

ALFRED H. BARR, JR. AND JAMES THRALL SOBY'S GRAND TOUR OF ITALY

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Silvia Bignami | Davide Colombo **Methodologies of Exchange: MoMA's "Twentieth-Century Italian Art" (1949), Issue 3, January 2020**

ABSTRACT

From May to June 1948, and with the approval of MoMA's trustees, Alfred H. Barr, Jr., and James Thrall Soby did a "grand tour" of Italy, visiting artists, collectors, critics, dealers, museum, and galleries in Milan, Bergamo, Brescia, Rome, Venice, and Florence. Along the way they saw the Fifth Quadriennale in Rome and the Twenty-Fourth Venice Biennale; these, the most important art events of the time, would prove major sources for Barr and Soby as the curators of the 1949 exhibition *Twentieth-Century Italian Art*. The mission of the journey was double: selecting artworks for the show, and acquiring artworks for MoMA's collection, which was sparse in its Italian modern art holdings.

This essay analyzes how and why Barr and Soby worked to shape a history of Italian modern art within the international context of modernism according to the stylistic genealogy of art that Barr had, since 1936, proposed at MoMA. The details of whom they met; which works they saw and selected, borrowed or purchased; and which works weren't available makes it possible to better understand the framework of the exhibition. In effect, Barr and Soby's approach was ambivalent: their desire for autonomy and their strategy of not involving public institutions allowed them to build direct relationships with artists and private collectors. *Twentieth-Century Italian Art* was an operation of cultural diplomacy that needed to go through official channels, even as the curators insisted on selecting works based primarily on their artistic value and high quality, without prioritizing the political affiliation of the artists. Barr and Soby considered the new democratic and political order in Italy after the end of Fascism an indispensable prerequisite for an artistic "renaissance," which merited the organization of an exhibition at MoMA; they often agreed on selected artworks, and their personal tastes and interests emerged during the process.

As detailed in the foreword to this issue of *Italian Modern Art*, the 1949 exhibition *Twentieth-Century Italian Art*, at the Museum of Modern Art in New York (figures 1a–1b), reflected the Cold War rhetoric of its moment.¹ The climate for art was propitious in Italy, after the end of presumed Fascist isolationism,² and – the message went – a “new renaissance” was blossoming after the defeat of Italy’s powerful Communist Party in the political elections of April 18–19, 1948, which signalled a return to democracy.³ In effect, the new political order was the prerequisite for the United States’ participation in the re-establishment of cultural exchange with Italy, and the 1949 show was a crucial step.

Along the Peninsula

Thus, with the approval of MoMA’s trustees, in the spring and summer of 1948 Alfred H. Barr, Jr., and James Thrall Soby did a “grand tour” of Italy. On April 24, 1948, Barr wrote from Paris to Charles Rufus Morey, the Cultural Attaché at the U.S. Embassy in Rome: “[A]fter two years of discussion and uncertainty which has lasted right through the current week, we have finally decided that we can go ahead with our exhibition of Italian painting and sculpture.”⁴ *Twentieth-Century Italian Art* was largely the product of Barr and Soby’s research activities and interactions with Italian critics, dealers, and collectors (figure 2) – in particular Romeo Toninelli, who functioned as the “executive secretary” of the exhibition.⁵ During their journey, Barr and Soby were accompanied by



Figures 1a–1b. James T. Soby, and Alfred H. Barr, Jr. “Twentieth-Century Italian Art” (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1949): cover and frontispiece with reproduction of Giorgio de Chirico, “Le muse inquietanti” [The disquieting muses], 1916. Mattioli Collection (formerly the Feroldi Collection). New York, MoMA. © 2020. Digital image, The Museum of Modern Art, New York/Scala, Florence.

Soby's wife, Eleanor "Nellie" Howland Soby, and Barr's Italian-born wife, Margaret Scolari Barr, who had much experience in organizing exhibitions as well as fluency in the Italian language; indeed, Scolari Barr's long-recognized role in the exhibition's planning is now well documented in the Margaret Scolari Barr Papers, available to researchers through the MoMA Archives since 2015.

In Italy, Barr and Soby spoke with everybody: artists, collectors, dealers, important critics (such as Roberto Longhi and Lionello Venturi), and museum superintendents and directors. However, while discussions with the leading figures of the Italian art world were prioritized to a degree, for the two curators it was most important to maintain their "independence" in deciding the selection of artworks; this required that they avoid official entanglements:



Figure 2. "Twentieth-Century Italian Art" exhibition views in Roberto Mango, "The Museum of Modern Art in New York," in "Domus" 241 (December 1949): 24–25.

We realize of course that the present political situation in Italy is delicate and complicated. Although we hope that the exhibition will promote sympathy and understanding between Italy and the United States on a cultural level, we feel that it is essential to act independently of official channels insofar as possible. We should like your sympathy and understanding in this problem, for if it were to appear that the exhibition – whatever its quality – were officially sanctioned or supported it would suffer in the eyes of the artists and critics because of the political implications. We believe that we must choose the exhibition on artistic values alone irrespective of the political affiliation of the artists. This may seem unrealistic during this period, but after a great deal of thought we are convinced that no matter what happens in the next year or so, in the long run even the political consequences of the exhibition will be better if it is selected for quality alone.⁶

In time, Barr and Soby's autonomy caused friction. A number of the Italian collectors and critics who met with them – Emilio Jesi, Carlo Frua de Angeli, Fernanda Wittengs, Lamberto Vitali, and Raffaele Carrieri – complained about the role given to Toninelli, and lamented the curators' final selection. Some likely felt their institutional charge, expertise, and scholarship had not been sufficiently appreciated. Barr and Soby treasured each meeting, but, in the end, they made their choices according to their own point of view.

It's also clear that the scenario arranged by Barr and Soby corresponded to the Italian strategy of "indirect cultural diplomacy" evident in the activities of the Italian Prime Minister Alcide De Gasperi during his travel in U.S. in 1947.⁷ Despite their desire for autonomy, theirs was an operation of cultural diplomacy that needed to go through official channels. Between the summer of 1946 and the spring of 1947, Monroe Wheeler, Director of Exhibitions and Publications at MoMA, involved Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli, Director of the Division of Antiquities and Fine Arts of the Ministry of Public Instruction, in the exhibition planning of *Twentieth-Century Italian Art*, and both the Circolo delle Arti in Milan and the American Academy in Rome contributed to the ministry's administrative, logistic, and economic support. As officially approved by Bandinelli, the ministry placed its staff at the disposal of Barr

and Soby for their curatorial research; covered the cost of the works' transportation to the port of embarkation; and lent pictures from the State collection.⁸

The MoMA team's research trip was hugely fruitful, thanks to meetings, discussions, and visits with artists, collectors, museums, galleries, dealers, critics, and scholars. One of Barr and Soby's missions in Italy was to fill in gaps in MoMA's collection of Italian modern art. As Director of Collection, Barr oversaw the museum's expanding holdings,⁹ and with Soby he planned an important acquisition campaign in advance of the Italian show and after. They worked together with intensity: proposing tentative lists of works, comparing their opinions (they often agreed), and finding a commendable balance in the number of items by various artists and loan requests to collectors.¹⁰ Aware that the show would probably not be a comprehensive historic survey, Barr and Soby nonetheless aimed to trace a history of Italian modern art that would establish its role in the international context of modernism. Beyond Futurism and the Metaphysical School, the two curators were interested in younger artists emerging after World War II, as well as in the leaders of the older and middle generations born before the 1890s or soon after, respectively.¹¹ Further, although the planned exhibition focused on the twentieth century, the curators' attention stretched back into nineteenth-century traditions of Italian painting in order to better understand to sources of Italian modern art. Thanks to his first-hand exposure, Soby could review, in 1949, the *Exhibition of Italian Nineteenth-Century Paintings* sponsored by the city of Florence and displayed in New York at the Wildenstein Gallery and the Metropolitan Museum of Art,¹² and he especially appreciated the Tuscan group of Macchiaioli painters' innovative approach: "[T]he accomplishment of the Macchiaioli seems just that much more impressive [...] not until the arrival of the futurists did Italian painting begin once more to move forward"¹³ (figure 3).

Barr and Soby's selection process worked on two levels: they studied the careers and research directions of individual artists, selecting those useful to their curatorial vision of Italian modernism;¹⁴ and they closely evaluated each and every painting, sculpture, and print under consideration, choosing the only the best quality possible, according to the canon of MoMA's idea of modernism. Altogether, the complex activity of designing an exhibition such as *Twentieth-Century Italian Art* involved both analysis of modernism rooted in

knowledge of its historic, political and artistic context, and the practical motives of organizing activity.

We can follow Barr and Soby's grand tour along the peninsula in five notebooks and pocket diaries: two notebooks usually attributed to Soby, but written in by Margaret Scolari Barr as well;¹⁵ a pocket diary by Soby; a travel diary by Soby; and a last pocket diary by Margaret Scolari Barr.¹⁶

Barr and Soby traveled together for portions of the trip. They were all in Milan until May 4, and then in Rome, until May 15. At that point, Soby returned to Milan, then proceeded to Venice for the Twenty-Fourth Biennale; the Barrs stayed in Rome until at least the end of month, then moved on to Venice. Thus, we can follow the Barrs and Sobys to Milan, Bergamo, Brescia, Rome, Venice, and Florence. The Fifth Quadriennale in Rome and the Twenty-Fourth Venice Biennale were the most important art events in Italy at the time and major sources for the American curators. They were the first edition of the Quadriennale and the Biennale, respectively, after WWII, and exposed Barr and Soby to a breadth of Italian artists' postwar work, which they could compare to international advanced art production. Moreover, as Soby pointed out in one of his reports to MoMA, the Quadriennale included special galleries devoted to Futurism, while the Biennale had a large section on the Metaphysical School – the two movements that would open *Twentieth-*



Figure 3. James T. Soby, "The Fine Arts: Realism – Macchiachioli Style," in "The Saturday Review of Literature," March 5, 1949: 28.

Alfred H. Barr, Jr. and James Thrall Soby's Grand Tour of Italy

Century Italian Art. Barr and Soby intended to propose Futurism and the Metaphysical School as Italian versions of Cubism and Surrealism, the two main tendencies Barr's modern art genealogy according to his landmark exhibitions *Cubism and Abstract Art* and *Fantastic Art, Dada and Surrealism* in 1936–37.

