

The Italian Art World and São Paulo Museum Collections in the Aftermath of World War II

Abstract

The present article analyzes the engagement of prominent Italian art world figures – Margherita Sarfatti and Pietro Maria Bardi, in primis – in the creation of the collections of the two most important museums of São Paulo: the São Paulo Museum of Modern Art (MAM), and the São Paulo Museum of Art (MASP). Our aim has been to analyze how these Italian art critics helped to shape Brazil's understanding of modern art at a time when this understanding was still controversial. The article seeks to emphasize the complementarity of these museums' collections and to highlight that both used the same network of agents to broker the acquisitions made on their behalf. How recent immigrants from the European art world were able to salvage their careers in South America at a significant historical moment when the international postwar situation had created the opportunity for new art markets to flourish, is also described. By 1945 there was a growing Allied-led effort to recover lost and/or confiscated artworks and return them to their rightful owners. This action ran parallel to the immediate efforts made to rebuild the art market through the organization of exhibitions and other para-diplomatic initiatives throughout Europe, in the United States, and in South America.

Beginning from provenance research, we have sought to rebuild the network of art agents that were involved in the acquisitions made for the two Brazilian art museums. In so doing it has been possible to highlight the active role the Brazilian art world played in the international art system, and to tackle the presence of foreign art collections from a different perspective: as an inherent part of the Brazilian art historical debate.

Since the 1990s, Brazilian art historians have attempted to throw new light on the history of the art museums in their country. This is especially true in the case of the Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo (MAM), and of the Museu de Arte de São Paulo (MASP).¹ This investigative boom corresponds to the professionalization of the museum structure in the country, which has also contributed to the organization of museum archives – a vital element in revising the way the museums' narratives are written. By the end of the twentieth century, the history of these two museums still mostly relied on the accounts given by the protagonists of their founding.² The publication of Maria Cecília França Lourenço's research on the history of the São Paulo museums was one of the first to analyze their formation from a scholarly perspective,³ and opened up the possibility for new research into the topic.⁴

However, research has not yet been conducted into how their foundational collections were acquired and the circumstances and implications of that initial collection-building. Both MAM and MASP were founded in the aftermath of World War II, and their first acquisition campaigns essentially ran in the first six years of their existence, i.e., from 1946 to 1952. They also engaged immigrants in Brazil as possible patrons and donors, as well as agents outside the country, tempted by the prospect of carving out a new career for themselves in the face of the extreme situation (and sometimes their tarnished reputations) in Europe in the years following the Allied victory. This aspect is frequently mentioned by Brazilian art historians when discussing the artworks in MASP's collection, but, while repeatedly questioning their authenticity (under discussion since the early 1950s), they nevertheless have fallen short of conducting a precise study into their provenance.⁵

1 Acknowledgement: I would like to thank the post-doc researcher Renata Dias Ferraretto Moura Rocco, who helped me with the revision of this article, and Alecsandra Matias and Elaine Maziero at MAC USP for their support in organizing the images of the museum's works reproduced in this article.

The two Brazilian museums under discussion here have placed their collections online. The artworks mentioned in this article can be consulted in the MAC USP online collections (www.acervo.mac.usp.br) and in the MASP online collections: www.masp.art.br. The museum now bears the name of its founder, Assis Chateaubriand, and is officially called Museu de Arte de São Paulo Assis Chateaubriand.

2 In the case of MAM, see Mendes de Almeida 1976. Mendes de Almeida was himself one of the proponents and defenders of Modernism in São Paulo, projecting his own reading of modern art onto the Brazilian Modernist experience as a whole and making São Paulo's MAM the beacon of modern art in the country. As for MASP, see, for instance, Bardi 1956. Bardi left his mark on MASP while he was the director of the museum, also intertwining its history with that of Modernism in Brazil.

3 See Lourenço 1994. Her book resulted from a research project she coordinated with a group of graduate students and scholars at the School of Art and Architecture of the University of São Paulo (FAU USP) in the late 1980s. That project anticipated the rise of new undergraduate and graduate programs in art history that have appeared in Brazil in the two last decades. Today, one of the research groups investigating the history of art institutions and collections in Brazil is the Modos Group, which also edits the art journal *Revista Modos*, URL: <https://www.publlionline.iar.unicamp.br/index.php/mod/index> (accessed 30.11.2020), and has recently edited the volume dedicated to the history of museums in the country. See *Histórias da Arte em Museus* 2020.

4 There is an impressive list of M.A. theses and Ph.D. dissertations written in the last twenty years that take aspects of the history of MAM and MASP as their theme. In regard to the argument of this article, see Barbosa 2015, which was an original attempt at producing a comparative study of the making of the two museums.

5 Until the 1990s, Brazilian art historians tended to dismiss the artworks in the collection of MASP. Being mainly a collection of European art, it was understood as something not pertaining to art history in Brazil. In addition to this, ever since the 1950s, rumors have circulated on the authenticity of certain artworks in the collection. This shadow of doubt led the museum director, Italian émigré art critic and gallerist Pietro Maria Bardi, to organize an exhibition of the

This article thus seeks to analyze the engagement of prominent figures in the Italian art world in the making of these two museum collections, and how they helped shape the Brazilian understanding of modern art that was then still fluid and under debate. It is our aim to stress the complementarity of both museums' collections and to highlight that both used the same network of go-betweens to broker the acquisitions made on their behalf. The present article describes how recent immigrants formerly of the European art world were able to salvage their careers in South America at the very point in history when the international postwar situation had created the opportunity for new art markets to flourish.⁶ By 1945 there was a growing Allied-led effort to recover lost and/or confiscated artworks and return them to their rightful owners. This action ran parallel to the immediate efforts made to rebuild the art market, through the organization of exhibitions and other para-diplomatic initiatives all over Europe, in the United States, and in South America.

Our study thus involves Italian artworks acquired by MAM and by MASP with the help of Italian brokers, against the backdrop of the great turmoil experienced in Italian cities in the early postwar years.⁷ The artworks purchased for Brazil were put up for sale or shown in exhibitions on both sides of the Atlantic. It is high time that Brazilian art historians reconsider the role of the country's rising contemporary art world within the wider context of the international art market. In addition to this, one must consider that the sudden availability of certain artworks or private collections was made possible precisely because of the tragedy that devastated the European continent during the period of National Socialist rule. As the true scale of the Holocaust emerged at the end of World War II, it became clear that it essentially entailed two campaigns, each of enormous and catastrophic proportions: on the one hand the extermination of people and, on the other, the dislocation of cultural and artistic heritage. The mass extermination in Nazi death camps took place only after the National Socialists and their allies had already set up a very sophisticated system of accessioning, storing, triaging, and selling artworks.⁸ In their efforts to dismantle and appropriate artistic heritage, the Nazis enlisted the support of highly specialized professionals, such as art critics, museum directors, gallerists, art historians, and artists. If Brazilian

MASP collection that toured first Europe then the United States from 1952 to 1957. See *103 dipinti del Museo d'Arte di San Paolo del Brasile* 1954, the Italian version of the catalogue of this touring exhibition.

6 Although there are very important scholarly contributions on the number of Europeans emigrating to Brazil to escape the world conflict, such studies have tended to concentrate on social history. In 2018, Helouise Costa and Daniel Rincon curated the exhibition *A arte degenerada de Lasar Segall* (The Degenerate Art of Lasar Segall) at the Museu Lasar Segall, which was followed by an international conference at the Museu de Arte Contemporânea da Universidade de São Paulo (MAC USP) and which attempted to evaluate the impact in Brazil of the *Entartete Kunst* exhibition of 1937; see *Arte degenerada 80 anos. Repercussões no Brasil* 2018. This was the first scholarly event in the field of art history in Brazil to consider the issues of provenance research and the presentation of a few case studies in the collections of São Paulo museums.

7 Rome was liberated by Allied troops on June 4, 1944, whereas the liberation of the rest of the Italian territory was only completed on April 25, 1945. This period is marked by the dire set of circumstances faced by the average citizen in the face of a lack of infrastructure, rationing, and difficulties in communication, circumstances that would continue to plague the territory until 1947.

8 In 1998, the United Nations organized a conference to push Western countries to investigate these cases, which resulted in the creation of special departments of provenance research in museums, and the establishment of thorough research practices in the field. See Nicholas 1994; Yeide/Akinsha/Walsh 2001. More recently, see also the ongoing research project on looted art during the Nazi era at the Freie Universität Berlin, URL: http://www.geschkult.fu-berlin.de/en/e/db_entart_kunst/index.html (accessed 30.11.2020), under coordination of Prof. Meike Hoffmann, as well as the exhibition curated by Prof. Olaf Peters; see *Degenerate Art* 2014.

collectors and museum patrons had attempted to create the São Paulo museums at any other point in the nation's history, they would certainly not have been able to purchase the caliber of artworks found in their collections today.⁹

In what follows, we speculate on the collaboration between the Italian art critics Margherita Sarfatti (1880–1961) and Pietro Maria Bardi (1900–1999) and art historian Bernard Berenson (1865–1959), as well as their active role in fostering a market for European Old Masters in South America in the aftermath of World War II, while also actively promoting Italian modern art. Exhibiting and collecting Old Masters in combination with modern art was, as we will see, a strategy they borrowed from the *ventennio's* cultural policies, which were to gain a new meaning in the postwar period, both in Brazil and the United States.

The Italian Artworks at MASP: The Tintoretos and the Activities of Italian Agents and Intermediaries in South America

Founded in 1947, MASP is the most important (if not the only) art collection of its kind in South America. Its patron and founder, the media tycoon Francisco Bandeira de Mello Assis Chateaubriand (1892–1968) was known not only as a leader of Brazil's economic elite but also as a very influential political figure.¹⁰ Chatô, as he was dubbed, is known to have used his political influence to foster his pet project of creating a museum of European art for Brazil, and, as at first it would seem, leapt at the fortuitous opportunity of placing its stewardship in the hands of the Italian art critic and gallerist Pietro Maria Bardi as its founding director.¹¹ The latter came to Brazil on a visit in November 1946, as a representative of COREITAL (Comitato per le Relazioni Economiche Italia America Latina), bringing exhibitions of Italian modern art and Old Master paintings to Latin America and disseminating the new Italian art publications, some of which he worked for as editor. Bardi was then owner of the gallery Studio d'Arte Palma,

9 The ripple effect created by the Washington Conference in the 1990s also reached Brazil, one of the forty countries to sign the new agreement that came out of the conference. In 1997, Brazilian government established a special committee to investigate possible Nazi-confiscated art in the country. This committee worked until January 1999 and presented a report on its findings, later filed at the Brazilian Ministry of Justice. These documents cannot be located today. I thank my MA student, Fabiana Aiolfi, for sharing this information with me. She came across this material while conducting provenance research into three prints belonging to the collections of MAC USP, which she was able to securely identify as not being Holocaust-era assets. It is worth noting that as part of its work, members of the Brazilian committee on Nazi-looted art visited MASP, where some Nazi-looted objects might have ended up.

10 For a biography on Chateaubriand, see Morais 1994. Morais was the first to study Chateaubriand's private papers, as well as having access to the business archives of his media company, Diários Associados. His analysis of Chateaubriand as a wingman of Brazilian president Getúlio Vargas (1930–1945, 1950–1954) is one of the cornerstones of his biography, hence its title (in translation): “The King of Brazil.”

