

generation of muralists, underscoring the non-political nature of Diego Rivera's and José Clemente Orozco's first works for the National Preparatory School (arguably the birthplace of the Mexican mural movement) in 1922–23, and their gradual awakening to the power of parody and criticism of the various revolutionary governments later on.

Commenting on *Estridentismo* (a Mexican equivalent of literary and artistic Futurism), Lear astutely focuses on woodcuts made by Jean Charlot, Xavier Guerrero and Fernando Leal for a variety of publications. Magazines had a considerably stronger impact on the general public than murals, which were inevitably in places to which the proletariat had little or no access. Eventually magazines also incorporated contemporary photography. The author's analyses of works by Tina Modotti and Manuel Alvarez Bravo, among others, add a good deal to the widening perspective of the way the working classes were presented to a literate proletarian audience.

Many studies of Mexican art history leave aside the strong links to the arts in Spain during the Spanish Civil War (1936–39). Lear argues that the exchange between artists across the Atlantic exerted a strong sense of commonality between Spanish Republican printmakers and their Mexican colleagues. This and the following sections of the book deal very well with the history

9. Detail of *The worker's struggle against monopolies*, by Pablo O'Higgins. 1934. Fresco. (Mercado Abelardo Rodríguez, Mexico City; photograph John Lear).



of the powerful Mexican Electricians Union and the experimental mural created at their downtown Mexico City headquarters by David Alfaro Siqueiros in collaboration with several other muralists, both Spanish and Mexican. Lear continues his lively story beyond 1940, with apt comments on uses of the printed medium as a social protest tool in the 2000s. This brief postscript is an illuminating end to a vibrant study of the intersections of art and life in their most lively – and challenging – manifestations.

De Chirico and the United Kingdom (c.1916–1978)

By Victoria Noel-Johnson. 832 pp. incl. numerous ills. (Maretti Editore, Falciano (RSM), in association with Fondazione Giorgio e Isa de Chirico, Rome, 2017), €60. ISBN 978-88-98855-37-7.

by ROBERT RADFORD

De Chirico's place in the art worlds of Paris and Italy might be firmly established in the literature, but any comparable understanding of his significance in Britain has simply not been addressed until now. Victoria Noel-Johnson has set out to correct this imbalance in this detailed record and commentary, based on extensive archival research. As an illustration of how much has been unearthed by this undertaking, of the eighty-five exhibitions in the United Kingdom that have included his work, some forty-nine are discussed here for the first time.

The main body of the book contains a thorough chronological record of exhibitions, both group and solo, catalogue texts, lists of exhibits, prices, related correspondence, reviews and articles. These items are all accompanied by valuable contextual discussion as well as detailed notes concerning such matters as identifying works where titles are variable or lacking. The extent of such material is inevitably dependent on the completeness and survival of the relevant archive. For example, there are some tantalising hints of the early appearance of his work in Britain, but precise information has yet to emerge. At the other end of the scale, such London entities as Alex Reid & Lefevre, Wildenstein & Co. or Tate have preserved a great deal of information that both relates to the specific narrative of de Chirico in Britain and illustrates the more universal strategies of interactions between artist and dealer, lender and exhibitor.

Noel-Johnson additionally provides an account of the principal collectors of de Chirico's work in Britain, notably Edward James, Roland Penrose and Eric Estorick; these were collectors who also acted to various degrees as dealers. What emerges from this account is the potent engagement of James and Penrose with the ideas of the surrealist adventure and of Estorick with the overlooked importance of modern Italian art. All three saw themselves as participating in a global, but Paris-based art world, and they saw their relationship with Britain as a mission to educate a dilatory, distinctly unadventurous artistic culture.

