

## GIORGIO DE CHIRICO AND THE *MYSTERIOUS BATHS FOUNTAIN* IN MILAN'S SEMPIONE PARK\*

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In 1973, on occasion of the XV<sup>th</sup> Milan Triennale (20 September - 20 November), twelve works were created for Milan's Sempione Park as part of the project "Contatto Arte/Città" designed and coordinated by Giulio Macchi. The intention was to bring the inhabitants of the city into closer contact with art, or better, to enable them to experience works of art more fully, in a new kind of "usability" that was not merely contemplation. For this reason Macchi had asked a group of artists to think of works that would be designed and carried out by big industries "as long term installations in Milan's public spaces". Five of these were meant to be purchased by the City of Milan (however, this did not occur).<sup>1</sup>

The artists who took part in the project included: Arman, *Seated Musical Accumulation. Open-air Compression in Cement and Metal* (Fiat Engineering); Umberto Bignardi, *Implicor. Visual and Sonorous Tunnel within the Walls of Palazzo della Triennale* (Olivetti-Kodak); Alberto Burri, *Continuous Theatre. Open-air Structure in Cement and Painted Steel* (Italsider - Finsider - Italcementi); Corrado Cagli, *Cinematographic Variant* (Busnelli); Corneille, *Open-air Book - Story in Images under Plastic* (La Nuova Foglio); Giorgio de Chirico, *Mysterious Baths - Painted Sculptural Composition* (Industrie dei Marmi Vicentini - Swimming Pool International); Hundertwasser, *Tree tenant - Temporary Incentive in the City Streets*; Gino Marotta, *Artificial Eden. Animals and Hedges in Methacrylate and Marble*; Sebastian Matta, *Autopocalypse - High-speed Architecture*; Antonio Paradiso, *History of the Earth - Narrative Panels in Stone from Trani*; Pizzo Greco, *Musical*

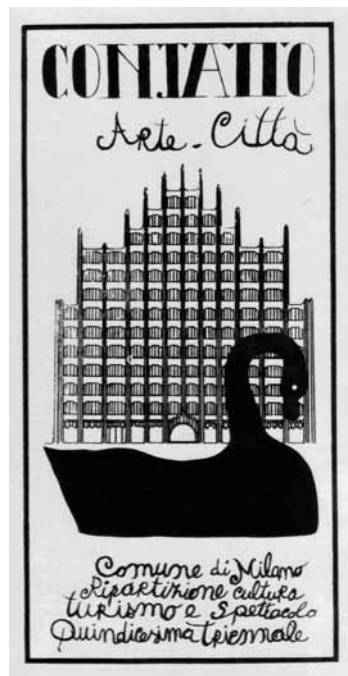


fig. 1 *Contatto arte città*, catalogue, 1973

\* In memory of Jole de Sanna, whose tenacity and commitment to bringing the degradation of the Fountain to the attention of the public and the City of Milan was fundamental in carrying out the restoration project.

<sup>1</sup> G. Macchi, *Nel Parco Sempione. Contatto Arte/Città*, presentation to the exhibition "Contatto Arte/Città", Giulio Macchi, curator, Milan 1973. See also F. Lanza, *La fontana dei "Bagni Misteriosi" Vicenza - Milano 1973*, in *Giorgio de Chirico. Metafisica dei Bagni misteriosi*, exhibition catalogue, M. Fagiolo dell'Arco, curator, Vicenza 6 June - 13 September 1998, Skira, Milan 1998, pp. 149-158.

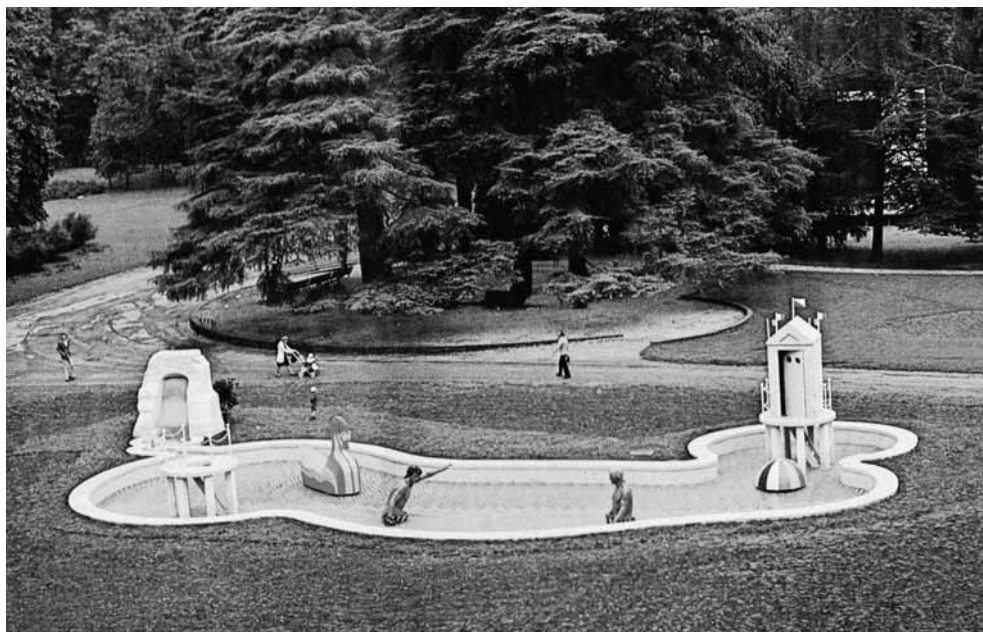


fig. 2 *The Mysterious Baths Fountain*, 1973

*Labyrinth - Sound Sculpture* (Dalmine Ponteggi - Farfisa - Ivis - Siemens); and finally, Roccamonte, *Sculpture Kiosk - Structure in White Cement* (Italcementi). The entire project was sponsored and held under the patronage of Count Paolo Marzotto (fig. 1).

Of these works, only Arman's *Little Theatre* and de Chirico's *Baths* remain in their original locations, although in a derelict state. The others have been withdrawn by the artists themselves or, like Burri's *Theatre*, destroyed.

If de Chirico is a constructor of enigmas, and if every work of his conceals – in a maze of possibilities – a secret way to discover its sublime message, the *Mysterious Baths* is the easiest and at the same time most playful (fig. 2).

Exactly forty years earlier, the artist had had an unfortunate experience at Palazzo della Triennale in Milan: in 1933, for the V Triennale, he had executed a mural entitled *Italian Culture* on one of the vast walls of the *Salone delle Cerimonie*, now known as the *Salone d'Onore*. When the exhibition ended, the decision was made to destroy all of the paintings, an event which infuriated de Chirico. In his *Memoirs* he recalls: "In this period I executed a large mural painting at the Palazzo della Triennale in Milan. I executed it very quickly and in extremely difficult circumstances, using the egg tempera process, and this painting cost me the sum of 150 lire in eggs alone. My work turned out very well and its effect was beautiful, in spite of the fact that the painter Sironi had put some gigantic Cubist-like chandeliers in front of it which looked like colossal geysers, and on top of that had placed a mosaic by Severini in the middle of my fresco, which looked completely out of place. My mural painting gave rise to much envy; it was not reproduced in the newspapers or even in the illustrated leaflets which were on sale at the exhibition and included, instead, paintings by Campigli,



fig. 3 Volos, the beach at Anavros



fig. 4 The baths, c. 1890

Funi and Sironi. After the exhibition had closed, all the paintings in this room were destroyed, probably because they did not dare, owing to possible scandal, to destroy only mine.”<sup>2</sup>

Forty years later, for de Chirico to return to Milan – and to the Triennale in particular – with another work, it was perhaps a little like returning to the scene of a crime.

