



JOÃO LEONARDO  
*Apontamentos sobre a consciência de Zeno*  
03 – 03 | 21 – 04 – 2018

Brief notes on the metrics of annotation

Richard Klein's book *Cigarettes are Sublime* introduced João Leonardo to the philosophical reflections of Ettore Schmitz, a Trieste bourgeois who during the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century wrote *Zeno's Conscience*, under the literary pseudonym Italo Svevo. Richard Klein dedicates a whole chapter in his book to the analysis of Svevo's fictional creation. It is within this context that the *Apontamentos sobre a Consciência de Zeno [Annotations on Zeno's Conscience]* exhibition develops as the mapping-out and construction of a system of images and texts, comprising various types of drawings, photographs, print-outs, lists and indexes, historic pictures, characters, manuscripts and transcriptions from Svevo's book done by the artist himself. This wavering between two literary works, between fiction and reflection, plays an especially important role in João Leonardo's working process and is connected to a cumulative need to elaborate indexes of literary or photographic references, and often lists of verbs and words, or also sequences of numbers and dates, that become part of his work in exhibitions or installations or as elements in the composition of certain of his pieces.

The "annotations" displayed here include handwritten texts, copied or transcribed by the artist's own hand, and the fact of that continuous action of writing under a compulsion that is endless, but also controlled and austere, as its disciplined graphic quality shows us, is equally observable in his drawings and collages. That handmade quality brings his studio work to the gallery, both the clippings of texts and pictures and the time spent reading and writing, the latter now as an abstract temporality, or an idea of time that cannot be counted, moving away from the domain of measuring and bringing us into a historical metrics framed by the orthogonal grid of the compositions, presented in two different formats, one larger than the other. These compositions are pictures, in the most didactic sense of the term, but they are also,



in their most cryptic, disruptive assumption, self-referential mappings of the paradoxes and tensions they reveal to us, confronting us with their resistance and resilience, and for that reason paradoxical in their tension between desire and doubt, pleasure and death. In this respect, the images and drawings invite us to revisit various classification and communication systems, such as a leaf of a plant from which tobacco is extracted, drawn in graphite on watercolour paper in the artist's studio and part of the work *Apontamentos sobre a Consciência de Zeno #1 – "Escreva!"*

That plant, a *Nicotiana tabacum*, was drawn from life and is part of the same kind of visual references as another member of its family, also present here; however, that other image is an inkjet print, also done in the artist's studio. We are confronted with a play on varying scales of valuation of the images and their references, which examines such concepts as authorship and appropriation. But there also abstract, gestural elements, such as drippings or printed circular shapes that resemble similar motifs in drawings by the artist.

However, the act of smoking is a central theme in his work; while I believe that João Leonardo does not focus his work on smoking as a social and mundane protocol, it is true that he cultivates a political and social awareness of the communication systems that have created the icons used to attribute and enhance a status of masculinity and virility, as displayed in commercials for such tobacco brands as Lucky Strike or Marlboro, among others. These icons also include historic figures, such as Albert Camus or Humphrey Bogart, who can be seen on *A Global History of Smoking*<sup>1</sup> amidst other images that take us to a variety of historical times and social contexts, such as, for instance, the picture of a smiling father who enjoys a cigarette while looking at his son, who is having his hair cut, which can be seen in

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<sup>1</sup> GILMAN, Sander L. and XUN, Zhou (ed.), *Global History of Smoking*, Reaktion Books, London, 2004, p. 340.



*Apontamentos sobre a Consciência de Zeno #14 - "Filho"*. A passage from Klein's book tells us the following: "Except in times of great scarcity, when they become a form of money – a universal token of exchange – cigarettes are normally exceptions to the regime of private property and are subject to the more expansive transactions of the gift. Even now, in many countries, just as formerly in America, anyone of whatever class can ask anyone for a light, and a request for a cigarette is never refused" (p. 86). This levelling of social hierarchy by the acknowledgement of the act of smoking as a transversal, concessionary right is echoed in the conceptual structure of the installation Leonardo created for the gallery's elliptical space. There is also the fact that the sequences of images are connected by a handwritten chronology in which the artist's self-referential condition is expressed as a timeline that includes his own life. It is as if this chronology, of which no event is known to us, was also a serial atlas, to which the personality and work of Aby Warburg is no stranger, but only used here as the cumulative reason for a system of images/texts developed by João Leonardo, which generates a plurality of meanings, sometimes dystopian and asynchronous, sometimes political, but always paradoxical.

