

THE YEAR ⁽⁴⁾

waiting for godot

50 weeks

350 days

4 countries

30 flights

many pirates

Scottish delights

34 knitted hats

THE FULL STORY

countless general strikes

global financial meltdown

ashes in the sky

BP black leak

Eric Rohmer RIP

Louise Bourgeois RIP

New labour RIP

collaboration

coalition

1 crush

1 crash

THE MOTHER OF ALL UNDERSTANDING

(autumn)

1-2	AUTUMN LEAVES IWAN AND AXEL
3-4	ST YRIEIX LONDON FARNHAM MUNICH LONDON
5	SAND IN VASELINE AND HALLOWEEN
6-7	MULTITASKING AND SNEEZING
8-9	FIRST FROST AND AUTUMN BLUES
10-11	PILGRIMAGE

(spring)

25 to 28	THEE THE SEA
29	ONE WEEK TO GO
30-31	WELL HUNG
32-33-34	CUTS CUTS CUTS
35-36	TWENTY FOUR HOURS OF YESTERDAY

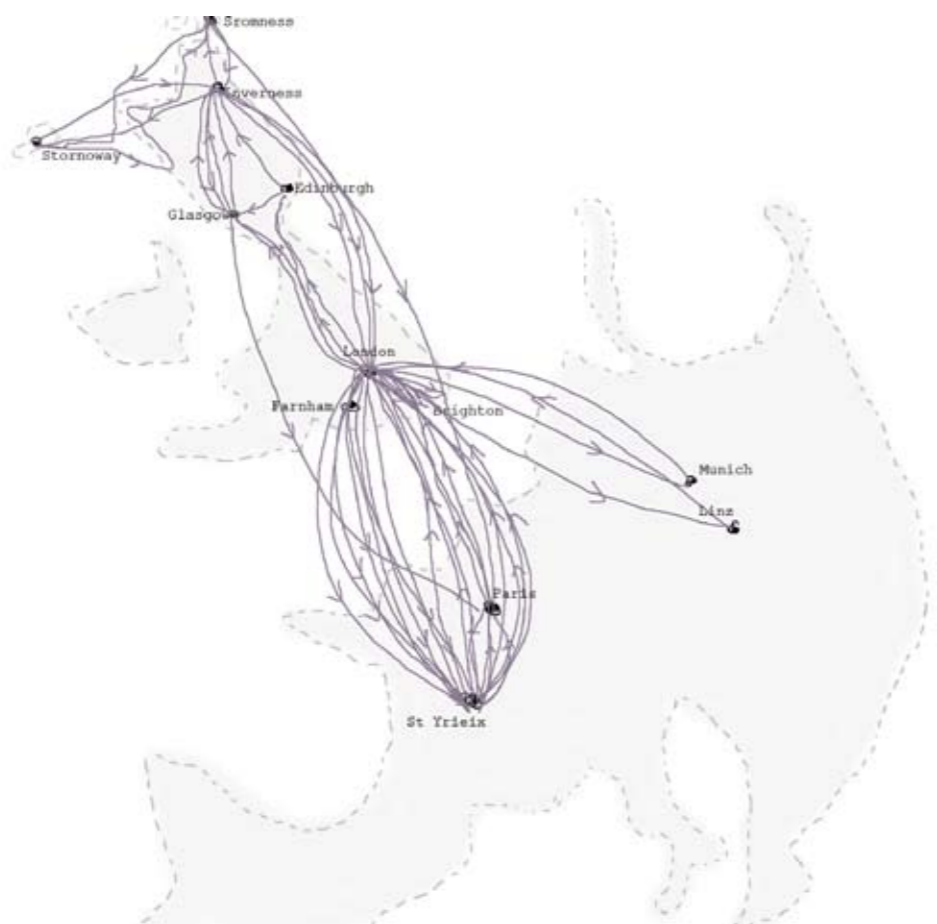
(winter)

12	MERRY AND STUCK
13-14	SNOW AND FALLING
15-16	DEEP INTELLECTUAL LUST
17-18	LIFE IS A SPIRAL
19-20	FISH AND ORGANISED LOVE
21-22	SPRING IS IN THE AIR
23	SCOTTISH DELIGHTS
24	WAITING FOR GODOT

(summer)

37 to 40	LIFE ACCORDING TO OCTOPUS
41-42	COLD TURKEY
43-44-45	BOHEMIAN TRIP AND NIPPON TREATS
46-47-48	SCOTTISH DELIGHTS AGAIN
49-50	NEVER ENDING

THE MOTHER OF ALL FALL OUT TOO



Everything is in place for a brand new cycle, the fourth one of this MOIblog experiment, THE YEAR (vol.4). A cycle that brings me back close to where it all started in September 2006 before I drove off to France to start my battle against the pirates that were wrecking my life. (See THE YEAR vol.1 2 and 3)



A U T U M N

Week 1 & 2

Autumn leaves Iwan and Axel

Atmosphere; Indian summer. Mood; average or low. News; I don't believe in the recovery of the economy.

-- Victory is rarely clear cut, no winner or loser in my case, we have had to get used to each other, and we have managed pretty well so far. This has become my personal start of the year, slightly later than the academic calendar so that it is out of the way, and weeks before the 1st of January, avoiding post Christmas blues and the following dreary winter months. This is called a blog year, and I have a bit of blog year blues. It feels like I am coming home after a three-year break from my life.

Expectations are high, mine of course and while getting re acquainted with all I left behind, I am finding as much good things, memories, habits, places, friends, as bad ones, memories, habits, non places, non friends, pressures... I guess it is quite logical after 25 years in a town. What feels right is my flat on top of Brixton Hill and living alone again, it is wonderful, and Richard's leather sofas and Catherine colourful hand made bed spreads look absolutely right here. The rest will follow in its own time. I hoped this first entry to appear on my brand new revamped website but it will have to wait for the next one, the beast is not quite ready yet.

-- I am in the Limousin right now, 10 days to fulfil my duties at the centre of artists books, collect my share of family warmth and play my part in yet another birthday ritual. The hunting season has started already, I have seen my first victims. On the way down here I stopped over in Paris for Iwan's Wijono's opening at Impressions gallery behind Beaubourg. Iwan and Miko are here for three months for a series of exhibitions and performances in Paris, Bordeaux, Marseille, Brno and Eindhoven, their first visit to France all the way from Yogyakarta in Java, invited by MATASIA an association from Bordeaux promoting Indonesian Art in Europe. I last saw Iwan in Toronto, when we were both part of 7a*11d festival I of performance art organised by FADO. I was in shock and mourning at the time, after my dear uncle/ father figure Bernard suicide two days before I left. I was in a very strange place psychologically and emotionally. Iwan was just back from Mexico, smitten by the culture, the language and Frida Kahlo. My slight resemblance to her, mastery of Spanish and need for spirit medicine brought us close together, an odd pair but a natural coming together of bodies minds and souls without a need for explanation or the usual awkward social rituals taking place when strangers meet. We have kept in touch ever since. Seven years is a long time, a lot has happened in the world and our lives but we met up as naturally as last time round. His work is as strong and political as I remember it, yet deeply modest and generous. He is a great painter, I was more familiar with his performance work. The paintings he is showing are of struggling Indonesian farmers and hand painted slogans expressing their frustration and anger. These are their own words, Iwan works with them, helping in their struggle for survival and justice, he creates various photographic tableaux re-enacting their plights. I do prefer the photographs, they are more anchored in reality and look very powerful, but photographs don't sell over there. A big part of the money Iwan makes for selling the paintings goes back to the farmers and their cause. If you imagine Magritte making politically engaged work than you get an idea of Iwan's paintings. Absolutely wonderful work.

I must find the time to go and visit him, his invitation have been hard to resist, combining a bit of teaching and workshops and performing and collaborating combined with a guided tour of Java, but I haven't found the time yet. The opening was very interesting; I was so surprised to see so many French people speaking fluent Indonesian and being so taken by the culture, the people and their hospitality. It was so un-French, very refreshing to see, strangely enough all the people I invited to the opening didn't turn up; the invitation looked quite 'exotic' and low key, that coupled with the assumption of what Indonesian art might be like, folk and crafty, must have put off more than one. Iwan and Miko are spending Christmas with me here, a traditional family Christmas in deep France, I can't think of anything more exotic for them, and possibly depressing too, compared to where they come from.

I am thinking of Axel my seventeen year old nephew who is having a small tumor removed from the back of his brain tomorrow morning, we are all so worried, yet there is nothing we can do but wait and hope for the best. I have no doubt he will survive; I am worried about possible long term of permanent side effects. *Saturday 10th October 5pm*



Week 3 & 4

St Yrieix London Farnham Munich London

*Atmosphere; chilly. Mood; heavily stress than relief. News; beyond
his wildest dream Blair hopes to become president of Europe*

-- Axel is fine, recovering in intensive care, all seem as it should be, no sign of permanent damage so far. We all feel the worse is over, full recovery is around the corner, hoping that he will be out before Christmas. I can't believe I wrote that dreaded word. I still think in summer mode, despite the change to winter time this weekend or the icy winds in Munich. My busy schedule of the past two months is finally over, I survived it all with a smile, managed to do it all, if I ignore all the boxes waiting to be emptied in my spare bedroom. I am behind as usual, about two weeks late I would say; I don't think THE YEAR vol3 will be ready for the small publishers fair on the 15th of November. I will try but have no intention of doing a rush job. Now the period of transition is over I want to make sure I stop running and take the time to do things properly, at my own pace, making sure I keep stress at bay and plenty of space to reconnect with it all here in London. There are three major exhibitions I am eager to see, Ruscha, Calle and Baldessari, bringing the three together sounds like a solicitors firm.

-- In the past ten days I have flown three times, I am not proud of it or of my carbon footprint, visited three countries, did an experimental voice workshop in Limoges with Geraldine Keller – powerful voice, beautiful grain, interesting group techniques, looked after a group of students from the école des Beaux Arts de Grenoble coming to discover the collection at the centre of artists books in St Yrieix. It was so funny to observe the look of amazement on the face of the local journalist; she couldn't believe how engrossed and fascinated our visitors were among all these mostly rare books, it was beyond her understanding, she compared them to small kids in a toy shop, they were not amused. I had little time to enjoy the warmth of the Indian summer or to go and pick up the last apples and walnuts before the birds and squirrels steal them all.

I came back for two days of teaching and one final day to finish preparing my performances for Munich, Ballade n1 and Ballade n2. I have never felt so unprepared and stressed about a piece of work. The more I worked on it, the more it was unraveling or breaking up in many smaller pieces I am not sure which, so much so that by Wednesday night, the day before leaving I felt I had nothing at all, thinking of the performance two nights later filled me with dread and horror, the same kind of feelings you have in a nightmare when you are trying to run away but you can only move in slow motion. I took the plane the next day as if it was to the gallows.

-- Once on the plane I decided to let go of my sense of panic as well as of my idea of being perfect. I was here to enjoy myself and try out a new work in a similar kind of positive environment than in July in Die station in Neufelden. Christoph Nicolaus, a member of Wandelweiser, project Turm im Klam (art in the tower) is a monthly event taking place in his beautiful and spacious abode, one floor of a solid second world war concrete bunker tower which was hollowed out from the inside in order to create the current 5 stories building with one loft on each floor. Every month a different artist or composer is invited to perform there, this month it was I. The event is followed by soup cheese and wine. I had the whole day to get ready and try out sounds and visuals in the space with the help of André O. Muller, another Wandelweiser member from Düsseldorf into microtonal music and overtone chanting. So that by the time I was on I was relaxed and confident, still aware that the work was not totally resolved and definitely not a masterpiece.... but I was ready happy and eager to perform. The room was packed, the audience attentive from what I could tell. It is true that I wasn't completely in control of it all, an extra pair of hands would have helped but I didn't miss a step, literally and didn't trip on the way, apart from dropping my clip mike twice..... It never happened before. I have yet to look at the video documentation of it all, but I sort of know now what needs to be done.

I am much more pleased with the second work Ballade n2 that I wrote very quickly as a piece of concrete poetry: 100 steps “walked” together for my breathing voice and Christoph on his beautiful stone harp, one step equals one breath equals on sound on his instrument.

It lasted around 30 minutes, worked almost as I had expected, sometimes hypnotic, sometimes soothing, changing rhythm occasionally, we both got lost a few times which was what I hoped for and the sound of my breath definitely bringing one into oneself. Apparently all the audience had their eyes closed. I have a recording of it too; I can't wait to hear it. I am hoping Christoph and I will have another chance to perform it and I wrote the work so that I can ‘walk’ it with any other instrument or voice. Here I am writing the last words of this entry before uploading them on my brand new website. It is now finally up to date, Ballade n1 and n2 included and ready to launch. *Tuesday 27th October 11pm*





Week 5

Sand in Vaseline and Halloween

*Atmosphere; bright and chilly. Mood; high spirits low pressure.
News; Chirac prosecuted for fraud Bush will follow shortly maybe...*

-- Axel is coming out of hospital on Friday, it is amazing to witness once again how resilient the human body is. He will have to have some radiotherapy as they found cancerous cells in his tumor. Dust is finally settling, boxes are being unpacked, domestic space is being recovered inch by inch, studio space is being cleared one bin at a time, backlog of images are being uploaded, cleaned up, flickered then archived in a growing number of folders and subfolders in alphabetical and seasonal order, bills are being settled - sending my overdraft rocketing to the sky, a nicer image than plunging into the abyss - friends are being reconnected with one at a time - for some it has been over a year since we last saw each other in the flesh - Karen for coffee and Algerian lunch in a new place in Brixton, Debby for the full Ed Ruscha experience, she has caught the bug it was a slow process starting by saying "I love the background but not the words". she was won over in the end, Petri for Sebastian Lexer's Interlace concert series. I was touched to hear two Wandelweiser pieces performed, one by Jurg Frey for Recorder and the other by Antoine Beuger for piano and recorder. I wasn't impressed by the rendition, the recorder player was definitely lacking finesse and subtlety, his sound overpowering the subtle harmonies of the piano. It made me realise how privileged I was to have experienced these works from the horses mouths so to speak.

-- 50 years of painting, the Ed Ruscha exhibition at the Hayward has definitely touched me deeply. It is the first time I see any of his work in real, apart from one or two artist books. I was a fan already, loving his way with words, simple but not simplistic, sharp yet humorous and sometimes poetic and the way he navigates freely between painting drawing and photography using a limited palette of words and visual symbols. His books are great. It was absolutely fantastic to follow up the evolution of his mark making as well as his subject matter, becoming more refined and sharper as time goes by yet never repeating itself, always finding new ways, new angles, new styles. I was blown by the tactile quality of his paintings, the way colors and textures are brought together and resonate, the same way that his word images resonate with their painted background. The one that really did it for me is 'Sand in vaseline'. These three words are very evocative and conjure up such precise textures and colors, these are completely ignored by Ruscha, the letters are painted with pale grey egg yolks on a mid grey gently shimmering moiré background. I don't see any logic in his choice but the combination of what the words bring to mind with how they are depicted feels so right and poetic and alive, turning it into a beautiful object for contemplation where both eyes and mind are constantly dancing back and forth between what they see and what they read. The more I try to put it into words the more it eludes me but my fascination remains intact and I would love it on my wall.

I rarely get so engrossed in a painting or an exhibition or in both as in this case, last time was for Rothko Seagram murals at the Tate modern, this summer. Another memorable experience was Georgia O Keefe 1993 exhibition at the Hayward, and also discovering Francis Allys work, which included a small version of his Fabiola series, in the Antechamber exhibition at the Whitechapel in 1997. When we left the Hayward gallery late on Saturday night, I felt so elated that I half jokingly spoke about a spiritual experience, not a bad achievement for a cool conceptual American painter photographer whose work fetches for millions... I do love his painting of the bible, brilliantly displayed next to the one of a manual of rules.

-- On the other hand I am amazed to see how americanised this country is becoming. For Halloween on Saturday, the streets and the pubs were packed with dressed up adults, vampires and zombies and skeletons and monsters of all kind, few simple DIY costumes most were elaborate full fancy dress outfits. When did that start happening? I remember Halloween being for kids, lots of bangers and small groups in street corners doing tricks or treats. South London resembled a small budget horror movie film set. I finally started going to the Lido in Brockwell park, the place I missed most these past three years away from London. It has been completely revamped, they have done a great job, there is now a Gym, sauna, steam room, Spa and the yoga studios have big great bay windows onto the swimming pool, proper heating and creaky floorboards. After 2 hours there on Sunday enjoying getting steamed up and relaxing in the Jacuzzi, I felt like a million euros or as if I had been away to the seaside for the weekend. Nigel's yoga classes are as precious as ever, the slow yet continuous pace of it, his naming of every smallest muscle one uses, the way it should move up or down or sideway for each Asana, works wonders. There isn't one day when I am not rejoicing at being where I am, even the commuting to Farnham, though often heavy with traffic, doesn't manage to spoil it. *Wednesday 4th November 8pm*





Week 6 7 Multitasking and sneezing

Atmosphere; windy and wet. Mood; low energy slight sneeze. News; Christmas lights are on booray...

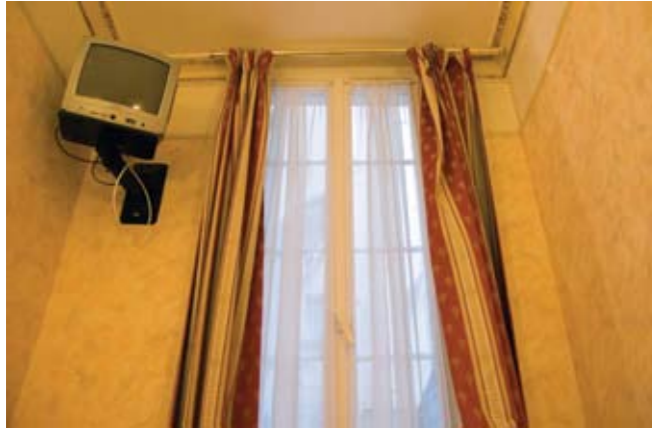
-- I have started working on THE YEAR vol.3, reading for the first time all the entries of this year just gone, in order to spell-check the text and also extract the elements that will constitute the front page index and the headlines. I find myself often amazed or surprised by what I read. On one level I am struck by the repetitiveness of one's life, so many of the events or rituals I relate I can remember from previous years entries. I must take the time to check one day if I am or not actually recounting them in exactly the same way. On the other hand a lot of what I have written hasn't stuck to my mind, somehow having been left behind so that it doesn't belong to my recent memory. It is interesting to see what my brain has chosen to keep in its drawers. I am possibly influencing and changing the current flow of my thoughts and my current mind configuration by bringing back into the equation what was discarded up to a year ago. I was hoping the volume 3 to be ready for the small publishers fair last weekend, keeping up with what happened with volume 1 and 2 but as usual I am late on my own schedule. The 2 other volumes have attracted a fair bit of attention once more and with my usual lack of business sense I kept on encouraging people to download the PDF for free from my website instead of paying 30 pounds for a hard copy. When will I learn?

bookRoom display did very well again, sales of cheaper books went well, many good connections made, but foremost the overall quality of the books on display stood out; not that other exhibitors didn't show interesting pieces but in my eyes very few of them manage to address equally well or critically or successfully, content and form as most bookRoom work seem to. Gorgeous looking and perfectly groomed Michael Mack of Staedl fame spent a fair bit of time looking and had good things to say about quite a few works, including one of mine 'the two virgins form St Yrieix'. Luckily it took me a while to place him, preventing the usual cool reserve or awkwardness (to hide shyness and lack of confidence possibly) with which I treat influential / important / respected people, silly I know but I cannot help it. I have learned to accept it. I did overspend as usual, not able to resist a beautiful 1968 Robert Filliou poster of 'galerie imaginaire', Ian Hamilton Finlay 'Brout' based on Robespierre dog and a beautifully designed issue of Sea level magazine, a quarterly magazine from October foundation in Eindhoven, including works by Tacita Dean and Ian Hamilton Finlay. Each issue of Sea Level is designed completely differently and has different formats depending on the content. I also bought a few other recent works, my favorite being Kurt Johansen's 'lux', he is an artist from Norway working with performance, language and the books. I could see many similarities with my own concerns, yet I was surprised to notice his complete disregard of the limitation of translation. He writes very poetically and beautifully in Norwegian, playing on the subtlety of words and their meaning, yet most books of his books exists both in English and Finnish, and someone else does translation. I tried to engage him on the subject, his English is impeccable but, though eager to have a chat, he didn't seem to understand my issues with his use of translation. 'Lux' uses Latin, it is a black book with only hand perforated holes on the right page and a Latin name on the left page. Each hole corresponds to the size of a bird eye socket referenced by the bird Latin name. Absolutely no other information, it is conceptual yet simple and to the point and really tactile, a perfect addition to my growing 'hole' collection of works.