11 See Tentori 1990. The Portuguese translation was published by the Instituto Lina Bo e Pietro Maria Bardi and Imprensa Oficial do Estado de São Paulo in 2000. See also the ongoing research of Paolo Rusconi (Rusconi 2020). While speaking of Bardi as having a “second life” in Brazil, Rusconi seeks to point out his many contradictions, and his attempt of rehabilitation in his new adopted country Bardi occupied a central role in the Italian art world in the 1930s, when he was nominated the first director of the Galleria d'Arte di Roma (the exhibition gallery of the artists' union Sindacato Nazionale Fascista Belle Arti. But in his defense of Rationalist architecture (especially during the debates surrounding the inauguration of the Casa del Fascio, in Como, designed by Giuseppe Terragni), Bardi made a few enemies in the higher political circles of the National Fascist Party. Playing the role of the polemist, he built his career as an art critic and gallerist while benefiting from Fascist cultural structures, having powerful allies among the fascist elite including Mussolini himself. Scholars like Rusconi, Rifkind, and others working on Bardi's career as a gallerist, journalist, and cultural promoter have to contend with the fact that his papers are divided between São Paulo and Milan, and that a portion of the documents that came back to Italy were lost.

which he had founded in 1944, in Rome.¹² His gallery not only showcased modern Italian art and design but also works by Old Masters, and was even equipped with its own authentication office and conservation laboratory. Accordingly, the first exhibition he presented in Brazil was titled *Exposição de Pintura Italiana Antiga* and was hosted by the Brazilian Ministry of Health and Education in Rio de Janeiro shortly after his arrival in Brazil.¹³ The exhibition brought fifty-four works for sale, and resulted in eight acquisitions that ended up in MASP's collection in 1947, when the museum was officially founded.¹⁴

Bardi's arrival in Brazil changed the course of his life. With the offer that Chateaubriand made him, he decided to emigrate to the country, and went on to hold the position of MASP director until the early 1990s. From recent research, one learns that Bardi had in fact already been to South America, travelling on a ship along the coast of Brazil in 1933, accompanying an exhibition on Italian Rationalist architecture bound for Buenos Aires.¹⁵ It was then that his first contacts with the South American art world (primarily art journalists) were established, contacts he seems to have subsequently maintained via correspondence. Months before his arrival in Rio de Janeiro in 1946, he had been contacted by the secretary of Francisco Matarazzo Sobrinho, one of the founding patrons of MAM,¹⁶ requesting lists of works of modern art in his gallery for possible purchase for the new museum collection.¹⁷ In the light of such new evidence, one must reconsider Chateaubriand's apparently hasty decision to offer him the job of museum director. It now seems much more likely that connections between Bardi and Chateaubriand already existed, and that such ties only grew, partly because Bardi was well acquainted with the Brazilian press through Italian émigré editors and journalists already working in the country, and partly because the association Bardi represented at the time (COREITAL) contained other figures with strong connections with Brazil.¹⁸

12 See Pozzoli 2013.

13 See *Exposição de pintura italiana antiga, do século XIII ao século XVIII* 1946. The exhibition was organized by Bardi's gallery in Rome, the Studio d'Arte Palma. As evidenced by the catalogue's foreword, the gallery gave its guarantee on the provenance of the works on show.

14 They are a Crucifixion by Deodato Orlandi (cat. 2 of the 1946 exhibition), an Adoration of the Magi by Maestro del Bambino Vispo (cat. 3), a resurrected Christ by Niccolò Alunno (cat. 5), the two works by Jacopo del Sellaio (cats. 7 and 8), a *Madonna col Bambino* and an infant Saint John the Baptist by Giampetrino (cat. 12), an Adoration of the Magi by Jacopo Bassano (cat. 16), and a painting of a scene from the life of Scipio Africanus by Giovanni Battista Tiepolo (cat. 47). They all came from Italian private collections at the time, the majority from Rome.

15 On his first trip to South America, see his manuscript *Amer* (MASP, Research Center and Library, Pietro Maria Bardi papers). His log diary was studied by Eugênia Gorini Esmeraldo at the University of Campinas (Ph.D. dissertation) and a reevaluation of this trip and his entire biography has been undertaken in the research and essays published by Paolo Rusconi in the last decade. See also Rifkind 2013 for Bardi's defense of Rationalist architecture in Italy through his magazine *Quadrante* (1933–1936).

16 Francisco Matarazzo Sobrinho (1898–1977), better known by his nickname, Ciccillo, was an Italian-Brazilian industrialist and businessman. Born into a family of Italian immigrants from Castellabate (province of Salerno), he built his own company out of the corporate conglomerate created by his uncle, Count Francesco Matarazzo. The Matarazzos were the richest family in South America in the first half of the twentieth century, and were pivotal in accelerating Brazilian industrialization. The only biography ever published on his life as a patron of the arts and businessman was commissioned by himself; see Almeida 1976.

17 See Pietro Maria Bardi's telegram to Matarazzo's secretary, Carlino Lovatelli, dated March 17, 1946 (MAC USP, Registrar's Section, folder MAMSP-MAC). The acquisition of these works will be tackled below, when we analyze MAM's collection of Italian modern art.

18 This was the case with architect Marcello Piacentini (1881–1960), who actually seems to have suggested Bardi for the job at COREITAL. Piacentini travelled to Brazil in 1934, whereupon the Brazilian minister of education and health, Gustavo Capanema, selected him as first choice in preparations for the master plan of the Universidade do Brasil (today known as Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro). On Piacentini's influence and projects in Brazil, see Tognon 1999.

Bardi was not the first Italian art critic and gallerist to bond with the upper echelons of the Brazilian art world. Since the 1920s, and precisely in the context of fascist Italy, there had been many initiatives, both from private actors and from the Italian government, to promote Italian art and culture in South America.¹⁹ This was the case with art critic and journalist Margherita Grassini Sarfatti (1880–1961).²⁰ Leader of the Novecento Italiano group in the 1920s, she first arrived in South America in August 1930, with an exhibition on the Novecento group that toured Buenos Aires, Rosario, and Montevideo.²¹ She spent fifteen days in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo and used every opportunity to disseminate her ideas on art, giving many interviews to Brazilian newspapers and becoming acclaimed by the Brazilian art world.²² She then came back to South America, against her will, in 1939, settling first in Montevideo, and later in Buenos Aires, where she lived until she helped Ciccillo Matarazzo purchase a collection of modern Italian painting for the creation of MAM, before finally returning to Italy in 1947. Although there is no evidence of any kind of collaboration or connection between Bardi and Sarfatti, in their motherland they were both very close to the fascist elite at different moments in time, and were aware of each other's activities.²³ But in Brazil they seem to have come to some agreement, presumably when Matarazzo reached out to each of them separately for assistance in acquiring modern Italian paintings for MAM's collection. Moreover, new evidence, detailed later, suggests that after Sarfatti's return to Italy, she and Bardi may have cooperated on nurturing Old Master collections in South America.

In regard to collecting Old Masters, Bardi and Sarfatti counted on the support of a third party: the celebrated connoisseur and art historian Bernard Berenson (1865–1959). His relations to South America seemed to have strengthened once Argentine art critic and art historian Jorge Romero Brest asked his permission to translate and publish his book *Aesthetics and History*.²⁴ Berenson

19 Since the second half of the nineteenth century the Americas have been home to the three largest communities of Italian immigrants outside Italy. New York, São Paulo, and Buenos Aires are the cities with the largest Italian communities; see Trento 2008; Bertonha 2001. As far as the art world is concerned, it is worth mentioning the tour, during the early fascist period of the 1920s, of the Nave Italia (see Cecchini 2016) and the first visit of the leader of the Futurist movement, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, to Brazil and Argentina in 1926 (see Fabris 1993).

20 There are a number of important biographies on Sarfatti, mainly concentrating on her role as a fascist ideologue. See Cannistraro/Sullivan 1993, the first comprehensive biography on her. In 2015, journalist and art historian Rachele Ferrario published a biography that focuses on her activities as an art critic and cultural figure; see Ferrario 2015. Even the recent exhibition on her life as a major figure in the Italian art world (see Montaldo/Giacon 2018) contributed nothing new to the subject of her connections to South America.

21 For a fresh reevaluation of the Novecento Italiano exhibition in the River Plate region, see Cecchini 2020.

22 For an in-depth study of her relations with South America, see Magalhães 2016; Magalhães 2020a.

23 It is worth noting that there was also a significant age difference between them: Sarfatti was twenty years older than Bardi. Moreover, according to her biographers, Sarfatti started falling out of Il Duce's grace in 1930–1931, the very time that Bardi was settling in Rome as director of the Galleria d'Arte di Roma and enjoying celebrity as an art critic. There is one piece of evidence, still in Milan, which connects the two of them: a letter from gallerist Gino Ghiringhelli (of Galleria Il Milione) to Pietro Maria Bardi, dated June 7, 1931 (Castello Sforzesco, Biblioteca Trivulziana, Pietro Maria Bardi papers). In the document, Ghiringhelli mentions her in the context of an attempt by her group to organize an exhibition in his gallery.

24 See Berenson 1948. Here Berenson attempts to summarize his approach to studying artworks, basing his concepts and ideas on his practice as connoisseur. One of the most important concepts he develops here is what he calls "life-enhancement," or the ability of an artwork to convey "[...] the ideated plunging into a state of being, or a state of mind, that makes one feel more hopefully, more zestfully alive; living more intense, more radiant a life not only physically but morally and spiritually as well [...]" (p. 150).

and Romero Brest were introduced to each other by Sarfatti in the winter of 1949, when Brest was visiting Italy with his wife.²⁵ The Argentine art critic had been one of Sarfatti's main contacts during her time living in Buenos Aires and acted as her editor for the book *Espejo de la pintura actual*, issued by his publishing house in 1947.²⁶

Berenson and Sarfatti, meanwhile, had been introduced to each other by a mutual friend in April 1936.²⁷ From then on, Sarfatti was a habitu  of Villa I Tatti, and kept a continuous correspondence with Berenson, interrupted only during her exile in Argentina. Despite their disagreement when it came to the appreciation of modern art, they engaged in a very rich debate on art in the 1950s. Moreover, Sarfatti seems to have taken an interest in Berenson's field of expertise in as early as 1935.²⁸

Upon her return in Italy after her exile, Sarfatti immediately took up her correspondence with Berenson again. In his answer to a letter or telegram from her, on August 27, 1947 he writes: "Dearest Margherita. Pleased to hear from you at last & to have your mail ad."²⁹ In the first fifteen days of September we see them making arrangements to meet, with Sarfatti mentioning a Tintoretto exhibition at San Rocco in Venice:

Dearest friend, the best of BBs.

Your letter which has just reached me has been the gladdest tiding I have had for a week of Sundays of course, delighted to meet you anywhere, in Milan, Florence, or, *why not? here in Venice now, when, & how? Have you seen the Tintoretto exhibition here at San Rocco?* [my italics]

[...]

P.S. I wonder if you really know how world-wide your name & fame has spread. If you do realize it you are wonderful not to have grown awfully conceited. *Nobody, in South America, says: mai sentito nominare of B.B.* [my italics] [...]³⁰

The letter clearly connects South America and the theme of Old Masters as a common interest between them and suggests that there might have been at least an attempt to collaborate in their capacity as connoisseurs and art dealers for new collectors in South America. True, such a partnership may not be documented in writing, but their further contribution to the magazine Brest had recently founded in Buenos Aires in 1948 suggests otherwise.

25 See letter from Margherita Sarfatti to Bernard Berenson, dated January 18, 1949 (Villa I Tatti – Harvard University, Settignano, Bernard Berenson papers). For a specific analysis of the reception of Berenson's book in Argentine art circles, see Magalhães 2020b.

26 See Sarfatti 1947.

27 See Chierichini 2013.

28 See her personal notebook, Quaderno X, pp. 47–67 (MART, Rovereto, Archivio del '900, Margherita Sarfatti papers). The book is a record of her notes while visiting the major Titian exhibition that took place at Palazzo Ca' Pesaro in Venice in 1935, which seems to have inaugurated a series of exhibitions on Italian Renaissance painters establishing the first corpus of works attributed to them; see Barbantini 1935. In her notes, Sarfatti discusses some of the attributions made by Berenson in his *Venetian Painters of the Renaissance* (Berenson 1894).

29 See letter from Bernard Berenson to Margherita Sarfatti, dated August 27, 1947 (MART, Rovereto, Archivio del '900, Margherita Sarfatti papers).

30 See letter from Margherita to Bernard Berenson, dated September 14, 1947 (Villa I Tatti – Harvard University, Settignano, Bernard Berenson papers). The phrase in Italian is in the original. The Tintoretto exhibition at San Rocco she is referring to is the exhibition of the wall and ceiling paintings in the Scuola Grande di San Rocco, di San Giovanni Evangelista, and dei Carmini by Tintoretto, Tiepolo, and Guardi respectively that opened to the public that year. See *Il Tintoretto, Tiepolo, Guardi* 1947.

