

# Opening the Eyes of Memory: War Painting in Adriano Sousa Lopes and Amadeo de Souza-Cardoso

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**Abstract** After a hundred years, when we open the eyes of memory with photographs, drawings and paintings of the Great War, it is impossible not to feel the horror of war. Beyond recording events and allowing us to remember them, what is the purpose of the art of the period? How can we bring to life a war which became a huge generalized massacre, a mechanical war with tanks, artillery, gas, airplanes and submarines, hidden and without a face, with no clear goals? During the conflict, war not only lost its traditional iconography—the horse, the flag, the soldier, the hero—but even the traditional “language” of painting struggled to express the states of light and movement, of speed and noise, of pieces of flying metal and fragmentation. It is in this context that this article seeks to compare the artistic and iconographic language of João Sousa Lopes and Amadeu Sousa Cardoso. In Sousa Lopes, an official war artist working in the trenches of Flanders, the horror and the absurdity of the unnatural violence is expressed in a figurative and realistic way. In Amadeu Sousa Cardoso, the language is contemporary and abstract, as well as profoundly original in aesthetic, conceptual and artistic terms. In his war paintings, and above all in the painting titled “Entrada”, Amadeu, twenty years before Picasso, shows how war leads to the destruction of life, harmony and the Light. In the perversity of war, electric light, traditionally a symbol of modernity, becomes something unnatural.

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My sincere thanks to José de Azeredo Perdigão Modern Art Centre—Gulbenkian Foundation, to the Ilídio Pinho Foundation, to Lisbon Military Museum and Municipal Library of Lisbon for their kind permission to reproduce the works of Amadeo Sousa-Cardoso and Adriano Sousa Lopes.

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# 1 Introduction

One hundred years later, as the eyes of memory are opened by photographs and paintings of the Great War, it is impossible not to feel the horror of war. The commemoration of the centenary of the First World War has provided a direct access to thousands of photographs about various aspects of the war, hundreds of drawings that filled the periodical newspapers and dozens of paintings created throughout Europe, Canada and America, from 1914 to 1918. Confronted with these images, and beyond their value as documents, as a means of not forgetting, we can't avoid the question of what exactly the purpose of the art of the period is?

With few exceptions<sup>1</sup> and perhaps because we have as a reference point works from the Second World War, we think that these images represent important documents, but recreated at a distance or through individual experiences. They rarely touch the essence they leave us out. Possibly for two reasons: on the one hand, we are facing a new kind of war, and on the other, abstract art is taking its first steps as a new poetic language. How do you bring to life a war which became a huge generalized massacre, a mechanical war with tanks, artillery, gas, aeroplanes and submarines, hidden and without a face, with no clear goals?

During the 1914–1918 conflict, war not only lost its traditional iconography—the horse, the flag, the soldier, the hero—but even the traditional “languages” of painting struggled to express the states of light and movement, of speed and noise, of pieces of flying metal and fragmentation, elements and states that become themselves signs and symbols of modern technology and aesthetics.

In the field of the arts, these new heights of destruction and military power demanded the creation of plastic languages of greater impact, with an iconography that breaks with the traditional. More sensitive to an abstract aesthetic, the avant-garde painters—in most cases mobilized or voluntarily enlisted and therefore directly involved in the confrontation—had difficulty in finding in the new pictorial language the energy and maturity to express the scale of tragedy. From 1914 to 1918, Léger, Malevich, and futurist artists such as Severini and Boccioni, by employing the aesthetic of collage and breaking light, by fragmenting forms and colours and using letters and coded numbers, were the most able to open up new pathways.

It is within this context that this article analyses the effects of the First World War on the work of Adriano Sousa Lopes and Amadeo de Souza-Cardoso.

We believe that war paintings done by these two artists in this period correspond to their best work, specifically through the original use of perspective, the expressiveness and impact of the message, the emotion of a wounded humanity and the feeling of destruction and yawning absence. Both painters chose to leave Portugal while still young in order to pursue their studies in Paris, where they were living when the conflict began. Both were persistent and ambitious, aspiring to

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<sup>1</sup>*Sandham Memorial Chapel* by Stanley Spencer; *Path of glory* by Christopher Nevinson, an official War Artist; *Gassed* by John Singer Sargent; and the triptych *The War* by Otto Dix.

recognition. Both of their lives would be touched by war; a war that would also be uniquely present in their drawings, engravings and paintings. However, Sousa Lopes and Souza-Cardoso were very distinct personalities, with almost opposing life paths, interior dispositions and sensitivities.

By looking at the language, pictorial expressiveness and war iconography of their paintings, the divergence of their aesthetic conceptions becomes apparent. In Sousa Lopes, an official war artist working in the trenches of Flanders, the horror and the absurdity of the unnatural violence is expressed in a figurative and realistic way, employing a drawing style that is both firm and incisive as well as suggestively poetic. In Amadeo, the language is contemporary and abstract, as well as profoundly original in aesthetic, conceptual and artistic terms.

Comparing two photographs of the artists in their studios reveals their distinctive temperaments and personalities, concerns and dreams, tastes and complexity of compositions. Differences in their social ambitions, cultural links and ties of friendship are also revealed (Figs. 1 and 2).

Adriano, who had simple tastes and a shy and retiring personality, almost insecure, adheres to academic disciplines, following the canon in term of themes, ideals of beauty and balance of the composition. He seems to remove himself from his paintings, using them to gain visibility and recognition<sup>2</sup> [http://hemerotecadigital.cm-lisboa.pt/OBRAS/IlustracaoPort/1907/N66/N66\\_master/N66.pdf](http://hemerotecadigital.cm-lisboa.pt/OBRAS/IlustracaoPort/1907/N66/N66_master/N66.pdf). The young Amadeo, proud and confident, with an intense and imposing personality, looks at us in a penetrating and fearless way. His secure posture and the intensity of his look, almost provocative in their audacity, suggest a world with no barriers. But the image also shows us something else: he composes the picture with the care with which he will organise his mature compositions. Amadeo, the person and the painter, has mastered classical rules and models and admires sophisticated compositions. The magic of this photographic composition reminds us of another composition: *Las Meninas* by Velasquez. The main terms of comparison are the assertiveness of the painter figure, the use of the mirror to create multiple planes and levels of depth, as well as the balanced dialogue between the verticality and horizontality of lines and forms. However, Amadeo introduces personal elements of his doubly modern language: the play on the gaze, eyes that look and are looked at, the use of the mirror to suggest depth and broken lines in zigzag that cross the six planes of the painting, giving it dynamism. The result is a wonderful structure for organizing the space.

