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Grosvenor Gallery

April 22 - May 17, 1993

Mario Sironi

1885 – 1961

Grosvenor Gallery

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38. METAPHYSICAL FIGURE

INTRODUCTION

This collection, mainly of works on paper, comes from a larger group of several hundred bought by Eric Estorick direct from the artist in 1947. On honeymoon that year in Arosa, Switzerland, he was introduced to Arturo Bryks, a former teacher at the Bauhaus, by Peggy Cripps, daughter of Sir Stafford Cripps, then President of the Board of Trade. Bryks showed him a tattered copy of Umberto Boccioni's book *Pittura Soultura Futuriste* (1914), and aroused in him so great an excitement that Estorick decided to drive to nearby Milan and meet Sironi.

As Sironi had destroyed most of his early work, Estorick was able to buy only a little that can be described as Futurist or Metaphysical, demonstrating his direct links with Balla, Boccioni, Carra and de Chirico; the earliest work of which there was any great quantity in the studio were the drawings of eerie street scenes and deserted factories made during the latter half of the Great War and immediately after it. By the late 1920's, Sironi had turned his attention to popular culture, to political commentary and commercial advertisement (he worked for the Fiat motor company), and became and remained a prominent caricaturist for Mussolini's official press, *Il Popolo d'Italia* – an association that has since led to accusations that he was a Fascist. These accusations are not altogether justified, for the Fascist

Minister Roberto Farinacci condemned him as degenerate (the Nazi's favourite word for art of which they disapproved), and the Party destroyed his fresco for the Palazzo dell'Arte in Milan; his support in 1943, after the fall of Mussolini, for the extreme Fascist Republic of Salò in northern Italy, may well have been no more than a matter of survival at that time, for Milan was a stronghold of the Germans.

Two drawings in this collection, one caricaturing Fascism as a bomb with a lit fuse, the other depicting journalism as a knight on a rearing horse with a pen for his lance, suggest that Sironi's sympathies were indeed anti-Fascist, and his resumption of a leading position among Italian artists after the Second World War was immediate. His memory was celebrated with a major retrospective exhibition at the Venice Biennale in 1962, and the centenary of his birth with another, at the Palazzo Reale, Milan, in October 1985.

Estorick mounted his first exhibition of works by Sironi in October 1948, at the St. George's Gallery, London. In 1952 he presented two pictures to the Tate Gallery (its only works by the artist), both published by Agnoldomenico Pica, *Mario Sironi*, Milan 1955, p.53. His second exhibition devoted to Sironi was held at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1964, and of the 247 works then shown, a number of those not sold re-appear in the current exhibition.

(Prices Reduced.)

Mario Sironi

Most of the sheets are irregular in shape: measurements of height and width have been taken from the left and lower edges and do not necessarily apply to right and upper edges.

1. TWO FIGURES IN FRONT OF A TENT

Black crayon, pen and brown ink
9.9 x 8.4cm

Circa 1916.

Cf. Milan Centenary Exhibition, fig 9., p.28.

£1800 (1200)
Sold Milan
~~£1800~~

2. FIVE FIGURE STUDIES BASED ON
ARTICULATED MODELS, WITH TWO TRACED
THROUGH ON THE REVERSE

Black chalk
16 x 21.7cm

£2500 (1750)

3. CARICATURE OF A MAN IN A TOP HAT

Signed
Pencil and black crayon
11.2 x 15.7cm

£2500 (1750)

(Here)

4. LOT AND HIS DAUGHTERS

Signed
Pen and brown ink
17.7 x 25.8cm

Circa 1944-45

£3,500 (2,500)

(Here)

5. CROUCHING MAN

Signed
Charcoal and grey wash
33.5 x 20.5cm

Circa 1930

£4,000 (3000)

(SOLD - Milan)

£1920

6. FASCISMO: A CARTOON IN WHICH A BOMB IS
ABOUT TO EXPLODE IN THE FACES OF
HELPLESS POLITICIANS

Inscribed - pencil, pen and brown ink, brown wash
28.4 x 22.4cm

£8500 (6000)

(SOLD - Milan)

£2880

7. TWO GROUPS OF FIGURES GATHERED
ROUND A FALLEN MAN

Signed
Pen and black ink, grey, pink and blue washes
heightened in white body colour
19.2 x 29.6cm
Circa 1944

£7,500 (5000)

8. THE CLOWN

Signed
Pencil, grey, pink and green washes
21.7 x 23.5cm
An unfinished study of a whirlwind on the reverse

£3,500 (2,500)

(Sold - Milan)

£3120

9. THE FACTORY

Signed
Pen and black ink, black and grey washes
14.5 x 13.4cm
Circa 1916
Cf. Gino Travesi, *Sironi i Disegni*, 1968, pl.38

£5,000 (4000)

10. FUTURIST FIGURE RUNNING IN A STREET

Pen and brown ink
18.7 x 21.5cm

£5,000 (4000)

11. THE EXPULSION OF HELIODORUS

Signed
Pencil, pen and black ink, grey and black washes
19.9 x 14.7cm

With four small sketches on the reverse,
one of them a well developed figure of a man
in a top hat.

