



fig. 15
Cover Chapter Three: Excursus,
oil, acrylic and ink on wood,
2010,
40 x 27.5 cm / 16 in x 11 in

CHAPTER THREE

Excursus

Take an earful from me once, go with me on a hike
 Along sand stretches on the great inland sea here
 And while the eastern breeze blows on us and the restless surge
 Of the lake waves on the breakwater breaks with an ever fresh monotone,
 Let us ask ourselves: What is truth? what do you or I know?
 How much do the wisest of the world's men know about where the massed human
 procession is going?
 —Carl Sandburg¹

Hiking and Thinking

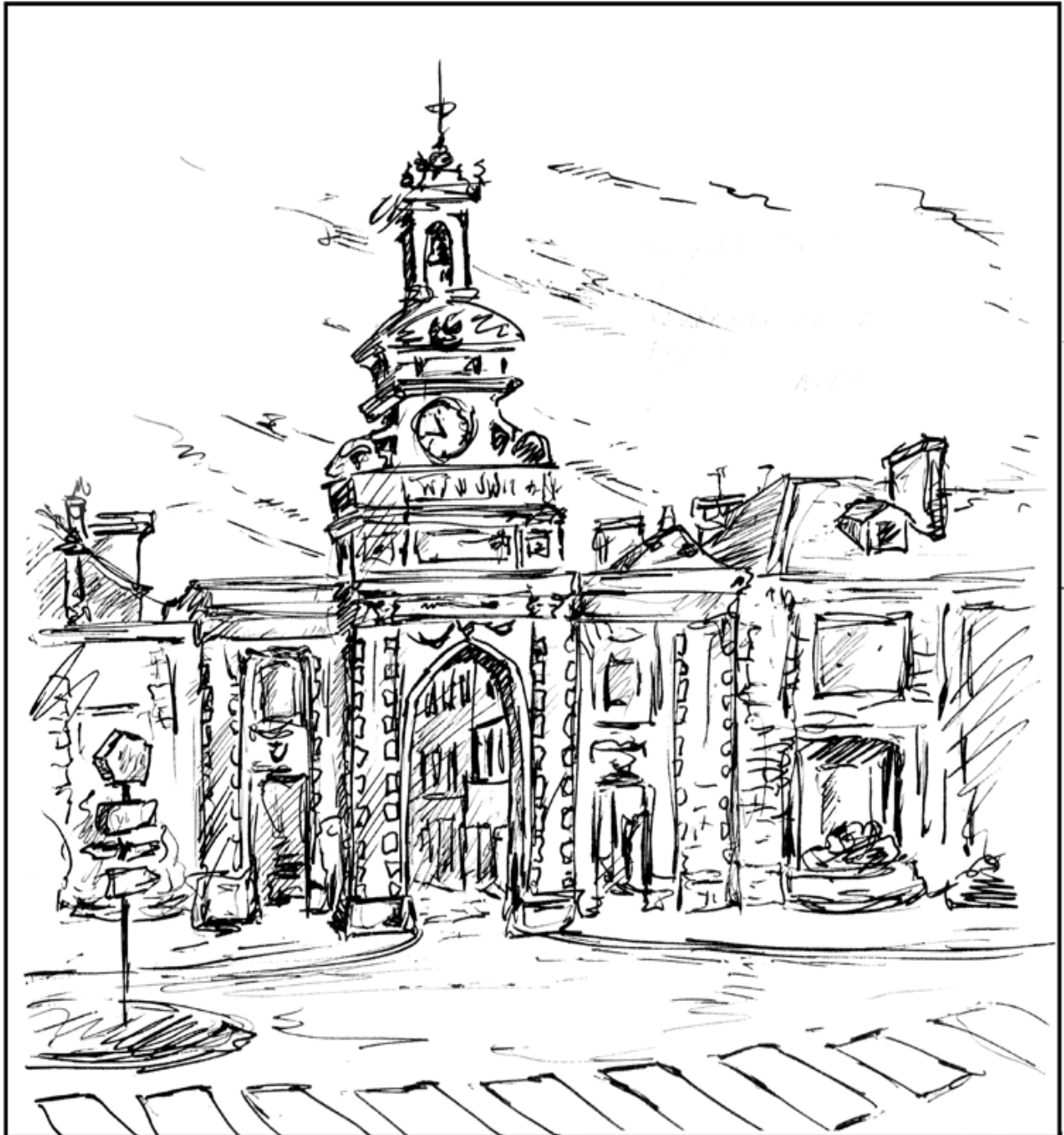
Each of the chapters in this dissertation ends with a short comic as personal commentary; in this chapter, the illustrated, sequential form takes center stage. I have long had the desire to do an extended comic sequence of one of our *Wanderferien*, the hiking vacations my wife Cornelia and I do with our dogs. We not only appreciate the sites and exercise (enduring the physical ordeal is harder for me as I am less fit than Cornelia and the dogs who regularly do dog sport training such as Agility), but also discuss projects and ideas of ours. This was the perfect opportunity, as Cornelia and I along with our young dog River decided to hike a section of the ancient Via Francigena from Pontarlier, in the Franche-Comté region in eastern France, to the town of Vevey in Switzerland, in the canton Vaud, on the north shore of Lake Geneva. We planned ten days on this section of the ancient road between Canterbury, England and Rome. It began as a Roman road and in mediaeval times was an important pilgrimage route. I was at a point in my dissertation where, after the presentation of the central aspects of my theory of central trope, I was about to apply it to my own artwork. This was an idea of Professor Ursprung's with which Professor Langlotz was very much in agreement. I was a bit reticent, as I generally abhor most so-called artist's statements and the like. Perhaps it is partially the fear of nailing myself down, as changeability has always been very important to me in my art. Also at this time, I was offered the motivating opportunity to do one of the largest "Panels" painting-installations that I had ever done. It was to be made and presented in an exhibition in an unused ex-fabric-dyeing factory in Switzerland, now an art center. I realized this was my chance to ruminate on the application of metaphor(m) theory to my work, followed by concretizing that thought process in a substantial piece of art, a challenge I could not resist. This chapter is the sequential representation of our journey and my internal and external dialogues. The painting-installation that resulted from this is presented in a following chapter.

¹ Carl Sandburg, "On the Way," *Chicago Poems* (New York: Dover, 1994; original New York, Henry Holt, 1916), p. 26.

EXCURSUS

We started from a hotel near one of the city gates of Pontarlier.

Walking through the gate as we began our journey — and as I began my ruminations — felt symbolic, if unplanned. As my friend the author Daniel F. Ammann would say, "No one would believe this in a novel."





Along the way we went by La Cluse, a cleft in the mountain chain, with a castle fortress on the peak of each side. They originally controlled the traffic between the Duchy of Burgundy and the region of Vaud, now in Switzerland, but then belonging to the counts of Savoy. They appeared to me to be like a positive, affirmative pairing, more Cosmas and Damian than Scylla and Charybdis; echoing the condition of doubling that I feel is a part of my own metaphor(m).



