

“*Le piazze d'Italia*: de Chirico’s Prophetic Vision of Public Space in Destination Italy”

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According to Roland Barthes, tour-guide books present destinations as an “uninhabited world” where “the human life of a country disappears to the exclusive benefit of its monuments.” A consequential choice, he argues, as it abstracts the tourist site from the “real” place, which “*exists in time*” (emphasis his). The portrayal of tourist destinations, Barthes goes on, suppresses “the reality of the land and that of its people, it accounts for nothing of the present, that is, nothing historical, and as a consequence, the monuments themselves become undecipherable, therefore senseless.”<sup>1</sup> Many scholars since Barthes have argued that such tourist expectations, of an empty and timeless space purified of its mundane daily uses and local significance, have had concrete and lasting effects on physical spaces, particularly in cities.<sup>2</sup> Heritage management expert, Britt Baillie, for example, sees in heritage sites like Italy’s art cities “the ultimate reduction of the dimensionality of time,”<sup>3</sup> and cultural-heritage scholar, Ilaria Agostini, states that Italian *città storiche* have experienced an “obliterazione,” as they “esangue per l’esodo di abitanti e di attività.”<sup>4</sup> Cultural economist, Pier Luigi Sacco, argues that “La città si trasformerà in un fondale per foto ricordo, quando i negozi chiudono, i tessuti turistici della città si trasformano in desolate città fantasma, e finiscono per assomigliare a quei ‘non luoghi’.”<sup>5</sup> He goes so far as to liken it to an apocalypse, calling cities like Florence zombie-like,<sup>6</sup> and stating that what had been promised as *uno scrigno* (treasure chest) of Italian heritage, has proven itself *una tomba* (tomb).

These descriptions are strikingly similar to those of Giorgio de Chirico’s *Piazza d'Italia*

paintings, which Lorenzo Canova describes as “dystopian” squares “fossilized in the midday sun.”<sup>7</sup> In the same strain, Tate Galleries’ ‘Metaphysical Art’ entry on its *Art Term* section of its website, says his early *piazze* are “unnaturally empty”<sup>8</sup> and Vincenzo Trione likens the 1913 “Melancholy of a Beautiful Day” to “the start of a journey that leads to cities without time,” where “only buildings and monuments remain. The inhabitants have left, almost like ‘the day after.’”<sup>9</sup> There seems an uncanny affinity in description between these two 20<sup>th</sup>-century monoliths, de Chirico and tourism.<sup>10</sup> Yet, the “horror vacui”<sup>11</sup> of the painted *piazze* hasn’t been considered from the perspective either of the mass-tourist gaze arriving in *fin-de-siècle* Italy, or of the effects of that tourism on the subjectivity, agency, and gaze of others sharing the square.

This chapter proposes another look at de Chirico’s *Piazze d'Italia* beginning with the inspirational moment for his Metaphysical painting, to reconsider the mystery, or in dechirican terms, ‘enigma’,<sup>12</sup> at its center, from the standpoint of external, rather than internal, stimuli. De Chirico was influential on Surrealism and his Metaphysical style of painting, like Surrealism, is known for its deep connection with the unconscious and dreamworld.<sup>13</sup> For this reason, the majority of criticism around Metaphysical painting, and the central enigma which de Chirico insisted on across his career, focuses on Freudian theories of dream analysis and on the dreamlike nostalgia of inner life.<sup>14</sup> Critiques that engage potential external influences generally go so far as to point to philosophers the artist is known to have read, such as Nietzsche and Schopenhauer.<sup>15</sup> Ascertaining concrete changes in the urban landscape that may have been influential to de Chirico is difficult, for he didn’t much mention external motivations, rather maintaining his story, across his career, of an ineffable inner inspiration. Thus, as Joan Lukach points out, something as simple as if he “was saddened by the incongruity of the juxtaposition of Renaissance and twentieth century or by the seeming ineffectiveness of the modern in the Italian setting is hard to say.”<sup>16</sup> Yet, we can

say that any inner stimulus came from gazing first at real *piazze*: Piazza Santa Croce in Florence in 1910, Piazza San Carlo in Turin on his way to Paris in 1911,<sup>17</sup> and, as he began in earnest “Piazza d’Italia” variations in the 1960s, what he saw outside his apartment at Piazza di Spagna in Rome.

