus that was part of his artistic mission. At the same time it seems to reveal the existential condition of the young painter in the climate of anxiety between the wars, after four years spent at the Front, in that "sentiment run through with a very subtle vein of melancholy, of a fully Lombard spleen," and in the "impalpable expressionist murmur" that according to Giorgio Seveso more generally characterised his entire body of work (cfr. Tiziano Rossi, Giorgio Seveso, *Vanni Rossi: una pittura d'identità tra arte e vita*, Ponte San Pietro 2009).

Stefano Grandesso



12. Piero Marussig

Trieste 1879–Pavia 1937

Interior with Masks (and Self-Portrait)

1925

Oil on panel, 49.8 x 44.9 cm

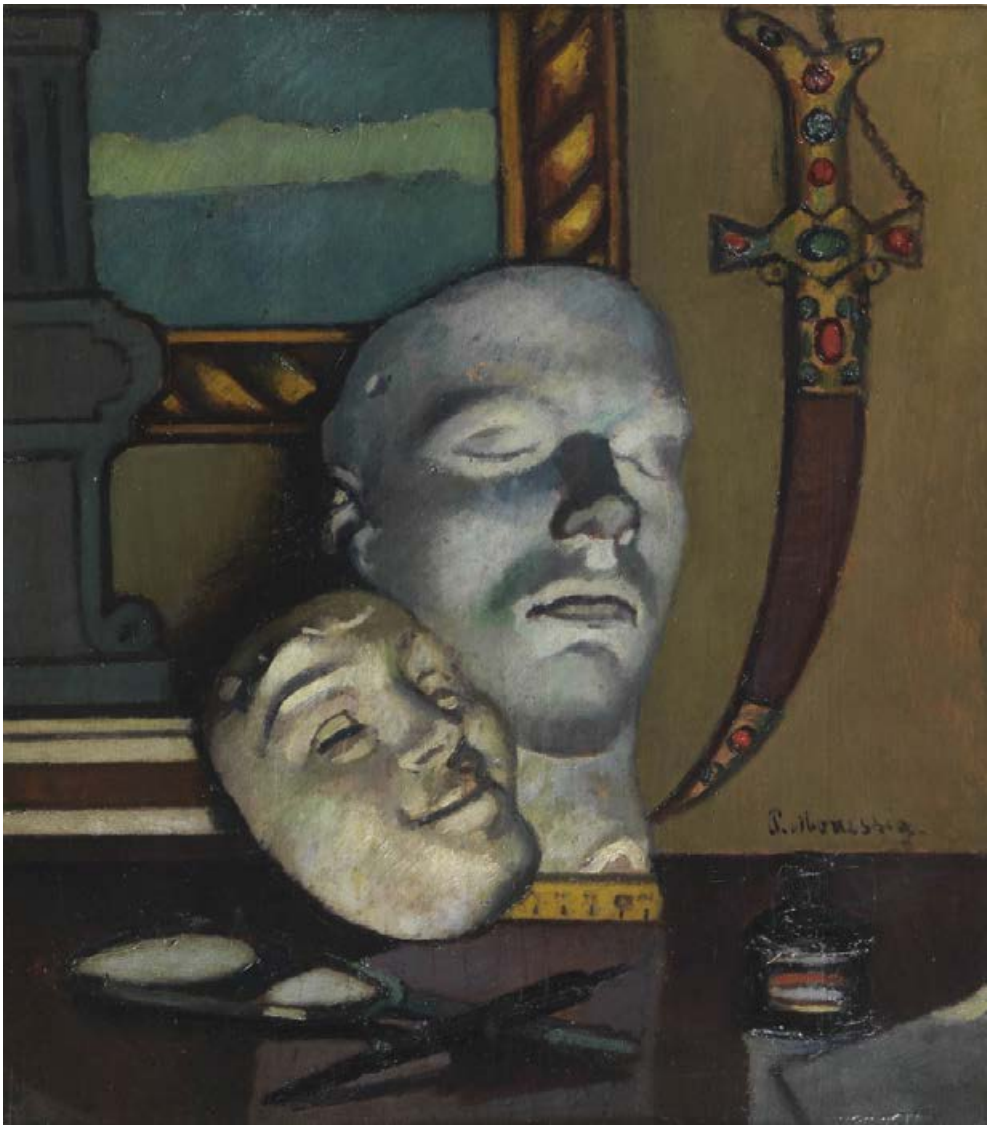
Signed: "P. Marussig"

Provenance: Padua, private collection

Bibliography: Alessandra Tiddia, *Pietro Marussig*, Trieste, 2015, cat. 410.

Internationally trained painter, Marussig studied in Vienna, Munich, Rome and Paris and took part in all the most important collective exhibitions of his time in Italy and abroad. Influenced by the *Jugendstil* – Franz von Stuck was among his tutors at the Munich Academy – initially he expresses himself in darker tones and gruelling atmospheres, to then, between Rome and Paris, mitigate the brutalities by filtering them through contact with classicism, impressionism and post impressionism. In France, in particular, he delves into the *Nabis* and Gauguin as well as Cézanne and Matisse, all of which, when returning to Italy, he blends into his own expressive language that he shows to be mature soon after 1910. It is an intellectual and highly restrained painting expressed through a palette of anti-naturalistic shades applied *à plat* and enclosed in marked outlines in black. From 1920, having moved to Milan, the chromatic ascents are tempered in favour of hotter and more naturalistic tones and, especially in the portrait, the painter reaches the heights of a deep and unsettled intimacy. This *Interior with Masks* is also *sui generis*, where the male face is the *Self-Portrait* in plaster dated 1913, from time of the artist's brief excursion into the field of plastic, which was sold at auction by Finarte in 2018. Whereas the painting is datable to 1925, the year when some masks, of which the smaller, female mask is one, reappear several times in still lifes. Particularly enigmatic in atmosphere, accentuated by the mute and significant presence of objects and the frame on the wall being slightly out of square, this still life evokes further research into the rational purity of space, reducing to the essential the game of volumes, and that of strongly controlled introspective and spiritual depth.

