

A time-honoured signal of personal freedom, this statement was also a recurring feature of Guy de Cointet's oeuvre – and the perfect embodiment of the nonchalance, encyclopaedic curiosity and whimsicality to be literally read, as well as listened to, in his drawings and theatre texts. It's only natural, then, that it should provide the title for his fourth solo exhibition here at Air de Paris.

Guy de Cointet was born in Paris in 1934 and migrated to New York in 1966. After hanging out briefly at Andy Warhol's Factory, he began working as an assistant for Larry Bell, who lured him to Los Angeles a year later. In the city's passionately Minimalist context he built up a body of work based on another, theoretically simple form: language. Firstly using his mother tongue, French, in opposition to the language of the country he was living in, then the English he gleaned from what he heard around him, the press, advertising and the TV soaps he was a fan of. In 1971 he published his first work, *ACRCIT*: a veritable codex, a newspaper analysing verbal structures, it went out free on newsstands and later even turned up as a prop in the stage works. The same year he made lots of drawings – some of them brought together here – as he pursued his work on an alphabet at once innovative and imaginary, intermingling typefaces, sources and modes of presentation, and recreating sentences and grammatical and linguistic formulae. Equally influenced by Ferdinand de Saussure and Raymond Roussel, he developed systems in which language was both code and image, and in which painting read, heard and felt becomes an actor in its own right, like the white horizontal/vertical painting-object whose exact context and date of appearance remain an enigma. Could it be that it (too) needs a mirror to reflect its secrets? The exhibition also includes the arrhythmia of welovejad (a kind of early days hashtag), the first (and last) part of de Cointet's diary, and the title drawing whose date is still unknown.

And let's not forget that in 1979, at the premiere of *Tell Me* – in which *ACRCIT* appeared – Michael (alias Denise Domergue) was already dialoguing as follows with Mary (played by Jane Zingale):  
Michael: Mary, got a cigarette? Mary: A cigarette? Have a scotch instead. Michael: No, I'd rather have a drink. Mary: Like what? Michael: A Marlboro. Mary: A Marlboro... Michael, I'm sorry, I'm out of Marlboro. I finished the bottle yesterday morning. What would you say to a Havana?  
Michael: Great. Mary: There you go. Enjoy. You're in luck, I'm just back from Havana. These are delicious... I'll drink one too.

*(This document was automatically generated by Contemporary Art Library.)*