

INTRODUCTION ROOM

Biography

Giorgio de Chirico was born in Volos, Greece, on 10 July 1888 of Italian parents. He studies at the Athens Polytechnic from 1903 to 1906. In September 1906 he moves to Munich with his mother and brother, Andrea, and frequents the Academy of Fine Arts. In March 1910, again with his mother and brother, he moves to Florence. He has his metaphysical revelation in Piazza Santa Croce and produces his first metaphysical paintings: *The Enigma of the Oracle*, *The Enigma of an Autumn Afternoon* and *The Enigma of the Hour*. On 14 July 1911 de Chirico and his mother join his

brother in Paris. Here he develops the theme of Italian piazzas, inspired by the architecture of Turin and the teachings of Nietzschean philosophy. In March 1913 he exhibits three paintings at the *Salon des Indépendants* and comes to the attention of Picasso and Apollinaire. With the latter he begins a lasting collaboration and friendship. In 1914, thanks to Apollinaire's good offices, he is introduced to his first dealer, Paul Guillaume. In 1915 he begins the cycle of works involving mannequins. In May of the same year he signs up with the military authorities of Florence and is transferred to Ferrara. Here he begins to paint his first metaphysical

interiors. Between 1917 and 1918 he also creates his most famous works of art: *Great Metaphysical Interior*, *Hector and Andromache*, *The Troubadour* and *The Disquieting Muses* (1918). He continues to have contact with the Parisian scene and to send his works to Paul Guillaume. Moving to Rome on 1 January 1919, in February his first solo exhibition is held at the Casa d'Arte Bragaglia. De Chirico rediscovers the art of great artists in the museums and begins to make copies of the works of the great Italian masters of the Renaissance, among whom Raphael and Michelangelo. In Rome in 1924, he meets his first wife Raissa Gourevitch Krol.

At the close of 1925 he moves back to Paris. The subjects of his paintings are archaeologists, horses on the seashore, trophies, interiors with landscapes, furniture in the valley and gladiators. The surrealists heavily criticize his more recent works. His break with the group is by now total and destined to be exacerbated in coming years. In 1929, Pierre Lévy's Éditions du Carrefour publishes *Hebdomeros. Le peintre et son génie chez l'écrivain*. In 1930 his marriage to Raissa comes to an end. That same year he meets his second wife Isabella Pakszwer Far, who is at his side until his death. In August 1936 he leaves for New York, to return to

Italy in early January 1938. During the forties he begins work on a series of terracotta sculptures and in 1941 illustrates *The Apocalypse*. Over the course of the 1948 Venice Biennale, Francesco Arcangeli organizes an exhibition in which the prize for metaphysical painting is awarded to Giorgio Morandi, and where, among the exhibited works, there is also “a formidable fake” by de Chirico. In 1950, in protest of the preceding Biennale, he organizes an “Anti-Biennale” at the Società Canottieri Bucintoro in Venice. In 1952 he and Isabella marry. On 5 May of the same year, his brother, known under the pseudonym Alberto Savinio, dies. From the

end of the sixties de Chirico takes up his metaphysical subjects again in more joyful contexts, full of color: the Neo-Metaphysical period. He dies on 20 November 1978. From 1992 his remains have been kept in Rome, in the Church of San Francesco a Ripa.

ROOM 1

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The Disquieting Muses

Here we have one of the most well-known and universally renowned works of Giorgio de

Chirico's entire artistic production. In this masterpiece, *The Disquieting Muses*, the scene represents a piazza empty of people but for the presence of two mannequins with egg-shaped heads. The mannequins appear in an illogical context, in a reality crystallized and suspended beyond time. The standing figure's body is formed from an ionic column, the muscular bust of a classical sculpture and the eyeless and mouthless head of a mannequin. While the seated figure, whose head is leaning at their feet, recalls archaic maternal figures with arms folded over the stomach. Further back, a third figure, with a faceless head, brings to mind classical

sculpture. In the background, to the right stands Castle Este in Ferrara, and to the left, a factory with tall red chimneys. Both buildings seem empty and abandoned. Frozen in the silence of the large piazza, with the improbable panorama made up of the castle (symbol of a glorious past now irremediably lost) and the chimney stacks (symbols of modernity), the “muses” are immobile, as though placed on an empty stage, and we spectators are the public. They are mysterious presences, which will never be able to reveal their inaccessible secret to us. Disquieting, they seem to suggest that we go beyond appearances and dialogue with the

mystery. The painting's vibrant colors are almost flat and accompanied by shadows that don't correspond to reality.