My current form of art has to do with the convergence of sign-painting and comics with "fine art" painting and installation. Sign-painting techniques are a love I acquired from my father; sequential images I became enamored with chiefly through famed artist Gene Colan's fluid and unusual style of comic art (he later became my mentor). A dash of display art, which both my father and mother also did, certainly primed me for installation as well. BUT metaphor(m), according to my theory, has to be broader in one's oeuvre and more concretely specific, to be the integer of insight and tool I envision it to be. So what is mine? This is what I decided to contemplate on our journey.



I frequently was a bit behind Cornelia and River, being less fit! So this is a sight I saw often.

The first day and evening I was much too exhausted, my muscles ached and my feet were tormenting me. So, I didn't do much thinking about my theory!

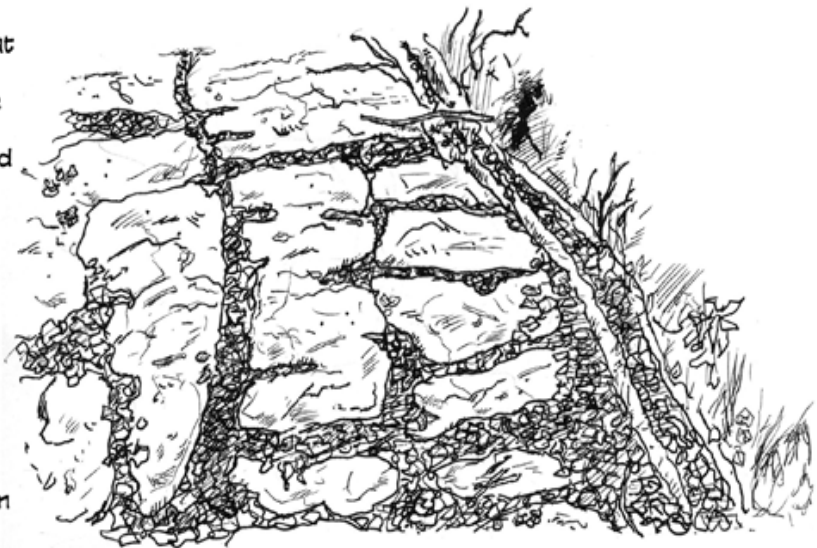


We stayed overnight in St. Croix. We set off the next day, still stiff but refreshed. Along the way, we went through some delightful and varied stretches of path: forest, open fields, sunlight, shadow. Many fallen and falling leaves. I decided to use images of falling leaves in the sequential panels of my installation.

The via Francigena, is still now relatively unknown and unused in comparison with the St James Way, which means that travelling along it can be arduous, but in many ways more enjoyable. It was also known at various times as the Iter Francorum, Chemin des Anglois, Chemin Romieux and others.

The first part of this route was created by the Emperor Claudius to connect Rome with the then new province of Britannia. In 990AD the Archbishop of Canterbury, Sigeric the Serious, traveled the via Francigena to receive his pallium from the Pope. It is also part of this route that Chaucer's characters travel in the Canterbury Tales.

One marvelous discovery we made that second day was the remnants of the "Salt Trail," another subsection of the Via Francigena. The road served the ancient transport of salt. Until the end of the 18th Century, wagons had no brakes to stop them on this steep, rocky path. They could only block wheels with chains and drag the wagons into the valley. The Lords de Grandson, who ruled the area, had deep grooves carved to serve as wheel ruts. We saw these clearly, often filled with fallen leaves. The amount of labor that went into them was obvious, probably carried out by artisans who were not much more than servants.



It shows how not doing your own work can even lead to the stultification of inventiveness. I'll bet if Lord de Grandson would have had to carve them himself, brakes would have been invented much earlier.



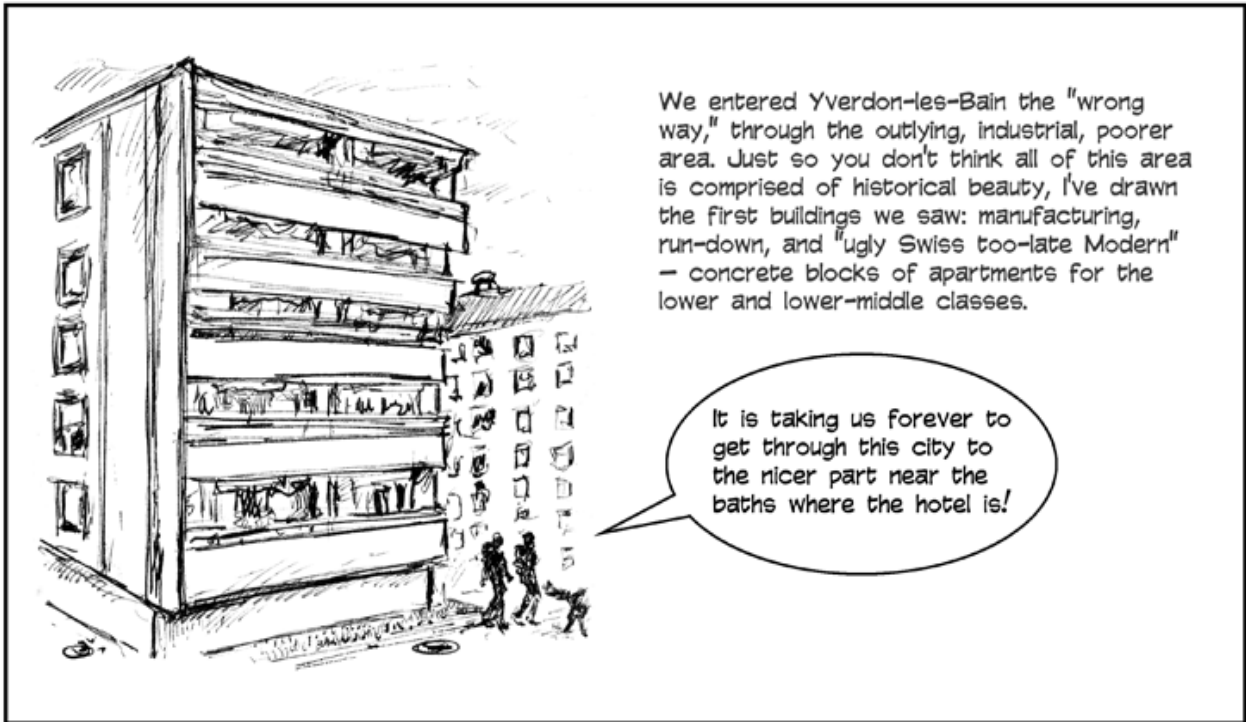
Claudius



Sigeric



Geoffrey Chaucer



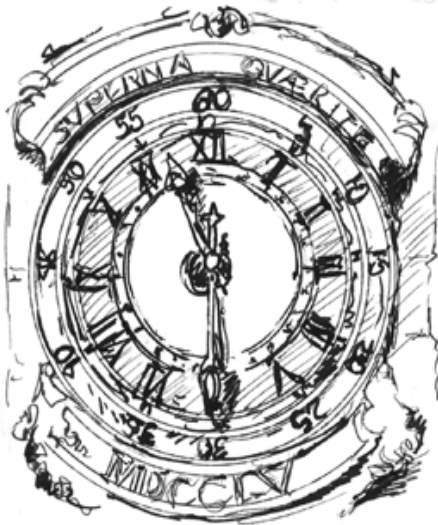
I am using waaay too many words for a good comic. And ones that sometimes mirror the images. So my chapter is somewhere between a true comic and a sequentially illustrated journal. But that may be the necessary nature of this endeavor, in order to cover much ground quickly.



