

KRANK.

I lived in Paris for nearly 9 years. I came back for a few days after a year and half away. (Oct 2015) - I was there to feel it out and reflect on whether I wanted to die an old man in Paris.

I needed two stamps after I had visited the all new, revamped Picasso museum in Le Marais, I had to send a postcard to a dear friend in Oslo. First I had to have a coffee at La Perle. Didier and Eric smiled when they saw me. After a quick chat they returned to work. I looked at the two men that have served me my morning coffee for over eight years. John Galliano inadvertently supported La Perle with his anti-semitic rant; I sat there the morning after, news crews and Japanese bloggers snapping, talking and pointing. La Perle's annual income increased so radically that the owner, a hairy man from Marseilles had to invest the money back into the cafe. I have seen its idiotic 007-like underground ham and wine bar.

I walk to Rue Rambuteau to buy the stamps. I have lived at no. 15. I entered Rambuteau by crossing Rue des Archives. I looked down the street towards Beaubourg (Pompidou), the street had completely changed. The chaos and grit had disappeared and been replaced by tourist friendly comfort. I stopped for my stamps, but the cafe where I have bought them for over 8 years was not there. To my astonishment it had been replaced by a large, wide, new type of concept cafe. These cafes are pre-made with all the trimmings and delivered in a container.

I walked on the left-hand side of the road, down to rue du Renard, crossed the street and took Rue Rambuteau back up to rue du Temple, so I could suck up what a capitalist plough can do to our historic soil in an extremely short time. I made a left up rue du Temple. After the Jewish museum, on the other side of the street is one of the two entrances to rue de Braque; the name has nothing to do with the painter. A German friend said something like, that is a GOODY GOODY TWO SHOES gallery. This commercial French / Italian gallery located on rue de Braque, like so many others, operates and survives from their suspect, self-made secondary market platform. The gallery owner has explained with hand gestures what makes a good artist. At that same time, on rue Vieille du Temple, he insulted my friends and me. His ethics are common. Should I battle them to stand my ground?

I didn't pop by the goody goody gallery. Instead I stopped at the all impressive Marian Goodman Gallery. The entrance door to la cour makes you feel like a peasant. Dan Graham is not an artist that I like, but I do like to look at or hear him speak, online of course. All the wall work is redundant, unnecessary and solely produced for sale. I turned my focus to the gallery space. Finally Dan Graham entered my heart. Two curved pieces of glass, some steel and a bridge like passage. I walked through it and back into it. I stopped in the middle. I connected.

A few days later or even the next day, I can't remember, I forget things these days, I walked down the commercial road, rue de Bretagne. This street used to have a horse butcher. Now it has an all organic, trendy, blueberry muffin blog shop with bearded, tattooed punters instead. I passed the boucherie Frédéric Simonneau, 41 rue du Bretagne, and like the cafe on Rue Rambuteau, it was bloody gone. And where they have butchered several hundred tons of meat, stood a camp man, selling overpriced chocolate bars on sticks. The fat, racist, little butcher had sold up. Over one hundred years of clients and meat was gone, sold to the neo-wave of gentrification. A problem that sneaks up on us and installs its parasitic eggs.

Early 2008, I asked Frédéric Simonneau if I could help in his boucherie. He gave me an apron and a knife right there and then. I had a problem eating red meat. Living in France not eating meat is trouble. (Meat racists).

Employees at Frédéric Simonneau's boucherie taught me a lot and I will be ever grateful, but I left after a few mornings working there. The owner brutally rubbed chicken feathers in the face of his Chinese employe, he had forgotten to flame burn the bird before showing me how tie it into shape. Bastard. He lost my friendship and business. For several years afterwards I only walked by the boucherie Frédéric Simonneau nodding a polite bonjour. Later his fat little son was part of the operation. The son would have been the 3rd generation working that boucherie.

Coffee at Le Progres during fashion week is all fucked up. I spotted a vacant table and desperately tried to seize it, but I had vicious competition. The waiter, who I know, did not help me through the row of tables. He said: relax Victor. Sod, I lost the table. I had to back out and bumped into waiter Kevin with bad teeth, he was raised in Beaubourg, I like that. I lost he taste for coffee.

A message to the Belleville art scene; please stop the use of mdf and plywood all together. It was like walking back in time visiting these galleries, like art-time had stood still. Why am I even seeking out or looking at this - Wood, rubbish, metal, sound, research into something, it's fucking groundhog day. One gallery owner even tried to explain to me that an artist needs talent. I was told what my talents were. What can I say? Thank you? And, If I were to come back to Paris, they would support me, who are they? and why do I need support? Do I limp?

I had a coffee at Aux Folies. Some graffiti artists were working on a wall piece around the corner, the wind carried the odour from the graffiti spray cans, it was wonderful. That whiff of paint combined with coffee drinking was an all new sensation, it was probably the only real art experience I had in Paris during my visit. Besides the commercial art galleries my biggest Belleville disappointment came later that day as I walked past where an old building that came down in 2012. The lot had been filled by a neo-corrupt atrocity—a sign of the times. The changes are radical. History and traditions are evaporating, bulldozed to the ground as we speak. My problem has always been that I am caged by my beliefs.

Victor Boulet
Berlin. 2015.