Thus, that de Chirico inspired the Surrealists and that his painting is described as an attempt to ‘see beyond’ the present and concrete, in art that Tate Galleries describes as “typified by dream-like views,”<sup>18</sup> need not exclude his artistic motivation from having some basis in the urban environment. There are, in fact, other examples of dreamlike cityscapes that have their inspiration, at least partly, in actual rather than sleeping visions. Walter Benjamin’s *Arcades Project*, for one, was partially inspired by the Surrealists in its attempt to reconceive of the city, yet, his engagement with Surrealist thought is quite outwardly focused when it comes to his treatment of dreams. As Susan Buck-Morss points out, the theoretical framework of the project is a “sociopsychological theory of modernity as a dreamworld.”<sup>19</sup> That is, Benjamin’s city-as-dreamworld is partially external to the individual, both as it’s communally dreamed/imagined and as it exists in material objects/relics in the urban space. De Chirico’s affinity with Benjamin has been pointed out before, and it will continue to be important here, particularly in theorizing the figure of the tourist vis-à-vis that of the flâneur,<sup>20</sup> who proves a meaningful counterpart when the tourist is contextualized in the historical setting of the earliest dechirican *piazze*. This contextualization is useful, in turn, as the tourist was regarded by modernist artists and writers quite differently than he is by postmodernists and today. It turns out that de Chirico was not the only modernist to gaze on Italian urban space and either willfully erase tourists from the actual and rhetorical canvas or minimize the significance of their presence.

By comparing de Chirico’s memory of the inspirational 1910 moment in Santa Croce with

other early-20<sup>th</sup>-century accounts of Italian cities, one sees that there was a tension of competing gazes. The square was a battleground, as it were. At stake, I argue, was the determination of whose gaze perceived the 'correct' *piazza*, and whose gaze, in turn, would project the space into modernity: the gaze of the intellectual or artist, that of the nascent mass-tourist, or that of the local city-dweller. I suggest that we might better understand the mystery at the center of de Chirico's haunting *piazze* by re-inserting tourists into the frame and investigating how the actual urban space may have sparked, at least in part, the inscrutable prophetic feeling that the artist maintained as both his inspiration and a central motif of his work.<sup>21</sup>

#### *Defining de Chirico's Piazze d'Italia*

Cataloguing de Chirico's art has proven difficult, as demonstrated by the various introductory disclaimers (one by the artist himself<sup>22</sup>) found in the eight-volume *Catalogo generale Giorgio de Chirico*. As Jennifer Hirsh summarizes the issue, "forgeries and fakes have affected the history of de Chirico reception and scholarship in complicated and elusive ways, for not only have other artists passed off their own work as that of de Chirico, but the artist himself passed off later paintings as earlier ones."<sup>23</sup> Curator and modern-art expert, Michael R. Taylor, states that the difficulty in talking about a precise *Piazza d'Italia* series, in particular, is threefold: that of linear progression, de Chirico's tendency to make *verifalsi* (falsely dated reproductions) and near-replicas, and the massive number of paintings involved.<sup>24</sup> Thus, the *Piazza* series is referred to variously in the scholarship; some state it begins in 1913, others that it gets underway in the 1920s, while an endpoint is left largely undefined.<sup>25</sup>

This chapter is not concerned with exacting a series or placing parentheses around a time period or production style (Metaphysical, Reformed Metaphysical, New Metaphysical, etc.). From the moment of inspiration for Metaphysical painting in 1910 to some of the last works de Chirico

produced, this investigation considers all paintings that take up the formal and emotional elements that have come to be seen as nearly synonymous with dechirican urban space: archetypal square, clock, tower, train, arcade, statue, shadowed figures, warped perspective, unnatural light and time, disconcerting emptiness, mystery, anxiety, foreboding, alienation, loss. Indeed, even de Chirico's *verifalsi*, which he began as early as 1924,<sup>26</sup> and imitations like Andy Warhol's 1982 *Piazza d'Italia*, could become part of the *piazza* series as it will be imagined here, as simulation, reproduction, and loss of authenticity across the 20<sup>th</sup> century will play key roles in validating and thus heightening the prophetic emotional tone of the paintings. For a selected list of *piazza* paintings and reliable sources to see those and others, see the note at the end of this chapter.

### *The Flâneur and the Tourist*

Since the time of the Grand Tour, travel to Italy was considered a formative experience for young aristocrats, artists, and philosophers, and for an even longer time, travel writing has been a staple of sociological and philosophical thought. Yet, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the rise of mass tourism changed the face of travel, and scholars, artists, and writers began to nurture a reluctance to either see themselves as akin to the tourist or to consider in any sustained and profound way the mass-tourist's role in shaping the modern world. Only with the rise of postmodern thought, with theorists like Barthes ("The Blue Guide") and Umberto Eco (*Travels in Hyper Reality*), and with the birth of tourism studies and works like Dean MacCannell's *The Tourist* and John Urry's *The Tourist Gaze*, did the figure of the modern tourist enter the scholarly theoretical cityscape as an agent of history. Theorists disagree on the effect of mass-tourism on the tourist, many argue that at its core it is unreflective consumerism;<sup>27</sup> this investigation, however, is less concerned with the role of modern tourism on shaping individual subjectivity and more concerned with the nearly undisputed influence it has on shaping public space. That is, the emphasis here is placed on the

subjectivity of the tourist's desire and gaze only insofar as it translates into an impact on the destination landscape or population.