-- I had my first houseguest for a week, Pedro visiting from Saragossa via Barcelona. He was such a considerate and charming guest. We had a very strange little epiphany. I showed him a catalogue from VISOR gallery in Valencia from 1992. Time spirals around in strange ways. In 1990 I was spending a lot of time in Barcelona because of my Catalan boyfriend Jordi, this is how I met his friend Eduardo Cortils, a very good artist photographer and poet, Jordi introduced us because he felt that we were working in very similar way at the time, making poetic photo sculptures with existentialist tendencies if that make any sense. My friendship with Eduardo lasted longer than the relationship. He was represented by Visor gallery and often spoke about its director Pep Benlloch, how great he was. Twenty years later Pedro became my student in Farnham, a mature and ambitious student after a career change, he graduated four years ago and is now a fast rising curator, writer, and conference organiser back in Spain and running an MA in photography in Barcelona and also a good friend. Pep Benlloch is still an influential figure on the Spanish photography world and has helped Pedro to launch his new career; they are now close friends and collaborators. This small unassuming catalogue Eduardo gave me twenty years ago is now in Pedro's hand who is pondering about the likelihood of such thing happening,

This strange connection between 4 people and three countries. I wasn't as surprised, simply a great example of the spiraling of life I often talk about. Incidentally as we were pondering the mysteries of life Pep phoned on Pedro's mobile and Koldo Camorro, one of the photographer printed in the catalogue died this week. Spooky or what.... Yet strangely life affirming in the sense that it gave me some kind of certainty of being at the right place at the right time, all the way back then and now. Pedro and I went to see John Baldessari at Tate modern, not the best of show, I always loved his work, how playful and over the top and obsessive his layering and fragmentation of images and texts is but it sometimes went a bit too big and too ambitious. I don't like the didactic and formulaic way most Tate show are curated, really killing the life of most works, though the last installation and most recent work of his, a video relay with a delay creating this very interesting and beautiful trompe l'oeil effect really redeemed it all. As well as the new menu in the Tate members bar, now serving venison in a pot, very small round pot as a kind of a pâté, how post-modern is that, poor venison. *Tuesday 17th November 23:18pm*





Week 8 9

First frost and autumn blues

Atmosphere; wet and wetter. Mood; all time low. News; Dubai is bankrupt the Swiss ban minarets.

-- Once all challenges of this new cycle in my life were overcome and the novelty worn out I plunged into the long forgotten depths of gloom, familiar for sure yet always surprising and difficult to accommodate; like a dark opaque fog descending slowly yet surely on everything I touch, see, think, do, plan, contemplate, say. Sleep is the only relief, plus of course the experience of previous episodes which taught me to lie low and wait for it to end. The negative wisdom that the mind fabricates in the dark emerges with frightening clarity, making it impossible to ignore yet I am reluctant to put it down on paper. A certain impossibility to regroup myself, the more I try the more I disintegrate in thousand pieces. Doubt is everywhere, what I considered as strengths and successes have turned into weaknesses and failure, like my reluctance to progress on the power structures of the various institutions I am evolving in, or my multidisciplinary practice, or double life in between two countries, or my move back to London, ethics and modesty become lack of self esteem.... and on and on. I am smiling writing it all down, noticing the predictability and absurdity of it all. Lying low means getting behind on a few projects I have on the go, giving me even more reasons for dissatisfaction and frustration. The few boxes left to unpack are remaining untouched. -- I think what triggered it this time is going through last year blog entries in order to make THE YEAR vol.3.

Apart from a few highlights and one epiphany, it reads as a marathon of disconnected fragments, continuously jumping from one thing to the next, overcoming constant pressures and commitments, mostly self imposed, and very little depth or continuity to any of it, very little progress to what really matters. This was quite a shocking realisation, if not an obvious one it seems now. It might be time to stop running and dig down a little.

-- On my way back to London last weekend I stopped in Paris for the last weekend event of an interesting research project called 'l'encyclopedie de la parole' - the speech encyclopedia, run by a bunch of artists, writers and musicians, one of them Frederic Danos, a long lost friend I reconnected with last June. They have spent the past few months trying to make sense and nonsense of the act of speaking, based on multiple recorded samples of speeches of all kind, be it political, fictional, philosophical, constructing in the process a method for analysing mainly the form but sometimes the content of any speech act, using a mix of theoretical, scientific, poetical and empirical approach. The result is an interesting collection of collaborative texts, conferences, performances, audio works, a great archive of speech samples of all kind and a fantastic choir where six of them, all men, are conducted by the only female member of the team to recite a few speeches, a short extract from the recent Mesrine film, a few lines from a Jacques Lacan lecture on death, and a short exemple of the famous train of thought of a brilliant France Inter radio presenter. They emphasize rhythm, silences, pace and prosody to great effects, a fantastic project for them to put to the task all their findings as well as their varied skills and interests. It was very inspiring and also a relief to let my head be filled by others words and sounds.

-- For the first time in my life I spent a night in a hotel in Paris, not wanting to impose my current mood on any friends. I also thought that I might find some kind of poetic comfort or existential relief in this new experience, making sure I chose a perfect little hotel in the Marais, quaint and authentic in its fake old fashioned classic French style, the internet is great for that, I got a bargain in the process. Virtuality didn't lie, it lived up to expectation, the room was a bit smaller than expected and funnily enough the 3 men at reception that I saw during my stay were all of North African descent, you can't get more Parisian then that. Yet I didn't manage to live the dream of the distressed artist pondering on the meaning of life in THE existentialist city. Despite the tiny absinth shop next door to the hotel, perfecting the setting and reminding me of Rimbaud and Baudelaire. I did consider starting smoking again and getting high on absinth in my bedroom, silly and absurd thought.

-- Yesterday my mother was selling my BdeM hats at the Christmas market in St Yrieix, I managed to get 34 ready, all unique with label and all, 8 were sold and one given away. At 82 I was slightly worried it might be a bit too much for her, a whole day behind a stall in a big hall, but she loves it, stopping people, chatting and coming up with great lines. Last week when I was there she had a sudden fit of vertigo and had to remain in bed for a couple of days. She was fine about it, even enjoying being looked after by my dad and myself and her grandchildren coming to keep her company. Yet it had a profound effect on us, such a strange and powerful sight, seeing her horizontal, almost as if it happened to remind us that time was running out. Both are very active and in great shape for their age, but it can be taken away any day and it is not likely to happen to both at the same time, one of them will be left behind. We didn't need to talk about it, just a silent acknowledgement that death had sent us a gentle reminder; we have all received it loud and clear. Strangely enough that elevated my mood for a little while.

While my hats were on display in the Limousin I went to the Tate Britain to check out the Turner prize exhibition, a way of still being proactive in my current state, I know Enrico David from the late 80's and 90's, always liked his sense of humour and the way it comes across in his work. Sadly not this time, I was disappointed by his display, it gained in size what it lost in gentle potency and delicate craft, it looked like a collage of various half hearted puns, his recorded text was much more interesting, in parts. My bet is on Lucy Skaer, poetic, thoughtful, generous, conceptual yet sensual display. Or Richard Wright beautiful and ephemeral drawings. Roger Hiorns is way to post-modern and anal even for my liking, the atomised plane engine is a powerful concept but strangely not in its actualisation. Once again the idea in his video is a great one but I wish he were more generous with what he is given us to look at. *Sunday 6th December 9.35pm*





Bile M
hat collection

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

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Week 10 11 Pilgrimage

Atmosphere; snow and icy wind. Mood; fair and rising hopefully. News; Copenhagen climate summit mobilised 1200 limos and 140 private planes.

-- The only thing I do remember clearly from the mad whirlwind of the past two weeks is the gale force icy wind piercing multiple layers of clothing and fat to reach my bones. So much so that we could only manage a 40 minutes walk after more than two hours drive from London to Dungeness. It had been over three years since I hadn't undertaken my ritual visit to what I call the end of England, the waves passing you by, boats lining on a sea of pebbles, the black wooden cottages, the newer crappy ones, the two light houses and of course the power station standing proud in the background. Last time I came it was with Joachim to show him the boats on the pebbles, reminding me of his big boat sculpture on the ground of Die Station in Austria. We still reminisce about the delicious crab we brought back to London. This time Guido came with me, I wanted to show him what I considered to be true Englishness at its best and I thought he would understand and appreciate the strange power this place has. He didn't take seriously my advice to wrap up well; mind you this is the coldest I have ever been there, yet people were still rod fishing in the rough sea. We took refuge in this new strange addition to the landscape, a gift shop selling all kind of new age bits and pieces with a flashing orange neon light you can see from afar declaring the shop open. Such an odd place to set up business, I had to ask the gothic looking woman behind the counter. She has been there two years, moving down from London, like many others. 'Everybody keeps to themselves and the townies do not mix with the fishermen' she said very matter of factly, not seeing it as a problem. She had never heard of the two other people I know who live 500 yards from her. Business was slow in winter but she proudly added that she was happy that day, having just had two groups passing through her shop spending eighty quid.

We took refuge in the Falcon pub sitting by the fire in front of deliciously fresh plates of fish and chips and glasses of Guinness, comparing our differing opinions of what he calls finding the right 'one', and the impermanence of such feeling. Not that I think it impossible to find the right 'one', more that the definition of what constitute such being is for ever evolving and changing, as much as we are each evolving and changing, as such it needs to be constantly re-assessed. I am not too sure Guido got my point, anyway he has everything required to succeed in his quest, a great mind, good looks, charm and he is great company. Being 15 years older I have a different perspective on the matter. The old fisherman I used to buy my crabs from has retired, his son is now fishing and his daughter selling but I couldn't find her place. Luckily the fish shop up the road was still open when we left, and we could drive back to London accompanied with the fishy smell of cooked crab and fresh scallops.

-- I managed to squeeze in a visit to the Whitechapel Gallery to check up the Sophie Calle exhibition, as it will finish before I come back from France. 'Take care of yourself' is a wonderful experiment, the reading and interpretation by one hundred women of a break up letter Sophie Calle received, each bringing their own flavour and interpretation to a typically and hilariously pompous, hypocritical, egotistical yet poignant letter. I still do not know who the man is, a literary figure for sure, but I do hope he has seen the exhibition, this is the best possible punishment and the artist best possible revenge, a fantastic gesture.



Not that I am one for personal revenge but bringing this letter to the public sphere and sharing it with all these other women is a brilliant way of neutralising the personal history by making it so universal via this peculiar form of collective gestalt therapy. I have always liked her work but not all projects are as spot on as this one. -

-- The rest of my time and energy has been occupied with the mad and stressing mess at work, no budget left for next semester, no explanation given, once again we are expected to cope, third years working hard trying to finish their projects in time for assessment this week, resources and facilities overstretched, I have luckily managed to find enough space for 53 of them to display their work, having to beg and be pushy, as if I was asking for the moon. Anyway it is now all over, the assessing and the marking, some great pieces but so many mediocre ones lacking any critical engagement, energy, or ambition or work which are so subjective and self indulgent that it is hard to find anything to say. We are seeing the effects of 2 years of chaos and cutbacks and unmanageable student numbers and workload, yet everybody seems surprised.

- Snow and icy roads are creating havoc again, weather warning, university closing, and power cuts... I can never understand what is it with England and weather changes, so useless at coping. Once more the forecast for Farnham was wrong, the snow storms never materialised, I left early to make sure I would not get stuck on the motorway and funnily enough that has been my shortest journey back ever, 50 minutes instead of the usual 1 1/2 hour. Tomorrow I am off to France; Christmas will soon be over, hopefully this cycle of winter blues too. I discovered a drink I am glad I didn't know before, Sloe Gin, absolutely delicious and heart warming and comforting and uplifting thanks to the sharpness of the Gin. *Friday 18th December 23.14pm*



W I N T E R

Week 12

Merry and stuck

Atmosphere; merry and foggy. Mood; merry and happily stuck. News; Jesus is born...again

-- Bad weather created more havoc than I thought. So much so that I ended up spending Christmas in London and getting to France a week later than planned. Eurostar trains couldn't cope with the difference of temperature inside and out of the tunnel, ending up remaining stuck in it, 5 of them for 16 hours; passengers left in the dark without water and food nor information on what was happening; just thinking of it sends shivers down my spine. I was somewhat luckier, due to travel the next day, finding out an hour before leaving home, suitcase ready full of gifts that all services were suspended.

I remained waiting for a couple of days not knowing what to do, information given by phone being very different from what I was hearing on the news or reading on the internet. I was finally told on the 21st that Eurostar couldn't guarantee me a seat before Christmas and that I should make my own way there, my ticket will be reimbursed of course. It is a very strange feeling in today's world of global communication to be literally stuck somewhere as urban as London. Airports were also closed, harbours too, all because of severe weather conditions, yet the most I have seen is ten centimeters of snow for a couple of days. The English were quick to blame the French and the weather conditions across the channel, The French blaming Eurostar, Eurostar blaming Eurotunnel, I personally blame Sarkozy, who else...





I was OK, I was home and had plenty to occupy myself but hundreds were left stranded at stations on both side of the channel. On the 22nd, under pressure from Eurostar to give up hope and ticket, I did and had to pay £150 for a flight to Paris on the 26th and resolved myself to spend Christmas in London. It is only then that I received an email from customer services saying that service was resuming the next day and that they might be able to get me on a train, strictly on first come first serve basis, advising me to get there as early as possible to ensure I would travel. I decided to count my losses and not trust them.

-- Beside I was really enjoying this extra time in London. It gave me a chance to finish up university work, marking and assessing first semester projects and preparing timetables of semester 2, an interesting juggling act, considering the limited amount of funding and teaching hours I am given to run the last semester of 55 graduating students, when complaining, I am simply told that I can't get what I want, as if my desires had anything to do with it. It was the first chance I had to really enjoy London and my flat since I moved back in September, so busy has it all been underneath the dark cloak of my winter blues, which has finally lifted up; it is not bright sunshine yet but the apathy and unease has gone. So I am trying to cram in these few extra days all the good time I can, meeting up with Ela whom I hadn't seen for 2 years, Karen who gave me a wonderful shiatsu massage, she definitely has the touch, Roz and Petri for an afternoon in the Lido Spa, Carole and Eli to see Avatar in 3D, not as shallow as I thought it would be.

We tried to go to the IMAX, my birthday treat to Eli but it was sold out for the next 2 months, the effect was still incredible on a normal screen, the difference between virtuality and reality quickly forgotten, and the details of the Fauna truly beautiful. Catching Michael Hanecke White Ribbons at the Curzon Mayfair the next day with Richard and Jochen was also an experience; such a powerful piece of film making and storytelling, a period piece shot in black and white, absolutely no music, yet you felt like you were completely in it, I could feel, weighing a ton on my shoulders, the stifling and oppressing hand of small town puritanism, the three of us did let out a huge sigh of relief as the film ended. There is also a subtext of who done it? Which never quite get resolved and days later, flashbacks of images and bits of dialogues retrospectively become crucial clues. The atmosphere and content of the film was in stark contrast with the luxurious and spacious genuine 70's style deco of the cinema itself, kept in pristine conditions marble toilets included, in stark contrast also with the area itself.

I rarely walk around these parts of town where new and old money are so proudly and unashamedly in harmony, absolutely no sign of the current economic climate. I walked from Sloane square to Mayfair, via Sloane St, Hyde park corner and the back streets of the Hilton, my eyes taking it all in with equal amount of wonder and horror; shop windows full of glitzy and skimpy clothes for high class whores and princesses alike, it was hard to tell, equally lacking style or class, few opulent men gazing at it all in wonder, few mature women grazing the displays with touchy fingers; Harvey Nichols windows spilling out crystal chandeliers, silver and gold and decadence, reminiscent of pre-war Berlin nightlife, uncannily appropriate and surely intentional; fur and cashmere coated men and women on their marathon Christmas shopping, loaded like camels with equal amounts of designer label bags on each side, Chanel, Yves St Laurent, Burberry, D&G, Gucci.... The total cost of one-person load probably reaching close to my annual income. I played with the idea of snatching a few loads, not out of envy but out of a desire for sabotage and the urge to unsettle the air of blasé confidence that they all have in common.

-- I spent Christmas eve at Roz's, and Paul, being merry, singing around the piano, listening to Paul's great selection of dub step and other tunes, including alternative Christmas carols, drinking Champagne, Cava and Pit whisky from the isle of Sky, looking at photos of their summer visit to St Yrieix, discussing with Kyle and Angus their ambition for the future, amazed at how wise they are at 16, others joined in later on, more singing and exchange of gifts. My homemade Kamut bread and Corn bread worked very well I thought and were well appreciated. Finishing in the early hours of the morning with a bit of Danish storytelling from a distant voice with the sweetest Scottish accent. A few hours later Jochen came for Sunday lunch, crossing London on his flashy yellow bike, a menu of foie gras, Mont d'or cheese cooked in the oven served with potatoes and smoked sausages, and a Tartatin. The sun was shining; the mood was good, not exactly a traditional one but a perfect Christmas courtesy of Eurostar...

I am now finally in St Yrieix, writing these words before joining the rest of the family tonight for a postponed celebration and the occasion for us all to welcome for the first time for a family meal Murielle and Clement, the respective sweethearts of my nephew and niece, Florent and Amandine, both very nervous, knowing full well what is in store in terms of worn out family jokes and stories in dire need of new ears... *Monday 28th December 22.38pm*





Week 13 14 Snow and falling

Atmosphere; snow and ice. Mood; stuck again and spectacular fall. News; Happy New Year. Eric Robmer didn't make it.

-- I am stuck once more, this time on the other side of my double life, weather conditions in the Limousin and in England were so bad a couple of days ago that my flight was cancelled, the low cost plane arriving from Stanstead to drop a load of humans in exchange for another, was diverted to Bordeaux, and we were all left stranded. I managed to jump the queue of confused passengers to re-book for next Sunday, I am not proud of it, but sometimes you need to act fast. I made amend by arranging a taxi to Limoges train station for a couple of older ladies and helping them to make alternative arrangements, one had to get to Norwich, the other to Edinburgh. I managed to catch a small train back to St Yrieix, my family once informed was so happy to have me around for a few more days. Not sure I shared the feeling, I was looking forward to get back to London. I was trying to ponder on the meaning of it all; bad weather once again disrupting life, as we know it and me being stuck twice in a row. I had shut down my home here, the fridge was empty, shutters closed, not much I wanted to do or needed doing and I was missing a diner at Natasha's by the fire, Eva's birthday in Brighton on Saturday and meeting up with the future head of photography in Farnham. Plus one or two crucial deadlines and the prospect of furthering a new exciting connection.