(Silhouettes with apologies to Carmine Infantino.)

The next day we took a break and wandered the streets a bit.

The church, called "The Temple."



Inscription on clock
"SVPERNA QVÆRITE":
"Seek Things Above."

In the Maison d'Ailleurs there is a Musée de la Science-Fiction, de l'utopie et des voyages extraordinaires (Museum of Science Fiction Utopia and Extraordinary Journeys), with a Jules Verne exhibition.



And a surprising show of the illustrational art of Mervyn Peake, now mostly known as an author. In particular, his darker works were incredible. I enjoyed his preliminary and preparatory studies most.

We also took River to the lake.



Where there were many ducks, diving birds we call Taucherli in Swissgerman (Bläsrallen, Coots, Fulica atra), a swan and a feather floating on the water.

What about your
Metaphor(m)? –
And why don't you put more
of the verbiage in word
balloons?

Suggests Cornelia in a
combination of Swissgerman
and English, our typical mix.



I psychologically resisted applying my theory to myself, as I stated. I suppose this was due to the standard antagonism artists have to being delimited by words. Even our own. Also, I have always loathed the now-prevalent "artists' statements" which we are all forced into writing, particularly in the US. I find most to be generally boring, academicist attempts to manipulate viewers or to clothe art in quasi-intellectual jargon. On the other hand, a small number are created in opposition to this and present coyly mannerist, "cutesy" jokes or the like. So I was afraid of navel-gazing or reactionary irony.

Nevertheless, when Professor Ursprung suggested it and Professor Langlotz supported the idea, I reconsidered. They inspired me to attempt it. Did Sigmund Freud ever analyze himself? There are claims that he resolutely refused to do this, or that he did so and failed, yet there is no scholarship to prove either allegation. Theorist, theorize thyself. It is true that if I feel my idea embraces all artists, then it must extend to me as well.

I went through this difficult analytical process while hiking the route in this comic. The process and result are described here. It is then concretized in the *Panels* painting-installation presented in the following chapter.

I knew a few basics about my current struggles in art, but wanted to both specify and expand my understanding to include my entire mature body of work from about 1979 until now, which includes roughly ten groups of artworks thus far.

The following is one big thought balloon.

Before we went hiking, I had several important dialogues, in order to give me the food for thought I needed for our hike. First, my wife, being a management consultant and business coach, had some suggestions. We did a brainstorming session with all my ideas about my art, foundational cognitive metaphors, and so on.



We wrote these on Post-its and arranged and rearranged and rearranged them on a flip chart.

I tried to perceive some order and discussed the results of that session with two close friends of mine who have known and been involved with most of my art for years.



I did this by email with Prof. Th. Emil Homerin, PhD, who has been my best-friend for years, as we declared in 5th grade in 1965. He lives in Rochester, New York. A scholar of religious studies, poetry, Arabic literature, mysticism, art and literature in general. He has participated in my whole development, has a collection of my art, has written about it and collaborated with me in art projects.



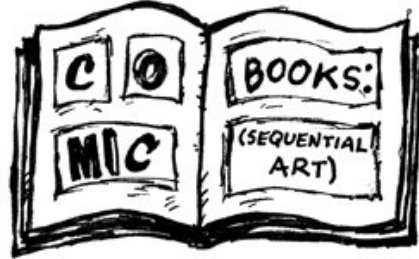
I also discussed metaphor(m)'s bearing on my art with Daniel F. Ammann, PhD in his home in St Gallen, Switzerland. He is my closest friend in Europe and is an author, scholar of English literature, German-language literature, and literary theory. He has written about my art and has also collaborated with me on art projects.

Then I contemplated all that while hiking.

I knew that my current work combines the influences of



(with its necessarily exhibitional/
presentational/ installational aspect)



But what are the processes, conceptions and key formal element(s) I use metaphorically in my work – ones which, most importantly, were also present in my previous work such as ...



The Conceptual
Performance Art
pieces ...



Their accompanying
"Certificate Paintings" ...

These were the genuine beginning of my "resolute" art vocation (not purely student works, although I still did those and was still in the university). From 1977 till 1979. In these I felt my calling. The first was even titled *Hiding/Starting*. I concentrated on concretizing personally tropaic images through actions, using them in paintings, beginning to slowly assemble my own vocabulary.

My favorite is *Will to Form / Will to Inform*, wherein my father hand-lettered those words in various styles on stretched canvases in a museum.

The "Distances Between" Installations,
videos and 2D works...



... were from 1979 through 1981, although I continued to use the ideas behind that phrase and these works for many years afterwards, even today (as well as symbols, images and metaphors from the performance artworks before them). (And where I began to have soundtrack music for my installations, often with Matthew Swyers.) They segued directly into the following "+Art" or "Stations" works.



The Mail Art works and the paintings (primarily those for Egypt), performances (done in collaboration with Th. Emil Homerin and Nora Walter) and installations resulting from them – roughly 1980 to 1984 – can be seen either as an experimental parallel "aside" (a habit of mine), or as a contextually specific combination of the two previous groups of work...



OPUS 3: SHAPE OF THE DISTANCE BETWEEN THE SPHINX' PAWS. First body length marked.



The "Stations" installations, paintings and performances went for a comparatively long time, overlapping other groups of works as well, from 1980 to 1986. The most successful one was probably +Art 3 in Rawspace in Chicago with music by Roar Schaad and a month-long performance by me; most extensive was the last one with 12-channel music by Kyle Gann in its own space as part of a "Kunsthalle" in Chicago. There were many. This is where the 'painting-installation' became crystallized and the performance aspect vanished (to reappear later in my instructional work and performative lectures). First huge paintings as well.

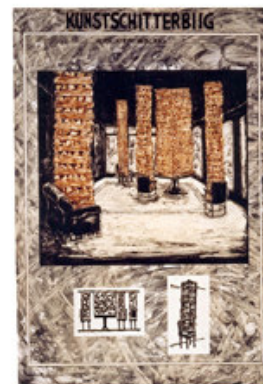


The "Staff 'n' Eddie" collaborations with Jeff Hoke were short-lived, 1983, but important. Highly critical and yet humorous works in many media.



