

LOCAL ANTHROPOGENIES – CONTEMPORARY COSMOGONIES

PAINTING

THE LIVING FORMATIONS (Micheline LO)

Les philosophes de notre époque sont les peintres

(Jean Renoir, film director)

(Micheline Lo built her own web site : www.michelinelo.com/michelinelo/index.html to which the reader is referred. Not only were the illustrations selected by the artist herself, but they were digitalized by her. Digitalization is never completely faithful: it is a compromise, at best a recomposition. When it is done by the artist, one may hope that, although it is not the primitive image, it is at least an image that corresponds to the spirit of the work.)

For Micheline Lo's complete website, see www.michelinelo.com.

Cosmogony defines the creation of objects which, through the medium of art, echo the (scientific) cosmologies of an epoch. In that respect, Micheline Lo is an essentially cosmogonical painter. Her prime concerns very closely met the new concepts on the brain, more specifically those on memory learning. Her Chemins des écritures activate the new paradigms of living formations.

Strangely enough, she began painting when she was fifty three, a long wait that probably was necessary for what was to follow.

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Chapter 1 – BEFORE THE PICTORIAL ERUPTION



Les chemins des écritures # 41, 200 x 230 cm

The development of Micheline Lo as a painter suggests that of a volcano: initially a lengthy accumulation of various matters that interact first passively, then actively. Then, suddenly, an outburst of pictorial elements, perfect from the onset.

1A. The molten material

Initially, and for a long time, she must have experienced a wide variety of interests. As an art teacher, year after year she had to revisit the forms of contemporary art and the seven civilizations of our planet: Japan, China, India, Islam, black Africa, Europe, and Iberian America, using the existential designs of both artists and cultures, hence their topologies, cybernetics, logic and semiotics; their presentivities, i.e. the ratio which they establish between their functionings and their desire for pure presence.

Micheline Lo did not travel extensively, but intensively, in India, Mexico, California, New York, North Africa, and of course the three European peninsulas. She did not travel as a tourist, but rather as a resident, with a morphogenetic point of view, noting how mores everywhere derive from the local geologies.

Her friendships complemented her vision of cerebral landscapes. There were the mathematical, logical, poetic and erotic mind of René Lanvendhomme, and the preoccupations for ethology, experimental psychology, and statistics of Jean-Louis Laroche. Then was the time of Laing, that of the antipsychiatry, when it was briefly believed that a "normal" life would cure psychoses. This is why a mildly psychotic girl friend, then a gravely psychotic friend lived for some time with her family.

Finally, she was barely twenty when she participated, in a decisive manner, in the writing of the three thousand pages that are now posted on the *anthropogenie.be*. Finally, she was barely twenty when she participated, in a decisive manner, in the writing of the three thousand pages that are now posted on the *La présence dans la conscience*, *Les Arts de l'espace*, *Le nouvel âge*, *L'Intention sexuelle*, a languagic history of French literature, and the logic of ten European languages. Or yet again, an occasional involvement in contributions to *Encyclopaedia Universalis*, in a dozen of subjects going from Architecture in the first volume to *Zoopsychology* in the last one.

1B. The preparatory fusion: Flexte (c. 1965)



Les chemins des écritures # 38, 83 x 100 cm

Her quasi-involvement with text production makes it plausible that her first works should have been literary. After a few poems, hers became a kind of automatic writing, but in a much more radical sense than that of the surrealists of the 1930s. It was made not only of surges of ideas, but practically of neuronal leaps. All this happened in a basement kitchen turned into study, in Brussels, and in a hunter's dry-stone hideout at the foot of the Grand Luberon, in Provence.

« C'est toujours de vin rouge et de sang et d'amour et la nuit quand les demoiselles cessent d'être pucelles et que les puces au lit piquent les plus minuit. La cloche harde sonnait sans compter tous les coups, et la concierge s'empessa de répondre. Je n'ouvre pas la nuit, quand tous les chats sont jaunes, et que leur oeil fendu voit plus que le mien. J'ouvre au grand

soleil et je nettoie le coin à coup de serpillière et de savon moderne. Je rince à plusieurs eaux, ainsi finit l'histoire ».

A text that follows the neuronal flow so closely could not begin with a capital letter, so it started like this: *"remé remenait là wa bas na le pa, pa papapapier silencieux de on di vin vin bu la nuit dans le silence des ombres fuminées. Là le dortoir dirait : ceci est ma nuit préférée. Et les sirènes licences suivaient le pan de mur depuis le commencement du monde de la nuit des temps et des impératifs nocturnes polbués. Des camions et encore des souris tout passait sans que les mots moteurs s'éteignentgnissent sans que la langue française chiâlée par les marmots dérangisse les parentals".*

This exercise was not solipsistic, however, as it was turned toward a "tu": *"Loin, loin dans le soupir des mamelles désemparées, désemples et respirées un fume montait rampant et suppliant : 'Tu'. Mais tu tuait tuait toujours sans s'en faire. Ah qu'il fallait pleurer beaucoup pour laver rien que le dor d'une mite bloquée sous le lustre. Hélas, c'était encore toujours le retard, dix ans ou plus et l'histoire que des pauvres lecteurs sémiaient pour s'empêcher de greloter de peur. Mais Bleuberry avait dit oui à toute vitesse. Cela c'était de l'homme et du raz de colleter wè."*

Since the beginning of the 20th century all the major writers had been on a quest for native cerebral movements. Claudel, who wrote: "It sort of looks on paper as if it were moving". Proust, with memory superimpositions. James Joyce, with *Finnigans Wake*. Paul Valéry, who drank his coffee early in the morning to capture the last glimmer of "that morose confusion that passed as sleep", to return, with his back turned as did his *Rameur*, to "the source where even a name ceases". But it is doubtful that anybody went back higher, or even as high, toward the neuronal connections and cleavages:

"Monsieur mon cas, mon caisse, mon sylvestre, oh les saints se suivent les essaïms et les essors, un sein chassant l'autre et remplissant les innombrables cases des multiples cassettes d'hor, d'heur, les séipsismes, tant et tôt ou tardaterre, des émergeants et des immènes dézam, imagimarginégalinEGO. Ainsi de quarte en quinte en sixte, en ixtérye, et en sptitt, névroctitt ! Neuve et décimédez-ons, douce et tresse... On voit les jours se suivre et se rassembler d'en bras, sur braises et brisons-ici-là mes prises."

This scription made it possible to capture the most secret of tremors, as those caused by bereavement: *"Il y a deux façons de deuille que je connais : la sienne et la mienne. Moi je d'oeil par le sielle, en regardant longuement les étoiles multitude innombralabride bird oiseau yo la vois voix voile lactée, lancefulgure et m'exhor, m'horté tant de constellé lueurs où vologent l'imge de nos disparelus diminués pourleuil mais vastes, si espacés luisés, Luis, il y a place pour Lucie, Rex, Orion, Véga, galopent à leur vitesse exhalitée, ex, hésir, je suis partie, j'existe... C'est là-haut, en tourant mon regard vers les consternelle ailées si blanches, balanches, o tristis sum..."*

And, on the death of a woman: *"Tandis qu'elle c'est par les pieds. Elle sent ses défuncti reluire en-dessous des cailles qui couronnent les champs, à travers, cailloux, caillots, caillés, elle éprie crit sous ses pieds, sassé semelle, leur aunom en toutes vert-let-bres, et pour la derure vahhvoeudurée de son dépleure elle ne se lave plus les plantes. Et elle écrit face à n'importe quel hymne végétal sthmen : Oh mon pal platane, oh mon tide tilleul, haut mon*

chêne, mon un humble untel, toujours mon, monterré du fond du secrème des os, fouié autel sombre né du corps de mon aimémour."

The title on the front page read: "The Office Worker", which implied the masculine, for when a woman engages in that type of scription, it is safer to stay in the masculine gender in order to remain really neuronal and not anecdotal for the "I" of the text, just as Proust had changed Albert into Albertine. Also, this approach evidently alludes to the comic strip character *Gaston Lagaffe*, the Office Worker par excellence. All comic strips, which are graphically metonymic, lend themselves to graphic, hence neuronal, shifts. Indeed, Frankin's blundering office worker, swamped in an ocean of dossiers, is probably as faithful an image of human destiny as is the Librarian in Borges's *La biblioteca de Babel*.

However, the final title of "The Office Worker" remained that which had initially been used: "Flexte". This portmanteau word, blending text and flux, would have delighted Valéry, author of *Ébauche d'un serpent*. Valéry was not an explorer of the night, as she was, but one of the morning, who visited "the forest of my chances" only to see the forest "dissipate with the rosy appearance of the sun", and to move from the potential of the dream to the actuality of the statement, to the word, to the verse: "*Non, dit le serpentment, c'est Valéry le heaume, perché sur son dedans, et puisant le néon des éons antiquants penchés sur le monome, et c'est alors qu'enfants ils lui diront béau! oh le mot le moment de l'écouter, pareiller la pavane de pa-on-pa-on pan... Le vers, le vers est là, tendu comme un drapeau, il hérissé sa lance et darde son rayon. Le vers est descendu, il faut fermer la vanne. Hé mousse, moussaillon, crémez la rédaction."*

The author of *Flexte*, in turn, attempted to "skim". But how can one skim a *flexte*? To correct it, amend it, socialize it, dispose it for a stranger to read was already a lie. It meant replacing its connections and disconnections, imponderable and innumerable, with communicable textures and structures, those of the word and of the sentence. Yet, the author attempted a "definitive" version, which a few of her friends venerate: "*Et contemplant ce point final, cette façon désobligeamment d'affronter, appelons-le bien, l'ennemi, l'auditeur si inefficace, celui qui mordu dans le code, dans la compréhension, celui qui demande, demande, sans pourtant refuser, celui qui ferait s'arracher les cheveux si l'auteur n'était chauve, ayant effiloché à verra plus, ayant filé sa laine pour n'en plus retenir, ayant enfin principalement retourné vers la fin, comme le commencement même pour lui, et alors si même lui, si même elle... C'était donc bien certain que c'était autre chose, et pourquoi s'obstiner, dites-le lui..."*

There was the dream of returning to the language before Babel: "*Et pensant pauvre alphabète qu'il se trouvait encore dans l'ancien temps, au moment où avant Babel, avant de devoir balbutier, la langue était moitié moitié faite de deux parts, une pour la nourriture, une pour larguer."*

Or returning to the language of Villon, the friend of the adolescence, sentenced to be hanged: "*Et songeant que les suppliciés s'en tiraient, lors du moyen âge, pour encore faire passer, par ce moumoignement langagier, du contraste de leur plat de langue, châtrés du mot, pauvres punis, tentant quand même hadicapa chassés, chassés dans les forêts, bêtes humides et textant, estimant du pont de leur langue ineffilées pouvoir quand même y faire passer ce choix de sons les plus délicieux, les plus paradigmosés synta sans tas, des boulettes*

onctueuses, insignifigénies, des mots lusques, des mots frusques, ce revêtement culturel..."
And yet, while she had read and re-read Joyce's *Ulysses*, she had never read *Finnegans Wake*.

The last lines herald renunciation:

"Ne me laissez pas patauger à votre aise. Il m'en souffre, et faute de percher il se faudrait avec plaisir un manque de quelque chose, un trouble dans l'élucubration qui permette, enfin, comment ne le voyez-vous pas faire ces signes, crier sans paix, qui saurait pour que il s'arrête, enfin l'arête du poisson, mais as, tout passe par ce trou : au nom de la loi."

Or is it that "l'arête du poisson" (fish bone), which figures the impossibility for literature to afford a crossing bridge, might have hinted at bridging through painting. At all events, the final thought was that of a sketching artist: *"os de certains poissons / ligne saillante / intersection de deux versants d'une montagne / barbe des épis de l'orge, du seigle, etc. / ligne d'intersection de deux plans ou de deux surfaces qui se coupent."* And what if painting was the only possible *"flexte"*? Might not the pictorial *flexte* have one day presupposed the adventure and the failure of the written *flexte*?

Chapter 2 — FIRST COSMOLOGICAL PRELUDE: THE PLURAL BRAIN

In major civilization changes, such as the Renaissance, the works of art have an immediate effect on their public. But they gain even more resonance when they are placed in the cosmologies which they echo as true cosmogonies. Boticelli's highly popular Venus is a perfect example of such multiple-level approach. Hundreds of spectators have intimately encountered Micheline Lo's paintings, and made no comments. Yet, as with Steve Reich's music, the cosmologies in which those paintings become actors — we will not say, "which they illustrate" — probably achieve their plenitude. Let us for a moment consider the views which since 1970 have prevailed regarding the brain, perception, learning, and memory.

Eric Kandel, born in Vienna in 1929 in a Jewish family, and who therefore experienced the fervor of the first psychoanalytical circle, had decided he would attempt to identify the possible locus for the Freudian Ego, Superego and Id in the brain. In the 1950s, he therefore went over from psychoanalysis to neurophysiology, and he soon became convinced that neurons had to be studied, not globally as in an electroencephalogram, but one by one; that is, to determine the changes in a neuron in a given learning and a given memory situation. To this end, it was necessary to dispose of an animal organism with few functions and thick neurons. Around 1970, these properties were evidenced in a small marine mollusk, *Aplysia californica*. The results were striking: learning and memory are chemical changes in either the synapses or the neuronal body, which sometimes will involve the DNA in the case of long-term memory.

These were not more or less "mental" events operating on a unchanged brain, but biochemical, in fact anatomical, changes in the brain. If such a situation applied — as in Homo — to two hundred billion neurons, with an average of one thousand dendrites, one could then talk of billions of instances of the unconscious rather than of the three tiers (Ego, Superego, and Id) of Freud's second topic. Certainly factors of coordination and cleavage were involved, like Technique, and Language, where "I" could be used for practical purposes. But these coordinations imply more instances of pullulation. It has even been envisaged, more recently, that the animal and human "self", hitherto the ultimate principle of unity, is made up of plural cerebral foci. Even more, there would be, in Homo as in mammals generally, mirror neurons which generate "intercerebral" actions in which several brains work as a single one, as in the hunting learning process in the tiger cub and its mother. After death, part of the brain of the deceased is physically continued in the survivor. The cruelty of rejection and abandonment comes from an amputated intercerebrality.

