

Giulio Paolini Teachers' notes

Also including: Kader Attia: Continuum of Repair; Children's Art Commission: Francis Upritchard: Do What You Will; Contemporary Art Society: Twixt Two Worlds; Stephen Willats: Concerning Our Present Way of Living + **Front cover image: Giulio Paolini**

Introduction: Teachers' Notes

This resource has been put together by the Whitechapel Gallery's Education Department to introduce teachers to each season of exhibitions and new commissions at the Gallery. It explores key themes within the main exhibition to support self-directed visits.

We encourage schools to visit the gallery Tuesday – Thursday during term time, and to make use of our Education Studios for free.

+ **map of gallery location (image credits saved in folder)**

Summer 2014 at the Whitechapel Gallery



Giulio Paolini: To Be or Not To Be
Until 14 September 2014



Kader Attia: Continuum of Repair
Until 23 November 2014



Stephen Willatts: Concerning Our Present Way of Living
Until 14 September 2014



Francis Upritchard: Do What You Will
Until 28 September 2014



Contemporary Art Society: Twixt Two Worlds
Until 31 August 2014

Giulio Paolini: To Be or Not To Be

Galleries 1, 8 & 9

9 July - 14 September 2014

The Whitechapel Gallery presents the first major solo show of Italian artist **Giulio Paolini** (b. 1940, lives and works in Turin) in the UK since 1980, with works from the 1960s to today, including a brand-new installation created specially for the exhibition. The artist immerses us in elegant installations of canvases, windows, fragments of statuary and checkerboards – sometimes presented by 18th century footmen. Believing that every work of art embodies earlier traditions, Paolini pays tribute to artists such as Chardin, Lotto and Velazquez. His own face, hands and eyes reappear throughout the show, as he asks Hamlet's question of the artist.

From *To Be or Not to Be* (1994–95) where canvases radiate across the floor into infinity to the existential drama of *The Author Who Thought He Existed...* (2013), Paolini takes us on an exhilarating journey through five decades of work exploring perception and creativity.

Kader Attia: Continuum of Repair

Gallery 2

Until November 2014

A series of marble busts of wounded soldiers from World War I and repaired North African wooden learning boards (ketabs) observe a towering structure of bookshelves filled with centuries of accumulated human knowledge.

The process of repair is central to **Kader Attia's** (b.1970) work, which he sees as an underlying principle of development in nature as in culture, and a motive to re-invigorate his extraordinary library.

Inside the structure of books lies a warmly-lit cabinet of curiosities above which a vast mirror reflects a horizontal beam of light, transforming it into rungs of a ladder to infinity. This commission is made specially for the Whitechapel Gallery and is inspired by the religious story of Jacob's vision of angels ascending to heaven, as well as by the space itself which is steeped in history as a former library reading room.

Children's Art Commission: Francis Upritchard: Do What You Will

Galleries 5&6

10 June 2014 – 28 September 2014

A two-metre long papier-mâché dinosaur, strange creatures and delicate objects are part of London-based artist **Francis Upritchard's** (b. 1976) experiments with materials, forms and textures inspired by classical sculpture, and craft traditions from Brazil to her native New Zealand. Upritchard works with glass, paper, clay, bronze and balata - a form of rubber sourced from the Amazon rainforest, discovered while on a residency in Brazil.

Balata is used by craftsmen to make colourful toys depicting humans, animals and monsters that tell the myths and legends of Amazonia. In New Zealand, she investigated the stories of local potters and their ceramic techniques. Upritchard blurs the boundaries between fine arts and craft, exploring how making and play can shape collective imagination and develop creative potential.

Contemporary Art Society: Twixt Two Worlds

Gallery 7

10 June – 31 August 2014

This display maps the pivotal moment in cinema history when still photography evolved into moving images. Inspired by the Barnes brothers' collection of early projection apparatus at the Royal Pavilion and Museums, Brighton and Hove, this shift is explored through objects, printed materials and films.

On show are magic lanterns and slides from the late 19th century and films and photographs by pioneers such as **William Friese-Greene** and **Eadweard Muybridge**, alongside contemporary artists including **Susan Hiller** and **Saskia Olde Wolbers** who revisit the history and techniques of early film.

Stephen Willats: Concerning Our Present Way of Living

Gallery 4

4 March - 14 September 2014

These richly complex works tell the stories of our own neighbourhoods. **Stephen Willats'** (b.1943) approach is a landmark of socially engaged art in Britain. A pioneer in using art and technology as a trigger for social networks and self-organisation, he is inspired by cybernetics and communication theory, and uses photography, architecture, fashion and design to examine the function of art in society.

Drawing on remarkable Whitechapel Gallery archive documents, this display revisits an exhibition Willats made at the Gallery in 1979 when he spent time with leather tanners, dockworkers and the residents of local public housing estates, capturing the life and times of communities who have long since dispersed.

Giulio Paolini: To Be or Not To Be
Until 14 September 2014



Delfo [Delphi] 1965. © Giulio Paolini

Gallery 1

Italian artist **Giulio Paolini** (b. 1940) is one of the leading figures in the development of Conceptual Art, which places emphasis on the means and processes behind a work. From the 1960s to today, his work has questioned the way artists define and re-define the categories of art, the making of art and particularly the artwork itself.