Eugenio Costantini



13. Dyalma Stultus

Trieste 1901–Darfo Boario Terme 1977

Portrait of a Lady

1926

Oil on canvas, 70.7 x 67.5 cm

Signed and dated upper right: "STULTUS 1926"

14. Guglielmo Janni

Rome 1882–1958

Fragment (Sacred Composition)

ca. 1939

Oil on canvas affixed to panel, 38,5 x 27.5 cm

Inscription on the back, head print: "This painting is the work of the painter Guglielmo Janni. (In marker pen) circa 1930 / In faith: / Libero de Libero / Romeo Lucchese / Alberto Ziveri / Rome, 10 July 1972"; next to the names are the relative signatures in marker pen.

Provenance: Rome, private collection

Bibliography: M. Fagiolo Dell'Arco (ed. by), *Janni*, exh. Cat., Accademia Nazionale di San Luca, 2-31 October 1986, Rome, 1986, cat. 27, p. 109.

Having trained with Giulio Bargellini, who wanted his input for various pictorial mural cycles, Janni's early works clearly owe a debt to the great masters of the Italian '400. Sensitive to tonalism he embraces the Roman School in his own very clear version. The painterly matter turned towards the 'dawn' acquires more atmospheric values and the layers undergo to a more insistent formal synthesis, while the pervasive, hanging interior tension, far from psychologism, sets off the disquieted energy of an indistinct moral query. But then, shy and introverted, he suddenly abandons painting to dedicate himself to editing the unpublished works of the famous poet Giuseppe Gioacchino Belli, his maternal grandfather, and destroys or reduces to fragment a significant part of his work. As is the case with this Head, to which the rarefied and bleached palette with earth tones and blue and the weave of the canvas showing through bring a dreamy note to the sought-after vagueness of shapes of great poetic intensity.

Eugenio Costantini

15. Luigi Trifoglio

Rome 1888–1939

Portrait of the Surgeon Gino Pieri

1931

Oil on canvas, 130.5 x 109.5 cm

Signed: "Trifoglio Roma 1931"

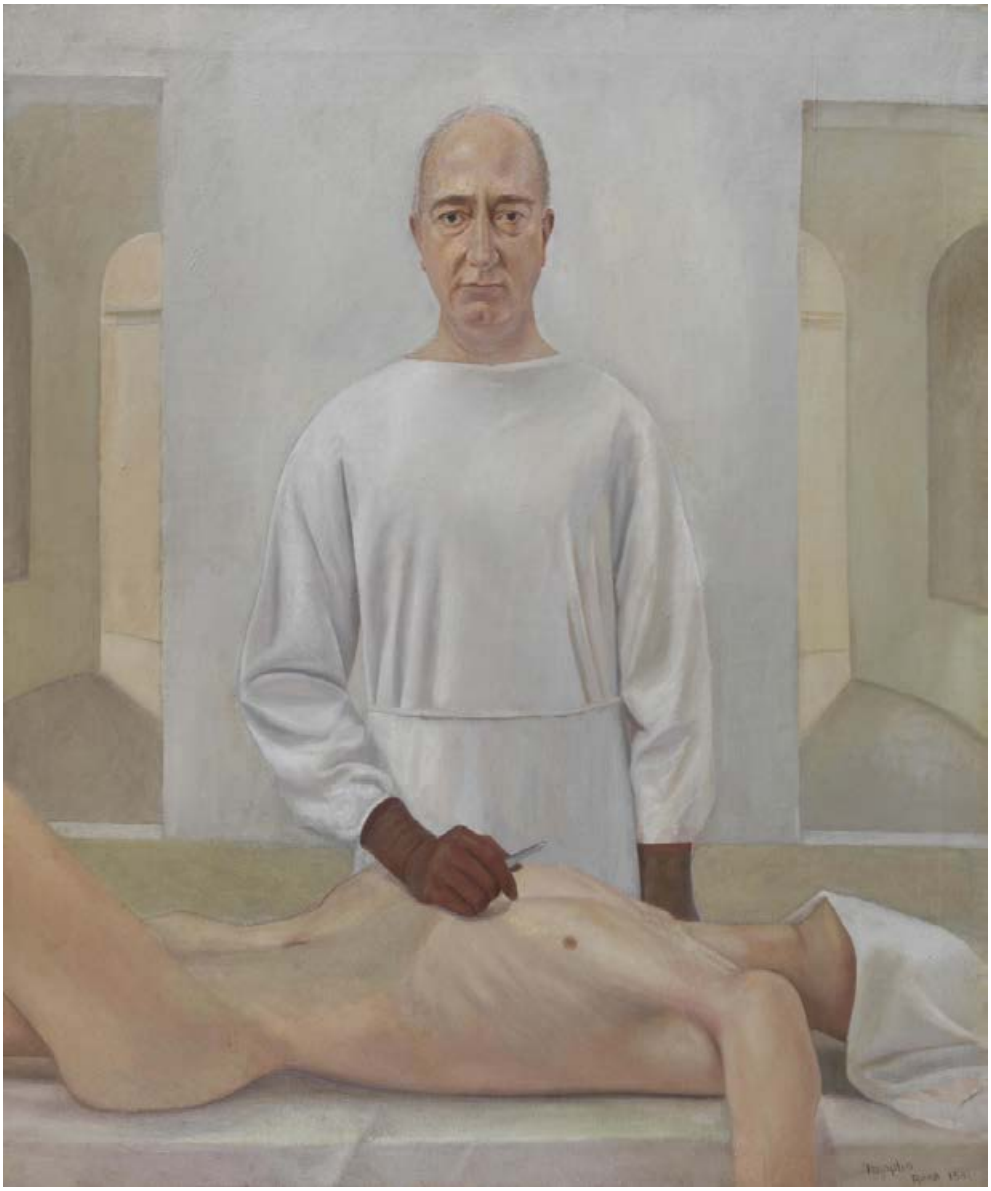
Bibliography: Gino Pieri, "Luigi Trifoglio ritrattista di medici", in *Nicia. Rivista medica d'arte e varietà*, A. X, n. 7-8, Milano 1940, pp. 5-9 (ill.); "Un ritrattista di medici Luigi Trifoglio", *L'artista moderno. Rivista d'arte pura e applicata*, 1942, pp. 11-12 (ill.).

