



PRESS RELEASE

## Edi Hila: Painter of Transformation

2 March – 6 May 2018

Museum on the Vistula  
Wybrzeże Kościuszkowskie 22  
Warsaw

The Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw is preparing the first retrospective exhibition of the Albanian painter Edi Hila.

Edi Hila was born in Shkodër in 1944 and works in Tirana. He is affiliated with the Tirana Academy of Fine Arts, where he is an influential teacher.

Educated in Shkodër, a city with its beginnings in the ancient world, Hila has always had access to the roots of classical culture. During his studies in the 1960s he experimented with deformation. In 1972 he painted *The Planting of Trees*, a pleasant picture rendered slightly unreal through the use of colours. Because it departed from the social realist doctrine in force at the time, the painting was used as the pretext for sentencing him to a re-education camp. For several years, forced to live in the countryside and work in the poultry processing factory, he was practically cut off from the ability to practise painting. He produced numerous drawings at that time, first and foremost the series *Poultry* (1975–1976), documenting rural life, harrowing in the raw realism of its presentation, with existential undertones. In the 1990s, seeking his own path back to painting, Hila carefully observed life evolving after the fall of the Hoxha regime and tried to depict the realities of social transformation. In the groundbreaking series *Comfort* (1997), the artist captures the inability to satisfy the need for comfort promised to the new society.

He primarily creates series treating a selected theme over several paintings. The most important of Hila's series include *Paradox* (2000–2005), *Relations* (2002–2014), *Threat* (2003–2009), *Roadside Objects* (2007–2010), *Penthouses* (2013), *Martyrs of the Nation Boulevard* (2015) and *A Tent on the Roof of the Car* (2017). The realism of his painting is distinct, based on careful observation of detail, which he exploits to convey the psychological truth of the observed phenomenon.

Hila carefully selects the themes for his painting series. They possess the strength of authenticity of everyday observation as well as the universality of the existential principle. In his version, this strips the transformation in Eastern Europe of accident or adventure typical of many presentations, and gives it the weight of distilled general truths, as if he were its final chronicler. One of the reasons for such radical reduction may be Hila's leaning toward classicism, a fascination with Renaissance sources of painting. It is as if modernism has evaporated from his field of interest and there are no dilemmas of modernity. This is why the transformation, in collision with the

classical tradition of painting and balance understood in the distant spirit of the Renaissance, conveys so clearly the disruption and attack on harmony and order. On the other hand, it is rooted in human dilemmas that are hard to conceal, even with a veneer of modernization.

Edi Hila's exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw fits within a series of exhibitions devoted to overlooked artists from Eastern Europe. Over the past few years we have prepared monographic exhibitions of Ion Grigorescu, Július Koller and Mária Bartusová, and carried out projects with Sanja Iveković and Tomislav Gotovac. But this project extends beyond scholarly curiosity or historical necessity. The reason we are addressing Hila's oeuvre at this time is the acute currency of an artist who refused to be deceived by the trappings of the transformation, always tracing the subcutaneous threats it carried with it.

**Curators:** Kathrin Rhomberg, Erzen Shkololli, Joanna Mytkowska

**Website:** [artmuseum.pl/en](http://artmuseum.pl/en)

**Interactive guide:** [edihila.artmuseum.pl/en](http://edihila.artmuseum.pl/en)

**Museum on the Vistula opening hours:** Tuesday–Friday 12 noon – 8 pm, Saturday 11 am – 8 pm, Sunday 11 am – 6 pm (closed Mondays)

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Press materials and photos: [prasa.artmuseum.pl](http://prasa.artmuseum.pl)