Soby's penned a review of the Biennale for the *Saturday Review of Literature* that provides an overview of both movements – despite a major interest in metaphysical painting transpired –, highlighting their contrasting elements and the specificities of their influence on younger artists:

The aims of the *Scuola* [*metafisica*] were the opposite of those of the futurists (1909–16), who had so avidly embraced their era's industrial characteristics of speed, precision and clangor. The painters of the *Scuola* achieved an enigmatic and poetic art, based on philosophical meditation, in which still-life objects and mannequin figures were assembled in strange settings, amid an uncanny calm, with emphasis on that evocative incongruity of juxtaposition which led to surrealism in later hands. Since the Futurists' accomplishment was also reviewed this spring in a special gallery at the huge Quadriennale Exposition in Rome, it was possible to reconsider in one season the two principal movements of earlier twentieth-century Italian art – Futurism and the *Scuola metafisica*. Both movements are revered by many younger Italian artists – they are, indeed, the cubism and surrealism of Italy – and both are perhaps more influential now than any time during the past twenty years. But the contrast between them is fairly absolute, and passing from one to the other is like turning from Vachel Lindsay's 'Boomlay, boomlay, boomlay, BOOM' to Lewis Carroll's unforgettable, disquieting lines 'Of shoes-and-ships-and-sealing wax-of cabbages and kings.'¹⁷

Soby's and the Barrs' travels in Italy were noticed by the Italian press, including *L'Osservatore Romano*, on May 19, 1949:

Two representatives from the Museum of Modern Art, James Thrall Soby, Director of Painting and Sculpture Department, and Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Director of Collections, came to Italy in order to study the last developments of contemporary art and to select works for the Italian modern art exhibition that the museum has planned for next year. The show will include about 150 paintings and sculptures and 50 drawings and etchings.¹⁸

The news of an upcoming exhibition dedicated to Italian modern art by MoMA was confirmed by the artist Corrado Cagli in the newspaper *Gioventù*, on July 22, 1948. Cagli enthused about how Barr and Soby had been impressed by the art they had recently seen in Italy – more so than they had expected to be. Similar commentary was related by Soby and Barr in their reporting to MoMA.¹⁹ However, Cagli also complained that the major effort by MoMA, achieved through and Barr and Soby's abilities, would not be enough to support the lasting success of Italian modern art in the international art system, if Italian dealers did not work systematically to support Italian art in the US.²⁰ As examined by Raffaele Bedarida in his book dedicated to Cagli's years exile in the U.S.,²¹ the artist was a primary point of connection in the American and Italian artistic panorama. Starting with the list of Italian artists and galleries in his article "Italian Renaissance," published in *Harper's Bazaar* in March 1948, he provided ample suggestions for Barr and Soby's research trip.²² In fact, Cagli was aware of MoMA's *Twentieth-Century Italian Art* project as far back as early 1946, when, in a letter to Pietro Maria Bardi, he professed his aim to be a promoter and consultant for the exhibition.²³

The Italian Collectors of Italian Modern Art: "White Flies"

Following their strategy of not involving public institutions or critics, Barr and Soby based their research on building direct relationships with artists and collectors, whose contributions compensated for museums' indifference to supporting Italian art during the 1930s through the purchase paintings and sculpture.²⁴

In effect, around 1950, artistic historiography started to celebrate the “heroic” role played by private collectors in the 1930s – those who had first bought works from contemporary artists. Between February 16 and March 23, 1952, the dealer Gino Ghiringhelli arranged an exhibition dedicated to the tailor and art collector Adriano Pallini at the Famiglia Abruzzese-Molisana association in Milan; the preface to the catalogue lauded the cultured and polished Italian collector.²⁵ The following year, Carlo Ludovico Ragghianti presented the Gianni Mattioli Collection at Florence’s Palazzo Strozzi, which he called “the first modern art museum of Italian contemporary art.” Recognizing the foresight of private collectors went together with decrying the paucity of public museums, the involution of art criticism, and the backwardness of bourgeois tastes.²⁶ The recognition of private collectors was also advocated in the organization of the Twenty-Sixth Venice Biennale, in 1952. Rodolfo Pallucchini, General Secretary of the Biennale institution, proposed to Roberto Longhi, member of the Executive Commission, an exhibition of Pallini and Mattioli’s art collections; however, Longhi declined.²⁷

The praise worthiness of private collecting was already being acknowledged in the 1930s. *Mostra Protesta del Collezionismo* opened at the Galleria del Milione in Milan on December 23, 1933, a presentation of works from the Pietro Feroldi Collection,²⁸ and Raffaello Giolli published an article dedicated to the Della Ragione Collection in the journal *Colosseo Colonna* in December 1934.²⁹ In 1938, Giuseppe Gorgerino wrote in *L’Ambrosiano* of these few collectors’ bravery: “They attempted a mystical act, a leap in the dark; they trusted in their art expert – if they have one – or in their own taste – the best way – or in foreign rules and trends. If men of good will should be blessed, they really are: white flies.”³⁰ In 1949, the *Twentieth-Century Italian Art* exhibition at MoMA, of paintings and sculptures lent by Italian private collectors, seemed to confirm the notion that advanced art in Italy was collected much more by private citizens than by public institutions.³¹

The Barrs and Soby started their Italian journey in Milan, where the Circolo delle Arti – of which Toninelli was President, coordinating a membership of many Milan-based collectors and critics – was an excellent base for pursuing information and publications on Italian art.³² It also facilitated the curators’ exposure to paintings and sculptures from several different collections that were installed in the waiting room, two galleries, and bar of the Circolo delle Arti. On display were works by Carlo Carrà, Arturo Martini, Giacomo Manzù,

Alfred H. Barr, Jr. and James Thrall Soby's Grand Tour of Italy

Mario Sironi, Osvaldo Licini, Ardengo Soffici, Felice Casorati, Amedeo Modigliani, Giorgio de Chirico, Pompeo Borra, Massimo Campigli, Arturo Tosi, Giorgio Morandi, Virgilio Guidi, Scipione, and Pietro Marussing.³³

Carrà and Alberto Savinio were the first artists that Barr and Soby visited in Milan, between May 1–3. The details of their meeting with Savinio, including a discussion of the Metaphysical School and de Chirico, were recorded by Soby in the notebook “Milan II-X;”³⁴ no works by Savinio, however, would be included in the MoMA show. Their visit to Carrà’s studio, as noted by Soby and Margaret Scolari Barr, focused on his Futurist, Metaphysical, and later works, such as *L'estate* (Summer, 1930) and *Natura morta con anguria* (Still Life with Watermelon, 1941). In particular, Margaret Scolari Barr listed some Futurist sketches, several of which were lent to the show by the artist. On May 3, the Barrs and Soby started examining the holdings of the Milan-based collectors Antonio Boschi, Jesi, and Riccardo Jucker. The day after, in Brescia, they looked at the Pietro Feroldi Collection;³⁵ Gianni Mattioli would acquire the latter collection and lend a number of the works to *Twentieth-Century Italian Art*.³⁶

The pages of the travelers’ notebooks list masterpieces of Italian art held in private collections, bearing witness to the high quality of collecting in Milan in the first half of twentieth century. Soby and the Barrs were shocked by the collections, and such impressions and thoughts are recorded along with lists of titles and the occasional small sketches they drafted as they worked towards a mutually agreed upon selection for MoMA.

At Boschi’s home, Barr and Soby took note of many important works by Sironi, de Chirico (figure 4), Casorati, Gianni Dova, and Italo Valenti. They recorded their admiration for works from Jesi’s collection by Gino Severini, Ottone Rosai, Umberto Boccioni (*Studio per la Città che sale* [Study for The City Rises], 1910; and *Rissa in galleria* [Riot in the Galleria], 1910), Campigli, Morandi, Mario Mafai, Scipione, Filippo De Pisis, Casorati (*Nudo nello studio* [Naked Woman Seated Frontally], 1921), Carrà (*Ritmi di oggetti* [Rhythms of Objects], 1911; *La casa dell'amore* [The House of Love], 1922; and *Il Cinquale*, 1926), and Marino Marini (*Ritratto di Jesi* [Portrait of Mr. Jesi], 1947). But unfortunately nothing would be lent both by Boschi and Jesi. In the Jucker Collection, they found remarkable Boccioni’s *Bevitore* (Drinker, 1914), Carrà’s *Figlio del costruttore* (Builder’s Son, 1917–21) and *Natura morta con la squadra*

Alfred H. Barr, Jr. and James Thrall Soby's Grand Tour of Italy

(Still Life with Triangle, 1917), Morandi's *Natura morta con manichino* (Still Life with a Mannequin, 1918) and *Natura morta con scatola e birillo* (Still Life with Box and Ninepin, 1918), and de Chirico's *Giorno e notte* (Day and Night, 1926); the two Morandi works would be lent to MoMA.

After Soby arrived back in Milan from Rome, on May 16, he continued to visit private collections – belonging to Toninelli, Carrieri, Frua de Angeli, Giuseppe Vismara, Franco Marmont, and Cesare Tosi – as well as art galleries – Galleria Bergamini, Galleria Barbaroux, Galleria Borromini, Galleria della Spiga, Galleria Il Camino, and Galleria Il Milione. Also in Milan, he went to the warehouse of Galleria d'Arte Moderna, which officially reopened in the following year (having closed during the war);³⁷ there he saw Futurist paintings, drawings, and collages; MoMA would borrow Boccioni's *Scomposizione di figura di donna al tavolo* (Woman at a Table: Interpenetration of Lights and Planes, 1914) and *Dinamismo di un corpo umano* (Dynamism of a Human Figure, 1913).³⁸

Of course, Toninelli was well-disposed to lend his own works to *Twentieth-Century Italian Art*, and to discuss selling some paintings to MoMA. Soby selected many works from Toninelli's collection, some of which he would display in New York: Boccioni's *Materia* (Matter, 1912) and *I selciatori* (Street



Figure 4. Boschi Di Stefano residence, with Giorgio de Chirico's paintings including "La scuola dei gladiatori: il combattimento" [The gladiators school: Fighting], 1928, and "Les brioches," 1925. Casa-Museo Boschi Di Stefano, Milan. Photo: Gabriele Basilico (1980s). Courtesy Archivio Gabriele Basilico.

Alfred H. Barr, Jr. and James Thrall Soby's Grand Tour of Italy

Pavers, 1914), and de Chirico's *Ettore e Andromaca* (Hector and Andromacha, 1926). Among the works in Frua's collection, he admired two Campiglis, which would be lent to the show (*Isola felice* [Happy Isle], 1928; and *Uomo a cavallo* [Horseman], 1928), Sironis, Morandis, and, in particular, de Chirico's *Pesci sacri* (Sacred Fish, 1918–19), which MoMA would eventually purchase at the exhibition's end. From the Vismara and Marmont Collections Soby chose De Pisis's *Pollaio* (Poultry Yard, 1928) and *Natura morta con imbuto e borsa della spesa* (Still Life with Funnel and Shopping Bag, 1925). Cesare Tosi lent two recent works by Sironi, De Pisis's *Il cavallo di Napoleone* (Napoleon's Horse, 1924), a Futurist collage and *Natura morta* (Still Life, 1914) by Soffici, and Casorati's drawing *Commessa* (Midinette, 1935).

Soby and the Barrs went to Rome on May 5 or 6,³⁹ where they benefitted from the support of Laurence P. Roberts, Director of American Academy in Rome (1947–60), where works for the exhibition were collected for shipping. Since the great and wide private collecting in Milan had no parallel in Rome, here they visited galleries, museums, and above all artists, like Renato Guttuso, Emilio Greco, Fausto Pirandello, Antonio Donghi, Carlo Levi, Pompeo Borra, and many others. In Guttuso's studio they saw him working on the important painting *La Mafia* (The Mafia, 1948), which MoMA bought for the exhibition, though later Barr exchanged it for *I mangiatori di cocomero* (Two Figures and the Watermelon, 1948), which they also saw in studio. At Greco's studio they selected *Testa maschile* (Head of a Man, 1947) and *Il cantante* (The Singer, 1948). Of their visit to Donghi's studio, Soby noted his appreciation for the artist's intense realism and emotional simplicity, comparable to that of "primitives" like Henri Rousseau. In fact, Soby dedicated a section of his text in the exhibition catalogue to Donghi as well as Rosai, as two different versions of social realism, but pointed out that Donghi's had nothing to do with political-social commentary.

Among the art galleries Soby and the Barrs visited Galleria La Margherita, L'Obelisco, Studio d'Arte Palma, and Galleria del Secolo. The owners of Galleria L'Obelisco, Irene Brin and Gasparo Del Corso, played a crucial role in facilitating the organization of the *Twentieth-Century Italian Art*.⁴⁰ The curators visited the Del Corsos' gallery and home repeatedly, where they saw pieces by Afro Basaldella, Toti Scialoja, Luigi Bartolini, Marcello Muccini, and Renzo Vespignani. At the Galleria del Secolo, Soby and Barr saw works by Pio Semeghini, Giovanni Omiccioli, Guttuso, Roberto Melli, Pirandello, Giovanni

Alfred H. Barr, Jr. and James Thrall Soby's Grand Tour of Italy

Stradone, and much admired works by Mafai such as *Foglie e garofani secchi* (Dry Leaves and Carnation, 1934), which would be lent to the show by the gallery owner's, Giulio Laudisa. On May 13, while speaking with Lionello Venturi about Futurism, Impressionism, and Novecento, as well as Casorati, Birolli, Antonio Corpora, Guttuso, and Vespignani, Soby learned of Mafai's extremely important role in Rome during 1930s: as Fascism celebrated Rome as the eternal capital of the new Caesar, Mafai painted scenes of demolition, of old buildings slithering to the ground to make way for triumphal boulevards.⁴¹ Soby and Barr would see an important group of paintings and sculptures by Mafai, Scipione, and Antonietta Raphael at the Venice Biennale, where the Roman School was well represented and supported by Italian critics.⁴² In particular, Scipione's solo show at the Biennale allowed them to evaluate his historical place in the development of Italian art, and also his influence on younger artists.

