

Kaggsy's Bookish Ramblings

"Vivre le livre!"

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March 30,
2020

**"As you walk around Paris do not take
space for granted."**

@_CopyPress #michaelschwab

👤 kaggsysbookishramblings 📁 Uncategorized 💎 copy press, michael schwab,
oulipo, paris 💬 26 Comments

Paris by Michael Schwab

As we're all still confined to barracks, the only way left to travel is in films or books, and the latter is my preferred choice – I like to let the words take me on journeys. Paris is a place I've still not managed to visit but it has an endless appeal; however, a recent encounter via a slim book what not quite what I anticipated...

Imagine you were to pick up a book by a photographer apparently exploring the trees of Paris. You would expect maybe a glossy monograph filled with tastefully and beautifully taken images and lyrical commentary. "Paris" by Michael Schwab is indeed a study of some trees in Paris, but it's as unlike those expectations as you could imagine!!

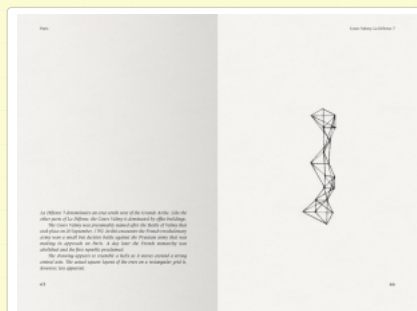


Schwab is a German artist who takes a very individual view of his craft, and it's his clever image which adorns the cover of this thought-provoking little book. Intriguingly, however, he takes as his central premise the idea of a photographer who sets out to snap the trees of Paris but has forgotten his camera. How to log and record what he sees? Instead of some kind of attempt to draw the foliage he instead devises a gadget and sets out chart the trees by a complex measuring method (set out at the start of the book). The result is an abstract diagram which represents the tree though of course looking nothing like it; yet which has a beauty of its own.

Each diagram is accompanied by text explaining where the measurements were taken, describing the location and also the response of local people to his actions. It's a fascinating concept, somewhat Proustian to my mind; a visual constraint as opposed to a linguistic one; and the results really are singular. Despite the fact that the diagrams look nothing like trees, you still get a strong sense of place from the combination of the plan and the description; and the two have a kind of beauty of their own.

Space: In the drawings space is uneven. It is as if spaces move under my eye like waves in a sea that break and fold back onto themselves. When the figure is developed in the drawing, and imaginatively brought back to site, it is space that is affected first. The real, lived space starts to move too and all sense is reconfigured. This happens already when a site is measured and the figure emerges. The drawing gives uneven space an established form, like a memory.

"Paris" is published by [Copy Press](#) in their 'Common Intellectual' series, a set of short 100-page works; according to the publisher, "each title makes a proposition for living, thinking and enjoyment." Certainly this book makes me think about representation; whether we can best capture a place by a simple snap, or whether thinking outside the box and looking more deeply gives a better impression. Schwab is London-based and so presumably wrote the text in English, and it's evocative writing, capturing the artist in the process of undertaking his work and interacting with those around him. All in all, it adds up to a fascinating short book which is not really like anything else I've read.



An example of one of the diagrams from the Copy Press website:

<https://www.copypress.co.uk/index/paris/>

This really was a most interesting experience, reading "Paris"; the more I think about it, the more I feel that Schwab is coming from a very Oulipian perspective, with the mixture of maths and words and constraints; even down to the cover photograph with the foliage reflecting the shape of the Eiffel Tower behind it. I'm still trying to remember where I stumbled across this one (possibly Twitter...), but I'm very glad I did. The Copy Press website lists some very tantalising titles, and I may have to explore a little further... ;D

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madamebibilophile

Mar 30, 2020 @ 08:45:22

This sounds completely unique! Although as you say, very Oulipian. What a fascinating way to approach a city.

👤 REPLY



kaggsysbookishramblings

Mar 30, 2020 @ 09:28:08

It was most unusual and unexpected, yet very effective. And yes – I couldn't help thinking of Perec! 😊

👤 REPLY



themothlybooking

Mar 30, 2020 @ 09:03:52

This sounds thoroughly intriguing – I've definitely never read anything like it before. I'm off to investigate Copy Press right away . . .

👤 REPLY



kaggsysbookishramblings

Mar 30, 2020 @ 09:27:30

No, me neither – such a fascinating concept! I definitely think Copy Press are worth checking out!

👤 REPLY



BookerTalk

Mar 30, 2020 @ 09:32:24

Wish I could draw because it teaches yiu to really look at a subject as opposed to photography which often is a meme tart experience. Sadly I don't have an artistic fibre in my make up. Even my stick insect attempts are pathetic.

