

Subject: TIJUANA I JUNE
Sent: 6/1/97 3:42 AM
Received: 7/4/97 11:17 AM
From: FRANCIS deSMEDT ALYS, 110123.630@compuserve.com
To: Olivier Debroise, debroise@laneta.apc.org

TJ es un invento de America
(Tijuana is an American invention)

Subject: MEXICO/3 JUNE 1997
Sent: 6/3/97 1:42 AM
Received: 7/4/97 11:17 AM
From: FRANCIS deSMEDT ALYS, 110123.630@compuserve.com
To: Olivier Debroise, debroise@laneta.apc.org

Wherever you are is the entry point, she said.

The Art of Packing

Subject: PANAMA/ 10 JUNE 1997
Sent: 6/10/97 7:34 PM
Received: 7/4/97 11:17 AM
From: FRANCIS deSMEDT ALYS, 110123.630@compuserve.com
To: Olivier Debroise, debroise@laneta.apc.org

Loops are elusive. This journey makes me think
of the infinite unfolding of a flying carpet.

Subject: SANTIAGO AIRPORT / 11 JUNE 1997
Sent: 6/12/97 2:34 AM
Received: 7/4/97 11:17 AM
From: FRANCIS deSMEDT ALYS, 110123.630@compuserve.com
To: Olivier Debroise, debroise@laneta.apc.org

6.00 A.M.

It's raining outside and I'm not ready to leave the airport yet.

7.20 A.M.

Still raining but I'm feeling more prepared.

I walk outside, following the main Terminal building.

Taxis are on the other side of the street, waving at me.

I keep going.

The side I am walking on is protected from the rain while the other isn't.

I make a left and start crossing the road. A car drives by and splashes water all over me.

My left sox is soaking.

The journey is starting.

xFrancis

Subject: SANTIAGO / 12 JUNE 1997
Sent: 7/12/97 5:25 AM
Received: 7/4/97 11:17 AM
From: FRANCIS deSMEDT ALYS, 110123.630@compuserve.com
To: Olivier Debroise, debroise@laneta.apc.org

..still concentrating on slowing down: walk at a tourist pace, eat 3 meals a day, watch time's disintegration, resist the temptation to zap TV all day in my hotel room. I am not able yet to get interested in the city. Maybe it's all too familiar? It reminds me of Switzerland.

Rain helps in a way; it provides an excuse to hang around coffee places. Sex and coffee seem to be closely associated here, an exception to the general puritan atmosphere. The center's numerous galleries allow me to slip from one coffee bar to another, without ever being exposed to daylight.

Still in Limboland.

Subject: TAHITI / 13 JUNE 1997
Sent: 6/14/97 2:34 AM
Received: 7/4/97 11:17 AM
From: FRANCIS deSMEDT ALYS, 110123.630@compuserve.com
To: Olivier Debroise, debroise@laneta.apc.org

I am woken up by the stewardess who ask the passengers to leave the plane for a couple hours, for hygenic reasons as she graciously declares.

Very night, 35 Celcius. I order a Pernod in a bambu bar to a fake Vahina waitress.

She's a native from Tourcoing, from the North.

As I've been there I invite her for a drink.

Back on the plane, back to sleep.

I enjoyed the visit.

The journey is defining itself.

Subject: INT DATE LINE
Sent: 6/14/97 11:24 PM
Received: 7/4/97 11:17 AM
From: FRANCIS deSMEDT ALYS, 110123.630@compuserve.com
To: Olivier Debroise, debroise@laneta.apc.org

The plane crosses the International Date Line while I'm asleep.
It costs me a day of life: a Friday 13.

Subject: SYDNEY / 15 JUNE 1997
Sent: 6/15/97 8:26 AM
Received: 7/4/97 11:17 AM
From: FRANCIS deSMEDT ALYS, 110123.630@compuserve.com
To: Olivier Debroise, debroise@laneta.apc.org

Very pleasant but unexciting.
Still warming up too.

Trying out a new game: "Exponential Tourism"

Upon arriving in a city:

1. Find out where the major tourist attractions are located
2. Visit as many sites as possible (the Aquarium, the Opera House etc...)
3. Once on location, stand at the "Kodak Point" and smile
4. When tourists cameras arrive with their camera,
try to figure within the frame of their photos.

These actions will exponentially transport your image from the visited site to wherever the photographers will return to.

