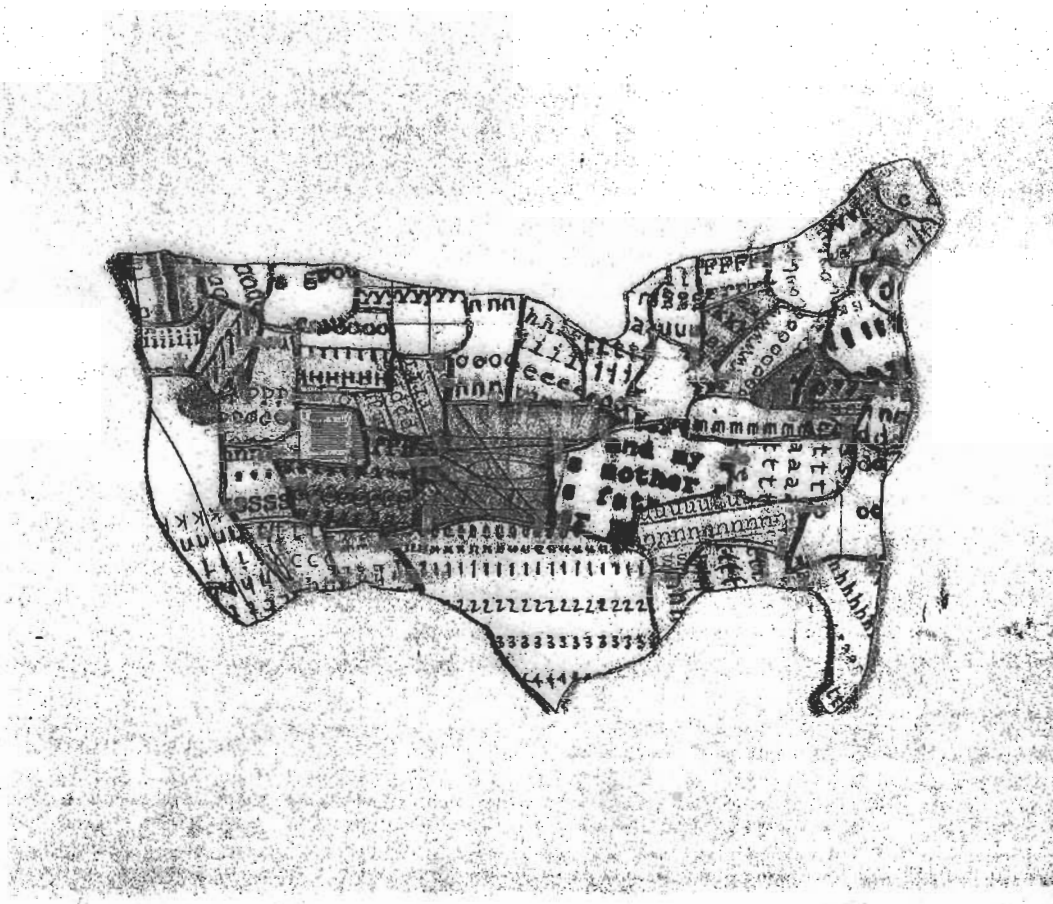

AT THE RIM OF THE FUCKING PARADIGM

Frances Stark, Los Angeles 2004-2005

You may find what follows to be ever so slightly out of place. The reason for its out-of-place-ness, or even its out-of-time-ness, lies in its having been crafted to serve a specific purpose elsewhere, in a different, less ambitiously produced and dare I say less ambitiously circulated publication. It finds its way here as an artwork more so than a catalogue essay, but my hope is that distinction will rapidly become obvious. I wish to avoid insulting the reader's intelligence by forcing down his or her throat an apologetic preface in which I read between my own lines before the reader has had a chance to read the lines themselves.

