



LULLO | PAMPOULIDES

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LORENZO VIANI

Viareggio, 1882-Lido di Ostia, 1936

PORTRAIT OF ALPINOLO PORCELLA

1913

Oil on cardboard, on canvas; titled, signed and dated upper right: 'Ritratto di / Alpinolo / Porcella fatto in / Roma dal pittore / Lorenzo / Viani / il MCMXIII; to the reverse, stamp of the Fondazione Lorenzo Viani; stamp of the Galleria Falsetti, Prato, with inventory number 5749; Label of the Comune di Bologna Galleria d'Arte Moderna / Mostra antologica di Lorenzo Viani / Museo Civico 1973-1974; Label Fondazione Viani Viareggio / Mostra antologica di / Lorenzo Viani / luglio-agosto 1978
101 x 71 cm.

PROVENANCE

Galleria Falsetti, Prato;

Aldo Giannini collection, Lucca;

Private collection, Italy, from whom acquired in 2021

EXHIBITED

Mostra antologica di Lorenzo Viani (1882 - 1936), exhibition catalogue, 22 Dec. 1973 - 27 Jan. 1974, Bologna, 1973, n.68

Mostra antologica di Lorenzo Viani, Viareggio, Fondazione Lorenzo Viani, 8 Jul. - 28 Aug. 1978

LITERATURE

Mostra antologica di Lorenzo Viani (1882-1936), exhibition catalogue, 22 Dec. 1973 - 27 Jan. 1974, Bologna, 1973, n. 68 (illustrated)

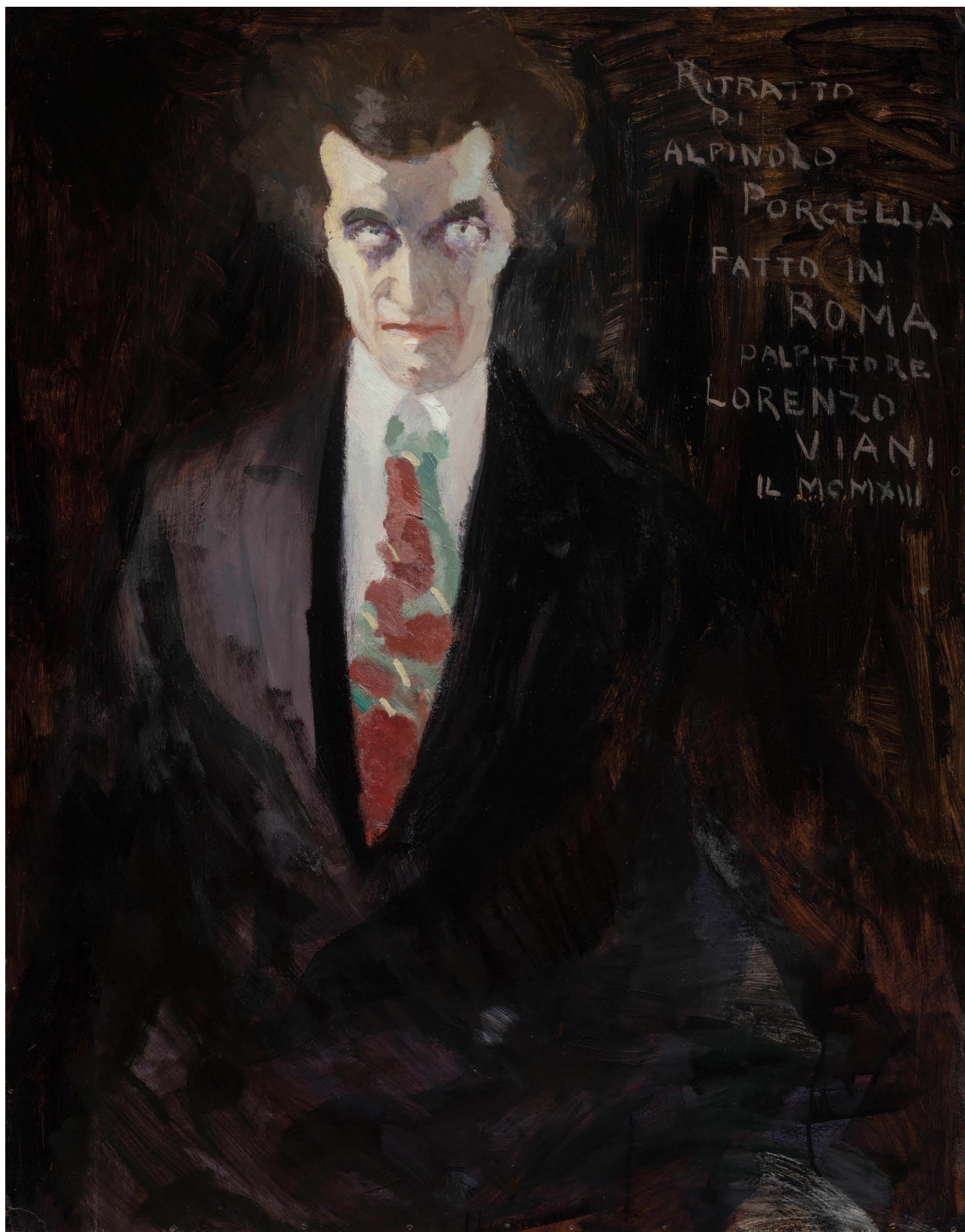
Mostra antologica di Lorenzo Viani, Viareggio, Fondazione Lorenzo Viani, 8 Jul. - 28 Aug. 1978