ROOM 2

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Italian Square with Statue of Cavour

The first artistic experiments portraying de Chirico's *Italian Piazzas* date back to the early 1910s – more than a century ago – at the time the Futurist movement was establishing itself -, charged with dynamism and modernity. De Chirico's piazzas are

metaphysical places in which time is suspended and space is marked by long black shadows, juxtaposed with the intense light of the scene. By means of perspective, de Chirico framed within a single space, fragments of the past and visions of the present, creating an architectonic *assemblage*, sometimes recalling the architectures of the main cities in which he had lived, such as Florence, Turin and Ferrara. They are places in which the public space deserted by man is populated by objects systematically alienated from their habitual context. De-contextualization that ends up making them illogical and mysterious. Such

urban landscapes, in contrast to Futuristic utopias, represent “silent cities” distinguished by an absolute classicism beyond time, in which the suspended atmosphere creates the disturbing expectation of an uncertain future and produces a feeling of continual disorientation. Alongside the composition’s buildings is the statuary monument of the piazza, the statue of Cavour, the political architect of Italy.

ROOM 2

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Summer Poem

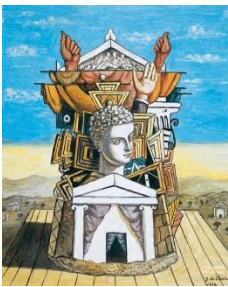
Summer Poem is an exemplary painting from Giorgio de Chirico's metaphysical production. The work highlights the theatrical aspect of the composition based on contrasting elements, such as light and shade, stillness and movement, space on this side and beyond the architectonic settings, the co-existence of an animated statue and a person in a suspended state. The mise-en-scène

includes recurrent elements that are full of ambiguity. The train, for example, alludes simultaneously to the career of the artist's father, engineer Evaristo de Chirico (who died in 1905 when the artist was only 17 years of age) and to the theme of never-ending departure. In this scene the contrasting feelings of nostalgia and anxiety cohabit. In the foreground the classical statue portraying Ariadne, recall the moment in the myth when she was abandoned by Theseus and awaits Dionysus and the new life the god will bring her. Finally, the chimney stack in the background acts as a symbol of modernity in a composition knowledgeably constructed

with fifteenth century perspective. The work communicates a sense of suspended time, Nietzsche's eternal return.

ROOM 3

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Trophy with Head and Temple

For the ancient Greeks and Romans, the trophy was a monument erected to celebrate victory over the enemy. According to ancient custom, the remains of the defeated were raised and hung from a tree or a stake, or at

least thrown into a pile on the battlefield. Following its construction, the trophy was dedicated to a deity, as a gesture of thanks for the victory. In the Roman era trophies became compositions sculpted from arms in bas-relief, used to decorate the sides of triumphal arches or decorative monuments. Whereas de Chirico's *Trophies* are places for collection, gathering the most disparate elements that can arouse his archaeological curiosity and stimulate his creative fantasy. In this case the subject emerges on a wide stage of wooden boards dominating the serene surrounding landscape. The structure soars as the culmination of a classical temple, forming

its rich decoration. Our eyes are drawn upwards by the vertical tension expressed by the hands, to reach the triangular pediment. It is a sort of metaphysical totem, whose shadow almost acts as a sundial, or rather a fundamental element to measure time that, though flowing, is always suspended in de Chirico's paintings.

ROOM 3

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Troubadour

The *Troubadour*, who historically speaking belongs to the Middle Ages, is among the most famous subjects matters of de Chirico's oeuvre. The subject isn't given human features, but alternatively the appearance of a depersonalized mannequin. The artist conceived his *Troubadour* as the herald of a new era, triumphantly proclaiming the expressive and stylistic novelties ideated by

his creator. The painting's atmosphere reflects the aura of the Renaissance in the city of Ferrara, where de Chirico moved in 1915. The figure, supported by a type of scaffolding structure, is complete with engineering tools. On the line of the horizon, we again find one of the recurrent motifs of de Chirico-esque art: the modern steam train, symbol of travel, and more specifically, the metaphysical journey that the protagonist is undertaking. His face, lacking eyes, symbolizes the protagonist's introspection regarding the metaphysical aspect of the everyday things that surround him and the space that he inhabits.