Our "attitude" has reappeared in my analytical, critical and polemical articles, art-political cartoons, etc., such as at Sharkforum later.

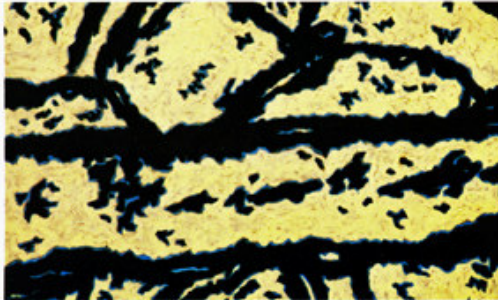
The "Museum Works" ran from 1986 or 87 to 1991, if the "Kunstschitterbiige" and "Ausgefüllte Formulare" are included, and I felt them all to be linked at the time. These were highly influenced by my work as a diorama builder and exhibition builder at the Field Museum of Natural History (and Anthropology). In these I began to really hone in on my central trope, I now see in retrospect. Important discoveries for me were the attempt to focus on the relativity of culture and of truth, yet in an anti-nihilistic way.



Seeds of my later work are all clearly present in these - along with the further concentration on painting as a "great absorber" or installation, conceptual art, popular, fine and scientific culture and more. Collaborations with Daniel F. Ammann started as well.

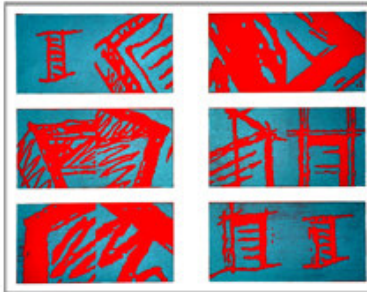
My following rejection of overt Conceptualism came as I witnessed it turning into Neo-Conceptualism and the hegemonic academy. I moved to Switzerland as, following my soon-to-be wife Cornelia. I began to develop my current combination of so-called popular, or vernacular, artforms from my life and fine-art painting and installation – still intellectual, but jettisoning vestiges of Duchampian forms and investing in the range of knowledge and experiences that had contributed to the shaping of my own mind. Forms for which I had paid my dues in life.

This began first with "Metonymic Paintings" ...



Which Ammann described thus: "In this series, interference, 'noise', mistakes or irregularities only become apparent through a 'microscopy' technique. What we perceive as perfect contours on a painting prove to be far more complex in fractal magnification, dissolving and simultaneously resolving themselves in that the broken-down details in close-up or zoom allow new structures to originate."

They were usually from my own studies of comics and sign-painting images. "Context was even in the details," as Homerin said.



I had a mini-retrospective of my art in the University of Rochester New York in 1992. The "Metonymic Works" also included all the paintings and temporary wall painting installations I did when Cornelia and I lived on the island of Tortola in the British Virgin Islands in the Caribbean, which was very influential on me. Back in Europe after a year, there were also lithography, installations, drawings and Kunst-am-Bau art-in-architecture works, publication pieces and an extensive litho leporello book with Ammann *Das Auge der Verfolgung*, but mostly paintings.

Many many many exhibitions including a show in Paris with music composer Duncan Youngerman. The first appearance of my art on the cover of an international art magazine. Much else. This series lasted from 1992 till 2001, when the works evolved slowly into the next phase, as first seen in a show at the Art Museum of Thurgau.

These became sequential ...



... and installational, as they transformed into the "Panels Painting-Installations." These installations consist of groups of paintings with additional painting directly on the wall, all of which combine to create several huge, walk-in, "readably" sequential "comic pages." The idea of "panels" resonates with the small framed areas in comics, as well as portable panel paintings, or panel-segments of a fresco.

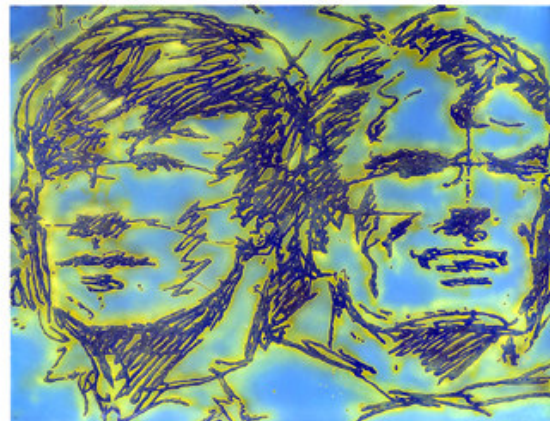


The "Covers" works joined them: paintings which recognizably utilize the structure of comic-book covers (thus also showcard sign-painting), with title, bold lettering, price, date, numbering, image and so on.

In them I engage these forms as an inherited yet incomplete grammar, coaxing it to proclaim celebrations and complaints, desires and critical thoughts. The paintings are usually exhibited in groups as installations in spinner racks and the like. ...



The "Panels" and "Covers" are frequently united in single installations. Ever more aggressively mongrel.



They have recently begun to merge, while also bearing ever more clearly representational images. ...



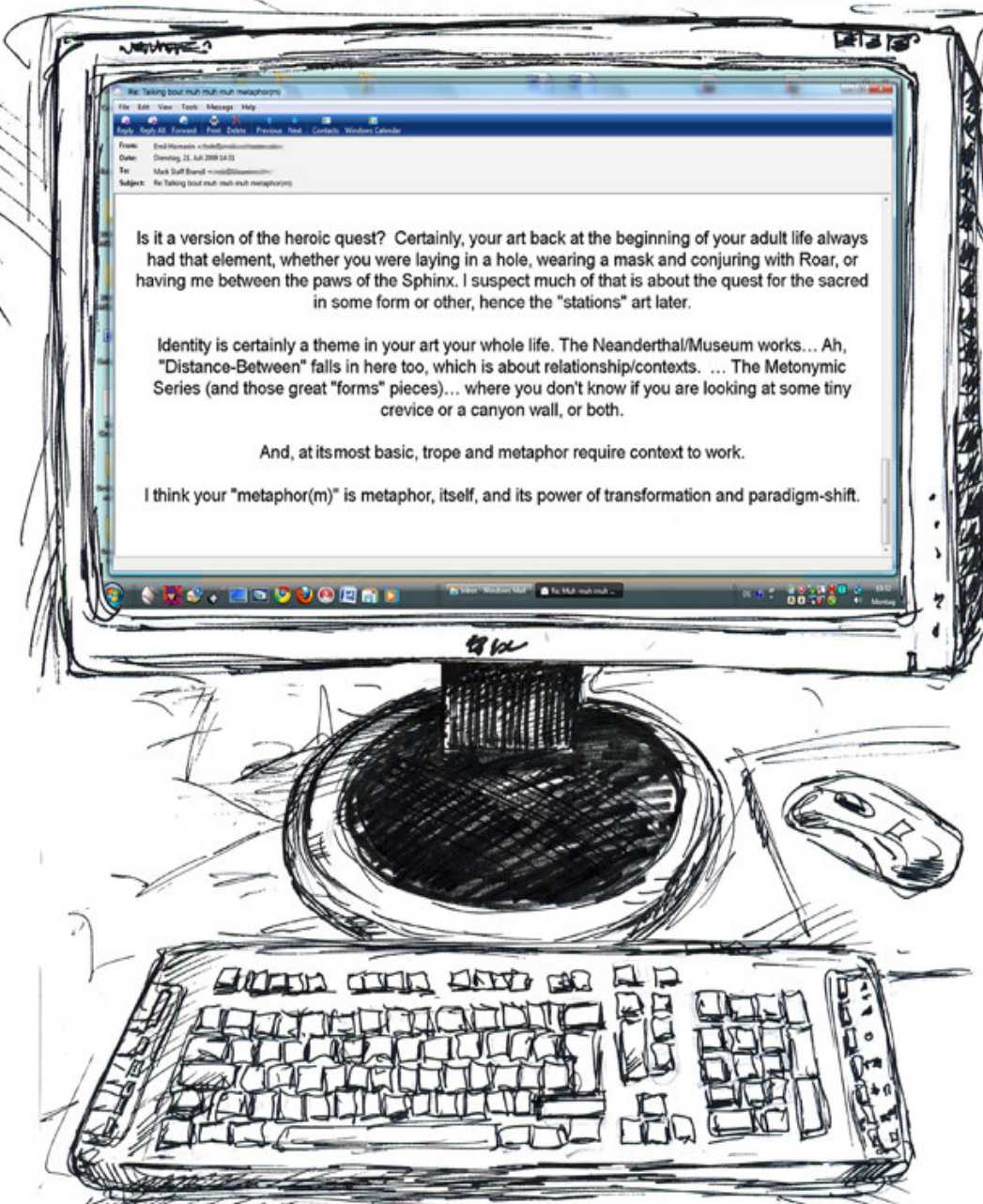
So — after this Cliff Notes version of my career — what is "der rote Faden," the common thread running metaphor(m)ally through all this?

