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The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	JTS	I.6.2

1961

René Berger
Buenos Aires - Reconquista 336
T. E. 32-9471

Mr.
J.T. SOBY
Brushy Ridge Road
New Canaan (Conn.)

Dear Mr. Soby,

I thank you for your letter dated April 25.-

I have forgotten the street number of the little boarding house where Chirico, his mother and myself were living.- The year was, I guess, 1920, the house was the third or the fourth on the Lungarno Acciaoli, very near Ponte Vecchio, which I could see from my window. Giorgio shared a room with his mother and slept in a little soldier bed, behind a paravent. The Baronessa was a very energetic woman who entertained the bitterest discussions with the "signorina".-

At that time, I happened to know Castelfranco and Mario Broglio. I am not able to tell you when Chirico was in Germany but if I well remember, he made two journeys. During the first one-- which I could place around 1926-- he stood at my place and came from Munich and remained a week or some days over a week.-

The second time, he went to Berlin at the same time the Diaghilew's Ballets were in Berlin. I remember that Diaghilew went for lunch to my place. Giorgio worked for Diaghilew some ballets decors, and spend in Berlin, 2 or 3 weeks.-

I am sorry not to remember more precise details.... Time is elapsing quickly and the memories are loosing themselves in the darkness of the past.-

I probably will go this year to Europe and surely will go to Rome and see Giorgio.-

With kindest regards,

René Berger


René BERGER

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J. T. SOBY
Brushy Ridge Road
New Canaan, Conn.

Alfred: Probably you're bored with this whole subject but, damn it, I just can't let go, and Berger's letter fascinates me.



April 25, 1961

Mr. Rene Berger,
Reconquista 336,
Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Dear Mr. Berger:

Thank you very much for your extremely interesting letter about your friendship with de Chirico. I have no present plans for revising my book on de Chirico's early works, but I continue to gather all the information I can about him and his brilliant early period.

First of all, it would be enormously interesting to know the address of the boarding house in Florence where you, de Chirico and his mother lived, if you can remember it. I would assume this was right after the First World War, after de Chirico was released from the Italian Army at Ferrara, but the exact date is important, too. I would be most grateful for any precise information you can give me.

In all these years of research, you are the first one to have told me that de Chirico was in Berlin between 1925 and 1930. This would explain a great deal, for I know that Mario Broglio organized a de Chirico exhibition for Central Europe through his gallery-publishing house, Valori Plastici and that at least a few works by de Chirico were sold in Germany in the 1920's. I would like very much to know how long de Chirico himself stayed in Germany, what artists he knew there, the approximate date of his arrival, and so on.

As to your two paintings of mannequin subjects, it is impossible to give you an opinion about them without seeing the originals. Nevertheless, it seems unlikely that de Chirico copied these two images of his earlier period - Hector and Andromaque and The Condottiere - for your special benefit and then said he had found them in Berlin. We do know that as early as 1921 he had made a copy of the famous Disquieting Muses for Paul Eluard and Andre Breton, when Castelfranco refused to sell the original except for a steep price. But that, I tend to think, was an exceptional case at that early date and probably motivated by his then high regard for surrealism's leaders. I have no proof that he then did copies for anyone else, but I do have his letters offering to paint the second version of the Muses. (Or rather I have copies of his letters, given me by Eluard.)

I wish so much I could see your two pictures. They look extremely interesting, and perhaps one day you will bring them to New York with you.

Meanwhile, my kindest regards and thanks,

Sincerely,

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J. T. SOBY
Brushy Ridge Road
New Canaan, Conn.

Sept. 19, 1960

M. Rene Berger,
Reconquista 336,
Buenos Aires, Argentina/

Dear M. Berger:

I have your letter of Sept. 14 and the photographs of the de Chiricos. I regret to tell that that it is impossible for me to give an opinion from photographs that small. Even if I had the negatives, which you also sent, enlarged, I doubt that I could tell you much.