Amadeo questioned the rules with method, searching inwardly for his own way: “Every artist, that truly is one, has in himself something unmistakable that belongs to him only and no one else. We, the young, seek within ourselves that thing which if it is really there, will reveal itself” (Pamplona, 1983, pp. 62–63).

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<sup>2</sup>*Retrato de Mulher (Portrait of a Woman)*, painted by Sousa Lopes and presented at the Salon in 1907. Photograph published in the review *Ilustração Portuguesa* 66 (27/5/1907): 3. Accessed February 1, 2016.



**Fig. 1** *Retrato de Mulher* (*Portrait of Woman*), painted by Sousa Lopes, Inv. 566 © Hemeroteca Municipal Lisboa

**Fig. 2** *Amadeo de Souza-Cardoso in his studio, Paris 1907* © Museu Calouste Gulbenkian—Coleção Moderna



## 2 Adriano de Sousa Lopes in the Trenches

Ten years older than Amadeo, Adriano Sousa Lopes (1879–1944) graduated in painting—with a specialization in history painting—from the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Lisbon. In 1903, he moved to Paris on an official scholarship. He travelled across Europe and exhibited in successive years in the traditional and academic *Salon des Artistes Français*.

In 1917, by then 38 years old, he organized his first solo exhibition in the National Society of Fine Arts (SNBA) in Lisbon, exhibiting 265 works. The exhibition was a huge success. Recognized in academic circles and politically close to the regime, Sousa Lopes proposed to enlist as official artist to the Portuguese Expeditionary Corps. He was then dispatched to Flanders, where he was stationed in the Fauquissart sector and participated in the battle of La Lys.

After the armistice, he returned to Paris and working from his experiences and sketches created a series of drawings, etchings, prints and oils—without a doubt his most penetrating and genuinely authentic works.

During the Twenties, like everyone else in Europe, he tried to forget the horrors of the conflict. He married a sophisticated and coquettish Parisian woman and returned to his well-crafted female portraits, as well as landscapes and historical works, coloured with patriotic feeling.

During this period the Lisbon Artillery Museum commissioned him to create some large canvasses on the war, which he completed in a strange mix of the apologetic and the celebratory.

Further rising to prominence in Portuguese cultural and political circles, he organized a second solo exhibition in 1927 at SNBA—47 of 148 works were on the theme of war. In 1929, he was appointed director of the National Museum of Contemporary Art (Lisbon), benefiting from that moment from numerous scholarships that allowed him to travel throughout Europe and the world.

### 2.1 *The Authenticity of the Moment*

Because of his strong academic training, Sousa Lopes was highly accomplished at drawing. So we might say, metaphorically, that it will be his weapon during the period he spent on the battlefields of the First World War. Depending on his proximity/remoteness from areas of direct contact with the enemy, Sousa Lopes's drawing went through various adaptations. Quick sketches, made in the trenches, bear highly specific features: simple lines, loosely drawn or tangled up to show up textures; abstract and rhythmic contours; greater attention to the key subjects; shadows drawn with a darker outline and also the use of words to bring out what the drawing can't show—"boots", "blood", "naked legs". As the painter found himself in a place of great tension, these drawings are very expressive.

Something similar applies to the smaller etchings and paintings that Sousa Lopes produced during and immediately after his participation in the war. In formal and stylistic terms, these are unprecedented works in the artist's aesthetic. In the etchings in particular, the painter is able to portray an even more unvarnished and all-encompassing reality than in the drawings made in the midst of the war zone, underlining the devastating character of this international event.

We might compare two examples. The drawing entitled *Cristo das Trincheiras*<sup>3</sup> (*Christ of the trenches, 1917*), made on sight, and the etching which it inspires, *Uma Encruzilhada perigosa*<sup>4</sup> (*A dangerous crossroads, 1917–1921*), show similarities in the composition and the expressiveness of the iconographic elements. The dark image of a devastated landscape, where a mutilated body is nailed to a tree and remains hanging there as if it were a crucified Christ, is equally disturbing in the drawing and the engraving. What distinguishes them in formal terms is a simpler line, in the case of the drawing, and the energetic use of discontinuous lines and chiaroscuro contrasts in the etching. The inversion of the vertical elements (body suspended, tree and shelter) from right to left also influences the way we look at the image. In the drawing, these elements close down our field of vision, whilst in the engraving they appear immediately in front of our eyes, releasing the vanishing point, that is providing continuity to the composition.

However, it is in *Sepultura de um soldado português desconhecido, na Terra de Ninguém* (*Grave of an unknown Portuguese soldier in no man's land*) that we are violently faced with the hostile reality of this conflict. In a cold and inhospitable scene, a dense patch of black lines contrasts with clear empty spaces, holes made by grenades. On the right, a cross made with pieces of wood traversed by a shovel serves as a grave to a dead Portuguese soldier, as the title indicates. There is no movement or noise, only silence and desolation. Even time seems to have stopped. The “no man's land” is barren of life and continuity. The soldiers have been condemned to a real hell. We can say that the documentary content of this picture goes beyond the mere recording of events, moving the viewer and making him/her reflect on the atrocities of this war.

We would also highlight in this period some oil paintings where Sousa Lopes moves away from the figurative, opting instead for colour modelling, applied in impasto in the style of the impressionists. In *Ruínas da igreja de Merville*<sup>5</sup> (*Ruins of the Church of Merville, 1918*), the painter uses the ruins of the Christian church to create an interesting allegory. Various gradations of earth tones are thickly applied on successive vertical planes, arranged in perspective, framed by a quiet pleasant blue sky. The intense and symbolic light, which penetrates the centre of composition, seems to suggest a divine look of condemnation on human actions but, at the same time, offers a glimmer of hope for a better tomorrow.