ROOM 3

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The Anniversary of the Prince

Painted in 1973, this work is a re-elaboration of a theme that first appeared in de Chirico's early metaphysical period of the 1910s, namely *Playthings of the Prince* of 1915. The changes consist in the addition of brightly colored geometric elements and the still life in the foreground – or “silent life” as de Chirico renamed the artistic genre – as well as the statues in the background niches. Equally,

the shadow on the right is an extraneous element referencing the elongated shadows populating his early metaphysical works. The theme of toys is the composition's main protagonist. Nostalgia for a childhood spent in the land of mythical Greece continually fuelled de Chirico's imagination. The large play tent imposes its huge bulk in the foreground and stands out from the wooden floor with its loud color and rich decoration. The inspirational work of 1915 was painted in Ferrara and was amongst the very first paintings that the artist sent to the Parisian gallery owner Paul Guillaume, one of the first to underpin de Chirico's revolutionary talent.

Two years later, in a historic exhibition organized by André Salmon, he exhibited some of the artist's works next to Picasso's masterpiece: *Les demoiselles d'Avignon*.

ROOM 4

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The Painter and The Astrologist

In the work *The Painter*, the mannequins are depicted with semi-human bodies, albeit faceless. The subject matter appeared for the first time in de Chirico's work in 1914. As in

the subject of the troubadour, the absence of eyes is indicative of his introspection. De Chirico's poetics are closely intertwined with those of Guillaume Apollinaire, the famous French critic of the early twentieth century avant-garde, who was also de Chirico's first champion in Paris. In a poem Apollinaire composed at the end of 1913, he describes a faceless human figure as the Dionysian personification of the poet himself and his creative power. Alongside *The Painter* we find *The Astrologist*, a painting from 1970 also with a mannequin, standing out from an urban landscape, in front of an easel. Here the astrologer meditates upon the

metaphysical depth of his cosmic designs. Incomprehensible signs drawn in white can be seen on the blackboard. The body of the figure is made up of a careful overlapping of geometrical shapes and has no arms.

ROOM 4

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The Masks

In the sixties and seventies, de Chirico returned to some fundamental themes of his earlier metaphysics. Naturally, mannequins appeared once again, albeit reinterpreted

with greater attention paid to the use of color. This painting can also be seen alongside the various versions of “Orestes and Pylades.” The subject, symbol of universal man, is emblematic of de Chirico’s poetics, while the theme of two mannequin heads in an interior is equally proverbial. The head in the foreground is empty, and its notably darker inside is visible from the profiled opening divided in two by a set square that assumes the appearance of an unlikely nose. A cap in multicolored quarters enlivens the look of the subject, making it almost harlequinesque, despite such a distressing aspect. Behind this appears a white head, made more human

because it is depicted at a coquettish angle. The window opens onto an urban panorama possibly recalling the skyline of Bologna with its two famous towers. One figure provides comfort and support to the other while discerning his inner metaphysical journey, as can be seen even more clearly in the series *Archaeologists*, which de Chirico developed in Paris during the second half of the 1920s.

ROOM 4

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The Bride's Secret

An analysis of *The Bride's Secret* might begin from the plaster head lying in the foreground with open eyes and pupils turned up and backwards. The rest of the body is modeled in the classical style. Looking up towards the centre of the scene, painted on an easel, we find the figure that lends the title to the composition: a woman with no arms, draped in a classical toga. More specifically, the

figure portrays a bride; or the mythological figure of Ariadne waiting for Dionysus, in the intermediate state between sleep and wakefulness. We are in an interior, but through the window on the right we see a glimpse of a blue sky furrowed with airy clouds. The mannequin has no arms – in any case they would be futile for her intellectual and visionary activities – substituted by overlapping black circles. The *mise-en-scène* of this “painting within a painting” is completed by a motif frequently used by de Chirico, which is to say an assemblage of set squares and rulers in the lower right foreground, while on the left-hand side we

see another painting or window featuring a temple sitting placed amongst rocks.