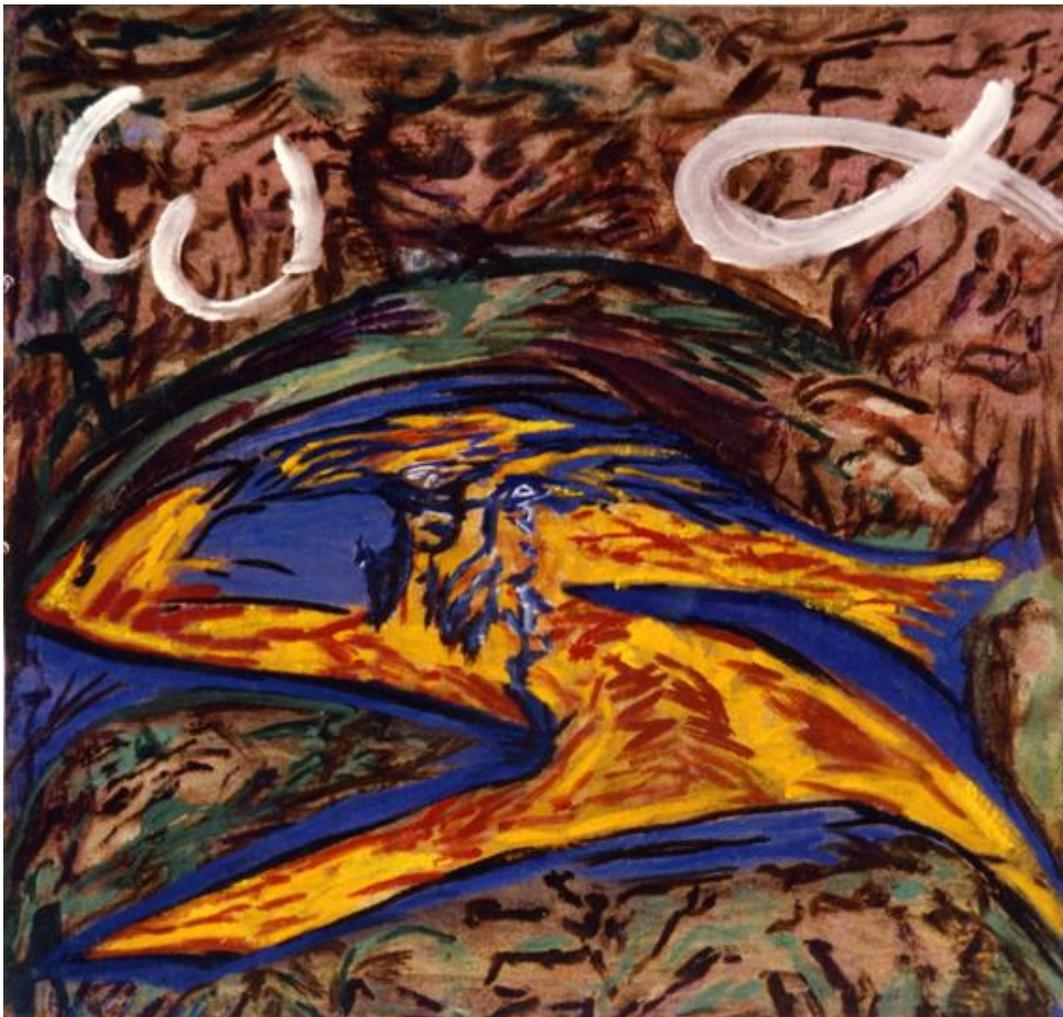
Micheline Lo lived in an environment where this type of things were known almost in real time. A copy of *Principles of Neural Science* — in which some fifty professors of Columbia University would, every four year, make a review of the knowledge on neurons — would be lying on one of her tables at all times. One day, at breakfast, she said — as though talking to herself — "I paint the cerebral landscape", but she did not mean Freud's landscape whose factors, after all, remained trivial: sexual impotence or poetic sublimations were explained through the early childhood relationship between father, mother and the child. (To help understand so immense a poet as Hölderlin, a French psychoanalyst had even used the title, *Hölderlin or the question of the father*.) Nor was her cerebral landscape that of Lacan, enclosed within those other trivialities which were the effects of (play on) the words of the language. Her landscape postulated the infinitely plural and anatomically modifiable brain of current neurophysiology

Chapter 3 — "I PAINT THE CEREBRAL LANDSCAPE"

When she started to paint, one day, with no previous practical training, after she had turned fifty-three, Micheline Lo began making a few copies of works by Van Eyck, Rubens, and Velasquez. She visited their cerebral landscape, not in an attempt to capture their picturesqueness, but rather to divine the connections and the cleavages in the underlying brains, together with their metamorphoses. One becomes a surveyor, once the transformations in a given form have been apprehended. Her first copy of Van Eyck was an homage to Cézanne, and she bestowed the title *Montagne Sainte Victoire*. on her depiction of Arnolfini's head. One day, she went down to her basement kitchen-cum-study, where she had written *Flexte*, to get a copy of Flaubert's *Salammbô*. But the book was nowhere to be found, and instead she picked up *La Tentation de saint Antoine*.

1984 : La Tentation de saint Antoine

In the midst of the incredible mental exaltations of heresies pullulating in the fourth century, sitting on the doorstep of his cabin hanging on a rock above the Nile, a vantage point on the turmoils of Alexandria, beyond the arid desert, Anthony — who was "biographed" and invented by Saint Athanasius — is entirely Homo when, after the daily chores have been dispatched, he is but neurons that accumulate and disperse the mirages of gold, blood, sex, philosophical and theological disputes. He is Homo turned into the bright stars in the sky and the dull stones on the road. An infinitely old Homo, because old age alone is total liberty and nakedness. One hundred thousand temptations, which fuse into a single one: the Temptation, in the sense of the Latin *temptare*, meaning to touch, palpate, explore, draw the unknown to oneself, a word of which *tentative* has retained the memory. A surge of orgasmic fusion, before being copulatory. Orgasm of mineral and vegetal densities, of animal surges, and also of the schismatic and heretical divagation of signs, images and words.



Saint Antoine : Saint-Antoine affronte les hérétiques

In the same manner as the Antoine of Flaubert had walked to the City, knee-deep in blood, the new painter advanced among the waves of heresies and colors, with some sixty sketches, and paintings — small, medium, or large. Thierry Zeno, cinematographer of the sacred, whose *Vase de Nocés* (the story of a man and his overly intimate relationship with a pig) had been shown around all the art houses of the world, had just completed a medium-length film for television on *Les Tentations de Saint Antoine*, spanning from Sassetta and Jérôme Bosch to Claude Lorrain and Max Ernst, which was commented on-screen by Claude Louis-Combet, the Burgundy novelist who wrote of the hysterical pregnancies of the Flemish beguines. Although the film was finished, Zeno re-opened it to include about ten large canvasses which, from the rough tissue of *Avant la tentation* to the flashes of light of *Après la tentation*, carried the major hallucinations of Anthony and of the Queen of Sheba.



Saint Antoine après la Tentation, 216 x 268 cm

1985 : La Nativité

It behooved an artist devoted to neuronal formations to be focused also on Birth in general. Christmas 1985 was close at hand. The magi of the gospels, with their star and their gifts, naturally continued the realistic delusions of the *Tentation de saint Antoine*. But the essential thing was that the star, here, was *La Nativité en croix*, in which Eve, pregnant, was depicted with her hands on the right, and her feet on the left, torn apart in the shape of a Saint Andrew's cross which filled a 4.6 feet square canvas. Its center was occupied by a radiating vulva, showing the Child come to life, with gloriously spread arms. Amidst her loose hair, the Mother's face was elsewhere, contemplating from afar an action that was beyond her, from the end of the world and things. Between the legs spread apart, the muffles of the Nativity donkey and ox were a reminder that generations are a continuity of the animal and vegetal pulsions from thousands of years ago, and a reference to Saint-John Perse's *Amers* in which she had read that "this breath had in olden days been imprinted from far and wide from us." Below the eruption, we see a male whom we can call Joseph, who is busy writing, for through writing alone can an event be established.



La Nativité en croix

Micheline Lo never made any connection between her *Nativité* and DaVinci's *Anthropos*. Inscribed in the circle and the square, the figure stands in the shape of a Roman cross, from the Vitruvius proportions, as the angular body of Homo, the origin of all geometry, technique, and semiotics. While this already meant much, more was needed to attain Homo in full: besides this masculine body, the female Homo needed to dilate, expand, enjoy, in a fulfillment that generated the Universe, and spilled beyond all events, and all records. In such manner DaVinci and Lo complete the diptych of an integral Homo, which became the logo for *Anthropogeny*, the Saint Andrew's cross and the Roman cross becoming mutually complementary. Both probably judged that their idea was so essential that it had to be presented naked, without the interference of art's splendors, so that they simply offered a sketch. Kant would have said "a scheme".



1985 : La suite espagnole

Nowhere other than in the desert of sand and stones, do the neuronal connections and cleavages move in a more native way: this was the initial environment for Muhammad, Jesus of Nazareth, Saint Anthony, and Saint-John Perse. As her automobile was entering Death Valley, on the way from Las Vegas, she experienced a malaise and said to her companion, "Should I die now, I would have no regret. I saw what I wanted to see."

This probably is what the "nada" is, the "nothing", the dry soil resounding under the foot of the Meseta which attached her first to the Spain of *zapateado*, then to North Africa. Ecstasy and blasphemy walking alongside. Dali, the comedian and martyr painter, was seeking for what he called the "geodesiac", a blending of geodesis and aphrodisiac. Micheline Lo relished the distinction which the Spanish language makes between "ser" (*essere*) and "estar" (*stare*), the being as a substance and as a pose.

Spain also meant two fraternal painters: Velasquez and El Greco, whose pictorial touch was — as hers — a writing that heralded the comic strip. *Les Ménines selon Hergé* announced that relationship, in the full size of the original.



Les Ménines selon Hergé, 261 x 216 cm

Also close was El Greco, which ended up reducing everything to the seven elementary catastrophes of differential topology: crease, fold, dovetail, butterfly wing, and the three types of umbilicus: hyperbolic, elliptic, and parabolic. In Micheline Lo's work, these seven catastrophes also dominate her four versions (morning, noon, evening, and night) of her *Don Quichotte s'apprête à affronter trente moulins à vent*. In fact, these are the four moments of a Don "Quixote before Toledo", on that path winding down toward the river from which, as she turned around, she had felt the overwhelming, distance-less mass of the city, where she had just seen, in the city cathedral, *The Burial of the Count of Orgaz*, in which all distance is abolished between the viewer and the viewed.



*Don Quichotte s'apprête au massacre de trente moulins,
versions du matin, du midi, du soir et de minuit*

The four depictions of a stricken Don Quixotte define her realism adequately. On that point, she was adamant: she imagined nothing, "I have no imagination", and only picked up indices, and with this in mind, she observed the canvas: "The canvas is already a physiognomy. When it disappears, fully covered, something has been destroyed. The foreign shapes that appear on the blank canvas, as in the barks, the stains (DaVinci), or the imprints (Max Ernst) are indeed that 'something'. It is the visionary experience." This involves three relationships which Flaubert could have claimed as his own

(a)) "**Absorption**". That which enables the cerebral motions of the vision, the painter and the viewer, to fuse into one single tissue.

(b)) "**Light reflection**". "I favor the very thin flax canvas, which shimmers, and go from a dry, dull, or poor aspect, to a sheen. The wet canvas looks like earth or sand under the rain." (The *Avant la Tentation de saint Antoine* almost remained in that condition.)

(c)) "**Forward and backward**". "A canvas initially possesses a rhythm. If preserved and served, that rhythm creates an enchantment as do kaleidoscopes, mosaics, stained glasses, carpets, or Persian gardens. The shape does not stand out against a background, but is held in it. This third relationship is for me the most important. What I strive for in my painting is that vibration, the sprightliness of a pulsating spectacle. This is far more fundamental, more basal than the avowed directional moves of the straight lines, of the diagonals, verticals, or the cuts. I expect a global, apparitional, almost hallucinatory effect. The essential resides in that pulse, a motion of waves so to speak, in a sea that would stand erect." (One of her leitmotifs will be: "It must advance and retreat at the same time.")



Don Quichotte et le taureau Osborne

1986: Le Paradis de Dante: first, second and third suites

In the way of cerebral landscapes, however, only Dante ventured there where nobody had ventured before (L'acqua ch'io prendo già mai non si corse), and he even advises against anyone following him: "O you who are within your little bark (O voi che siete in piccioletta barca) eager to listen (desiderosi d'ascoltar) turn back to see your shores again (tornate a riveder li vostri liti) do not attempt to sail the seas I sail (non vi mettete in pelago) you may, by losing sight of me (chè, forse, perdendo me) be left astray (rimarreste smarrati)." What is more, what Dante had attained, he could not repeat because, as he explains, our intellect becomes so deep that memory cannot follow (nostro intelletto si profonda tanto / che dietro la memoria non puo ire).



Le Paradis de Dante, série 2

The painter, however, has an advantage over the poet: he is the poorer of the two. The artist, at any time, only has for himself the tip of the brush, a drop of paint, a spot on the canvas. Because of this, probably, he can cross most tightly time with eternity. Micheline Lo took the most narrow-tipped brush, a pen; the poorest of colors, black; and on the emptiest surface, white. Enough to risk the beatific visionary experience.

When he saw this second suite in black and white of the *Paradis*, more than when he saw the first or the third ones, in color, the historian Marcello Verdenelli, author of *La teatralità della scrittura*, came upon the final title for his introduction to Micheline Lo's exhibition in Cingoli, in the Marche: *La luce senza centro*. He tells us how it unfolded before him: "Il Paradiso dantesco mi si rivelava in tutta la sua dirompente, incontenibile, forza segnica. Un

segno che procedeva per improvvise quanto suggestive accelerazioni et riprese. E non potevo naturalmente che riportare tutta quella vibrante tensione segnica a un'idea di perfezione che si accompagna comunque al Paradiso. Un'idea di perfezione che usciva, che debordava da qualsiasi coordinata spazio-temporale, così come pure da qualsiasi riferimento geometrico. L'unica figura che resisteva in questo generale annullamento era quella del 'cerchio'. Un 'cerchio' che, nelle sue diverse velocità concentriche, lasciava intravedere pure l'idea, la forma della Trinità. E una luce vorticoso, intensa, avvolgente, musicale, a riempire quel 'cerchio', quelle spazio che non era più spazio."



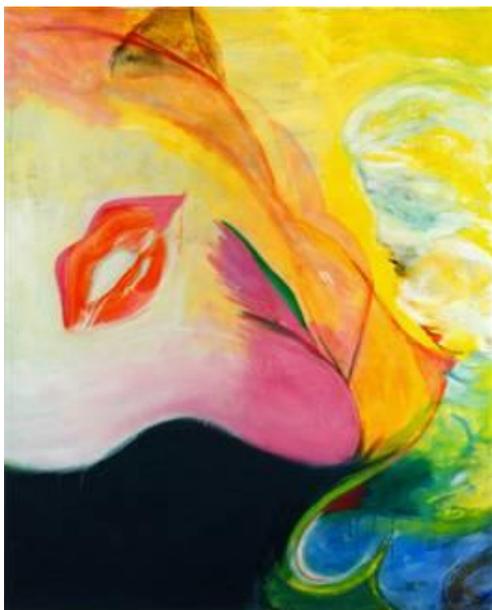
Le Paradis de Dante, série 2

Verdenelli also perceived how the painter of the beatitudes of the cerebral landscape had to find her only recourse, her "ragione poetica" (we would say: her pictorial subject) in the "salto" and the "scarto" — the leap and the swerve — already suggested by Dante: "E così, figurando il paradiso, / convien **saltar** lo sacro poema, / come qui trova suo cammino **riciso**." (XXIII, 61-63.) Commenting on her *Suite espagnole*, Micheline Lo had previously exalted that leap of the black and of the white, "[...] this intense relationship, immediate and unchangeable, [where] both, without distinction, occupy with as much ability the sites of void and of brightness."

1988: Les Tombeaux

Saint Antoine, the *Nativité*, Spain, and Dante moved within the cerebral landscape in general. There remained to define this landscape in individuals. Therefore, the **portrait** returned as prominent, a pictorial style abandoned by "modern" and even "post-modern" art. The first portrait she painted, that of Marilyn Monroe, was too large to be hung on the walls of her summer house in the *Drome provençale*. So, she did it on the ground, and later as she viewed it one morning, she thought she was watching a tombstone. Why would not these portraits be tombs, or *Tombeaux*, in the sense used by Mallarmé for his series of sonnets in which each was to be fixed "as, in itself, eternity finally changes it"?