At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the tourist had much in common with the flâneur, who was a requisite figure of portrayals of Paris in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and who became, for Walter Benjamin, the modern urban spectator *par excellence*. The figure of the tourist was also born in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in Stendhal's 1829 *Promenades dans Rome*, about Italy, and his 1838 *Mémoires d'un touriste*, about his native France. Indeed, in a sort of chicken and egg scenario, some scholars see the flâneur as a forerunner to tourists, while others see Stendhal, the self-described tourist, as a precursor to flâneurs.<sup>28</sup> For all their similarities, however, some crucial differences exist. Firstly, the flâneur is native to his city, while the tourist necessarily comes from outside. Secondly, the modifier 'mass' comes increasingly to describe the tourist in the modern world and will become the most impactful aspect of his presence. These first two differences, then, cumulate in a third, which is that the figure of the flâneur, and his experience of the city, has long been important for urban planners, as he represents city dwellers who are affected by architecture and urban design. The tourist, on the other hand, has been important, not to urban development but to its commodification. This difference puts the mass-tourist's gaze, in many ways, at odds with the flâneur's, exposing him as a sort of negative image, rather than a brother.

This description of the flâneur (as he represents the local and the solitary reflective spectator) and tourist (as he represents the foreigner and the spectator *en masse*) as negative mirror images of each other can help one conceive of their gazes on the urban landscape, each of which, I propose, sought to annihilate the other. Travelers have long essentialized locals or pushed them to the edges of the frame. In the popular turn-of-the-century literary genre depicting British gentry abroad in Italy, we see many examples of Italian spaces in which Italians only appear in the

background, becoming part of the landscape itself. As E.M. Forster's Miss Alan believes, in his 1908 *A Room with a View*, "the Florentine culture of churches, photographs, hillside views, and Renaissance villas" are "a legitimate vehicle for cultivating the young girl" while "actual contact with the city's inhabitants is unseemly."<sup>29</sup> Forster's tone is tongue-in-cheek here, yet this novel, overall, exposes an insidious prejudice. Forster's Italy, like the Italies of George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, Henry James's *Portrait of a Lady*, and Elizabeth Bowen's *The Hotel* – all novels coinciding with the first 80 years of mass-tourism in Italy – are virtually emptied of Italians.

This tendency emerges, too, in early-20<sup>th</sup>-century scholarly writing, like Georg Simmel's 1911 essay, "The Ruin", and some of Walter Benjamin's writing from the 1920s. The figure that emerges here is a sort of flâneur abroad, who seeks to privilege his gaze, as we will see, above those of both the local and the tourist. In "The Ruin", Simmel argues that the abandoned ruin has a transcendent effect on the viewer, while, in reference to Italy,<sup>30</sup> he states that "the inhabited ruin loses [...] that balance" and gives it, rather, a "problematical, unsettling, often unbearable character" as the ruins then "strike us as the settings of life."<sup>31</sup> That is, the writer expects the tourist destination to exist for him alone; it should be vacated for his viewing and edification. Tourists today are still promised this in travel-advertisement photography, and expect, aside from their own presence, the aura of an otherwise empty space.<sup>32</sup> A search for solitude, authenticity, and aura has made certain travelers, at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and today,<sup>33</sup> seek to distinguish themselves from the 'masses' and differentiate their own presence abroad.<sup>34</sup> Walter Benjamin, for one, in writing about a trip to Naples, which Susan Buck-Morss calls "the origin of his *Passagen-Werk* [*Arcades Project*],"<sup>35</sup> begins an engagement with mass-tourists that will eventually demonstrate at once how pivotal they were to his experience of the city and, at the same time, how disinclined he was to allow them to become central to his vision of modern urban space.

In 1924, Benjamin wrote to his friend and fellow philosopher, Gershom Scholem, about a conference he was attending in Naples, remarking that “the entire enterprise very soon fell into the hands of Cooks Tours, that provided the foreigners with countless ‘reduced-rate tours’ in all directions through the countryside,” and mentioning he did not join the tours, instead choosing to go alone to Vesuvius and its National Museum.<sup>36</sup> Two years later, he again writes of tourism in Naples, this time not turning away from it, but dwelling on it, and recognizing its impactful presence. He states in *Frankfurter Zeitung*: “Traditional life goes on, except now, as a tourist show, everything is done for money. Tours and replicas of the ruins of Pompeii are for sale. [...] One sees neither an ancient society nor a modern one, but an improvisatory culture released, and even nourished, by the city's rapid decay.”<sup>37</sup> The presence of the tourist, which is momentarily at the forefront here, nearly disappears in Benjamin's notes for the *Arcades Project*, where only his shadow remains, most strikingly in the souvenir.

