

## Borderknots – cartographying experiences of crossing borders

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### Abstract:

*Borderknots* is a drawing-performances project that I began in 2013 and through which I “graphically connect” borders of different nature with the help of a rudimentary drawing machine I developed: Inside a wooden box, a tracer produced a line on a paper sheet according to the movements, the accelerations, the vibrations, the shocks which it undergoes. Worn straight from the body or fixed to the door-luggage of a bicycle (**Fig. 1**), the instrument works as a seismograph recording graphically my journey, including the consequences of meeting the route, a harshness on the ground, a muscular fatigue or a fall. The routes so traveled and fixed on paper are always bound to the crossing of an obstacle or a frontier, real and concrete, political or symbolic, a limiting border physical or invisible, in charge, harmless. At the same time every paper of the project being carved of simple forms linked to the performance to come (in the obstacle to be exceeded), the pen meets then an obstacle in the irregular surface of the sheet of paper itself, too. The way it reacts response to the constraints that impede the flow of movement and reorient impulses of the *Borderknots*-performances and the border-behaviour in general.

The drawing is the capture of an effort, a cartography of a more or less difficult and risky crossing. In its cash demonstration – cross 101 times a barrier (*Borderknots - Crossing urban barriers*, 2013); cross 28 times the French-German border as fast as possible (*Borderknots - Europe round trip*, 2013 / **Fig. 2**); or the relation between the unlimitedness of the obstacle and the simplicity of the obtained drawing (*Borderknots - Crossing the Alps 1 and 2*, 2014)– this effort sometimes lends to laughter: a certain irony participates unmistakably in the project.

The political dimension takes however a more dominant aspect, particularly with the performances consisting in a penetrating into the representations of various countries present in the same city (consulates of Strasbourg / embassies in Brussels, 2013 / **Fig. 3**). The application of the stamp of every country straight on the drawing being made, is not only a proof of my path, but also outcomes of the negotiations (often difficult) begun in every stage with the various hierarchical authorities of the administrations around the artistic project. The maps thus produced and authenticated by seals, are at first glance abstract, but definitively very official drawings: like generalized visas for freedom of movement.

Instead of a *borderline*, the title “Borderknots” propose making *knots*. It is to be said a tie, a link, but also a scrawl difficult to undo and representative of the complexity of certain limits. The lines marked by these machines during performances are in this way maps of the experiences of territories: straying, hesitating, starting over, jumping straight, crossing, turning backwards.



Figure 1: Katrin Gattinger, *Borderknots*, Drawing machine on bicycle, 3 drawings. Exhibition view, *un-stable.eu*, Kunsthalle am Hambureger Platz, Berlin, Germany, 2016. Photos: P. Geng. **Figure 2:** Katrin Gattinger, *Borderknots - Europa Hin und Zurück (Borderknots - Europe round trip)*, 2013. Ink on paper, embossing, 41,5 x 29,4 cm. From the performance of 28 crossings from the Franco-German border to Kehl. Photo: Jean-Louis Hess.

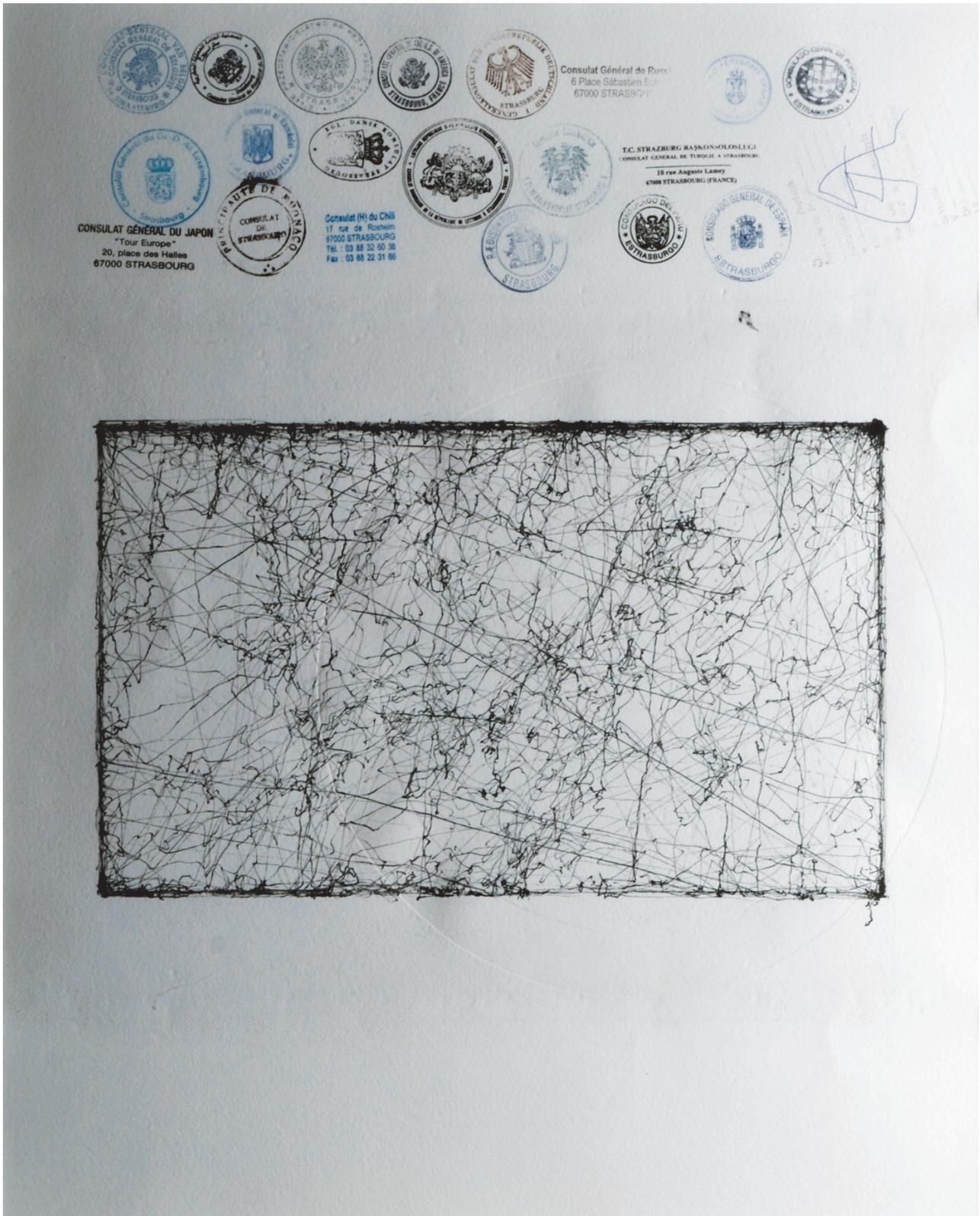


Figure 3: Katrin Gattinger, *Borderknots (Consulats Strasbourg) (Borderknots - Strasbourg consulates)*, 2013. Ink on paper, embossing, 60,9 x 44cm. From the performance of crossings of the consulates at Strasbourg, August 26th, 2013. Seals of Consulates General of Belgium, Russia, Germany, Gr. D de Luxembourg, Japan, Kingdom of Morocco, the United States of America, Romania, Turkey, Spain, Portugal, Republic of Austria. Seals of Consulates of the Principality of Monaco, Peru, Poland, the Kingdom of Denmark, Consulate (H) of Chile, Serbia, Latvia. Photos: Jean-Louis Hess.