

THE YEAR ⁽³⁾

COME DOWN

52 weeks

333 days

4 countries

28 flights

300 000 pirates

1 house move

34 knitted hats

THE FULL STORY

sattelite crash

credit crunch

3 general strikes

Obama

H1N1

George Brecht RIP

Michael Jackson RIP

Woolworth RIP

1 crush

no harm

THE MOTHER OF ALL STRUGGLES

AND A FEW UPS

(autumn)

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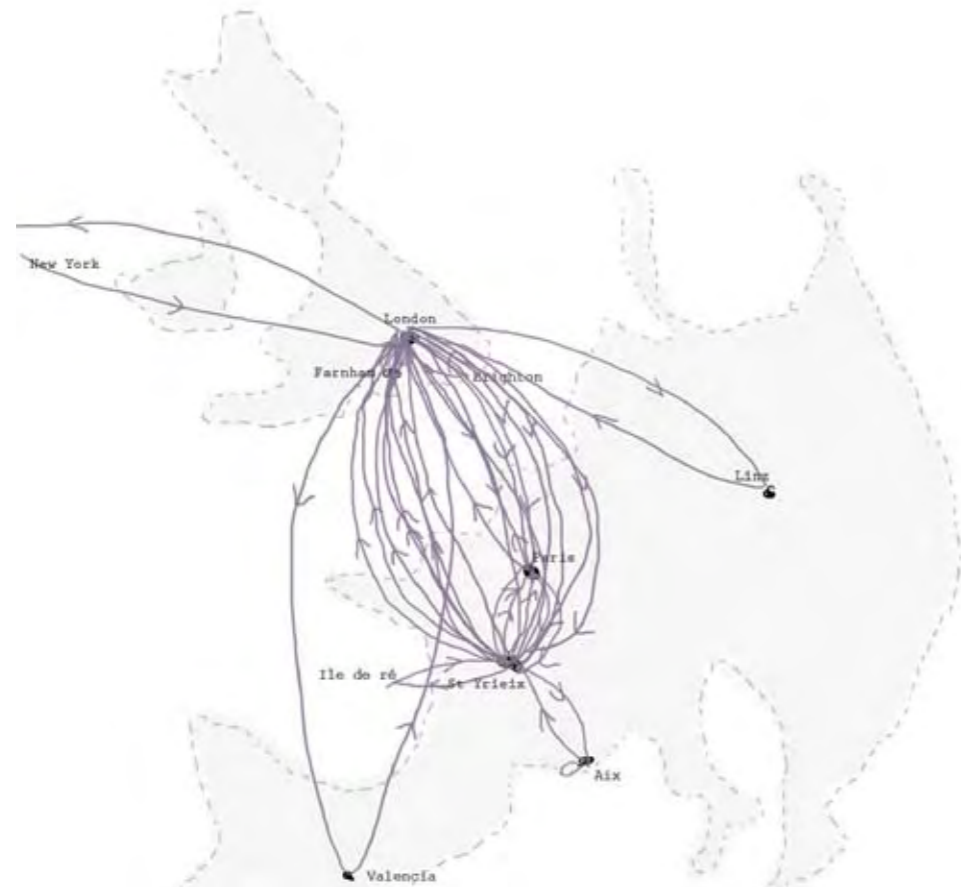
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THE MOTHER OF ALL JUGGLES TOO



This is the third volume of *THE YEAR*, commemorating on paper the past fifty two weeks of the MOIblog experiment, an online (more or less) weekly chronicle in words and images, keeping track of my life in between two countries, two languages, two cultures, following my failed attempt at medical decontamination of 2006 and the subsequent unexpected yet welcomed cultural recontamination. (See *THE YEAR* vol.1 and 2)



A U T U M N

WEEK 1 AND TWO BEHIND

—I do usually love beginnings but this one is particularly difficult to get going, bearing in mind that the end did take a long time to achieve, way too long trying to achieve a clear-cut finish with no drippings. I am already two weeks behind on my real time schedule and Autumn is more than on its way. How will I ever catch up? Can I ever catch up? Does it really matter? Will it have an impact on this new cycle? Never have I been out of synch to such an extent. Am I destined to always run behind the idea of myself, one hand stretched in front trying to grab the present.

Why do I always have the feeling of being late? And forever trying to catch my present self. A strange inflation has come upon my life. How can I get rid of it? This crunch syndrome reminiscent of our current credit crunch which has evolved into a credit crash, as just heard on Radio 4 PM program. Am I also soon to crash and collapse in the impossibility of ever being able to be in the present moment, but forever getting ready for the one to come ?

—Autumn is truly here, leaves in technicolor orange and red, flying in gale force winds distracting my driving, early morning frost clouding my bedroom window making me want to stay in bed. I haven't yet had a chance to go for a walk in the surrounded woods; too busy putting the final touched to THE YEAR vol.2, in time for the small publishers fair at Conway hall in London this weekend. This time round the headline is HIDE AND SEEK and there are two videos on the DVD supplement. I have used my eighty-year-old mother to model for the advert of my knitted hat label BdeM, the result is compelling and touching; too busy finishing the bookRoom research cluster website and business card also in time for the small publishers fair. Christian has down a great design job. It is now all at the printers, fingers crossed, hoping no major mistakes have slipped through my meticulous yet rushed final check. I have already got the spelling wrong for so many of THE YEAR, having made the mistake of trusting the Microsoft word spell check which is set up for American language. As a consequence and in doubt about which is right, I have replaced quite a few s by z in such words as recognize..... and even more our by or, such as colour... I did stop when it suddenly asked me to correct Labour for labor. By then it was too late to revert all the changes made. I was already way behind with the printer's deadline. Once more time available and outcome intended were out of synch. I only have myself to blame. And no higher authority to bail me out or pick up the pieces. I will have to live with a work, which is not entirely up to standard, not the first one and probably not the last.

— Petri and I have started to experiment with voice and guitar, after a two year break. We are now using the photographic studio here at the university in Farnham, after we found ourselves locked out of my London studio last week end, all keys having been changed a few months ago, Benny who is using it forgot to inform me. It was a strange and unsettling feeling being locked out the space I have called home for more than fifteen years. It reminded me of my tendency to cling to my recent past in London. Despite my new life in between two countries, I haven't yet been able to cut all links to the old one, I am subletting the studio to Benny: I still have some work, tools and furniture there. And I haven't yet been able to put my flat for sale, even though I am losing quite a lot in terms of profit, now prices are falling down. Anyway at least the studio in Farnham is heated and as it is a Saturday we have the whole building to ourselves. It took us a while to get back into the mood and familiarise ourselves with our respective instruments. Somehow both of us were quite reluctant to fall back into old habits and from the start we did try new configurations and new ways of interacting. Petri was standing using his body in space as much as his guitar, allowing him to experiment with all sorts of feedback and reverbs between amp and guitar with impressive results, and more crucially managing to divert the attention to himself: he used to sit and curl up around his guitar so that most the attention was always on me. I started to use text and spoken words, my own writing in French and in English but also random text, recipes, philosophical writing.... instead of limiting myself to my register of non-verbal vocabulary.

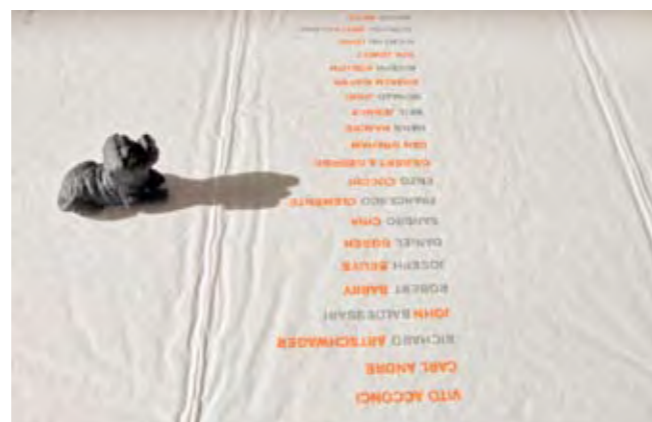


WEEK 2 FIRST FROST AND MORE

The result was truly exciting, new textures, new horizons navigating in and out language and harmonies. I have asked Sebastian (father of VINST) to create a new patch that can process visuals in real time and in synch with the sound we are making, so that we can aim for a holistic visual and sonic experience. His first experiments are very exciting.

— I discovered Alain Fournier, French social theorist of the mid 19th century who wrote of work, love and the law of passionate attraction as a way of ruling society, but also of absolute doubt in relation to civilisation and absolute deviation concerning all previous doctrines and moral codes. His utopian vision has influenced many, among which Robert Filliou, which in turn has introduced him to me; very refreshing, very profound and so ahead of his time. I have watched again David Lynch Eraserhead, letting myself be carried along this dark visual and sonic stream of consciousness, the kind of film that really makes you want to pick up a movie camera. Also as delightful and dark was Dogville that I have finally got around to to watch. A true masterpiece I felt, so subtle in its careful unraveling of human hypocrisy. I did regret not having discovered it on a big screen alongside a full audience, to be able to feel the ups and down of human reactions as the story evolves and slowly slide down into horror in such a casual way.

Posted Oct 21, 09:32 PM



—This morning all was slightly white with frost when I opened my bedroom window in St Yrieix, the grass and the surrounding trees, not enough to hide the thinning red yellow leaves. I have been here since the weekend, in time for yet another family celebration, the 20th birthday of one of my nieces, daughter of my Dordogne sister. Another occasion to eat and drink plenty, this time with a distinct north African flavour, my parents having just come back from their three weeks break in Tunisia, looking super healthy and very tanned, their bright blue eyes looking even brighter. Next to all of us looking quite pale, they reminded me of a retired American couple visiting from Florida. They brought back for the occasion five kilos of delicious Tunisian ultra sweet pastisseries. The main course was a couscous royal (with 4 different meats), followed by a big birthday cake with whipped cream and fruits so that candles could be blown. —I do feel very alive yet very tired, yet quite inspired. I was dreading the month of October, and its long list of commitments. But it is over now and I am fairly pleased at some of the outcomes. I have run two 'grammar of performance' workshops with second year students. The first one wasn't as exciting as I hoped, it took me a long time to get the 18 strong group to tap into areas of their mind and body that they had rarely reached, let alone explore. But the second did surpass any expectation. Working with 8 students who wanted to develop some of their ideas - WAR - itching and Marcel Duchamps ready made - via the workshop, creating material, gestures, sounds and movement using the various techniques I had introduced them to the previous week. I am as amazed as last year to see these young photographers so readily leaving their inhibition behind and coming up with some fabulous stuff, really surprising themselves in the process. A British woman boarding the plane to Limoges at 8am in Stanstead has called me that lady from St Yrieix. She recognised me from the Jeux de bouches project of last February, fame at last... The two days of the small publishers fair last week were rewarding and trying in equal measure.

bookRoom finally has an identity, a great card and a website, and the display from our collection with a few new publications seem to generate a lot of attention. Not as much as Alec Finlay's Morning star publications on the next table, but as much if not more than Boekie Woekie, on the other side. I finally had the chance to chat with Eck Finlay, we met a few times over the years via Thomas, a close friend of both of us now living in New York, and we know a lot about each other this way but it was good to engage somehow and see whether our close connection to Thomas did transfer to us, I am hopeful it can. What seemed to come across a few times throughout the fair is how well we have done in terms of creating bookroom research cluster and managing to keep it going for the past few years. It looks like quite a few other universities haven't managed as well. I guess it is due to our (Anna and mine) sheer determination and ingenuity in skillfully surfing the constraints and opportunities of our institution. It is encouraging though. At the fair, I acquired a great new book being launched, playing with words, edited by Cathy Lane, a very interesting collection of works and writing of artists who use language within their practice. I did feel a small pang of regret at not being included but I met the author and managed to introduce my work to her, so all is not lost despite the forceful and clumsy manner in which I behaved, so excited was I about her book and our meeting. This morning as I finish these words, a thin layer of snow, chillingly beautiful, covered all; I am not ready for winter.



WEEK 3 GUY FAWKES AND OBAMA

Six days to Obama's victory perhaps, it is so hard to believe that America will have a black president, I imagine many nervous hesitation in the polling stations

—I have finished THE YEAR vol.2 just in time for the fair. Having to rush so much means that a few mistakes have occurred, one wrong image, another is looking strange with a weird color cast, the poster is not the centre spread..... But it was there looking good next to Vol.1 on the display. The project is starting to generate some positive interest. And I am slowly beginning to articulate some of my ideas around the work; different forms of writing used to negotiate the thin line between the public and the private, archiving one's life and work as it happens, choosing as I go along what goes in and what stays out, having a platform where my various interests can exist and collide: conceptual living, writing, storytelling, taking pictures, performing, cataloguing, repetitive actions, cooking, knitting, making books, realising now and then that everything does connect to everything else.....

Posted Oct 30, 06:33 PM



—Glimmer of hope, role reversal, as Guy Fawkes goes down in flames, President-elect Obama goes up in world-wide acclaim, set to rule the Western world for the next few years. What a surreal sight to see this picture-perfect black nuclear family making its first public appearance, impeccable in every detail, he looked so relaxed and at ease, one could read a sweet shy almost humble yet puzzled look in their eyes while the Democrat crowd in Chicago roared their victory. Almost the whole world was pro-Obama, easy to do so when it is not happening in your backyard, I was hoping but could not believe that Americans would actually go through with it. Even France was pro-Obama; quite absurd when you know that a few years ago they all voted Le Pen so that the socialist wouldn't reach the second round. I truly don't believe that Obama would ever make it in France. And that infuriates me. The tears on Reverend Jesse Jackson's face were truly moving. Such a momentous turn of event, it was obvious that he was the best contender but we all thought that most would never look further than the color of his skin. It is so good to be proved wrong. Mind you what he has to tackle seems impossible; biggest national debt ever, two impossible wars, and a global financial meltdown. Thank you Bush. Perhaps it is all for the best, let it all crash down and start from scratch, perhaps our dear W did it all on purpose...

—While the world is on the move, I am stuck at home with a stiff lower back and the worse pain at every attempt to move. I don't even have a good reason for it; it started with a small cramp on Sunday when I tidied my bed in St Yrieix. By the time I was back in Farnham on Monday I was reduced to a grumpy and depressed cripple. Even the Bank of England cut of 1.5% of the interest rate hasn't managed to cheer me up. Four days of pain and low grey skies have finished me off, the high spirit of last week has vanished, here comes doubts and frustrations.

I did try to indulge the rare opportunity to stay put and do nothing but the dark shadow of long-term illness is looming far too close for my liking. Reminiscence of the past I guess, silly fear of never getting up again. Two chiropractic sessions, despite my reluctance at this practice, have made a difference; the pain is less acute which allows me a bit more mobility. I am alternating hot and cold treatment of the injured part every hour. Going from an incredibly smelly hot water bottle, brand new from Sainsbury, every time you feel it up the heated plastic starts releasing this pungent and putrid smell which lingers in the whole house, making me feel very nauseous. I do intend to bring it back as soon as I am able. I am using a frozen pack of smoked bacon with maple syrup as an ice pack, the shape fits this part of my anatomy perfectly. Hardly glamorous but highly efficient in terms of reducing the pain and the inflammation, more efficient and less taxing on my liver than the dual Nurofen plus tablet I have been feeding myself with.

—I have way too much time to think but I did manage to catch on Radio 4 Aristotle's taxonomy of government structures this morning: from monarchy to oligarchy (the governing of the rich by the rich) to democracy (government of the needy by the needy), preferring the first two rather than democracy, as needy people do not have enough time on their hands. The aim should always be the pursuit of virtue and well-being for all citizens.



