



A3:2/8  
Title: Loop  
By: Francis Alÿs  
From: different airports and stations over the globe -  
on the way from Tijuana to San Diego

Subject: TIJUANA I JUNE  
Sent: 6/1/97 3:42 AM

TJ es un invento de America

Subject: MEXICO/3 JUNE 1997  
Sent: 6/3/97 1:42 AM

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

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

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 am now walking outside, following the main building.

Taxis are on the other side of the street.

A couple drivers are waving at me.

I keep going.

My side is protected from the rain. Their side is not.

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

My left sock is soaking. I'm listening to the sloshing water in my shoe.

The visit is starting.

Francis

Subject: SANTIAGO / 12 JUNE 1997  
Sent: 7/12/97 5:25 AM

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

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the general puritan atmosphere.  
The center's numerous galleries allow me to slip from one coffee bar to another,  
without feeling exposed to daylight.  
Still somewhere in limbos...

Subject: TAHITI / 13 JUNE 1997  
Sent: 6/14/97 2:34 AM

I am woken up and asked to leave the plane for  
a couple hours for hygienic reasons.

Very night, 35 Celcius. I order a Pernod  
in a bamboo bar from a fake Vahina waitress. She's a native from  
Tourcoing, from the North.  
I've been there. I invite her to a drink.  
Back on the plane, back to sleep.  
I enjoyed the visit.  
The journey defines itself.

Subject: INT DATE LINE / 14 JUNE 1997  
Sent: 6/14/97 11:24 PM

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

Subject: SYDNEY / 15 JUNE 1997  
Sent: 6/15/97 8:26 AM

Very pleasant but unexciting.  
Still warming up too.

Began playing a new game: "Exponential Tourism."  
On 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 and cameras arrive figure within the frame of as many shots as possible.
5. Attempt to synchronize the flashing camera of the tourist facing you with your own flashing camera.

This game exponentially transports my image from the site to wherever the  
photographers will return to.

A3:4/8  
Title: Loop  
By: Francis Alÿs  
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Subject: SINGAPORE / 16 JUNE 1997  
Sent: 6/17/97 6:14 PM

Singapore is nothing but a large shopping center.  
Every one knows that; well I didn't. It just tells how unprepared I am for  
this trip.  
Beyond the aura of the next city's name, I don't know. I have no  
expectations.  
Meaning, no demands. No goals.

When arriving, the more disoriented I feel, the more I walk.  
And 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 which, if systematic, might lead to a perfect  
circle by the end of the day.

I also 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 a short  
distance. In such situations, eye contact becomes unavoidable and sometimes  
leads to blushing.

Subject: BANGKOK / 18 JUNE 1997  
Sent: 6/18/97 7:10 PM

A wave of nostalgia takes over as I inhale the city's foul smells.

Getting off the air-conditioned airport bus my eyeglasses are instantly  
coated with vapor.

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

The flux of visual information is too intense.  
If I walk back and forth on the same street I fail to recognize it as such,  
it becomes two different walks.  
Hardly drawing at all. It is too slow, too selective. I don't have the  
courage or conviction to choose a single image.  
Moving to words, notes seem less exclusive, but then, words can be precise.  
At least, it's faster.

A3:5/8  
Title: Loop  
By: Francis Alÿs  
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(Monologues)

Subject: RANGOON/ 21 JUNE 1997

Sent: 6/22/97 6:15 PM

I have been longing to lose myself. 5 hours here and I'm 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 very sweet homosexuality is pervasive, or I don't know if a dog is a dog?

With tea rooms, the tricky part is not so much entering but leaving with dignity, as 15 pairs of eyes follow me.

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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 many smiles.

Subject: HONG KONG / 25 JUNE 1997

Sent: 6/23/97 7:31 AM

Arriving in time to join the last UK rave party. People from all over have made the journey to watch a colony change hands. In fact there isn't much to see. Just declarations at street corners claiming "no effective change will occur."

Rumors are spreading quickly and are the most tangible sign of the forthcoming handover.

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

Endlessly watched myself walking away in storefront TV screens.