ROOM 4

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The Painter of Horses

Examining this work, we should first turn our attention to the iconography of St Luke painting the Virgin Mary. In the picture traditionally attributed to Raphael – an attribution accepted by de Chirico for the work’s “aspects of metaphysical ghostliness” – Raphael portrays St Luke, patron saint of

artists, in the act of painting the Virgin Mary. The work, which de Chirico probably saw for the first time during a trip to Rome in October 1909, struck him deeply because in his opinion it presented, “indisputable signs of metaphysical naturalism.” Later, the Renaissance masterpiece inspired him to paint *The Painter of Horses* in 1927, successively revisited with the neo-metaphysical painting of the same name in 1974. Here de Chirico, the mannequin-philosopher-poet is portrayed painting the head of a horse on canvas, thereby simultaneously changing himself into the patron saint of the arts, modern protector of

the great tradition of painting. It is an image before which we observers are dumbfounded: Raphael's *St Luke painting the Virgin Mary* with religious decorum, transformed into a faceless mannequin painting a horse. The silent dialogue we witness here between de Chirico and Raphael, the symbol of perfection in the late Renaissance, is highly significant. The feeling of surprise, derived from the decision to substitute the two main figures in a famous work of art, is the element that triggers "a highly metaphysical revelation" in which "time does not exist," because "on the great curve of eternity the past is the same as the

future [...] memory mixing with prophecy is an immense mystery.”

ROOM 5

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Hector and Andromache

The mythological couple of Hector and Andromache is a common subject matter in art and is an important subject for de Chirico from the latter half of the 1910s onwards.

Hector, oldest son of Priam and Hecuba, was famed as the bravest among the Trojans.

Andromache, for her part, is one of the most

poignant figures of antiquity. Her portrayal is forlorn and beset with woe. She is the daughter of the King of Thebe, whom she sees descend to Hades with her seven brothers and her mother, victims of the sword of Achilles and the terrible Artemis. Destined for solitude and the loss of all her loved ones, she also sees the death of her husband and baby son Astyanax. The name Andromàche means “fighter of men.” Both figurative art and poetry have succeeded in exposing Andromache’s impotence and desperation faced with Hector’s vital sense of duty. The artist who succeeds with great potency to embody this immobile

desperation is de Chirico. Rather than portray two realistic figures, the sculpture gives us a pair of faceless, armless mannequins. The artist uses this composition to recount and reinterpret Hector and Andromache's last embrace before the Trojan hero meets Achilles the Greek on the battlefield. Hence the scene represents the critical moment of leave-taking, a fundamental concept for de Chirico. It symbolizes the start of Hector's metaphysical journey. The scene reflects the lovers' full awareness: their last embrace before a cruel and inexorable death. The feeling that emerges is one of love united with resignation, all rendered extraordinarily

immediate by two faceless, armless mannequins.

ROOM 5

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Solitary Orestes

Orestes, son of Agamemnon, left alone with his sisters and mother Clytemnestra when his father (supreme head of the Greeks) leaves for the Trojan War. As a child he knew the horror of his father's death, killed by his mother with her lover Aegisthus, usurper of Mycenae. Orestes is removed to safety,

outside the kingdom. While his sister Electra remains, marginalized at home, awaiting her brother's return, with a single idea in mind: to avenge the death of their father Agamemnon. Thus Orestes was destined to fulfill this violent deed, continually pursued and stymied by the Furies, avenging spirits of their mother. Apollo, his protector, gave him a bow with which to defend himself. In the theater, the figure of Orestes takes on the role of tragic hero par excellence. His task is a heavy burden: to avenge his dead father, he will be obliged to kill his mother. Giorgio de Chirico portrays his Orestes on a sort of stage. The figure is alone, waiting to be reunited with his

sister, and to carry out the deed; he seems absorbed and perhaps prey to inner conflict, invisible to us. *Solitary Orestes* by de Chirico is a prelude, a moment of anticipation for what is coming, according to the mythological narrative. The moment of solitary meditation is suspended between past and future.

ROOM 5

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The Thinker

During the 1910s and 1920s, de Chirico began to fill his paintings with solemn, monumental,

and three-dimensional figures, like mannequins. Gradually the figures were identified in different terms: “thinkers,” “seers,” “philosophers” and “sages.” De Chirico’s mannequins, deprived of eyes, ears, and mouth, evoke the impossibility of seeing, hearing, and speaking. And yet, recalling the poets and diviners of classical mythology, they also recall the superior ability to probe reality beyond its phenomenal appearance. They represent the melancholy and mysterious states of mind, of a heroic and epic solitude. In 1942, many years after the appearance of the first mannequin in 1914, de Chirico, inevitably conditioned by the

horrors of the ongoing Second World War, wrote: "The mannequin is an object roughly possessing the aspect of man, but without movement and life; the mannequin is profoundly not alive, and this lack of life pushes us away from it and makes it odious. Its aspect, both human and monstrous at the same time, frightens and irritates us. When an intuitive man looks at a mannequin, he should be filled with the frenetic desire to perform great feats, to prove to himself and others what he is capable of, and to demonstrate clearly once and for all that the mannequin is a defamation of man, and that

in the end we are not as insignificant as a random object that might resemble us.”