The ordering of the fragments of the *Arcades Project* is certainly controversial, but it's worth noting here that the folder on the flâneur begins by differentiating him from the tourist: “the great reminiscences, the historical shudder—these are a trumpery which he (the flâneur) leaves to tourists, who think thereby to gain access to the genius loci.”<sup>38</sup> Then, Benjamin's most significant meditation on the tourist in the *Arcades Project* follows a few fragments later: “Paris created the type of the flâneur. What is remarkable is that it wasn't Rome. And the reason? [...] The national character of the Italians may also have much to do with this. For it is not the foreigners but they themselves, the Parisians, who have made Paris the promised land of the flâneur.”<sup>39</sup> Putting aside for now where he places blame — “on the national character of the Italians” — and the ways in which the mass-tourism industry stole public space from the cradle of the Italian nation before a so-called national character had time to appear,<sup>40</sup> it's worth noting how Benjamin's argument for *why* Paris



and *why* the flâneur, in this instance, has everything to do with a negative definition of that which the flâneur is not and, in turn, that which Paris can be.

It was already clear to Benjamin that mass tourism, particularly the rule wielded by foreigners on cities, was negatively impactful on urban space. Yet, rather than dwell on it further, he erases the tourist and tourist-city from further consideration. This willful removal, either removing himself from the tourists, in the first instance, or the tourists from his meditations, in the second, proves quite characteristic of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Beginning in 1864 with Thomas Cook's first tour of Italy, there was, as Stephanie Hom argues, a "remarkable intensification and acceleration of mass tourism" across Italy,<sup>41</sup> which by the 1870s meant "daily departures from London to Italy were required to meet demand."<sup>42</sup> Yet, decades later, modernist literature and art practiced various modes of heightened seeing, which combined nostalgia, abstraction, and innovative new imaginings to convey contemporary urban spaces that did not deal in the mundane transformations of modernity, such as Cook's hoards. At the time of de Chirico's inspirational vision, we can say that the Italian *piazza* exists as a tense space where various gazes, including the modernist's, attempt to excise others from the frame, as their presence does not fit, somehow, into incipient narratives and representations of modernity.

*Santa Croce with no Baedeker*

With these competing gazes in mind, let's return to de Chirico. For he too, as an Italian and as a modernist, cuts a hole in the city so as to erase traces of the vulgar or undesirable, tourists included. When asked what inspired Metaphysical painting, de Chirico inevitably gave some variation of this account from a 1970 interview:

Empty space can mean something or not mean anything; the architecture, especially of many Italian cities, and particularly of Turin, provided me with ideas that I translated into those subjects that I call the "Italian Piazza", but beyond the idea and intuition there is no

other explanation, and it is useless to ask how, when and why, although I remember that I began to paint these paintings around 1911 when I was in Italy, precisely in Florence, on the eve of travelling to Paris for the first time. The first was a painting inspired by Piazza of Santa Croce where there is, or at least there was, a monument to Dante.<sup>43</sup>

Empty space, baroque and gothic architecture, and a 19<sup>th</sup>-century statue of Dante Alighieri are the elements that inspire Metaphysical painting according to the artist. The city is presented as the artist imagines it, pure and abstracted. Yet, I cannot help but think of E.M. Forster's depiction of Florence from a few years prior, in chapter two of *A Room with a View*, "Santa Croce with no Baedeker."

In 1908, the city is depicted by Forster as teeming with British abroad, tourists and expats alike. Cook Tours of Italy had been underway for nearly half a century and were highly popular, and the time period, as John Urry points out, coincides with a new way of seeing, as, by 1890, "Kodak cameras were common among European tourists."<sup>44</sup> By the second-half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Urry argues, "the 'tourist gaze', that combining together of the means of collective travel, the desire for travel and the techniques of photographic reproduction, had become a core component of western modernity."<sup>45</sup> He calls the changing experience of space a "'time machine' of the tourist industry and photography," which "freezes townscapes in an idyllic and untouched chocolate-box vision where time moves slowly if at all."<sup>46</sup> With Urry's assertions in view, and bearing in mind the tourist-site it has since become, we can read turn-of-the-century Florence as one of the very points at which the space of certain European cities began to be changed by modern mass tourism.

