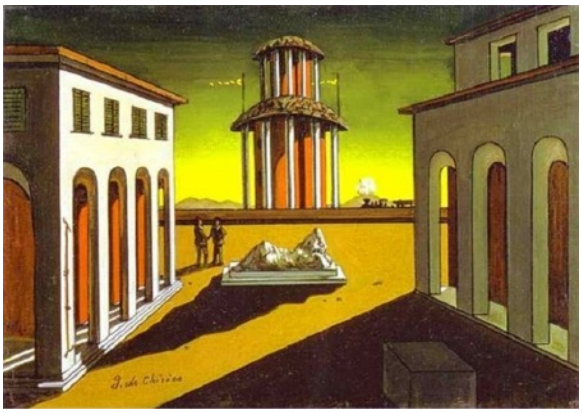
De Chirico: Prophet of the Apocalypse (of Tourism)

De Chirico, Giorgio. *L'enigma di una giornata.* 1914.



De Chirico, Giorgio. *Piazza d'Italia.* 1913.

The desolate land, without vegetation, the gloomy sky, polluted. The statue, the mannequin, the tower, the train, the smoke, the shadow, the flag, the tiny mountains, shadowy figures: spectators or businessmen. These are often Giorgio de Chirico's themes, they resound throughout his work to create a darkened and abstracted Italian landscape. They are the building blocks that aggregate to create his sparse and post-apocalyptic piazzas, which are at once familiar and alien, ancient and modern, peaceful and unsettling. This is, perhaps, that which is most interesting in de Chirico, his ability to evoke so many Italies—historical Italy, modern Italy, Fascist Italy, capitalist Italy, touristic Italy—without paying homage to any of them. He evokes the monumentalized Fascist future before Fascism, and the simulacrum of the postmodern before postmodernity. Yet, the pomp of his monuments, without any human fanfare, are silly, absurd. His cottages on distant hills are rather more sad than picturesque; his sky is clear, without clouds, but rather more bleak and martian than sunlit; his businessmen are alienated, even as they shake hands. For, where is their commercial realm? What business are they possibly doing? And de Chirico's trains, where and why are they going around this empty world? There is something essential missing in this land.

Landscape in de Chirico's paintings is an impossibility. As in the urban landscape all those spaces traditionally considered spaces of "habitation" and "passage," that is, implying both the passage of time and through space: stations, parks, streets, galleries, come increasingly to be seen in de Chirico

as what Marc Auge would later call "non-places."[1] The park and piazza are no longer places of promenades and picnics, they become anonymous spaces of transience and transients. Galleries—which de Chirico transposes to the outdoors, surrounding them with archways and giving the sense of a non-functional, aesthetic space, which exists only for viewing the statue central to it—exist to be seen by an unseen bunch. Visitors come and rush away, never staying long enough for the painter's brush to catch them, and leaving behind just the alienated art, looming and awkward in its lonely existence.

The statue, the representation of life, becomes a stand-in for life itself, while De Chirico takes nature, with all of its massive grandeur and sublimeness, with all of its vibrancy, and he transports it far away, into the tiny distance. For those who would seek a traditional landscape, it has become unreachable and, anyways, distorted by distance into near insignificance. Who would care to make the trek to mountains so small, so plain, that they seem merely an aberration of the plain on a far horizon? The distance and the plainness of the natural landscape discourage visitors, and then as if to cut off even the most intrepid traveler, de Chirico inevitably places his train between the city and nature, the railway high up and infinite, apparently impossible to cross, a physical barrier that imperiously fences off the two spaces. The sublime that can be found in nature's unfathomable greatness, its size and power, which creates in the viewer astonishment that gives way to fear of the object or phenomenon on view, be it valley, mountain, or storm, does not exist in this space. The painter has extinguished the possibility of sublimation through nature, for the largest and most-powerful objects here are manmade.

He has, likewise, extinguished the possibility of transcendence through the beauty of art, for the statues take on a forlornness in their majestic loneliness. They are central but shadowed, out of focus or somehow out of place, and unwatched by the bystanders who seem not to notice them. Kant's definition of the sublime, that is, "the mere capacity of thinking which evidences a faculty of mind transcending every standard of the senses," has disappeared in de Chirico. Man no longer has the capacity for transcendence, it seems, it has been eliminated even from the objects that could

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[1] Augé, Marc. *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*. London: Verso, 1995. Print.

potentially mediate transcendence: the infinite plain, the enormous towers, the art, all seems to create the opposite feeling. The sublime is replaced by the ridiculousness of a set of people and objects that are all serious and concrete, that exist in, or close to, their habitual spaces, acting in their habitual ways—the buildings create shadows, the trains race on and make smoke, the men do business, the statues imitate the men, the towers look down from above—yet, in each object, in each person, and every configuration, there is a strong sense of the absurd, of a disquieting nonsense of being, as if all of the people and objects were lacking their most profound significance or function.

