

Dear X

Stuart Bailey

The COMPOSITE/COMPOST issue
Wrong makes more sense
Don't aim so hard
Laterally yours
Scaffolding
F for FAKE
Re-reading + Winging it
Marbles / The not-looking
The subtle alphabet
Difference in forms
Julie Burchill + ZEN
LA
Hit from the side

Almost two months to the day after our meeting, here's my promised attempt to reconstruct our conversation. I'm going to start with this list of notes I made when I got back home, go through them individually and try to remember what we were talking about. I'm also half-borrowing from Daniel Spoerri's book *AN ANECDOTED TOPOGRAPHY OF CHANCE*. One morning in Paris, 1966, Spoerri made a map of the items on his breakfast table, described each object and how it came to end up there, then got other people to contribute: Topor sketched each object from memory, Emmet Williams annotated the original notes, and later the (French to English) translator added further annotations to the existing ones. The result is a branching series of stories and observations from a composite of sympathetic minds, all drawn from the original collection of mundane objects. This carried on over a few ever-expanding editions, and the form of the book mirrors the process perfectly, with ever-decreasing footnotes. So I'm going to follow suit and expand on each line on the above list in editorial smallprint.

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Liter of Vin des Rochers†

bought on the Rue Mouffetard this morning from my regular wine dealer, who calls me the "gentleman with the deep voice" and says from time to time: "With what I have seen in this place, I could write a novel stretching from here to Place MAUBERT."†† The liter cost 1 franc and 65 centimes plus 30 centimes deposit, and with it I received a free chance on, among other things, an automobile.††† The bottle is still half full, and I am in the process of finishing it now. (Nos. 25, 28, 28a.)††††

AUTHOR'S ORIGINAL NOTE

† On the label is the following data: "11% / Vin des Rochers / Lines your stomach with velvet / I guarantee this wine is made from wholesome and dependably pure juice /



LITER OF VIN DES ROCHERS / 3

(illegible signature) / registered trademark / JULES LEONELLI & Co."

AUTHOR'S ADDITIONAL NOTE

†† I erred. It wasn't the wine dealer who said "With what I've seen in this place I could write a novel stretching from here to Place MAUBERT," Fr. No. 1, but GEORGES SODINE, proprietor of Les Cinq Billards café at Place de la Contrescarpe (see No. 70). An American, JOE CHAPEAU, set me straight on this point. He is called JOE CHAPEAU because of the filthy Spanish cowboy hat he always wears, which probably serves him as a source of inspiration for the delicate romantic portraits he paints. Just this morning MONSIEUR GEORGES expanded the philosophical observation of one of his customers, CAMILLE, that "Life is a shit sandwich" with: "Yes, and we take a bite every day."

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE 1

From Place de la Contrescarpe, the ever more fashionable haunt of bohemians at the top of the Rue Mouffetard, that dingy but animated crooked street of markets and stalls, more picturesque than hygienic, to Place MAUBERT, called a "cesspool" by ERASMUS but today only a drab and banal annex to the more exotic quarters of which it forms the axis, is .44 miles: a pleasant downhill walk along the Rue DESCARTES past the Esperanto bookshop, the house where VERLAINE died, a Chinese grocery store, the rear sweltering walls of the Lycée HENRI IV, the backside of ST-ETIENNE-du-MONT (where RACINE is buried), across the Rue clovee (with remains of the medieval city walls), then down the Rue de la Montagne-STE-GENEVIEVE past the Polytechnic Institute, several lesbian bars and VERA's apartment.

AUTHOR'S ORIGINAL NOTE

††† "Vin des Rochers / free lottery / Series L, No. 712017 / Drawing Nov. 30, 1961."

AUTHOR'S ORIGINAL NOTE

†††† RAYMOND HAINS, after reading the manuscript, astonished by this reference to Vin des Rochers, one entire evening developed for my benefit a whole train of ideas that I jotted down on a dozen cards which I have since lost. All I can remember is that he started out with an analysis of an essay by ETIENNE, "PAUL CLAUDEL et le Vin des Rochers," to which

The COMPOSITE/COMPOST ISSUE: The word COMPOSITE has been buzzing around my head for a while.

One of the things I remember saying to you was 'I've been coming to the conclusion that graphic design doesn't exist', and you replying 'That's a good theory'. But what did I mean? I THINK I meant that graphic design only exists when other subjects exist first. It isn't an A PRIORI discipline, but a GHOST; both a grey area and a meeting point – a contradiction in terms – or a node made visible only by plotting it through the lines of connections. And that's exactly how I've come to start thinking of DDD, slowly becoming about everything BUT graphic design – towards a negative of what it originally was. And if the subject is a GHOST, then we're all GHOSTWRITERS: that sounds about right. Of course, all journals/magazines/fanzines are composites to some extent, but none seem quite so DEFINED by the idea as us. DB once pointed out that a graphic design magazine is one of those odd