



**LISA TAN**  
LOS ANGELES

To create *One Night Stand* (LA<ART; November 11—December 31, 2006) Lisa Tan got on a plane and traveled to Paris—for twenty-four hours. Instead of documenting her journey with photographs or video, she recorded her thoughts, impressions, and observations. Later, Tan transcribed them to create a twenty-two-minute video projection of white type on a black ground—like subtitles. We read what she did and saw as a series of fragments. She condenses times and places into descriptive bits, without ever mentioning any encounters, feelings or impressions usually associated with the romance or charms of Paris. This work can be seen as a continuation of Tan's "travel" practice, which previously entailed preparing for journeys never actually undertaken.

For *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, 2004, she planned a one-hundred-and-twenty-four-day trip to see ninety-one paintings by Hieronymus Bosch. This journey would begin in London and end in New York, taking her to twenty places in between. In describing the project she states, "The piece has given way to a new reality—an experience that has already taken me to rain-soaked piazzas, museum corridors, heterotopic hotel lobbies, quaint bookstores, and the back seats of taxicabs. I consider this piece to be a map of my desire—a desire that relies on the near impossibility of its fulfillment for its very existence." While Tan never took this trip, her extensive scheduling and documentation of the paintings, museums, and cities became an eight-foot-long work of art.

Tan's practice is conceptual. She is more interested in maps, plans, and relationships than in physical objects. Her work does not privilege any single medium. Instead, it involves spontaneity and acute observation to deftly give form to concepts. Upon entering the gallery, one is confronted with a darkened space and a bench. *One Night Stand's* minimal projection appears on the far wall. But this bench is no common gallery fixture. It is a component of *Roman Lovers*, a sculptural work that

initially appears to be a fragment of a city. It is a recreation of a place that, perhaps seen in Paris, includes a lamppost, an iron fence, a bush, and a dirt-filled embankment. Sitting on the bench places the viewer in the displaced scene. Positioned in the corner, *Roman Lovers* illuminates the space. More importantly, it brings the outside in. This work actually began as a photograph, and was then made into an object. This transcription restages the ideas of memory and reportage that Tan explores in *One Night Stand*. Ultimately, both works are as much about absence as they are about presence.

*One Night Stand* begins with a description: "Flight 120 departs 9:20 pm." There are no other cues, no answers to the who, what, or where of this mention until they are revealed onscreen. Even then, little information is supplied. Paris' existence as a social space is entirely left out of the narrative. There are no chance encounters, fabulous meals or romantic interludes. The narrator takes a plane, lands in Paris, gets a room, wanders around the city, goes back to her room to sleep a few hours, eventually takes an early morning taxi to the airport, and flies back.

Most of what we learn about the trip is screened as dry observation:

10:25 AM / glass hallway / diffused white light /  
10:54 AM / it has begun to rain / 11:32 AM /  
11:35 AM / 11:38 AM... The Seine / 12:17 PM /  
poles / cylinders / Haussmanization... after 1:00 AM  
Room 64 / 14 x 14 feet / ceiling height 9 feet /  
bed is 48 x 75" / white sheets / white pillow

The piece feels dislocated and impersonal. Yet, its matter of fact tone lodges in our memories, allowing us to project our own experiences into the work. While the unfolding narrative is full of possibilities, Tan shirks all stereotypical *Night in Paris* or *One Night Stand* associations. *Roman Lovers'* dim lighting is as close as we get to a romantic sensibility. Still, it suggests more than it reveals.

—Jody Zellen

ABOVE, LEFT TO RIGHT: Lisa Tan, *Roman Lovers*, 2006, mixed media sculpture: live plant, lamppost, wrought-iron fence, cinder block wall [courtesy of the artist and LA<ART, Los Angeles]; Eileen Cowin, still from *Your Whole Body is a Target*, 2006, video projection, 5 minutes [courtesy of the artist and Fringe Exhibitions, Los Angeles]