

**The Spirit of Collaboration: Gino Severini, Jacques Maritain, Anton
Luigi Gajoni and the Roman Mosaicists**

Justine Grace

Art is a collaboration between God and the artist, and the less the artist does the better.

André Gide

This paper considers a little-known aspect of Gino Severini's *œuvre*, his religious commissions, in light of his collaborative friendship with the French neo-Thomist philosopher Jacques Maritain. The collaboration between Severini and Maritain was a dynamic process of exchange, in which they shared both directly and indirectly their individual expertise as artist and philosopher to arrive at their creative objective of a modern sacred art. Gino Severini's futurist canvases inspired Maritain's understanding of the avant-garde, while Maritain's aesthetic treatise *Art et Scholastique* (1920) provided the means for Severini to reconcile the spheres of discipline and intuition, to realise the common ground between the spiritual and the artistic researches of the avant-garde, and to find an accord between art and morality. It was also thanks to his friendship with Maritain that Severini became one of the first protagonists within Europe to renew sacred art in light of the artistic languages of the avant-garde. Through the specific case stud-

ies of the church of Notre-Dame in Lausanne (Switzerland) and the mosaics of the Via Crucis in Cortona (Italy), I outline the relationship between Maritain's neo-Thomism and Severini's sacred aesthetic. I also consider Severini's collaborations with the Milanese artist Anton Luigi Gajoni, who worked alongside Severini in the church of Notre-Dame, and the group of Roman mosaicists who assisted Severini in the execution of La Via Crucis. I interrogate these collaborations and argue that ideologically they challenge the fragmentary individualism that was understood by Maritain and Severini to characterise modern art, while in practical terms they demonstrate Severini's reticence in wholly embracing the collective enterprise.

Gino Severini is acclaimed in Italy and abroad as one of the founders of futurism and there are innumerable texts and exhibitions dealing with this aspect of the artist's *œuvre*. Yet his religious commissions, church decorations, and Christian-inspired easel works, despite being produced almost exclusively for ten years during the 1920s and 1930s, and continuing to engage the artist throughout his career, have been largely ignored within the majority of the literature concerning the artist. This in no doubt relates, as Daniela Fonti likewise observes, to the enduring preconception that religious art falls outside the scope of twentieth century art scholarship—a tiresome legacy of the past that is ostensibly seen to be ruled by the dogmatic prescriptions of the church rather than the artistic imagination.¹

Nevertheless, since the 1980s scholars have periodically addressed Severini's sacred compositions, re-evaluating their artistic value and seeking to demonstrate a sense of coherency with the artist's earlier avant-garde and *rappel à l'ordre* experiments.² The scholarship establishes that his religious commissions were not an incongruous interlude within the artist's *œuvre* (recovering them from the ash heap that is sacred art history), to firmly locate them within the cultural sphere of modernism. While the importance of Maritain's *Art et Scholastique* for Severini's art practice is agreed upon by most scholars, there is a paucity of research that considers precisely how this theory was visualised by Severini and how it modified his way of conceiving art.³ Situating Severini's work and method within the ambit of neo-Thomist aesthetics is essential to articulating how a philosopher became an agent for the reprisal of Christian art. The concept of neo-Thomism in this context relates to Maritain's particular engagement with the medieval philosophy of St Thomas Aquinas; utilising a dialectical model of argumentation, he drew upon the Christian metaphysics of Thomism, Aristotelian reason and the theoretical ideas of Charles Baudelaire to establish a new framework for thinking about modern art.

This paper also addresses an aspect of Severini's *œuvre*, his religious commissions, that remain largely unheard of in Anglo-Western scholarship.

In addition, no-one to date has considered the artistic collaborations of Severini and their broader relationship to the theoretical writings of both artist and philosopher. The study begins by considering Severini and Marinetti's somewhat anachronistic return to Catholicism.

Two Atheists and their Return to Religion

*Then Ervin's religiosity began to affect us ... we believed that man was degraded by his material needs ... Every day we searched out new poor unfortunates in need of assistance, and even newer immortally great Catholic authors requiring to be rescued by us from undeserved obscurity. St Thomas and Jacques Maritain, Chesterton and St Anselm of Canterbury buzzed in our conservation like flies.*⁴

Although Gino Severini was a devout Christian in his infancy, his return to religion was in stark contrast to an intervening period of rebellion, when, alongside his futurist friends, he railed against the Catholic Church and its institutionalised morality.⁵ In 1913 he married Jeanne Fort in a civil ceremony because he "had lost faith and was a total atheist."⁶ In the same year, he wrote a text entitled *Art of the Fantastic within the Sacred*, in which he declared: "to the great Christian error ... we oppose our Futurist ethic and aesthetic," rather than adore "puppets in wax, symbols of a false conception of creation and of human instinct," man in the world of machines would now be adored.⁷ Two years later, in an article for *Lacerba*, the artist celebrated French civilisation as "the most advanced in the world," as her people were "irreligious, and no longer needed dogmas or moral and supernatural institutions to regulate her marvellous social progress."⁸ But by 1918 religious questions began to stir in the artist.⁹

There is no one account that wholly explains the artist's perplexing re-adhesion to Christianity—Severini provided two versions of this decision in his autobiography—but there was a multitude of significant events that preceded his return to the Church. In 1917 he had suffered the loss of his first-born son Tonio, and the death of his close friends Umberto Boccioni, Amedeo Modigliani, and Guillaume Apollinaire. The artist's own ill health and the consequent isolation he found himself in during a long convalescence in hospital also encouraged a period of interior contemplation.¹⁰ During this time, between 1917 and 1918, the artist and his wife also read the novels of Émile Zola and Joris-Karl Huysmans, which according to Jeanne suggested to them the possibilities offered by faith.¹¹ In addition, the post-war period was more generally a time of anxiety and disorder in which the certainties of the post-Enlightenment man were threatened by the atrocities of the previous four years. This succession of experiences led Severini to

aspire “toward a truth superior to art.”¹² He came to reflect on the “impossibility of Science to explain life’s mysteries” and, “driven by an internal need of the heart,” he found confirmation in the philosophy of Christ.¹³

The artist’s rediscovery of his internal faith culminated in the baptism of his and Jeanne’s daughter Gina in 1919, and the renewal of the couple’s vows in a religious wedding ceremony in January 1923. The priest Gabriel Sarraute, whom Gino and Jeanne had fortuitously met in the house of Maurice Denis, presided over the couple’s Catholic marriage.¹⁴ Abbé Sarraute, who had a decisive role in reconciling the artist with faith, had to depart Paris soon after the ceremony and, not wanting to leave Gino alone with his spiritual problems, recalls that he “entrusted Severini to Maritain.”¹⁵ Thanks to this introduction, Jacques invited Severini to his household in Meudon in August 1923.¹⁶ After their first meeting Maritain gave Severini a copy of the first edition of *Art et Scholastique*.

