

# THE YEAR <sup>(2)</sup>

## HIDE AND SEEK

50 weeks

331 days

8 countries

30 flights

3 house moves

600 000 pirates

## THE FULL STORY

1 death of a loved one

6 blood tests

720 pills

42 knitted hats

much walking

2 crushes

1 crash

no harm

# THE MOTHER OF ALL UPS AND DOWNS

## THE JOYS THE SORROWS



*(autumn)*

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- 23-24 STORM IS THE NORM

*(summer)*

- 37-38 THE HONEYMOON IS OVER
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# THE MOTHER OF ALL CRISIS TOO

Trying out THE YEAR for the second time, commemorating on paper the past fifty two weeks of the MOIblog experiment, an online weekly chronicle in words and images, keeping track of my progresses in between two countries, two languages, two cultures, following my failed attempt at medical decontamination and cultural recontamination of 2006.

(See THE YEAR vol.1)

## WEEK 51 PLUS

*—If one counts the customary and statutory four weeks holiday everyone gets in France, I am reaching a total of 55 weeks, a bit more than the predicted yet unpredictable refurbishment year I subjected myself too, the cycle is complete. The rubber band I was securely fastened too (in order not to get lost) has snapped me back somewhere unexpected and slightly out of target, Farnham upon St Yrieix la Perche. I feel as stretched and stunned – but livelier and luckier – than the dead squirrel I photographed in Brixton the other day, lying next to double yellow lines, the two tone pattern of his fur (light underneath and darker on top) uncannily flush with the inside curve of the pavement, after being knocked down by a speeding car.*

*—I am writing the final words of this chapter of my life, sitting comfortably at the bar of my American kitchen, listening to Andreas Schol singing Vivaldi's Stabat Mater, sometimes accompanied by a thumping bass line of passing cargo trains, reminding me that when I arrived on Sunday, the Farnham brass band was there to welcome me in a nearby green. London suddenly feels very far and tomorrow I will be breathing French air...*

*Posted Sep 5 2007, 05:15 PM*



## WEEK 1 GARDEN OF EDEN

—I do love beginning, and of course they are much easier to do well than endings. The hunting season started the day I arrived in Limousin, reminding me of the wounded hunted deer that was howling all day last year when I began my adventure here. Hunters now have to wear an orange day glow top for safety reasons, looking very much like road workers with dogs and guns. My brother in law came back with hundreds of local political gossips and two fat dead pheasants, one male one female, no details about the kills and nobody asked.

—This being apple country and picking season, a good one this year, piles of wooden crates are lining up the roads and hundreds of gardens of Eden are filling up with seasonal workers from eastern Europe, since French students and the out of work are now finding it too hard a job, breaking a long tradition of seasonal work for French youth which started in the 60's. Seasonal work is now done by immigrants and some youths from the big suburbs who need to be "away" for a while, to avoid the police or even worse revenge. At least immigration is seen in a positive way for a short time as long as it is temporary and they do keep out of trouble while in the region – not my words.



—I have been in the paper alongside the rest of the team (4 of us) of the centre des livres d'artistes, with an article trying to explain what it is we do and what the hell is an artist book, a text I gave the journalist two months ago, that she pasted between her introduction and her final words: the best way to avoid making mistakes and misunderstanding, these are her words not mine. I was also on stage introducing Jeux de bouches project (or happy mouths as it has been renamed by some) for the opening season event at the cultural centre; I was surprised to see what a scale it has taken, most local structures and associations have already started working on it, the local choir and music school, the amateur dance association, the leisure centre, one school... The tension and the anxieties of the first meeting a while ago seem to have been forgotten. What I am discovering, now I am actively involved, are the behind the scene, backbiting and politics of it all. I am no longer sure whether I should be happy or worried at the apparent enthusiasm for my ideas and my projects for this year. Time will tell but I am half expecting to see promises broken and agreement taken back for no reasons, at some point. One thing is sure, I am not getting caught up with it all, and I am trying to preserve the independent and outsider position I still have.



—My flat here will be ready to move in on the 8th of October next time I am here. And what a relief that is. I can only be nomadic in my head, I do need a bit of stability, I am waking up almost every night wondering where the hell I am, not only whose house but also what country. Furthermore I have lost control of the where about of most of my clothes, right now impossible to locate the bag with all my underwear, it is not in Farnham, and I am still searching here, same with all my jumpers. I am far from the way I had it all planned. To have both places fully functional with its own set of relevant books, clothes, and everything else, so that I never have to carry anything back and forth. Easier said than done and pretty costly so far. I'll get there by Christmas hopefully. Meanwhile yoga helps with easing the confusion...

*Posted Sep 14, 02:12 PM*



# A U T U M N

## WEEK 2 REALITY CHECK

—I am writing these words on the Farnham to London train, on my way for a culture fix and friendly creature comfort, after my first week of full teaching and living/camping in Farnham, straight after a packed ten days busting with stuffed mouths and camping at whoever would have me in France. After a few errands collecting what I have left behind on my last visit, with all that moving about I keep on losing and forgetting things, I am off to the Tate Modern to meet Sebastian (father of VINST among other things) that I haven't seen for over a year, since the last showing/performing of our virtual creature, I have one of my BdeM hat for him, a daring choice of color but I think he might like it.

Then Catherine and Bratislava are coming to join me for a quick look at one of the room, probably the minimalist one, followed by a catching up session in the members bar, gazing at the Thames and St Paul. What a treat.

—The best possible cure I hope for my current state, exhausted, nauseous, stressed, bewildered and anxious after these past few days of my new life: four teaching days while camping out in that strange home without internet or sofa, or shelves or books or anything or anyone familiar. It was to be predicted had I had the time to think about it. What finished me off is finally having the guts to check my finances, and realizing how much worse than I thought it all was;



how foolish and unrealistic of me to set up so quickly this double life and double move. There is no way back anyway and it is probably the only way I could actually go through with it. Farnham is so close to London, and even after all these years of commuting, as soon as I leave the campus I might as well be in another country, I do not know a soul and have no car or bicycle yet to explore the countryside. I had to drop my ambitious interior design plans for lack of funds, making do with shelves from Argos and the nearby cancer research charity furniture shop for a second hand brown thirty's style leather sofa, very comfortable, I decided to call it the turd. It all feels much more homely and friendly now that boxes are unpacked and I can sit and stare at the window.

—After this long break, I had forgotten how equally rewarding and taxing teaching can be, and absurd and bureaucratic too, I have fifty students to get to know and get on with and coach for their final year of study. But I am excited about the performance workshop I am starting with second years next month, the response was very good and it is the first time it happens here, let's see how far we can go. Well before that there is the Printed matter book fair in New York, followed by finally moving in my flat in St Yrieix. It all was a dream once, and I have endless energy in dreams.

*Posted Sep 24, 09:16 AM*



### WEEK 3 BIG WEEK BIG APPLE

—Farnham Woking Heathrow New York in one smooth trip, exhausted, worried about energy requirement, excited to see Thomas after 2 years, to revisit New York after 6, to attend the NY book fair at the Dia centre, on behalf of the centre des livres d'artistes, with some of my books too, our revamped cdla website is now online, Christian did a marvelous job. Last time I visited the Dia centre was in 2001 for a Karen Finlay reading/performance, a memorable event just before the two towers came down, similar weather as I recall, a very hot and humid 30 degrees. The Carlton Arms hotel where I am staying is a bit shabbier and noisier than it looks on their wonderful website, but well worth it for the visual feast as for the price, a modest 75 dollars per night. Each room has been painted/decorated by a different artist, not a square inch of blank space anywhere.

The first night I found myself sleeping between an empty late night bar complete with stools and lone drinker and waiter, and a walking figure on the opposite wall, the following nights, I changed room to avoid the loud air conditioning noises emanating from a nearby building, I had a bunch of dark skinned kids staring down at my enjoying a cool American size ice cream lying in bed. Once the fair was over I moved to Queens at Lisa's and Thomas place, such a friendly and quiet neighborhood after the crazy chaos of east village where early on Sunday morning I was woken up with what sounded like a protest march with disciplined shouting and chanting, a strange combination, it started again a bit later, and I had to have a look, I saw this group of 30/40 young men and women jogging and singing in a platoon formation with 3 men leading them with shouting/counting steps, and singing a line that all of them were echoing,

a very strange sight indeed this marine style sunny morning jog. I was told later that this was the Sunday ritual of a nearby drug rehab centre, God bless America... I should have recommended it to the young cab driver who aggressed me when he felt my 1.50 dollar tip wasn't enough for a 7 dollar ride, throwing back at me some of the change and scratching my hand in the process, living me stunned and bleeding on the pavement. I tried to warn the couple who was just getting in, instead of concern or thanks I got a raise of the shoulder and the affronted look of the man, feeling his male hood had been questioned, he just said, I can handle it. I am not sure what shocked me more, the driver's or his attitude...

—That was the only incident, the rest was great, hard networking and selling at the fair, quickly getting a feel of (without getting flustered by) the fast shifting power flux and exchanges, American style, attitudes and friendliness changing as fast as the wind according to various hidden agendas, the pushy attitudes of those who have something to offer, the high brows of those who have power, often the way to recognize them and the overall frenzy of it all. Thomas and I went to see the hyped up Richard Prince show at the Guggenheim, Spiritual America. I felt the title was probably much more ironic than intended, so vacuous and surface deep was it all, not a shred of irony or tension or doubt or surprise beyond the glossy surface of the glossy recycled pop culture images and dispirited mechanical gigantic text paintings which had had more relevance and looked less pointless had they been postcard size. Utterly depressing and frustrating.



The whole show was already contained, much more successfully, on a beautiful double page of one of his old sketch book from the 70's, displayed in the hard to find basement of the Guggenheim, 2 images of blurred watery and/or cloudy texture positioned one above the other with a small, smart, to the point yet poetic caption hand written underneath. As if it took 30 years of practice to get it that big and glossy and vacuous and in the Guggenheim, Spiritual America, spiritual Art world..... His work feels much more appropriate to the magazine or book format, I felt. The perfect antidote to that depressing experience was to later discover, thanks to Thomas, the beautiful work of the Belgian Wim Delvoye, his mechanical reproduction of the digestive system, able to re-produced in front of your eyes, via a series of chemical reactions, in interconnected glass container, on various edible products, perfect shit, his tattooed pigs in China, his X-ray images of various sexual activities..... Absolutely fascinating, and magical, and dark and witty and mind blowing.

—Now it is back to Farnham and the educational machine, and my maisonette, inspired, and jetlagged. and the leaves are starting to fall.

*Posted Oct 5, 10:52 AM*

## WEEK 4-5 HARD TO KEEP UP

—I had just settled back into my new Farnham life that it was already time to go to France, after a lovely guided tour of the many surrounding footpaths with Jason, the two of us cameras in hand each with our quirky way of snapping away. This was followed by two consecutive train journeys to London and back as I had left my French mobile phone behind, one of the many hiccups in my attempt at a double bilingual life.

—I arrived just in time to collect the keys of my flat here, what a let down that was. Public services here are such a nightmare, I was expected to sign for and accept a place which was far from being finished with no real intentions of doing so: bathroom unusable with a gaping hole around shower appliances and no tiles, all cupboards left as they were, with smell, hair and other unidentifiable remains of the two dogs who used to live in them, the newly applied wallpaper very ugly and badly glued..... The man in charge didn't seem a bit concerned, declining any responsibility, and calmly said that I was untitled to give it up if I wasn't happy with it. My big mouth can be useful sometimes and to cut a story short, five days later the bathroom was finished, badly and creating serious damage to the kitchen wall on the other side but finished, and I could move all my belonging plus a few very welcome items donated by sisters and parents, bed, cooker, pans, plates and dishes.....