Paolini came to prominence as part of a generation of Italian artists in the 1960s, including Michelangelo Pistoletto and Mario Merz.

A key interest for Paolini is the subject of the artist or author and his relationship with the work. *To Be or Not To Be* is his first solo exhibition dedicated to this theme. He rejects the romantic notion of an artist as a genius 'creator'. Rather, he sees the artist as a contemplative 'messenger'. In Paolini's thinking, artworks are not 'born' from the author, but have always existed and are made manifest by revealing their own longstanding history and the way they are displayed and viewed.



Académie 3, 1965. Courtesy Archivio Giulio Paolini, Turin. © Giulio Paolini

Setting the stage with a survey of Paolini's artistic vocabulary, in this gallery, early works like *Delfo* (1965) or *Académie 3* (1965) exemplify Paolini's questioning of traditional myths of the author, be it in painting or photography. The large-scale installations of the 1980s, such as *A Portrait of the Artist as a Model* (1981), translate this interest into sculpture, culminating with *To Be or Not To Be* (1994–95), an expansive scattering of canvases across the floor.

In the last section of Gallery 1 one of Paolini's most iconic works, *Young Man Looking at Lorenzo Lotto* (1967) is a reproduction of a portrait from 1505 by Italian Renaissance painter Lotto, reversing the roles of the artist and the viewer. In this photographic canvas, Paolini focuses on the gaze: the model looking at the artist Lorenzo Lotto becomes more important than the painting itself. The relationship between artist, model and spectator goes beyond the plane of the canvas.

>>BOXED<<

Paolini's work is in constant dialogue with art history. Why do you think he has a desire to make this connection?



Giovane che guarda Lorenzo Lotto (Young Man Looking at Lorenzo Lotto), 1967
Courtesy Archivio Giulio Paolini, Turin. © Giulio Paolini

>>BELOW TEXT – BOXED<<

Lorenzo Lotto (born c. 1480, Venice [Italy]—died 1556, Loreto, Papal States), is one of the most prominent painters of the Italian Renaissance. His artworks represent religious subjects where the mystical element is conveyed through contrasts of light and shadow. Between 1508 and 1512 Lotto was in Rome, where he met Raphael, who was painting the Stanza della Segnatura in the Vatican palace. Furthermore, Lotto was influenced by Titian and his large pictorial compositions in Venice. Although the painter confronted himself with these masters, he established his own style by focusing on the intensity in the expression of the characters he portrayed.

Gallery 9

'I've never wanted to express myself in the work. I've always left the work to express itself (always demanded it should do so), to declare itself, to speak out loud and clear about what it is and where it comes from.'

Giulio Paolini, 1988

The question of how a work of art comes into existence has been an interest for artists from the Renaissance to today. Rejecting the idea of art as an act of self-expression, Paolini believes the artwork is determined by pre-existing authors, traditions and contexts.

On the Threshold (2013) examines the act of looking at art. The back of a bronze plaster cast head could be a stand-in for the viewer as well as the author. From its gaze emanate line-drawings, creating rectangles that repeat the shape of the canvas. Never reaching a final form, the golden lines offer infinite possibilities.

Nothing Now (2006) displays a pencil and a blank sheet of paper inside a Plexiglas plinth. Rather than displaying the outcome of an artistic act, the pencil is never allowed to touch the paper, so putting the emphasis on the potential of a work of art.



Sulla soglia (On the Threshold), 2013

Giorgio Benni, courtesy Giacomo Guidi Arte Contemporanea, Rome. © Giulio Paolini

>>BOXED<<

The white canvas and white paper represent the undefined matter addressing the subject of Platonic forms. Research Plato's Theory of Forms and look for connections with the works in Gallery 8 and 9.

The bronze cast in *On the Threshold* is the back of Apollo Parnòpios, one of the most represented gods in classical sculpture. Find more about this mythological figure.

Gallery 8

This gallery has three staged rooms. In the first, *Big Bang* (1997–98) represents an abandoned artist's studio, surrounded by crumpled papers like remnants of discarded ideas. Within the artist's space is a studio in miniature, a mise-en-scène which offers a moment of artistic self-reflection.

The second room contains a display of several works, including *Contemplator enim* (1992), a series of Plexiglas room dividers with life-size reproductions of 18th century theatre valets. Appearing to hold empty squares as framing devices, the figures act as mediators, reflecting Paolini's understanding of the artist as a messenger rather than a creator.



Installation view: *Contemplator enim* (detail) 1992

Photo: David Parry



Installation view, l-r: *Vedo (frammenti della decifrazione del mio campo visivo) (I See [Fragments of the Decoding of My Visual Field])*, 1987 and *Photofinish*, 1993-94.

Photo : © Luciano Romano. Courtesy Archivio Giulio Paolini, Turin. © Giulio Paolini

The final room is dedicated to Paolini's latest installation, *The Author Who Thought He Existed (Curtain: Darkness Falls Over the Auditorium)* (2013). With an overturned chair, a crowded working desk, as well as a wall full of traces of unrealised artworks, it suggests the author's hurried exit from the scene. Whereas *Big Bang* was concerned with inception, the final room is concerned with the completion of a work.

