



STENGEL

EXISTENCE IS RESISTANCE.
ART WILL REMAIN.

KARL STENGEL
AND THE COLLECTION OF THE MUSEUM
OF SAINT AUGUSTINE

GENOA • PIAZZA SARZANO 35R
SEPTEMBER 20 • NOVEMBER 23

In a historical moment when painting defends its position with fatigue versus other media like photography, video art, and installation, the new artistic season at the Civic Museum of Saint Augustine in Genoa suggests an exhibition that showcases the multiform oeuvre of the Hungarian artist Karl Stengel (1925/2017) in a confrontation with the protagonists of the 15th and 16th century in Genoese painting.

The set up of the show puts in the foreground the artworks' narrative features translated into rather unexpected site specific scenarios that open towards a panoramic vision oscillating between the calligraphic force of Stengel's "apparently" abstract art and the iconography of the frescoes transferred to monumental canvas. Pieces created by masters like Valerio Castello, Gregorio De Ferrari, Domenico Fiasella, Luca Cambiaso, Domenico Piola, placed between the masterpieces of the sculptors Pierre Puget, Giovanni Pisano, Francesco Maria Schiaffino, Filippo Parodi, to mention some of them.

For centuries Catholic Church and aristocracy had determined the principal topics of art, representing the main commissioners and collectors of art works. The Museum collection on the second floor is a historical showcase of this development that recalls mythological Greek and Roman subjects, frequent monumental canvases of the life and martyrdom of Saints like Saint Lawrence, Saint Sebastian, the events around Jesus Christ, his disciples, and Virgin Mary. So the plot of the exhibition initiates with the discussion about if and where, in art, religion ends and spirituality starts, or if there is any parallel and fruitful coexistence in the present. Spirituality in Stengel's painting early leaves the narrative pattern behind, falls out of the Baroque framework to trace a way of expressing himself through the transmission of spiritual contents that allows him to progress independently from figuration.

Penalized by a biography marked by the Second World War, the deportation to a Russian Lager, the revolution in Hungary in 1956 and his escape to Munich, Stengel followed art all his life as the reason of his existence. His outstanding humanity that early

matured from sufferance, and later from the numerous cultural contaminations he had experienced during his travels around the world, donates to his painting a chromatic magic where colour, as a tool of composition, creates something unexpected. His painting is an impulse erupting from his body, a sensual idea that stimulates his mind oriented towards new reflections. For all his life Stengel had proved resistance towards various temptations to sacrifice his creative credo and his art, in front of events imposed by destiny, objective difficulties that more and more increased his solitude. His look, a deeper moral attitude than an artistic one, leaves kind of a truth: to exist means to be inside of art. In a comment that seems more actual than ever, Roland Barthes observes that the artist's imprint lies inside the artwork and this is the reason for its being so human. Art tears the world off randomness. Art means true life.

Stengel's exhibition gets perfected by a vast collection of drawings, etchings and gouache set up in the Museum's Cabinet of drawings and graphics on the first floor, surrounded by architectural stone relics from the 12th to the 15th century. Stengel left a heritage of more than thousand drawings, "his constant company" as he used to say, a body of ingenious works created on an infinity of supporting bases like pages of notepads, scores, old books with interventions by means of pastels, ball-point pens, chalk, colour brushes, pencils. The drawings with which the artist transfers his experience on paper, his perception, the moments he had lived in any circumstance of his life, music he had listened to, or the short lived impressions of a book he had read, were his way to make philosophy, to think about himself and about how life was going and where the world was directed to, with a very personal and spontaneous gesture.

The project conceived and curated by Beth Vermeer, Design of the Universe, stages the coexistence between sculpture and paintings created in different historical periods, with a valued reference to the mission of the European Year of Cultural Heritage and his leitmotiv "where the past meets the future" and in particular to the European Heritage Days 2018 on September 22nd and 23rd calling for art to be shared.