In order to understand the genesis of the Sempione Park *Baths*, one must go back to de Chirico’s beloved native city, so mythicised during his life and in his work: Volos, founded in a land bordered by two rivers: the Anavros, located to the East (where Greek mythology says that Jason lost his sandal, thus giving rise to the saga of the Argonauts), and the Cravsidon to the West. There is a magnificent beach at the mouth of the Anavros, and de Chirico described the sea there as “the most beautiful in the world”. At the end of the nineteenth century, long wooden bridges were built there – and there they remained until just before the Second World War – with a series of platforms jutting out into the water. They held separate changing cabins for men and women, with ladders that went down into the water from the inside (figs. 3, 4).

It is interesting to note that Evaristo de Chirico’s firm, Thessaly Railways, was involved in the construction of the bath houses, creating a special rail link between the city and the beach, with conveniently-priced trains running every hour in the summer to allow bathers easy access. A group of white swans lived on the nearby river right up until after the War. Today, the Anavros has practically dried up, the swans have disappeared, and so have the bath houses. Only the beach remains, still beloved and frequented by the people of Volos.

In his 1920 study on Klinger, de Chirico recalled the etching *Chord, Brahmsphantasie*, opus XII - 1894, writing about how he had been struck by the painting and in particular by the steps going down towards the sea, because “going back to my childhood memories, I remember how the steps of the beach cabins always disturbed me and gave me a great sense of dismay. Those few steps of wood covered with algae and mould immersed less than half a metre under water seemed as though they must have been descending for leagues and leagues, down into the heart of the oceanic darkness”<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> G. de Chirico, *Memorie della mia vita*, Astrolabio, Rome 1945; II ed. Rizzoli, Milan 1962; English translation *The Memoirs of Giorgio de Chirico*, Peter Owen, London 1971, p. 127.

<sup>3</sup> Giorgio de Chirico, *Max Klinger*, “Il Convegno” 10 November 1920. Now in *Giorgio de Chirico, Scritti/1 (1911-1945). Romanzi e scritti critici e teorici*, A. Cortellessa, ed., A. Bonito Oliva, dir. Bompiani, Milan 2008, pp. 321-333.

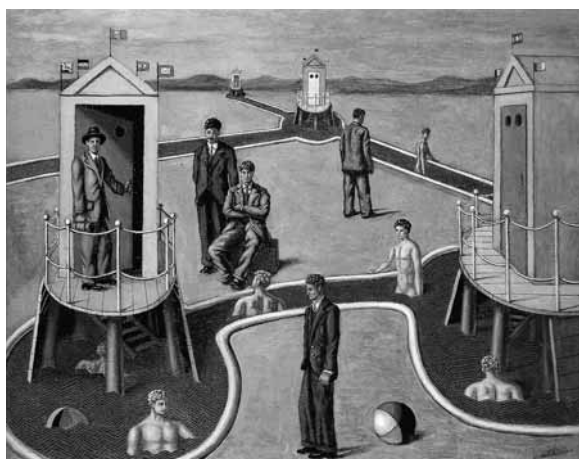


fig. 5 *Mysterious Baths*, c. 1934



fig. 6 *Swimmer in the Mysterious Baths*, 1974

In an interview with de Chirico on occasion of his exhibition held at the Julien Levy Gallery (published in “Art News” on 28 November 1936 with the title *The New Chirico: A Classic Romantic*), the American journalist Martha Davidson wrote: “When de Chirico was a child in his native Greece, his father, a Sicilian engineer working in Volo (sic!), occasionally took him to the baths. The boy was deeply impressed by the difference he perceived between the clothed and unclothed figures. They seemed like different species of animals in different spheres of existence. The clothed men, like overwhelming and majestic statues, towered over the swimmers, who appeared exposed and defenceless. The little cabins, with their pierced windows, were like masked heads looking on the scene. Some time later a subconscious association was formed between this childhood impression and shining parquet floors which became identified with the water of the pools. Into this “parquet water” the swimmers descend. The figures dressed in street clothes assume sculptural and massive proportions. De Chirico has interpreted modern costume in classical terms and has achieved the desired compatibility between a casual, ordinary dress and a heroic treatment.”<sup>4</sup> (figs. 5, 6).

The first representation of the *Mysterious Baths* dates to the summer of 1934, with the ten lithographs that de Chirico executed for *Mythologie*, published together with ten poems by Jean Cocteau, reproduced in 120 copies and a deluxe edition of 10 copies, each of which also included a drawing done especially for the occasion (the whereabouts of nine of these are known today).<sup>5</sup> The artist also executed two more lithographs which, however, were not included in the volume.

The figures of the Swan, the Fish, the Half Sphere, the Source and the Cabin are present in these lithographs just as they appear in the *Baths* in Milan. De Chirico liked the idea so much that he exhibited seven canvases on the *Mysterious Baths* theme at the Second Quadriennale in Rome the follow-

<sup>4</sup> Martha Davidson, *The New Chirico: A Classic Romantic*, in “Art News”, 28 November 1936, published on occasion of the exhibition *Recent Paintings by Giorgio de Chirico*, 27 October - 17 November, Julien Levy Gallery, New York, 1936. The text was published in the original English version and translated in Italian in “Metafisica. Quaderni della Fondazione Giorgio e Isa de Chirico” n. 7/8, Le Lettere, Florence, Pictor O. Rome 2008, p. 158.

<sup>5</sup> Jean Cocteau, *Mythologie*, printed by Edmond Desjobert, Éditions des Quatres Chemins, Paris 1934.

ing year. The work was not understood by some critics: Carlo Ragghianti belittled it<sup>6</sup> and Francesco Callari looked upon it doubtfully.<sup>7</sup> Only Italo Cremona of Turin seemed to understand this new form of Metaphysical Art, and the mystery and the disquiet these paintings held.<sup>8</sup> Giorgio de Chirico, oblivious to criticism as always, continued to present the theme in the most varied versions, which rapidly became popular with the public, the critics and the art market, and even led to his painting them with Manhattan as a backdrop. He returned to this beloved theme later, in the autumn of his life, painting it again in many variants, and even producing a series of ten new lithographs.

Studying the existing scholarship on the Mysterious Baths, we encounter theories where the forms of the pools and canals are described at different times as human intestines, alchemical relationships, trips into space, or towards God<sup>9</sup>, or as communicating vessels.<sup>10</sup> I do not think that one should go so far in interpreting these works, which, even in their simple, playful inspiration, certainly conceal mysteries.