👤 REPLY



kaggsysbookishramblings

Mar 30, 2020 @ 09:47:06

Me too, but we never got taught that kind of proper art at school; unless you have an obvious talent you were kind of ignored, but I think we would have benefited from being shown the proper way to look at things and turn them into drawing. I yearn to be artistic, but I can't draw for toffee so end up doing craft instead!!

👤 REPLY



JacquiWine

Mar 30, 2020 @ 11:07:13

Sounds very intriguing , definitely an interesting way of looking at a city. You do seem to have a knack for uncovering some fascinating books. 😊

👤 REPLY



kaggsysbookishramblings

Mar 30, 2020 @ 12:20:34

It's very unusual, which I suppose is what appealed to me! Certainly it made me think outside the box regarding visual representation, and it was very absorbing. I wish I could remember where I stumbled across this one – I'm sure it was on Twitter, but I'm not sure from whom! 😊

👤 REPLY



Tredynas Days

Mar 30, 2020 @ 12:05:28

Fascinating.

👤 REPLY



kaggsysbookishramblings

Mar 30, 2020 @ 12:18:47

It certainly wasn't much like anything else I've read – so interesting!

👤 REPLY



literarygitane

Mar 30, 2020 @ 13:39:07

This sounds fascinating! What a unique approach! Thank you!

👤 REPLY



kaggsysbookishramblings

Mar 30, 2020 @ 14:17:03

It was very singular and so intriguing – I'm glad I stumbled across it! 😊

👤 REPLY



heavenali

Mar 30, 2020 @ 21:19:08

An unusual and intriguing work. Quite a unique way of exploring a city.

👤 REPLY



kaggsysbookishramblings

Mar 31, 2020 @ 08:52:16

It really is. And although I've read many an unusual book, I don't think I've read one quite like this!

👤 REPLY



Lisa Hill

Mar 30, 2020 @ 22:35:38

Like others commenting here, I can't draw either...

but when I was teaching English as a Second Language, I so often needed to draw something so that the kids would understand what I was talking about, so I took a six week drawing course.

I still can't draw, but I am better at looking at things properly. And the interesting thing is that while I was trying to improve my skills, I took a number of opportunities to sketch things when I was away from home on lazy local holidays. And these sketches are what spring to mind when I remember those holiday places, not the photos that I took. I think it's because I only sketched what interested me, and just left out the other things.

It's a very soothing activity... I might dig out my pencils and try it again in the back garden.

👤 REPLY



kaggsysbookishramblings

Mar 31, 2020 @ 08:51:45

Arty stuff *is* soothing, definitely, and I envy you that course because I think the knowing how to look is half the battle. I mess about abstractly with paper and paint, which is enjoyable, but never anything figurative. But yes – drawing in the back garden sounds like a marvellous idea right now!

👤 REPLY



Constance

Mar 31, 2020 @ 04:12:19

I hope we won't take anything for granted in the future! I am sad about a trip to Paris and Provence planned for May but I do enjoy armchair travel when nothing else is available.

👤 REPLY



kaggsysbookishramblings

Mar 31, 2020 @ 08:49:35

Definitely – even my quiet bimbles around the charity shops and lunch out every Saturday seem exotic and appealing at the moment. Thank goodness for books and armchair travel!!

REPLY



Dark Puss

Mar 31, 2020 @ 11:03:03

One can travel in music too!

REPLY



kaggsysbookishramblings

Mar 31, 2020 @ 11:06:16

Indeed one can, and I often do, It's quite good for time travel into one's past too! :DDDD

REPLY



Dark Puss

Mar 31, 2020 @ 11:10:49

So much amazing music available via YouTube (etc.) I have listened to some great new surf-rock bands some quite punky new groups too (though their technical skills seem far in advance of the originals and some generally crazy stuff from around the globe. I am also very glad to have subscribed to Qobuz with its amazing catalogue of classical music at 16-bit (or indeed higher for more money) quality uncompressed streaming.



kaggsysbookishramblings

Mar 31, 2020 @ 11:15:23

There is. It's very easy to disappear down a YouTube wormhole, and it's a very good way to discover new stuff and also explore old stuff. My knowledge of classical music is very limited and there's tons of it on YouTube fortunately so I can check out interesting sounding names!



Liz Dexter

Mar 31, 2020 @ 12:09:06

This does sound like an unusual one but very you, somehow!

REPLY



kaggsysbookishramblings

Mar 31, 2020 @ 13:46:59

Yeah, I think it *is* me! Unusual but very intriguing!

REPLY



TravellinPenguin

Mar 31, 2020 @ 22:08:21

Really interesting concept.

REPLY



kaggsysbookishramblings

Apr 01, 2020 @ 11:03:12

It is! So unusual and clever – I like things that take a step outside the box!

REPLY

Share your thoughts here! :D

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