ROOM 5

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The Archeologists

One of the main themes developed by de Chirico during the latter half of the 1920s, when he lived in Paris, is the series known as the *Archaeologists*. De Chirico's archaeologist is not a person in flesh and blood, but a timeless mannequin presented individually or as a couple. Appearing on the bodies of the

Archaeologists are statues, capitals, and snatches of landscape with architectonic elements from ancient Greece. The bodies are out of proportion, exaggeratedly long in the upper body and arms. The impression is finding oneself faced with monumental architectonic structures that dominate the barren surrounding landscape. The figures, however dehumanized by the absence of a face, are involved in a silent dialogue. These mannequin-archaeologists bring de Chirico's dreams to the canvas: traces of his Greek youth, idealized and mythicized as a golden era. Like archaeologists, they represent the importance of the past – history, culture,

mythology, art and architecture – a past that builds the present in an eternal Nietzschean return. Often portrayed in couples, one archaeologist gives support to the other, while meditating on the metaphysical importance of the assemblage of the past, of which there are signs in their “stomachs”: for example, parts of aqueducts, arches, books, statues and so on. From 1927, until the artist’s death in 1978, many of his works include this subject, whether paintings or sculptures.

ROOM 6

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Sun over the Fireplace

The iconography of this work dates to the late 1920s. In 1929, de Chirico was commissioned to produce 66 lithographs to illustrate *Calligrammes*, a posthumously published work by Guillaume Apollinaire (the French avant garde critic and poet, who died prematurely in 1918). The result was this graphical masterpiece of the early twentieth century and for it de Chirico temporarily

abandoned all the previously treated subjects to bring into being completely new imaginary shapes and situations. Waterfalls and clouds, floral forms, shells, and as in this case, suns illuminating and darkening in the sky and on the ground, tied together by mysterious threads. In his works of the 1920s, suns and moons were found in ancient Mediterranean landscapes populated with classical ruins. During his neo-metaphysical period, the themes that appeared in the *Calligrammes* were re-elaborated with scenes brought increasingly indoors. In this way the theme assumes the aspect of a theatrical performance, with curtains opening onto the

scene. In this painting, we see the sun placed within the room's fireplace which warms this Ferrarese interior.

ROOM 6

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Minerva and the Mysterious Object

In classical mythology, Athena, or Minerva for the Romans, is shown as a warrior, in charge of advising and defending heroes. Her ability to settle disputes was quite different to that of the bellicose Ares (known to the Romans as Mars). The god of war was mainly tied to the more violent aspects of battle, champion of combat understood as bloodlust, while his

female equivalent often used reason, conceiving war to obtain peace. Moreover, Athena also designed great inventions such as the flute, the terracotta pot, the plough, the ship and so forth. Athena/Minerva was therefore both an intellectual goddess as well as an artisan. She was something of a role model for Giorgio de Chirico: a deeply intellectual artist but invariably bound up with the technical methods of painting. In this work on paper the Greco-Roman deity appears in the form of a gigantic sculpture, clearly recognizable with her attribute of the helmet. She does not look down from the pediment of a classical temple, but stands in

front of it, dominating it with her presence. Framing her is a large pair of curtains that fall onto the stage in the foreground. The urban space derived is that of a modern dramatized Athens, while the dimensional contrast and the unconventional presence of a colorful but inexplicable object in the foreground generate the usual metaphysical disquiet to which de Chirico has accustomed us. Minerva is portrayed meditating on the metaphysical aspect of the object, which plays the leading role on the “stage.” It vibrates with vivid colors, symbol of a pure animated essence even in its identity of inanimate object.

ROOM 7

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Metaphysical Interior with Factory

De Chirico's artwork is the reflection of a reality immortalized by a theatrical eye, an approach that the artist began to develop at the age of twenty-two, sitting on a bench in Piazza Santa Croce in Florence. Facing the buildings, fountains, sun and statue of Dante Alighieri in the middle of the piazza, he was overcome by the impression of seeing his surroundings as if for the first time,

everything beginning to appear new and alienating. In *Metaphysical Interior with Factory*, de Chirico returns to themes dear to him in the 1910s, with renewed compositional solidity and rigor. As in the preceding metaphysical interiors, here the painting reveals an unexpected juxtaposition of elements plucked from reality, which are mutually extraneous and incongruent, that transcend ordinary logic. The inclusion of slanting lines, crooked rulers and frames, and the incongruous placing of shadows, disassembles the space according to perspectives defined by multiple vanishing points. The illusory game of the painting

within a painting, an aspect taken up by surrealists Max Ernst and René Magritte, and the unresolved relationship between interior and exterior compete to mislead the direction of the image and provoke a feeling of alienation and a transformation in visual perception. The interior painting, with the factory in the centre and classical sculpture in the foreground, is imbued with a warm light evoking the melancholy feeling of an autumn afternoon.