Titled *Ver y Estimar*, Brest's magazine seems to have changed over time.³¹ Now better known as a space for debating modern art, the first issues seem broader in theme, relating much more closely to Brest's professorship in the art history program at the University of Buenos Aires. Essays on the Italian painters of the Renaissance are thus quite common in the issues from 1948 to 1950. It is in this context that Brest published a chapter ("Art History Specifically") from Berenson's *Aesthetics and History*, translated into Spanish.³² The presentation of Berenson's chapter is followed by an essay penned by Alfredo Roland, where the author discusses Berenson's approach to aesthetics and art history.³³ Before the appearance of Berenson's *Aesthetics and History* chapter in Brest's magazine, the Buenos-Aires-based Editorial Ateneo published *Italian Painters of the Renaissance*, translated into Spanish, in 1944.³⁴ This was in the same year in which Sarfatti published, also in Buenos Aires, two monographs, on Giorgione and Titian respectively.³⁵ In the monograph on Giorgione, she dedicates a chapter to discussing Berenson's methods of authenticating works of art.³⁶

Although Sarfatti appeared in Brest's magazine as a modern art critic reviewing contemporary exhibitions in Rome, she republished a prior article in the issue of November 1949 on Giovanni Bellini.³⁷ Her essay comments on a monographic Bellini show that took place in Italy that year.³⁸ But what is important to point out here is that there was most likely an ulterior motive to self-referencing the monographic books she had published during her years in Buenos Aires, especially in regard to the title of her essay³⁹ and the content, where she not only comments on questions of attribution in Bellini's oeuvre but also mentions the latest connoisseurship on Venetian Old Masters. By introducing Berenson to Brest in the winter of 1949 she presented him as the voice of authority when speaking on the Old Masters, while preserving her realm of expertise in modern art – a field in which Berenson had little interest and where she was his equal, complementing his views on the history of the visual arts in Italy. It was a mutually rewarding partnership in matters of dealing art, with each enjoying their own niche.

A discussion of the practices of connoisseurship in European Old Masters published for a South American readership in the shadow of the Second World War would have seemed of remarkably marginal interest if it were not for the fact that Bardi and Chateaubriand were at that moment building a collection of European masters for São Paulo, while across the border in Buenos Aires another famous patron of the arts, Torcuato di Tella (notably of Italian origin), was building his own collection of Old Master paintings.⁴⁰ He had the help of Italian art critic and historian Lionello Venturi (1885–1961), in exile in the United States

31 On Brest and *Ver y estimar*, see Giunta/Costa 2005. The magazine was published in two series, the first between 1948 and 1953, and the second between 1954 and 1955. The digitized issues are available at URL: <http://revistasdeartelatinoamericano.org/collections/show/5> (accessed 30.11.2020).

32 See Berenson 1950.

33 See Roland 1950.

34 See Berenson 1944.

35 See Sarfatti 1944a; Sarfatti 1944b.

36 See Sarfatti 1944a, chapter V: "El acertijo de las atribuciones," p. 36.

37 See Sarfatti 1949.

38 See Pallucchini 1949. The exhibition took place from June 12 to October 5, 1949. A copy of the catalogue can be found at MASP's library. Bellini's *Willys Madonna*, now in the museum's collection, appears in the show (see cat. 90, p. 158).

39 The title of the essay, "El sonriente y paciente Bellini" (The Smiling and Patient Bellini), has the same character as the titles of her books on Titian and Giorgione, and seems to emphasize subjective traits of the three artists – very much in alignment with her understanding of Berenson's connoisseurship, i. e., based on the "emotion of the works of art" (see Sarfatti 1944a).

during the war, to facilitate acquisitions for his collection.⁴¹ While in Italy, Venturi and Berenson had met each other, in 1908, long before Mussolini's rise to power, and their paths would cross many times later in their work for art collectors.⁴² Both enjoyed a degree of celebrity in Brazil in the 1950s.

Berenson's fame in Brazil reached its peak during the presentation of the MASP collection to the local press. The museum's chairman, Assis Chateaubriand, owned the most widely read illustrated magazine in South America, *O Cruzeiro*,⁴³ which he used to promote the museum and raise publicity for the luxurious receptions he organized in celebration of the arrival of Old Master paintings in its collection. One of these receptions, marking the collection's 'homecoming' after touring abroad, was to take place in the official residence of the Brazilian presidency, the Palácio das Laranjeiras, in Rio de Janeiro in January 1957. The reporter on the feature, which, judging from the photographs, looked much more like a high-society event, starts by mentioning Berenson:

It was Bernard Berenson who came up with "It" as an expression to define the aesthetic fruition of the good and beautiful things in life and the universe. It is not the "It" that Clara Bow discovered, a quarter of a century ago, the naïve and graceful fixation that later came to be known as "sex appeal." There is, though, a relationship between them, for [Berenson's] "It" is also attained through great explosions of love. But sublime love in devotion and in sacrifice, or in aesthetic pleasure.⁴⁴

Using the typical hyperbole of the popular press, and making comparisons to pop culture, the reporter evokes Berenson's ideas on the reception of great works of art, which he had precisely systematized in his *Aesthetics and History*.⁴⁵ Moreover, his name would continue to appear in the arguments Bardi and he put forth surrounding the attribution of MASP's *Resurrection of Christ* (1499–1502, oil on wood, 56.5 × 47 cm) to the young Raphael that had been purchased for the museum's collection during its tour in London, in 1954.⁴⁶ Most of the Old Masters of uncertain attribution in MASP's collection were accompanied by a rich correspondence between Bardi and another Italian art historian, Roberto Longhi.⁴⁷ There are however at least two works that were

40 Torcuato di Tella (1892–1948) was an Italian immigrant in Argentina, who made his fortune manufacturing home appliances in partnership with US investors. He is known to have openly opposed fascism and was a patron of the arts in Argentina. Following his death in 1948, his son, Guido di Tella, donated some of his Old Master paintings to the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes and created the Centro de Artes Visuales – Instituto Torcuato Di Tella in 1958. The center was directed by Jorge Romero Brest and became one of the most important venues of avant-garde art in the country; see Giunta 2001. Giunta and other authors examining the Di Tella Collection have dedicated their research to the institution's role in fostering modern and contemporary art in the 1960s and 1970s in Argentina. Its collection of Old Masters, by contrast, remains to be studied.

41 See Venturi/Brest 1965. The study of the collections had begun earlier, as attested by the note on Venturi's unfinished foreword to the catalogue (Venturi died in 1961).

42 On the relations between Berenson and Venturi, see Marinho 2020.

43 On the history of *O Cruzeiro* and its inspiration from magazines such as *Life Magazine* and *Paris Match*, see Costa 2012.

44 Andrade 1957.

45 The "It" in the feature seems to popularize Berenson's concept of "life-enhancement."

46 See *103 dipinti del Museo d'Arte di San Paolo del Brasile* 1954, p. 26 (cat. 6): "After spending several years on the London antiquarian market and being attributed by Berenson to a student of Perugino, the painting was recently purchased, with a report by Mario Modestini, for the Museu de Arte de São Paulo and exhibited at the Tate Gallery as an unpublished work by Raphael [...]" [my translation]. Bardi would only pick up on Berenson's mistake very late in his life. In 1983 he raised the matter in at least two of his weekly reviews in the Brazilian magazine *Senhor*; see Bardi 1983. The work, as attested by MASP's documentation, was first offered to the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., which followed Berenson's guidance in not recognizing it as an autograph work by the young Raphael; see Barone/Marques 1998.

47 See the exhibition of the Italian art collection organized by MASP in 2015 (Pedrosa/Esmeraldo 2015), where some of the letters were exhibited alongside the artworks they referred to.



possibly brokered for the museum's collection with the involvement of Sarfatti and Berenson. These are the two paintings by Tintoretto. Their provenance reveals the names of two collectors with direct ties to Sarfatti and Berenson. In the case of the *Lamentation over the Dead Christ (Pietà)*, dated to 1560–1565 (fig. 1), it was purchased for the museum directly from the collection of Count Alessandro Contini Bonacossi in Florence, in 1947.⁴⁸ The *Ecce Homo*, dated to 1546–1547 (fig. 2), was purchased for MASP in 1949, directly from the collection of Carlo Peroni of Rome.⁴⁹ As far as Bonacossi is concerned, he was an important art dealer and collector in the 1930s and early 1940s, and was friends with both Sarfatti and Berenson.⁵⁰ A recent study shows he bought most of his artworks from collections abroad and had direct ties with the US art market, where he seems to have taken over Sir Joseph Duveen's place as a transatlantic *marchand* after Duveen's death in 1937.⁵¹ His main client in the United States was Samuel H. Kress, whose collection was formed by at least 900 artworks bought from Bonacossi

1 Jacopo Robusti alias Tintoretto, *Pietà (Lamentation over the Dead Christ)*, 1560–1565, oil on canvas, 94.7 × 141 cm. São Paulo, MASP (photo MASP – João Musa)

48 See Marques 1998.

49 See Marques 1998.

50 Cannistraro and Sullivan were the first to document Sarfatti's relationship with Contini Bonacossi. See Cannistraro/Sullivan 1993, pp. 399–400. Regarding Berenson, the literature on Contini Bonacossi's collection attests that he, Lionello Venturi, and Roberto Longhi were close to Bonacossi, and were from time to time called up to authenticate artworks that he bought and sold to other private collectors. More recent information on the Contini Bonacossi collection can be found in the catalogue published by the Gallerie degli Uffizi. See *Contini Bonacossi* 2018.

51 See Toffali 2014–2015.

52 Information given at the introductory text of the Kress Foundation Archive. URL: http://www.kressfoundation.org/archive/finding_aid/default.htm (accessed 30.11.2020).



2 Jacopo Robusti alias Tintoretto, *Ecce Homo*, 1546–1547, oil on canvas, 109 × 136 cm. São Paulo, MASP (photo MASP – João Musa)

himself.⁵² Among Bardi's papers in the Research Center and Library at MASP is a manuscript Bardi prepared for the general catalogue of the Kress Collection, but which was ultimately never published.⁵³

The circumstances surrounding the sale of Tintoretto's *Lamentation* were controversial: Bonacossi faced trial from September 1944 to February 1947, accused of having collaborated with the Nazis. According to Eva Toffali, our Brazilian *Lamentation* appears in a list of forty-eight other classical paintings which Contini Bonacossi claimed had been confiscated by Nazi troops from his property, in Capezzana (Provincia di Prato in Tuscany).⁵⁴ The works were found in a storage site the Germans had in Alto Adige. They were safely returned to Florence, initially under the custody of the Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives division that Allied troops had established in Italy. During Contini Bonacossi's trial, custody of Tintoretto's *Lamentation* passed to the local authorities, specifically the cultural office, and only in February 1947, when he was acquitted, was Bonacossi able to (re)claim the works. During Bonacossi's trial, Berenson was summoned by the collector to give proof of his legitimate business. As Toffali relates, the trial documents include a letter Berenson wrote to the authorities confirming the legality of Contini Bonacossi's art dealing activities.⁵⁵ Toffali also states that according to the documentation on the Contini Bonacossi Collection that she had access to for her research, the works in it would have been (re)acces-

53 See Pietro Maria Bardi's papers (MASP, Pietro Maria Bardi papers, folder 39). Bardi would have dedicated his time to producing the catalogue of the Kress Collection in the early 1970s.

54 See Toffali 2018. Toffali also suggests that a work by Fra Galgario present in the list ended up in Bardi's collection.

55 See Toffali 2018, note 51: the letter dates from April 19, 1945.

sioned at least three times between 1947 and 1954, after returning to the collector. The MASP's registrar's files state that the *Lamentation* was already sold to the museum by Bonacossi already in 1947. But it nevertheless appears on the list prepared by an official at the Soprintendenza di Belle Arti in Florence who paid a visit to the count's Villa Vittoria in 1955, upon his death, which lead Toffali to put forth the hypothesis that MASP must have acquired Tintoretto's *Lamentation* after the count's death, probably from his heirs.

Surprisingly, however, this is not confirmed by MASP's documentation on the work. In the registrar's files, the first document on the *Lamentation* is a letter of authentication, dated July 11, 1947, and signed by another eminent Italian art historian, Pietro Toesca, who states that:

This canvas (1.40 × 0.945) by Jacopo Tintoretto is one of the most beautiful and rare of the master's youth: from him, it has the vigorous contrast of light and dark values, yet tempered with the influence of Titian that brings to him the delicate effects of composition, gestures, colors, without diminishing his own individual talents and traits, which enables one to recognize his hand in every single aspect. The quick and expressive touch of Tintoretto is everywhere to be found; in the anxious lightness of the surface, in the contrast of the tones, in the passages from lights to shadows one finds all his art.

