

NATHALIE PERRIN
ÉCRIRE, DIT-ON (WRITING, THEY SAY)

A poem by Dickens began: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times [...]."

I only have one collection, which includes hundreds of traces of what people still write by hand without being forced to do so, and which they leave lying around. By 'writing by hand' I mean writing that requires you to hold a tool with several fingers close together. So it could be "Never give up" engraved with a spanner under the molasse arches of Saint-François, "kiss kiss kiss" written with an acrylic marker in a tunnel of a station, or "rappeler Jacqueline" written with a Bic pen on old paper left in a shopping trolley. For example, "We are all reptilians" written in aerosol does not meet the criteria of a tool clutched by several fingers, nor does "momonique lapopo", painted with a roller on the foundations of a bridge on the A1 motorway.

What interests me first of all, at the dawn of a world where we write by tapping on a screen, are the last gestures that hold a writing utensil tightly in our fingers. After that, it's not a question of knowing whether the messages left are intelligent or not, but of feeling a genuine curiosity by looking for a kind of hidden poetry in them.

One day as I was making an inventory of the data on these lost post-it notes, felt-tip tags on dark paths or amorous boldness on cable cars, I realised that the three words that kept coming back were *Fuck*, *Love* and *Mozzarella*. In short, the key themes of hate, love and food.

Looking into this further, and in all seriousness, I experimented with scripts other than handwriting.

Sometimes I've collected comments on what you've written on an Instagram wall, where the sentence requires too much effort or time, so you have to find a word, and a good one. It's often "Wow", "Splendid" or "Bravo", and without being smart, you can quickly guess that after sweating to write a few real words, we'll all switch to the register of the yellow man, which is faster, more efficient and only requires a single tap of the keyboard.

Sometimes I gave written orders to an artificial intelligence and it gave me strange images. I noticed that written content is very important when you talk to a machine. You can tell it several times and in different languages to remove three moons, abandon the dramatic sky or arrange some fingers, but it won't listen. So it's this 'hear nothing' that I've used. For example, I gave a machine five chances to produce an acceptable image. None of them was suitable, but when superimposed in a sort of montage of errors, they gave an unprecedented view, almost figurative or almost abstract, of the legendary cradles of writing. These were the regions of Sumer in Mesopotamia, Abydos in Upper Egypt and Henan in China.

Sometimes I imagined that the authors of some of humanity's great texts had written them with their fingers. By tapping on a surface the size of a telephone screen, I transcribed two legendary texts: the prologue to *the Epic of Gilgamesh*, the first known human text, and *Tears in the Rain* from the film *Blade Runner*, one of the most commented monologues in the history of cinema.

So even if we can't prove Dickens right or wrong, one day in Iraq, on the banks of the Nile or in some Chinese province, an old android may wonder how anyone ever wrote with a pen in his hand.

Nathalie Perrin

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Nathalie Perrin (born in Geneva in 1989) is a graduate of the ECAL and the University of Neuchâtel. She was awarded a residency in Cairo (2014), the Alice Bailly grant (2015) and the Prix de la Ville de Nyon (2016). Her exhibitions include *Fortune Carrée* at the MCGM gallery in Lausanne (2015), *Darladirladada* at the Duflon Racz gallery in Bern (2018), *La fragilité des créatures à sang chaud* and *Traversées* (2021) at the Heinzer Reszler gallery in Lausanne (2019), Solo Show at Art Genève (2020), *Traversées I* at the CHUV in Lausanne (2021). She took part in the group exhibitions *L'art se livre* at the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Le Locle (2014), *Ungestalt* at the Kunsthalle in Basel (2017), *Pour Elle* at the Manoir in Martigny (2018), *Des Seins à dessein* at the Espace Arlaud in Lausanne (2020), *Scrivere disegnano* at the Centre d'Art Contemporain in Geneva (2020). In 2021, she published a first essay with Art&Fiction: "Rimbaud, Rambo, Ramuz. L'étrange destin de quelques maisons d'écrivains".