

Angelo (Markus Schleinzer, Austria/Luxembourg) — Platform

BY ANGELO MUREDDA IN CINEMA SCOPE ONLINE, TIFF 2018



By Angelo Muredda

It's funny in an Austrian sort of way that Markus Schleinzer should take seven years to follow his 2011 Cannes debut *Michael* with a movie called *Angelo*. That kind of contextual anti-joke would be at home in his latest, a self-reflexive 18th-century period piece, pitched at the edge of irony, about the eventful life of Angelo Solliman. Born Mmadi Make, the Viennese courtier was abducted from Nigeria as a child, sold into slavery in Marseilles, and raised as a court slave in Sicily by a marchioness (Alba Rohrwacher). In her magnanimous whiteness, the marchioness decides that Mmadi/Angelo will replace her dead son (also Angelo), be groomed into a prince, and prove to a world that up to now is reliant upon colonial diarists' tales from around the world that Africans needn't be seen as "godless creatures given over to the devil from birth." And so we have both nu-Angelo, rechristened after his predecessor as well as "God's first messenger," and *Angelo*, a sneaky film that like its predecessor *Michael* seems interested in the way our character interacts with malevolent outside forces to make people the sum total of what they are.

CURRENT ISSUE



Cinema Scope Mag for film reviews, criticism news & comments. One of the most respected publications on film, uniting experienced critics with new writers.

SUBSCRIBE AND SAVE

Subscriptions

Subscribe and save worldwide

Digital Edition

Any device, PC, Mac or phone

Back Issues

Instant download back issues

A bone-dry formalist like his frequent collaborator Michael Haneke, Schleizer gets a lot of mileage out of the hollow grandeur of the Viennese court. In strikingly framed and dramatically lit 4:3 frontal tableaux, he observes the goofy rituals into which Angelo is indoctrinated with a detachment that undermines the marchioness' contention that his participation in noble European institutions like literacy, balls, and theatrical performance (in racist melodramas about evil Moorish kings) are great victories "on the path to becoming human." Insofar as the five actors that play Angelo display their humanness, it's in their bemusement and traumatized detachment from the tasks they are forced to perform. The closest any of them gets to idiosyncrasy is when the twentysomething Angelo interrupts a tender moment with a lover by passing gas.

That all of the Angelos are ciphers save for that moment of indulgence is both a feature and a bug. Schleizer here essentially inverts *Moonlight*, showing a young black boy meeting all the wrong people and becoming European because of it, which is to say hollowed out. He plays Angelo's death, his body taxidermied, displayed in phony African garb in Vienna's Naturhistorische Museum, and stuffed into a box, more as black comedy than horror, albeit punctuated by his daughter's blood-curdling scream as she's turned away at the door. It's hard to argue with this reading that Angelo's disgraceful end is the natural conclusion of the white liberal colonial project with respect to "curios" like a black intellectual who ran in Mozart's circles, but one wonders what a black filmmaker would have made of the same story, unencumbered by the need to make this ultimately obvious point about the way whiteness burns through everyone it touches.



SEARCH



CINEMA SCOPE ONLINE

Before the Frost (Michael Noer, Denmark) — Contemporary World Cinema

The Death and Life of John F. Donovan (Xavier Dolan, Canada/UK) — Special Presentations

Maya (Mia Hansen-Løve, France) — Special Presentations

Redemption (Boaz Yehonatan Yacov & Joseph Madmony, Israel) — Contemporary Word Cinema

The Standoff at Sparrow Creek (Henry Dunham, US) — Midnight Madness

The Truth About Killer Robots (Maxim Pozdorovkin, US) — TIFF Docs

Vision (Naomi Kawase, Japan/France) — Special Presentations

22 July (Paul Greengrass, Norway/Iceland/USA) — Special Presentations

◀ ANIARA (PELLA KÅGERMAN & HUGO LILJA, SWEDEN) — DISCOVERY

ANGEL (KOEN MORTIER, BELGIUM/NETHERLANDS/SENEGAL) — ▶
CONTEMPORARY WORLD CINEMA

SUBSCRIBE AND SAVE



CONTRIBUTORS

Subscriptions

*Subscribe and save
worldwide*

Digital Edition

*Any device, PC, Mac or
phone*

Back Issues

*Instant download back
issues*

FOLLOW



LINKS

[Cahiers du Cinema](#)

[Cineaste](#)

[Dave Kehr.com](#)

[David Bordwell's Website on
Cinema](#)

[Girish](#)

[Guardian Film](#)

[Images – A Journal of Film &
Popular Culture](#)

[Jonathan Rosenbaum](#)

[Moving Image Source](#)

[Reverse Shot](#)

[Senses of Cinema](#)

[The Academic Hack](#)

[The International Federation of
Film Critics](#)

[Adam Nayman](#)

[Alex Ross Perry](#)

[Alicia Fletcher Alicia Fletcher](#)

[Alysia Urrutia](#)

[Andrea Picard](#)

[Andrew Tracy](#)

[Angelo Muredda](#)

[Aurelie Godet](#)

[Azadeh Jafari](#)

[Benny Safdie](#)

[Blake Williams](#)

[Boris Nelepo](#)

[C.J. Prince](#)

[Celluloid Liberation Front](#)

[Chelsea Phillips-Carr](#)

[Christoph Huber](#)

[Christopher Small](#)

[Chuck Stephens](#)

[Cinema Scope](#)

[Clara Miranda](#)

[cscope2](#)

[Dan Sullivan](#)

[Daniel Kasman](#)

[Diana Dabrowska](#)

[Diego Brodersen](#)

[Dominik Kamalzadeh](#)

[Elena Lazic](#)

[Erika Balsom](#)

[Ethan Vestby](#)

[Gonzalo de Pedro Amatria](#)

[Ian Barr](#)

[James Lattimer](#)

[Jason Anderson](#)

[Jay Kuehner](#)

[Jennifer Lynde Barker](#)

[Jerry White](#)

[Jesse Cumming](#)

Jonathan Rosenbaum

Jordan Cronk

Jose Teodoro

Joseph Pomp

Josh Cabrita

Josh Slater-Williams

Kate Rennebohm

Kelley Dong

Kong Rithdee

Lawrence Garcia

Leo Goldsmith

Leonardo Goi

Lorenzo Esposito

Lydia Ogwang

Madeleine Wall

Mallory Andrews

Manuela Lazic

Mark Peranson

Matías Piñeiro

Michael Sicinski

Olaf Moller

Pamela Jahn

Phil Coldiron

Quintin

Richard Porton

Robert Koehler

Roberto Minervini

Ruben Demasure

Samuel La France

Sarah-Tai Black

Scott Foundas

Sean Rogers

Shelly Kraicer

Stefan Grissemann

Steve Macfarlane

Steven Shaviro

Tom Charity

Tommaso Tocci

Willow Maclay

[HOME PAGE](#)

[CONTACT](#)

[SUBSCRIPTIONS](#)

[ADVERTISING](#)

WEB DESIGN: ADRIAN KINLOCH

