

Press release



Musée
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Gino Severini (1883 – 1966), Futurist and Neo-Classicist

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Musée National de l'Orangerie



Gino Severini, *Expansion sphérique de la lumière centripède et centrifuge. Simultanéisme, [Spherical Expansion of Light (centripetal and centrifugal) – Simultaneism]*, 1913-1914, Oil on canvas, 60 x 50 cm, Utica (N.Y.), Munson-William-Proctor Arts Institute, Museum of Art, © Munson-William-Proctor Arts Institute, Museum of Art / DR, © ADAGP, Paris 2011

“Cortona and Paris are the cities I am most bound to : I was physically born in the first, intellectually and spiritually in the second.” Gino Severini

This is the first retrospective of the work of the Italian painter Gino Severini since that organised in 1967 at the Musée National d'Art Moderne in Paris. It brings together some 70 works (original drawings, paintings...) from private collections, European museums (Triton Foundation Netherlands, Peggy Guggenheim Collection Venice, Centre Pompidou, Musée National d'Art Moderne in Paris, Estorick Collection in London and the Thyssen Foundation in Madrid...) and American museums including the MOMA, New York.

Introduced to the Divisionist technique by his master Giacomo Balla, Gino Severini at first remained close to his style, with an emphasis on Luminist effects and the contrast of light and shade.

He arrived in Paris in 1906 keen to find out more about the work of Seurat. In 1910, Raoul Dufy, who had the neighbouring studio, introduced him to scientific Divisionism. His urban views, painted in quite a free Pointillist style, are reminiscent of Signac but also seem quite close to the landscapes painted by Van Gogh in Paris in 1887 with their broken brushwork and lighter palette. His few pastel portraits are closer in style to Degas and Toulouse-Lautrec. He continued the Divisionist experiments in his early Futurist works by integrating coloured planes and adding sequins to his dancers.

In 1911, Gino Severini joined the Futurist movement, having already signed the Manifesto in 1910. His large painting, *The Dance of the Pan Pan at the Monico*, was the highlight of the 1912 Futurist exhibition. He acted as mediator between the artists from Milan and those of the Parisian avant-garde, and joined the Futurists on their European tour. His preferred subjects at this time were crowds, urban scenes and places of entertainment, very different from the themes of his artist friends (*The Boulevard*, Estorick Collection, London). He also represented movement in his series of dancers produced in 1912-1913.

In 1914 - 1915, at the invitation of Marinetti, Severini produced a series of paintings on the war (*The train blindé [Armoured Train]*, MOMA, New York).

In 1916, after abandoning Futurism, he became part of the Cubist movement until 1919. He rubbed shoulders with Cocteau and Matisse, and met Juan Gris to whom he was very close both personally and stylistically. During this period, he painted still lifes that included real fragments of wallpaper, newspapers, musical scores, etc., basing them on a set of complicated calculations. His Cubism stood out for the subtlety of colour harmonies. It was at this time that he produced many theoretical works on geometry, the Golden Section and harmonic lines, resulting in the publication in 1921 of his book *From Cubism to Classicism* on the relationship between art and mathematics. He sought a return to the traditional values of painting by concentrating on "construction".

From 1920 to 1943, his art entered a new phase with the "Return to the Figure". With his *Portrait de Jeanne et sa Maternité [Portrait of Jeanne and Maternity]*, dating from 1916 and representative of a classical and realist style, he became part of the "Return to Order" movement. Just like other artists of the time, Picasso, Gris and Derain, Severini was fascinated by the characters of Harlequin and by the *Commedia dell'Arte*. His still lifes at this point became more decorative. This new transformation in his painting style, so far removed from Cubism, is evident in the decorations he created for the Sitwel family at Montefugoni in Tuscany.

In the 1930s, he also worked on a number of religious mosaic murals for the churches of Tavannes and Saint Pierre de Fribourg in Switzerland. Severini painted relatively few easel paintings at that time. His subjects were more intimate and family-orientated. He alternated between hieratic portraits and still lifes (musical instruments, pigeons, ducks and fish) inspired by the decorations in Pompeii and by Byzantine mosaics in Ravenna. Along with other artists like De Chirico, Picabia, and Ernst, he was involved with the decoration of Rosenberg's house. Between 1928 and 1930, he exhibited with the Italian artists in Paris (De Chirico, etc.).

His *Arlequin [Harlequin]* from 1938 (Ateneum Art Museum, Helsinki) completes an exhibition that presents the many different aspects of an artist who was much more multi-faceted than his fame as a Futurist painter would have us believe. His work fits perfectly with the Musée de l'Orangerie collections, particularly in his desire for a classic "return to order" and his numerous representations of Harlequin that unquestionably bring him closer to André Derain.

**Curators : Gabriella Belli, director, Museo d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto and Marie-Paule Vial, director, Musée National de l'Orangerie
Project of Gabriella Belli et Daniela Fonti**

Next venue : Museo d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto 17 September 2011 to 8 January 2012

Media Partners : Arte, RATP

<p>Around the exhibition Exhibition catalogue, joint publication Musée d'Orsay / Silvana Editoriale, 240 pages, €39</p> <p>Guided tours (duration 90 min – except public holidays) From 2 May: Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays at 11am, Wednesdays at 11am and 4.15pm, Saturdays and Sundays at 11.30am and 4.15pm</p> <p>Workshop (8 -12 years) 11, 18, 25 May, 1, 8, 15, 22 and 29 June and 6, 13 and 20 July at 3pm / Futurist Expression</p> <p>Lecture cycle in the auditorium - Friday 29 April at 6.30pm / Gino Severini : from Divisionism to Abstraction - Friday 6 May at 6.30pm / The relationship between poetry and painting in the work of Gino Severini - Friday 20 May at 6.30pm / The Antiphilosophy of Futurism - Friday 3 June at 6.30pm / Futurism and Magnetism</p> <p>Discussion - Friday 10 June / Severini and the Futurists</p> <p>Opening times : daily, except Tuesdays and 1 May, 9am - 6pm (galleries cleared at 5.45pm) Admission : museum entrance ticket: full rate: €7.50; concessions: €5 (2€ supplement for temporary exhibitions) Address : Jardin des Tuileries, 75001 Paris, +33(0)1 44 77 80 07</p>

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