WEEK 4 FLAMELESS CANDLES

According to him only someone educated and having enough time on his hands could be the ideal ruler. It is a bit of a simplistic summary but enough to make my point. I do agree with him to a certain extent. But when in the whole history of the world have we ever seen rulers or government or even human beings in pursuit of virtue and well-being. It is and has always been power and money they are after. And any way how can a government successfully look after both rich and poor? Today's nations are all ruled by the rich in order for the rich to get richer and for the poor to envy the rich and desire what they have. Nations ruled by desire and the need to fulfil them at any cost, desires in turn are ruling the economy, which is ruling and ruining governments.... Virtue and well being instead of power and money, mmmh, it doesn't sound that sexy but it makes sense.

—All that thinking time brought to light another contradiction. For the past few months I have been far too busy to stick to the weekly routine of this chronicle, and life was far too fast, making it difficult to relate it all or to do it justice in a few words. When my life was brought to a stop for a while, I feel that both my experience and my writing of it was much more interesting, in form and content, despite or because of the minimal amount of things going on. I had more time to engage with it all but also to let it permeate my mind and brew there a little before transferring to paper. So perhaps it is not about having enough time and energy to do it all as I wrote not so long ago but to do less, choosing to do less, to want less..... I wouldn't go as far as virtue yet.

Posted Nov 6, 08:28 PM



—Charmless autumn, painless back and blameless council, yet seventeen months old baby P died of mindless abuse, everybody is talking about it, at the gym, in Waitrose, in the streets, in the Cancer Research charity shop, in the corridors of the university, on the radio, now I am writing about it. Still no answer to who is to blame. From local authorities to the prime minister everybody is rejecting responsibility. I am thinking what about neighbours, friends and family of the poor thing; did anybody ever react to the signs and the sounds of violence or step forward at anytime? To make the matter worth he had the face of an angel, all blond curls and big blue eyes, how I imagine Cupid's faced. The Christmas frenzy has began, credit crunch or not the mad consumerist machine has been set in motion, it is everywhere and anywhere, surreal backdrop to the innocent death of baby P, crucified before birth.

I saw an ad on TV, yes I have succumbed to the beast this week, a man cosily foaming in a candle lit bath, warm glow, shiny tanned skin of a perfect body, picture of domestic paradise, one can imagine the misses waiting in bed for a perfect romp while nanny looks after the homework of the two perfect kids. Guess what the candles are flameless, as fake as the ad, and no irony there, and no explanation of how you switch them on and off. But imagine no more risk of burning your skin or worse your hair, no more warmth and flickering light and smell of the hot melting wax and temptation of dipping your fingers in it with the anticipation of that sharp pleasurable pain or painful pleasure I never know which.

No more temptation to make silly shadows on the wall or perfect little wax dices moulded by the applied pressure of your thumb and index to the liquid mass you scooped up with your nails. Could someone tell me what is the point of a flameless candle, apart from being pointless, on the same level than non alcohol beer or wine, useless placebo that will cost you more than

the real thing and deprive you of countless pleasures. I do understand the point of an electric heater with false flames effect, I almost bought one this week; I do love fires and do not have a fire place, beside the electric flickering flame is as hypnotic as the real thing, and it is not trying to replace the real thing, simply providing a cheaper substitute. The ad seemed to imply that flameless candles represented the summum of sophistication and comfort. The worse is that I can imagine how many people would succumb to it, who knows I might even get some for Christmas.

—My lower back is almost fixed and the pain gone. I am mobile and able again thanks to the talent of a chiropractor named Pretorius who operates his magic from the local Cannon's sport centre. Unfortunately his skills didn't operate on my mood, which has remained low, very low, and sinking still. Body and brain have resumed normal activity, requiring exhausting effort to go through daily motion and routine, yet achieving it all quite successfully and to the satisfaction of all it seems, but one, myself; feeling so bored of the sound of my voice and the patterns of my thoughts, which seems to work on others and fail to enthuse me. I am trying to let it pass and not wallow in it, looking for scraps and sparks to hold onto, feeling strangely detached and unconcerned by it all, yet quite frustrated by all and nothing.

It is impossible to put the finger on one particular thing, on the contrary when I try to examine things closely it all seems quite positive, yet... Second hand retail therapy and swimming do provide great relief and do wonder for my looks... I want to sit this one through, lie low and long for I am not too sure what. Roman is 12 this week, first birthday since the death of his mother. Strange how I do think of her and feel her much more now that she is gone. It might be time for a Brixton night out, mohitos and all. and Wallace Bermann at Camden Arts centre, food for the soul.

Posted Nov 15, 02:06 PM

WEEK 5 6 DOWN BROKEN INTO AND CUT OFF



—Seasonal germs are having the better of me once again, I am battling against a cold/flu roaming my body from throat to chest to aching muscles, to lost voice, cavernous coughing, aching and shivering body. The third illness since September, depriving me of three vital weekend fixes of social and cultural nourishment in London, buried in my Farnham home under countless blankets, still feeling frozen inside and out. I saw half a rainbow from my bedroom window, small glimmer of light and hope breaking the endless grey low frozen sky. To top it all I had to be without a phone for 10 days, having lost it at work. A member of staff pick it up by the coffee machine in the staff area, thinking it was too vulnerable there and decided to hug it for a while. It took me a week to find out what happened to it and another 4 days to finally get it back. It never crossed the mind of the one who found it hand it in straight away... I did find it very hard not to be very rude. I do not like feeling cut off like that while living in Farnham, the world as I know it seems to have disappeared along with all the warmth and loving ties I have within it. Even my lovely Proton has felt the hardship las weekend when I finally managed to drag myself to London lats Sunday, staying over at Catherine off Coldharbour lane. The next morning I found my poor car broken into, the driver's door at a strange angle with a 30 cms gap at the top, the wheel blocked but nothing was missing, it looked like the work of kids fooling around and luckily getting disturbed, unless my dear Proton did manage to resist the agression. I will never know. The pattern seem to be one week ill, one week to recover followed by one week to enjoy full health before I succumb again, my mind following the same pattern of high and lows, perhaps taking longer to recover. I am not sure why my immune system is so inefficient, perhaps a sign that the pirates are getting stronger again.

—I am currently still voiceless and consequently speechless having to cancel the Bouche Bee rehearsal with Petri, we are performing next week for the Jeux de bouches epilogue and hardly had a chance to get ready for it. It will have to be pure improvisation and it will be fuelled by my anger and frustration at the way the event has been handled there by the cultural centre. They did expect me to organise it all from this end, suddenly deciding at the last minute that they would only “host” the event and not take responsibility for making it happen, asking me plainly to orchestrate it all from here. Absolutely absurd! It was very hard to keep my calm. Hadn't Petri and I bought our tickets already I think I would have cancel it all. It is definitely the Epilogue of my involvement with the town. I do find it very hard to believe their attitude after the great success of the project last year and the demand for more. It is sad to see the little effort put in to promote Culture, the little value it is given. It is such a waste of resources. At least I have tried and I have proved that it is possible. Time to move on.

—Woolworth is dead and Mumbai luxury hotel have been under attack, absolutely no link between the two apart that they both happened this week and both are hard to believe. Woolworth the pillar of UK high street bargain shops, always packed because it is hard not to find something you need in there. I do not understand why it wasn't rescued or how it could go down without warning like that. What will happen to all the empty shops? Who will take over? When I watched the attacks on Mumbai, I felt like I was watching one of these play station battle games, the small boat arriving from the sea carrying the commando in black posing as foreign students, casually walking towards their deadly task with their black rucksacks.

Week 7 8 Limousin heights

How free and careless they were with others life, yet how hard it was to recognise them among their victims. Impossible to tell who are the goodies and the baddies., the players and the spectators, the victims and the perpetrators. Like in a game, your task is to shoot until you run out of amunitions, recharge and resume. For maximum score make sure you hit as many as you can, spare no one. How badly prepared were the police and special forces in front of such ruthless virtual tactics applied to reality, what are the rules? When is the game over ? Who wins ?

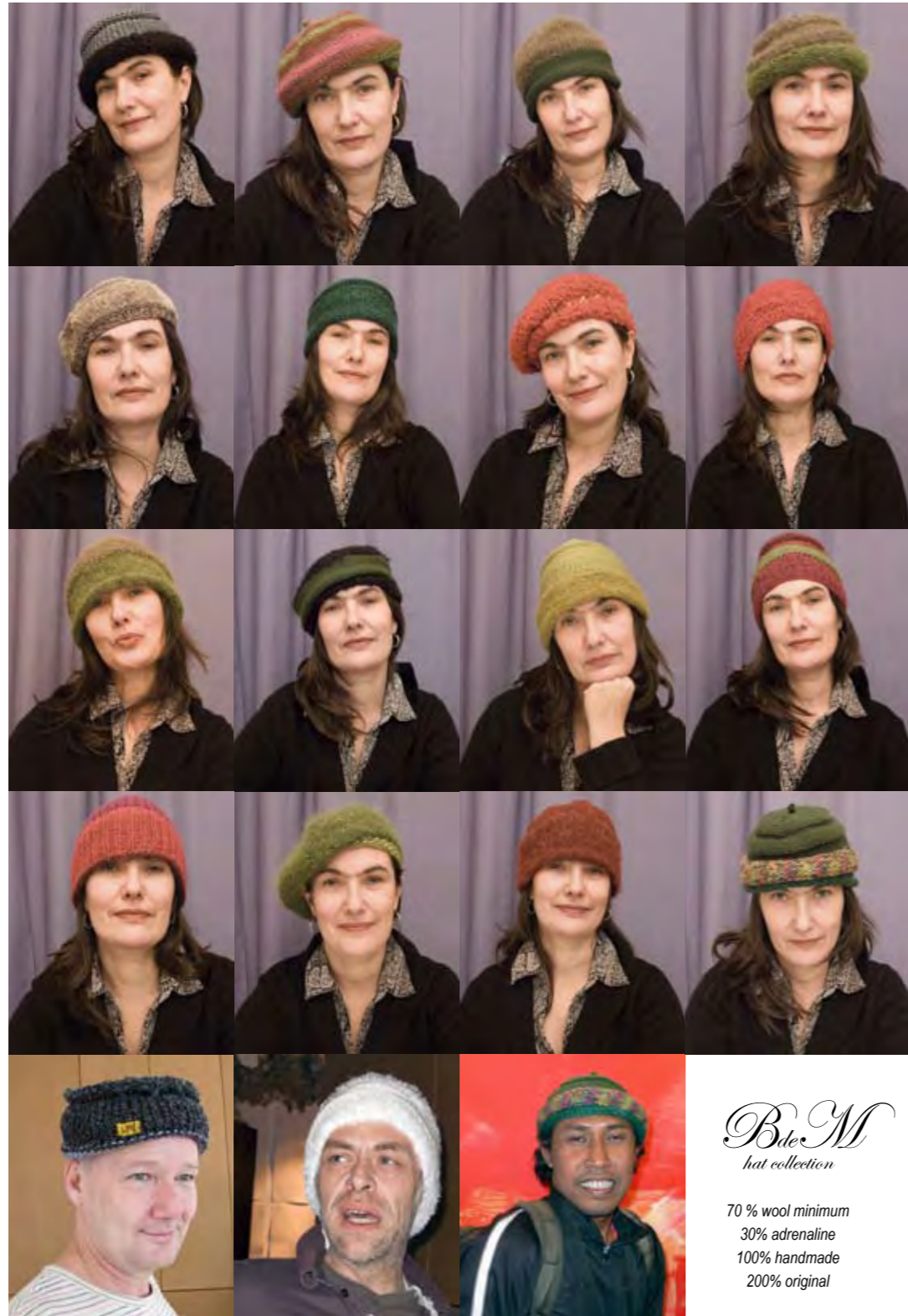
Posted Nov 30, 03:04 PM



—A Monday in bed, substitute Sunday, crispy white and sunny outside, I am recovering from a full on weekend; the Epilogue of the jeux de bouches project on the stage of the Cultural centre of St Yrieix, the project is finally over, now that I have brought back to the town the video commemorating it. It was a touching moment, relieving the highlights of the memorable February weekend of last year when the whole town came alive. Let's say it was a small success, it is not easy to compete with the Telethon, the French equivalent of UK's Children in need media frenzy, as well as the annual Christmas market organised by the French German twin cities committee. Incidentally my mother decided to have a stall and sell my BdeM hand knitted hat collection alongside my friend Danielle's wonderful hand knitted socks and gloves. My mother borrowed 3 wigged heads form her hairdresser and I had designed for the occasion a picture ad for my label, a grid print in which I used my 80 years old mother to model all hats displayed, with the caption 80 % wool, 20 % adrenaline, 1550 % original. She does look wonderful in the photos and the hats all looked well on her, perfect advertising I felt, but my father thought differently, he made me take it off the display, feeling that I had made her look way too old... Nothing could persuade him otherwise. Anyway the hats were popular and with the help of my mother's persuasive selling skills, they sold well.

—The crowd for the Epilogue of Jeux de bouches in the evening was average despite a great article in the highlights section of the regional newspaper, I did expect slightly more. One of the act of the evening, the town choir cancelled half an hour before the start, some had exhausted themselves singing for the Telethon, leaving the others in the lurch, not being able to perform with half of the voices missing. But the rest went very well, the video looked and sounded great projected big, very atmospheric and procession like with the Cornelius Cardew continuous soundtrack, and members of the audience were giggling when they spotted themselves or friends. La luette Agile, a voice improvisation group from Limoges used the occasion to try out a new work "Parapluie et postillons" (umbrellas and spits), then Petri on guitar and sampler and myself with voice and live electronics, finished the evening as Bouche Bée, trying out VILMA the live image manipulation patch Sebastian designed for me: it looked great while it lasted but the laptop froze within 4 mins of us starting, not a good sign... Once more it sounded very different from the last live gig we did and my repertoire has been freed by my use of language now, dipping in and out of it. We were both quite excited by the progression of it all. The audience did respond very well despite the lack of visuals on the big blank screen during most of the performance.





Ble M
hat collection

70 % wool minimum
30% adrenaline
100% handmade
200% original

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—The evening finished with most of the performers and a few from the audience coming back to my place, 17 people to entertain in my not so small flat, black pudding omelette with salad and a plate of local farm cheeses and ice cream for desert, a wonderful cote du Rhone wine to help unwind. A great way to finish and a chance to discuss the value of this form of artistic interaction with the town and ways to pursue it with a local government which expects it to come free. It was very encouraging to get so much positive feedback from artists and locals alike. The next day Petri and I were invited to join the weekly workshops organised by la Lurette Agile, the group of vocal improvisers from Limoges. Petri did put his vocal chords to the test, and later took his guitar out, it was very interesting to compare what we have been doing together for three years in terms of guitar and voice impro with some of the group experiments we did that night. Very inspiring indeed and as a result the group decided to continue working with various musicians; starting with a trombone player they know. I do love how things connect and evolve in such an organic way.

This is what I was to explain to the director of the cultural centre, that bums on seats and popular entertainment were not all that mattered and that there are other ways to measure success, like providing a platform for experimentation, cross fertilisation, dialogue and exchange between different art forms but also between artists and their audience was as important if not more. She is listening but I am not sure I can convinced her. —We had some snow, it doesn't stay, bleak weather. George Brecht is dead, I hope he will rejoin Robert Filliou somewhere. The crisis doesn't feel as bad in France as in England. People do not live on credit here as most people do in the UK. And perhaps the media do not focus on it as much. Not enough air time left once they have finished their daily report on the great but small Sarkozy... He announced today that he wasn't one for stagnation, his excuse for reforming the media as he calls it; making it freer because he is taking away the constraints of advertising, and using the occasion to bluntly take over the power to nominate the heads of the 2 public channels, in the name of change of course, reassuring the journalists that he had absolutely no intention of controlling it but failing to justify his decision.