I was helped by my eighty years old father and a friend of his. What a sweet team we made, one had a bad back, the other a bad hip, I was jetlagged and stressed by the unwelcoming feel of my new home, and both of them were overdoing it in a very manly way trying to override my natural concern for their mature age.

—A week later the place is still a mess and my daily bursts of DIY and home improvement are still failing to make a mark. I am determined to make it work before I leave next week. But I was kept busy with setting up the new exhibition at the centre des livres d'artites, FATHOM by Mark Themann, who arrived straight form Australia with this strange conceptual / philosophical / metaphysical / emotional / poetic exploration of the various contradictory connotations of the title (fathom) in relation to notions of time, using language and everyday materials such as post it, diaries, string and paper bags..... The only way I could attempt to describe it is to imagine Maurice Blanchot and Gertrud Stein joining effort to conjugate and describe folding and unfolding meaning, paper, time, and string.. It was no easy task trying to 'unravel' it to local journalists who then had to write about it in the local press. I must admit that they did a great job.

—I am also kept busy by the progress of Jeux de bouches, I am finding it very difficult to keep up with it all: the various dimensions of the project, all the participants who are actively involved but require guidance, the new participants who wants to join in, the people in charge who aren't and need pushing... I would need someone here on site to assist me when I am in England bit I can't think of whom.



—I have been here ten days and I had not time for mushroom hunting, chestnut collecting, or even a walk in the woods or a bit of daydreaming in the sun or cooking. In other words I am overwhelmed and stressed which wasn't the really the idea behind my spending time here. Then I hear on the radio that the Russians have managed to plant their flag at 30 000 feet under the sea in the north pole, claiming it before anybody else, in the race for control of the North West passage once the ice cap has melted completely. That isn't the idea either.

*Posted Oct 17, 11:39 AM*



## WEEK 6-7 MERRY GO AROUND

—Just time for a wonderful Sunday autumn stroll in the Dordogne, the only one I managed in this packed two weeks, leading to a lucky encounter with the last hanging apple of the season, beautiful sight, before heading back to Farnham via Limoges airport where I decided to leave my car in the car park for the first time, unluckily the day they airport is starting charging after 5 years of free parking, costing me a massive row with the manager about the sudden change with no room for negotiation, and 180 euros when I go back at the end of November, I boarded the plane almost in tears at my bad luck adding to the cost of my already stretched double life...

—I am now back in Farnham, not intending to bulge for the whole month, apart from a day or a weekend in London, mind and body still twitching trying to slow and settle down, into the life I imagined for myself at the end of my battle against the pirates last June, listening to Charlemagne Palestine strumming music almost in tune with my restlessness. Here I am with both French and English home fully operational, basic and economical but comfortable, my studio in France baptized and fully functional, a pleasure to work despite lack of heating, a car in each country, not great for my carbon footprint but essential in both places. My old Peugeot 205 loves the French air. Looking for something similar in the area proved impossible and in Farnham I am now the proud owner of an old automatic proton 1500 (south Korean brand I had never hear of), an immaculate pale green 70's looking car with full history record, all 15 years of it. Desperation and the charm of the retired couple from Ash Vale overcame my doubts about running costs and obscure brand. It drives beautifully, makes me feel less isolated and remote and also marks me out further from the small new car small maisonnette youngish middle class first time buyers or old age pensioners I am surrounded by.

—I am finally there: a better life style, less stress, less commuting, more time and energy for my own projects. It is all well and good and living up to expectations but my social life has become absurdly minimal in both places and I do miss (the proximity of all) my friends. I am happily experimenting with the total isolation I have chosen and the mixed feelings it is bringing to light: loving the lack of distraction and the full concentration, questioning the possible irreversibility of the situation – the gap I am leaving behind slowly be filled by others, and finally doubting whether my health and my work deserves such sacrifice.





—I have run my first ever and first in the University performance workshop. I was very nervous and over prepared probably but the day was highly productive and a real success for all involved; the 18 photography students who very quickly managed to leave their inhibition behind and trusted me enough to follow my unfamiliar and sometimes bizarre instructions. The results were surprisingly good. It gave me the chance to revisit Anthony Howell's wonderful book 'the Analysis of Performance', such a generous source of inspiration and materials, thanks Anthony it reminded me of our meeting and work together in St Petersburg in 1998. The workshops I did with Guillermo Gomez Pena in 2003 proved very useful also. For the follow up session in two weeks time the group accepted to work on the Jeux de Bouches project, to explore the possibility of becoming a mouth; If they were a mouth what kind of mouth would they be and what would be their purpose. I am very excited at the prospect of what will come out of it, a perfect prelude to the event itself and I intend to use the documentation of their performances to inspire the various participants as well as publicity material. I do love it when things come together.  
*Posted Oct 29, 10:50 AM*



## WEEK 8 DEATH AND DORIS CRACK

—Time for fire crackers fireworks bonfires and fancy dress, the more the merrier, enough to make your forget the day of the dead, the dead past present and future, our own death, Death with a big D, enough to disguise anything to do with it. What is it that we are so scared off, dying itself, ageing, what comes after or what precedes it? I do wonder. In Farnham Park it was amazing to observe hundreds of faces staring up in wonder at the fireworks, despite the awful disco music trying to compete with it. Wouldn't it be wonderful to celebrate Death that way, going out with spectacular bangs of colours and light? I think I am going to ask for fireworks when I die, just two or three big bangers when I do go up in smoke. And Champagne for all.

—Autumn here in Farnham is even more spectacular than in the Limousin, the landscape is actually quite similar, hills and forests, but there are more varieties of trees here and the colors are more vivid, more saturated. On Sunday Jason took me to a few of the surrounding hotspots to explore; the witches cove, the ruins of Waverley abbey and Bore woods where the battle in the movie Gladiator was shot. In the first forest we walked through the beech trees were very old and so high that you could hardly see the top without stretching your neck as far back as possible; Jason explained that they owed their respectable age to their inadequacy as ship building material in previous centuries. All these and many others are within ten minutes drive of my front door, a fact I find hard to adjust to. As a Londoner such places were out of reach, only to escape to once in a while when I did manage to extract myself from the city, which is easiest said than done.

—My newly acquired car, the Proton, is a very thirsty creature but loves equally the small country lanes or the A31 taking me to London and the Tate modern, the current epicenter of my social life. I was there last week-end, meeting up with Roz and Petri and revisiting the wonderful sculptures of Louise Bourgeois and hopping along Doris crack, such an effective and

playful aggression on the building and its overwhelming size: a perfect choice of scale. I refused to read the blurb contextualizing the work, preferring to see it solely as an intervention on the powerful architecture of the Tate itself. With the artist challenging the foundation of the Art institution that chose her.

—I have spent this week wondering how I did manage to catch head lice, for the first time in my life. I was horrified and disgusted at first and almost shaved my head in a panic. Instead I scrubbed my head from top to bottom and put in the washing machine everything I might have worn or just touched for the past 2 weeks. The mystery remains unsolved and made me face the sad fact that I haven't been physically close to anybody, close enough for our heads to touch, for more than a month, and the bastards don't jump. Did I bring them back from France or New York? My other life in France feels really remote and I sometimes panic when I think about it waiting patiently for me there, projects, home and studio.

*Posted Nov 7, 12:00 AM*





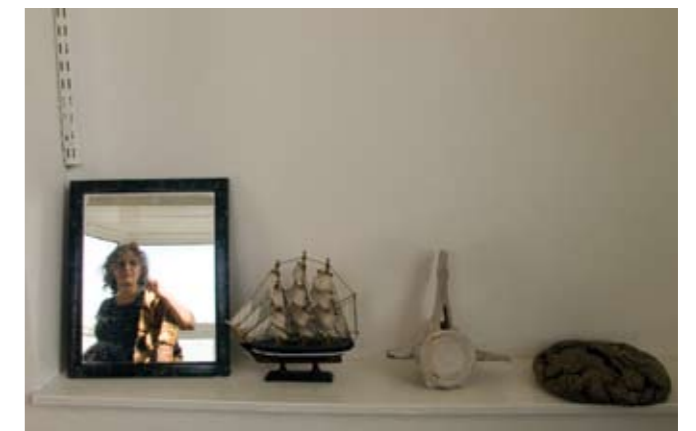
*B. de M.*  
beret de mameix

70%wool 30%adrenaline  
100% original

## WEEK 9 REMEMBRANCE AND THE SEA

—I was in Brighton last weekend, instead of my weekly London fix, visiting Eva who moved there 2 years ago, a long overdue first visit. Being by the sea was so precious, to see to feel to smell to breathe to sing along with seagulls. I was amused to notice they have a very different accent compared to French ones, with an added southern drawl to their three consecutive high pitch call, very melodic but quite hard to get right, Eva was much better at it, she had two years of practice, and a great life there by the sea, with a lovely house on the hills of this buzzing continental town and a great studio in Hove close to the water. It made me realize how alien my own set up in Farnham felt, very provincial, with very little potential apart great country walks, amazing charity shops and the proximity of work. It is quite a lot but not sure it will be enough to keep me here very long. It is early days but I am wondering if I will ever feel at home here, visiting Brighton reinforced that feeling. As pretty and charming as it is I think I will always feel alien. A feeling I am used to since an early age in Morocco, then coming back to France in my teens then moving to London. It is ok being an alien among others in London, the ultimate city of outsiders, but here is different, not many of us, such a traditional wealthy white middle class community. Work brought me here not the place itself.

—Doubts are crawling everywhere as persistent and dark as cockroaches making me feel quite depressed, the heating in my house is not efficient, making it all even more grim and staying at home working away on my computer quite unbearable. I have spent most of my time in the past two weeks editing and designing THE YEAR, a cross between a year book and an almanac bringing together the first 51 weeks of MOIBLOG, my refurbishment year in France: 64 pages of it, complete with pictures, recipes, poster, DVD supplement, hat collection. Perhaps it is explaining my low mood, having to go through the whole adventure, the ups and downs of my battle time and time again, in order to get the design and the feel of it right. It is very difficult to get the balance between the newspaper format and the diary style of weekly entry and between textual and image content. I want it to be ready for the ICA book fair next week. More doubts, this time about the whole project, yet my instinct and my stubbornness prevent me from giving up. Beside it is starting to work and to look quite good.



—I haven't felt that low for a very long time. Yet there are lots of nice things happening, the ICA book fair next week, my Republique Francaise book displayed on the Print Matters website new available publications, going to France next week to catch up on the Jeux de Bouches project and celebrate my father's 80th birthday, an invitation to go and perform in New York, a possible visit to Pakistan and Bangladesh to organize links with the university, and more. Maybe I should resort to the wonderful molecule I was given last year to regulate my drug induced crazy mood swings. On Remembrance day, I saw parades of children in uniforms marching down the streets of Guildford, it made it really look like there were very few veterans left. I revisited Almodovar High heels, the actor playing the roles of the judge and the transvestite is so convincing and so sexy as both. There are more moiblog images to look at.