Subject: SINGAPORE / 16 JUNE 1997
Sent: 6/17/97 6:14 PM
Received: 7/4/97 11:17 AM
From: FRANCIS deSMEDT ALYS, 110123.630@compuserve.com
To: Olivier Debroise, debroise@laneta.apc.org

Singapore is nothing but a large shopping center. Every one around but me seems to know that. It shows how unprepared I am for this trip. Beyond the aura of the next city's name, I have no expectations, no demands, no goals.

Upon arrival,,the more I feel disoriented, the more I walk. The faster too. The same process happens with my thoughts. By the end of the day,I'm going through a catharsis of words, a chaotic succession of frozen thoughts. Peaks usually happen during sunsets.

As for the itineraries, they're guided by a couple postcard images,the general flux of the crowd, or by arbitrary criteria such as walking on the sunny side of the street always, which, if done with method, will draw a large circle and take you back to your starting point by the end of the day. A perfect metaphor for this journey.

I find it difficult not to make eye contact while walking. The problem is, since I mark regular pauses along the way to frenetically write down thoughts, it often occurs that I repeatedly pass by the same person over and over. In such situations, eye contact becomes unavoidable and can sometimes lead to blushing.

Subject: BANGKOK / 18 JUNE 1997
Sent: 6/18/97 7:10 PM
Received: 7/4/97 11:17 AM
From: FRANCIS deSMEDT ALYS, 110123.630@compuserve.com
To: Olivier Debroise, debroise@laneta.apc.org

A wave of nostalgia for Mexico City submerges me as I inhale the city's fowl smells.

When I left the air conditioned airport bus my glasses got instantly coated with vapor.

I spend my first morning trying to recall an English word which causes me to gradually slow down. I am walking slower every day, entering a tourist pace. Even dogs pass me on now.

The word is "puddle."

The flux of visual information is too intense. If I walk back and forth the same street I fail to recognize it, it becomes a different walk. Hardly drawing at all. It feels too slow, too selective. I don't have the courage or conviction to choose a single image. Moving to words, notes seem less exclusive. And they come and go faster.

Subject: RANGOON/ 21 JUNE 1997|
Sent: 6/22/97 6:15 PM
Received: 7/4/97 11:17 AM
From: FRANCIS deSMEDT ALYS, 110123.630@compuserve.com
To: Olivier Debroise, debroise@laneta.apc.org

I had been longing to lose myself, yet 5 hours in this place and I'm already dissolved.

The journey is shifting from a vain arty joke to a sentimental quest for redemption. The original reasons for being here are fading away.

A sweet smell of homosexuality is pervasive in the air, or I don't know if a dog is a dog?

In tearooms, the tricky part is not so much entering but leaving with dignity while 15 pairs of eyes following you.

I asked the young lady at the Hotel reception desk to wake me up in the morning. She blushed.

At night, the locals don't notice my otherness until close range. The surprise in their eyes is worth 1000 smiles.

Subject: HONG KONG / 25 JUNE 1997
Sent: 6/23/97 7:31 AM
Received: 7/4/97 11:17 AM
From: FRANCIS deSMEDT ALYS, 110123.630@compuserve.com
To: Olivier Debroise, debroise@laneta.apc.org

Arriving in time to join the last UK rave party. People from all over the world have made the journey to watch the colony change hands. In fact there isn't much to see, just some posters at street corners claiming that "no effective change will occur". Rumors are spreading quickly though; they are the most tangible sign of the forthcoming handover.

China beckons: "Long for Hong Kong"
"Back to origin".

I spend too much time watching my self walking away in the many closed-circuit screens of a TV storefront.

In downtown Kowloon, prostitutes are hanging around the coffee machines outside of the local 7-ELEVEN.

*China will put the noose
around the goose's neck
and will expect the goose
to lay the golden egg.*

Subject: SHANGHAI /29 JUNE 1997
Sent: 6/28/97 10:11 AM
Received: 7/4/97 11:17 AM
From: FRANCIS deSMEDT ALYS, 110123.630@compuserve.com
To: Olivier Debroise, debroise@laneta.apc.org

Not much to do with the Tintin-esque Shanghai of my childhood, but exoticism still flourishes. Insignificant details transport me, is it just a matter of geography?
At this point of the journey, whether I travel East or West it would take me a week to get back home.