Thus, I see two competing views of Santa Croce – Forster's and de Chirico's – overlaid on the *piazza* and presenting two versions of "Santa Croce with no Baedeker." The first, which turns out to be, in a sense, the realer view, is Forster's vision of a Florence that exists for its tourists, with Italians only visible at the edges, and which suggests an Italian *piazza* that loses all meaning if one

cannot interpret it through guidebook descriptions.<sup>47</sup> It is in tension with the other view, de Chirico's, which takes the Baedeker guidebook as a synecdoche for the tourist, as modern artists and Italians attempted to experience the *piazza* as it had been, and would be, without the crowds of tourists, guidebooks and kodaks in hand. De Chirico, in the first instance, may force the tourists out of view so as to imagine Piazza Santa Croce purified: empty, tranquil, and therefore, necessarily, of the past. As he returns to the *piazza* in his paintings time and again, however, I argue that he increasingly performs an uneasy fusion of perspectives. That is, he again depicts a deserted space, but one that has been hostilely emptied this time by competing gazes. Thus, his *piazze* increasingly emphasize the aura of the empty space, not as it is idealized, but as it is realized.

We can interpret De Chirico's *piazza* as twice emptied of life. In the first instance, it is emptied for the tourist and here it is the effected desire of his teeming gaze. As Simmel said, it is unbearable when the site strikes us as the setting of life. That desired emptying, however, is simultaneously experienced in other gazes, in those represented by de Chirico, himself, as a local city-dweller and as an artist in search of new meaning. The emotional tone of de Chirico's paintings, I argue, emphasizes this second experience of the emptying of life in the *piazza*. That is, seeing through the multitudinous eyes of gazers (which justifies his longstanding use of multiple perspectives<sup>48</sup>), I suggest that de Chirico paints a space that intuits the future feeling of Italian *piazze* if the demands of the tourist economy are allowed to re-sculpt the actual space. As stated above, flâneurs are to urban development as tourists are to urban commodification and, interestingly, in dechirican *piazze*, often the only living figures are shadowy businessman-types shaking hands, as if they have just sealed a deal. And some ominous fate at the same time.

*In Sum: De Chirico and Destination Italy*

De Chirico's *piazze* are a Barthesian vision of monuments: towers, arcades, statues. There are

sometimes trains, generally considered a reference to de Chirico's train-conductor father,<sup>49</sup> but which also remind us that this new technology allowed for and implied the increasing numbers of tourists arriving daily. Beyond these objects, the squares are generally empty, much as tourist sites are depicted in postcards and travel advertising. Empty monumentalism might convey tranquil timelessness in postcards, but in de Chirico, when combined with the use of the color and perspective that help to create the emotional tone, the emptiness and timelessness lose all possible neutrality and come to signify a sense of anxiety, alienation, and loss. Indeed, scholars often don't use the term 'timeless', but more loaded descriptions, saying the *piazze* are "immobile and removed from time"<sup>50</sup> and referring to their atmosphere as "suspended" in "static nonsense."<sup>51</sup> This sense of unnatural suspense, of *piazze* stuck outside of time, in a sort of midday twilight, comes from the use of color, which is produced by introducing other into the mixtures for sky, ground, and shadows.<sup>52</sup> This removal from time strikes the contemporary viewer uncannily, as I've argued, as time at the actual Italian heritage sites has been stopped in a similarly unnatural way. Indeed, their staying-the-same is a requisite for tourists and so they have been detached from the urban fabric and handed over, wholesale, to the economy of tourism, which demands they remain historic, picturesque, like de Chirico's *piazze*, in a word, suspended.<sup>53</sup>

The unsettling effect of the light and shadow is heightened by the warped perspective, which portrays the *piazza* as if it were seen from multiple points of view at once.<sup>54</sup> The use of perspective gives the sense of a space being observed by many unseen eyes, eyes that observe from outside an invisible boundary, without interacting. As discussed previously, this calls to mind, in the modern perspective, the tension of competing gazes. From a postmodern perspective, it is evocative of Baudrillard's term, 'museumification', which he chose, significantly, for its similarity to 'mummification', and which describes the ways in which towns are turned into open-air

museums in order to better commodify their heritage.<sup>55</sup> As we have seen in previous descriptions, the mummification of space, now read as its museumification, is one of the overarching emotional effects of de Chirico's *piazze*. They are timeless in the sense that they are dead, stalled, or detached from the living world.

Finally, and left largely undiscussed to this point, there is a prevalent sense of anxiety, whose cause much de Chirico scholarship has sought to illuminate. Many agree that, formally, it is created by breaking with linear, one-point perspective.<sup>56</sup> However, one might see the anxiety as coming, increasingly, from the sense that de Chirico's vision of Italian squares has somehow come true. The specific terms Michael Taylor uses to describe the generalized anxiety in the *piazze* are "alienation" and "loss,"<sup>57</sup> the latter of which includes a loss of meaning. These same terms are used, today, to describe Italians' sense of their own relationships to their art-cities, like Florence, and to their cultural heritage. For de Chirico, the sense of alienation was certainly, as well, the contemporary sense of alienation in the modern world, yet, that sense renews in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in unique relation to the Italian *piazza*. Marx argues that commodification alienates, and this is true for commodified urban space as well. As tourism scholars have discussed, in Destination Italy both the space and its inhabitants become alienated through tourism.<sup>58</sup>