-- When the train arrived in St Yrieix, after a 40 minutes ride spent readjusting and texting here and the UK to inform those who needed to know that I was stuck again and delayed, something quite spectacular happened, I had the fall of my life, a backpack with my two laptops on my back and my usual suitcase on my right hand, my left foot somehow slipped backward on the first step, about one meter high, I flew in the air, I saw it all in perfect slow motion, landing heavily on my bent knees first, bouncing headfirst on my right cheekbone before my hands managed to touch and scrape the icy concrete platform too late to protect any part of me.

Bag and suitcase went flying; my glasses too after leaving a perfect round indent on my nose and right cheek. The pain was excruciating. I instantly thought I had broken something so I rolled on my back, legs in the air and tried to bend my knees and my elbows and my neck. I had been the first one off the train, now all four in the air, I noticed all the faces of the passengers still in the train staring at me stunned, not able to move for about 30 seconds, which was even more scary than the thought of having hurt myself badly. I could move everything, there was no blood but I was in shock, shaking all over, not being able to move either, a woman finally came down and tried to help, the station master, his assistant and the train controller followed, they all helped me up and gathered my stuff while I was standing there wavering in pain and shock, incapable of moving. I could now feel blood trickling down my legs but was amazed that nothing was broken. The station people kept on saying that they were not responsible for my fall, there was no ice on the steps, they kept on repeating this while carrying me back to the station office. My computers are ok, my glasses are unusable, badly out of shape and scratched. I ended up in ER, X-rays showed no fractures, they said I had been very lucky. Two days later I walk like a penguin and have a black eye and a half with dark bags under my eyes, the pain in my bruised and scarred knees is bearable but my lower back is stuck. I am wondering even more what is the meaning of it all; being stuck twice plus a spectacular fall from a train. These are strong signs, or tests perhaps; of what though?

-- The snow makes everything looks so beautiful and peaceful, I have rarely seen so much in the region. Last weekend I went to Bergerac to see Nico and Roman, a long overdue visit to my godsons who lost their mother, my dear friend Kathy last year. They are small men now, both taller than me at 17 and 14, sweet and musty smell of sweat mixed with rising level of testosterone, yet they still demand a lot of cuddling which I am very happy to provide, and they do hug, stroke, play fight and groom each other quite naturally, which is very sweet to see. They are really flourishing and healing well, I am both amazed and proud of them, they show such maturity and resilience, having had to radically change their life in such a brutal way only 18 months ago. They will be coming to London for a few days in March or April, my Christmas present to both of them, I can't help remembering their previous visits with their mother and I hope I can make us forget her absence, and also show them as much patience as she did.... We were all staying in the beautiful wooden house of her sister Dominique and her partner Norbert, Dominique really looks like her and has similar expressions and gestures, it really startled me often and I was wondering how the boys felt about that, hoping it was a comfort to them, they seem very close to her.

-- On the way back from my weekend there I got stuck by a freak snow storm in the middle of nowhere on a Sunday night, within 15 minutes all was white and the roads difficult to use. I had to phone for help, not sure what to do, being worried of ending in a ditch. My brother in law advised to deflate my front tires counting up to ten on each side and to give it a go. Strong on his advice and encouragements, I started on the last 30 kms of my journey on small roads thick with snow still falling heavily, big flakes hypnotising me with their constant and regular bouncing on the windscreens, going extra slow, listening to a Nathalie Sarraute play on the radio, a beautiful man's voice punctuated by the loud rhythm of my wipers, my Lumix camera in video mode stuck in between the wheel and the glass recording it all, enchanted moment.

So much so that I forgot to keep close ones informed of my progress and worried of not having any news and my phone not responding for lack of signals, they decided to come and rescue me. Half an hour later my camera unknowingly recorded the flare of their 4x4 headlights on the other side of the road. We didn't recognise each other. I am a lucky woman. It took me another week before I could get back to the UK, having to cough up an extra two hundred pounds to get back via Paris, flying to Luton. *Tuesday 12th January 22.34pm*





Week 15 16 Deep intellectual lust

Atmosphere; usual January muck. Mood; changing like the wind. News; Haiti has collapsed the rest of the world pretends to care.

--- I am here and I am here and I am here, grounded, at ease, finally feeling at home thanks to the various weather induced delays of the past few weeks. As of course after all the trouble and expense of trying to get back here in one piece and in time for work, I was stuck at home for another 2 days, the university being closed due to severe weather warning, because of a few drops of snow and a bit of cold weather, health and safety regulations gone absolutely mental... We had 70 students waiting to be assessed. We had to beg and put pressure on the powers in place to let us access the facilities. They made it so difficult that you would have easily thought that we were at war and this was occupied territory. Followed an incredibly demanding two days marathon of looking, discussing and marking work, 35 per day in front of the whole second year. To make things worse I had to be in 2 places at once on the last day, assessing as well as looking after and organising the day of our external examiner, coming to moderate first semester third and second year work. Once more chaos was created by lack of communication and the careless attitude of some and their reliance on me to save the day, no apologies or appreciation shown, not that it would make much difference.

-- Anyway I survived and was rewarded by the unexpected visit for a week of Ian Stephen, a coast guard, sailor, poet, storyteller from the Hebrides who came down for an intensive period of team building, comparing works and sharing stories in preparation for a collaborative project we have started to develop for 2011. He has invited me to respond to two traditional Gaelic folk tales he has been putting on paper for his next book project. The outcome will be shown in Lewis and other places, with possibilities to work in various medium, book form, performance, exhibition and to get the local population involved somehow. He seems to have been given great freedom by the gallery and Scottish arts council, which means that we have very little limitation. His arrival was preceded by a package of samples of his published works and documentation of his visual artwork. I was seduced by his writing. He has a very sharp yet poetic eye, his prose is direct and minimal, short pieces and short sentences going straight to the point, you rarely see it before you reach it, yet once you are there you wonder how you could have missed it. I also relate to his collaborative ambitions which are close to mine in the way he tries to create conceptual and productive structures so that others may get involved and explore a common idea. What I have tried to do lately with the Jeux de bouches and the Once upon Time event. His creative and collaborative ambitions remind me of what Joachim Eckl is doing in Neufelden with Die Station. And how as artists they are both actively involved in and significant pillars of their local community. Ian with various public sailing projects, trying to cultivate and maintain a certain ancient sailing and boating tradition. So far I have found it fascinating to exchange with someone whose practice is so rooted in culture and tradition.

I am also looking forward to apply my tools and my tricks to someone else's stories for a change, seeing it as an interesting way to decentralise my practice. It is also a challenge, all the stories he has told me so far are powerful and very evocative yet they also feel very alien and exotic in the way they do relate so much to a land and a place which I do not know and where the forces of nature play such a big role, the sea, the wind, the tides, and man's entire existence is ruled by it, in awe and in fear. The legends I was fed by Ian felt as if not more exotic than Scheherazade thousand and one night's stories.

I compared ourselves to Echo and Narcissus in our differing ways of using language and storytelling; he tells it as it is told to him, and I tell it as I am experiencing it or seen it through my own eyes. Yet we could see some of the other also in what we are each doing. There was also much cooking and eating involved, his fish soup is unbeatable, the best I have tried, it was a pleasure to observe him inspect the five or six fishmongers in Brixton market before he could make up his mind on what mix of fishy ingredients to use in order to achieve a perfect mix of texture, taste and quality, a man who knows what he is talking about. He was impressed by both how fresh and reasonably priced it all was. Observing the chef at work was another treat; I think I would know now how to build up a good fish stock. The result was incredibly tasty and subtle.

-- He has now gone back to the sunshine of the Hebrides, yes it is sunny and mild up there right now. I am pleased with the prospect of our collaboration, as well as the friendship we have developed and the level of natural intimacy we seem to have reached. It all looks highly promising and in such contrast to what we have both experienced at the London Art fair. A few of the most happening contemporary art galleries were there, yet I did find it hard to recognise the Art from the predictable packaging and the artists from the dealers. It all looked so contrived and predictable and beautifully safe. Mind you it did make me see Damien Hirst for what he represents, the Andy Warhol of the 21st century, as clever, as commercial, as appetising, yet slightly more cynical perhaps. Warhol was celebrating the icons of consumerism, Hirst is concentrating on the remains and the leftovers, reconditioning them in silver and gold and diamonds. The photography project on the top floor stunk of nepotism, neither doing favor to the selectors or the artists chosen or to contemporary photography. The only one that stood out from it all is Nigel Shafran and his five images of domestic kitchen sink, simple, modest and beautiful work. Another surprise and jewel, especially in the context of an art fair was the exhibition of archive photographs of various atomic bomb tests and other related subjects by a young American dealer going under the name of ORDINARY-LIGHT; all together beautiful and frightening to look at, thus reaching a certain sublime quality,

in such contrast with most of the chocolate box aesthetic of the majority of the work in the fair. We spoke at length to the young dealer, another great story teller full of passion and knowledge for his work which consists of building various unwanted or overlooked archive of historical photographs. I am inviting him to give a talk in Farnham.

-- Meanwhile the medias are full of full on images of the Haiti disaster, as Eamon McCabe, picture editor of the guardian said on the radio 4 this morning, ' if we don't then people will not respond generously to the appeal'. The saddest and most outrageous thing is that nobody challenged him on that affirmation, neither the journalist or the other guests on the program. Yet one woman rightly asked whether we would be so hungry for disaster images if they were taken closer to home? I am wondering if unconsciously we feel relieved by seeing evidence of far away horrors, perhaps thinking that if it happens there it cannot happen here. *Monday 25th January 21.37pm*





Week 17 18

Life is a spiral

Atmosphere; usual early February mild. Mood; grounded with occasional vertigo. News; Chilcott enquiry reveals little we didn't know Tony Blair would do it all over again.

I am still here and here and here, feeling grounded at last, able to spend a whole day working on one project, no desire to fidget, no need to move about. I am finally feeling grounded and focused, I am catching up fast with the piles waiting to be dealt with for 3 or 4 months; Ballade n1 and n2 are documented and archived and video clips online, the 2 short videos Brief encounter 1 and 2 are finally re-edited, looking and sounding perfect, if I may say so, with Jurg Frey soundtrack, The YEAR vol3 is ready for print, meanwhile it is available as a PDF to download from the website. The only thing left on my list is to edit the sequel to Bohemian trip. I have formalised my ideas regarding possible (artistic) ways of reconnecting with Morocco, my place of birth left behind in 1974; I did present these ideas to Sean Williams at the British Council, we worked together on a mad exchange of young women photographers between Jeddah and Farnham in 2005, he is now starting to develop possible projects in North Africa. It seems that my proposal could fit very well with his ideas; it starts to feel like Morocco is getting much closer suddenly. Besides it felt very good and positive to present my recent work around the idea of the ballad and the parallel I make between walking and writing/reading.

-- The only itch is that one of my external hard drive, the one containing all my master videos and photographs has crashed unexpectedly, ironically as I was trying to back it up on another drive; it is now asking me to re-initialise. I am hoping to find a way to retrieve all files, refusing to get too stressed about it or to think of the consequences of losing all, the equivalent of my studio burning down with all its content, reminding me that I did this summer lose most of my studio's content in St Yrieix, 'stolen' by members of the local (political) mafia, they prefer the term intelligentsia. The only other itch to these happy and productive times is the fact that I suddenly developed what is allegedly called Benign positional vertigo or Meyer syndrome yesterday, I was in Farnham, 11am crossing the long corridor to get myself a bottle of water before starting my lecture on Narrative, when I found myself on my knees by the drink machine, overcome by incredible dizziness and drunkenness, I thought low blood pressure or sugar levels, went outside in the cold air, drank water, to no effect, it was getting worse. I ended up a few hours later in Guildford A&E being tested for all kinds of potential diseases until it was decided that it was BPV, no explanation given, the doctor was surprised it hadn't happened to me before considering the strength of the fit and simply said that it could last a day or a few months, sent me off with travel sickness tablets and an emergency appointment with an ear specialist. I am fine as long as I don't move my head up and down or left to right, if I do everything starts spinning. It is apparently due to something becoming displaced in the inner ear, I am wondering if my spectacular fall of a few weeks ago has anything to do with it. Anyway it is not life threatening, but slowing me down and bringing back to my mind uneasy memories of times when my body was out of control and a battleground.

-- The spinning of life, spiraling away, ascending of descending I am not sure. These past two weeks have brought back once more a few faces from the past and a reconnection with Brixton nightlife. I went to The Grovesnor's pub with Petri for Gordon's 50th and 2 others birthday bash, with djs and three bands playing in the back room. I had heard of it and it stays open until 5am, the back room is complete with stage, lighting and good sound system and used by many obscure bands, some great, some less great.

Grey's of Test Department fame was playing with a bunch of great mature and weathered musicians, recognisable from other bands, he has become a great crooner, suiting him to the bone, doing his own and other great bluesy, blue grassy, jazzy cover songs, with another young female singer with a great voice but to my liking way too bouncy and fresh and innocent to bring the required amount of live grit and luscious decadence to the songs. Then a fantastic and mad band from Wales called Sick Note, full on, racy, dubby, crazy, dancy, dirty, irreverent and very potent, they kept on going and going. The middle band was a woman punk ensemble with the great name of Velvet Underpants doing the usual punkish cover songs. Fantastic crowd, the usual potent Brixton mix of all ages, all styles, all cultures, all eager and experienced at having a good time. Anyway the first person I bumped into is Rod Morris, a photographer with whom I studied at Sir John Cass in the late 80's, last I saw of him was probably 12 15 years ago, he is now a documentary maker and has triplets. Then I bumped into Glenn, Nina's partner, both best friend of Andrew Moon, my partner for a few years in the early 90's, I left him when having children started to be part of the plan. I haven't seen Glenn or Nina since we all went to Egypt together in 1996 and I have lost touch with Andrew perhaps a decade ago. I was shocked to find out that he was the happy father of three. It felt so weird to have these two completely disconnected flashbacks of past life within an hour of each other and all connected to Gordon who is an old friend of both Rod and Glenn and Nina. It felt good actually, reinforcing the choices I made instinctively all these years ago, not able to imagine myself as a mother of three today, very happy with my lot and to be there with friends partying away.

Tomorrow Katy Bauer, another old friends from the past, she went to live in South Africa fifteen years ago, I have only seen here once since for her wedding in the Uk, is coming to spend the weekend with me, she is now living in Bristol with husband and daughter, speaking on the phone it felt like we had seen each other only yesterday and at least our voices and our words haven't aged a bit. *Friday 5th February 22.27pm*





Week 19 20 Fish and organised love

Atmosphere; post valentine spring. Mood; fair with occasional highs. News; Gordon Brown shade a tear on chat show the election campaign has started, sadly.

-- Katy has been and gone, we met at the SPEAKING OUT conference at Tate modern, bringing together artists who use language in their practice, including Caroline Burgvall, Brandon La Belle, Trevor Wishart, David Toop and Tomori Adachi who started the event, with composed and improvised vocal works, in and out and between languages, using similar real time processes that I use but managing to integrate them better than I have so far, by controlling it all with a customised glove and hand gestures, allowing for a more integrated body, voice, technology experience. I was impressed and slightly envious, being aware of that possibility for a while but not having managed to achieve it for all kind of reasons, mainly financial ones but perhaps also by lack of commitment to the idea, being already so fragmented between different mediums and projects; Jane of many trades and master of none. Well this is my excuse and I am sticking to it for now, or until I manage to find a way of not being stuck behind my computer to activate VILMA and VALTER, my two interactive and virtual body extensions. Tomori Adachi was the best of the whole conference, and the more alive too. The rest was way too academic and analytical for my liking, even such people like Caroline Burgvall and Brandon Labelle whose work I like and respect, got lost in trying to be too clever,

perhaps too flippant an explanation but talking to others, we were not the only one of that opinion. Brandon tried to subject us to his inner voice via a long and silent PowerPoint monologue/rant on the subject, a great idea in itself which started well but quickly lost us in the sense that it assumed that we would follow and obey it, completely ignoring the possibility of provoking a subversive response in the form of our own inner voice competing with or challenging his. What followed was quite interesting and very funny, a few of us were voicing quietly the rude and flippant responses of our impatient inner self to Brandon clever but narrow minded reflection on the existence and purpose of his inner voice. I didn't have a chance to discuss it with him later on, Katy and I had enough and decided to do our own speaking out in the Members bar. I did have high expectation of this conference, really enjoying the book of the same name edited by Cathy Lane who also curated the event, but in the end it was highly disappointing and uninspiring apart from Tomori Adachi and Trevor Wishart of course.

The next day once I had brought Katy up to date with my current work with language, voice and interactive technology, it was life affirming hearing her praise and compare my efforts to what we had seen and heard at the Tate, saying that I had nothing to envy them; except I argued the fact that they have been chosen and immortalised in print to officially represent the best in their field by the artistic and in this case academic establishment. This lead to the endless debate about what makes good art and bad art and the pros and cons of the system and how to best operate within it. I do not have the answer. I have been navigating the waters of Academia and the Art world for the past fifteen or so years, I am not against it, working with and alongside the ones who are at the forefront and shaping it, with mutual respect in most cases, yet never wanting to be completely part of it, needing to keep a certain distance to allow me complete freedom of action, a poor excuse perhaps, but rarely also having been solicited to represent it at top level. The two perhaps being connected.

-- Anyway what followed was much more creative and interesting, two middle age women artists catching up and comparing notes on work, love, relationships, sex, children, ageing.... with endless bouts of laughing and remembering our past and youth together. Katy doesn't look a day over 30, amazing figure, perfect skin, a radiant smile, the same spark in her eyes, and her mind is as sharp and irreverent as ever. I did feel slightly envious, feeling that gravity and time had affected me much more than her at least on the surface... She confessed working at it a bit and being partial to a bit of cosmetic work. She thought that perhaps it was pay back time, remembering how envious and slightly frustrated her chubby self was two decades ago when we lived together, at my care free attitude and lack of self consciousness in the way I looked, flaunting it happily, walking around in the nude or sprawled naked in the stairs, legs up on the banister, a cigarette in one hand, talking on the phone. I laughed at this image, which doesn't ring true at all, not the way I remember myself, funny how personal histories are created. We talked and talked and laughed and laughed, went dancing in Brixton for Carole 50th birthday, great to see it all through Katy's fresh eyes, my ageing extended family that is, still dancing away and being merry, we all know each other for 15 years or more, we are now joined by a few grown ups offspring and their partners, most of us are close to 50, a few well over, some already grandparents. I had a small shock, small reality check, not having met them altogether for over 3 years, while away from London; we are definitely not spring chickens anymore, it is official.

-- Tow days later skipper, poet, storyteller and fantastic cook Ian visited again from the Hebrides, so that we put down on paper our storytelling project together. It has a name now 'Is a thing lost... if you know where it is'; a voyage through the Hebrides, following the trail of local sea legends connecting one island to the next, starting on the Isle of Lewis, from Brittany all the way up to Iceland, via Shetland, Orkney, Mull and a few others whose Gaelic names still elude my memory. At each port of call a gallery will be the home of a site specific telling of each story by two different kind of storyteller, inspired by the classical myth of Echo and Narcissus;



Ian Stephen, a teller of traditional stories who seems to be closer to Echo, He can only repeat what he has heard; myself as the narcissistic artist who has to experience, see, touch, smell it first, finding it impossible to break free from seeing herself in the story. These roles are not set in stones and often glide from one to the other. There are also recurring motives, ensuring continuity and flux from one place to the next, from one story to the next. It was an intense week of highly creative input, organising the project as a whole, each partner institution but also contributing local artists, but foremost the site specific and medium specific conceptual telling of each story; both of us really enjoying working abstractly on paper, inspired by the content of each story but also by the cultural, geographical and technical specificity of the host island and institution. Our two minds egging each other on yet always one ready to intervene when things were getting confusing or out of hand in terms of logistic or budget.

