

CENTER FOR ITALIAN MODERN ART

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CIMA Presents Rarely Seen Art by Alberto Savinio, Brother of Giorgio de Chirico, Alongside Select Works by Louise Bourgeois

First U.S. exhibition of Savinio's work in over two decades

October 6, 2017 – June 23, 2018

Press Preview: Tuesday, October 3, 9:30 – 11:00 a.m.

(New York, NY, September 6, 2017) . . . The Center for Italian Modern Art (CIMA) presents the first exhibition in the United States of the work of Alberto Savinio (1891–1952) in over two decades. Hailed by poet and critic Guillaume Apollinaire as the paragon of a Renaissance man, Savinio was not only an exceptional visual artist and member of the Parisian avant-garde, but also a gifted pianist, composer, musicologist, set designer, critic, and writer. Yet despite his achievements, Savinio, the younger brother of Giorgio de Chirico, is today virtually unknown outside of Italy.

On view October 6, 2017– June 23, 2018, *Alberto Savinio* will feature 25 rarely seen works created by the artist after his move to Paris in 1926, when he put his other creative pursuits on hold in order to devote himself to painting. These will be accompanied by a select group of sculptures and prints by French-American artist Louise Bourgeois (1911–2010), revealing the two artists' serendipitous commonalities, including their flirtation with Surrealism, a shared interest in the subconscious, and, most significantly, the profound influence that familial relations had on their respective artistic imagery.



Alberto Savinio, *Autoritratto in forma di gufo* (Self-portrait as an Owl), 1936.

CIMA's Executive Director, Heather Ewing, states, "CIMA is pleased to introduce Alberto Savinio to a wider audience through this exhibition, as well as through related programs that explore his multi-faceted artistic pursuits. Despite Savinio's successes among the Parisian avant-garde—and the impact his work had both at the time, among the Surrealists, and later, with movements such as the Transavanguardia of the late 1970s and 1980s—he remains largely unknown to contemporary audiences both in the U.S and abroad. His work

is not included in any public collections in the U.S., and he has only rarely been exhibited here. This exhibition therefore promises to be a real discovery as it brings his original work to light. We are also pleased to continue, with the work of Louise Bourgeois, our practice of juxtaposing artists from different generations, backgrounds, and genders.”

Exhibition



Alberto Savinio, *Le songe d'Achille* (*The Song of Achilles*), 1929.

Alberto Savinio explores two major themes in the artist's oeuvre: the expressive power of imagined landscapes and the fraught emotional terrain of family life. CIMA's main gallery space is dedicated to the paintings in which Savinio conjures voyages to fantastical towns, islands, and magical places. With their unreal colors and curious forms, these works evoke deep-seated memories or dream states, such as those (*Monument to Toys*), of 1930, or *Les rois mages* (*The Magi*) of 1929. Other scenes, populated with figures from ancient literature or myth, draw on the stories that shaped the artist's

childhood in Greece, as in *Prometeo* (*Prometheus*) or *Le songe d'Achille* (*The Dream of Achilles*), both of 1929.

Notably, two of the paintings here—*La Cité des promesses* (*The City of Promises*) and *L'île des charmes* (*The Charmed Island*)—were commissioned in 1928 by the famed art dealer Léonce Rosenberg for his private residence in Paris, where work hung alongside that of de Chirico, Max Ernst, Fernand Léger, Francis Picabia, and others from Rosenberg's roster of artists. (The Rosenberg apartment will be the subject of a Study Day at CIMA, in addition to a second daylong program devoted solely to Savinio in the spring.)

The exhibition continues in CIMA's long hallway, with a series of paintings that explore the family unit as a site of perilous ambiguity. In these works, figures are often confined in claustrophobic spaces, a subject that Savinio shared with—and pursued more fully than—de Chirico. He sometimes transforms himself and other family members into living objects or figures with animal heads, seen here in paintings such as *Jour de Reception* (*Receiving Day*) of 1930, *Autotratto* (*Self-Portrait*) of 1936, and *I genitori* (*The Parents*), of 1931, thereby rendering the body monstrous and the portrait anonymous.