It's time I collected myself and began a dispatch from Los Angeles. I expect congratulations are in order for Daniel Buchholz and Christopher Mueller on a finely crafted publication. So, Congratulations! I can't remember the phrase Christopher first used to qualify his use of the term "fanzine" when referring to The Sky as Thin as Paper—"not-well-produced", was it? I'm certain it's well done, without too much emphasis on production value! My husband and I have been intermittently scheming about producing our own publication for the last couple years, only with no results! We hoped to see an incarnation of it by the end of the summer, but it has yet to take any shape whatsoever! Because the title of what you're now holding seems to me almost eccentric, I felt compelled to share my own similarly unwieldy title for our unborn booklet: At the Rim of the Paradigm. Our title, of course, lacks the poetry of this one!! I guess we were sarcastic when we first uttered the words, but years of rumination on its actual meaning have made it stick! I love it, even though I always end up apologizing for it when I bring it up! What it needs is an ingenious graphic incarnation, something elegantly rendered by hand, and beautifully silk-screened on an off-white stock with a rich matte brown ink, maybe even with a gold embossed flourish—at least for the premiere issue anyway!! Well, now I guess I have to go into some detail about the obstacles between me, my husband, and it! I kind of imagined telling The Sky as Thin as Paper's readers about what kind of a brilliant editor I would be and some of the authors I had in mind, and the customized assignments I dreamed up for them! The problem is I can't find any of my notes, and the ones I have lying around are so embarrassing that it's probably safe to assume that what I remember as the truly brilliant ideas are better off lost!! Instead of addressing all the pressing questions of our time, the ones I so

urgently scrawled on the backs of now-missing envelopes, the real question before me is: What exactly is it that rubs between our efforts and our existence?!! I'm thinking of an old motor oil commercial that demonstrated viscosity, and the lack thereof, and the subsequent breakdown. It was a very dramatic close-up shot of a car engine's pistons, educational almost—a well-received vocabulary lesson, to the point of "viscosity" being referenced in school yards. There was another even more popular commercial, from Standard Oil, or Chevron by that time, that was also somewhat "educational." "Find more Fossil Fuels" was the hook line, and cartoon graphics showed dinosaurs settling into the globe and turning into oil! Who would have thought that gas, this dangerous, seductive, almost nice smelling liquid came from dead dinosaur goo?! (Remember it used to smell good, before the supposedly environmentally-friendly additive, MTBE, which was all Bush Sr. by the way. I promise not to go off on Bush and oil, it's been such a major distraction all year!!)

I have to admit that a lot of my free time is spent burning gas in Los Angeles. We literally drive like 10 miles to our favorite coffee shop and market several times a week, and even further to our favorite Mexican restaurant!! We even drive around to put our baby to sleep! We drive around just looking at houses, and landscaping! I guess we are obsessed with landscaping without really having anything to do with it as professionals, neither practitioners nor followers. "I don't know about landscape design but I know what I like." Please!!! I've flirted with proposing that there needs to be a discussion of the term "taste". I even clumsily threw this out, onstage, at some inter-art-school consortium while delivering a paper about the so-called Chinatown art scene! Boy, was that embarrassing!! And speaking of embarrassing, I just got an e-mail from the coordinator of that symposium asking whatever happened to the final draft of my paper, his publisher was waiting!! His e-mail opened with Happy Holidays! Hardly!!! The year ends in two days and I've accomplished next to nothing! For example, I started writing this in the summer and then left it dangling at "Boy, was that embarrassing!" I made a nice show at Galerie Daniel Buchholz and one at greengrassi, and other than that I've spent the majority of my time feeding my child, cleaning my house and watching television! Nothing new has been created, aside from the handful of artworks I hung in Cologne and London, as I mentioned! Nothing new, just rearranging the same old shit, figuratively and literally!! This here, what you're reading, might only exist merely because I decided it was okay to complain in print about what a fucking awful human being I am! I mean last night I dreamt that I was apologizing to Jorge Pardo --of all people—for being cold and uninvolved!! So, sorry Jorge and sorry everybody for being cold, uninvolved and out of touch! I just got a fucking e-mail from the publications editor at MOCA asking me to be on a panel called "Zines and scenes" or some such bullshit about the emergent scene of self-publishing artists in Chinatown! I sort of know what she's referring to, but "scene" is pushing it a little hard, hell, even the word "publishing" is a stretch! I certainly can't count myself among any self-publishing scene!! What am I supposed to do, get up there and say "these people haven't come to my attention, or captured it anyway, these so called self-publishers of chinatown, but me-- and my husband, who supposedly started