The aesthetic philosophy of Maritain immediately engaged the artist, who found within the pages of *Art et Scholastique* an account of art spoken of “with a depth, and tact, and wisdom, which I have never found around me amongst our modern critics.”¹⁷ The theoretical premises of the tract formed the new basis of Severini’s artistic choices and helped to formulate his response to Christian art. He developed an artistic theory heavily indebted to it, cited passages from it throughout his artistic career, wrote reviews of it for the Italian press, and, as letters sent between the artist and the collector Angelo Signorelli reveal, in the early 1930s he endeavoured to translate and publish the text for an Italian audience.¹⁸ In short, the book became Severini’s “artistic breviary” on which he always depended.¹⁹

But who was Jacques Maritain and what was so singular about his text *Art et Scholastique*? Maritain, like Severini, had spent most of his youth as an atheist. But, when Jacques and his future wife Raïssa Oumançoff were scarcely twenty years old, a deep sadness—a metaphysical anguish—descended upon them. Their study at the Sorbonne, although providing them with specialised knowledge, was ultimately “undermined by the relativism of the scientists, by the scepticism of the philosophers.”²⁰ Raïssa had long believed herself an atheist, but the absence of any meaning for truth, and for a distinction between good and evil, meant that it was no longer possible to live humanly, and she writes: “I wanted no part in such a comedy. I would have accepted a sad life, but not one that was absurd.”²¹ Jacques’s despair was as great as Raïssa’s, so around 1905, seated within the seventeenth century gardens of the *Jardin des Plantes*, they decided:

To extend credit to existence, look upon it as in experiment to be made, in the hope that ... the meaning of life would reveal itself ... and deliver us from the nightmare of a sinister and useless world.

But if the experiment should not be successful, the solution would be suicide; suicide before the years had accumulated their dust, before our youthful strength was spent. ... We wanted to die by a free act if it were impossible to live according to the truth.²²

It is at this point that the two came across the teachings of Henri Bergson, whose formulations of liberty gave them enough strength to again consider the future. However, it was not until they read Léon Bloy's *La Femme Pauvre* that they found themselves before the reality of Christianity. They increasingly studied the doctrine and sources of Christianity and:

Little by little, the hierarchy of spiritual, intellectual, scientific values was revealed to us, and we began to understand that they could not be inimical to each other. ... Once we recognised as inoperative the objections of rationalistic scepticism and pseudo-scientific positivism ... the veracity of faith became a plausible hypothesis.²³

In February 1906, eight months after their first encounter with Catholicism, Raïssa fell dangerously ill. It was a time of great anguish for Jacques, and during her illness, Raïssa tells us that her husband "gave way, and felt himself ready to accept Catholicism."²⁴ The Maritains (including Raïssa's sister Vera) were baptised on 11 June 1906, marking their definitive adhesion to Christianity and paving the way for their subsequent discovery of the medieval Christian philosopher St Thomas Aquinas.²⁵

Towards the end of 1910, after much passionate encouragement from his wife Raïssa, Maritain set himself to read the works of Aquinas. Jean-Luc Barré, the Maritains' biographer, remarks that the couple's interaction with Thomism was more than simple adherence to a philosophical school of thought, it was a kind of filiation, or spiritual intimacy.²⁶ Though perhaps more importantly, as Piero Viotto writes, the Maritains' "meeting with the writings of St Thomas transformed their moral convictions into solid intellectual knowledge, preventing them from falling into Fideism."²⁷ What was so exciting and innovative about Maritain's project was "that it was not a scholastic Thomism, the Thomism of manuals, but an alive Thomism open to the problematics of contemporary philosophy, very existential."²⁸

The Maritains were modern day disciples of St Thomas Aquinas and turned their home in Meudon (situated in the south-western suburbs of Paris) into a centre of debate during the *Renouveau catholique*—a cultural movement during the inter-war period that was marked by a widespread desire to renew the paradigms of Christian art, architecture and literature.²⁹ Their home became a meeting place throughout the 1920s and 1930s for the cultural vanguard, where philosophers, artists, writers and musicians converged to discuss problems of contemporary culture, politics and relig-

ion. It was a site of fertile discussion, impassioned debate and conversions, the most famous of which being the poet and opium-addict Jean Cocteau's "miracle of faith."³⁰ It was into this context of religious spirituality and intellectual freedom that Severini was introduced when he arrived on the Maritains' doorstep in mid-1923.

Art et Scholastique: a new aesthetic framework

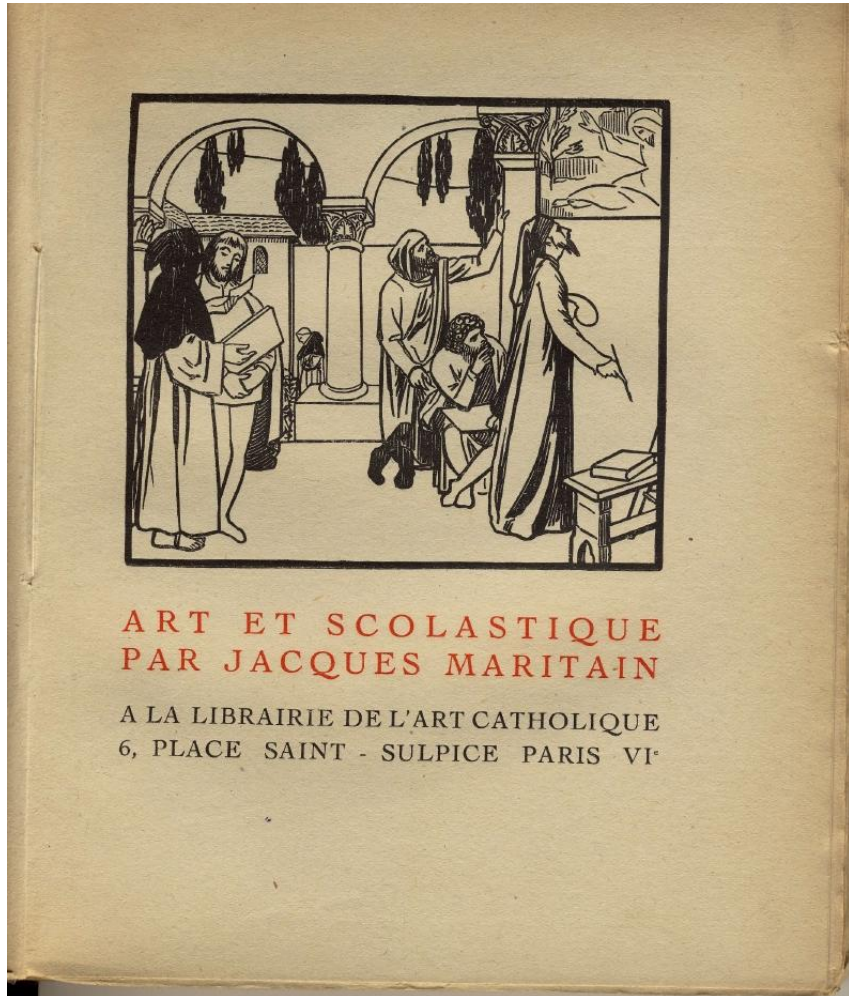


Figure 1. Jacques Maritain, *Art et Scholastique* (front cover), Paris: *Librairie de l'art catholique*, 1920. Printed with permission.