Posted Dec 11, 04:17 PM



WEEK 9 10 PAELLA VALENCIANA

—Writing these words from the cushy leather sofa of the Novotel bar in Valencia. It is 17 degrees outside, this lunch time Sunil Gupta, Kathy Kubicki, Liz Wells and I were having a paella valenciana while looking at the sea, seamless blue sky and bubbling cava. I am here for the Pasar Pagina conference on the future of photography magazines, here at MUVIM, the museum of Illustration y modernidad. I am here to lead the first bookRoom workshop on the potential of creating an international network of practitioners and academics around independent and experimental forms of publishing, the research project Anna Fox and I have been developing for a while. We invited various interested participants to the conference to present and discuss an artist/book/page of their choice. We were 2 hours late as our plane from Gatwick was delayed, due to fog apparently, and had to go straight from airport to stage dragging our suitcases behind us, quite stressing and chaotic to start with but it went well in the end and it was a valuable experience in relation to future workshops, what works, what doesn't... The works presented were overall very interesting and it gave me the opportunity to formalise and try out the concept behind THE YEAR yearbook; more than just a dead end archive and parking space for a life well spent, an evolving platform sprinkled with a handful of remains turned into seeds from which new projects are emerging, hat collections, beauty of failure series, the two virgins series...



It is also a perfect vehicle to carry and bring together the various strands and interests of my multidisciplinary practice with my everyday life. I do love the way it is gaining momentum and growing. During the conference, translation was an issue for most but especially for me, both presentation and the work itself depending so much on nuances of language, as in most of my work. Despite that I did get some very good feedback and found the whole event inspiring and the potential for projects, collaborations and links in Spain very exciting. As one of the organisers said regarding our understanding and practice of Photography, we were being active in the present and looking into the future while they were still contemplating their photographic past. I am wondering what happened to the legacy of the Movida and the Spanish photographic boom of the 80's. Anyway it looks like the new generation of photographers, theorists and cultural activists now in their 30's and 40's are ready to re-ignite the flame, and I am more than happy to get involved too.

—After spending a few days here, in the gentle weather and relaxed Spanish rhythm, I am wondering why I am punishing myself so much with the much harsher living condition of the UK or even the Limousin. Culture is thriving here; the food is amazing, hospitality overwhelming... My Spanish is rusty and very patchy but enough to manage a few interesting exchanges and making friends. As if my life wasn't fragmented enough as it is.

—Finishing these words from St Yrieix after a quick stop over in Farnham and London. Valencia feels far away but I still feel the buzz and the warmth of the Spanish way. I just had enough time to go to see the wonderful Rothko exhibition with Debby at the Tate Modern on Saturday night. What a treat, what an awakening of the senses, what a wonderful experience, I would even say spiritual at the risk of sounding naff. For once at the Tate modern, a beautifully hang show, a gradual progression of apparent minimalism and diminishing use of colours towards the black series in the last

room, the summum of perfect sublime or sublime balance which is difficult to extract your gaze from. Rewinding through the whole exhibition after that my vision and perception of the works had increased incredibly and I was experiencing the flat surfaces crammed with layers and gestures and marks and nuances almost spilling over the taught canvases. I always succumbed to the contemplative nature of Rothko paintings when they are well hung but it is the first time they come alive in such a way. In Time magazine this month, there are fascinating visual documents of the Obama's frenzy in America and around the world, all edited from Flickr, a fascinating collection of photographs, slogans, drawings, posters... praising the man, the genuine homage of the people towards the president elect and the newly chosen TIME man of the year. It is fascinating to see Flickr used in this way, to build this authentic document of the man's influence. What is as fascinating is to see what follows in the magazine. After pages and pages of hundreds of anonymous images of Obama, there is a one-page article and a full-page official photo of the runner up of TIME man of the year with his wife, Nicolas Sarkozy and Carla Bruny Sarkozy as a perfect official almost royal couple. The contrast was so strong and strange, making the former even more real and the later so constructed that I had to look more closely; I usually try to avoid reading, watching or listening to our president, a difficult task as he is everywhere in the media most days. The article was written by Tony Blair, yes THE British ex prime minister! The article is a boring flattering list of all Nicolas (as he calls him, hinting at their friendship) qualities and wonderful abilities, interestingly or strangely enough I noticed that most of them had been attributed to Tony Blair when he first came to power. And the presidential photo was taken by Annie Leibovitz. What a loaded and incestuous page spread, Tony Blair and Annie Leibovitz drooling over Nicolas Sarkozy and Carla Bruni..... how hilarious

—I am now closing the autumn MOIblog folder with a slight sense of fulfilment, not too sure of what or why, perhaps simply surviving it and managing to close it on time, having caught up with some of my lateness of the beginning. Tomorrow is Christmas eve, family reunion, surprising and silly after the violent fiasco of last year but nobody is able to make a stand and give up this hollow family ritual, the excuse of my parents getting old is wearing thin but still useful. It will soon be over.
Posted Dec 23, 06:46 PM





W I N T E R

WEEK 11 ALL THE (LAST) ONES

—Yes indeed, it is the last day of the calendar year, one more landmark, time mark to be precise, reminding us of time passing, of our progress on the various ladders, roads, paths we have chosen for ourselves, standing still is not an option and whatever self imposed criteria you have chosen the last step seem to be forever receding in the future. The image of a donkey led by a carrot held by its master comfortably sitting on its back is once again quite cliché but appropriate. If only I could sometimes feel like the one sitting or even better like the carrot, forever desired but never reached, the metaphor would appeal to me.

The carrot keeps on changing appearance and often becomes a bunch, but very rarely do I manage to divert my gaze from it or let it go. I also often recognise myself in the one getting a free ride on my back, my master who is still never satisfied with its lot. Perhaps the day my legs can't run anymore, will I stop driving myself so hard? But that day can only come with old age and / or premature death, and one of the reasons I drive my donkey so hard is because I feel I am running out of time. This is called catch 22 I think.

—I am writing these words while cooking a delicious chestnut velouté (soup), my contribution to tonight's celebration at my friends Danielle and Gerard. I was hoping for a quiet non-event between us and Astuce, their dog, but they have invited a few other last minute lost souls. Thinking about markers of time, I do live according to three different annual system, this one the calendar year, but also the academic year which goes from September to September, usually the one that I plan strategically in terms of goals and balance between teaching and projects, funding... Then there is THE YEAR / MOIblog cycle which goes from the end of September (usually coinciding with Autumn) for 52 weeks. This one I do use to sort out, archive and classify the various carrots I have managed to reach. So I am now 1/3 of the way through the academic year, about to start 2009 and this is the first chronicle of the winter chapter of my life as a willing donkey. Danielle and Gerard do have two lovely real donkeys, absolutely incredible animals, beautiful eyes (looking almost made-up with elegant black liner), soft manes and clever too, they can open the various doors separating the field where they spend most of their time from the barn where they sleep, regardless of what kind of knots Gerard uses in order to stop them to do so. They do also recognise and are shy, almost suspicious of strangers, even if you do bring carrots or other treats to bribe them, more discerning than me I am afraid.... I wonder where the myth of the dumb donkey comes from.

—As for New Year resolution, I will stick to the subject of carrots. The perfect diet for smooth skin and losing the all over padding I have somehow acquired: while also trying to limit the number of them I will force myself to follow. I will start the year in Paris, catching up with friends and a few exhibitions; I am looking forward to the Werner Herzog retrospective at the Pompidou centre. I do think a lot of what is currently happening in the Gaza strip, what a hell it must be, with absolutely no escape, and once more witnessing the same passive reactions from around the world, the same words from the same mouths, always ready to help with promises of peace negotiations but never managing to carry it through or at least prevent the next round of aggression. Words are as useless as carrots. This is again perhaps why donkeys do not speak.

—“ The ideal subject of the society of extras is reduced to the condition of consumer of time and space. For anything that cannot be marketed will inevitably vanish “. These are the last clever words I read , from Nicolas Bourriaud in his book of essays Relational aesthetics. The frenzy of presents and logos smothering the Christmas tree and fuelling the narcissistic seasonal conversations are a perfect and timely illustration.
Posted Jan 1, 05:02 PM



WEEK 12 GOOD START

—week 12 of my own private calendar year and week 2 of 2009. Donkeys are still not speaking, Israel has been destroying the Gaza strip by air and by land for the past two weeks, there are hundreds of deaths and more than a few allegedly misplaced missiles and rockets destroying civilians homes, a school and a UN building, all of course currently being carefully investigated by the Israeli government; as if it could change anything or justify their intervention; the international community is as useless and powerless as ever, their brand new resolution not being worse the paper it is written on as everybody knows full well it will never be enforced. On the contrary, Israel shamelessly announced that they are not done yet and about to start the third phase of their destruction of Hamas, not specifying how many phases there are. Meanwhile in France, a week after Christmas, Rachida Dati the young and beautiful French (north African) Justice minister has become our contemporary virgin Mary and gave birth to Zora, father unknown though the President's (God and Napoleon all in one) brother is suspected alongside a few other political apostles she has dated last year. The three wise men are late and might never make it to Paris, having been refused entry to the French empire by the over zealous Immigration minister who is about to be promoted to a higher ministry post, thanks to his tough handling of immigration: unrealistic quotas of extraditions have been easily reached, perhaps even exceeded, never mind the countless families being divided for good and the numerous kids being taken from school to be instantly deported.

—Despite all that I had a fantastic and laid back start of the year, spending a few days in Paris, strolling in the icy air, seeking warmth in cinemas and cafés, indulging in watching two films one after the other; there is something magical in watching a movie in Paris, not sure what it is but I have always found it very special, spending morning in bed reading and watching the snow falling outside, catching up with friends and chatting for hours on end,

even reconnecting with a close high school friend, after 25 years, we were unruly punks yet the best pupils at school, in maths and science, a bit of a contradiction which allowed us to get away with a lot of misbehaving and eccentric dressing up. It was a bit like a Hollywood movie, we were kids and now we are mature women, when at the end two protagonists are seen years later, make up and acting helping the audience to suspend belief. The wrinkles and few extra pounds were real. apart from that we both felt we had grown into what we were meant to become and the various ups and downs of our respective life had not managed to turn us into serious mature boring adults, we were not that different from back then. It is probably easier for me having taken a creative path and as such chose to remain a perpetual outsider observer of life. She stayed in France, studied hard and is now a highflying manager within the statistics department of an international insurance company. I am not sure I would have been able to survive in such an environment or retain my individuality and eccentricities. She seems to have managed somehow.

—I am now back in Farnham, the cold is almost unbearable but as beautiful as in Paris, frosted trees and hedges everywhere. The recession is much more severe here in England than in France where people are worried and unemployment is rising but consumerism is holding up. Since I am back, I am amazed to see how much prices are slashed, even in Sainsbury's, and the sales have just started but it has already reached 70 % of reduction. Such a strange sight to see Woolworth dark and empty and every morning on the radio, I am dreading to hear the list of bankruptcies and latest victims of the crisis. As much as I am happy to see capitalism in poor health, at least for a while, it angers me to see that few of the ones responsible are suffering from the situation, let alone made accountable for it. The wonderful wool shop in Farnham is actually doing very well, proving perhaps that people are turning to simpler yet richer pastimes. All is not lost.

Posted Jan 11, 09:53 PM



WEEK 13 14 OBAMA AND GAZA

—End of semester assessment are in full flow, a factory line of 2nd and 3rd year students works, only so much my brain can take in, the past two weeks have been a crazy marathon against time and sheer number of works to grasp, analyse and assess objectively without counting the endless feedback forms to fill in with clever critical and helpful comments. It is almost over and I feel as drunk, having gone through 90 students in six days in a climate of budget cuts, downsizing, (eighty staff members have to go across 4 campuses), stressed and overworked colleagues and oversensitive students. Not a good atmosphere to be in. Trish has six weeks to go before she pops, I really felt for her and her bump in this frenzy, oh what a woman!

—Because of all this I missed completely all the excitement around Obama's official start as the first black American president. I have to write it to believe it, what a contrast, from redneck petrol mafioso ignorant bastard Bush to spanking new able and black Obama. Seeing on the news the crowd of two millions welcoming him was overwhelming and scary at the same time. So much hope and expectation put upon the shoulders of one man. Someone remarked that the same that voted for Bush again four years ago were probably all there. And finally a speech which didn't reduce it all to (good) us and (bad) them and didn't refer to them as terrorists.



—Meanwhile Israel denies the atrocities committed by its soldiers in the Gaza strip, accusing Hamas of having brainwashed the kids and trained them to tell lies about the deaths of their brothers, sisters, parents, cousins.... they had to witness. I couldn't believe the argument of this government official who with his best BBC accent (they usually have American accent) used as an argument the fact that all the stories were consistently identical, proof that they were probably made up. I do admire the acting skills of all these kids, the depth and intensity of their eyes staring into the TV camera were very convincing. And of course the same generic phrase, "we will investigate". The international community is as responsible as Israel for these war crimes, condoning them with their passivity.

—The weather hasn't been that cold for years and this house is even colder than my previous one. I have to spend my evening home, curled up in the living room by the fire, my room is so big that it is impossible to spend time in there, unless well tucked in bed. I can't believe how badly insulated British houses are. I am off to France tomorrow, looking forward to leave UCA behind for a bit and get back to my own projects and the two performances of Bouche Bée planned for March and April, in Farnham and New York. I do get worried when teaching commitment do overtake the rest of my life, creative or otherwise, mind you not much otherwise to speak about... oh yes a lovely walk in the woods the other day and getting back to regular exercise, swimming, stretching and a bit of circuit training. Not much to write home about.

Posted Jan 23, 06:28 PM

WEEK 15 16 STORM IS THE NORM

—A difficult and bumpy landing here ten days ago on the edges of the huge wind and rain storm that paralysed and destroyed a good bit of South West France, as strong as the big one in December 1999 but not as wide spread. Such a sorry sight to see hectares and hectares of flattened pine trees on television, as of course this became headlining materials for a good week afterwards, way in front of the situation in the Gaza strip which suddenly almost disappeared from the news as it had never happened. It brought to my mind Baudrillard catchy title 15 years ago for his essay on the influence of the media in the making of history, the Iraq war never happened. It rang so true then, as true as it was hard to accept, it does ring true now but we hardly notice anymore. The French government was very quick to label the effect of the storm a natural catastrophe with all it entails in terms of financial and practical help. I can't help comparing the scale and amount of destruction to the one in Gaza, though one is caused by nature, the other by human nature. News bulletin on radio were full of people moaning about the inconvenience and the loss of a car, a roof, a garage, a wall, income, electricity and water for up to a week or the army coming to help clear the roads but failing to bring any relevant tools like chain saws. Nobody ever made a parallel with the Palestinians. I wonder who is there giving them a hand, let alone a listening ear.

—Then when chaos brought by Nature got into control, a national general strike took place, well organised by all the unions who for once rallied together, supported by the media and most of the population, it was so well organised and advertised and broadcasted that it almost appeared to be a governmental bank holiday. Of course Sarkozy had to open his mouth for the occasion and condone almost praise the people right to protest and make their views known, that in the sweetest and most understanding and patronising tone of voice, adding at the end that it wouldn't change anything to the wave of tough changes he is bringing in.

He compared himself to the captain of a ship in the middle of a storm who knows best how to keep it safe; a fitting metaphor revealing his lack of concern for crew and passengers, ruling for the benefit of a few at the expense of the majority.

