

PICASSO, DE CHIRICO AND DALÍ A DIALOGUE WITH RAPHAEL

Mart Rovereto, 2 May - 29 August 2021
Curated by Beatrice Avanzi and Victoria Noel-Johnson



Rovereto's Mart hosts the first exhibition to explore Raphael Sanzio's influence on the greatest exponents of 20th century art: Picasso, de Chirico and Dalí. Featuring 100 masterpieces that illustrate the dialogue between ancient and modern art, loans have been sourced from some of the most important international museums, such as Gallerie degli Uffizi, Musée national Picasso (Paris) and Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí (Figueres).

Vittorio Sgarbi's vision for Mart is to offer initiatives of a **timeless art** that spans chronological boundaries and surpasses academic definitions. As per the announcement made at the beginning of his mandate back in Spring 2019, the President envisions a museum that deals with art, not ideological restrictions: at Rovereto "classic and modern masters dialogue amongst themselves and with artworks from one of Europe's richest public collections. Mart's programme spans centuries"

This exhibition plan is congruent with the original vocation of the Rovereto museum that opened nearly 20 years ago. Its architectural forms recall classicism, starting with its homage to Rome's Pantheon as declared by Mario Botta in his design for the now iconic cupola. Back in 2013, Mart compared **Antonello da Messina's** work with recent portraiture, whereas last Autumn's exhibition *Caravaggio. The Contemporary* placed one of the 17th century master's most dramatic paintings in dialogue with two key 20th century figures: the artist Alberto Burri and the poet Pier Paolo Pasolini.

Held between 2 May – 29 August 2021, the investigation continues in the form of a new large exhibition *Picasso, de Chirico and Dalí. A Dialogue with Raphael*: an original and in-depth analysis of the ways in which the Urbino master's work influenced the research of three great 20th century artists. Curated by **Beatrice Avanzi** and **Victoria Noel-Johnson**, the project highlights the visual dialogue not just between Raphael and the three modern artists, but also amongst the artists themselves. Although they all studied classical art and were fascinated by it, their respective **reinterpretations** are completely different: de Chirico's rapport with Raphael, for example, was learned and systematic, Picasso's was more immediate and instinctive, whilst Dalí always looked up to the Renaissance master with great admiration, coupled with the aspiration of becoming "a 20th century Raphael". **Their aesthetic repertoires were, therefore, profoundly individual.**

Over 100 works exhibited at Mart offer different variations on **Raphael's** own aesthetic, including his famous *Self-portrait (1505-1506)* lent by **Gallerie degli Uffizi**. Further to the recent 500th anniversary of the Renaissance master's death, the show



provides the opportunity of closely examining the influence he exerted on **Pablo Picasso**, **Giorgio de Chirico**, and **Salvador Dalí**. Although approaching Raphael in wholly different ways, the three artists were inspired by the lesson that his work provided, which they studied, quoted and interpreted: an inescapable example for the quest of grace, balance and renewed classicism. Whilst numerous European artists looked towards past masters during the *Return to Order* years, the exhibition's three protagonists "seek out" Raphael throughout their long careers. Similarly to many other artists who came before them including Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, whose work also features in the show, they were ceaselessly drawn to Raphael. As curator Beatrice Avanzi illustrates in her essay in the exhibition catalogue: "Raphael's work and life itself were crystallised into a **legend fed by seduction and undisputed admiration** [...] the very fact that the greatest artists of the century, exponents of its most radical movements, used the work of the 'divine painter' as a constant benchmark, serves as eloquent testimony to a greatness that appears **eternal** to today's eyes".

Whilst **de Chirico** openly showed his admiration for Raphael, whose work he studied and copied, and whom he considered an important source of reference during the development of his poetical **Metaphysical** art and successive classical period, **Dalí** made no mystery about his veneration of this great master. Regarding him as a legend, the Spaniard looked towards him from the outset of his youth, before producing some extraordinary **reworkings** during the WW2 postbellum period, which impelled him to declare: "Long live modern art on the condition that one paints like Raphael".

On the other hand, **Picasso** never confessed to his direct encounter with the Renaissance master's work, despite the latter appearing to have influenced some of the Spaniard's masterpieces, inspiring an **irreverent** series of etchings dedicated to the theme of Raphael and La Fornarina. With regard to the Cubist painter, curator **Victoria Noel-Johnson** is of the belief that two of his most successful and well-known masterpieces, *Parade* (1917) and *Guernica* (1937) contain specific references to Raphael's work.

The exhibition is structured into **8 themed sections**: *Dialogue between Masters*; *The Eternal Greatness of Raphael*; *Sacred and Profane Motherhood*; *The Ideal Space*; *La Fornarina: A Timeless Beauty*; *Picasso: An Irreverent Vision*, *Dalí: A Long Waking Dream*; and *De Chirico: A Sudden Revelation*.

Elements of Raphael's aesthetic are identified in the three artists' figurative repertoire from the outset, ranging from the ideal and enigmatic space of de Chirico's *Italian Squares* inspired by Raphael's *Marriage of the Virgin* (1504), to specific references detectable in Dalí's art, to the **first ever analysis** of the fascinating lure that the **Vatican Rooms** exerted on Picasso.

Spanning centuries, the exhibition offers numerous parallels and cross-references. *The Borghese Fornarina* (c. 1530) attributed to **Raffaellino del Colle**, Raphael's pupil, features amongst the prestigious loans, acting as the cardinal point for a thought-provoking gallery of extraordinary female portraits, including Picasso's *Seated Woman* (1920) and de Chirico's *Autumn* (1935).

The last three sections of the exhibition explore each artist's individual rapport with Raphael's art, which was learned and systematic for de Chirico, vehemently self-identificatory for Dalí, and more immediate and critical for Picasso.

In addition to the displayed paintings and drawings, the exhibition features an **impressive selection of primary source material** (manuscripts, documents, vintage photographs,

reproductions, and books) on Raphael and owned by the three modern artists, which constituted direct sources of inspiration.

The exhibition set-up has been designed by **Contemplazioni**.

A fully illustrated catalogue by **Silvana Editoriale** containing academic essays by the two curators **Beatrice Avanzi** and **Victoria Noel-Johnson**, as well as **Vittorio Sgarbi**, **Daniela Ferrari** and **Lucia Moni**, has been published on occasion of the exhibition.

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Opening Hours

Tue-Sun 10 am- 6pm
Fri 10am- 9 pm
Closed on Mondays

Tickets

Full price €11
Reduced rate €7
Free of charge for children aged 14 or under and people with disabilities

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