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Peter Frank

"Artists Write"

The three books of Guy de Cointet, a Frenchman relocated in Los Angeles, cannot as yet be found chez Rietman, although he would have no trouble ordering them for you. Cointet works with literary forms, but not in any way that you will be able to recognize. He makes up his own languages, his own codes, even his own alphabets. His earliest book is written totally in some odd print consisting of concave and convex strokes.

I haven't bothered to crack whatever language system might be behind this writing; the mystery of the book, and the abstract beauty of its markings — both enhanced by the appearance of equally unexplained diagrams every few pages — satisfy my aesthetic curiosity as the ability to read it would never. *TSNX C24VA7ME* is more demonstrably decodifiable. Subtitled "A Play By Dr. Hun," *TSNX* is quite obviously drama, with characters like Sylvia Orommel proclaiming, "SUVO 10S PJ LUV4FEDA EB83I" and types like Dr. L2E responding, "DOOJC U NEIN2VL L111K AHL M VIWYT ZS EFN O BNH 4V." As the eye wanders baffled over the fields of letters and numbers, certain formations — license plates, phone numbers, movie ratings, words (even!) — emerge tenuously, suggesting that the seemingly meaningless strings of ciphers have their own logic and their own story

to tell. Dr. L2E's "NEIN2VL," for instance, may indicate a Germanic sort correcting a waiter as to the beer order, to wit, "No, two, very light." Then again....

More readable, and more readily understandable for its language, is *Espahor ledet ko uluner!* This book is straight narrative, with recognizable characters, dialogue, and even the intimations of plot, development, climax, denouement, and all that sorta stuff, written in deathless lines of prose such as, "Misdod, lerbonazs ko troupiakaff lo bihssuk Artobeli uls e pebeskeen." Like Cointet's two other books and like the *Sunday New York Times*, it's nice to know it's all there. But something is *definitely* there! Parts of *TSNX C24VA7ME* — as well as certain of Cointet's paintings, which are themselves textual — were performed in L.A. last winter! I guess there's no good way of making the case for Cointet's books, unless proclaiming them obstinate mysteries of tremendous charm turns you on. Maybe Cointet's next book will be his Rosetta Stone.