As I become progressively unable to read the local codes, I'm happily losing conscience of my self. At night I crash, empty.
I don't dare to resist the vain romanticism which disguises the crude reality of a violently mutating Shanghai.

Pure present.

Hardly any dogs around. The few I saw are discreetly being walked around late at night.
Most were killed over the latest cleansing of the city.
They are the first collateral victims of a three year plan of "modernization" of the whole downtown area.

After the habitual packing ceremony, the morning's next ritual is the quest for a coffee.

Mini skirts are flying high in Shanghai.
The girls are sexy, but genuinely. I can't detect much seduction play in the air.

Subject: SEOUL / 1 JULY 1997
Sent: 6/30/97 7:01 AM
Received: 7/4/97 11:17 AM
From: FRANCIS deSMEDT ALYS, 110123.630@compuserve.com
To: Olivier Debroise, debroise@laneta.apc.org

Every urban situation I have been deferring is evident here. If I was to stay much longer, I'd become violent.

It took me the whole morning to find the pedestrians: they were under my feet. Below the high-tech city lies a immense second class mall.

Sitting on a subway bench I understand the sentiment of advantage I have been feeling.

Because I can keep moving, I don't have to stay here or anywhere.

Les seins se portent petits et rapprochés cet été.

Subject: ANCHORAGE IN TRANSIT / 2 JULY 1997
Sent: 7/1/97 10:03 PM
Received: 7/4/97 11:17 AM
From: FRANCIS deSMEDT ALYS, 110123.630@compuserve.com
To: Olivier Debroise, debroise@laneta.apc.org

No idea what time it is.
Guessing from the fogged up window it must be dusk or dawn.
A thought for Beuys crossing New York City in his ambulance.
Can I be the coyote?

This is the first art souvenir in a while.
It is the return's beginning.

Subject: MCDONALD'S / 2 JULY 1997
Sent: 7/2/97 10:45 AM
Received: 7/4/97 11:17 AM
From: FRANCIS deSMEDT ALYS, 110123.630@compuserve.com
To: Olivier Debroise, debroise@laneta.apc.org

The local price of a cheese burger with medium coke and french fries is the quickest way to estimate the average cost of living in each country.

When traveling abroad, always balance every second meal with a McDonald's or KFC meal to keep one's stomach stable.

When feeling nostalgia for airplane food have a chicken or fish burger. Ask if you can keep the tray.

Subject: VANCOUVER / 4 JULY 1997
Sent: 7/2/97 8:55 AM
Received: 7/4/97 11:17 AM
From: FRANCIS deSMEDT ALYS, 110123.630@compuserve.com
To: Olivier Debroise, debroise@laneta.apc.org

Touching down on known land.
When did the journey really start?

While mapping the route back in Mexico City?
(You were gone before you departed, she said.)

While I was forcing myself into a tourist condition
and accepted to be contemplative only?

When my original skepticism was absolved by the genuineness of Rangoon?

When what started as a mock project shifted into a sentimental quest for
redemption?

Somewhere along the loop the doing simply evacuated the thinking.
And then, it became pure living.

Rumour of an old lady who walking around at night followed by a
"fully dressed" duck.

I Discover the art of "Rock Balancing" on the downtown beaches.

Wishing I could be sipping my capuccino on my way to work like everybody
else around.

Subject: AIRPORTS & PLANES / 3 JULY 1997
Sent: 7/3/97 8:55 PM
Received: 7/4/97 11:17 AM
From: FRANCIS deSMEDT ALYS, 110123.630@compuserve.com
To: Olivier Debroise, debroise@laneta.apc.org

7% of my total traveling time was spent in 17 airports over 16 countries.

Upon arrival, the airport functions as a decompression chamber.

8% of the journey took place in airplanes. I like flying.
The airline contract induces an infantile state I'm enjoying.

Smoking regulations in airports and planes are directly proportional to the degree of Westernization of the host country.

Why is it that red wine is always so cold on planes?

Subject: Los Angeles / 4 July 1997
Sent: 7/4/97 11:57 AM
Received: 7/5/97 10:42 AM
From: FRANCIS deSMEDT ALYS, 110123.630@compuserve.com
To: Olivier Debroise, debroise@laneta.apc.org

"I kept on moving from one place to another, hopping the drugs would be better, the alcohol would be better, the women would be better, but things were coming to an end".
out of an interview of Dennis Hopper on Channel 4, L.A., 11:27 PM