De Chirico's world is the Earth "lost from sight" of Luisa Bonesio's "Volti della terra,"[2] a world of modern destructions of space, both civil and natural, and then a modern attempt to save those once-inhabited and naturally-occurring spaces, those free commons that were forests, those intimate private spaces that were parlors, by birthing the conservation-spaces of museums, national parks, and birthing the consumer to go with them: the tourist. "In this world, the Earth has ended up completely invisible, or rather, unimaginable outside of scientific, economic, and technical schematizations. It has been substituted by an artificial image that has been made ready for our own objectives, or for our collective remembering of times gone-by."[3] De Chirico's reality is post-apocalyptic before the apocalypse of WWI, when many artists would follow. It reveals a destructive force that is more profound, more complete, while at the same time less obvious and less violent. It is Bonesio's destruction, one carried out by a way of living that is ever-more abstracted, ever-more cosmopolitan, ever-more mobile, more pollutive, and in which people no longer know how to *see* the world, they only know how to profit from it. It is in this moment, in the handshake that is the subtle, sly, but central act, that humans begin to lose sight of world, they begin to see no value in it other than monetary value, and then they begin to lose, or rather, to sell it off.

There is in de Chirico a strong sense of the destruction of the 'real' and its substitution by a simulacrum or image of the real. The statue and mannequin, for example, inhabit the piazza more than the man does, they are the images of man, pretend to be the man. Yet, they seem to be once

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[2] Baldino, Marco, Luisa Bonesio, and Caterina Resta, eds. *Geofilosofia*. Sondrio: Lyasis, 1996. Print. p. 103

[3] ibid. p. 105; "Nel Mondo, la Terra ha finito col diventare invisibile, ossia non immaginabile al di fuori delle schematizzazioni scientifiche, economiche, e tecniche, sostituita dalla sua immagine artificiale approntata per i nostri fini, oppure semplice ricordo dei tempi andati." Trans. J. VanWagenen.

removed from their usual representational status. They are not just simulacra of man, but simulacra of the statue and mannequin themselves, not only in that they exist in paintings of statues and mannequins, but in the supreme lifelessness and emptiness de Chirico manages to instill in them, often by erasing the faces, disembodying them, or setting them at limp angles.

From left to right: *The Song of Love,* 1914; *Le due sorelle,* 1915; *Il figlio prodigo,* 1922.

Indeed, if one takes away all of that which is 'true' in the world, that is, all that is natural and that would exist and make sense even without the context of man's cultural, social, and political schematics, and even without man's gaze alighting upon it, what remains? What are the objects that do not become absurd or disturbing without those schematics, without the human gaze that generally frames them? That which remains is nature alone: the sun, the moon, the forest, the mountains, animals, all those things that are eerily missing from de Chirico. The metaphysical artist paints a landscape that is most often made only of manmade objects, then he removes the sociocultural frame, thus abstracting the objects and his images. He leaves the viewer with a sense of the alienation of the modern world. Certainly, De Chirico's framing of objects is preceded by a similar movement in poetry. Giovanni Pascoli's poetry, for example, was often a sort of object poetry, with objects that were instilled with subjective meaning, memory, and thus that were symbols. *Crepuscolarismo*, which followed Pascoli, and poets like Guido Gozzano around the same years that De Chirico began painting, removed Pascoli's symbolism from objects and reduced them to a colorless and forgettable banality. The tone of the poetry is reduced to melancholic irony, which could be said of De Chirico's

paintings as well, yet there is a difference. The *crepuscolari* poets are post-decandent, ironizing the heroic D'annunzian myth, the 19th-century bourgeois aestheticism, and mourning the marginalization of poetry in the 20th century, overtaken, seemingly, by the banal. De Chirico works in a different space, not in a private space, but in the most public and common of all spaces in Italy, in the piazza. He implies not the bourgeois salon or parlor, but the museum and train station, he ironizes not the private citizen, the potential romantic hero, but the nation itself, represented in the glowering tower and its perky surrounding flags. The romantic hero, the 19th-century poet, the flaneur, is not ironic in De Chirico, for he does not exist. The private individual is the shadow of a businessman creeping at the corners of the frame.