Interpreter of the return to order and magical realism, Trifoglio first showed his work in 1910 at exhibitions held by the Società Amatori e Cultori di Roma, demonstrating suggestions of De Chirico's metaphysics. Post war, he exhibited at the first Roman Biennale in 1921 and, thanks to taking up plasticity in form again, in compositions that Ettore Camesasca would later recognise the stamp of a "synthesis of Piero della Francesca," he participated in the first exhibition of the Novecento Italiano in 1926, appreciated by the curator Margherita Sarfatti, followed in 1927 by the show Dieci Artisti del Novecento Italiano and the following year by the Venice Biennale. Among the protagonists of "magical" abstraction, he was then compared to Cavalli and Capogrossi in 1933 at the Circolo delle Arti e Lettere in Via Margutta.

Trifoglio's introverted and melancholic character, added to the fact that he contracted tubercolosis, which would cause his early death in 1939, kept Trifoglio apart from public artistic debate. A rare artist and known for a small number of works, his sophisticated and severe painting left us with the *Self-Portrait in Black* at the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna and some still lifes where he placed Giacomo Leopardi's funerary mask as the interpretative key of his inner vision and philosophy.

In 1940, Giuseppe Pensabene held his posthumous personal show at the IX Mostra del Sindacato Laziale. But already, back in 1933, in *Emporium* (pp. 370-372), he supplied a key to reading his painting. "In the final Roman exhibitions, the works of Luigi Trifoglio attracted great interest; an artist who has worked alone for years, in conscientious research, going deeply, on his own account, into the problems of modern painting!" In his paintings Pensabene saw Trifoglio summarise and go beyond the research of the European avant-garde, as a representation of "objects in the concreteness of their matter: objects given a reality that was *considerably more intense than the real* and whose spirituality manifests itself (in a very modern sense) *as the height of objectification*." Hence art was not seen as "liberation of matter, but as the extreme realisation of the matter itself: transfusion and identification of the *id* in things."

The portrait of the surgeon Gino Pieri is one of the artist's most representative works. The frontal, symmetrical composition, the plasticity obtained, as Virgilio Guzzi (*Pittura alla II Quadriennale*, in Nuova Antologia, 1 marzo 1935, p. 101) said "by direct intuition of the volumes and abstracting from the game of shadows," the dry, very clear and luminous colours that are redolent of mural painting, and the mysterious perspectives opening out in the background point to quattrocento figurative sources, from Masaccio to Piero della Francesca. The hieratic appearance of the surgeon, the profound fixity of his gaze, the gravity of the expression matching that of his profession, revealed by the body lying in the foreground like an aulic lay deposition, truly seem to be invested in their abstract materiality with the artist's existential vision. The universal pain of the human condition is evoked without



violating the formal serenity of the scene.
The protagonist, Gino Pieri (Anagni 1881-Rome 1952) was an eminent physician in Udine for many years. Under surveillance by OVRA (the secret police) due to his socialist political positions, he was nonetheless requested by Mussolini to come to Rome and carry out a secret operation. Linked to partisan groups in Friuli he was arrested by the Gestapo and then freed to deal with the return of the Germans on the National Liberation Committee. In 1946 he was elected deputy for the Socialist Party and was a member of the Constituent Assembly of Italy.