The various interpretations only contribute to misconstruing an expression – rarely found in de Chirico – that is simply playful, to which he gave precise indications as to the original places represented in the works: Mount Pelion, personified like he did with the Tiber River, along with the Centaurs who inhabited it; the god Neptune in the sea of the Pagasitikus Gulf that he so loved and described in his *Memoirs* as such: “[...] the sea was a mirror. Never in other countries afterwards did I see a mirror of water so beautiful; [...] Years later, I see this spectacle as I saw it then, but if I tried to describe it completely, to represent it by means of a pen, a pencil or a brush, I would not succeed at all. Greece has inspired many artists at all times, but there are things there that so beautiful they can only be imagined. There is much truth in the words of the nineteenth century Greek painter Nicolas Ghisis when he said: ‘I cannot paint Greece as beautiful as I imagine it’”.<sup>11</sup>

In his childhood memories, de Chirico’s brother Savinio also described Neptune near the port of Volos: “Down there, in the city of my childhood, seated on the bank of the Pagasitikus Gulf, resting its shoulders on wooded Pelion, the sea first entered one’s nostrils ... a small pair-oar boat rowed by a little boy came to dock, its entire prow out of the water from the weight of the passenger seated in the stern, which caused the boat to point its nose in the air. Neptune got off the boat, onto the dock and went to sit down at the Caffè Lubié to take in a bit of fresh air ... Everyone knew him, but although he was sitting down at the table with no clothes on and encrusted with mire and salt, full of shells in his dripping whiskers, and with his stumpy little trident, umbrella-like and bearded with algae resting against the chair, no one bothered him – on the contrary, they pretended not to see him”<sup>12</sup>. “Uzàki”, the typical Greek beverage that people drink, seated on wooden chairs at round tables on the waterfront, also has a place in these paintings; everything expressed in a style that is linear, essential, playful, meta-realistic – what he called “metaphysical” (figs. 7, 8).

<sup>6</sup> C. Ragghianti, *La seconda Quadriennale d'arte italiana. G. de Chirico*, in “Critica d’Arte”, Florence, October 1935.

<sup>7</sup> F. Callari, *II Quadriennale d’Arte Nazionale. Studio critico*, Terzo Quaderno d’attualità, ed. Conquiste, Rome 1935.

<sup>8</sup> I. Cremona, *La Quadriennale romana*, in “L’era nostra”, Turin 1935.

<sup>9</sup> A. Ruggieri, *Interpretazione e descrizione della Fontana Bagni misteriosi secondo alcuni percorsi formali e simbolici. G. de Chirico. Nulla Sine Tragoedia Gloria*, Proceedings of the European conference, Rome 2002.

<sup>10</sup> K. Robinson, *Mysterious Baths – Communicating Vessels*, in “Metafisca”, n. 7/8, *cit.*, pp. 154-165.

<sup>11</sup> G. de Chirico, *The Memoirs...*, *cit.*, p. 24.

<sup>12</sup> A. Savinio, *Tragedia dell’infanzia*, Adelphi, Milan 2001.



fig. 7 Volos, c. 1890

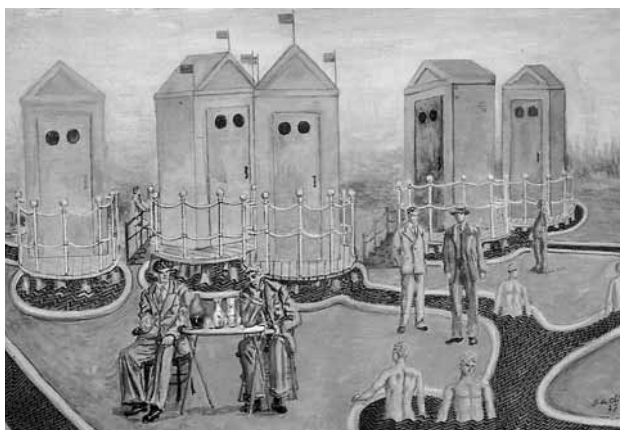


fig. 8 *Evening in the Mysterious Cabins*, 1936-1937

Pertinent to the artist's "metaphysical" cycles, together with the Italian Piazza, the Metaphysical Interiors, the Metaphysical Compositions, the Furniture in the Valley themes, the Mannequins, Horses, Gladiators and characters of the period known as Neo-metaphysical (1968-1976) – all born as philosophical texts and full of encrypted messages – I believe that the Mysterious Baths should also be considered, like the Piazzas, as "mental spaces" or "out-of-place-scapes", to cite Cocteau. With the *Baths* in Milan, the initial (but then discarded) idea of including a statue of a sleeping Ariadne (documented in the panels of the project and in the photos of the model) also leads us to think of a close kinship between the Mysterious Baths and the Italian Piazzas.

In his Baths, Giorgio de Chirico solidifies water, transforms it into wood not only for the flat surfaces of his lakes and his rivers, but also for the waterfalls or simply for water running from a tap. Heraclitus said "ρεῖν ὅλα ποταμοῦ δικήν" – everything flows, nothing stands still – and perhaps these are the rivers that connect the pools for de Chirico, too – that is: flowing and unstoppable Time.

Thus, I feel that our attention must dwell on the figures that exist in the space of the Baths, which remain strangely immobile, on the differences in the painted people – some in the aquatic, summery, playful world, in motion; the others on the land, wintry, static, contemplative. We must dwell on the "kinship" between the bathers, and sometimes between them and the visitors who might seem to be even brothers (Castor and Pollux again?), differentiated only by the colour of their hair. Investigating the oddities of the strangely wintry clothing – heavy tweed, the cuffs of the trousers, jackets, ties and wool hats – although all in a definitely summery atmosphere, in order to arrive at understanding that strange "distance" perceived between the bathers and the visitors, who, even when they seem to be engaged in dialogue, one senses the impossibility of a dialectic, almost as if they were divided by an invisible wall that separates the two "species of animals in different spheres of existence"<sup>13</sup>, to use de Chirico's words. All the rest is only a game, an assemblage of memories, of real and metaphysical, ancient and contemporary objects, habitual in de Chirico, put forward with a sense of humour that is

<sup>13</sup> See M. Davidson, *op. cit.*

anything but latent, and found only in these paintings by de Chirico. Are the “bathers”, artists, philosophers, wise men, perhaps happy in their watery world (loved by Heraclitus, with his “Τα πάντα ρεί” – everything flows, everything is a perpetual becoming liquid), while people with “the innocence and distraction of common men” – to coin de Chirico’s words – prisoners in heavy bourgeois clothes, watch from the safety of dry land without understanding?

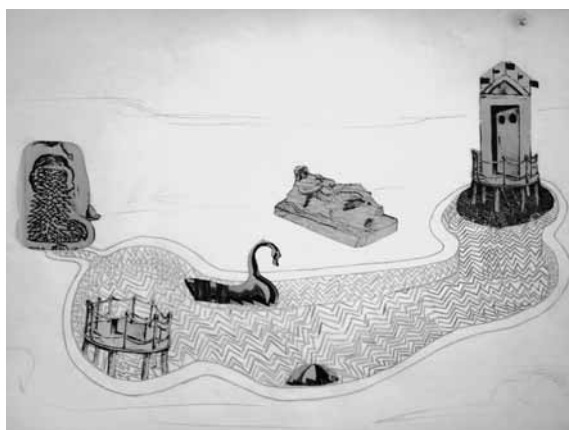


fig. 9 Preliminary project elaborated by Giulio Macchi using collage technique

We might also recall that Heraclitus

considered the sea vapours (αναθυμειάσεις) as “λαμπράς και καθαράς” bright and clean, while those of the land were “σκοτεινάς”, dark. And Socrates, after reading a book that Heraclitus had loaned to Euripides, said: “α μιν συνήκα, γενναία, οίμαι δε και α μη συνήκα. Πλην Δηλίου γε τινός δείται κολυμβητού, οσοικ αποπνιγήσεται εν αυτώ” – the things that I understand are wonderful; I believe that the ones I do not, are too. [To understand everything] you must be like a swimmer from Delos [famous swimmers in ancient Greece] so that you do not drown.” And the book that narrates all of this was called “Κατακολυμβητής”: good swimmer.<sup>14</sup> I do not think that all of this is simply a mere coincidence.