A month after Severini left his first meeting with Maritain, he wrote the philosopher a letter in which he praised the text, writing: "I found in your book the confirmation of my ultimate conclusions and the tools for deepening

ing this aspect of the artistic problem.”³¹ He similarly wrote in his autobiography that:

Before my encounter with Thomist philosophy through Maritain, I had almost reached the same conclusions through the logical development of my work, intuition and thought, but what a great sense of joy I felt upon discovering, in Maritain, the confirmation of certain thought patterns, certain ways of clarifying these to myself and to others.³²

Severini seeks to emphasise that Maritain’s ideas were in line with the logical development of his work (only natural for an artist who wants to maintain a sense of his own autonomy and genius). Nevertheless, in Maritain’s text the artist discovered some resolutions to artistic problems and a new way of conceiving the artistic problem.

The artist highlighted the value of Maritain’s aesthetic philosophy for approaching contemporary art, writing in his introduction to *Raggionamenti sulle Arti Figurative* that:

Thomist thought, more than any other, accords with modern aspirations. ... It is in light of this thought that we can examine the action of Picasso in art, or certain modern exhibitions, or certain modern artists such as Manet, Matisse, and Renoir.³³

He considered the principles of *Art et Scholastique* as constituting the only theory of art that permitted the artist to think of the past while looking to the future.³⁴ For Severini, neo-Thomism established a sense of equilibrium between the subject and object, between the human qualities that nourish art and the distinctly pictorial activity of the artist.³⁵

Maritain’s small tract *Art et Scholastique*, published in 1920, sought to relate the medieval metaphysics of St Thomas Aquinas to the modern art world—establishing a new lens, grounded in Christian metaphysics, through which to approach modern aesthetics.³⁶ It was a book of the modern man and the medieval because, as Umberto Eco writes, Maritain did not view “the medieval as an historical island, but as a dimension of the spirit.”³⁷ Like the scholastic tradition, which had Aquinas as one of its principal theorists, Maritain utilised dialectical reasoning to overcome the discord between apparently irreconcilable spheres—art and morality, modernism and scholasticism, and avant-garde culture and Catholicism—as a way of re-conceiving art and the creative act.³⁸ Inspired by his appreciation for avant-garde art, he provided an analysis of art that responded to enduring aesthetic problems such as beauty and social engagement.

The book was a major, if unexpected, success and was almost imme-

diately translated into languages all over the world.³⁹ What was so remarkable about Maritain's views on religious art was that he approached the genre from both a religious and an artistic point of view, traversing a new path between conflicting tendencies. On the one side was a Catholic world restrained by clerical conformism that for centuries had not ceased to scorn contemporary artists, and on the other side were the most extreme aesthetic experiments, such as surrealism or Dadaism in which the principle of art itself needed to be defended.⁴⁰ For Maritain, religious art not only had to serve dogma and answer the prayers of the faithful, it also had to partake in contemporary artistic languages. Hence the abstracted forms evidenced in Rouault's clowns, Severini's dancers or Picasso's seated women were considered appropriate means for confronting Christian topics because, revealing more than objective reality, they sought to evoke an inner essence of the subject. Like the work of the great medieval masters, Maritain saw the modernists as seeking to explore the metaphysical essence of things through what Stephen Schloesser has termed the "de-formation of surface representations".⁴¹

In summarising *Art et Scholastique* five salient characteristics concerning the nature of art can be ascertained: art as an intellectual virtue; the autonomy of the creative act; the notion of beauty; the problem of imitation; and the interrelationship between society and the artist. The degree to which these principles sustained Severini's imagination is demonstrated both in his journalistic interventions (after reading the tract Severini became a regular contributor to journals such as *Nova et Vetera*, *L'Ambrosiano* and *L'Information*) and art practice. But, for our present purposes, it is Maritain's discussion of beauty and art's role in society that is particularly pertinent, revealing the reciprocal influences that flowed between the artist and the philosopher. In the analysis below, I outline the impact that Severini's futurist paintings had on the philosopher, and following this how the artist's approach was reoriented toward neo-Thomist aesthetics through his meditation on *Art et Scholastique*.

The third characteristic of Maritain's theory of art is the concept of beauty. For Maritain, the principal aim of the fine arts is to produce beautiful objects, and in this sense they are distinguished from the more utilitarian intentions of the useful arts such as architecture or carpentry. Beauty is not an interested activity, and consequently the fine arts are defined by their disinterestedness, which means "they are not made to be used as a means, but in order to enjoy them as an end."⁴²

Maritain begins his discussion on beauty by quoting Aquinas and defines the beautiful "as that which, being seen, pleases."⁴³ He does not intend this as an authoritative definition, but as more of an experiential ac-

count. According to Maritain, beauty stimulates the intellect through the delight of the senses where the intellect is pleased because “in the beautiful it finds itself again and recognizes itself.”⁴⁴ The act of perceiving beauty “gives delight in knowing; not the delight peculiar to the act of knowing, but a delight which superabounds and overflows from this act because of the object known.”⁴⁵ So beauty resides both intrinsically within the object, and in the relation between work and viewer.

The second definition of beauty in *Art et Scholastique*, which follows on from the first, outlines the three essential characteristics of a beautiful thing: integrity, proportion, and radiance or clarity. Integrity “is the inner logic of the product,” its perfection or completion.⁴⁶ This means both that no parts are missing and that there is a fullness of being, not in the philosophical sense but in relation to the work to be made. Maritain provides his readers with an example which simultaneously demonstrates that Severini was not unknown to the philosopher. He states:

If it pleases a futurist to give the lady he is painting only one eye, or a quarter of an eye, no one denies him the right to do this: one asks only—here is the whole problem—that this quarter of an eye be precisely all the eye this lady needs in the given case.⁴⁷

According to the artist’s memoirs Maritain later told Severini:

That he had been thinking of one of my futurist paintings while making that consideration, more specifically of *La Danseuse Obsédante*. He spoke of the painting with the same freedom of spirit that we painters did, that is, detached from any external limitations.⁴⁸