We spent a fair bit of time doing this at Paulo's, the fantastic Portuguese café around the corner from mine, ideal setting for think tank activity, looked after by lovely Ruiz and Raoul for regular coffee breaks and the occasional bottle of wine with olives too. All proposals have now been sent to all partners, confirmed and prospective one, we are waiting for feedback. It is a big and long project, starting in February 2011 and hopefully concluding 2 years later, depending on what happens with the international partners, in France Ireland and Iceland. There are still some funding and management issues but I truly excited at the prospect of applying my tools to something entirely new as well as discovering new territories and cultures, completely alien to me. Working with Ian is proving very enjoyable and highly productive, our egos feeling at ease with one another so far. I am thankful too, for this great opportunity he has put my way. I am hoping to visit Lewis around Easter.

-- We celebrated anti Valentine together, with Karen, James and Hu Dong. An amazing fish feast, all cooked by Ian of course, fried squids and whiting, fish soup and lightly roasted filets of hake with onions and leeks. I was in charge of salads and desert, a Tartatin, upside down apple pie with caramel. I had made for the occasion a pile of special napkins, each one adorned with a rude comment written with thick black marker. The effect was hilarious yet highly effective; great way to break the ice, they didn't know each other and all eager to make good impression on each other; Hu Dong and Ian are both poet and great cooks, Karen and Ian have links with Scotland, and actually found out that they have friends in common... James and Hu Dong are avid collectors of all kinds, not just junk; James and Ian share a similar quirky and rude sense of humour, not always appreciated. I knew they would get on somehow but I never enjoy being a host so the napkins did the trick and within ten minutes they were calling each other all kinds of names; sweet bloody fuck, you tart you, get the fuck out of my heart, drips of smelly rotten egg, dirty cunt, old fart..... Ok quite basic and not very sophisticated but much more real than all the organised romantic drivel seen in shop windows for the occasion such as the buckets of '5 pounds' roses in Sainsbury's bought in last minute panic by countless hopeful if not romantic men. *Monday 22nd February 15.48pm*



Week 21 22 Spring is in the air

Atmosphere; chilly yet sunny. Mood; stressed but high. News; Tory deputy chairman Lord Ashcroft is a non dom but not a tax evader

-- Birds are starting to sing again even before dawn sometimes, bringing a certain lightness to the atmosphere despite the persisting bitter cold weather, daffodils are showing their pointy green heads everywhere you look, and the sun is shining gloriously. Hope is in the air. Last week in France I saw the cranes coming back from the south, in their hundreds; you do hear them way before you see them, a loud and un-harmonious noise, a sort of collective sarcastic laugh contrasting with the grace of their perfectly choreographed formation flight. It is really early for summer migration, did they get it wrong or do they know something we don't. My week in France went smoothly despite the freak weather with April showers, thunderstorms and a very big storm crossing France, big enough to be named Cynthia, which hit the Limousin at the exact time of my scheduled return to London. How unlucky is that, it would have been the third consecutive time that the weather disrupted my travels back and forth between my two homes. Luckily the wind managed to slow down for an hour or two, allowing the plane to land and take off again at Limoges airport. The storm hit us around 3am and was really impressive.

-- We have a new exhibition at the centre of artist's books 'Atlas, maps and plans. Topography, Toponyms, territories'; a beautifully designed exhibition I have to say, with some fantastic works from Art & Language, Marcel Broodthaers, Wim Delvoye, Robert Filliou, Daniel Spoerri, Eric Watier, Hubert Renard and many others.... Also a timely one for me providing fantastic research material and inspiration for my storytelling collaboration project with Ian Stephen, 'Is a thing lost if you know where it is' where we are sailing from story to story from Brittany all the way to Iceland, via the Hebrides, Ireland and the Faeroes, all kinds of mapping will be involved. I do sometimes wonder why I am keeping a job there, it is not good money, what I have to do is not always interesting, my time and energy could be put to much better use on my own projects and self promotion. On the other hand, it is a great place, full of beautiful and rare works, and the best place to develop my knowledge and critical appreciation of book art, and of course being part of a worthwhile project. Being there for such short time means that I have to make difficult choices on how to spend my little free time, between catching up with family, friends, and keeping some precious time away from it all, to reflect upon current projects in development. And I am always treated very well, amazing food, champagne three times in a week, chocolate treat... It always feels too much in the end but how can I complain.

-- I am currently in the train on my way up to Scotland for 5 days, meeting up with Ian and a few other people and places involved in the project, in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Inverness and the borders. No time to go to Lewis but this is all very exciting and I can't remember how long it has been since I last visited, at least seven years. I haven't had time to contact the few remaining friends I have there, beside we have a packed schedule already and I am hoping to have a bit of free time to enjoy it all and relax a bit, at least a day. It has been a gruesome week, very busy and hectic, with three long consecutive teaching days peppered with numerous other meetings. Some of it very exciting. I am finalizing the bookRoom press equipment list, having hundred thousand pounds to play with, not often I can say that, funding Richard and I worked on and secured to set up production facilities for our research cluster.

So that we can make in house small runs of high quality image, graphic or text based book works; from a digital press, to the best scanning and reprographic equipment, and all kind of electrical cutting and binding machines. So that by this summer, once I have had training on it all others and I can start using the facilities and make books. Also the connection between the library and bookroom is finally alive, from this week our collection is being catalogued and digitized and will be moved to the Library so that it can be made available to all. An internship has been created for one of our third year student interested in Archiving and Library work, every year in semester 2 a student will be updating and archiving our growing collection as well as looking after our website. After 6 years of sheer struggling in the dark and little support from the university, the bookroom is finally growing roots and branches and ready to expand. I have just seen the sea! Dark grey sea under a dark grey sky of Berwick upon Tweed, Scotland here I come. *Saturday 6th March 16.35pm*



Week 23 Scottish delight

Atmosphere; mild and sunny. Mood; fair. News; Lehman brothers were fiddling their accounts for at least 6 years before their collapse.

-- A packed five days of Scottish delicacies for all senses, starting from award winning Cullen skink, smoked haddock soup, in a small pub as soon as I got off the train in Edinburgh, served with a smooth whisky to deal with a menacing cold bothering my throat and sinuses; time to catch up with Ian and finalise our tight and exciting schedule together; then Shetland poetry reading at the university for the end of a conference on the same subject; most of it was music to my ear as I couldn't understand much, one word in five perhaps, but I loved the rolling R's and soft melodic accent. I am wondering why or what in the Scottish isles produces so many poets and such good poetry, the landscape surely, and a great oral tradition of storytelling perhaps, or is it great whisky and not much else to do... joke. I have to be careful what I write. We then went to the borders, our base for the next three nights, staying with the Laws, Pat and Andy and their two daughters Kirsty and Mairi, in their wonderful home, an old farm building in the middle of rolling hills still covered with snow, just starting to melt after four months of solid whiteness, their cross country skies are still outside the front door. Andy is an architect and has constructed further up the hill 2 great purpose built artists studios, Heriot Toun studios, one for Pat, a painter by trade and the other to hire out to artists and musicians, many contemporary Scottish bands rehearse and record there.

Pat's studio definitely made me envious, and I took a few notes for the hypothetical day when I will be able to design my own. She will take part in our project making work on Chinese whispers, a concept she has explored extensively in her 'seven short sails' collaborative project. Their welcoming was amazing, much talking and eating and drinking and a great walk. One evening we ate wild mussels cooked with cream and much to my surprise I almost broke my teeth on pearls, small beautiful grey mussel pearls, I never knew mussels had pearls, by the end of the meal we each had a few in the palm of our hands, and were comparing our respective catch.

--Then meeting Norman Chalmers, a concertina and whistle player of great talent for both traditional and experimental folk music, and a very sharp and quirky mind, once again many stories were told in front of glasses of whisky. He is the one who instructed me in the best way of drinking the stuff, adding a few drops of water to fully release the flavour; he used the metaphor of a forest before and after the rain when the water has released all the perfumes and scents locked in the earth, same with whisky, and it works. Norman took us to Max's place by the water to check a rowing boat, sir Maxwell MacLeod to be precise, a writer and journalist son of late Lord John McLeod. He cooked fish soup for us and told us his epic rowing adventures, on the Caledonian Canal and on the open Hebridean Sea retracing the rowing steps of his great uncle from the Isle of Sky back to Iona on an 18 foot skiff. He is currently writing a book of his adventures. I was also solicited to give advice on how to best seduce a woman, having to give my honest yet informed opinion on one or two misadventures of his.

-- Then up to Inverness by train, a gorgeous three hours journey in glorious sun along the seashore then through white mountains peppered with a few cows and sheep farms, lambing has started, following the contours of a few deep iced up gorges. We were going to visit the Highland print studio, as they will produce some screen prints and photo etching for me. It is a beautiful three story building in the center of town on the river bank, impeccably run by Alison and John;



I have never seen such tidy and spotless studio / workshop and apparently it is not rare to see seals or otters in the water down below. Seagulls were many and funnily enough had a sort of southern tremolo drool to their shout. Inverness is very pretty in the way Paris is, each a perfect image of what they should be and a river running through it, I saw a very big dead salmon that hadn't survived his return journey. It looks like I will be spending a week in July to prepare and start the production of 3 limited editions print runs, it might be time to start making the work...

-- We were staying in the Station hotel, also more aptly named Royal highland hotel, a grand luxurious and traditional Scottish palace, complete with beautiful landscape paintings on the walls, no cheap reproductions, and tartan carpet. I do love a bit of class. The rest of our time there was spent planning and budgeting the various stops of our storytelling sail trail, it is starting much earlier than I planned, the Orkney show beginning early August to coincide with 2 festivals there, a science festival and a storytelling one.



The last decision we had to take is to decide if I was fit, strong and mad enough to sail with Ian on his thirty feet racing yacht from Orkney to Lewis via Cape Wrath, in some of the choppiest waters there are, early April, so that I can shoot some of the required video and photos. It will take roughly 24 hours non-stop. After many hesitation and weighing pros and cons Ian's answer was yes, he is the experience skipper / ex coast guard and I have to trust his judgment, and tickets back up to Scotland were booked. I haven't been on a sailing boat since I was 12 and that was on a lake in France. I am worried of being seasick, also of panicking if the sea is too rough. As Martin pointed out I could do like Turner who tied himself to the mast in big storms so that he could keep on painting. Anyway Ian doesn't need my help for the sailing bit so I guess that is a start and I have a few weeks to investigate all the different sea sick remedies there are, homeopathic and stronger ones, making sure I have a few at my disposal. *Monday 16th March 00.19am*



Week 24

Waiting for Godot

Atmosphere; Springy. Mood; moody. News; MP's selling their lobbying services as expensively as a high class booker.

-- What shall we do now? Estragon kept on asking, not necessarily because of his short span memory. Can waiting be considered as an action? If taken by itself without any object or purpose? Lucky, though the unluckiest in appearance, burdened with pointless luggage which are not his, and physically tied to his master, is the freer of them all; his ties are visible, tangible, he knows who his Godot is, he has no need to create an elusive one. It was the first time I saw a production of the Beckett classic, this was a grand West End production at Theatre Royal Haymarket with Ian Mc Cullen as Gogo, Roger Rees as Didi, Ronald Pickup as Lucky and strangely enough TV star/presenter Matthew Kelly as Pozzo, and a convincing one too, if not slightly over dramatic in his moment of sadness or distress. It was a real treat indeed, going to the theatre always is, it happens so rarely and the production and acting was of very high standard. Yet I felt it was slightly to theatrical and polished for my taste, I always imagine Beckett's plays as very stark and minimal. The set was beautiful but highly polished and quite baroque, too many ruins, too many broken boulders, too many elaborate textured lighting. I always imagined the pace to be much slower, with lots of empty moments of nothingness, lots of silence and waiting in between the great bits of dialogue. At least this is how I read it in the text.

The play was full of rhythms and quite fast paced but the end still worked very well, the repetitive and pointless nature of what one chooses to do or not do, and what prevailed for me is the importance of friendship, having someone to wait with, fight with, laugh with, despair with.

-- Godot never made it but spring did, bang on time with a glorious warm and sunny day, daffodils everywhere and birds singing as early as 4am, even before day break. Hyacinths and tulips on my table. I do love the feeling of Nature waking up but dislike as every year, its effect on body and mind, finding it hard to come back into the glaring light after a winter of darkness, March and April are always difficult to get through, with its load of frazzled moods and annoying pains. Danielle and Gerard visited from La Gorgère in deep Limousin, managing to leave their farm and animals behind for the first time since they bought it six years ago when they leaved the city behind. I felt both honored and under pressure to make sure they would have a good time and for London to live up to the memory of their last visit fifteen years ago. I tried to tell them that London was a fast changing city, one of the fastest in the world and that they might not recognise any of it. Anyway it all worked out fine, I was giving them a thorough and carefully planned itinerary by bus on my teaching days, thinking they would only manage half of it. But no they followed it all to the letter, Brixton market, British museum, Soho and Covent Garden, Soanes Museum, Free Mason temple, Bloomsbury, South Bank, Portobello, Hyde Park.... It left them ecstatic about London, though Portobello wasn't as exciting as they expected it, they realised they had outgrown their compulsion to buy old stuff and vintage things, haven't we all. After 3 days of this their knees, leg muscles and lower backs were shot to pieces, no wonder, and we spent the weekend cruising London in my lovely Proton, stopping for short strolls in the city, getting lost in the small streets and alleys around the gherkin, Lloyds building....

We stumbled upon campanologists queuing to take turn to ring the 280 years old bells of a small church. I was amazed, I had heard of the word but never thought it would be such a popular pastime. They were all keen to answer my questions; there are over 4000 churches in England and Wales where people meet every Saturday or once a month to ring bells. We could hear in the distance at least 3 or 4 other churches bells. I do love it when I discover something new. I loved the effect of the sounds and the vibrations on my body and mind. As hypnotic was to see the perfect choreography of six people in a circle repeatedly pulling a rope in perfect harmony, though it was impossible to match gestures to the 6 different sounds produced. Then a visit to Shakespeare's globe and finishing the evening at the Tate modern looking at the permanent collection. I was impressed by the Fishley and Weiss sculptural installation, Tate 2000, that they were commissioned to do for the opening of the museum. It looks like a building site, with stacks of boards, tools and the usual rubbish found in such a place. At first glance it looks like what I hate, a perfect example of post modern sculpture from the late 90's, stack of building material cleverly yet casually disposed, uncooked, unbaked, I wouldn't like to name names.

But at closer look you realise that everything is fake, sculpture turned on its head, Duchamps ready made in reverse, every object, every scrap, every smallest bit of nail is actually sculpted out of acrylic foam, and painted to look like the real thing; thus creating a mad and perfect trompe l'oeil installation whose scale and attention to details is absolutely insane; a fabulous piece of work I felt. Great news from France, Sarkozy is having a doubly hard time, his marriage is in trouble, and strangely enough it was all over the papers and radio here but not a word in the media in France. And the regional elections were a disaster for his government and his party. *Monday 21th March 22.50pm*



S P R I N G

Week 25 26 27 28
Thee the sea

Atmosphere; bumpy. Mood; breezy. News; Icelandic ashes in the sky

-- How do I relate four weeks in one blog entry, weeks full of adventures and new experiences in between three counties if you count Scotland as a country which I am willing to do now not for any political reasons or firm beliefs in its right for independence but spending ten days there left me completely culture shocked; I feel more and more that it has very little to do with England, on so many levels. I actually find it hard to think of any similarities apart from language and even there, the words might be the same but their use, rites of exchanges and of course pronunciation are something else entirely,

and it is so much more of a spoken culture than England. Where do I start what do I chose to relate, only a tiny part sticks to mind, this is perhaps how History is written, in broad headlines leaving all details behind, and at the whim and mood of whoever writes it.

-- I remember the John Smith exhibition at the RCA, that I caught just before it ended on the day that Jarvis Cocker was scheduled to do something in tribute to the artist who taught him at Central St Martins in the 80's; what a great and generous intervention that was, a live improvised soundtrack to the 45 mins long Slow Glass film with audience participation including his two young kids at the front.





We were all given either empty bottles or glasses and pencils, shown how to make three different kinds of noises and guided at certain moments to intervene, some of the objects later appearing in the film; a simple yet very effective and generous idea that brought us all together in the making and watching of the film with added soundtrack. The rest of the show was interesting though I would have liked to see more older pieces, but great to see again girl chewing gum and the tower, as well as more recent video shot in Vienna where he makes great use of digital editing technology to freeze part of the image. I love the way truth and fiction comes together so seemingly, never being sure of which comes first.

-- I also remember picking up Fiona Banner's *Nude* book at Tate modern, a beautifully designed and edited book about her life drawing project where instead of drawing the model she writes the description and experience of looking at the model, on canvas, continuing a life project that she started two decades ago with war than porn movies and now bringing her process based concept to life drawing. I do love it all, it works on every level, conceptually, textually, visually and I do admire and respect her one track mind that allows here to pursue the same idea/process in depth, allowing it to become laser sharp and still finding new ways of doing it. I am comparing it to my torch like wide beam way of working, jumping from one thing to the other, advancing ever so slowly on every front, only hoping that at some point before I die it will all come together or at least some of it will reach the certain state of completion I am aiming for. I am of course tempted regularly to try to concentrate one avenue only and leave the rest behind.

The decision has been taken more than once but I have never managed to stick to it, my mind and hands behaving like flies in summer heat, darting from one point to the next as if following an invisible rectangular or hexagonal path over and over again. There is a pattern and a conceptual logic to my methodology but it would take three of me at least to carry it all forward. I am starting to work with assistants so it might start to feel a bit less daunting.

-- Then there is meeting Swiss composer Manfred Werder, part of the John Cage influenced Wandelweiser group. Of all the ones I have met so far he is the most radical and extreme in terms of his use of indeterminacy and the way he relinquishes any control or authorship of the interpretations of his textual scores. I felt his scores looked more like concrete poems, very few words dispersed onto a page. For example on one from 2005 only three words, 'place – time and in bracket (sounds) or later ones from 2009 which are simply short quotes from French philosopher Francis Ponge; description of familiar domestic places, or Natural scenes... We had a great discussion on language and musical scores and intentionality and on that notion of control that I am so caught up with but also comparing survival techniques for those of us who work in the experimental field rather than the commercial one and the pros and cons of Academia as a viable solution for experimental artists. He has organised some concerts next week in London and I am really looking forward to hear for myself what is created with what he has sent me as his verbal scores. It was wonderful and life affirming to connect so easily and once again feel part of this growing network of like minded creative people of all kind across the world, who speak the same language.

-- Then there is the giving shape to the performance workshop I am giving in 2 weeks time as part of a research project in Teaching and Learning strategies I am running, trying to formulate and analyse the particular strategies I have developed to help students use their body as a thinking and research tools. I have two assistants on board Alex Milnes and Sophie Bell, both have an interest in performance and have participated in previous workshops I have given. Anthony Luvera, a photographer who uses performative and collaborative strategies in his portraiture / social documentary work

with various groups is taking part in the workshop. It will be interesting to have his impressions on my methods. There is still a lot to do but the ball is starting to roll now.