The *crepuscolari* poets portray the banality of life objectified, overrun by objects, yet for all their melancholy, there is not yet the apocalyptic mood that exists in De Chirico and that many artists and writers will begin to take up after the unimaginable destruction of WWI. Massimo Bontempelli's 1922 *La scacchiera davanti allo specchio,* for example, describes a land beyond the mirror populated by chess pieces and mannequins, both of whom think the precede man, are closer to the godhead than man, and that man, in turn, models himself on them.[4] The landscape, like De Chirico's is nature-less; as the narrator describes: "Everything around me was identical to the place I'd come from. The plain unfolded in infinite homogeneity."[5] There are no plants, there is no sun, there are no animals. The only identifiable and unique place that the narrator happens upon is "a landscape of objects, resting on a square piazza,"[6] this piazza is the tiny land lorded over by the mannequin. Bontempelli's tale, however, is retrospective. It is a prewar moment imagined after the war, and thus, cannot possibly imply that which de Chirico's prewar paintings do. Bontempelli's narrator is a child who glimpses a desolate land, an objectified land that is made up of simulacra, made literally of reflections of objects from the land in which mirror exists. The land is populated by manmade objects,

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[4] "i pezzi degli scacchi sono molto, molto più antichi degli uomini … Tutto quello che accade tra gli uomini, specialmente le cose più importanti che si studiano poi nella storia, non sono altro che imitazioni confuse e variazioni impasticciate di grandi partite a scacchi, giocate da noi." p. 35

[5] ibid. p. 69: "Correvo senza sapere dove … a un certo punto mi fermai. Tutto intorno a me era identico al luogo donde m'ero mosso. La pianura si stendeva infinitamente uguale."

[6] ibid. p. 46 : "paesaggio di oggetti, fondato in una piazza quadrata."

and indeed, was created itself by man, as we learn when the narrator is introduced to the Mirror Maker, God and Adam, the land's creator and first inhabitant.

Bontempelli, like De Chirico, is obviously concerned with images and objects that begin to overshadow man, to crowd him. But his concern is also,obviously influenced by the events of WWI, which showed that man had begun to create forces that he could not predict or control, forces that would prove increasingly capable of destroying man, as well as the world. Bontempelli's narrator is first led by the White King from the chess set into the mirror land, as a sort of Virgilian guide, but then the chess pieces turn violently on him, beginning to launch themselves on him blindly and relentlessly. He is saved only by the sound of another mirror shattering in the distance, destroying its mirror world, and frightening the inhabitants of this mirror world. De Chirico's objects are rather less active. They stand, they sit, they look without eyes, they pose in imitation of action. Yet, they represent a threat that De Chirico seems to have felt pressing constantly on reality. If not Bontempelli's war? Then what was his imminent apocalypse?

It is the intuition of a destructive force far less aggressive and obvious, that is ostensibly good, for it is profitable, creates jobs, and keeps the GDP afloat no matter the global or local economic or political crises. I suggest that it is tourism, that the gaze of the viewer on the endless piazzas is filtered through the gaze of the tourist who does not see the people, did not come for people or the present, but who sees objects, and, specifically in Italy, looks not for the present, but for the past. For the alienation experienced in De Chirico is not an alienation general to modernity in the west, but rather, it is highly Italian. Its piazzas, its arches, its statues all give the sense of the peninsula, but so does the alienation itself. De Chirico's is not the alienation of the individual from the world, but of the world itself, removed from the individuals, who no longer exist, or at least are no longer visible in the world. People have disappeared and that which remains is a world of history and art, the largest presences are of towers and flags, ancient arches, and classical statues in white marble. In the tower we see medieval Italy, in the arches we see ancient Rome, and in the statues the Italian Renaissance. What we see of the modern, rather, is not representative of Italy, but of the tail-end of the Grand Tour and the beginning of mass tourism. Tourists now arriving en masse and hoping to yet find deserted

piazzas to paint or photograph, imagining Italy, indeed, as we see it in De Chirico: an outdoor museum, free of life, a silent, barren remnant of the past.