—I have been here for ten days and I hardly have had a chance to stop and stand still. Not even time for a walk in the stark winter countryside, bare fields carefully ploughed, bare trees, bare new born lambs hugging their mother or tugging at their nipples, stacked dried wood waiting to be collected, piles of cow dung waiting to be sprayed onto the bare earth. In between various family rituals of birthdays – the custom made balaclava I knitted for my nephew turning 11 was a total success, very post-modern – Sunday lunches, pancake day and numerous meals at my parents, there is little time for the rest, preparing various lectures to give on my return, getting to know Gherasim Luca's work, the next exhibition at the centre of artists books, organising a few events around the exhibition. I do love and relate to his use of language, altogether quite morbid yet buzzing with life and sensuality and emotion with a few razor sharp poetic and phonetic associations. Imagine Henri Michaux stuttering on LSD being transcribed by Gertrud Stein, herself corrected by Henri Chopin; a very potent grasp of words which are allowed to expand or contract until they burst and collide with numerous other fragments and words to form yet new unforeseen meaning and connotations.



WEEK 17 18 SPACE CRASH AND VALENTINE

He is endlessly crushing and crashing words and expanding on the bits that remain. I never realised before how close a crush and a crash were. A crush is a crashing in, an inner crash. A crash is a crushing out, an out of body crush. I am now on my way back to England via Paris, that it if I can get there. While I was enjoying a sunny spring weather this past few days, Paris and London and Farnham are struggling under 15 cms of snow, airports closed, UCA has been closed for 2 days, for the first time in the 9 years I have worked there. and will remain close for another 2. Absolutely amazing how England is so unprepared everytime Nature decides to be a bit temperamental. The roads are cleared, just a bit of ice in the morning, the snow is now patchy but no, the car park and a few paths are unusable so the whole campus is closed, how absurd, but I am not complaining, it is giving me an extra day and a bit to get back into things here.

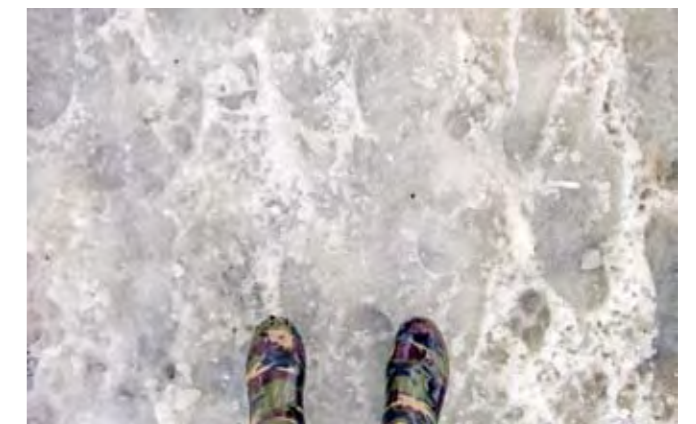
Posted Feb 4, 11:50 PM



—Time goes faster and faster and satellites are starting to crash into each other in space, the first crash of this kind took place last week, what is the chance of that happening, absolutely mind blowing, can we call it fate ? Perhaps the two submarines that collided underwater this week are an echo or a ripple of that, a sort of inverted mirror image?

_Last week was my worst ever in terms of stress in the working place, trying to cram in two weeks into one to catch up for the freak closure of the university due to snow. We were already stretched to breaking point; the image that comes to mind when reminiscing is that of me being stuck standing on a pier in Folkestone or Hastings during a big storm, being repeatedly bashed by one wave after another, the first one feels quite fun and refreshing, the second an interesting challenge but for the following ones you have no choice but to bear them with a smile if possible and wait for calm that usually prevails after chaos. On top of everything management is about to announce the complete restructuring of the university across 5 campus which involves making 80 staff redundant, creating a climate of uncertainty and frustration. I think I am safe and the Photography department too, but all kind of over the top rumours are going on. It will all be revealed very soon and redundancies complete by Easter. Students are badly affected by the general atmosphere. I do feel sorry for them, and responsible but there is not much more I can do to protect them. Today we were all informed of the amount next year intake of students will have to pay, a maximum of £3400 per year, just for the fee... I find it hard to believe considering what they have to put up with, less contact hours, bigger groups, less pastoral care, stretched resources and facilities. When will they or their parents start complaining I wonder?

—The snow stayed for almost a week, even today there is a few blobs left here and there where people shovelled it out of the way. The woods behind my house were amazing in white, I truly felt I was in the Pyrenees and not in Surrey. One of these moments when I really appreciate living here. Despite the great luminosity and a few walks, I find it hard to concentrate on my own projects, feeling stressed and tired. I have only had 2 days in the past 10 during which I could fully concentrate on the progress of Bouche Bee and my vocal repertoire, starting to bring back verbal content, using lists of words and literal and detailed descriptions of what bouche bee is about and what it does as part of my material to improvise with. I am trying to ignore the slight anxieties I have about the whole work. When showing Petri the video recording of our last performance in France, which was fairly successful and worked well in terms of quality of the impro, I suddenly wondered whether I would enjoy watching/experiencing the work if I was in the audience, I was very tempted to say no. Doubts are creeping in. I blame stress and lack of time to concentrate on it and experiment in order to move the work further but doubts remains. I am trying hard to ignore them. We shall see.



WEEK 19 20 NINE NINE NINE NINETEEN

—The best remedy against stress and doubts is a good night out, the DEX hotel in Brixton and Sacha monthly cabaret/club night Stranger than paradise with a Valentine special on Saturday night provided the perfect excuse to leave it all behind. It was scary to realise how out of practice I am, what to wear... The night was great, a true brixtonian experience, people of all ages and all styles out for a good time, quite a few dressed up, we danced away until the early hours of the morning, a few good cabaret/performance acts, one fun band Marmeduke Dando and an awful French band based in Sheffield, the Lovers – that should have been a warning, people in France would laugh at them –, great musicians, very good melody but the two front people, a couple in real life obviously very much in love had no depth, character, humour or stage presence, she was incredibly sexy and flirtatious and living it up, wearing a red corset with red mini skirt and high heel, but what a poor caricature of French sexy 60's popstar she made, it was awful as they actually were serious and seemed to believe in what they were doing. Fortunately they played late in the night and quality wasn't what was required by then, good rhythms were enough. A few guys were in the front with their camcorders, zooming in on her tits and red lips, recording a few sexy bits for later use I am sure.

—It did the trick, I came back to Farnham all refreshed and relaxed after my London fix, certain doubts remain but inspiration is flowing again, let see what it brings.

Posted Feb 17, 12:20 AM



—Late but in tune. almost feeling 19 again. Spring is in the air; nature is slowly waking up in and around me, buds are starting to appear everywhere. I used to look 19 and feel twice as much. Now I feel 19 and look almost the age when you wished it didn't matter anymore but can't help checking the mirror regularly. It has become a reliable barometer of my moods, when feeling good I do not care, when I feel low stressed or tired, I stare with disbelief and sometimes horror, at the markers of time and the effect of gravity on my face and body. I do try to be objective and compare myself to less fortunate but it is increasingly hard to ignore the better off...

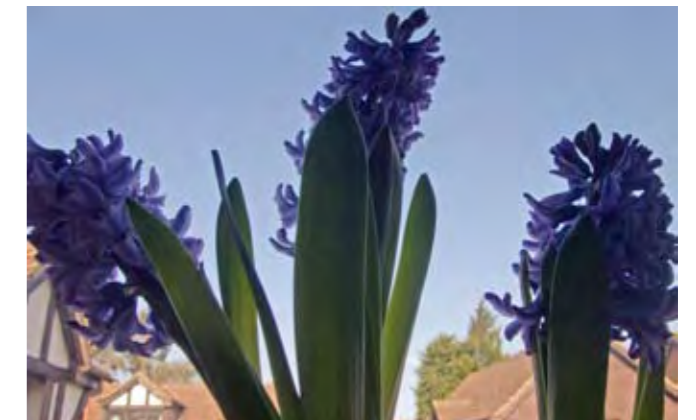
—Right now I do not care, creative juices are flowing, unrestricted, writing is fertile, thinking is sharp, a few disparate and forgotten avenues are resurfacing and merging in interesting ways. The feeling that things are coming together of their own accord, proof somehow that I am on the right track for now. Bouche Bée is progressing towards a more holistic approach where visual and sonic aspects of the work are starting to interact, so that what is spoken/uttered is simultaneously transcribed visually to become in turn possible material to use vocally. Valter, my virtual offspring and trusted software for live sonic manipulation now has a partner, VILMA, its visual counterpart, thanks to Sebastian talent and expertise in interactive technology.

Our collaboration is evolving in interesting way, I am learning to trust and rely on our very different ways of thinking, working, and speaking about what it is we are trying to do. The various layers and dimensions of my performance lecture 'Body talk/Body thought' are slowly starting to make sense, it is like trying to bring together the pieces of a puzzle without knowing in advance what the final image is with the hope it will appear once the jigsaw is complete, though I never really know whether I will reach the sky or a dead end. The program of Once upon Time, the international performance study day I am organising here in Farnham on the 25th of March, is finally complete.

—My urge to get fit and lose weight is starting to pay off, the scale is beginning to move, and muscle shapes are starting to resurface beneath the fat skin. Beside I am enjoying the exercise, my energy levels are certainly better and I do not get as stressed as I usually do. I am writing these words, sitting in bed, the sun is shining outside and the three over ripe hyacinths on my window seal are still releasing their pungent smell. I love their heavy perfume, going straight to my head, deliciously pungent, almost sickening at times, making me feel almost drunk.

—I rarely speak of matters of the heart because I rarely engage in matters of the heart, I usually prefer keeping a certain distance between my heart and other ones and frankly I am very rarely tempted. Perhaps sad but true. Well I have recently tried otherwise and reached a premature dead-end. It seems that my natural spontaneity had the opposite of the required effect. It is disappointing and slightly hurtful but I have enjoyed reconnecting with all kind of forgotten feelings and it has giving me a renewed taste for matter of the heart (and flesh). Spring is here after all. I finally managed to find copies of the fantastic "the four horsemen of the apocalypse", both the original movie from 1921 with Rudolph Valentino and the restored, tinted channel 4 version via a great website selling rare movies and documentaries for less than 5 pounds. www.rare DVDs4sale.co.uk

Posted 26th February



WEEK 21 22 GENERAL STRIKE

—In a couple of days Spring will be here, it is 20 degrees outside here in the Limousin, a brutal change of temperature propelling us out of winter. I feel like a mole in the open air, with squinting eyes and frequent flushes, I am not quite ready for summer heat and sharp sun light. I have left behind all the stresses and frustrations caused by an impossible working situation in Farnham. We have a course without a head, on long-term sick leave due to stress; the second member of staff to succumb to this modern day disease since Christmas. What are left of the team are trying to cope and keep the boat afloat as well as the students 'satisfied', an impossible task due to simple logistics, a case of too many Indians and not enough chiefs. I was quite close to cracking up myself just before leaving for Paris, and I was just trying to resolve urgent things during my absence. Uncertainty still prevails for next week and onward; we simply can't deliver as things stand. What are we supposed to do? Checking work emails everyday is like receiving a shot of adrenaline with each posting bringing yet one more problem. We are not the only institution struggling according to the Guardian last Saturday; we are actually one of the least affected by redundancies and budget cuts. I am extremely worried about the future of the course and seriously thinking of making further life changes, it might be time to get out of teaching. It is quite frustrating in relation to the various on going research projects I have been actively involved with within the institution for the past few years; the bookRoom, performance workshops as teaching and learning tools, international workshops, study days... Just as the seeds are starting to produce interesting offshoots, we might have to give it all up.

—It is only since I am here that I am realising and comprehending fully the madness of the situation in Farnham as well as the magnitude of the recession in England compared to here. In France the collapse of the economy is hardly more than a potential threat, there is a slow down but the threat of a fuller crisis is used as an excuse to tighten up budgets, downsize businesses and make redundancies often despite huge annual benefits being announced, like TOTAL the oil giant did earlier this week, with the full approval of the prime minister. Our dear president is also refusing to get rid of the 50% tax shield for the super wealthy he brought in when he first came to power, it would break his election campaign promises and probably lose him many of his close friends who regularly invite him to board their private yacht or jet en route for their exclusive exotic paradise.... The valid argument that in two years things have changed, and that these are extraordinary times requiring extraordinary measures does apply to everybody else but not to the super rich. What I find quite interesting is that most of the one protected by the tax shield are probably the ones who brought the whole financial system down in the first place, with their ruthless capitalism and dodgy deals; bank managers, investors, speculators, property developers...How much more immoral does it have to get before we, the people, say NO, NO MORE, TIME TO STOP.



—There is another general strike tomorrow, the second one in 2 months. I truly hope it is massive and the whole country is at a standstill. I see our consumer society as a trapped beast, ready to collapse out of frustration and exhaustion and frankly I can't wait. It is finally time for Once upon Time in Farnham next week; it is all under control somehow, ready to go. It sounds slightly trivial in the wider scheme of things. Or perhaps not, maybe we can make it a meaningful and inspiring event, how a bunch of mature and talented artists manage to make sense or contribute to this overrated world of ours. It is small gestures that count, more than big hollow words uttered by big hollow mouths. Friday is French national poetry day 'le printemps des poètes', I am taking part with the centre des livres d'artistes, organising readings and a projection of Gherasim Luca reading his own words as part of the local celebration, trying once more to bring together amateur and professionals around a common interest. The theme this year is Rimes et Rires, rimes and laughter. I might read something myself, time to lighten up what are some of my most stressful times, almost on a level of my lost battle against my now beloved pirates.

— All this moaning made me forgot two memorable moments, Paul 50th birthday party on a barge on the thames, across the river from Big Ben, the tide was out and the barge on a serious slope for most of the evening when suddenly the tide came in quite fast and the floor straightened under our eyes. The next day I stayed with Fabienne in Paris, a long lost friend, catching up in our forties, after a 25 year break was a heart warming experience, despite having followed different paths, some of the old affinities were still there and it didn't feel much different from spending time together in our late teens.
Posted 15th March





WEEK 23 24
OUT AND OVER AND BACK



An international study day and an evening of live interventions investigating the interplay between performance art and other mediums. This event brings together international artists, academics and UCA students each using performative tactics within their practice.

25th March at the Maltings, Farnham

Entry £3 (free for students), Tickets available on the door or in advance from The Maltings in Farnham
Box office Tel: 01252 726234 or online: www.farnhammaltings.com

Daytime 10am to 5pm
Artists talks by: Joachim Eckl (Austria), Sebastian Lexer (Germany/UK), Natasha Caruana (UK), Amanda Couch (London), Peter Finnemore (Wales), Rasha Ragab (Egypt), and UCA Students; Anna Lindestam, Chris Linaker, Gemma Bringloe, Steven Kenny and Andrew Ferguson.

Evening 8pm to 1am
Live Art by:

| | | |
|---|--------------------|--|
| Rasha Ragab | - | Harim...Harim! |
| <i>(Living tableau of famous orientalist paintings reconstructed)</i> | | |
| Emmanuelle Weckerlé | } | Bouche Bée |
| Petri Huurimainen | | |
| Sebastian Lexer | | |
| <i>(Improvisation on the edges of language – voice, guitar, live electronics, video)</i> | | |
| Joachim Eckl | - | Re-Membering Reality/Listening to Spirit |
| <i>(Performance / social experiment with 12 stones and 12 potatoes)</i> | | |
| Marcus Kaiser | - | Forgetting Elvis / Blue Elvis |
| <i>(Hybridic deconstruction of an Elvis classic - video and cells)</i> | | |
| Amanda Couch | - | Dust Passing |
| <i>(Performative photography merging landscapes of the body and dust with light and grain)</i> | | |
| (At Midnight) | Christoph Nicolaus | - Garonne-für sich |
| <i>(Meditation on 'Time', layering various manifestations of its passing using video and cells)</i> | | |

This is a BookRoom event organised by Emmanuelle Weckerlé, with generous support from the Fine Art and Film departments at UCA Farnham.