Another gallery the MoMA representatives visited in Rome was Studio d'Arte Palma, which Pietro Maria Bardi founded in May 1944 (before he went to Brazil in 1946). It was an unusual experiment in the Italian art system to combine within the same commercial art gallery, spaces for ancient and modern art, a restoration workshop, and radiography and photograph labs (for art diagnostic, conservation, and documentation), inspired by French and American galleries and museums models such as Wildenstein and Knoedler galleries in New York.⁴³ Barr and Soby visited Studio d'Arte Palma on May 13, when the gallery was holding the exhibition *Quattro accademie straniere: USA, UK, Ungheria, Belgio*. Rather than the current show, however, they went to see Cagli's work, held in the gallery's storage. In November 1947, Cagli organized his first major postwar show at Studio d'Arte Palma, in which the artist exhibited a combination of expressionist paintings and of non figurative works on n-dimension inspired by de Chirico's *Metaphysica*.⁴⁴ Soby and Barr appreciated the latter kind, of which they borrowed for the exhibition at MoMA *Teatro tragico* (Tragic Theatre, 1947), one of the most accomplished paintings in the show, (figures 5 and 6) and *Studio per Spie al palo* (Study for Spies at the Stake, 1947).⁴⁵

A pivotal event of their sojourn in Rome took place at the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna (GNAM), then directed by Palma Bucarelli, who was rethinking the setting up of the museum collection after the war, with an

emphasis on promoting international and Italian abstract art.⁴⁶ Here the Americans wrote down a long list of names: Martini, Tosi, Mino Maccari, Marini, Casorati, Manzù, Gianfilippo Usellini, Franco Gentilini, Pirandello, Pericle Fazzini, Omiccioli, Boccioni, and Mafai. GNAM would indeed lend a remarkable group of paintings and sculptures to MoMA: Fazzini's *Ritratto di Ungaretti* (Portrait of Ungaretti, 1936), Manzu's *Cardinale* (Cardinal, 1938), Mafai's *Due donne che si spogliano* (Two Women Disrobing, 1935), Guttuso's *Battaglia con cavalli feriti* (Battle with Wounded Horses, 1942), and Armando Pizzinato's *I difensori della fabbrica* (Defenders of the Factory, 1948).



Figure 5. Corrado Cagli, "Teatro tragico" [Tragic theater], 1947. Oil on canvas, 36 1/4 x 24 in. (92 x 61 cm). Private Collection, Rome.

Also in Rome, Soby and the Barrs visited great private collectors of Italian art: Pietro Rollino, Riccardo Gualino, and Giorgio Castelfranco. In Rollino's collection, Soby especially admired a group of works by Morandi, de Chirico, De Pisis, and Sironi; he also sketched Morandi's beautiful *Natura morta (metafisica)* (Metaphysical Still Life, 1918; figures 7 and 8). At Gualino's home

there were important paintings by Casorati; among them *Ragazza a Pavarolo* (Children at Pavarolo, 1943) would be included in *Twentieth-Century Italian Art*. Moreover they appreciated de Chirico's paintings, and above all, many Manzù's sculptures: *Deposizione* (Skeleton Hanging from the Cross, 1940), *Deposizione con prelate* (Cardinal and Deposition, 1941), and *Crocifissione con soldato* (Christ and the German Soldier, 1942). The topic of conversation at Giorgio Castelfranco's was again de Chirico, specifically his earlier paintings and Metaphysical production.⁴⁷



Figure 6. "Twentieth-Century Italian Art" exhibition view with Afro, "Trofeo" [Trophy], 1948; Lucio Fontana, "Cristo" [Christ - Crucifixion], 1948 (bought by MoMA after the exhibition); Lucio Fontana, "Maschera" [Masker], 1948, and "Maschera" [Masker], 1948; Corrado Cagli, "Teatro tragico" [Tragic theater], 1947; and Salvatore Fiume, "Isola di statue" [Island of statues], 1948. Gelatin silver print, 7 1/2 x 9 1/2 in. (19 x 24.1 cm). Photo Soichi Sunami. Photographic Archive. MoMA Archives, NY. Cat. no. IN413.28. New York, MoMA. © 2020. Digital image, The Museum of Modern Art, New York/Scala, Florence.

At the end of Soby's stay in Rome, the trio visited Margherita Sarfatti,⁴⁸ an episode that filled several pages of a notebook with titles of artists and works collected everywhere in her home, kitchen included: Sironi, Carrà, De Pisis, Casorati, Soffici, Alberto Salietti, Pirandello, Michele Cascella, Raffaele De Grada, Boccioni, Severini, Achille Funi, and Martini.⁴⁹ However, just two paintings, Casorati's *Stanza d'albergo* (Room in an Inn, 1929) and Luigi Russolo's *La nebbia* (The Fog, 1912), would be lent to the 1949 show.

On May 16, Soby left for Milan again, and the Barrs stayed on in Rome until the end of the month, visiting more collectors, artists, and critics.⁵⁰ Alfred Barr was also sick at this time. Notable was Barr's long visit to Benedetta Marinetti's house, where he looked through scrapbooks, heard Zang Tumb Tuuum record, and discussed the sale of Boccioni and Balla works in collection.⁵¹ At the time Barr purchased Boccioni's two bronze sculptures *Sviluppo di una bottiglia nello spazio* (Development of a Bottle in Space, 1912) and *Forme uniche della continuità nello spazio* (Unique Forms of Continuity in Space, 1913; figure 9), and after the MoMA exhibition the second version of his triptych *Stati d'animo* (States of Mind, 1911) and the charcoal *Dinamismo muscolare* (Muscular Dynamism, 1913), lent by Benedetta Marinetti together with *Elasticità* (Elasticity, 1912). As Barr wrote to Soby, his encounter with Yvonne Müller Casella – second wife of the composer Alfredo Casella,⁵² who had just passed away in 1947 – was highly interesting too. Nevertheless, this didn't persuaded Barr to include in MoMA show a section dedicated to music, theater or any kind of futurist work different from painting, sculpture or



Figure 7. Giorgio Morandi, "Natura morta metafisica" [Metaphysical still life], 1918. Oil on canvas, 21 1/4 x 15 in. (54 x 38 cm). Fondazione Magnani Rocca (formerly the Rollino Collection), Mamiano di Traversetolo – Parma.

drawing. Barr suggested to his colleague that they add some paintings by Casorati, Carr, de Chirico, Donghi, and Morandi; of these, they would later decide upon Carra's *Pino sul mare* (The Pine, 1921 – “one of his best” – Casorati's *Conversazione platonica* (Platonic Conversation, 1925, and de Chirico's *Paesaggio romano* (Roman Landscape, 1922).⁵³

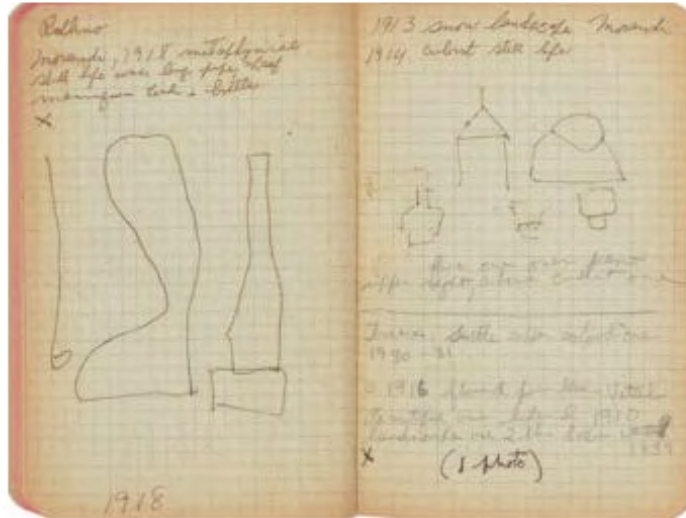


Figure 8. James T. Soby's sketch of Morandi's "Natura morta metafisica" [Metaphysical still life], in "Rome" notebook, 1948. James Thrall Soby Papers, MoMA Archive, I.135. MoMA Archives, NY. Cat. no. ARCH. 9569. New York, MoMA. © 2020. Digital image, The Museum of Modern Art, New York/Scala, Florence.

Break or Continuity? The Fifth Quadriennale in Rome

At Rome's Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna (GNAM), Soby and Barr visited the Fifth Quadriennale, organized by the new General Secretary of the event, the sculptor Francesco Coccia, who had replaced Cipriano Efisio Oppo, the Secretary who oversaw the Fascist editions of the exhibition.⁵⁴ The 1948 edition, on view from March 31 to the end of May, included 816 artists and 1292 works in 36 rooms – all the possibilities in Italian art were there. Coccia was supported by an organizing committee and a selection jury, both composed above all by artists: in addition to the critic Giuseppe Marchiori, the lawyer Alberto Carocci, and Giuseppe Natale and Carlo Speranza from the board of directors, among the committee's members were the artists Nino Bertolotti, Aldo Carpi, Casorati, Vincenzo Ciardo, Giovanni Colacicchi, Guttuso, Levi, Marini, Melli, Morandi, Natale, and Carlo Speranza; and the jury included Casorati, Fazzini, Alberto Gerardi, Guttuso, Mafai, and Paolo Ricci.⁵⁵

On November 22, 1944, the Italian Prime Minister Ivanoe Bonomi had appointed Coccia temporary director of the institution.⁵⁶ In this role, Coccia began consulting with artists who were members of the various political factions within the Committee of National Liberation in order “to implement the changes in the institution in the superior interest of Italian art and with the consent of all the artists interested in this development.”⁵⁷ The Palazzo delle Esposizioni – the past location for the Quadriennale – had been used as a warehouse for food supplies during the war, then as a club for the allies, and had since been converted into a polling station. The Fifth Quadriennale was planned, early on, for December 1947 at the Mercati Traianei, and only later was the GNAM decided up as the hosting venue.⁵⁸ The 1948 edition changed its name to the *National Exhibition of Visual Art* in order to mark the gap with



Figure 9. Giacomo Balla, “Rondoni: linee andamentali + successioni dinamiche” [Swifts: Paths of movement + Dynamic Sequences], 1913, and “Automobile in accelerazione” [Speeding automobile], 1912; and Umberto Boccioni, “Sviluppo di una bottiglia nello spazio” [Development of a bottle in space], 1912, and “Forme uniche della continuità nello spazio” [Unique forms of continuity in space], 1913, purchased by MoMA for the exhibition. Reproduced in Gio Ponti, “La collezione italiana del ‘Museum of Modern Art’ di New York,” in “Domus” 248–49 (July–August 1950): 42.

previous, Fascist editions,⁵⁹ though the institution's statute continued to exist on the same terms as before the war. Indeed, some critics and artists – such as Carlo Levi, from the Partito d'Azione, and the Communist Guttuso – found the exhibition's continuation troublesome.⁶⁰

Though it has been overlooked in art historical scholarship for a long time,⁶¹ the first postwar Quadriennale (figure 10) presented a strong portrayal of the Italian artistic panorama after the war, including its breadth of generations: it combined past and present, older masters and younger artists, figurative painting and Neocubism as well as abstract art, as we can see in this video from the Archivio Istituto Luce.⁶²

Among this broad abundance of proposals and names—though most of them were not particularly known to Barr and Soby – and especially due its lack of a systematic and progressive organization, the Quadriennale seemed more mixed up than the concurrent Venice Biennale (even if the latter displayed 3065 works by 1108 Italian artists). The



Figure 10. Visitors in 1948 to the Fifth Quadriennale in Rome, from "Nel mondo della pittura: ieri e oggi alla Quadriennale," *La Settimana Incom*/00158 (May 27, 1948), black-and-white film. Archivio Istituto Luce, Rome.