-- While all this was going on I had at the back of my mind that crossing from Orkney to Lewis, my first sailing experience ever and in tough conditions; difficult waters, cold weather, small Spartan racing boat, hoping to be able to make work. I went up to Edinburgh to meet up with Ian who was there to start a parallel journey that Gerry and Morven were doing across the canal crossing Scotland from Grangemouth to the other side, around forty miles rowing on a small white wooden boat with a very nice and cozy barge following them for night keep and cooking; it took them a week, gently doing a few miles a day, having arranged to meet up all kinds of people en route and documenting the journey in their own way, words, photographs..... We stayed a couple of days with them before setting up for the top of Scotland to catch the ferry to Orkney in Thurso... , one the way one stop in Glasgow to meet up Peter and Colin and record their literally heart stopping story of a sailing trip to the Faroes island, where Peter's heart misbehaved and stopped a few times, they kept on going as he was reluctant to be treated in the Faroes, it would have costed him around 30 000 pounds, once back in Glasgow he was fitted urgently with a pacemaker on the NHS, being told that he would have died if he had waited another day. We drove slowly up through the highlands, taking small roads whenever possible, breathtaking scenery, wide-open spaces, still a lot of snow, we had to turn around once as the road was blocked. A night stop in Inverness in the gorgeous Station/Royal Highland hotel, not so lucky this time, our bedroom was on the station side and didn't have a bath, I moaned a bit but I knew this was still luxury as from the next day onward I would be living onboard a beautiful yet small racing yacht on choppy waters with showers and proper toilets at the end of the pier and a tough crossing ahead, baptism by fire. Ian kept on checking the weather forecast and it wasn't looking good, in the short window we had to do it, it looked like headwinds all the way which was far from ideal. But the crossing couldn't be delayed for all kind of reasons. I was worried and still had a plan B to consider, driving his van back to Lewis by land while Ian and his son Sean would do the crossing.



But I considered this as giving up and was quite determined to go through it all, not able to judge what it would really be like. Well I am still here writing these words and I would do it again no questions asked but it is definitely the hardest thing I have ever done, after my illness and fighting my pirates with heavy duty chemical warfare three years ago that is; which proved to be great training for this adventure; knowing when to switch off and shut down body and mind for a while without panicking. To cut a long and bumpy story short a crossing which should have taken 24 hours lasted for 42, 38 of them I spent horizontal, lying on my narrow berth down below in El vigo which felt like a tumble dryer being dragged on a country lane. I lasted for the first three hours after we left Stromness harbour at 5am then only emerged for the last hour before arriving in Stornoway. I was only sick three times, two great releases in the breeze before collapsing, they actually felt quite pleasurable, and once on the last day while lying down, not much to give as no food or drinks had reached my stomach for the whole crossing but the bucket was ready by my side. I was fine lying down but nothing else, tried a few times to reach either toilets or fresh air but no can do, the constant rocking of the boat and nauseous vertigo always brought me back to the horizontal. I was amazed at the energy and stamina of skipper and son who spent the whole time struggling against headwind and the constant spray it brings, a storm near Cape Wrath, hardly any wind towards the end, and a grumpy engine that kept stopping and needed purging and cleaning before accepting to start again.

I didn't moan, I didn't panic, even enjoyed the experience I think. I had absolutely no notion of time for the first day and the second dragged on like hell but I found ways of occupying my mind, as my movement were completely restricted, great frustration at imagining the amazing scenery I was missing being stuck in my dark womb, the west coast of Scotland we were sailing along once we passed Cape Wrath. I managed to take one photo at arm length from the small window above my bunk, unfortunately it was starboard and the coast was on the other side. Then I started to draw blind, letting my hand being moved on my sketchbook propped against my knees, following the constant bumpy moves of El Vigo negotiating the swells, still horizontal with my head down to avoid feeling sick, strangely enough the results looked like layered waves, hands and body drawing what my eyes couldn't see.

-- Then suddenly I felt better, the sea had been calmer for a while the wind had died down, the engine too and I managed to get on deck to join skipper and son who were enjoying a moment together after the hard work of the past two days, stars were shining in the wide sky. According to Ian it was one of the toughest sailing he had done, and he has been sailing these waters for a few decades, Sean loved it, he is into extreme sports and thought nothing of this little adventure. I felt proud at having survived it, horizontally mostly but without a moan. I found out later in Stornoway from other sailors that many of them dreamed of doing that crossing, few have done it, and not many in these tough conditions. Amazingly enough, perhaps as a way to make me forget the ordeal, I had to stir the boat and moor it against a big expensive yacht, risk of plenty of damage if I bumped into it. Sean and Ian had to operate the sails as our engine had run out of petrol and they had to make full use of the very little wind we had by manipulating the sails in a particular way. I followed instructions as best as I could, avoiding rocks on one side and big fish trawler speeding towards us, eager to get back to base a bit later. I was nervous but too tired and weak for lack of food and water to get stressed and did get thumbs up all around for my perfect smooth parking. Michael-of-the-hat who had been on dock watching me intently was also full of praise later. Once on land we all felt exhausted, the ground was swaying like mad, it still does a week later.

I spent three days recovering and discovering Stornoway around the harbour where Ian has a great house, open house where everybody comes and go, well the sailing community does, all passionate about the sea and their boats and stories of the sea. Our story was told and retold many times, around food, scallops and soles and other wonderfully cooked fish and wine and dram of whiskies. I felt so out of it, drunk with the bumpy sea and stories of. El Vigo needed a lot of attention, engine and clearing up and mooring, she looked like a battle field, Ian was struggling with energy to do it all while keeping up with friends neighbours and fellow sailors wanting stories, help or advice and entertaining me. I did my best to help and fit in, the stress of the crossing catching up with mind and bruised body. I did feel then and for the first time like a fish out of water, and very culture shocked in this strong Scottish boating community who only speaks of the sea and her stories and her boats who are referred to as she in the most tender and proud way.

-- I am in St Yrieix now the ground has only stopped moving yesterday, my mind has finished processing it all in the background, I have almost finished making a small book of my journal, drawings and 2 photos of the crossing. It will be online soon. And I am wondering when I will be able to go back to England as a cloud of ashes from an Icelandic volcano is creating havoc in European skies. Once again I am at the mercy of winds apparently from North North west on Tuesday, which would have been perfect for our sailing trip but wrong for my flying back to London as it will bring more ashes to the skies. I forget to mention how trees and flowers are starting to explode in blooms, interesting to compare progresses between London being well in advance of St Yrieix, the Hebrides only just starting to wake up. Painted toenails and sandals have come out same day that my first taste of Asparagus and strawberries of the year. And Easter which has been and gone, I missed the usual big family reunion and the feast of chocolate. I have almost finished reading W.C Bald Austerlitz, wonderful storytelling and style of writing without ever being sensationalist. *Tuesday 20th April 10.24am*



Week 29

One week to go

Atmosphere; stressful. Mood; low. News; Gordon Brown fucks up, BP also.

- And then what, same old shit again whoever will govern this country in crisis, Gordon, David or Nick, the old dog who has the experience and the know how if not the looks or the two young beaux who may sound and look slightly better but fail to convince me; one is so eager for power that his eyes are sweating envy and impatience while his mouth drips honey, the other has stars in his eyes like a little boy visiting Las Vegas. The campaign is going strong, they say it s the most exciting in decades, a three horse race, yet their actions and gestures speak louder than their words, sounding hollow but nobody cares looking beyond the fake Hollywood smiles or the tired eyes or the empty promises. They are all avoiding talking about what matters; for exemple how to get rid of this huge deficit and what to do to control the banking system who has got us where we are; banks were bailed out by tax payers money only to then blackmail the government who is at their mercy for their monthly borrowing needed to cover up the deficit created by the money used to save them in the first place – breathe - Bankers have only to refuse and the government will be bankrupt. It took me a while to see this vicious circle clearly. If the government comes down hard on the huge bonuses or banks not lending enough or at too high rates then the banks can in turn refuse to lend them money. Furthermore most profit is to be made when the system is unstable as right now so the more financial institution fuck up the economy the more

money they can make in speculating selling and buying. It is the most absurd set up, hardly believable yet this is the case. And we are paying for it, will have to pay more, the Greeks are paying the price, the Spanish, the French too, every citizen in the world is paying for it. The IFS, institute for fiscal studies, released a report closely analysing the economic and budget policies of each, and the three of them are equally behind by about 43 billions when you add up what they each propose to cut out the deficit.

-- So who to vote for? I do prefer what I know but what hope have we got of real change with this current system. And who can stop the train and airline companies and everybody else involved making extra money out of the Icelandic volcano crisis. My Ryanair flight was cancelled, to change my booking to May I was charged an extra 40 pounds because the free exchange offer was only valid for the following 2 weeks while no planes were available; to get back I had to pay an extra 200 pounds to Eurostar for a standing only ticket Paris London, the fact that it was standing only wasn't mentioned until I was in the station. Who is going to stop the local council charging me 260 pounds to get my car back after they towed it away yesterday, a Saturday. It was parked on a single yellow lines where everybody parks on a Saturday, there was no 'restricted area' signs anywhere in this small side street, there were other cars there also, yet only mine was taken, their didn't even get a ticket. This is organised crime not parking control. The police itself thought my beloved Proton had been stolen, as it all happened so fast and the 2 other cars next to me remained untouched.

-- This incident yesterday left me disgusted, depressed, feeling victimised and super stressed. I was so much looking forward to this long weekend in London at home, so rare with all my moving about and recent Scottish trips, time also to recover from a heavy yet great week of teaching, final assessment and graduation are getting close, pressure is on, tension is high, yet I had two wonderful days of seminars with graduating students, final decisions to be made for the best resolution of their final major projects, very focused, very involved some interesting debates.

It is great to witness their growing maturity and self-confidence is great to witness, as well as the quality of their work, some potentially outstanding pieces. I will not mention the rest, the organising and setting up of their assessment and the final show, still my responsibility and no improvement from previous years on the contrary, less space, less support, more students.... Highly stressing and demanding times, I feel the adrenaline rushing through my body. This is definitely my last year of being in charge. In the middle of it all, ' Body thought body talk' the one day performance workshop / research project evaluating the potential of using the body as a thinking and research tool in an academic context. Preproduction was a struggle with time lost because of Icelandic ashes, I spent all last weekend getting it all ready, then Monday evening with Alex and Sophie, so good to have their help and support. It went very well, beyond my expectations in terms of the response of the participants. I think I am onto something there. I will start drawing conclusions and putting together a report in June once assessment and exhibition are over, the video documentation looks very promising too. , some of the photographs are great.

I was so pleased that I treated all participants to Cava and tapas in Farnham after the final focus group discussion, the alcohol was on me. Exhausting week, no wonder I am reacting so strongly to the car incident, feeling even slightly sorry for myself, and it feels that the more I ask for support or understanding the less I get it. I went out last night as planned, hoping to shake it all off dancing and drinking, highly enjoyable Sacha's Belleville hot night at Hootenanny, special gipsy edition, one band from Romania Shukar collective, not the best of the evening but highly entertaining. -- My liver and I do hate stress and transitions period like Spring, usually difficult and highly emotive times; it is hitting me right now, later than usual, I almost thought I managed to avoid it this year, for some it is hay fever, but not me, perhaps a delayed reactions to the physical and other strains accumulated in recent adventures, Scottish and French ones, it has been a full on month and some residues are still roaming in my mind helplessly, not able to find closure or release. May day May day. I remember this as being my headline in last year's entry, I call this consistency. *Monday 3rd May 18.54pm*



Week 30 31 Well hung

Atmosphere; highly charged. Mood; scattering of highs. News; a well hung parliament is born.

-- It is a rare thing to experience history in the making, it happened to me this week. On Tuesday I was driving back to London, from Farnham, after a long day teaching. I was listening to Radio 4 around 7pm, a special edition after the Archers, extended news coverage of the ongoing negotiations between the different contenders to the political throne, the lib dems trying to bargain hard with the Tories on one side and Labour on the other. Whatever the outcome of this political bartering game it was clear that Gordon Brown was going to resign as both prime minister and leader of the Labour party, journalists were trying to guess the likely timetable, within days, weeks or months in order to coincide with the next Labour conference in the Autumn. There was still no guarantee of a possible deal between Tories and Lib dems, although everybody knew it would happen, hard to imagine either DC or NC giving up the possibility of being in the ruling seat, better doing it together despite their incompatibility then not at all, even if it meant going against their respective principles. Of course agreeing to easily or quickly would make them look too cheap or desperate, to their own supporters and to the world watching, hence the date and time of the announcement was constantly postponed, appearances and reputation were almost intact.

I was pondering on the farcical aspect of the whole thing, the comings and goings, playing hard to get, false rumours, speculation, hollow allegiances for the good of the nation at the expense of personal ambitions... when I became witness, like many others I am sure, to a brilliant turn, Gordon's last masterful stroke of genius; against everybody's expectation he came out of n10 to announce his immediate double resignation, followed a short yet perfectly formed and dignified little speech full of honesty and even warmth in which he referred to his weaknesses and what he had tried to achieve as prime minister, his way perhaps of acknowledging awareness of what made him so unpopular. I couldn't believe my ears, the cars were rushing left and right past my Proton as I was hugging the middle lane, I was witnessing a momentous event, the kind History is made of, furthermore I was listening to a powerful leader, not the overwhelmed and clumsy speaker he usually was; what a clever move getting out before any clear coalition was formed, thus putting pressure on those involved in the talks as a country without a government was unthinkable and unconstitutional. He then walked out of Downing street, holding hands with wife and kids, turning his back to n10 never to return, vivid picture in my mind that I found replicated in the papers the next day. What a dramatic gesture and such a brutal way to close a major chapter of one's life, having to leave both home and job in front of the whole world watching.

-- By the time I was home, the new prime minister had been announced, after of course having sought the permission of the queen, aristocratic David Cameron, perhaps looking much more at ease and suited to the surroundings than his predecessor but not necessarily more apt at doing the job. A deal has been struck, we have a hang parliament, well hung according to him, but we all know that this does not necessary guarantee know-how or efficiency. As much as I dislike both candidates, and not necessarily because they are younger than me as I quickly realised, a sure sign that I am getting on, first time that the ruling ones happen to be younger than me, Sarkozy is still older than me, small relief. Anyway I do like the idea of a hung parliament, best way for democracy; they are in disagreement regarding so many key issues, immigration, taxes, Europe....

Providing they manage to function, they will keep an eye on each other; hopefully no more of pushing through unpopular laws that nobody wants like we have seen so often with Blair, with his way of putting pressure and wearing down those against him. Perhaps they will start addressing what matters, the huge deficit almost as big as the ones of Portugal or Greece and finding ways of controlling the financial systems and the mighty banks.

-- My moods and spirits are starting to lift up perhaps helped by the prospects of change on the political scene and also some great teaching sessions, last days of tutorial support before final assessment and graduation of this year crop; always a stressing time for all but very exciting and rewarding to see it all coming together, resolution of final projects and students growing professionalism and maturity, plus a few last minute breakthrough for some of them; above all seeing some very interesting works coming to life. I have to stop myself feeling too motherly but in such times a lot of the struggles and increasing pressures of the job do seem worthwhile, for a brief moment.

-- Also working wonders for my mood is having the luxury of spending an uninterrupted stretch of four days working on my own projects, starting to finalise some of the work for my Scottish collaboration with Ian, the tough crossing from Stromness to Stornoway, and other story related video works and text pieces, the nature of our collaboration slowly starting to emerge more clearly as we progress and influencing the content of the work emerging on both side, an interesting process to observe in itself. The exhibitions in Stromness and Glasgow are starting to take shape. I am realising how rare these long period of concentrated work have become in between my various commitments in between two countries, some fine-tuning is still required in order to free some space and time somehow. I have also started to look at the documentation of the performance workshop and ensuing group discussion that took place a few weeks ago. I had no chance to do so until now, this time away from the project is allowing to look at it with fresh eyes and clear mind. I am positively surprised by what I am watching, some great moments of interaction and concentration,

it is also very easy to spot that 'letting go' I am so interested in and it looks like the answers to my questions are all being spelt out by the participants, proving the validity of my theory. Not sure when I am going to find the time to write up the report between now and September but it is certainly all there and looking very exciting in terms of potential development.

-- I am now in St Yriex for five days, for the conference the centre of artists books is organising this weekend on Maps and mapping, it is all slightly too academic for my liking but who knows, hopefully something of interest. More interesting has been discussing who had created the world, with my parents and a couple of old family friends going back to my childhood in Morocco, the four of them well over 75 years old, and devote but not bigoted catholics; all of them are convinced of course of the existence of God, and that only the almighty could be responsible for such perfection in this sublime act of creating Nature and every living creature. The debate lasted until late, and of course was not resolved but I was amazed at their conviction and their reasoning. They all accepted the theory of evolution, and consider Adam's rib story as nothing more than a powerful image, but for them God was responsible for that first spark at the beginning of it all, they call it the first breath. The only argument being if not him then who else? Who could put such powerful wisdom in Jesus' mind and mouth? They were not content with seeing him as one among many other visionaries. It seems that their belief is coming from a need to have answers but it was fascinating to see how convinced they were and how easily they managed to separate the myths from what they considered to be the truth, and not just a belief in a chosen system. As I am finishing these words I am hearing on French radio that the first cabinet meeting in London has been very successful, all present, 18 Tory and 5 Lib Dem minister plus NC and DC, voted on a reduction of not 10 or 20 but 5% of their salaries. Hurray!! I suppose that less than 5% would have been taken as a bad joke. *Saturday 15th May 10.11am*





Week 32 33 34

cuts cuts cuts

Atmosphere; stormy. Mood; unsettled. News; Louise Bourgeois is no more, Sarkozy at its lowest (popularity).

-- Louise Bourgeois died at 98, I heard it on the radio last night, my bag packed ready to set off for France the next morning, wishing I could stay in bed for a week instead. I am feeling exhausted, unsettled and stressed. All quickly forgotten with this sad news. This is a life definitely well lived right up to the end; she was still making good work as well as entertaining at home every Sunday well into her late 90s. I am reminded of her own words on her long nights of insomnia, trying to keep the demons at bay by drawing and writing in her sketchbook. It is just that she has always been such an inspiration to me as an artist and as an expatriate too. I have never contemplated being as masterful and powerful as she has been and I am not expecting to reach her level of fame and fortune, I am just hoping to last as long as she has while keeping on maturing and developing all the way. Beside I find some of her sculptures so timeless, sensuous and sometimes overtly sexual too, absolutely wonderful. The portrait of her witty corner smile on Mapplethorpe photograph of her holding a big phallus object under her arm is how she will remain in my mind. Long live Louise Bourgeois. I suppose this is a timely reminder of the futility of life and its fragility, no matter how great or talented one is. In her case I can easily imagine her becoming one of the markers of 20th century art history, and not just in the chapters on gender studies and feminist art.

-- The coalition government is hard at work, still cooing away, the honeymoon is not over yet, despite one or two financial scandals over MP'S expenses leading to a high profile resignation in an almost dignified fashion, despite the obvious breaking of the law; apparently it all depended on how to define what a partner is, sharing the same bed for ten years not being enough, whether straight or gay, you also have to share the same purse; being the budget secretary, you would think he would know. Finally plans for cuts in all kind of public spending are announced, not going far enough I think as no attempt is made yet to regulate or tax financial institutions massive profits and bonuses. But I guess this is a start.

-- The academic year is almost over, final assessment have just finished, running almost smoothly compared to recent years, yet still impossible to avoid a two week marathon on my part, from organising the setting up of works, struggling to secure the required space for 57 students to display their work, managing the mood and the flow of the same 57 highly stressed and anxious students, while helping them to make the most of the time and space allocated to exhibit their final major project, then assessing it all fairly and thoroughly in two days. On the last day, when the two external examiners were there, it felt like my brain was made of porridge. Then I had to spend part of the long bank holiday weekend writing all the feedback forms. Anyway it is all over now and I have to say that the work is overall of very high standard, proving that we are doing something right. There are a handful of works which are very exciting and highly original and could easily do very well as they are. I am hoping they will get noticed at the London 'Free range' show in a week time at Truman Brewery. I do find it very rewarding to see students coming of age and becoming confident and proud of what they have achieved.

