

# Futurist Film Uncovered

## THE SERENDIPITOUS GENESIS OF A FUTURIST PHOTOROMANZO

Futurism has been an important movement in the early 20th century, but its legacy has never left the world of art. Occasionally, it has appeared in overt form, as with the Neo-Futurist and Post-Futurist revivals, more often just as an influence. Recently, many exhibitions linked to the centennial celebrations of Futurism have brought this movement in the limelight. This attention is probably the underlying cause for the discovery of an unknown script for a futurist film. It is amazing that this document has survived two wars and about hundred years of neglect, but even more surprising is how the script has fallen into our hands. This is a little story in itself and we have asked Mr. Tomas Carpenter to let us publish the correspondence that eventually has led him to 'Twill and 'Twill to publish a Futurist "photoromanzo" based on that lost project. Proud to unveil this rare finding, we offer this production as our homage to Futurist artists.

**From: Tomas Carpenter**

**To: editor@timesliterarysupplement.co.uk**

Dear Ms Franklin, I write to you in the hope that you might be interested in a remarkable discovery which has recently been made in my family. I have learned that my great great grandfather was the Italian Futurist artist Umberto Boccioni and have come into possession of a script for a film that he was planning to make at the time of his death in 1916. As one of the most important representatives of Futurism in Europe, I felt sure that the draft for his last work would be of interest to the TLS. Perhaps you might like to publish it, with a commentary? You can contact me at the email address above. Many thanks for your time and consideration, your faithfully, Tomas Carpenter

**From: editor@timesliterarysupplement.co.uk**

**To: Tomas Carpenter**

Dear Mr. Carpenter, Thank you for your interest in the TLS. Unfortunately, in the present climate, it would be inappropriate for us to associate ourselves with a movement which defined its intentions as " We will glorify war- the world's only hygiene-militarism, patriotism, the destructive gesture of freedom bringers... and scorn for women". I wish you luck with your project. Your, Frieda Franklin

**From: Tomas Carpenter**

**To: stevebrown@lightboxproductions.co.uk**

Dear Mr Brown, I greatly admired your company's recent documentary " Cubism and the Violent Twentieth Century" and wished to bring another potential project to your attention. My great great grandfather, the Italian Futurist artist Umberto Boccioni, exhibited in London at the Sackville Galleries in 1912, during which time he met my great great grandmother, then a student at the Slade. Though they never married, my great great grandparents remained in correspondence and before Boccioni's death he sent a film script for safekeeping to London, which has recently emerged at our home here. Given your interest in twentieth century art, I thought that the script might be of interest to you, either as the subject for a documentary or as a potentially realizable film project in its own right. I would be happy to meet and discuss the idea with you whenever convenient. You can contact me at the email address above. With many thanks for your time and consideration, I remain yours faithfully, Tomas Carpenter

**From: lily@lightboxproductions.co.uk**

**To: Tomas Carpenter**

Hi Tomas, Steve Brown asked me to let you know that he's in LA for the next three months. Best, Lily

**From: serena6@wanadoo.fr**

**To: Tomas Carpenter**

Hey, T, How's London? Any news on your aged ancestor? Love Serena

**From: Tomas Carpenter**

**To: serena6@wanadoo.fr**

Hey Serena, Thanks for getting in touch. Can't say I'm getting anywhere with the Boccioni project. It seems ironic, really, that Marinetti wrote about their contempt for "the spineless worshipping of old canvases, old statues and old bric a brac" and then the script turns up in the attic after the funeral, next to an ironing board and dad's old skis! The film is really mad- you know they were obsessed with the colour red? Boccioni has this huge red horse in that painting "States of Mind"- well this is all about painted women and the idea that objects and their surroundings can't be separated. Mental but fascinating. I guess I'll keep trying. How's Paris? Love T

**From: Tomas Carpenter**

**To: gcox@bbc.3.co.uk**

Dear Ms Cox, I have recently come into possession, through family connections, of the original draft of Umberto Boccioni's last projected work, a film script which he was hoping to produce at the time of his death in 1916. I feel that this would be an ideal project for BBC 3, perhaps as part of a series on Futurism. If this interests you, please do not hesitate to contact me at the email address above. Many thanks for your time and consideration, yours faithfully, Tomas Carpenter

