

## Visual arts Jackie Wullschlager



**'Il Caffeuccio Veneziano'**  
(1942)  
by Emilio  
Vedova

Giuseppe Iannaccone  
Collection, Milan

### A New Figurative Art 1920-1945

Estorick Collection, London

Milan lawyer Giuseppe Iannaccone describes his collection of richly expressive domestic scale paintings as "a mirror of the human mind, a mirror of the emotions of Italy during a period of turmoil . . . and as people are always the same, it is also contemporary humanity that my artists depicted". The works, just arrived in London, beautifully complement Eric Estorick's collection. Iannaccone favours individualists, each rejecting fascist rhetoric in his own way; together they build an engrossing picture of a particularly Italian metaphysical version of inner exile.

The opening display fizzles with

youthful experimentation emphasising tonal effects, strident or exquisitely delicate colour, thick painterly brushwork. Carlo Levi's twisting, flattened "Reclining Nude" on a ground of slashing pink and turquoise looks to Soutine, In Mario Mafai's dreamy "Sunset on the Lungotevere" Rome is a blurry reflection in the Tiber, the brightly lit bank accentuating grey-blue water and sky. The rosy round face of Mafai's tubercular friend Scipione in a freely rendered "Self-portrait" laughs defiantly. Fausto Pirandello's ochre/red/white "The Letter", a missive gleaming within a still life, dense as sculptural relief, of packages, newspaper, wooden table seen from above, marvellously suggests youthful homesickness.

The mood darkens among the second gallery's fine group of works 1941-2. War is never depicted but you feel its presence: in Ennio Morlotti's jagged "Still Life with Skull"; Giuseppe Migneco's "Still Life with Masks", a solitary reverie with unplugged electric lamp; Renato Birolli's meditative "Woman in Black Hat"; Renato Guttuso's superb, angular, downcast "Portrait of Antonini Santangelo" against a mysterious, nearly closed door. Filippo de Pisis's trembling cityscape "Il Foro Bonaparte a Milano" makes so much bare canvas eloquent; Emilio Vedova's ghostly geometric figures haunt "Venetian Cafe". A wonderfully evocative gathering. [estorickcollection.com](http://estorickcollection.com), to December 23