*Posted Nov 17, 07:22 PM*



## WEEK 10-11 TO HELL AND BACK

—7am on a Sunday morning on a Stanstead train, another episode on my jetsetter experiment after three days in London for the ICA book fair. I love London. Four weeks of my provincial life in Farnham was enough to revive the old flame, I am reveling in the noise and chaos and visual stimulation and warmth of friendship. BookRoom stall at the fair looks great with quite a few new works; we received an award for Astrid's trilogy on pig dissection. I have sold a few books of my own and THE YEAR yearbook commemorating my battle against the pirates, complete with DVD supplement and recipes has been very well received, well worth the struggle and frustration to get the design right. The fair itself has lost a bit of its spirit, a feeling shared by most participants. Thomas and Lisa are in town from New York, bad timing as we just had time for a quick drink before I had to take off.

—The issue of the moment is how to get the balance right. However exciting and productive this month has been, performance workshops, cultural and national identity lecture, funding application, THE YEAR, the book fair, AHRC network project and Pakistan trip well on the way, Brighton week end, country walks, I did feel quite isolated and very cold in my new home. I need to find ways of making it a bit easier on myself until I feel a bit more at home (or not); more London trips, one or two Farnham connections or activities would also help. Words are not set in stones but actions and changes recently put in place may well be if I do not watch out. Such a great desire to move back to Brixton.

—Half way through my week in France now, tomorrow is my father's 80th birthday, reminiscence of my mothers surprise party last year. A small one is planned too but the mood is different this time and the ambiance not as friendly with slight sisterly tensions, due to my lingering presence here, I am dreading having to face the signs of rejection once more. I am enjoying my new abode here, very quiet and sparse and warm, I only wish I could say the same about some of my work commitment

which are getting harder and harder to negotiate, I am not sure why and I am not sure how long I can go on for. I visited the school of image today in Angouleme, a couple of hours away, to introduce Jeux de bouches project to students and staff. Great feel to the place, situated on the riverbank, thirty students maximum per year, compared to our fifty to sixty in UCCA. My mood is very low, stress very high, weather true to the season, freezing and grey, studio very cold, French finance almost as bankrupt as English one after a major car breakdown, Christmas less than a month a way, desperately looking for some light relief somewhere, finding a bit of it sitting by the fireplace at my parents, relaxing in the warm glow of the burning wood.

—Back in Farnham after a hell train journey back from Southampton airport, it took 5 hours; reasons being the usual Sunday engineering work on the tracks resulting in 3 changes to get to Woking, followed by a successful suicide on the tracks in Porchester, which paralysed the rest of the network while I was reaching my third change Fareham, and no emergency plan B of course. We were simply told to go back home, meaning France for me! or wait two or three hours minimum or take a taxi to Varant and wait for the London train there, which I did, sharing the ride with a fairly big in size student priest on his way to administer the funeral rites of an old family friend, how bizarre. When we got there I was twenty pounds lighter in money, the amateur priest refusing to share the fare equally, the network was still on hold because of the death on the tracks AND there was a tree on some other tracks somewhere along the line..... What a f\*\*\*ing week !

*Posted Dec 3, 12:10 AM*



## WEEK 12-13 LONGER THAN EVER

- 6.30am on a Saturday morning, pitch dark outside the south western train taking me to London, trying to make it to Stanstead by 9.30am, fingers and buttocks crossed. It took me the past two weeks to recover mentally and physically from my last trip to France, the hardest two weeks since the end of the battle, finding myself once again at the edge of body and mind without the logical excuse of being a chemical plant, and almost wishing I was. Patience, yoga, self-control and the warmth of friendship have kept me safe from total collapse.

— My mind is constantly racing among the many hurdles of my two lives arrangements, not being able to settle on what is not right, my finances are close to total disaster. Yet apart from peace of mind I seem to have achieved everything I wanted to in these past few months. Possibly the cause of my distress; too much in too short time for me to cope with. It hasn't yet turned out to be the ideal and picturesque life I had imagined it to be. I have yet to establish a sense of belonging in both places in order to put to rest my feline territorial instincts.

—These past few days have been the usual seasonal frenzy of endless Christmas parties and strategic shopping. I have managed to keep it down to two work does, a big lump of Stilton and a big Christmas cake to take to France.

—It is minus 5 here with glorious sunshine and my car windscreen was covered with frost inside and out. The fields are frozen; some already have piles of dung waiting to be spread. I was welcomed by an enthusiastic article on my project Jeux de bouches in the local Newspaper, which came out last week, my parents kept it for me proudly. Even the mechanic I took my car too yesterday mentioned it when I introduced myself to him. Hopefully it will mean that a lot of the population will come out and play on the day...

\_So far all is going according to plan, the poster should be ready at the end of this week and everybody seems to be happily working on his or her various contributions. Yet I get very anxious when I think of all there is still to organize and bring to life somehow, all these mouths masks and costumes for the parade, the collective feast of the Friday evening, enough musicians and vocalists for the Cornelius Cardew great learning Paragraph 3 ... Never has a project put me in such a state of panic, not even when I took my clothes off in front of a packed audience for the video performance I confess. I was in control then, for this work I am deliberately trying not to, in order to allow for the collaborative and communal aspect of the venture to take place. So I am left with the usual stress and adrenaline but nowhere in particular to let it out. It would feel so much better to be my usual control freak...The naked trees look majestic in the sunshine, newly pruned and ready for a harsh winter. I am about to close the autumn folder of moiblog.

*Posted 281 days ago*



## W I N T E R

## WEEK 14-15-16 HEAVEN AND HELL

—Christmas is finally over, one to remember as it is marking the end of family reunion for us. We were twenty in total uprooted in the Alps courtesy of my brother, spread in between 2 cottages and his brand new apartment in this beautiful small ski village with breathtaking views on surroundings mountain peaks, glorious weather, plenty of glowing snow, a full moon, a perfect setting for a perfect family Christmas. Yet none of us really felt like being there for various reasons to do with silly unresolved grievances with one another. Christmas eve went well enough, a few tensions but nothing major, everybody going through the well-known rituals of eating drinking, opening presents and thanking each other. On Christmas day, after dinner all hell broke,

twenty five years of unreleased tension, everybody unloading their frustrations as a pack of dogs or vultures, on the one who continuously dares not comply with the rules of the majority, thus always triggering mounting anger and frustration. It was human nature at its worse, the ugliest mob action I have ever experienced, the object of so much grievances responding fiercely at first before collapsing in tears and shock. I tried to calm things down with little effect, a can of worm had been opened, and nothing could close it again. She left never to return for the rest of the week, hiding in pain and hurt pride, the rest of them feeling satisfied that all was resolved, the culprit punished, life could go on in paradise "altogether".



Very little after thought or concern for the one left behind. I remained silent, not daring voicing my thoughts, dreading a similar treatment, so glad when it was finally over. I am to blame in a way as I had my share of grievances like the others and I was the one to offer that we discuss it all over diner, an open and friendly exchange to clear the air, what I call British style. How naïve and stupid could I be for thinking it possible among a bunch of typically French opinionated loud mouth and self righteous archetypes, I was one of them once but 25 years of british diplomacy has luckily almost cure me. I tried to make amend, apologizing for suggesting it, spending time with her, walking in the most beautiful scenery, trying to mend some of it in silence. The children were so shocked and wounded by such awful and violent behavior from their elders, finding it hard to reconcile the strong bond that unites them all as cousins with the instinct to defend their respective parents. They vowed never to let anything like that ever happen between them. She was far from being free of blame, but never deserved such bashing, nobody does.

—I am now back in St Yrieix, more tired, depressed and stressed than when I left still not daring to voice my feeling, most are still righteous about it all, far from sharing some of the blame for what happened. I do feel that my coming back to France after 24 years, with my big mouth and my eccentric ways has unsettled the fragile balance of family life.



I have slowly but surely tried to rebuild communication and ties with most by encouraging dialogue openness and tolerance, rather than keeping it all in or speaking behind others back. I am wondering now what monster I have unleashed. Maybe silence is best afterall.

—There are mouths everywhere in St Yrieix, Jeux de bouches might all work out.... America might get a black muslim president or a woman, the Paris Dakar rally has been cancelled for the first time due to terrorist threat in Mauritania, president Sarkozy is dating a ex top model/ popstar two months after his divorce and a few months after his visit to the pope, where he officially endorsed the catholic religion as the state religion, something no other president ever dared doing not even De Gaulle, a fervent catholic. He is already taking her on official foreign visit: Egypt, Jordania, Disneyland...  
*Posted 263 days ago*



## WEEK 17-18 SETTLED IN THE DARK

—Wind rain and lack of light, it is January for sure, and February and March too in our beloved island. I feel as if I could touch the sky, it is so low. The beech tree in front of my bedroom window is stirring the clouds, majestically swinging in the wind, I am hypnotized every morning, postponing to the last minute getting up. I feel a bit more settled here, a simple matter of acceptance as well as trying to adapt to country life now I have understood that I needed to abandon my London ways for new country ones. Daily walks on the multitude of surroundings footpaths, dedicated period of time off from working, thinking, teaching, writing (last weekend I went to Brighton for Eva and Maze's birthday and a stroll on the beach singing with the seagulls), more planning of cultural, urban and social fix which used to be on tap, preventing the recluse inside me taking over. And it is already time to uproot myself, just over two packed weeks here and France feels like a distant dream.

—Yet Mouth games is getting close, emails are flying back and forth, everybody is getting excited and ready, I am often kept awake by details, lose ends, things to remember, things forgotten or dreaming of floating, sinking among thousands of mouths. The project is in full swing over there, kept alive by a web of unpaid enthusiasts and volunteers and paid cultural and city workers. It took a few stressing months to create and activate this formless Bwo (body without organ), it is now finally starting to show signs of independent life, its various parts sparking off and feeding each other. It is very exciting I do feel like withdrawing now, my work is complete, letting it take over for the final steps of preparation and the celebrations of the 8th and 9th of February. I am not sure I would dare though, or that my absence would be understood as part of the concept. I did mention it in passing before leaving; it was taken as a bad joke or a cowardly move. It has been accepted, if not entirely understood, that I am the artist behind the project, as opposed to "in front" or "my project", it was written in the press as such,

yet they had to find another leader for their headline so they chose VINST, my virtual and vocal alter ego. I also feel that revealing or clarifying too much at this stage might jeopardize the process by bringing in too much self-consciousness or confusion depending on the understanding.

—It doesn't stop me thinking about it and trying to articulate what I have tried to do. One image that comes to mind when I think of my role in this project or where to look for the Art is as follow. I had a spark of an idea and I wanted to ignite a whole forest with it, I found a few twigs, then a few branches, then bigger logs. Once I had built and lit the fire, I only had to keep an eye on it, blowing now and then, finding a few more logs, making sure it didn't collapse on itself or disappear in smoke. The flames do the rest. And I am there to admire and document it all, making sure to not interfere too much, yet stressing at my lack of control over the outcome.\_

—In true winter mode I am knitting again in the evening, adding a few more hats to the collection, while listening to music or watching dvd's on my laptop; Donny Darko, Breakfast on Pluto, the shout, Fellini's dolce vita and 8 1/2, the rat catcher, Jean Vigo's Patalante, zero de conduite, Tatis and a propos de Nice..... My fingers slowly remembering the moves and the feel of the wool getting shaped. There is also the time spent chatting on Skype to Dany in Paris. It is still new to me and I can't get over how magical it is, a familiar disembodied voice coming from my laptop as clear as if it was in the room. absolutely magical....