The parable of the Mysterious Bath in de Chirico’s work concludes with this unique sculptural group designed for the outdoors, in Milan’s Parco Sempione. Giulio Macchi wrote: “In order to establish contact between art and the city, the first thing I thought of was the painter who had done nothing other than invent cities in his paintings – with the ‘architect’ de Chirico we would have liked to construct cities, squares, neighbourhoods – we are not yet a building firm – for now, de Chirico has limited himself to suggesting a direct encounter: a mysterious bath.”<sup>15</sup>

Thus, when he was asked to create a work for Macchi’s *Contatto Arte/Città* in 1973, de Chirico decided to make a gift to Milan of a corner of his childhood memories, a glimpse of that sea and that beach, which was lacking in Milan. One of Giorgio de Chirico’s manuscripts was published in the sumptuous catalogue to the exhibition, where one can read: “The idea for the *Mysterious Baths* came to me once when I happened to be in a house where the floor had been polished with wax. I watched a gentleman walking in front of me, whose legs reflected in the floor. I had the impression that he could sink into that floor, like in a swimming pool and that he could move and even swim in it. Then I imagined strange swimming pools with men immersed in a kind of water-parquet, who stood still and moved, and at times stopped moving to converse with other men who stood outside of the pavement-swimming pool.”

<sup>14</sup> Diogene Laerzio, *Vite dei filosofi*, Greek edition, Papyros, Athens 1975. [translated by the present author]

<sup>15</sup> G. Macchi, *Contatto Arte-Città*, exhibition catalogue, La nuova Foglio Editrice, 1973.

In an interview with Berenice, he said that “once, when he was a child in Volos, while watching the reflection of a guest walking across a room on a shiny parquet floor, he had the impression [...]”<sup>16</sup>. De Chirico told this story again and again.

In one of their meetings, Macchi recalls: “The project took shape in a café in Piazza di Spagna in Rome. De Chirico drew the outline of a pool in his drawing-block and then arranged all



fig. 10 Alberto Savinio, *The Dream of Apollo*, 1927



fig. 11 Louis Figuier, *The World before the Deluge*, 1888

the rest. The first models were created in polystyrene, then in stone. A convincing place for the ‘Ariadne’ could not be found, and so it was discarded”<sup>17</sup> (fig. 9).

With his typical inventiveness and sense of humour, de Chirico recreated, in the heart of the park in Milan, a drop of his beloved Volos sea, the Anavros River that goes down Mount Pelion (the pictorial origin can already be found in one of Savinio’s works (1927), entitled *The Dream of Apollo*, (fig. 10), the cabin with the ladder that emerges from the water, the round platform with the typical steps that go down to the sea-parquet, the two suntanned bathers, one blond and the other dark-haired, taken from his paintings, the multi-coloured ball, an enormous painted swan, surely as it must have seemed to him when he was a little boy. Fagiolo dell’Arco identified the strange resemblance of the Swan and the drawing of a plesiosaur on the cover of a book by Louis Figuier illustrated by Edouard Riou (also famous for the illustrations of Jules Verne’s novels) *The World before the Deluge* (1888), owned by de Chirico, who wrote in his article *Sull’arte metafisica (On Metaphysical Art)*, that appeared in the volume of “Valori Plastici” of April-May of 1919: “As a child, I recall the strange, deep impression an old book with the title ‘The World before the Deluge’ had on me”<sup>18</sup> (fig. 11).

He also sculpted a fish, identical in shape and colour to the one in a painting of 1934, *The Mysterious Swimmer*. This painting would also be called to mind again in 1974, after the construction of the *Baths* in Milan, when he painted the *Swimmer in a Mysterious Bath*, identical to the previous one but with a Swan in place of the Half Sphere, which was moved to where the Fish first was.

It should be noted that de Chirico never copied his paintings, as some have claimed. He revisited themes with the same pleasure he felt in re-reading a beloved poem, adding things, changing the situations or colours, always going a little further, like the poet who changes a word, an accent or a phrase when going back through one of his poems. Thus, I find that de Chirico’s revisitations in his paintings are nothing other than the extreme expression of love for his works.

<sup>16</sup> Berenice, *Una intervista lunga e leggera*, in *Incontro con Giorgio de Chirico*, ed. C. Siniscalco, La Baitta, Ferrara 1988.

<sup>17</sup> Giulio Macchi’s recollection (interview with the present writer).

<sup>18</sup> The first edition of this novel for children in French dates from 1864, Hachette, Paris.



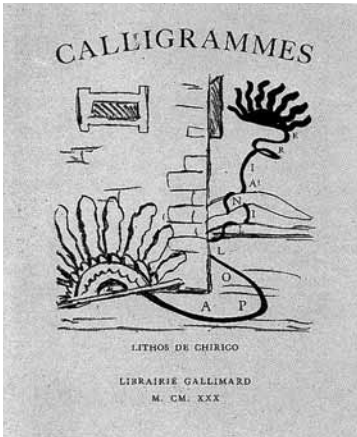


fig. 12 *Calligrammes*, 1930

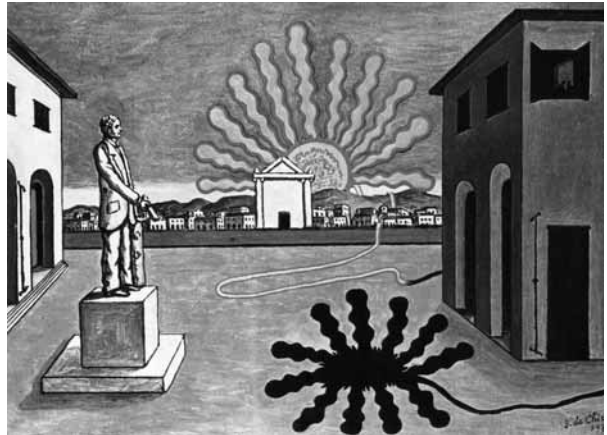


fig. 13 *Italian Piazza with the Sun Turned Off*, 1971

Two Suns had also been planned, one luminous, in painted iron, the other black, in plastic, connected with a wire, taken from another of the artist's famous works, the *Calligrammes* (fig. 12), which also derived from the lithographs published in 1930 with Apollinaire's poems and taken up again in the splendid oil paintings (fig. 13). They are the embodiment of a philosophical citation, this time from Plato's famous cave: light and shadow, what is real and man's impression of it, interconnected but certainly different.

Although carried out, they were never placed in the sculptural complex. Today, the iron Sun is in the garden of Count Marzotto's house, while the black plastic one was destroyed during the fire that damaged the MARGRAF warehouses in Vicenza, where the work had been kept. Before arriving at the final solution, various possibilities had been considered.