What stands out is the composition of the figures in a myriad grading of dynamic tones to a landscape in which Tintoretto finds, in competition with Titian, total originality when passing from the hot and golden paints of the group on the left to the silvery distances of the plane on the right.⁵⁶

Still, according to the old accession file of the painting at MASP, besides Toesca, there were two other documents produced in 1947 to attest the authorship of the work as Tintoretto's. In terms of bibliography, just one German reference attests its publication as a Tintoretto before its shipment to Brazil.⁵⁷

The authentication of Tintoretto's *Lamentation* reverberated in the Brazilian press as soon as the painting arrived on October 25, 1947.⁵⁸ The famous São Paulo modern art critic Sérgio Milliet (1898–1966) used his art column at the newspaper *O Estado de S. Paulo* to discuss the attribution to Tintoretto.⁵⁹ At first he questions the attribution, only to then confirm it as an autograph work by Tintoretto, but by using his own arguments: He publishes two drawings that he himself had drawn to compare the flow of the figure drawings in the *Lamentation* group on the left of the painting to that of the version in the collection of the Accademia di Brera. Milliet's article, together with another written by Bardi,⁶⁰ is a clear confirmation that Tintoretto's *Lamentation* was already in Brazil by late 1947. The controversy over its attribution and provenance might well have been the reason why it remained in Brazil in the 1950s while the other Old Mas-

56 Pietro Toesca's manuscript note dated July 11, 1947 (MASP, Registrar's Section, file for *Lamentation over the Dead Christ*) [my translation]. It is worth pointing out that Toesca speaks of a work from Tintoretto's early period, despite the fact that it is dated to 1560–1565.

57 The accession file only makes reference to Erich von der Bercken (Bercken 1942). A copy of the volume can be found at MASP's library.

58 This is the accession date of the *Lamentation* in the MASP collection, as recorded in the old accession file.

59 See Milliet 1947.

60 See Bardi 1947. Here Bardi uses the von der Bercken catalogue to confirm the attribution to Tintoretto. According to this author, MASP's work would have been a preparatory version for the lunette of the *Lamentation* now at the Pinacoteca di Brera. This was later dismissed by Luiz Marques in the general catalogue of the Italian collection, published in 1998, see Marques 1998, pp. 87–89. Another article published by Bardi in as early as 1951 suggests that the painting's attribution was still under dispute; see Bardi 1951, where he reaffirms von der Bercken's reading of the work and its attribution to Tintoretto.

ters recently purchased for MASP's collection toured Europe and the United States. Even many years later, it did not travel when MASP did another touring exhibition of its collection, which resulted in the two major catalogues edited by Ettore Camesasca.⁶¹ Finally, in the 1978 edition of the Rizzoli *L'opera completa di Tintoretto*, it is not even mentioned in the final list of works "mostly attributed" to the Venetian painter.⁶²

This is not the case with the other Tintoretto now belonging to MASP, *Ecce Homo*, which arrived in the museum's collection on March 5, 1949. According to its accession file, it came from the Palazzo Ducale in Mantova, and its prior owner had been Carlo Peroni, a lawyer from Rome. The old accession file gives the direct provenance of the work as coming from a private collection in Rome, but without mentioning Carlo Peroni.

Peroni was a close friend of Sarfatti and her family,⁶³ and when she fled Italy in 1938, she left some suitcases of personal belongings at Peroni's villa in Como, where they were neighbors.⁶⁴ He also sold two works from his collection of Italian modern art to Ciccillo Matarazzo, in a sale brokered by Sarfatti in 1946–1947, as will be discussed later. Although very little is known about him, recent research into another private collector of the 1930s reveals that Peroni seems to also have acted as an art dealer, and he was known as an important collector of Italian modern art.⁶⁵ He was not the only collector during the *ventennio* interested in purchasing both Italian Old Masters and Italian modern art: the most famous collection in Italy containing classical Italian painting and modern Italian art was that of Riccardo Gualino, which had been built with the help of Bernard Berenson and Lionello Venturi, albeit at different points in time.⁶⁶ The same collecting activity applied to the collection of Contini Bonacossi. Despite his greater interest in the Old Masters, he became a collector of Italian modern art in the 1930s. While establishing himself and his family in Villa Vittoria in Florence, Contini Bonacossi used the occasion of the I Quadriennale di Roma to start a collection of modern Italian art. This was, to all intents and purposes, not on view to visiting clients when they came to look at his Old Masters. The upper floor of his Villa Vittoria – the more intimate part of the house – was renovated by Giò Ponti, who created galleries specifically for the display of Bonacossi's newly acquired modern Italian art.⁶⁷ There is no record available to check which works he bought, and whether they were sold or kept by his heirs after his death.

Peroni and Bonacossi were part of a circle of collectors in Italy who had grown their collections in the years of the fascist regime, when the country witnessed the emergence of an established market for modern art and major private collections of Italian modern art. This ran parallel to the Italian government's policy of promoting art from the peninsula, both modern and traditional, in exhibitions abroad.⁶⁸ Sarfatti and Bardi had parts to play in this development and

61 See *Da Raffaello a Goya* 1987. This was also a touring exhibition of the museum's collection that took place between 1987 and 1989, with venues in Italy, Germany, and France.

62 See *L'opera completa del Tintoretto* 1978.

63 As stated by her granddaughter, Magali Sarfatti-Larson, in our conversation in New York, March 2016.

64 As stated by her biographer, Brian Sullivan; see Cannistraro/Sullivan 1993, pp. 518–519.

65 The engineer and collector Alberto della Ragione, who also sold works from his collection to Matarazzo in 1946–1947. On his activities and his partnership with Carlo Peroni, see Toti 2017. According to Toti, Peroni was also in partnership with gallerist and collector Vittorio Barbaroux in Milan, before acting in partnership with della Ragione.

66 On Riccardo Gualino and his collection, see Bava/Bertolino 2019.

67 See *Contini Bonacossi* 2018, p.44.

68 The fascist regime created strategies to associate Italian modern art with the period of the Renaissance, as a way to reaffirm a specifically Italian identity, or as the fascists would call it, the country's *italianità*. This has been already tackled in some specific case studies; see Haskell 2000; Braun 2005.

seem to have revived such strategies while acting as go-betweens in the founding of MAM and MASP. Moreover, Berenson's name frequently appears as the major authority whenever Bardi faced the issue of expert authentication and quality appraisal for works being purchased for MASP – even in cases when he ultimately opposed Berenson's opinion, as with the museum's *Resurrection* by Raphael. As far as our two Tintoretos are concerned, Berenson and Sarfatti had access to privileged information from the collectors involved. Although Bardi was an insider in the network of connoisseurs and critics, there were certain things only Berenson could have known: the fact that Berenson had been summoned to testify on the legitimacy of Contini Bonacossi as an art dealer gave him direct access to the list of works the collector claimed to have been confiscated by the Nazis.

Finally, even if one can only speculate on the direct involvement of Sarfatti and Berenson in the Tintoretto acquisitions for MASP, it nevertheless helps to make sense of their sustained presence in the South American art world through various journalistic and scholarly pieces, and their repeated emphasis on connoisseurship in the field of Italian Old Masters, at the very moment in the history of the southern subcontinent when its elites suddenly became interested in building collections of this kind. As per the latest historiographical research, there seems to have been no effort to create a collection of Old Masters in either Brazil or Argentina before 1945. The first half of the twentieth century did indeed see the rise of many private collections, but they seem to have been much more geared toward French academic art or Italian art of the nineteenth century.⁶⁹ This means that the collecting of Old Masters in South America started much later than in the United States, only taking place in the aftermath of World War II and without the same financial clout already enjoyed by US tycoons in the early decades of the twentieth century. The case study presented here suggests that this might have resulted from an expansion of the art market toward the south in the Americas, a subject that still needs in-depth and broader research. This moment would never repeat itself, and the MASP collection remains one of a kind for the region.

A Collection of Novecento Italiano for the São Paulo MAM.⁷⁰

Even before MAM was founded in July 1948, its chairman Francisco Matarazzo Sobrinho took action to contact agents in Italy and France to facilitate purchases of whole groups of works for the museum. Between September 1946 and July 1947, Margherita Sarfatti was hired by Matarazzo to broker the purchase of seventy-one modern Italian paintings for the founding collection of MAM. The creators of these artworks were widely recognized as the greatest Modernist masters in Italy in the preceding two decades and had been promoted by the fascist regime, inside and outside the country, especially in the 1930s. They included Amedeo Modigliani, Mario Sironi, Ardengo Soffici, Carlo Carrà, Arturo Tosi, Massimo Campigli, Achille Funi, Felice Casorati, Filippo de Pisis, Gino Severini, Giorgio de Chirico, and Giorgio Morandi among others. Modigliani, De Chirico, Severini, Carrà, Morandi, and Soffici are still part of the international canon of modern art, and their works can be found in the most celebrated collections of modern art around the world. Others, like Tosi, Funi, and De Pisis seem to only be relevant in the history of Italian modern art. As for Sironi, Campigli, and Casorati, for instance, they did enjoy a place on the international stage during

⁶⁹ One of the main publications to elucidate this collection profile, in the case of Argentina, is that of María Isabel Baldasarre (Baldasarre 2006).

⁷⁰ This part of the article is the partial result of the decade-long research on the artworks mentioned, which now belong to the collections of the Museu de Arte Contemporânea da Universidade de São Paulo (MAC USP). MAC USP was created after the transfer of the collections of MAM in 1962–1963 to the University of São Paulo. For a deeper analysis of this episode and an in-depth study of the collection of Italian modern art addressed here, see Magalhães 2016.



3 Amedeo Modigliani, *Autoritratto* (Self-portrait), 1919, oil on canvas, 100 × 64.5 cm. São Paulo, MAC USP (photo MAC USP – Nelson Kon)

their lifetimes and were still widely appreciated outside Italy in the 1950s. However, little by little they have been overlooked by international art criticism ever since.⁷¹ As for the works chosen for MAM, they clearly express the view of their authors and their role in the artistic debate in the 1930s and 1940s. Many of them come from prestigious collections of Italian modern art, while others were deliberately chosen to reflect such private collections in Italy.

Once in Brazil, the discrediting of these paintings started very early, due more to the reputation of the dealers involved in their purchase than to the quality of the paintings themselves. The first broadside came from Belgian critic Léon Dégand (1907–1958), acting as MAM’s founding director:

[A]rtistically, it [MAM] had Italian paintings that Matarazzo had purchased in Italy the year before – *the worst products of the most illustrious names* [my italics], with the exception of Modigliani’s self-portrait – those that he had bought with the help of Alberto Magnelli in Paris – very good paintings of the *École de Paris* – and a bunch of paintings, often very mediocre, that Matarazzo had purchased occasionally from the worst Brazilian painters.⁷²

Dégand spares Modigliani’s *Autoritratto* (or *Self-Portrait*, 1919, oil on canvas, 100 × 64.5 cm, fig. 3), but emphasizes his negative view of the other paintings by saying that: “While visiting Italy, he [Matarazzo] purchased *with the help of who knows who* [my italics] a collection of Italian paintings of the contemporary school. After that, in Paris, I found him ready to start the exhibition activities of the

museum with an exhibition of abstract art.” He clearly suggests that the paintings had been selected indiscriminately, despite the big names behind them. One might say that Dégand’s criticism was purely a result of his defense of abstraction. However, our research shows that his attacks on the collection went beyond personal aesthetic taste. His judgment of such Italian paintings must be interpreted in the light of the heated debates that gripped European intellectuals concerning the role that art and culture had played in totalitarianism’s expansion on the continent in the interwar years – a debate led by the communist parties of Western Europe, of which many figures from the French and Italian art world were members or sympathizers. Fascist Italy had created powerful instruments of propaganda in art and culture.⁷³ It had supported intellectual and

71 Mario Sironi seems to be the most extreme case in this regard, due to his direct links to fascist Italy. He can be considered the official painter of the fascist regime, as he was commissioned with numerous major cultural and architectural projects, especially in the 1930s. This was the case of the new building and decorations for the Triennale in Milan. His mural paintings covered large facades of fascist-era official buildings, most of them systematically destroyed in the aftermath of World War II, with Milan’s Palace of Justice being one of the few still remaining; see Pontiggia 2015.