<sup>3</sup>Charcoal on paper, 16 x 24 cm. Particular Collection, Lisbon.

<sup>4</sup>Etching on paper, 21.2 x 29.8 cm. MNAC-MC, Lisbon.

<sup>5</sup>Oil on canvas, 54 x 65 cm. Musée de l'Armée, Paris.





**Fig. 3** *Sepultura de um soldado português desconhecido, na Terra de Ninguém* (Grave of an unknown Portuguese soldier in no man's land) Etching on paper, 21 × 29.2 cm. 1918 © Fotografia de Paulo Costa—Museu Calouste Gulbenkian- Coleção Moderna

*Cena de Batalha*<sup>6</sup> (Battle Scene, 1918–1920) and *Bombardeamento aéreo*<sup>7</sup> (Aerial Bombardment, 1918) are set in nocturnal environments that challenge the artist's aesthetic in terms of palette and light concentration/diffusion. The first, vertically composed, has a base of dark green tones, where subtle black contours suggest the soldiers' heads, placed along a trench. Orange tones illuminate these figures, evoking flashes of fire. In the middle plane, a mixture of blacks and blues, applied in circular strokes, suggest column of smoke. On the highest plane, a dark blue assumes the hue of the night sky. In the second picture, the brightening effect of colour is heightened. Bombs fall from the sky, leaving light beams in their trails which cross each other. As they fall to the ground they provoke fire flashes that illuminate the space, in shades of yellow and red. In these pictures, we can see the same compositional freedom present in the drawings made at the battle front, to which is added a more expressive (pure) use of colour than in the pictures painted for the Lisbon Artillery Museum (current Military Museum of Lisbon) (Figs. 3 and 4).

<sup>6</sup>Oil on canvas, 45 x 50 cm. Particular Collection, Lisbon.

<sup>7</sup>Oil on wood, 118 x 90 cm. Veteran's Museum, Lisbon.

**Fig. 4** “*Very-lights*”.  
Etching and water colour on  
paper, 65.1 × 51.9 cm.  
1919 © Fotografia de Paulo  
Costa, Museu Calouste  
Gulbenkian—Coleção  
Moderna



## 2.2 *The Sublimation of the Portuguese Hero*

As the scene of the battlefield begins to recede in both physical and temporal terms, both Sousa Lopes's drawing and monumental painting acquire more figurative and naturalistic characteristics. This can be explained, on the one hand, by the official, patriotic and propagandist character the works begin to assume and on the other by the collective desire to forget the atrocities witnessed during the conflict.

Drawings such as *Maqueiros*<sup>8</sup> (*Stretcher bearers*, 1918), *Soldado morto*<sup>9</sup> (*Dead Soldier*, 1918–1919) or *Soldado rastejando*<sup>10</sup> (*Soldier crawling*, undated), for example, reveal a strong technique in terms of the depiction of the human figure. Clothing, movements of the body and facial expressions are depicted with great detail and psychological impact, as well elaborate light/shadow effects. However, it is an austere drawing with little expressiveness and a restrictive message (Fig. 5).

<sup>8</sup>Charcoal on paper, 39 x 59 cm. Military Museum, Lisbon.

<sup>9</sup>Charcoal on paper, 24 x 45 cm. Particular Collection, Lisbon.

<sup>10</sup>Charcoal on paper, 36.4 x 53.2 cm. Ajuda National Palace, Lisbon.





**Fig. 5** *Patrulha de reconhecimento na Terra de Ninguém* (*Reconnaissance patrol in no man's land*). Etching on paper, 56.4 × 75.3 cm. 1919 © Fotografia de Paulo Costa, Museu Calouste Gulbenkian—Coleção Moderna

The same occurs with the drawings which serve as studies for the large-scale oil paintings. In terms of the structure of the composition and the technical dexterity of the various elements, they are almost identical to the final works. We can ascertain this, for example, in *Estudo para a Destruição de um obus*<sup>11</sup> (*Study for Destruction of a howitzer*, 1918–1919) and the final oil painting,<sup>12</sup> where an episode in the battle of *La Lys* is depicted, which the artist would not have observed but would have known about through his companions. In both images, the centre is occupied by the shell and by a soldier who stands holding a pick-axe. He tries desperately to destroy the howitzer, to avoid letting it fall into the hands of the enemy, who arrive on the left-hand side, wielding their weapons.

By filling in the left-hand side with more soldiers in the painting than in drawing, the painter brings the enemy and his bayonet closer to the stomach of the Portuguese gunner, provoking an increasing tension and an immediate feeling of entrapment, as if he were telling us that for this man no salvation is possible. Reinforcing this heroic image, the gunner's companions appear, who, whether injured or killed, are fallen at his feet, no longer able to help him, as do flames which rise and devour the background.

In formal terms, both these two works allude to other western history paintings. *Três de Maio de 1808 em Madrid*<sup>13</sup> (*The Third of May 1808 in Madrid*) by Goya seems to have been an inspiration for Sousa Lopes. We can observe similarities

<sup>11</sup>Charcoal on paper, 27 x 41 cm. Particular Collection, Lisbon.

<sup>12</sup>*Destruição de um obus* (*Destruction of a howitzer*), 1925. Oil on canvas. 470 x 298 cm. Military Museum, Lisbon.

<sup>13</sup>Oil on canvas, 268 x 347 cm. Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid.

with Sousa Lopes's painting in terms of the use of the palette (with a predominance of earth tones, blacks and whites), the representation of the figures, the confrontation between the hero and the aggressor, in the psychological dimension of the scene or in the light/shadow contrasts that give greater or less importance to certain figures.

