



# GENIO FUTURISTA

di Giacomo Balla

*Under the High Patronage of the President of the Italian Republic*



Comune di Roma  
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Biagiotti Group

Laura Biagiotti  
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With the Support of the Ministry for the Cultural Heritage and Activities

*The Mayor of Rome Giovanni Alemanno and  
the President of the Biagiotti Group Laura Biagiotti present*

## Giacomo Balla's 'GENIO FUTURISTA'

Laura Biagiotti Collection

Museo dell'Ara Pacis, Rome  
Lungotevere in Augusta

4 December 2009 – 31 January 2010

**Umberto Croppi**

*Councillor for Cultural Policies and Communication of the Municipality of Rome*

**Umberto Broccoli**

*Head of the Cultural Heritage Service of the Municipality of Rome*

**Laura Biagiotti**

*President of the Biagiotti Group*

**Fabio Benzi**

*Curator*

**WILL PRESENT THE 'GENIO FUTURISTA'  
TO THE PRESS  
ON THURSDAY 3 DECEMBER 2009, AT 12 AM**

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Thanks to:



**The Mayor of Rome Gianni Alemanno and the President of the Biagiotti Group Laura Biagiotti are offering the general public an opportunity to see Giacomo Balla's *Genio Futurista*, a fundamental work by the artist that has not been put on show for over thirty years.**

**The centennial year of the Futurist Manifesto closes with the exceptional encounter of two symbols that derive from two different eras yet evoke novel meanings that nearly cancel out the two thousand years separating them.**

**The Ara Pacis represents an anthem to a golden age, to the fullness of Augustan times, to the cult of the genius of the emperor; *Genio Futurista* narrates the power, energy and optimism of a generation at the dawn of the twentieth century. Two ways of making visible the essence of genius: the pure form of the classical and the dynamic flight of the avant-garde.**

The monumental work (oil on tapestry canvas, 279 x 381 cm, the largest ever painted by Balla) has recently entered the large collection of Giacomo Balla's works assembled by the fashion designer Laura Biagiotti, who in 1996, together with the daughters of Gianni Cigna, set up the Fondazione Biagiotti Cigna. Created in memory of her husband, who had died before his time, the foundation is directed by Fabio Benzi. The collection stems from a great passion for art and comprises over two hundred works by the artist, including a significant number of studies for clothing designs, and represents the largest and most important range of examples of Futurist applied arts in existence. The entire collection was presented at the Pushkin Museum in Moscow in 1996 and at the Chiostrò del Bramante in Rome in 1998.

It is certainly an important occasion, not just because the large hanging has always been regarded with one accord, and above all by Balla himself, as the linchpin of his show at the World's Fair in Paris in 1925, a highly symbolic presence for the origin and developments of Art Déco, but also because it allows the public to approach and rediscover the fascination of an exciting and prestigious collection, built up with patience and passion by the Biagiotti Cigna family.

The oil painting was made by Balla for the *Exposition des Arts Décoratifs Modernes* held in Paris in 1925, where it was shown for the first time in the pavilion of decorative arts together with three other works: *Mare vele vento (Sea Sails Wind)*, *Farfalle in movimento (Butterflies in Movement)* and *Fiori futuristi (Futurist Flowers)*.

The Paris Expo set the seal on what was by this time the widespread international diffusion of the ideas of the Futurists who, interpreting the theories of Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, had already carried out a genuine ideological and artistic revolution in the previous decade, and given voice to the impetus that would clear the way for the international avant-gardes. The cult of speed and dynamism was linked to a new concept of art, which the Futurists no longer saw as mere representation, but as concrete action in the world. In the themes tackled this translated into a paean to modernity and progress and embodied the optimistic and progressive vision of the early part of the century. The hanging was put on display again in the exhibition at the association of Amatori e Cultori di Belle Arti in Rome in 1928, in a dominant position at the centre of a large wall in the anthological room devoted to Giacomo Balla's work in which the artist presented a selection of the most important creations of his career, commencing with the Divisionist works from the beginning of the century.