Prostitutes are hanging around coffee machines in the 7-ELEVENS in downtown Kowloon.

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

A3:6/8  
Title: Loop  
By: Francis Alÿs  
From: different airports and stations over the globe -  
on the way from Tijuana to San Diego

Not much to do with the Tintinesque Shanghai of my childhood, but exoticism still flourishes.

Insignificant details transport me,

Is it just a matter of geography?

At this point, whether I travel east or west, it would take me a week to reach a homeland.

As I become progressively unable to read the local codes, I'm happily losing knowledge of my self.

At night I crash, emptied.

I don't even dare resist the vain romanticism which disguises the crude reality of a mutating Shanghai.

Pure present.

Hardly any dogs around.

The few I saw are discretely being walked late at night.

Most have been killed during a cleansing of the city.

They are the advance victims before a three-year plan of "modernization" of the whole downtown area.

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

Miniskirts are flying high in Shanghai.

The girls are sexy, but genuinely. I cannot detect any seduction game going on.

Subject: SEOUL / 1 JULY 1997

Sent: 6/30/97 7:01 AM

Every urban situation I have been deferring is evident here. If I was to stay too long, I believe I might become violent.

It took me the whole morning to find the pedestrians, they were under my very feet. Below the smart city lies a second-class mall.

Sitting on a subway bench I maliciously understand the sentiment of superiority I feel. Because I'm able to keep moving. I don't have to stay anywhere.

Les seins se portent petits et rapproches cet etc.

Subject: ANCHORAGE IN TRANSIT / 2 JULY 1997

Sent: 7/1/97 10:03 PM

No idea what time it is.

Guessing from the fogged up windows it might be dusk or dawn.

A3:7/8  
Title: Loop  
By: Francis Alÿs  
From: different airports and stations over the globe -  
on the way from Tijuana to San Diego

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.  
I am beginning to return.

Subject: MCDONALD'S / 2 JULY 1997  
Sent: 7/2/97 10:45 AM

The local price of a cheese burger, medium Coke and french fries  
is the quickest way to estimate the 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 happy.

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

Subject: VANCOUVER / 4 JULY 1997  
Sent: 7/2/97 8:55 AM

Touching down on "known land."

Feedback. 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 the tourist condition?

When I accepted to be contemplative only?

When my original skepticism was absolved by the genuineness of Rangoon?  
When a mock project shifted to a sentimental quest for redemption?

Somewhere along the loop the "doing it" simply evacuated the thinking.  
And later on the doing became pure living.

RumoUr(?) of an old lady who walks around at night followed by a  
"fully dressed" duck.

Discovered the art of "Rock Balancing" on the downtown beaches.

I want to walk sipping my capuccino like everybody else.

A3:8/8  
Title: Loop  
By: Francis Alys  
From: different airports and stations over the globe -  
on the way from Tijuana to San Diego

Subject: AIRPORTS & PLANES / 3 JULY 1997  
Sent: 7/3/97 8:55 PM

7% of the total traveling time has been spent in 17 airports over 16 countries.

The airport, upon arrival, functions as a decompression chamber. Upon departure, the lounges provide a space for...

8% of the journey occurred in airplanes.

I like flying.

The airline contract induces the infantile state I am enjoying.

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

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

Subject: Los Angeles / 4 July 1997  
Sent: 7/4/97 11:57 AM

"I kept on moving from one place to another hoping the drugs World be better, the alcohol World be better, the women World be better, but things were comino toa n end."

out of an interview with Dennis Hopper on Channel 4, L.A., 11:27 PM

Subject: SAN DIEGO / 5 JULY 1997  
Sent: 7/5/97 8:22 AM  
Received: 7/5/97 11:07 AM

"soy lost and found,"

heard in San Diego , July 5 , 1997.

These emails were sent by Francis Alys to Olivier Debroise during Alys's 35-day intinerary in 1997 from Tijuana to San Diego via Mexico City, Panama City, Santiago, Tahiti, Auckland, Sydney, Singapore, Bangkok, Rangoon, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Seoul, Anchorage, Vancouver, and Los Angeles.