Another example is provided by *Rendição nas trincheiras* (*Surrender in the trenches*), a subject worked on by the artist in charcoal, etching and oil technique, thus reaching different levels of expressiveness and plasticity. The working sketch<sup>14</sup> is meticulously drawn and almost totally followed in the etching. In it we can see an orderly movement of a group of soldiers that extends in perspective from right to left until it reaches the figure who is believed to be Américo Olavo, the Commander who hosted Sousa Lopes in his section of the trenches. Wrapped in thick layers of snow and camouflaged by nets, these soldiers are moving away from the front lines, through a connecting trench, which a sign on the right tells us is called "Masselot", leaving behind them a cemetery filled with crosses, where their comrades rest. Comparing the etching<sup>15</sup> with the drawing, it becomes clear that the compositional structure has not changed, except for the group of soldiers which disappears. Only the Commander remains in the image, surrounded by the same desolate scene. He no longer holds a gun in his left hand, but instead a shovel. Now his appearance is more realistic and his figure bulkier and more imposing. The painter appears to have a specific intent in using this technique solely to depict his commanding officer. As was seen in previous cases, the etchings of Sousa Lopes are more expressive than his drawings. Aware of this fact, the painter portrays the figure of Américo Olavo not as leader of an army withdrawing from the trenches, but as a man who walks alone in a desolate landscape, leaving behind his dead comrades, which he himself has buried using the shovel he brings with him. In this way, the message is broadened (Fig. 6).

However, when the artist depicts the same scene in an oil painting, first in a small-scale study,<sup>16</sup> then later on a large canvas, its basic elements appear to become insufficient from the point of view of the psychological depth that war painting requires. The battalion that was following Américo Olavo along the trench in the study drawing is now placed to the right of the composition. The foreground is no longer centred on the Commander (who again carries his gun instead of a shovel), but on a group of soldiers, who walk exhausted and bent under the weight of their bags, their weapons, and the weeks of weariness that permanently keeping watch on the enemy has imposed on them. By drawing the human figures on a larger than life scale, filling the entire composition and depicted with white Impasto, which contrasts with the earthy tones of their garments, he confers on them a very strong psychological dimension. The painter again portrays the difficult lives of the

<sup>14</sup>Fauquissart, 1918. Charcoal on paper, 29.5 x 40 cm. Military Museum, Lisbon.

<sup>15</sup>Masselot, 1919. Etching on paper, 30.5 x 42.5 cm. MNAC-MC, Lisbon.

<sup>16</sup>*Uma rendição no Inverno de 1917* (*A surrender in the winter of 1917*), 1918. Oil on canvas, 135 x 88 cm. Musée de l'Armée, Paris.



**Fig. 6** *Duas ordenanças de Infantaria 11* (Two ordinances of 11th Infantry). Etching on paper, 30.8 × 24.5 cm. 1918 © Fotografia de Paulo Costa, Museu Calouste Gulbenkian—Coleção Moderna

soldiers in the new trench warfare, showing them as moving ghosts. It should be noted also that the soldiers walk in an inverse direction to the viewer, that is, from right to left, as if they were walking backwards. They surrender, as the title states, and remove any trace of hope in the future. They are condemned beings and everything that surrounds them points to it. Yet again, the “glorious effort of the Portuguese people”<sup>17</sup> is underlined.

There are clear affinities between this work and *Gassed* (1919), by John Singer Sargent,<sup>18</sup> whom since 1904 Sousa Lopes had considered “the greatest painter of the era” (Silveira & Silveira, 2015, p. 224). In addition to a horizontal and realistic composition, the two artists resort to symbolic imagery which appears to have man’s

<sup>17</sup>Sousa Lopes words to Norton de Matos, Portuguese Minister of War (April, 1917).

<sup>18</sup>Oil on canvas. 229 x 610 cm. Imperial War Museum, London.





**Fig. 7** *A Rendição (The Surrender)*. Oil on canvas. 296 × 1252 cm. 1919–1922. Inv. n° 000592  
© Museu Militar de Lisboa

dehumanization as its goal. The war, a cruel and traumatic experience, is shown to us through the eyes of these artists, who will not allow any other interpretation except their own (Fig. 7).

### 3 Amadeo de Souza-Cardoso: Caught by the War

Whilst on holiday in Portugal, Amadeo was surprised by the outbreak of the conflict. Although planning to return to Paris in 1915 and again in 1916, he ended up spending the war years exiled in his home-town of Manhufe, in the north of the country. This physical and artistic isolation forced him to speed up a process of interior creativity. In 1918, at the stage where he had developed his own language and expressed it with creative maturity, he fell ill with the Spanish flu a few days before the Armistice. He died on the 25th October 1918, aged 30.

#### 3.1 *Paris: A Time for Absorbing and Learning*

To better understand the changes that the war environment produced in Amadeo, we have to go back to his experiences in Paris from 1906 to 1914. They involve painters, sculptors, musicians, writers and choreographers of various nationalities and backgrounds, some of whom came from the peripheries to the centre of the artistic world that Paris represented. It was a loosely structured learning, undertaken with different modernist and bohemian schools, from Modigliani to Brancusi and Delaunay, going onto Rousseau, Chagall and Matisse, following the rhythm of Apollinaire's poetry and writing, as well as Satie and Stravinsky's music.

Amadeo, who had thought of being an architect, found the influences of modernism challenging. If, from the artistic point of view, he adheres immediately to avant-garde experiments, from the point of view of his socio-cultural values, he felt quite distant from them.

Subjects such as mechanics and its dynamism, noise, speed and the syncopated rhythms of life and the modern city, the fascination with light, with technique and

progress did not integrate themselves easily into his worldview. Amadeo in Paris was a young man of rural origins, with aristocratic values, searching for his own path. He was equally fascinated by the forms of Modigliani and Brancusi and the colours of Leger, Severini or Kandinsky, as by the Flemish primitives and the colours of medieval stained glass.<sup>19</sup> The Paris years of Amadeo were a time of learning and absorption. His landscapes, stories and figures point to a graceful world, of fantasy outside of time. Moving away from realism and painting as imitation, he produces works, which although figurative, have a dreamlike subject matter and resonance. Amadeo drew on a classical style and form, but one which upsets academic balance to assume its own dimensions and proportions.

In *Clown, Cavallo, Salamandra* (Fig. 8) the shapes create dynamism and effect through the use of patches of colour (yellow, green, blue and red), in a rhythmic harmony of joyful colours and movement. It is a delicate and sophisticated painting, with a suggestive power and archetypal memory, which in terms of its iconography distances itself from modernist themes. Through the rhythm of the lines and colours, the observer is involved in the harmony of music. It is a very sensory painting, emotional, that departs from the logic and aesthetics of cubist and futurist construction.