A 1947 suite of nine engravings by Bourgeois, entitled *He Disappears into Complete Silence*, is installed in the kitchen, together with a lithograph by Savinio, *I miei genitori* (*My Parents*), of 1946, also known as *Poltro-babbo, poltro-mamma* (*Armchair-Dad, Armchair-Mom*). The pairing underscores the two artists' shared interest in using text and image to excavate personal, often ambiguous histories. Other works by Bourgeois in the exhibition include sculptures that bifurcate the body, such as *Untitled*, of 2002, and the iconic *Nature Study*, of 1984. As CIMA President Laura Mattioli notes, "Like CIMA's earlier pairings of Cy Twombly with Medardo Rosso, or Fabio Mauri with Fortunato Depero, the juxtaposition of works by Louise Bourgeois with those of Savinio will create new pathways for considering and understanding the older artist's oeuvre."



Louise Bourgeois, *Nature Study*, 1984.

2017–18 Fellows

Every year, CIMA's fellowship program brings advanced scholars from the U.S. and abroad to New York City to conduct research related to the exhibition on view and to interpret the exhibition for the public through conversational tours. In so doing, CIMA fosters a unique mix of ideas and perspectives on the exhibited works, while supporting a new generation of academics. For *Alberto Savinio*, CIMA fellows will investigate, among other topics, the rapport between Savinio the writer/critic and Savinio the painter; the visual sources of Savinio's iconography; and Savinio's influence on the *Transavanguardia* artists of the late 1970s and 80s, such as Francesco Clemente and Sandro Chia, who were both fascinated by their forerunner's "mauvais peinture" or "bad painting."

Public Programs

Alberto Savinio distinguished himself by pursuing his artistic vision in every medium available to him: in addition to painting, printing, and drawing, the Italian artist penned musical compositions, dramatic theater, and literary fiction (in multiple languages). CIMA's public programming this season will explore many of the facets of Savinio's remarkably diverse output through lectures, readings, discussions, family programs, and artist-led drawing nights, as well as CIMA's signature Study Days. Detailed information about the fall programming will be announced in the coming weeks.

About CIMA

The Center for Italian Modern Art (CIMA) is a non-profit exhibition and research center dedicated to promoting new scholarship and dialogue around 20th century Italian art. Through its annual exhibitions, art history fellowships, and rich calendar of public programming, CIMA situates Italian modern art in a broad historic and cultural context, illuminating its continuing relevance to contemporary culture.

Located in a bright, elegant loft in SoHo, CIMA is a retreat for one-of-a-kind experiences with Italian art. Every Friday and Saturday during the nine-month season, visitors are welcomed by CIMA's resident scholars for distinctive visits through the exhibition aimed at inspiring unexpected insights and conversations. This extended exhibition run serves as an open-ended platform for the development of new scholarship by the fellows-in-residence—who come from near and far for six months in order to conduct and share their research—together with colleagues in museum and university communities and with the wider public.

Access

CIMA is open to the public Fridays and Saturdays; reservations are required. Signature guided walk-throughs of the exhibition, led by CIMA's fellows, are offered both days at 11am and 2pm. Due to popular demand, new public hours have been added from 1pm – 6pm for visitors to view the exhibition independently. CIMA is wheelchair accessible and available for group tours and CIMA member appointments Monday through Thursday. Members may also visit for free during public hours. For information and reservations, visit <http://www.italianmodernart.org/>

Media Contacts

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Image captions

Alberto Savinio, *Autoritratto in forma di gufo (Self-portrait as an Owl)*, 1936. Tempera and charcoal on paper applied to plywood; 27 1/2 x 19 2/3 inches (70 x 50 centimeters). GAM - Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Torino. © 2017 Artists Rights Society (ARS) / SIAE, Rome. Photo: G. Rampazzi, 1986.

Alberto Savinio, *Le songe d'Achille (The Song of Achilles)*, 1929. Oil on canvas; 39 1/3 x 47 1/4 inches (100 x 120 centimeters) Private Collection, Brescia. Courtesy Galleria Tega. © 2017 Artists Rights Society (ARS) / SIAE, Rome.

Louise Bourgeois, *Nature Study*, 1984. Bronze, silver nitrate patina, and steel; 30 x 19 x 15 inches (76.2 x 48.3 x 38.1 centimeters). Collection The Easton Foundation © The Easton Foundation / Licensed by VAGA, NY / Photo: Christopher Burke.