We will not leave out any of the thirteen Tombeaux, because their system probably reveals something of the cerebral landscape of the artist herself.



1. Marilyn Monroe – The initial tombeau at the time was to have been that of Marilyn Monroe, as no one had ever been so much an image qua image, so much so that after The Last Sessions (her last photo session with Bern Stern), the physical body called Marilyn Monroe no longer had any reason to exist, and even demanded its disappearance. Micheline Lo retained, of the subject, three "elementary catastrophes": the parabolic umbilicus of a mouth-landscape; the crease at the base of her breasts; and the hyperbolic umbilicus of her cleavage

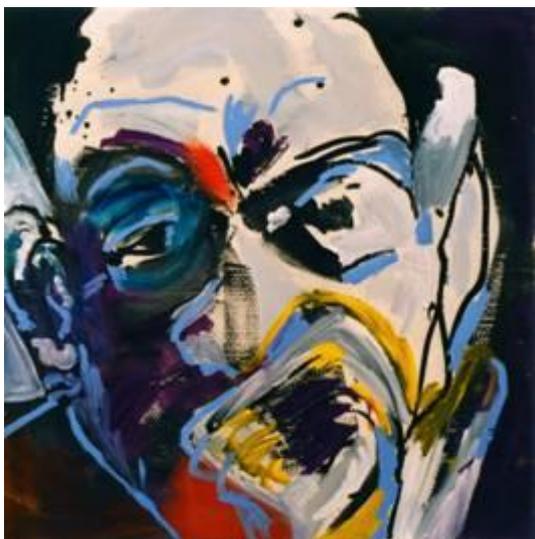
2. Joseph Beuys – Joseph Beuys was not only a cerebral landscape, but an outcropping brain in itself. He had been trepanned, and always wore a black felt hat that made him recognizable from far off. He had become the sculptor of the convolutions of the felt hat. Together with Oldenburg, he created the first "negative volumes" of Western sculpture, after three thousand years of convexity, which Rodin still advocated





3. **Rothko** – A Russian-born Jew, Rothko remained, for Micheline Lo, the icon, the possibility to do away with any particular function by using a few simple geometries and colors and simply retaining a pure presence. The smoke arising from his last cigarette.

4. **Morris Louis** – A Jewish-born artist, too, he no longer sustained the flesh of the presence, but the void of the absence, the Veils of the world, before dematerializing light in Stripes. His face was more an evanescence than an apparition.



5. **Jean Dubuffet** – — He was at the same time a brother and an associate. Micheline Lo shared his dislike of all cultures, his taste for "Art Brut", his will for raw material, for Texturologies. His tombeau was painted on corrugated cardboard, of course.

6. **Andy Warhol** – *Every day, she had before her eyes the albino painter's Campbell's Soup with vegetables and barley that hung on the wall of her house. She had met him at the vernissage of the exhibition of his silk screens of Hergé. For his tombeau, she felt she must paint the more consistent face of La Gioconda alongside the inconsistency of his own, so that each brought the other into question.*



7. **Fred Astaire** – *She had spent five years, a mother of four, to write another "flexte", a philosophy teacher's dissertation on folk dancing, in which she perceived the body movements as an indefatigable self-generation. While that type of dance was still analogical, Fred Astaire's had been digitalized, written — a dance akin to the Chemin des écritures?*

8. **Charlie Parker** (1987) – *Next to the digitalizing dancer, we find the Bird, the digitalizing musician, exploded in his particle-collider saxophone, crossing eternity and fraction of second, all distance being abolished between neuronal and sound shocks, as between those of the brush strokes and of the sound.*



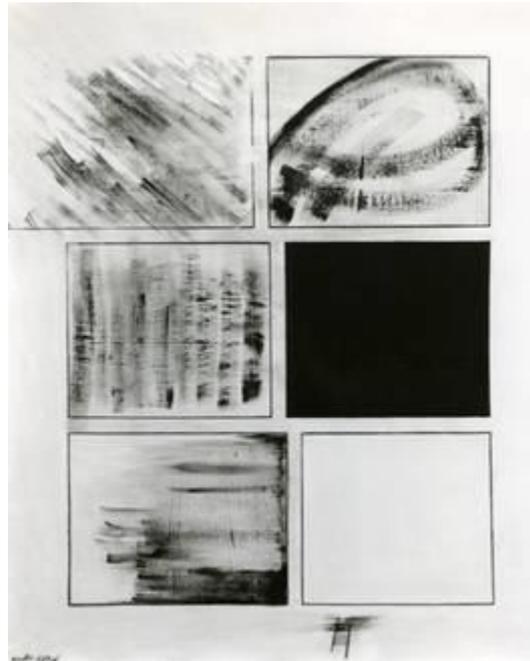
9. **Tino Rossi** (1987) – *She had always dreamed of painting the tombeau of a voice. But can a voice be painted? She did one for Edith Piaf, but later destroyed it. She kept preparing one for Maria Callas, but never dared start it. In the end, only Tino Rossi was rustic enough to hold, between a large treble clef and an oversized ear, a meridional chord.*

10. Jacques Brel (1987) – Brel really lent himself to painting, for it was not a voice but a diction. A diction can be spelled, cut up, sequenced and resequenced, as are the strokes of a brush, particularly as it pertains to somebody who produces a metasong, as we speak of metalanguage, as for instance in the Valse à mille temps. To the extent of including the Marquesas Islands.



11. Joan Marti (1988) – At the opening of the Tombeaux exhibition, one living subject, Joan Marti, pronounced his own obituary in front of his own tomb. A painter, matrix worker, bicycle racer, he hailed from the country of Dali. The broad red curtain in the painting is a reminder that, in Picasso's Catalonia, everything is theater, philosophical circus, bullfighting.

12. **Hergé** (1988) – *In a certain manner, Hergé had just himself completed his own tombeau, with the last page of the untimely interrupted Alph'Art. All that was needed, therefore, was simply to pick up this foundering, placing in evidence the role which the frame, as such, had played in this man who relished the work of Yi Jing. She had witnessed his cry of admiration when he had, in her home, caught a glimpse of David Lipszyc's Proposition 1 (see below, 5, C).*



13. **Yves Klein** (1988) – *Klein had taken painting so seriously that he wanted to become the blue of the sky, the absolute pictorial act. The adventure of the Tombeaux had therefore come to its conclusion.*

1988: Terra nostra

The relationship between Spain and Central America since 1500 remains an extremely troubling phenomenon for those intrigued by cerebral landscapes. Two civilizations meet, confront and destroy each other, while at the same time sharing a community of views on life and death, on the all and the nothing, the imaginary and the real, sufficient to give rise to a new civilization, "Amerindia". Carlos Fuentes took this entanglement as a theme for his monumental *Terra Nostra*, where he weaved a web of bicontinental, transoceanic characters. Micheline Lo has retained the cerebral landscapes of the most famous: the King, the Queen, the Queen Mother, Guzman, Barbarica, the Idiot, the Mason. .



Terra Nostra, Guzman

When offered to choose one from among those paintings, Fuentes selected *Barbarica*, for — as he explained in his letter — in this he found "la tradición Velasquiana con la del esperpento (Ghelderode) y Ensor". "*Esperpento*" was illuminating, for a scarecrow alone was truly apt to gather and compress contradictions. Flaubert used to ritualistically take his visitors at Croisset to a neighboring puppet show. Micheline Lo had retained a memory from her adolescence, almost traumatic, of the Greek actors perched on their cothurni, ancient *esperpentos*, in Cohen's production of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, played by students of the *Sorbonne*



Terra Nostra, Barbarica, environ 115 x 105 cm

1989: La Vache bleue

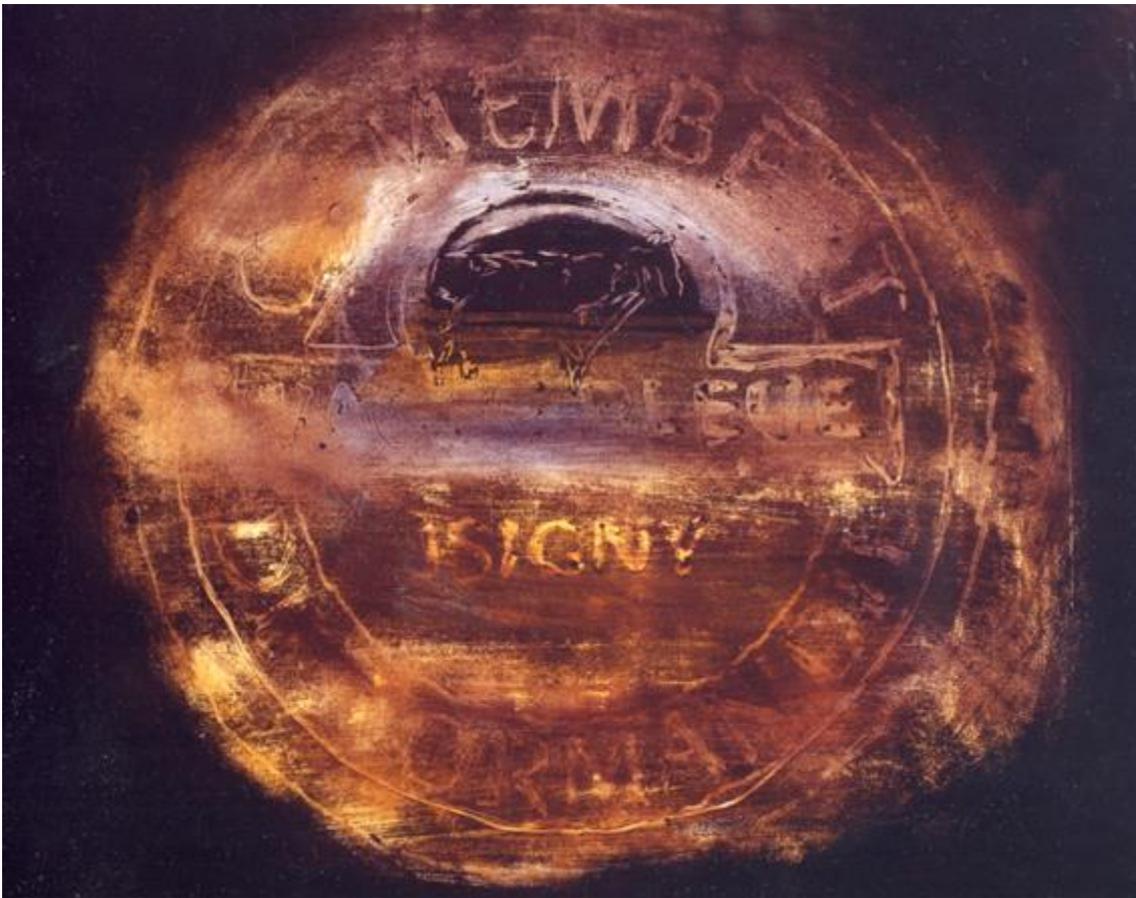
Was there anywhere a figure that would sum up, almost all at once, the cerebral landscapes which the human neurons project onto the real landscapes? One more portrait, but of the entire Planet?

There was at the time a camembert cheese on the market sold under the brand name of "*La Vache Bleue*", and its label indeed depicted a cow, colored in blue. As she saw it lying on her breakfast table, the painter who maintained she imagined nothing, but only read the indices present on the canvas texture, began to recognize there universal maternities, maps of countries and continents, an atlas of the starry sky, the Dream of the fatfleshed and of the leanfleshed kine.



La Vache bleue, Bois brulée, 160 x 200

About sixty drawings and paintings, of all sizes, were made with such names as the *Vache espace*, the *Vache grande île*, the *Vache ciel*, the *Vache Méditerranée*, the *Vache nuit*, the *Vache arc-en-ciel*, the *Vache Alpes*, the *Vache Terre*, the *Vache truie*, the *Vache bois brûlé*, even the *Vache Galla Placidia*, from that tomb near Ravenna, which is the most celestial tomb in the world with its lapis lazuli mosaic. All visitors, from the committed politician to the botany teacher, were surprised to be able to fully breathe again in the apnea of the art of the time, which had been through the "Support-Surface" current. Not only in India is the Cow the deity of a religion which does not have any unbelievers.



La Vache bleue, Médaille

At the time of the exhibition, a text by Luc Delisse commented on the virtues of the canvas as weaving, and accidents of weaving. "The canvas is waiting, becoming tense, in a silence fit to cry. Then, slowly, some life ebbs in. Mountains change colors, become bluish. Crystal after crystal, they come off the surface. A frosty sky, all mist and transparent pleasure, occupies its arbitrary place. Nowhere, where the wheel turns, do stains, powder, and mites reappear. Transcendence, eh? Is that the word? Transhumance! Say no more!"



La Vache bleue, Placidia

1990: Two more suites of Dante's "Paradise": Astrology of the ten skies

Homo is a born astrologer. Even more: physics began with astrology. At the conclusion of Antiquity, Plotinus conceived the cosmos as a Procession of the luminous One to the shady Multiple, at the same time as a Recession from the Multiple to the One, based on Ten Skies. This is what Dante again saw, a thousand years later, through Dionysius the Aeropagite. Micheline Lo had failed to underscore this aspect in her three suites of the thirty-three *Canti of Il Paradiso*, and she had to revert to this. Following the narrative order of his *Commedia*, Dante had been an astrologer, from the bottom to the top, from the Moon to the Empyrean. As both Plotinus and Dionysus had it, Lo's painting could be read both ways. Let us decide that, for the sake of instruction, we shall read them from top to bottom.



Paradis de Dante, série 4, Empyrée

(10) *L'Empyrée*, that is the-fire-inside, strictly transcendent, can be glimpsed only as set back behind the ellipse of an outsize eye. (9) *Le premier mobile* is the principle of native geometries. (8) *Les étoiles fixes* inaugurates initial physical functions, but only preformed, preforming. (7) *Saturne* inaugurates colored formations, under primitive preformations recalled over a demarcation line.



Paradis de Dante, série 4, Mercure

(6) With a black-feathered wing, Jupiter opens the social field. (5) *Mars* shows that this Order must needs be accompanied by Conflict, Heraclitus' "polemos patèr pantôn", a clash of horizontal and vertical bars against a red background. (4) And now, in splendor, comes the *Justicier*, "Noon the Righteous", the King, the Sun, blue and gold. (3) *Vénus*, the morning star, gathers all that coolness which, according to Ungaretti, is the unique privilege of the Mediterranean ontology, that of Homer, Virgil, and the auroral Dante of the *Purgatorio*. (2) *Mercure* is witness to the trouble of our minds and senses. (1) *La Lune*, misty, earthy, with its pale lights, finally places us there, where we live.

After this, the artist had only to resume those ten skies, in very large and very concrete form (7 x 7.4 feet), as ten skies, this time rather small and very abstract (3.3 feet square). The final square of the Empyrean was the painter's farewell to Dante's *Paradise*.