The acceleration, stylization and elongation of the figures, their gentleness and delicateness, combined with harmonic movements and rhythms, as well as an intense brilliance, produce beautiful paintings dominated by plays of colour and rhythm. Without abandoning classical models and aesthetics, Amadeo creates a balance and a harmony that, although not yet dissonant, undermines them. “He extends the truth through the over excitation of intentions”, as Jerome Doucet writes of him in 1912 in the Introduction of *XX Dessins*.<sup>20</sup>

His first works, the *XX Dessins*, directly inspired by the Kandinsky album *Klänge-Sounds*,<sup>21</sup> immediately challenge the academic style. During the same period, he illustrates and transcribes a short story, by Flaubert, entitled *La Légende de Saint Julien l'Hospitalier*, using the style of the richly illuminated manuscripts of the early Renaissance. The imagination of the themes, the drawing and resulting rhythm cadence give expression to the dialogue that literature, painting, sculpture, music and even ballet are having with each other at this beginning of the 20th century (Fig. 9).

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<sup>19</sup>The effect that stained glass had on Amadeo is visible in the original way in which he assimilates and develops his cubist experience between 1912 and 1915: the excessive length of the lines, greater clarity and fragmentation of forms, artificial plays on tones and shadows. The technical is particularly achieved in *Barcos* (*Boats*, 1913) and *A Menina dos Cravos* (*The girl with carnations*, 1913).

<sup>20</sup>*XX Dessins* is an album of drawings made in Indian ink by Amadeo de Souza Cardoso, published in 1912.

<sup>21</sup>The poems, drawings and engravings of the pictorial work *Klänge* were created by Kandinsky between 1908 and 1912. It is published in Munich in 1912.





**Fig. 8** *Title unknown [Clown, Cavalo, Salamandra]*. Gouache on paper. 23.8 × 31.8 cm. 1911 © Fotografia de Paulo Costa, Museu Calouste Gulbenkian—Coleção Moderna



**Fig. 9** *La Tourmente (The Turmoil)*. Original drawing for *XX Dessins*. Indian ink and gouache on paper. 1912 © Fotografia de Paulo Costa, Museu Calouste Gulbenkian—Coleção Moderna

In this world of discovery and affirmation, the young Amadeo, who worked forms and colours with originality and provocation, is recognized not only in Paris but also in Berlin, Hamburg, London, New York and Chicago.

1913 was the year when the painter Amadeo is recognized in the United States and Germany, a year of explosive vitality in Paris with the premiere of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* by the Ballets Russe, and *Les Peintres Cubistes* and *Alcools* by Apollinaire.

Throughout the 20th century, Amadeo's name will be mentioned in European modernism context thanks these early works.

The burden of the war removed him physically and culturally from the centres of dissemination. His mature work, carried out between 1915 and 1918, left no disciples or schools, either in Portugal or abroad. These profoundly innovative and original paintings, almost unknown even to Portuguese people until the 1980s, remain on the margins of the European and Portuguese modernist movement.

### 3.2 *Portugal, Isolation and Artistic Maturity*

When he returned to Portugal in 1914, Amadeo isolated himself in Manhufe, as was mentioned earlier. Isolation did not mean not receiving correspondence, newspapers or not staying informed. It meant resuming a non-urban existence, with natural rhythms and ancestral ways of living, being a witness to the life of a rural community, absorbed by survival in accordance with the rhythms of nature. This return accelerated a process of tension, confrontation and interior creativity. His experiences became the basis which give expression to his pictorial creation.

The influences of the war become explicit in Amadeo's painting from 1914 on, with the painting *Mulher Decepada* (*Woman Beheaded*) and, in 1917, with the paintings known as *Zinc*, *Brut*, and *Entrada* (*Entrance*). But they are also revealed implicitly, through the change in the colour palette, the clutter and fragmentation of the composition, no longer with a centre, and by the absence of his usual points of reference: vitality and confidence, joy and magic.

The *Mulher Decepada* (Fig. 10) watercolour anticipates in an intuitive way the tragic changes that will scar all of Europe. Although belonging to a series of humorous drawings about frustrated loves, the subtitle of this work leaves little room for interpretation: *Brisement de la grâce croisée de violence nouvelle* (*the breaking of grace, marked by the cross of a new violence*) (Fig. 11).

The horizontal plane is reinforced by the hanging head and the right hand that resists. Vertically, the white blouse and the skirt of the apron form a cross together with the horizontal line. This large cross is linked to other smaller crosses and to the drops of blood (consequences of the violence), increasing the feeling of suffering and death.

The effects of violence are also conveyed through the destruction of the woman's womb, a symbol of fertility. All the joys of life conveyed through the strong and clear colours of the clothes, are tinged with black patches coming from



**Fig. 10** *Mulher Decepada*  
*brisement de la grace croisée*  
*de la violence nouvelle* (The  
 breaking of grace, marked by  
 the cross of a new violence).  
 Watercolour on paper.  
 24 × 15.8 cm. 1914 ©  
 Fotografia de Paulo Costa,  
 Museu Calouste Gulbenkian  
 —Coleção Moderna



the background. The caption which accompanies the image leaves no room for doubt: grace has been broken (Fig. 12).

From 1914 to 1915 onwards, torn masks and faces become an obsession for Amadeo, wide-open eyes staring at us that penetrate us and penetrate beyond appearances, lonely and suffering heads, touched by violence and defeat.

Eyes are a constant presence in Amadeo's work, even when they become windows or in more abstract works, such as *Zinc*, hidden gloomy circles. When Amadeo paints figures closely bound to nature, forming a dense pictorial ensemble with a dramatic charge and directness, these characters—the old woman, the miller, the mad person, the pastor, the piper—are symbolic. His pictures, immersed and dense, cease to tell stories and directly reveal a suspended state of mind. They seek to immortalize a long-standing rural way of life, crude, painful, lonely, heavy and deformed which becomes contagious. Far removed from the gentle, delicate forms and joy of his Parisian works, this expressionistic phase coincides with a deep inner soul-searching by Amadeo.