Wieland Schmeid claims that one could derive a "complete theory of alienation" from de Chirico's paintings, in which "architecture becomes a 'thing'" that is separated "from the people who had created it: set loose, estranged, irrationalized," in which "human history, human action is frozen. [...] It is completely man-made, but it is not made *for* man." This is a useful synthesis of dechirican alienation, yet, it is Schmeid's final thought that strikes me as the most poignant here: "No one lives behind the arcades of the palazzi," he says, "they are nothing but empty and menacing stage props."<sup>59</sup> This idea brings us to the sense of loss of meaning and authenticity that is so

uncanny in de Chirico today, for it too seems to have come to pass. His *piazze* are absurd, empty themselves, and empty signifiers, becoming more like representations of simulacra than of reality. This excavation of substance has been one of the refrains of tourist scholars when speaking of the 'authenticity' and 'aura' that is sought by tourists and promised by heritage sites. Through the very act of being seen by multitudes, these spaces lose authenticity, are hollowed out, and become more akin to replica constructions (like the Venetian in Las Vegas or Charles Moore's Piazza d'Italia in New Orleans<sup>60</sup>) than to the actual things they are.<sup>61</sup>

### *Conclusion*

In consideration of the central enigma of de Chirico's art, Italian historical avant-garde theorist, Maurizio Calvesi, states that contemplation of the "miracle – or of the tragic, but equally inscrutable, event – cannot exclude the obscurity of the mystery and the reference the mystery entails to a looming hidden entity, a presence or paradoxically active absence."<sup>62</sup> Could we see that 'looming hidden entity' and 'active absence' as the throngs of tourists that modern artists cut out of their considerations of European urbanity? If so, could the tourist's gaze and the effects of tourism partially unravel the mystery that is part and parcel of the other essential elements of de Chirico's *piazze*? The artist never claimed as much, he never named his prophetic feeling, and it has remained very much as he wanted it, an enigma. Yet, perhaps there is one possible solution here, one that could not have been named for decades, until recently, for it had not fully transpired. As Benjamin in his *Arcades Project* claims, images "attain to legibility only at a particular time" and "what has been comes together in a flash with the new to form a new constellation."<sup>63</sup> To gaze at de Chirico's *piazze* is to have the eerie sensation that his hundred-year-old prophetic feeling in Florence came true, and to read tourist studies is to understand one perspective on what brought that future into being, a future that was already inevitable, if barely perceptible, in 1910.

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Notes

Rubin, *De Chirico*: "Enigma of an Autumn Afternoon" (1910), [pl. 4], 134.

Taylor, *Giorgio de Chirico and the Myth of Ariadne*: "The Delights of the Poet" (1912), 79; "The Enigma of a Day" (1914), 86; "The Melancholy of a Beautiful Day" (1913), 90; "Piazza d'Italia" (1950), 148-149 and (1952-1961), 153-157; "Piazza d'Italia metafisica" (1950), 150; "Piazza d'Italia-Malinconia" (1950), 152; "Piazza d'Italia with Statue and Moving Carriage" (1969), 158.

Simonetti, *De Chirico: gli anni venti*: "Malinconia" (1912 (1914)), 94-95; "The Joys and Enigma of a Strange Hour" (1913), 94.

<sup>1</sup> Roland Barthes, "The Blue Guide," in *Mythologies* (New York: Noonday Press, 1991), 75-76.

<sup>2</sup> Sacco argues that Italian heritage cities, regarding tourism, "non fanno che replicare banalmente le competenze e le aspettative del pubblico a cui si rivolgono." (Pier Luigi Sacco and Christian Caliendo, *Italia reloaded: ripartire con la cultura*, e-book (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2011), kindle 121-122.)

<sup>3</sup> Britt Baillie, Afroditi Chatzoglou, and Shadia Taha, "Packaging the Past: The Commodification of Heritage," *Heritage Management* 3, no. 1 (2010), 57.

<sup>4</sup> Ilaria Agostini, "La cultura della città storica in Italia," *Scienze del territorio* 3 (2015), 101.

<sup>5</sup> Sacco, *Italia reloaded*, kindle 14.

<sup>6</sup> Sacco, kindle 2815-2818.

<sup>7</sup> Lorenzo Canova, "Metaphysical, Spectral and Post-Human: De Chirico's Shadow on Art's Visionary Path," *Metaphysical Art*, 11/13 (2013), 76.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/m/metaphysical-art>

<sup>9</sup> Vincenzo Trione, "Metapolis: Metaphysics and the City," *Metafisica*, 5-6 (2006), 354, 355.