Stefano Grandesso

16. Irene Valentini Sala

Milan 1864–1934

Two Young Guitar Players

1932

Oil on plywood, 130.3 x 100.3 cm

Signed and dated lower left: "I. Valentini Roma 1932.X"

Provenance: Rome, private collection


VALENTINI

17. Galileo Chini

Florence 1873–1956

Self-Portrait

1933

Oil on panel, 60 x 50 cm

Signed at bottom: "GALILEO.CHINI.PIT.CER.FIORENTINO.1933"

Provenance: Finarte, Rome, 28-29 April 1987; Farsetti, Prato, 10 October 1997; Rome, private collection

A long way from the decorativism of a Secessionist stamp with which he passed the first decades of the twentieth century, reaching high levels of Liberty and Déco expression, in this self-portrait, with the solid organisation of shapes and the tangible clarity of spatial scansion, Chini allows a very subtle soft material succulence to shine through, recalling its Novecentist ancestry. A more intimate dimension, distilled with a quiet poetic lyricism, characterised Chini's painting for about a decade from the end of the twenties. In full maturity, after his successes at the Venice Biennales and prestigious commissions both in Italy and abroad – among which that of the Throne Room for the royal palace in Bangkok personally requested by the King of Siam stands out – he began to focus on easel painting and to pay close attention to introspective psychological aspects, as can be seen by the concentrated intensity of the face and the signature on the parapet, which, mediating the dimension of memory and reflection, proudly recalls Florentine quattrocento arts and trades: painter and ceramicist.

Eugenio Costantini


CALILEO. CHINI. PIT. CER. FIORENTINO. /933

18. Elica Balla

Rome 1914–1955

Inspiration

1941

Oil and sand on panel, 78 x 60 cm

Signed bottom right: "ELICA BALLA". Titled and dated on the back: "Inspiration / Spring 1941"

Provenance: Italy, private collection

Like his sister Luce, Elica carried in her name the futurist blessing of their father Giacomo, who in 1914, the year of her birth, introduced the theme of the Caproni aeroplane into painting; to later sign the *Futurist Manifesto of Aeropainting* in 1929. She shared with her sister the choice of a secluded life and artistic collaboration with their father – of whom later she would write the biography (*Con Balla*, 3 vols., Milan 1984-86) – converting his ideas into objects of applied art and decorations for the Balla's house in via Oslavia, a futurist setting in continual transformation. However, she showed greater determination than Luce to put herself forward as an autonomous artist. Futurist painter at a very young age she participated, under the pseudonym Ballelica, in the exhibition *Trentatré artisti futuristi* (33 Futurist Artists) at Galleria Pesaro in Milan in 1929, at the XVII Venice Biennale in 1930 and at the *Prima mostra di Aeropittura* (First Exhibition of Aeropainting) of 1931. In 1935 she exhibited with her father and sister at the Galleria d'Arte L'Antonina, while in 1942 she held a personal show at the Lyceum Romano (cfr. *Casa Balla. Un pittore e le sue figlie tra futurismo e natura*, catalogue of the exhibition at Comacchio, ed. by Maurizio Fagiolo Dell'Arco, Venice 1997).

As can be seen by many of the titles of her paintings presented on that occasion (*Prelude of a Storm*, *Tranquil Sleep*, *Pensive Lionella*, *Smile of Spring* and *Melancholy*), Elica focuses on natural reality and the inspirational motives of her figurative painting were sentimentally inspired. This lyrical concept is also evoked in the intimist portrait of a young man entitled *Inspiration*, where a young poet is intent on noting down ideas in a notebook at dusk, in a suggestive Roman park. The pinkish and pastel colours are applied with ease in an expressive style by means of the typical divisionist brushstrokes, in part recalling the late painting of her father Giacomo.

Stefano Grandesso

19. Achille Funi

Ferrara 1890–Appiano Gentile 1972

Self-Portrait

1942

Watercolor and pencil on paper, 380 x 310 mm

Signed bottom left: "A. Funi"