*Posted 249 days ago*



## WEEK 19-20-21 RIDING THE WAVE

—My longest week so far, twenty-four packed days in between here and there. Jeux de bouches is over and I am feeling over the moon, proud, fulfilled and on the high despite complete exhaustion. Last week end while Camden was going up in flames, St Yrieix la Perche was being invaded by hundreds of happy, loud, hungry and unruly mouths of all kinds, from all over, Holland, Germany, Finland, London, Paris, Grenoble and local ones too. Preceded by a few sensational headlines and articles in the press, endless announcements and reminders on local radio to motivate and inform the town as well as an interview on the regional TV news on the purpose of it all, the two days were a total success: great audiences and participation, perfect synergy between amateur, professionals and volunteers, a street parades of around 200 loud mouths of all ages crossing the city followed by passers by, an interpretation of The Great Learning paragraph 3 of Cornelius Cardew by members of the local choir, teachers and students from the music school, a few other volunteers and myself led by Sebastian Lexer, that left the audience entranced and speechless throughout; neither spectators or participants were familiar with such music, let alone improvisation. It was a truly magical experience for all. It was very difficult over the past three months to convince people to take part and try something new and radically different. At the first workshop with Sebastian only a few brave ones turned up, anxious and shy. They did enjoy it so much that they rallied all their colleagues for the next workshop and on the night, the stage was full and as the work progressed the voices and instruments were getting more confident and adventurous. A beautiful work that will be the backbone and lead of the documentary Karen Livesey and myself are making of the whole project.

—Elodie in the bistroquet restaurant cooked for the occasion the most amazing stuffed carp that she was serving for the duration of the event I had never seen such a big soft water fish, more than 70 cms long without the head. She presented it on my parent's Moroccan silver mechoui (whole roasted lamb) tray, it looked so perfect and decadent, very Peter Greenaway I felt. Even the weather was with us, blue sky with warm sun. It is one of the rare times when I am entirely satisfied and thrilled by a project that went way beyond my expectations. I have no criticism, no reservations, no doubt, no regrets; a small one maybe, I was looking forward to the special and unique opportunity of performing in front of my parents and sister and niece for the first time; I was very eager to share with them one of my special orgasmic vocal outburst, but the opportunity didn't arise as Sebastian stopped playing VINST a bit prematurely for some reason and neither VINST or I (in a VINST costume) had a chance to reach a climax, we ended instead with a very beautiful silence which drowned my frustration, I don't think I will have another chance to climax in front of family members.



—On Monday when I left, a lot of the town was talking about it all, everybody was smiling and waving at me when I crossed the town in my old English Peugeot 205. A lot of people (officials and others) in the past six months admired my energy and drive but thought I was foolish and naïve to think I could succeed in getting the town involved, let alone interested in my eccentric project. But we did it, they did it. It was such a treat to see the look of surprise and pride on their faces when they realize that they were part of what happened, they were involved and they enjoyed it. And now they want some more. Wonderful. I am so looking forward to finish the documentary with Karen but also to bring together all the photographs, all the mouths masks produced, all the contributions throughout.

—I am now back in Farnham for a bit, taking stock, unwinding and catching up on sleep in between university duties, so happy not to be in hectic London. The sun is out, the daffodils too, a taster of spring, before the weather deteriorate again for a couple of months, as it does every year.

*Posted 222 days ago*



**vendredi 8 dès 18 h**  
salle attane  
BUFFET COLLECTIF RABELAISIE ET MUSICAL

**samedi 9 dès 14 h 30**  
dans les rues de saint-yrieix  
DÉFILÉ CARNAVALESQUE DE BOUCHES JOYEUSES

**samedi 9 dès 19 h**  
centre culturel jean-pierre-fabrègue  
LA BOUCHE DANS TOUS SES ÉTATS

Gregory Aymar, Jaap Blonk, Greg Gilg, Marc Guillerot,  
Sebastian Lexer & VINST

**jeux  
de  
bouches**  
saint-yrieix  
8 et 9 février  
2008





## WEEK 22 BACK ON TRACKS

—Yesterday Fidel Castro's successor was chosen; a long page of history is turning. And I haven't had the chance to see him give one of his famous long-winded speeches. I heard an extract on the radio today and I do love his slow and clear delivery with big echoing words: who else can still speak about the revolution and mean it after fifty years in power. On the other hand Sarkozy and Madame la new presidente's honeymoon with the press is over. It must hurt but they are probably working on a revival, what will it be, adultery? Divorce? Or nearly Immaculate Conception? Their official visit to England is getting close and I hear on the radio that the French ambassador was already stressing over palace etiquette, apparently Madame intend to bring her guitar to the royal visit in hope of singing a song. Surely this is a joke. It is hard to know as the international political circus is becoming more and more like a soap opera cum puppet show. We are ruled by caricatures inspired by Dallas and Dynasty with a touch of Eastenders flavor.

—University life has its fair share of political and diplomatic games, which have little to do with teaching. It is all about maintaining a high profile, negotiating influences in high places in order to find the right balance between personal interest and institutional progress. It is the nature of the beast that you always have to go forward, to do more, to expand your involvement if you do not want to be left behind. I am now encouraged to go for a readership and perhaps develop performance studies across the campus. Considering the success of the workshops I have been running this year, and their impacts on the students, it is a good idea and I do feel up to it. But I am not sure I want the academic responsibility or to be more involved with the institution than I currently am. The outsider inside me is reminding me to always keep one foot free. Are the two incompatible? I wonder.

What is more important is that although I am now enjoying Farnham and the non city life, I am not yet happy with my living arrangement and I haven't found yet a suitable solution; the right accommodation at the right price.

—Birds are singing non-stop and the first trees are in blossoms, Daffodils everywhere, Nature is waking up. We humans find it a bit more difficult: tired faces, sore throats and runny noses and low moods abound, it must be spring. This new cycle has been preceded by a few close encounters with death. My young mechanic in France, who helped me out when my car died on me the day I flew back ten days ago, died in a car crash during a local race. Debby's mother collapsed and died without any prior warning. My dear aunt Kiki, the Franciscan none, is on her way out, deteriorating fast in the past two weeks; no particular illness, just a body and a mind at the end of their strength. I am dreading that call everyday. I am hoping to visit her at Easter but I am not sure she can wait. Time goes so fast, she told me. She appears calm and ready.

*Posted 212 days ago*



## WEEK 23-24 STORM IS THE NORM

—Last weekend I lost my hat and a chunk of my heart in Munich, the wind storm was so bad for a couple of days that they both flew away on leap day of this leap year. Who invented the 29th anyway? More to the point which Scottish half wit invented the silly custom of allowing women to propose on that day only? And even more to the point since when do I feel obliged to stick to the rules and take this custom seriously? Was it being in Munich, or the storm or leap day or the effect on me of Marcus's wonderful living installation/vivarium Uberumterung / opernfraktal, complete with tropical jungle and crickets, the purpose of my visiting Munich together with meeting up with Joachim who hosted my artist in Heaven residency in Austria, a couple of years ago.

Maybe it was that overwhelming mix of testosterone and creative juices flying around, being surrounded by 3 uber men. Anyway the point is I became over emotional and couldn't help expressing my feelings in the machoest of manners, a mother of all macho behavior that I couldn't control. Quite funny in retrospect but highly embarrassing at the time and definitely counter productive. No regrets, no deep scars, just wishing I could perhaps stop treating certain fundamental parts of life as a project, some of the time at least.



—Maybe it was Spring working its wonders on my nerves, like it is doing all around me, bursting at the seams, blowing winds in all directions, a storm is brewing as I write, and hale storms too, so heavy in Munich that it looked like loud snow, covering the city in 15 minutes flat. Yesterday in Elstead Nature reserve I caught the most perfect full rainbow and its reflection in the clouds above, in between two April showers, the light was absolutely magnificent and surreal. I couldn't stop snapping away while feeling guilty about this compulsion to record it all rather than living the moment fully. I do love the image though and this rare moment lives on, the power of photography at its most basic level.

—This is the first weekend in months that I can let go for a bit and take time to just be in my own time and my own pace, standing still for a couple of days, still mind, still heart, still body and savoring every minute of it, without thinking of all that is waiting at the door. Next weekend I shall be in Saragossa showing VINST as an installation, then onward to St Yrieix via Paris, finalizing details and funding for the Marianne made in Limousin project in June July as well as giving visual documentation of the Jeux de Bouches project to the various participants. The editing of the video is progressing well, using the interpretation of the great Learning by Cornelius Cardew as a structure and the core on which we are weaving the various aspects of the projects. I have high hopes for the outcome.

—I have watched a documentary on Marcus Coates and his dawn chorus work, as well as a range of his video work on trying to become animal, I am fascinated by the equal poignancy of his failing and succeeding to do so or of his shamanic experiments to resolve contemporary social issues. I saw the Rothko retrospective in Munich, very disappointing as it was very difficult to engage with the work in this gallery in a trendy shopping mall with a very cool and clinical museum presentation, bright neon light and a big queue in front of each work with a constant murmur of the commenting voices coming from the headphones most were wearing.

Not the way to enjoy the work, how wrong, but none seemed to mind. The Tate displays are so much more successful.

By chance on the same day I came across a solo show of Scott King at Kunstverein Munchen, a big white cube style gallery, perfect for its potent and sharp pastiche of our media driven society in glorious technicolor, his Lenin as Ziggy head sculpture is hilarious. Two films that have impressed me this week, Time code unknown by Michael Hanecke, a beautiful work on everyday life and loosely connected stories of survival, and Ghosts by Nick Broomfield on the death of 24 Chinese illegal workers on Morecombe bay two years ago, using ex illegal Chinese immigrants as actors to re tell this awful story. Both films speak about immigration in such a powerful way. I wonder why politicians and policy makers can't do the same, but maybe the answer is only to clear. I am about to close the winter folder of my MOIblog images, I love endings. they give me a certain sense of achievement and wonder about what comes next, even if it is only a new folder.

*Posted 218 days ago*



S P R I N G

## WEEK 25-26-27 SPRING ON SPRINGS

—Farnham, London, Saragossa, Madrid, Paris, Limoges in seven days flat, leaving me on my knees and mixing Spanish, French and English when I speak. The editing of Jeux de Bouches with Karen is going slow due to technical problems, I am losing the feel of it all and getting slightly worried. The exhibition El cuerpo (re)sentido in el Centro de Historia in Saragossa is a great success: beautiful space, some great works, particularly Jemima Stheli new video work, great hotel, amazing food, perfect timing as we were there during the Semama Santa, holy week which the Spanish always celebrate with great rituals of re enactment and processions.

Sebastian and I managed to find us always at the right place to witness the best displays with amazing drumming and the traditional Ku Klux Klan like pointy hat and gigantic handheld carriages. It is all quite hypnotic, the processions last for about five hours through the centre of town with the same repetitive cycles of marching and stillness. We managed to catch both the beginning and the end of it at around 10 pm when each handheld carriage disappears amidst frenzied drumming down a slope through the Cathedral imposing entrance, giving the impression of being swallowed up.

The crowd is clapping generously the mix of showmanship religious fervor and self-inflicted hardship. The weight of the carriages is tremendous, the pain and strain showing right from the start on the faces of all involved in the carrying.

—VINST is behaving very well in this beautiful museum with a beautiful alabaster wall and polished ceramic floors and perfect lighting. The grand surroundings gives it a certain dignity and having to play and listen to it via headphones brings a new dimension to the work, a more intimate experience as well as being able to observe the silent choreography of the sounds.