The model de Chirico had made for the *Baths* was donated by the artist to Remo Brindisi, the president of the Triennale at the time, and today is part of the Collezione d'Arte Contemporanea Remo Brindisi of the City of Comacchio. It contains the Cabin, the Rotonda, the Fish, the Swan, the Ball, the Waterfall, and the Sun with the Shadow upside down. The position of the elements does not correspond to the final version of the *Baths* in Milan or to the one seen in the sketches made in Rome.

One copy of the *Bathers* and two of the *Swans* (silver plated and another coloured) also belong to Count Marzotto. Plans had been made to produce multiple copies of this statue for commercialisation, but they were never carried out. Giulio Macchi (who went to see the *Baths* during restoration, but passed away before the work was finished), owned some objects that were later inherited by nephew Claudio Luna: an Ariadne in terracotta on a wooden base (originally part of the project, then rejected), and painted polystyrene models of the Swan, the Ball (planned as a whole, only to then become the Half Sphere), the Fish, a drawing that represented the Swimmer both from the front and the rear, and eight panels for the project (figs. 14, 15). There was also once a drawing of the *Bather* in two views (front and rear), which has since been lost; only a photograph remains.

Paolo Pillitteri, Cultural Officer of the City of Milan at the time, owns the manuscript by Giorgio de Chirico on the *Mysterious Baths*, which was published in the exhibition catalogue.



figs. 14 and 15 Models of the *Ball* and *Swan* in painted polystyrene

On occasion of the opening, a gift edition of a puzzle with images of the Bathers was produced by MARGRAF, together with over twenty silkscreen prints of the Swan signed by de Chirico, all contained in a cardboard box together with a little book of photos and texts.

The *Mysterious Baths* were produced in Vicenza stone by the Industria dei Marmi Vicentini in Chiampo (Vicenza), owned by Count Paolo Marzotto, who paid for all of the production costs. Everything was carried out in just thirty-five days – record time – and 30 cubic metres of Vicenza stone were used. De Chirico followed the production personally at the Laboratorio Morsetto, retouching all of the pieces, painting them and signing the Swan, the Swimmers, the Fish and the sectioned Half Sphere (figs. 16, 17). Television filming also took place on various occasions, with de Chirico at work, with friends, Count Paolo Marzotto, the two Morsetto brothers and with the group of workers.

At the Povolaro plant, the artist retouched the Sun and signed one of the rays. Four exemplars were planned of the Swan: one painted, one silver plated, one covered in gold leaf and one laminated, among which de Chirico chose the first. When finished, the pieces were taken to Milan to be placed in the pool, which had already been constructed in Sempione Park.

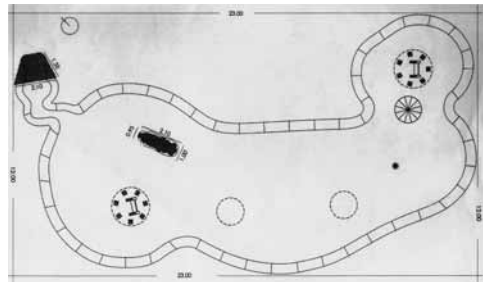
The *Mysterious Baths* comprise of a pool measuring a maximum length of 23 metres, a maximum width of 12 metres, and a depth of 50 centimetres, set on a northwest/southwestern axis with a curvilinear profile and a depth of 50 centimetres (fig. 18). The edge is built in blocks of Vicenza stone of various sizes and curvatures, adapted to the design of the pool. The bottom was waterproofed and painted yellow ochre with brown waves, like a parquet floor along the entire north part, while the south part was kept empty. The bottom is slightly inclined towards a drain for rainwater in the south-eastern-most part, near the Half Sphere, while there is another drain with pumps outside the pool to suck up the water and send it back to the Source on the eastern side installed by Swimming Pool International to recycle the water, thus creating a waterfall effect.

The Source (210 cm wide, 135 cm deep and 252 cm high) is found in the northern-most part.



*figs. 16 and 17* Giorgio de Chirico at work, Industria dei Marmi Vicentini

Instruments for the system that fills the pool with water are housed on the inside. Opposite and to the south is the Swan (210 cm long and 100 cm wide, with a maximum height of 220 cm), located above small stone pegs that keep it raised 9 cm above the bottom. The round diving board in front is made of a slab with a diameter measuring 180 cm and a thickness of 10 cm, supported by seven square supports that are 122 cm high and 20 cm thick. A staircase with four steps leads to the centre of the slab. A balustrade of eight 87 cm high small metal poles, linked together with curved metal wires that imitate ropes, is installed upon it.



*fig. 18* Plan of the pool

On the other side of the pool, towards the south, the Cabin is located on a slab similar to the previously mentioned one, with a diameter of 120 cm, and it, too, is supported by seven pilasters that are 125 cm high and are as thick as the abovementioned ones. It also has steps that lead inside, to a room of 120x120 cm, with a door ajar opening towards the inside, and covered by a roof in the form of a Greek temple with a triangular “tympaanum” topped by five little metal flags. The total height reaches 4.5 metres. The Cabin has a metal balustrade similar to the one found on the Diving Board. Opposite it is the Half Sphere, which also stands on stone pegs like the Swan; it is 57 cm high, with a diameter of 140 cm and a surface subdivided into thirteen equal sections of different colours. In the centre of the pool, one finds the Swimmer, towards the northwest (180x150 cm, 140 cm high), and the Bather, towards the southeast (115x90 cm, 140 cm high). These two truncated figures rest directly on the bottom of the pool.

The Fish (245 cm long, 60 cm wide and 100 cm high) is positioned outside the pool on the lawn further to the southeast. The iron Sun (with eleven rays of different lengths) and the black plastic



figs. 19 and 20 Moving the *Fish* and the *Swan*, photograph Adele Macchi

one were not installed. As can be seen from the designs, the *Fish* was supposed to be placed under the *Diving Board*, but de Chirico decided to place it on the lawn rather than in the pool. Another enigma? Perhaps it is simply a self-portrait of the artist, who lived his life without being understood, like a fish out of water (figs. 19, 20).

In this way, the inhabitants of Milan with their briefcases would pass by the *Baths* on their way to the office, and the unknowing tourists who stopped in front of the *Fountain* would involuntarily become a “living”<sup>19</sup> part of the artist’s great metaphysical sculpture. Thanks to de Chirico’s ingeniousness, the *Fountain* is perhaps the work that allows the fullest interaction between the Public (who end up taking part in it) and the artwork included in Giulio Macchi’s initiative.

The original plan to fill the pool with water with the intention of giving the impression of a glossy shine to the bottom in order that the sculptures would be reflected in it (as can also be seen in de Chirico’s model), was probably abandoned as the work progressed. This can also be surmised by the fact that the two human half figures are not placed on stone pegs, like the *Swan* and the *Half Sphere*, but are placed directly on the bottom of the pool. Moreover, the bases of the supports of both the *Diving Board* and the *Cabin* show that they were planned to be raised above the ground, whereas instead, once they were installed, the empty space was filled in with mortar.

Following the *Swimmer*’s disastrous fall, a metal rod was inserted into the floor of the pool and the bottom of the statue in order to give it more stability.