72 My translation from the French. See Léon Dégand, “Un critique d’art en Amérique du Sud,” ca. 1949, pp. 7–8 (Centre National Georges Pompidou, Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Paris, Léon Dégand papers). This text is understood to be a draft for an article Dégand was presumably asked to write on his experiences in Brazil, never to be published.

73 For an approach of such initiatives from a critical and historical point of view, see Lazzaro/Crum 2005.

artistic activities, the organization of art exhibitions, both inside and outside Italy. Moreover, it had fostered the collecting of Italian modern art by private collectors, making use of mass communication (radio, cinema, newspapers, illustrated magazines) to disseminate the regime's ideas on art and culture. Dégand found himself in the midst of this political arena. Before his arrival in Brazil, he had served on the selection committee of the art gallery of the Italian embassy in Paris, working side by side with painter Gino Severini as one of his colleagues.⁷⁴ At that moment in time, Italian diplomatic staff were adapting the discourse surrounding their cultural and foreign affairs to reconnect with the victorious Allied nations, in the hope of possible redemption in foreign policy circles, especially in the context of the League of Nations (soon to be rebooted as the United Nations). Dégand was thus very much aware of the interceding agents behind Matarazzo's purchases in Italy. Margherita Sarfatti was in particular someone he knew to be a fascist ideologue and 'grande dame' of the *ventennio* in Italy.

While not in Italy, Sarfatti engaged her son-in-law, Livio Gaetani d'Aragona, to facilitate Matarazzo's purchases for MAM's collection. An ex-senator of the fascist era and heir to one of the most prestigious noble families of Naples, Livio Gaetani had a brother living in São Paulo.⁷⁵ However, there is evidence that Sarfatti (through her son-in-law) was not the only agent. Livio Gaetani had a predecessor, the Venetian Enrico Salvatore Vendramini, whose name appears in a series of telegrams sent by Matarazzo's secretary, Carlino Lovatelli, to Pietro Maria Bardi from as early as March 1946. From March to July 1946, Matarazzo's main contact in Italy was Bardi and his Studio d'Arte Palma.⁷⁶ In any case, Bardi and Enrico Salvatore Vendramini were soon to be replaced by Sarfatti and her son-in-law. This replacement took place after Sarfatti's visit to São Paulo, in June 1946. In a letter to her old American friend, Nicholas Murray Butler (then president of the University of Columbia and former ambassador of the United States to Italy), she writes:

June 18, 1946

Dear Friend:

I am here on a journey which I meant to be only a short trip, but circumstances are retaining me here, good ones, I am glad to say, for I found here many friends and relatives, and some good hope of a permanent future job for my sun in law [sic.], which might permit my daughter and family to come over to this hopeful continent out of poor Europe and Italy.⁷⁷

74 See Pane 2014. Pane's analysis focuses on the remodelling of the state apparatuses post-World War II. She demonstrates how after 1945 they switched to a new policy, as part of the redemocratization of Italy that at the same time attempted to erase any trace of fascism in the country.

75 Felice Gaetani, who had established himself in São Paulo as an antiquarian.

76 There is no document proving any transactional relationship between Bardi and Vendramini, but the connection can be hypothesized for two reasons. Firstly, because despite Matarazzo's contact with Studio d'Arte Palma, it is Enrico Salvatore Vendramini who answers his letters and is in charge of making the first direct purchases. And secondly, at the MAC USP Archive – MAMSP Fond we have located an empty folder with the following label of identification: "Quadros Bardi (Caetano Salvatori) (1946-1948) (da metalúrgica)" (Bardi Paintings [Caetano Salvatori] [1946-1948] [from the steelworks]). The steelworks mentioned is Matarazzo's company, Metalúrgica Matarazzo. The "Caetano Salvatori" in brackets alludes to both the names of Enrico Salvatori and Livio Gaetani (sometimes mentioned as Caetano or Caetani).

77 Letter from Margherita Sarfatti to Nicholas Murray Butler, dated June 18, 1946, written on the commercial paper of Hotel São Paulo, Praça das Bandeiras (Columbia University Archives, Butler Library, Carnegie Endowment, box 127, n. 3447). I would like to thank historian Brian Sullivan for sending me a copy of this document, which he found while doing his research for Sarfatti's biography, published in co-authorship with Philip Cannistraro in 1993. In addition to this, in Margherita Sarfatti's papers, there is an exchange of letters between herself and her

The job mentioned here was the post of Matarazzo's agent in Italy purchasing paintings for MAM. In the first acquisitions made on behalf of MAM, Vendramini acted as Matarazzo's agent, via Bardi, until August 1946 when a telegram confirming the shipment of the works he had bought for Matarazzo at Genoa's harbor appears to mark the conclusion to his services.⁷⁸

There are other clues that may help us reconstruct the way Sarfatti, Livio Gaetani, and Matarazzo settled their agreement for Gaetani to start purchasing works in Sarfatti's absence. The fact that Sarfatti was not in Italy made it difficult for her to choose specific works. However, two things might have helped her overcome these constraints. First of all, both her biographers and her granddaughters contend that Fiammetta's attachment to her mother bordered on idolatry. Fiammetta Gaetani (née Sarfatti) was known to accompany her mother to various social events, particularly when visiting exhibitions and galleries. She can be seen as a qualified and trusted proxy acting on her mother's behalf in looking for paintings that she knew would have pleased her taste. In addition to this comes the fact that it was Sarfatti who still had the final say, as is made clear from the exchange of telegrams between mother and daughter during the acquisition process.⁷⁹ It is also likely that they made use of another element to overcome their separation: photography. In addition to Sarfatti's bulging photography folders as a journalist and art critic,⁸⁰ we know that Fiammetta and Livio Gaetani had gallerists send them photographs of the paintings under consideration for purchase.⁸¹

Another group of photographs suggests that Sarfatti might also have been asked to give her opinion on purchases that the painter Alberto Magnelli (1881–1971) was making in Paris at the same time.⁸² Magnelli, in turn, was a point of

daughter, Fiammetta (Livio Gaetani's wife), where they share their concern with Livio Gaetani's situation and their family's fate in Italy. As a senator of fascist Italy and aide to the last president (Dino Grandi) of the Fascist Council (Gran Consiglio del Fascismo) before the Nazi occupation in 1943, Gaetani was summoned by the Commissione di Epurazione, or "Political Purging Commission." The years 1945 and 1946 were very difficult for him and his family, as his connections with fascist authorities resulted in him being stripped of his diploma and his job. See also letters from Livio Gaetani to Margherita Sarfatti, dated July 2 and July 5, 1944, and the letter from Margherita Sarfatti to Fiammetta Gaetani, dated January 25, 1945 (MART, Archivio del '900, Margherita Sarfatti papers). In them, Sarfatti, Livio, and Fiammetta talk about the possibility of their emigrating to Brazil, where Livio could turn over a new leaf as an agricultural engineer.

⁷⁸ As per the telegram sent by customs agent Maurizio Morris to Francisco Matarazzo Sobrinho (Ciccillo Matarazzo), Genoa, dated August 3, 1946 (MAC USP, Registrar's Section).

⁷⁹ Although the telegrams themselves cannot be found, in Margherita Sarfatti's papers in Rovereto there are masses of receipts that attest to the frequency of their contact. Fiammetta opened an account at the Italcable cable company just to be able to communicate about the acquisitions. The receipts date from December 1946 to June 1947 and record the payments Fiammetta made for Italcable's services.

⁸⁰ When Sarfatti fled to South America, she took them with her, as Brian Sullivan argues based on an interview he did with Pietro Foá, son of Carlo and Isa Foá, who also emigrated to Brazil in 1938, after the introduction of the *leggi razziali* or "racial laws" in Italy. Carlo Foá, a prominent physiologist, was professor at the University of Turin and found a job at the University of São Paulo after arriving in Brazil. His wife, Isa Foá, was Sarfatti's niece and her secretary in the offices of the magazine *Gerarchia*. Four such folders can be found today in Margherita Sarfatti's papers (MART, Archivio del '900, Margherita Sarfatti papers).

⁸¹ This is the case of an envelope found in Sarfatti's papers addressed to Fiammetta and Livio from the Galleria delle Carrozze, containing photographs of works by Filippo de Pisis. Another envelope, from the Galleria Il Milione, contains the photograph of a work by Virgilio Guidi (MART, Archivio del '900, Margherita Sarfatti papers, Fotografie, 933 Sar.5.3.2.8).

⁸² At the same time that Sarfatti and her son-in-law were acting as Matarazzo's agents in Italy, Magnelli was buying works of art for MAM in Paris. Magnelli's purchases on behalf of MAM included thirty-two works by artists related to the French abstract groups of the 1930s, a work by Wassily Kandinsky, a work by Pablo Picasso, and some paintings by what is dubbed the "Second School of Paris." See the exhibition Daniel Abadie curated at MAC USP in 2010 (Abadie 2010), which also assessed Magnelli's involvement in Matarazzo's purchases for MAM.



4 Achille Funi, *L'indovina* (The fortune-teller), 1924, oil on wood, 45.7 x 45.8 cm. São Paulo, MAC USP (photo MAC USP – Rômulo Fialdini)

contact between young Italian painters experimenting with abstraction and the French artist groups Abstraction-Création and Cercle et Carré. Such photographs are of works that were not Sarfatti's personal choice. Their exceptional status within the collection may be precisely because they do not reflect Sarfatti's taste.⁸³

Of the paintings purchased by Matarazzo, there are certain artists whose careers Sarfatti did not follow, leaving her unable to appraise what to buy. In such cases, both the appraisals of her gallerist friends and even of Bardi himself might have come in handy. One specific case is that of Galleria della Spiga e di Corrente, located in Milan. The gallery was founded in 1941, with the backing of collector Alberto della Ragione, to support a group of young artists – the Corrente di Vita Giovanile – formed of Renato Birolli, Giuseppe Santomaso, Aligi Sassu, and others. They had initiated the group to reconnect with avant-garde trends, mainly in France. The gallery was located in the same venue where in 1940 the same artists had founded the Bottega di Corrente and devised anti-fascist actions. The purchases made for Matarazzo from this group were a still life by Giuseppe Santomaso, a battle scene with horses by Aligi Sassu, and a still life by Renato Guttuso.⁸⁴ Many purchases were made through the galleries Milano/Barbaroux, Il Milione, and Gussoni, all of which were owned by old friends of Sarfatti. She was on especially good terms with Vittorio Emmanuelle Barbaroux (1901–1954).⁸⁵ In 1927, when he married the daughter of Count Gaspari Gussoni (a well-known collector of Italian painting of the *ottocento*), Barbaroux went into

83 There are two envelopes containing photographs of works by Wassily Kandinsky and by Alberto Magnelli himself.

84 Sassu's work was one of the three paintings purchased for Matarazzo that came from Carlo Peroni's private collection, while Guttuso's still life came from the collection of Alberto della Ragione himself.

business with his father-in-law, supporting the artists of Sarfatti's Novecento Italiano group through Galleria Gussoni. In 1931, after the death of his father-in-law, Barbaroux renamed the gallery "Milano," and in 1938 changed its name again, this time to Galleria Barbaroux. Sarfatti and Barbaroux mainly collaborated on exhibitions of Italian modern art abroad, in which the gallery offered its support through the generous loan of artworks. Barbaroux reappears in South America in 1947, when he brought his own private collection of Italian modern art to be exhibited at Galería Müller in Buenos Aires.⁸⁶

Barbaroux's connection with Sarfatti's Novecento Italiano is explicit in Achille Funi's *L'indovina* (or *The Fortune-Teller*, 1924, oil on canvas, 45.7 × 45.8 cm, fig. 4), purchased for Matarazzo. Bought at Galleria Il Milione, it was first registered at Galleria Milano in 1933.⁸⁷ This painting dates to Funi's so-called Magic Realism period and to the exhibition that he and five other painters had in the early 1920s, and which gave rise to the Novecento group, with Sarfatti as its leader. *L'indovina* is strikingly different from Funi's work of the 1930s that resonated with other private collectors of the period but which Sarfatti did not like.