-- La democracie des gens heureux, democracy of happy people, this is the second time I hear this rather poetic statement on the radio here in France, regarding a new debate and movement trying to promote the idea. Finally an acknowledgement, in a roundabout way, that democracy doesn't necessary work or bring freedom or fulfillment as modern day crusaders would led us to believe.

Interesting the way they resemble more and more their ancestors in the middle ages, who were roaming the same regions for God's sake at the time, democracy was just a philosophical idea then, thus justifying the violence and high levels of casualties. Isn't roughly the same thing happening now for democracy's sake? yet I like the term a democracy of happy people, stuff economic recovery and the huge deficit most countries seem to be burdened with, what does (my, your) happiness depends on ? a minimum amount of money to survive yes perhaps, but what else ? I am wondering what would be the answers given to this question in a national survey; family, a close community? Personal achievement? I wonder what most politicians would come up with, depending of course whether one speaks about their own or the People happiness, for democracy's sake or the one of the sad people they are exploiting for Economy's sake.

-- I am in France finishing these words, after a packed week of juggling between the workload at the centre of artists book to launch the summer exhibition on Concrete Poetry, it is now up and looking absolutely wonderful, a real treat to the eyes and finalising a few ideas as well as starting production for my collaboration on storytelling with Ian in Scotland, the first shows are approaching fast and it is not always easy to make the collaboration work by emails alone at the moment, yet it is creating a certain urgency and making us take some interesting decisions.

Not really the way I like to proceed but we haven't got much choice, both being tied up to other things a few hundred miles apart. I am not sure whether this is a fact or not but the crickets here seem to be much louder than in previous years, or there are many more so making that much more noise, which apparently would be a sign of diminishing pollution, or my ears have become so much more sensitive, every evening as right now it is hurting my ears and driving me to distraction and sometimes even preventing me from falling asleep. I have found out also that their shrill noise is made by the males of the species, rubbing their front legs together in order to attract the females, the pitch and texture being a precise and reliable source of information regarding their age and sexual power. *Tuesday 8th June 18.43pm*





Week 35 36 Twenty four hours of yesterday

Atmosphere; almost wintery. Mood; rising. News; French footballers strike during world cup. Summer is finally here.

-- 24 hours of John Lennon song 'Yesterday', this is a program I stumbled upon on Resonance fm yesterday afternoon, while slaving away on my computer, a non-stop compilation of various versions and covers of the song. What a great idea, quirky, almost poetic and poignant too. This is the kind of song whose melody and first lines we all know by heart and sing along to, the emotional trigger never fails, at least in my case, not sure what it is, the nostalgia in his voice, the tune, yet every time the song finishes, I want more of it. So the idea of 24 hours of it is brilliant. The experience is slightly different, I couldn't take it anymore after 40 minutes of it, not because of the repetitive nature of the experience, some of the versions were truly cheesy, very few great ones and after a while it felt like when you eat too much chocolate, you love the taste and you can't stop despite feeling sick.

-- Football fever is on, St Georges flags everywhere, making cars look like horned cows. I am not bothered, I do hate the patriotism that comes with it but this year is proving quite exciting, not so much the matches but the downfall of the great European teams who are pretty mediocre so far, and the French one has even gone on strike, how absurd is that, footballers on strike!

I find it absolutely hilarious, France is ashamed and outraged, Sarkozy has sent his sport minister, poor woman, what can she do? It looks to me like all these overpaid players are weighed down by their fortune and the life of luxury they have become used to and are mistaking it with the sport itself perhaps. I am no specialist in the matter, but the little I have seen of the games, I was surprised by the lack of enthusiasm or lightness or even enjoyment of the players, even more obvious in South Africa amidst the noise of the vuvuzele and the cheers of the crowd.

-- Things are winding down on the teaching front, tidying up loose ends with marks and assessments and preparing the next academic year, with Stephen Bull first full year as a course leader with us; I like his enthusiasm, really wanting to bring some kind of order and organisation to our great but chaotic course which hasn't been properly managed for a while now; permanent staff shortage, increasing students numbers, 120 first year next year, I almost resigned when I found out, limited resources.... The usual story, I do hope his efforts will make a change. The London show at Truman brewery was a success and really enjoyable too, great team work from all involved, so much less stressful than in previous years somehow, the students were much more organised. I think the show looked very good and the works definitely stood out among all the other photographic shows taking place concurrently. I am always too tired to fully enjoy the opening, the Pims served in big glasses didn't help, it was great to see so many graduates from previous years, I got quite emotional when leaving, having to say goodbye and good luck to so many great individuals that I have helped to mature. I don't remember ever receiving so many touching thank you from so many of them. I felt that it was a good way to end my running of the shows and final year responsibilities. I almost had second thoughts. And even more on the second planning meeting when we were discussing duties and responsibilities. They were plenty of volunteers to jump into my shoes as Year 3 tutor, on the other hand, very little else I could see myself doing. I know what I am given up, hard work and challenging but I loved it, I am not too sure what I am inheriting instead. But it is definitely time for a change.

-- I am now in full production mode for my collaborative project with Ian in Scotland; producing the artwork for the textual posters, hours spent on my computer fiddling with colors sometimes letter by letters. So much so that I have developed some kind of repetitive strain injury in my left arm, my back and my neck. I cannot work for more than one hour at a time, which forces me to take breaks and that is ok. When possible I am starting the day with a swim at Brockwell park Lido, then drying in the sun, a coffee at Paulo's Way and I am ready for a long days work. I haven't said it for a while how much I do love being back in London. I have taken the habit of going to the farmers market on Railton road every Sunday morning, great quality, asparagus picked up in the morning and on your plate in the evening, great organic meat and cheeses almost as good as French ones, the buffalo one with cumin seed is hard to resist, fantastic bread and everybody is so friendly too. I stock up for the week, it is costing me half what I would spend in a supermarket and the flavors and quality are really making a difference. Not too sure if it is my age or if London has changed but I find it hard to believe the quality of life one can have in Brixton now.

-- Today is the first day of summer and I am closing the spring chapter of my MOIblog experiment, I do love ending and beginning, bringing somehow punctuation and rhythm to my life, breaking the flow. Though it is increasingly difficult to keep to weekly entries and to fit in all that I would like too. I guess this is some kind of natural selection, not that what I don't include is not significant or interesting, like catching up with Guido on Saturday, Sarah's tea and cake party and Felix that I hadn't seen for 20 years, or Manfred's concert performance in St Anne's park in Hoxton, or Marcus pictures of the galla flower he is growing in Dusseldorf with seeds he collected outside my home in St Yrieix when he performed there 2 years ago, or Petri's 40th birthday I forgot and his new apartment in Dulwich with the longest balcony I have ever seen and a view of London almost as good as mine, or the drastic budget being announced today or the Elderflower cordial I made for the first time last weekend with flowers I collected in Brockwell park with Karen, or the lovely other Karen - Land Hansen - from Denmark staying with me at the moment, an artist on a short residency making beautiful light and poetic yet monumental suspended wood sculptures of strange skeletal creature-machines I might need to change the format or my style of writing if I want this blog to be a rigorous archive of my life as it happens. *Tuesday 22nd June 22.36pm*





S U M M E R

Week 37 38 39 40

Life according to Octopus

Atmosphere; British summer. Mood; high pressure. News; The coalition government refuses to ban the burka, thus confirming why I live here and not in France.

-- Summer is in full gear, not in terms of the weather unfortunately but high energy and long days are definitely on the cards plus a certain lightness in the air, hence four weeks elapsing since my last entry, despite many attempt to sit down and get on with it. London, St Yrieix, London, Glasgow, Inverness, London, Brighton and Farnham in between of course;

a tight schedule of plane and train journeys jumping from one country to the next, juggling with projects now in full production mode and job responsibilities; organising summer projects at the centre of artists books in France and planning next academic year in Farnham, I wake up sometimes in the morning wondering where it is that I am. The World cup is now over, I did catch a bit of it when hearing the occasional collective roar of neighbours reacting to a missed or successful goal opportunity, prompting me to switch the TV on. Spain, my favourite, became world champion, long forgotten the mediocrity of the English team or the tantrums of the French one. The well fed German Octopus predicted every victory right to the end, how likely is that!

And my local café is now displaying a Vuvuzele above the fish tank. Well done South Africa, by proving everybody wrong and living up to the challenge, though I wonder how much good it will do to the country as a whole in the long run, what wealth will trickle down to the majority, which were kept well away from it all.

-- I have spent ten highly productive and successful days in Scotland, in Glasgow first finalising the details of the Crossing Alba exhibition at Collins Gallery starting on the 21st of August. I was slightly worried of certain development in relation to our ' is a thing lost if you know where it is 'project as a whole, the two being closely related as far as Ian and I are concerned though this was not initially the case. I was worried the two other partners in this project, Gerry and Morven who crossed the canal rowing a small skiff while we sailed from Stromness to Stornoway, might not agree with this development. But all is well the concept is now tight, two parallel journeys across Scotland, the works produced complete each other beautifully, I think we might have a good show on our hands and the catalogue adds another interesting dimension by giving the four of us the chance to give our personal interpretation of each voyage rather than duplicating the work on display. I am picking up from the printers tomorrow the first run of Stromness to Stornoway, the log of my five day baptism by water, complete with drawings and the only three photographs I manage to take, this will also be part of the exhibition.

-- After a day off in Glasgow, 2 artists shopping in TKMAX for shoes and jackets, followed by an afternoon at the movies catching an old 50's B&W movie, David Lean's Madeleine, based on the true story that led to the first ' not proven guilty' verdict, Madeleine Smith, a young Glasgow woman who was tried in 1857 for the murder of her French opportunist lover. Anna Todd who played her was fantastic; a great piece of cinema, it felt so appropriate to see it in Glasgow on a rainy Sunday afternoon on what was for both of us a first day off in a long while. Followed a week in Inverness, at Highland Print studios working with John to screen print seven all-in-ones, seven cutty sarks and a Storm sail with the RESTRICTED (in its ability to maneuver maritime symbol) designs I had finalised the previous week.

We were also there to check the first proofs of the 3 editions of polymere prints John was going to make for us. It is such a fascinating process, chemical free, bringing together old-fashioned photogravure process with the latest digital and polymere technology. The photographic prints John showed us look exactly like what you find in all photographic books, incredibly fine details and great texture. Using this process with my text and graphic based images give them a beautiful depth and density which works beyond my wildest expectations. I literally shivered when John held for me the first full size proof of the Shiants text image I had spent hours and days getting right on the computer, I am still feeling the pain in my elbow and shoulder. Highland Print Studio is a printmaker's heaven right in the centre of Inverness, on the banks of the Ness river, four floors impeccably designed for all traditional printing methods, from impressive Rochas presses to high end digital printing. Banter and stories are plenty and not just in the many tea and coffees breaks.

We were staying half an hour walk away along the river in Touchwood house, an imposing manor run as a guest house by a self confessed friendly witch called Susan, broomstick and hat are hanging in the hall way, her kitchen is filled with pumpkin shaped dishes, specialist cookbooks for potions of all kinds and witch and wizards paraphernalia hanging from walls and ceiling. When we arrived she was reading tarot cards to two Danish girls in the gigantic three storey high living room hall with a concourse, I felt like I was in a Harry Potter movie. She looks like a rock chick. Both print studio and accommodation had an incredibly calm and peaceful atmosphere, no stress apart from slight anxieties about the success of the work produced, a perfect environment for making work. I do want to go back and explore further the polymere technique for other of my text-based work. And to top it all Inverness has great food at very reasonable price, I do recommend the Mustard seed café next door to the print studio, or the Castle café and its fantastic home made steak pie and curly chips; the same recipe and the same cook for the past few decades. I was told she is now in her sixties and everyday she gets picked up by her husband in a Jaguar at closing time. She does make the best steak pie I have ever eaten.



It was a fantastically productive and successful week, if not full on and intense, great team work once we adapted to each others ways again; it had been three months we hadn't met, since that memorable crossing, distance and virtuality are great but it does make one forget about the shortcomings and eccentricities of living side by side. We now feel that after a long period of gestation, planning and conceptual development it is now happening, brewing, cooking, smoking, the work is coming alive and we often feel surprise at what is emerging and how well our two voices are working together, sometimes in unison, sometimes completing each other, at other times individually creating new connections, new echoes; a very interesting collaborative practice, it would be very interesting to formally reflect upon it one day.

-- All in all I came back absolutely exhausted, feeling we have some great works in the bag to find a completely revamped bathroom, finally, thanks to DziDza and his brother, impeccable (almost) Polish craftsmanship, at a higher price than expected; I hadn't accounted for a huge bills for materials that was never mentioned before, on the other hand they replastered all walls and ceiling. I now have a beautiful 1930's style bathroom, Arsenic green walls and ceiling, white tiles randomly peppered with a few black ones, beveled mirror and glass shelf, polished aluminium cabinet, rectangular butcher style sink, small white bath with sail shape glass panel and slate color laminate floor. It looks perfect. I am tackling the kitchen next as soon as my purse allows it, hopefully before next Christmas. I came back just I time to welcome my 17 years old niece and god daughter, coming to perfect her English for a couple of weeks.

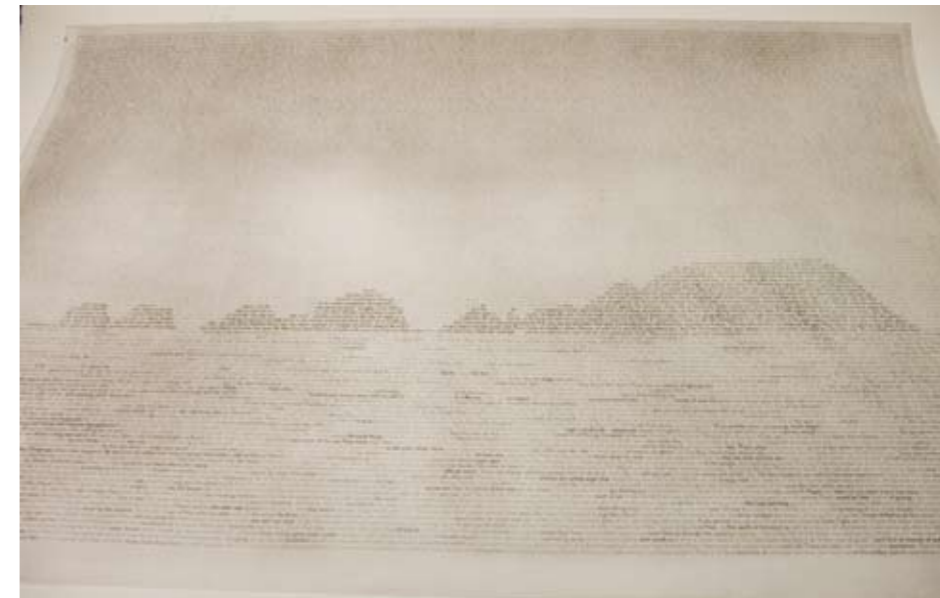
I was nervous, previous visits from teenage relatives haven't been that successful; certain expectations not fulfilled, to be mothered for once or expecting the same standard of living that they have at home which is usually much higher than I can provide. Loving and appreciating an eccentric and artistic aunt or godmother or friend of one's parents is not the same thing as visiting her. Or the charms of London as seen on TV or the media is not necessarily what they find once they arrive. In Maud's case she has extremely high standard of living, used to the best of the best, a very privileged upbringing, it was the first time she left home by herself and first time she came to my humble abode.

The beginning was a bit bumpy, she missed her flight, arrived the next day with her father who stayed a couple of days to make sure she was alright, the bed was too hard, the curtains not dark enough, the noise too much, the flat too far from the centre, she never enrolled for the lessons she came for in the first place.... But it ended up being a pleasure to have her around once she relaxed into it. We both enjoyed it, I felt motherly enough but not anxious, people mistook her for my daughter, we celebrated 14th July together, I even went shopping with her, making her buy clothes that made her look like a woman rather than the young girl that she dresses as... fun to feel what her mother must feel like, pride and awe at seeing her so grown up and enjoying the company and the conversation of an equal rather than a child.

-- It looks like my attempt to change my work load and duties in Farnham have paid off, I must say it is all thanks to our new course leader Stephen Bull who has worked very hard at sorting out the mess the course was, in terms of structure and organisation, spending days working on timetables so that we all have a manageable and consistent work load and a reasonable amount of responsibility. And what is great is that he seems to enjoy his role. I am left with responsibilities for the MA experimental practice unit in semester 1 and the 2nd year Narrative unit for semester 2 and nothing more. We had a long all day meeting in Brighton, I celebrated by rolling in the waves with Eva at sunset, a ritual we engage in every time we see each other, regardless of the weather, since we met in Aberystwith years ago.

There is also good development on the bookRoom front, here also the workload and the responsibilities will become more balanced, all my hard work of the past 2 years have paid off, even if hardly acknowledged by the institution, this is my fault in a way, having refused so far to play the institutional game and brag in higher places or disseminate my achievements to the people in power, thus giving space and opportunities for others to do so on my behalf. I think I have learnt my lessons. Anyway we are putting together a bookRoom committee that will oversee and manage the various activities; collection, bookRoom press, study days, residencies, book fairs, website.

Long live multitasking, long live the octopus, my multiple lives in between three countries at present, Scotland is definitely a country. I enjoyed so much listening to their intricate strategies for choosing a football team to support according to which one would make England even more of a loser than it was even though the English team was already out of the game already, the pleasure they took in doing so. *Sunday 18th July 22.36pm*





Week 41 42 Cold turkey

Amosphere; French summer. Mood; pressure on all fronts. News; Catalonia gets rid of bullfighting Sarkozy gets rid of Roms (gypsies) in France.

- Writing these words sitting at my kitchen table in St Yrieix after a triple birthday celebration and family reunion, a rare occasion these days, not more than once a year, when all siblings and their siblings sometimes with their own sibling in the making, manage to get together, three generation, 30 people around a festive table. The radio has just announced that the 78 years old hostage held in Mauritania for the past few months has just been executed, after the failed military intervention to attempt to liberate him. Sad terrible news, putting my current struggles in perspective, yet not enough to lighten my spirits, on the contrary. For two weeks now I have been experiencing serious withdrawal symptoms on a few fronts, severely effecting the well tuned and cared for balance of my body-mind configuration, leaving me stressed, highly reactive, and quite dysfunctional, a bit like being on an invisible roller coaster. The crazy schedule of the past three weeks hasn't helped. I only have myself to blame, as it is all self induced. Mind you I did enjoy for a while the strange sensations, the adrenaline, over the top dreams, subtle hallucinations and short circuits of the mind, observing and playing with the storm I was experiencing, able to ride the wave while keeping a certain amount of control, until it all started to go wrong.

-- I have been taking a low dosage of paroxetine, a very effective serotonin inhibitor for the past 3 years, to help recover from the aftermath of my lost battle against beloved pirates but also to help body and mind regulate the daily liver induced high and lows that I have to get used to ever since. I admit that it has worked wonders, so well that I am taking it for granted and I have forgotten how hard it was before, despite being the laughing stock of doctors who insists that 1/2 pill daily cannot have much effect, the recommended dose being 1 or 2, but I stuck to it as much because it felt right as to satisfy my ego, hating the idea of being drug dependent. I have been planning to quit for a while, waiting for the right time as it is a highly addictive substance and it has to be done gradually over a few months. I am also researching cleaner alternatives. Anyway amidst the chaos of my return from Inverness, my whole flat a battlefield after the work done to my bathroom, guests arriving from France, closing of academic financial year and research project, planning of summer projects, finalising staffing and timetabling of next academic year; a few too many things requiring immediate attention, leading me to discard by mistake my valuable supply of miracle pills, nowhere to be found and impossible to get some in England now all my medical care is done in France.