As we hiked, I pursued this in my mind. I went back to trying out my theory on various artists and authors, contemporary and of the past. I realized that discovering creators' central tropes takes much time: it is not a one-liner, rather a condensation of much reflection and knowledge of their works.

In the smattering of example-subjects I tackled, those in the Modernist period worked most expediently. Pre-Modernist artists from the Renaissance to Impressionism were also relatively straightforward. Earlier than that, metaphor(m) appears to also work, yet the central tropes appear to be wider, more generally shared across communities. In Postmodernism, and the unnamed works that are now appearing which seem to be post-postmodern, a certain self-reflexive convolution complicates the analysis, markedly more so than in Modernism, which began the notion of foregrounding the processes of signification. This may be the nature of the beast now. I will have to compare this to artworks from earlier transitional periods in the future.

Indeed, I suspected that my own metaphor(m) exhibited this trait.

Tom (which I still call Emil Homerin, his childhood nickname), started me on this train of thought. He had several insights in his email dialogues with me. The most pregnant one being ...



Dani, (Ammann's nickname), supplied a supplementary key observation – that his version of the concept of "format" fit my work to a T.

I have already described Dani's inventive theory of format in an earlier chapter. I had, however, never thought to apply it to me! He proposed that my artworks were concerned with transformation, as Tom observed, and added the thought that they are transformative convergences – and convergences of formats.

The accuracy of these estimations struck me as we hiked. It hit me: my work on this dissertation on cognitive metaphor theory and art is itself a synecdoche of my own agon of discovering and creating a central trope! I am so deep in the middle of it, and of my own art, to never have seen that before.

I sketched a few notes and applied them to my metaphor(m) chart.

A vital foundation metaphor in my approach is that "UNDERSTANDING IS CONSTRUCTING A PICTURE." This is related to "IDEAS ARE CONSTRUCTED OBJECTS." Important related metaphors being "Mind is a Builder" and "Think is Forming," as well as a conception that "causes that result in change are central," from the metaphor "CAUSES ARE FORCES." (See Berkeley's Master Metaphor List.)

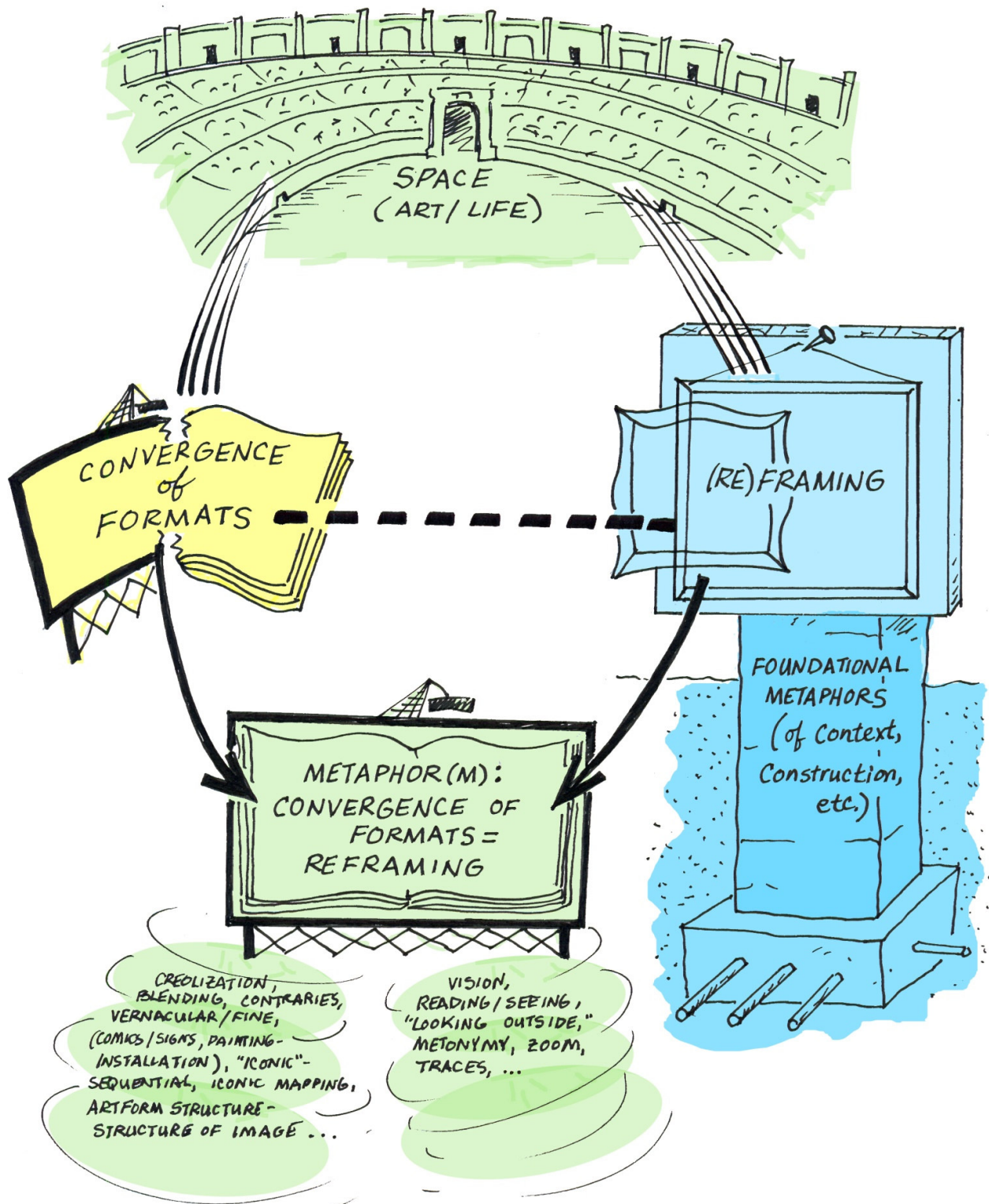
I could sum up my approach, or belief perhaps, as "Art is the process of transforming personal experience by changing metaphors (paradigm shift)."