The same connection with the Novecento Italiano can be seen in the paintings by Arturo Tosi, purchased in the galleries Gussoni and Il Milione. The still life now in the collections of MAC USP, was first exhibited at the I Quadriennale di Roma, and is a typical example of Tosi's "Cézannism," much appreciated by Sarfatti. The monograph on the artist's work published by the French editors of *Les Chroniques du Jour*, with an essay by critic Waldemar George, features a still life by Tosi then in Sarfatti's collection, which is certainly very similar to the painting bought for Matarazzo.⁸⁸ The same publication also contains a reproduction of a *Ponte di Zoagli* very similar to the version now at MAC USP.⁸⁹ *Ponte di Zoagli* (or *Bridge at Zoagli*, 1937, oil on canvas, 70 × 90 cm) was bought for Matarazzo and shown in Brazil for the first time at the Italian pavilion organized for the major exhibition marking the 50th anniversary of immigration in the state of São Paulo, in 1937.⁹⁰ It also serves as another example of the use of photography in selecting paintings to be purchased for Matarazzo, as it appears in reproduced form in Sarfatti's *Espejo de la pintura actual*.⁹¹

Another important element proving Sarfatti's direct intervention is found in the correspondence between Arturo Tosi and the Venetian gallerist Carlo Cardazzo (1908–1963).⁹² Although the first letter in which Tosi mentions the Brazilian

85 About the history of this and other Milanese galleries in the interwar period, see Pontiggia/Colombo 2004; Pontiggia/Colombo/Gian Ferrari 2003.

86 See *Artistas italianos de hoy* 1947. As in the case of the exhibition of the Novecento Italiano group in 1930, the works went on sale to local collectors.

87 As per the gallery label on the back of the painting, displaying the inventory number of the work at Milano and its date of accession: June 30, 1933, n. 13. This was when the gallery organized a solo exhibition of Funi's works, although *L'indovina* was not on show; see Magalhães 2011.

88 See George 1933.

89 The work was presented in an exhibition of Italian modern art at the Glaspalast in Munich in 1931, and was destroyed, along with other works, in the fire that consumed the building during the show.

90 See *Esposizione commemorativa* 1937. Although the painting is not reproduced in the catalogue, documentation proving its display on the occasion in 1937 was confirmed by the research Dúnia Roquetti Saroute did on Tosi's works in the MAC USP collections for her MA thesis in 2014, and by documentation found in Arturo Tosi's papers. URL: https://teses.usp.br/teses/disponiveis/93/93131/tde-16032016-173305/publico/2015_DuniaRoquettiSaroute_VOrig.pdf (accessed 30.11.2020).

91 See Sarfatti 1947, p. 80.

92 The letters between Tosi and Cardazzo were located at the Archivio del Cavallino (L'archivio della Galleria del Cavallino alla Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Carlo Cardazzo papers). I thank his granddaughter Angelica Cardazzo for receiving me in June 2014 and granting me access to her grandfather's papers.

acquisitions to Cardazzo is undated, it can be securely dated to late August 1946, as he mentions the month and speaks of Fiammetta and Livio Gaetani:

Dear Cardazzo,

After your letter of August 23rd, I haven't received any other news on the show – When did you close it? [...]

[T]hey talked confusedly to me about the paintings to send to Brazil – What's with all this? They ask for a beautiful still life for a museum – Are those measuring 70 × 90 still available?

Please let me know quickly, as it is very important.

What follows is a letter from Cardazzo to Tosi, dated September 26, 1946, in which the gallerist speaks of Livio Gaetani's visit to his gallery:

Dear Tosi,

Count Gaetani came to the gallery to see the paintings, the still life pleased him, but he is not sure about the landscape. He asked me to keep the paintings here in Venice for the moment, and as soon as he speaks to his wife he will give me an answer.

As for the price, it's ok. As soon as I hear from him, I'll write to you.

In Tosi's answer, he insists on the sale of a still life and a landscape:

Sept 27

Dear Cardazzo,

[...]

I received your letter yesterday and thank you for the information –

So this is what it's all about: Countess Gaetani bought various things in Milan for an Argentine gallery (she also bought one of my Zoagli paintings). Now she would like two other important paintings from me – I thought about the still life with a watermelon in the center and peaches on the left and slices of watermelon on the right, and the village that was exhibited at Colomba – [...]



5 Arturo Tosi, *Paesaggio di Val Seriana* (Landscape of Val Seriana), 1940, oil on canvas, 49.4 × 59.6 cm. São Paulo, MAC USP (photo MAC USP – Rômulo Fialdini)



6 Felice Casorati, *Testa nell'armatura* or *Testa e cimiero* (Head in Armor), 1946, oil on canvas, 73.1 × 54.8 cm. São Paulo, MAC USP (photo MAC USP – Rômulo Fialdini)

Although Tosi mentions “an Argentine gallery,” he is in fact talking about the purchases for Matarazzo; his “Zoagli” refers to the *Ponte di Zoagli* that the Gaetanis had bought at the Galleria Il Milione. He still suggests the choice of a still life and a landscape, which he asks Cardazzo to send to his Milanese gallery (Galleria del Naviglio) and to contact Fiammetta Gaetani to close the deal. These letters and the receipts of the purchase suggest that the negotiations resulted in the acquisition of *Paesaggio di Val Seriana* (or *Landscape of Val Seriana*, ca. 1940, oil on canvas, 49.4 × 59.6 cm, fig. 5).

In addition to this, the correspondence between Cardazzo and Tosi confirms two important things: Fiammetta and Livio visited the galleries to negotiate and make the purchases for a *museum* in Brazil, as mentioned in Tosi’s first letter (“They ask for a beautiful still life for a museum”). That the purchases were being made for a Brazilian museum reappears in the correspondence between Livio Gaetani and the artists Felice Casorati and Mario Sironi, who sold the following works to Matarazzo respectively: *Testa nell'armatura* or *Testa e cimiero* (or *Head in Armor*, 1946, oil on canvas, 73.1 × 54.8 cm, fig. 6), *Invocazione* (or *Invocation*, 1946, gouache on paper, glued on wood, 87.5 × 96.2 cm), and *Paesaggio* (or *Landscape*, 1947, oil on canvas on wood, 53.9 × 74.2 cm). Finally, both artists make clear their intention to sell the works for a special price as Margherita Sarfatti is acting as agent.⁹³

However, only forty-three of the seventy-one paintings purchased for MAM are clearly documented. These were the ones bought from Milanese galleries (in addition to those bought by Enrico Salvatore Vendramini), the works acquired directly from artists, and those from private collectors. The other twenty-eight are now under investigation, as the only thing mentioned in the accession files is that they were bought in Rome, but without any date or precise documentation on their provenance. Among these are *Bagnanti in Piscina* (or *Bathers in a Swimming Pool*, 1930, oil on canvas, 119 × 80 cm, fig. 7) by Giuseppe Capogrossi, three paintings by Fausto Pirandello, three paintings by Giorgio de Chirico, one Morandi, one Sironi, the two paintings by Corrado Cagli, and a still life by Mario Mafai. These artists (especially Mafai and Cagli) seem to reflect something of the style of the Scuola Romana in the 1930s, while some other young artists, like Fausto Pirandello, display anti-Novecento trends. This circle of artists were connected with two galleries in Rome in the 1930s. On the one hand, some of them first showed in the Galleria d’Arte di Roma, under Bardi’s direction from 1930. On the other, they were all promoted by the Galleria della Cometa (also in Rome), which was particularly busy between 1935 and 1937.⁹⁴ Sponsored by Mimi Pecci-Blunt, the gallery’s program was coordinated by writer and art critic Libero de Libero, although its real artistic mastermind was artist Corrado Cagli. In 1937, the Galleria della Cometa opened a venue in New York, which

93 This is corroborated by the receipts signed by Casorati and by Sironi, which can be found in the documentation of the works (MAC USP, Registrar’s Section). Casorati’s receipt dated October 23, 1946, reads: “To Count Livio Gaetani, I hereby declare that I received 55,000 lire for my painting ‘Testa nell’armatura.’ I am thus pleased to have sold this painting for an exceptional price, it being destined to a museum, and to have pleased Signora Margherita Sarfatti, to whom I remain devotedly affectionate” [my translation].

94 On the Galleria della Cometa, see Cavazzi 1991; *Libero de Libero* 2014.



organized exhibitions of these artists' work, until it was closed down (both in New York and Rome) in 1938. Because of Cagli's and Pecci-Blunt husband's Jewish origins, the gallery was impacted by the newly introduced racial laws. It must be pointed out that Bardi had close ties with the gallery, especially due to his direct collaboration with writer and critic Massimo Bontempelli – Cagli's uncle and a major contributor to the gallery's publications and exhibitions.⁹⁵

In any case, what most of the paintings purchased for MAM have in common is their provenance from the collections of Italian private collectors who were key in promoting Italian modern art, inside and outside Italy, in the 1930s and early 1940s. Such collections were fostered by a state policy that was created in the second half of the 1930s through a system of exhibitions and awards. Collections such as that of gallerist Carlo Cardazzo and others like Rino Valdameri, Alberto della Ragione, and others are represented in the Matarazzo purchases through very special works of art.

The purchases started with the acquisition of the eight works Enrico Salvatore Vendramini secured for Matarazzo, seven of which first belonged to Carlo Cardazzo and his collection. In the late 1920s, Cardazzo had started his activities in the art world as an editor of artist's books in Venice. He emerged in a circle of intellectuals and artists who met in an effort to foster a debate on modern art in La Serenissima. Even though Venice played host to the Biennale, it lacked its own collectors and galleries of modern art, and Cardazzo was pivotal in persuading the Venetian elite to adapt to modern tastes.⁹⁶ He started his collection of modern Italian art in the early 1930s, one of his first purchases being *Osteria/ Il Bottegone* (or *The Tavern*, 1932, oil on canvas, 70.3 × 55.6 cm, fig. 8) by Ottone

7 Giuseppe Capogrossi, *Bagnanti in piscina* (Bathers in a swimming pool), 1931, oil on canvas, 119 × 80 cm. São Paulo, MAC USP (photo MAC USP – Rômulo Fialdini)

8 Ottone Rosai, *Il bottegone* (The tavern), 1932, oil on canvas, 70.3 × 55.6 cm. São Paulo, MAC USP (photo MAC USP – Rômulo Fialdini)

95 On Cagli and his connections with Bardi, see Bedarida 2018.

96 See Fantoni 1996; *Carlo Cardazzo: una nuova visione* 2008.

9 Gino Severini, *Natura morta con piccione* (Still-life with pigeon), 1938, oil on cardboard, 29.4 × 40.5 cm. São Paulo, MAC USP (photo MAC USP – Rômulo Fialdini)



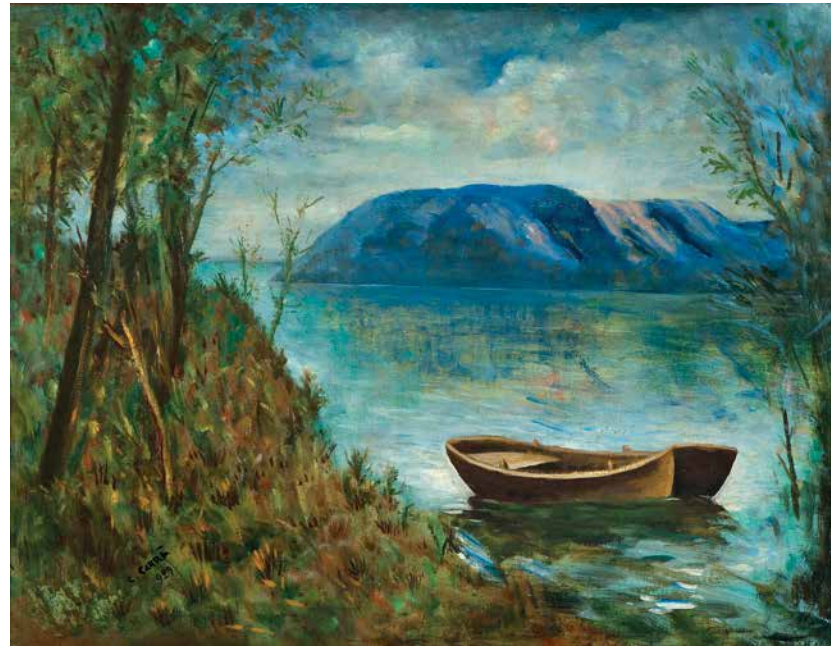
Rosai, later bought for MAM. The prestige that his collection enjoyed resulted from its presentation in two exhibitions in 1941, which led to him receiving an award from the program for private collections promoted by the Ministry of Education under minister Giuseppe Bottai (himself a private collector of modern Italian art).⁹⁷ In April 1941, one hundred works from Cardazzo's collection were exhibited at the Galleria d'Arte di Roma, in the first of a series of exhibitions dedicated to showcasing private collections of Italian modern art as part of Bottai's program at the Ministry of Education. In August, thirty works from Cardazzo's collection were shown at the Mostra delle Collezioni d'Arte Contemporanea in Cortina d'Ampezzo.⁹⁸ The success of his collection prompted him to create his own gallery. His subsequent Galleria del Cavallino was inaugurated on April 25, 1942 and operated under his direction until 1945. He then left the administration of the gallery to his brother, Renato, and opened a new gallery in Milan, in 1946. This gallery, the Galleria del Naviglio, went on to have a central role in disseminating Italian abstract art in the 1950s, especially in the United States, thanks to his friendship with Peggy Guggenheim. Afro Basaldella, Giuseppe Capogrossi, and Giuseppe Santomaso are some of the artists Galleria del Naviglio promoted to American collectors. The gallery also became very celebrated for the important exhibitions it organized of foreign Modernist artists, mainly those connected to the avant-garde of the first decades of the twentieth century as well as young artists at the start of their careers.