Paradis de Dante, série 5, l'Empyrée abstrait

1992: L'Enfer de Jean Genet

In the pilgrimage of cerebral landscapes, an *Enfer* was bound to follow a *Paradis*. Not the *Inferno* of Dante, too anecdotal and moralizing, too political, but the real *Enfer* — that of Jean Genet. The one of Crime and of Glory, of crime's glory. Micheline Lo fondly recalled how, still in her teens, after she had read Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, she had become Raskolnikov. As a painter, after she had been Dante and Beatrice, she became Genet's bandits, the more so as Genet did not describe his criminals from the outside, but precisely from the proliferation of their strange neuron colonies. Had he not shared their destiny as a thief, and as a prisoner? A painter, wrote Luc Delisse, is a thief and a murderer.

Pictorially, each "hero" needed to be there, and so obviously in his individual capacity of heroism that he would be recognizable at first sight. A friend who had dropped by one day was able to name each one without any hesitation. But this remained trivial, Freudian, psychological. It was important to attain the *Tenebra* that made those nights incandescent. The first to attain its glory was Harcamone, with his nose-sex erect as a central Roman pillar, with his aura of miracles, as on that day when his chains were transubstantiated into garlands of roses before Genet's enamored eyes. Then the others, beatified one after the other, made the contemporary system of criminal glory.



L'enfer de Jean Genet, Les bandits

Luc Delisse, in front of the portrait of Weidman, the bandit who opened *Notre-Dame-des-Fleurs*, wrote: "pinched lips, low forehead, frightened look, hollow cheeks, an aura of gauze around his head, and a pervert twitch of the nose", "that ash, that misfortune, those eyes of a happy torture victim", "comedy stretching to crime, initiation changed into a Way of the Cross", "everything that could be game and pleasure turned into tragedy, in a universal fire of funeral pump." And again: "Behold this art of dangerous, dirtying, and incompatible colors". "The blue air that evaporates (...) the green and the brown in slices, slow satellites, droplets of blood, delicately greenish festering. And the Red Sea, quite black underneath." "A clotted red, extremely violent, very close to the lumpy garnet of certain velvets, those of the shabby lounge chairs that can be found all over the provincial towns."

Micheline Lo was particularly fond of Bach's *Saint Matthew Passion*. *La Mort d'Harcamone* became her passion according to *Saint Genet, Actor and Martyr*, to quote the bold title which Sartre gave to his lengthy essay on the novelist bandit and playwright. The writer of *Flxte* copied the meanders of the text, both as a sequence of words and as a sequence of phantasms. Valéry's *La Jeune Parque* had not stepped down so hollow-sounding a stairwell, for she finally uttered: "Come lower. Speak lower (...) Black is not so black."



La Mort d'Harcamone

1994: Salammbô

The reader will recall that, when she chanced upon *La Tentation de saint Antoine*, it was in fact Salammbô that she had been looking for. Her Salammbô had been latent. This was the only time that she went on an initiation journey.

She was staying at La Marsa, and on her way to Tunis she would daily go through Carthage, or rather through its remaining shadows. Naturally, she spent some time in the Taphet, known for its child sacrifices. She was able to read, on columns, accounts of those sacrifices, kept in Phoenician writing, a system that shared the purely accounting cursiveness of Aramean and ancient Hebraic writings. She saw the *Cap Bon*, from the vantage point of what is supposed to have been the port used by Hamilcar and the young Hannibal. One night, she had tea, seated perhaps on the very same chair where Flaubert had been sipping his.



Salammbô, guerriers, Hamilcar

The cerebral landscapes of Flaubert's Salammbô have a special quality: they are absolutely frontal and compact. Only the Etruscan sculptors of that same epoch appear to have viewed certain faces in this manner. Let us recall the phonosemics of the text, which opens on the most compact phonetic pair of the French language: "K-A" and A-R", "KAR" (*C'était à MéGARA, faubourg de CARthAge dans les jARDins d'HAMilKAR*), and closes on four enclosing "T"s (*Ainsi mOURut / la fille d'HAMilKAR / pour avoir Touché / au manTeau / de TaniT*). With the painter, this produced faces-substances, those of Hamilcar, of Shahabarim, of Spendius, and of the young Hannibal. And lastly, the puffed face of Mâtho, filling the whole frame, which advances toward the distraught face of Salammbô, who faints. "Figures", in the most epic of senses.



Salammbô, La mort de Mâtho, acrylique sur toile, 120 x 200 cm

So solid are those faces that the artist finally resorted to the pure pigments of pastel, and thus created six "esperpentos", of an almost mineral substance. We know how Heinrich Schliemann must have felt when, as he was excavating the site of Troy, he suddenly faced the mask of Agamemnon. The painter seems to have gone through the same stupefaction as she faced the Carthaginian masks embedded in Flaubert's consonants and vowels.



La bataille du Makar # 5

Flaubert's narrative elicits the same compactness as do the figures. Mâtho advances in an aqueduct whose ground slopes upward while its roof slants downwards as he walks on. Micheline Lo retained the narrowing, the maximal orgasm of the narrative, that moment when the Barbarians, lured by the Cathaginians in the Thermopylae, end up being crushed there in a lake of stones and blood which is in continuation of the one where *Saint Antoine* had walked. The *Bataille du Makar* are mineral and visual crushes in pure state.



Variation 6, aquarelle sur papier, 50 x 65 cm

In the hall where the works were first shown, this Flaubertian suffocation strangely appeared next to Giovanni Bellini's *Young Woman at Her Toilet*, the most tenderly irradiating painting of Western art. A self-portrait furtively hung there? Or was it to indicate that the truth in the cerebral landscape demands that one should go to the two extremes at the same time? And to all that is in between. Flaubert and Bellini. The Carthaginian, and the Venetian.

1994: Cien años de soledad. The system of portraits

Finally, among the cerebral landscapes, the absolute convexity of Flaubert found a counterpart in the absolute concavity of Gabriel García Márquez. This time, no "characters" would effect any action *inside* a landscape or release any imaginary *into* the real. Only the immensity of the Amazonia and the Cordillera, causing action and country, imaginary and real, to be fused into the Colombian *mammagallo* (feminine-masculine, uterus-clitoris). Proper names no longer designate men and women, but human bodies, made up of trees, rocks,

animals, streams, rough gestures, delusions. "Aureliano Segundo había satisfecho por fin su sueño de disfrazarse de tigre (to disguise himself as a tiger) y andaba feliz entre la muchedumbre desahorada (the madding crowd)." García Márquez's *disfrazarse* is an echo to Carlos Fuentes's *esperpanto*.



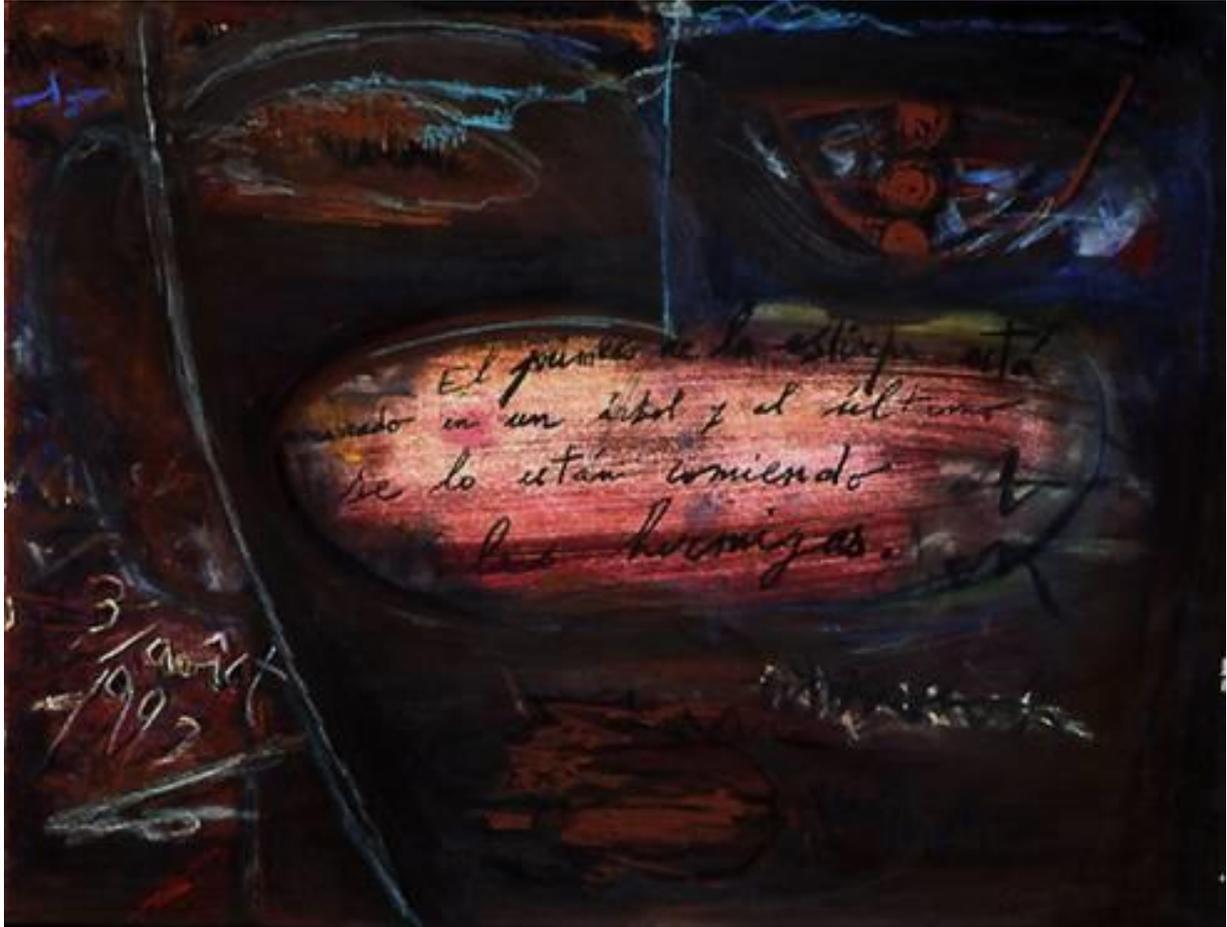
Cien años, le colonnel Aurelano Buendia

Each word then becomes an oracle, so that the suite of twenty-six portraits open and close on Melquiades, the magus who owns the people's manuscripts, its *Poppol Vuh*, but refuses to translate them because no one is to apprehend their meaning until a hundred years of non-time of the *Continente Eterno* — about which his Colombian friend, Heriberto López Pérez, had written his *Sueños Epifanias y Porros* — have elapsed: "pero se negó a traducir los manuscritos. Nadie debe conocer su sentido mientras no hayan cumplido cien años explicó." Unless some particular circumstance should tear the veil, as for Aureliano Babilonia: "No porque io hubiera paralizado el estupor, sino porque en aquel instante prodigioso se le revelaron las claves definitivas de Melquíades."



Cien años, José Arcadio el mayor, Techniques mixtes sur papier, 50 x 65 cm

Micheline Lo deciphered twenty-six figures of warm and humid earth, of human flesh, of animal skin, of vegetal arborescence, of cryptic texts, cramming the sheet on which they were drawn, each time somewhat off center to the left as if to say they were to be viewed and read from left to right. Figures, and narrations. Based on Amazonian coalescences, the drawings were made directly on an embossed board of bark-brown color. Those compact masses she chose to frame with solid, square-shaped wood of varying patinas, according to the web of the rain forest and to human traits.



Cien años, Aureliano Babilonia, Techniques mixtes sur papier, 50 x 65 cm

Those portraits were the last which Micheline Lo painted as an explorer of cerebral landscapes. They open a new era of faces. Picasso made a last self-portrait in 1972, in which he fulgurates by the explosion of his look. But in this, he does not depart from the traditional Western vision of an Ego, of a "someone", of a "certain". He concludes a world. Micheline Lo's portraits inaugurate a radically different vision: that of the biochemical brains, inexhaustibly plural, both exogenous and endogenous.

She therefore successively explored

- (1) The ecstatic portraits of Saint Antoine
- (2) The beatific portraits of the elects of the Paradiso
- (3) The essentializing (Mallarmean) portraits of the Tombeaux
- (4) The scarecrow (esperpentos) portraits of Terra Nostra

- (5) The infernal portraits of the Enfer de Genet
- (6) The archeological (Schliemannian) portraits of Salammbô
- (7) The mutational portraits of Cien años de soledad, in which the organisms are relays of Evolution and Universe.

1995: The transition: Vents de Saint John Perse

Flxte, as did the narration both copied and figured of *La Mort d'Harcamone*, already had disclosed her intention of crossing the written and the depicted. But not to such a point that the pictorial line be at the same time the scriptive line, and vice versa. There remained a final step to take.

Naturally, she needed a writer whose work would lend itself to this. She chose Saint-John Perse. Born in the French Antilles, those Amerindian islands, French ambassador and poet, Perse precisely had made as his central theme the generation and regeneration of animals, humans, ideas, images, political and commercial institutions, of fervent brains. "Se hâter, se hâter, paroles de vivants". Micheline Lo liked to repeat the last verse of *Vents*, which adequately expressed her own violence: "Quand la violence / eut renouvelé / le lit des hommes sur la terre // Un très vieil arbre / à sec de feuilles / reprit le fil / de ses maximes // Et un autre arbre / de haut rang / montait déjà / des grandes Indes souterraines // Avec sa feuil/le magnéti/que et son chargement / de fruits nouveaux." It will have been noted that, just as Claudel, his contemporary, Perse expresses himself in verses made up of sections of four or six feet, sometimes forming decameters (4/6, 6/4) and alexandrines (6/6). According, as he says, to Pindar's ideal of the strophe, both strict and broad.

As discipline is the condition of liberty, the painter imposed on herself a strict protocol. She decided to copy each verse from bottom to top, starting again from the bottom when she had reached the top. She used her colors according to an arbitrary code: a given color for a given alternation of strophes. Yet, her brush, loaded with acrylic paint, caused insistences, ruminations of syllables, letters, or lines. In this manner, snags, faults, or slips resequenced the sequences. Yet another way of using the canvas as a field of indices, of making it the privileged site of neuronal connections and cleavages. The workplace was really ready for the *Chemin des écritures*. For the passage from *neuronal formations* to the *living formations* in general.



Vents, Hommage à Saint John Perse

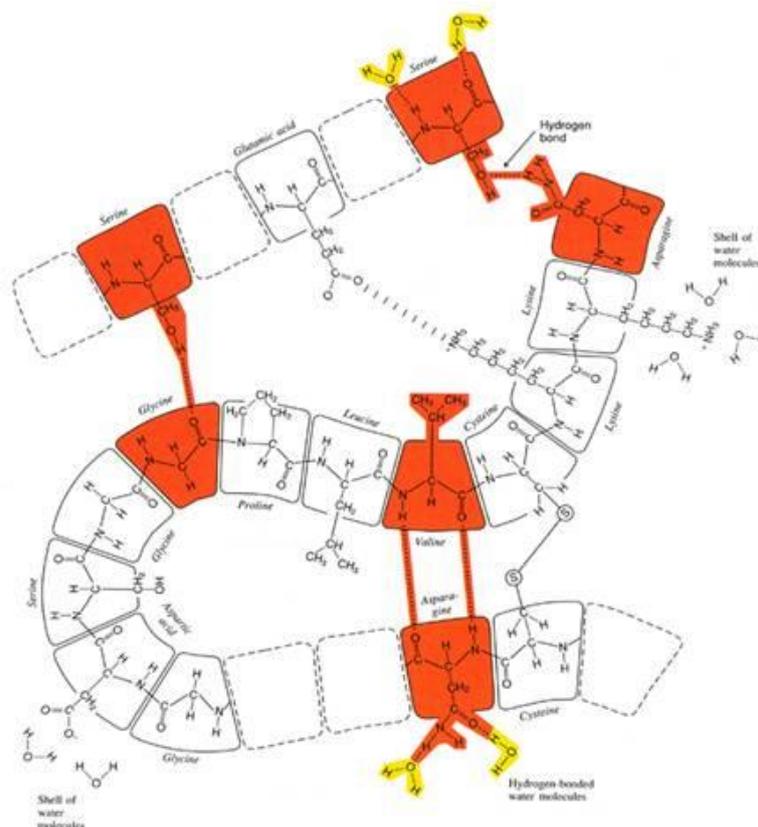
Chapter 4 – SECOND COSMOLOGICAL PRELUDE: THE LIVING FORMATIONS

With the *Chemins des écritures*, we have to go beyond the field of brains, and to introduce a new cosmological interlude, this time on living formations in general. The word "formation" had to be taken in its active sense. What is concerned here is not the forms as a result of an act of forming, according to one of the meanings of "formation" in French ("des formations rocheuses"), but rather the process through which forms are obtained. The German language is clearer in this respect, as it makes a distinction between **Gestalt** (form) and **Gestaltung** (formation, the act of forming). *Gestaltung*, and not *Gestalt*, properly translates the word formation(s) here.