This is Italy beginning to cede itself to tourism. This is the beginning of the tourist who overwhelms the Italian and forces him out of the piazza. The tourist who, in fact, judges the Italian unfit for inhabiting Italian space, or as Georg Simmel, the 19th and 20th-century German sociologist and philosopher, says in his 1911 essay "The Ruin:" the presence of the Italian is *unbearable*. While De Chirico is not a Romantic painter of ruins, there is something of the decay, the decadence, the ruin of time, the strong presence of the past in his works, and it calls to mind, somehow, the essence of ruins without the detail of crumbling facades. Simmel, on the other hand, is not speaking only of ruins in his essay. He, perhaps, hopes to narrow his analysis to the ruin and its effect on the viewer, but he lets himself speak laterally about tourism itself, about the foreign eye and its judgment of the local people, who become foreign themselves in the tourist's experience. The ruin, according to Simmel, has the ability to effect in humans a sense of peace that comes from uniting the constant enmity between man and nature. He differentiates in this eternal opposition the external battle within nature and between man and nature and the internal battle between nature and spirit within man. The external battle consists of spirit, that which strives upwards, against the natural world that pulls it back down. He states that within the natural world there is the same struggle, between "two cosmic tendencies": the volcano that creates a mountain and the rain and erosion that gradually knock it back down.[7]

When man sees nature's recreation of his upward striving spirit, he senses that he is part of the Earth, he senses that the ruin resembles the alpine form, the ultimately sublime earthly form, and he accepts that nature reclaims the form, rising, as Simmel says, "above its sad nihilism,"[8] to recognize an affirmation of the constantly climbing spirit, which finally returns home. He points out, as well, that in the ruin we must recognize, not just the external struggle between spirit and gravity, but, the internal struggle of the human soul between upward progress and the indifference and passivity, the natural proclivity towards leisurely inaction, that acts as nature's accomplice, allowing the building to

[7] Simmel, Georg. "Two Essays: The Handle, and The Ruin." *The Hudson Review* 11.3 (1958): 371. Print. p. 381
[8] ibid. p. 382

be overcome. He calls this "positive passivity,"[9] but the term is problematic in that the final product, the ruin, has a mysterious harmony that creates a sense of peace in the viewer, yet the positive passivity that allows the ruin to form is never elaborated for its positive attributes. Rather Italy is recalled as the site of the ruin, seemingly, at once *par excellence*, in that it is the only country mentioned in the essay (and it is mentioned three times), and at the same time as an entirely problematic site for viewing ruins, due indeed to what he sees as a sad population of these wholly aesthetic locales, which must represent the past, without connection to the present.

Simmel's examples are: a good many Roman ruins that lack the "specific fascination of the ruin,"[10] Forum Romanum "stumps and pillars," which have lost their "metaphysical-aesthetic charm,"[11] and many still-inhabited urban ruins, like those "often found in Italy off the main road," which are "unsettling."[12] It is, perhaps, not surprising that all three of these ruins reference Italy, two are firmly situated in the peninsula, while the other extends itself to any Roman colony, maintaining a strong Italian association. That which is surprising, however, and ominous, is his impression that the presence or trace of any other man, besides himself, ruins the effect of the ruin. In his first example, the Roman ruin is not as fascinating as it might be because one notices destruction by man, presumably looting of columns, and use of buildings generally, by later generations of Italians. That history has passed over and touched the ruin, that any events have affected it from its building to its present state is seemingly problematic for Simmel. But the most egregious to him, the least *bearable,* is not the trace of history's touch, but the trace of the present on the otherwise perfect, harmonious ruin, the presence of a ruin-dweller who lets the building decay. He says:

> "From the standpoint of the idea of man, such indifference is, so to speak, a positive passivity, whereby man makes himself an accomplice of nature and of that one of his inherent tendencies which is dramatically opposed to his own essential interests. Here the inhabited ruin loses for us that sensuous-suprasensuous balance of the conflicting tendencies of existence which we see in the abandoned one. This balance, indeed, gives it its problematical, unsettling, often unbearable character. Such places, sinking from life, still strike as settings of life."[13]

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[9] ibid. p. 380
[10] ibid. p. 380
[11] ibid. p. 384
[12] ibid. p. 381
[13] ibid. pp. 380-1

The places *strike us as settings of life,* he says, misunderstanding that they do not simply *strike us* as settings of life, but rather *are* settings of life. What appears unbearable in them is, from a touristic point of the view (that is, from the point of view of one who visits, not people, but places, which Simmel as a viewer apparently is), that there is a person in the beautiful ruin-to-be, who will neither demolish and build over it, nor disappear from the place so that the visitor can have a pure experience of the past. The ruin, which we can enjoy as a tragedy, becomes sad when there is the ruin (as Simmel sees him) of a person inside. That nature can pull a building back down to Earth can be seen as a just right of the Earth to reclaim its own, but we do not see man in the same way. When Simmel speaks of a 'person as a ruin,' he is most simply dealing with a person who, in advanced years or sickness, becomes feeble and tends toward the grave. Yet, one intuits that these ruin-dwellers, who *allow* a sinking from life by their indolence, are ruins of man as a plurality, unwelcome signs of human decadence.

