

The Museum of Modern Art

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NO. 28
FOR RELEASE:
March 21, 1974

WORK BY GIULIO PAOLINI IN PROJECTS SERIES

An exhibition of work by 33-year-old Italian artist Giulio Paolini will be on view from March 21 through April 14 at The Museum of Modern Art as part of the Museum's Projects series reporting on recent developments in art.

Born in 1940 in Genoa, Paolini has produced, since 1960, a body of work concerned with what Italian critic Germano Celant terms "the concrete language of art." His activity as an artist has been an extended investigation of various aspects of art, with individual works functioning as non-verbal propositions about the nature of art.

Paolini's earliest works, dating from the beginning of the 1960s, were concerned with what Celant calls the "neutral support" -- the unmarked canvas and the supporting frame. Typical works of this period presented the spectator with a blank canvas, the back of a stretched canvas, a canvas marked only by the geometrical squaring off of the surface, and pieces in which the relationship between surface and support was stressed by making visible part of the support or the means of fastening the surface to the support.

Subsequent works extended the limits of Paolini's investigations to include the physical space in which the works are shown, the cultural "space" in which art works are deployed (one work in the Museum show is a photographic reproduction of a page from an art history text illustrating the movements in art from 1900 to 1965), and images of the artist himself.

Around 1967 Paolini began to draw upon the corpus of art history. One of the first of these pieces was titled "Young Man Looking at Lorenzo Lotto." It consists of a reproduction of "Portrait of a Young Man" by Lotto and the effect of the work and its title is to put the spectator in the position of the original artist Lotto, at whom the subject of the painting stares, and thereby effect an identification between spectator and artist. Other pieces from this period incorporated earlier works of art or details

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from such works and suggest a preoccupation with correspondences between artists at different points in time. In "The Invention of Ingres," for example, Paolini superimposes a photographic reproduction of Ingres' "Self Portrait of Raphael" on its model, Raphael's "Self Portrait," thereby suggesting an identification between Ingres and Raphael and between both those artists and Paolini himself.

A culmination of these interests was "The Apotheosis of Homer," made in 1970-71 and which occupies one of the galleries of the Museum's exhibition. It consists of a number of ordinary music stands on which are placed photographs of historical figures as portrayed by actors and actresses. The title refers to a painting by Ingres. The historical figures, most of them of mythic, heroic proportions, are not depicted directly by the artist but are, instead, represented by contemporary figures acting in films, a popular art. It is these actors and actresses who are, in turn, "represented" by a contemporary artist who identifies himself with an art historical figure. A tape recording which comments on the piece accompanies the scene.

The most recent works in the exhibition attempt to incorporate the development of Paolini's work within a single image. One of these, "Self Portrait with a Bust of Heraclitus and Other Works," shows the author with the outlines of his paintings in the background. These outlines are rendered in perspective (thus offering a literal, as well as figurative, perspective on Paolini's own history as an artist) and the bust of Heraclitus referred to in the title is a verbal reference to an earlier Paolini work.

Giulio Paolini has shown his work widely in one-artist and group exhibitions. He currently lives in Turin. This exhibition of his work is directed by Cora Rosevear, Curatorial Assistant, Department of Painting and Sculpture.

The Projects series is supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts in Washington, D.C., a federal agency. The Museum of Modern Art gratefully acknowledges the support of its exhibition program by the New York State Council on the Arts.

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