Until recently, traditional painting attempted to produce forms, more precisely, perfect forms, exemplary and archetypal, so much so that Michelangelo destroyed almost all of his sketches. And when Picasso deforms, it is to produce new forms. Now, what interested Micheline Lo, as other contemporary cosmogonists, who like her had become radically evolutionists, was to offer a perception and an experience of the *formation processes*, of *morphogeneses*, those movements and logics of our contemporary Universe. We chose here five of those new *paradigms*, the first three of which are ontological, the fourth, epistemological, and the fifth, almost ethical.

4A. Dynamic evolutive (re)sequenciations

The miracle of the twenty **amino acids** which, from the time of the sulfur gases from the volcanoes on the floor of the oceans, carry the edifice of the Living, is that it is made of two parts. One is identical in all organisms, and electrically polarized, thereby enabling the formation of solid chains, while the other makes them different. As a result, when those acids make up chains of a few dozens or a few thousands, amino acids attract and repel each other depending on how distant they are, but also because of their virtualities of chemical bindings (covalent, ionic, hydrogenic, or hydrophobic). Hence, the resulting pellets, called **proteins** (proteios, of prime importance), are infinitely varied.

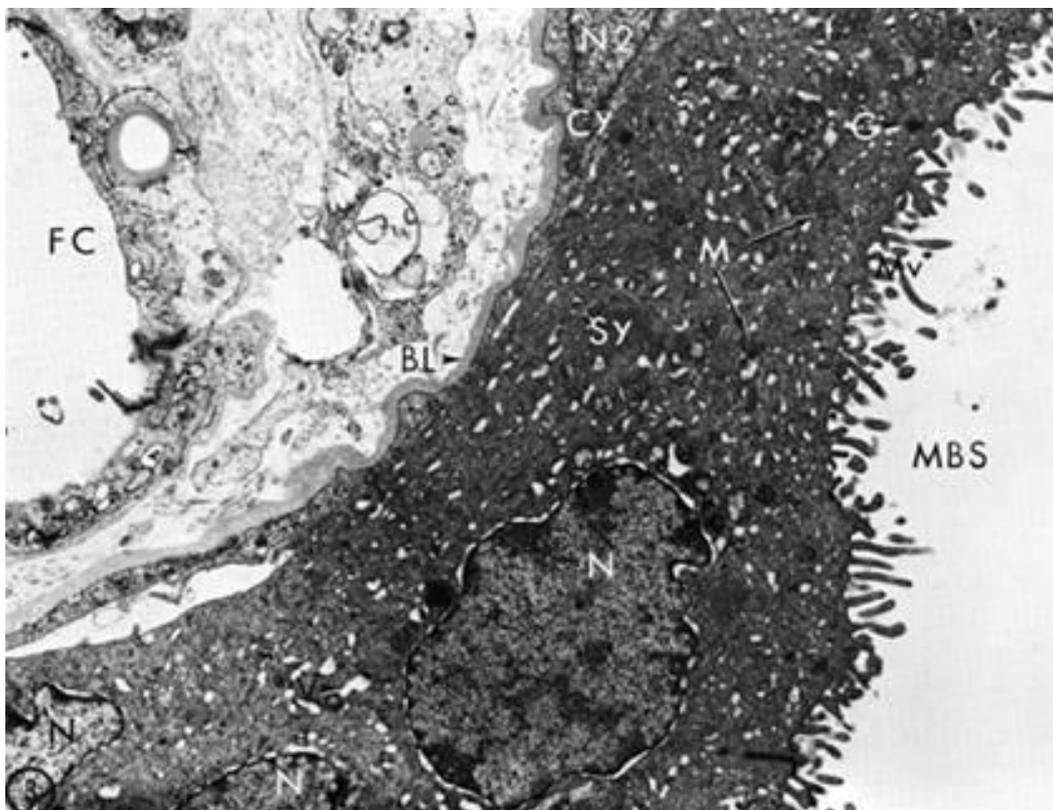


D. Dressler and H. Potter, « Discovering Enzymes », Scientific American Library, 1991, p 130

The discovery of formations through (re)sequencing was to shake the human mind more violently than anything before. From the beginning, an angularizing, orthogonalizing and transversalizing primate must assume that any formation inevitably resulted from molding and plasticity. Yahweh Himself had created Adam from modeled clay. Now, having discovered proteins that resulted from the (re)sequencing of amino acids, Homo had gained a first understanding that what happened at the start (variant) of living formations was not related to a plastic process.

4B. Ultrastructures

However, even after Hermann E. Fisher (who, for this, received the Nobel Prize for chemistry in 1902) had found that proteins could assemble by a key-and-lock effect between their active sites — which assigned them anatomical and physiological functions — there remained to be found some intermediary between their very open biochemical reactions and the relatively closed organic units formed by the cells responsible for both organs and organisms. These are *organelles* such as the mitochondria that stock and provide cell energy. Since 1939, histologists have called these **ultrastructures**, for the reason that powerful microscopes were needed to observe them, unlike *structures* and *textures*.



Coupe histologique, placenta

4C. Organizations by geometric, topological, mechanical and hydrodynamic constraints

Was there a way to proceed from the still evasive preformations made up of proteins and of organelles (almost level with proteins), to the organs of our living organisms? As early as 1920 D'Arcy Thompson noted that when the form of a fish has been geometrically framed in a grid, rather simple anamorphoses help find the shape of other fishes, as would as many geometrical variations of the same theme. The same approach could be applied to other animal families. To understand morphogenesis, then, one could evoke *morphogenetic fields*, obligated epigenetic pathways — *chreodes*, as Conrad Waddington would later call them.

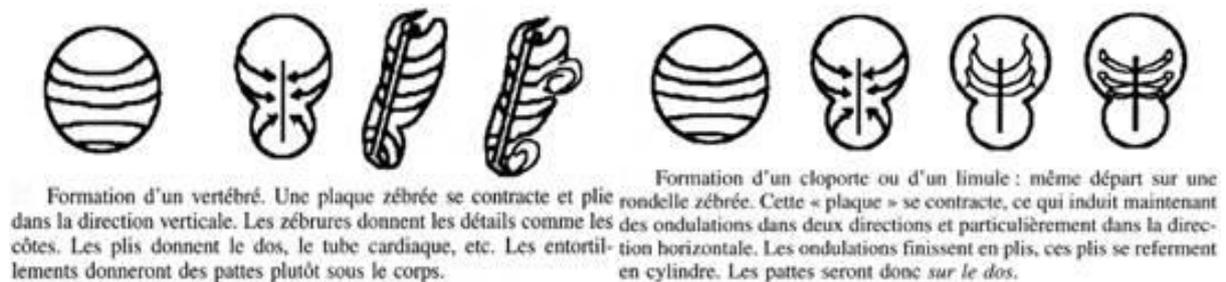
In the 1950s, René Thom found the mathematical foundations of this. He received a Fields Medal for establishing that equations of differential topology point to seven elementary "catastrophes" (*strophein kata*, transform through and through), via "singularities", i.e. points in space-time where the curve of space-time becomes infinite. We touched on this earlier when talking of El Greco. They are (1) the crease, (2) the fold, (3) the dovetail, (4) the butterfly wing, and (5-7) the three types of umbilicus: hyperbolic, elliptic, and parabolic. With the mind of an embryologist, Thom added, in 1972 in *Stabilité structurelle et morphogenèse* (Benjamin), that those seven catastrophes helped understand that living tissues, both fibers and fibrated, then produce organs: tracts (digestive, vaginal), pouches (urinary, stomachal, uterine), as well as their angulations and articulations.

Nom des singularités	Centre organisateur	Déploiement universel	Sections remarquables	Interprétation spatiale (substantifs)		Interprétation temporelle (verbes)	
				Sens destructif	Sens constructif	Sens destructif	Sens constructif
Minimum simple	$V = x^2$	$V = x^2$		Être, objet		Être, durer	
Le pli	$V = x^3$	$V = x^3 + ux$		Le bord, le bout	La fin - finir	Le début - commencer	
La fracture (catastrophe de Riemann-Hugoniot)	$V = x^4$	$V = x^4 + ux^2 + vx$		La faille (géologie)	Capter Casser, Rempir	Engendrer Changer - Devenir Unir	
La queue d'arçon	$V = x^5$	$V = x^5 + ux^3 + vx^2 + wx$		La fente, le coin	Déchirer Fendre	Coudre	
Le pignon	$V = x^6$	$V = x^6 + ux^4 + vx^3 + wx^2 + tx$		La poche, l'écaillé	S'écailler S'écarter Remplir (une poche)	Donner Recevoir Vider (une poche) Lune poche)	
L'omblic hyperbolique	$V = x^3 + y^3$	$V = x^3 + y^3 + wxy - ux - vy$		Le crêt (de la vague) La voûte	Briser S'effondrer	Recourir	
L'omblic elliptique	$V = x^3 - 3xy^2$	$V = x^3 - 3xy^2 + w(x^2 + y^2) - ux - vy$		L'aiguille, la pique, le poil...	Piquer Pénétrer	Boucher (un trou) Anéantir	
L'omblic parabolique	$V = x^2y + y^3$	$V = x^2y + y^3 + wx^2 + ty^2 - ux - vy$		Le jet (début) Le champignon La bouche	Briser (un jet) Éjecter, lancer Percer Couper, pincer Prendre	Lier Ouvrir Fermer (la bouche)	

René THOM, « *Stabilité structurelle et Morphogenèse* », 1972, W. A. Benjamin INC, Massachusetts.

The foregoing views have been supplemented or even completed by the work of a number of biophysicians. Some are concerned with the regeneration of organs — how to remake a bladder, a vagina, a lung, or a liver — as for example Vincent Fleury (*De l'œuf à l'éternité*, Flammarion, 2006), and they state that every cell has its movement, say south-north as would a compass needle, and that in this manner the disc (the pancake) of cells that are the starting point of a living organism, has an identical movement, suggesting that of a magnetic field. From the gastrular stage, the height of the navel (site of gastrulation) on that general south-north axis results in *radiolars* when the navel-mouth-anus axis is central, of *quadrupeds* when its position is lower. What is more, under the same laws of mechanics and hydrodynamics, in these initial distributions there will appear creases, bulges, windings, which will become arms and legs, and even fingers (Vincent Fleury, *Des pieds et des mains*, Flammarion, 2003).

In sum, a living organism is varied, variable and variant by reason of its biochemistry, which contributes to the expansion of the narrowing of the fibers of its fibrated, or even to their thriving or their degenerating — the extended neck of a giraffe, or the shortened one of a mouse. But this does not mean that an infinite number of organisms will be possible — probable and possible will be four fins, four legs, two legs and two arms, two legs and two wings; improbable and impossible (?) will be four legs and two wings (the mythological Centaur still remains a fantastic animal). No head will appear beyond a head, since it is the final spherical bulge in those animals that have a lowered umbilicus, as we human have. As she died early in 2003, Micheline Lo was never aware of those biophysical developments. But they are in continuation of the geometrical and topological views of both D'Arcy Thompson and René Thom, with which she was familiar.



From the egg to eternity

4D. Non-finality. Modules and network. Individuation vs. individual subject. Metastability. Initiative of the digital.

Such a spreading of the living implies changes in paradigms that can be grouped together because they are faces of one another. (a) The conventional scheme "purposes >> functions >> forms >> organs >> elements" has been reversed to "elements (amino acids, proteins) >> organelles >> forms-organs >> functions >> purposes". (b) The forgoing shows that no organism is ever fully a *whole*, as held in Ancient Greece, or an *individual* as in the 17th century, and that there are only *individuation processes* which sometimes between birth and death are congruous enough for us to be able to speak of a specimen of a species. (c) The *integral parts* of a classical "whole", a kidney, a lung, or a foot, assume the status of *functional parts* or *modules*, that may intervene in different organisms. *A fortiori* we will speak of *nodules* with respect to biochemical cycles such as ATP, or that of chymotripsine, that may be involved in various organisms, as well as effect certain functions in that same organism give or take a few variations. (d) Sets made up of nodules are not so much wholes with a center as *networks* with multiple centers. (e) As a result, the distinction in new biology is less of the *stable* and the *unstable* than of the *metastable*, i.e. of the states where transformations do not yet appear under the formations, but sufficiently prepare for this so that they come out in bursts, "quantum"-like. (f) The technical invention sequence "*analogy* (the general motion of a Guimbart turbine) >> *digitality* (detailed calculation of its energy exchanges)" is often reversed into "*digital* >> *analogic*".

A number of those characteristics have been pointed out by Gilbert Simondon in *Du mode d'existence des objets techniques* (1957), and *L'individu et sa genèse physico-biologique* (1964). Micheline Lo knew the two books, and she even taught a few classes in an arts school on François Jacob's *La logique du vivant*.

4E. The Universe as an adventure

In this view, the future state of a living system is unpredictable by reason of its incessant cellular variations, in spite of its embryologic, geometric, topological, and physical invariants. And yet, this unpredicted state can perfectly well be explained from the moment it arises. Is there a simple, vehicular word to describe that situation?

Not the Greek *tukHè* evoked by Freud and Monod, which Aristotle said designates the meeting (tunkHanein, to meet) of heterogenous series, as those of a stone falling off a roof, and of a passer-by whose skull it smashes. Nor is it *chance*, from the Latin vulgate (cadentia, from cadere, to fall) — the fall of a circumstance that "drops" as a good or bad Fortuna (fors, forse, perhaps). Nor the Arabic *hazard*, a throw of dice (al rahr) selecting an element in a closed inventory (one side from among the six sides of a die) which caused Pascal to conceive a probability theory to calculate the shares in the win of an interrupted game. Nor the accuracy ranges in a physics experiment, in Newton's theory of errors. Nor even the *Markov process*, which since the 1920s has applied to a subject walking and to the Brownian motion.

