

## KNOTS, TWISTS & TURNS AT ARCHIVIO DELL'ARTE METAFISICA GERD ROOS: THREE EPISODES

*Paolo Picozza*

For the sake of Giorgio de Chirico's historical legacy and the future prospects of his oeuvre, it is useful to shed light on a number of recent episodes that have taken place within the judicial realm, the art collecting world and the art history field. The conscientious rigour of the latter upholds various requirements within the art system with particular regard to the following three aspects: legality, the protection of private and institutional property, and the safeguarding of the artist's intellectual and artistic oeuvre.

The Foundation deems three recent events worthy of mention due to the damage caused to a number of institutions, to art collectors and especially to the historiographical truth of Giorgio de Chirico's oeuvre. In all three events, a leading role was played by Gerd Roos, Vice-president of Archivio dell'Arte Metafisica [Archive of Metaphysical Art].

In the episodes that will be looked at in this article, Roos declared fake a number of authentic paintings by Giorgio de Chirico, whilst, when called upon to give expert testimony for a group of paintings seized by the Italian Magistrate, he implied that the paintings under examination were authentic. The judicial process in question resulted in the sentencing of Paolo Baldacci, President of the abovementioned Archive (someone to whom Roos reports directly), for knowingly selling forged paintings attributed to Giorgio de Chirico in a Judgment *res judicata* by the Italian Magistrate.<sup>1</sup>

The various episodes, worthy of mention for the damaging thought behind them, as well as the lack of professionalism that distinguishes them, were amply illustrated and documented on the Foundation's communication channels, including its website and the periodical "Metaphysical Art – The de Chirico Journals". It is worthwhile at present to examine the way in which the Archive responded to the Foundation's criticism of these events, whilst highlighting both the method (unacceptable in the academic arena) and the manipulation later employed by Roos in an attempt to counter this criticism. Even more than the questionable contents of Roos' written work, the Foundation intends to denounce the method he employed and make this known within the Italian scholarly milieu and the international academic milieu, in particular to scholars of de Chirico's oeuvre. The method Roos employed will be illustrated below.

The Foundation's periodical "Metaphysical Art – The de Chirico Journals" n. 11/13 was published in the second half of May 2014. The issue included an article in which I expressed strong disapproval of Roos' contribution to the catalogue of the exhibition *Letzte Bilder. Von Manet bis Kippenberger* held at Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt in 2013.<sup>2</sup> Curated by Esther Schlicht and Max Hollein, the museum Director, the

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<sup>1</sup> Judgement of the Court of Appeal of Milan, Fourth Criminal Section, Judgement n. 3539, 20 May-19 July 2013; the Statute of Limitations was ruled in effect, a legal provision that Baldacci did not renounce.

<sup>2</sup> P. Picozza, *Giorgio de Chirico's Neometaphysical Paintings – The Foundation's Response to Gerd Roos' Article: When did Giorgio de Chirico Retire?*, in "Metaphysical Art - The de Chirico Journals", n. 11/13, 2014, pp. 226-256.

exhibition was dedicated to the work of several great artists during the final period of their lives.<sup>3</sup> For the event, the museum had requested and obtained the loan of eight paintings from de Chirico's Neometaphysical period (1968-1976) from Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris.<sup>4</sup> We are speaking here of artworks belonging to one of the artist's most extraordinary periods, a moment when, having passed 80 years of age, his painting exploded in an incredible flowering of ideas, colours and "bright" enigmas, fully expressed in the works chosen by the curators for the occasion. Called upon to write an article for the exhibition catalogue, Roos entitled his essay: *When did Giorgio de Chirico Retire?*, an insinuating and rhetorical question that delegitimised the curator's cultural proposal from square one. In the article, he went on to develop the absurd and offensive accusation that the de Chirico works in the exhibition were forgeries and even used terms such as "posthumous work" in reference to the artist's late period.

The episode was fully documented in my article: *Giorgio de Chirico's Neometaphysical Paintings – The Foundation's Response to Gerd Roos' Article: "When did Giorgio de Chirico Retire?"* published in "Metaphysical Art" n. 11/13. The issue also included the editorial column *The Constants of History: Old and Recent Falsification of Giorgio de Chirico's Oeuvre – Paolo Baldacci: a Case Study*, which examined, among other things, the scandal regarding a group of fake metaphysical drawings supposedly deriving from the "Valori Plastici" archive. Baldacci published 21 of these fake drawings as authentic in his 1997 monograph and also sold circa ten of them through the art gallery of which he was partner.

The events described above have been summarised here for the purpose of illustrating the "astute" solution employed by Roos and Baldacci in response to the criticism illustrated in "Metaphysical Art".

At the beginning of May 2014, an obituary in honour of scholar Wieland Schmied, who passed away on 22 April 2014 at 85 years of age, was published on the Archivio dell'arte metafisica website entitled *Ricordo di Wieland Schmied* [Memorial for Wieland Schmied] in the *Notiziario* [News] section. In addition to being a great connoisseur of de Chirico's art, Wieland Schmied was also a sincere friend of the artist's. The piece, written by Baldacci, followed another contribution of his published in February 2014 entitled: *The risks of Authentication: on a recent episode that brought about the discovery of a fake Giorgio de Chirico "drawing"* [title translation, ed.] (2014/02).<sup>5</sup> Nothing else was published in the website's *News* section from the beginning of May, when the Schmied obituary appeared, through to 5 July 2014.

It was therefore with great surprise that on 5 July two new articles appeared on the website as if they had been published at the beginning of May. Indeed, the titles of both articles appeared listed in the index *prior* to the memorial to Wieland Schmied and *after* the article published in February. One of these was signed by Baldacci, *The de Chirico Catalogue, the Foundation and Peretti Forgeries: Response to Paolo Picozza* [title translation, ed.] and the other, consisting in a collection of criticism against me by Gerd Roos: *A new Baron Munchausen: Paolo Picozza and the Invention of Fake Truths* [title translation, ed.].

3 *Letzte Bilder. Von Manet bis Kippenberger*, curated by E. Schlicht and M. Hollein, Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt, 28 February-2 June 2013, Hirmer Verlag, Munich 2013.

