

Commentary

Severini – From Divisionism and Futurism

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Citation: Carelli F (2021) Severini from Divisionism and Futurism. Educ Res Appl 6: 188. DOI: 10.29011/2575-7032.100188

Received Date: 10 December 2021; Accepted Date: 15 December 2021; Published Date: 20 December 2021.

In 1900, Gino Severini met the painter *Umberto Boccioni*. Together they visited the studio of *Giacomo Balla*, where they were introduced to the technique of **Divisionism**, **painting with adjacent rather than mixed colors and breaking the painted surface** into a field of stippled dots and stripes. The ideas of Divisionism had a great influence on Severini's early work and on Futurist painting from 1910 to 1911.

He met most of the rising artists of the period, befriending Amedeo Modigliani and occupying a studio next to those of Raoul Dufy, Georges Braque and Suzanne Valadon. He knew most of the Parisian avant-garde, including Jean Metzinger, Albert Gleizes, Juan Gris, Pablo Picasso, the poets Guillaume Apollinaire, Paul Fort, Max Jacob, and author Jules Romains. The sale of his work did not provide enough to live on and he depended on the generosity of patrons.

Futurism He was invited by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti and Boccioni to join the Futurist movement and was a co-signatory, with Balla, Boccioni, Carlo Carrà, and Luigi Russolo, of the *Manifesto of the Futurist Painters* in February 1910 and the *Technical Manifesto of Futurist Painting* in April the same year. He was an important link between artists in France and Italy and came into contact with Cubism before his Futurist colleagues. Following a visit to Paris in 1911, the Italian Futurists adopted a sort of Cubism, which gave them a means of analysing energy in paintings and expressing dynamism.

Severini was less attracted to the subject of the machine than his fellow Futurists were and **frequently chose the form of the dancer to express Futurist theories of dynamism** in art. He was particularly adept at rendering lively urban scenes, for example in *Dynamic Hieroglyph of the Bal Tabarin* (1912) and *The Boulevard* (1913).

Crystal Cubism and Neo-Classicism

In 1916 Severini departed from Futurism and painted several works in a naturalistic style inspired by his interest in early Renaissance art. After the First World War, Severini gradually

abandoned the Futurist style and painted in a synthetic Crystal Cubist style until 1920. By 1920, he was applying theories of classical balance based on the Golden Section to still lifes and figurative subjects from the traditional commedia dell'arte. He became part of the "return to order" in the arts in the post-war era. Works such as *The Two Pulchinellas* (1922) exemplify Severini's turn toward a more conservative, analytic type of painting, which nonetheless suggests metaphysical overtones.

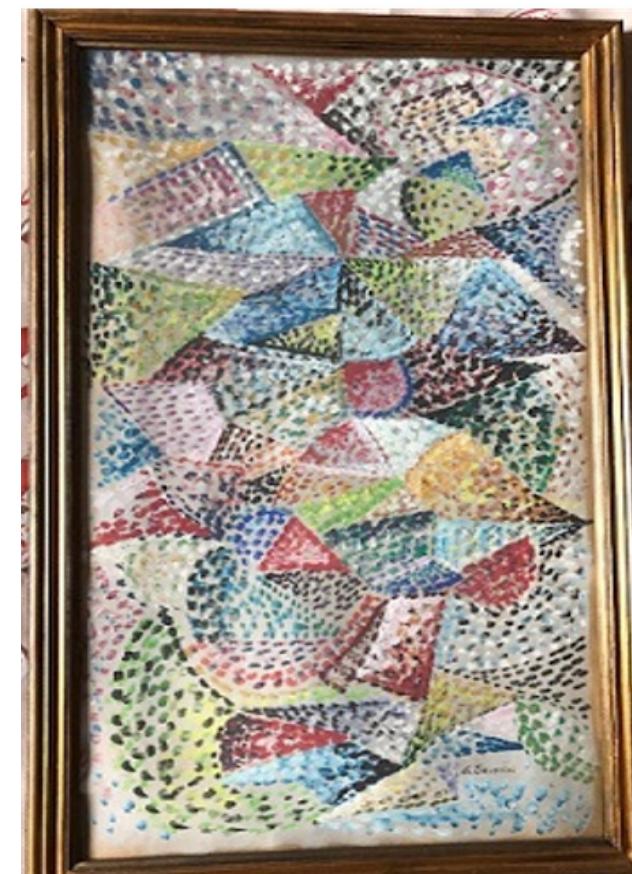


Photo: Puntinism Painting; Pulchinella; Oil on Paper.