

PRESS RELEASE



Giulio Paolini

Il modello in persona, (The Model Itself), 2020 (detail)
Courtesy Fondazione Giulio e Anna Paolini, Turin
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Giulio Paolini *"Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu"*

October 15, 2020 – January 31, 2021
Second Floor, Rooms 18, 33, 32

The Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea presents *Giulio Paolini "Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu"* - an original journey covering sixty years of artistic work through a three-part exhibition comprising a large number of new artworks. Developed in close contact with the artist **Giulio Paolini** (Genoa, 1940), the exhibition is curated by Castello di Rivoli Chief curator **Marcella Beccaria** and celebrates the artist's eightieth birthday.

One of the pioneers of the Italian art movement Arte Povera, with whom he shares the use of everyday materials and an interest in the phenomenological relationship between visitors, artworks, and the site of the exhibition space, Paolini foreshadowed the developments of conceptual art through his first artwork *Disegno geometrico* (Geometric Drawing, 1960), which is the starting point of this new exhibition.

Paolini's works are mirrors and lenses through which art reflects on itself. "Ever since his debut," writes Marcella Beccaria, "the artist has focused on the ideal and material foundations of art, on the space of the studio and on the occasion of the exhibition as settings in which art is produced and displayed. His work often includes quotations and fragments drawn from the great catalog of the history of art, as well as reformulations of his own works in new contexts. For the artist, the act of

seeing constitutes a crucial moment of knowledge-formation, whose truth is nevertheless always relative and subject to constant re-evaluation. Works can provide ideas for subsequent works and new displays in an endless cycle.”

The title of the exhibition, “*Le Chef-d’oeuvre inconnu*” (The Unknown Masterpiece), refers to a short story written by Honoré de Balzac, first published in 1831. According to Paolini’s method, the tribute to the short story reflects some of the crucial questions which his works raise. Through each of the artworks featured, the exhibition points to the elusive relationship between reality and representation, between an artwork and its image, between vision and artistic intentions, based on an investigation of the very essence of art.

“*Le Chef-d’oeuvre inconnu*” is also the title of the major new installation that greets visitors in the first room of the exhibition (**Room 18**). The historic work by Paolini, *Disegno geometrico* (Geometric Drawing), 1960, is expanded three-dimensionally to comprise the entire gallery, transforming the small 1960 artwork into a new participatory place the audience can enter and linger in. The floor, the walls, and the space above house the elements that make up the compositional scheme of *Disegno geometrico*, from the rectangular structure to the red diagonals and the points originally marked with a compass to square the canvas and now marked by physical easels. In addition to *Disegno geometrico* itself, the four walls of the room feature as many variations on this work, offering different possible ways of squaring a rectangular surface.

The exhibition continues in the next gallery (**Room 33**), which the artist has called “Vertigo”, to highlight the presence of works moving in space through time, like the protagonists of an unreleased film. *Vertigo*, 2020, the work which gives its name to the whole gallery, consists of an assemblage comprising a photographic image of the sky printed on a piece of fabric, a pallet and a photograph of a pallet, a number of frames and stretched canvases, empty stretchers, and two photographs with details of the work itself. The various elements seem to be dynamically flowing out of the old fireplace into the room, like entities whose existence predates the author’s intervention. In addition to the installation *Vertigo*, 2020, the gallery hosts the new work *Omega (1948-2018)*, 2020, a rare occasion in which the artist includes details related to his own biographical history – his Omega watch worn from when he was 8 years old until 2018 when it stopped working.

“*Fine*” *senza fine* (“The End” Without an End) is the theme which brings together the artworks exhibited in the third and last gallery of the exhibition (**Room 32**). Here Paolini explores the concept of continuous becoming and the unfathomable secret of artworks, which, even when they consist of apparently legible images, never betray their origin and cannot know their own fate.

As **Giulio Paolini** states “Day after day, everything is renewed and repeats itself as the natural effect of the incessant becoming of things. In the Museum, by contrast, we can escape from the disquieting destiny marked by the passing of Time. This place seems to be caught in an eternity of its own: here hours, works, and people belong to an instant that lives and renews itself through the same enduring illusion: to hold the end of Time in a specific image. ‘Everything flows,’ as we know, yet nothing prevents us from turning our gaze elsewhere – without a place or date.”

On the occasion of the exhibition, the Castello di Rivoli Museo d’Arte Contemporanea is publishing a catalog in two volumes. One volume is dedicated to the poems written by Giulio Paolini, introduced by Andrea Cortellessa. The second volume includes additional writings by Paolini, his unpublished drawings and projects, a correspondence between Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev and the artist, and an essay by the curator Marcella Beccaria. The catalog will be richly illustrated with images from the exhibition, and published in a bilingual edition (Italian and English).



Giulio Paolini
Courtesy Fondazione Giulio e Anna Paolini, Turin
Photo © Luciano Romano, Naples

Giulio Paolini was born on 5 November 1940 in Genoa and lives in Turin.

His poetics focus on themes that examine the conception, manifestation and vision of the artwork. After his inquiries on the elements that make up a painting, his attention has turned to the act of exhibiting works, to the consideration of the work as a catalogue of its own possibilities, as well as to the figure of the author and his lack of contact with the work, which either pre-exists or transcends him.

Since his first participation in a group exhibition (1961) and his first solo show (1964), he has had countless exhibitions in galleries and museums the world over. His major retrospectives include: Palazzo della Pilotta in Parma (1976), Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam (1980), Nouveau Musée in Villeurbanne (1984), Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart (1986), Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna in Rome (1988), Neue Galerie am Landesmuseum Joanneum in Graz (1998), GAM Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea in Turin (1999), Fondazione Prada in Milan (2003), Kunstmuseum in Winterthur (2005), MACRO Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Roma in Rome (2013), and Whitechapel Gallery in London (2014). Among the most recent solo shows should be mentioned those at the Center for Italian Modern Art in New York (dialogue with Giorgio de Chirico's works, 2016) and at Fondazione Carriero in Milan (2018).

He has participated in many Arte povera exhibitions and has been invited on several occasions to Documenta in Kassel (1972, 1977, 1982, 1992) and the Venice Biennale (1970, 1976, 1978, 1980, 1984, 1986, 1993, 1995, 1997, 2013).

Since 1969 he has also designed sets and costumes for the theatre, notably the projects he devised with Carlo Quartucci in the 1980s and the sets for two Wagner operas directed by Federico Tiezzi (2005, 2007).

Having trained as a graphic designer, he has always nurtured special interest in the field of publishing and writing. From the very outset his artistic exploration has been accompanied by his thoughts, collected in books he has personally edited: from *Idem*, published in 1975 by Einaudi with an introduction by Italo Calvino, to his most recent publications, *Quattro passi. Nel museo senza muse* (Turin: Einaudi, 2006), *Dall'Atlante al Vuoto in ordine alfabetico* (Milan: Electa, 2010) and *L'autore che credeva di esistere* (Milan: Johan & Levi, 2012). Many books have been published devoted to Paolini's

oeuvre: from the first monograph written by Germano Celant (New York: Sonnabend Press, 1972) to the volume by Francesco Poli (Turin: Lindau, 1990) and, lastly, the Catalogue Raisonné of his works dated 1960-1999, edited by Maddalena Disch (Milan: Skira, 2008).



Giulio Paolini, *Disegno geometrico* (Geometric Drawing), 1960
Photo © Mario Sarotto, Turin
Courtesy Fondazione Giulio e Anna Paolini, Turin
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