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Laurent Schmid: Editorial Bridge and Tunnel

Seeking to improve his draftsmanship, Goethe traveled to Rome in 1786, where he commented on how difficult "scribbles from life" were for him: "It takes a lot of concentration to get rid of my odd little German habits. I do see what is handsome and good, but finding the right tone in nature and imitating it is difficult, very difficult." We have seen his sketches and can only agree with him. Indeed, for one who found things so easy in one realm of endeavor, he stands far from alone when it comes to suffering in a different one of his choice. Many are the artists excelling in drawing – both before and since Goethe – who have been confronted with this problem. The following pages will spare our readers such torments. The present issue is a compilation of images comprised of numerous little sketches that, more often than not, were scrawled in haste and without any intention of creating a work. Rather, they are ideas that were quickly set down on paper, the aimless daydreams of artists who often had not planned to save them, let alone display them. Undaunted, we have gathered together a whole collection of these little sketches whose value comes through a posteriori. These skirt their subject, go off on tangents and only rarely focus directly: they are more of a "bridge" than a "tunnel". Most were jotted down during a conversation – on notepaper, a paper tablecloth – to lend form to a thought. But only the barest outlines would do, lest the original idea be lost in an overly detailed schematization of it. Naturally enough, one comes across a number of ironic declarations, for this sort of bridge makes it far easier to say things clearly than a more direct and difficult road. As John Abercrombie so aptly put it with respect to music: "Let's think of a tune and not play it." A lovely ideal, but one that reserves all the pleasure for the musician alone, leaving the public in the lurch. My search for these sprightly scribbled sketches often

elicited allusions to marvelous imagery that, as non-art works, had simply vanished into thin air. Followed by, "Wait a minute, maybe in one of my files ..."

It took little searching for us to come across one of Gerda Steiner's marvelous collections of sketches – a treasure trove of equally airy images bound into a volume and reproduced in small number within this issue.

The drawings that Cristina da Silva formerly executed in parallel to her video works have now become pivotal to her activity. And this without having lost an iota of their freshness or originality. The young artist herself composed the pages devoted to her work in this issue, assembling various of her drawings and photographs into montages akin to exhibition posters.

Text is minimal in this issue, with the exception of an interview in which Roberta Weiss-Mariani discusses with Christoph Büchel the questions raised by the latter's joint exhibition project with Gianni Motti at the Zurich Helmhaus.

Spewed forth from my fax over the last few weeks were more than just letters and forms: whole rolls of artist drawings also appeared, begging to be sorted into a selection. Because they are conveyed so rapidly and painlessly, there is something fleeting, almost deliberately temporary about fax messages. For technical reasons, certain linear subtleties are also lost. Seen from another point of view, however, this crude treatment leads to a more emphatic expression of the message, to highly original solutions. Be our guest, then, and see for yourselves.