—I am now in France in time for Easter weekend and my niece second communion, her first communion last year was the pretext for a gigantic trampoline, and this year it is a laptop. What a farce. Tomorrow will probably be the last time she will ever visit a church. My sister, her mother, had to bribe her other older children (who all went through it for the same reasons, a big gift) to make sure they all attend the service: no church, no feast afterwards and no Easter eggs. The church service was real torture, I have rarely seen a priest with least talent and charisma, it lasted two hours and a bit, the sermon was awful, truly boring, a succession of meaningless words trying to put together one or two simplistic ideas, no poetry, no dogma, not even anything to rebel against. I was looking forward to Easter classic singing, Gloria in excelsis deo...

Instead we had a contemporary equivalent with live guitar, only a few could follow the choir leader and her cheap mezzo soprano voice. I kept my fingers occupied by making small dice with the wax of the candle we were all given just before crucifixion time.

—The traditional communion cake has been customized. Chloe my niece loves animal and dogs in particular; she has begged her parents to have one for years. Her room is full of dog replicas of all kind, from soft cuddly toys of all sizes, to posters, photographs, drawings and all kind of related electronic games, including a desktop dog you have to feed and look after. The cake was topped with a framed portrait of a smiling German shepherd painted with butter and cream of various colors on a dark toffee canvas, overshadowing the customary small figurine of a saintly looking youth in white robe holding a candle. The feast of delicious roast lamb served with white beans in tomato sauce preceded by numerous aperitif and canapés of all kind was followed by the customary hiding of Easter eggs of all sizes, from mammoth to pigeon size. Then the delicate operation of splitting the recovered eggs equally among all involved regardless how active or successful one has been in retrieving them: no capitalist aspiration allowed, for once during this long Easter / communion ritual some form of Christian spirit does prevail.

—We had a white Easter, cold and windy, a rare occurrence and a disastrous one for fruit growers, as it usually bring 'black frost' (turning fruits black). It has already damaged almost half of the production in the southwest, of mainly apricots and pears. Summer will be bleak, shortage of fruits, high prices, and a bad year for homemade jam. The general mood is low around here and cold viruses of all kind are being passed around endlessly. I caught them all within two days of my arrival, a mix of head cold, stomach bug, flue like symptoms and bronchitis, living me flat for three days, staring at the wind and hale storms through my bay windows, while trying to complete a funding application for the regional arts board here in France, concerning my next project, Marianne made in Limousin this summer. First time I do such a thing here and finding the right French words to sum up my practice was no easy task, and fever probably helped. I haven't yet dared reading back what I came up with, I can only hope it reads better than the French translation of my English statement. Time will soon tell...

\_I had this vivid image last week while waiting for my luggage at the airport in Paris. I saw a big balloon that some unknown force (or numerous drugs) had inflated for ten months continuously, then let lose to roam through space in crazy loops until completely deflated. I am half wondering when and where that would be.  
*Posted 176 days ago*



## WEEK 28 DEAF ON THE LEFT

—Ten days now that my left side is almost completely silent, my ear blocked by fluids stuck in one of the inner tubes. Half the world in mono is not much fun, I feel half trapped in myself and slightly drunk having lost my sense of balance, hearing my voice from inside my body, half getting what the world has to say, constantly asking others to speak up or repeat. It is hard to feel in tune with it all in these conditions. I am not sure what I would miss most if I had to choose between sight and hearing. I read this week something Schopenhauer wrote, so simple and so clear. “The world is my representation. I do not see what is; what is is what I see”: quoted by Remy de Gourmont in its introduction to *The book of Masks*, French symbolists and decadent writing of the 1890’s, published by Atlas press. According to him there are as many diverse and different worlds as there are thinking minds. I find it difficult to argue against that statement. I am only wondering about what is a thinking mind? Every human being has a mind but how many thinking minds are there? Curious mind, sleeping mind, blind mind, lazy mind, borrowing mind, copying mind, confused mind, passive mind, these are easy to find, but a thinking mind is rarer. I do not see and hear what is, what is is what I see and hear. What is is what I see and hear. A silent world is a dead world, like Mogadishu, the capital of Ethiopia which has been left in ruins and deserted by its inhabitant, destroyed by internal struggle for power fuelled by American involvement to protect their economical and political interests in the region.



—While my various cold bugs are slowly dying and my air ways clearing up, I am catching up on sleep and news of the world on the radio, sometimes kept awake by reports of the ruthless games of capitalist monopoly unashamedly going on everywhere in the world. There are moments when I truly appreciate living here in Farnham with its gentle pace, despite the temperamental weather and high stress levels of students, seeing the end of their studies approaching fast. It is my favorite period of the teaching year, seeing final projects coming together, witnessing newly found confidence and maturity and the look of surprise on their faces when they become conscious of it. Last week end Thomas was here, visiting from New York, bringing me back little treasures, such as signed copied of Matha Rosler’s books and DVDs, *Semiotics of the kitchen*, *vital statistics*, and 3 works. We went together to the Pataphysical Museum and Archive hosted by Alaster Brotchie and Atlas Press, in the front room of a large (Victorian?) house in Highgate: a cabinet of curiosity full of rare Pataphysical and Oulipo works and documents. A timeless space, dark and stuffy, full to the brim and wonderful. The occasion was a display of Daniel Spoerri’s work and in particular various re-editions of his seminal *Topography of chance*, I have already the 1990 centre Pompidou reprint on the occasion of his retrospective there, a great show that is still inspiring me now, eighteen years later. I couldn’t help getting the Atlas Press 1994 editions with wonderful supplementary annotations from Emmet Williams and Dieter Roth, and illustrations by Topor a truly wonderful continuation of the work in time. All kind of odd characters were mingling or hanging around, amateurs and specialists of all ages and shapes, among them an incredibly tall and lanky young woman with thick spectacles and her equally tall parents, all three with a timeless feel, they could equally fit in a late 19th or early 20th scene, buzzing around taking pictures, making notes, commenting...



—Thomas and I traveled back to 2008 and found ourselves in the pool hall underneath centre point, to meet up with Steve, Richard and Jochen around a game of pool, now a regular occasion when Thomas is visiting from New York. In more than a year of not playing my game has improved greatly, consequently my enjoyment in playing too. Or was it the luscious red of the pool table or the lingering energy of Daniel Spoerri influence on my senses: his beautiful wands, collage postcards and table tops. More MOIblog images  
*Posted 164 days ago*



## WEEK 29 THE END IS NIGH

—Life is good and in stereo again, my ears unplugged. Stress levels are high in Farnham right now, the end is nigh for all 48 of my tutees, pressure is on, tension rising, egos flying. I have to constantly remind myself to keep one step back or ahead, in order to take it all on board but let it slide and not get to me, making sure I leave it all at the door when I go home. So far so good. Five days in France is giving me a chance to release some of the pressures. Weather is gorgeous here, nature finally exploding unashamed, all winter viruses have vanished, smiles are coming back, flesh is bared for the first time this year, mine stays covered, shy and concerned about the effect of a whole year of hardly any physical exercise other than dragging my suitcase back and forth across the channel. I am here to put the final touches to my first photographic exhibition in over 6 years starting on the first of July, Republique Francaise. The small book is almost ready to be printed and the final edit of images almost resolved, still one or two issues about cost to sort out.

—I am reading a lot of symbolist literature of 1890 compiled in Atlas press the book of masks; a strange mix of spiritualism, puritanism, bourgeois decadent behavior and sometimes a hint of anarchy. When it works it is quite powerful like in the case of Raymond de Gourmont or Jean Moreas or Marcel Schwob or Mallarme. A lot of the others I find quite tedious. One contemporary symbolist inspired book also published by atlas press is Circular walks around Rowley Hall by Andrew Lanyon, a brilliant selection of stories in words, drawing and images from his many books on the Rowley family of St Yves; a wonderful work recounting the life and work of a strange household of three eccentric characters and their conflicting ways of looking at life and art. I found a beautiful phrase about one of the main effect of the evolution from painting to more mechanical means of representation like photography and cinema. ***“The moment pictures began to move mankind experienced a growing stillness, that trance-like inactivity of an audience hypnotized by its own image”.***

A world of Narcissus obsessed and blinded by our own fabricated reflections. Television and the media are the opium of the people of today, Religion requires too much commitment and active participation, it is left to terrorists, in a way the last true believers of this world. Even the preachers of today, pope included (his recent visit in America looked like a Madonna concert), prefer performing on television or in stadiums, churches are left empty or used for jumble sales.

—I watched this week all the Fritz Lang movies I could get my hands on, M, doctor Mabuse, Metropolis (still a masterpiece as powerful as George Orwell 1984, if not over optimistic and utopian). At the beginning and the end of Metropolis he wrote, the mediator between the head and the hand surely is the heart. He was speaking about the mediator between a boss and its employees, management and work forces, power and the masses, master and slaves... A beautiful idea in itself but not one I can associate with the ruthless capitalism that our rulers preach. The jeux de bouches video is almost finished, just lacking titles. I am pleased with the results considering the minimal budget, I only wish I had secured more funds to afford one more camera person, better sound quality and more time to edit. But it works and we have managed to convey the wonderful spirit and collective energy of old and young, amateur or professional, participant or spectator, locals and foreigners, vocalizing together for a whole week-end.  
*Posted 144 days ago*



WEEK 30 31 32 33 34  
MAY DAY MAY DAY

—Apocalyptic week before the first bank holiday of the year, a storm in a tea cup but a storm nevertheless. Richard was made redundant after having to reapply for his job of deputy dean along with 4 others across the four campuses of UCCA, officially the price for much needed restructuration, unofficially an easy way to size down and get rid of unwanted or unruly members of staff. Two got the jobs they applied for, two went for early retirement and Richard didn't fit the bill despite ten years of loyal services and speed climbing of the career ladder. No clear reasons given. It left a few of us really wondering about what kind of institution we work for; it might be one of us next.

—Ken Livingstone got the boot too, no longer the mayor of London after more than 25 years on and off the job. It might have been time for him to go as some have suggested, but do we deserve Boris, the eccentric public school boy who would be very useful as a scarecrow in a field with his mane of straw blond hair, birds would definitely fly off, what does he know about the need of Londoners, I mean not the privileged few like himself but all the inner city communities which are being pushed out and dismantled to make room for yet more luxury housing and corporate offices. Mr Johnson senior spoke on Radio 4 trying to convince us that his son was a serious politician despite appearances. How telling is that. His sister did the same a few days later.

When I came to London twenty five years ago, the place looked and felt like a third world city, making me feel right at home, reminiscence of my childhood in Morocco, homeless and jobless abound. Ken really did wonders before Maggie kicked him out. I was there on the Southbank for the GLC farewell party; I shook his hand and photographed him too. Then he came back with Labour; by that time London was already on its way to become a beautiful and expensive city, one of the most expensive in the world. Even Brixton my neighborhood became trendy, house prices trebling in five years, the lively community destroyed, most pubs and cafes having to close down to make room for soulless expensive brasseries and music bars, the locals not welcomed except as waiters, bar staff or door men. I live in Farnham now so I shouldn't care but I do I do I do. Mind you even here the ship is sinking. In the past three months seven small shops have closed down in the centre of town, business is hard and rates too high. It is predicted that in the next few months 5 more shops will shut down when their lease come up for renewal, franchise and big names waiting in the aisle to take over.