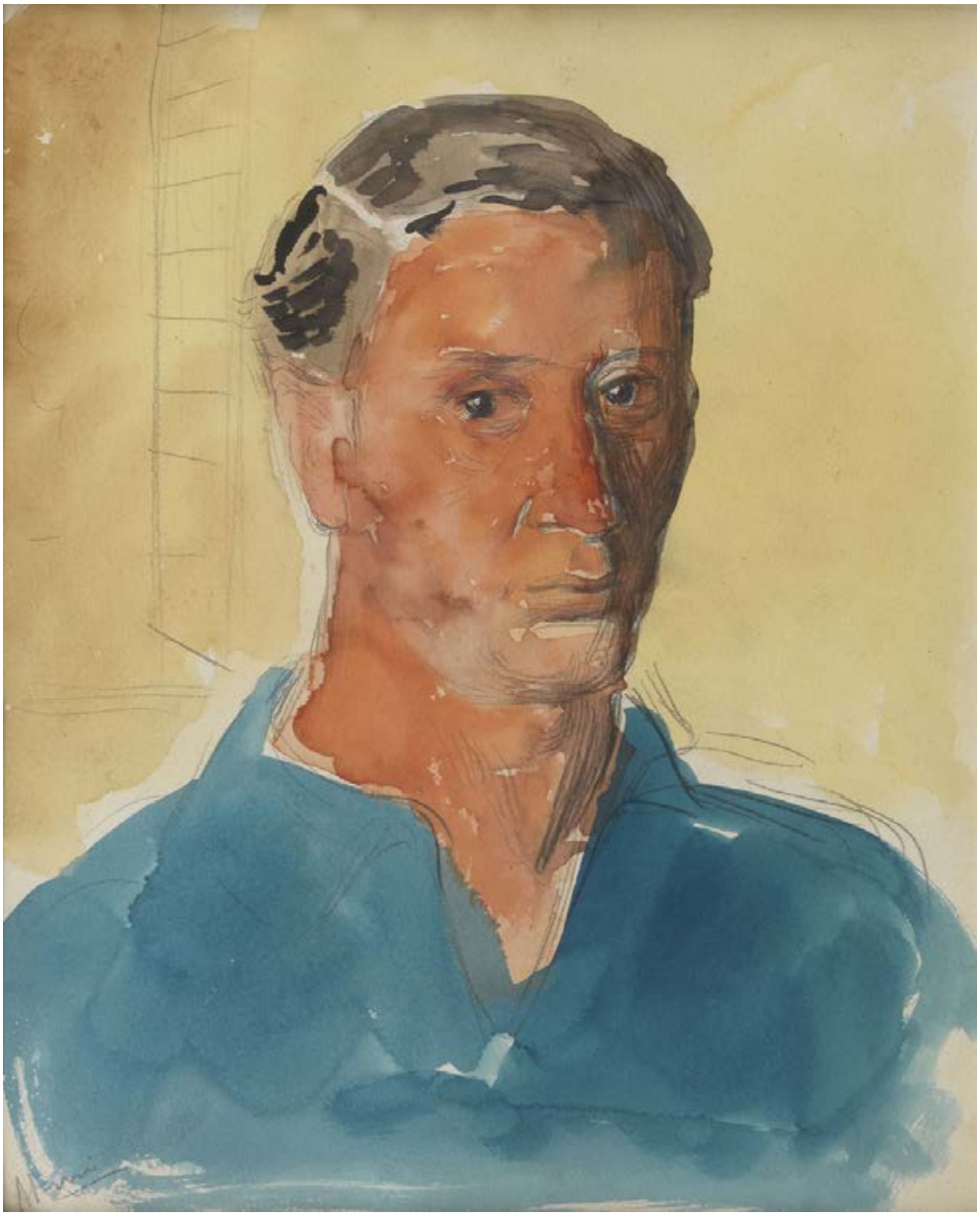
Exhibition Labels on the back of the original mount: Galleria del Milione, Milan 1942, 3069/3; Galleria dei Serpenti, Rome; Finarte, Rome, 1984.

Provenance: Rome, private collection

Bibliography: *Catalogo* 1914, p. 51, n. 264.

After the experience of Futurism, filtered through Cézanne and Cubism, he adheres to the general Return to Order of the early twenties, finding in it the cultural milieu and style that most suit him, so much so that he would remain true to it for the rest of his long career. Although already characterised by a thick, doughy brushstroke, with continuity and softness of line and a solid plastic understanding, it is a substantial transformation with respect to the theoretical acquisitions of Futurism. At this point he begins an incessant and programmatic return to classical and neoclassical sources. Moreover, for community of intent, in 1922 he is among the founder members of the Novecento group, alongside Lino Pesaro and Margherita Sarfatti. He hopes for a new Renaissance, rejecting any technique that does not adhere to the cannons of traditional painting and focussing attention on the plastic values of composition. In 1933 he signs the *Manifesto del Muralismo* with Campigli and Sironi and from that moment onward he dedicates the greater part of his energies to making large scale fresco cycles. At the end of his life he declared: "I have calculated that overall I have painted frescoes to cover an area at least 6 km long and 1 metre high." Beside this enormous effort, easel painting is often thought of as a sort of fragment of the same, which might be the case for this self-portrait, that in its suspended fixity, inscrutable expression and in the distance of the research from mere psychological data, declares one of the essential references of his painting: Piero della Francesca.