Simmel states that there is a metaphysical, an aesthetic, and a moral harmoniousness in the ruin. The metaphysical calm comes from an a priori understanding of the decay of material, the aesthetic and moral balance stems from a stillness of upward and downward forces in the first case and from a sense that the beauty is not just in *perception,* but in the sense of time and life that has inhabited, created, and moved on from the place. Man cannot help but feel the presence of all of that history, all of those souls, all of that progress in the ruin. Italy is the site of past-progress, then, a place to look back on our accomplishments, from the point of view of modern man, and judge them. Past progress is something modern man is proud of and, in turn, is proud to have left behind, to have moved on from. In Italy, modern man can watch nature grow over his beautiful, but antique, technology, and modern man, in turn, will create newer and better progress that nature will not so easily overgrow. Modern man will strive ever upward, never letting passivity keep his spirit from overcoming nature. Important in this image is that it is centered necessarily on the emptiness of the ruin, which lends itself to an often fictionalized idea of man as naturally moving on from it. While Simmel states that peace comes from the sense of a connection with the past, he implies, as well, that

there must be a clean break from that past. The ruin must be seen as a symbol of man as improved, as content to step away from the past, and watch nature begin to erase signs of it.

He describes the depth of time, "the past with its destinies and transformations,"[14] as an integral part of the present and of the feeling of "psychic wholeness" at the ruin site, saying that it creates an "extreme intensification and fulfillment of the present form of the past."[15] In this accumulation of time, we see both human progress and nature's progress, which manifests itself in time's waste of human progress. At the same time, in "The Metropolis and Mental Life," he is critical of both the city-dweller's hyper-present existence and his adversity to wasting time. In the metropolis, as a coping mechanism for the the simultaneity and abundance of stimuli, Simmel proposes that our awareness is shifted to the least sensitive organ, the intellect. This shift is, he explains, a cause and effect of the precision of a money economy in the city and of the synchronization of clocks and pocket watches. One's existence is so schematized, so set to an impersonal schedule in order to reduce wasted time, that the city comes to "favor exclusion of those irrational, instinctive, sovereign traits" that are important in forming individuality. Thus, there is a preference even in this argument for the allowance by man of nature and time to waste humanity, to create in the modern city individuality and in the forsaken countryside the peaceful ruin. The latter is praised as a space of mystic contemplation of time's accumulation in opposition to his criticism of the flat-time of the city, the ever-present, where man attempts to assert his supremacy over time and control it. Yet, simultaneously, he is critical of those who would waste time, those who live in the ruins of the ancient city, who have not progressed from it or built over it, who are passively wasting time and thus allowing time to waste them. Does this criticism come simply from their imposition on the pure tourist experience?

He seems to support the balance of man and nature, as we "envisage," he says, "in their working a picture of purely natural existence. Expressing this peace for us, the ruin orders itself into the surrounding landscape without a break."[16] The ruin has been given back to the natural order, it is

[14] ibid. p. 385
[15] ibid. p. 385
[16] ibid. p. 383

a symbol in a sense of man's present as beyond his past. Thus, while a "villa or peasant home"[17] can fit "the mood of their landscape,"[18] it will always be a break in the natural plane. The villa or peasant house can create a quaint or picturesque landscape, but the ruin creates a landscape that - when viewed by the modern man, aware of his dominance and progress in the world, who now competes in the city against other men, safe from the threat of nature - implies a sense of pride and serenity. Accumulated time in the ruin is given back to nature and the past it represents as detached from man, man can view it as other, as prior, as lesser. When man continues to inhabit the ruin, however, modern man is reminded of his attachment, his debt to the past, is reminded that he, too, will be wasted by time, that the wasting of time cannot be overcome by schematized progress. Or perhaps he is simply reminded that the ruin does not exist for the visitor's pleasure, but as a home.