The opening of the show will take place on Wednesday September 19th at 5pm in the presence of the local Authorities, with Museum Director Adelmo Taddei's introduction and Curator Beth Vermeer's presentation of Karl Stengel's life and art. The guided visit to the exhibition that is distributed on two floors will be accompanied by an itinerating live performance conceived by the Genoese artist Cri Eco. In the framework of this interdisciplinary exhibition principally based on the synaesthetic coexistence between the artistic imagery of the 15th and the 16th century and the period after the Second World War, the Slovakian composer Juraj Kojš contributes to the project with the creation of sound traces regarding the diachronic conversation of the artworks proposed and set up by the Curator.

In the network of events during the European Heritage Days 2018 several initiatives will be on program immediately after the opening of the show, putting the highlight on interdisciplinary aspects in Stengel's art. These encounters are focused on the elective affinities between the painter Stengel and numerous writers, poets, philosophers and musicians that stimulated his creativity, with his own words, "the illustrations of the effects that music and literature exercised on him".

On Thursday September 20th an evening is dedicated to "Stengel, migrant artist and his relationship with others", in collaboration with the Cultural Association "Il Gatto Certosino", presided by poetess Rosa Elisa Giangoia who will perform a recital with other authors and poets of diverse ethnical communities of Genoa.

Stengel loved music to a remarkable extent, being inspired by Prokofiev, Rachmaninoff, Stravinsky, Bartok, but also by Schumann, Ravel, Debussy. On Saturday September 22nd some artists of the "Theatre Carlo Felice" generously offer a music performance that, with ambition, tries to reflect the cultural atmosphere of the 19th century from the point of view of composers and philosophers: Patrizia Battaglia (contralto and reciting voice), Matteo Armanino (tenor) e Patrizia Priarone (piano).

A special “Stengel-Experience” will be set up in a space where visitors get the possibility to immerse themselves in a moment of synaesthetical perception, observing the movement of Stengel’s chromatic symphony and listen to Juraj Kojs’ soundscape.

In the course of his Karl Stengel had cultivated a very tight relationship with literature and poetry, in particular with the authors Ivan Goll, Antonio Tabucchi, Giuseppe Ungaretti, Samuel Beckett, Jorge Borges, Charles Bukowski. Imagining semiotic parallel lives between Stengel and the writers mentioned before, a series of encounters starts on Wednesday October 3rd with an event dedicated to Charles Bukowski, in collaboration with Annamaria Saiano, Consular Agency of the United States of America in Genoa and Massimo Bacigalupo, University of Genoa, Department of Modern Languages and Culture. Camilla Paul Stengel’s poetry, the artist’s wife and his lifelong sustainer, will be in the centre of a poetical reading in Italian, English and German language, alternating with Charles Bukowski’s poems performed in original language.

The Astronomical Observatory of Genoa takes part in the project with an interdisciplinary conference by Enrico Giordano regarding memorable events in the skies of the Thirties around Stengel’s year of birth.

The complex project conceived by Beth Vermeer, Design of the Universe, and curated together with Adelmo Taddei, Director of the Saint Augustine Museum, is part of the Agenda of the European Heritage Days 2018, with the patronage of the Region of Liguria and the Consulate of the United States of America in Genoa.

Scientific coordination and realization: Design of the Universe. Curator and designer of the exhibition lay-out: Beth Vermeer. Collaboration: Stengel Collection, Florence, with the gentle agreement to lend some of the paintings and drawings for the show.

Partners on the Ligurian territory: Cultural Association “Il Gatto Certosino”, Astronomical Observatory of Genoa; Università Popolare Sestri; Centre of Documentation Logos.

Partners on the national territory: Calliope Bureau, Public Relations. Laverna.net, Venice, communication online and art video production. Mediapartner: Aurora International Journal, Rome.

An exhibition catalogue will be edited in the course of its duration, containing the photos of the site-specific art itinerary at the Museum, several critical texts by Adelmo Taddei, Beth Vermeer and other contributors, and a biographical and a bibliographical apparatus. A CD shall be enclosed with the compositions created by Juraj Kojs.

On Thursday November 22nd Kojs offers his artistic skills and outstanding talent at the ceremony of Thanksgiving Day organised by the Consulate of the United States of America, whereas on Friday November 23rd the Slovakian composer performs in a multimedia concert at the Finissage of Stengel’s show at the Museum of Saint Augustine.

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