Eugenio Costantini



20. Laura Bellini

Ancona 1915–Rome 1976

Portrait of a Man

ca. 1935

Oil on panel, 50.5 × 40 cm

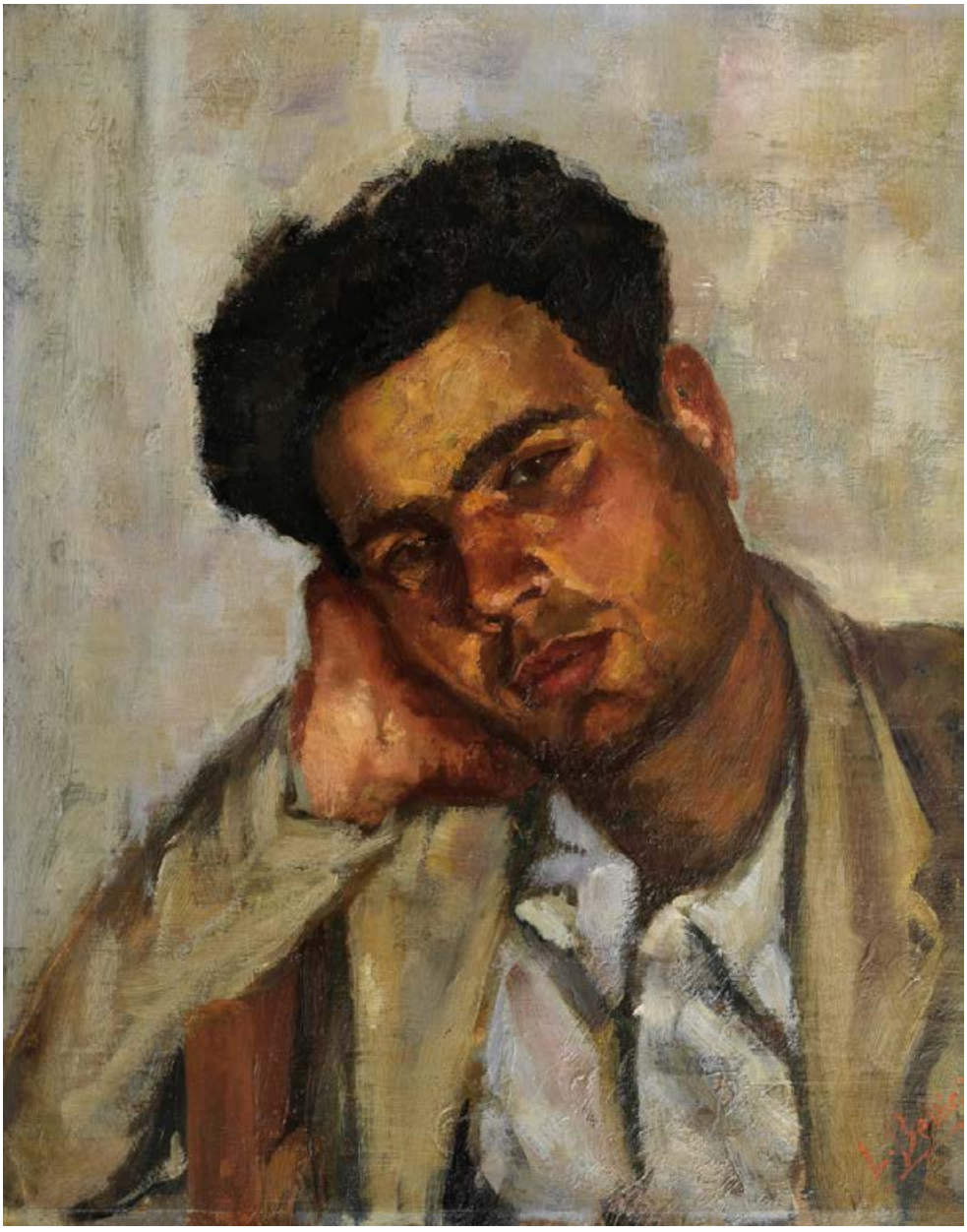
Signed lower right: "L.Bellini"

Provenance: Rome, private collection

A rare work by this artist, considered one of the last exponents of the Roman School. Contributing to the Mayoral exhibitions of the years 1937, 1938 and 1940 as well as the Quadriennale of 1939 (Renato Breda, *1890-1940. Artisti e Mostre. Repertorio di pittori e incisori italiani in esposizioni nazionali*, Rome 2001, p. 60; Marco Severini, *Bellini, Laura*, in *Dizionario biografico delle donne marchigiane, 1815-2018*, ed. by L. Pupilli, M. Severini, Ancona 2018, pp. 32 ss.), Bellini's work was described as follows by Lorenza Trucchi, writing for example in *Momento Sera* (24 April 1966): "there is an inevitable reference to the Roman School of which this painter is, in a certain sense, one of the last heirs: Mafai, Scipione and the first dazzling expressionist Gentilini, are somewhat ideal masters of this painting heightened by romantic flashes and chromatic frenzy well adapted to render the climate of an eternally baroque Rome, lifted by the reddish light of her fiery sunsets." Then in 1998, recalling her link with the painter Orfeo Tamburi, Trucchi again underlined her use of expression in the Roman School, "of which her baroque-style and magmatic painting was a successful if extreme example."

Very likely earlier, by quite some time, than these quotations, the painting presented here is chronologically in harmony with the sources mentioned, around the mid-thirties, for its materic and earthy aspect, recalling Mafai, Scipione but also Carena, however with a specific visual vagueness in the brushstrokes that captures the real, underlining the sentimental languor of a modern figure, shown in the classical iconography of melancholy by the hand supporting the head.

Stefano Grandesso



21. Fausto Pirandello

Rome 1899–1975

Antonio Absorbed

1950

Oil on card, 68 x 48 cm

Signed bottom right "Pirandello"

Provenance: Rome, heirs of the artist

Bibliography: C. Gian Ferrari, *Fausto Pirandello*, Roma 1991, n. 277; C. Gian Ferrari (ed. by), *Fausto Pirandello. Catalogo Generale*, Milano 2009, n. 440, p. 168; V. Sgarbi (ed. by), *Fausto Pirandello. Forma e materia: dipinti e disegni 1921-1972*, Siena 2009, pp. 54-55.

Exhibitions: *Fausto Pirandello. Forma e materia: dipinti e disegni 1921-1972*, Vittoria 2009 – Salemi 2010.