Quadriennale required multiple visits by Barr as he stayed on in Rome until the end of May. In effect he wrote⁶³ that the third and fourth visits revealed little new – three good pictures by Pirandello,⁶⁴ a big Guttuso, a big Cagli (but inferior to oils already listed), and Pietro Annigoni. During a second visit to the GNAM collection, Barr appreciated some Casorati's works, as well as Mafai's *Donne che si spogliano* (Women Undressing, 1934–35) and Guttuso's excellent *Battaglia con cavalli feriti* (Battle with Wounded Horses, 1942); these last two paintings were both lent for the New York show.⁶⁵

Connecting to the past, the Fifth Quadriennale included masters of Italian modern art – Carrà, Casorati, Levi, Mafai, Martini, Marini, Modigliani, Morandi, Pirandello, and Savinio – and dedicated Room 10 to Futurist artists of the Pre-World War I years, showing approximately thirty works by Boccioni, Balla, Carrà, Russolo, Severini, Sironi, Soffici, Funi, Fortunato Depero, and Enrico Prampolini. Many of the exponents of the so-called Second Futurism had not been invited; others, including Fillia, Benedetta Marinetti, Marasco, and Tato, were exhibited with artists affiliated to different movement or stylistic tendencies. This choice – vociferously disapproved of by Benedetta Cappa Marinetti⁶⁶ – was the result of a tendency emerged after WWII to separate out the Futurist artists who were active primarily after the First World War, and more connected with Fascism;⁶⁷ this chronological division promoted the founding members of Futurism as the precursors to the latest trends in advanced art, and, chiefly, abstraction.

Of course, this display of Futurism was a significant reference point for Barr, who went on to dedicate the first and largest section of *Twentieth-Century Italian Art* to the movement. In effect – as Raffaele Bedarida had pointed out⁶⁸ – Barr finessed a resolution to the main problem facing the postwar reception of Futurism: its involvement with Fascism. He demarcated the movement into two generations, considering the activities of the second group marginal and their works minor in quality in comparison to those of the original Futurists;⁶⁹ in doing so, he proposed a Boccioni-centric interpretation of the movement (even if he recognized Balla's significant role, which was more appreciated by Soby, who especially commended Balla's kinetic innovations and talent as a colorist). Barr's presentation of Futurism was limited to the aesthetic qualities of painting and sculpture rather than ideological grounds – and the same held true for the representation of the Novecento group in *Twentieth-Century Italian Art*.

Since one of Barr and Soby's missions was to fill in the gaps in MoMA's collection of Italian modern art, the museum bought, with the mediation of Laurance P. Roberts, two of Balla's paintings shown in the Quadriennale: *Rondoni: line andamentali + succession dinamiche* (Swifts: Paths of Movement + Dynamic Sequences, 1913), and *Automobile in accelerazione* (Speeding Automobile, 1912).⁷⁰

Alfred H. Barr, Jr. and James Thrall Soby's Grand Tour of Italy

Near to the Futurism section at the Quadriennale, Rooms 11 and 12 featured abstract compositions (paintings by Magnelli, Mario Radice, and Mauro Reggiani, made in the 1930s, to works by the young Forma 1 group, for example by Ugo Attardi, Pietro Consagra, Piero Dorazio, Giovanni Guerrini, Achille Perilli, Antonio Sanfilippo, and Giulio Turcato) as well as Neocubist (by Prampolini, Afro, Corpora, Nino Franchina, Guttuso, Mattia Moreni, and Pizzinato). These rooms were praised by Italian critics as the most innovative and dynamic sections of the Quadriennale, but Barr and Soby noted only minor appreciation of them initiating a long-term oblivion on this area of artistic production in the United States.⁷¹ On the one hand, the curators positively evaluated several works by members of the Fronte Nuovo delle Arti as possible items for display at MoMA⁷² – works that demonstrated the influence of Pablo Picasso's paintings of the past fifteen years; neocubism was a way to a semi-abstraction for painters like Cassinari, Giuseppe Santomaso, and Pizzinato, who also revived the Futurists' interest in kinetics. On the other, the two American curators didn't select any Forma 1 works – since they needed to be very careful with younger artists – nor abstractionists operating in non-objective direction during the 1930s. Soby and Barr professed to preferring the non-representational paintings of Afro and Cagli – both on view at the Fifth Quadriennale – who “added to abstraction an element of enigmatic mystery by reviving in a personal manner the strong linear perspective and dramatic shadows of de Chirico's ‘metaphysical’ period.”⁷³

After all, “abstract art” was missing in *Twentieth-Century Italian Art* exhibition. The only non-figurative works included by Barr and Soby came from neocubism or metaphysical models, instead the 1930s Italian abstract production wasn't considered good enough, save Magnelli. Two curators identified Magnelli as a fine abstractionist, but his absence was unfortunately due to his works unavailability for the exhibition in New York.⁷⁴ Moreover Soby mentioned in the catalogue Lucio Fontana as an “abstract Constructivist” who had abandoned the non-objective forms and machined materials of his early career for the expressionist figures in ceramic that he was producing in 1947 (included in the MoMA exhibition).⁷⁵ Also the name of Osvaldo Licini was missing; unlike Italian critics, Soby didn't like his work: “so many people feel is the greatest living abstract artists. To me he seems rather dull school of Klee.”⁷⁶

Among the retrospective section of the Quadriennale dedicated to early twentieth-century masters of Italian art, a major one focused on Amedeo Modigliani. As a Jewish artist who was part of international milieu, Modigliani had been target of Fascist censorship during the 1930s. After WWII a series of publications and exhibitions attempted to pick up the thread where it had been interrupted.⁷⁷ Between April and May 1946, Jewish critic Vitali (who had just returned to Italy from the exile) organized at Casa della Cultura in Milan the first major solo show dedicated to Modigliani since the large exhibition curated by Lionello Venturi at the 1930 Venice Biennale.⁷⁸ Vitali's show included sixteen paintings and forty-five drawings and was widely reviewed. One of these reviews, published by Umbro Apollonio in the art journal *Emporium*,⁷⁹ was included by Barr and Soby in the selected bibliography about Modigliani in *Twentieth-Century Italian Art* catalogue (figure 11). In the Quadriennale (room 7), the two curators saw six drawings and four paintings by Modigliani.⁸⁰ Unlike the Italian shows, however, which limited themselves to paintings and drawings because of the lack of Modigliani's sculpture in Italian collections, Barr and Soby were keen to include in the MoMA exhibit two sculptures as well. One of them was already in the Museum's collection – *Testa* (Head, 1911–12; figure 12) –, and the second one – *Cariatide* (Caryatid, 1919 ca.) – was lent by the Buchholz Gallery. Comparing paintings, drawings and sculptures, Soby pointed out that like so many painters whose drawing is incisive, Modigliani “was attracted to sculpture, and in that medium his love of stylization is conveyed with exceptional clarity and force.”⁸¹

The curators' emphasis on sculpture was no limited to Modigliani. The “Recent Sculpture” section of the MoMA catalogue – unique in the volume for its focus on a specific medium, even if the sculptures were exhibited in different rooms within the exhibition – reveals the curators' increasing interest in Italian sculpture: “perhaps the most agreeable surprise of the trip was the amount of good sculpture by modern Italian artists.”⁸² Barr and Soby recognized a line in sculpture that run from Medardo Rosso, Boccioni, and Modigliani to the so-called “Three M's” (Martini, Marini, and Manzù), and younger sculptors. Such sculptural production was well represented at the 1948 Rome Quadriennale and Venice Biennale, which included an homage to Martini, who had just died in 1947.

At the Quadriennale, different approaches to sculpture, ranging from various types of figuration to non-representational ones, were displayed together: works by Martini, Marini, Manzù, Gerardi, Greco, Edgardo Mannucci, Luciano Minguzzi, Venanzo Crocetti, Amerigo Tot, Leoncillo, Fontana, Carmelo Cappello, and Giuseppe Mazzullo



Figure 11. Umbro Apollonio, "Breve omaggio a Modigliani," in "Emporium" CIII, no. 6 (June 1946): 260-61.

along with plenty by Consagra, Alberto Viani, Franchina, Renato Barisani, Antonio Venditti, Francesco Somaini, and Pietro Cascella. A second short newsreel on the Quadriennale produced from the Istituto Luce⁸³ documents how an icon of futurism such as Boccioni's *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space* was exhibited next to a traditionally representational, academic piece such as Mario Vita's *Vanità nascente* (Rising Vanity, 1948 – without any curatorial or critical framework. Among this huge and undifferentiated set of sculpture samples, Soby and Barr selected Viani's *Nude*⁸⁴ – a work that was clearly influenced by the biomorphic forms of Jean Arp – their section "The Younger Abstractionists; the Fronte Nuovo delle Arti."

Despite this opening to the new abstract and neo-cubism proposals, the accrochage of the 1948 Quadriennale, as well as the ways to communicate it, reveals how much the framework of the first Quadriennale after the WWII was still related to the Fascist Ventennio. Thus, even if Barr and Soby selected some works from the Quadriennale, they displayed them at the MoMA show in a different way, much more inspired to the Venice Biennale approach.

“A Step in the Right Direction”: The Twenty-Fourth Venice Biennale

If the Quadriennale was suspended between past and present, the Twenty-Fourth Venice Biennale looked forward, by presenting a new perspective and breaking with the Fascist past.

In his review of the Biennale for the *Saturday Review of Literature* – which would be the basis for his essay in the *Twentieth-Century Italian Art* catalogue – Soby asserted that the “biennial now current is more advanced in approach and more comprehensive than ever before. This is a suitable fact to report, for the first thing to be said as the modern art’s prospects in postwar Italy is that the atmosphere is propitious, in fact is amazingly energetic and hopeful.”⁸⁵

The rhetoric of a “new renaissance” after the end of Fascism – at the basis of *Twentieth-Century Italian Art* exhibition at MoMA – inspired the Venice Biennale editions after World War II directed by Rodolfo Pallucchini as General Secretary of the institution. Through grand retrospective exhibitions, the Pallucchini Biennales (1948–56) proposed a historical reconstruction of



Figure 12. Amedeo Modigliani’s sculpture and paintings in MoMA’s collection before the exhibition: “Testa” [Head], 1911–12, “Moglie e marito” [Bride and groom], 1915–16, and “Anna Zborowski,” 1917. Reproduced in Gio Ponti, “La collezione italiana del ‘Museum of Modern Art’ di New York,” *Domus* no. 250 (September 1950): 59.

the pivotal artistic developments and events of international modernism, in order to create a bridge between European avant-garde masters and new, further advanced international endeavors.⁸⁶ Unlike the Quadriennale's approach, the Venice Biennale went back until Impressionism to find the sources of current not-academic and of modernism, and to propose the right models to younger generation involved in the most innovative artistic researches: going back to go forward.

In the foreword to the Biennale catalogue of 1948, Pallucchini claimed to come back to the original agenda of the Biennale to offer "to all smart men the way to know and compare different aesthetic directions and styles, as well as to enrich the intellectual heritage of young artists." This, according to Pallucchini, had proved impossible in the still recent past because of the "purist creed of Nazism that was unfortunately embraced by some supporters in Italy too. The freedom of the new climate, a remarkable achievement of the European spirit, has been welcomed by the members of the Executive Commission for the Twenty-Fourth Venice Biennale."⁸⁷ In the catalogue's preface, Giovanni Ponti, President of the Biennale, encouraged everyone to go beyond national borders and ideological walls in favor of a humanism: "I don't think I am wrong in saying that, for the first time since the war's end, we have a large and complete vision of what has been done by the most significant artists of modern times. All movements are included: from the first reactions against the academy by Impressionism, to Post-impressionism, Expressionism, abstract art, and Surrealism."⁸⁸

In his review Soby pointed out that "this year's Biennial is a step in the right direction. It includes the first important exhibition in Italy of the French impressionists – fantastic as this may seem. It includes as well selections of the art of [Georges] Braque, [Marc] Chagall, [Paul] Klee, [Oskar] Kokoschka, [Henry] Moore, Picasso, [Georges] Rouault, and other leaders of the modern movements."⁸⁹ He added that it was important to give to young artists the tools and information to learn more about what has happened elsewhere in the art.