—Spring is here in Farnham, no general strike but a big demonstration in London, pre G20 meeting. Green shoots bursting everywhere, sunny days, april showers, hale storms, seeds planted in the pantry, sunflowers, red peppers, rocket, spring onions, capucines, tomatoes.... We mowed the lawn for the first time this year. One day of gardening has left my body in near agony, back pains, soar knees and muscles, knettle bites all over my ladies hands but my brain has been cleansed of all the stresses of the past two weeks. Chaos prevails in university, most of promised sessional hours and admin support to replace the ones who have collapsed from stress at work have yet to materialise. The pressure is immense. I am squeezed in between the demands of students and the lack of understanding and support of the ones above who are forcing me/us to manage the work load as we are. Then last week finding myself completely alone to manage, host, produce and perform for the Once upon Time event at the Maltings, as well as look after the wonderful bunch of artists who arrived on Tuesday from all part of Europe and Egypt also. I did think at one point on the Wednesday morning, while getting ready for the big and long day and feeling ready to crack up, that I wasn't going to be able to make it. I forced myself to deal with the next step at the end of my nose only until it was all over, if only to avoid the waves of panic at the thought of the mountain ahead. It worked, I lasted and lived up to the task until 2am. The event was a success, a marathon of talks, videos and performances of all kind, a great diversity of work managing to connect with each other in the most interesting way I felt. It was wonderful to witness Rasha Ragab, from Cairo, reclaiming orientalist paintings in her performances, the first time she performed such work in the West, the displacement worked very well. The stupid irony is that I could not pay her an artist fee or any expenses as she hasn't got the right to work in the UK according to immigration laws Audience and participants seem to have enjoyed it all, there was a definite buzz of something happening; the next day too, the echoes of the one that attended were very interesting and kept the energy up for a while longer.

I did feel exhausted and frustrated at the lack of support once more from the institution, all those who promised to get involved in one way or another and didn't, or all those who could at least have been present and didn't bother. The exhaustion exacerbated the effects of the usual come down. A few days down the line, after a great walk in Thurley nature reserve with Marcus, a visit to the Roni Horn exhibition at the Tate modern, would someone tell me what is the strategy behind her wonderful drawings, neither Marcus or his friend Jessica could decipher it. A day of gardening later I am all philosophical and have drawn the lessons from the whole experience as well as found a way of developing further the visual and spoken aspect of the Bouche bée performance. Sebastian interactive patches work wonderfully, the visuals produced have a lovely organic texture but more consideration needs to be given to the way it is introduced. My suitcase is packed; tomorrow Sebastian and I are off to New York to perform a duet (virtually), an improvised dialogue between the real voice and its avatar, VINST voice and my own. We will have 3 days to decide exactly how differently we are going to do it, from last year in February in France. A chance to catch up with dear Thomas and witness Lisa's big bump.

—Meanwhile the wonderful Margaret Mellis has died at 95, I wish I could afford one of her collage piece, it was strange and touching to hear Telfer Stokes been questioned about his mother and his upbringing on radio 3. Obama is arriving in London for the G20 pointless get together.

Posted 1st April





S P R I N G

WEEK 25 26 BIG APPLE AND EASTER EGG

—19 minutes of fame exactly at CUNY centre, just across the road from the empire state building, for NYCEMF - New York City Electro Acoustic Music Festival - four days packed of live and not so live pieces by a range of composers and sonic artists from around the world, most of them academics often producing very academic work, very few exciting pieces to my ears, a few clever ones, only four or five that really stood out, Peter Stollery variations around live recordings made of the Paris traffic was truly wonderful, making best use of the sophisticated

12 channels surround sound systems to produce sound and textures that felt truly three dimensional. I felt the concert we were part of had some great pieces too, Mark Zanter's, a recorded piece which manage to provide tension, texture as well as wonderful harmonics and overtones, Konstantinos Karatanasis piece which had such energy and depth, almost Wagnerian I felt, though I am sure he would squeal if he heard me.

A great woman trombone player and composer on the last night Monique Buzzante, such strength, energy and strong presence on stage and a certain irreverence which felt very refreshing among quite a lot of pompous work. We met two interesting people Mark Zanter from Huntingdon, with whom I shared a memorable Japanese meal with delicious sculptural dishes with poetic names and a few good conversations. Momilani Ramstrum from San Diego that I met a few years ago at SAN expo in Scarborough where I was showing VINST for the first time, she recognised me, she now works with the voice and Max Msp, using a pair of glove with sensors to control the various effects she applies to her voice, we were scheduled one after the other and both felt slightly unhinged and weary of the other vocal and technical ability. We got on and started half jokingly to plan a world tour of experimental vocal work. Something to keep in mind, My piece a duet (virtually), an improvised dialogue between the real voice (mine) and its avatar (VINST played by Sebastian) went very well and received a fair amount of praise and interest. Sebastian was very happy with the quality of the sonic improvisation. I felt it was slightly too 'busy' and had to battle often against my virtual voice, but the work is effective as a dialogue managing to confuse us at times finding it hard to know who was doing what. The fact that my voice was influencing the visual aspect of VINST really worked well in bridging the gap between the virtual and the real. I am now ready to tour the work to a few places, but we will have to train someone on VINST, as Sebastian will not be available, very busy with his own work; PhD, a new cd coming out, a few concerts and new projects of interactive technology to get involved with. We sometimes laugh at the fact that we are still tied to VINST, seven years and a few travels down the road, the project is still evolving. It is both a blessing and a curse, though more for Sebastian it seems, neither of us would have ever thought this would happen.

—Five intensive days in New York in full spring, a few showers, big wind, a huge thunder storm and two beautiful sunny days. Sebastian convinced me to go up the Empire State building, a first for me, I could never be bothered before with the crowd and the touristic trap. It was worth it as much for the architecture and wonderful 20's art deco interiors as for being a voyeur to the various rituals most felt compelled to indulge once at the top: the compulsory photo souvenir with cheesy smiles and unnatural poses and the unbearable generosity and understanding shown by all when faced by a seemingly lone tourist - myself - trying to fit herself within the viewfinder of her camera. I then realised that tourists always travel in packs or pairs but rarely by themselves. It was very difficult for me to explain my refusal of such help and my preference for the awkward poses my self-portraits forced me to take. A project for a small book was born. The view from up there was ok too. I had time to indulge in a Kenneth Anger retrospective at PS1, an orgy of kitch and drug induced psychedelic rituals, very 70's and surprisingly effective in its relentless non narcissistic self indulgence if that makes sense. While we were in New York the G20 summit was in London, it was very strange to watch every morning at Breakfast the CNN coverage of the protests and the over-reaction of the British police trapping most protesters for hours within a small square made of four walls of solid policemen, of course it was not reported as such but as the successful handling of unruly protesters.



Then seeing Obama who has travelled with an entourage of 500 (what is the cost of that) literally preaching to an excited French crowd in a Strasbourg stadium, this was a peculiar sight, I was imagining the envious reaction of Sarkozy whose popularity is dwindling and who orders the crowds to be silent when he is out, to avoid the boohooing and heckling, how democratic is this... What a farce, the G20 agreeing to disagree on most measures required to tackle the crisis, Americans and British siding against the French and the Germans while the young glamorous wives, Michelle and Carla compare labels and exchange presents, for Carla a classic Fender guitar in honour of her musical talent...

—I just had time to catch up with dear Thomas, a fast exchange on the pros and cons of Marcel Broodthaers work that he has been trying to like and understand for a while, he is not convinced yet, and the stresses of soon to be fatherhood in the big apple, probably not the most baby friendly city in the world with its fast pace and ambition driven mentality.

I was hoping to see the little one but she is in no hurry it seems, Lisa's body has given up under the pressure, her back and hips not able to bear the weight, the pain is exhausting her and she cannot move. They are both worried that the hospital will impose a caesarean. I really felt for them and wished I could have stayed longer to help and offer my support. But it was time to fly back for a last week of teaching before the Easter break.



—A family Easter with a great big feast in the Dordogne on Easter Sunday, foie gras and venison with cranberry, ceps and truffles macerated in cognac sauce, absolutely mind blowing, all senses unravelling in my mouth in layer after layer of divine tastes. I am here for two weeks, time to recover from it all, jetlag, OUT project in Farnham, the mad pressure at university since January... It has been an absolutely crazy two months, I think things will be quieter for a while, time to stop and think and read and write and look at documentation of recent work performed and practice with Valter and Vilma, my visual and sonic interactive other so that I develop further and integrate my visual and vocal repertoire. And plan the summer months. And catch up with loved ones and and and find a way of pruning my life a little. Less commitments, responsibilities, travelling, spreading myself thin.

Posted 15th april



WEEK 27 28 ON THE OTHER HAND

—A bit more than two weeks in the Limousin with a daily routine of work at the centre of artists books, preparing the summer exhibition and the reading of Gherasim Luca by Michael Lonsdale next month, translating in French the content of the guerrilla girls posters (as potent and irreverent today or in French), and a text on concrete poetry written in the 70's by an obscure priest from Jersey, expert on the matter, lunch at my parents, a couple of hours work on my own stuff at home in the evening, finishing with watching a DVD in bed, Stromboli and the four horsemen of the apocalypse, or reading from Antonin Artaud collected works, not the best time to do so late in the evening I found. Very little social or cultural interruption disturbs my days and evening, after all the excitement, stresses and movement of the past two months, it is making feel slightly bored and lethargic, missing the buzz of it all. Just when I feel adjusted and refreshed by the slow monotonous pace of a small place, it is time to fly back to the UK for the last stretch of the academic year in Farnham and soothing the stresses of graduating students while making sure they achieve the best possible outcome for their final project in the best possible atmosphere in these impossible times.



—Spring is in full swing, Nature around me bursting with life and the various grey shades of winter are quickly being invaded by growing splashes of green, fresh young and flashy green and sometimes vibrant white pink and yellow flowers. All this on a canvas of stormy April shower skies, it is glorious to watch and observe the changes everyday, mind and body find it harder to wake up from cosy winter mode, perhaps why my mood feels slightly low. Also the small town mentality here is starting to get to me, gossips, misunderstandings, insecurities turned into misplaced pride, everybody trying to step on their neighbour toes in order to appear grander. It all looks so silly and futile from where I stand yet It is hard not to get caught up in it all and I am sure that if I lived here full time it would make my life hell. I haven't had much time yet to spend in my studio here, this was after all the reason for the whole double life setup. But I am making sure this changes as soon as university breaks up and for the rest of the summer. Perhaps then it will bring into distant perspective the small inconveniences of small town mentality

—Last weekend I had one of these rare experiences in a lifetime, when reality largely exceeds fantasy. Since I was a child and being given this book called Crin Blanc (white mane) – the story in words and black and white photographs from the film of the same title made by Albert Lamorisse in 1954 who also directed another great film the red balloon, of a wild white horse from the Camargue region, a small area of swamps by the seaside south of Arles. “ Crin Blanc is a magnificent stallion who leads a free herd of horses and is too proud to be broken in by men. Preserving his wild nature, he only allows himself to be tamed by Falco, a young fisherman. Together they set off in pursuit of a freedom men will not allow them”. At the time I fell in love with the horse, with the boy and the amazing landscape.

I was living in Morocco at the time, not knowing much about France and this is the image of France I really believed to be true, imagine my disappointment when we came back to live in deep France as the Limousin area is called, green green and very green, far from the sea, no wild horses but limousine cows, no handsome young fishermen but an ageing population of old fashioned farmers, mostly old and grumpy single bachelors with bowed legs, looking at my thirteen years old bare feet and tanned self with lustful eyes. Within a year, our only neighbors, a mile away, a couple of farmers and their two sons in their mid twenties that I used to visit often, helping the wife tend their vegetable garden, and often staying for lunch with them, I was fascinated by their way of life and their strong accent and rough yet gentle manners, all so new to me, well within a year, I was barely fourteen, they showered us with vegetables from their garden for a few months before asking my parents for my hand for their elder son, Gilbert, they wouldn't take no for an answer, agreeing that my youth and the age difference was a slight problem but not that important as he was prepared to wait for me. It took a good 2 to 3 years before they gave up the idea. I only found out later when I asked my parents why they suddenly stopped me from going to visit them by myself. So the Limousin never lived up to my fantasy of the Camargue by the sea and the area has remained a fantasy to this day. Last year in July I got very close when I went to Arles for the Rencontres Photographiques but we didn't have the time to drive further down.

—Last weekend the time had come, my sister, my nephew and I drove to Aix en Provence to visit my dear eighty years old aunt Kiki, a Franciscan none who has spent most her life in the Algerian desert, she is now in a retirement home for old Franciscan nuns who cannot look after themselves, her knees have given up a few years ago. We are very close, she has the greatest of mind, spirit, wisdom but also wit, I have been trying to go down and see her for a few years now. We had the greatest of three days, driving down, spending time with her, sleeping in an authentic Mongolian yurt and finally going to the Camargue, with great expectation and fear of deception. It was a very short experience, a slow drive at sunset through 45 kilometers of wonderful swamps with white horses grazing happily, a few low roofed white cottages and the most amazing thundery sky, all that in color! then a short walk in Saintes Maries de la mer, the small town and its harbour by the sea at the end of the road, I found a few potential dream houses, we had a fish diner with aioli (traditional strong garlic sauce) looking at the sea then drove back to the Limousin with stars and butterflies in my eyes , reality was even grander than my childhood fantasy. Needless to say, I have plans to go back and explore further.

Posted 26th april



WEEK 29 30 31

MAY DAY AND BEATRICE

—I came back from France two weeks ago refreshed, relaxed and confident and definitely not prepared for the sinking ship I found in Farnham as well as the usual panicked reactions that this kind of crisis situation provokes: some had jumped ship at the first sign of danger leaving nobody in charge, the classic expression ‘après moi le deluge’ – after me the flood) comes to mind, some try to save their skin by trampling on others, some are panicking and creating havoc in the process while a few remain petrified, not knowing what to do, or like an ostrich in trouble, bury their heads in the sand. What is left like myself run around trying to save the day, unable to accept the inevitable. I do not have much choice, as Head of year 3 I feel hugely responsible for my soon to graduate stressed students, and have a lot to sort out at this time of the year, I am trying the impossible to make sure it will happen for them and that what’s remaining of their 3/4 years with us goes relatively smoothly.

—I really thought I was going to crack up not really being able to comprehend or deal with what I was really faced with, I felt my breakdown was imminent, I know the signs too well, going the same way than two others in our team before me. Luckily I have now managed somehow to adjust to the situation, identified what I realistically could and couldn’t do to minimise the damages and blanking my mind to all the rest; the future of the course in the long term, my various involvement in research and teaching within the institution, how to get out of it, what are my other options... this has to wait a while longer. I am learning a lot though and coping quite well despite the fact that I am completely inadequate and uninterested in institutional politics, yet fully caught up in them. I am where I am by default, not by choice; I have to make sure I do not remain there. With all this I forgot Thomas birthday on May day, until he announced a few days later the arduous and long awaited birth of Beatrice Rose who had been reluctant to come out, ignoring Lisa’s pleas, her body not able to cope leaving her bed ridden and in constant pain for the past two months. I am amazed, how can we women cope with so much pressure on our bodies, hormones, emotions, minds.... then recover as if nothing had ever happened... I never felt strong enough to go through it all; no regrets there, I do trust my instincts, perhaps a slight sense of shame or inadequacy and definitely total admiration for mothers.

