



Giulio Paolini  
Un posto vuoto  
con un testo di Marina Dacci

Opening Saturday 21 September, 6-8pm  
24 September 2024 - 4 January 2025

Press Release

*For some time now I have had a preference for themes and exhibition opportunities in Italy. While the progressive blurring of cultural borders is indubitably valuable for a reciprocal sharing of experiences, it also limits a work's relationship to its own heritage.*

*It is as if the confines of our own four walls, the intimacy of one's own studio, were projected onto the all-too familiar, tried-and-true latitudes of our planet.*

*Italian art then?*

*Yes, but free to explore infinite trajectories, as always, anywhere it wants to throughout Time and History.*

*Here, then, are echoes and memories of authors, distant relatives of this new (or ancient) season of mine.*

*A petit-tour inside a room: a world less vast but more precious.*

Giulio Paolini

With these words, Giulio Paolini introduces his seventh solo show at Galleria Studio G7, inaugurating the new exhibition season. The space of the gallery, at once concentrated and inviting, is displaying four of the artist's pieces which have never been exhibited before now, as well as some of his works on paper which invite the viewer to follow the diagonal layout of the space.

In the center of the room, we find *Ultimo modello*, a plexiglas structure of intricate geometry, holding a host of randomly distributed photographic fragments: a sort of "building site" which, through traces of previous works and iconographic motifs characteristic of the artist's repertory, speaks of a work-in-progress. The title – taken from another version of the work of his from 1992, as indicated by the pair of dates on the piece – announces that there is in fact something new: in a broad sense, it announces that the artist is always starting the work anew, each time believing he will catch sight of what he seeks among the echoes of the past and hints of an as yet unknown apparition.

Placed around *Ultimo modello*, at the four corners is a work entitled *L'Efebo*, consisting of four plaster casts of the bust of Ephebe set upon as many white bases. As Paolini has written: "*Individual, physical beauty, personified in the male figure of Ephebe, is captured contemplating the symbolic space evoked by Ultimo Modello in an unmitigated confrontation between one truth and another*".

In *Vertigo*, the plaster cast of Antonio Canova's Hebe (1796) – seen from the back as she is caught in the act of fleeing the scene in one corner of the exhibition space – is accompanied by a length of cloth draping onto the ground, as if to extend the garment that adorns this female figure. The fabric displays a daytime sky, dotted with clouds, in which a Genesa crystal and an amethyst – timeless portents of spirituality – have been set. Paolini has appropriated the figure of the goddess Hebe – daughter of Zeus and Hera and cupbearer of the Gods – in virtue of how lightly she glides, like a dancer, reverent, focused and silent. The artist declares: "*Canova's Hebe flees and evades our gaze: even the sky above her seems to envelop her body and give rise to an imminent and dizzying disappearance*". The title *Vertigo*, in fact, alludes to the position of the figure who, placed with her back to us in a corner, stands at the edge of a threshold in the act of stepping into an unknown dimension, perched between contingencies and absolutes, between the earthly dimension and ineffable Beauty.

Diagonally opposite to the placement of *Vertigo*, we find *Estasi di San Sebastiano* which leads us to the entrance of the exhibition space. This reproduction of Lorenzo Costa's Saint Sebastian (1490-95) is set in a round, gilded frame, off-center on its white mat board. These elements are displayed over a plexiglas case that is set within a nebula. The ensemble is pierced through the center by a black pencil, which provides the key to understanding the work: according to the artist, this represents the instrument of "martyrdom" that forces him to try again and again each time to make an ecstatic contact with an absolute dimension, an attempt symbolically represented by the image of the Cosmos.

The primary theme of the exhibition is the enquiry into the act itself of exhibiting, a process which is activated and vivified through the dialogue established between the antique figures, protagonists and witnesses to the act of creating the artwork in an ineffable and absolute dimension.

The exhibition is accompanied by a text written by Marina Dacci.



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*The Sacred Geometry of Giulio Paolini*  
Marina Dacci

Giulio Paolini transforms the space of the gallery into a habitat that both recalls the intimate dimensions of his studio and evokes his creative process.

In the center of the room, his piece *Ultimo modello* reproduces the entryway into his abode, as a labyrinth of walls of light. The visitor advances onto a stage set, encouraged to look "with closed eyes" in amazed anticipation of the subsequent images: apparitions that reveal themselves incarnate, purified, in works deposited on the plexiglas floor. The work then appears without completely unveiling itself, offering only tidbits, in a constant breath of regeneration.

The artist, hidden from view, is at once advocate and witness, Paolini's own stance is like that of his *L'Efebo*, displayed in four plaster casts flanking the *Ultimo Modello*, looking at one another, yet seemingly "unseeing": visitors – as he himself calls them – but also helmsmen of and spokesmen for the possible manifestation of a work of art suspended in a time steeped in metaphysical flavor.

There is a strong presence throughout the work of its relationship with the diagonal which encompasses and amplifies the notion of entrances and exits, of arrivals and departures, conferring a sense of centrifugal and centripetal forces to the space of the gallery. Along the diagonal that connects the two opposite corners of the room, two figures – Hebe and Saint Sebastian – seem to be trying to flee the scene.

In *Vertigo*, Hebe, cupbearer of ambrosia, promenades towards the exit. Her garment slips from her ivory flesh leaving the room in a blue glow. As the perpetual enigma of Beauty?

On the opposite side, *Saint Sebastian* overcomes the pain of his wounds by turning his ecstatic gaze towards a new cosmos: a dimension of swirling energy filled with light and darkness which the artist's pen, stuck like an arrow, cannot stop.

*Vertigo* and *Ecstasy* upon which the gaze of art rests are mental states withdrawn by time and space.

It is my feeling that poetry, rather than a critical review, is what is called for to describe Paolini's work: his ABC book<sup>1</sup> speaks to us about the Infinite, about enigmas, identity, memory and time.

The apparent composure of his work tears down borders, placing itself in a liminal space between the affirmation of the image and its negation with respect to the infinite ways to look at it.

Space and Time are at once absorbed and denied in the very awareness of the illumination that brings the image to life time and time again, while still preserving its previous incarnations.

The artist thus lives suspended, as does his work. He generates it and is prepared to go beyond it or even wonder about its very existence.

It may seem like a paradox, but formal completeness, laid out according to precise rules which can be traced back to sacred geometry, abides side by side with the dissolution of the sign into pure energy, understood as that which is never given, constant movement.

When art manifests, it instantaneously dazzled us with its robes of truth. It tears open new perspectives, aims at absolutes, sometimes even aspires to create a drama of conscience, man's persistence to be human.

<sup>1</sup> Giulio Paolini, *Quando è il presente?* (*When is the Present?*) Polistampa/Museo del Novecento, 2022 (pg. 91-107)