£4,500 (3,500)

12. TWO STUDIES OF A RIDER AND HIS HORSE,
ONE CLASSICAL, ONE REARING.

fragmentary inscription
pen and purple ink
15.3 x 14cm

Circa 1915

£4,000 (3,000)

13. THE BETRAYAL IN GETHSEMANE

Signed
Pencil and gouache
16.5 x 12.9cm

£6,000 (4000)

(Sold - Milan)

£3360

14. THE FACTORY

Signed
Pen and black ink and gouache
11.5 x 9.3cm

With two studies of heads on the reverse

£10,000 (7,500)

15. THREE SCENES OF BATTLE

Signed
Pen and black ink on the back of a pamphlet
entitled: "Come parlano i Bolscevichi"
31.5 x 21.2cm

£1,500 (1000) (Here)

19. A TOUCAN STRANGLING A MAN

Signed
Pen and black ink, grey wash, white gouache
13.5 x 14.6cm

(Sold - Milan)
£2,750 (1800) £960

16. METAPHYSICAL COMPOSITION WITH A FEMALE BUST

Signed
Pencil
13.6 x 10.7cm
Circa 1922

£2,500 (1750)

20. THE MONSTROUS FISH

Signed
Pen and black ink, black wash, white gouache
14.2 x 10cm

(Sold - Milan)
£2,200 (1500) £1920

17. THE SERPENT

Signed
Brush and black ink, grey and white gouache
16.3 x 16.3cm

£3000 (2000)
(Sold - Milan)
£1440

21. THE UMBRELLA

Signed
Pencil, pen and black ink
14.2 x 13cm

(Sold - Milan).
£2,200 (1500) £3120

18. THE MONASTERY

Signed
Charcoal
15.3 x 26.2cm

£1,800 (1200)
(Here)

22. THE GLOBE BALLOON

Signed
Pencil, pen and black ink
9 x 9.3cm

(Sold - Milan)
£2,200 (1500)
£1850

23. HORSEMAN

Pen and brown ink
8 x 6.1cm

£2,000 (1,200)

Dated 1915 on Sironi's original mount, but connected with the painting *The White Horse and the Pier* Exhibited at the Royal Academy, *Italian Art in the 20th Century*, 1989, No.103, dated circa 1920-22. See illustration back cover.

24. ELEPHANT AND GALLOPING HORSE WITH WOMAN RIDING SIDE-SADDLE

Coloured crayons
23.5 x 34cm

£10,000 (7,500)

25. INDUSTRIAL CITY

Signed
Pen and black ink, grey wash
30.3 x 20.5cm
Circa 1920

£7,000 (5000)

26. FUTURIST COMPOSITION: AN INTERIOR WITH STILL LIFE AND A FIGURE

Charcoal
34.1 x 23.5cm

£15,000 (10,000)

27. THE CONVERSATION

Signed
Pencil, pen and black ink, black wash
23.8 x 21.1cm

£3,500 (2500) £1740

28. HEAD OF A BULL

Signed
Pencil, brush and black ink
18.2 x 18.2cm

£3,500 (2,500) £1440

29. FOUR MALE HEADS

Signed
Pen and blue ink
39.5 x 10cm

£1,500 (1000)

30. TWO MEN IN A LANDSCAPE

Signed
Black wash and white gouache on grey paper
19 x 27.5cm
Circa 1930

£5,000 (4000)
£2300

31. DESIGN FOR A STAGE SET

Signed
Pencil, charcoal, red and green crayon
24.3 x 42.5cm

£6,500 (5000)

32. A BAREFOOT PEASANT

Signed
Pen and black ink, grey wash
7 x 25.8cm

£4,500 (3000)

33. FUTURIST FEMALE FIGURES RUNNING

Black chalk
27.8 x 21.8cm
Circa 1914-15

£10,000 (8,000)

34. PORTRAIT OF LIEUTENANT GONNELLA SEATED AT A TABLE

Signed
Inscribed "Il Tendente Gonnella - 26th Fanteria - Piera"
Circa 1917
Charcoal
32.1 x 23.4cm

£5,000 (3000)
(SOLD - M. I. ca)

£ 22 00

35. TWO SOLDIERS SEATED AT A TABLE

Signed
Charcoal
34 x 23.2cm

Circa 1917
Cf. Milan Centenary Exhibition, fig. 16. p.14.

