

# Renato Tomassi

## Italian-German painter

1884-1972

Renato Tomassi, a gifted artist working in both Italy and Germany in the first half of the 20th century.

Tomassi was born in Subiaco, a city outside of Rome, in 1884. Self-taught, he was in contact with prominent members of the colony of German painters in the Italian capital, including the famous painter and graphic artist, Otto Greiner. The early works of Tomassi are characterized by an analytical use of line inspired by the modernist European Secession movement. Primarily portraits on paper, these display great compositional finesse and the influence of German Renaissance portraiture and, in particular, the compositions of Hans Holbein the Younger.

The painter's youthful style underwent a radical transformation in the years following the outbreak of World War I, when Tomassi found himself fighting at the front as a Lieutenant machine gunner in Trento. Like Italo Brass, Anselmo Bucci, Giulio Aristide Sartorio, and Umerto Moggioli, Tomassi was a soldier painter, visually expressing the emotional experience of war. Unlike these other artists, however, Tomassi focused on the depiction of subjects outside the battlefield, mostly scenes of military life, landscape locations, and portraits of compatriots. In this later area, one finds the most radical artistic transition, the abandonment of analytic design favored in Tomassi's youthful production, and the freer instinctive artistic expression of the painter.

Renato Tomassi can be considered both an Italian and a German painter. He spent more than 60 years in Germany, even living there during World War II. Although he was a pupil of Otto Greiner, he defined himself as a self-taught artist. In truth Tomassi, appreciated in both Italy and in Germany, was an independent artist and never became part of any specific school or avant-garde group, even when he adopted Expressionist techniques. In 1937, Tomassi exhibited his best paintings in the Gurlitt Gallery of Berlin. These paintings (together with the works of other German artists) were later hidden in the vaults of the Nationalbibliothek in Berlin. Before the end of the war, this library was bombed and plundered and much of Tomassi's early work was destroyed.

Source:  
<https://www.kilgoregallery.com/artworks/1197/>