

F T Marinetti photograph

H-ArtHist (Homann)

I wonder if anyone can give an explanation for a photograph of the founding father of Italian futurism, F T Marinetti, which I have encountered in reproduction in several books on the subject, but which none of them go to any lengths to explain.

The photograph shows an aging Marinetti (he'd have been 66) in Italian WW2 military uniform, standing by a roadside somewhere in the Soviet Union, perhaps the Ukraine, in 1942, presumably having ended up there as part of the Italian input to Operation Barbarossa. He is standing, in a somewhat untidy uniform next to a family group of peasants, looking for all the world as if he's waiting to catch a bus.

Possibly the easiest source for a reproduction of the photograph is 'Futurism' by Richard Humphreys, one of the 'movements in Modern art' series produced by London's Tate Gallery, although it has been much reproduced elsewhere. I have found no comments other than the general ones of it being Marinetti in 'Russia' (sic) My only other potential source of information is the Estorick Gallery in London (which by the way, I can heartily recommend) which specialises in futurist and early 20th century Italian art.

What is strange about the situation is that he would have been well over the age for military service at this time (although his having volunteered is less surprising when one considers his commitment to the Fascist cause) but what is odder is that he was completely out of favour with the regime by this point in his life. Perhaps he'd been sent to the Soviet Union to be got out of the way, or in the hopes that he'd meet with an 'accident'. As we know, however, he survived to die in his bed four years later; an unrepentant Fascist to the last.

I'd be grateful if anyone can shed any light on this somewhat mysterious photograph.

My thanks in advance

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Reference:

ArtHist.net

Q: F T Marinetti photograph. In: ArtHist.net, Jan 27, 2001 (accessed Jan 30, 2026),
<<https://arthist.net/archive/24302>>.