(SOLD Milan)
£4,000 (3000)

£2640

36. METAPHYSICAL COMPOSITION: AN ARTIST'S STUDIO WITH A PAINTING PROPPED AGAINST A FIGURE

Charcoal
34 x 23.5cm

£12,400 (10,000)

37. THE ARCHITECT

Signed
Pencil
13.7 x 13.4cm

Circa 1922
This study is closely connected with the painting of the same title exhibited at the Royal Academy, *Italian Art in the 20th Century*, 1989, No.105.

(SOLD - M. I. ca)

£3,000 (2000)

✓ 38. METAPHYSICAL FIGURE

Gouache and tempera
34.3 x 26.2cm

Circa 1917
See frontispiece

(Estrinck Foundation)

£75,000 (Here)



39. A KNIGHT IN ARMOUR MOUNTED ON A
REARING HORSE MADE OF NEWSPAPER,
HOLDING A PEN AS A LANCE

Inscribed "L'Apocalisse Cartacea"
Collage of newspaper, pen and black ink,
grey wash heightened in white gouache
27.8 x 20.7cm

Circa 1917-18
See illustration

£40,000

(Sold - Milan)

£28840



40. METAPHYSICAL COMPOSITION: A FEMALE FIGURE
EMBRACING A HORSE, WITH PART OF AN
IRRELEVANT INSCRIPTION ON THE REVERSE

Pencil, pen and brown ink, blue and pink crayon
18 x 15.5cm

Circa 1914-15.
See illustration

£20,000 (15,000)

(sold Milan)

£12,000

41. THE WRITER AT HIS DESK

Signed
Oil on canvas (Sold Milan)
14 x 26.5cm
Circa 1922 £18,000 (12,000)
£5800

43. THREE FIGURES

Oil on canvas
41 x 26.8cm £40,000 (30,000)
Circa 1950

42. FIVE MOUNTAINS

Signed
Oil on canvas
23 x 35.5cm £30,000 (25,000)
(Sold Milan) £6500

44. FIVE FIGURES

Signed
Oil on canvas
26.2 x 27.3cm £35,000 (30,000)
Circa 1949-50

912050

Mario Sironi

Born Sardinia 1885 – Died Milan 1961

- 1885 Mario Sironi was born in Sassari the second of six children on 12th May.
- 1900 He undertook engineering studies at a technical school and entered University in 1902.
- 1903 First meetings with Boccioni, Severini and Balla at the Free School of the Nude in Rome.
- 1906 Move to Paris and shared an apartment with Boccioni.
- 1912 Published five illustrations "Noi e il Mondo".
- 1914 Went to Milan at the invitation of Boccioni to join the Futurist movement with himself and Marinetti. Exhibited works at the Free Futurist Exhibition at the Sprovieri Gallery in Rome.
- 1915 Replaced Soffici in the leadership of the Futurist group joining together with Marinetti, Balla, Boccioni and Severini.
Joined the Lombard Volunteer Cyclists and Drivers Corps at the outbreak of war.
- 1915-17 Collaborated as cartoonist to the magazine "Gli Avvenimenti".
- 1918 Returned to Milan.
- 1922 Founder member of the "Novecento" movement.
- 1926 Organised first "Mostra del Novecento".
- 1928 Exhibited nine pictures in the XVI Biennale of Venice.
- 1929 One-man exhibition at the "Galleria Milano". Organised second "Mostra del Novecento".
- 1928-30 Throughout this period wrote articles on art in "Popolo d'Italia", "Rivista del Popolo d'Italia", "Domus" and others and with the architect Giovanni Muzio organised the planning and arrangement of the Italian pavilions at the Cologne and Barcelona International Exhibitions.
With architects Alberto Alpago-Novello and Gio Ponti directed the "Quarta Esposizione Internazionale delle Arti Decorative e Industriali Moderna" at Monza.
- 1931 Awarded a "Carnegie Institute" prize at Pittsburgh.
- 1933 & 1936 Member of organising committee of Fifth and Sixth Triennale Exhibitions in Milan.
- 1937 Assisted in Italian Pavilion Paris Exhibition.
- 1941 Worked with Giovanni Muzio on building "Popolo d'Italia" Milan, creating all plastic and figurative decorations.
- 1952 Exhibition including moltiplicazione paintings in Copenhagen and Oslo.
- 1953 Travelling co-exhibition with Marino Marini throughout the U.S.A.
- 1954 Awarded Luigi Einaudi Prize and Gold Medal of Ministry of Public Instruction.
- 1956 Awarded the first prize of the City of Milan for painting.
- 1962 Posthumous Retrospective Exhibition at Venice Biennale.