>>BELOW BOXED<<

What aspects of Paolini's earlier work can you identify in Gallery 8?

Identify similarities and differences between the work on display here compared to Gallery 1. Think about content and composition.

Kader Attia: Continuum of Repair
Gallery 2
Until November 2014

For this annual sculptural commission, French-Algerian artist **Kader Attia** (b.1970) has created an intriguing cabinet of curiosities that revisits the biblical story of Jacob's Ladder.

Kader Attia's multi-media installations reflect on anthropology, politics and science and are rooted in history and archival research. His works explore ideas around identity in an age of globalisation and are informed by the experience of growing up between Algeria and the Parisian suburbs, and later living in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Venezuela.

At the centre of the work is a cabinet of curiosities. Above it, a beam of light shines up to a mirrored ceiling, creating an infinity reflection which evokes the biblical tale prophet Jacob's vision of angels ascending from earth to heaven.

Surrounding the cabinet is a towering floor to ceiling structure of books, exploring subjects such as history, art, architecture, science, physics and astronomy.

The commission is the result of an in-depth engagement with the space as the reading room of the former Whitechapel library. It looks at the idea of books and objects as receptacles of history, continuously carrying memories with them. Attia links the trajectory of religious and scientific knowledge to the concept of repair, which he sees as an underlying principle of development and evolution.



Photo: Stephen White

Francis Upritchard:

Do What You Will

10 June–28 September 2014



Photo: Angus Mill

The sculptures in this display reflect the playfulness of experimenting with materials, forms and textures while blurring the boundaries between fine art, design and craft. Dinosaurs, strange creatures, delicate objects and watercolours are all part of London-based artist **Francis Upritchard's** (b.1976) new work inspired by classical sculpture, natural history museums, and craft traditions from Brazil to her native New Zealand.

Upritchard worked with glass, paper, plastic, clay, bronze and balata - a form of rubber sourced from the Amazon rainforest, discovered while on an artists's residency in Brazil. It is used by craftsmen to make colourful toys that tell the myths and legends of Amazonia.

In this gallery, a group of pre-historic figures rest on plinths made by the Italian designer **Martino Gamper**. These balata sculptures are modelled under cold water, while the material is still at high temperatures. The speed of the making process is visible in the creature's textured 'geological skin'.

In the next room, two papier-mâché dinosaurs placed on tables designed by Studio B.B.P.R for Olivetti in the 1960s, are displayed alongside a series of watercolours, polymer plastic and bronze and glass sculptures. The Crystal Palace Dinosaur Court, in Bromley, Greater London was a source of inspiration for the project. The models of

dinosaurs and other extinct creatures installed in the 19th century park are said to represent the 'latest scientific knowledge' at the time.

For this commission Francis Upritchard was drawn to use materials in an extraordinarily free way, exploring how making and play can shape collective imagination and creative potential.

The Whitechapel Gallery's annual Children's Commission invites an artist to create a new work of art that engages children.

Contemporary Art Society: Twixt Two Worlds
Until 31 August 2014
Gallery 7



Photo: © Daily Herald Archive/National Media Museum/Science & Society Picture Library

Cinema history unfolds in this exhibition which captures the pivotal moment when still images evolved into moving images.

The display - which takes its title from a book about the famous medium William Eglinton - considers the relationship between photography and cinema in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as still images became animated and opened the door to film.

Inspired by John and William Barnes' collection of early moving image apparatus and documentation amassed since the 1930s and now held at the Royal Pavilion, Museums & Libraries, Brighton and Hove, this shift is explored through objects, photographs and films.

The exhibition includes magic lanterns and painted glass slides, plus rarely-seen films and photographs from pioneers such as **William Friese-Greene**, **Eadweard Muybridge** and **George Albert Smith**. Alongside these influential figures are works by contemporary artists including Susan Hiller, Steven Pippin and Saskia Olde Wolbers (whose film *Trailer* was gifted by the Contemporary Art Society to the South London Gallery in 2005). They revisit the history and techniques of early motion pictures through formal associations and references to Victorian popular culture.

Twixt Two Worlds is an imaginative display drawn from the collections of Contemporary Art Society member museums across the south of England and is part of the Whitechapel Gallery's programme opening up public and private collections for everyone.

Stephen Willats: Concerning Our Present Way of Living
Until 14 September 2014
Pat Matthews Gallery (Gallery 4)



Photo: Courtesy Stephen Willats archive

These richly complex works tell the stories of our own neighbourhoods. **Stephen Willats'** (b.1943) approach is a landmark of socially engaged art in Britain. A pioneer in using art and technology as a trigger for social networks and self-organisation, he is inspired by cybernetics and communication theory, and uses photography, architecture, fashion and design to examine the function of art in society.

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We encourage schools to visit the gallery Tuesday – Thursday during term time, and make use of our Clore Creative Studios for free. All visits must be booked in advance with the Education team. For details of school workshops, CPD for teachers and education events please visit whitechapelgallery.org

To find out more or to book a visit please contact:

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