The second condition of a beautiful object is proportion, which refers to matter intelligibly arranged. It is both the object’s intrinsic proportion and its “harmony and adaption to the observer’s mind.”⁴⁹ Like integrity, the property of proportion will be different according to the ends of the work and it is not constrained by the laws of the natural world. For Maritain, Rouault’s clowns are as perfectly proportioned as figures constructed according to the Greek canon.⁵⁰ The final, and most important condition of beauty, is radiance, which is “the splendour of the form on the proportioned parts of matter;” a flashing of intelligence on the forms or arrangements of a work.⁵¹ While these three characteristics are essential, they have no absolute signification because “beauty is not conformity to a certain ideal and immutable type” and it is always relative to the proper nature and end of the thing.⁵²

Severini was particularly attracted to Maritain’s definition of beauty and the artist often adopted Maritain’s phrase in his writings after 1923 that “beauty is the splendour of form on the proportioned parts of matter.”⁵³

Severini's attraction to this definition relates to its rehabilitation of the spiritual, its emancipation from the *ideal* of beauty, and the idea that a painting could be beautiful independently of the things represented. In his review of the second edition of *Art et Scholastique* for *Critica Fascista* in 1928, Severini summarised Maritain's theory of beauty as a notion "stringently intrinsic, inseparably tied to the work and to the workman, resulting from the spiritual radiation that the artist knew to disclose in things, and from his creative spirit."⁵⁴ He celebrates Maritain's notion of beauty, because it is not that of Hegel, Kant, Winckelmann, the *bello-ideale*, and neo-Platonism.⁵⁵

An important aspect of Maritain's theory, as mentioned above, was his synthesis of apparently discordant ideals, such as *art* and *morality* (or what Maritain terms Prudence). Although he acknowledged that art has its own rules that are distinct from the human realm, he also maintained that art must take account of humanity. For Maritain, the artist has a responsibility to the society in which they live; they "provide a food and not simply intoxication."⁵⁶ So there appears an antinomy between the essence of art (Art) and the conditions of its human existence (Morality). Maritain does not deny these contradictory forces, stating rather prosaically that "the sole question for the artist is not to be a weakling," to be strong enough to dominate matter without being distracted by the human ends pursued.⁵⁷ For the philosopher, good workmanship (a human virtue) and humility (denial of the cult of celebrity and individualism) reconciles the artist's absolute freedom with the need to act morally.

Maritain was particularly disparaging of artistic individualism or the idea of the lone and grandiose genius, which he saw as being first cultivated during the Renaissance. Setting up a somewhat problematic dichotomy, he celebrated the social structure of medieval civilization where "the artist had only the rank of artisan" (in contrast to the Renaissance where art production was still collective in nature).⁵⁸ For Maritain, the virtue of the artisan lay in the fact that he represented "the general run of men" and because "If Christ willed to be an artisan in a little village, it is because He wanted to assume the common condition of humanity."⁵⁹ For Maritain, an artisan during the medieval period worked alongside others where "every kind of anarchical development was forbidden his individualism" and for "the whole mass of mankind" rather than for the "rich and fashionable and for the merchants."⁶⁰

In the immediate post-war period, ideas of social responsibility increasingly preoccupied artists and the role of art in society was hotly debated. But, as knowledge of the artistic situation in the Soviet Union slowly filtered through to the environs of Paris, social engagement was progres-

sively seen as a hostile constraint to artistic freedom. Severini was very sympathetic to the idea of an engaged art and Daniela Fonti has noted that Severini had a desire to communicate with a public beyond the intellectual elite that frequented the Parisian galleries.⁶¹ Severini saw Maritain's interpretation of art and the artist as providing a resolution to the conflict between social commitment and artistic freedom, where independence did not have to mean indifference. It was ultimately religious art and mural decoration that provided the chance for Severini to realise a more universal form of communication and to establish a new rapport with the masses.

In this regard, Maritain's examination of religious art is integral. Understanding the genre from both sides of the divide, he argues that religious art needs to arrive at a synthesis between the innovation, novelty, and interior emotion that are characteristic of modern art and the tradition, instruction and dogma that defines religious art.⁶² To achieve this end he establishes a number of theoretical foundations. Sacred art must be *legible*, as it is there for the instruction of the faithful, and it must be *finished*, that is, as summarised by Severini "the work has a surface carried out according to all the rules of the craft and according to the relative needs of the form of expression."⁶³ Religious art must partake in *contemporary artistic languages* and it must have *religious emotion*, which does not depend on the subject or technique, but on the interior accord of the artist with the spiritual life of the Saints.⁶⁴ These observations found currency with Severini, who was almost exclusively engaged in church decoration between 1924 and 1933.

Lausanne (1933-1934).

*I should think there are at least a thousand Holy Families in existence: and yet the subject seems as fresh to me as ever. The reason is that the subject embodies the purest form of human love, and echoes the religion of the home, the ideal of family life in our own time.*⁶⁵

Between 1933 and 1934 Severini completed his fourth religious commission in the church of Notre-Dame in Lausanne. The fresco is a summary of his artistic experiences and marks an evolutionary point in his mural decorations toward a more Byzantine aesthetic.⁶⁶ This is an important aspect of the artist's development as it brings him further in line with the aesthetic disposition of Maritain who celebrated the simplicity and interior order of the Italian Primitives throughout *Art et Scholastique*. Indeed, in a letter sent to Severini on 9 June 1934, Maritain exclaimed that the fresco decoration was "a magnificent work."⁶⁷



Figure 2. Gino Severini, *Mater Divinae Gratiae*, apse decoration, various techniques, L'Église di Notre-Dame du Valentin, Lausanne, 1933-1934. Printed with permission.

The apse decoration *Mater Divinae Gratiae* (figure 2) depicts the principle figures of the Virgin and Christ against a gold background that was made with sheets of pure gold. Mother and child are surrounded by four auxiliary scenes: to their left the Coronation of the Virgin with the church of St Peter behind and to their right the Annunciation with the city of Lausanne in the background.⁶⁸ Representing actual cities behind religious scenes is a particular characteristic of medieval art, but it also serves to bring the Christian story into the domain of the contemporary, a sign of Christ's enduring presence. In the lower part of the fresco, saints, angels and a priest are represented encircling a crucifixion, behind which is depicted the tessellated fabric of Harlequin's costume—an affectionate nod to the humanist theatre of the *Commedia dell'arte*.⁶⁹ The overall effect of the fresco is one of simultaneous vision (a principle first utilised in Severini's futurist experiments) in which interior and exterior scenes, or figures from different time periods (the Coronation of the Virgin for example is situated next to a contemporary image of Monsignor Besson offering up the new church) are collaged together in the one composition.⁷⁰

Perhaps one of the most exciting and innovative aspects of this fresco is Severini's synthesis of different artistic styles and techniques employed according to the requirements of the subject. The focus of the composition, the attention for the prayer of the faithful, is Queen Mary, Mother of Mercy and accordingly Severini depicts a recognisable type, the noble

queen of Byzantium. Whereas the secondary figures of the angels, suspended in winged flight in the upper left and right parts of the fresco, draw upon the cubo-mechanical forms of Fernand Léger. The decorative components utilise geometric abstraction while the religious symbols, such as the pigeons and lambs, recall the Christian primitive tradition. In relation to this work Severini explained that:

One can easily renew contact with the most antique traditions and keep them actual by bringing into the dominion of mural art certain conclusive experiments from modern art.⁷¹

Severini maintains a balance between the antique technique of fresco and cubist forms, innovation and legibility, and between the tradition of the Christian doctrine and the contemporary circumstance of its execution. He resolves the essential problematic of religious art defined by Maritain and creates a work that recounts the principal narrative of the Virgin's life without renouncing the formal lessons of contemporary art.