4 The artworks form part of the recent donation made through the will of the artist's widow Isabella Pakszwer Far of 61 of the artist's works to Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris in 2011.

5 P. Baldacci, original title: *Il rischio delle autentiche: a proposito di un recente episodio che ha portato alla scoperta di un falso "disegno" di Giorgio de Chirico*, published on the Archivio dell'arte metafisica website, February 2014. In the article Baldacci attempts to justify a mistake he made in 1993 in authenticating a print as if it were a drawing. The dismaying aspect of this, which also illustrates the unscrupulous manner of his mode of action, resides in the fact that after realising the macroscopic error, he advised the seller to put the "drawing" to auction anyway as it was furnished with authenticity certification issued by the Foundation, which had however been underwritten by Baldacci himself who was a member of the Authentication Commission at the time.

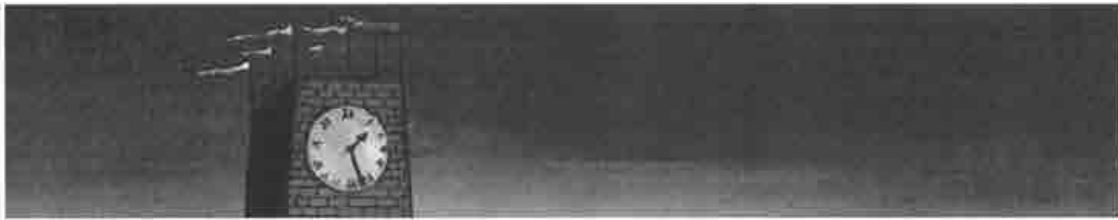
The virtuality of Internet made possible an operation which would not have been possible in printed publishing. Considering that Internet makes use of current information, a backdated article seems to make no sense. However, the unusual trick of the backdated articles seems aimed at creating the illusion that both of these articles came out *before* the paperback version of “Metaphysical Art”. It is sad to note that Wieland Schmied’s obituary was used as a temporal marker for the staging of the trick. In fact, on 5 July 2014, the abovementioned articles were indexed in the table of contents as if they had been published prior to the scholar’s memorial (figs. 1-2).

For what concerns the article by Roos, the move allowed him to attempt to discredit me in advance of, and not directly connected to, the publication of my article regarding the Frankfurt exhibition, the contents of which would have been difficult for him to contest. Written in the name of the Foundation in order to confute Roos’ monstrous allegations against the elderly artist and his wife Isabella Far, my article provided information and direct testimony of people who knew and frequented de Chirico in the 1970s. This contextualisation of the period bore witness to the insubstantiality of Roos’ historiographical work and also underlined both the illogicalness of his speculation and the foolhardiness of his decision to intervene in the exhibition at Schirn Kunsthalle in Frankfurt in such a way. In the arguments developed in my article, Roos clearly came to understand that his reputation as a scholar in the eyes of the academic community and the museum milieu was seriously being put to question. He then used the *News* section of the Archive’s website to construct (with an altered date) a “preventative” self-defence along these lines: “Moreover, one is participant to the reappearance [in “Metaphysical Art”], *ed.*] of the method we call ‘the Baron Munchausen’, or rather, the more or less fantastical invention of fake truths”. In reference to what he calls “opinions expressed by Picozza” he then specifies that: “when read they show how this new Baron Munchausen attempts to destroy my integrity”. Roos would later respond formally to my article no earlier than the beginning of August 2014 with a brief and confused text entitled *Gerd Roos’ Response to Picozza’s Article* [title translation, *ed.*].<sup>6</sup> Lacking in solid arguments, the tardy and insubstantial response is – *coincidentally* – based on: “the new Baron Munchausen (see our May *News* column)”,<sup>7</sup> in which, with foolish irony in the use of this fictional figure he emphatically qualified me as an “inventor of fake truths”.<sup>8</sup>

6 Roos’ text forms part of a raving and insulting article by Baldacci entitled: *The current issue of Metaphysical Art and the “Picozza case”* [title translation, *ed.*] (in response to the article: *The Constants of History: Old and Recent Falsification of Giorgio de Chirico’s Artwork – Paolo Baldacci: A Case Study*). This article by Baldacci was also made to appear as if published on the website much earlier than the actual date of publication, that is, as “June” instead of 5 August 2014.

7 Roos does not actually counter my observations on his essay in the Frankfurt catalogue but limits himself to a generic contestation and judgement of my article saying it contains: “unfounded accusations, grotesque alterations and manipulations and even out and out lies. It is unfortunate that the entire central supposition made at the start is the pure invention of our novelist, who once again turns out to be a new Baron of Munchausen (see our May *News* section)”. Roos maintains that no-one else noticed what I had remarked: “neither the draft reader [Baldacci? *ed.*], nor the exhibition curators or the readers of the catalogue”. The truth of the problem is that no doubt was raised as to the truth of what Roos wrote as it came from a scholar who, even though without an academic title, qualifies himself as a de Chirico expert.

8 Roos confutes my affirmation in “Metaphysical Art” that states (p. 262): “Standing on the shoulders of anti-Dechirican patriarch André Breton, Roos defines de Chirico’s entire oeuvre from 1918 to 1978 as the ‘late period’, altering with rare insolence the theme established by the curators. In response to the question asked in the article’s mocking title *When did Giorgio de Chirico Retire?*, the author proposes that the ‘late’ work of Giorgio de Chirico includes everything following his youthful work, thus a period of over 60 years”. Roos states that what I wrote is based on fantasy. However, in the English translation of Roos’ essay published in German in the Frankfurt catalogue, one reads – exact words –: “the concept of late work includes everything after his youthful period, which means, a corpus of work that goes up to the 1970s and therefore over half a century. [...] The brilliant early metaphysical period is set against the decadent late period, in the words of ‘a malignant spirit’ (André Breton). Faced with such radical positions there is no room left for a historical-artistic analysis of the post-metaphysical oeuvre”. In order to confute my “fantastical” reading of his words, he adds: “What can one say about such a limitless imagination? We will present an Italian translation of my text on our website, so that everyone can form their own opinion of Picozza’s *modus operandi*”. Such a translation would be welcome, if carried out by an independent translator. It is a shame that the promise was not kept.