João Silvério



JOÃO LEONARDO

Odemira, 1974.

Lives and works in Klippan, Sweden.

### Education

2007 / 2009 Programme in Fine Art / Malmö Art Academy – Lund University / Malmö, Sweden  
2002 / 2005 Independent Study Programme / Maumaus – School of Visual Arts / Lisbon, Portugal  
1999 / 2001 Advanced Diploma in Graphic Design / Billy Blue College of Design / Sydney, Australia  
1992 / 1996 Bachelor (Honours) of Arts – Art History / Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities –  
Universidade Nova de Lisboa / Lisbon, Portugal

### Solo Exhibitions

2018 *Notes on the consciousness of Zeno*, Galeria 111, Lisbon, Portugal  
*João Leonardo Playlist # 18*, Café Candelabro, Porto, Portugal  
2017 *Decadança*, MNAC–Museu Nacional de Arte Contemporânea / Museu do Chiado, Lisbon,  
Portugal  
2016 *Europa: Polar Shift*, Museu de Portimão, Portimão, Portugal  
2014 *Flying High, Falling Low*, Galeria 111, Porto, Portugal  
2013 *Flying High, Falling Low*, Galeria 111, Lisbon, Portugal  
*Breathe in, Breathe out*, Galeria Mors Mössa, Gothenburg, Sweden  
2012 *Alpha | Omega*, Galeria 111, Lisbon, Portugal  
*Live, Smile and Fly*, [with Mike Mike] Studyo Galery, Istanbul, Turkey  
2011 *Seven Seconds*, Galleri Pictura / Martin Bryder Gallery, Lund, Sweden  
*One Hundred And Six Columns, Four Heads And One Table*, Galeria 111, Porto, Portugal  
2010 *One Hundred And Six Columns, Four Heads And One Table*, Galeria 111, Lisbon, Portugal  
*One Hundred And Six Columns, Four Heads And One Table*, Villa Concordia, Bamberg,  
Germany  
*Another Autointerview*, Instituto Franco–Portugais, Lisbon, Portugal  
2009 *Timeline*, Galeria 111, Porto, Portugal  
*Timeline*, Galeria 111, Lisbon, Portugal  
2008 *João Leonardo* [with Franko B], The Mews, London, UK  
*Time After Time*, KHM Gallery, Malmö, Sweden  
2006 *As Time Goes By...*, Galeria 111, Lisbon, Portugal  
*João Leonardo*, Arte Contempo, Lisbon, Portugal

### Awards, Grants and Residencies

2017 National Museum of Contemporary Art – Museu do Chiado, Exhibition Grant, Lisbon Portugal  
2013 Kulturstöd Pronto – Exhibition Grant at Galleri Mors Mössa, Gothenburg, Sweden  
2012 Guimarães 2012 – European Capital of Culture – Exhibition Grant, Portugal  
2011 Sveriges Konstföreningar – Exhibition Grant, Lund, Sweden  
2010 / 2011 Internationales Künstlerhaus Villa Concordia – Artist in Residency, Bamberg, Germany  
2008 / 2009 Gulbenkian Foundation – Study Grant, Portugal  
2008 Kuno Express / Nordic–Baltic Art Education Network – Travel Grant, Norway  
2007 Danfoss Art Award – Silver Medal, Denmark  
2005 Prémio EDP–Novos Artistas / New Artist Award – 1st Prize, Portugal

### Public Collections

Manuel de Brito Collection, CAMB, Algés, Portugal  
EDP Foundation Collection, Lisbon, Portugal  
António Cachola Collection, Museu de Arte Contemporânea de Elvas –, Elvas, Portugal  
Museu de Arte do Rio, Rio de Janeiro, Brasil  
Museu Nacional de Arte Contemporânea – Museu do Chiado, Videos from the António Cachola  
Collection, Lisbon Portugal  
The Danfoss Art Foundation, Nordborg, Denmark