The work, painted in strong, bright colours, gave the impression that it was made of plastic, an aspect that attracted the public, who had not yet discovered Pop Art or the pure plasticising colours typical of contemporary art. At the age of 85, Giorgio de Chirico showed an unexpectedly youthful outlook and surprising, extraordinary modernity. Due to the lack of time and bad weather conditions (continuous rain), a number of elements were not finished for the opening, including the dark motifs (in the form of parquet) both on the bottom of the pool as well as on the railings and waterfall, as de Chirico had planned in the original model. De Chirico complained to Count Marzotto: “we are inaugurating a work that is already incomplete”. I personally think that the artist’s idea was to have a shiny

<sup>19</sup> See K. Robinson: “the *Mysterious Baths* [...] then materialised into stone in the *Fountain*, a physicalisation ever closer to the dimension in which we experience the world, where we ourselves become the spectators standing beside the pools.” *Op. cit.*, p. 159.



fig. 21 Giorgio de Chirico, Sempione Park, Milan 1973, photograph Maria Mulas



fig. 22 Inauguration: Giulio Macchi presenting the work to the public, 19 September 1973

floor – not water – for the statues to be reflected in. This is probably why a rain water drain was installed in the pool. As mentioned above, Industria dei Marmi Vicentini produced 500 copies of a beautiful cube puzzle with images of the *Baths* and the works, accompanied by photos, and twenty silkscreen prints of the Swan signed by de Chirico, as gifts to friends in memory of the event. On the day of the inauguration, 19 September 1973, a long documentary was filmed for RAI by Luciano Arancio and excellent photographs of the event were taken by Maria Mulas and Adele Macchi (figs. 21, 22).

On the second day of the exhibition, the drain was closed, the pumps were turned on and the pool was filled with water to a higher level than had been planned. Today, no one really knows if this is what de Chirico had wanted, even if the engineer Giobatta Danda recalls: “[...] de Chirico had planned for ten centimetres of water, which is why the sculptures were slightly raised, as were the cabins, but there was very little time to carry out the project in synergy and the idea was abandoned. I only know that we spent money on a pump.” When asked about it in an interview, de Chirico said: “The parquet on the bottom is enough to suggest the presence of water, in fact, I’d prefer it.” In another interview, Macchi also recalls that “de Chirico did not agree with the idea of filling up the pool with water”. In any event, the water began to consume the sculptures in stone, which were highly porous, and to eat into the colours. They remained in this state until the autumn of 1995, when the pool was emptied in order to start the first restoration work. In the meantime, a decision was made to cover the floor with a coat of cement to waterproof it, although this would have hidden the colours.

Unfortunately, the monument has not enjoyed the good fortune it deserved, nor for that matter have the other works produced for Macchi’s project. Intellectuals and journalists did not understand the works, and fierce criticism appeared in the newspapers of the time. “Macchi’s idea, published by Nuova Foglio in a magnificent volume, is more convincing than its realisation. The pieces outdoors – from the parody of de Chirico’s *Mysterious Baths*, to Burri’s theatre, from Arman’s fossil to Matta’s house and the transparent pink perspex zoo-benches by Marotta – all deface Sempione Park, which has no need to be furnished”, wrote Bruno Zevi in an article in “L’Espresso” of 14 October 1973, entitled *Prendi l’Architetto e buttalo via* (Take the architect and throw him out). Harsh comments of the same type, if not worse, are found in all of the newspapers and periodicals of the time, like Attilio Bertasio’s critique in “Servire il Popolo” of 6 October 1973, which went so far as to misread the posi-



fig. 23 The Swimmer knocked down, with broken arm

its two half-figure statues of Arians emerging from the water, apparently swimming or posing with the Fascist greeting: it is difficult to say which. But we are convinced that this organically Fascist rot represents only a limited minority of the artists and intellectuals riding the Christian Democrat wagon". The following 16 November, Nello Ponente's take on the statues as "big rubber dolls" appeared in "Paese Sera". In not one of the papers of the period, is there a single piece of positive criticism.<sup>20</sup> Prime Minister Amintore Fanfani went to the park with the express purpose of seeing de Chirico's work, which was shown to him by Remo Brindisi. After nine days of existence, on the night between 27 and 28 September, the statue of the Swimmer was overturned and its arm broken (fig. 23). Some Milanese papers published the photos, rejoicing: "Two images of de Chirico's horrible 'swimming pool' at the Triennale. On the left, in the initial version; on the right, a few days later, thanks to the intervention of a providential gust of wind, or – who knows – an unknown benevolent hand?"<sup>21</sup> After a few months, another unknown hand pushed the Bather and knocked it down, breaking it at the height of the trunk. MARGRAF and Count Marzotto hurried to restore the statues and put them back in their places.

Nevertheless, soon no one took any interest in the Baths. Children, adults – even dogs – played in the pool. The hand of the Swimmer was broken again, as was the head of the Swan, which was put into storage and later retrieved by Jole de Sanna. The protective cordons disappeared and the cabin door was opened outwards. In the pool, a love scene was shot for the film *Una sera c'incontrammo*, with Johnny Dorelli (1975).

On 29 May 1974, given the state of abandon in which the work had been left, Leonardo and Paolo Morseletto, Paolo Marzotto, Giobatta Danda and Giulio Macchi held a meeting. After notifying the City of Milan, "who had taken the work on consignment", about the state of degradation and not "getting any results", they decided to take the two Suns to the MARGRAF warehouses. This was also because, as Danda recalls, "the iron Sun was poorly lodged against the side of the Triennale, in danger of falling and hurting someone". The iron Sun was exhibited for a certain period of time at MARGRAF's warehouse,

tion of the Swimmer's left hand, as already portrayed in a painting of 1934, *The Mysterious Swimmer* and in the Neo-metaphysical work *Swimmer in a Mysterious Bath*, 1974 (see fig. 6): "The most openly reactionary works of the XV Triennale are the out-and-out monuments constructed only a short while ago. Among these, de Chirico's swimming pool stands out for its aesthetically horrible, decadent style, with

<sup>20</sup> See also A. Mottola Molino in "Giornale della Lombardia", T. Trini in "Corriere della Sera", P. Restany in "Domus", L. Vergine in "Manifesto", D. Segre in "Edilizia Popolare", etc.

<sup>21</sup> A. Bertasio, *La povertà di idee della cultura di regime*, in "Servire il Popolo", 6 October 1973.

and was later moved to the gardens at Count Marzotto's house. Giulio Macchi instead took the Fish to Rome.<sup>22</sup> The day after, another meeting was held in Rome, with de Chirico present, to decide what to do with the work. Isabella Far de Chirico suggested that the monument be moved to Vicenza, to MARGRAF, but her request was not taken into consideration, so "the rest was left *in situ*, due to the damage it had been subjected to"<sup>23</sup>.



fig. 24 "Civil Service for Art" event organised by Casa degli Artisti, Milan, 1994

Count Paolo Marzotto stated that the sculptural monument would be donated to the City of Milan. However, no document for this donation was found, and in an interview, Danda said that the donation had never taken place.

Hidetoshi Nagasawa, sculptor and multifaceted artist, was the first to speak out on the state of abandon and degradation of the Fountain in a letter to "Corriere della Sera".<sup>24</sup> In 1978, together with Jole de Sanna and Luciano Fabro, both of whom were teachers at the Brera Fine Arts Academy, Nagasawa founded the Casa degli Artisti, a creative and didactic atelier for young artists.