2014/02 Paolo Baldacci. Il rischio delle autentiche. A proposito di un recente episodio che ha portato alla scoperta di un falso "disegno" di Giorgio de Chirico.

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Nell'ultima delle due pagine annuali di informazioni che l'Archivio pubblica sul GdA ("Il Giornale dell'arte", n. 336, novembre 2013, p. 19) affermavo che un attendibile servizio di certificazione può essere fornito solo nell'ambito del complesso lavoro che presiede - o almeno dovrebbe presiedere - alla redazione del Catalogo Ragionato di un artista.

Due fatti recenti mi inducono a tornare sull'argomento con maggior forza. Il primo è la scoperta che un bel "disegno" acquerellato, dichiarato come originale di Giorgio de Chirico dal comitato per le autentiche della Fondazione nel 1993, quando anch'io vi facevo parte, è in realtà una stampa abilmente camuffata con un collage. Il secondo è la notizia data a Cristina Ruiz (*Chirico catalogue under scrutiny* in "The Art Newspaper", section 2, n. 251, febbraio 2014, p. 3 e p. 11) dal presidente della Fondazione, Paolo Picozza, che sarebbero pronti e starebbero per uscire ben quattro nuovi volumi del discusso Catalogo Generale di Giorgio de Chirico, un'opera che, solo per la sua concezione, va annoverata tra quelle scientificamente più aberranti che l'editoria d'arte mondiale abbia mai prodotto.

Partiamo dall'episodio del disegno. Ho fatto parte della Fondazione e del suo comitato per le autentiche nella prima fase che potremmo chiamare post-Bruni, dal 1993 al 1997[1]. Il comitato era composto, oltre che da me, da Pia Vivarelli e da Antonio Vastano, e posso dire senza timore che si trattava del miglior comitato possibile, che univa il massimo delle competenze allora disponibili. Ma, come mi sono reso conto in seguito, erano le regole che ci eravamo dati e il nostro metodo di lavoro che rendevano impossibile non compiere qualche errore. Purtroppo, molti altri servizi di certificazione di opere di autori del Novecento funzionavano nello stesso modo.

Molto in sintesi, la segreteria della Fondazione raccoglieva le fotografie delle opere per le quali veniva richiesto un esame e svolgeva un primo riscontro in archivio. Nell'archivio erano raccolte e catalogate in buste e fascicoli divisi per argomento le immagini e l'eventuale documentazione di tutte le opere che nel corso del tempo erano state raccolte per il Catalogo Generale o presentate per ottenere un giudizio. In ogni busta si trovava ogni documento relativo a ciascuna opera: giudizi del Maestro sul retro di fotografie o in margine a pubblicazioni, giudizi e annotazioni di Claudio Bruni, documenti presentati dai proprietari e relativa corrispondenza. Le opere archiviate erano molte migliaia, comprese quelle giudicate false. Dopo questo riscontro, che metteva in evidenza se nell'archivio vi era già traccia dell'opera che sarebbe stata presentata e se su di essa era già stato dato in passato un giudizio, si faceva una prima selezione del materiale. Di molte opere infatti era talmente evidente la falsità che non era necessario esaminarle dal vero. Scartate queste, i presentatori delle richieste venivano invitati a portare le opere da esaminare in Fondazione, dove generalmente venivano trattenute un paio di giorni o poco più, e la commissione si riuniva. Quasi sempre i membri della commissione avevano già ricevuto a casa le fotografie delle opere da giudicare e in una o due sedute consecutive, spesso lunghe e stancanti, venivano esaminate anche trenta o più opere, tra quadri e disegni.

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- :: 2009/02 Giornata di Studi per Pia Vivarelli

<http://www.archivioartemetafisica.org/home-it/notiziario/201402-paolo-baldacci-il-ris...>

15/06/2014

fig. 1 News page with index on the "Archivio dell'Arte Metafisica" website 15 June 2014.



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<http://www.archivioartemetafisica.org/home-it/notiziario/201402-paolo-baldacci-il-ris...> 26/07/2014



fig. 2 News page with two new articles added to the index on the "Archivio dell'Arte Metafisica" website 26 July 2014.

The unusual trick of backdating with regard to Baldacci's article is of a different magnitude.<sup>9</sup> It seems aimed at creating the illusion that the interest he expresses in it for the problem of the fake "Valori Plastici" drawings<sup>10</sup> is fruit of a spontaneous and careful consideration on his part, expressed *before* the Foundation brought the problem up in an irrefutable and documented way in "Metaphysical Art" n. 11/13, in which the question of his direct responsibility in the authentication of these forgeries and their consequent sale was also raised. In the meantime, the fake drawings were also published under the title: *Allegedly Fake Drawings, said to be from "Valori Plastici Archive"* in *Giorgio de Chirico – Catalogue of Works*<sup>11</sup> edited by the Foundation (in circulation from mid-June 2014), a contribution that must also not have pleased Baldacci. When, with these two publications, the Foundation, for all intents and purposes, broke the wall of omertà created in order to defend these fake drawings, Baldacci jumped to the other side declaring – out of the blue – his will to personally shed light on the problem, therefore attributing to himself the future merit of clarifying a question that he himself substantially created and consecrated in his 1997 monograph. In light of this, the manipulation of the article's date constitutes the most explicit admission of guilt he has expressed so far and also the most untoward strategy ever employed in name of his Archive.

Following his grotesque attempt at destroying an entire period of de Chirico's work – Neometaphysical Art –<sup>12</sup>, the same year Roos intervened in the art market with regard to a German speaking art collector who had successfully bid at auction on a splendid late version of *The Disquieting Muses* (late 1940s, Galleria Rotta, Genoa): the art collector, convinced by Roos that the painting could be a fake, seeing that the notorious forger Peretti had (with reserve) called it so, later refused to pay its €472,000.00 price to Sotheby's, the auction house that had handled the sale.<sup>13</sup> In order to shed light on the incident, the Foundation published a documented and informative article on its website.<sup>14</sup> In response to this, Roos considered it in his interest

9 A reference in the article attempts at implying the date of publication was as early as the beginning of April. Baldacci specifies in the text: "A few days ago an eleven-page text [was posted] on the Foundation's website [...]". The article, entitled *Authentic de Chirico painting signalled as a Fake by L'Archivio dell'Arte Metafisica – The construction of a fake "truth"* was published on 28 March 2014.