Another important principle of Maritain's philosophical aesthetics was that art, especially in a church, should not deceive through illusion.⁷² In the lower right side of the fresco, Severini has represented the construction site of the church. Replete with Cezannesque bricks, a hammer, trowel and painting instruments, the detail reminds us that the work is a construction, not to be confused with God's creation. Severini also inserted a stylised self-portrait in the guise of a bishop in the lower left part of the composition. The addition of his portrait is another action that points to the constructedness of the work, defining the work as a human, rather than divine, intervention.

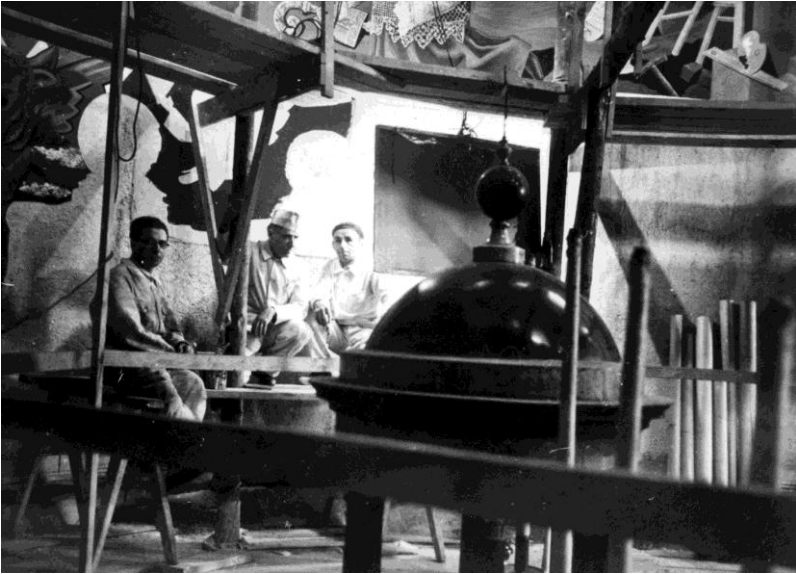


Figure 3. Gajoni, first to the left, and Severini with the newspaper hat at work in the church of Notre Dame du Valentin, photograph, 1933-1934. Printed with permission.

As mentioned above, Maritain despised the decadent individualism that had come to characterise modern art, and as Stephen Schloesser writes, one of the continuous threads of Maritain's thought was his contempt for bourgeois-capitalist individualism, positing the cult of celebrity as the cause for modernity's fragmentation.⁷³ To redress this situation, Maritain esteemed the anonymous artisan of the medieval—an historical period that was elevated in *Art et Scholastique* to the golden age of collective art production. In the introduction to the text *Ragionamenti sulle Arti Figurative* (1936), Severini likewise criticised contemporary artists for their extreme individualism and materialism, which he argues—in line with Maritain—was brought about by the Renaissance.⁷⁴ In an article published in the same collection of texts, Severini also suggests:

One should persuade artists to consider and conduct themselves like artisans; the social question, in turn, needs to be resolved within a corporate organisation in which the spirit of the “bottega” ... the spirit of camaraderie should be brought back.⁷⁵

In the church of Lausanne, Severini realised this ideal of a collective art, collaborating alongside the Milanese artist Anton Luigi Gajoni, who was his artistic aide throughout the enormous undertaking. A photo taken during the execution of the fresco (figure 3) shows the two seated under their work-in-progress. Although Severini recommended a model of art produc-

tion based on a rhetoric of camaraderie, in actuality he eclipsed the participation of Gajoni. In fact, we only know of their collaboration through scholarship published on the artist Gajoni.⁷⁶

This was not the first time that Severini had worked alongside others. In his first religious commission for the *Église de Saint Nicolas* in Semsales, Switzerland (1924-26), he was assisted by some native painters of Fribourg. Marie Torche-Julmy's archival research is exemplary in this regard, as it provides us with further insight into how the artist defined himself in relation to the process of collaboration.⁷⁷ Torche-Julmy describes the historical episode in which, at the completion of the Semsales frescoes, Severini offered Pope Pio XI an album presenting the designs for the decoration. Important for our present discussion is the detail that Severini suppressed the participation of his Swiss collaborators (a fact which particularly upset the Fribourg artists).

So on the one side, Severini advocated collaborative art production and undertook work alongside others. But on the other side, he never acknowledged his collaborators or discussed the particular instances of his collective enterprises. It seems that ideologically the principle of shared work, unity, and collectivity appealed to Severini, but the implication of anonymity or shared kudos that such collaboration entails was fraught by enduring *modernist* conceptions of the lone artist. Ultimately it would appear that Severini could not extract himself from the Renaissance legacy, from Vasari's construction of the lone genius, not only suppressing the names of his collaborators, but, as we will see below, insistently defining and distinguishing himself as the *individual artist* in contradistinction to the *labourers* he employed.

La Via Crucis



Figure 4. View of hill leading up the Via Crucis.

I saw his Via Crucis in mosaic which ... accompanied me on the uphill journey toward the sanctuary of Margherita ... I remember that the difficult road had become a joyful surprise from the first, to the second, to the third station; a sort of race anticipated by the spirit onto the eye, to have more light and colour, and then light and colour again.⁷⁸

Severini's love for the quasi-obsolete craft of mosaic may appear, at first glance, as an almost retrograde interest for one of the principal innovators of modernist aesthetics. Yet a closer look at works from the height of his futurist experiments, such as *The Dance of the Pan-Pan at the Monaco*, where the frenzied movement of the dancers is expressed through a tessellated surface of contrasting chromatic shapes and shifting planes, reveals a sensibility that is closely aligned to the craft of mosaic.⁷⁹ Severini himself stated, after seeing the Ravenna mosaics for the first time, "that I was immediately aware of the close analogies, of both intention and motivation, between the art of these antique artisans and so-called modern art."⁸⁰ Severini's foray into the art of mosaic dates from his first religious commission in Semsales, where he produced a *Crocifissione* in Majorca tiles for the church façade. He continued to experiment with the form throughout the 1930s, creating numerous portable mosaics and utilising the artistic form in his public commissions.⁸¹ These experiences culminated in the Via Crucis mosaics, which were commissioned by the parish priest of Cortona, Monsignor Franciolini in 1944, a brief overview of which provides further insight into Severini's collaborative practice.

