

GIULIO PAOLINI
Fuori quadro

8 March 2021 – 24 April 2021

Alfonso Artiaco gallery is pleased to announce the opening of Giulio Paolini' solo show, *Fuori quadro*, on Monday, 8 March 2021 from 10 am to 7 pm.

For his fifth solo show at Alfonso Artiaco gallery (the previous ones have been held in 2005, 2009, 2014 and 2018), Giulio Paolini proposes eight works, four of them realised specifically for this occasion, together with several collages that are exhibited for the first time.

All the works in the show are distinguished by the presence of various references: art history (Jean Antoine Watteau, Edouard Manet, Giorgio de Chirico), ancient art (the Greek sculptor Polyclitus, Pompeii) and mythology (Icarus and Antiope). As it always happens in Paolini's research, the aim is not to give rise to a simple celebration of the past, but to evidence fragments still meaningful in today's art: they emerge from history with a metaphysical firmness and question themselves on the passing of time.

On this subject the artist affirms: *"My references to the history of painting do not depend on a fixed idea. I do not intend to analyse the past, to make exegesis. I am myself a prisoner of an inventory of figures. Usually, I find myself in comparison with images of artists whom we traditionally call 'classics'. Artists who had a particular attitude towards images: rather than offering them, they waited for them at a certain distance; mine is an undifferentiated reception, a memory that wants to draw on the making itself of the artwork, I am attracted by the myth of why art is made"*.

The show opens with *La caduta di Icaro*, 2020. The myth tells the escape from the labyrinth of Dædalus' son with the help of wings fastened to his body with wax, Icarus being caught by the euphoria of the fly got too close to the sun, the heat melted the wax and he died falling into the sea. In Paolini's words: *"A 'false start' ends up repeating itself over and over again, without glimpsing the hope of arrival. Everything is placed beyond a threshold, visible, even though insurmountable"*.

In the same room *Vis-à-vis (Amazzone) (I)*, 2019 where the plaster cast of the Amazon of Polyclitus questions the status of the artwork and of its becoming through our gaze. The two halves of the plaster cast head are, indeed, placed one in front of the other – *vis-à-vis*, as the title suggests – on two pedestals against the canvas. The pencil drawing outlined on the canvas proposes a perspective space together with a number of drawn rectangles, moreover the traced red-pencil diagonals evoke the space of the representation, expressed by the artist since his first painting, *Disegno geometrico*, dated 1960.

In the second room the new work on canvas *Giove e Antiope*, 2016-21 draws inspiration

from the painting by French artist Jean Antoine Watteau, *Jupiter et Antiope* (1715-16). In Paolini's words the painting portrays "Jupiter in the shadow and in the background, discovering Antiope without touching her... No contact seems to be announced in a scene where light is the only thing to offer the absolute beauty of a body". The main subject in Paolini's work is the body of Antiope, desired by Jupiter, whose figure is scattered in fragments all around the perfection of the feminine silhouette. At the centre of the canvas, a gilded frame and a transparent sheet allude to the coming true of an image or a painting.

In the same room, *Fuori tempo (II)*, 2021 is a tribute to painting, in particular to Edouard Manet, one of Paolini's favourite artists. The photographic reproduction of Manet's palette is lying as a cut-out collage on a wooden palette. An envelope and a card, sustained by a glass sphere with photographic fragments of the French painter's palette, are offered to an imaginary recipient. The composition of the elements is inscribed in an ideal dimension represented by a metal polyhedron. These works presented in the second room, despite their different media and languages, are associated by the memory of the art expressions *par excellence*: sculpture and painting.