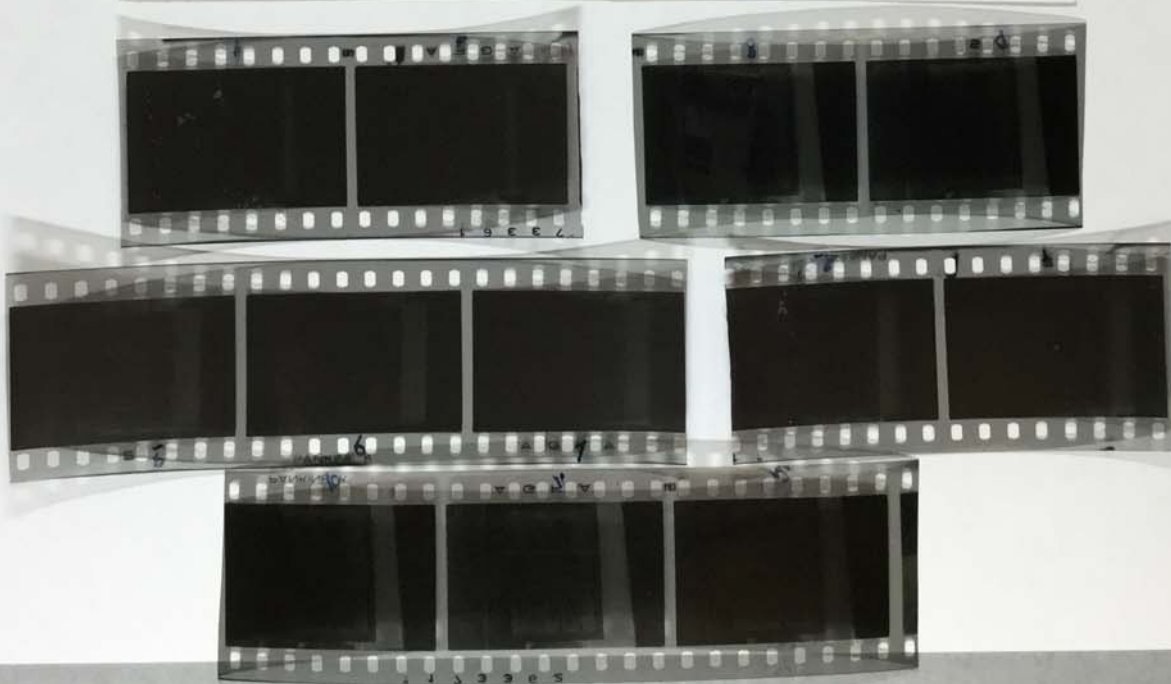
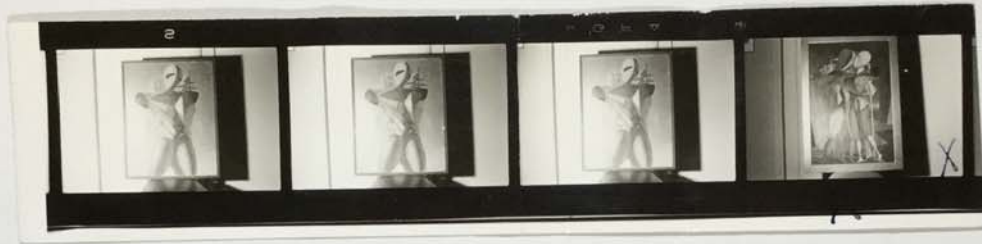
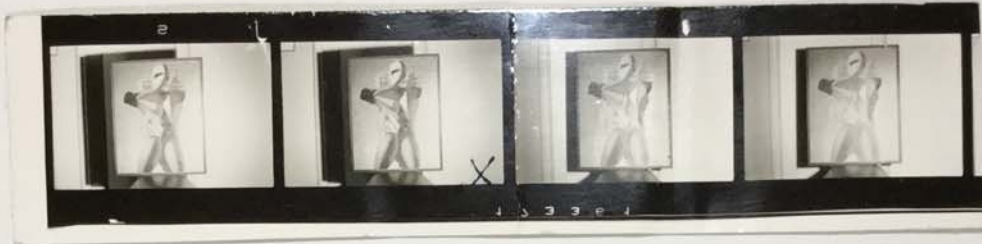
Wouldn't it be possible for you to have 8 x 10 inch photographs made of the pictures and send them to me? These problems of dating, etc., are extremely difficult, and I need the clearest black-and-white photographs to work from. If it is not possible to have larger photographs made, let me know, and I will try to have your negatives enlarged.

Kindest regards,

Sincerely,

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René Berger

Buenos Aires - Reconquista 336
T. E. 32 - 9471

Buenos Aires, Septiembre 14, 1960

Mr.
J.T. SOBY
Brushy Ridge Road
New Canaan
CONNECTICUT(U.S.A.)

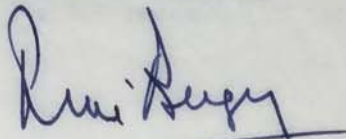
Dear Mr. Soby,

I am sorry to answer after so many months to your kind letter dated, alas, December 5, 1959 ! But I have been traveling abroad and it is not easy here to find a suitable photographer.-

I dont even konw whether the enclosed pictures will be sufficient for your examination = it is the best I could get.-

It remains only for me to hope that you will not await as long a time to answer me as I did to answer you.-

With kindest regards,



René BERGER

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Vgartecha 3370
6º Piso
Buenos Aires
RENÉ BERGER
with kindest regards



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René Berger
c/o. H.J. Dorfer
221 East 78 Street
New York 21, N.Y.



Mr. James Thrall Soby
c/o. Museum of Modern Art
11 West 53 Street
New York 19, N.Y.

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J. T. SOBY
Brushy Ridge Road
New Canaan, Conn.

Dec. 5, 1959

M. Rene Berger,
Vgarteche 3370
Buenos Aires 6,
Argentina.

Dear M. Berger:

I have the color photographs of your four de Chiricos, and frankly would much prefer to study the works from 8 x 10" black-and-white photographs which you said you could send; I would be greatly obliged.

The self-portrait has been reproduced many times and seems a perfectly authentic work of the very early 1920's. Similarly I think the landscape was probably done around 1923, when de Chirico was extremely interested in landscape with mythological figures. (As you probably know, the self-portrait is reproduced in Valori Plastici, vol. II, no. 5-6, May-June, 1926, and therefore must have been done in 1919 or 1920 - a fact I wasn't sure of until I found the Valori Plastici plate after I started this paragraph.)

The two pictures which interest me most are the two with mannequin figures. I tend to think that the one with two mannequins is a "metaphysical" work of 1917 or 1918, long lost in Central Europe. But I can tell you much more after I've seen the large black-and-white photos. Meanwhile, I hope I may hold onto the little color photos; I won't lose them, I can assure you.

I will wait forwardly to seeing the black-and-white photographs.

With kindest regards,

Sincerely,

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JAMES THRALL SOBY

Brushy Ridge Road

New Canaan, Conn.

Nov. 9, 1955

M. Rene Berger,
Reconquista 336,
Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Dear M. Berger:

Thank you very much for your kind letter, with its most interesting information about de Chirico and your collection of pictures by him. I would be greatly obliged if you could send me photographs of the pictures, which sound fine and some of which I know from reproductions in Valori Plastici.

I am especially excited to know that you own the Hector and Andromache published on page 232 of my book. I have never seen this picture, alas, but my friend and colleague Alfred Barr saw it years ago in Germany and has never forgotten it. It would be good to have a decent photograph of the picture. The one photograph we had in the Museum of Modern Art was somehow lost, and I had to reproduce from an existing plate.

As to de Chirico's novel, Hebdomeros, I share your admiration for it completely. On page 46 of the book I said: "Moreover, de Chirico has always shown decided literary gifts; his astonishing novel Hebdomeros (1929) would in itself be adequate proof of his ability to invent his own titles." And on page 162 I wrote: "Similarly, his genius revives in his novel, Hebdomeros, published in 1929 and greatly admired even by his now-enemies, the surrealists." Perhaps I should have said more about this remarkable book. I used to have an extra copy of the book in the 1929 French edition. If I can find it, I will send it to you with my compliments. And it might interest you to know that the book was published in Italian in 1942 by Bompiani in Milan. This reprint is easy to find in Italy, but may lack the flavor of the original French text.