—I have been coping with all the stress thanks to gardening, swimming and cycling in order to release most of the negative adrenaline roaming my body and brain, leaving me exhausted, almost relaxed and full of a wonderful buzz, the garden is looking great too. I have also been indulging in a few dates lately, I felt completely inadequate and out of practice for the first one, it has been a long while, but I really enjoyed the process of dressing up, not for work or a meeting or to perform, neither to impress or to kill, that is yet to come one day maybe... but to simply feel like a woman or hunter and perhaps slightly more feminine than I usually do. It is probably like cycling, it is all coming back to me quite easily and I am loving it. I can’t say that any of them have given me the sensation of having butterfly in my stomach yet, but I am having a good time, enjoying the banter that goes on and the preliminary rituals of the mating game, and getting a few interesting conversations in the process. What else can a girl want...? I am in France right now, for four days only, for the coming of Michael Lonsdale to read Gherasim Luca here in St Yrieix, a bit of a coup for the region. I did a radio show last night, La tribune, on the local radio, talking about artists books, Gherasim Luca and trying to clarify the usual misconceptions or doubts that contemporary art provokes in the countryside and in most non informed context. My French was a bit rusty, specialists words not coming easy or wanting to come out in English, but it was great fun and the debate quite interesting too. It made me want to do more, perhaps try radio as a platform for performing or disseminating work, a great tool to use. Careful there as if I wasn’t scattered enough yet...

Posted 15th May



WEEK 32 33 FIRST SWIM SECOND FIDDLE

—It looks like finally time is slowing down, my mood also, I feel burnt out and slightly depressed and now that my mind is less occupied all that was pushed aside in the past few months is rushing back to the front, competing with mounting resentment at what I had to put with at work, frustration towards my naivety or idealism for letting it all happen, wounded pride at being made second fiddle on a recent date, my power of seduction is not what it used to be, or am I already past “it”, I can’t even bring myself to expand on the it bit of it all. One remark that was made is that my availability or accessibility was an issue, as if I was a pot on a shelf, needing to be close to reach whenever needed, not living in London and being on the move so much. I thought that being so free would be an advantage but it seems not, it might even been taken as a threat I am now thinking. Not much I can do about that. Well there is little space left up there for constructive thinking like planning my summer, allowing for plenty of studio time to catch up with myself and what’s waiting for a bit of care and attention to develop, making sure I give up current academic responsibilities next year so the balance between academic duties and my own work gets back to normal so that I make the institution work for me rather than having to slave for its well being, surely I can find a way for a more harmonic and mutually beneficial relationship.... Now will it help if I move back to London in September, living further away I would feel less responsible for the future of the course. Decision, decision...



—My week end with Michael Lonsdale in the Limousin feels so far away, it is hard to recall the magic of it all, the pleasure of spending some times with such a genuinely talented and humble person. His reading of Gherasim Luca was magical, his way of letting words do the work without trying to bring too much of his own interpretation or personality to their reading was very special. He is a charmer too, you can tell he likes women; I could have easily succumbed despite his relatively mature age, early seventies, now that says a lot about his magnetic power or is it more about me not getting younger.... Not sure. I had the pleasure and the honour of driving him around in my ancient English peugeot 205, the same one that drove me down here from London 3 years ago, it was quite a sight in St Yrieix, the famous and respected actor of James Bond fame, bent double, he is tall and large, in my tiny ancient foreign vehicle. The French are very strong on appearances but he seemed to enjoy the adventure, even if others found it outrageous.

It reminds me that Zineb has just become a grandmother at 45, and two days before the opening of her show at INIVA, a grand and ambitious multi-screen video installation and some sculptural light boxes using images of a boat graveyard in Mauritania, a rather melancholic and contemplative piece, I would need to see it again to really make my mind up, on the opening night it felt a bit too busy, noisy in terms of images and sounds, my taste goes toward a more minimal and barren approach perhaps. But great to catch up with her, and enjoy a precious break between the great marathon and struggle that setting up for the college show and degree assessment has been, limited amount of space for 52 students, limited amount of technical support, of tools, of materials, it was challenging but the atmosphere and group dynamic was great, I am really proud of the students for putting up with it and coping with such maturity, good will and patience. I only lost it on a couple of occasions, it was justified if not slightly out of proportion.

The result is fantastic, some great and original pieces of work there, a very professional looking and impressive exhibition, which doesn’t reflect the duress and disruptions of the past few months. It is such a joy to see the look of pride and wonder on their faces, finding it hard to believe that it is all of their own doing.

—Then a bank holiday English style complete with a trip to Brighton to catch up with Eva and see Anish Kapoor public mirror sculptures, the big curve on top of the south downs was worth the unexpected long walk in the wind with heels, followed by my first visit to Charleston house for a reading, the garden is a real treat, I like the way it is labelled an artist house in the brochure, making the assumption that all artists houses, like the one of the Bloomsbury circle, looks that luxurious and upper class.

Next day my first swim in the sea and the inevitable sunburnt redness, worth it I assure you for the painful bite of the freezing water followed by the warm touch of the sun on my winter skin, true pleasure. To conclude a Sunday birthday party, Natasha’s in her beautiful new Brixton home with a big garden, her wonderful man and her many brothers, all of them into some kind of juggling or clowning or musical thing, thanks to their circus upbringing with a real clown for father. A great mix of people of all kind and ages, truly Brixton style, despite them being new to the area. Three more days of assessment and I am going to St Yrieix, for another bank holiday, not sure what is a typical French bank holiday, I just hope my mind will feel less crowded and more at peace by the end of it.

Posted 28th May



WEEK 34 35 36

CARDEW KANDISKY AND HAZEL

—A French bank holiday drenched in sun, soaking it by a pool in the Dordogne in between yet another family birthday celebration, nephew Florent's 23rd and a slow food meal with british expats in a local restaurant. Yet my body is suffering, fever, swollen glands, chronic yawning fits, lethargy and a mind which finds it hard to focus on anything else than my current vegetable state. I am not too sure what is wrong, but something is, I am struggling to get through each day and sleep like a log 10 hours a night, waking up as if from a coma still feeling like a log. I am resisting family pressure to consult, check my blood.... I am slightly worried, it can't just be stress and over exhaustion, have my beloved pirates gathered strength ? It has been a week now in the Limousin plus four days in Paris with one quick faint in the streets and 2 panic attacks at the prospect of another loss of consciousness. Yet I was determined to catch the Cornelius Cardew exhibition and afternoon of concerts somewhere in the distant southwest suburb of Paris and the Kandinsky exhibition at the Pompidou centre before returning to the UK.

—Cardew was really worth it, true to style in this remote and unfashionable art centre near a school in Bretigny, far from the Paris limelight. Some great photographs, posters and documents from various public performances, the full length display of his Concert Treatise score, beautiful to look at with its choice of graphics notations and symbols and inspiring too, the performing of it by a laptop quartet using as materials various previous recordings of the work itself was interesting though too acoustical for my liking, yet it was great to have both score and performing within the same space time continuum, a rare thing. The work Volo Solo (for a virtuoso performer on any instrument) originally composed for John Tilbury and played here by trumpet player Rhys Chatman was absolutely fantastic. The score looked so busy and challenging, around 68 complex events to be played as fast as possible while trying to fit in all the keys, it looked physically very challenging, 16 minutes of struggle

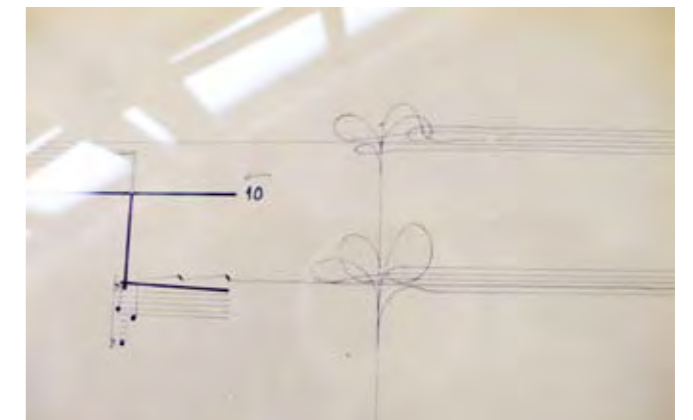
with breath and velocity and complex arrangements and sampling which was used to layer the sound, to great effect I felt, a built up feast of superimposed fast trills, very impressive. There was a documentary on show, bringing together all kind of footages and interviews from the man himself and various collaborators, John Tilbury and others all in their prime. Interesting to see how hippyish and laid back it all was at the time where as now his work belongs to the connoisseurs and experimental / improvisation scene which tends to go for either the nerdy or trendy sober look. Followed the strange encounter with an artist friend I hadn't seen for more than 25 years, Frederic Danos. At the time he was a close friend of my partner, a young and good looking Parisian self confessed painter, very trendy in my eyes, I was trying to become a photographer in London, studying at Sir John Cass and coming to terms with being an artist. I did find him quite intimidating at the time, admiring his apparent self-confidence compared to my tentative beginnings in the creative arts. We used to have differing approaches to Art, he was of the opinion that anybody could be an artist or a painter that knowledge of a particular medium and art history was irrelevant and not necessary, while I felt that I needed to learn and understand the evolution and tradition of my medium in order to master it before I could choose to depart from it, remember this was the beginning of the 80's, just before the likes of Brit art, Damien Hirst, Sarah Lucas took over the contemporary art world for a decade or so... This is where we left it. A quarter of a century later it was great to see that we are both still alive, in apparent good mental and physical health, still practicing artists and strangely enough working on fairly similar themes and concerns; writing, performance, sonic improvisation, multidisciplinary and process based approach.... We had a whole train journey back to Paname to compare notes and get reacquainted. It was for me one of these rare and pleasurable moments, an impromptu opportunity to reflect, look back, observe, compare, retrace my steps, sum up and make links between

events, and above all to see yourself in someone else's eyes, not a complete stranger but someone with whom you share a bit of the past, a fixed anchor from which our lives evolved until our paths crossed again. I do find his work very interesting and inspiring, in some ways more developed than mine in relation to his use of words and his writing which has a very distinctive style, on the level which the good experimental writing of today, Jerome Game, Anne James Chaton, Caroline Burgval.... It is less dry and formal than the above mentioned, there is something more, a subtle dark and absurd existential undertone à la Beckett and some lovely poetic touches that let transpire a certain vulnerability, I find it touching. But I find some of his noise performances or certain musical or literary homage too postmodern, too cynical or flippant for my liking, not much more than interesting one liner Fluxus style, perhaps that is all they are. It is funny that in some ways there are still traces of our diverging takes of yesterday in our respective practices of today despite the similarities of approaches we have reached through what I used to call independent arrival. I do hope we will have a chance to discuss it all further. For an afternoon Cardew and this surprise encounter managed to make me forget my current general physical weakness.

—The next day I psyched myself up to go and see Kandinsky, with the mental and physical support of Fabienne with whom I am staying, the long lost high school friend with whom I have recently reconnected, I haven't been much company this time, she has had to nurse me like a baby, regular naps and food and drinks intakes in order to generate a minimum of energy. As in every good retrospective it is great to see the evolution in the work from figurative to abstract and the construction in time and on canvas of his various theories on color sound, the point, spirituality.... As well as seeing the real thing, paintings you are so used to see in reproduction of various quality.

But I find these exhibitions inhuman, the scale is too big, there are too many works, too many viewers, too many explanations, too much merchandising, too many knowing guides giving precise and explicit readings to docile audiences. It is like a supermarket, selling cheap culture and second hand knowledge to the masses. It frustrates me, I wish these museums were like churches rather than shopping malls, mind you famous churches are tourist traps too. I find it hard to concentrate and look at the work in these conditions, I always leave frustrated. I did enjoy making connection between Kandinsky and Cardew, in their use of symbols and visual interpretation for one and scoring of sonic material for the other. Ironically enough I cured some of my frustration by buying a book, Kandinsky 'point and line to plane, his wonderful step by step unravelling of his theory on the point. The point being like the atom of a painting, the geometric point also being ' the ultimate and most singular union of silence and speech. There are some gems in there.

—Then back to London for the last busy stretch of the academic year, the London graduate show at the Truman Brewery, a frenzied two days to build walls and set up the show. Not surprisingly I was let down and had to do it all by myself, curate and supervise the whole process with 45 stressed and exhausted students. It is an enjoyable and exciting time but too much for one person to bear.



The 2 days tube strike didn't help. I ended up getting there by boat, Waterloo to Tower bridge at 9 in the morning, it was a lovely ride in the sun and no queues, not many seemed to know of the free ride organised by London transport. The show works well, the opening was a success, well attended and complete with speeches, a performance and merchandising, a nice fabric bag with the show logo 'ecclectic' containing the catalogue, for which I wrote the introduction. The work looks great, very professional and of high standard, some great projects, some perhaps lacking in originality and punch. As the Maidstone team installed next door said, their show is slightly more adventurous, more punky. I am just glad our exhibiton doesn't reflect the struggles of the past few months. I feel I have succeeded in protecting the students and I am quite happy if not slightly resentful. It is all over now. The end of it all coincided with the surprise arrival of Hazel, who has been litterally thrown off her ship by a snake of a hotel manager in Longyearbyen Svaalbard , the northern most island in the arctic circle. She turned up in Farnham in icy shock yet smiling the day after the opening. We have spent the past few days gently recovering from our respective ordeals in the comfort of each others presence, the way only old friends can do, being used to each others little habits.

Posted 16th june



S U M M E R

WEEK 37 38 SUMMER SOLSTICE AND MICHAEL JACKSON

—8am in the Standsted Express train leaving Academia behind for a couple of months, precious me time, studio time, catching my breath time, thinking time, not doing time, experimenting time with two short breaks, one to Austria at the end of July and one to the Ile de Ré just before that. Writing these words, head full of the residues of recent work related overload, mingling with anticipation, expectations and slight anxieties now this long awaited empty yet pregnant break is here. I have two laptops in my backpack, one for each of my virtual offspring, the elder Valter the sound/voice transformative software

I am using in the Bouche Bée formation and the brand new born VILMA, visual transformative midi controlled baby that I am eager to bond with, both ingeniously and lovingly put together by Sebastian Lexer. I can finally try out this fully integrated and holistic sound and vision live interaction I have hoped to achieve a few years ago, inspired by the touch sensitivity of VINST; perhaps trying to create a similar chain reaction between body stimulus and vocal reaction, this time in between the written or drawn and its vocal and sonic interpretation. Expectations are high, slight anxieties of not living up to it.

__Guido in London is progressing well on my long awaited new revamped and updated website, he is hoping to ' fulfill all my desires step by step ', in his own truly non-british words, isn't this a charming thought... I was slightly hesitant at first as he is an architect by trade, but I have been won over by his enthusiasm and commitment to do it well and of course his charming endeavour to fulfill all. Hazel is now in Sardinia, roaming the coastline on a scooter until Jess her daughter arrives from New Zealand in 10 days, I was very tempted to join her, it would have meant cutting short my precious me studio time. Anyway I am expecting their visit at some point this summer, I haven't seen Jess since she was 6 months old. This reminds me of Hazel last comment to me before she left, rather to the point and flippant despite being said in the most charming and loving voice and totally out of the blue early one morning after she brought me a cup of tea in bed. The only man who could put up with me would have to be a doormat or a saint. She continued by asking which I would prefer, she seemed surprised when I said neither if I was allowed, if not a saint. If I had any illusion left about finding a soul mate, or some sort of male counterpart, she definitely put an end to them. Unless such a thing as a saint with doormat quality can be found.