Following the suggestions of the Committee for Arts⁹⁰ and the organizers of the national pavilions, the first postwar edition of the Biennale was an arrangement of numerous focuses: an exhibition of Impressionism⁹¹ was curated by a special committee at the German Pavilion and featured works

Alfred H. Barr, Jr. and James Thrall Soby's Grand Tour of Italy

by Claude Monet, Alfred Sisley, Camille Pissarro, Édouard Manet, Berthe Morisot, Paul Cézanne, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Edgar Degas, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Paul Gauguin, Vincent van Gogh, and Georges Seurat (figure 13);⁹² solo shows were presented of Picasso (whose work was returning for the first time since its removal during the Biennale of 1905), Klee, and Oskar Kokoschka; and a collective exhibition was dedicated to German artists including, among others, Willi Baumeister, Otto Dix, Max Pechstein, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, and Emil Schumacher. The national pavilions' significant exhibitions included: at the French Pavilion, Braque's paintings from 1940s and works by Chagall and Rouault; at the Austrian Pavilion, Fritz Wotruba and Egon Schiele; at the British Pavilion, William Turner and Moore, who was awarded with the international prize for sculpture; at the Belgian Pavilion, Paul Delvaux, James Ensor, René Magritte, and Constant Permeke. The Greek Pavilion was empty because of the civil war in that country, and hosted the Peggy Guggenheim Collection.

Among the exhibitions dedicated to Italian artists, the most significant ones concerned the three major Italian sculptors Martini, Manzù and Marini, Campigli and De Pisis, members of "School of Paris," thus aware of the international researches, Gino Rossi – Venetian painter who had just died in 1947, and was able to merge Italian models with international influences by Gauguin, Cézanne and Cubists –, Cagnaccio di San Pietro (dead in 1946), Scipione and Mafai from "Roman School," and Maccari, awarded with the international prize for etching; particularly remarkable were the cohesive group presentations *Tre pittori italiani dal 1910 al 1920. Carlo Carrà, Giorgio de Chirico, Giorgio Morandi* (Three Italian Painters from 1910 to 1920: Carlo Carrà, Giorgio de Chirico, Giorgio Morandi) and *Il Fronte Nuovo delle Arti* (The New Front).

By identifying Impressionism as the progenitor of modernism, through which European artistic tastes developed, and in also considering the relevance to modern art and Surrealism of the Metaphysical paintings of de Chirico, Carrà, and Morandi,⁹³ the Biennale aimed to reaffirm the central position of modernism in contemporary European culture, highlighting the roles played by France and Italy.

Thus, for Barr and Soby the opportunity to attend the Venice Biennale was an important and educational experience. Indeed, on June 25, 1948, having evaluated Soby's long list of works displayed at the Biennale,⁹⁴ Barr wrote to Soby: "I visited the Biennale five or six times for many hours carefully checking your notes with my own made independently. I find that we agree to a remarkable extent and that my most radical differences developed usually after I had seen the pictures many times."⁹⁵ Comparing both lists, a role-playing seemed to emerge.

Soby – considered the expert on Italian art by Barr – started the discussion on artworks displayed at the Venice Biennale and suitable for the 1949 MoMA show, and suggested artists and works or dismissed them thanks to a more refined look; moreover he summarized the features of some works referring to well-known International and Italian artists.⁹⁶ Barr, by a more concise approach, removed excess. Anyway, the main differences concerned above all minor artists (according to his personal taste)⁹⁷ and didn't change the shared whole framework of *Twentieth-Century Italian Art* exhibition. Instead it's more interesting note they agreed to consider not



Figure 13. Lionello Venturi and Rodolfo Pallucchini, "Gli impressionisti alla XXIV Biennale di Venezia" (Venice: Edizioni Daria Guarnati, 1948).

Alfred H. Barr, Jr. and James Thrall Soby's Grand Tour of Italy

enough good works of artist well appreciated by Italian critics, such as Mino Maccari,⁹⁸ Gino Rossi, and Osvaldo Licini.

After Futurism, Metaphysical painting was the second original contribution to modernism that Barr and Soby proposed in *Twentieth-Century Italian Art*, represented in a selection of names and works based on the Biennale's aforementioned show *Tre pittori italiani dal 1910 al 1920*. In including Carrà and Morandi as members of the Scuola Metafisica along with de Chirico, the Biennale's curators interpreted Metaphysical painting as an innovative expression of Italian identity (despite de Chirico's claim that it was, for him, a personal philosophy and experience). Thus, the Metaphysical style clearly visible in great masterpieces on display in Venice, and also lent by the Italian private collectors mentioned above, was identified as an Italian model as prominent as Futurism. In the MoMA catalogue, Soby would credit Mario Broglio's *Valori plastici* journal, published from 1918–21, as having brought the Scuola Metafisica international fame and lasting influence.⁹⁹

In his 1948 review of the Biennale (figure 14) (and in the *Twentieth-Century Italian Art* catalogue too), Soby considered the careers of de Chirico, Carrà, and Morandi separately, and in so doing spotlighted Morandi's role in Italian modernism. In recalling Morandi as a great discovery during their travels in Italy, he confessed to having previously assumed that Italians' esteem for Morandi was exaggerated and simply the result of the isolation imposed on Italian art by the Fascist regime. But "as one sees whole rooms hung with Morandis in the leading Italian collections, one becomes aware that his art reflects the most subtle modifications of form and tone, that he has in fact devoted himself to a research whose formal purity and lyric impetus are comparable, in more representational terms, of the late Piet Mondrian."¹⁰⁰ Moreover, Soby grasped just how much Morandi had influenced younger painters of different tendencies throughout Italy – abstractionists, expressionists, romantics, and realists.

Reviewing Soby's list of works at the Biennale, Barr of course agreed with him on Morandi, selecting several works; he bought the beautiful *Natura morta* (Still Life, 1916) from Morandi for MoMA's collection, and *Natura morta con bottiglie e piatto di frutta* (Still Life with Bottles and Fruit Dish, 1916) and *Oggetti* (Objects, 1919) would be lent from the Feroldi and Longhi collections. For MoMA's print collection Barr purchased five etchings also from Morandi

(three landscapes, from 1913, 1928, and 1933; and two still lifes, from 1933 and 1934), as well as additional items from Bartolini (*La storia del martin pescatore* [The Story of the Kingfisher], 1935; *Il sogno di Anna* [Anna's Dream], 1941; *Tacchi alti* [High Heels], 1946; and *Lungotevere* [Tevere Waterfront], 1947), Giuseppe Viviani (*La gamba* [The Leg], 1939; *Bicicletta dal mare* [Bicycle by the Sea], 1941; and five miniature etchings, 1947), Casorati (*Ragazza che dorme* [Girl Sleeping], 1946; *Due donne* [Two Women], 1946, and lithographs from an album portfolio), and Manzù (etchings for *Le Georgiche di Virgilio* [Virgil's Georgics], 1948); these works were included in *Twentieth-Century Italian Art*. After WWII the print collection of MoMA became more and more important, leading to the opening of the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Print Room in May 1949, which was inaugurated with the show *Master Prints from the Museum Collection*. Despite prints having always had a place in the museum's collection, only at the end of 1940s MoMA established a department of prints, naming William Slattery Lieberman as its first curator. This development followed the model of other pioneering institutions in



Figure 14. James T. Soby, "The Venice Biennial," in "The Saturday Review of Literature" (August 7, 1948). With reproduction of Giorgio Morandi, "Natura morta" [Still life], 1939. Exhibited at the Biennale and lent by Pietro Rollino to "Twentieth-Century Italian Art."

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championing printmaking, such as the Brooklyn Museum, the Cincinnati Art Museum, and the Art Institute of Chicago. In a special bulletin dedicated to the print exhibition, Barr highlighted the extraordinary flowering of printmaking, which as an art had reached unprecedented levels of accomplishment.¹⁰¹ He presented printmaking as an essentially democratic medium and the most efficient means for disseminating abstract art far and wide.

Similarly to the Quadriennale, the Venice Biennale gave a special visibility to the sculpture, but in a different way: by focusing on the main figures such as Martini, Marini, and Manzù thanks to dedicated rooms, and also by displaying the pieces in the rooms according to the painting on the walls, in order to suggest a mutual visual dialogue between both medium and languages. Thus at the Venice Biennale, Barr and Soby also appreciated the sculptors Minguzzi, Marcello Mascherini, and Fontana, with his ceramic piece *Cristo* (Christ, 1948).¹⁰² But they focused above all on the three most-esteemed Italian sculptors: Martini, Marini, and Manzù. The latter had a special position of preeminence at the 1948 Biennale having been awarded the top prize for Italian sculpture. Soby asserted that the "Three M's"¹⁰³ contributed enormously to the call for modern Italian art to be better known internationally.¹⁰⁴

Among Martini's sculptures on display in the rotunda (figure 15) and other rooms of the Italian Pavilion, Barr borrowed from Brigida Pessano, Martini's wife, *Dedalo e Icaro* (Dedalus and Icarus, 1935–36). Moreover the terra-cottas *Le collegiali* (Women Chatting, 1927–31) and *La moglie del pescatore* (The Fisherman's Wife, 1931) were lent by the art dealer and collector Count Contini Bonacossi, whom Margaret Scolari Barr visited in Florence, while Alfred Barr "wasted a dreary two hours going through the modern Collection on the top of Pitti, closed to public."¹⁰⁵ *Dedalo e Icaro* (Daedalus and Icarus, 1934), which would be purchased by MoMA during the run of *Twentieth-Century Italian Art*, is exemplary of Martini's language, featuring a rude, powerful expressionism and sense of archaic grandeur that draws equally on primitive and mannerist sources.¹⁰⁶

As is well known, since 1948 Marini enjoyed strong success in America thanks to the dealer Curt Valentin and Soby,¹⁰⁷ as his sculptures were exhibited in galleries and museums throughout the country.¹⁰⁸ Soby's interpretation of

Marini's work was partially based on the analysis of Lamberto Vitali, specifically a long article published in the American magazine *Horizon* in September 1948: Marini was an heir of Italian tradition – primitive and anti-academic – but he was also extremely modern and connected to European developments.¹⁰⁹ Soby was enthusiastic about Marini's sculpture, and he highlighted his plastic values of Marini's sculpture as well as his strong textural interest, and his sensitivity to the particularities of character: "Marini is today one of the few major figures of his generation in European sculpture. [...] His presence in Italy today is an extraordinary asset in the resurgence of creative impetus among the younger men."¹¹⁰ For *Twentieth-Century Italian Art*, Barr and Soby selected a few Marini drawings and some outstanding sculptures: *Pugile* (Prizefighter, 1935) from the Valentiner Collection; *Nudo* (Nude, 1943), shown at Buchholz Gallery in New York in 1948; the great *Cavallo e cavaliere* (Horse and Rider, 1947–48), purchased by Mrs. John D. Rockefeller III and by MoMA just before the show; the *Ritratto di Lamberto Vitali* (Portrait of Lamberto Vitali, 1945), lent by the critic and then acquired by MoMA after the exhibition; and *Ritratto di Carlo Carrà* (Portrait of Carlo Carrà, 1947), lent by the artist.



Figure 15. Arturo Martini's sculpture at the XXIV Venice Biennale, in Giorgio Castelfranco, "La XXIV Biennale Internazionale d'Arte di Venezia," in "Bollettino d'Arte" XXXIII/IV, no. 3 (July–September 1948): 277.

