

ELISABETTA ZANGRANDI: PAESAGGIO DELLA VITA

Andrew Edlin Gallery, New York

December 11, 2021 – February 5, 2022

Fondale (Backdrop), 2021



A self-taught artist who paints visionary landscapes inhabited by flora and fauna, 61-year-old **Elisabetta Zangrandi** made her way into the international art world from her home in rural Italy via Instagram. She had painted on rocks, bottles and anything else at hand for years but had not had an audience until she turned to social media in 2017. From then on, her life as a painter blossomed.

Posting images of rocks painted with imaginary scenes, she got positive responses, which inspired her to post drawings of lacelike figures. She then began painting on wood, which a carpenter friend

provided. Her big break came in 2018 when, after she messaged a painting of an angelic woman to New York art critic Jerry Saltz, he replied: "L-I-K-E".

Saltz shared Zangrandi's art with James Barron, who smartly mixes outsider art with contemporary art at his Connecticut gallery and art fairs. Meeting up with the artist – who had never exhibited – and seeing her work, Barron was taken by her originality. He presented her paintings at the 2019 Outsider Art Fair in New York and Paris which put her on the path to her first New York solo show, "Paesaggio della Vita" (Landscape of Life) at Andrew Edlin Gallery.

Featuring eight recent paintings – ranging from two large canvases to smaller works on wood panels – this enchanting show highlighted Zangrandi's favourite motives and working methods. *Mancanze durante il Lockdown* (Shortcomings during the Lockdown) plucks the bartender from Édouard Manet's painting *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère* and puts her in a fantastical landscape filled with strange creatures, female nudes and a collection of skyscrapers, as dense as Manhattan.

Stati d'Animo durante il Lockdown (Moods during the Lockdown), the other large canvas in the show, evoked Hieronymus Bosch's *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, where creatures cluster to converse in a peaceful paradise. In contrast, *Mancano le Amiche* (Missing Friends) brings Zangrandi's make-believe world into the spa-like setting of a domed-roof palace, where nude women frolic by a pool, and arched entrances reveal dreamlike scenarios in other rooms.

Also on view were *Fondale* (Backdrop), depicting a nightmarish underwater scene with a snake that could have come out of a work by **Antonio Ligabue** (one of Zangrandi's favourite naïve artists), and *Nuovo Modello di "Sedia a Rotelle"* (New Model of "Wheelchair"), portraying a desert playground for man and beast. These two expressively painted works show the diversity of Zangrandi's artistic experimentation and the vividness of a mind with more tales to tell.

PAUL LASTER