10 In reference to his future studies, Baldacci, in fact, discloses that: "The culminating episode of this research on forgeries from the 1960s-1980s, surely destined to arouse clamorous polemics, will be the publication of all the documentation regarding the most serious event of forgery taking place after de Chirico's death: the so-called Archivio Broglio or Archivio Valori Plastici".

11 *Giorgio de Chirico. Catalogo Generale – Opere dal 1912-1976*, Maretti editore, Falciano, 2014, pp. 426-433.

12 And along with it, the work on the Neometaphysical period of those who came before him. Roos attempted to create scorched earth with regard to the period claiming that in "art historians have scarcely commented on the late period paintings by Giorgio de Chirico (1888-1978)", asking himself "shouldn't the late period have already been fully studied for some time now?". In reference to the extensive exhibition on Neometaphysical Art held in San Marino in 1995, curated by Maurizio Calvesi, a member of the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei and author of fundamental texts on de Chirico's oeuvre such as *La Metafisica schiarita* (1982), and by Mario Ursino, Roos, with regard to this catalogue wrote: "In foregoing a text that illustrates the works on show and their context it is clear that the editors did not feel duty-bound to proceed with a historical-artistic analysis". Besides diminishing Calvesi's work by calling him a "*Herausgeber*" (editor) instead of *Kurator* (curator), doubt arises as to whether Roos actually knows what a historical-artistic analysis is. Roos responded with insolent irony to my mention of his erroneous use of terminology and the implicit insult aimed at Calvesi, writing: "And now for a great surprise: Picozza has started to learn German!" and went on, unbelievably, to affirm that *Herausgeber* in German does not mean "editor" but rather "curator". Textually stating: "The only thing wrong is his translation: '*dei Herausgeber des Katalogs*' means 'the curators of the catalogue', and if it is correctly translated there is no insult to anyone" [*Gerd Roos' Response to Picozza's Article*, cit., translation, ed.]. I affirm that the German term "*Herausgeber*" means "editor" and this is how it is translated in English. I believe that the offense was intentional and was aimed as polemic response to Calvesi, who in 1997 had ironically complimented Baldacci's monograph only for its design and quality photographic reproductions.

13 20<sup>th</sup> Century Italian Art Auction, Sotheby's, London 17 October 2013. (See note 5).

14 See *Authentic de Chirico painting signalled as a Fake by L'Archivio dell'Arte Metafisica The construction of a fake "truth"*, [www.fondazionechirico.org](http://www.fondazionechirico.org).

to moderated his stance substantially, stating in the Archive's *News* section that he had merely raised doubt about the painting's authenticity. After having created a false problem for the buyer, which turned out to be a real problem for the seller, the auction house and the Foundation that safeguards the artist's oeuvre, Roos was not able to substantiate his claim with concrete elements.<sup>15</sup> To describe his action, one can use the Italian expression: "he threw a rock and then hid his hand". In confuting the Foundation's accusation that he had in fact declared the painting a forgery, Roos wrote: "In reality in the incriminated lines one speaks only of well-founded doubt about the authenticity of these *Disquieting Muses*, which is very different from the apodictic judgement of it being a fake that Picozza attributes to us". Roos is entirely right here, in the sense that none of his affirmations can ever be taken as "apodictic" as it is with ambiguity and allusion that he lubricates the gears of his communication.

Roos cried "Fake!" in both these episodes without substantiating his claims with proof or an examination of the quality of the artworks and their historiography. All the artworks involved here, including the artist's splendid Neometaphysical paintings and *The Disquieting Muses*, a fine and solid painterly example of one of his best-loved subjects, are beyond all doubt authentic works by Giorgio de Chirico and furnished with ample documentation.<sup>16</sup> Roos' intervention seems to have been aimed at positioning himself as an expert on Giorgio de Chirico's art with irrefutable authority within the German museum milieu and the art market. In my opinion, based on the events illustrated and the statements later made, in Roos' work to date there is no sign of the necessary technical ability and proficiency to carry out the task of expertise.

A different incident shows how, when asked to give testimony on a number of fake paintings confiscated by the Magistrate as the object of an illicit commerce during legal proceedings, Roos resolved his testimony with a turn of phrase. Although expressed in ambiguous fashion, the meaning conveyed was clear. Called as an expert by the Italian Revenue Guard Corps in 2003 to provide expertise on artwork sold by Baldacci on which a criminal confiscation order had been issued, Roos proved reluctant in expressing clear judgement regarding the authenticity or non-authenticity of the group of paintings sequestered. He got through his troublesome testimony on three of the paintings in question – *Archaeologists on the Seashore* "1926", *Still life* "1922" and *Still life against the Sky* "1922" – by declaring: "they are not paintings that I – as curator – would exhibit in a de Chirico exhibition".<sup>17</sup> The vague statement was clear in meaning (such that the investigators did not ask further questions of him<sup>18</sup>). It suggested *that the paintings were authentic but not of sufficient quality to merit*

15 In reality, Baldacci and Roos who are not capable (as Antonio Vastano indeed is) of distinguishing between an authentic de Chirico and a fake Peretti, assign an almost absolute value to Peretti's affirmations. *Ipsa dixit*.

16 See the article cited in note 14.

17 Minutes of preliminary testimonial information of 7/5/2003 (proc. 02/008864 rgnng. Procura della Repubblica di Verona, pp. 595-596).

