

Leandro Katz: Entre dos citas [Leandro Katz: Between Two Quotes]

March 6 – May 27, 2018



Libro Quemado (Burnt Book), 1992. Enamel, pastel and ink on handmade paper. 13 individual pages. 80 x 36 cm c/u

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Leandro Katz: Between Two Quotes

Hegel: "When philosophy paints in shades of grey, then an aspect of life has grown old and can be rejuvenated no more, but simply acknowledged: only with the dusk does the owl of Minerva spread its wings."

Guy Debord: "When art grows independent, painting the world in dazzling colours, a moment of life has grown old and can no longer be rejuvenated with glowing colours, but can be evoked only in our memory. Art's grandeur grows apparent as life declines"

Leandro Katz quotes. He quotes from Hegel and from. He is surely not unaware that quoting, *hacer citas*, is tantamount to making a rendez-vous, *citarse con*.



Dos citas (Hegel/Debord), 2015/2018. Vinyl, thread and needle. Variable dimensions

A quote, of course, may end well or badly. Many quotes are missteps, 'Freudian slips'. Which is not to say, however, that they're necessarily failures. On the contrary: between one date and another, one quote and another, there's a space (uncertain) and a sequence (enigmatic) that can involve forms (space) or shift place through questions (enigma).

As far as the sequence goes, this much seems clear: philosophy arrives at life too late, as life does at art. There are also too many spaces between these three terms (life/ philosophy/ art). How to mend them, weld them together, is the supreme enigma. For this reason, there's no other solution than to mingle quotes: to tangle them up with crossed lines that change one's first reading, the obvious one.

The quote from Hegel has its own little history. In his youth, the philosopher from Jena borrowed it -- rereading, reinterpreting it -- from the poet of Weimar, Goethe: "Gray is

theory, green is the tree of life." Later on, Marx would in turn use it to create tangles of his own, in his attempt to merge life with theory (a task, as we know, yet to be fulfilled). The quote from Debord has a much longer history: to a certain extent, the entire history of the dominant forms of Western art, which have privileged "independence" over life. Which burned the ancient codices of the "others" (there, where life is directly ciphered in certain mysterious glyphs) so that the only thing visible should be those glowing new colors. To have that gleam, they didn't hesitate a moment to smudge life with a dull grayness. To further quote: Adorno: "The bourgeois mind aspires to an ascetic life and a voluptuous art; but wouldn't the reverse be better?"



Oscura conjetura, 2009. Enamel, pastel and paper mounted on cardboard. 36,5 x 38,6 cm

Well, Katz keeps trying. One path, between the cobweb of quotes and reconstruction (for once, and in an obscurely conjectural form) of the burnt codex -- and here we're

back in sequence -- is the series, tossed onto the horizon, of the phases of the moon. That movement, of the transformation of certain phases into other ones, is perpetual, infinite. At the same time, it is a repetition. An endless repetition, a shifting repetition? Perhaps it should be thought about differently: since, between the various phases, there are empty circles, it can be conjectured (dimly, of course) that the sequence isn't over, can't be ended; there are still phases in a potential state, "conjectural." Art can't complete life, nor can it replace it: it can, in any event, show what is missing, both in art and in life. It can ironize, not without tenderness, about the opposition (so bourgeois in spirit) between art and life, between repetition and the infinite. A final (we promise!) quote: Kierkegaard: "The condition for an authentic repetition is that it seem to be a novelty."



On the solidarity of waiting, 2016. Collage, graphite and ink on paper. 77 x 139 cm

Thus, the alphabet -- which we shall have to construct, since Katz won't regard anything as finished -- of things to come, can be sketched out simply, as if with pencil and watercolor. It won't be totally either writing or image, but rather, a rebus, or some sort of new hieroglyph, blurring distances -- still rigid, though some forms of present-day art try to disguise those distances: Katz, though, isn't present-day, he's potential -- between art/ life/ philosophy (Katz is potential, and shrewd: he includes a third implicit quote, that of "unrepeatable distances": Benjamin).

Between two quotes, then, are many others, indeed, an endless number. The first *cita* is the main one -- the date with (hi)story woven and unwoven (the obviousness of the metaphor of Penelope shouldn't daunt us) among them. Art, Katz means to tell us, is -- should be -- a modest proposal, so that this (hi)story can be transformed into that of the

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emancipation of the gaze, safely withdrawn from the bedazzlements of the brilliant colors that make life so gray (when will we ever learn that the "society of the spectacle," or "the culture industry," or the "mass media" are diabolically metaphysical entities?).

Perhaps that would be one way in which art could push the owl of Minerva so it would get to its date early enough. But art can't do this on its own. Katz, as we said, *hace citas*: makes quotes or makes dates. It's up to all of us to keep them.

Eduardo Grüner

Eduardo Grüner is a Doctor of Social Sciences and *Profesor Consulto* at the University of Buenos Aires. He was a full professor in the Sociology and Anthropology of Art and of Literature and Cinema in the Arts Division of the UBA's Department of Philosophy and Literature.



Enigma, 2016. Collage, graphite and ink on paper. 112 x 33 cm

Leandro Katz, born in Buenos Aires in 1938.

He is an Argentine artist, poet and writer. In the mid-1960s, after his long travels through countries of Latin America, his texts turned into conceptual art incorporating language, anthropological and historical research, and the photographic and cinematographic iconography of facts, whether real or imaginary.

He is the author of various books and artist's books. His *The Catherwood Project*, a collaboration with Jesse Lerner, was recently published by the University of New Mexico Press. He has made 22 films, in narrative, non-narrative and installation forms, the most recent of them (2015) being *The Love for Three or Four Oranges*.

Among his recent shows are Encuentros de Pamplona 72: fin de fiesta del arte experimental [Pamplona 72 Encounters: The Party's Over for Experimental Art], Museo Reina Sofía, Madrid; Imán: Nueva York [Magnet: New York], Fundación Proa, Buenos Aires; Arrebatos, diagonales y rupturas, [Raptures, Diagonals and Ruptures] Fundación Telefónica, Buenos Aires (curated by Bérénice Reynaud), 10000 Vidas [10,000 Lives]- Gwangju Biennial, South Korea; El Rastro de la Gaviota [The Seagull's Tracks], Tabacalera, Madrid (curated by Berta Sichel); and Un Viaje en Canoa [A Canoe Trip], at Henrique Faria Fine Art, New York.

His works are in collections in Argentina and abroad, including those those of MoMA, NY; Museo de Arte Moderno, Buenos Aires; Museo Reina Sofía, Madrid; MUAC, Mexico City; MALI, Lima; Blanton Museum, Austin; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Pérez Art Museum, Miami, and the Getty Museum, Los Angeles.

He has received support from the Guggenheim Foundation; the U.S. National Endowment for the Arts; the Fondo Hubert Bals, the Netherlands; and CIFO Fundación Cisneros Fontanals, among other institutions.

For several decades he lived in New York; more recently, he has been moving between a mansion in Hollywood and an ivory tower in Buenos Aires. He often flees the former and comes down from the latter.