Alfred H. Barr, Jr. and James Thrall Soby's Grand Tour of Italy

Italian critics saw the sculptor Manzù as continuing in the the tradition of Medardo Rosso.¹¹¹ Though Soby on the whole preferred the work of Marini, since it was more original and stronger,¹¹² both he and Barr deeply admired Manzù's sculpture *Ritratto di signora* (Portrait of Lady, 1946), on display at the Venice Biennale and later at MoMA. They described it as "a moving and gracious work of art, achieving an atmospheric magnetism through its delicacy of line and surface."¹¹³ Soby added that Manzù was a sculptor "warm, tender [and] romantic, belonging essentially to older sculptural tradition."¹¹⁴

Barr agreed with Soby also on Semeghini, Borra, Casorati, Pirandello, Campigli and Mafai; on many of Scipione's paintings; Stradone's *Coleotteri* (Beetles, 1944) (even if *The Colosseum* seen in the Laudisa Collection in Rome was the best); Cassinari's *La madre* (The Mother, 1948),¹¹⁵ purchased by Barr from Vitali; and above all on Carrà, whose paintings enriched the Metaphysical School section of the MoMA exhibition, as well as the focus on Italian painting during 1920s and 1930s.¹¹⁶ As Soby wrote, Carrà was a problem because of the difficulty of selecting among many great works.¹¹⁷ The selection of De Pisis's works wasn't easy either: Barr got generally bored by his paintings seen at Biennale and he only liked few items, mostly suggested by Soby since excellent in quality: Jesi's brilliant portrait of *Soldato nello studio* (Recruit, 1937), Novacco's *I peltri* (Pewters, 1941), Romanelli's *Il Coniglio* (The Rabbit, 1933), Venturi's *La porta del mio studio* (The Door of My Studio, 1935), which will be showed at *Twentieth-Century Italian Art* exhibition. Soby well identified the different sources of De Pisis' painting (Manet, Impressionism, Metafisica, Baroque, eighteenth century's venetian landscape painting) and the virtuosity of his technique. Also, he pointed out De Pisis' "contradiction": "Because he improvises with such rapt faith in his own virtuosity, he succeeds or fails according to the clarity and depth of the emotion that prompts a given work. His lack of meditative integrity is his vice and his virtue."¹¹⁸ Another specific case was Gianfilippo Usellini's one; Barr and Soby appreciated his work, but they didn't find any very good piece available.

In Venice, Cagli's *La Chanson d'outrée* (The song of outraged ones, 1947) was, for Barr, good but inferior to the best works seen in Rome; Alberto Ziveri (influenced by Scipione's and Mafais' painting) and Gianni Vagnetti were interesting; and Virgilio Guidi – thanks to his simplified language¹¹⁹ – rose in

his opinion, so much so that they chose to borrow from the artist both *Figure nello spazio III* (Figures in Space III, 1947) and *Nudo* (Nude, 1945). Instead Barr and Soby considered of insufficient quality those paintings on view beyond their very different stylistic affiliation: Rossi, Rolando Colombini, Antonio Calderara, Mario Cavaglieri (despite Longhi's recommendation), Orfeo Tamburi, Vittorio Bolaffio, Lega, Maccari, Birolli, Turcato, Corpora, Sante Monachesi. Moreover, Barr didn't like enough paintings by Emilio Vedova, Giuseppe Aimone, Arnaldo Ciarrocchi, and Giuseppe Capogrossi, and he disparaged works by Domenico Cantatore, Omiccioli, Domenico Purificato, Ennio Morlotti, and Leoncillo.¹²⁰

It's clear that Soby and Barr were demanding and very careful in their selection of young artists at the Rome Quadriennale and Venice Biennale or supported by the commercial galleries, since they were "uneven in quality."¹²¹ In effect in the *Saturday Review of Literature*, Soby wrote that "perhaps it is too early to decide whether in Italy a strong new generation of artists is emerging, but at least the young there are really young (many of the most promising are under thirty), and they work with the enthusiasm of those who believe that history is ahead of them instead dogging their tracks."¹²² Notably, they chose only a few members from Fronte Nuovo delle Arti group to appear in *Twentieth-Century Italian Art*. The group – composed of Birolli, Corpora, Franchina, Guttuso, Leoncillo, Morlotti, Pizzinato, Santomaso, Turcato, Vedova, and Viani, who were linked much more by a common will of renewal than a shared style – was supported by the critic Giuseppe Marchiori and much discussed by Italian critics in newspapers and art journals during the Biennale; indeed, they were widely considered the most dynamic emerging practitioners of painting and sculpture. Among them, Guttuso was the most attractive to the representatives of MoMA, thanks to a visual rather than political or ideological approach: they appreciated his neo-cubist style and didn't consider his affiliation to Communist party. Both Barr and Soby appreciated also several of Pizzinato's and Santomaso's paintings,¹²³ and Viani's sculpture (which they had already enjoyed at the Fifth Quadriennale).¹²⁴

Of course, the Italian Communist-artists topics was one of the main troubles which Barr and Soby faced. They always asserted that their selection was made solely on the basis of artistic quality, but they were aware of political

instability in Italy after WWII, that could be a problem as well as an opportunity:

Our choice of works for the exhibition, though not yet final, was made solely on the basis of quality. We made clear from the beginning that the political convictions of the artists would not be a factor in our judgment. As a result, we were able to work with a free hand, and perhaps it is not too optimistic to claim that our impartiality had a good if minor effect. We found on arrival in Italy that a majority of the living artists were Communists. Before the elections of April, the Communist party had made all manner of promises to prominent Italian artists. But when one of the most intelligent of the younger Italian Communist-artists was asked what he had really received from the Communist party, he reply was 'Nothing but orders.' These orders began to be a serious matter before we left Italy. Before the elections, the Communist party has assured the artists that they would be entirely free to paint what they liked – abstractions, expressionist pictures, anything they wanted. The assurance was frequently given that Italian Communist would not follow the Russian pattern of forcing artists to create image useful to the Communist Party, that is, to create "socialist realist" images to direct propaganda value to the Party. But soon after the elections, the Communist members of an important jury were instructed not to award prizes to any abstract paintings but rather to favour realistic and social works. This action came as a bombshell to advanced artists of Italy. It made the Museum's non-political impartiality of choice seem the more welcome, and perhaps we are justified in saying that at least a few good artists began to consider a new the virtues of the democratic principle "Freedom of expression."¹²⁵

Thus, Barr and Soby's grand tour was utterly educational and they departed confident that an extremely interesting exhibition would result – one surely more varied and of better quality than what they had supposed possible before their trip.

Quality was the refrain of Barr and Soby, but which is "quality?" In a transnational exchange operation like *Twentieth-Century Italian Art* exhibition, the evaluation of "quality" of artworks was totally arbitrary and according to a specific point of view, influenced by the context and many factors: establishing the role of Italian art in the international context of modernism according to Barr's stylistically derivative system proposed since 1936 and at the base of MoMA presentation of twentieth-century art; a schizophrenic and contradictory methodology, from one hand, that aimed to select artworks by a stylistic and visual approach and neglected any social and political influences, from the other, that considered the new democratic and political order in Italy after the end of Fascism indispensable prerequisite for a new "Italian renaissance" in art too; Barr and Soby's personal taste and interest.

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1. Davide Colombo is the author of the first, third, and fourth sections of this essay, "Along the Peninsula," "Break or Continuity? The Fifth Quadriennale in Rome," and "A Step in the Right Direction": The Twenty-Fourth Venice Biennale;" Silvia Bignami is the author of the second, "The Italian Collectors of Italian Modern Art: 'White Flies.'"

Alfred H. Barr, Jr. and James Thrall Soby's Grand Tour of Italy

2. The historiography has for long time asserted the cultural and artistic isolationism of Italian artists during Fascism – the MoMA 1949 show was also based on this thesis –, but in the last years some scholars and texts – in this issue as well – contested it.
3. See Raffaele Bedarida, "Operation Renaissance: Italian Art at MoMA, 1940–1949," *Oxford Art Journal* 35, no. 2 (June 2012): 157.
4. Alfred H. Barr, Jr., letter to Charles Rufus Morey, April 24, 1948, Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Papers, 3154: 271, Archive of the Museum of Modern Art, New York. All future references to letters, notebooks, and diaries, unless otherwise noted, are from MoMA's Archive.
5. See Laura Moure Cecchini's essay "'Positively the only person who is really interested in the show': Romeo Toninelli, Collector and Cultural Diplomat Between Milan and New York," in the present issue of *Italian Modern Art*.
6. Barr, letter to Morey, April 24, 1948, Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Papers, 3154: 271.
7. See Raffaele Bedarida, "Export/Import: The Promotion of Contemporary Italian Art in the United States, 1935–1969" (PhD diss., Graduate Center, City University of New York, 2016), 21.
8. Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli, letter to Monroe Wheeler, August 22, 1946; Wheeler, letter to Bandinelli, February 24, 1947; Bandinelli, letter to Wheeler, March–April 1947; and Rene d'Harnoncourt (on behalf of Wheeler), letter to Bandinelli, April 15, 1947, *Twentieth-Century Italian Art* exhibition records, 413.8.
9. See Davide Colombo, "1949: Twentieth-Century Italian Art at MoMA di New York," in Francesco Tedeschi (ed.), *New York New York. La riscoperta dell'America* (Milan: Electa, 2017), 107–8. See also Davide Colombo, "MoMA and the Italian art collection: a debate between Alfred H. Barr, Jr. and Gio Ponti," paper presented at the study day on Alfred H. Barr, Jr., and Margaret Scolari Barr, Center for Italian Modern Art, New York, April 23, 2015.
10. See several tentative lists and comments by James Thrall Soby and Alfred H. Barr, Jr., *Twentieth-Century Italian Art* exhibition records, 413.6.
11. Based on their specific areas of interest and responsibility, Barr focuses on Futurism, and Soby – as well as in his *The early Chirico* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1941) – wrote about the Metaphysical School and the middle and young generations of painters and sculptors.

Alfred H. Barr, Jr. and James Thrall Soby's Grand Tour of Italy

12. James T. Soby, "Realism – Macchiaioli Style," *Saturday Review of Literature*, March 5, 1949: 28–29
13. *Ibid.*, 29.
14. Soby and Barr requested many books and photographs of paintings and sculptures from Italian institutions, galleries, and critics. See the bibliography in Alfred H. Barr, Jr., and James Thrall Soby, *Twentieth-Century Italian Art* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1949).
15. Elena Cordova, "Discoveries from the Margaret Scolari Barr Papers at the MoMA Archives," paper presented at the study day on Alfred H. Barr, Jr., and Margaret Scolari Barr, Center for Italian Modern Art, New York, April 23, 2015.
16. The Archive of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, holds two notebooks penned by Soby and Margaret Barr: "Milan II-X" and "Rome" (James Thrall Soby Papers, I.135); a pocket diary and a travel diary by Soby: "J.T.S. 1948," "Milan" (James Thrall Soby Papers, II.F); and Margaret Scolari Barr's pocket diary (May 18–29 pages missing) (M. Scolari Barr Papers, IV.5).
17. James Thrall Soby, "The Venice Biennial," *Saturday Review of Literature* (August 7, 1948): 30.
18. "Una mostra dell'arte Italiana moderna a New York," *L'Osservatore Romano* (May 19, 1948): 2. Translation by the authors'.
19. [James Thrall Soby], Report on MoMA exhibition of Twentieth-Century Italian painting and sculpture, [after June 1948], *Twentieth-Century Italian Art* exhibition records, 413.6.
20. Corrado Cagli, "Cagli risponde a De Chirico con un vivace discorso polemico. Una rassegna di pittura italiana al museo di New York," *Gioventù* (July 22, 1948), available in Raccolta Documentaria Arti Visive, BV 1948 records, Archivio Storico delle Arti Contemporanee (ASAC), Venice.
21. Raffaele Bedarida, *Corrado Cagli. La pittura, l'esilio, l'America (1938–1947)* (Rome: Donzelli editore, 2018).
22. Corrado Cagli, "Italian Renaissance," *Harper's Bazaar* (March 1948): 227–33. See also a list on artists and galleries from the article in *Twentieth-Century Italian Art* exhibition records, 413.6. In the same article Cagli wrote that MoMA was organizing an exhibition on Italian art and planning Soby and Barr's journey in Italy.