—My dear friend Katy has lost her fight against cancer after eight years of resisting countless attacks always a smile on her face and boundless energy. She is leaving behind Nicolas and Roman, my godsons. Even harder than my grief and my frustration, anger, sadness, shame at not managing to be there when she needed me most or say my goodbyes face to face, is helplessly witnessing their shock and distress, what can be worse than losing your mother and only parent at 12 and 16, and trying to find the words, the gestures, the energy that could bring them some relief, however small. Both of them locked tight on their own pain, not coming to term with the irreversibility of it all, the possibility of the rest of their life without her, today, tomorrow, and the next day and the next and the next. There is family to take over the parenting and I am trying my best to be as present and supportive as I can, but how can it ever be enough. As painful and sad as it is to lose a close friend, it does make me feel even more eager to live it to the full. She did try so hard to hang in there, wanting so much from life for her boys, for herself.

—Apocalyptic month, an earthquake in China, hurricane in Burma, goodbye Hilary, goodbye Ken, hooray Obama, so long Katy, price of petrol hitting the roof, panic in Wall street, So long Marianne made in Limousin, Culture does not come cheap or free I am afraid, it costs as much as anything else, sometimes more sometimes less, it requires the same investment than any other social or economical venture, when will politicians and power crazed civil servants learn that. I do love a good recession and it is definitely on its way. I made it to June, with a soar heart and a smile. I remember the weight of her casket, only sign of her presence in there, wondering what she was wearing, which way was her head, really wishing I could have a last lasting look, better than having to imagine it day after day trapped in there. I have been thinking ever since that when I die, I would prefer to go up in flames.  
*Posted 107 days ago*



## WEEK 35 36 CLEANING THE HOUSE

—On my way to the Liquid page conference in London last Friday, I read Tracey emin's column in the independent. What an uplifting experience, perhaps not for the right reasons though. Any doubts I have ever had about the quality of my blog have vanished completely. She did concede that it probably wasn't her best entry as she felt so distraught yet compelled to write about the imminent death of her most beloved cat who had just been diagnosed with the animal strand of AIDS, not knowing how she will be able to keep on living once he/it is gone. Mind you I did learn something, I didn't know animals could be punished for their promiscuity too. I was even tempted for a minute to offer my services to the Independent, I am not famous, infamous or glamorous but my emotional pseudo analytical regular accounts of life as I go through it beats hers even on a good week. But somehow I prefer to remain virtual, so that one may have the choice to tap into my stream or not.

—The academic year is over, at least the teaching and assessing part, the London Free range degree show went extremely well, a difficult space to work with in two days flat but in the end the best show around I was told by many. A few behind the scene issues with misplaced ego trip tempered my enjoyment of it all but in the end we all felt proud. And you know the saying once beaten twice..... I feel it is the second best final year in my 9 years teaching in Farnham. My exhibition Republique Francaise is all ready to be hung next week, I have just seen the offset proof of the book and I am very pleased, beyond my expectation actually and it should be ready just in time for the opening.

—It is time to change my UK home yet again. I am surrounded by boxes as I write, becoming an expert in tactical packing and each time less attached to my few possessions. Tomorrow at 3pm Simon the careful and reliable man with a van found in the ads of the Farnham Herald will be here to transfer my belongings from this little maisonnette behind the station to a big shared house on the outskirts of Town, number 9 the laurels, as pretty a name as the current Southern way. Another temporary abode, but less expensive, until I work out what to do, sell my flat in London and buy something here, move back to London or change life completely. As much as I really enjoy what I am doing here at UCCA, now that I have been up rooted for a couple of years, I can imagine myself giving England up altogether for the first time in 25 years, and it is a great feeling. Let see what the wind brings. Anyway I have already worked out my retirement plan in my seventies. Hazel, my long lost friend from New Zealand, and I have decided to finish our life together on a yacht sailing the Indian ocean, she is from around there and have plenty of experience of the local waters and customs. It may read like a silly teenage fantasy but it is a serious plan which if we wanted to, could be put into motion right now. But we both feel we have a lot we want to do first, her sailing the world from the North pole to the south pole as a steady footed chef, me well following the art as life as art trail for a while longer.



There is something quite liberating in packing your life in order to move home: a chance to prune it and get rid of excess baggage. It is the first time in years that I am managing to plan a holiday for myself. I do feel uneasy though, wondering how it will feel to spend two weeks free roaming in Easter Europe, all that unplanned time to fill in without any prior purposes, all the choices... Summer is here now I have stored all my spring MOIblog images and opened up a new folder. This time next week someone else will be leaving in this place, my new home in the laurels will be full of boxes waiting for my return, and I will be putting up my show in St Yrieix, Marcus Kaiser will be there too to perform his interpretation of the king, Forgetting Elvis/Blue Elvis a composition for cello and video. How exciting...

*Posted 93 days ago*





# S U M M E R

## WEEK 37 38 THE HONEYMOON IS OVER

—I arrived here 10 days ago with good weather in my suitcase, next to the freshly printed Republique Française books, all excited and full of wonders at the week to come; finally seeing the mounted and framed images, setting up the exhibition, welcoming Marcus here in St Yrieix, the opening of the exhibition and his concert, anticipating the reaction of the audience to this almost hour long minimal abstract rendition of Blue Moon, a lot to ask from first timers, I am slightly doubting my decision..... and of course the 4 Belgium editors show to open at the centre of artists books. Quite full on for this remote place.

—The show is up, looking good despite the usual unexpected problems. This time the mounted prints on dibound falling off their wooden structures due to faulty double sided tape and extreme heat, for three days the atmosphere was tropical. Two images are slightly damaged but the framer is accepting full responsibility. The opening went well, a family affair with mother and sisters making lovely snacks and canapés, brother in law providing champagne and father orchestrating the whole thing as if he was at home; welcoming guests, serving, shmoothering the officials....

The staff of the cultural centre were very amused, I was less so when he started to boss me around as to whom I should speak to or when to start the introduction of the work or when he left taking with him what was left of champagne considering the party over and saving it for me.....

My first opening with my family around, as touching as it is stressing. The work was well received if not entirely grasped, the reactions were many and the issue of the political tendencies of the work, the main concern so far, is left unresolved, as I intended. People did engage with the various associations made between images, coming up with all kind of interpretation but the main game remained the guessing game of finding out who's fragments were whose and comparing results. After that Marcus Kaiser performance was superb, intense, concentrated, his visual and sonic deconstruction of the king image and voice (singing blue moon) was mesmerizing. The added pleasure for me was witnessing the audience negotiation of the work, the novelty the minimalism the length, the monotony and lack of narrative, that was as fascinating as the work itself, only one person left half way through, the rest sitting it through with various degrees of involvement and enjoyment. Yet the clapping at the end was genuine and generous and the faces and smiles and reactions in the foyer afterward a real treat, I was amazed and touched by their openness and willingness to engage.

—The other exhibition in town “freedom of expression of matter” is what you expect of a small town badly curated summer show mixing together some great large scale drawing/painting on layered tissues paper full of depth and layers and wonder with crafty, fiddly one liner pieces made of recycled wood, clay tools, paper.... disguised as art. The opening was a fascinating provincial highlight of the year with mayor speech, evening dresses and all the town officials mixing with Sunday painters, craftsmen turned artists and Mathieu Sevy the author of the drawings, a talented young artist from Limoges, disappointed by the show and putting up a brave face. Meanwhile across the road at the center of artist's books a much smaller event is taking place. The gallery is packed with beautiful bookworks, On kawara, sol lewitt, Robert Filliou, Robert Barry, Laurence Weiner, Baldessari..... published by unpronounceable belgium editors, Imschoot, Yves Gevaert, Yellow now and mfc michelle Didier. Visual and talent overload but absence of a crowd. I will need a whole week to absorb half of it. A more serious event, two of the editors are present and a few other connoisseurs talking books while sipping wine and delicate nibbles. All very serious and no mayor speech. For one evening only and within 100 meters of each other one can experience the whole range from the worst deluded amateur art to the most elitist high art, both having their purpose, qualities and weaknesses, I am not making judgment there. These two extremes are in complete denial of each other with no hope of any reconciliation, not even acceptance of each other for what they are.





# République Française



Emmanuelle Waeckerlé

*exposition du 2 juillet au 13 septembre 2008*  
Centre Culturel Jean-Pierre-Fabrègue - 87500 Saint-Yrieix

—The Republique Francaise exhibition is probably my last project here, despite the success of all my other projects. The honeymoon is over, I do feel small town mentality closing in on me, the novelty of my persona is wearing out and my status as an outsider or a friendly go between is becoming hard to sustain. I have made my point, the town feels it is a good point but they are not sure they want to follow anymore, it is not safe enough, and I am not easy to control. One side prefers to remain thinking that high art is obscure pretentious and unreachable while the other side thinks local people are idiots and good art is wasted on them. Well I will finally have the time to stop and think and spend time in the studio, after all that was the initial plan.

—Marcus and his cello have gone back to Germany, bringing with him a few samples of ferns from the area. I think he enjoyed French hospitality, and I did enjoy seeing the place through strangers eyes, though his nocturnal lifestyle was hard to accommodate on top of all the demands put upon my days, my nights were very short. His visit was followed by Nicolas and Roman and Katy's sister Dominique who came to see the exhibition and spend the weekend with me. They brought with them a few items belonging to Katy that she wanted me to have, such a difficult moment.

Seeing her two sons who now have left Paris to live in Bergerac with her family, and the few objects I remember her wearing, made her absence even more poignant. Her sister looks a lot like her too. The boys are doing extremely well considering, having matured so much in two months, and I was so amazed at their openness at discussing some of their feelings and concerns regarding the new life forced upon them by the death of their mother. I do feel so much their hurt and chaos and confusion, not knowing how or what to do to relieve some of it, and getting overwhelmed when I do manage to make a bit of difference. It was a very special time, I must make sure I am there always. I am off to Arles tomorrow, my first time to the rencontres photographiques with a show and a book to plug.

*Posted 78 days ago*



## WEEK 39 40 NIRVANA

—Back in England, sitting on my new bed in my new bedroom in my new home in Farnham, all boxes unpacked, except one, pondering about Herman Hesse's Siddharta and his quest for truth and peace of mind, trying out throughout his life a succession of real incarnation, various doctrines and gurus, before learning it all from the waters of the river he helps people cross: thus proving the limitations of words and learning and teachings. The pursuit of happiness reminds me of the piece of Nirvana I unexpectedly reached and explored for a few months last year when I found myself at the limits of both mind and body, part of the western medical process of eradicating the pirates that had colonised my body. In the end they won, not overwhelmingly but enough to gain the right to continue roaming freely but not enough to take over my mind. And they showed me the way to that special place of stillness at the bottom of my guts, so hard and painful and scary to reach, yet so exhilarating, inspiring, simple and clear once down there; reminiscence of being in the middle of the Sinai desert and its minimalist perfection. It all vanished gradually as I regain strength and control over my body and mind but I still remember the way sometimes and can tap into it if I try hard. I am anxious to slowly lose the way there, and I am wondering if my endless traveling, trying out different paths lately is not my way of feeling the void I have felt ever since or perhaps exhausting my body and mind in order to find that door again.