**From: gcox@bbc3.co.uk**

**To: Tomas Carpenter**

Dear Mr Carpenter, At present BBC 3 is not accepting submissions, but many thanks for your interest. Yours, Gail Cox

**From: andrewferguson@sharkagents.co.uk**

**To: Tomas Carpenter**

Dear Mr Carpenter, I recently heard from Frieda Franklin at the TLS that you are in possession of an original Boccioni manuscript. Have you any interest in taking on representation for the project? We should be very glad here at Shark to learn more about your plans. Yours, A Ferguson

**From: Tomas Carpenter**

**To: andrewferguson@sharkagents.co.uk**

Dear Mr Ferguson, Thank you so much for getting in touch and for your kind interest. It's a fascinating story. As you probably know, the Futurists got started in 1909 with Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (for whom I am named), when he published his manifesto Le Futurisme in Le Figaro. He demanded an art of the "young and strong", rejecting the languorous posturing of the nineteenth century aesthetes and allying himself with science, technology, iconoclasm and, most controversially, war. Futurist art was to be instead an aesthetic of violence, discontinuity, a weapon if you like. I studied Futurism as part of my Art History degree, but it was only recently that my interest in it began to seem-well, almost hereditary. Umberto Boccioni was a friend of Marinetti's and one of the best-known exponents of the Milan school of Futurists. In 1912 he showed here in London, at the Sackville gallery, and at the vernissage he met my great great grandmother, an art student named Hester Wilson. We know from her diary and my grandmother's stories that they fell in love, and my grandfather was conceived during Boccioni's visit, but Umberto had to return to Italy, where he died in 1916 whilst training as a cavalry officer. They never met again, but he and Hester wrote to one another and some of their letters have stayed in the family. recently my grandfather passed away, and when we cleared his home in Chelsea we found a box in the attic containing some sketches and a script for a film that Boccioni had sent to Hester for safekeeping. I am passionately interested in the Futurist project, and feel that it would be a tribute to Umberto Boccioni to bring his vision to life. I have approached several potential leads, but so far without success. I would be thrilled if you could help me in any way. I look forward to hearing from you, with best wishes, Tomas

**From: andrewferguson@sharkagents.co.uk**

**To: Tomas Carpenter**

Dear Tomas, We would be most interested in representing you. We charge a finder's fee of £500 and would expect to take 50% of any future earnings on the project. Yours, A Ferguson

**To: serena6@wanadoo.fr**

**From: Tomas Carpenter**

Hey Serena, Great to talk to you last night. I'm just about in despair. That agent's having a laugh, right? I think maybe the best thing would be to try to sell the stuff to one of the auction houses and just forget about it and go travelling. They just don't want to know. Glumly, T

**From: serena6@wanadoo.fr**  
**To: Tomas Carpenter**

T, Don't give up! There's a magazine I've seen here, reckons itself as intellectual fashion (know, I know, but still) It's called 'Twill and their tag line is "A Toast to the Future". Maybe they'd be the right sort of people? I could ask my friend Anna who's a stylist if she can get a contact for you. Let me know, Serena x

**From: Tomas Carpenter**  
**To: serena6@wanadoo.fr**

Thanks, worth a go, I suppose.

**From: annalepeyre@wanadoo.fr**  
**To: Tomas Carpenter**

Salut, Tomas, J'ai recu ton email de Serena. Elle m'explique que t'as un project qui peut etre interessant pour 'Twill magazine. Je viens de faire un shooting pour eux, et le nom de l'editrice est Lisa Hilton . Tu peux le contacter sur lisahilton@gmail.com . Amities, Anna

**From: Tomas Carpenter**  
**To: lisahilton@gmail.com**

Dear Ms Hilton, I received your details from Anna LePeyre, and hoped you might be interested in a project I'm developing on Futurism for inclusion in the magazine. Maybe you could call me on 0207 834 8657? Many thanks, look forward to hearing from you, Tomas Carpenter

**From: lisahilton@gmail.com**  
**To: foscobianchettied@twill.com**

Ciao Fosco, I've just spoken to an English guy named Tomas Carpenter. Check this out- he's a direct descendant of Umberto Boccioni! aAnd he's got an original film script from 1916 that he's been shopping around. So, I did a bit of research, and what's fascinating about Boccioni is that he was the more spiritual of the Futurist thinkers- he took the idea of the technological triumph of humanity over nature and turned it into a sort of metaphysical outlook, conflating the object with it's environment. Boccioni wanted to capture the essence of objects as well as their forms (look at his sculpture Unique Forms of Continuity in Space to get an idea, it's in the Tate), and to meld discrete art forms to capture the synaesthesia of reality- smell becomes touch, movement becomes sound and so on. I know we can't exactly make a movie and stick the DVD on the cover, but do you think we could shoot this?L x

**From: foscobianchettied@twill.com**  
**To: lisahilton@gmail.com**

Ciao bella, Sounds promising. What do you have in mind? F x PS where's your copy?

