

Writing absentmindedly

24.11—26.11.2022

After reading *Água Viva* (1973) by Brazilian writer Clarice Lispector, whose title translates as “living water” but also “jellyfish”, I am stuck with an earworm that does not go away: “what saves you is writing absentmindedly”.

But what does it mean to “write absentmindedly” (in Portuguese “*escrever distraidamente*”? Searching for the etymology of “to distract” I found two entries 1) late 14c, from *distracten*, “to turn or draw (a person, the mind) aside or away from any object”; 2) from Latin *distrahere*: “draw in different directions”. I lean toward the second meaning: writing means for her to be pulled apart by different feelings and thoughts, following the fickle and variable moods of the moment. Reading the book, therefore, means following the author in an oscillation of opposite states of body and mind (love, fear, excitement, despair, hunger, enlightenment).

This description also reminded me of the experience of painting (it is certainly no coincidence that Lispector’s alter ego in *Água Viva* is, in fact, a painter). When I work on canvas or paper, each new decision is a forward movement but also a counter-movement: it brings with it other possibilities unforeseen, which reshuffle my preconceptions and ideas of what a painting could be. And in painting, as a medium, the cacophony is emphasized: writing requires reading, which occurs in linear time so that we do not have to experience all these conflicting feelings simultaneously. Painting, on the contrary, is presented to us all at once: we may not process all the information in one glance, but the painting does not change as we look at it, it is our perception that does it.

In my painting process, making sense of these heterogeneous points of view alternately translates into exhausting the work through fatigue and redundancies; or creating a sufficiently generous pictorial space to host all these hypotheses simultaneously. Paraphrasing Chuck Close, who once stated that putting the right color in the right spot on a canvas is like “shooting one’s eyeball”, the line between me and the target during the “shooting” is much thinner if not blurred.

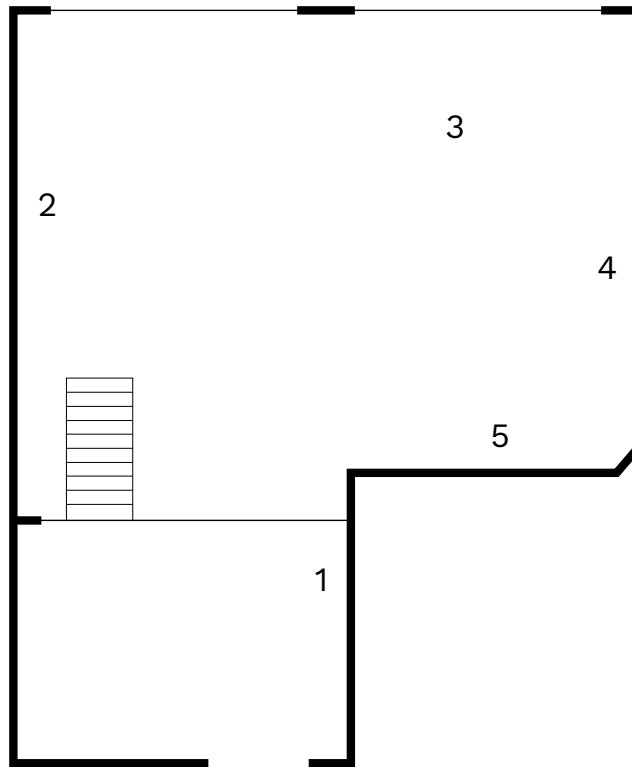
Renato Settembre (*1991 Genoa) lives and works in Brussels. He studied Fine Arts in Italy (Milan) and Germany (Stuttgart), before moving to Brussels in 2019. During his studies, he was awarded the Takifuji International Prize (2017) and was selected for the Gopea scholarship (2018). His work has been exhibited in Bonn (“Momentum 2”), Berlin (“Bells”, 2020), and Brussels (“Lausanne”, 2021). In his artistic practice, which extends to the media of painting, graphic and printmaking, he poses questions about the mutability and precariousness of aesthetic criteria.

Opening
Thursday November 24
6-9 pm

Rue Vanderschrick 17
1060 Brussels

November 25 and 26
by appointment

renatosettembre.com



1 **Writing absentmindedly**, 2022
oil, acrylic, and graphite
on cotton canvas,
90 x 120 cm

2 **Close encounter**, 2021
acrylic and graphite
on cotton canvas,
140 x 200 cm

3 **Marelle (part 1)**, 2021
oil and graphite on paper,
215 x 150 cm

4 **Vedo non vedo**, 2022
acrylic and graphite on linen,
80 x 60 cm

5 **Marelle (part 2)**, 2021
oil, acrylic ink, oil pastel, graphite,
and charcoal on paper,
215 x 150 cm