What word, then, could adequately describe such antecedent unpredictability, and consequent deducibility? Perhaps "*adventure*" in the strong sense of "something that occurs" (ad, venire), which makes that the novel has become the preponderant literary genre of our time, having superseded epopee, lyricism, tragedy, and comedy, irresistibly influencing history. Our evolution, that combines bushiness (biochemical and ultrastructural) and invariants (biophysical), and which therefore at the same time broadens and channels that of Darwin, would thus place us in an *adventurous Universe*. For living organisms, and adventurous painters. Given a new logic. And also for some ethic that would no longer be that of perfection, but of wondering wonderment.

Chapter 5 — THE LIVING FORMATION AND WRITING

How can the spatial arts echo those five paradigms? In *architecture*, there is some impediment in the heaviness of the materials, even though they become legible in the work of Frank Gehry — inchoatively in his Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain; and patently in his project for the Louis Vuitton Foundation for Creation building in Paris. In *sculpture*, the same paradigms have certainly carried Enzo Cucchi and Tony Cragg, in spite of a similar resistance of not very pliable materials. *Painting* is favored by lightness of means, as well as by its proximity to *writing* which could be convoked inasmuch as the analogic no longer always precedes the digital.

5A. The living formations and writing as such

Writing formations, even ancient, are close to the newer living formations owing to a number of their properties.

1. Like proteins, they have distinct units and several levels. (a) First they have a number of characters — a few thousands in China, and around thirty in our alphabets. (b) These characters are made up of stokes and lines — a few strokes are enough to produce all the Chinese ideograms, while the characters of the Western or Arabic alphabets have upstrokes, downstrokes, round, open, and closed shapes, that run above or below the writing line.
2. Writings often display ligatures or set spaces causing the characters to be joined, at least by some of their parts, and to differ by some other parts, as do amino acids. This follows three dynamics: (a) a *graphic dynamic* — downstrokes, upstrokes, angular or round hand, above or below the writing line, etc. (b) a *phonic dynamic*, because once they have been pronounced they are low- or high-pitched, with definite or indefinite formants, up to the twelve phonematic strokes of Jakobson-Halle. (c) a *semantic dynamic*, because once understood, they are linked to semes that are fluid or compact, centripetal or centrifugal, appreciative or depreciative, etc.
3. Writings are a living thematization of *interactions between analogy and digitality*. Initially, they were essentially pictograms, which soon were schematized and digitalized — in Egypt, when they became partially alphabetic; in Sumer, when they underwent a 90 degree rotation to follow the scriptive motion. Conversely, abstract (digitalized) written signs immediately took

on analogic meanings by reason of their graphic and optical convections. As in the history of our capital "A". First, with its point down (hence upside down for us) it was the analogy of the head of an ox. Then, pointing upward (as it is today), it became a digital sign. Finally, in view of the isosceles force it assumes in this position, it took on the majesty of the "A" *de l'Atlantique* of the cartoonist Fred, who again works analogically. Once again, ***in the living formation, the morphogenetic, mathematical and physical invariants are more often analogical, while the chemical (re)sequenciation variants are more digital.***

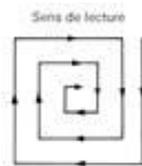
4. Right from the time of counting tokens of the Neolithic, writing records inventories and exchanges (so many cattle for so many bags of grain), thus confirming the artisanal consecution: ***functions*** (transactions) >> ***organs*** (graphic expressions). Very soon, however — with the emergence of the primary empires, around 3000 B.C. — , writing suscitates unknown themes once it has to support the award of titles, royal victories, or religious invocations. The consecution then becomes ***organs*** >> ***functions***.

5. Finally, ***ligatures*** in the broad sense of the word (connective and disjunctive strokes, periods, jump to the next line, capitalization, or set spaces) suggest the ***chemical bindings*** of amino chains, and especially ***cerebral connections and cleavages*** with which they share at least six performances: (1) they *convey* information in the etymological sense (formare, in — put in shape); (2) they *collect* information through the weaving, crossing, entangling, and intensities of their connection; (3) they *accentuate* the information, as do our sensory nervous systems, reinforcing what is already salient, smoothing down the less salient; (4) they *split* the information through cuts — themselves an accentuation — between the information batches, boxes, and modules; (5) they *help* short-, medium-, and long-term learning, and (6) they *foment*, at the time of storage and re-reading, innovative cerebral digestions.

5B. Living formations and calligraphy

Left to themselves, however, graphic formations lack several of the properties of living formations. As lines, strokes and characters, they display two layers only, while chemical living formations have more. They are not self-generating, and imply and intentional writer. Of themselves, they do not generate a regenerative, but only a reproductive memory. Nothing in them invokes the notion of ultrastructure. How, then, could the few lines and characters of writing make a pertinent cosmogonic echo to the cosmology of living formations?

However, since a writing is made up of lines, it can be the site, as would a painting, of fixating, kinetic, dynamic, and even uncoordinatable **perceptive-motor field effects** ("excited" as understood by Thom). Or yet again, of **logical-semiotic field effects**. Both these aspects can then be exploited by ***rhythm***, which is particular to Homo, in order to express or realize specific topology, cybernetics, logical semiotics, or presentivity, i.e. the ***destiny/life choice*** of an individual subject or of a people, or again their ***work subject***. Such were the calligraphies-paintings of the emperors of the Song Dynasty in the 11th-12th Chinese centuries, or that of Arabic Kufic calligraphy.



كوفي هندي معقول من الطابوق المطلوب السيراميك - من
القاهرة - وفي الإعجاز نفس الخط تمكيزا . وليست عمل
الطابوق كوحدة أساسية لهذا الخط .
مسجد المؤيد - القاهرة -

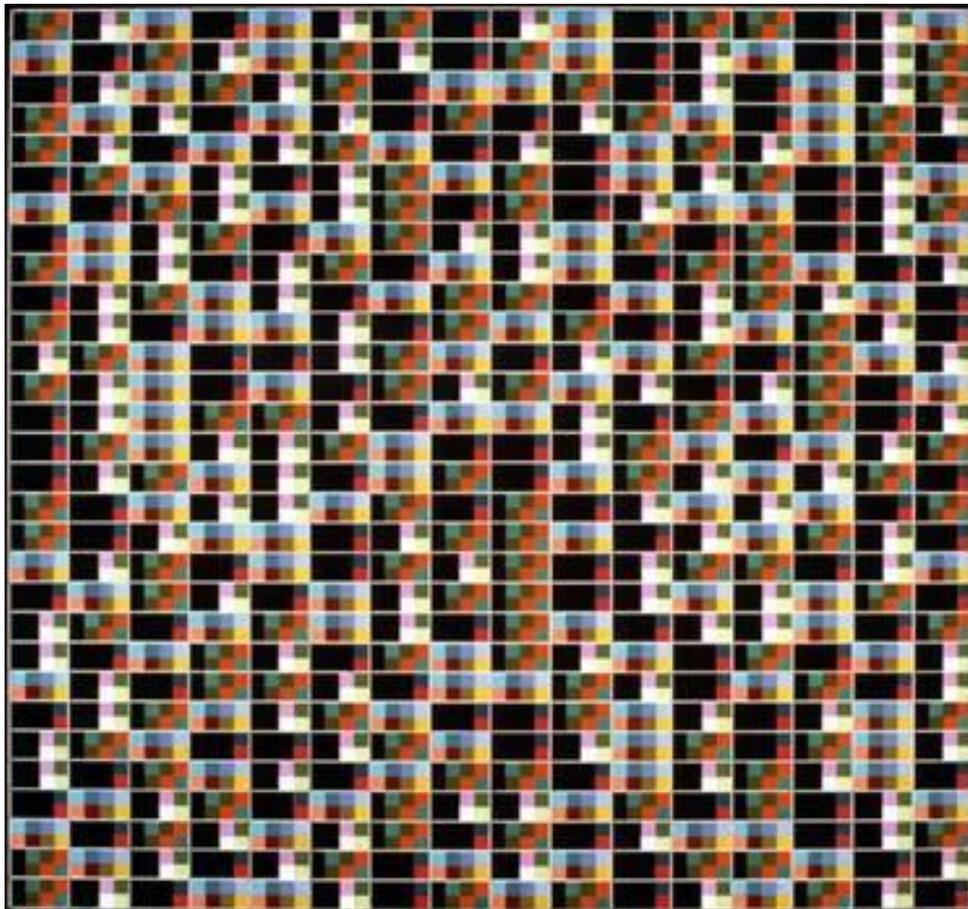
*Style Koufi géométrique, Mosquée du Sultan Mouaylad, Le Caire
In Hassan MASSOUDY, « Calligraphie arabe vivante », 1981, Flammarion, Paris*

5C. Of painted writings since 1950

Many were those in the 1950s who learned that amino acids were spontaneously formed in an earthy environment, thus bridging the gap between the inanimate and the animate, and also that the (re)sequencing of amino acids was a principle of living formation. At that time, too, **Jackson Pollock** introduced the technique of *cross dripping*, and the resulting formations were as little intentional and as much self-generating as could be. Yet, it covered the painted canvas with many *modules* and *networks*, and few or no *forms*.

In 1955, in the same cosmological climate, **Jasper Johns** took three aspects of writing as a subject: individual characters, lines, and columns, especially when he arranged in abacus form the letters of the alphabet. A genial valorizing artist, he thus sufficiently enriched these structures to evoke, among them, a network not only of textures but of generative ultrastructures. Still, his system overlooks the potentialities of (re)sequencing.

In the 1960s, **Lucia Di Luciano** introduced the subject of (re)sequencing. Her *alba elettronica* is proof enough of how dazzled she was by perceptive-motor and logic-semiotic field effects, generated by the simple data processing "bit" (flip/flop, 0/1, black/white) even from its most elementary disposition, as a rectangle, provided the potentials of (re)sequencing could be exploited. But her initial small rectangles were perhaps too elementarily digital, not dynamic and analogical enough, to move from the *structure* and *texture* field effects over to those of *ultrastructures* (histological).



Cromostruttura, n°10, Lucia Di Luciano, 1980

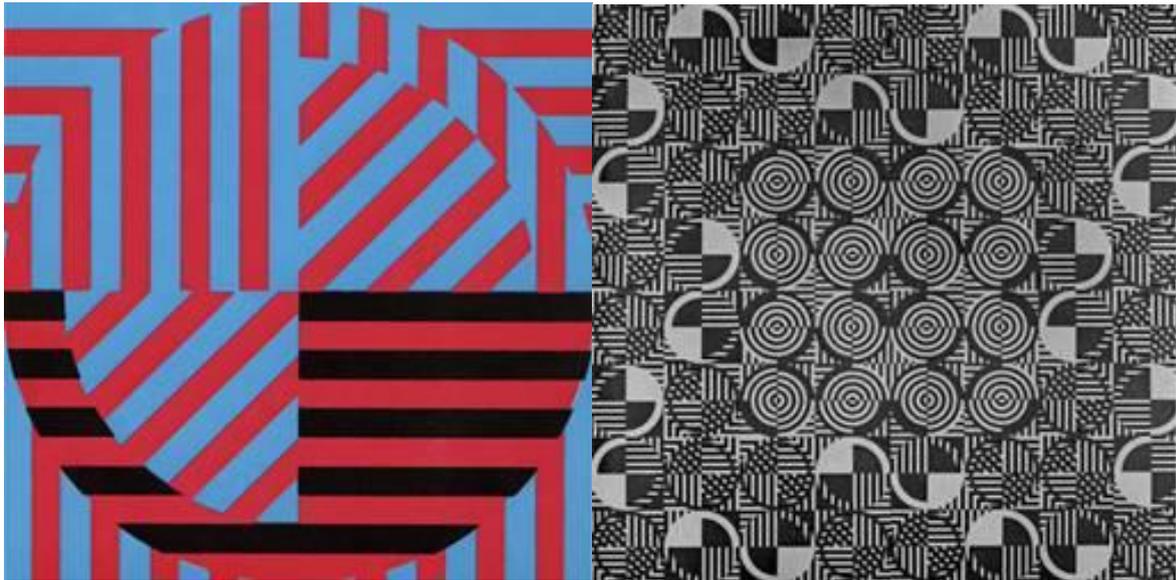
In 1966, moving another step toward living formations, **Jean Dubuffet's** *Cycle de L'Hourloupe* offered a pictorial cell of the living organism that is both very plastic (analogizing) and very much written (digitalizing), which mixes cuts of the mineral matter, of the living tissue

and living organ, of the expression of faces. His work consists in multiplying this cell into sequences that proliferate to the edges of the frame. But in this case, the idea of (re)sequencing is missing. As does that of ultrastructure in a very smooth loom.



Nunc Stans, Jean Dubuffet, in « Cycle de l'Hourloupe », 1966, Galerie Jeanne Bucher, Paris

In 1969, **David Lipszyg** produced, precisely in Micheline Lo's house, his *Proposition 1*. On a substrate of 5.25 feet square, he placed squares of 0.3 x 0.3 feet, which amazingly recall certain biochemical constructions — (1) Each one carries five elements: (a) straight lines, (b) arcs of circles, (c) hues, (d) saturations, and (e) luminance (// The five elements of amino acids??). — (2) Those elements form some twenty different compounds (//The twenty amino acids retained by the living organisms??). — (3) Those initial compounds, through their dynamic seriations, form highly diversifiable vertical and horizontal plastic compounds (// Pictorial proteins??). — (4) Those higher-order compounds, through combination, generate a "proposition" (// A pictorial organism??). — (5) Propositions form, among themselves, affine groups (// Pictorial "species", "genera", "families", and "orders"?). — (6) In order to clearly show that they are (re)sequentiabale the squares, initially made of cardboard and pasted on, later were made of aluminum and attached by magnetic force, hence inviting mutation.



Propositions, David Lipszyc, 1969, Galerie Withofs, Bruxelles

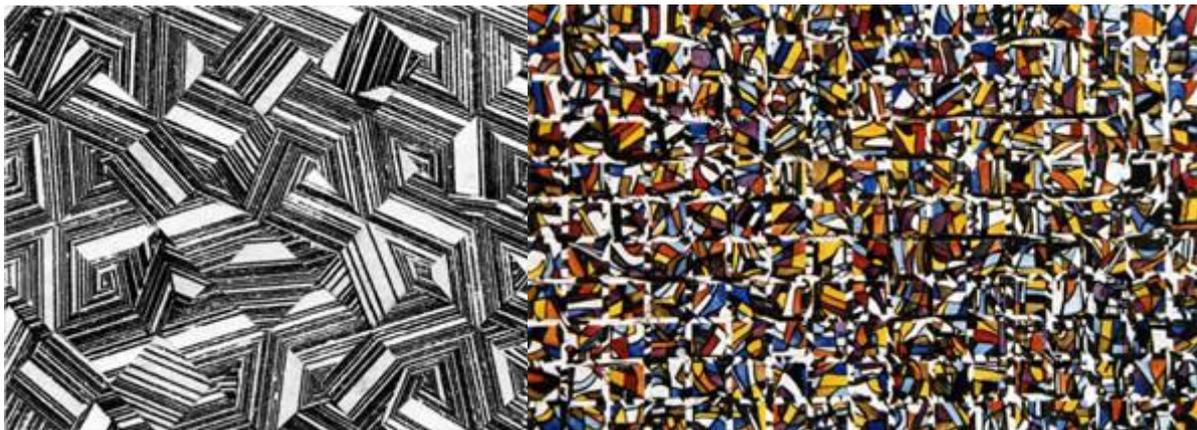
From 1970, the very year Christian Anfinsen demonstrated the folding and unfolding of the protein, **Frank Stella** who thus far had only painted fixed graphic sequences started painting sequences in mutation. First the wooden beams of *Synagogues polonaises*, the Polish synagogues turned to rubble during WW II. Then those that explode in the organs of the living organisms (*Albatros*, etc.) Yet all his sequences, although dynamic, failed to manifest generation, and even less self-regeneration. Would this be for the reason that his painting never exploited the properties of writing, in spite of the example of Jasper Johns who was, however, Stella's painter of reference?



