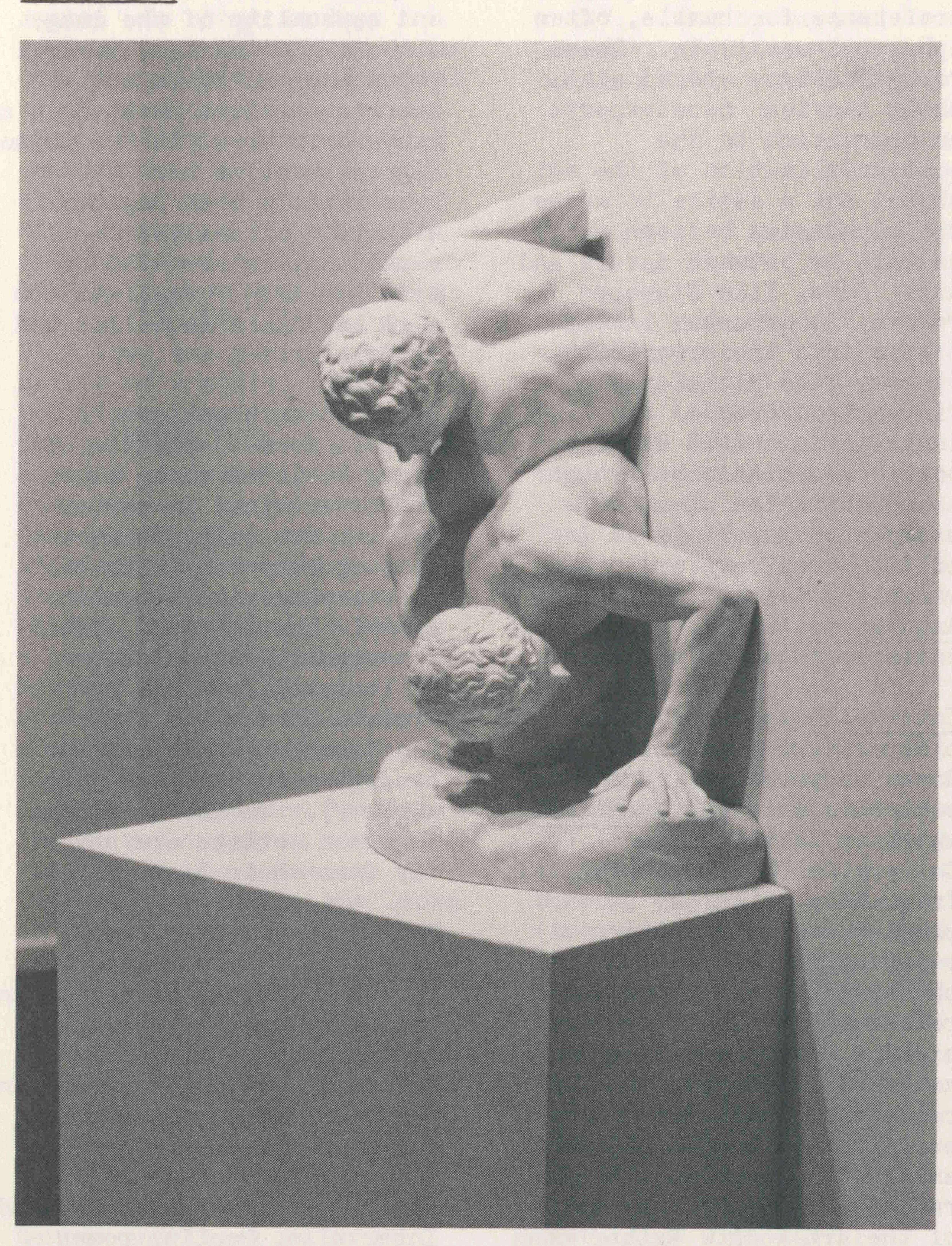
Giulio Paolini MATRIX/BERKELEY 101 University Art Museum early October - late November 1986

Intervallo, 1985 (detail)



Giulio Paolini is associated with Arte Povera ("poor art"), a Post-Formalist movement in Italy which roughly corresponds to Conceptual Art in the United States and elsewhere. Named by Italian critic and curator Germano Celant in a 1967 exhibition he presented in Genova, the movement features dreamlike sculptural installations which display the artists' preoccupation with history and myth and preference for humble, often ephemeral materials. These young Italians shared with their American counterparts an opposition to the commercialization of the art object and a desire to erase the boundaries between media as well as between nature and art. Some, like Giuseppe Penone, incorporate living plants into their works; others, like Michelangelo Pistoletto, create installations that evoke poetic associations through the combination of such unexpected materials as multicolored rags and whistling teapots. Indeed, Arte Povera's aims closely resemble those of poetry.

Intervallo is based on a plaster cast of a well-known Roman copy of a Pergamene sculpture entitled Wrestlers, which is in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence. Paolini frequently makes use of plaster casts and other reproductive media such as photography to explore the relationship of art to history and to question the notion of authenticity. In a recent interview Paolini explains his re-use of the antique as an attempt to reach back to the very making of the art work. Rather than being drawn to a specific style of the past (he has utilized reproductions of

paintings by Lorenzo Lotto, Nicolas Poussin as well as Classical sculpture), Paolini is "attracted to the myth of the why, why one makes art." Unlike some of the American Conceptualists, for example Joseph Kosuth, who often dispensed with the art object altogether in their intellectual investigations into the function and meaning of art, Paolini has never been willing to renounce what he describes as the mystery and sensuality of the image. Although in the last several years many European and American artists have shown a renewed interest in the human figure, Paolini has consistently been engaged with it. (Classical reproductions are also used by other Arte Povera artists such as Jannis Kounellis and Pistoletto.)

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 Classical, particularly Hellenistic, art had 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
Memesis (1976), for example,
two plaster casts of the
Medici Venus face one
another. In both Memesis 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 bemused by the illusion of the figures coming through the wall before realizing that they are seeing 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 Genova 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:

Intervallo, 1985, plaster, edition of 6, A: 36 x 34-3/4 x 17-1/2"; B: 36-1/2 x 43-1/2 x 22". Lent by Raymond Learsey, courtesy Marian Goodman Gallery, New York.

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, NY, '74 (catalogue); Sperone Westwater Fischer, NY, '77; Stadtisches Museum, Mönchengladbach, W. Germany, '77 (monograph with text by J. Cladders); Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, '80 (traveled to Museum of Modern Art, Oxford, England; catalogue with texts by H. Szeeman, D. Elliott); Le Nouveau Musee, Lyon-Villeurbanne, '82, '84 (monograph with text by Paolini); The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, NY, Les Fausses Confidences, '85 (catalogue with text by Paolini); Galleria Pieroni, Rome, '85 (catalogue); Marian Goodman Gallery, NY, '85.

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); Kunstverein, 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 about the artist (see also catalogues under exhibitions):

Gilbert-Rolfe, Jeremy.
"Giulio Paolini," Artforum,
May '74.

Celant, Germano. "Image of the Image," Art & Artists (London), May '74.

Oliva, Achile Bonito.
"Process, Concept & Behavior
in Italian Art," Studio
International (London), Jan.Feb. '86.

Rubinfien, Leo. "Giulio Paolini," Artforum, April '77.

Masheck, Joseph. "Neo-Neo.", Artforum, Sept. '79.
Russell, John. "What the Guggenheim Has on Its Shopping List," The New York Times, May 29, '83.

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

Idem, text by Italo Calvino (Turin: Einaudi Editore, 1975).

"Statement." (Zurich: A. Verna Editore, 1979)

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