Among the projects was "Civil Service for Art", an initiative planned to raise public awareness on problems pertaining to culture, including, among other things, a campaign of signatures involving artists, schools, universities and the citizens of Milan "to save de Chirico's *Mysterious Baths Fountain*"<sup>25</sup>. On 4 May 1994, a demonstration took place in Parco Sempione (fig. 24); others followed including one in which the famous "Gabibbo", a character from the Italian TV programme "Striscia la notizia" also took part. A number of articles were published and the event was covered on the TV news. As a consequence, a Protocol for the work's restoration was drafted in 1995 between the City of Milan and the Milan Polytechnic, the Brera Academy and the Triennale. Deliberated on 17 March 1995, after various vicissitudes, it was signed by all parties on 19 June.<sup>26</sup>

The restoration project, drawn up by MARGRAF's engineer Danda, who had worked with de Chirico on the original construction, was presented and approved by the City of Milan in September 1996. Fondazione Giorgio and Isa de Chirico stated that it would be "happy to join in and endorse the project" (letter of 17 January 1997).

<sup>22</sup> Document drawn up on 29 May 1974 by L. Morsetto, P. Morsetto, P. Marzotto and G. Danda (MARGRAF Archives).

<sup>23</sup> Memorandum of G. Danda, MARGRAF Archives. See also Fabrizia Lanza, *La Fontana "Bagni misteriosi"*, Vicenza 1973.

<sup>24</sup> H. Nagasawa, *La vasca della vergogna*, "Corriere della Sera", 3 June 1994.

<sup>25</sup> Library of the Milan Triennale, documents for the "Mysterious Baths", with the 447 signatures.

<sup>26</sup> City of Milan, session of 21 March 1995, Approval of the "Protocol". Prot. Gen. 74869.4000 del 17.3.1995, Prot. Sept. 2481/95. Attached: Protocollo d'Intesa, 19.6.1995, signed by G. Cozza on behalf of the City, by A. de Maio on behalf of the Polytechnic, by F. De Filippi on behalf of the Brera Academy and by S. Monno on behalf of the Triennale.

Doubts still remained as to whether to carry out a conservative or restitutive job. Jole de Sanna was inclined towards “restitutive” restoration<sup>27</sup> with the application of a new coat of paint on the statues, underlining the importance the “painted sculpture” held in its greater setting as a true “painting in the landscape” – Giorgio de Chirico had indeed called it a “pintoscoltura” (painted-sculptural) composition. This decision, however, caused clashes (references to which also ended up in the newspapers), between the Protocol subscribers, some of whom were accused of falsifying de Chirico’s work.<sup>28</sup> On 28 November 1996, Alberto Pizzati Caiani of the Milan Polytechnic sent a fax to Count Marzotto and Danda in which he stated: “to subject the remaining parts of the artwork to a massive facelift by reconstructing missing parts and surfaces, redoing *ex novo* these missing elements and combining them with elements that have been restored, and finally repainting the entire Fountain (even with the National Research Council’s consent!), would amount to producing a [...] ‘metaphysical cyborg’ unjustifiable even from the most reactionary political-cultural consumerism perspective”. Luckily, Jole de Sanna did not take the controversy seriously, and responded with an interview in the same newspaper a few days later, rebutting the accusals and presenting her idea for a “vintage restoration” with the blessing of the de Chirico Foundation.<sup>29</sup>

The new inauguration was set for 20 December 1996, even though the sculpture had not been painted and covered with a protective film (treatments that would not be carried out even afterwards).

As can be deduced from a memorandum report by Jole de Sanna for the City Officer for Urban Decor, Fortunato Finolli, dated 16 February 1998 (in the hands of the present writer), it was also decided that casts “of the Bather with dark hair, the Bather with golden hair, the Swan and the Ball” would be made to exhibit outdoors, whilst the originals were to be displayed in a museum. Additionally, some form of protection for the monument was also supposed to be created.

The restoration work started outdoors in the autumn of the same year, but was interrupted in January of 1997 due to serious disagreements among those who had signed the Protocol<sup>30</sup> and to heavy rain that made it impossible to continue the work. As can be deduced from two letters by restorer Luciano Formica<sup>31</sup> (one to the Urban Decor Sector of 11 November 1996 and the other to Jole de Sanna of 6 December 1996), the restoration carried out by the Restauri Formica company included: 1. the cleaning and elimination of the patina on the surfaces; 2. the elimination of graffiti; 3. the removal of the cement that had been applied to the bottom of the pool and restoration of the original painted motifs; 4. the remounting of the fragments of the statues through the insertion of iron rods; 5. the recomposing of the fractures and surface lacunae; 6. the cleaning of the iron elements.

The Swan’s neck was also remodelled. However, since the measurements had been poorly calculated, the joining was not precise. A metal support placed under the neck ensured its stability.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>27</sup> J. de Sanna, *Considerazioni sul colore. Restauro conservativo o restauro restitutivo?*, unpublished signed document.

<sup>28</sup> P. Caiani, *Uno scempio il restauro. Per favore impedite!*, in “Corriere della Sera”, 3 December 1996, and *De Chirico, scandalo al parco*, “Corriere della Sera”, 6 December 1996. Caiani wanted to demolish the monument and rebuild it in reinforced concrete in another place, transferring the sculptures to a museum. He wrote a project in opposition to de Sanna, who responded to him in an interview in the same newspaper on 13 December 1996, *Restauro doc per i Bagni Misteriosi del Parco*.

<sup>29</sup> See previous footnote.

<sup>30</sup> In the archives of the Brera Academy, the Triennale, the Polytechnic and the City of Milan, there are a series of documents, letters, faxes and memoranda concerning unpleasant episodes and vehement arguments among the members of the Protocol.

<sup>31</sup> City of Milan, Urban Decor Sector, Prot. 588/96 of 14.10.1996.

<sup>32</sup> Recollection of G. Danda.



De Sanna later found the original pieces of the Swan's neck in the basement of the Triennale.<sup>33</sup> Due to lack of funds, the worksite was not reopened the following spring as foreseen. At that time, various projects were presented but without any tangible results.

In November 1998, the Compagnia Italiana di Conservazione and the Banca di Roma issued a press release announcing that they would donate "exact copies" of the statues of the swimmers to the City of Milan, "executed by means of industrial engineering optical laser digital data collection techniques, carried out by Fox Bit and certified by the Istituto Centrale per il Restauro". However, beyond the press release and a report by the Compagnia Italiana di Conservazione, nothing else was ever heard.