18 That Roos left it to be understood that the paintings were authentic emerges from the Report written by the Italian Revenue Guard Corps (p. 685, folder n. 5061/04 – Prosecutor Office of Milan), where one reads: "Roos Gerd, who did not hesitate to express doubts on the authenticity of a number of the confiscated paintings [specifically 'Archeologi in riva al mare' and the Still-life confiscated from Zocca, "Natura morta contro il cielo", confiscated at Fondazione de Chirico in Rome [...] admitted that the painting dealt with (Die melancholie de Abreise [*The Melancholy of Departure*, ed.] era a painting that...". In other terms, the Italian Revenue Guard Corps who, a few pages earlier in his report had written the declarations given by Roos suggesting the paintings were authentic, went to the trouble of pointing out to the Magistrate that notwithstanding his registered testimony, Roos who was obviously in difficulty, had expressed perplexity with regard to the paintings' authenticity. If Roos were to maintain today that he had called the works shown to him fake, it is incomprehensible why he did not clearly define them as fake. Perhaps he intended to protect Paolo Baldacci. He would certainly have contributed, with intellectual honesty, to the Magistrate's inquiry with regard to the fake artworks sold by Baldacci. It must also be noted that Roos, although called upon to testify in the preliminary phase of the court proceedings against Baldacci, more than once avoided appearing, offering various excuses, to a point that the Civil Plaintiff had to forego his testimony, which in this case would have been important.

*being shown in an exhibition, which is the equivalent of saying they were good but of poor quality.* In what setting then, if not in an exhibition, would they be good enough? The art market? Permanently confiscated as forged works of Giorgio de Chirico, the problem – fortunately – is no longer posed.

Roos' testimony was cited in an editorial column in 2011, which spoke of Baldacci's legal proceedings.<sup>19</sup> He would later offer the following imaginative justification: "In reference to the paintings that were shown to me as forgeries, one of the agents suggested I use the following formula: 'they are not paintings that I – as curator – would exhibit in a de Chirico exhibition'". Apart from the fact that an Italian Revenue Guard Corps serviceperson is not an art historian, Roos declares here to have deposed, rather than his own judgement, that of another person, an action that goes against the very objective of legal testimony. If what Roos speaks of is true, an inversion of roles would be advisable, as the Italian Revenue Guard Corps agent seems, in fact, to be endowed with more qualified competence in the art field than Roos.

The most amazing thing about this is that Roos, completely unaware, cites the episode and formula suggested to him by the agent once again in the "May" *News* article as an example of his competence!

The judicial investigation regarding Baldacci's illegal activity also examined a fake metaphysical painting dated "1913" entitled "The Melancholy of Departure" (in German), shown in the exhibition *Die Andere Moderne. De Chirico-Savinio* (Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen in Düsseldorf, 2001), of which Roos was a curator together with Baldacci. Interrogated on the matter, Roos answered: "Painting number 12 [the one in question, *ed.*] was exhibited in the exhibition on de Chirico-Savinio in Dusseldorf: with regard to its colour, it differs from the group of works on show of the same genre; nevertheless it can be included in the context when put next to another work of the same period as the others: same tonality".<sup>20</sup> To be read: the colour of the painting is different from the group of paintings on exhibit [motive in support of it being a forgery]; but the tone of the painting is the same as another painting from the same period [motive in support of its authenticity]. Apart from his absolutely incomprehensible (non) response, it must be clearly stated here that there exists *no* painting with colours gaudy enough to "ferry" this fake into de Chirico's metaphysical period.<sup>21</sup> Roos, curator of the exhibition, put a horrendous "previously unpublished" painting on show, or, to put it another way, a horrendous fake. The incident completely overturns his pretentious proclamation "they are not paintings that I – as curator – would exhibit in a de Chirico exhibition" expressed in the courtroom. Keeping in mind what Roos said previously with regard to the three abovementioned paintings, one understands that he must have held this painting as authentic, inasmuch as he indeed included it in the exhibition. In this case, there are three possibilities: 1) he believed the "1913" painting authentic and worthy of being shown in the exhibition; 2) he did not possess the necessary competence to judge the painting; or, 3) he had no say in the matter even though he was a curator of the exhibition. It must be remembered that Wieland Schmied, who was also curator and who indeed *had* say in the matter, declared in writing that the painting had been included in the exhibition without his knowledge. His affirmation was expressed in a lucid and articulate letter written to me on 31 October 2013.

<sup>19</sup> See editorial column *The Constants of History: Old and Recent Falsification of Giorgio de Chirico's Artwork*, in "Metaphysical Art – The de Chirico Journals" n. 9/10, 2011, p. 396 (note 5).

<sup>20</sup> With regard to Roos' testimony, see *ibid.*, p. 396; for that which concerns the chronicle of the fake painting, see *The Constants of History: Old and Recent Falsification of Giorgio de Chirico's Artwork – Paolo Baldacci: a Case Study*, cit., n. 11/13, 2014, pp. 324-330.

<sup>21</sup> The fake painting, executed on an old canvas, bears the title *La mélancholie du départ* taken from a painting exhibited at the Salon des Indépendants in Paris in 1913 that remains unidentified. The colour of the fake painting is a glaring combination of orange and blue complementary colours that de Chirico has never employed. Roos has not yet taken a position with regard to the painting.



Roos' testimony continues thus: "It was a painting that was unknown to us curators prior to that exhibition. None of us had seen the original. Only Baldacci, who was also curator, had seen the original before the exhibition as he was the one who had proposed it for the exhibition. I repeat that concerning this work there is and will be a historiographical debate amongst us art historians".<sup>22</sup> The statement seems to confirm the likelihood of the second possibility, as it appears that only a "historiographical debate" could clarify the painting's status for Roos. Following the advisory made to the Italian and German authorities, the painting was prudently omitted from the exhibition's second location in Munich and the confiscation order issued by the Magistrate in 2003 was not carried out. The same can be said for the "historiographical debate" announced by Roos, which never occurred.

