

Sei illustrazioni per gli scritti sull'arte antica di Johann J. Winckelmann [Six Illustrations for the Writings on Ancient Art by Johann J. Winckelmann], 1977

Bound volume with six plates printed in lithography and silkscreen, with original additions in collage

50 x 35 cm

Edition of 33 in Arabic numerals plus 7 in Roman numerals

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The bound volume presents six illustrations inspired by Johann Joachim Winckelmann's Italian anthology of writings on ancient art entitled *Il bello nell'arte. Scritti sull'arte antica*. Winckelmann (1717-1768) was a renowned German archaeologist and art historian, whose writings are of great interest to Paolini by virtue of their treatment, during the Neoclassical period, of the autonomy of beauty.

The six plates are preceded by a text, chapter four of *Dell'arte del disegno de' Greci e della Bellezza*, from Winckelmann's *Monumenti antichi inediti* [Unpublished Monuments of Antiquity]. The illustrations developing on a double-page each feature at the centre the reproduction of Winckelmann's book *Il bello nell'arte. Scritti sull'arte antica*, open each time to a different page and associated with motifs and images also from Winckelmann.

In the first illustration, the image of Winckelmann's book serves as a background for the crossed gazes of the Greek sculptor Alcamenes, who is seated and looking at a bust of his son and, through it, at himself in a mimesis typical of Paolini's language in the mid-1970s.

In the second illustration, against a black background, the *Apollo Belvedere*, holds up Winckelmann's book which is open to the page where the same statue is reproduced, as if to announce his own historicization. An image within an image, where the duplication of the subject is the protagonist

of a *mise-en-abîme* of the representation as such.

The third illustration presents two images, arranged so that they are askew

to each other, of Winckelmann's book open to the page with the *Borghese Gladiator*. With his arm outstretched he seems to be pushing himself

out of the page, almost as if he wanted to distance himself from his own representation.

The fourth illustration presents the frontispiece of the chapter entitled *Storia dell'arte antica*, overlapped by some fragments taken from Winckelmann's drawings. The subject and the arrangement of the torn details, applied in the manner of a collage, vary from one edition of the print to the other.



In the fifth illustration Winckelmann's book is open to the paragraph entitled *Della bellezza: e ch'egli è impossibile di definirla* and is held down by a hand, which seems to be an invitation to read the text. A closed envelope, applied in a different position from one edition to another evokes, complementary to the text, the impossibility of defining beauty.

In the sixth and final illustration Winckelmann's book – open to the paragraph entitled *Gli occhi* [The Eyes] – almost completely overlaps a photographic portrait of Paolini who in turn holds a book open before him. Moreover, the page of text is associated with the ancient drawing of the upper part of a face. The montage of images suggests the gesture itself of reading, thus reflecting our own gaze.

The tearing of the paper material along with the photographic, serigraphic, and lithographic treatment contribute to a dissimilar elaboration of the original text, showing at the same time adherence to and distance from the source. For Paolini the illustrations have the value of a theatrical space, hosting events and apparitions, brought to life by the figures and by the gestures that take place in between the pages in a dizzying show of echoes and doubles.



Bibliographical references

Impressions graphiques. L'opera grafica 1967-1992 di Giulio Paolini (Turin: Marco Noire Editore, 1992), cat. no. 29.

Entry by Bettina Della Casa