—Our marathon three days in Arles for the rencontres photographiques, with Anna, was great, allowing me to reconnect with South of France after about 12 years. We even had a chance to go swimming in the Tarn river on the way there, well in my case more like letting myself float down river. I do love the area, the people, the latin laid back temperament, the architecture, the flamingos, the Camargue swamps and marshes, the proximity of the sea, even the mosquitoes as they know best and stay well away from my blood.... I am even contemplating moving there, already looking at Estate agents. I know the grass is always greener elsewhere but it really felt like a breath of fresh air after the literal and symbolic dampness of the Limousin temperament. Furthermore, the day we arrived it was announced that the work to build the "Parc des Ateliers" described as a cultural Utopia, a Frank Ghery project for the old train depot, were about to start to be completed in 2011: one more incentive for getting involved in this sunny region already culturally booming, a change with the Limousin where I have to bring or create culture myself and imagine the sun shining inside

—Les rencontres photographiques, this year curated by Christian Lacroix were better than expected or commented upon, despite their heavy fashion input. Three highlights for me, Gregoire Alexandre fashion shots, a mix of formal craftsmanship and poetico surrealist subversion of both medium and subject matter: beautiful and refreshing and sparse compared to the excesses of Tim Walker and others. The classic carravagiesque large format portraits of Gregoire Gonnor were also a high note for me, though frowned upon with a hint of cynicism by most around me. The top was Joachim Schmidt display of his 20 years collection of found photographs, the 900 scraps mounted on A4 archival paper simply displayed in a line, covering all the walls of this huge warehouse. A perfect and seamless layering of form, content, context, purpose, space, time, personal record, public archive..... built over time through this persistent yet casual act of collecting found images. The impact was emphasized by the fact that I had met the artist the night before. We had diner together with a few other photographers and photography related writers, publishers and editors. I usually dread this kind of gathering but I did find Joachim Schmidt a very friendly and interesting human being. Furthermore he offered to swap one of his book, recently published by Photoworks for my brand new Republique Française book, not a fair swap of course, be it in size, weight, number of images or quality but a touching gesture I felt. Republique Française is now on sale in the Actes Sud bookshop in Arles too.

—Anyway Arles and the Camargue is now definitely in my mind as a future French base, once I have finished what I started in the Limousin and sold my London flat. The sharing accommodation here in Farnham feels absolutely right, the house is very big and we all have very different lifestyle and routines which means so far I have found myself completely alone most of my time there. It is great to have a big garden and fiddle with weeds and pots at the end of the day or sit and enjoy the last of the sun. Soon I will be off with Hazel to Austria then for a little tour in Eastern Europe before we both go to France for 10 days. We are dreading it, never having traveled this way before, without a purpose, without a project. Mind you I have got a few in mind, the main one using Italo Calvino's invisible cities as a guide book and frame of reference for our adventures there, asking Hazel every day to pick up a number to chose which sub chapter to explore. The issue at the moment is packing and luggage size. Hazel as an experienced globetrotter / jetsetter has the smallest of shoulder bag as luggage and is persuading me to do the same, which I find impossible. But I am downsizing and find ways to minimize my tool kit too: computer, camera, leads, charger..... but also small portfolio and new book and things to leave after my appointment with Camera Austria in Graz the day I arrive.  
*Posted 60 days ago*



## WEEK 41 42 43 44 – TOO BIG OR NOT TOO BIG

—This trip felt as if it was meant to be. In our early twenties Hazel and I used to dream up such adventures and possible life paths all lying ahead of our smoky London selves. Twenty years later, both of us firmly engaged in our forties and our respective exciting lives on opposite sides of the world (New Zealand and uk/france), we are finally going on that mythical trip together. Starting gently in Austria, in Joachim's artist in heaven wonderful Lagerhaus where the Wandelweiser group of experimental composers are having a week long series of extremely minimal and quiet concerts, among them, michael Pisaro, André O. Muller, Marcus Kaiser who played his hypnotic Forgetting Elvis/Blue Elvis in St Yrieix early July, plus others from Düsseldorf, Munich, Vienna and Los Angeles, a truly inspiring and wonderful bunch. Then we drove off into the Czech sunset towards Horni Plana, we liked the name and it was surrounded by a lot of blue (water) on the map, first destination on our two weeks of wanderings through southern Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia before returning our brand new rented VW fox in Vienna. We started at snail pace, having progressed forty kilometers in the first two days, spending our first night in a small doll size wooden bungalow by a lake, lost among a few staring holidaying local families. It all looked so exotic to us and wonderfully unspoilt and void of tourists (like us...)

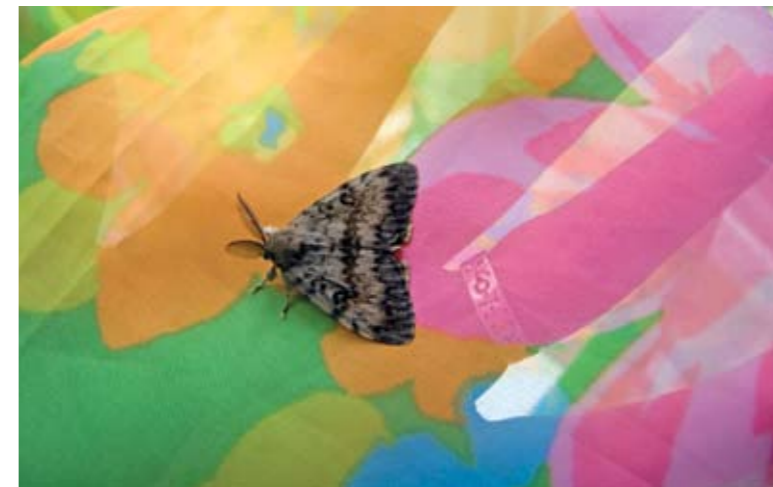
—Everyday since leaving London we are choosing a chapter of Italo Calvino Invisible Cities, Hazel picks a number I read the corresponding text then we ponder the relevance to our where about and state of mind. Both of us are experienced travelers but neither of us has ever had a proper 'holiday', spending time together catching up on a twenty year separation while exploring a region unknown to both: no itinerary, no particular goals or prior knowledge, cultural or historical of the place apart from the obvious. Just two musts, staying away from the usual tourist places which would be packed in August, and finding ways of sampling the best local foods and wines.

Language was an issue, local maps were quite unreliable as were road signs, good wine was rare, but we did great on all other counts, discovering some gems little towns and villages with unpronounceable names while trying to reach others, amazing castles with unpronounceable names too, there are hundreds in Bohemia, delicious beer, addictive bohemian sekt (champagne), amazing architecture from the turn of the last century to 20's and 30's, gigantic dams, beautiful power stations, dreamlike small Spas with superb palaces in genuine perfect conditions, the friendliest people with the biggest smile, the roughest people with the smallest kind smile, the individual makeovers given to old style Eastern housing blocs and houses, the supermarkets with very little choice yet delicious products, black breads, pickled gherkins beetroots and chillies, fresh fruits, strange full fat feta like cheese..... It was such a relief to see so few shops.

Aigen, rohrbach, ulrichsberg, horni plana, cesky krumlov, borovany, nove hrady, trebon, jindrichuv hradek, telc, jemnice, Vranov naj dyji, Znojmo, morasky krumlov, brno, bucovice, kyjov, uherske hradiste, luhacovice, horni lidek, puchov, zilina, rajek, trencin, piestany, bratislava, vienna, then a plane to paris, a train to limoges, a smaller one to st yriex where we arrived exhausted and exalted, Hazel still in curious traveling mode far from home, me just wanting to stay put for a few days in my second home. The weather was appalling, late autumn early winter was suddenly upon us, frequent rain, cold, quite an anti climax together with reality and its few chores and loose ends waiting to be tackled while Hazel needed entertainment and constant translation. I am not always the best of host.

—We seemed to be in tune most of the times with our Italo Calvino daily pick. The first one was page 72 'cities and eyes' which can be summed up by one of its final lines; 'your footsteps follow not what is outside the eyes but what is within, buried, erased'. It seemed to sum up perfectly our way of being, like two (butter)flies fluttering around, according to the wind, attracted by a smell or a colour or something that one of us recognized from her past. Both of us very interested in culinary practices, architecture and watching how people live, often spending hours sitting at a café or on a bench being voyeurs, sometimes commenting but rarely: as Calvino says in another chapter page 62, ***we were busy 'contemplating with fascination our own absence'***. While castles did fascinate us and we spent much time visiting them, we usually avoided guided tours when offered, preferring our own investigation and unorthodox interpretation and findings, (butter)flies superficially scanning the surface without ever digging too deep but making sure we got some kind of taste or understanding of the spirit of each place, staying longer when it felt right, quickly moving on if not.

—I must admit that I am not a great traveler or traveling companion. While I have great intuition and flair when looking at a map or for finding great places or somewhere good to eat or sleep, it rarely fails me, it is like a fifth sense, I am not a great adventurer, quite reluctant to move on once I have found a suitable paradise. I was weary of not knowing what came next or what will be our next abode. It did get better after a few days and my anxieties slowly disappeared. But I did need to stop walking, driving, exploring... every hour or two, running out of energy very quickly at the risk of becoming grumpy. I quickly started to suffer from overload, there are only so much my eyes and brain can take in, often needing a drink and a snack to recharge. Hazel was patiently indulging and respecting my weaknesses, perhaps enjoying them too. Brno in Slovakia was one of the highlights of this trip, we were there the weekend of my birthday early august, and the city was quite empty. It is I feel more beautiful than Prague and almost void of tourists. It is the only place where both body and mind forgot their limitation and we spent two days walking everywhere our eyes mostly looking up at the mind blowing architecture, at every step, as loaded and unassuming as I remember Rome to be. We also drove to a large residential area above the university where every house, every block of flats was a pure wonder of modernist architecture of all kind, in perfect condition and full working mode.



We both felt like moving in straight away in at least twenty of them I also became quite obsessed with the figure of women there, old and young, mothers or not, they all looked so wonderfully thin and fit, miniskirts are in fashion, there are very very very few fat and/or unhealthy looking people around and 99 per cent of women are absolutely unselfconsciously gorgeous. We spent hours, on the Monday once the city filled up again just watching them walking by, and wondering how an entire female population can be so fit looking: genes, diet ..... Slight hint of jealousy.

I later found out that Brno is the city where retreating Russians drunk on vodka made my father prisoner at the end of the Second World War. He had to escape, with two others, to avoid being taken to the famous nearby concentration camp from which no one ever returned. Two of them made it. He was just seventeen. How strange it is that both of us could have such a different experience of this town. As I am writing these words I am hearing on French radio that 40 years ago exactly the Russian army invaded the Czech republic to put an end to the spring of Prague, the 7 months during which the Czechs managed to remain free of their iron fist. The world didn't bat an eyelid, Michel Debré, a French minister of the time called it a simple glitch. I am thinking of Georgia, and a few of the many contemporary invasions and cleansing of all kind left unchallenged.