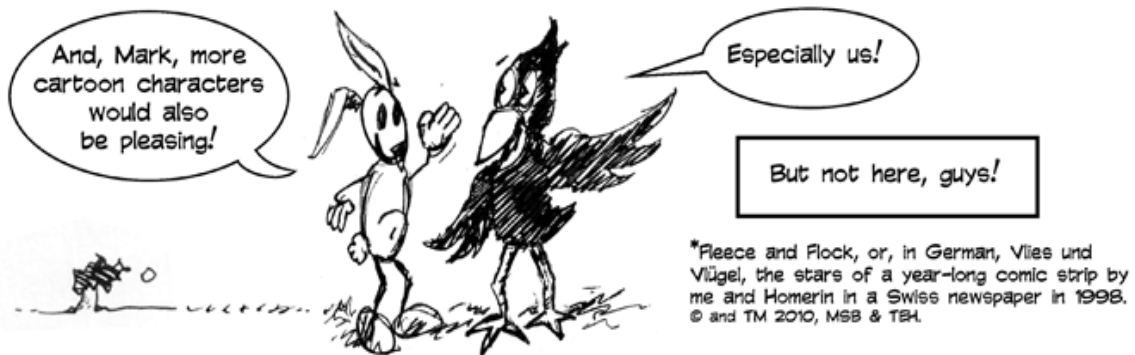
One equation being "visual transformation = metaphoric transformation."

Now – End of the thought balloons, the chart follows and then back to pictures and hiking!



fig. 15
The Chart of the Author's Metaphor(m)





The next day we hiked from Yverdon-les-Bain to Orbe. There were some parts that would have been beautiful — except we had to walk 7 hours in steady rain!

It rained...



And rained...



And rained.



Along the way, pausing for lunch under a tree, we saw one of the ubiquitous half-hidden Swiss army posts.



They look very different, one from another, but always suggest Romantic ruins of Land Art projects to me.

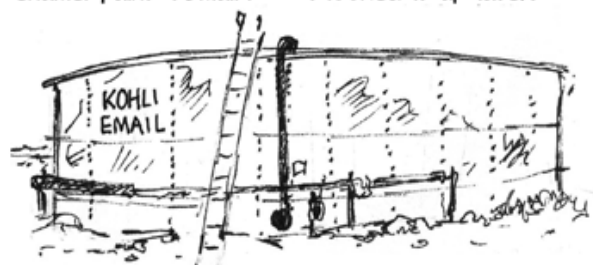
But always great cows, too, right?



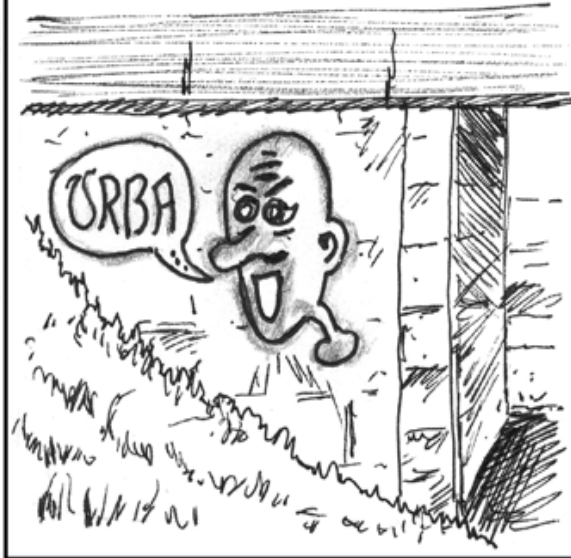
With the Neo-Liberalization (supply-side Reaganomics for you Americans) of our economy, this sign we saw tacked to a barn expressed my thoughts too.



We saw two of these huge containers marked "Kohli Email." We wondered if they were compost heaps for all the deleted emails of the world — or where authorities raked through emails for "security reasons." They are, in fact, water tanks or "Gülle" tanks (liquid manure) coated with enamel paint ("Email") — I looked it up later.



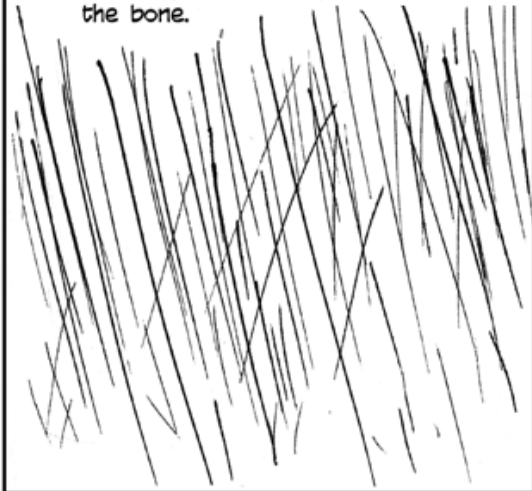
In the midst some of fields, a nice artwork.



We also visited some rediscovered ancient Roman mosaic floors from the destroyed Villa at Orbe-Boscéaz. These mosaics paved eight of the 100 rooms in a huge, luxurious inn/hotel/villa that was built around 160 A.D.



We arrived in Orbe (in Latin originally *Urba*), all three of us, Cornelia, River and I, soaked to the bone.



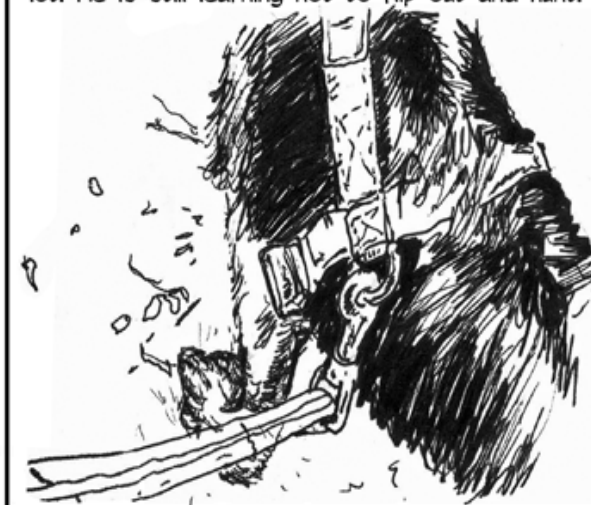
The following day, we walked from Orbe to La Sarraz, then on to Cossonay.



