

Giulio Paolini

QUI DOVE SONO (HERE WHERE I AM)

Galleria Christian Stein
Corso Monforte 23, Milan

September 30, 2020-January 30, 2021

The Galleria Christian Stein presents a solo exhibition by **Giulio Paolini** (Genoa, 1940) entitled ***Qui dove sono (Here Where I Am)***, a reference to a work in the show and a homage to the Galleria Christian Stein, where Paolini exhibited for the first time over fifty years ago, in 1967, at the branch in Turin, and has continued to do so regularly throughout his career, most recently in 2016.

The exhibition at the gallery on Corso Monforte is made up of five works, three of which were created expressly for the occasion. Sculpture and photography, suitably elaborated in Paolini's language, tell a story that turns around myth, classical antiquity and history; the images on display are shrouded in an absolute dimension of time, remote from the realities of the present day.

In the work located at the center of the room, ***In volo (Icaro e Ganimede) (In Flight [Icarus and Ganymede], 2019-20)***, the plaster cast of Ganymede, copy of a marble sculpture by Benvenuto Cellini (1500-71), stands on a high base. The youth is holding two wings made of gilded cardboard to evoke his flight to Olympus. In fact the myth of Ganymede is founded on the beauty of the young man, to whom Zeus, king of the gods, takes a fancy, abducting him in the form of an eagle and carrying him off to Olympus to be his lover. On the ground a square sheet of transparent material offers glimpses of fragments of a photographic image of the sky together with a reproduction of the figure of Icarus from the picture *Daedalus and Icarus* (1799) by the French painter Charles Paul Landon (1761-1826). In addition, an antique terrestrial globe has been placed on the sheet of plexiglass near the base. Both Ganymede and Icarus are mythological figures linked to the act of flying: Ganymede ascends to Olympus, while Icarus falls into the sea after coming too close to the sun, which melts the wax of his wings. Paolini says of the two figures: "Two naked bodies, one plummeting to the ground, the other reaching upward, are both suspended in the vertigo of flight (of the void). They are actors playing the part of the parallel fates of two characters: Icarus and Ganymede, end and beginning of an idea of Beauty, of a single nameless figure."

On the rear wall ***Vis-à-vis (Kore), 2020*** is composed of two halves of the same plaster cast of a Hellenistic female head, a kore, placed one in front of the other on two bases set against a large canvas on which a perspective drawing has been traced in pencil. Thus the canvas acts as a "stage setting," a theatrical backdrop to the mute gaze of the two faces. Echo of an absent model and of a distant, mythical image, the plaster cast constitutes one of Paolini's preferred instruments. In fact the artist declares: "the gaze fixed in a picture or a sculpture is not turned on the author or on anyone else. It admits neither one nor many points of view, reflecting in itself the question about its very presence."

On the left-hand wall hangs ***La casa brucia (The House Is on Fire, 1987-2004)***. The work consists of forty-three collages divided into a compact central group of fifteen and an ample

external frame of twenty-eight elements. In the ones in the first group, the photograph of a building in flames is combined each time with torn details of photographic reproductions of the artist's earlier works or exhibitions. In the elements around the perimeter, instead, torn pieces of sheets of paper commonly used by Paolini (white, black, graph, tracing and other kinds of paper) are superimposed on the image of the fire. Taken altogether, the frame of "materials" or preliminary means – announcing a work yet to come – encloses the echoes of works that are finished and "already seen."

The walls on the right house a series of collages with the title ***Qui dove sono (Here Where I Am, 2019)*** that allude to the place where the artist resides, Piazza Vittorio Veneto in Turin, a historic porticoed piazza of rectangular shape. The series presents various perspective drawings in pencil, superimpositions and *mises en abyme* of images of various origins, such as a photograph of the entrance hall of the artist's home, an old print of the piazza and a picture of the same place taken at night. Some of the collages present a figure viewed from behind intent on observing the square (a stand-in for the artist himself?), while others have a perspective window at the vanishing point. Thus the piazza becomes an ideal theater in which to stage intersections of gazes, perceptual tricks not without a metaphysical aura that owes a debt to Giorgio de Chirico's *Piazze d'Italia*, not coincidentally evoked by figures present in two of the collages on show.

Finally, between the wall and the window, is located the work ***Passatempo (Pastime, 1992-98)***: on a base are set innumerable pieces of broken glass, a photographic portrait of the artist and some fragments of color reproductions of astronomical motifs; in the portrait an hourglass has taken the place of the spectacles. In *Passatempo* the artist looks through time in an attempt to grasp what his gaze and his hand cannot renounce pursuing. Fragments of time (the portrait from 1971), indications of an absolute dimension (the astral iconography), combined with the (motionless) hourglass, suggest the artist's desire to hang onto the ideal instant in which a finished vision could emerge.

The project represents one of two shows that Paolini will be staging in Milan over the course of 2020; in fact Giulio Paolini's exhibition *Qui dove sono* at the Galleria Christian Stein was initially planned for April 2020, in concurrence with *Giulio Paolini. Il mondo nuovo*, held at the Galleria Massimo De Carlo in Milan's Palazzo Belgioioso.

In addition, from October 15, 2020, to January 31, 2021, the Castello di Rivoli will be hosting another exhibition by Giulio Paolini, *Le chef-d'oeuvre inconnu*, on the occasion of his eightieth birthday.

Corso Monforte 23, Milan

Monday to Friday: 10 am-7 pm, Saturday: 10 am-1 pm / 3 pm-7 pm

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