**Fig. 11** *Tête Ocean (Ocean Head)*. Watercolour on paper. 25.4 × 18.8 cm. 1915 © Fotografia de Paulo Costa, Museu Calouste Gulbenkian—Coleção Moderna



**Fig. 12** *Title unknown [Janelas do Pescador]*. Oil on canvas. 27.4 × 34.8 cm. 1915 © Fotografia de Paulo Costa, Museu Calouste Gulbenkian—Coleção Moderna





**Fig. 13** *Figura Negra (Black Figure)*. Oil on canvas. 50 × 50 cm. 1914 © Fotografia de Paulo Costa, Museu Calouste Gulbenkian—Coleção Moderna

From 1914 to 1916, the painter prepared 111 works for exhibition in Portugal and the United States. Exhibitions were held in Oporto and Lisbon, and were as visited as they were misunderstood. From the conflict between the process of maturity and the frustration of artistic misunderstanding, his final phase brilliantly emerges with a burst of creativity. Traces of the war are present and implicitly suggested by the changes in the colour palette and by the absence of his usual points of reference: vitality and confidence, joy and magic (Fig. 13).

From a technical point of view, there are no sudden changes in Amadeo's work; as a versatile painter he works according to a personal goal of capturing the "inner expression of things",<sup>22</sup> in other words, moving towards abstraction. 1917 was a year of frenetic activity. Amadeo introduced new materials into his paintings (glass, wood, hooks, mirrors, sand, etc.) and his works became highly complex in their composition. These are chromatically dense works, with a tension in their movement and forms. The fragmentation and chromatic intensity produce a thematic depth that distinguishes these late paintings from all his previous iconography. Strangely, these paintings, painted in Manhufe, reveal a cosmopolitan and urban character that the early Parisian paintings lacked.

<sup>22</sup>Title attributed to one of his paintings from 1916.



In the last two years of his life, the artist contrasts the simple shapes (which were features of his earlier painting) with large patches of colour and tones. In order to achieve abstraction, he experiments with overlaying planes, textures and fragmented forms. This technique of filling the entire space of the canvas with tones becomes the painter's typical creative approach in relation to the succession of overlapping planes and sense of depth, in other words, the background of his paintings. In these overlapping planes, a new dimension emerges in the painting of Amadeo. Shapes and colours remain, but in the overall scheme of things become dependent on each other, as well the final structure of the composition. To put it another way, there are two pillars—colour and forms and the conceptualisation of the space. The overall artistic composition of the painting becomes the main priority. This is characteristic of Amadeo's abstract painting in 1917: a well-structured arrangement of the space and colour. The paintings deliberately do not have a defined centre, but points around which the painting is organized. This disordered and fragmented composition is also an implicit sign of the experience of war in Amadeo's painting.

### 3.2.1 The Theme of War in Abstract Paintings

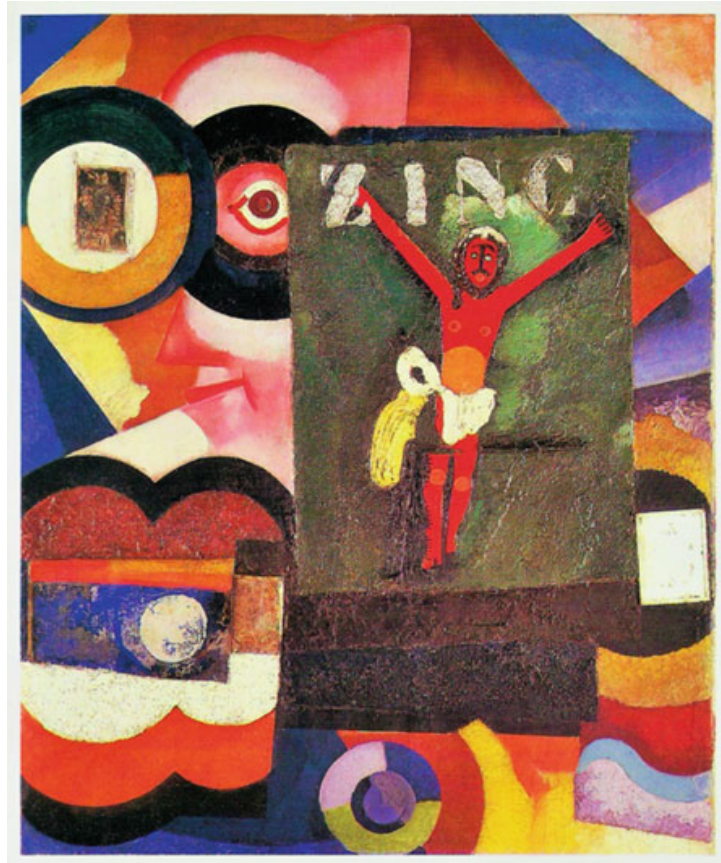
In 1917, Amadeo's painting was organized around two main themes: music and war. They have common subjects: violas, guitars and musical instruments. From an iconographic point of view, the effects of the war are explicitly present in the untitled paintings such as *Zinc*, *Brut 300 TSF* and in an indirect but more elaborate way, in *Entrada*, all from 1917. A comparative analysis of these three paintings, and the preparatory study for *Entrada*, allows us to observe the following: a movement from the simple to the complex, both in iconographic and compositional terms and technique; Amadeo's evolution into abstraction; the power of his symbols, which come to life in the close relationship between them and the typical objects of works (Fig. 14).

To give an example, Amadeo paints the word "ZINC" along the top of painting within the painting, above a crucified man's head, a poor soldier killed in war.<sup>23</sup> "ZINC" symbolizes the crown of thorns or "Ecce Homo". Zinc was used in artillery weapons and therefore the painter employs it as a metaphor for death. Subsequently, in the study for *Entrada*, he writes "ZINC" in the lower left hand corner; understood as symbol of death "ZINC" becomes the meeting point of the tensions between the different subjects of the study. In the [*Entrada*] painting, in the same lower left-hand corner, this word is replaced by "LA", followed by the painter's name. In brief: in the logical sequence of symbolism, the "LA" sign which traditionally symbolizes harmony needs to be understood as the destruction of harmony; by associating his name with it, Amadeo becomes a participant in the disharmony. In conclusion, Amadeo's creative process obliges us to go on a mental

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<sup>23</sup>Private Collection of Mr. Ilídio Pinho (Porto).