In Switzerland, the *Wanderwege*, hiking paths, are usually well-marked. Sometimes here the markings were difficult to see.



It didn't rain that day at all! — Despite predictions. Unfortunately, River smelled and saw wild deer, so he had to walk on the roll-line a lot. He is still learning not to flip-out and hunt.

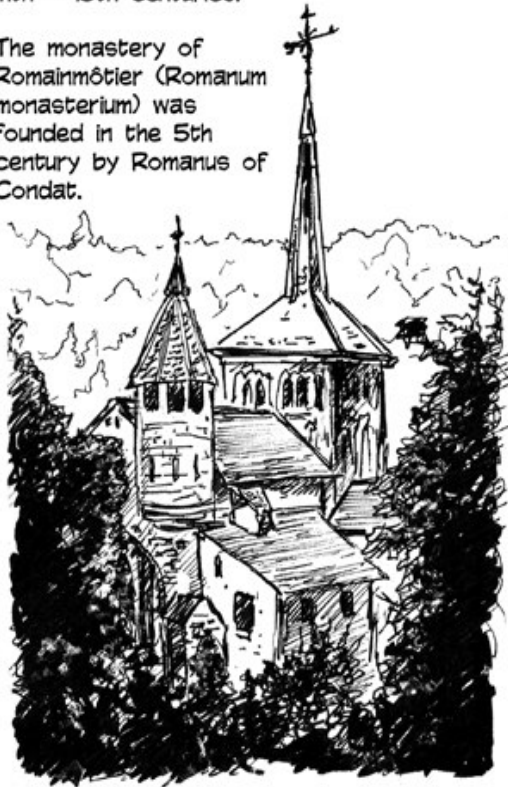


These woodland paths are incredible. Mostly wild, natural, mixed forest with paths that are well taken care of. And varied.

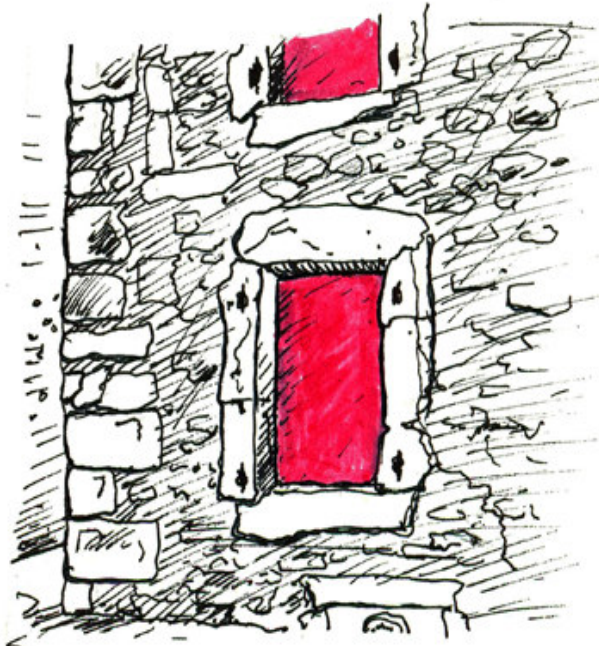


The enchanting surprise was Romainmôtier. A totally charming village on the Nozon river of about 450 inhabitants. The town has a famous Romanesque church, which is a strangely pleasing eclectic collage of elements from the 11th - 15th centuries.

The monastery of Romainmôtier (Romanum monasterium) was founded in the 5th century by Romanus of Condat.



Inside the courtyard next to and behind the church were the semi-restored ruins of a *Mönchshaus* (monks' dormitory). In it was an intriguing installation artwork titled *Silence*. An artist living in the village named Anna Blum created it.



A creative, little "bio" (organic) bakery, with delectable goods, and two small hotels.

Let's come back for a longer stay sometime and not just this "hike-through."



La Sarraz was OK, but we marched through it. We were tired and hurried on to Cossanay: We did look quickly at the Chateau from the outside.



The next day, we hiked from Cossanay to Bussigny-près-Lausanne.

Once again, it rained cats and dogs.



Within 2 hours — I was soaked through my expensive, yet worthless, raincoat.

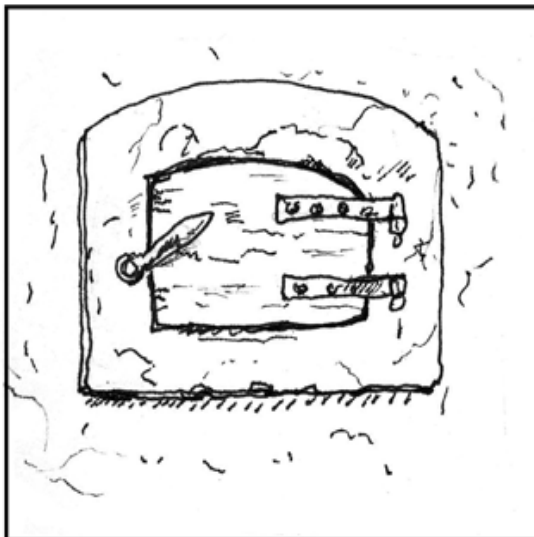


On most of the journey we saw almost no one else. Especially on such rainy days. Today we crossed three young bikers. Also waterlogged.

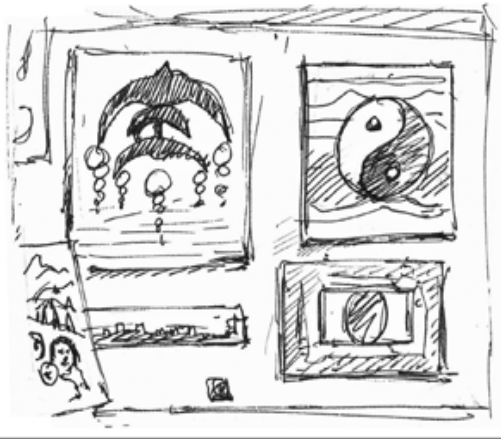
How far is it to the next village?
(spoken in French)



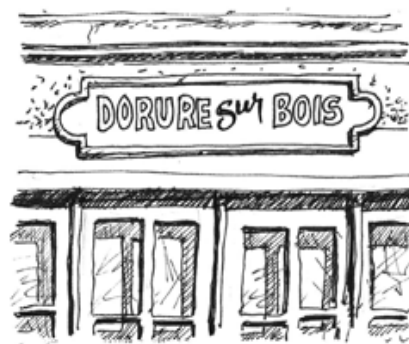
From Bussigny to Lutry.