the chinatown scene by the way—we have this awesome pipe dream for a publication called At The Rim of the Paradigm, you wanna hear some of my ideas about content?! I didn't think so!! " Or, "I'm not up on this scene, but I made some books of my own, but nobody here knows about them, do they?!?!?" Why the fuck am I sitting on this panel?!!?!! Why the fuck am I invited to do anything?!?! I never invite people to do things!!! Of course I imagine inviting but I don't! I just accept others' invitations allowing me never to have to follow through with any of my own ideas!! I just figure if the invitations keep coming I can continue imagining myself doing what I want to do yet being excused on account of never having the time to do it! I spend most of my time, like I said, driving around, watching tv, managing my household! It takes a lot of energy to keep up with all the Bush scandals and diapering and the refrigerator restocking and the laundry and the fucking mail!! My god, you can't even imagine the fucking junk mail that piles up at our house! And then the bills kind of get lost in the mix and then I think if only I had a room of my own, I'm serious here, if only I had a room of my own to organize the bills I have to pay! If I had that room of my own maybe I could pay the bills on time and wouldn't have to pay so many late fees and bounced check fees and I could keep track of what I owe—which is a fucking lot! Forget a room of one's own to write, I need a room of my own to organize the fucking frequent flyer junk mail and the fucking bills from the gap and the jcrew catalogues where I have to shop because I am such a fucking loser that I can't manage to outfit myself in decent clothes anymore!!! I need a room of my own so I can have stamps and envelopes and "bills due" and "bills paid" safely compartmentalized so that my baby doesn't grab at them and chew on them or throw them in the trash can or so that I don't keep putting them into my awful unstylish book bag that I carry back and forth everyday to my studio where they sit in the bag all day while I sift through piles of e-mail and get drawn into virtual newspapers and sucked into all the ugliness of American politics, drawn away from my nice little ideas I have scribbled onto tracing paper, blind to the unfinished artworks on the tables and walls, indifferent to the brilliant prose of others stagnating on my dust-collecting shelves!!!! And those urgent papers in my bag, at the end of the day I think "shit, I didn't get to these, I'll take them home tonight"; and then I might put them into an envelope or shuffle them, and they acquire some more wrinkles on the trip home and they just sit in the bag while I change diapers and make dinner and play with the baby --and then I sort of think about them once I put the baby to bed and nestle into the couch with the remote control! And then I think about the idiocy and the genius behind all the people who bring me my televised news and entertainment and how substantial all that is, the urgency, the timing, the importance! And being a person who likes to think and not act I just kind of think about how great and how awful it is not to be involved with society on that level, I mean not to be a powerful person, but then of course the role of powerless consumer is not very inspiring, so then I think of what it means to be an artist and I can kind of convince myself I'm one of those, and maybe I'll get around to enjoying being an artist tomorrow, oh but maybe the day after tomorrow because tomorrow I have to advise graduate students about their

own artistic aspirations!!! The students do like me, and the paycheck pays the bills, but not totally because I ran out of money—completely—right before Christmas!!! This meant that the only shopping I got around to for my husband was buying him three pairs of argyle socks with my jcrew credit card! The sweaters there are oversized and made for the majority of hefty, overweight or bulky Americans, they don't look good on a slim figure like my husband's! It's a miracle we're not fat because all we eat is pasta and cheeseburgers and enchiladas, and of course we don't exercise or do yoga or anything healthy like that!! Anyway, what I was getting at is that I didn't have money to buy my husband a Christmas present and we did all our shopping together, mostly for the baby, well technically he's a toddler, but the one gift we got for my husband we ended up having to give away because of a mix up, so on Christmas morning he didn't have a gift to open because I left the fucking socks in my studio and I hadn't been there for days because I was sick with Bronchitis! And now my mail man who just walked into my studio hand-delivering a piece of, guess what, fucking junk mail, just told me that if I don't take antibiotics I'm going to have "walking pneumonia" which I probably have already!! My husband was very disappointed not having a present so I came to my studio on Christmas day and luckily my baby, who is actually two and full of personality, and not really a baby like I keep saying—I mean he loves Tubeway Army and The Sweet for God's sake. He has a sense of humor too but he's still helpless, and anyway he fell asleep in my studio and I managed to make a tiny little collage of a fucked-up continental United States for my husband while the baby napped. He woke up just in time, but I hadn't wrapped my little USA yet so I had to hold a cranky sleepy baby in one hand while I threw the collage into some cheap Ikea frame and into the box with the jcrew socks. I wrapped it and took it home and my husband got a surprise and that worked out sort of okay, though it was less than joyous, but don't you see, this is the holiday season and I'm having to bust my ass to do something that barely ranks as nice, just on account of being incompetent and broke, and the whole time I'm thinking I should be rewriting that Chinatown essay once and for all or answering e-mails or writing letters of recommendation, or asking people to write me letters of recommendation, or vacuuming or filing, or cleaning out my filthy car, or calling my many sisters who I haven't spoken to all year, or going to the fucking free clinic to get antibiotics so I don't die of pneumonia!!! I can't fucking handle the banality that is my life!!!!! When I finally become the editor of At the Rim of the Paradigm, maybe next year, I will be so driven by a desire for excellence and intellectual deliciousness the minutia will fall to the wayside, my baby will shit in a toilet, and I will be a force to be reckoned with!!!!!!

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