—Little did I know when writing these first words that a few days later the slow demise of the biggest icon of the postmodern world, in my own eyes the 21st century equivalent of Marilyn Monroe, will come to a mysterious and tragic end. Michael Jackson is no more. Marilyn was as clear and straightforward an object of sexual fantasy as he was ambiguous and hard to define: neither black or white looking more like a zombie or a fragile clone of himself toward the end, neither or both man and child, neither or both man and woman with the moves of a James Brown and the body and voice of an anorexic teenage model, straight or gay or bi or asexual, we will never know. He stands for the perfect living example, if not a slightly negative one of that third sex / third space/ in between / neither nor of the various post structural and postcolonial theories of representation – in his case addressing them all, sexual social cultural moral philosophical – of (naming a few) Derrida, Judith Butler, Helen Cixous, Guillermo Gomez Pena, Homi Bhabha I have decided to perfect my moon walk and include it alongside one of his shrieks of Billy Jean or a line from thriller in whatever I am going to work on next.

__I have just realised the reason why I feel so touched by his death, I wasn't a real fan, apart from a few songs I think are absolutely brilliant and his dancing extraordinary in terms of his virtuosity, speed and moves but also in what I can only define as weirdness, he moved so lightly with very little gravity. I have chosen to define myself both as an artist and as a person as one of Derrida's neither/nor. And I can't help somehow identify with his tragic demise, feeling that it was probably caused by his (chosen or not) denial or refusal or blindness of definite boundaries, roots of any kind, sense of belonging, inevitably leading to extreme choices and behaviour... In my case my nomadism is inherited and subsequently cultivated and I haven't yet reached any extremes of any kind apart from a terrible carbon footprint due to my life in between two countries, close to 40 flights last year and being incapable of choosing a place to grow roots, but even on this small personal scale I could see it as possible being the seed of my own (future) fall.

—On the day of M.J's death I found that my studio here in the Limousin had been carefully emptied of quite a lot of its content: A lot of my old work from the 80's, waiting to be archived in 2 big portfolios, a few essential tools, like my big guillotine and an IMac, part of the mounted images of my last photo exhibition République Française, and a few books ; the contents of a few drawers had been emptied in a big bin, yet no sign of breaking in. The initial shock was gradual yet immense, I couldn't and wouldn't accept the facts, not so much for the tools, books or computer but for all that old work that I hadn't had a chance to archive yet and for the peculiar nature of the disappearances, carefully selected with no signs of break in. I spent the afternoon with the chief warrant officer from the local gendarmerie, trying to elucidate the mystery. What is evolving is a strange saga of small town social and political intrigue where no one is willing to implicate anyone despite the facts which are very clear: someone has been given access and for some reasons thought they had the right to roam around and pick and chose the best, as if it was for grab, someone with a taste for contemporary art. This alone should be enough of a clue to identify the culprit, so few people fulfill that criteria in the region. The enquiry goes on.

Posted 2nd July



WEEK 39 40
ORGANISED THEFT
AND PRINCESS SHOES

—It now looks like I will never see any of my belongings again and the insurance will not cover much due to the peculiar circumstances. There was no break in, all the clues point to the culprits acting more like conscientious cleaners with loose morals than thieves. The town has shut off as a flower at night, protecting what it knows and making sure none of 'them' can be linked to this 'mess' as they refer to it. The 'cleaners' have come in with the keys, making sure to close the door behind them, they have a taste for contemporary art, a discerning one too, judging from what they took with them, 3 complete series of photo sculptures from the 80's, the series of framed drawings of VINST vocabulary, a third of the Republique Francaise exhibition – the smaller works and the framed ones – luckily they left a portfolio full of loose works and photographs from the early eighties behind the door, probably hoping to collect it later, these are irreplaceable, I am so relieved. They also took most of my tools and materials, anything of value, making sure to clear what they didn't want in my big bin, leaving shelves and drawers empty. A peculiar thing to do for a thief. As a coincidence the space next door, on the other side of the locked door where the portfolio was found, is being taken over by a nearby tinned pâté manufacturer, as it happens one of the town MP/mayor best friends, the same big chief who made it possible for me to have this studio. The space is currently been cleaned up and some of its content – porcelain moulds – sold to another friend of his.



This operation started exactly after I left the Limousin last time around on the 6th of June. I also found my broom in the space next door, next to a big pile of rubbish. Despite all these evidence, witnessed by the policemen dealing with the enquiries, the people in question, deny any responsibility or involvement in the matter, deny even entering my space and refuse to give any information on who has had access to the building in the last 2 weeks. The pâté factory owner, confident of his impunity, is trying to convince me and everybody involved that the area is constantly being visited by vagrants or opportunists and that one of them must be responsible. It is such a ludicrous and absurd explanation in the light of the facts yet, everybody is conveniently sticking to this story, giving new meaning to Magritte famous words 'this is not a pipe'. I have never seen such a farce of an inquiry or masquerade. It is so obvious that someone, the owner or his men assumed or convinced themselves that my space was part of the deal, and helped themselves knowing full well that if it wasn't the case they would have a perfect alibi. The town officials cannot accept the obvious, as it would mean incriminating one of 'them'. When they can't avoid me, I have to endure listening to their crooked mouths professing empathy outrage and understanding while their eyes drilled onto mine silently acknowledge the fact that we both know what happened but that there is nothing I can possibly do about it.

—It reminds me of what I used to joke about three years ago when the town was welcoming me with open arms and offering me the moon in terms of opportunities and finding ways of making me stay. I was overwhelmed and thankful but I knew the price, I had to become one of them, obey their rules, accept their dirty tricks, losing in the process my integrity and my independence. So when people around me were commenting on my successes, I used to say that within three years they would probably boot me out as quickly as they welcomed me. I have had to take a few ethical stand and as such go against their wishes, making a point to show my disagreement and not backing down under pressure.

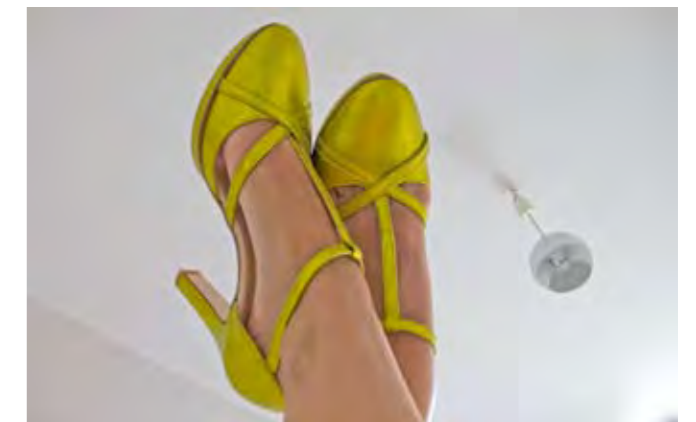
This has been taken as a refusal to be part of them, therefore I am not worse protecting now I am in trouble. I am not implying that the theft was intentional or deliberate, but nothing was done to prevent it happen, like informing me of the changes in the space next door or making sure that what was taken by 'mistake' is returned. 'They' are now using the occasion to try to get rid of me, using the excuse that the space is not secure anymore. I have heard of quite a few people being dismissed that way, now it is my turn. I haven't said my last word yet; I am resisting and making sure I am spreading the facts widely. I get very angry and frustrated at times, faced with the injustice of it all on top of the loss of my work and belongings, I discover everyday new things that have gone, the latest one being the old free standing school blackboard that could fold as a table I bought last year at a car boot sale. In between I spend time at the centre of artists books, organising the summer trying to make ourselves as visible as possible so that we reach the tourists and the region alike. The centre itself is suffering from not belonging to 'them' and everything is being done to make us invisible and our work difficult. Such as not being included in the town summer brochure of cultural activities, the road signs signalling our location have been removed and major building work organised by the town council has started next to us on the 1st of July, blocking both road access to our building and car park.

—I have lost a lot of time, about 10 days, dealing with it all, doing the necessary claims for the insurance and the police, all that precious time I should have actually spent in the studio working with VILMA and VALTER. I have only managed 3 days this week. The first day was touch and goes finding it hard to get into it and to psychologically reclaim the studio to fill it with good vibes. But on the second day it all started to happen, finding new ways of processing some of my sounds as well as bringing together voice and percussion. I am also becoming comfortable with the potential of VILMA, it is overwhelming; so I am just trying for now to concentrate on the most basic connection between sound and visual;

the score – notation, text, images – becomes sound, score and sound making are video recorded, and both video relay and sound produced are processed live, the former by VILMA, the latter by VALTER. Through this process the score is forever evolving and becoming sound, and mixed live with processed sound. This is as far as I can put into words what I am doing intuitively. Trevor Wishart vocal sounds anthology and annotation techniques are proving very useful to frame and inspire my experiments.

—Tonight Hazel and daughter Jess are arriving, for four days, France national day is looming, fireworks, republican celebration and family reunions are being planned, I am doing a voice performance with La lulette agile tomorrow night in a bar in Limoges, a lovely small place run by a Russian from Mongolia, the only one to know how to celebrate Bastille day in a genuine popular and revolutionary (not officially organised) way, an evening of music and performances of all kind, spilling onto the streets, with a whole roast lamb on the counter to feed the crowd. I will wear for the occasion the beautiful pair of handmade Repetto high heels I treated myself too, the factory is nearby and they sometimes organise in house sales which brings the prices of these fashionable luxury items down by 75%. Completely out of character and impossible to walk with but I love them, one hour of practice every night will soon make me an expert on the catwalk, I wish.

Posted 12th july



WEEK 41 42
BASTILLE DAY AND
THE GOOD LIFE

—The 14th of July was as it should be, patriotic, hectic and festive with a hangover, my first one in years, consequence of the festivities of the night before in Yvan's bar, with an interesting medley of people of all ages, the roast lamb was good if not slightly greasy, our performance riotous and rough on the edges in true revolutionary/fluxus fashion, a good contrast to the other musical interventions, more on the folk and gypsy kind with virtuoso musicians. The French crowd quickly adopted Hazel and Jesse, after a few drinks most of them lost their legendary inhibition and self-consciousness and came out proudly with their best English. Hazel and I would have partied all night but Jesse, who was still suffering from a combination of jetlag, hay fever and the remains of a chest infection was putting emotional pressure on us from midnight onwards, we resisted as much as we could, trying to convince her of how special the evening was and of the medicinal benefits of a shot of vodka, by 2am she had her way and we were back in the car. The patriotic meal offered by the mayor/MP to the people of St Yrieix was a success, around 2000 people spread around tables, in circles of family or friends or corporations of workers, in the garden of the town Hall; a certain contemporary multicultural flavour mixed with reminiscence of the past, pre virtual communities of the likes of facebook...



The Moroccan mint tea and the Portuguese bacalau stalls were busier than the traditional displays of melon des charentes, cold Limousin roast beef, and various kinds of saucissons and ham. There was the traditional folk music and dance interventions, a lot of women wearing men folk costumes, sign of a shortage of men willing to learn traditional dances. Hazel and Jess loved it, an authentic French experience, their foreignness blissfully oblivious to certain details and nuances, the various social factions clearly not mingling, the fact that most stall owners were only paid for the ingredients but not for the manufacture of their dish, almost two days spent cooking to produce enough to feed over 1500 people, all local public servants were forced to work on that precious bank holiday weekend, but also to sing together a popular folk song in Occitan, the old dialect of the south of France that the majority of them couldn't speak. I have become invisible to the town officials who are involved in the mess of my studio clean up. Up to a week ago they used to cross the road to kiss me hello, their eyes now go straight through me as if my body had lost all density.

—I am finishing this eventful month in France, far from the stresses of university life, with a week in ile de Ré, the lovely and flat salt swamp island facing La Rochelle. I do love this place, cycling around on the numerous car free narrow lanes crossing the island in between the salt fields and through the nature reserves swarming with birds of all kind, being rolled around by the big waves of the seasonal high tides, imitating seagulls on the jetty while taking in the intoxicating smell of the rotting seaweed, collecting pebbles with holes and making mobiles, small sculptures and necklaces with them, having coffee on the harbour reading the paper, fresh crab claws with a cool local rosé, cycling to the market every day to bring back fresh tomatoes and apricots, practicing magic tricks with Louis, playing barbu (a card game) until late at night with endless fit of laughter, eating hot pizzas on a deserted beach at sunset.... It is idyllic if you know how to avoid the usual French holiday crowds with its rituals and shopping traps.

I have started a little project on the difficulty of ordering a one shot latte or latte macchiato in France, there is no translation or easy way of ordering one, a cappuccino being a coffee with whipped cream, and the equivalent of a cappuccino, either a noisette or a ' petit or grand crème'. I have been struggling for 3 years to find the right way to ask for one, it usually takes at least two phrases, one to describe the amount of coffee, the other the nature of the mix and the size of the cup.

—My skin has gained a healthy tan, my mind a healthy break, I do feel normal and fit again, may it last. Two days in Farnham catching up with work and home news almost erased it all. A good session with Guido to finalise the design of my new website to be.

I am now in Neufelden in Joachim's Die station for the annual Wandelweiser residency/meeting week with daily concerts; lovely to meet them all again a year later and looking forward to the feasts of silence now and then interrupted by a few subtle notes, a treat for all senses and the brain too, I see it as the best possible research and inspiration for my current work, also looking forward to gather feedback on my current sonic experiments. Joachim's and Hani's welcome is still as warm and superb in its effortlessness and scale, life is good. A big group of about 50 passengers from Linz who got off the Ryanair plane in Stanstead before we got on, were all wearing white masks against swine flu.

Posted 29th of July



WEEK 43 44 45 BRUISES BIRTHDAY AND BACK



—Such an eventful few weeks, too loaded and significant to sum up in a few paragraphs. It all started with a week in heaven with the Wandelweiser gang, and a shared feeling that we were part of something very special created by our coming together; a brewing ground, a melting pot, a fertile space for like minded creative minds. What happened during these 7 days is enough to keep me energised and inspired for the next few months. So rarely do I find myself feeling so in tune with it all. So rarely do I find myself, as an artist, in a situation, which gives you back, ten times more than what you put in. So often do I feel milked of my creative juices and energy with little else given back apart from the usual financial reward however inadequate, or the satisfaction of a job well done or the small epiphanies that happen now and then when it all comes together for a brief moment or when behind a failed attempt a new perspective appears. If only art institutions and their keepers cared a bit more about their herds of artists, making sure that both minds and bodies are properly looked after, fed and nurtured, so that we may produce rich and healthy works. In the same way perhaps that a cow or a field requires proper care in order to produce plenty of what they should. Mind you even these are overworked and mistreated, feeding vegetarian cows with their own flesh so that they may produce more milk or meat, over use of pesticides to improve productivity of monocultures, resulting in the killing of bio diversity and its fragile balance. No wonders most galleries and museums are packed with dried up anorexic pieces of nothing, mere shadows and replicas of other greater works, meagre juices of stressed and neurotic artists who have no time or envy to cross fertilise and pollinate each other, or simply rest body and mind regularly so that new seeds may have a chance to grow, so busy are they to try to please their keepers. This week at Die Station in Neufelden was a continuum of dialogues and exchanges, experiments, rehearsals, concerts of new and old works alike with a few homage to great artists. Sandra's performing of the full 12 hours of John Cage Empty words from 8.37pm to 8.37am the next day was incredible.

Her reading of Thoreau broken texts precisely structured by Cage in 4 2.5 hours long sequences with 20 minutes break in between, was breath taking and consistent throughout, the ups and downs of her mood and mind in tune with the rhythm of the piece, the whole work managing to remain in between the verbal and non verbal, yet retaining endless nuances and possibilities for the performer to explore without ever becoming too abstract or too figurative, a true master piece.