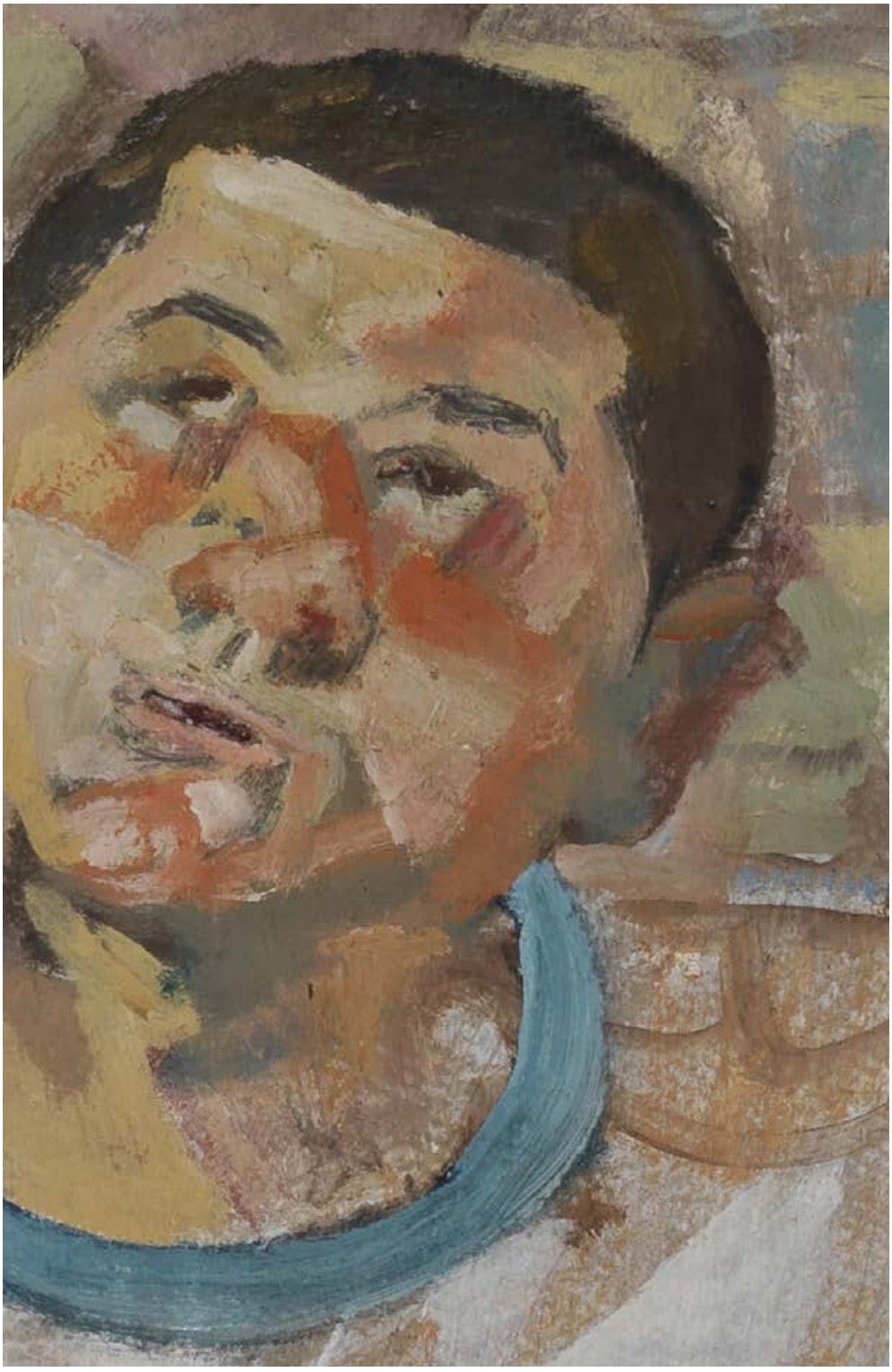
The painting, originating from Fausto Pirandello's Roman studio, depicts Antonio Pirandello (Rome 1937 – 2006), the second son of the artist and Pompilia D'aprile, the famous model from Anticoli Corrado whom the painter married in Paris in 1928 and with whom, in the same year, he had his first son, Pierluigi. The work is part of the rich corpus of paintings in which Pirandello's children pose for him (To go further into the subject, see M. Carrera (ed. by), *Fausto Pirandello e il cenacolo di Anticoli Corrado: in ricordo di Pierluigi Pirandello*, Rome 2018). both in large compositions and nude, and in full family portraits, dating for the most part to the period stretching from the late twenties to the early fifties. To be recalled from among the works for which young Antonio posed are, in particular, *La maschera* (Milan, Galleria d'Arte Moderna) and *Bambini con il volano* (Udine, Galleria d'Arte Moderna). The birth of Antonio occurred at a significant moment in the artist's private life: indeed his second child was born on 18 January 1937, less than a month after the death of Luigi Pirandello, Fausto's father. The complex relationship between the Nobel laureate for literature and his painter son, about which much has been written (F. Matitti, *Luigi e Fausto Pirandello tra pittura e scrittura*, in F. Benzi, F. Leone, F. Matitti (ed. by), *Fausto Pirandello: opere dal 1923 al 1973*, Cesena 2016, pp. 43-56), was finally resolved just around that time. In a certain sense, the birth of Antonio signified for Fausto Pirandello the beginning of a new phase: which is to say, the response that life is renewed by death (F. Benzi, *Fausto Pirandello dagli esordi alla seconda guerra mondiale*, ivi, pp. 19-20).