Alfred H. Barr, Jr. and James Thrall Soby's Grand Tour of Italy

23. Cagli, letter to Pietro Maria Bardi, February 11, 1946, reproduced in Bedarida, *Corrado Cagli*, 201–03.
24. This topic is analyzed in Silvia Bignami, "'Ti prego di preparare I vestiti, perché sono nudo'. La collezione di Adriano Pallini negli anni Trenta," *L'uomo nero*, no. 3 (2005): 31–50.
25. Gino Ghiringhelli, ed., *Mostra Pallini. Alcune opere* (Milan: Ind. Grafica Moneta, 1952).
26. Carlo Ludovico Ragghianti, ed., *Arte moderna in una raccolta italiana* (Milan: Edizioni del Milione, 1953).
27. Rodolfo Pallucchini, letter to Longhi, September 24, 1951, and draft by Longhi, reproduced in Maria Cristina Bandera, *Il carteggio Longhi-Pallucchini. Le prime Biennali del dopoguerra 1948–1956* (Milan: Charta, 1999), 142–48.
28. "Mostra Protesta del Collezionista," *Bollettino del Milione*, no. 20 (December 23, 1933–January 4, 1934).
29. Raffaello Giolli, "Genova: dell'ingegnere Della Ragione," *Colosseo Colonna* (December 1934): 32–36.
30. Giuseppe Gorgerino, "Utilità delle opera d'arte," *L'Ambrosiano* (February 9, 1938): 6.
31. Already in 1935 Barr contacted directly Galleria Il Milione and artists in order to request artworks for *Cubism and Abstract Art* exhibition held at MoMA in 1936.
32. See Sileno Salvagnini, *Il sistema delle arti in Italia 1919–1943* (Bologna: Minerva Edizioni, 2000); Antonello Negri (ed.), *Il sistema dell'arte a Milano dal 1945 al 1956: gallerie ed esposizioni* (Cernusco Lombardone: Hestia, 1998); Antonello Negri (ed.), *Il sistema dell'arte a Milano dal 1945 al 1956: arte e critica in "Avanti!", "Corriere della Sera", "L'Unità"* (Cernusco Lombardone: Hestia, 1998).
33. A typewritten list on the letterhead of the Il Camino and Il Milione galleries with handwritten notes by Soby, *Twentieth-Century Italian Art* exhibition records, 413.6.
34. "Milan II-X" notebook, James Thrall Soby Papers, I.135.
35. Guido Piovene, *La Raccolta Feroldi* (Milan: Edizioni del Milione, 1942).
36. See Flavio Fergonzi, *La collezione Mattioli. Capolavori dell'avanguardia italiana* (Milan: Skira, 2003).

37. See Mario Bezzola, *Situazione delle opere nella Galleria d'Arte Moderna*, December 6, 1948, Archivio dei Musei Artistico e Archeologico Municipali, Servizio Biblioteche e Archivi Artistici e Archeologici Civici, Castello Sforzesco, Milan, folder 157; quoted in Marina Pugliese, Danka Giaccon, Iolanda Ratti, "Un secolo di storia per un museo definitivo," in *Museo del Novecento. La collezione* (Milan: Electa, 2010), 31. "... the artworks were not displayed in the rooms of the museum. They were provisionally in the warehouse; the paintings were placed on the floor 'on each other' and 'contrary to good preservative standard.'" Translation by the authors'.
38. "J.T.S. 1948" pocket diary and "Milan" travel diary, James Thrall Soby Papers, II.F.
39. "Rome" notebook, James Thrall Soby Papers, I.135; Margaret Scolari Barr's pocket diary, Margaret Scolari Barr Papers, IV.5.
40. See Ilaria Schiaffini's essay "It's Roman Holiday for Artists: The American Artists of L'Obelisco After World War II," in the present issue of *Italian Modern Art*.
41. This feature of Mafai's work was highlighted promoting him after WWII, despite his painting was well appreciated during 1930s as well as it was institutionally recognized thanks to the Venice Biennale in 1938 and the Premio Bergamo, promoted by Giuseppe Bottai (Minister of National Education) in 1940.
42. Soby, "The Fine Arts: The Venice Biennial," 31–32. Despite her role in "Roman School" together with Scipione and Mafai recognized by the Venice Biennale (as well as the persecution because of the racial laws), Antonietta Raphael was missing in MoMA show and unquoted in Soby's texts.
43. See Viviana Pozzoli, "Lo Studio d'Arte Palma: Storia di un'impresa per il commercio artistico nell'Italia del dopoguerra," *Acme*, vol. 69, no. 2: 145–58.
44. See Bedarida, *Corrado Cagli*, 3–4, 271–82.
45. *Spies at the Stake* (1947) was displayed at Fifth Quadriennale.
46. See Mariastella Margozi, ed., *Palma Bucarelli. Il museo come avanguardia* (Milan: Electa, 2009).

47. Since 1945, Soby was working on revising his monograph on the de Chirico's early paintings (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1941) in order to reprint it (New York: MoMA, 1955), thus each discussion with Italian scholars on this topic was very useful, as he also wrote in the "Acknowledgments" of the 1955 edition (7–9); moreover Soby asked to critics, collectors and dealers good pictures of de Chirico's paintings. In an index card, Soby summarized the topics of his talk with Castelfranco on May 14, 1948: de Chirico's using siccatic de Courtrai up to 1918 and using tempera from 1921–22; two de Chirico's works from Girardon Collection destroyed by fire in New York; copy of *Muse Inquietanti* purchased by Breton (see "Chirico" index card [post summer 1948], James Thrall Soby Papers, I.353).
48. Margherita Sarfatti – writer, journalist, art critics – was the promoter of the Novecento Italiano group, established in 1922 (Anselmo Bucci, Leonardo Dudreville, Achille Funi, Gian Emilio Malerba, Piero Marussig, Ubaldo Oppi, and Mario Sironi). For twenty years she was intimate with Benito Mussolini and she wrote his biography, *Dux*, published in Italy in 1926; after the racial laws in 1938, she left Italy, where she came back in 1947.
49. "Rome" notebook, James Thrall Soby Papers, I.135.
50. See Margaret Scolari Barr's pocket diary, Margaret Scolari Barr Papers, IV.5; Barr, letters to Soby, May 22, 1948, and May 28, 1948, *Twentieth-Century Italian Art* exhibition records, 413.6.
51. Barr, letter to Soby, May 22, 1948, *Twentieth-Century Italian Art* exhibition records, 413.6.
52. Alfredo Casella contributed to Depero's *I balli plastici*, staged at Teatro dei Piccoli (Palazzo Odescalchi) in Rome, on April 15, 1918, and to Anton Giulio Bragaglia's shows at Teatro degli Indipendenti in 1921.
53. Ibid.
54. After the fall of Fascism, Oppo came out of two court cases unscathed: he had been fully acquitted of the charges brought against him by a special committee against Fascism and the profits of the regime. Thus, he was invited to the Quadriennale as painter. See Francesca Romana Morelli, ed., *Cipriano Efisio Oppo. Un legislatore per l'arte* (Rome: De Luca, 2000), 397.

55. On the history of the Fifth Quadriennale, see Claudia Salaris, *La Quadriennale. Storia della rassegna d'arte italiana dagli anni Trenta a oggi* (Venice: Marsilio, 2004), 69–83; Enrico Crispolti, "Ricapitolazioni e prospettive in scena problematica," and Roberto Ciuni, "Uno sterminato 'catalogo di pittura e di scultura,'" in *XIV Quadriennale di Roma. Retrospective 1931/1948* (Milan: Electa, 2005), 133–37 and 139–42.
56. Bonomi, letter to Coccia, November 22, 1944, Rome, Archivio Storico della Quadriennale II, carteggio, b. 2, u. 8, quoted in Claudia Salaris, *La Quadriennale. Storia della rassegna d'arte italiana dagli anni Trenta a oggi* (Venice: Marsilio, 2004), 226.
57. Coccia, letter to Premiership, January 10, 1945, Rome, Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Presidenza del Consiglio dei ministri, 1948–50, 14.1.12422, quoted in Salaris, *La Quadriennale*, 226.
58. Memorandum of Organizing Committee of the Fifth Quadriennale, Rome, ASQII, c.1, in *XIV Quadriennale di Roma*, 222.
59. It is useful to remember that the Quadriennale commemorated, in two solo shows, the artists Arturo Nathan and Rudolf Levy, who died in Nazi concentration camps. A small solo show was dedicated to Nathan also in the Twenty-Fourth Venice Biennial. Nathan's name is mentioned in the catalogue of MoMA show, with Savinio's and de Chirico's, reviving certain aspects of the Metaphysical premise during the 1920s. See Barr and Soby, *Twentieth-Century Italian Art*, 26.
60. Ernesto Valentino, "La 'Quadriennale' si farà ma come si farà," *Umanità* (July 27, 1947).
61. Enrico Crispolti suggested this underestimating the Fifth Quadriennale was probably caused by its all-inclusive approach, unlike some many others shows focusing on a specific artistic research: *Mostra Internazionale d'Arte Astratta e Concreta* [International Exhibition of Abstract and Concrete Art] (Milan, 1947), *Quattro pittori fuori strada* [Four Painters off-road] (Rome, 1947), *Prima Mostra del Fronte Nuovo delle Arti* [Fronte Nuovo delle Arti First Exhibition] (Milan, 1947), *Forma 1* (Rome, 1947), *Arte Astratta in Italia* [Abstract Art in Italy] (Rome, 1948), *Prima Mostra Nazionale d'Arte Contemporanea* [First National Contemporary Art Exhibition] (Bologna, 1948), and, later, *Arte astratta e concreta in Italia* [Abstract and Concrete Art in Italy] (Rome, 1951). See Crispolti, "Ricapitolazioni e prospettive in scena problematica," in *XIV Quadriennale di Roma*, 134–35.

62. *Arti figurative. Rassegna Nazionale a Roma*, La Settimana Incom/00140, April 8, 1948, black-and-white film with sound, 1 min. 26 sec., Rome, Archivio Istituto Luce.
63. See Barr, letter to Soby, May 22, 1948, *Twentieth-Century Italian Art* exhibition records, 413.6.
64. One of them, *Bathers*, was purchased by Augusto Caraceni and later lent to *Twentieth-Century Italian Art*.
65. See Barr, letter to Soby, May 22, 1948, *Twentieth-Century Italian Art* exhibition records, 413.6.
66. Benedetta Marinetti criticized the organizers for focusing on early Futurism and minimizing the second generation. See Benedetta Marinetti, "Sulla 'Mostra dei Futuristi,'" *Il Tempo* (March 31, 1948), quoted in Salaris, *La Quadriennale*, 70 and 226.
67. After WWII few references to second generation of futurist artists appeared in Raffaele Carrieri, *Pittura scultura d'avanguardia in Italia 1890-1950* (Milan: Edizioni della Conchiglia, 1950); Guido Ballo, *Pittori italiani dal futurismo a oggi* (Rome: Edizioni Mediterranee, 1956); Tristan Sauvage, *Pittura italiana del dopoguerra (1945-1957)* (Milan: Schwarz, 1957). But a new and more complex analysis of the "second Futurism" started at the end of 1950s thanks to Enrico Crispolti, "Appunti sul problema del secondo futurismo nella cultura italiana fra le due Guerre," *Notizie: Arti figurative*, 2: 5 (April 1958): 34-52, and Maria Drudi Gambillo and Teresa Fiori, eds., *Archivi del futurismo* (Rome: De Luca, 1958-62).
68. See Bedarida, "Operation Renaissance: Italian Art at MoMA, 1940-1949," 157-58.
69. The second generation of Futurists was just mentioned by Soby in the catalogue, introducing the Italian situation of 1920s, after the collapse of Futurism and of the Scuola Metafisica. See Soby and Barr, *Twentieth-Century Italian Art*, 26.
70. See Barr, letter to Soby, May 22, 1948, *Twentieth-Century Italian Art* exhibition records, 413.6; see also Gisella Conte, "L'ufficio vendite," in *XIV Quadriennale di Roma*, 232.