The following rooms lead the viewer into a closer dimension: the title of the three artworks *Piazza d'Italia (I)*, *Piazza d'Italia (II)*, 2001 and *Piazza d'Italia (III)*, 2002 pay homage to a well known series of paintings by Giorgio De Chirico's metaphysical period. "In his *Piazze d'Italia*" – Paolini states – "Giorgio De Chirico takes back those air and light to their authentic and original silence: or rather, to an even preceding silence... undefined, unfathomable." In Paolini's *Piazze d'Italia* the playing elements hint at a painting which, instead of composing itself in the look of the author-viewer, takes apart under our eyes leaving visible only a few iconographic clues. In *Piazza d'Italia (I)* we see a hand that in vain tries to hold an absolute dimension, represented by the sky, by definition slippery. *Piazza d'Italia (II)* shows a drawn quadrilateral, fragments of writings, scattered sheets. In *Piazza d'Italia (III)*, the *trompe l'œil* drawing recalls the Italian cultural tradition as a context of belonging, like the ploys typical of the representation. The clock, for its part, not only constitutes a typical element in the image of metaphysical painting by De Chirico, but it also represents an absolute dimension, the time, which escapes every attempt to define it.

In the five collages *Senza titolo (Pompeii)*, 2020 and 2021, exhibited in the fifth room, the artist realises a "portrait" of Pompeii, archaeological site *par excellence*. He draws circles with pencil and he frames images of the ruins together with constellations and clock quadrants with the collage technique. Paolini affirms: "While the classic is the distance, the ancient is the remoteness. The ancient, the archaeological, the ruin are a distance that no longer can be moved closer. They are those kinds of fascinations released from something untouchable belonging to our memory".

The same sense of impassable distance can be seized in the new work *Nello stesso punto*, 2021, where the shell and its specular image, symbol of the origin of things, is highlighted in its perfect shape, essential and finished. It dialogues with the circular elements present in the Pompeii collages in a vibrant tension between nature and history.

The exhibition closes with a homage to the dimension of being (or its absence). The new work *In scena (Gilles)*, 2021 presents the photographic reproduction of the Gilles character painted by Watteau in *Pierrot, dit autrefois Gilles* (1718-19) placed as a collage in a new context. The image of Gilles is placed, in turn, on an easel and completed with furnishing elements (a chair, a curtain, a frame) on the edge between the intimacy of an atelier and a theatre stage, in a sort of "private *mise en scène*". In Paolini's words: "Gilles looks, simply looks, absent figure, unconscious, in front of us with absolute innocence, he relies on our look". It is a work focused on vision and its conditions of existence: the silence of the studio and the one of a theatre in which the curtain has been closed.

Biography

Born on 5 November 1940 in Genoa, he lives in Turin.

His poetry focuses on themes that question the conception, manifestation and vision of the work of art. From the first investigations around the constitutive elements of the painting, the attention was subsequently oriented toward the exhibition act, toward the consideration of the work as a catalogue of its own possibilities, as well as toward the figure of the author and his lack of contact with the work, which pre-exists and transcends him.

From his first participation in a group show (1961) and his first solo (1964) he held several exhibitions in art galleries and museums around the world. Among the most important retrospectives we remember the ones at Palazzo della Pilotta in Parma (1976), at Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam (1980), at Nouveau Musée in Villeurbanne (1984), at Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart (1986), at Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna in Rome (1988), at Neue Galerie am Landesmuseum Joanneum, Graz (1998), at GAM Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Turin (1999), at Fondazione Prada in Milan (2003), at Kunstmuseum in Winterthur (2005), at MACRO Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Roma (2013) and at Whitechapel Gallery, London (2014). Among the most recent solo shows we highlight the ones at the Center for Italian Modern Art in New York (in dialogue with works by Giorgio de Chirico, 2016), at Fondazione Carriero in Milan (2018), at Castello di Rivoli - Museo d'Arte contemporanea (2020), Turin.

He has participated in various Arte povera exhibitions and he has been invited more than once to Documenta in Kassel (1972, 1977, 1982, 1992) and to the Venice Biennale (1970, 1976, 1978, 1980, 1984, 1986, 1993, 1995, 1997, 2013).

From 1969 he has realised sets and costumes for theatre representations, among them the projects ideated with Carlo Quartucci in the '80s and the set design for two operas by Richard Wagner at Teatro San Carlo in Naples, with the direction of Federico Tiezzi (2005, 2007).