Although these mosaics marked Severini's first religious contract in Italy, at the time of their commission in 1944 the artist had also undertaken numerous monumental works for the fascist state including, among others, mosaics for the Foro Mussolini in Rome (1937) and a fresco for the University of Padova (1941). However, Severini's fascist sympathies are complex and cannot be reduced to a discrete piece of biographical information. On the one hand his connection to the regime is clear. He published articles in the fascist journal *Critica fascista* on numerous occasions, and from early 1934 he was also in direct contact with Mussolini, writing letters in which he expressed his "most deep fascist devotion" and "absolute fascist faith."⁸² But on the other hand, as Fabio Benzi deftly articulates, Severini's monumental works for the fascist regime are also underpinned by an intricate symbology and anti-celebratory monumentality that point to anti-fascist sentiments.⁸³ While we cannot deny Severini's implications in the fascist regime, it is likewise important to acknowledge that the artist did not wholly embrace the fascist enterprise.⁸⁴ Furthermore, Severini had a strong desire to return to his home country, which, as a financially struggling artist, was only possible through some form of allegiance to the fascist regime.

Whatever the degree of Severini's fascist sympathies, they should not be seen to have productively informed or influenced his religious aesthetic. His state commissions were executed during an intervening period from his religious commissions between 1937 and 1942, by which stage the artist had already completed five church decorations and established the pictorial

language of his religious aesthetic. Furthermore, his religious commissions were not only made possible by Maritain (who not incidentally was an active participant in France's anti-fascist movement) their ideological foundations were underpinned by neo-Thomist philosophy and were not drawn from fascist ideology.

Monsignor Franciolini commissioned the Via Crucis mosaics to honour Santa Margherita of Cortona, who was understood by the parish to have saved the town from destruction by an advancing front in 1944. Monsignor Franciolini contacted Severini in mid-1944 contracting the artist to design fifteen cartoons, of which fourteen composed the Stations of the Cross, and one apart, which described an episode from the life of Santa Margherita. The fourteen designs for the Via Crucis were translated into mosaic by a group of Roman mosaicist's under the direction of Severini, while the eventual transportation and installation of the mosaics in Cortona was undertaken by another mosaicist, Mattia Romualdo (also from Rome). Despite the appearance of a collaborative enterprise, Severini maintained total creative control, directing all aspects of the commission, from the design to its execution in mosaic. For example, in the employment contract between Severini and one of the mosaicists, Vincenzo Renzi (who was charged with executing five of the Stations), the artist stipulates not only that he will guide the production, but that he reserves the right to intervene and correct both the mosaicist and the work carried out. This point is rather interesting, as despite Severini's rhetoric against the cult of celebrity and criticism of modernism's excessive individualism, he followed a model of collaborative practice where the mosaicist's were executors, employed labourers, and not co-creators with equal status.⁸⁵

Collaboration and individualism

Severini's return to the religious subject was a return to a more universal and collaborative form of art, one that was not directed or defined by *the fashionable, the rich, or the merchants*. His extensive religious decorations were the perfect forum to implement the lessons of Maritain and from the late 1920s onwards he sought to renew the paradigms of Christian art based on a neo-Thomist framework. Although Severini advocated a particular model of collaboration in which the artist would be an artisan working alongside others as they did in the medieval, in practice he was ultimately a product of the early twentieth century, unable—and perhaps unwilling—to renounce authorial control and entirely submit to the collective enterprise and all that it entailed.

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NOTES

- ¹ Daniela Fonti, "Gli Affreschi di Gino Severini nelle Chiese Svizzere: Quando il Cubismo Divenne Sacro," *Art & Dossier* 68 (1992): 26.
- ² See Giorgio Mascherpa, *Gino Severini pittore 'Sacro'*, exh. cat. (Milan: Hoepli, 1981); Giorgio Mascherpa, "Gli anni venti: Severini religioso," in *Gino Severini catalogo ragionato*, ed. Daniela Fonti (Milano: Arnaldo Mondadori Editore, 1988), 347-351; Emanuela Garrone, "Gino Severini muralista sacro," in *Sesta Biennale d'Arte Sacra*, exh. cat. (San Gabriele: Fondazione Stauros Italiana, 1994), 368-403; Fabio Benzi, "Gino Severini. Le opere monumentali," in *Gino Severini. Affreschi, mosaici, decorazioni monumentali, 1921-1941*, exh. cat. (Roma: Leonardo-De Luca Editori, 1992), 7-16; Fonti, "Gli Affreschi di Gino Severini," 26-32. See also Zoë Marie Jones, "Spiritual Crisis and the 'Call to Order': The Early Aesthetic Writings of Gino Severini and Jacques Maritain," *Word & Image* 26 (2010): 59-67 (for my criticisms of this article see the forthcoming issue of *Critica d'Arte*, October-December, 2011).
- ³ There have been some preliminary studies that analyse Severini's writing in light of Maritain, including: Piero Viotto, *Grandi amicizie: i maritain e i loro contemporanei* (Rome: Città Nuova, 2008) and "Maritain e Mounier maestri di Gino Severini," *Humanitas: rivista mensile di cultura* 5, no. 6 (1997): 943-954; Piero Pacini, "Severini e Maritain: bilancio di un sodalizio," in *Paolo VI e l'arte il coraggio della contemporaneità*, exh. cat., ed. Cecilia De Carli (Milano: Skira Editore, 1997), 55-59; Gian Paolo Violi, "Due grandi amici: Maritain e Severini," *Otto/ Novecento: rivista quadrimestrale di critica e arte* 6 (1982): 57-63.
- ⁴ Antal Szerb, *Journey by Moonlight*, trans. Len Rix (London: Pushkin Press, 2001), 38.
- ⁵ Signora Severini apparently told Gabriel Sarraute that Gino had been very religious during his first years in Cortona—cited in Piero Pacini, "Una testimonianza inedita di Gabriel Sarraute su Severini e Maritain," *Otto/Novecento: rivista quadrimestrale di critica e l'arte* 3, no. 4 (1985): 169.
- ⁶ Gino Severini, *The Life of a Painter: The Autobiography of Gino Severini*, trans. Jennifer Franchina (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 126.

