**Visualizing the avant-garde**



Tullio Crali, *Intercepting English Torpedo-bombers*, 1942, Rome, priv. coll.

**Wednesday 12 March, 4-6 pm, room WIN104**

Christopher Adams (Assistant Curator, Estorick Collection of Modern Italian Art, London)

**The Plastic Expression of a Futurist Hour: Aeropittura di Guerra and Italian Futurism during the 1940s**

During its concluding phase (1940-44) Italian Futurism remained a vibrant and multi-faceted movement. However, its enduring Fascist sympathies throughout the difficult years of World War Two have proved a major obstacle to an objective appraisal of its achievements during this period which, in the sphere of the visual arts, has come to be associated almost exclusively with a style of painting known as aeropittura di guerra. A late manifestation of the Futurist machine aesthetic and fascination with industrialised conflict, this ‘aeropainting of war’ is extremely problematic, ideologically speaking. Nevertheless, as an expression of the movement’s belief that war was ‘Futurism intensified’ this tendency demands closer attention than it has hitherto received, despite its unpalatable glorification of violence and military conquest. Examining the formal characteristics of such work, this talk aims to challenge the habitual presentation of aeropittura di guerra as visually crude and unimaginative, subservient to the retrogressive aesthetics of a regime in thrall to the anti-modernist cultural policies of its Nazi ally, and reveals its imagery to be much more varied, inventive and interesting than is often supposed.

The paper will be followed by a panel discussion chaired by Dr Laura MacCulloch (curator of RHUL Picture Gallery)

Discussants:

**Dr Ruth Hemus** (SMMLC). Dr Hemus researches the visual art, literature and performance of the 20th C avant-gardes, with a focus on women’s interventions in Dada and Surrealism. In 2012 she worked with the curators of the exhibition ‘Avant-Garde Women 1920-1940’ (Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Denmark).’

**Dr Giuliana Pi**eri  (SMMLC). Dr Pieri works on Anglo-Italian artistic relations, and 19C and 20C Italian visual culture. In 2010, she co-curated the exhibition *Against Mussolini. Art and the Fall of a Dictator* (Estorick Collection of Modern Italian art, London).

**Prof. Eric Robertson** (SMMLC). Professor Robertson works on French literature and visual arts, particularly in the 20th-Century avant-gardes. He is currently co-curating a forthcoming exhibition devoted to Hans Jean Arp (The Hepworth Wakefield, 2015).