<sup>10</sup> "To be a tourist is one of the characteristics of the 'modern' experience." Urry, *Tourist Gaze*, 5; De Chirico's seriality incorporated "a sort of proto-postmodern sensibility." (Michael R. Taylor, *Giorgio de Chirico and the Myth of Ariadne* (Philadelphia: Merrell, 2002), 134.); "The attraction de Chirico's later work exerted upon postmodern critics and younger painters" included Warhol. (Neil Printz, "On Warhol's 'After de Chirico,'" *The Brooklyn Rail* (May 2017))

<sup>11</sup> Wieland Schmeid, "De Chirico and the Realism of the Twenties," in *De Chirico*, ed. William Rubin (New York: MoMA, 1982), 103.

<sup>12</sup> Many of de Chirico's Metaphysical paintings include the term 'enigma' in their titles (*The Enigma of an Autumn Afternoon*, *The Enigma of the Oracle*, *Enigma of an Afternoon*, *The Enigma of a Day*, *The Joys and Enigma of a Strange Hour*). In an early self-portrait, de Chirico is shown holding an engraving that states: *Et quid amabo nisi quod aenigma est?*. With de Chirico's emphasize on this particular term, together with an essential seemingly unnamable quality of his work,

'enigma' has become one of the terms most used by art historians to talk about de Chirico's metaphysical paintings.

<sup>13</sup> De Chirico was "the father figure of the Surrealist movement." (Jennifer Hirsh, "Representing Repetition: Appropriation in de Chirico and After," in *Italian Modernism: Italian Culture Between Decadentism and Avant-Garde*, eds. Mario Maroni and Luca Somigli (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 406.)

<sup>14</sup> Hirsh, 406.; James Thrall Soby, *De Chirico*, (New York: MoMA, 1955), 119.

<sup>15</sup> Maurizio Fagiolo dell'Arco, "De Chirico in Paris, 1911-1915," in *De Chirico*, ed. William Rubin (New York: MoMA, 1982), 11.

<sup>16</sup> Joan Lukach, "De Chirico and Italian Art Theory, 1915-1920," in *De Chirico*, ed. William Rubin, (New York: MoMA, 1982), 37.

<sup>17</sup> Fagiolo dell'Arco, "De Chirico in Paris," 33.

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/m/metaphysical-art>

<sup>19</sup> Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), 253.

<sup>20</sup> Emily Braun argues de Chirico is "the first in the visual arts to acknowledge the loss of meaning inherent in allegory [...] providing a visual parallel to [...] Walter Benjamin's *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*." (Hirsh, "Representing Repetition," 412.)

<sup>21</sup> Giorgio De Chirico, "On Metaphysical Art," *Metaphysical Art* 14/16 (2016), 38.; Ara Merjian, "Untimely Objects: Giorgio de Chirico's 'The Evil Genius of a King' (1914) between the Antediluvian and the Posthuman," *Anthropology and Aesthetics*, no. 57/58 (Spring/Autumn 2010), 194.

<sup>22</sup> "Ho dovuto, però, constatare che il mio giudizio, non sempre è stato sufficiente a stabilire l'autenticità o meno delle opere." Claudio Bruni Sakraischik and Isabella Far, eds., *Catalogo generale Giorgio de Chirico*, vol. II. (Milano: Electa editrice, 1971), 11.

<sup>23</sup> Hirsh, "Representing Repetition," 431.

<sup>24</sup> Michael R. Taylor, "The *Piazza d'Italia* Paintings," in *Giorgio de Chirico and the Myth of Ariadne*, ed. Michael R. Taylor and Guigone Rolland (Philadelphia: Merrell, 2002), 133.

<sup>25</sup> William Rubin, "De Chirico and Modernism," in *De Chirico*, ed. William Rubin (New York: MoMA, 1982), 57.; Taylor, "Piazza d'Italia," 133.

<sup>26</sup> Sophia Maxine Farmer, "The Trouble with de Chirico: *Verifalsi* and the Study of Backdated Paintings," *The Brooklyn Rail*, May (2017).

<sup>27</sup> Welten cites Urbain, Baudrillard, and Bauman. (Ruud Welten, "Stendhal's Gaze: Towards an Hermeneutic Approach of the Tourist," *Tourist Studies* 14, no. 2 (2014), 169.)

<sup>28</sup> John Urry and Jonas Larsen, *The Tourist Gaze 3.0*, (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2011), 162; Welten, "Stendhal's Gaze," 178.

<sup>29</sup> In Suzanne Roznak, "Social Non-Conformists in Forster's Italy: Otherness and the Enlightened English Tourist," *ariel* 45, no. 1-2 (2014), 40.

<sup>30</sup> Georg Simmel, "Two Essays: 'The Handle' and 'The Ruin,'" *The Hudson Review* 11, no. 3 (Autumn 1958), 381.

<sup>31</sup> Simmel gives three examples of ruins, all Italian. (Simmel, 380, 381, 384.)