Steller's albatros par Frank Stella, 1976.

Couverture du livre de Steve Reich « écrits et entretiens sur la musique » Christian Bourgeois éditeur, 1981, Paris

Lastly, by a strange coincidence Micheline Lo and Jean-Claude Goffre had since 1980 their workrooms only a short distance apart in the village of Le Poët-Sigillat. Goffre was first a photographer and he probably had been molded by the framing, subframing, and reframing potentialities of photography; he practiced a pictorial protocol that was exemplary for a cosmogony of the living formations. — (1) Gather a batch of haphazard images: magazine photographs, or from the painter's own paintings. — (2) Cut these structures into rectangular fragments, from which they assume the status of ultrastructures. — (3) Paste these ultrastructural elements in (re)sequentiating columns and lines. — (4) Perform this operation according to the demands of perceptive-motor and logic-semiotic field effects, paying particular attention to general and differential topology, and to the fecundity of fractals. In this manner, he obtained not objects-before but networks of interfaces where the connections and cleavages of the artist's and his viewers' brains cross. The subject of the work is decided enough to allow for the pertinence of accurate placing — in the Bouches-du-Rhône, and in particular in the Camargue. Without any fear of rubbing shoulders with the abstractions of "*Tissus Mémoires*".



Jean-Claude Goffre, Les tissus mémoires et Bebop, 2001

Chapter 6 – LES CHEMINS DES ÉCRITURES



Les chemins des écritures # 42, 200 x 230 cm

Micheline Lo's *Chemins des écritures* (1996-1999) is a suite of some fifty wide-shaped canvasses, approximately ten square feet in surface — some are somewhat broader, and only three exceed forty square feet (6.5 x 7.5 feet). On first impression, the eye catches fragments of figures, letters, geometric and topological forms, body members and organs, efflorescences and rhizomes, the size of which varies between four and twelve inches square. They could be said to be "plastic cells" as understood by Weidlé, i.e. portions of a work where the destinies-designs of the work as a whole can be found.

6A. The trait



Les chemins des écritures # 20, 83 x 100 cm

Yet, the eye cannot rest on anything. None of the elements glimpsed are there for their own sake. It has no contour and no part. It is not an event placed next to another event. It is not even a segment before or after another segment, as in the polymeric cells of Dubuffet's *Cycle de l'Hourloupe*.

To the contrary, everything happens as if the eye were caught in each portion of surface and there read — or at least suspected — some underlying elements, so that, as it catches that particular portion, it also catches the one that comes next, or before, or above, or below. These are not data, but sequences in the strong sense of the word. What is to be seen are not the Generated, but the Generation. And less the generation of one by the other than a Self-generation which enables to apprehend the one and the other, the other and the same. There are

therefore no specimens and no species, even, but the generating principles of the species and specimens. Structures and textures, while not negated, are thus never accomplished, nor even definable or discernable, hardly namable. Their exposure, decided but transitory, is there only to create a perception of the work of those ultrastructures of which they are the transient, metastable emergences. Hence, no **forms**, only **formations**. In sum, each painting in its own way achieves the same theme: **the generalized biological, technical and semiotic Generation.**



Les chemins des écritures # 39, 83 x 100 cm

To fulfill this, the drawing leans on the properties of writing in that the emerging elements, instead of lending themselves to a one-by-one identification, are rather like characters disposed in sequences that would reveal the *strokes* from which they follow, with the result that the sequences at once come out as (re)sequentiating, as each character already turns into another one, which will in turn become another one. This, from all around, causes singularities that are not so much individuals (non-divided) as relays of individuation, as understood by Simondon. And those relays are not singly describable, narrable, countable, since they are transitions and

metamorphoses. Far from all dialectic, there is nothing predictable beforehand, while nothing is either explainable afterwards.

The singularities thus produced are uncountably multiple and diverse by reason of the fecundity of the process from which they originate, i.e. the dynamic (re)sequenciations. But they are so, too, because they continue to remain elementary, staying on the level of the digit, the stroke, and in particular of the seven catastrophes of differential topology: crease, fold, dovetail, butterfly wing, and the three types of umbilicus: hyperbolic, elliptic, and parabolic; or yet again on the level of the prime principles of mechanics and hydraulics. As a result, they carry everything that is primary in the anatomy and physiology of the living, as in geometry, algebra, the written character, the element, the object and the technical process, the technical gesture. By reason of this elementarity, each painting often seems to comprise as many actual or virtual signs as did the whole history of images, or even more.



Les chemins des écritures # 23, 83 x 100 cm

In as much as the stroke or the spot stay under the formation, the least digitalizable deviation suggests a new form of analogy, while all analogy keeps inducing a fresh digitalization. With, however, — as in any phenomenon that is akin to writing — a certain **predominance of the digital over the analogic**. For, while it is true that in this case there are never any departure or arrival but only relays between anterior and posterior potentialities, such relays could not be distinctly analogic, or they would give rise to narrations and descriptions, which are not to the point. Therefore, the digital initiates the first groupings, of which the still abstract dynamism suggests more concrete analogies, that are in turn again disseminated.

This gives a pictorial echo to the revolution recently brought about by biology, in the sense of Physis, or Prime Generation. Since the beginning of time, Physis had been supposed to work following imagetive copies (Yahweh makes Adam "[a] man in our image, after our likeness"), or metamorphoses, or scissiparities of the same, or detachments of the same, or reciprocal conversion (the yi of the yin/yang), in sum all sorts of processes governed by the One, and where, as a result, there is never anything more in the effect than in the cause. Such is the traditional causality, source of constant and consistent ontology and epistemology, and ultimately perceivable, in part by the creatures, and wholly by Providence, Allah, the Tao, the Dharma, the Polynesian Mana and Kamo, the Mexican Quik (thick blood). But we showed earlier that at least five characters of current living formations depart from this view. Prominent there are the **quantic effects**. Binding is replaced by **start, rerouting, triggering**. The process is never strictly plastician, i.e. made up of previously imagined continuities (plattain — to model, imagine).



Les chemins des écritures # 15, 83 x 100 cm

This is indeed what this painted writing, or rather scriptive painting makes us share. Articulation is no longer punctuation of a totality or of integrant parts, but rather emergences in **ubiquitory** overlappings, where one can no longer continuously point to an instant-point where A generates B, or where B is distinct from A. One has in mind non-commutative geometries, involving (self-)regulations of elements as much as simply elements.

6B. The color

With this in mind, color must be just as revolutionary as the drawing, since it could no longer work in contrastive layers — as in the Flemish primitives, or Piero della Francesca, or even David Hockney — nor be simply valorizing, as in De Koninck or Jasper Johns.



Les chemins des écritures # 35, 96 x 140 cm

Color must also be triggering and overlapping, working by rerouting, sequence, sequenciation, resequenciation, positive and negative reactions, feedback and feedforward. And yet, unpredictable. The expletive, "What colors", often elicited by the first contact with this form of painting is not caused by the surprise of broad differences sensed in a single view, but by the partial surprises, in leaps, in formative singularities, generative and self-generated in their leaping. Someone trying to be more specific would usually say, "And then", "Oh, and then", "Ah, and now", and the like. Color that traces and branches off, down to its science values. **Released** or else **flattened to be, in turn, generative, ultrastructural.**

Surprisingly seen in **Mexican color**, which is never that of an object, but that of some force behind, before or among objects, which are then only relays of that force.



Les chemins des écritures # 6, 100 x 120 cm

6C. Of the superimposing distribution

The more so as, in such a system, **composition** gives way to **superimposition**. All forms of arts, at all events since Çatalhöyük, until then had com-posed, i.e. put together (ponere, cum) previously defined elements in a space-time, also defined, or predefined; this derived from that structure par excellence that is the *frame*, the *framing*. Even Dubuffet, in his metamerizations of *L'Hourloupe*, knows that at one moment he will reach four edges where he will have to stop, bearing in mind that edges attract and repel, and that therefore they are the ultimate referential of the perceptivo-motor and logic-semiotic field effects of a painting.

But in our case, the edges are no longer stop lines to expansion, but **lines of reflux**. The are the ensemble of the space-time points from which the previously produced graphic and colored (re)sequenciations continue by reverting to themselves (this is what began as the copies of Saint-John Perse's *Vent* went along), in some sorts of close or distant folds, and more often distant rather than close. For each time we were given to glimpse Micheline Lo's brush strokes, they were just as leaping at a distance and in all directions as those of the Impressionists, of Bonnard, or Chagal.



Les chemins des écritures # 3, 100 x 120 cm

With this, **superimposition** itself changed its nature. In previously composed painting, Micheline Lo usually displayed changes in design, global or local. Our x-rays reveal subjects initially on the left who have moved to the right, even if the first layer was finally used as a substrate for the new. Now, in the *Chemins des écritures*, superimposition (right > left, top > bottom, above > below) is a continuation of the same design but in reverse, or retreat. It is the generalized dynamic (re)sequencing that goes on, flowing back to its previous states, thereby indexing other ultrastructures of those states. The return then multiplies on the whole the graphic and colored irruptions (suddenness, emergence), with a global prevalence of singularities over generalities, and — this needs stressing — of the digital over the analogic.

For those reasons, ultimately, the energy of the project finds its origin mainly in the dimension of depth. Painters are people of few words, but one thing Micheline Lo kept repeating was that "**it has to go on and retreat at the same time**". The pictorial cell is first circumscribed here by this pulsing. One will have understood what acrylic paint was indispensable, as it dries fast enough to allow a distinction of the layers while not excluding their conpenetrations and crossing, to lay a fresh accent on the ultrastructures.



Les chemins des écritures # 7, 100 x 120 cm

A comparison with music will be helpful here. Admittedly Bach's music is almost antipodal to the Bushy Evolution of our biologists. What mattered for a musician contemporary with Leibniz was to express the Multiple of the One while saving the One in a supreme realization, through sound, of the Western monotheistic eternity. Yet a number of Bach's counterpoints, as *Contrapunctus 8* in *Die Kunst der Fuge*, make their progression by *sound handles*, formed by a sequence of notes bunched together in chords that are more horizontal than vertical, with the end of a handle at the same time being the beginning of the next, in what could be termed **harmonic curves**, or **modal scrolls**, thereby creating a **melodic harmony** as opposed to Mozart's "accompanied melody". Now, these sound handles (Scherring would take his pulse before playing the *Grande Chaconne*) throw some lights on the **curved visual handles** that cause the pulsing of the pictorial cells of the *Chemins des écritures*. It is significant that jazz musicians in the 1960s would play Bach between their own improvisations at the Newport Festival.

6D. Cerebral landscape in motion

David Hubel tell us that he was amazed to discover, in the 1960s, that the colors, forms, and movements of the objects of our vision were carried by nervous pathways that are **distinct and nowhere totalized**. Others have investigated the selections, accentuations, and redistributions done by our visual nerve relays — ganglia, thalamus, and brain areas. In 1982, David Marr, in his work *Vision*, offered an initial computational program of the stages which retinal data, first blurred, incomplete or too complete, need to go through to finally result in a 3-dimensional "perceived", after a stage which, he said, was "2.5-dimensional".



Les chemins des écritures # 1, 100 x 120 cm

This pertains to the eternal painter whose vision, since the cave age, goes back to those moments of an object when it has not yet been fully defined but is still under cerebral construction. It may even be assumed that for any major painter Marr's computational stages have specific particularities, for example that of being slower or faster, more hesitating, more accentuated, at all events more exploratory and explorable than in the ordinary man. Yet, for the rational Occident, such stages were taken as a prerequisite, which were more or less shaded off or erased from the final result. Or they might be maintained, but in states that were at least stabilized by contours that negated perspective, as with Joan Miró, or by modulation of luminance, as with Cézanne.

In the *Chemins de écritures*, one should as far as possible move among those preliminary perceptive stages inasmuch as generation (self-generation) as such is concerned, with its ultrastructures lying beneath structures and textures. The neuronal landscape is part of the pictorial theme, as is the landscape of the living. The painting is then **genetic on two counts**: in the perceived, i.e. the living formations; and in the perception, i.e. the neuronal reticulations, with in both cases the same importance for the quantic rerouting. The notion of interface is present everywhere, in so far as there is no ontological and epistemological fracture between the perceived and the perceiving, unlike in the matter/spirit dualism. They both have the same behavior, working by releases, and by "punctuated equilibria" (S. J. Gould). They invite to reading in graphs rather than geometries as in traditional Western art, or in pulses as in traditional non-Western art.



Les chemins des écritures # 32, 100 x 120 cm

6E. From contemplation to perceptive and hermeneutic effervescence

Let us now situate this experience within that of art in general. Homo is a physical, physiological, technical and semiotic organism subjected at every instant to very diverse and heterogeneous stimuli that form as many pools of attraction that trigger, among themselves, *field effects*. As a technician and semiotician, he experiences for himself *logic-semiotic* field effects, while sharing with other animals *perceptive-motor* field effects that are fixating, kinematical, dynamic and "excited" (René Thom).



Les chemins des écritures # 51, 200 x 230 cm

While other animals have no use for "excited" field effects which would hamper their action, Homo by contrast takes pleasure in thematizing them in *rhythm*, for then they help him neutralize general functionings for a time, thus eliciting the presence (apparition, apparitionality, autostranslucency) that accompanies certain functionings. Such is the role of

euphoria induced by drink and drugs, dances as those of fakirs, the orgasmic caress and paraorgasmic experiences, certain hypnotic prayers, and chiefly *works of art* — poetry, dance, music, architecture, sculpture, painting. Craving for pure presence Homo will indulge in rhythm to ecstasy. An animal is not rhythmical, not even the ape rocking to and fro and which simply responds to a Baldwin reaction (perception >> movement >> perception).

In art, the ancient chiefly tried to be contemplative, to hold many things together, as in the sight or the unifying pathway of a temple (contemplare, templum, cum). The West sought to go from parts to wholes, with the hope of a consented rest, of a Spinozian "acquiescence" in the Whole of wholes. This was so as late as Renoir and Cézanne, and even Mondrian. The perceiving stood *in front of* the work, dominating and integrating it. But the look that meets the *Chemin des écritures* is no longer in front of anything, but is physically and cerebrally in its midst, an activity among activities, with no attempt as with DaVinci to attain the sight of the embracing God but to identify as far as can be with the Universe of which he is a state-moment.



Les chemins des écritures # 31, 100 x 120 cm

Contemplation has been replaced by mental, or rather neuronal, **effervescence**, introducing another form of the **sacred**. The ancient sacred was exemplaristic and eager for stability and the dazzle of the Eternal and the Expected. The new form of the sacred, apart from the mechanical and hydrodynamic invariants, meets infinite "singularities", an "inexhaustible alterity", a "once, never more", the "explainable only in hindsight". A *Chemin des écritures* — in that it assembles metastable states, is wrought by its ultrastructures, its (re)sequenciation reflux, its secret graphs, and its interfaces of perceiving and perceived — is the most intense and the most "Universal" brain activator that one can conceive.

