

TOWNSEND

A BRIEF HISTORY OF DRUGS

FANI ZGURO

An Online Exhibition
January 2 until February 2, 2021



Image: Fani Zguro, *To Share It (Diaries)*, 2008, c-print, 42 x 30 cm, courtesy the artist

Townsend is pleased to present *A Brief History of Drugs*, an online solo exhibition by Berlin-based artist Fani Zguro. On view at www.townsend-gallery.com from January 2 until February 2, 2021, *A Brief History of Drugs* offers a clear-eyed perspective on legal and illegal drugs and audaciously points to the circumstances, conditions, and management surrounding their use, misuse, and abuse. *A Brief History of Drugs* is comprised of photography, video, and text by Zguro that peer into this world with unflinching candor.

All the events narrated in the project are real. "A Brief History of Drugs" is not a movie. All three works featured in the exhibition were produced between 2008 and 2009. For the reader's pleasure, let's consider these works as 'guardians' (as the 'poor' parent plays an overarching role in this project, being the guardian of their offspring = the pupil of the eye).

The first guardian, "To Share It" (2008), is a still photo showing a hand holding a freshly lit cigarette. It looks like a ruler, marked with equidistant lines. Why? This is how cigarettes were shared by teenagers in the 90s. Often it was just a cigarette, but just as often it was loaded with all sorts of pleasures.

The second guardian, "In a Blind of an Eye" (2008), is a video of just the blind eye of a dog, a German shepherd; the eye blinks in tune with the noises the dog hears. But what is of interest in this video, is not how the eyelid performs, but the story of this dog and its master. In short, this is story of a dog suffering the effects of its 'helicopter parent', who sanctimoniously made sure the ill-fated dog was not put to sleep (regardless of its old age), by bombarding it with all kinds of drugs, and we all know science does wonders.

The third guardian, "Let Me See Your Eyes" (2009), relates to an unfamiliar phenomenon to me. Many of my friends who were still living with their parents had a distinctive 'problem'. Due to their substance abuse, their parents had been forced into a controlling relationship with them. Their parents had acquired experience. They knew how to determine whether their offspring were on drugs or not. They'd simply apply a routine check of the retina of the eye. If the retina was too restricted, then their offspring would have used cocaine. If it was overblown, heroine was the reason... In the video "Let Me See Your Eyes" I have imitated to a T this parental check up, while the adult child is lying on the sofa, watching TV - Let Me See Your Eyes!

-Fani Zguro

Fani Zguro was born in 1977 in Tirana, Albania. He lives and works in Berlin. Zguro was graduated at the Accademia delle Belle Arti di Brera in Milan (1998-2007). In 2007 he won the International Onufri Prize assigned by the National Gallery of Arts in Tirana; in 2016 the International Mulliqi Prize of the National Gallery of Kosovo in Pristina and the Best Video-Art award at TIFF Tirana. Zguro was part of the AiR program for 2017 at Q21, Museumsquartier, Vienna. His work has been shown at Haus der Kulturen der Welt Berlin, National Museum of Contemporary Art Bucharest, Musée des Civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée Marseille, Filmoteca Espanola Madrid, Photo Museum Braunschweig, 2nd Tirana Biennale, 3rd Mardin Biennial, 4th Young Artists Biennial of Bucharest, 6th Çanakkale Biennial, 13th Biennale of Cairo, Ludwig Museum Budapest, Belvedere 21 - Museum für zeitgenössische Kunst Vienna, PalaisPopulaire Berlin, the New York Public Library, and Centre Pompidou Paris.

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Townsend is a curatorial initiative that showcases the work of a global roster of artists of all media.

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