Locked up in my studio at the Camera del Lavoro in Viareggio, surrounded by black, vermilion and heroic flags, I swore to myself alone, on my own indomitable will, O Florentine Minos, that all those who had left a shred of their flesh on the stones of the road or on the thorns of the hedge, or in a workshop a flower of their youth, or in prison the breath of a vast human affection, must have their glory in a firm vision of common pain and common terror'
L. Viani, 1919

A prolific painter and draughtsman, committed anarchist, talented poet and writer, Lorenzo Viani was a leading exponent of European expressionism, living his life uncompromisingly, representing the brutality of social injustice without filters, as a living witness to the desperation and solitude of the human condition.

Viani is one of the few, true, forgotten all-round geniuses of the 20th century, celebrated by his contemporaries but widely unknown internationally today.

The sitter of this haunting portrait is Alpinolo Porcella (1874-1962; fig.1): a writer, journalist, critic, but also an artist, he executed lithographs for 'Ebe', a magazine founded in 1905 by Luigi Romolo Sanguineti, and for 'Eroica'. Porcella was born in Genoa, but moved to Rome, where he became a prominent figure in the Roman artistic and literary milieu of the 1920s, in close contact with intellectuals and artists of the time, like Giorgio de Chirico, Filippo de Pisis, Giovanni Comisso and, of course, Lorenzo Viani.