- ⁷ Gino Severini, "Art du fantastique dans le sacré" (written in 1913 but unpublished until 1960), in *Témoignages 50 ans de réflexion* (Rome: Editions Art Moderne, 1963), 32. Original French (all translation are my own unless otherwise stated): "A la grande faute Chrétienne ... nous opposons notre éthique et esthétique futuristes ... poupées en cire, symboles d'une fausse conception de la création et de l'instinct humain."
- ⁸ Gino Severini, "Siamo tutti preti," *Lacerba* 13 (1915): 99. Original Italian: "Il più evoluto del mondo ... irreligioso, non ha più bisogno di dogmi o di enti morali e soprannaturali per regolare il suo meraviglioso sviluppo sociale."
- ⁹ In his autobiography Severini writes that around April 1918 "the problems of man's destiny ... began returning just then, very gradually, to worry me." Severini, *The Life of a Painter*, 199.
- ¹⁰ Severini, "Processo e difesa di un pittore d'oggi," *Arte* 5, 415-436; 6 (1931) : 486-505. Republished in Gino Severini, *Raggionamenti sulle Arti Figurative* (Milano: Hoepli, 1936), 128.
- ¹¹ Jeanne Severini cited in Pacini, "Severini e Maritain," 272.
- ¹² Severini, *Raggionamenti*, 129. Original Italian: "verso una verità superiore all'arte."
- ¹³ Severini, *The Life of a Painter*, 263.
- ¹⁴ It is interesting that in the three memoirs of Gino Severini, Jeanne Severini, and Gabriel Sarraute, they should each refer to the timely coincidence of their meeting as a chance from Providence. See Severini, *The Life of a Painter*, 267; Jeanne Severini in Cecilia De Carli, *Paolo VI e l'Arte*, 180; Gabriel Sarraute in Pacini, "Una testimonianza", 142.
- ¹⁵ Gabriel Sarraute quoted in Pacini, "Severini e Maritain," 164.
- ¹⁶ Sarraute also mentions in these same memoirs that he asked Maritain if he could offer some financial assistance to the artist to open an atelier. Severini was invited to the Maritain household on the pretext of picking up the sum of 1000 francs, which was left by an anonymous donor, though presumably it was Maritain himself.
- ¹⁷ Quote taken from a letter sent by Severini to Maritain dated 18 September, 1923, located in Archivi Maritain in Kolbsheim, quoted in Piero Viotto, "Tullio Garbari: poeta e artista cristiano," *Vita e Pensiero* (1994): 46. Original Italian: "con una profondità, e un tatto, e un buon senso, che non ho mai trovato attorno a me tra i nostri critici moderni."
- ¹⁸ "Appendix" in *Gino Severini. Affreschi, mosaici, decorazioni monumentali, 1921-1941*, exh. cat., ed. Fabio Benzi (Roma: Leonardo-De Luca Editori, 1992), 116-118.
- ¹⁹ Quote taken from a letter sent by Severini to Angelo Signorelli dated 26 October, 1930 in Benzi, *Gino Severini*, 117.
- ²⁰ Raïssa Maritain, *We Have Been Friends Together*, trans. Julie Kernan (New York; Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co., 1945), 73-74.

- ²¹ Maritain, *We Have Been Friends Together*, 75-76.
- ²² *Ibid.*, 77-78.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, 148.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, 171.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, 178.
- ²⁶ Jean-Luc Barré, *Jacques e Raïssa Maritain: Beggars for Heaven*, trans. Bernard E. Doering (Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 101.
- ²⁷ Piero Viotto quoted in Maddalena Maltese Fonte, "La contemplazione vissuta per strada: intervista con Piero Viotto," *Città Nuova* (2010). Original Italian: "incontro con gli scritti di san Tommaso trasformò le loro convinzioni morali in solide cognizioni intellettuali, evitando loro di cadere nel fideismo."
- ²⁸ Piero Viotto, "Fruizione e creazione della bellezza in Maritain," in *Filosofia e Arte* (Rome: Urbaniana University Press, 2006), 1. Original Italian: "Non è un tomismo scolastico, il tomismo dei manuali, ma una tomismo vivo e aperto alle problematiche della filosofia contemporanea, molto esistenziale."
- ²⁹ For some preliminary studies of a modern sacred art movement during the inter-war period in Europe, which found inspiration in the philosophy of Maritain, see Francesco Galluzzi, "Arte sacra e primitivismo," in *Il Futuro alle Spalle: Italia Francia – L'arte tra le due guerre*, exh. cat. (Rome: Edizioni De Luca, 1998), 103-107; Giuseppe Goisis, "Maritain e i 'non-conformisti' italiani degli anni trenta," in *Jacques Maritain e la Società Contemporanea*, ed. Roberto Papini (Milan: Editrice Massimo, 1978), 181-203; Jean-Pierre Greff, "Art sacré en Europe 1919-1939: les tentatives d'un renouveau," in *Un Art sans Frontières: l'Internationalisation des Arts en Europe 1900-1950*, eds. Gérard Monnier and José Vovelle (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1994), 157-174; Elena Pontiggia, "La spiritualità e la vita," in *Edoardo Persico e gli artisti 1929-1936: il percorso di un critico dall'impressionismo al primitivismo* (Milan: Electa, 1998), 13-39.
- ³⁰ Jacques Maritain quoted in Jean Cocteau and Jacques Maritain, *Art and Faith: Letters between Jacques Maritain and Jean Cocteau*, trans. John Coleman (New York: Philosophical Library, 1948), 8.
- ³¹ Quote taken from a letter sent by Severini to Maritain dated 18 September, 1923 quoted in Viotto, "Tullio Garbari," 46. Original Italian: "ho trovato nel vostro libro la conferma delle mie ultime conclusioni e gli strumenti per approfondire questo aspetto della questione artistica."
- ³² Severini, *The Life of a Painter*, 289.
- ³³ Severini, *Raggionamenti* xvi. Original Italian: "Pensiero tomista che più di ogni altro si accorda con le aspirazioni moderne ... è alla luce di questo pensiero che potremo esaminare l'azione di Picasso nell'arte, oppure alcune esposizioni moderne, o alcuni artisti moderni come Manet, Matisse, Renoir."
- ³⁴ Severini, *Raggionamenti*, xiv
- ³⁵ Severini, "Processo di un pittore d'oggi," *Arte* 6 (1931): 486-505. Republished in Severini, *Raggionamenti*, 156.

- ³⁶ Scholasticism or the scholastic tradition was a method of medieval learning that placed a strong emphasis on dialectical reasoning to resolve contradictions, especially concerned with reconciling Christian theology and the late antique philosophy of Aristotle.
- ³⁷ Umberto Eco quoted in De Carli, *Paolo VI e l'arte*, 19.
- ³⁸ Stephen Schloesser suggests that it was this promise to unite such differences that held tremendous appeal for post-war culture. See Stephen Schloesser, "Ultramodernist Anti-modernism: Neoclassical Catholicism," in *Jazz Age Catholicism: Mystic Modernism in Postwar Paris, 1919-1933* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 154.
- ³⁹ Schloesser, "Ultramodernist Antimodernism," 151.
- ⁴⁰ De Carli, *Paolo VI e l'arte*, 17.
- ⁴¹ Schloesser, "Ultramodernist Antimodernism," 148.
- ⁴² Jacques Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism and the Frontiers of Poetry*, trans. Joseph W. Evans (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962), 11-12.
- ⁴³ Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism*, 23.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 23.
- ⁴⁶ Rowan Williams, *Grace and Necessity: Reflections on Art and Love* (London: Continuum, 2005), 12.
- ⁴⁷ Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism*, 27.
- ⁴⁸ Severini, *The Life of a Painter*, 288.
- ⁴⁹ Williams, *Grace and Necessity*, 12.
- ⁵⁰ Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism*, 27.
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 25.
- ⁵² *Ibid.*, 29.
- ⁵³ *Ibid.*, 25.
- ⁵⁴ Gino Severini, "Arte e Scolastica," *Critica Fascista* 3 (1928): 53-54. Original Italian: "Strettamente intrinseca, legata indissolubilmente all'opera, e all'operaio, risultante dall'irradiazione spirituale che l'artista ha saputo cogliere nelle cose, e dal suo spirito."
- ⁵⁵ Severini, "Arte e Scolastica," 54.
- ⁵⁶ Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism*, 95.
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 73.
- ⁵⁸ Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism*, 22.
- ⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 20.
- ⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 21-22.

- ⁶¹ Severini, "Processo di un pittore d'oggi," *Ragionamenti sulle Arti Figurative*, 1936, 138; Fonti, 'Gli affreschi di Gino Severini nelle chiese Svizzere', 28.
- ⁶² Maritain distinguishes between *Christian art*, which originates in a profound religious feeling, includes both the sacred and profane, and does not have to serve a pious use, and *religious* or *sacred art*, which is art specified by primarily liturgical ends, a sense of decorum and the requirements of the faithful. Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism*, 64.
- ⁶³ Gino Severini, "Problèmes sur l'Art Sacré Contemporain," *Arts* (1952) : 7. Original French: "l'œuvre doit être exécutés selon toutes les régles du métier et selon les exigences relatives à la forme d'expression choisie."
- ⁶⁴ Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism*, 106-107.
- ⁶⁵ Armitage quoted in Graham Howes, *The Art of the Sacred: An Introduction to the Aesthetics of Art and Belief* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 39.
- ⁶⁶ Benzi, "Gino Severini," 13.
- ⁶⁷ Severini archives, MART, Sev. I.2.65.4.
- ⁶⁸ Monsieur Marius Besson, "Opere di Gino Severini nella decorazione delle chiese," *L'Illustrazione Vaticana* (1935): 316-317.
- ⁶⁹ Maurizio Fagiolo dell'Arco argues that Severini combines his two great loves, sacred art and the *commedia dell'arte*, to suggest that the death of God coincides with the sadness of Harlequin. See Maurizio Fagiolo, Ester Coen, and Gina Severini, *Gino Severini "Entre les deux guerres" 1919/1939*, exh. cat. (Roma: Staderini Editore, 1980), 33.
- ⁷⁰ Ennio Francia articulated that this was the personage of Monsignor Besson. See to Ennio Francia, "Temi religiosi in artisti contemporanei: Gino Severini," *Ecclesia: a cura dell'ufficio* 9 (1946): 436.
- ⁷¹ Severini, *Ragionamenti*, 142. Original Italian: "Portando nel dominio dell'arte murale certe esperienze conclusive dell'arte moderna, si può benissimo riprendere contatto con le più lontane tradizioni e restare attuali."
- ⁷² Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism*, 49-52.
- ⁷³ Stephen Schloesser, "Ultramodernist Anti-modernism," 160.
- ⁷⁴ Severini, *Ragionamenti*, xiii.
- ⁷⁵ Severini "L'Unità nella sorgente d'ispirazione," *Ragionamenti*, 263. Original Italian: "si dovrebbero indurre gli artisti a considerarsi ed a condursi come degli artigiani; la questione sociale deve a sua volta esser risolta dall'organizzazione corporative nella quale bisognerebbe riportare quello spirito di "bottega" ... spirito di cameratismo."
- ⁷⁶ For a more complete analysis of the working relationship between Severini and Gajoni refer to Marco Fagioli, *Anton Luigi Gajoni Pittore da Parigi a San Miniato* (Florence: Aión, 2001).
- ⁷⁷ Marie-Therese Torche-Julmy, "Gino Severini a Semsales Renouveau de l'Art Religieux en Suisse Romande," *Patrimoine Fribourgeois* 2 (1993) : 29-32. At least at

the level of primary information, Torche-Julmy does not interrogate what Severini's lack of acknowledgement signifies in relation to the broader discourse of collaboration.

⁷⁸ Pia Bruzzichelli, 'Gino Severini', *La Rocca*, n.d. (c. 1957-1958), n. p. Original Italian: "Vidi una sua Via Crucis in mosaico che, in tante cappelline, mi accompagnò nella salita verso il santuario di Margherita, la santa penitente. Ricordo che la strada difficile era diventata una sorpresa gioiosa dalla prima, alla seconda, alla terza stazione; una specie di corsa, anticipata dallo spirito sull'occhio, per avere ancora luce e colore e poi luce e colore ancora."

⁷⁹ Gino Severini, *The Dance of the Pan-Pan at the "Monico,"* 1909-1911/ 1959-1960, oil on canvas, 280 × 400cm, Paris, Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne.

⁸⁰ "Mosaïque et Art Mural," Conférence faite à Ravenne en juin 1952 sous les auspices de la Société des Amici dell'Arte. Republished in Gino Severini, *Témoignages - 50 ans de réflexion* (Rome: Éditions Art Moderne, 1963) 160-180. Original French: "Lorsque j'ai vu pour la première fois les mosaïques de Ravenne, m'est aussitôt apparue l'analogie, quant aux intentions et quant au 'moyens', entre l'art des ces artisans anciens et l'art dit moderne."

⁸¹ Giorgio Mascherpa, *Severini e il Mosaico*, exh. cat. (Ravenna: Longo editore, 1985), 17.

⁸² Quotes taken from letter sent by Severini to Mussolini dated 4 January 1934 and 29 April 1935 quoted in *Avanguardia, tradizione, ideologia: itinerario attraverso un ventennio di dibattito sulla pittura e plastica murale* (Rome: Bagatto Libri, 1990), 449 and 451.

⁸³ Benzi, "Gino Severini. Le opere monumentali," 16. Benzi also notes that in the Mussolini archives there is a carbon copy of a note delivered to the Duce in 1939 that mentions the artist's involvement in anti-fascist organisations overseas. State Archives, Rome, S.P.D. CO 132.849 folder 371.

⁸⁴ I find it interesting, for example, that in his autobiography Severini criticises the Italian academics who did not "raise even a sigh of protest" after Mussolini declared war in 1940, despite disapproving of the situation. Such a statement indicates that the artist far from wholly embraced the regime. Severini, *The Life of a Painter*, 152.

⁸⁵ Severini Archives, MART, Sev.II.4.1-17.