Simmel's premise tends towards the imperialistic and his tone is arrogant and self-important as the philosopher yearns with enthusiasm for what de Chirico foresees apocalyptically. Simmel yearns for sites of the past that are untouched by the present and de Chirico paints just this. In both cases, the piazza described is one unpopulated by locals, taken over by artifacts. Yet, the tone is different, to Simmel it is a sublime space, for de Chirico it is absurd, lifeless. This is because de Chirico, before many others, glimpses the stilted nature of space that is created by tourism. Even in its ideal condition, unpopulated by crowds of other tourists, de Chirico sees an alienating separation in public spaces dominated by and dedicated to tourism that will not become apparent or be theorized about for almost a century. De Chirico's piazza is reminiscent, indeed, of the Italy described in Christian Caliandro and Pier Luigi Sacco's 2011 *Italia Reloaded: Ripartire con la cultura,*[19] who claim that the removal of culture into another a realm, (a realm of the tourist, a realm of the consumer, a realm of the honored, untouchable, and, above all, past, concluded, and fully penetrated/ interpreted) is just one of the 'removals' that has, in a way, switched off the Italian public. The authors compare the contemporary Italian identity to the zombies they have so admired in films since the 1970s. Zombies, interestingly, in the 1970s replaced vampires as the most horrid of supernatural

[17] ibid. 383
[18] ibid. 383
[19] Caliandro, Christian and Pier Luigi Sacco. *Italia reloaded: Ripartire con la cultura*. Bologna: Il mulino, 2011. Print.

beings to haunt the collective mind, and which are strikingly divergent from the traditional anthropomorphized vampire legend. They are human, they are neither dead nor alive, and they go through the instinctual acts of 'living' without volition or purpose, they simply consume.

Culture today can only exist if it impacts a nation's economy in some significant way, and the authors identify two types of cultural productions that can impact an economy: passive and proactive. In passive cultural production the public is treated as a consumer base and nothing more. When activated, however, cultural productions involve and actually create the public, initiating a communal desire to play a role in and even impact culture. The first, and crucial, step towards a proactive public is establishing the desire in the individual to learn to give meaning to a cultural experience. But in Italy, which is seen worldwide as the fertile breadbasket of Western culture, to which millions around the world travel every year to witness the cultural patrimony warded there, the ability to judge cultural productions is dying, precisely because of the influence of the economy on its cultural patrimony. Italians are removed from their cultural spaces, they have been disallowed from creating new cultural productions, because, as Simmel protested, they might clash with the aesthetics of the ancient. The problem of the power of tourism and its foreign pressure towards local cultural conservation is so deep and so engrained that it does not indeed register the alarm that it should. The actions behind keywords of tourism and cultural patrimony like "witness," "cultural treasures," "ward," Sacco argues amputates culture from the body of the place, and by amputating it, essentially kills it, and that Italian culture has been placed in a tomb rather than the *scrigno* (treasure chest) that has been ascribed to it.

The great threat to Italy's future, the apocalypse as it were, is once again cultural. It will not be the death of the Italian political or economic state, it will not be war, but, rather, the great threat is tourism. Italian cultural heritage, if left amputated from society and controlled solely by profit and tourism, will devolve and slowly morph away from that in it whichwas historically and towards that which tourists want it to be and that which is most profitable. The changes have already begun, as one sees in Rome, for example, where there are sections of town for tourists and sections for Romans, where there are restaurants that serve 'real Italian food' and restaurants that serve chicken fettuccine

alfredo for tourists, a dish that does not exist anywhere in Italy as far as this reviewer has found, and where internationals and hotels exist in the city's center and citizens are forced to the outskirts.

The passive apocalypse, the apocalypse that leaves behind only monuments to travel and tourism, and sometimes the discreet handshake that sealed the future to its alienating doom. This is the world of de Chirico that chills us, but that we might, ironically, travel the world to visit in person. Our world a century later is, like de Chirico's far removed from the sublime landscape, we seldom venture to the mountain top, but much prefer the gallery, the city square, the towers of city centers. And even much of the potential beauty of those places is lost to us, as we lose sight of the world as a whole and begin to see it as an accumulation of precious objects, none with any seeming connection to another, all arbitrary and lost in space. The Italian piazza, specifically, suffers from this lack of being. It is occupied at once by the world, and by no one, millions of passersby who glimpse it in a shutter and disappear. The Italians, themselves, have been disinherited of their piazzas, banished to marginal spaces, and time has been stopped on the peninsula in an attempt to maintain harmony with the past that is worth so much to the economy and costs so much to culture. The sublime and beautiful Italian public space banalized and amputated by tourism: that is the world of de Chirico. Is it not also now reality?

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