RITRATTO
DI
ALFONDO
PORCELLA
FATTO IN
ROMA
DAL PITTORE
LORENZO
VIANI
IL MCMXXIII

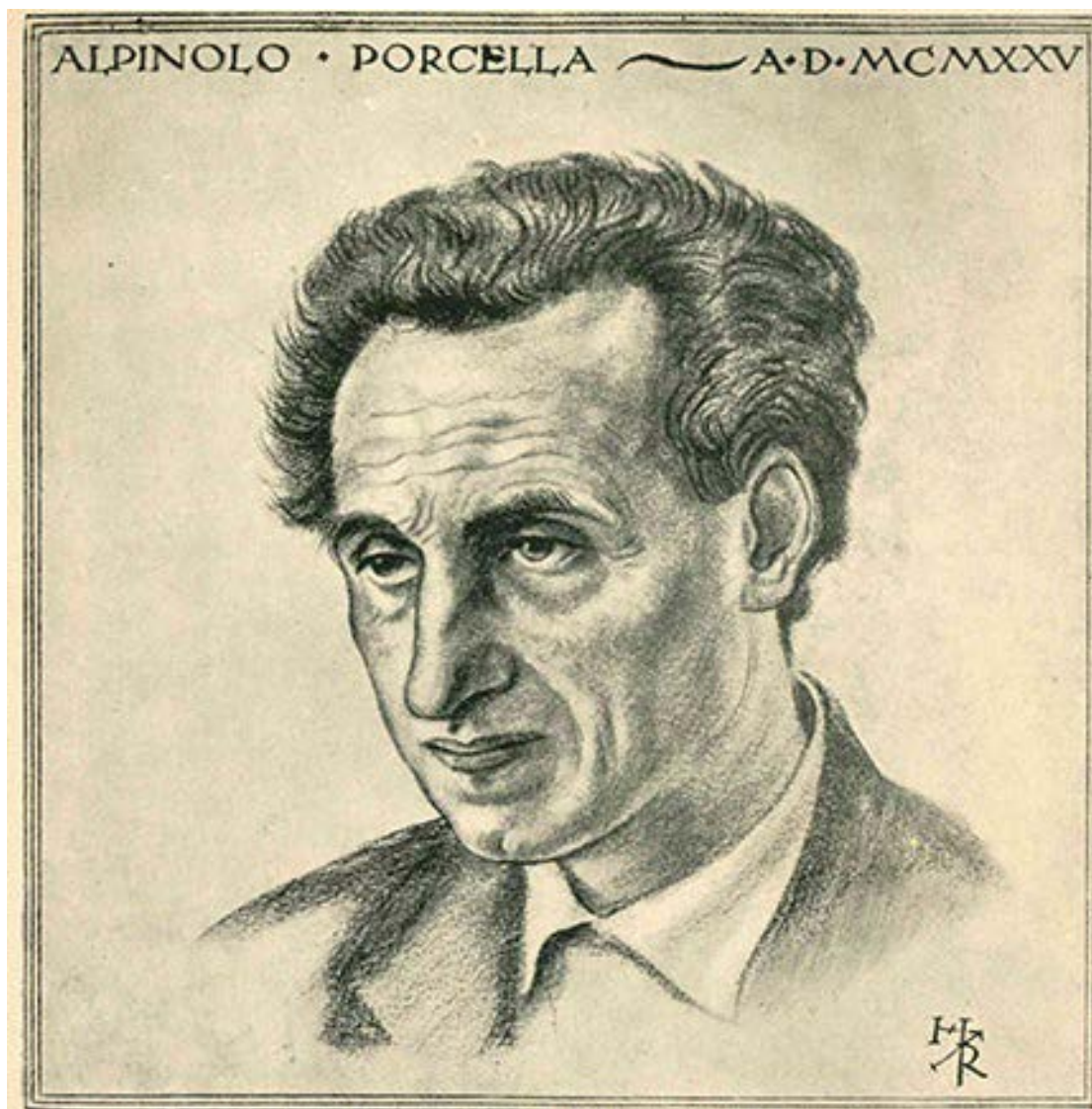


Fig.1 H. Reny, *Portrait of Alpinolo Porcella*, from the antiporta of A. Porcella, *L'olio di San Luigi il pellegrino e il diavolo*, Rome 1926

Born into a modest family in Viareggio in 1882, Viani was encouraged to study painting at the Istituto di Belle Arti in Lucca by Plinio Nomellini. He soon courted trouble with the police for his anarchist activities and in 1904 moved on to the Accademia di Belle Arti in Florence, where he was taught by Fattori and Adolfo De Carolis. Viani established friendships with a number of contemporary artists, such as Antony De Witt, Moses Levy, Armando Spadini and Giovanni Papini. Nomellini, with whom he studied at Torre del Lago, introduced him to the surviving Macchiaioli painters. He developed a strong interest in satire and caricature, which was first shown in the drawings he exhibited at the 1907 Venice Biennale. Crucial for his career and artistic development was the encounter with the Belgian artists, Constantin Meunier and Eugène Laermans. In his first, decisive trip to Paris in 1908 he experienced extreme poverty, while also meeting with the songwriter and 'poet of tramps' Jean Richepin and discovering the art of Picasso, Lautrec, Munch and Van Gogh. In Paris he associated with other political and social activists, such as Octave Mirbeau, and the following year, met Meunier in Brussels. After another trip to Paris in 1911, Viani settled in Viareggio, on the Tuscan coast, where he worked both as a painter - with his very personal style influenced by Fauves and Expressionism - and as a poet and writer. His first book, *'Alla Gloria della Guerra'*, is a bitterly ironic criticism of the Italian's government attack of Libya. In 1916 he was called up for World War I and discharged in 1919: during these three years he incessantly drew, painted and illustrated, producing a great number of caricatures of his fellow soldiers (fig.2).