**Fig. 14** *Title unknown*  
[ZINC]. Oil and collage on  
canvas. 59 × 49 cm. 1915 ©  
Fundação Ilídio Pinho, Porto



and emotional journey that moves from analogy to interiority. His abstract painting, almost sealed off, is dense and full of tension, pregnant with all the signs for war he has been refining.

The *ZINC* painting is different from all of Amadeo's other works and is the first in this series. It is closer to the figurative. Amadeo is searching for his own war iconography and adequate compositional forms. The painting's greatest depth comes from the staring eye and viewing eye, which penetrates us, but which can also be struck. With a harmonious background and resorting to large-sized forms, the composition has the appearance of a collage divided into four sections: in the foreground, on right hand side of the painting, a large rectangle depicts the crucified man; on the left-hand side in the background, we see a powerful mask with an ironic smile and two huge staring eyes; the third part is filled by large guitars, lying down, whose arms and head are represented by a dense black rectangle. Finally, in the lower part of the central area, a coloured target aims to balance the composition, by concentrating the meaning in one detail: small and surrounded by black it brings to mind a threat. We can say that in this searching, Amadeo finds black as the colour which absorbs all and can destroy all (Fig. 15).

*Brut 300 TSF* is the most explicit painting about the day to day experience of war. In it we find allusions to the works of Léger and Malevich, and the futurists Severini and Boccioni.

It is an environment composed of a multiple fragmentation of objects: a special edition of a newspaper, a drum expanded to a ridiculous degree that becomes a

**Fig. 15** *Title unknown [Brut 300 TSF]*. Oil and sand on canvas. 85.8 × 66.2 cm. 1917 © Fotografia de Paulo Costa, Museu Calouste Gulbenkian—Coleção Moderna



pistol, the rudder and metallic bow of a ship, an aeroplane propeller, a terrified eye, half eye and half target, a pendulum on the point of setting fire to the centre of the composition, iron bars, electric wires, and human shadows. Letters and numbers frame the entire composition: registration numbers, seemingly abstract, evoke the cipher machines used in war; TSF, wireless telephony and ÉCLYPSE in front of the fuselage of an aeroplane evoke progress, but also its destructive power.<sup>24</sup>

Here composition is integrated, centralized and arranged around a central axis. Black unifies and unites all parts of the composition. In the centre, on the left-hand side, Amadeo's guitars assume their final shape. As in other works, for example in *Trou de la serrure*,<sup>25</sup> Amadeo creates depth on the right side, through overlapping planes and colours. The feeling of space leads us ultimately to a final plane, vaporous and labyrinthine. Here we look for an exit; instead we are met by an aeroplane, a target-eye and metal structures. The iconography of the last paintings has been fully realized. But it needs to be perfected to his aesthetic. By looking at

<sup>24</sup>In 1916 there was a total eclipse. Amadeo names it symbolically, as an expression of the extension of human and social disorder to the cosmic forces.

<sup>25</sup>*Trou de la serrure parto da viola Bom ménage Fraise avant garde* (Keyhole viola's childbirth Good combination Strawberry avant-garde, 1916). Oil on canvas. 70 x 58 cm. C.A.M./FCG.

the context of war, Amadeo wants to penetrate to its very essence while attempting new approaches in plastic and compositional terms.

Comparing *Brut 300 TSF* with the study for *Entrada*, a common structure is evident in both: the set of guitars. There are also references to *Brut 300*, the newspaper and the metal structures. Novelty relates to search for depth. The centre of the study is placed at a deep level, reached by pushing to the side the more superficial elements and levels. It evidences a closed structure: no escape is possible on either side, limitations are imposed that force us towards the centre where we find a hole.

Generally speaking in Amadeo's paintings, few changes are made between the preparatory study and the final work. The artist knows which direction he wants to take the work in. His preparatory studies show how meticulous and rigorous he is. However, the study for *Entrada* is significantly different to the final work, freeing itself up to develop a more abstract language.

*Entrada* is an ambitious and profoundly original work aesthetically, conceptually and plastically. It is a unique painting, in that the theme of war was virtually ignored by domestically-based Portuguese artists during the conflict and is exceptional, representing a milestone in the history of European abstractionism. During this period it was still usual for painters to use figurative language in works related to war.

Among the abstract works of 1917, this painting is unique in its theme, its chromatic range and its construction of forms, which seal it off. Amadeo takes inspiration from the Cubist still lifes to create in abstract language a war painting in which the natural elements and life itself have been vitally erased—more than just dead, life is unrecognizable and absent. Reflecting on the effects of war through the genre of modernist still life is deeply original and ambitious (Fig. 16).

Thematic conceptualization is achieved by associating forms and objects. There is a predominance of cold, acidic and dark colours, which coincide with Amadeo's colour palette in the period. Successive horizontal forms dominate the picture suggesting the artificiality of a fixed reality, where there are few elements of life: fruit, in a state of decomposition; insects, trapped or killed; a cello that resembles the shadow of a hanged man, a pear with the shape of a woman's body lying and bleeding. Although the painting has a great unity, we can differentiate between three vertical axes, according to the amount of light. The fruits in the central axis are all twisted, touched by rot, a metaphor for destruction and death that comes from within and envelops them. The fruits more exposed to light are painted against a white background; the colours appear to be joyful but are misleading. The shadows that surround the fruit take away all the naturalness of the light. The presence of matches accentuates the surrounding artificiality. Insects are trapped within some of the black circles. Everything points to the centre of the composition, in part because the edges of this square are compact and oppressive. The centre corresponds to a large inner circle, covered, however, by a yellow cloth, suggesting a tattered flag. As the centre is covered, our gaze is shifted towards *Entrada*, an inscription written with black letters against a white background, a caption which points us towards a dark and absorbing hole or to the point of a gun or a tunnel with railings. A sense of danger





**Fig. 16** *Title unknown [Entrada]*. Oil and collage on canvas. 93.5 × 75.5 cm. 1917 © Fotografia de Paulo Costa, Museu Calouste Gulbenkian—Coleção Moderna

emerges from the red saw against a strong yellow, painted in the foreground and superimposed on *Entrada*. A thick horizontal black and grey line gives life to this symbolic saw. This new technique of underling the contours with wide and dark brushstrokes, mixing grey blue and black tones, allows the artist to add a dimension of interior depth, without limits. The tunnel—a dark circle—takes us to that ultimate plane, threatening, with no exit. If we associate *Entrada* with the periscope<sup>26</sup> above the shade of the hanged man, the light bulb and the dark window, we easily arrive at the image of the mousetrap and the image of insects caught in traps. It is a symbolic language, open to lesser or greater interpretation, more or less threatening, that narrows down to a sense of anguish and loss.