Two events that feature at some length in this record are of particular significance for understanding the story of de Chirico's relations with Britain: first, his appointment in 1949 as Honorary Foreign Member by the Royal Society of British Artists (RSBA; a body associated with a conservative adherence to figurative art), involving a major exhibition of his work, and secondly, his acrimonious complaint to the Tate Gallery in 1962 that they were exhibiting three works improperly attributed to him. De Chirico was highly appreciative of the RSBA invitation, contrasting it to what he saw as the hostility and absence of due recognition from Italian institutions; indeed, he was widely fêted in London and attracted much wider press attention than in Italy, where he was covered only in the specialist art press. He showed recent work that emulated Renaissance subjects and techniques (Fig.10). In the public lecture he gave on the occasion he pursued an anti-modernist argument, echoing the bibulous attack on Picasso by the President of the Royal Academy, Alfred Munnings, shortly before.¹

The three paintings that de Chirico maintained to be fakes were on loan from the Edward James collection and the Tate trustees found themselves in a tricky bind. Patently aware of the serious legal battle posed by the artist's lawyers, including threats to have the works removed and destroyed, they were on the other hand concerned not to discourage loans and bequests from important collectors. The problem only grew when the composer Igor Markevitch formally protested that one of the disputed works belonged to him rather than to James. Tate's archival material on this matter affords a blow-by-blow account of the gallery's responses and we have the benefit here of reading both the official and the confidential correspondence involved.



10. *Seated nude with pink and yellow drape*, by Giorgio de Chirico. 1947. Canvas, 109 by 84 cm. (Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris).

The longitudinal nature of this study allows for an informed account of the shifting directions of de Chirico's critical reception in Britain and, by extension, of the whole project of Modernism there. One of the notions that now seems patently inapt but frequently resurfaced was that his work was in some way naive, in the manner of Henri Rousseau. In general, however, his invocations of nostalgic memory were recognised as both effective and original. The direction his art took towards mythic Aegean seashores and brooding gladiators, revealed in his first solo show at Arthur Tooth &

Sons in 1928, was widely approved, but this was heavily countered in the 1930s, starting with Herbert Read's *Art Now* (1933), which made no mention of him, and culminating with the vocal hegemony of the Surrealist group, ridiculing and dismissing anything of his production after the Metaphysical period. It was not until the Wildenstein show of 1976 that the sophisticated and ironic qualities of his neo-metaphysical paintings were first recognised. This comprehensive and informative book is set to be an essential source of reference for any future major study of de Chirico's place in twentieth-century art.

1 G. de Chirico: 'The Italian Renaissance and the present-day painter', *Journal of the Royal Society* 97 (1949), pp.807-21.

Short reviews

Immagini ed eresie nell'Italia del Cinquecento

By Massimo Firpo and Fabrizio Biferali. 494 pp. incl. 94 col. + b. & w. ills. (Laterza, Bari, 2016), €38. ISBN 978-88-581-2524-3.

by FRANÇOIS QUIVIGER

For a long time religious censorship of Italian Renaissance art was mostly considered through the lens of Paolo Veronese's encounter with the Venetian Inquisition and its lenient outcome. With the exception of studies on Michelangelo and his circle, scholarship on the Reformation in Italy hardly affected Italian art history and was confined to specialists of the *storia ereticale* (study of heresies). The book under review, written collaboratively by a scholar of the *storia ereticale* and an art historian, brings another layer of understanding to the religious context of sixteenth-century Italian ecclesiastical art. Firpo and Biferali's detailed archival research reveals diffidence in matters of worship and aggressive energies directed at images – ranging from mockery to verbal and physical violence – that parallel the iconoclastic outbursts associated with the Reformation in Northern Europe.

The book begins with two introductory chapters on the question of idolatry and the *Beneficio di Cristo* – perhaps the most influential sixteenth-century devotional text – composed in Naples by the Spanish exile Juan de Valdés (1500–41). The next five chapters cover Naples, from which Valdés's ideas radiated, and the locations where his ideas were received and fused with the notions of northern reformers: Florence, Rome, Central Italy and, finally, Venice and the Domini de Terraferma. Each chapter begins with an assessment of the presence and circulation of heterodox ideas followed by interpretations of the images commissioned and produced in these contexts.

The Italian sympathisers of the Reformation, like those north of the Alps, objected to worship of images, in particular images of saints. They believed that salvation is achieved through faith rather than through charitable works, donations and the commissioning of costly works of art for churches and chapels. These ideas circulated in semi-secrecy throughout the Italian peninsula until the 1550s, when they were brutally repressed. Artists, patrons and artisans were affected because many of them