—Hazel has gone back to New Zealand via London and Hong Kong. Now is time to take stock and plan this new academic year starting soon: I do feel that some pruning and cutting down is necessary. Simplifying my commitments and responsibilities so I have more time and head space for what matters; making good work and good energy with like-minded people. In Vienna I was quite impressed and inspired by the life and work of the artist and 'architecture doctor' Hundertwasser, his holistic approach to art life and nature, together with his relentless quest for a better world and self is criticized by many for its simplicity or absurdity, most Viennese I spoke to do not take him seriously, it certainly made sense to me and brought a few symbolic answers to my current dilemmas. *Posted 33 days ago*



## WEEK 45 46 47 KICK START

—We are almost at the end of summer. I am about to close the second chapter of this MOIblog experiment. The format has remained the same, the writing is more confident yet probably less accomplished as I am giving it much less attention than last year. I have less time and my mind is fragmented in so many different avenues and projects and hats and responsibilities and and and... Long gone are the precious months where I could only afford one thought or task per day, sometimes per week. The pace of Moiblog has been less regular, weekly sometimes becoming bi-monthly or less. But the practice feel well rooted now, my readership steady and I am about to start working on the THE YEAR yearbook volume 2, complete with poster, recipes and dvd supplement. This time I have decided to include advertising space that I am 'offering' only to those creative (or other) ventures or individuals that have a link with or have a part in my personal or professional life. The cost is very reasonable, starting at 40 pounds for a text advert (the cost of printing one copy of THE YEAR) to 200 pounds for half a page with text and visual. Beside exclusive advertising space each advertiser will also be given a copy of the limited edition bookwork. The number of copies printed will correspond to the average number of monthly MOIblog readers. I am very pleased with the idea, an interesting way to deal with both funding and distribution. If any of you I haven't thought of, are interested in taking part in this experiment in ethical advertising, please do get in touch. My only worry right now is to find the time and the energy to get it all done before the end of October.

—I have been back in Farnham for 10 days now, finding it hard to reconnect with it all, while planning the coming year and reflecting upon the good and the bad of my double life in between two countries. It has worked out beautifully I feel but some serious tuning and pruning is required, to minimize traveling and feel less fragmented. I had very high expectations last year when it all started, I have lived up to them and I am truly proud of that, but I would like to cut back a little. My roots are well established in both places, it is now time for pruning unnecessary shoots and stray branches in order to strengthen what's left and preserve what made me do it in the first place, my health and a need for a simpler more harmonious life concentrating my limited energy on what matters most, making the right work with like minded people for the right reasons and the good of all, those who care but also those who don't but might one day. Easier said than done when my mind is spinning with all I am involved in already colliding with all that is calling. I must learn to delegate and find a way to fund an assistant.



—I have realized that the secret of success is not talent or financial freedom or good contacts or great marketing skills, of course all these are important but not as much as the amount of energy one can generate in order to reach and stay in front of the never ending race, more of a decathlon in my case. Mind you nobody asked me to follow so many different lines of creative inquiries, Emmanuelle of all trades and mistress of none, not a writer, not a photographer, not a performance artist, not a book artist, not a musician nor a singer, not an academic, not a wife, not a mother, perhaps still a good friend to some I hope. I was thinking today that maybe I should change tactics in order to be less spread so thinly. I cannot give up any of my interests, too difficult to choose one and I do feel that they are all connected, the same way that spider webs or mazes do form a tight ensemble, and by disrupting one or more of their parts you would destroy the whole. But perhaps I can try to dedicate certain period of time, 6 months or 1 year at a time to just one area or two; instead of the current manic surfing of it all; the Marianne book, the Year yearbook, promoting the Republique Francaise exhibition here and in France, developing Jeux de bouches here in Farnham, getting back into voice work to develop and prepare for the performances of Bouche bée in decembre and March, organising the 'Once upon Time' performance event in March, redoing and updating my website, developing the Bookroom website and documenting the collection, finishing the AHRC proposal with Anna, writing two lectures and one paper for the conference and workshop in Valencia early decembre, my teaching duties as third year tutor, preparing the small publisher fair at the end of October, finishing the mouths slideshow and revisit the Jeux de bouches video for the epilogue event of the project early decembre, resume printing and presenting of the Mo(ve)ments and Holestory series of photographs.....

Juggle juggle. Plus all this knitting waiting to be done too. Martin was 60 last week, I think we were all as surprised as he was, what a great party, his aunts meringues with cream were out of this world. So were Sue's mohitos at Mango Landin after that, my first one in a few years, reminiscence of another life not so far away, peppered with care free Brixton late nights. I think once in a while will not hurt.....

*Posted 16 days ago*



## WEEK 48 49 CYCLES AND CREDIT CRUNCH

-- I am in France right now, just in time for the end of summer and the autumn solstice coinciding with the end of Yea 2 of this MOIblog experiment and the surprised 50th double birthday party organised by my sister's kids for their parents. It was equally touching and scary, the first time members of the next generation take on entire responsibility of a family ritual: whiffs of helplessness and frustration, not being in control and having to accept other way of doing things, however clumsy, while being there on the sideline available for when they need help and advice. They did great, the weekend was a success with 83 guests well fed and happy and two speechless parents overwhelmed by emotion, of course dad couldn't help saying that he knew something was up. I saw cousins and aunts and uncles I hadn't seen for 30 years. It was interesting to notice how my eccentricities and choice of life are now celebrated and praised by the same who used to look down on me as a lost cause and a bad seed. I guess it is better now than never and I was flattered actually, hating myself for it. They are now so proud to have an artist in the family and one that looks almost happy and fulfilled. Success is never mentioned as it is assumed that I am not, as I am not famous and not wealthy.

- The academic year kicked in last week in Farnham, I had one week to welcome my fifty three strong cohort of students, and get them going with equal amount of enthusiasm and cautious advice on how to get the best result out of their final year of study. I am getting better at it year after year, building upon previous years experience and as time goes by feeling a bit more motherly each time. I feel optimistic, this is a really good year and I have put together a great semester for them packed with interesting workshops and other treats. At the same time I am hoping to give up teaching within the next three years, time to do something else I think.

-- It took the best of the past three weeks to get myself going and reach full working multitasking mode and a steady enthusiastic pace. Memories of last year keep coming to mind, how stressed, unsettled and fragmented I felt after my yearlong absence from working life, yet how excited I was about setting up my new double life between two countries. I am there now, it has worked out well, some tuning and twicking is still needed if only to create more time to let the mind wonder and cook up more wonderful and wild ideas. I am well aware that neither Jeux de bouches or Republique Francaise would have happened if I hadn't had all that precious time to think them up from the depth of my mindful guts or gutsy mind. More Time and mental Energy is the answer.

-- I have finally started on my get fit plan. I am a now a member of the local sport centre, I joined a weekly body balance class, far from the introspective depth and intensity of Nigel's yoga classes in London, but the closest Farnham has to offer, I go swimming twice a week and have a strict program of exercises and toning circuit training worked out by a personal trainer, all part of the members package.. I had to make it clear that I had no intention of looking like him, all pumped up and distorted by too much body building, only wishing to tone up and build up stamina, he wasn't impressed. It is amazing how quickly I started to feel the benefits of it all, my energy levels on the up already and I can finally feel my body now...

-- The credit crunch, such a lovely sound, crispy and strong, like a good bar of chocolate, who did invent this catchy phrase, here in France it is called the financial crisis - la crise financiare - and doesn't feel as urgent and drastic and close to home and threatening as in England. The French do not live their life in credit like in the UK or in America, a credit card debt has to be cleared up at the end of every month, you never get more than 30 days credit. I did really enjoy in England putting the radio early every morning and finding out the latest collapse of a financial institution, another one biting the dust.

Reminiscence of school and history lessons, the 1929 financial crisis. I find it very exciting, never in my lifetime have I experienced such a threat to our precious capitalist bubble. What surprises me is how recklessly fragile and unprepared most institutions involved are. How didn't they see it coming? How could they let it get that bad? Why were they allowed to go that far? Or is it part of the game, to go all the way, knowing full well that the state will pick up the pieces in order to save the national or global economy, and that there is plenty of money to be made on the way down, buying and selling falling shares. How utterly unfair yet strangely surreal it all is. Surely like in a marriage agreement a financial deal should be for better or for worse. Who is to blame? It is so easy for governments to start talking about the need for serious regulation and safeguard and a return to a less speculative capitalism, why didn't they say so before and act accordingly, I am no expert but we all saw it coming months ago? What happened to the millions of millions dollars of profit made? Surely some of it was put aside for a rainy day. Simple logical questions really. I am thinking of Lafontaine's fable of the cricket and the ant. The former careless and carefree during summer while the later works hard to stock up and be prepared when winter comes. There was never any question of the hard working ant bailing out the greedy cricket, or was there?

*Posted 5 days ago*



## WEEK 50 CRUNCH OR NO CRUNCH



—This is the end before a third beginning, a third cycle of this MOIblog experiment. This is the end two weeks late in real time but right on time in virtual and legal time, as I am entitled to a two weeks statutory holiday. I am back in Farnham now writing the last belated words of this cycle. It has been a marathon week and weekend in Limousin and Dordogne. Starting with taking my parents to the station, on their way to Tunisia for three weeks, they looked less fragile than a year ago on the same occasion but had more luggage as my father, like the true generous king he likes to be, had filled up a suitcase with all kinds of gifts for the few people he met there last year, you would think he knew the whole town and had never heard of the escalating financial crisis.

—Then it was time to set up the autumn exhibition at the cdla of the wonderful work of Mirtha Dermisache, unreadable writing, beautiful scribbling marks on every possible printed vehicle, page, book, card, news spread... Presented in an interesting set up by Florent Fajole, her publisher and official PR/commentator it seems. Both artists were around for the whole week, to look after and entertain which we all did with pleasure, thankful of the warmth and the life they brought to the usually very quiet centre. Both were interesting in their own differing way, the mature, laid back Argentinean artist, very particular in what she required for her work and well being but in an easy going matter of fact way, we got on very well.

The young knowledgeable well-spoken and good-looking French publisher, ambitious and enthusiast but impatient and clumsy at times, trying perhaps to conceal his shyness behind abrupt manners. Their bickering with each other was very entertaining, like an old couple, yet they looked more like mother and son. Anyway we got on too, the exhibition is great and the private view was one of the most well attended I have seen there.

—In between I ended up at the Zenith in Limoges to witness Rachel on stage, reworking her 80's new wave hit Mes etats d'ames Eric, alongside a whole bunch of other pop stars of that era, not all of them I could recognize let alone remember. A DJ with basic yet effective technique had warmed up a packed audience of all ages. When the show started they sang along non-stop to most hits. I was amazed. High culture might be dead but popular culture is definitely in, they knew their classics and they were proud of it. Some tunes were familiar to me, not many did age well and it got a bit boring after a while, not taking part in the frenzy. Rachel's song did very well and had some complexity to it. I was wondering how it felt to be back on stage 20 years later, I don't think I could have done it. But the money is very good, I have been told, probably a good incentive. She seemed to enjoy it and hopes to get better as the tour of all the Zenith of France progresses.



—Next was a weekend visit to Nicolas and Roman, the two sons of my dear friend Kathy who died last May, they now live in Bergerac with her brother's and sister's families. I was completely amazed at how well they have adapted and how well they are, barely four months after the loss of their mother. I was truly touch to see how gentle and patient they all are in helping them to adapt and integrate their new life, so far and different from their Parisian upbringing. But they do seem happy and secure. I was relieved to see that Bergerac is only one hour and a half away from St Yrieix, It was my first visit there and the first time I met her family since the funeral but I didn't feel estranged, I felt welcome and I realized I knew them somehow through Katy's stories over the years. And vice versa. I do feel I have a strong bond to the boys and it is going to be easier than I thought to remain close to them. Bergerac is a beautiful city, and at least 2 degrees warmer than the Limousin. I even thought that it might be a good place to live once I finished with St Yrieix....

*Posted 7 minutes ago*

**IF YOU**

*Reality narrated as it happened*

**CAN'T**

*stories of sheer survival*

**ADOPT THEM**

*read all about it*

**IGNORE**



***T H E M***