<sup>32</sup> Regarding travel advertisements, “some 24 percent of photographs show places without people (predominately landscapes and sights) and locals appear in only 7 percent (often [...] reduced to cultural markers).” Urry, *Tourist Gaze*, 175.

<sup>33</sup> Dean MacCannell sees it as characteristically upper-class to believe that “other people are tourists, while I am a traveler.” *The Tourist: A New Theory of Leisure Class* (New York: Schocken, 1999), 107.

<sup>34</sup> This desire for and promise of an empty space has grown in proportion with the rise in mass-tourism. Piranesi's *Vedute di Roma*, among the most popular souvenirs for travelers during the Grand Tour (Stephanie Hom, *The Beautiful Country: Tourism and the Impossible State of Destination Italy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 40), depict panoramas of a city alive with daily life, while today postcards generally capture monuments, avoiding the “out-of-place” or “undesirable”, such as crowds, or locals who do not “signify authenticity.” (Urry, *Tourist Gaze*, 174-5)

<sup>35</sup> Buck-Morss, *Dialectics of Seeing*, 9.

<sup>36</sup> Buck-Morss, 9.

<sup>37</sup> Buck-Morss, 27.

<sup>38</sup> Walter Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), [M1, 1], 416.

<sup>39</sup> Benjamin, [M1, 4], 417.

<sup>40</sup> Hom, *Beautiful Country*, 103.

<sup>41</sup> Hom, 88.

<sup>42</sup> Hom, 93.

<sup>43</sup> De Chirico, “L'Europeo Asks de Chirico for the Whole Truth”, 265.

<sup>44</sup> Urry, *Tourist Gaze*, 170.

<sup>45</sup> Urry, 14.

<sup>46</sup> Urry, 175.

<sup>47</sup> “Tears of indignation came to Lucy's eyes partly because Miss Lavish had jilted her, partly because she had taken her Baedeker. [...] Now she entered the church depressed and humiliated, not even able to remember whether it was built by the Franciscans or the Dominicans. [...] Of course, it contained frescoes by Giotto [...] But who was to tell her which they were? She walked about disdainfully, unwilling to be enthusiastic over monuments of uncertain authorship or date.” (E.M. Forster, *A Room with a View*, e-book, Penn State Electronic Classics (Pennsylvania State University, 2007, 21-22.))

<sup>48</sup> Begun as early as 1912. (Taylor, “Piazza d'Italia,” 140.)

<sup>49</sup> Hirsh, “Representing Repetition,” 414.

<sup>50</sup> Trione, “Metapolis,” 354.

<sup>51</sup> Mario De Micheli, *Le avanguardie artistiche del Novecento* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 2005), 192.

<sup>52</sup> Taylor, “Piazza d'Italia,” 141.

<sup>53</sup> In Forster, “urban Italian spaces” attract tourists for “their charming timelessness.” (Roznak, “Forster's Italy,” 170.)

Pier Luigi Sacco claims Italy's cultural patrimony has been entombed, which explains “l'immobilismo di fondo nella gestione dei beni culturali. [...] Un immobilismo, una paralisi che

mostra caratteri, ancora una volta, consapevolmente o inconsapevolmente funerei.” (*Italia reloaded*, kindle 366-371.)

<sup>54</sup> Dechirican perspective is detailed in Rubin, “De Chirico and Modernism,” 58.

<sup>55</sup> Sharon MacDonald, *Memorylands: Heritage and Identity in Europe Today* (London: Routledge, 2013), 139. Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, trans. Paul Foss, Paul Patton, and Philip Beitchman (New York: Semiotext[e], 1983).

<sup>56</sup> Taylor, “Piazza d'Italia,” 140; Andreas Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos, “On the Line of the Horizon: Anxiety in de Chirico's Metaphysical Spaces,” *Religion and Public Life Annual Series* 35 (2009), 2.

<sup>57</sup> Taylor, “Piazza d'Italia,” 142.

<sup>58</sup> Baillie, “Packaging the Past,” 60; Agostini, “La cultura della città storica,” 101.; MacDonald, *Memorylands*, 137.

<sup>59</sup> Schmeid, “De Chirico,” 103.

<sup>60</sup> For more on the relationship between Italian heritage sites and simulacra see Hom, *Beautiful Country*.

<sup>61</sup> “La trasformazione di Venezia in una Disneyland” (Agostini, “La cultura della città storica,” 101); “Firenze è diventata una sorta di Disneyland in pietra” (Sacco, *Italia reloaded*, kindle 308-312).

<sup>62</sup> Maurizio Calvesi, “The New Metaphysical Period,” in *De Chirico, the New Metaphysics*, eds. Maurizio Calvesi and Mario Ursino, (Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 8.

<sup>63</sup> Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, [N3, 1] 463, [N2a, 3] 462.