In addition to *Osteria/Il Bottegone* by Ottone Rosai (exhibited in the two shows of Cardazzo's collection in 1941), paintings like *Natura morta con piccione* (or *Still Life with Dove*, ca. 1938, oil on cardboard, 29.4 × 40.5 cm, fig. 9) by Gino Severini, and *Passeggiata delle amiche/Donne a passeggio* (or *Women Promenading*, 1929, oil on canvas, 80.9 × 64.6 cm) by Massimo Campigli, are good examples of what Italian collectors and Italian critics appreciated at the time.⁹⁹ Campigli's

97 See, for instance, Crespi 1941, for the review of the presentation of his collection at *Emporium*.

98 See Giacon 2005. In this article, the author also makes a synthesis of Bottai's policy at the Ministry of Education in regard to his program for Italian modern art collections.

99 On the direct relationship between these private collections and art criticism of the period, see Lacagnina 2014.



painting was shown as an example of the so-called “Italiani di Parigi” (Parisian Italians), and first belonged in the collection of Jeanne Bucher, in Paris, before Cardazzo purchased it.¹⁰⁰ Gino Severini’s *Natura morta con piccione* alludes to other still lifes he exhibited in the special room dedicated to him at the 1935 II Quadriennale di Roma, for which he was awarded the first prize in painting and which marked his return to Rome. It also found its echo in other still lifes of his that appeared in the collection of Parisian gallerist Léonce Rosenberg, owner of one of the leading centers of modern art in the city, the Galerie l’Effort Moderne.¹⁰¹

Another celebrated collector that appears in the provenance of the paintings purchased for MAM is Alberto della Ragione (1892–1973).¹⁰² Born in Genoa, and educated as a naval engineer and businessman, della Ragione started his collection of Italian modern art after visiting the I Quadriennale di Roma in 1931. In addition to this, he also first sponsored a gallery in Genoa, and later (as mentioned above) sponsored the Corrente di Vita Giovanile group and founded the Galleria della Spiga e di Corrente, in Milan. From his collection, Matarazzo purchased *Natura morta con ventaglio* (or *Still Life with Fan*, 1915, tempera on paper, glued on cardboard, 41.5 × 36 cm, fig. 10) by Ardengo Soffici, *Il lago* (or *The Lake*, 1929, oil on canvas, 69.2 × 89.2 cm, fig. 11) by Carlo Carrà, *Natura morta con lume* (or *Still Life with Lantern*, 1940, oil on wood, 60.7 × 48.5 cm, fig. 12) by Renato Guttuso, *Oceano indiano* by Scipione (1930, oil on canvas, 54.2 × 59.7 cm),¹⁰³ and Amedeo Modigliani’s famous self-portrait.¹⁰⁴ Della Ragione’s collection also featured at the 1941 Mostra delle Collezioni d’Arte Contemporanea at Cortina d’Ampezzo.

10 Ardengo Soffici, *Natura morta con ventaglio* (Still-life with fan), 1915, tempera on paper on cardboard, 41.5 × 36 cm. São Paulo, MAC USP (photo MAC USP – Rômulo Fialdini)

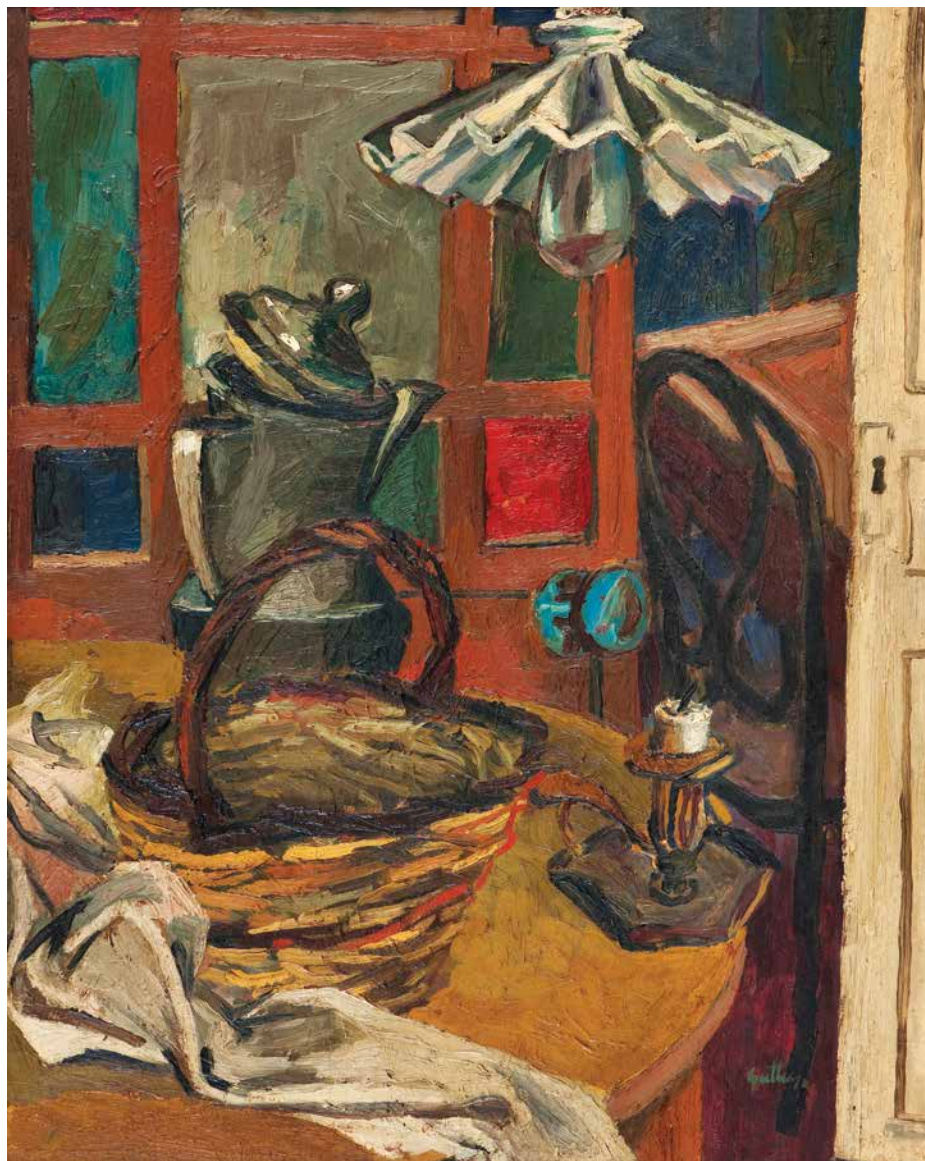
11 Carlo Carrà, *Il lago* (The lake), 1929, oil on canvas, 69.2 × 89.2 cm. São Paulo, MAC USP (photo MAC USP – Rômulo Fialdini)

100 Together with the other five paintings by the artist in the MAC USP collections, Campigli’s *Passeggiata delle amiche/Donne a passeggio* is now the subject of post-doctoral study by Renata Rocco at MAC USP.

101 On this and the other three paintings by Gino Severini in the MAC USP collections, see Rocco 2013.

102 See Toti 2017.

103 In the correspondence undertaken by Palma Bucarelli and Alberto della Ragione for the retrospective Bucarelli organized on Scipione’s work at the Galleria Nazionale d’Arte Moderna in 1954, the work is titled “Orango” by Bucarelli, and as “Mapa mundi con uccello esotico” by della Ragione. The original title of the painting is actually *I sognatori* (The Dreamers). This is how the artist submitted it to the selection committee for the exhibition on the animal in the arts, organized by Rome Zoo in 1930; see *Prima mostra nazionale dell’animale* 1930. Research into this painting is still ongoing in preparation for an upcoming exhibition project at MAC USP.



12 Renato Guttuso, *Natura morta con lume* (Still-life with lantern), 1940, oil on wood, 60.7 × 48.5 cm. São Paulo, MAC USP (photo MAC USP – Rômulo Fialdini)

In Alberto della Ragione's activities of buying and selling artworks, he seems to have had another partner, Carlo Peroni (1911–1984). As mentioned before, in addition to being a very good friend of the Sarfatti family, Peroni also sold a Tintoretto from his private collection to MASP. To Matarazzo, he sold *Battaglia* (or *Battle*, 1938, oil on canvas, 40.3 × 40.3 cm) by Aligi Sassu, *Paesaggio* (or *Landscape*, ca. 1935, oil on canvas, 34.3 × 42.8 cm, fig. 13) by Corrado Cagli, and *I Pescatori* (or *The Fishermen*, 1925–1929, oil on canvas, 108.8 × 89 cm, fig. 14) by Mario Sironi.¹⁰⁵

Finally, the name of Rino Valdameri frequently appears in documents from the time as a collector of Italian modern art. Piero Marussig's *La Maddalena* (or *Mary Magdalene*, 1929, oil on canvas, 89.3 × 72.2 cm, fig. 15) came from his collec-

¹⁰⁴ This along with another three paintings by Amedeo Modigliani came to Italy through the acquisitions that critic and art historian Lionello Venturi made on behalf of the collection of Turin businessman Riccardo Gualino (1879–1964), who was known to have one of the first collections of Italian modern art in the country; see Bava/Bertolino 2019. About Modigliani's self-portrait, see Magalhães et al. 2019.

¹⁰⁵ Very little is known about Carlo Peroni and his activities as a collector and, it also seems, as a gallerist. About the works purchased for Matarazzo: Sironi's painting together with six other works by the artist in the MAC USP collection were the subject of the MA thesis of Andrea Augusto Ronqui (see Ronqui 2017). After an in-depth analysis of the documentation and after comparison with other works by the artist, Ronqui suggests a later date for *I Pescatori*. As for the landscape by Corrado Cagli, it is very likely that the artist painted it during his sojourn at Sarfatti's summer villa at Lake Como, in 1935.



13 Corrado Cagli, *Paesaggio* (Landscape), 1936, oil on wood, 34.3 × 42.8 cm. São Paulo, MAC USP (photo MAC USP – Rômulo Fialdini)

tion, and had been exhibited at the Venice Biennale in 1938 and in the show of his collection organized by the Galleria d'Arte di Roma in 1942. Even less is known about Valdameri,¹⁰⁶ but the appearance of both his name and Peroni's reflects the impact of the government's policy of fostering private collections such as theirs. Despite the growth of a coterie of collectors and dealers of modern art throughout the 1930s in Italy,¹⁰⁷ there were very few art museums yet dedicated to collecting Italian Modernism.¹⁰⁸ In addition to this, fascist policies tended to favor supporting private collections, something that cannot be seen as a specifically Italian solution, but also prevailed in many other countries, indicative of how modern art became mostly institutionalized through private enterprise and private patronage.

