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EST. 1817

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Tullio Crali (Igalò 1910–2000 Milan)

Nose-diving on the City

Signed lower left "CRALI"

Oil on canvas

35 ³/₈ x 39 ³/₈ in. (90 x 100 cm.)

Painted c. 1970s



Provenance

Private collection, South of France.

The swirling, sometimes abstracted, aerial imagery of Futurism's final incarnation, *Aeropittura* (painting inspired by flight), came about through contact with Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, the founder of Italian Futurism, and was launched in 1929 with the manifesto *Perspectives of Flight*, signed by Benedetta, Depero, Dottori, Fillia, Marinetti, Prampolini, Somenzi and Tato. The manifesto stated that "The changing perspectives of flight constitute an absolutely new reality that has nothing in common with the reality traditionally constituted by a terrestrial perspective" and that "Painting from this new reality requires a profound contempt for detail and a need to synthesise and transfigure everything.". *Aeropittura* emerged from the Italian Futurists' interest in modern aircraft and photographic technologies. Propelled by Italy's military pre-eminence in aviation, their fascination with the machine shifted focus from the automobile to the airplane. In flight the artists found disorienting points of view and new iconographies to explore in painting, photography, and other mediums.

For the artists Tullio Crali, Gerardo Dottori, and Tato, *aeropittura* represented a novel painting approach that allowed the Futurists to address nationalism, speed, technology, and war, providing radical perspectives that exalted these concepts. Crali was one of the undisputed stars of the 1938 Venice XXVI *Esposizione Biennale Internazionale d'Arte* and his work is noted for its combination of "speed, aerial mechanisation and the mechanics of aerial warfare". Crali's work was included in the 1990 exhibition at the *Accademia delle Arti e delle Arti Applicate*, London, *Futurism in Flight: "Aeropittura paintings and sculpture of Man's conquest of space"*.

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The present painting is one of five known versions of what is perhaps his most famous composition, *Nose-Diving on the City* (1939), showing an aerial dive from a pilot's point of view, the buildings below drawn in dizzying perspective. The best known is a larger and more horizontal painting (130 x 155cm.), signed and dated 1939 in the Museo di Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto. The earliest version (private collection) is dated 1938, and like the present painting has a squarer format, measuring 79.3 x 90.7cm. (as opposed to the present work which measures 90 x 100 cm.). One could imagine that the 1938 painting was the first conceived, followed by the painting in Trento (illustrated in the catalogue for '*Flight and the Artistic Imagination*' which accompanied the 2012 exhibition at Compton Verney Art Gallery (fig.1).

In his Futurist *Manifesto dell' Aeropittura*, Marinetti wrote of the "immense visual and sensory drama of flight," perfectly represented by pilot and self-taught artist Crali, who puts the viewer in the co-pilot's seat for a terrifying acrobatic stunt. Crali recounted with pride that a professional pilot viewing his work avowed that it gave him vertigo.

The present version, like another in the Carpi collection, Rome, was likely executed in the 1970s, as a later reprise of one of the artist's most famous compositions.

We are grateful to Professor Giovanni Lista for his assistance in cataloguing this painting, and for confirming the attribution to Crali as well as its dating (private communication).



Fig.1: Tullio Crali, *Nose-diving on the city*, Museo di Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto.