

Biography

1940 - 1959

Giulio Paolini was born in Genoa on 5 November 1940. He was the second child of Angelo Paolini (1910-1992), who had a degree in business and economics, and worked as a clerk in the sales office of the Italian Institute of Graphic Arts, and Teresita De Maria (1908-1988), a middle school teacher. He is the younger brother of Cesare Paolini (1937-1983).

In 1942 his family moved to Bergamo for his father's job. There Giulio attended school through the first year of middle school.

At the age of eight Giulio took part in a children's drawing competition held by the Turin-based fountain-pen company Aurora and was unexpectedly awarded first prize by a jury headed by Felice Casorati: it was his first unwitting "artistic" success.

In 1952 Giulio's father was transferred to the Piedmont region, and the family settled in Turin, at Via Giolitti 19.

To satisfy his father's expectations in 1954 Giulio enrolled at the Giambattista Bodoni State Industrial Technical Institute for Graphic and Photographic Arts, in the Graphics department, graduating in 1959. His experiences in the world of typography and photography, which took place at a turning point in Italian graphic culture towards a more experimental approach – it was the period of Albe Steiner, Bruno Munari, Erberto Carboni and Max Huber – left their mark on his training.

His brother was studying architecture, and the specialist magazines lying around the house (*Domus*, *Casabella*, *Graphis*) stimulated his interest in architecture and design, orienting his taste in an aesthetic and visual direction rooted in the Modern Movement¹. While still a student Giulio Paolini approached the art world as a spectator, going to exhibitions and reading articles on contemporary art, especially at the American Library (United States Information Service) in Piazza San Carlo, which was inaugurated in the early 1950s, and was active until 1963. There he found monographs and magazines such as *Art International* and *Art News*, which at the time were among the richest sources of information about international artistic developments. He drew little encouraging stimulus from the local art scene: the Turin galleries La Bussola and Galatea represented currents that were fairly distant from his own interest in more radical experimentation. He was more curious about the shows at the Galleria Notizie which in 1958-60 held exhibitions by, among others, Wols, Pinot Gallizio, Carla Accardi, Lucio Fontana and Sam Francis.

He gradually approached art also as a painter, getting to know his vocation: around 1958, in the attic at home he tried a few pictures of an abstract nature, tending to monochrome (small oils on cardboard).



Genoa, 1947, Giulio (right) with his brother Cesare



Turin, 1965

¹ His brother Cesare Paolini studied architecture at the Politecnico di Torino (1957-1966), where he was awarded a diploma.

In 1965, he founded, along with Piero Gatti and Franco Teodoro, an architecture, design, graphics, and photography firm in Turin, which is especially famous for the "Sacco" bean bag chair conceived in 1968 for the Zanotta furniture company.

On finishing his studies in 1959 he rounded off his professional knowledge with a year's training at Carlo Repetto's graphic design and advertising agency in Turin and subsequently worked until 1963 in the office of his father, who was a stationery salesman.

In 1959-60 he frequented Guido Le Noci's Galleria Apollinaire in Milan where among other things he discovered the works of Yves Klein.

Meanwhile he went his own way, exploring a reductionist line of research, a zeroing of the image that led him on to increasingly radical trials (now lost).

1960 - 1969

In the second half of 1960, not yet twenty, Giulio Paolini did a painting (probably his first on canvas) which he considers his first "authentic" work: *Disegno geometrico*. The ink drawing made using a ruling pen and a compass on a canvas painted with white tempera represents the conventional squaring of a rectangular surface. The diagonals that indicate the middle are drawn in red ink, while the medians, determined by a compass, are in black ink. Within the perspective of a radical depersonalization of the work, the artistic gesture is limited to indicating the "conditions of the spatial setting in which the picture could have existed" (Paolini). An actual statement of intent, *Disegno geometrico* would always remain the conceptual paradigm and the point of eternal recurrence in his artistic research.

The first works that revealed the artist to himself were followed by the first steps that revealed him to the public. In 1961 Guido Le Noci got him his first group show, inviting him to exhibit in the *Informativo-sperimentale* section of the *XII Premio Lissone* where he presented the work *Senza titolo* (1961). The work consisted of a stretcher wrapped in a sheet of plastic containing a canvas that was smaller in size, and hanging from several threads in the empty space of the stretcher, as if it were the "subject" of the "painting".

In 1961 he also rented a small studio in Via San Francesco da Paola 15, Turin, which he kept on until 1964. He made his first friendships with other artists – Aldo Mondino, Gianni Piacentino, Michelangelo Pistoletto – who encouraged him and became his first interlocutors in matters of art.

At the beginning of 1963 in Rome he met Guido Montana, editor of the magazine *Arte Oggi*, who in the January-June 1963 issue published Paolini's first piece of writing entitled *Sulle prospettive e alternative dell'attuale momento artistico* and introduced him to the Roman art scene. Through Mondino he got to know Plinio De Martiis, director of the gallery La Tartaruga of Rome, to whom he presented the exhibition project *Ipotesi per una mostra* that never came off.

In June 1964 he was at the Venice Biennale for the first time – the year Robert Rauschenberg was awarded the Grand Jury Prize –



Disegno geometrico, 1960

where he made friends with Carla Accardi and with some artists close to De Martiis who were exhibiting in the Padiglione Italia: Franco Angeli, Giosetta Fioroni, Tano Festa, and Mario Schifano. Again through Aldo Mondino he met Gian Tomaso Liverani, owner of the Rome gallery La Salita, who offered him his first solo exhibition for autumn 1964. Absolutely unusual on the Italian scene at the time, the show, which opened on 31 October, consisted of untreated wooden panels hung on or leant against the walls, suggesting not so much an exhibition of pictures but rather an exhibition that was in the process of being set up. The show resulted not only in his first sale – thanks to the acquisition of one of his works by Corrado Levi – but also his first critical recognition: Carla Lonzi and Marisa Volpi saw the exhibition and he began a lasting friendship with them. Shortly afterwards they would write the first critical texts on his work.

In early 1965, through Carla Lonzi, he got to know Luciano Pistoï who immediately invited him to take part in a group show with Carla Accardi, Enrico Castellani, Michelangelo Pistoletto and Cy Twombly where he exhibited *2200/H* (1965). A solo show was proposed for the autumn of the same year, which marked Giulio Paolini's Turin debut. The show included his first photographic works, made during the same year, and the first appearance of the figure of the artist himself.

The collaboration with Pistoï – his main dealer until the early 1970s – led to new contacts with collectors and the avant-garde artists that gravitated around the gallery. He struck up special friendships with Mario Merz and Luciano Fabro; in Pistoï's circle of friends he also got to know the writer and intellectual Saverio Vertone, the collector Ippolito Simonis and, more importantly, Anna Piva, Pistoï's fiancée at the time, and soon to become Paolini's partner in life².

Over the course of 1965 he moved his studio to a small attic apartment in Via Governolo 21, where he worked until 1968. In the second half of the 1960s his artistic research was further consolidated in his conceptual propositions and position of absolute autonomy with regard to the dominant effervescent climate of the day. Exhibitions increased together with the network of gallery owners and critics interested in his work. In 1966, through Enrico Castellani, he had a show at the Galleria dell'Ariete in Milan where he presented a series of works consisting of white canvases set in groupings on the floor and ceiling, stuck to the corners of the space. On this occasion he got to know Lucio Fontana who bought one of his works.

In 1967 Mondino introduced him into the circle of Christian Stein with whom, in the same year, he held a solo exhibition and began a long and fruitful collaboration as well as a lasting friendship.

One of the most important of his new acquaintances was Alighiero



Turin, 1965, with Luciano Pistoï



Anna Piva, Cagnes-sur-mer, 1969

² Born on 19 September 1931 to a Turinese family, Anna Piva spent her early life in Africa, where her father held a post as economic expert for the Italian government.

Her first marriage was to her peer Pippo Baldioli, but in 1956 she became romantically involved with Luciano Pistoï, with whom she directed for a short period of time the Galleria L'immagine in Turin, dedicated to print editions.

In 1965 she left Pistoï for Giulio Paolini, whose artistic career she followed closely, firmly believing in the gradual evolution of his activity. A lover of photography, Anna documented Giulio's output and exhibition activity between 1965 and the early 1970s, a precious and often sole witness to his travels, works, and exhibitions.

In the second half of the 1960s, she worked as a translator from English to Italian for the publisher De Donato in Bari. She translated *Environmental Theatre* by Richard Schechner (1968), an anthology on performance by Michael Kirby titled *Happening* (1969), and the Italian edition of *Aubrey Beardsley, Imp of the Perverse* by Stanley Weintraub (1970), among others.

She was a close friend of Carla Lonzi, sharing the subsequent feminist experiences with her, and taking part in meetings and the activities of the Rivolta Femminile group in the 1970s. Throughout her life she passionately nurtured her interest in literature, theatre, cinema, music, and art.

She died on 30 January 2022 after battling a long illness.

Boetti, with whom he felt a special affinity.

Through Carla Lonzi he met Germano Celant, who wrote an essay for the catalogue of a solo exhibition at the Galleria del Leone in Venice (1967) and got him involved in the nascent Arte Povera scene, inviting him to the main shows he organized in 1967-70, beginning with *Arte Povera – Im-Spazio* at the Galleria La Bertesca in Genoa.

Paolini's participation in the Arte Povera adventure, though borne out by the presence of his works at the exhibitions and by his now consecrated attribution under that label, was never based on adherence to a principle. As the works of the late 1960s suggest, his artistic position was distinguished, through a well defined autonomy, from the vitalistic approach and the "energy situations" of Arte Povera, just as it was from the revolutionary climate of the times. Far from the idea of "guerrilla war" founded on reconsideration of the relationship between art and life, and therefore far from exploration of a de-aestheticism of the artistic experience, Paolini turned his own inquiries towards a wholly different reflection.

Stating that he belonged intimately to the history of art – to the dynasty of artists who had preceded him – he wilfully remained within the boundaries of art, questioning the very "actors" of the artistic experience: the artist, the beholder, the gaze, the spatial framing of the picture, the space of the representation. Among the examples of this research, which was declaredly extraneous to the militant scene of the years around 1968 and decidedly influenced by the discovery of Jorge Luis Borges, we recall by way of example some of the works that are best known today: *Averroè* (1967), *Giovane che guarda Lorenzo Lotto* (1967), *Primo appunto sul tempo* (1968), *Quattro immagini uguali* (1969), as well as the "self-portraits" from Poussin and Douanier Rousseau (the latter shown at the group show *Teatro delle mostre* in Rome, 1968). Several emblematic works dating to 1968-69 highlight the use of citation, understood as a linguistic tool for questioning the very nature of an artwork and of representation. To this regard mention should be made of the works drawn from the details of the Old Master paintings by some of the Paolini's favourite "relatives" – Ingres, Velázquez, Vermeer, and Rousseau – exhibited in the solo show at the De Nieubourg gallery in Milan in February 1969. Or the banner exhibited in September 1969 for the event entitled *Campo urbano*, curated by Luciano Caramel in Como, featuring the Latin quotation "Et. quid. amabo. nisi. quod. ænigma. est?" taken from a self-portrait by Giorgio de Chirico. The Greek-born Italian was another "interlocutor" whom the artist had discovered during this period, and who would remain an essential point of reference. Lastly, there is the work *Elegia* (1969), which marked Paolini's first use of the plaster cast of an ancient sculpture, in this case the eye of



Giovane che guarda Lorenzo Lotto, 1967

Michelangelo's *David*, with the fragment of a mirror set in the place of the pupil.

Also worthy of note is the research thread begun by the artist in 1969, focused on the "phenomenon, an ancient one, of seeing". The most significant work in this regard is *Vedo (la decifrazione del mio campo visivo)*, in which a multitude of dots made in pencil on the wall retrace the area corresponding to the field of vision of both the author and the viewer. "*Vedo* is the abstract and conceptual scheme of vision, it is the translation into figures of the phenomenon of seeing" (Paolini).

In January 1969 he was invited to do the set designs and costumes for Vittorio Alfieri's *Bruto II*, produced by the Teatro Stabile in Turin and directed by Gualtiero Rizzi. This was the beginning of a long series of collaborations in the theatre.

In March 1969 he went to Cagnes-sur-Mer, in France, where he took part, with *La libertà (H. R.)* (1967), in the *Premier Festival International de la Peinture*, his first group show outside Italy. Shortly afterwards, in April, he and Anna went to New York (his only journey to the States until this day) to visit museums and galleries, including Knoedler's, where he caught a glimpse of Barnett Newman while setting up a solo exhibition.

In 1969 he left his studio in Via Governolo and moved to a small attic at Via Marco Polo 41 where he would remain for two years.



Making *Vedo (la decifrazione del mio campo visivo)*, 1969

1970 - 1979

After the decade of getting started – of preparing his own language and tools as well as clarifying his own conceptual position – the 1970s were the period of his coming out into the world: the first solo shows abroad, the first museum exhibitions and the first official acknowledgements.

At the beginning of the decade he began working with some of the most important international avant-garde galleries at the time. First and foremost with Paul Maenz, who since 1971 had encouraged Paolini and promoted his work in Germany, organizing various exhibitions at the Cologne gallery and contributing to getting his work into public institutions. In 1972 Paolini had a solo show at the Sonnabend Gallery in New York consisting of eight large format pictures which inaugurated an especially important theme: a backward glance at his own work and the idea of the picture as catalogue of an unlimited number of works. On the occasion of the exhibition the gallery published Germano Celant's monograph on the artist – the first to appear – with numerous extracts from an unpublished conversation. Other foreign galleries with which Paolini began a happy and lasting working relationship include Annemarie Verna in Zurich (from 1973), Yvon Lambert in Paris (from 1976) and Lisson Gallery in London (from 1977).

In Italy the main art dealer for Paolini in the 1970s was Giorgio

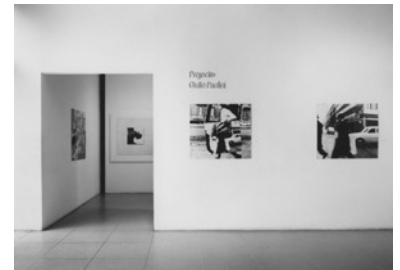


Turin, 1971

Marconi of Milan, who had gotten to know Paolini's work through the collector Attilio Codognato. In 1973 Studio Marconi organized the first retrospective, accompanied by a catalogue with an interview by Achille Bonito Oliva; the exhibition, which was reviewed in the *Corriere della Sera* by Maurizio Calvesi, was widely appreciated. Another event of particular importance was the solo show at Studio Marconi in 1979 entitled *Atto unico in tre quadri* for which the gallery published a catalogue with essays by Carlo Bertelli and Gianni Vattimo. The other leading Italian galleries Paolini worked with during the decade included Marilena Bonomo in Bari (from 1971), Lucio Amelio in Naples (from 1972), Françoise Lambert in Milan (from 1973), Ugo Ferranti in Rome (from 1975), Massimo Minini in Brescia (from 1976), Christian Stein in Turin and the Galleria dell'Oca in Rome directed by Luisa Laureati (with whom he had been close friends since 1967).

The first solo exhibitions in museums began in 1974 with a small show in the Project Room of the Museum of Modern Art in New York. In 1976 the first institutional retrospective with about thirty works from 1960 to 1976 was presented by the Art History Institute of Parma University, director Arturo Carlo Quintavalle, at Palazzo della Pilotta in Parma. An important monograph was published on the occasion of the exhibition with essays by Maurizio Fagiolo and Quintavalle himself and a selection of critical texts and reviews. Among the voices united in this anthology, special mention should go to Giorgio de Marchis, who had followed the development of Paolini's work since the late 1960s, to Tommaso Trini, a critic sensitive to his work since 1967 and author of an essay published in two parts in the magazine *Data* in 1973, and to Mirella Bandini who had been a keen commentator on Paolini's exhibitions and works since the early 1970s. In the second half of the decade there were solo shows in the German museums of Mönchengladbach and Mannheim, organized in collaboration with Paul Maenz in 1977, a major exhibition curated by the artist at Villa Pignatelli in Naples with the mediation of Lucio Amelio (1978) and above all the solo show at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (1978), director Suzanne Pagé, where Paolini presented the cycle of works entitled *Del bello intelligibile*, set up with columns drawn on the wall to suggest an imaginary temple.

His many group exhibitions included the 35th Venice Biennale (1970, 1976, 1978), the *Septième Biennale de Paris* (1971, 1973), the *X Quadriennale Nazionale d'Arte* (1973), the *Documenta* in Kassel (1972, 1977), the *XII Bienal de São Paulo* (1973, with special mention) and the *The Third Biennale* of Sydney (1979). Many exhibitions of Italian art abroad set Paolini's works in the international context (for example *Projekt '74*, Cologne, 1974; *Europe in the Seventies*, a touring show in the United States from 1977 to 1979; *Prospect/Retrospect*, Düsseldorf, 1977). Through the mediation of Gian Enzo Sperone



Solo exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1974



Solo exhibition at Städtisches Museum, Mannheim, 1977



Solo exhibition at Villa Pignatelli, Naples, 1978

and Germano Celant he has been represented in numerous exhibitions dedicated to Arte Povera and Conceptual art. He took part in the main Italian exhibitions on recent artistic developments including *Gennaio 70* (Bologna, 1970), *Vitalità del negativo nell'arte italiana 1960-70* (Rome, 1970), *Contemporanea* (Rome, 1973), *Europa-America. L'astrazione determinata 1960/1976* (Bologna, 1976) and *Arte in Italia 1960-1977. Dall'opera al coinvolgimento* (Turin, 1977).

In the exhibitions of the 1970s there were three episodes of special significance with regard to the artist's research: the solo shows *Un quadro* (Galleria dell'Ariete, Milan; Galleria La Salita, Rome, 1971) and *La Doublure* (Galleria L'Attico, Rome 1973), each dedicated to a single work cited in the title; plus the cycle *Idem* (various galleries from 1972 to 1978). *Un quadro* consists of fourteen pictures, each of which reproduces the image of *Disegno geometrico* but is attributed to a fictitious artist and given an imaginary title. *La Doublure* consists of twenty-eight canvases bearing a perspective drawing of the canvas itself, each signed on the back with a different subtitle. *Idem* is a cycle subdivided into seven parts corresponding to seven exhibitions in different places, each one proposing a grouping of modular elements distributed in variable order to suggest a "repertoire" of possible paintings.

From a formal and semantic point of view, Paolini's production in the 1970s is characterized mainly by two lines of research: perspective and the theme of the double. Perspective drawing, introduced into the pictures shown at the Sonnabend Gallery, functions as a linguistic device for announcing the picture as space of the depiction, as timeless scene destined to accommodate all past, present and future pictures. The double and the mirror image, especially developed in 1975-76 – the "icon" par excellence is *Mimesi*, created in several variants with two plaster casts of the same antique statue set face to face – questions the very nature of reproduction.

In the same decade Paolini worked increasingly for the theatre, above all with Carlo Quartucci, designing sets and costumes for *La fantastica storia di Don Chisciotte della Mancia* (1970, Golden Camera for the set designs in 1971) and *Laborintus II* (1971), among others.

In 1975 *Idem*, his first anthology of writings and interviews, with an introductory essay by Italo Calvino, was published by Einaudi.

In the same year he won the Lucio Fontana Prize.

From 1971 to 1978 his studio was a small flat in Via Cernaia 1. In 1979 he moved to his studio in Via Po 32, where he continues to work today.

On 9 May 1975 he and Anna Piva were wed, after living together for a decade. In the fall of the same year, they settled in their home in Piazza Vittorio Veneto 10.



Mimesi, 1975

1980 - 1989

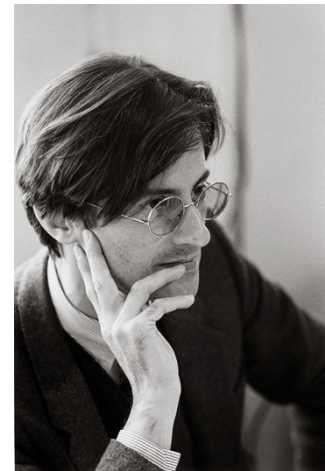
The 1980s definitively consolidated the name he had made in the previous decade and were years of the most intense exhibition activity, of great international retrospectives set up by the artist in accordance with precise thematic subdivisions and accompanied by important monographs. On the level of artistic production, an increasingly detailed attention emerged with regard to the exhibitive act as such. Most of the works found their *raison d'être* in the act of the exhibition, which became an occasion for devising complex situations, often in dialogue with the distinctive features of the exhibition space.

Among the main survey exhibitions special mention should go to the one at Le Nouveau Musée in Villeurbanne in 1984 (which travelled to Montreal and Vancouver, Canada, in 1985, and to Charleroi, Belgium, in 1986), organized by Jean-Louis Maubant and featuring a two-volume catalogue edited by the artist, with his writings and interviews; to the significant 1986 solo show at the Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart, set up in four different parts of the museum and documented by a four-volume publication with writings by the artist and critical essays by curator Gudrun Inboden and by Johannes Meinhardt; and to the 1988 exhibition at the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna in Rome, curated by Augusta Monferini and set up in accordance with a precise spatial logic. The catalogue includes essays by the curator, by Gianni Vattimo and Saverio Vertone and an anthology of critical texts.

On other occasions the exhibitions consisted of a single large-scale work: *Hortus Clausus* at the Kunstmuseum in Lucerne (1981, two-volume catalogue with writings by the artist and an essay by Martin Kunz), *Lo sguardo della Medusa* at the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna in Rome (1981), *La caduta di Icaro* at the Padiglione d'Arte Contemporanea in Milan (1982) and *Signore e signori...* at the Museo di Capodimonte in Naples (1988, curated by Bruno Corà). There were also numerous shows conceived around a single work presented in galleries.

Towards the end of the decade the exhibition was more and more explicitly put forward as a "work" itself, becoming an actual subject of reflection. At the 1987 solo show at the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Nantes, director Henry-Claude Cousseau, the main work "looked at" all the others in the exhibition situation itself. In the catalogue Paolini published a brief piece of writing on the theme of the exhibition, laying the foundations for his in-depth theoretical studies over the following decades.

Close involvement in staging works that were increasingly differentiated and had a wealth of literary-artistic evocations, together with the marked complexity of the exhibition set-ups, were intimately linked to a fundamental component of Paolini's research in the 1980s: theatricality. Hence the introduction of typical stage and theatre elements – clothes, 18th century *valets de*



Turin, 1983



Solo exhibition at the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, Rome, 1988

chambre, items of furniture – to celebrate the “triumph of representation” (as we read in a work central to this period, developed from 1983 onwards) in a “theatre” where the stage is occupied by the most varied bit actors who announce a representation that we constantly await.

Paolini took part in innumerable group shows in the 1980s, including the *Venice Biennale* (1980, 1984, 1986) and *Documenta* in Kassel (1982). There was also a series of Arte Povera shows curated by Germano Celant in Turin, Madrid and New York (1984-85). New reference galleries added to the ones of the previous decades included Marian Goodman in New York and Mario Pieroni in Rome.

In the 1980s, for the theatre he did some of his most interesting work, again with Carlo Quartucci, including *Pentesilea/Kleist, sei frammenti* (1981), *Comédie Italienne* (1981), and *Platea* (1982).

1990 - 1999

In the 1990s his reflections on the theme of the exhibition reached a peak in shows and individual works that were declaredly based on it. To this regard, among the most incisive examples is the project conceived in 1993-94 for the Galleria Locus Solus in Genoa, directed by Uberta and Vittorio Dapelo, which involved a complex exhibition that extended over a one-year period, accompanied by a long piece of writing published in the two volume catalogue. Among the various expressions in which the fundamental ideas of this decade were crystallized, various modes of conceiving the exhibition installation may be identified. In the first place an unprecedented typology asserts itself, of an implosive nature, founded on the concentration and accumulation of objects and materials, on the interlocking and superimposing of works to form “islands” – places, oases, rooms – dense with evocations, memories and echoes which blend into one another. Tried out for the first time in the solo show *L'ospite* at Massimo Minini's in Brescia in 1989, this type of installation found significant formulations in the nine rooms of the *Hotel de l'Univers* at Villa delle Rose in Bologna (1990), in the solo show at Palazzo della Ragione in Padua (1995) and in *L'Île enchantée* at Yvon Lambert's in Paris (1996). In other cases the works were set up around a scenic structure, as in the 1992 exhibitions at Stein's in Milan and Lambert's in Paris: the cornerstone work in these cases was *Contemplator enim*.

Another way of focusing attention on the exhibition theme turned on the development of a work with a particularly eloquent title, *Esposizione universale* (1992), consisting of a great container-display case in plexiglas intended as a sort of model or laboratory of all possible exhibitions.

The exhibition theme was echoed by that of the staging of the “theatre of the opus”, meaning a scenario that announces – through pencils, paper, canvases and images of hands intent on drawing –



San Gimignano, 1994

the instant in which the work is about to manifest itself. Emblematic in this context are the works *Teatro dell'opera* (1992-93), *Essere o non essere* (1994-95), *Big Bang* (1997-98) and *Quasi* (1999) which implicitly bring the dimension of the artist's studio onto the scene. Outstanding among his main solo shows in the 1990s were the touring retrospective of prints (from 1992), accompanied by the first catalogue of the artist's prints (*Impressions graphiques. L'opera grafica 1967-1992 di Giulio Paolini*, Turin: Marco Noire Editore, 1992), and the 1998 retrospective at the Neue Galerie im Landesmuseum Joanneum in Graz, curated by Peter Weibel (following the Trigon Prize awarded in 1995) and transferred in 1999 to the Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea of Turin, director Pier Giovanni Castagnoli.

Together with Francesco Poli's monograph brought out in 1990 (Turin: Lindau), the book published on the occasion of the Graz exhibition provides the richest and most complete documentation on the artist. Moreover, in 1995 an exhaustive collection of the artist's writings and interviews was edited by Maddalena Disch (*Giulio Paolini. La voce del pittore. Scritti e interviste 1965-1995*, Lugano: ADV Publishing House).

Paolini himself has published a considerable number of books and collections of writings: reflections on his own work and critical considerations on the art world and the role (or non-role) of the artist have taken on an increasingly evident importance in his activities. In particular, we point out *Contemplator enim* (Florence: Hopefulmonster, 1991), the trilogy published between 1994 and 1998 by Exit Edizioni of Ravenna (*Lezione di pittura, Black Out* and *Giro di boa*) and the "primer" entitled *La verità in quattro righe e novantacinque voci*, edited by Sergio Risaliti in 1996 for Einaudi. In 1995 Paolini was nominated Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres, and upgraded to Officier in 2002.



Essere o non essere, 1994-95

2000 - 2009

At the beginning of the new millennium Paolini resumed his work as a stage designer: the sets and costumes for three ballets choreographed by Davide Bombana (*Teorema*, 1999, *Aus der Ferne*, 2000, and *La septième Lune*, 2004), then for two Wagner operas directed by Federico Tiezzi at the Teatro San Carlo in Naples: *The Valkyrie* (2005, 25th 'Franco Abbiati' Italian Music Critics Prize for stage design), and *Parsifal* (2007).

In the early 2000's Paolini also got involved in teaching: he held a drawing class at the Salzburg International Summer Academy of Fine Arts (2000), was visiting professor on the Upper Level Course in Visual Arts at the Fondazione Ratti in Como (2002), and taught at the Laboratory of Artistic Techniques and Experiences at the Faculty of Design and Arts of the Istituto Universitario di Architettura in Venice (2002, 2003).

As for artistic research, in the first half of the decade his strong



Die Walküre, Teatro di San Carlo, Naples, 2005

interest in the conceptual implications of the exhibition experience found particular expression in the context of two major shows. The first in 2001 at Palazzo Forti in Verona, director Giorgio Cortenova, on the occasion of the International Koinè Prize for career achievement, and the second in 2005 at the Winterthur Kunstmuseum, which went on to the Westfälisches Landesmuseum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte in Münster (catalogue with texts by curators Dieter Schwarz and Erich Franz). The Winterthur show gave him the chance to create a new and monumental version of *Esposizione universale*, which also lent its name to the exhibition. Another fundamental theme in the 2000's is the artist's identity: his absence on the scene of the exhibition and his missing (or inaccessible) contact with a work which always precedes and supersedes him. Reflections on this subject were expressed not only in individual works but also in his writings and the propositions of exhibition projects: for example, in the solo show entitled *The Unknown Artist*, held simultaneously at the Marian Goodman and Yvon Lambert galleries in Paris and New York in 2006, in the collection of writings *Quattro passi. Nel museo senza muse*, published by Einaudi the same year, and in the large-scale work *Immacolata Concezione. Senza titolo / Senza autore* (2007-08). Foremost among his solo exhibitions are the 1960-72 retrospective organized by Germano Celant at the Fondazione Prada in Milan (2003), with a rich catalogue, and the solo show at the Galleria d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea in Bergamo (2006) curated by Giacinto Di Pietrantonio. Outstanding for their originality are the exhibitions presented at the Auditorium of the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia in Rome (*L'offerta musicale*, 2008) curated by Marcello Smarrelli, and at the Sala della Meridiana in the National Archaeological Museum of Naples (*L'ora X. Né prima né dopo*, 2009, curator Anna Mattiolo). Both exhibitions have in common a dense nucleus of works set up in the centre of the space.

Solo exhibitions held in galleries include, in addition to the one's previously mentioned, projects conceived for Annemarie Verna in Zurich (2000, 2009), Christian Stein in Milan (2001, 2007), Tucci Russo in Torre Pellice (2004, 2009), Giorgio Marconi in Milan (2007), Massimo Minini in Brescia (2007), Lisson Gallery in London (2008), and Alfonso Artiaco in Naples (2009). In 2004, with his wife Anna and his closest collaborators, the artist established the Fondazione Giulio e Anna Paolini. In collaboration with the Castello di Rivoli Museum of Contemporary Art, Rivoli, Turin, directed by Ida Gianelli, the Fondazione published, in 2008, a two-volume Catalogue Raisonné of the works from 1960 to 1999 edited by Maddalena Disch (*Giulio Paolini, Catalogo ragionato 1960-1999*, Milan: Skira editore).



Naples, 2009

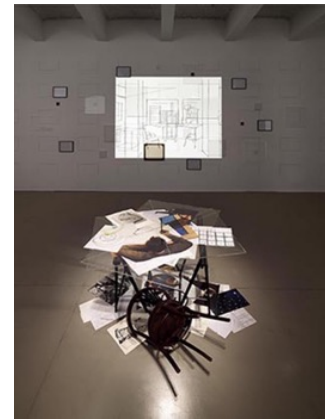
2010 - 2019

The start of the new decade coincided with a solo show of the artist's works, curated by Daniela Lancioni in 2010 as part of the Giorgio De Chirico retrospective held at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni in Rome. The installation produced for the occasion, entitled *Gli uni e gli altri (L'enigma dell'ora)*, introduced the wall video-projection of fade-out images, which would characterize other later works by the artist.

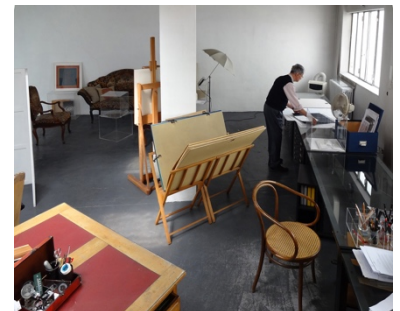
The ideas developed by Paolini during these years – in his works as well as in his writings – chiefly focus on the theme of the author, often involving the leitmotif of the artist's work-table and his relationship with the work of art. This was visible in the solo show dedicated to this very same theme, curated by Bartolomeo Pietromarchi in 2013 at the MACRO Museo d'arte contemporanea di Roma of Rome. The exhibition was repeated the following year at the Whitechapel Gallery in London, albeit with a larger number of works, including an important group of historical ones. This was the first retrospective, curated jointly by Daniel F. Herrmann and Bartolomeo Pietromarchi, of the author's work in Great Britain since 1980, and it was accompanied by a catalogue that included contributions by the curators, by Gabriele Guercio, Barry Schwabsky, and Ilaria Bernardi.

Another leitmotif that was represented in multiple works during the course of the decade is the reference to figures or episodes borrowed from classical mythology, especially recalled in relation to the theme of Beauty (Venus, Echo, Narcissus, Hermaphroditus, Ganymede). This theme is constantly invoked in Paolini's works, notwithstanding the awareness of its ineffability.

Four solo exhibitions held at institutions were particularly significant. In 2015, at Spazio -1 in Lugano, Paolini presented the complete cycle of *Mnemosyne (Les Charmes de la Vie)*, conceived between 1981 and 1990 after a painting by Jean-Antoine Watteau (curator Bettina Della Casa), while in 2016 the Center for Italian Modern Art in New York, for the first time ever, presented a "conversation" between Paolini and some of the masterpieces of Giorgio de Chirico (curator Laura Mattioli). Again in 2016, the Museo Poldi Pezzoli invited the artist to create a conversation with the permanent collection (curated by Annalisa Zanni, catalogue with essays by Ester Coen and Flavio Fergonzi). In 2018, the Fondazione Carriero in Milan hosted the retrospective *Del Bello ideale*, curated by Francesco Stocchi, which included about thirty works integrated with interventions by the set designer Margherita Palli. The exhibition, which centred on three major themes (portrait and self-portrait, perspective and tautology, the relationship with myth and the classical) was accompanied by a two-volume catalogue in two volumes, one of which devoted to an unpublished biography in pictures curated by the artist himself (the first volume contains essays by Francesco Stocchi, Italo Rota and Luke Skrebowski).



L'autore che credeva di esistere, 2013

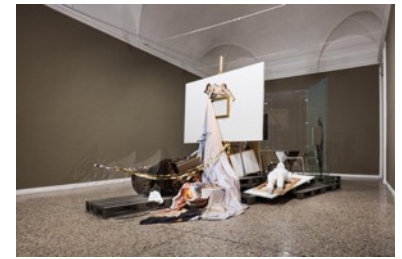


In his studio in Turin, 2014

The artist's collaborations with galleries led to new groups of works (including numerous series of works on paper) conceived for the Studio Dabbeni in Lugano (2010), Massimo Minini in Brescia (2012), Yvon Lambert in Paris (2012), Alfonso Artiaco in Naples (2014, 2018), Tucci Russo in Torre Pellice (2014) and Marian Goodman in New York (2015, 2019). Of particular importance is the solo exhibition held at the Galleria Christian Stein, including eighteen works dated from 1972 to 2016 exhibited in the gallery's Pero location, and the large-scale installation *Fine* (2016), a metaphorical *summa* of the artist's vision of art, on display at the gallery's Corso Monforte location (catalogue with texts by Bettina Della Casa, Lara Conte, Simone Menegoi).

Paolini's work was exhibited in various exhibitions devoted to Arte Povera (including those organized by Germano Celant in Italy in 2011), as well as to Italian art (*Vice Versa*, 2013 curated by Bartolomeo Pietromarchi at the Italian Pavilion of the 55th Venice Biennale; *Imagine. Nuove immagini nell'arte italiana 1960-1969*, curated by Luca Massimo Barbero, Venice, 2016; *Italia. Energia, Pensiero, Bellezza*, curated by Sergio Risaliti, Florence, 2017), as well as in other shows of an international nature concerning the theme of art in recent decades (including *Light Years: Conceptual Art and the Photograph, 1964-1977*, Chicago, 2011, curated by Matthew Witkovsky).

Paolini also published two new volumes of writings with many plates conceived for the occasion – *Dall'Atlante al Vuoto in ordine alfabetico* edited by Sergio Risaliti (Milan: Electa, 2010) and *L'autore che credeva di esistere* (Milan: Johan & Levi, 2012) – as well as the book *Orfano e celibe* with twenty-nine writings in verse, followed by a few short texts (Belluno: Edizioni Colophon, 2016).



Solo exhibition at Galleria Christian Stein, Milan, 2016

2020 - 2029

The decade began with two important exhibitions: a retrospective of recent works at the Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Rivoli-Turin, curated in 2020 by Marcella Beccaria on the occasion of the artist's eightieth birthday, and a solo show with new works at the Museo Novecento in Florence, curated in 2022 by Bettina Della Casa and Sergio Risaliti. In Rivoli personal memories were retraced based on the times and images of the artist's life contained in the works, while in Florence a new melancholy sentiment that developed at the threshold of the last season of the artist's life made headway. Both exhibitions were accompanied by a catalogue: for the event in Rivoli, two volumes, including a collection of verse writings by Andrea Cortellessa, while the Florence catalogue documented the main themes underlying the exhibited works with texts by Sergio Risaliti, Bettina Della Casa, Federico Ferrari, Stefania Zuliani, and Eva Francioli. The institutional exhibitions continue in 2023 with a solo show at the Accademia Nazionale di San Luca in Rome, curated by



Rome, 2019

Antonella Soldaini – which presents new works in conversation with the academic context and the spirit of the venue – and in 2024 at the Galleria d'Arte Moderna Achille Forti in Verona, curated by Patrizia Nuzzo and Stefano Raimondi, including several recent works and others made specifically for the event. The catalogue of the Roman exhibition contains a text and an interview by Antonella Soldaini with the artist, texts by Claudio Strinati and Francesco Guzzetti, as well as an anthology of solo exhibitions from 1964 to 2022; the Verona catalogue is a collection of texts by various authors about the works exhibited, and also includes a chronology of the artist's early years of activity, as well as a contribution on the activities of the Fondazione Giulio e Anna Paolini.

As for the solo shows held in galleries, the decade begins with an exhibition at the Massimo De Carlo gallery, Milan (2020), alongside collaborations with Christian Stein, Milan (2020, 2023), Alfonso Artiaco, Naples (2021, 2024), Tucci Russo, Turin (2021), Massimo Minini, Brescia (2022), Valentina Bonomo, Rome (2022), and Studio G7, Bologna (2024).

The group shows are distinguished by the participation in the *Arte povera* exhibitions curated by Giuliano Sergio (*Renverser ses yeux. Autour de l'arte povera 1960-1975: photographie, film, vidéo*, Paris, 2022, travelling to the Triennale, Milan, 2023) and by Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev (*Arte Povera*, Bourse de Commerce – Piunault Collection, Paris, 2024).

As for publications, a new collection of writings by the artist has been issued, curated directly by him, with numerous unpublished plates created specially for the occasion (*Eccomi. Qui dove sono*, Fondazione Giulio e Anna Paolini, Turin 2025).

In October 2022 Paolini was awarded the Praemium Imperiale, the most important acknowledgement in the field of art. For the occasion he spent a short period of time in Tokyo.

On 12 November 2022 he married, his second marriage, Bettina Della Casa, his collaborator (since 1995) and the Director of the Fondazione Giulio e Anna Paolini (since 2019).³

Maddalena Disch



Bettina Della Casa, 2009

³ Born on 7 June 1965 to a Swiss-Italian family, she grew up in Como. She was awarded a degree in Philosophy in 1991 at the Università Statale di Milano, and the following year she attended the Scuola Curatori del Museo per l'Arte Contemporanea Luigi Pecci in Prato.

From 1992 to 1995 she worked at the Galleria Christian Stein in Milan, where she first met Giulio Paolini and began collaborating with him. From 1999 to 2018 she was a curator at the Museo Cantonale d'Arte in Lugano, which in 2015 was renamed MASI (Museo d'arte della Svizzera Italiana). In the summer of 2018 she moved to Turin, at which point her work with the artist became stable.