Fig.2 L.Viani, *Portrait of a soldier in profile*, 1917
Charcoal on paper; Accademia di Belle Arti, Florence

As the present painting clearly demonstrates, his artistic production is totally detached from the Italian academic tradition and, instead, is evidently influenced by Goya, Daumier and German expressionism, as well as d'Annunzio's decadent Symbolism. Almost anticipating Francis Bacon's poetic, in Viani's art, deep human pain is reflected on the twisted features of his sitters.

As the present portrait demonstrates - as the second decade of the century began - Viani's involvement became more active and diverse, moving towards a more prominent public presence. Along his work as a painter and the multiplying number of important exhibitions, both personal and collective, such as the Venetian Biennale of 1914 and the Roman Secessions of 1913, 1914 and 1915, he took on roles as a journalist, cultural animator and political activist.

The derelicts he painted in Paris and Viareggio in the previous years (fig.3) were characters on the edge, living in a state of total unconsciousness and without any chance of redemption: their illnesses caused them to be forgotten creatures, defenceless rejects of society and, precisely for this reason, were deserving to be exposed - without filter - to the rest of the world.

The wide-open eyes of the outcasts from Paris and Viareggio, just like the desperate screaming stare of the *Naked madman*, also known as *L'Ossesso*, one of the artist's masterpieces also painted around this time (fig.4), are transposed by Viani into this extraordinary portrait of a fellow artist and intellectual: the sitter's haunting expression becomes '*a firm vision of common pain and common terror*' that is shared by all humans.

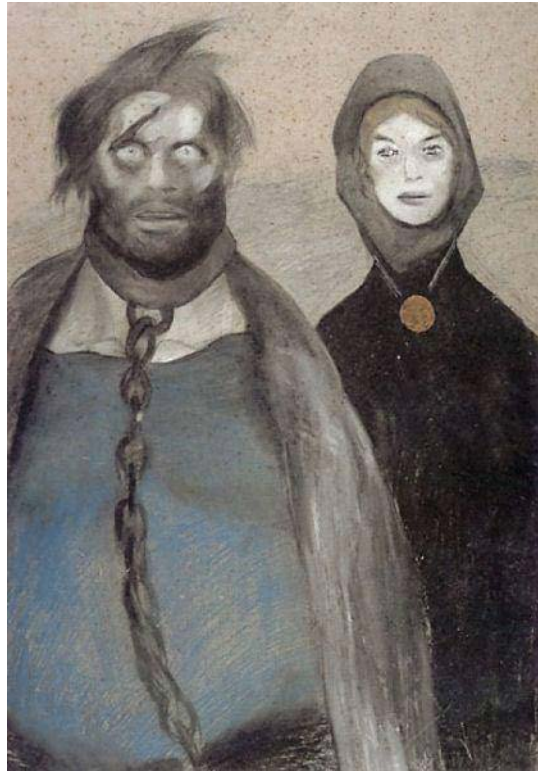


Fig.3 L.Viani, *// folle*, c.1907-9
Tempera and charcoal on paper



Fig.4 L. Viani, *L'ossesso*, 1911-13
Oil on cardboard, 103 x 71 cm, Galleria d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Viareggio

As in the case with his own *Self-portrait* dating from 1911-12 (fig.5), one of the painter's most iconic and successful portraits together with the painting under examination here, Viani's artistic vocation became completely identified with his political activity. Even deformation, the usual weapon used by the artist for revolt and protest, now becomes a search for superior balance, an art in itself meant as 'harmony of errors'.

One can understand such an extreme and destabilising result for a high society portrait with Viani's own words from 1915:

'to reject, through a slow and patient work of purging, all that was declamatory in art, to reduce to a definitive synthesis every sensation felt, to move away from what is exterior appearance to give the profound reality of men and things, to deform in order to harmonise, to decompose in order to reconstruct'

L. Viani, 1915



Fig.5 Lorenzo Viani, *Self-portrait*, 1911-12
Oil on board set on plywood, 98 x 67 cm