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Let us say good-bye for now to the Baron Munchhausen character brought on scene from Roos' cue and invite instead someone who really knows how to tell a tale, de Chirico's famous personage Hebdomeros. As occurs throughout the artist's extraordinary oeuvre, this ingenious character speaks of reality, not of fiction: "And often, in many, even among those who in the throng of their fellows enjoyed a reputation for intelligence, he saw the knot and the powerlessness to comprehend; because of this the knot was for Hebdomeros a cipher infinitely more profound and disturbing than the ithyphallic sign or that of the anchor or the two-edged axe. The *knot-people*, as he called them, were for Hebdomeros the living and walking symbol of human stupidity".<sup>23</sup>

The principal problem Roos seems to encounter can be identified in his inability to attribute or recognise authorship. As illustrated above, he proved unable to distinguish authentic artworks by de Chirico from incriminated forgeries. Indeed, Roos seems unable to attribute even his own affirmations to himself. In fact his responses on the subject cited herein all run along the lines of "I didn't say", "I didn't do", "I only said this not that"... One of the earliest and most amusing examples of his inability to recognise authorship harks back to when he first dropped anchor on de Chirico's oeuvre (a stance with which he seems set on sinking the artist, at least in Germany). In reference to a letter that Giorgio de Chirico's mother Gemma wrote to his friend Fritz Gartz in July 1908, in which with natural maternal concern she asked for urgent news of her son: "Dear Mr. Gartz, Please be kind enough to write and let me know the reason why Georges has not answered the letters I wrote him a week ago. I telegraphed him on Sunday and he answered that he 'was fine' but he continues not to write to me. Please write the whole truth to me. Address your letter to 'Villa Berta' Gardone Lago di Garda. I thank you in advance. My affectionate compliments to your wife, and my devoted friendship to you, G. de Chirico".<sup>24</sup> Incredibly, Roos thought that the letter had been signed by de Chirico himself and went on to formally thank Paolo Baldacci for: "making me take note that the signature was not of 'Giorgio' but rather,

<sup>22</sup> Minutes of preliminary testimonial information of 7/5/2003, *cit.* Roos can always maintain that by "historiographical debate" he meant that he did not believe the painting in question was authentic.

<sup>23</sup> G. de Chirico, *Hebdomeros*, Éditions du Carrefour, Paris 1929; English translation, The Four Seasons Book Society, New York 1966, p. 62.

<sup>24</sup> Gemma de Chirico, letter to Fritz Gartz in French, 7 July 1908 on letterhead paper of a hotel in Abano Terme, published in *Letters by Giorgio de Chirico, Gemma de Chirico and Alberto de Chirico to Fritz Gartz: Milan-Florence 1908-1911*, in "Metafisica. Quaderni della Fondazione Giorgio e Isa de Chirico" n. 7/8, 2008, p. 559 (downloadable in pdf from [www.fondazionechirico.org](http://www.fondazionechirico.org)).

of ‘Gemma’ de Chirico”.<sup>25</sup>

Another illuminating example that makes clear Roos’ inability to approach documents with historiographical method can be seen in the way in which he held as authentic a letter written on the back of a drawing that de Chirico had justly considered fake, which reproduces the iconography of the painting *The Soothsayer’s Recompense* (1913). On its back appears the beginning of a handwritten letter dated 16 June 1913 that Baldacci attributes to de Chirico in support of the drawing’s authenticity. Roos, whilst raising no doubt at all on the authorship of the letter, grapples instead with the difficult search to find out whom the letter “written by de Chirico” was addressed to, and goes on to elaborate a preposterous hypothesis that Baldacci publishes as historiographical research in a footnote.<sup>26</sup> It is a shame that Roos did not notice – a very easy thing to do – that the letter was absolutely not by de Chirico’s hand (likewise, moreover, the drawing).

### *Epilogue*

Over the past years, the Foundation has often felt the need to make its voice heard in defence of the artist, whose historical legacy has been undermined by a series of fake and defamatory theories elaborated by Gerd Roos and Paolo Baldacci.<sup>27</sup>

Let us take into consideration a number of statements made by Roos in his backdated article in which, picking up on various essays of mine or statements I have made over the course of time, he set out to create a collection of rather infantile criticisms of me. In particular, I find it useful to cite a contestation that Roos made which confirms, if such confirmation is still indeed necessary, his inability to apply a critical stance toward the documents or affirmations he sets out to examine.

25 See, G. Roos, *Giorgio de Chirico e Alberto Savinio. Ricordi e documenti: Monaco Milano Firenze 1906-1911*, Bora Editore, Bologna 1999, p. 191 (nota 2). See also P. Picozza, *Betraying de Chirico – The Falsification of Giorgio de Chirico’s Life Story over the Last Fifteen Years*, in “Metaphysical Art – The de Chirico Journals” n. 9/10, 2011, pp. 28-60. Roos’ quote in reference to the letter by Gemma de Chirico was included in abbreviated form at the end of this article under the subtitle: *Giorgio de Chirico... in other Terms – Paolo Baldacci’s Vocabulary (with a few observations by Gerd Roos)*. For what concerns Baldacci, the list included circa 20 insults made toward de Chirico in his written work over time among which “liar”, “fabulist”, “crafty”, “Levantine”, “lack of moral character” and “the existential failure of de Chirico as a man”; on the following page, similar comments by Roos. The last statement on this page did not deal with insults towards de Chirico, but rather, a wish expressed by Baldacci towards those who have taken the responsibility upon themselves to defend and safeguard Giorgio de Chirico’s artistic oeuvre and historical legacy – the Foundation, and implicitly, its President –. The statement quoted is as follows: “*And, in closing... for those who do not agree with Baldacci’s ‘truths’, he bids: ‘At this point, it may be necessary to wait for the demise of those involved in order to see things be put back into their proper place’*”. As a further point of criticism towards me, in his “May 2014” *News* article Roos objects that the statement was erroneously attributed to him. However, we indeed know very well who the author of the horrendous wish is: Paolo Baldacci, who, if it were not for the existence of an authority that protects the artist, would feel free to do whatever he likes, including rewriting de Chirico’s biography and the history of the invention of Metaphysical Art and still more. It is odd that Roos does not realise the seriousness of such an affirmation, whilst specifying that: “in its original context it had an absolutely ironic meaning”. If this is how he sees it, he should be happy about the expression’s erroneous attribution to his pen, as just recognition of his exceptional “irony”.

26 See. P. Baldacci, *De Chirico – The Metaphysical Period 1888-1919*, Bulfinch, New York 1997, p. 170 and note 17.

27 Roos’ ascertained inability to contextualise the documents he takes under examination is seen in how he treated the well-known letter from de Chirico to Fritz Gartz, which he (and Baldacci) believed was written on “26 January 1910”, only because this date appears written on it, without further, necessary analysis regarding the other letters contained in the epistolary. It has been demonstrated thanks to a methodological reading (and a rather simple one at that) that the actual date of the letter is 26 December 1910, a result that confirms what the artist has always maintained with regard to the invention of Metaphysical Art in Florence in 1910. The serious error in attributing the letter’s date brought both Roos and Baldacci to 1) to alter the history of Metaphysical Art backdating it to 1909; 2) call de Chirico a liar because the collection of his autobiographical writings did not correspond to their new time-line theory; and 3) elect Savinio as the unrecognised inventor of his older brother’s art. See P. Picozza, *Giorgio de Chirico and the Birth of Metaphysical Art in Florence in 1910*, in “*Metafisica. Quaderni della Fondazione Giorgio e Isa de Chirico*”, n. 7/8, 2008, pp. 56-92, and *Betraying de Chirico: the Falsification of Giorgio de Chirico’s Life History over the last Fifteen Years* in “Metaphysical Art – The de Chirico Journals”, n. 9/10, 2011, pp. 28-60. Baldacci’s late acknowledgement that the date of the letter is December 1910, which came about after the letter, which has been called the principal document of the dispute, had been correctly defined, was unfortunately in vain. Baldacci and Roos continue to maintain – against all documentary evidence – that Metaphysical Art was invented in Milan and that the first two paintings *The Enigma of the Oracle* and *The Enigma of an Autumn Afternoon* were painted in 1909.

Referring to an editorial introduction regarding a collection of previously unpublished texts by de Chirico on the falsification of his art ("Metaphisica" n. 5/6 2006, p. 573), Roos contests the reference given specifying that a fake painting by Oscar Dominguez appears registered in the Rosenberg Archive at n. 132.<sup>28</sup> The forgery in question, based on de Chirico's Great Metaphysician theme (a subject of 1917), was published as an authentic painting in the Larousse encyclopaedia in 1960. Strongly critical in my regard (even if the introduction did not carry my signature) and with disdainful irony, Roos categorically refutes the existence of a fake, specifically a Dominguez fake, in the Rosenberg Archive, which "has always been a point of reference for matters of authenticity".<sup>29</sup> Roos dictates his "illuminating lesson" by pointing out that forger Oscar Dominguez "notoriously began his activity at the beginning of the 1940s", a circumstance he holds to be irrefutable proof that he could not have painted a fake on the Great Metaphysician iconographic subject of 1917. He makes an attempt at demonstrating this with the following precise observation: "the young Oscar Dominguez, who was born in 1906 (!), at the age of circa ten, that is between the end of 1916 and the beginning of 1917, while living in Tenerife, was capable of forging a de Chirico and of sending it to Rosenberg in Paris to be sold! Hats off to him! Not only" – Roos continues – "with the iconographic theme that he invented, the young Oscar Dominguez managed to forerun the Great Metaphysician motif, a fundamental work of metaphysical painting, that de Chirico would only bring into being in the autumn of 1917! Let us therefore wait in anticipation for the seminal study on *The Influence of Young Oscar Dominguez on Giorgio de Chirico's Ferrara Period* from the pen of our storyteller [myself, ed.] that in the upcoming issue of the periodical 'Metaphysical Art' will constitute a sure-fire and interesting source of amusement".<sup>30</sup>

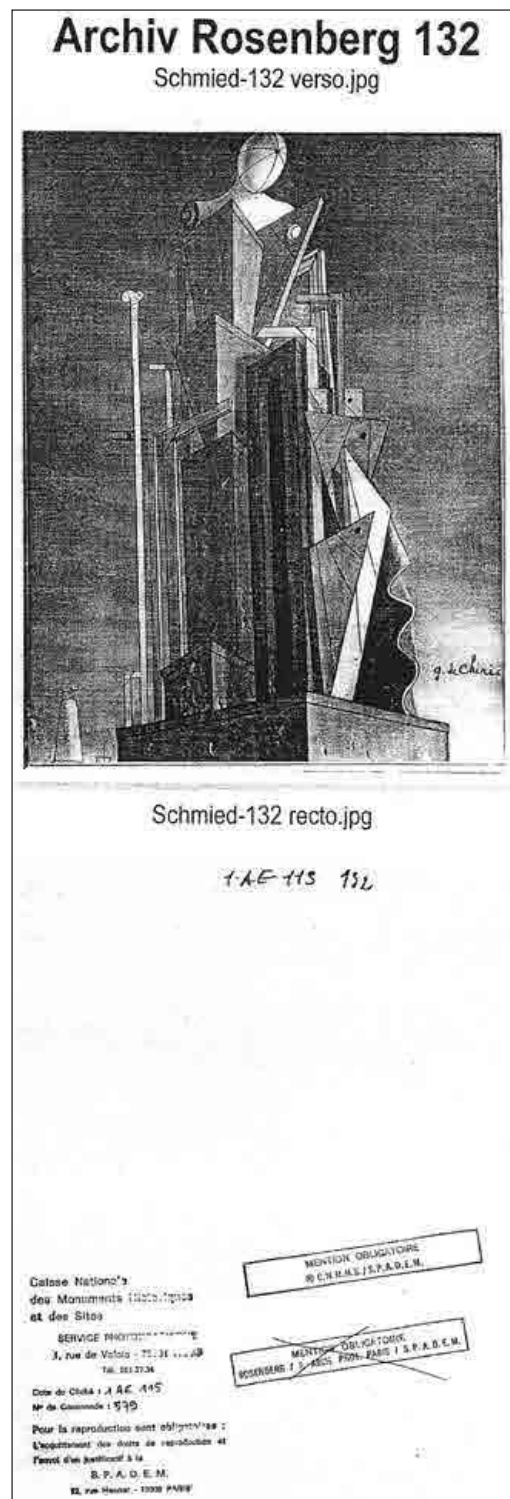
fig. 3 Information card n. 132, fake painting by Oscar Dominguez "The Great Metaphysician", Wieland Schmied's Rosenberg Archive

28 News "May", 5 July 2014.

29 *Ibidem*.

30 *Ibidem*.