These collectors may also have served as models for Matarazzo. His engagement with the project of a modern art museum for São Paulo came hand in hand with many other cultural initiatives he sponsored in the same period.¹⁰⁹ Like his Italian counterparts, he seems to have set himself up as a public figure – certainly

106 See Caputo 2020.

107 See Salvagnini 2000.

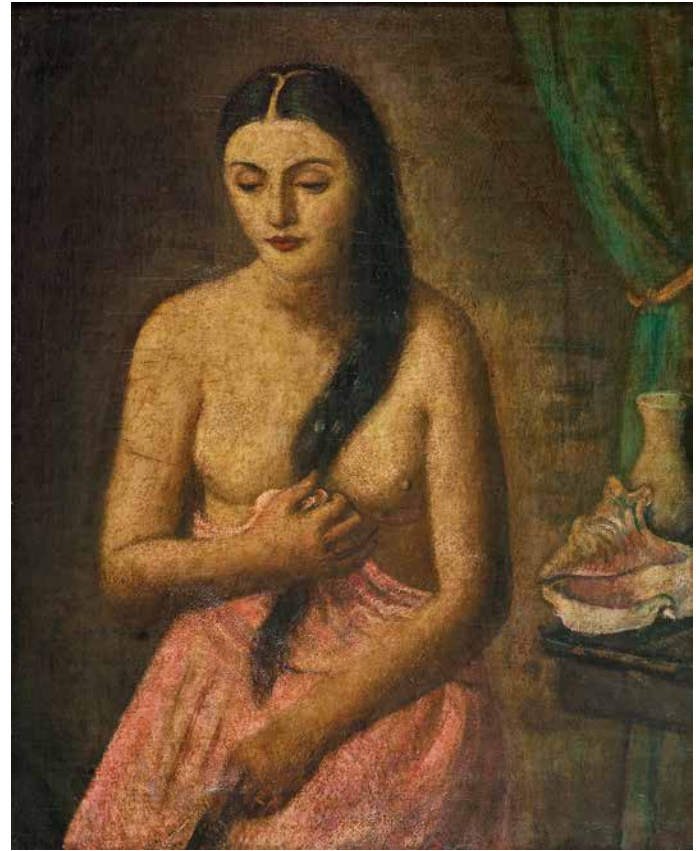
108 Against this backdrop, it is worth mentioning the activities of the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna (GNAM) in Rome. Founded in 1883 and taking as its model the idea of a "museum of living artists," the GNAM was an important institution in the history of Italian modern art, but only gained an international profile after World War II, under the directorship of Palma Bucarelli. On her activities as GNAM director from 1942 to 1975, see *Palma Bucarelli* 2009.

109 While creating the São Paulo MAM, Matarazzo also started negotiations with the Venice Biennale on the first participation of Brazil, in 1948 (but which only effectively happened in 1950); see Rocco 2018. Matarazzo also got involved in other cultural projects, such as the creation of the Brazilian National Film Archives, inviting five Italian actors and directors to take up temporary residency with a São Paulo theater company, and a museum of carved nativity scenes; see Magalhães 2015.

110 Although the archive of the Fundação Bienal de São Paulo holds the Ciccillo Matarazzo papers, they are mainly composed of the documents he produced as chairman and as patron of the institutions he created. There are no records of purchases for a private collection he might have had. There is thus no evidence that Matarazzo collected art before he got involved in MAM's foundation, which might indicate that he became a collector for the sole purpose of founding MAM.



14 Mario Sironi, *I pescatori* (The fishermen), 1924, oil on canvas, 108.8 × 89.4 cm. São Paulo, MAC USP (photo MAC USP – Rômulo Fialdini)



15 Piero Marussig, *La Maddalena* (Mary Magdalene), 1929, oil on canvas, 89.3 × 72.2 cm. São Paulo, MAC USP (photo MAC USP – Rômulo Fialdini)

in the case of São Paulo – by backing a major project which the local elite could rally around as a means of reaffirming their leadership in the modernization of the country. Also, like some of his Italian peers, Matarazzo seems to have become an art collector primarily to support this project.¹¹⁰ In this sense, he had a strong competitor in the chairman of MASP, Assis Chateaubriand, who also played a key role in Brazilian policy-making and the economy.¹¹¹

Classical Art, Modern Art, and Possible Collaborations between MASP and MAM

Although Brazilian historiography has tended to consider the activities of MASP and MAM separately, while also highlighting their disputes over the primacy of artistic debate on modern art in São Paulo, the case studies presented here tell a different story.¹¹² It is also important to consider that in the first years of these

111 As chairman of MASP, Assis Chateaubriand was nominated Brazilian ambassador to London in the late 1950s after serving as a Brazilian senator. This corresponds to the moment when he seems to have invested in creating Brazil's 'regional' museums of modern art. Like Matarazzo, there is no evidence that he himself was an art collector. In the 1970s, though, his estranged son, Gilberto Chateaubriand, emerged as a very important collector of modern and contemporary art. His private collection has been on permanent loan to the Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro ever since 1978, when a fire destroyed most of the works in the original museum collection.

112 The rivalry between the two museums is the subject of Marina Martin Barbosa's Ph.D. dissertation (Barbosa 2015), in which the author compares Cicillo Matarazzo's activities and social behavior to that of Pietro Maria Bardi. It might have been more apt to instead compare the public figures of Matarazzo and Assis Chateaubriand. Fernando Morais (Morais 1994) has already pointed out the rivalries between these two businessmen due also to their political ambitions. That MASP was engaging in a debate on modern art is made clear by Bardi's exhibition and educational programs. See the exhibitions he organized of Alexander Calder (1948) and of Max Bill (1951) at MASP, as well as the creation of the Instituto de Arte Contemporânea (IAC). The IAC was open from 1947 to 1951 and is viewed as the first Brazilian project for a school of industrial design in the country; see Leon 2013.

two museums they not only shared the same building but also the same figures in their respective boards.¹¹³

One case in particular from the founding collection of MAM clearly demonstrates the degree of collaboration between the two museums: the purchase by Matarazzo of the original plaster cast of Boccioni's *Forme uniche della continuità nello spazio* (or *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space*, 1913, plaster, 119.7 × 89.9 × 39.9 cm, fig. 16). Bought in 1952, while Matarazzo was attending the Venice Biennale, the negotiations between the heir of Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (his widow, artist Benedetta Cappa Marinetti), who owned the work, and Brazilian representatives had already started in December 1951, when Francesco Monotti (the director Bardi left in charge of his gallery in Rome) wrote to Bardi about it.¹¹⁴ Although Assis Chateaubriand, also visiting Europe, met Benedetta Cappa Marinetti in Rome in January 1952 to negotiate the purchase of Boccioni's masterpiece in sculpture, his efforts were not successful: for it was Matarazzo who managed to make the purchase, securing the work for the collections of MAM.

While gathering a collection of Old Masters for MASP, Bardi was also searching to collect modern art, as shown in the many purchases he made between 1947 and 1952 of works by Cézanne, Modigliani, Toulouse-Lautrec, Lipchitz, Picasso, the Impressionists, and avant-garde artists. One might even suggest that these works and those first acquired for MAM are complementary, and together actually form a consistent discourse on how modern art evolved, as told by a certain strand of art criticism in Italy that, in the first half of the twentieth century, aimed to assert itself as an alternative to the French-dominated narrative of modern art.

In terms of art criticism in Brazil and the construction of a debate on the history and canonization of modern art, the French and Italian artistic circles were the two main rival camps, with German Modernism playing a subordinate role.¹¹⁵ The collections' contents during this foundational stage of their history thus also reflect the balance of criticism on modern art in Brazil at the time and its direct connections with these two Latin European countries. Lastly, what also



16 Umberto Boccioni, *Forme uniche della continuità nello spazio* (Unique forms of continuity in space), 1913, plaster, 119.7 × 89.9 × 39.9 cm. São Paulo, MAC USP (photo MAC USP – Elaine Maziero)

113 The two museums were first located in an office building Matarazzo owned in the center of São Paulo, part of which was rented to Assis Chateaubriand to house the offices of one of his São Paulo newspapers. Moreover, Assis Chateaubriand was one of the members of the committee that oversaw the creation of MAM, and in its early years, acted as a member of its board of trustees. As for Matarazzo, he made important donations to MASP's collection after purchasing works explicitly for it. This is the case of a landscape by Gaetano Previati he donated to the museum in 1949, see URL: <https://masp.org.br/acervo/obra/paisagem-1> (accessed 30.11.2020).

114 A volume about the technical history and provenance of Boccioni's work is under preparation by Edusp – Editora da Universidade de São Paulo (the USP press), in co-authorship with British researcher Rosalind McKeever and was the theme of an exhibition and international conference at MAC USP in 2018. See "Boccioni: Continuity in Space," curated by Ana Magalhães and Rosalind McKeever. URL: <http://www.mac.usp.br/mac/expos/2018/boccioni/home.htm> (accessed 30.11.2020).

115 This can be attested by the interlocutors of very important art critics, such as Mário de Andrade, who was in touch with celebrated art critics from France and Italy whenever they came to São Paulo. This was the case in Blaise Cendrars's first trip to Brazil, in 1924 (see Amaral [1970] 1997), and Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's first visit in 1926. It is also worth mentioning that the first generation of art critics in São Paulo, while being called "Futurists" were

emerges from the making of these collections with the Italian assistance detailed above is the role they played in fostering a certain understanding of Italian modern art that would help shape the legacy of the artists and groups of the *ventennio*. This strategy was embedded in a discourse that celebrated Italian Modernism as an updating of the Italian artistic tradition. Whereas the fascist policies of *italianità* had made use of the notion of classical art (through quotations of Roman and Renaissance art by modern artists), in the aftermath of World War II, this discourse seems to have been turned into a search for a legitimate artistic tradition that linked modern artists to Old Masters in Italy.¹¹⁶ This argument is reflected in both Bardi's project for MASP as an art museum, and in Sarfatti revising her ideas on modern painting during the MAM acquisitions,¹¹⁷ albeit with slight differences.

Not being the work of Brazilian artists, the artworks discussed here have always been considered as belonging outside the history of the arts in Brazil. For scholars of a discipline that is relatively new and mainly occupied with researching art by Brazilian artists, they did not seem to have a place in the narrative of the arts in the country. Their sense of 'misplacement' has so far been perceived as a nuisance, and they were for a long time overlooked by Brazilian art historians. Nevertheless, by studying their provenance and the actors behind them, these collective 'nuisances' in fact place Brazil in another light: in a moment in world history when Brazil played an important role in the expansion of the art market in the Americas in the aftermath of World War II. Finally, at a time when great waves of immigrants were arriving in the country fleeing persecution or in search of a new life, the fluidity of what might be defined as 'Brazilian' had a major impact on the discourses surrounding such national projects as the founding of modern art museums – something Brazilian Modernists had been involved in ever since the first manifestations of 'homegrown' modern art in the country. This process thus requires researchers to pose new questions and to address them from an interdisciplinary and transnational perspective.

much more inclined to absorb such ideas through the writings of Ardengo Soffici and his activities in *Lacerba* magazine, rather than through Marinetti's writings – which amounted to a more realist/naturalist strand within the Futurist discussions of the late 1910s; see Fabris 1993; and Chiarelli 2007.

116 This argument, for instance, is discussed by artist Corrado Cagli, contesting art criticism in the United States that talked of a rupture, a break between Italian modern art and tradition, while searching to dismiss the fascist decades of artistic production – in which Cagli had built his career; see Bedarida 2018. In the same context, Cagli writes to Bardi, encouraging him to abandon any project in South America and instead bank on US collectors – something which Bardi seems to have ignored, as this was before he started making purchases for Matarazzo and his trip to Brazil that resulted in him staying as MASP's director.

117 Bardi's ideas for MASP as an art museum are still to be studied in depth. In any case, in a series of articles he wrote in the early 1950s for the magazine he cofounded in São Paulo, *Habitat*, he explained what kind of art museum he had in mind for MASP. Here he makes it very clear that he is deliberately avoiding qualifying any period of time in art history, by deciding on the name of "São Paulo Museum of Art" – with one of the possibilities most discussed by him being whether or not to include the adjective "modern." He also disseminated his ideas in Italy; see, for instance, Bardi 1953–1954. As for Sarfatti, in her *Espejo de la pintura actual* (Sarfatti 1947), which was launched just after the end of the Matarazzo purchases for MAM, she reaffirms her beliefs in the connections between modern Italian painting and Renaissance art, in what she calls an "art of synthesis" or "classicità moderna" (modern classicism). For an analysis of her book with her *Storia della pittura moderna*, see Magalhães 2016, chapters 4 and 5.

Abbreviations

COREITAL

Comitato per le Relazioni Economiche Italia America Latina

MAC USP

Museu de Arte Contemporânea da Universidade de São Paulo

MAM

Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo

MART

Museo di arte moderna e contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto

MASP

Museu de Arte de São Paulo

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