In view of your long and close friendship with the de Chirico family (I knew Savinio slightly and had long talks with him in Milan a year or so before he died), perhaps you will think this question impertinent. But was de Chirico's mother really a Baronessa? I have heard conflicting stories about her title, and would like to know as a matter of curiosity. She must in any case have been a remarkable woman.

Any other information you can send me will be appreciated, believe me. Though the book has been published and I don't plan to revise it, at least for some time, I can't resist trying to accumulate more material about this fascinating artist.

With thanks and kindest regards,

Sincerely,

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René Berger
Buenos Aires - Reconquista 336
T. E. 32-9471

Buenos Aires, October 27, 1955

Mr. James Thrall Soby
The Museum of Modern Art
11, West 53 Street
NEW YORK 19, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Soby,

I have just received from an american friend your extremely interesting book on Giorgio de Chirico.

In my youth, in 1919-1920, I have been intimately connected with Giorgio, his brother Alberto SAVINIO and their mother Baronessa de CHIRICO. We all together were staying for half a year in a little boarding house, Lungarno Acciaiuoli 2, in FIRENZE. This house has been bombed out during the last war.

I heard very often Chirico explaining his theories on the technicalities of painting and I remember having seen him, days after days, painting his wonderful copy of Michel Angelo Holy Family, in the Uffizi. I am still a good friend of him and visit him when I go to Italy.

I am a possessor of 4 pictures of de Chirico.

1) Autoritrato, with the corner of the Uffizi, and the legend "Et quid amabo nisi quid rerum metaphysica est". This very important picture is reproduced in Valori Plastici, Ano II Nos. VII - VIII, first page.

2) A picture from the Böcklin period, showing a big tree, a bridge and a man lying on the ground saluting an other one, on horse back, over a bridge. I am sorry to say that I have forgotten the name of it.

3) a manequin: Andromaca and Hector,

4) " " : Il Condottiere.

I bought items 1 and 2 from Castelfranco, in Firenze, in 1919 or 1920, may be 1921, and the two manequins from Chirico himself when he was staying at my place in Berlin, I suppose in 1926, may be 1925.

The "Hector and Andromaca" is exactly similar to the picture reproduced in your book page 232. Il Condottiere is very similar, but not identical, to the picture reproduced in Valori Plastici, Ano II, VII - VIII page 77.

I posses, further, a very good pencildrawing from Chirico: "Autoritrato" with the signature: "G. de Chirico - se ipsum delineavit anno aetatis suae XXXII" - which dates the piece from 1920.

The purpose of my letter is only to let you know of the existence of my small Chirico collection, being disposed, if it might interest you, to have the pictures photographed and copies sent to you.

RB./.

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- 2 -

René Berger
Buenos Aires - Reconquista 336
T. E. 32-0471

Mr. James Thrall Soby - NEW YORK -

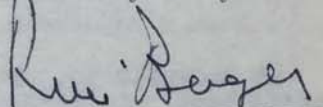
27/10/55

Of course, I am no seller, but I should be interested to know, more or less, the present commercial value of my pictures: as I wish them to be correctly insured.

May I make a very small objection to your so interesting and so well documented book. I can allow me to say that, having known all the Dadaist and having been in Paris during the quarrel between them and Giorgio di Chirico. Maybe, you don't give enough importance to this extraordinary mysterious and poetical work which is Hebdomeros. This book was written by Chirico directly in french⁽¹⁾, which gives to its style a certain "depaysment" poetical value. In my opinion this book ranges on the same level as the so celebrated Chants de Maldoror. Hebdomeros, further, was more or less the poetical testament and the closing of the metaphysical period of Chirico life. I am still sorry that my copy disappeared from my library and in no book shop was I able to find again another one.

Chirico was, then, living in a very modern apartment Boulevard Malesherbes, with his Russian wife, in a very sympathetic disorder. He returned to Roma, a short time after Hebdomeros was published, maybe a year, if I will remember.

Yours very truly.



René BERGER

(1) Alberto SAVINIO also used to write in an extremely good and interesting french, just enough different of the usual french to be more suggestive.