In Pirandello, above all in the works where the sitters are family members, it is more than ever sufficient to refer to biographical aspects to fully understand the more introspective side of the painting. Indeed, laid directly at the door of experience is the psychological inquiry that he carries out on the figures he portrays, to whom he seems to want to transfer his own inner torment. This also explains his personal interpretation of childish subjects, who are always pervaded by a deep sense of melancholy, as in the painting in question, in which the adolescent Antonio seems to be lost in thought. Non only did the painter have an unhappy childhood, mainly due to the difficult relationship he had with his father and with a mother affected by psychiatric disorders; but he himself, in his relationship with his own children, always shows an unshakeable emotional closure (something that, moreover, caused him to hide the birth of his first child, Pierluigi, from his father; revealing it only when the infant was a year old; P. Pirandello, A. Veneroso, *Il Pirandello dimenticato*, Rome 2017).

Perfectly in harmony with the work's

psychological significance, the pictorial technique of *Antonio Absorbed* efficiently recounts a crucial moment in the artistic research of Fausto Pirandello. Following the Second World War, alongside his experimentation of tonal painting characteristic of the so-called "Roman School," the artist cultivated a renewed interest in geometrical rigour and cubist decomposition, which would intensify in the second half of the nineteen fifties with his adhesion to the "abstract-concrete" language theorised by the critic Lionello Venturi (M. Bassu, *"È astratto e concreto, e soprattutto grandioso": luci e ombre del rapporto tra Fausto Pirandello e Lionello Venturi*, in Carrera, cit., pp. 27-40). This emerges in the work under discussion in the accentuation of the circular shape of Antonio's face, taken up by the curved collar of his shirt and in tune with the motif of multicoloured hexagons in the background. It is the very variety of the chromatic range that makes this portrait a *unicum* within the production of Fausto Pirandello. In any case, the choice of colours, dosed in a sober and harmonious manner, seems to stay within the parameters of his post-war tonal research. Whereas the composition of the likeness appears to recall early twentieth century portraiture and, in particular, certain solutions adopted at the turn of the nineteenth century by Antonio Mancini, who should besides be recognised fully for his undeniable influence on the chromatism of the Roman tonalists. Critics have at times denied an affinity between Mancini's mature works and the painterly matter of Pirandello: which is certainly due to a mistaken interpretation of Mancini's painterly matter, unjustly held to be moved by a superficial virtuosity. On the contrary, under close inspection there is a common thread linking the painterly matter of Mancini with that of Pirandello (as *Antonio Absorbed* demonstrates), in both cases symptomatic of an approach to a rendering involving strongly emotional colour and using neurotic strokes.

Manuel Carrera



22. Mirko (Basaldella)

Udine 1910–Cambridge, Mass. 1969

Portrait of Leoncillo

1953-54

Iron, 51,5 x 24,5 x 18 cm (with the plynth h 67 cm)

Exhibition label on the back: "33"

Provenance: Rome, private collection; Rome, Ovidio Jacorossi collection; Rome, private collection

Bibliography: Barbara Tiberi, in *Dal Simbolismo all'Astrazione. Il primo Novecento a Roma nella collezione Jacorossi*, edited by Enrico Crispolti, Rome 2017, pp. 140-141.

Exhibition: Rome, Musia, 1 dicembre 2017 - 1 gennaio 2018, *Dal Simbolismo all'astrazione. Il primo Novecento a Roma nella Collezione Jacorossi.*

Archived work by Archivio Cagli-Mirko, Rome, n. 00007, dated 26 October 2017.

The work belongs to the highly intense series of sculptures made by Mirko between 1953 and '58 and exhibited in many salient shows, from the 1954 Venice Biennale to the collective *The New Decade* held at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Probably among the first of the series, it portrays his friend Leoncillo Leonardi, also a sculptor, whom he met through the friendship they had in common with Corrado Cagli, in the mid-thirties in Rome.

It is an imaginative and mystical portrait created by the cutting out, extroflection and inflection of a sheet of iron (in other cases he used copper and brass), a "structural" portrait where the classical modelling of the material is substituted by its dilation on different spatial levels to direct the space itself into the shape.

Already echoing through this portrait are the concepts that the artist formulated in 1955:

"*Plastic language can have a similar meaning and function in society. Like words, shapes acquire their own meaning, born of the particular feeling that they evoke, as they are organised in frameworks or systems and strengthened in their emotive possibility. Thought is no longer formed of words because the elements that determine it are lines and planes; conflicts of shape, harmonies of sour and sweet, the sense of escape, hurry or pacification. Full and empty become the dominant motive like good and evil, black and white, conscious and subconscious. Plastic language, like any thought expressed, has its own particular coordinated logic with deep human roots, transmitting ideas, evoking sentiments, recounting the lives of things and men. But artists today don't limit themselves to narrating the life of the surrounding world through visual perception, they want to know the laws and reasons that govern and determine those appearances. Even the cognizance of current scientific achievements gives a particular character to the modern poetic by lighting up unknown worlds, opening the field to new inquiries. Today's various artistic trends and their character of modernity belong to theory and specialisation. The poetic side is something else, tied to deeper and more distant motives, moved by impulses of the subconscious primordial being.*"

Giuseppe Briguglio

Elica Balla
Giulio Bargellini
Mirko (Basaldella)
Laura Bellini
Galileo Chini
Gaetano De Simone
Gerardo Dottori
Achille Funi
Guglielmo Ianni
Cesare Laurenti
Lombard Anonymous
Giannino Marchig
Alberto Martini
Pietro Marussig
Arturo Noci
Fausto Pirandello
Vanni Rossi
Dyalma Stultus
Filippo Tagliolini
Luigi Trifoglio
Irene Valentini Sala