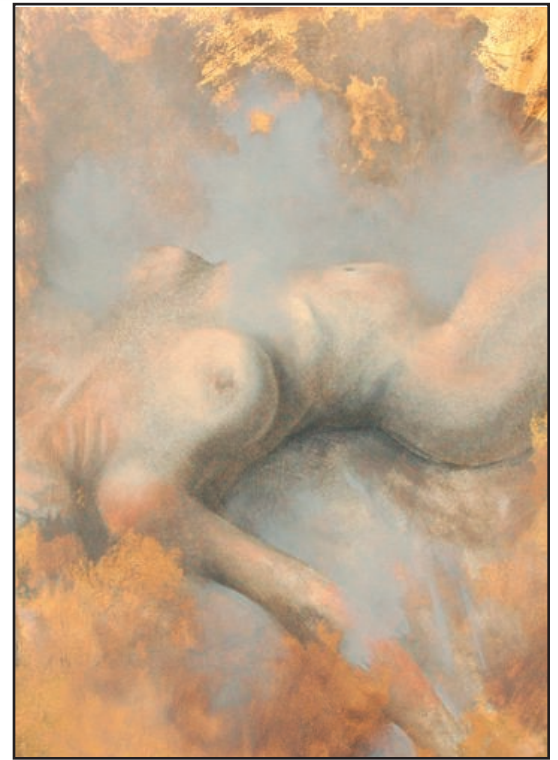


ART / Tad Wise

Master of dark light



Eric Angeloch's Path to the Beach and All We Are.

The reception for Eric Angeloch's highly anticipated new show at the Fletcher Gallery will be from 5 p.m. - 7 p.m., Saturday, June 3, and we can be sure that at the end of the night many little red dots denoting "sold" will be placed next to many new paintings. For several reasons. The most important being that Angeloch's magnificently moody landscapes hit a nerve. Viewers consistently respond to his work with an emotional immediacy usually reserved for the performing arts. A friend of mine recently admitted that she wept at his last show, and she is not unique. The sort of exquisite melancholy we once expected of poets and, today, hope for from tenors, is Eric Angeloch's home turf. His canvasses glow with an elegiac intensity not usually associated with this century; he is unabashedly romantic. His technique is formidable, yet his format, humble, in so far as he works small. And he does not seem to be running short on heartbreak. With "Eric Angeloch and the dark light" this native son is, once again, nearly impossible to resist.

Indeed it is "the dark light" that sets Angeloch apart. A sky Angeloch fans will recognize, illuminated by a hazy, gauzy light, dominates many of the new works. It is a light we might encounter at dusk or dawn or during intense humid heat, through which sunlight refracts, and under which the world is softened, obscured, heightened.

The result renders Angeloch's subjects even more anonymous, placeless, timeless. Though a recognizable location such as "Wittenberg" may find itself attached to an Angeloch, we search in vain for the very spot from which he painted. The son of two well-known landscape painters, Eric spent a childhood sketching "in the field". Now he works from the imagination, deflating the poetics of this accomplishment with a droll: "No more bugs for me."

While it is perfectly acceptable for a writer to remove themselves from their subject to render, say, Irish poverty from a Brooklyn apartment, I'm reluctant to admit the same license to a painter. Until I realize: there is no place on earth as perfect as in Angeloch's paintings. He would have to "make the place up", and so he has. "Inventing" trees, rivers, mountains, all pulsing with quiet drama. He admits to the cathartic joy that springs from successfully rendering the sadness pervading his work.

As for some experiments (and Eric confesses that experiments "are where I learn the most") there are two departures in the new show. First, in addition to his reputation-making miniatures, the exhibit contains some larger works, and—returning to his student days at the Art Students League—Eric has included several nudes.

Showing these to me in the order in

which they were created, Angeloch admits to using a living model but refuses to concede my observation that each painting depicts a more beautiful woman. It seems plain enough to me: the growing excitement of his rediscovery gives rise each time to a more lovely image. As falling in love reveals deeper pleasure and greater beauty, so reawakening his old passion for painting the female form invests a single subject with ever more eroticism and grace. Angeloch acknowledges that the nudes rejuvenated his painting, informing and enriching his landscapes, and that these, in turn, informed and enriched the nudes. There is a luminous yet anonymous quality to both nude and landscape. As if each had, at first, been completely revealing, yet treated with his layering of dusty light, his obsession with obscurity, the features are veiled, rendering them unfastened to an era, or country, or world...

When I asked Eric what realistic painters he admires most he responded with two names: Andrew Wyeth and George Inness. When I then asked if he'd ever consider placing "the figure" in "the landscape", he sputtered, outraged. Defending the idea, I mentioned Wyeth's "Christina's World". Eric acknowledged the accomplishment of the work and after a pause, conceded: "I'm going to hold my tongue on that one".

Timed with the new show (his first in

Woodstock in two years) Eric has produced a booklet with an insightful, provocative commentary by the local writer Peter Occhiogrosso. In his remarks, the author suggests that Angeloch is actually more akin to Paul Klee, whose visual vocabulary informs is of a private world, than to landscape painters, per se. He points out that Eric is a great admirer of Rothko and Klein, and that it is the emotion created by a painter, rather than his particular “school”, which establishes a connection among artists, that cobweb of admiration

and influence.. The text attempts, in this way, to lift Eric Angeloch out of the hometown-boy-does-good context and fully deliver him into the international art world. Eric’s considerable success (he has won many prizes and his paintings have doubled in price for several years running) certainly provides a case for such a promotion. The difficulty in making the jump may be the very facility with which Eric Angeloch so consistently “touches the nerve” and delivers to his audience exactly what they want. Angeloch has perfected his craft,

identified his subject, and delivers it with great power, knowing exactly where his bread is buttered. Yet I suspect Angeloch will actually need to stumble—difficult though it is to imagine such a graceful painter doing so—before his full potential is realized.

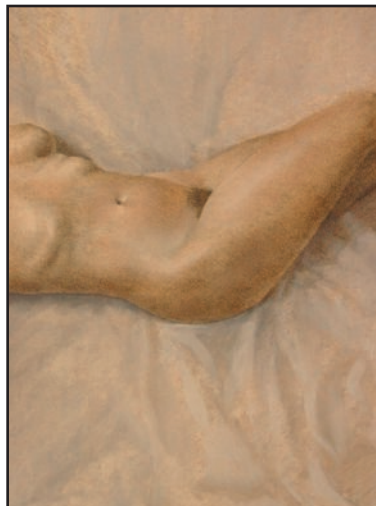
You might by now guess: I believe that Eric Angeloch is the best painter in Woodstock today. By which I mean he succeeds more often than any other in creating works that move us.



Sanctuary, oil, 18 x 28



Storm Break, oil, 8 x 10



Crux Ansata, graphite / oil, 15 x 11



The Home Fires, oil, 8 x 10