Michael Pisaro personal tribute to Joachim Eckl our host, performed at 4.30 am just before daybreak where nature is at its quietest, was another highlight; built around the rhythm of slow breathing (to the extreme) the work blended almost seamlessly local field recordings with ambient sounds, a truly beautiful sensory experience where notion of time, space, location, inner and outer landscape merged together. It was a real breakthrough for me, as I understood further the notion of John cage silence and the way it is explored by the Wandelweiser group. Silence is not just the end, the negation or the abstraction of sound resulting in ambient sound, I had realised it was a sound in itself as concrete as any other sound but I always used it, understood it as the foundation of any sound making, the background layer, the canvas... In Michael Pisaro's piece silence existed next to the other textures created, resulting in a very quiet composition completely in tune with the environment, part of it even, creating interesting interplay and vibrations between the real and the recorded, elevating the imperceptible and the inaudible, usually ignored in most western music.





Creating sounds in tune with the environment one finds oneself in, rather than on top of it or invading it with alien textures. I also made two videos, close up observations of nature, its natural rhythm and sounds, its way of coping with human intervention, imperceptibly enhanced by technology and the human voice, enhancing a few very simple rituals of nature, like the slow pace of a snail, or a spider web on a wooden sculpture of a bear, or a hand gently stroking a sculpture of an elephant back. I managed to create short narratives with epic qualities. It prompted two of the wandelweiser guys, jürg frey, a fantastic Swiss composer and clarinettist player and André O Muller a composer from Düsseldorf working with subtle drones, harmonics to offer to compose a soundtrack for the videos; for me the best compliment any of them could have made. I left, enlightened and badly bruised, my back blue all over due to Sandra's powerful Chinese massage with a water buffalo bone tool and my right thigh almost blue black due to a failed attempt at jumping on Joachim's wooden wave sculpture after setting my camera on self timer for the final group photo. I also met Klaus Rinke and visited his gigantic studio up the road from Neufelden; big man, big powerful and loaded work, big money, but a good man with a warm heart, yet a fragile one needing medical attention and open heart surgery in a couple of months.

—Three days in Farnham, time to finally decide to move back to London end of September. I want to be far from university and the stresses it causes me. I have manage to give up all responsibilities I had until now, or most. I will reintegrate my Brixton home and my studio in Vauxhall. Slight anxieties regarding commuting an giving up a big garden and the comfort of a big house in the quiet countryside but it feels totally right. And I still have St Yrieix la perche and the gentle Limousin.

—I am there now, working on a great project on grass, L'herbe dans tous ses états, collaboration between le centre des livres d'artistes and Jean Mottet, a professor in film history at La Sorbonne , Paris; a week of conference, films, concerts, exhibitions, great meals, bringing together, academics, artists, farmers, gardeners, musicians and the local population in 6 nearby villages; part of the entertainment was organised by the mayors and region officials. I did find it very interesting the way it brought together these very different people, something very difficult in sectarian France, where people don't mix much and despise difference, mainly by ignorance and fear of not understanding but nevertheless. Mind you despite the success of the whole events, back biting and behind the scenes complaints criticism and gossips were going strong, I did my best to ignore it all and concentrate on the good. It also gave me a chance to discuss with a few mayors my current problems in relation to studio space. I was very surprised to see how quickly and readily they reacted they are now looking for a suitable space for me and think that it shouldn't be long before they have something for me. I am so relieved and happy to see that not all the region is run like St Yrieix and what the French call " un panier de crabes".

—I am looking after my sister's house while they are on holiday, which means that I jump in the swimming pool every morning when I get up, perfect way to start the day in the current heat wave we are having. Roz Kyle and Paul have spent two days here on the way back to the Uk from Montpellier; they loved the area and might want to get a place here. Chris and Sam have just spent a week here also, loving the heat and the French hospitality. Everybody has gone and I can now spend the next two weeks in my studio getting back into my sonic and visual experiments. And yes I am one year older, spent the day with Hazel and Jess on my way back from heaven, in Farnham, before they went back to New Zealand.

Posted 17th august

WEEK 46 47 48
BACK FORTH
FORWARD BACKWARD

—This the final leg of my summer, trying to stretch it to a maximum with four days in Paris before wrapping it all up in the Limousin and going back to the UK for a couple of weeks still in Farnham, before moving back to London with a mix of anticipation and hesitation. I ask myself, is it a step forward or a step backward? Has the rubber band that I stretched all the way back to France three years ago finally brought me back to where I started, after a couple of bounces in Farnham? Or is it as I hope the beginning of a new loop on the ascending spiral of my life, bringing me back to London once more but within a different space time continuum, this time stretched in between two countries, a more mature (in all senses of the word) mind body configuration and a fertile healthy and loving environment. As much as I do love London I am very weary of not being able to put up with the constant and relentless temptations, opportunities and challenges it puts your way, socially, professionally and emotionally. I used to find it hard sometimes to not let it confuse or stress me. I have got used to the protecting isolation of Farnham. Time will tell.



—Four days of walking, along the Canal St Martin, from Pantin to Republique, Belleville, les quais de Seine around Austerlitz, the 18th arrondissement, IMA building by Jean Nouvel always more interesting than the exhibitions it hosts, this time a survey of contemporary Palestinian art, only three or four good works, the rest either terribly literal immature or clumsy or belonging more to an editorial or ethnographic field. It always annoys me as it is not doing any favour to the artists or their country, as it is saying that this is the best of what exists there artistically, when in fact it is merely showing what the wider public in Europe is wishing to see or already knows. Anyway Paris is blooming and healthy and letting it all spill onto the streets, from Ganesh celebration to breaking the fast of the Ramadan, trendy picnics on Paris 'beaches' and concrete canal banks, tango dancing by the Seine, without mentioning the usual sitting at a terrace de café watching the world go by....

Paris was still fairly empty, most of France closes down for the month of August, the majority of Parisians invading the costal areas or going back to their home towns, even Sarkozy has managed to keep his face and loud but hollow words off the media. I do love following Samia around, she knows Paris like her pocket, always making me discover quirky places and timeless small streets and cafés, far from the usual fashionable places and tourists trap. It is such a pleasure letting her instinct and pleasure carrying us all day with frequent breaks for refills of energy or a chat, usually finishing at the movies, before slowly walking back to Pantin late at night along the shimmering canal, total switch off of the willing mind, my version of a situationist derive or Michel de Certeau practice of everyday life, feeding on another's trusted free mind. It is the first time in 25 years that I do feel like living in Paris again. It seems that the program of cultural recontamination I am subjecting myself too is progressing well, almost too well.

—The Fluxus exhibition at passage de Retz was as expected, a retrospective based on Ben's archive, nice to see some pieces only seen reproduced before, but very few surprises, Emmett Williams Mississippi piece being my favourite of course, an interesting survey of the movement, yet its unavoidable staleness and lack of fluidity was made worse by a museum like presentation. It all felt quite contradictory to the essence of it all; a certain stale quality having lost its purging and irreverent smell. More interesting and lively was my quick conversation with Frederic Danos, an artist friends form yesteryears that I reconnected with recently thanks to Cornelius Cardew. Apart form a distant past we have a few artistic and conceptual interests in common, exploration of certain aspects of language, performance and notion of scoring, making our short exchange quite fruitful if not slightly frustrating, not having the time to expand more on certain ideas but more to the point not having the time or the will perhaps to overcome a certain mutual reserve or shyness or self preservation, or mistrust, or weariness, or hesitation or uneasiness, making our encounter equally interesting and stressing, each of us perhaps not wanting to alienate or mislead or frighten or deceive the other. Hopefully this will wear off in time, or not.

Strange the way we carry so much within us, making every human encounter increasingly complicated, as not only two minds but also two universes have to find a way of connecting. I am now in Farnham, my move to London is brought forward as my flat has been vacated earlier than planned and the letting agency in Farnham has decided to take us to court. The academic year is announcing itself even worse than last semester, I didn't think it was possible but one more member of staff has resigned over the summer and students numbers have increased once again, making it all even less manageable than previously, leaving 2 1/2 of us to manage and organise it all with absolutely no help or support from above. It is all a bit stressing and a lot to take in all in one go. But I am determined to protect myself and not try like before to cope with this impossible situation. I am therefore planning very carefully and precisely my duties and timetable, according to what I am contracted to do and firmly refusing any other duties imposed on me. The students will suffer for sure but they are in fact the only ones who can actually make things change and put the pressure on once they realise that they are not getting what they are paying for in terms of academic support and adequate space to work. It is definitely time to reconsider my teaching career.

Posted 31 august



WEEK 49 50 TYING LOOSE ENDS

—My engine has been slow to start, same for my multi tasking abilities, after these two months of working at my own pace. There is so much to finish off and even more to put into place. Dealing with a messy court case with the Farnham letting agency, it is so time consuming to gather and write up all the evidence proving our good will and honesty and the inefficiency of the agency which has led to this stupid situation; by the time it goes to court and judgement is passed, I will be long gone, making the whole process absolutely pointless. Cleaning my London flat of all the traces left by my lodgers; an interesting ritual in itself allowing me to slowly reconnect with the place after three years of absence. It is funny to realise how many memories and old habits I am finding under the woodwork. Yet there is also plenty of the new that has to find its place. I feel like a dog sniffing out its territory before pissing in the four corners to mark it as his. I spent the first weekend throwing out tons of things and painting my bedroom completely white from ceiling to floor, with the help of Catherine. Bedroom and kitchen are now ready, the living room still requires a good spring-cleaning and the wooden floor some heavy sanding. It does feel so right, the move back, feeling at home finally, in London, in Brixton, in my flat, an overwhelming sense of excitement and elation sometimes grabs hold of me. There is a new café just opened around the corner, a friendly Portuguese restaurant/ bar / bakery / delicatessen. Their Galao coffee is delicious as well as their lunches. We have been waiting for such place for years in the area, how timely. I see it fitting in perfectly in my new routine.



—That first decorating weekend was also Thames festival coinciding with Southwark bridge Feast; no cars, long lines of beautifully set tables and gold chairs awaiting the crowds of people coming to enjoy the wonderful ecologically minded food, drinks and artistic activities on offer. It was absolutely wonderful and heart warming to simply be there. There were real cows, temporary gardens, rocking boats full of plants, a third of the bridge was covered with straw, most people couldn't resist getting into straw fights while others just sat in it, eating, relaxing or reading the paper. The mechanical fire sculptures installed in front of the Tate modern were also fascinating as a perfect mix of iron age technology with 21st century ingenuity, yet the crowd enjoying them felt impersonal and soulless, compared with the gathering on the nearby bridge, where you felt part of something special, something more than just a spectacle, however good a spectacle.

—Teaching has started, I am trying to contain my anxieties as well as my duties, trying not to succumb to temptation or pressure, to do more than what I am supposed to. I am learning to let go and not feel responsible or worry about the consequences of things not getting done. So far so good but it is only the beginning. At least the teaching is bringing a bit of relief from the constant battles with management, and it feels good to be in contact with students again, regardless of their forever-increasing numbers. I have almost finished preparing the bookRoom contribution to the Whitechapel book fair this weekend, a selection of books from our growing collection plus around 15 new book works from both staff and recent graduates, the press release has been sent. I have managed to get the two book works I designed over the summer printed and bound, they look great in terms of design and production but I feel still too involved in their making to judge whether they are good or not. I am looking forward to see them displayed this weekend, and then I might be able to tell. And finally I am almost done with the locating and gathering of all my archive material so that Guido can get on with my website now we have found a design we both like.

—I have had a very emotional and intense weekend, being part of Eva and Maz's civil partnership wedding celebration. It is most definitely the most touching wedding I have been too. They have spent three months working on it, not as for most having the biggest and flashiest celebration, but working for three month with their interfaith minister on the ritual itself but also on the content; what it meant for them to take that step after 12 years of being together, renegotiating their relationship and their individual ambitions and careers, the meaning of love, the difficulties of intimacy, the nature and wording of their vows..... The registry office ceremony in the morning was straightforward yet very intimate and special somehow. Followed a three hours break on Brighton beach, it was so sunny and hot, I just jumped out of my dress, hired a chaise long and roasted front and back in my my underwear in the company of two other wedding guests I was driving around from one location to the next. The afternoon exchange of rings and vows took everybody by surprise, everyone there, around 60 people, wept at one point or an other, even the minister, even myself. None of us thought we would feel so involved or concerned by what we had been invited to witness.

The display of commitment to their civil partnership meant that each one of us had to look at our own personal emotional involvement and inadequacies, compared to the depth of theirs. The evening meal and entertainment were great relief and great fun, Scottish Kylie dances, Quaker style speeches where anyone could say what they wanted, a fantastic and gigantic chilli chocolate cake with fireworks on top, finishing with a great Dj set. I do generally rarely enjoy weddings, finding them quite boring but this one was truly unforgettable. Waking up with the seagulls the next day followed by swimming in the cold sea made it twice as special. The only sad note of the weekend was losing my beautiful Welsh love spoon I was wearing as a necklace; I took it out to go swimming in front of the Seven Sisters on Sunday afternoon and left it behind on the beach. Autumn is almost here and I am about to close this third round of weekly chronicle and start the fourth one. One more week to go. I feel almost ready.

Posted 23rd september



Week 51 52 THE ENDS



—This is the last entry of the third year of this MOIblog experiment. I am 8 days late on my schedule; I was hoping to conclude on the autumn solstice on the 22nd of September. This is also the last entry in this current form and location. By next week this website will not exist anymore, or perhaps will it survive a while longer until most visitors will empty their cache or refresh their browser. Guido and I are putting the final touches to a new revamped and updated website of the same name. I am hoping to launch it next week before going to Paris. This blog will still reside there, accessible on the homepage, and it will still be a mix of text and images. I have added 3 small sections to help me better contextualise my weekly chronicle. It will also constitute an interesting archive of my moods but also of what I have chosen to remember from current events and all the things that make the world go round.

—I have finished packing it all up in Farnham, I am an expert after so many moves, all the boxes were waiting in the garage neatly folded next to blankets and other protective material. I have just noticed that once more moths haven't had time to move in, I am escaping before they have a chance of ruining my perfect wardrobe; 2 years of regular visits to Farnham numerous charity shops has provided me with an impressive amount of great clothes, enough for at least three of me for all occasions, and at least a suit for every day of the week.

Tomorrow Stephen and Richard are coming to help me move. I am hoping that Stephen's van is big enough for Richard's two sofas I am inheriting temporarily, and my 10 boxes, 2 chest of drawers, Expedit bookshelf, 3 suitcases, various bags and other bits and pieces Goodbye country living, Brixton here I come (back). Last weekend in between looking after the bookRoom table at the London art book fair at the Whitechapel gallery, I was putting the last touches of paint and varnish to my floorboards in living room, bedroom and hallway, having fun creating enough textures to hide the imperfections. My knees are blue and very soar.

The book fair was impressive in design and attention to details, it was all very slick. All the biggies were there, Steidl, Phaidon... It was a good thing to bring together big publishers, small presses and the crafties but the crowd rarely bothered to venture further than the establishment, which occupied the entrance and the ground floor. We did well nevertheless, sold more than we usually do, my two new books did me proud, Empire State Building, the book of 12 self portraits in front of the New York skyline cleverly disguised as tourist postcards. The other one, the two virgins of St Yrieix la Perche, looked much slicker than I expected it too, diminishing the irony contained within the images. I am looking forward to start on volume 2 of this 12/12 series, 12 publications of 12 pages each.



—I am starting to feel more relaxed now I am reaching the bottom of my list of major tasks to get through this past month and a bit in order to close various chapters of my life and making sure that I get around the bend safely for the next episode. The only thing that remains to do is to finish developing the new work I am scheduled to perform in Munich at the end of the month. I am free now to put all my energy and attention to what started to take shape in August. I have had to give it a title so that the invitation cards could be printed. Ballade n 1, a short stroll to the end of words. Ballade in French means both a walk and a ballad. Carry me along oh long long long road.
Posted 3rd october

IF YOU

Reality narrated as it happened

CAN'T

stories of sheer survival

DO IT

read all about it

START



OVER