71. It's interesting to note that a commercial gallery like Sperone Westwater has recently held the exhibition *Painting in Italy 1910s–1950s: Futurism, Abstraction, Concrete Art* (2015), as an answer to correct the historical narrative proposed in the exhibitions *Chaos and Classicism: Art in France, Italy, and Germany, 1918–1936* (curated by Kenneth E. Silver) and *Italian Futurism 1909–1944: Reconstructing the Universe* (curated by Vivien Greene) organized by the Guggenheim Museum in 2010–11 and 2014. In her essay in the exhibition catalogue – “The Utopias of Italian Abstract Painting, 1910s–1950s. A Contested History” – Maria Antonella Pelizzari proposed a line of continuity within a wide chronological period.
72. See Adrian R. Duran's essay, “Neocubism and Italian Painting Circa 1949: An Avant-Garde That Maybe Wasn't,” in the present issue of *Italian Modern Art*.
73. *Ibid.*, 33.
74. See Barr and Soby, *Twentieth-Century Italian Art*, 32. See also a list of Magnelli's abstract collages compiled by Soby, *Twentieth-Century Italian Art* exhibition records, 413.6.
75. Soby and Barr, *Twentieth-Century Italian Art*, 34 and 129.
76. See James Thrall Soby, Biennale [June 1948], *Twentieth-Century Italian Art* exhibition records, 413.6. Soby spent four days visiting Biennale and filled a detailed list of artists and artworks to be evaluated by Barr.
77. See Léopold Zborowski, *Modigliani* (Milan: All'Insegna del Pesce d'Oro, 1945); *Note e ricordi su Amedeo Modigliani (1884–1920)* (Genova: Saiga, 1945); Lamberto Vitali, ed., *Mostra Modigliani* (Milan: S.A. Alfieri & Lacroix, 1946); Raffaele Carrieri, *12 opere di Amedeo Modigliani* (Milan: Edizioni del Milione, 1947).
78. On Modigliani during the 1930s see also Palma Bucarelli, “Modigliani, Amedeo,” *ad vocem* Enciclopedia Italiana (Rome: Treccani, 1934).
79. Umbro Apollonio, “Breve omaggio a Modigliani,” *Emporium*, vol. CIII, no. 618 (June 1946): 261–69.
80. See Gualtieri di San Lazzaro, *Amedeo Modigliani*, in *Rassegna Nazionale di Arti Figurative [V Quadriennale]* (Rome: Istituto Grafico Tiberino, 1948): 28–29.
81. See Barr and Soby, *Twentieth-Century Italian Art*, 24.

82. Report on MoMA exhibition of Twentieth-Century Italian painting and sculpture, [after June 1948], *Twentieth-Century Italian Art* exhibition records 413.6.
83. *Nel mondo della pittura: ieri e oggi alla Quadriennale*, La Settimana Incom/00158, May 27, 1948, black-and-white film with sound, 1 min. 38 sec., Rome, Archivio Istituto Luce.
84. *Nude*, a marble sculpture, was lent for the *Twentieth-Century Italian Art* exhibition by the collector Leone Traverso and later sold to MoMA.
85. Soby, "The Fine Arts: The Venice Biennial," 30.
86. See Pascale Budillon Puma, *La Biennale di Venezia: dalla guerra alla crisi 1948-1968* (Bari: Palomar, 1995), 29-30; Bandera, *Il carteggio Longhi-Pallucchini. Le prime Biennali del dopoguerra 1948-1956* (Milan: Charta, 1999), 7-41; and Enzo Di Martino, *Storia della Biennale di Venezia 1895-2003* (Venice: Papiro Arte, 2003), 53-58; Nancy Jachec, *Politics and Painting at the Venice Biennale, 1948-1964. Italy and the Idea of Europe* (Manchester/New York: Manchester University Press, 2007).
87. Rodolfo Pallucchini, foreword to *XXIV Biennale di Venezia* (Venezia: Edizioni Serenissima, 1948), xi. Translation by the authors'.
88. Giovanni Ponti, preface to *ibid.*, viii-ix. Translation by the authors'.
89. Soby, "The Fine Arts: The Venice Biennial," 32.
90. The Committee for Arts of Twenty-Fourth Venice Biennial consisted of Nino Barbantini, Carlo Carrà, Felice Casorati, Roberto Longhi, Marino Marini, Giorgio Morandi, Rodolfo Pallucchini, Carlo Ludovico Ragghianti, Pio Semeghini, and Lionello Venturi.
91. See Lionello Venturi and Rodolfo Pallucchini, *Gli impressionisti alla XXIV Biennale di Venezia* (Venice: Edizioni Daria Guarnati, 1948).
92. The selection of artists by the committee involved much lengthy discussion, due to disagreements between Longhi and Venturi about van Gogh, Gauguin, and Seurat. See Bandera, *Il carteggio Longhi-Pallucchini. Le prime Biennali del dopoguerra 1948-1956* (Milan: Charta, 1999).
93. Francesco Arcangeli, "Tre pittori italiani dal 1910 al 1920," in *XXIV Biennale di Venezia*, 29-30.
94. See Soby, Biennale [June 1948], *Twentieth-Century Italian Art* exhibition records, 413.6. Soby spent four days visiting Biennale and filled a detailed list of artists and artworks to be evaluated by Barr.

95. See Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Biennale notes for J.T.S., June 25, 1948, *Twentieth-Century Italian Art* exhibition records, 413.6. Barr spent more time than Soby in Venice, visiting Galleria d'Arte Moderna at Ca' Pesaro – despite finding nothing interesting – and Galleria del Cavallino, which lent works by Campigli, Morandi, Rosai, Scipione, and Sironito the MoMA exhibition.
96. For example: Orfeo Tamburi: very De Pisis; Achille Lega: ½ Rosai, ½ Carrà; Domenico Cantatore: Modigliani style; Renato Birolli: less Picasso, more Klee; Emilio Vedova: Futurism plus Leger; Armando Pizzinato: Kandinsky-Futurism; Carlo Corsi: very Schwitters; Giuseppe Ajmone: Villon cubism. See Soby, Biennale [June 1948], *Twentieth-Century Italian Art* exhibition records, 413.6.
97. Among artists proposed with positive comments, see, for example: Luigi Mariano's *Uomo e fanciulli* (Man and children, 1947), bought by Soby; Mario Marcucci, influenced by Scipione and Mafai's painting during 1930s; Italo Valenti, member of Corrente group; Carlo Martini, influenced by Novecento group and by Chiarismo group. Other works by Renato Birolli, Emilio Vedova, Giulio Turcato, and Giuseppe Ajmone (refused by Barr) were listed by Soby without any comments thus it isn't easy understanding clearly his point of view. See Soby, Biennale [June 1948], *Twentieth-Century Italian Art* exhibition records, 413.6.
98. Soby noted in his list five works by Maccari, but he added he "didn't really like any Maccari very much." See Soby, Biennale [June 1948], *Twentieth-Century Italian Art* exhibition records, 413.6.
99. See Barr and Soby, *Twentieth-Century Italian Art*, 18.
100. Soby, "The Fine Arts: The Venice Biennial," 30.
101. Alfred H. Barr, Jr., "Modern Prints and the Museum," in *Master Prints from the Museum Collection* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1949).
102. All the three ceramics lent by Fontana to Twentieth-Century Italian Art at MoMA – "Christ" [Crucifixion] (1948), "Masker" (1948), and "Masker" (1948), where displayed at XXIV Venice Biennale. The "Christ" reproduced on MoMA catalogue was not the item displayed in the show.
103. Italian critics also sometimes referred to them as the "Three MA's." See Raffaele Carrieri, "Tre 'MA' dominano il campo," *Tempo* (August 28, 1948).

104. On the “mid-century” success in the U.S. of Italian sculpture, see Davide Colombo, “Chicago 1957: ‘Italian Sculptors.’ Qualche vicenda attorno alla scultura italiana in America,” *LUK*, no. 23 (2017): 138–54.
105. Barr, Biennale notes for J.T.S., June 25, 1948, *Twentieth-Century Italian Art* exhibition records, 413.6.
106. See Barr and Soby, *Twentieth-Century Italian Art*, 33.
107. On Marini’s success in U.S., see Teresa Meucci, “Marino Marini e Curt Valentin: la fortuna dello scultore in America,” *Quaderni di scultura contemporanea*, no. 8 (October 2008): 6–21; and “Il debutto di Marino sulla 57^a Strada di New York,” in *Manzù/Marino. Gli ultimi moderni*, ed. Laura D’Angelo and Stefano Roffi (Cinisello Balsamo: Silvana Editoriale, 2014), 69–77.
108. Before *Twentieth-Century Italian Art* exhibition Marini’s sculptures were showed in *Handicrafts as Fine Art in Italy* exhibition at House of Italian Handicrafts in New York (1948) and his *Cavallo e cavaliere* (Horse and Rider, 1947) was reproduced in *Art News* (see “Artigianato. Artisanary as practiced by Italy’s top painters and sculptors in New York,” in *Art News* [1948]: 37); in *Sculpture* exhibition at Buchholz Gallery in New York (September 28–October 16, 1948) and Marini’s *Nudo* (Nude, 1943) was reproduced in M.C., “Contemporary Sculpture,” in *Art News* (October 1948): 46, and *Cavaliere* (Horse and Rider, 1947) in Sam Hunter, “European Sculpture. Work by Modern Artist. Painters in Contrast,” in *The New York Times* (October 3, 1948): X13; in *Rodin to Brancusi show at Society of the Four Arts* (March 4–27, 1949); in *3rd Sculpture International* exhibition at Museum of Art in Philadelphia (May 1949).
109. Lamberto Vitali, “Contemporary sculptors. VII – Marino Marini,” *Horizon*, vol. 18, no. 105 (September 1948): 203–07. See also Barbara Cinelli, “Marino Marini e la critica. Qualche fonte, una mancata storiografia e una leggenda,” in *Marino Marini. Passioni visive*, ed. Barbara Cinelli and Flavio Fergonzi (Cinisello Balsamo: Silvana Editoriale, 2017), 40–61.
110. See Barr and Soby, *Twentieth-Century Italian Art*, 33.
111. The topics of influences from Impressionism and Cézanne as well as from Rosso, Degas and Renoir on Manzù was proposed by Manzù himself in “Risposta a un referendum. Dove va l’arte italiana?,” *Domus*, no. 108 (February 1937): 30–31, and it was better analyzed by Lamberto Vitali, focusing on Rosso in “Lo scultore Giacomo Manzù,” *Emporium*, vol. LXXXVII, no. 520 (May 1938): 254.

112. See James Thrall Soby, *My Life in the Art World: 20/3–20/4*, James Thrall Soby Papers, VIII.A.1.
113. Barr and Soby, *Twentieth-Century Italian Art*, 33–34.
114. Ibid.
115. Soby proposed to Barr other Cassinari's paintings too – *Ritratto di giovane ragazza* (Portrait of young woman, 1948) and *Nudo in rosso* (*Red nude*, 1946) – and suggested him going to visit Cassinari solo show at Cardazzo's gallery. See Soby, Biennale [June 1948], *Twentieth-Century Italian Art* exhibition records, 413.6.
116. See Barr, Biennale notes for J.T.S., June 25, 1948, *Twentieth-Century Italian Art* exhibition records, 413.6.
117. Soby, letter to Barr, August 17, 1948, *Twentieth-Century Italian Art* exhibition records, 413.6.
118. Barr and Soby, *Twentieth-Century Italian Art*, 28.
119. See Barr and Soby, *Twentieth-Century Italian Art*, 29: "Very recently, like many Italian painters, he has turned to abstraction, working in a manner which recalls the rounded simplifications of Germany's Oskar Schlemmer but is exceptionally pungent in color."
120. See Barr, Biennale notes for J.T.S., June 25, 1948; and Soby, Biennale [June 1948], *Twentieth-Century Italian Art* exhibition records, 413.6.
121. Report on MoMA exhibition of Twentieth-Century Italian painting and sculpture, [after June 1948], *Twentieth-Century Italian Art* exhibition records, 413.6.
122. Soby, "The Fine Arts: The Venice Biennial," 30.
123. About Santomaso, Soby noted: "I probably overrate Santomaso but after four days I thought his pics had a certain quality, as did Guttuso's whereas Birolli, Corpora, Turcato and the others faded out. His color in quite good." See Soby, Biennale [June 1948], *Twentieth-Century Italian Art* exhibition records, 413.6.
124. See Adrian R. Duran's essay, "Neocubism and Italian Painting Circa 1949: An Avant-Garde That Maybe Wasn't," in the present issue of *Italian Modern Art*.
125. [Soby], Report on MoMA exhibition of Twentieth-Century Italian painting and sculpture, [after June 1948], *Twentieth-Century Italian Art* exhibition records, 413.6.

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