## FAKE PAINTING



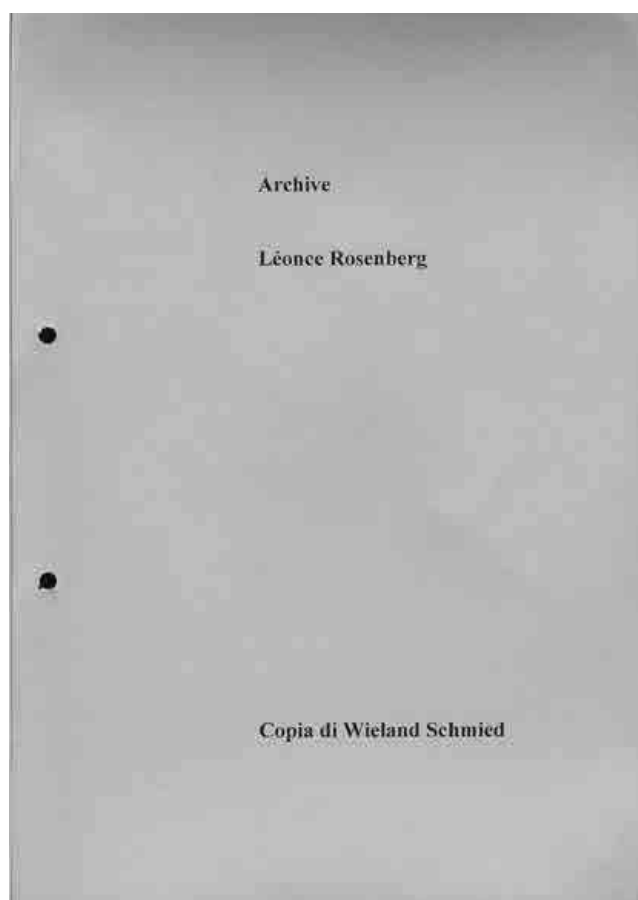


fig. 4 Cover page Léonce Rosenberg Archive compiled by W. Schmied

Roos, possibly blinded by the desire to demonstrate my ignorance, thus taking all credibility away from the severe criticism of his article *When did Giorgio de Chirico Retire?*, did not stop and ask himself if the presumed colossal error could have a precise and documented explanation. In the archival dossier compiled by Wieland Schmied on the Parisian archive, the fake Dominguez in question appears at n. 132 (fig. 3). Wieland Schmied had simply compiled an archival dossier of all of the de Chirico artworks conserved in the Rosenberg Archive, to each of which he assigned a number, naming it Rosenberg Archive (figs. 4-5). The Foundation has always used Schmied's Archive to verify the authenticity of the artist's paintings. I may be mistaken, but it seems to me that the copy of this archive was actually given to the Foundation by Roos or Baldacci. At any rate, it is well-known that Roos prides himself in having enjoyed a close relationship with Schmied. If he was unable to connect the two elements (the general Rosenberg Archive and the Rosenberg Archive of Giorgio de

Chirico's works), there is reason to be seriously preoccupied with regard to the soundness of his research.

The episode shows an absolute inability for in-depth analysis on his part, whilst once again crying out "Fake!", not in reference to the painting – which truly is fake – but rather to the congruity of the reference indicated in "Metaphysical Art". For completeness, it should be noted that the photograph of the Dominguez fake is still conserved today in the Fonds Léonce Rosenberg, Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Centre de Documentation et de Recherche du MNAM, Centre Pompidou. The painting, also held in deposit at Centre Pompidou, still gives rise to questions among the museum staff who, with due concern, recently asked for information on its possible attribution to de Chirico.

Here is the current issue of "Metaphysical Art", without the article Roos had hoped for, but rather with the present article that speaks about the *deleterious influence of Gerd Roos on Giorgio de Chirico's oeuvre*. Following the question in the title of his Frankfurt article, *When did Giorgio de Chirico Retire?* – worthy of the German Social Services –, Roos's poor work on de Chirico's Neometaphysical period gives its deadly blow right from its very start: "Breton was wrong. It was not towards the end of 1918 but at the beginning of 1915 that de Chirico had said all he had to say", attributing the unbelievable statement to Werner Schmalenbach, founder of Düsseldorf's Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen".<sup>31</sup>

31 In the abovementioned letter Wieland Schmied expressed strong doubt that such a negative opinion could have been expressed by Schmalenbach, a scholar he knew well as he was his predecessor as Director of Hannover's Kestner-Gesellschaft.

Strange as it may seem, this historiographical pillage did not prevent Roos from curating, with Baldacci, the exhibition *De Chirico a Ferrara. Metafisica e avanguardia*, held at Ferrara's Palazzo de Diamanti, with a second location at Stuttgart's Staatsgalerie. In all events, Roos seems to have taken Schmalenbach's statement to heart, as he indeed avoided speaking of the Ferrara period altogether and instead dedicated a weak contribution to the exhibition catalogue regarding de Chirico's 1919 exhibition at Galleria Bragaglia in Rome, a topic alien to the objective of the exhibition.

Based on Roos' doubt concerning the overall value of de Chirico's oeuvre, the inclusion in the show's second location in Stuttgart of a number of paintings (1912-1914) from de Chirico's first Parisian period can be understood as meant to strengthen the exhibition.

If it is grotesque the assumption made by Roos that de Chirico had nothing left to say after 1915, it is certain that, notwithstanding the exceptional honour of curating an exhibition dedicated to the artist's extraordinary Ferrara period, much like that of being asked to take part in the Frankfurt exhibition on the Neometaphysical period, he has nothing sensible to say about de Chirico's oeuvre still today.

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	124)	111-N	957	
	125)	111-N	1019	
	126)	111-N	non m°	
	127)	111-N	1007	
	128)	111-N	1327	
	129)	111-N	1328	
	130)	111-N	1329	
	131)	111-N	1330	
	132)	1-AE	115	
	133)	1-CF	333	
	134)	1-CF	333	

Basalio  
Cheval devant la mer.

Paysage - SAVINIO

partie de gauche }  
partie de droite } du cliché.

fig. 5 Index compiled by W. Schmied specifying the number references in his archive compared to those of the photographs conserved in the Fonds Léonce Rosenberg, Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Centre de Documentation et de Recherche du MNAM, Centre Pompidou. The fake Dominguez is listed as "132) 1-AE 115".