

MILAN



PRINT NOVEMBER 2016

- All Cities
- Athens
- Berlin
- Frankfurt
- Kolkata
- London
- Los Angeles
- Mexico City
- Milan**
- Munich
- New York
- Paris
- San Francisco
- São Paulo
- Shanghai
- Sharjah
- Tallinn, Estonia
- Washington, D.C.
- Wellington
- Zuoz, Switzerland
- Zurich



View of "Igor Eškinja," 2016. Foreground: *Screenscapes*, 2016. Wall: *Histogram of a City*, 2016. Photo: Antonio Maniscalco.

## Igor Eškinja

FEDERICO LUGER (FL GALLERY)

Three large canvases, hung from the ceiling on metal slats, created a virtual space within the real space of the gallery. They were made of polyester—light, almost immaterial, translucent—and enabled viewers to see each other walking about the space: Even the slightest breath of air moved the diaphanous partitions. Onto these large fields Igor Eškinja has printed photographs mostly shot in Rijeka, the city in Croatia where he lives. Depicted are large, anonymous apartment blocks, devoid of any aesthetic value, built in the early 1970s in anticipation of the city's industrial development, which never came to pass; on the contrary, an economic crisis kept away thousands of potential inhabitants. The buildings resemble the condominium-dormitories of many urban peripheral zones, faceless neighborhoods often in premature decline—Eškinja might have found their like anywhere in the world. For him, the “modernist” structure of these buildings, in this neighborhood of this city, is synonymous with the bankruptcy of the socialist program for social equality and economic development that resulted in depersonalized and alienating lifestyles.

For Italians, this disastrous outcome resounds even more strongly when considered in light of Rijeka's history: Formerly part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the city was seized by Italian nationalists after World War I. It briefly flourished as an independent state, but was annexed by Fascist Italy in 1924; as an Italian city it went by the name Fiume, but after World War II it was ceded to Yugoslavia. Now it is the third largest city in Croatia, but these dramatic historico-political shifts are no longer apparent. We see only the uniform facades, all conforming to standardized construction principles, without personality or distinguishing stylistic attributes.

No human presence is visible. Eškinja shot the photographs in the middle of the night, with the streets deserted, to make them as oneiric and ghostlike as possible. The lightness of the

polyester also contributes to this effect, making the solid, heavy, opaque structures seem light, mobile, and transparent: This alchemy is reflected in the title of the show, “Efemeropolis,” which conjures the idea of an ephemeral city. The photographs all have a dominant orange tone, but the artist has not manipulated the color in any way. Using the camera to take long exposures, he has merely recorded the color of the polluted sky. However, in the large canvas that faced the gallery entrance, this orange tone degenerates into black near the bottom, the blackness of night illuminated solely by streetlights.

While in this case the use of the camera is as neutral as possible, in other works in the show Eškinja has more actively manipulated basic elements of photographic language. Three framed sheets, each titled *Histogram of a City*, 2016, bear abstract geometric compositions in white and orange; they are actually sheets of paper that, partially masked by templates, have been exposed to the sun for weeks, resulting in a consistent discoloration. But these minimal acts evoke the photographic process through an action whose factuality contrasted with the dreamlike fixity of the large canvases. A final photographic image, *Efemeropolis*, 2015, presented yet another contrast: a view of Vitry-sur-Seine, an urban center swallowed up within the banlieues of Paris. Vitry, inhabited mostly by workers, has not suffered the same crisis conditions as Rijeka, and Eškinja’s work conveys its extremely normal appearance, depicting a treelined street with parked cars. Everything would seem to be in order, were it not for that dominant orange tone, here as well, a disturbing allusion to a possible shared fate.

—[Giorgio Verzotti](#)

*Translated from Italian by Marguerite Shore.*

#### ARTFORUM INBOX

Register to receive our newsletters—*The Archive*, *Must See*, *Dispatch*, and *The Issue*—as well as special offers from *Artforum*.

#### artguide

ADVERTISE

SIGN IN

SUBSCRIBE

BACK ISSUES

CART

PRIVACY POLICY

CONTACT



All rights reserved. artforum.com is a registered trademark of Artforum International Magazine, New York.

You have **1** article remaining this month. [Subscribe](#) for immediate access to this and over five decades of articles from our archives.