Lutry. (Roman: Lustriacum.) Where they have even found Neolithic remains. Picturesque. But why does every such place have a "bad art shop"? Easy abstractions, tricks, recipe art, even Conceptual and tourist video kitsch.



Moreover, nearby there were some **REAL** artisans. A fascinating shop of a restorer. Even the brushes were beautiful and the sign hand-painted, old and far better art than the other wannabe will ever reach.



Let's stay here and do a day excursion by foot through the vineyards!



In Grandvaux. A tiny village far above the lake, surrounded by exquisite vineyards, with a statue to Corto Maltese!



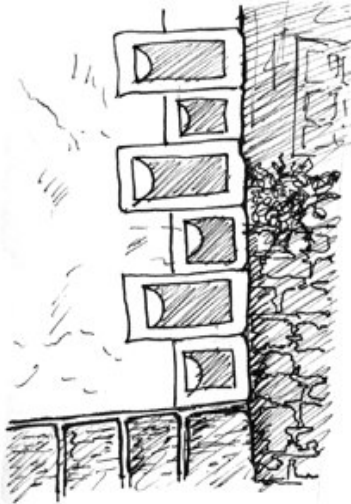
Corto Maltese, the sailor and adventurer, a character created by Hugo Pratt, the Italian comic book artist and author.



Amazing! Like our accidental discovery of the Popeye statue in Chester, Illinois. We were looking for the grave of Tom's ancestor, Shadrach Bond, the first governor of Illinois, and forgot it was also E.C. Segar's hometown. That's another story.



Ancient-style, traditional sgraffito corner decor, produced by applying layers of plaster tinted in contrasting colors to a moistened surface and "scratched" through. Reminds me of true artisanship, abstract painting, comics and sign-painting.



Back in Lutry.



Lac Léman (Lake Geneva).
Sunshine the whole day.



One of Cornelia's and my favorite activities. We read non-stop, and did so every day of our journey too. It is so prevalent I forgot to draw it until now!



Lese-Ratte und Book-Worm sind verliebt.



Tomorrow – getting the car in Pontarlier.



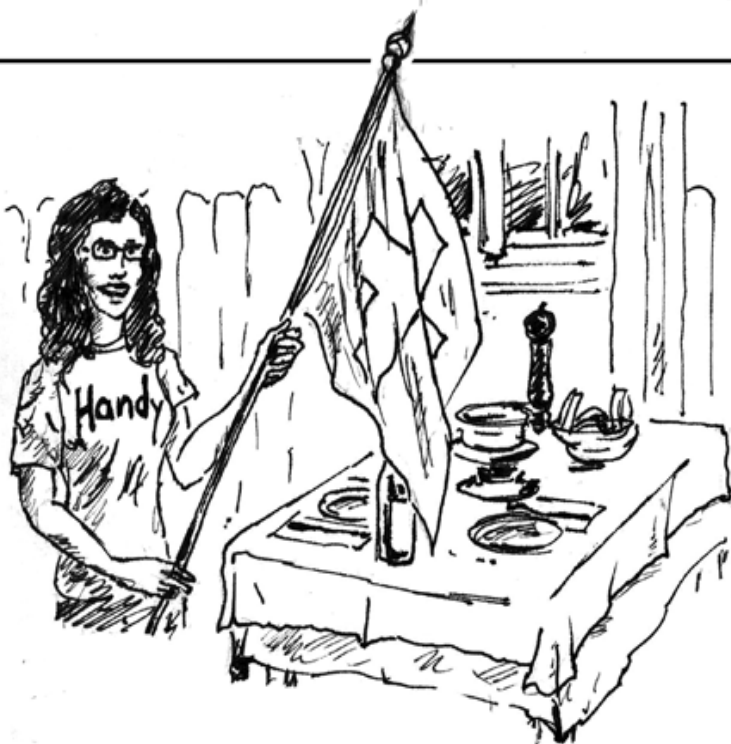
We took the train and bus because of the weather forecast — but it rained only intermittently anyway.

We got the car and drove to Vevey, where we had dinner in an amusing, kitschy hippy/"Ethno" restaurant, Le Trois Sifflets (The Three Whistles). It had been arranged for us. They served the Swiss-French version of cheese fondue.

When they brought the fondue, they also carried a huge Swiss flag and loudly played a recording of the General Guisan March.

Somewhat embarrassing.

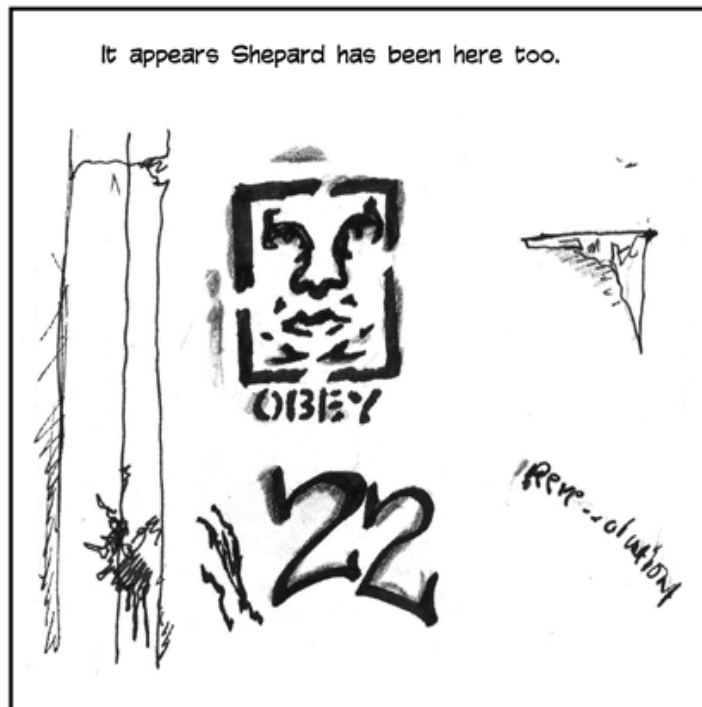
*Her T-shirt really said this — European for cell phone !



In town we saw many trendy, fashion and gift shops, but also a window full of accordions.

The next morning we tried to visit the Jerisch Museum, but it was closed for renovation till 2011! So we saw the sights and went shopping, strolled with River along the lake front. Ate some great sandwiches by the lake in the warm sun. Then we drove off for home.





We got home. It was extremely cold. We couldn't pick up our two cats, Babette and Emma, from the Chätzli-Hotel (cat hotel), where they had stayed for the ten days, because the caretaker was spending the entire evening and night at OLMA, the Eastern Swiss equivalent of a state fair (cows, bratwurst, beer, carnival, etc.) ...



We reached home. We got the cats the following morning.

And I now had an idea for a painting-installation for the show I would be in and one to serve as an element of this dissertation.

One based on my metaphor(m) – The Convergence of Formats = Reframing.