<sup>26</sup>The French newspaper *L'Illustration* in a special issue of August 8, 1914 called for a general mobilization in France. On the front page Georges Scot drew a French soldier barricading the enemy. The message of this image is enhanced by the inscription "Do Not Enter". In 1917, Amadeo summarizes the tragic evolution of the conflict with this bitter pun.



The guitar on the left-hand side has aggressive strings, like the beak of a bird and is the colour of blood; it doesn't play, doesn't bring harmony and the yellow circle above it is not the Sun and cannot produce light. The light sources are artificial and interiorized; the light of the matches does not heat, but burns. The inscription "LA" which appears frequently in his works, is found at the bottom of the painting next to Amadeo's name, as if he meant to suggest he too is affected by the anguish caused by the loss of harmony. A great silence, together with the absence of everything that represented life for the painter and for the Modernists, takes hold of the painting. Amadeo continues to draw on his basic iconography, maintaining his aesthetic and his technical originality. Nonetheless, in this painting the guitars, circles, flowers, fruit and insects provoke a feeling of absence. Absence of movement, rhythm, time and joy.

The painting suggests violence, fear, anguish and even death. But as an abstract painting it cannot be directly related to the world conflict. It is an inner meditation on the destructiveness of war. The preparatory study for the painting can provide clarifications and allow for more specific interpretations linked to the conflict. In concrete terms, how can we establish a connection between the *Entrada* preparatory study and the war? We can do so through the associations created by words: "zinc"—as it was a much-sought-after metal for weapons; "La Correspondence"<sup>27</sup> was the name of a military newspaper, one of the first Spanish information dailies, which published a special edition; "Wotan", a name associated with the activity of war and the famous newly-industrialized electric bulbs; the seal bearing Amadeo's name, variously repeated—"Cardoso, Cardoso, Cardoso"; the obsessions present in his works from 1916 and 1917—"Brut 300", "KK", "52". And the word highlighted in capital letters, preserved in the painting - "ENTRADA" - key to the understanding the painting and its preparatory study. As a first attempt, words are used to render things more explicit, when Amadeo removes them it is because the strictly pictorial elements have done their work: colours, shapes, textures, overlapping planes and levels of depth convey violence, anguish, fear, insecurity and even death. By freeing itself from the concrete, the meaning of the work becomes more profound and universal, creating an empathic force that moves us without the need for an intermediary. Once we inwardly apprehend (fix) the sense which he wishes to give to his creative work, it is freed of the superfluous (Fig. 17).

In the centre of the study, an eye from an undefined dark face stares at us. Next to it we find a collage with advertising for the Wotan electric light bulb—an allusion to the Germanic god, warrior and king. Around the eye several circles overlap each other covering the entire space of the canvas. Broken lines, the familiar metal structures in a zig-zag shape frame the composition, gently leading us to the central space. Dolls or human figures play with the circles. The profiled face which appears in the preparatory study is covered by a yellow flag, which

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<sup>27</sup>*La Correspondência Militar*, a Spanish military journal, founded in the 19th century, which during the First World War, assumed the defence of the German position.

**Fig. 17** *Preparatory study of [Entrada]. 1917* © Fotografia de Paulo Costa, Museu Calouste Gulbenkian—Coleção Moderna



becomes torn in the painting. The study is filled with a profusion of eyes and dark circles, holes that attract our gaze into the depths.

In the painting, the human figures disappear and the sense of pain becomes more abstract, but even more asphyxiating. Life has its representatives in the insects and the vegetable kingdom; death leaves its mark on the painting and touches us. A submarine periscope appears, peering out. Depth is not achieved through fragmentation and overlapping forms; the overlaps are dark centres which act as tunnels dug towards deep and closed interiors. Depth is created by a careful mix of dense blues, blacks and greys, by the dynamism of the textures and by the large black brush-strokes that outline and shade the iconographic elements of the painting.

## 4 Conclusion

The life of Adriano Sousa Lopes was marked by war. He was touched physically, emotionally and aesthetically by these events. At first the impact of the confrontation and the memories of the trenches was recreated in cold, sharp works.

Then, in a process of sublimation, he rendered the war in a more ordinary way and trivialized the message in order to promote patriotic heroism.

Amadeo's is a sensitivity wounded by war. The innovation, richness and complexity of the works created between 1916 and 1917 underline Amadeo's forceful originality and the creative anguish that distinguishes his inward, secret searching. Looking at these works, we become aware of the difficulties of painting the subject of war and representing it in abstract terms. Amadeo's abstract language is symbolically strong, conveying the absurd, without showing the horror. His paintings express the depth of the internal sufferings of war.

Amadeo's paintings, especially *Entrada*, can be included amongst the finest works on war, created between 1914 and 1918. In the painting, *Entrada* seems to enter into the heart of destructiveness of war; it conveys a particular vision of war, still relevant today.

A century after the conflict, there is still work to be done to explain and disseminate Amadeo's painting in the context of Portuguese and European modernism and to assimilate and give new impetus to his message on the horror of war. 20 years before Picasso, he brought out war's destructive effect on life, harmony and light. In the perversity of war, his iconography converts the light bulb, as a symbol of modernity, into an artificial means of non-life.

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Personal Narratives, Peripheral Theatres: Essays on  
the Great War (1914-18)

Barker, A.; Pereira, M.E.; Cortez, M.T.; Pereira, P.A.;  
Martins, O. (Eds.)

2018, XI, 286 p. 18 illus. in color., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-3-319-66850-5