Based on the colours of the Italian flag (red, white and green), set on a dark and light blue ground, the 'prismatic' composition is centred on the schematic figure of a man, with the head in the shape of a star, the arms outstretched to form a sort of M, the initial of Marinetti, the inventor of Futurism, and two red wedges for the legs. From this only vaguely anthropomorphic abstract figure (the 'Futurist Genius', essentially Balla's self-portrait) radiate noise-forms that condense the artist's various experiments with Futurist painting into a sort of artistic *summa*: from the sharp 'motor-noise' forms to the abstract volumes of *Feu d'Artifice* (1916-17), from the patriotic use of the tricolour in *Forme-grido*

*Viva l'Italia (Forms-Cry Long Live Italy, 1915)* to the theoretical and theosophical representations of the 'fourth dimension' in *Trasformazioni forme-spiriti (Form-Spirit Transformations, 1918)* and *Pessimismo contro Ottimismo (Pessimism versus Optimism, 1923)* and to the intersecting triangles of the *Compenetrazioni iridescenti (Iridescent Interpenetrations)*.

The *Genio futurista* hanging is the precise and recapitulatory representation of an inspired process that led the artist to an awareness of the dynamic relationships of the universe, and to depict them as pure shapes and colours: an avant-garde not just of forms, but also and above all of intellectual intuitions, of dimensions that go beyond the visible and 'give skeleton and flesh to the invisible', as Balla himself put it in the manifesto of *The Futurist Reconstruction of the Universe (1915)*.

GIACOMO BALLA was born in Turin in 1871. After finishing his studies he enrolled in the 'Accademia Albertina. A fundamental stage in his development was his stay in Paris in 1900-01, where he encountered the Post-Impressionist research into light conducted by Seurat and Signac. In 1910 he signed, along with Boccioni, Severini, Carrà and Russolo, the Manifesto of the Futurist Painters, which drew on the contents of the manifesto published by Marinetti the previous year, and which was followed shortly afterwards by the Technical Manifesto of Futurist Painting. In 1915 he and Fortunato Depero signed the manifesto of the Futurist Reconstruction of the Universe, which set out to extend Futurist aesthetics to every aspect of the life, a fundamental moment for the development of the European avant-gardes. Even before Boccioni's death in 1916, he had assumed a leading role within the movement. He worked incessantly, participating in the making of the film *Vita futurista (1916)*, signing with Marinetti and others the Manifesto of Futurist Cinema and in 1917 creating the scenery for Igor Stravinsky's ballet *Feu d'artifice*, performed at the Teatro Costanzi in Rome by Diaghilev's *Ballets Russes*. In 1919 he took part in the Grand National Futurist Exhibition at the Galleria Centrale in Palazzo Cova in Milan. Right through the twenties he showed at the main exhibitions of the Futurist group. In 1925 he was present at the Rome Biennale and in 1926 at the Venice Biennale, while in 1928 he held a solo exhibition at the 'Amatori e Cultori'. In 1929 he adhered for a short time to the Manifesto of Aeropainting, but at the beginning of the thirties he made an abrupt break with Futurism, declaring that 'pure art lies in absolute realism, without which it lapses into decorative and ornamental forms'. He carried on with his artistic activity up until his death, producing a vision of 'photographic' realism that in many ways anticipated 'Pop Art'. Balla died on 1 March 1958 in Rome.

**Didascalia opera:** Giacomo Balla, *Genio Futurista (Futurist Genius)*, 1925, oil on tapestry canvas, 279 x 381 cm, Laura Biagiotti Collection, Guidonia (Rome)

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## USEFUL INFORMATION

### Opening hours

Tuesday-Sunday 9 am-7 pm; 24 and 31 December 9 am-2 pm  
(the ticket office closes one hour earlier)  
Monday, 1 January and 25 December closed.

### Entrance fee

full € 6.50 / reduced € 4.50

### Info and bookings

tel. 060608 [www.museiincomuneroma.it](http://www.museiincomuneroma.it) [www.arapacis.it](http://www.arapacis.it)

### Exhibition Press Office

StudioBegnini tel. +39 0669190880 fax +39 0669925790  
[studiobegnini@gmail.com](mailto:studiobegnini@gmail.com)

### Biagiotti Group Press Office

tel. + 39 0774 571311- fax + 39 0774 571807  
[pressoffice@laurabiagiotti.it](mailto:pressoffice@laurabiagiotti.it)  
[www.laurabiagiotti.it](http://www.laurabiagiotti.it)