

SUPSI

Gino Severini in Switzerland: mural paintings and catholic art revival of the Groupe de Saint-Luc

In the Romand part of Switzerland, from the 1920s to the 1940s, over one hundred churches were built and decorated with great care in a new and modern style aimed at clearly communicating religious content. These churches are the result of a specific cultural turn that took concrete form in Switzerland thanks to the artists of the Groupe de Saint-Luc.

The movement was born and raised in the Catholic dioceses of Lausanne, Fribourg and Geneva, with roots in the long-lasting debate on the modern revival of religious art, flanked by the philosophical current of neo-Thomism of Jacques Maritain. The Groupe de Saint-Luc was founded in 1919 by the charismatic painter Alexandre Cingria who was the intellectual pivot of the group. The following year the architect Fernand Dumas joined the group and acted as fervent designer and coordinator of the activities of the many artists involved. Later, with the arrival of Gino Severini from Paris and the completion of his first works, the group emerged from the provincial milieu and obtained international resonance.

Between 1924 and 1947, Severini decorated five churches with several wall paintings with a style, developed in contact with the greatest artists of the early 1900s in the context of Italian Futurism and French Cubism. The craftsmanship of his painting technique represented an important reference point for the artists of the time.

In spite of the high relevance of the art historical context and the artist's fame, very few studies have been dedicated to Severini's wall paintings in Switzerland and to his role and influence on the Saint-Luc movement. Direct study of these works and their painting technique is important to determine and document the connection between these new kinds of artistic expression and the conscious choice of innovative painting media and methods.



In the delicate period of passage between the rise of the early avant-gardes and the return to classicism, artistic technique becomes an important key of interpretation through which fully understand the expressive choices of the artists and the development of the related artistic poetics.

Topic and aim

Through an interdisciplinary approach, the project will study the religious wall paintings by Gino Severini during his collaboration with the Groupe de Saint-Luc. One of the main goals is to understand Severini's expressive intentions and the materials and painting procedures used. Through the integration of art historical and archival information with direct visual and scientific examination of Severini's wall paintings the team will investigate the connections between the artist's technical choices, the primary sources and the availability of new painting materials and methods.

This research will fill a gap of knowledge on this particular moment in the history of Swiss art and culture, as well as on the figure of Severini himself, an internationally renowned artist whose Swiss religious mural paintings remain barely known today.

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