INTERROGATION 1985 (detail)

1986
Early October - Late November
University Art Museum

MATRIX/BERKELEY 101

GUILLIO PAULIT
By choosing Wrestlers, a tour-de-force depiction of young athletes whose limbs are intertwined in combat, Paolini not only provides a contemporary link with the classical period but also recalls the profound effect of Classical, particularly Hellenistic, art on artists during the Renaissance (Wrestlers was excavated in the late 16th century). Unlike Americans, European artists are never far from their history.

Paolini does not present Wrestlers in its original form but instead slices it in half vertically. Splitting or doubling of images is common in Paolini’s work. In Memoria (1974), for example, two plaster casts of the Medici Venus face one another. In both Memoria and Intervallo, Paolini poses questions about interval—the space between objects as well as the historical space which separates art of the present and that of the past.

By placing each fragment against opposite walls of the gallery so that the front half appears from one wall, while the back disappears into another, Paolini not only destroys the object quality of the sculpture but in doing so creates an installation which calls attention to the architecture of the particular exhibition space. In other words, viewers no longer focus on an object atop a pedestal placed within the open space of a room as they do in regarding conventional sculpture, but are directed to one wall and then across to the other, at first benumbed by the illusion of the figures coming through the wall before realizing that they are seen two halves of a whole. The sculpture, now removed from its cultural context, becomes a means of investigating perception. As to specific meaning, Paolini asserts that if his work communicates anything, it is "against its will." He prefers to set up a contemplative situation for himself and for the spectator. Italo Calvino, with whom Paolini has collaborated, wrote that Paolini’s works are "moments in the relationship between the person who makes the picture, the person who looks at it, and the material object that the picture is." Essentially analytical, hermetic, and restrained, Paolini’s work is an ongoing investigation into the act of perception and the conventions of art-making.

Paolini was born in 1940 in Genoa and lives in Torino. He is represented in the United States by the Marian Goodman Gallery in New York.

The Italian Cultural Institute has provided some support for this exhibition.

Constance Lewallen

Work in MATRIX:


Selected one-person exhibitions:

Galleria La Salita, Rome, '64, '71; Galleria dell’Ariete, Milan, '66 (catalogue), '71; Galerie Paul Maenz, Cologne, W. Germany, '71, '74, '75, '76, '77, '78, '81, '83; Sonnabend Gallery, NY, '72 (monograph with text by G. Celant); The Museum of Modern Art, NT, '74 (catalogue); Sperone Westwater Fischer, NY, '77; Städtisches Museum, Mönchengladbach, W. Germany, '77 (monograph with text by J. Cladders); Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, '80 (travelled to Museum of Modern Art, Oxford, England; catalogue with texts by H. Siegen, B. Elliott); Le Nouveau Musée, Lyon-Villeurbanne, '82, '84 (monograph with text by Paolini); The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, NY, Les Passes Confidentes, '85 (catalogue with text by Paolini); Galleria Pieroni, Rome, '95 (catalogue); Marian Goodman Gallery, NY, '95.
Selected group exhibitions:

Galleria La Bertesca, Genova, Arte Povera, '67 (catalogue with text by G. Celant);
Musée d'Art Moderne, VI Biennale de Paris, '69, VIII Biennale de Paris, '73, XIII Biennale de Paris, '85 (catalogues); Venice, Italy, Biennale, '70, '76, '78, '80 (catalogues); Kunsthverein, Munich, W. Germany, Arte Povera, '71 (catalogue with text by G. Celant); Cologne, W. Germany, Westkunst, '81 (catalogue); Kassel, W. Germany, Documenta 5, '72, Documenta 6, '77, Documenta 7, '82 (catalogues); The Art Institute of Chicago, Europe in the Seventies, '77 (traveled to the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and other U.S. museums; catalogue); Galleria Mario Pieroni, Rome, Boetti/LeWitt/Paolini, '83 (catalogue); The Museum of Modern Art, NY, An International Survey of Recent Painting and Sculpture, '84 (catalogue); Los Angeles, IL Modo Italiano, '84 (catalogue); Palacio de Velasquez, Madrid, Del Arte Povera a 1985, '85 (catalogue); P.S.1, NY, The Knot: Arte Povera at P.S.1, '86 (catalogue).

Selected bibliography by the artist (see also catalogues under one-person exhibitions):