Micheline Lo was very much aware of this, and on a loose sheet she noted, "*Chemin des écritures*: multiple signs in interactions launched into space-time: diverse cultures, signs of every category stored in order or disorder, embarked not on a Ship of Fools but on a voyage across the Universe where they will perhaps be deciphered and reconditioned under a new logic of which we have no premonition."



Les chemins des écritures # 52, 200 x 230 cm

Chapter 7 – THE FULFILLMENTS OF *LES CHEMINS DES ÉCRITURES*

As the subject of her work had led to so fundamental a phenomenon as the paradigms of living formations, the painter was bound never to depart from it. But what came after the *Chemins des écritures* were no mere "Variations" or even "Developments", but rather "Transformations" as understood by the older Beethoven, the one who composed the 33 *Transformationen* on a theme by Diabelli.

1997: L'astronome



L'Astronome # 2, 100 x 120 cm

Before the living formations came the stars and galaxies. It behooved a cosmogonist of our time to attempt, if only for a moment, to apprehend the sky, the origin of origins. Not to recount the stories of gods, as did the Ancient mythologists and astrologers. Nor even to savor the harmony which, as Kant saw it, confirmed the connivance between the World and the Spirit. But sufficiently to alarm oneself at the preformations before any formation.

We tend to believe that, from the start of our universe, there were not forms, nor even atoms, but as yet unqualified Energy. The question since the year 2000 (Rees, Weinberg, 2000) has been whether our Universe would not be simply a specific solution to a Multiverse, for example with respect to the speed of light, the charge of an electron, etc., which as a result would cease to be universal **constants** *sensu stricto*.

How can a cosmogonist echo those moments so distant from our own bodies, even though we have known since 1963 that they move within an isotropic radiation of 2.7°K, fossil of the big bang? Indeed, as a master of perceptive-motor and logic-semiotic field effects, every painter is akin to the heroes of today's cosmic tragedy whose names are Collisions, Fusions, Fissions, Ejections, Annihilations, Dilations, Expansions, General Entropy, and Partial Negentropies, states that are close to and distant from the Equilibrium, not forgetting those Singularities which Stephen Hawking called points of space-time where the curve of space-time becomes infinite.

The painter is not lost for words before the eternal silence of those infinites spaces that so frightened Pascal, on condition that the perceiving cerebral landscape take precedence over the perceived landscape. As a result, paintings on that subject could not be titled "The Sky", nor even "Astronomy", but simply and exactly L'Astronome (The Astronomer). Each painting propounds protoperceptions, something of the "2.5-dimension" according to David Marr (see above), and recalling Malevitch for whom speeds, because they keep being so fast, end up being immobile.

1998: Les traités de paix



Traité de paix # 2, 100 x 140 cm

On the other hand, one does not get involved in Self-generation of the living, and then in that of the Universe, without realizing that any generation means the existence of Conflict, that War which Heraclitus called "the father of all things", or recalling that conflicts are resolved through transient compromises that are the metastable moments (Simondon) of the compatibilizing Evolution of rocks, plants, animals, tools, and signs. In sum, in the beginning of the beginnings there are The Conflict and The Pact. The *Traité de paix* were probably the most liberated creations of Micheline Lo, who no longer needed be concerned with any particular circumstance. She was then open to pure contrasts, unifications, numerations, topologies, i.e. the pleasure of painting almost without any program, and an acquiescence to the basal movement of things.

As she was deeply troubled by the predicament of Palestine, she painted about ten *Traité de Guerre* which she ended up destroying because the subject was either not suited to a painter of generations, or was too narrowly historic to lend itself to cosmogonic intentions. Or

perhaps the *Traités de paix* were comprehensive enough to have included, besides the Pact, the essential moves of the *Traités de guerre* which were thus deprived of their proper substance.

1998-1999: Le bestiaire



Bestiaire, Jaguar, 100 x 120 cm

A modern-day Bestiary is not an Atlas of zoology, but an array of animal figures on which both author and viewer have asked the following questions:

- (a) What are the topologies, mechanics, and hydromechanics according to which living formations, within a given environment, can develop anatomies and physiologies that are sufficiently stable to constitute relatively viable, recognizable, and reproducible species?
- (b) Each species formation is a manner of practically distributing a portion of a World-around, an *Umwelt* (von Uexkuhl). In brain-endowed living organisms, such distribution involved a perception. How do the Whale and the Jaguar perceive their "outer world", their *Umwelt*?
- (c) Can it be possible for us, endowed with our own anatomies and brains, to share in other anatomies and brains? To what extent do we communicate with an *arboreal monkey living with its head down*? The German painter Bazelitiz has shown paintings upside down, which offers us, erect primates, and inverted display. Yet, the arboreal monkey for which the head-down position is natural is not inverted but inverts the viewer, relativizing his or her erect position as a system of reference. The *Bestiaire* thus opens polytopic logics (Bourne, Lavendhomme) for viewers previously made aware by the *Chemin des écritures* that perceptions are partly n-dimensional.



Bestiaire, Singe renversé, 100 x 120 cm

(d) On a more anthropogenic plane, what are the "outer worlds" (*Umwelt*) that are not constructed by the angularization, orthogonalization, transversalization, referentiality, and holosomy of Homo, who lives in a *Welt* and just a *Welt*, i.e. an *Umwelt* that is both closed and open by a horizon. Each painting in the *Bestiaire* proclaims the contrast between the animal conscience and the human conscience, as in Rilke's eighth *Duineser Elegien*:

"If there was consciousness like ours
in the sure creature, that moves towards us
on a different track – it would drag us
round in its wake. But its own being
is boundless, unfathomable, and without a view
of its condition, pure as its outward gaze.
And where we see future it sees everything,
and itself in everything, and is healed for ever."
(Translation: A. S. Kline)

(e) Micheline Lo's *Bestiaire* is amazement and admiration before the existential singularities of animal species, a collection of objective interfaces that activate our subjective interfaces, produces a brain effervescence that is admittedly less general than with the *Chemin des écritures*, though it is perhaps more intimately mutational.

1999: Mousiqqa



Mousiqqa # 5, 100 x 120 cm

Arabic music, among the array of traditional music, clearly heralds today's music of the living formations. Its sequence is ostensible, because of its restricted scale. It is highly resequentiating, by impatience or by encounter, to the point of reaching paraorgasmic stridencies, giving rise not only to variations but transformations (Oum Kalsoum has up to thirty in one single evening). Here, too, analogies are generated by rerouting of digitalities (for which nomadic people have a propensity, according to some). The musical phrase is not first and foremost a general intent that would generate parts, but rather random events, hazards *sensu stricto*, where aims, should they emerge, are transitory. Arabic music is noted with dots, lines, and ties, a boon for the painter of the *Chemin des écritures*.

This time, the painter no longer sought those immanences but rather the instants when, while structures and textures are still palpable, the ultrastructures of stridency turn immanence into transcendence, when *saltana* gives rise to tarab, sheer intensity of a cry in which everything that has been placed is at once undone. On the pictorial plane, only the green-yellow, that optical center which is prerequisite to the rhetoric of color complementarities, can sustain such ecstasies. It is the color of Islam, religion of non-mediatability transcendence, which was ostracized by Mondrian. Should green-yellow, then, have covered practically the whole canvas? What we learn from Arabic music is that transcendence can be aimed at only by an inversion of immanences. Here, with respect to color, pink and blue; and with respect to trait, a few ties.

This suite of paintings is a good opportunity to mention Micheline Lo's relationship to music. She played classical music on sight, but rarely except for Scarlatti. She never listened to music while she painted, but she almost always had some sequential music background when she read, as the *Chansons à penser africaines*, or Lightning's country music. She liked listening to music in loop, and her piano improvisations were comparable to the neuronal experimentation of *Flexte*.

1999-2000: Les Caméléons



Caméléons # 7, 83 x 100 cm

Caméléons # 13, 83 x 100 cm

*Mousiq*a was the beyond of all painting, while the *Caméléons* are the natural object of this type of painting. They *are* transformation, (re)sequenciation, ultrastructures, encounter between an external and an internal environment, interfaces of inside/outside as focal points of individuation, confusion between perceived and perceiving, perception not from the outside, as a mere cutout, but from the inside. The viewer-contemplator intending to remain *before* the painting, is first and foremost *inside, polytopical*. Those familiar with the work often said that if one had to capsulize this type of painting in an image, a chameleon would exactly do the work.

2000: *Les Mains*



Mains # 2, 83 x 100 cm cm

Mains # 10, 83 x 100 cm

Certain cosmologists, as Lachière-Ray, would faint repeat that they should be able to explain themselves using their hands only. This is all the more true for cosmogonists, which may explain the number of hand prints left by Homo on painted rock walls more than thirty thousand years ago.

The hands best sum up the technical and artistic gesture of Homo, the angularizing, orthogonalizing, transversalizing, and exchanging primate. They are perceiving and perceived, subjects and objects, sources of analogies as modeling, smoothing, planishing palms; and of digitality as fingers, the first abacus. Panoply of index finger (Zeigefinger) that designates, by contact or from a distance, equally well the edible prey (here, now) and the contemplable power and justice (elsewhere, some day).

Micheline Lo's *Les Mains* were those that painted-and-wrote the *Chemins des écritures*, more abstract than concrete, and more distancing than bringing closer. For them, digitality foments analogy, more often than the reverse, and the impatience of the organ creates the purpose more than it obeys it.

2001: Les migrations

It has been shown that, in this approach, the frame is a levee against reflux, from which (re)sequenciations flow back onto the whole surface in superimpositions. Yet, with this in mind, something is missing from those living formations, that is, the movement that causes one generation to give way to the one that follows, just as it ousted the one that came before, so that the living is never more than a relay in sequences of one-and-nevermore.

The painter therefore was bound to use the frame, if only in a few of her paintings, as a relay to show the beyond as much as the within, something the frame could not of itself indicate and that supposes that the framed events should present themselves as *Migrations*. We would still have living formations, but characterized by an availability to deletion, more prone to disappearance than to fecundity, and in a pictorial option highly suggestive to designatory *Mains*, always elsewhere than where they are.



Migrations # 1, 100 x 100 cm

It is quite possible that this was prompted by circumstances of the painter's life. In October 2000, her breast cancer that in the past seven years had responded to moderate therapy now required a monthly, and then weekly dose of chemotherapy, and the end of life was no longer a vague and common point in time. Any individuation thus became a temporary loop among much vaster migrations.

2001: Quetzalcoatl



Quetzalcoatl # 1, 100 x 100 cm

The Mexican god Quetzalcoatl was eminently suited to that state of mind. Both the god's name and image attest to the meeting of the Serpent and the Eagle in an embrace, but also devouring each other, at least potentially, while the Owl looks on, with the unflinching eyes of Destiny. Quetzalcoatl, at the same time benevolent and cruel, is the total sum of the divine, the thick blood — the "quik" of Popol Vuh — that circulates between the superior, the terrestrial, and the underworld, merging the viewer and the viewed in one same orgasmic ecstasy of Maya and Aztec sacrifices.

Quetzalcoatl was all the more relevant to this painting as the god's figure, being Amerindian, is both written and writing. It is a sequence of squares, rhombuses, rings, and feathers, punctuated by pulsing tropical colors, causing both forms and substance to pulse, so that "it advances and retreats at the same time." More than with any of the Western gods, it wavers between the analogic and the digital, and musters (re)sequenciation as a general polymerization of rocks, animals, men, and gods. There, any purpose, as it emerges, has already disappeared in the jungle of the means, each head — animal or human — still embedded in the ancestor's head, even then embedding that of the child, reminiscent of the Olmec. Or again, confusing the front of its face-to-face with that of the other's face-to-face, since Chavín de Huantar. Where skin has the quality of bone, and bone that of skin. As in the *Bestiaire*.

2001: Les esprits du vin



Esprits du vin # 2, 83 x 100 cm

The moment of the final departure was drawing near, and wine — with its spirits — lends itself to a farewell. Its hundreds of chemical compounds, its ostensible maturation, its palpable merging of the four elements of Empedocles: Earth (terroir), Water (liquid), Air (oxygen), and Fire (alcohol) make wine a popular cosmogony, mingling the physical, the technical and the symbolic, offering a daily opportunity to activate, soak, and glimpse the cerebral landscape. Since the time of *Flexte*, the painter of the *Chemins des écritures* had fused the image of the liquor and the discourse held on its subject.

This was an ultimate manner of causing the analogic and the digital to trigger each other, and above all of weaving together conscience and un-conscience. To someone who remarked that while the project was exciting but impossible, she replied, "I paint only that which is impossible".

She painted twelve *Esprits du vin* (six "reds", and six "whites") during the grape harvest near the *Route des Vins* which in Provence goes from her own town, Nyons, to the city of Orange. Among the innumerable wine qualifiers, those she chose almost suggest some self-portrait. The reds conjured up aromas of fruit, coffee, black currant, cocoa, hyacinth, clove, cinnamon, prune, iris, fig, banana, violet, plum, peach, resin, or linden blossom; they were tender, full-bodied, robust, spicy, heady, deep, complete, seductive, elegant, thick. The whites had flavors suggestive of flowers, vanilla, honey, spices, curry, almond, green apple; they were aromatic, exotic, intimate, crisp, cool, tart, vigorous, sprightly, slightly astringent, tempered, enhanced, mellow, charming, scented, youthful.



Signature

Micheline Lo always stressed the role of an artist's nervous system in his or her production, so that we cannot write about her without alluding to her complexion. A born left-handed, she was forcibly taught to use her write hand, which — it is now believed — sometimes favors intense perceptions of dimensions that remain recondite in space and even perhaps in space-time, as witnessed by DaVinci and many sculptors.

Our perceptive systems are twofold: in one, the objects in our environment are apprehended on a median definition, with tempered field effects, affording a smooth perception, as of ensembles; in the other, perceptions are fixative-fixed, which means the objects are perceived with such a projection of their field effects that they function both as viewed and viewing. A perfect example is the main character in Robbe-Grillet's *Voyeur*: the sight of the girl on the balustrade and of a rope folded on the ground, means that the girl has already been strangled. Micheline Lo curiously combined those two regimes of perception, as she almost always lived in the perception that was the most reasonable and balanced, the most objectivating and veridical, the most direct. Yet, at times, this was broken by exogenous, fulgurous, or disruptive perceptions. In both cases, in a straight manner and in full view.

Her painting probably required this mixture of objectivity and violence, both almost absolute, and the crossing of the two enabled her, in her day to day life, to dispense with any deliberation, causing her decisions to be immediately pertinent. And when she walked into her workroom, it was with a combination of relaxation and concentration, the possible and the impossible.

This fails to explain the immensity of the "figures" of Salammbô, of the bandits of Jean Genet, of the conquistadors of the *Terra Nostra*, of the men born Cordillera and Amazonia in *Cien años de soledad*. Nor the generative densities of the *Chemins des Ecritures* and the *Bestaire*. Even less *L'Astronome*, which was placed at the head of her coffin before her cremation. But this perhaps will help understand that nothing should be taken for granted, even here.

Some have marveled at the clearness, even the ostentation, of Micheline Lo's signature and dating on her paintings. This is because the artist's brain is of the same nature as the painting: he or she paints states-moments of the Universe, once and nevermore. Each of the pictorial action is therefore also a state-moment of the Universe, once and nevermore. It is radically dated and situated. For humility, and for admiration.

Henri Van Lier

Translated by Peter John