So I took this for a sign and foolishly thought Yeah why not, let's stop, I can do it, no problems. I even joked about going cold turkey like a junky, which is exactly what is happening; the sweats (not menopausal), the aches, the shivers, the anger, the aggression, the crying fits, the double dip depression after the highs, the adrenaline, flashbacks of my illness flooding in, confusion, incredible mood swings, panic attacks, lack of body coordination, crazy violent and erotic dreams, insomnias, lack of appetite, absurd yet controllable impulses, when using a knife for cooking, or strange attraction to down below when standing on my balcony. I also get fits of efficiency usually followed by wild vertigos. I am still functioning even if with great effort, keeping up appearances by turning my erratic behaviour into a joke. I do feel very detached yet highly sensitive to any stimulus, and incredibly sad and angry for putting myself through this and presuming I could cope. I am wondering how long it will take me to recover.

-- Not sure if it is related or not, but the strain of long distance romance has become too much to bare and I am grieving for what isn't or what is I am no sure, missing understanding, hope, comfort, or comfort of hope or hope of comfort, I am not sure finding it hard to acknowledge what's what, what snapped, why; withdrawal symptoms of another kind, time to lie low, regroup and wait for the storm in a tea cup to pass, see what's left behind, nothing, everything, other things

-- Yesterday I have had to empty my studio here, pack it all up once again, what is left of it after the burglary a year ago, I cannot delay it anymore as a new deal has been done between the one I hold responsible and the mayor/MP of the town who put me there in the first place; the whole place given away at a scandalous low price, he wouldn't hesitate to throw me out this time. Besides he has boarded up the door connecting our 2 spaces, the door he used to rob me dry, leaving me no access to water supply or toilets. I have requisitioned nephew and nieces to help, hoping it would give me the energy to get it done once and for all, and it worked, so many hands, so much energy and laughter and interesting responses to what they were carrying, old works, books..... it is almost all done, four trips, only a few things left, my home is now full of boxes needing sorted, my basement storage luckily big enough to accommodate it all. I will keep the space until the town will officially reclaim it. A page is turned, I am looking for a live and work space, old workshop, old school, the word is out.

-- I finally went to the doctor to sort out my sorry self, she wasn't impressed. I wasn't either, I am now back on the stuff, no escape, I did beg otherwise, there is no other alternative until I regain my balance, with a few homeopathic soothers, Nux Vomica, Passiflora, Sulphur, to help with current state until it all kicks in; it will take a few weeks for the body to readjust and the mind to settle down. Then in a while I am hoping to wean myself off slowly and carefully over a few months. I am more determined than ever, frustration is great, thinking of this summer being partly fucked by my stupidity and my pride in underestimating half a tiny pill, functioning feels like hard work.

-- Meanwhile I am spending my excess adrenaline and nervous energy working on promoting and finalising the Forest project mid august here, last summer it was all about grass, this year all about the tree, biodiversity and landscape; conferences, film projections in the open air, exhibitions, with Japan as special guest, a few Manga film directors visiting. Japan has a special closeness to the Forest, culturally, symbolically, it has preserved most of its forest heritage, and Nature is omnipresent in the arts and in everyday life. Looking at their take on conservation and diversity through film, art and exchanges, right here in the Limousin, a region of mainly forests, close to and with the people concerned (farmers, hunters, scientists, artists, walkers...) might be inspiring. I am looking forward to the strange encounter of cultures, deep traditional rural France, country of the black bottom pig, and Japanese refinement complete with tea ceremony and sushis. Life could be worth. *Thursday 29th July 14.21pm*





Week 43 44 45 Bohemian trip and Nippon treats

Atmosphere; strong breeze. Mood; unsettled. News; 100 days anniversary of UK coalition government.

-- Time is flying and I with it, the feeling of being dragged along from one project to the next, from one country to the next, quick stopover in London in between thanks to low cost flights - not that low cost but still very convenient for my jet set lifestyle on a shoe string; time to change clothes, water the plants and off again, the whole summer divided in 10 days chunks somehow. Body mind balance is improving daily thanks to chemical and homeopathic intake, the fast pace is helping in some ways, as there is no time to stop and check how I am doing. Full on dreams are becoming sparse, I am almost missing them, withdrawal symptoms have stopped, leaving me less sensitive to outside influences, I am also extra careful with my behavior and interaction with surroundings. In retrospect I am realising how highly strung and on the edge I had gradually become soon after my trip to Inverness, thinking at the time it was due to stress and exhaustion. Here I am sitting again at the same table than when I wrote the previous entry. The window is open but summer is no more, not that it has been much of one, here or in London or in the bohemian woods where I was last week, days are noticeably shorter. I am missing out on my yearly intake of sun and heat, it might become an issue once winter is here but I do not have the energy to fly to the sun once projects are completed and before the academic year starts mid September. I just want to stay put for a bit here or there or up there, not sure yet.

-- Last week at this hour I was listening to the first Wandelweiser concert at Die Station in Neufelden after a great reunion diner at the Muhltalof, courtesy of Joachim who has been hosting this annual Wandelweiser residency in his wonderful space in the middle of the bohemian woods for the 4th year running. Most of us hadn't seen each other since last summer but it felt as if yesterday; Antoine Beuger and Sandra Schimag, Michael Pisaro and his very sharp young son John, Jurg Frey, Marcus Kaiser, André o Muller, Christoph Nicholas, and Radu Malfati. Marcus and Joachim came to meet me at the Station, two familiar figures at the end of the only track, a filmic moment full of welcome and laughter, I was given the Hilton room I first stayed in when doing my residency there in 2006, I was touched yet it meant that I was less of an outsider than in previous years, this was quickly confirmed when Marcus asked me the next day whether I intended to make a piece of work, perhaps something for all of them to perform, then André asked me to sing for his new piece that evening, dedicated to Elke, which led to Antoine asking me to join his choir of 4 for his piece the next day. I was delighted and excited and truly nervous yet I took it all on. Most mornings were difficult, feeling unwell and exhausted still, a real challenge to find my balance and hide it from all and remain sociable and smiling, especially on the first morning when Joachim and Hani his wife turned up for breakfast with a big birthday cake and a firework candle for me to blow, very touching surprise but worse timing, I was struggling to smile and play the part which was making me feel even worse; I had lighten up by the evening and we had plenty of champagne to celebrate my getting older, not sure what there is to celebrate anymore.. The amasing evening meals and wine followed by late night talks and banter around a few drinks once concerts were over probably didn't help my morning moodiness, Klaus Rinke was often there telling one of his many stories. But the concerts every night were great, Michael Pisaro's and Jurg Frey's my favourites, I wished André had recorded his piece, as what was coming out of our voices and the way it was interacting with the recorded layered frequencies and pulses felt and sounded quite palpable from the stage, same thing wit Antoine's piece, I wished I could listen to the sound of ICHHH our six voices were making in turn, like a very low gentle hissing the length of our varying breath, not an easy sound to make for a non German speaking tongue like mine.

Sandra was doing daily readings of Franz Dodel ongoing online writing project, Haiku - endlos, impossible to understand a word, but I loved just sitting and listening to the texture and rhythm of her spoken voice. Four nights in a row Christoph's piece, Garonne / fur Sich, the one that he showed in Farnham two years ago for the Once upon time event, three video monitors showing one hour of water flowing, every night an hour later than the previous night, while Marcus plays a tone on the cello, equal amount of tone followed by equal amount of silence, 3 minutes first night, then 10 minutes, then 5 minutes..... a feast of loaded minimalism, every night a different experience, each time the mind and senses expanding in new ways. The weather was awful, raining and cold most days, very little sunshine, we still managed to make a few bonfires to sit around until the small hours. The week went by very quickly.

-- I proposed as a project that each composer chose and respond to a title from a menu of 6 of my extended photographs/videos I have been making for the past 2 years with my Lumix camera; they respond to the evocative title and the length without watching the work; spider talk, highland wind, last apple, a crossing in Paris, a photograph in St Yrieix, a seagull in Inverness.... I would then make a showreel of the chosen ones, each work consisting of a static video clip of between 2 mins and 5 mins followed by as much black, representing the after image. I would make a score with exact timings and they would play live, in turns to their chosen piece. We would discover the completed work together, image and sound. I was nervous, worried that they would not respond but they all liked the idea, some even chosing more than one, and some pieces chosen more than once, I was delighted and curious to see what the result would be and extremely anxious that it wouldn't work, that my little epics of the everyday wouldn't live up to the challenge and the whole thing would fall flat. Yet I couldn't resist the opportunity and I knew that this would be a great way to move on with the project and find out whether these 'poor' moving images as Antoine referred to them - poor in the sense of humble because so little is happening - whether they convey to others what I see in them, a certain pathos and depth and tension and poetry, very subtle and fleeting yet very moving at least to me.

Marcus chose to program the work, film musik as he called it, on the last evening, a good choice as a closing event, its togetherness. I almost cancelled at the last moment, as it was scheduled after Jurg's wonderful two pieces. It happened, I can't say I enjoyed it, I was so nervous, it seemed very long but something was happening holding everybody together, and the use of black, perhaps too long, did hold some of that memory of the images just passed. I was amazed seeing all these fantastic musicians playing my work. Some of the image and sound interaction worked beautifully, some less well.

The end came 45 minutes later, followed by a long silence, I didn't dare going to the front to bow with the musicians. The work did generate quite a lot of discussions, the quality of the images, their unassuming yet careful construction recognised by some but not others, their after effect, Joachim dreamt about them, the process of the construction of the work, how important it was for the musicians to see or not to see the clips beforehand, the notion of narrative and non narrative.... I was happy and relieved, I had learnt a lot and I had the chance of working with artists and composers I admired and respected greatly. And I didn't make a fool of myself, I think. This was the end of another inspiring week with the Wandelweiser, getting to know each other a bit more, working together, a few seeds of collaboration, one with André based on the work of Robert Creeley. Time to hop back to St Yrieix via London





-- I arrived in St Yrieix the day before the project on the forest in Japanese culture and cinema started, the day before the Japanese delegation arrived from Tokyo. I was exhausted but elated by my week in Austria and went on automatic mode, all smiles, instinctively doing what needed to be done or organised. From Tuesday to Saturday I left home at 9 for my daily coffee and newspaper break sitting in the sun at my usual café and never returned before midnight at the earliest after driving back one Japanese guest or another to their hotel. I must admit I didn't find the talks as interesting as last year for the project on grass, slightly too academic and elitist for my liking and a few too many speeches by mayors, MP's and other government officials thanking each other for their role in helping the event to happen. I was wondering why, then I realise that trees and forests are owned and managed by wealthy people, while grass belongs to farmers. But the film program was a real treat, starting with Alain Resnais masterpiece from 1954 Hiroshima mon amour seen on a big screen, it is still as powerful and relevant today, a fantastic piece of experimental cinema with the words of Marguerite Duras full of passion and emotion. Yet I was wondering what the Japanese guests, some of them film makers too, who couldn't understand a word, were making of it.

-- Miyazaki's My neighbour Totoro is a cult Manga movie in Japan and in the rest of the world too, I was curious to see it, and furthermore projected in a barn in deep France, it was entertaining and had a positive ecological message but I still fail to see why it is such a big deal.

The one that really impressed me is another Manga movie projected under the stars, many shooting stars too despite the cold, Miyazaki's Princess Mononoke; a fantastic tale of a combat between Nature and industrial revolution in true Japanese style, no overt dualism of good against evil but layers and layers of nuances and symbolic meaning constantly unraveling and keeping you on the edge of your seat for more than 2 hours. I do need to see it again. Yuki and Nina by Nobohiro Suwa was a contemporary tale of divorce between a French man and a Japanese woman taking their daughter Yuki back to Japan, no script, all improvised, I was thinking of Mike Leigh but the director who was there told us that he only understood what the actors were saying two months after shooting the film when back in Japan, he started to edit it, which I find fascinating. He did acknowledge French nouvelle vague influence but I felt the whole thing looked slightly contrived and the French part shot in Paris was very Bobo, bourgeois bohemian. Suwa actually looked very French a la Godard, big square black glasses, denim jacket and jeans, badly shaved.... The last film was amazing, Naomi Kawase Mogari forest, a tale of grief and desperation where a young woman who has lost her son and an old man still mourning his wife after 33 years, cling to each other while getting lost and stranded in a big forest in the heat and rain, highly charged, hardly any dialogue, hand held camera, Bergman meets Tarkovsky meets Almodovar; it left the whole audience speechless for a long while afterwards. Every evening meals with local wine and specialties, black bottom pig and duck magrets....

Strangely enough the Japanese guests didn't look too exotic here in the Limousin, even when wearing kimonos down the high street, they soon felt at home and blended in very well, loving pastis, but the cameras were often out, the only reminder of Japanese stereotype, tourists in Paris or London loaded with designer bags, camera always in hand. I wonder how they see us French or English in Japan; rosy and piggy like with a pint in hand or a liter of red under the arm. Time to hop back to London on my way to Glasgow and Inverness for the exhibition at Collins gallery 'crossing Alba', part of my collaboration with Ian Stephen. *Wednesday 18th August 20.10pm*



Week 46 47 48 Scottish delights again

Atmosphere; high pressure. Mood; high. News; US Fighting Operations in Iraq Officially over. Europe finally reacts to France ethnic cleansing

-- My whirlwind creative summer tour across three countries in 10 to 15 days long episodes is coming to an end after an extended stay in Scotland. Arriving in Glasgow on the 19th of August, just in time to put up the work for the 'Crossing Alba' exhibition at Collins gallery before the opening on the 20th. Samia joined me there from Paris and was quick to get to task, spending hours ironing the printed long johns and cutty sarks before I hung them, first time I saw her with an iron in hand in the fifteen or so years I have known her, hence my gratitude for her help and support. Ian wasn't around, busy in Stornoway sailing Jubilee and Broadbay, the 2 community skiffs, to The Shiant and other places as a back up plan in case sailing Jubilee to Stromness before the exhibition opened there on the 4th of September couldn't happen, because adverse winds; a heroic journey for a wooden open boat and 4 crew which could take 28 hours or so in the right conditions or impossible and dangerous. Not a journey I was tempted to do at all but there were plenty of experienced volunteers, up for the challenge of the open sea on an open boat in renown choppy waters; a spectacular and ambitious voyage that needed to be done not just for artistic purposes but to create link between the Stornoway open boat community and the Stromness one in Orkney, and to revive old sailing and fishing routes following the steps, so to speak, of Vikings of yesteryears.

-- Anyway Ian wasn't there to help, yet surprised us all by turning up for the opening thanks to favourable winds that allowed him to sail back just in time to Port Ness to catch a plane to Glasgow the next day. The exhibition looks good, we are both pleased with the works on show, video projection of the Stromness to Stornoway crossing we did in April, three minimal and poetic repetitive tableaux, one of them of a sunrise appearing and disappearing behind heavy swells is making quite a few people feel seasick, entirely intentional I may add, two videos on monitors of Ian telling a story, two related framed photogravures of the charts of the location of each story made of the script of the stories themselves - part of the beautiful edition I made at Highland print studios in Inverness in early July with John Mc Naughty, and the 14 skins garments, long johns and cutty sarks, hanging on a line, that also relate to the stories, customised with the 'Restricted in its ability to manoeuvre' nautical symbol. Our work echoed well the works made by Gerry and Morven during their rowing of the canal, Morven great boat costume and the video performance she developed from it.

Gerry's water bottles with printed text floating inside created interesting reflections on the plinths they were hovering above, horizontally in a fragile act of balance between their weight and the angled wooden holders their top was inserted in, they are truly striking. The catalogue was ready on time and acted as an interesting complement to the exhibition, given the four of us a voice and a chance to expand on our own interpretation of the two parallel journeys on water, Gerry with his poems, Morven with a record of her daily self imposed tasks and Ian and myself with our contrasting written log of our difficult crossing. My log of it becoming the starting point of a little book of 20 pages with 4 drawings and the only 3 photographs I managed to take during the crossing, being horizontally restricted on my berth for 38 of the 42 hours of the bumpy journey, a self portrait as sick crew, and from this position, at arm length, a shot of the moving cabin and the restricted view from the small window above my head. I am amazed to see people getting completely engrossed in the reading of it. The opening was a friendly and busy event where I knew many more people than I thought I would, Roz came up from London, she was joined by her sister, whose wedding I photographed more than 20 years ago in Paisley, a memorable experience I never quite recovered from,

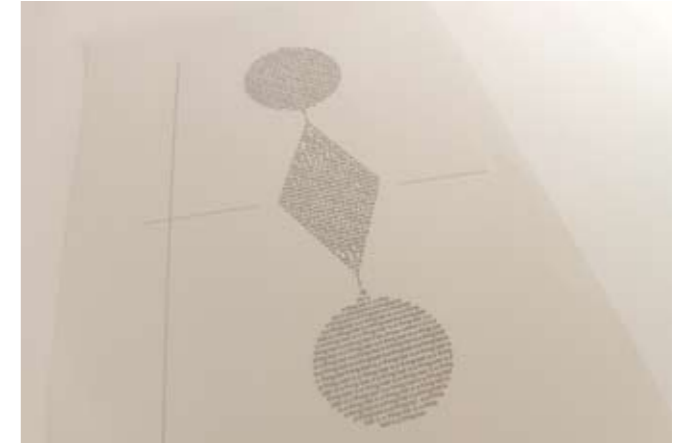
not just because of the drinks every member of her big family continually lined up in front of me at any occasion for the duration of my stay, never taking no thanks for a valid answer, but because the wedding took place on a Saturday afternoon in the middle of winter and by the time the church service was over it was pitch black; I was ill prepared and experienced and hangover and found it hard to cope with the extreme light condition, white dress in the night, group portrait..... I only had my old 35 mm Minolta and a small portable flash. Some pictures did come out but not as well as I wanted them to, I had chosen black and white, which was already a daring thing to do, it was after all a conventional wedding. I took ages, months actually to send the photographs back to the newly wed. I was also handprinting them and I was so embarrassed by my performance and the patchy quality; in my eyes I had clearly failed the task. Ever since I have felt quite ashamed about it, cringing at the thought of the whole thing, I never discussed it with Roz either. So I had the chance to finally confess my embarrassment and apologise, to my amazement she said that some of the pictures were still on her mantelpiece, and that I had managed to capture in some of the portraits, the true character of her siblings. I couldn't tell if she was being serious or just polite, but what mattered is that she didn't seem to hold any grudges and that my failure then hadn't messed up the most important day of her life. I felt so relieved. To conclude, she said that her colleagues in the office never believed her when she announced she was off to the opening of an exhibition of the work of her wedding photographer. Roz also contacted Looby, one of the first friend I made when I came to London in 1984, I couldn't get much of his Scottish accent at the time, he took me months to understand him. I used to nod and smile, so much so that



he thought he was a very funny man, which he actually is. I revealed years later that I couldn't understand a word of what he was saying. We both loved dancing and making funny moves and spent many long nights partying away. He moved back to Glasgow in the late 80's, I lost touch with him in the mid 90's. It was such a pleasure to see him and reminisce, the first thing he told me is that he was probably the only one there who actually remembered me not being able to speak a word of English; this was such a peculiar and moving reminder for me, of what I now take for granted, as an integral part of me much more so in a way than French. He is a chef and we spend a great night at his place eating and dining and telling many stories from the past and even singing a few songs. Then it was time to move on up to Inverness for production of a small edition screen print to be shown in the next exhibition at the Pier art centre on the 4th September, quite a tight deadline but I was confident that it would all work out.