**From: lisahilton@gmail.com**  
**To: foscobianchettied@twill.com**

Fosco, Get off my case about the sodding copy! This is what I'm thinking. Tomas has mailed me a synopsis of the script, which is a sort of choreography of colour and light playing over the female body. I looked into some Futurist poetry, the idea of parole in liberta (they were totally bonkers, these guys), and it's virtually uninterrupted lists of nouns, conceptually quite similar to the way a photographer shoots images in sequence and then imposes narrative. We can inhabit the Futurist idea visually, if you will. Then, the suggestion of the ineffable within the object, the blurring of boundaries in the material world. What if we incorporated something else- something concrete, that also played with the idea of deception and the fragility of perception? That guy with the sculpture place might be able to help. I think we should go for it. L x

**From: lisahilton@gmail.com**

**To: Tomas Carpenter**

Hey Tomas, It was great to talk to you and the synopsis you sent was very helpful. We would love to shoot this as a story. Could you maybe give us a couple of hundred words on your feelings about the script to include alongside the pictures? I'll let you know what the schedule is, and you'd be very welcome to attend the shoot. Best, Lisa

**From: Tomas Carpenter**

**To: serena6@wanadoo.fr**

Serena, Result! Thanks so much. I'll keep you posted, love T

**From: lisahilton@gmail.com**

**To: foscobianchettied@twill.com**

Ciao, I've copied you in on Tomas's copy, as below.

### A Toast to the Future

In his 1909 manifesto *Le Futurisme*, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti wrote "We rebel against...everything which is filthy and worm-ridden and corroded by time. We consider the habitual contempt for everything which is young, new and burning with life to be unjust and even criminal". Well, so do I. My great great grandfather, the Futurist painter, sculptor and writer Umberto Boccioni left the manuscript of his final work in London in 1916, and it did indeed become worm-ridden, though thankfully not corrupted by time. Although the Futurist project was overcome by the outbreak of war and has subsequently been perceived as no longer politically correct, I believe that the Futurists were both sincere and correct in their desire to establish not only new art forms, but new ways of looking at art, as a means of breaking down the hierarchies and stereotypes which had stultified creativity in Europe by the end of the nineteenth century. Now more than ever, it seems right that the conventions of art should be challenged, that we should teach ourselves to reconsider what art is and what it means to us. Conceptual art has had its day, and for me the allure of Futurism is that it allies genuine technical competence and an interest in (an albeit disturbing) aesthetic with a powerful philosophy.

I am delighted that 'Twill has had the courage to take on this project. The magazine is committed to breaking down prejudice and commonplace thought in a way of which I'm sure my great great grandfather would have approved. I hope the result will be a new, original and challenging manifesto for the future.

C. Tomas Carpenter 2009

**From: foscobianchettied@twill.com**

**To: Tomas Carpenter**

Dear Tomas, I understand the publishers that rejected your proposal, definitely too daring for most readers. At 'Twill, on the other hand, we enjoy picking up with an open mind stimulating artistic and intellectual challenges. It is a luxury that we can afford, because 'Twill is an intellectual project more than a magazine and we don't have to please specific readers-customers. In conclusion, we are extremely happy and grateful to you for the opportunity that you are giving us. As you may know, 'Twill publishes in every issue a "photoromanzo", which, in its unique form, has created a new genre of expressive art: something in between a film and a photo story. Of course we don't produce films, but we believe that our photoromanzo can be an ideal medium to give life to the script of your great ancestor. In essence, we will use the aesthetics of our time to interpret the poly-expressive symphony and photo-dynamism theorized by futurist cinema. Unfortunately, most dialogs are missing from Boccioni's script, but appropriate words taken from the literature of the period have been used to fill the gaps. The photoromanzo will be published in 'Twill #12. The task is definitely not easy, but I trust that we will not disappoint you!

Fosco Bianchetti - Director