

Eduard Angeli

5 April to 25 June 2017

In honour of Eduard Angeli's 75th birthday, the Albertina is presenting a retrospective of his oeuvre with paintings and drawings ranging from his beginnings as an artist in the 1960s to the present.

For over 50 years, Eduard Angeli has consistently worked on one single theme: the myth of silent space. Melancholy is the fundamental mood that characterises his vividly coloured and light-drenched pastels of the 1970s and '80s as well as the dark and gloomy paintings that he has produced since the late 1990s, working primarily in Venice. Angeli is all about a world of stillness—and in the Austrian's oeuvre, loneliness and emptiness are just as threatening as they are utopian in light of a present full of destruction and noise.

There are three phases that can be made out in Eduard Angeli's oeuvre: in his paintings from the 1970s, the Austrian artist deals with political themes; colonialism as well as militarism in Turkey are central to his early works. Soon, however, the few human figures depicted in those works gave way to the loneliness of empty space: Angeli's formats grew larger, and his overall output saw pastel technique come to the fore. These pastels were created neither spontaneously nor as sketches, and they also do not conform to the small formats once worked in by the impressionists as they pioneered this technique. Instead, the artist set about creating gigantic autonomous works on paper that opened up a new chapter in the history of pastel drawings.

His works from the late 1980s and early 1990s show everyday objects such as knives, drums, or loudspeakers embedded in empty spaces and silent landscapes. And in a way akin to the objects and moods in de Chirico's works of Metaphysical Painting, Angeli's drawings from that period began to manifest a strange magic.

Eduard Angeli has proceeded to develop this silent magic further and further, and for the past two decades, he has devoted his work to depicting and interpreting cities devoid of people. These urban landscapes are not *vedute*, however, nor are they created *en plain air* or otherwise in proximity to their motifs. Only photographs—often just simple snapshots—serve to vaguely support his memory of buildings and unusual spatial situations. During his travels, Angeli often takes hundreds of these quick snapshots. And upon his return, he transforms what he has seen into his own internal vision of depopulated silence, thus consistently building on the myth of the dead city—be it Venice, Istanbul, or St. Petersburg. The artist seeks out cities that have been inundated with tourists and fully commercialised, cities bursting at the seams with lively activity and consumption. This visible world, however, is something that his works refrain from reproducing; instead, they represent that which is invisible. Though conceived as landscapes in the motivic sense, they assume the function of allegorical still-lives.

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A unique and melancholic undertone is common to Angeli's works across all of his creative periods. He achieves this primarily via reduction in an aesthetic and formal sense, and in this, the Austrian artist displays unequalled mastery of the high art of subtle subtraction. In his works, he eliminates all details of urban everyday life and reduces reality to the bare essence, allowing its pure poetry to be seen—and the existing architecture in these images is used by the artist to subtly depict loneliness and melancholy.

With his art, Eduard Angeli numbers among the contemporary art world's truly exceptional figures. His oeuvre can best be compared with that of Edward Hopper or of Giorgio de Chirico—for melancholy, arising from the interplay between a space's emptiness and a monumental solitude, is the feeling that inhabits every one of this painter's works.