-- Glasgow to Inverness by train, a great journey I had already made in snowy spring, as beautiful in full summer, wind swept landscapes and fast changing light, in the company of Samia and Ian. I like good habits so we stayed again in Susan's wonderful Touchwood house guesthouse whose main lounge makes you feel like you are in a Harry Potter movie. I am feeling quite at home there and once more her strange perceptive or psychic power meant that she was always there out of nowhere just when you were thinking of or needed her, very strange indeed. The house is full of witchcraft related objects, books, decoration and according to Ian she is a self confessed witch. Samia was determined to find out more but never got around to it, simply falling under the quirky charm of the place and her hostess. Ian went back to Stornoway to prepare for the epic (my words, not his) crossing and wait for favorable conditions, not before we had a massive argument around issues of collaboration and authorship; not so much about the work that we were making, we were both really excited and happy with what we were producing collaboratively or individually, conceptually playing with the layers of dialogue that led or not to a particular piece of work, but more in terms of how the project originated and the fact that at the source he had been commissioned by Ann Lantair in Stornoway to come up with a project that made links between islands in the Hebrides based on his literary work around epic and personal stories of the sea.

He subsequently invited me to collaborate on the idea, we came up with the project as it is currently developing and coming together, Ann Lantair and Scottish arts council seemed very happy with what we proposed to do together. Yet the fact that I was not included from the onset is an issue coming up regularly, or whether this is an Ian Stephen project or and Ian Stephen and Emmanuelle Waeckerlé one; it is not so much so for myself or for Ian I am quite sure, though I sometimes start doubting due to some of his comments or reactions or of some who are involved on the way, who sometimes have considered me an uninvited guest or even worse a glorified assistant. I can't help thinking that if I was a male artist, the issue wouldn't even come up and I would readily be accepted as an equal collaborator. I have had on many occasion to control pride and ego (more than usual) and trust that all would be for the best, as trying to set the record straight might have had opposite effect. So now and then issues flare up between us as I think we both find the situation difficult at times, for different reasons and often when we are stressed or tired or overworked. We had discussed a few times the status of the Pier exhibition in Stromness coming up shortly and as much as I would have liked it to be an integral part of our collaborative project, Ian had already started working on the concept for the show before we met, this involved the decommissioning and rebuilding of old skiffs Jubilee and Broadbay, hence the former making the trip from Stornoway to Stromness; although I eventually contributed some work to the exhibition - the screen-print edition, the customizing of a storm sail - and the editing of the videos of the voyages made with the skiffs, this was Ian's exhibition in collaboration with Colin Myers, a shipwright and myself. All this is healthy and common dialogue to have in any collaboration for sure but I am not used to be in such position, usually being the one at the source of a collaboration, with Sebastian Lexer for VINST or Petri Huurrinainen for Bouche Bée, both of them successful and long lasting ones with never any misunderstanding or bad feelings, as I always made sure all was done fairly and democratically. Any way an argument there was, temporary closure and hugging there was too followed by a lovely Indian meal with Samia, highland style looking at an amazing sunset over the river Ness. And Ian was off with our blessing for good wind and good weather for his eventual ambitious crossing.



-- Of course the print took longer than planned and the prints did not give me goose pimples like the photogravures still do. It did me proud in the end, once framed and on the wall of the Pier art centre a few days later. I had promised Samia to keep a few days to spend with her. She was patient and in the end we had two great days together. We hired a car and explored Cromarty and the black isles, went looking for dolphins on a small motorboat, there were only four of us, and a pilot with great banter. We found some in the end, spotting them in the distance, their fins slicing through choppy waters, but they got closer, magical sight, made a few twirls and disappeared, a quick visit just enough to make it very special. Cromarty is great, we both really fell for it and started to look for our ideal abode, then sat starrng at the sea and the oil platform and changing loaded skies, sipping Guinness for a long time. We also stopped at Clooty Well in Munloch, on the recommendation of Linda at Highland print studios, a small wooded area whose trees are covered with hanging bits of clothes, left there to rot by people since the 12th century, in hope that a particular ailments will be cured by substitution, a Celtic place of pilgrimage and not an art installation as Samia first thought when she glanced at some photos of the place I was showing her in a local brochure; it could be a Boltansky work on the Holocaust. It is a creepy place and the more you spend time in it the more you start looking closely at what people left or wrote on what they left, ranging from poignant to silly to stupid; also looking at older rags starting to disintegrate, I was half hoping to find traces from the middle ages but it all looks quite contemporary, hard to find anything beyond the (19) 80's.

Then we took a small cruise on Loch Ness for a few hours, starting just outside Inverness on the Caledonian canal, a small cruise boat, 50 people maximum, the comments were full of Scottish humour, we didn't have to stop off at various castle ruins and other historical remains with massive visitor centers attached to them for the benefit of the Scottish economy; like the one where you were advised not to miss the fantastic 8 minutes long video retracing more than a thousand years of Scottish history. These two days were even more enjoyable considering they constituted my summer holiday.

-- The morning Samia was off to Paris via Glasgow, I was meant to fly to Limoges via London but decided to go to Stromness instead, via Stornoway. The temptation was too big. Furthermore the crossing on Jubilee from Lewis to Orkney was happening, weather conditions were right, which meant I had to document departure and arrival as well as re-edit the video for the exhibition to add those as well as the footage gathered by the crew. And someone needed to drive the van from Stornoway to Stromness with some of the boat related artworks, not a chore at all as it meant driving along the north west coast of Scotland from Ullapool to Scrapster, via Cape Wrath, one of the most beautiful drive one can do in the UK, one I always dreamt of doing. Time to cancel and change various flights, at a tremendous cost of course, these low cost companies are outrageous in the way they rip you off. Here I was, a weekend in Stornoway, mostly hands on the keyboard, occasionally staring at the window to look at the harbour and the seagulls, great meals and banter in between, with Ian's brother Kenny, a great talker with a long white beard full of stories, a talk about Ian Hamilton Finlay's work at Ann Lantair, to coincide with an exhibition of his, The dingy and a few boat related screen-prints with great visual and textual puns like 'The Catameringue'. Jubilee did get off as scheduled at 8.30am on a Monday morning, from Port Ness in blazing sunshine, with Ian as skipper, Dihanne Ross and artist and skipper from the mainland, Viking like, tall, blond, smiling and strong with a reputation to match- the story goes that she has once tackled and fought 5 policemen in Stornoway on a drunken evening, when she turned up at court all feminine and charming the judge dismissed the case not believing that such a lovely woman could be capable of such a thing - likewhich sexism can sometimes help....

-- Colin the shipwright and young David, at 16 the youngest qualified skipper in the Hebrides. I wished for thirty seconds to be with them. The next morning, 5am start to catch the ferry, six hours to drive a bit less of 200 miles, I had plenty of time to stop off and explore, coves, cliffs and dead end paths, and talk with seagulls. I only wished I could have taken longer but I was on a schedule, regularly interrupted by poetic text reports from Jubilee on the open sea, all going well despite some rough weather and big swells near the Cape and a very close encounter with a big oil tanker. It looked like they were going to make it and even better with 2 days to spare before the opening of the exhibition, we were all so excited and for sure they would be some kind of heroes when they arrived in Stromness harbour on their bright red skiff. At it happened and ironically they arrived a few hours before I did, after a 26 hours crossing which is very commendable. Success and relief all around, for months now we had been hoping that this trip would happen, a bit against the odds and it had worked out.

Ian and I were the guests of Hamish and Frida, in their beautiful home on the harbour, with a window to die for at the bottom of their living room at sea level overlooking the water, with a large padded and comfortable window seat to recline on and stare at the sea, boats, seals in the water, birds passing by and ferry arriving and leaving three times a day and and and. Hamish is a small concertina accordion maker and Frida a weaver, both of great talent and exquisite taste; they have a great collection of paintings and other art works covering most walls, they are fantastically welcoming, and great hosts, memorable long meals with plenty for all senses and great talks too, we had in common a particular taste for 'bad' or sick jokes, endless laughter. Dihanne and Colin were sleeping in Hamish's gorgeous yacht in the Marina, I was slightly jealous, but went for a cup of tea on board and I had the window.... Such an eccentric bunch of very different people, yet we all bonded superbly and I did really feel very close to all of them after a few days, I was sad leaving. In between all this heart warming activity there were serious and concentrated work putting up the exhibition at the Pier Art centre, one of the best art spaces I have ever been to or worked in, fantastic architecture, great light making for great exhibition spaces and a great team of very professional people.

Their permanent collection is exquisitely hung and contains some of my favourite artists, like Margaret Mellis, Ian Hamilton Finlay and many others.... It was a real pleasure working there, good team work between Ian and I, it all looked pretty much like expected, the engraved planks from the old boats majestic and fitting the length of the gallery space, Colin's drawing and my print facing each other on opposite walls, the storm sail hanging from a nail looking quite majestic and graceful and the videos of the sea voyage, and the making of a boat, though only 3 minutes long each were extremely evocative, people sitting down for a few loops of each before moving on. The little book of the log of my previous crossing made an impact, once again I am amazed how all these boating and sailing people are taking to it, and how the more literary ones are referring to it as great writing, a little pearl I even heard, I am not bragging, just surprised. Various sailing trips in the bay took place, linking the 2 open boat communities of Stromness and Stornoway, some of the locals coming sailing on Jubilee and learning the tricks of tacking, a well choreographed ritual involving 4 or 5 people to bring down the sail, pass the beam to the other side of the mast and raise the sail again, all this in one smooth continuous and rapid action if possible, not an easy task. Some of Jubilee's crew went sailing on the Orkney Yoles, looking much more elegant and feminine perhaps than Jubilee.



-- I am now back in London, it took a while to readjust to city pace and reconnect with other projects, teaching responsibilities and everyday little dramas, my boiler broke, my car too after more than a month of inaction.... I am tired, in need of a few days doing nothing but it has been such a great adventure, producing some work I am quite proud of, meeting some very interesting individuals and discovering places I had never been to and a successful collaboration. What else can I ask for? Well perhaps an assistant 3 days a week would help or the money to afford one. The rest is fine. Hatem from Beyrouth is staying with me for three weeks, on a short research residency with Delta arts, a great cook so a great artist I am sure, we are showing each other's work tomorrow. This week I am being an Indian goddess for INDIA SONG the Performance / photographic project initiated by Karen Knorr, exploring hybridization of cultural identity. I am frantically immersing myself into mudras, Indian mythology and iconography in an attempt to build up my own take on some of the 9 manifestations of Durga. From Scottish delights to Indian fantasy. *Sunday 12th September 16.34pm*



Week 49 50 Never ending

Atmosphere; unsettled. Mood; high with occasional lows. News; The read sea could have really parted for Moses. Labour party is choosing between Abel and Cain or is it Cain and Cain or Abel and Abel ?

-- This is the last entry of the 4th cycle of my MOIblog experiment, an end and a beginning of the fifth one; a personal landmark in my rambling, my attempt at keeping track of it all as it happens; a record of personal history in the making; a way of grasping what seems the most important before it disappears in the past or before circumstances or memory or nostalgia start selecting what matters and what doesn't, or before others start deciding for me what my story is, or in case nobody will ever be interested in a record of my doings. I have been postponing this moment for the past four days, no lack of good excuses, wanting to make sure I will end well. Beginnings are easier than endings; a bit like the famous line in a 1920's Hollywood movie after the star makes her entry walking down a staircase, she says to a co-star, 'L'ai-je bien descendu?' 'did I descend it well?'. It is not the first time I go through this, the fourth time I am repeating my small ending. It reminds me of two things Gilles Deleuze said about repetition; it is the unconscious of representation, not necessarily relevant in this context, or perhaps more relevant that I care for it to be if we start analysing this MOIblog experiment, which I dare not, at least not yet, preferring the role of scribe and keeper of my archive. Deleuze also said that the compulsion for repetition is a way of avoiding the unavoidable,

the only certainty we have about life, THE END of it; this seems to be very relevant here. Here I am analysing what I am doing while doing it, I am forever ending and beginning, every 12 months, and at the same time avoiding oblivion once THE END will come as I will have created a tangible archive of my passing on earth. This wasn't the initial intention as I recall and as I stated in THE YEAR Vol 1, it started as a one way correspondence between myself and close ones while I was going through one of life's challenges, critical illness, a way of keeping them informed of my progress without them having to enquire or me to repeat myself. Strange how at every ending I have to remind myself what is it I am doing and why. It is interesting for me to observe the development of both the actual act of recording my life as it evolves and my reasons for doing so. I have never read back through the 3 volumes of THE YEAR (soon to be 4) as a rule; my way to keep to the facts and not being influenced by my own judgment, but also because I probably don't want to or I am not ready yet to face my history.

-- Enough postponing. Last week, I smoothly if not gracefully slipped into the skin of a contemporary interpretation of Durga, in the beautiful embroidered purple and sky blue costume Karen Knorr bought for me in Bethnal green. Looking good was the easy part during our all day session in the Russian club photography studio that she booked for the occasion. I had had hardly any time to research the mudras (hand gestures) as well as Bharata Nattam dance moves and poses that I wanted to use, not just the ones I liked but more to the point the ones my western and ageing body could cope with. I am quite supple and have practiced Yoga for many years, though not during this busy summer, but even the simplest of poses were difficult to mimic, it looked so easy in the photographs and video clips I found on the internet. I had no chance at all to try them out or practice before the shooting session. In a way this impossibility of perfection is what I wanted to explore in front of Karen's camera for her 'India song' project. At the same time I needed to achieve a certain level of grace and fluidity to match Karen's highly polished and precise aesthetic. It was a challenge for both body and mind, an exhausting and fascinating one requiring great concentration and letting go at the same time and fast digesting of my own Durga body language.

I had brought a few objects to use but Karen chose a simple red rose as the only prop at my disposal. I have yet to see the results, I am fairly confident about the photographs but a bit unsure of the three or four short improvised performances for video that we finished with, I don't think any of them achieved the level of tension and consistency I wished for, unless some heavy editing takes place, and that would be cheating.

-- Meanwhile I have been busy documenting and archiving this summer's projects, Scottish and other ones, hoping to be able to bring up to date yet another archive, my website. It seems that half of our time is spent not doing but logging what we have just done, a form of doing I guess. I have been heavily influenced lately by 'Archive fever' Jacques Derrida lecture on archiving, psychoanalysis, Freud and Jewishness; this is by no means an accurate or adequate description, just some of the key themes articulated by Derrida in this fascinating and dense book. I haven't really yet even attempted to formulate let alone understand his meandering argument or critique of psychoanalysis problematic use and reliance on archiving as one of its fundamental tools but it seems that a few of his reflections on the archive have already infiltrated my thinking. Seeing MOIblog as a psychoanalytical archive, a mystic pad on which I am recording the present but in which the seeds of the future are hidden and may or may not come to fruition, time will tell. What is hidden in this archive, like in any other archive is what is at the root of all my actions, the source of it all, the origin, the WHY analysts try to find while digging behind and between the words they collect on paper from their patients, like an archeologist digs and search through ruins of the past. Can I call myself an archeologist of the present, archiving the pieces before they get buried? Isn't that what an ethnographer does? Be it a private one which has no distance between him/herself and his/her field of study. This is turning into an essay. I think a seed has definitely grown roots here and these roots seem to connect together in the present various ongoing strands of philosophical and existential interests; would that be a little epiphany? An ending bringing life.

-- The academic year has started, and started very well, we are still struggling with student numbers and lack of adequate teaching spaces but I am not in charge anymore

so it is not really my problem to find solutions. I just have to learn to cope with overcrowding. I am still not used to what feels like the incredible lightness of my workload, be it the correct load for a 0.5 post like mine, but about 1/3 of what I have had to do for the past few years. I don't have to constantly run, never managing to get through it all, I have time to think and to actually enjoy my various duties. It is very exciting indeed and I hope it lasts. So I am starting to decide what to do with all that freed up time and energy, no lack of choices between the various projects I am already involved in, with Karen, with Ian, THE YEAR vol 4 and duties in France, but also the new book project I am putting in place, as well as the Film Musik video project I started to work on in Austria during the Wandelweiser week at Die Station. A bit of self promotion of existing projects is greatly needed but this is what I hate doing so I shall have to find a way. I also want to keep time for reading, so far I am keeping one or two hours to do so when I wake up on non teaching days, and it is working well, the mind is fresh and uncluttered, the task highly enjoyable.

-- bookRoom is currently taking part at the Whitechapel book fair. We have been given a great spot on the ground floor, facing Phaidon, around the corner from Steidl, hopefully not a result of my loud complaining of last year. The fair is much better organised, mixing big and smaller publishers and we have a great display with plenty of new publications by new graduates, Rosie Sherwood, Ollie Poddar and Wandering Bears (aka Nick and Luke) and bookRoom members, Mark Bellingham, Jane Cradock Watson, David Rule, Thom Bridge, myself. We seem to be doing well, selling well to, though I do find the whole thing quite draining and soulless, the constant flow of people passing by, some stopping, some just glancing; it does look in a way like a big supermarket with too many choices, many brands offering the same products with slight variations, and we are shop assistants competing for attention, repeating the same stories as for the first time; so far from the joy and love of making and seeing your ideas having more or less successfully taken shape, both as enjoyable successes and failures. A little anecdote, on the opening night I was struggling to put names on familiar faces, especially in crowded situations, after a long day and two beers.

I saw this familiar face approaching, whose body and arms were cozily wrapped around those of a blond woman I didn't recognise, no clues there. As they were moving from one table to the next. I think we both achieved recognition at the same time and he elegantly turned away to avoid a potentially embarrassing encounter. He was an architect a few years older than me I dated briefly a couple of years ago when I was still living in Farnham. We had a few enjoyable dates in London, great conversations and sharpness of mind as well as a mutual love of extra dry bubbly, until he confessed having met someone else who was more 'convenient' than me, she lived a few streets away from him in North London and wasn't away as much as I did, living in between two countries. No harm was done, we had a last good evening entertainment, though I got plenty of mileage joking about the convenience of love once you reach middle age, and the fact that he was potentially two timing her by wanting to keep in touch with me. Anyway that was the last we saw of each other. I assumed the lovely woman he was with was the one he mentioned then. He had, politely perhaps, forgotten to mention that she was so much younger than me, late twenties, early thirties I would guess and I naively didn't even think about it.

This annoyingly did throw me slightly, not seeing this stranger with another young stranger, but the fact that I was not quite so young and fresh, hardly news to me, I am feeling and seeing the damages every day, but this was a sharp reminder of it, it did unsettle me for a bit. Yes my attractiveness to the opposite sex is diminishing fast, I am starting to reach the dreaded turning point where women are slowly becoming invisible as sexual beings or objects of desires, menopause is looming, I sometimes think I can already recognise some of the symptoms; the joys of ageing gracefully while witnessing helplessly what you took for granted - youth, charm, self confidence - running away from you. I love Rachel Rosenthal symbolic gesture of shaving her head as soon as she reached menopause, acknowledging her loss by renouncing one of the main attributes of femininity, hair. It made her look quite masculine or at least androgynous. I have often said I would do the same. Let see if I will have the guts or what excuse I will come up with once the time comes... talking about ending, did I finish it well? *Saturday 25th September 16.46pm*



IF YOU

Reality narrated as it happened

CAN'T

stories of sheer survival

PRETEND

read all about it

PRETEND

YOU CAN 