ROOM 7

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Furniture and Rocks in a Room

The art of de Chirico, born in Volos in Greece (where he lived until the age of seventeen), is strongly inspired by the world of myth and classical art. Added to this cultural base is the central European culture he encountered during his stay in Germany from 1906 to 1909. A main event of his cultural growth was the abovementioned encounter with the symbolist painter Böcklin. In Munich, de

Chirico came across an album of engravings of Böcklin's works that had a profound effect on him, leading to his debut in the artistic field. De Chirico would later write: "In Böcklin, metaphysical power emerges from the exactness and clarity of a particular vision. He never paints a fog or draws a vague contour; here lies his classicism and his grandeur." In this enigmatic composition, *Furniture and Rocks in a Room*, the most disparate objects cohabit extraordinarily in an interior. In just two details, as many references to Böcklin's symbolism can be identified: the sculpture painted from behind and the isolated rocky hill, which appear in the Swiss painter's

famous masterpiece, *Isle of the Dead*, produced in five versions in the 1880s. It is clear that de Chirico's painting pays homage to Böcklin – albeit in a veiled manner -whom he had discovered as a student over 60 years earlier.

ROOM 7

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Metaphysical Interior with Head of Mercury

Hermes is the Greek god identified with the Roman god Mercury. Son of Zeus and Maia, he was born in a cave on Mount Kyllini in

Arcadia. At a young age, Mercury invented the lyre, the musical instrument with which he soothed the wrath of Apollo, who hunted him down when he stole an entire herd of cattle. The god of the arts gave him a golden magic staff (better known as a *caduceus*), which would become his main attribute, the physical representation of the co-existence of good and evil in man. Hermes was the protector of travelers and a wandering god himself; the Romans extolled Mercury for his qualities of guile and swiftness. In the iconography here, de Chirico paints him with his other main attribute, which is to say his winged hat, while he is known for his winged

sandals too. The presence of wings clearly alludes to his proverbial speed, a characteristic that made him a suitable messenger for the gods. However, de Chirico ignores the more usual elements of the subject, portraying him with head bowed in meditation. This pensive attitude seems to allude to one of Hermes' other functions: that of facilitating the passage to the afterlife by laying his caduceus on people's eyes at the end of their life. The god seems to have just been painted, still on the easel. De Chirico often used the motif of the "painting within a painting" from the second half of the 1910s, when he began to develop the theme of

interiors from Ferrara. Alongside the illogical perspective and the presence of unexpected objects or scenes gathered in the same space, the “painting within a painting” also heightens our sense of disquiet, confusing the spectator in the perception of interior and exterior.

ROOM 8

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Mysterious Baths

In the same period as the graphic work of *Mythologies*, de Chirico began a series of

paintings on the same theme, and particularly during his later trip to New York from 1936 to 1938. The sources of this work are wide ranging. From a historical point of view the painter joined a long tradition (medieval in origin) of portraying nudes bathing in pools in the open. The better-known subject of the iconography is clearly that of the *Fountain of Youth*, where older people undress before entering a pool from which they emerge rejuvenated. In de Chirico's version the naked swimmers are immersed in a strangely shaped pool. The water seems to be substituted by a kind of wooden parquet of a herringbone pattern with an undulating

movement. As for the most part of the paintings in the series, in this case the figures are men. In 1973, de Chirico clarified his intentions, making the following ironic statement at the inauguration of the Triennale di Milano about *The Mysterious Baths Fountain* he had designed: “The idea of the *Mysterious Baths* came to me when I once found myself in a house where the floor was highly polished with wax. I watched a gentleman walking ahead of me, his legs reflected in the floor. I had the impression that he could sink into the floor, as into a pool. So, I imagined strange swimming pools with men immersed in that kind of water

parquet.” As enigmatic as his works of art, de Chirico often refused to provide clear explanations, preferring to give ironic replies to questions for which there were no logical answers.