

La Decima Musa (The Tenth Muse) by Giulio Paolini:
An Ode to Artistic Reflection

Plato considered Sappho the best poetic voice in Greek history, and called her 'The Tenth Muse'

Art has been an ever-evolving entity that has captured the imagination of humanity for centuries. Giulio Paolini, an Italian conceptual artist, pioneer of the Arte Povera movement, born in Italy in 1940, introduced a new perspective to this timeless dialogue with his thought-provoking work titled *Decima Musa (The Tenth Muse)* originally created in 1966. It consists of a series of three equilateral triangular canvases superimposed in staggered order forming a star, the first and the last are upside down, while the middle one is oriented on the recto, chasing each other in a vain attempt to find an ideal correspondence. *Decima Musa (The Tenth Muse)* presents an inverse succession of components compared to the smaller variant entitled *Alceo* whose dimensions are ideally inscribed in the central area of this work. The intimate correspondence between the two works harks back to the alleged connection between the ancient Greek poet Alceo, who in some of his verses evokes his beloved Sappho, his contemporary, elsewhere nicknamed "Tenth Muse".

The work explores the idea of the artist as a creator, drawing connections between artistic traditions and contemporary art practices. It invites viewers to consider the role of the artist as a muse-like figure, generating new ideas and perspectives. The term "La Decima Musa" translates in English "The Tenth Muse"; in Greek and Roman mythology, the nine Muses were goddesses of the arts and sciences, inspiring creativity in various fields.

Throughout this connection, Elisabetta Cipriani is delighted to present Giulio Paolini's new wearable art project, *La Decima Musa (The Tenth Muse)*, made in 2023 in exclusive collaboration with the gallery exploring the significance and implications of Paolini's masterpiece. In this body of work, the title re-appears as an ode to challenge traditional notions of artistic creation and inspiration. The title *La Decima Musa (The Tenth Muse)* directly refers to the idea of the tenth muse, suggesting that the viewer or more precisely, the wearer becomes the embodiment of this muse by interacting with the artwork. In essence, the artwork transforms the wearer into a participant in the creative process, blurring the line between the observer and the observed, the artist and the audience.

La Decima Musa (The Tenth Muse) by Giulio Paolini, consists in a necklace formed by a total of ten geometrical squares one of which represents the face of Sappho, a Greek lyric poet. Made in two variants, one in 18kt yellow gold and one in polished silver, both enamelled in an edition of ten exemplars, plus two artist's proof each medium. Paolini addition of a tenth muse challenges the established canon, suggesting that there is an inherent limit to the muses influence. In this context Sappho, the tenth muse, become a symbol of the artist's internal source of inspiration, indicating that true creativity arises from the depths of one's mind. Sappho invented her own meter (known as Sappho meter) leading an aesthetic movement away from classical themes of Gods to themes of individual human experiences.

Sappho in Paolini's *La Decima Musa (The Tenth Muse)* is the synchronicity, the co-existence, the Ariadne's thread that connects the two entities, the wearer and the 'creator' and reflects the inner spirit and interest of the artist in self-reference, art history, and the philosophical aspects of art-making. Sappho is Paolini's vision of breaking boundaries, is the essence of creativity, research and inspiration. The visual complexity present in this kaleidoscopic work, alludes to the multi-faceted nature of time and perception. Paolini's choice of composition for this piece underscores the interconnection between past, present, and future, suggesting that artistic inspiration is not confined to a specific moment but is instead a continuous dialogue across time.

The addition of a tenth muse challenges the notion of external inspiration, emphasising the importance of the artist's internal thoughts and musings. Through self-reflection, metaphor, a clever manipulation of perception and in a world where artistic expression continues to evolve, Paolini's work remains a timeless ode to the profound depths of the creative mind. By inviting the wearer to breathe the work, he questions the role of the artist as the sole creator. Instead, the wearer's presence become integral to the wholeness of the artwork suggesting that creativity is a collaborative process between the artist, observer, wearer and the concepts they bring together to the experience.

About Giulio Paolini

Giulio Paolini is an Italian contemporary artist known for his conceptual and minimalist works. He was born on November 5th, 1940, in Genoa, Italy. Paolini is associated with the Arte Povera movement, which emerged in the late 1960s in Italy and focused on using unconventional materials and exploring new artistic forms. Paolini's art is characterised by its intellectual depth and engagement with philosophical ideas. He frequently challenges traditional notions of art and the role of the artist, inviting viewers to contemplate the meaning and significance of the art-making process. His work often revolves around themes of identity, authorship, and the relationship between art and the audience. He is particularly known for his exploration of classical art and mythology, often incorporating references to famous artworks and figures from art history into his pieces. His work has been exhibited in numerous international shows and is part of many prestigious collections around the world. Giulio Paolini's contributions have had a significant impact on the development of conceptual art and continue to be influential in contemporary artistic discourse. Giulio Paolini in 2022 was also awarded as one of the Laureates of the 33rd Praemium Imperiale in the category of Painting . The Praemium Imperiale Awards were established to mark the centenary of the Japan Art Association, Japan's oldest cultural foundation. Often considered as the "Nobel Prize for the Arts" today remains unique and illustrious celebrating greatness in five of the major arts such as Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, Music and Theatre/ Film.

About Elisabetta Cipriani

Elisabetta Cipriani collaborates with renowned international sculptors and painters to create exclusive wearable sculptures with the use of precious materials. Since 2009 the London-based gallery has exclusively collaborated with thirty-three contemporary artists including Ai Weiwei, Carlos Cruz-Diez, Chiharu Shiota, Enrico Castellani, Giulio Paolini, Giuseppe Penone, Ilya & Emilia Kabakov, Jannis Kounellis, Rebecca Horn, Tatsuo Miyajima, Sofia Vari and Giorgio Vigna, to name few. A selection of the gallery's collaboration projects can be found in museums and private collections across the world, including Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris; World Jewellery Museum, Seoul and Museum Den Bosch, Hertogenbosch, Holland.

For media enquiries, please contact:

Elisabetta Cipriani Gallery
Federica Zaffiri
federica@elisabettacipriani.com
Tel: +44 (0) 207 2875 675
www.elisabettacipriani.com