In 2003, a new series of articles appeared in Milanese newspapers, rousing the attention of the city and its administration, this time by the journalist Lucia Galli, who had taken the restoration of the *Mysterious Baths* to heart.<sup>34</sup>

An important and costly project had been undertaken in 2002 by the City of Milan upon the proposal of Deputy Mayor Riccardo De Corato, in collaboration with Fondazione Giorgio and Isa de Chirico, the Superintendent for Architectural and Urban Landscaping in Milan, the Superintendent for Cultural and Artistic Heritage, Centro Gino Bozza (a national research centre), the Istituto Centrale del Restauro (central institute of restoration), under the direction of the architect Silvia Volpi, director of the Urban Decor Sector of the City of Milan. Unfortunately, after years of copious studies, nothing was actually done.<sup>35</sup> In the meantime, the Swimmer and the Bather were withdrawn and moved inside the Triennale to protect them from bad weather and vandalism.<sup>36</sup>

Finally in 2006, Vittorio Sgarbi, Cultural Officer of the City of Milan at the time, decided to recover the works of de Chirico and Arman from among the works in Macchi's project, however, he was met with enormous difficulties, due to both economic problems, as well as the opposition of various Milanese organizations that came up with excuses relating to methodology, owing to the impossibility of knowing the original colours used by the artist. They tried to impede the operation<sup>37</sup> until a series of miraculous coincidences paved the way for his project. In fact, the present author found various documents and colour photos representing the work at the time of the inauguration in 1973, as well as 1:1 scale drawings of the zigzag motifs on the bottom of the pool carried out by the students of the Brera Academy in 1995 under the direction of Jole de Sanna during the first restoration were retrieved from Fondazione Giorgio e Isa de Chirico. Moreover, the famous Fish, which had been lost, was acquired by Paolo Picozza, the Foundation's president, on behalf of Fondazione Giorgio e Isa de Chirico, on 6 December 2004 from Artcurial auction house in Paris. The sculpture, which still conserved its original colours, made it possible to discover their original composition.

<sup>33</sup> See J. de Sanna, interview in "Corriere della Sera", 13 December 1996. The Swan's head is conserved at Studio Restauri Formica, which was in charge of the restoration at the time.

<sup>34</sup> It is not possible to list all of the articles that Lucia Galli published in "Libero" since 2003. No other journalist in Milan has taken the restoration of the monument by de Chirico so to heart as she has.

<sup>35</sup> For a report on the studies carried out at the time, see J. de Sanna, *Notizia sul restauro della Fontana dei Bagni misteriosi al Parco Sempione di Milano*, in "Metafisica" n. 1/2, Techne editore, Milan, Pictor O, Rome 2002, pp. 371-372.

<sup>36</sup> All of the research documents and studies carried out and then presented on 5 September 2006 are held in the Urban Decor Sector Archive of the City of Milan.

<sup>37</sup> V. Sgarbi, *Ritornano i busti di de Chirico*, A. Artioli: *Siamo favorevoli, ma serve per il nostro parere*. "Corriere della Sera", 9 August 2007.



fig. 25 Production of the copy of the *Bather*; MARGRAF laboratories

The Fish was later given to the City of Milan as a permanent loan by the Foundation.<sup>38</sup> Of no less importance was Mapei Group's support as sponsor willing to cover restoration costs, executed by Gianfranco Mingardi, who undertook the work after presenting a serious, analytical restoration project.<sup>39</sup> Costs were thus reduced to just €69,500 instead of the estimated €150,000 (which in the previous 2002 estimate had exceeded €200,000). On 26 October 2007, Vittorio Sgarbi was finally able to announce that the City Council, in a decision made on 24 October 2007, had finally approved the restoration work "faithful to the original project"<sup>40</sup>. In a letter of 26 February 2008, Sgarbi entrusted the present author, "considering his expertise and experience" as well as his relationship with Fondazione

Giorgio e Isa de Chirico, with "the task of taking care of all aspects related to the entire project in collaboration with the city's exhibition services" and carrying out "a series of collateral events to promote such an important work for the city and thus allow the public to take part in it with greater interest".

This work is the fruit of later research relating to the history of the *Mysterious Baths* in Milan presenting, as such, a more precise image of the historical *iter* of this work, which is truly one of a kind. Finally, at the beginning of the summer of 2008, after thirty-five years of abandonment, Gianfranco Mingardi began restoration work on the *Mysterious Baths Fountain*. Together with the present writer, Mingardi visited MARGRAF and met both Count Marzotto and engineer Danda to verify information regarding the construction of the monument. Giulio Macchi was also invited to the restoration site and supplied valuable information concerning the work.

Once completed, Gianfranco Mingardi will have to prepare a condition report concerning the state in which he found the monument, the reasons for its condition of decay, the specific nature of the restoration work carried out, the cleaning techniques, the means used, the method for restoring the paint and – most importantly – his suggestions for conserving the monument over the course of time. During the restoration work, Mingardi wrote to Paolo Picozza, Domenico Piraina (Director of the Palazzo Reale) and Adriana Spazzoli of Mapei, pointing out that the Triennale garden's irrigation system could jeopardise the restoration as well as cause the rapid degradation of the work in the future. I believe

<sup>38</sup> The contract for the permanent loan was signed by Massimo Accarisi, director of the Cultural Headquarters of the City of Milan and by Paolo Picozza, President and legal representative of Fondazione Giorgio e Isa de Chirico. Archives of the City of Milan and Fondazione Giorgio e Isa de Chirico Archives.

<sup>39</sup> G. Mingardi, Restoration Project. *Bagni misteriosi, Giorgio de Chirico, 1973*, XV<sup>th</sup> Milan Triennale.

<sup>40</sup> City of Milan, Culture. Press release of 26 October 2007: *Al via il restauro dei Bagni misteriosi di de Chirico*.



fig. 26 The original sculptures on exhibit at Museo del Novecento, Milan

that the City of Milan and Fondazione Giorgio e Isa de Chirico will have to take serious measures with the Triennale, which is responsible for managing the gardens, in order to protect the monument from those very conditions that have led to the work's past degradation and that have not yet been resolved.

Moreover, it was decided, with the support of Fondazione Giorgio e Isa de Chirico and in agreement with Sandrina Bandera, Director of Pinacoteca di Brera, to produce copies of the statues of the two Bathers and Fish to be placed in the Fountain, in order for the originals to be moved to a museum. The copies, paid for by Fondazione Giorgio e Isa de Chirico, were produced by MARGRAF "using CNC milling by the firm T&D Robotics S.r.l and polished by hand, from polygonal STR 3D scanning" (fig. 25)<sup>41</sup>.

The original statues of the two Bathers and the Fish, which have yet to be restored, are now on exhibit in a particularly suggestive space in the Museo del Novecento at Palazzo dell'Arengario, in Piazza Duomo in Milan, inaugurated in December 2010 (fig. 26).

In conclusion, I believe that the City of Milan and Fondazione Giorgio e Isa de Chirico will have to find a definitive solution to protect the sculptural monument as soon as possible. A possible solution could be the involvement of a number of Italian and international architects in the design of a project to cover and protect the Fountain, whilst respecting the larger framework of its setting in the park. Such an objective might prove challenging for experts in their endeavour to find a revolutionary and ingenious solution.

*Translated by Clarice Zdanski*

<sup>41</sup> The copies of the two Bathers and Fish were completed and installed in the Fountain on 7 November 2011, on which occasion a press conference was held.

L'idea dei "Bagni misteriosi" mi venne una volta che mi trovavo in una casa orz il pavimento era stato molto lucidato con la ~~cera~~ cera. Guardai un signore che camminava davanti a me e le di lui gambe si riflettevano nel pavimento. Ebbi l'impressione che egli potesse affondare in quel pavimento, come in una piscina, che vi potesse muoversi ed anche nuotare. Così immaginai delle strane piscine con uomini immersi in quella specie di acqua-parquet, che stavano fermi, o si muovevano ed a volte si fermavano per conversare con altri uomini che stavano fuori della piscina-pavimento.

Giorgio de Chirico

Giorgio de Chirico, manuscript, 1973