

letter to:

# Simon Starling

*The other day I met this guy Simon who sure liked to talk about his car and his bike. He even made them the center of his artwork. After he won a prize for his artwork, the website read, "Simon Starling is fascinated by the processes involved in transforming one object or substance into another. He makes objects, installations, and pilgrimage-like journeys which draw out an array of ideas about nature, technology and economics. Starling describes his work as 'the physical manifestation of a thought process', revealing hidden histories and relationships. . . For Tabernas Desert Run 2004, Starling crossed the Tabernas desert in Spain on an improvised electric bicycle . . . "*

*It seems to me that if he loves these possessions so much, it must be because he loves the adventures they bring. I think I understand this feeling because I adore my bike so much I gave it a name.*

**marisa jahn**

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**to:**

Simon Starling  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
Germany

March 10, 2006

Dear Simon:

I'm writing to ask for your complicity.

As we spoke briefly the other day at the bar, I'm interested in the way that the subject of your artwork is the medium itself. In this way, you circumscribe art within larger geopolitical dimensions. My work also self-reflexively explores the contingent nature of its material presence, the events and conditions that frame its existence. However, while at times your work employs actual vehicles (motorbike, car, etc.) for physical adventure, I situate language and text (such as this very letter) as the metaphoric vehicle that explores.

A certain connecting logic between these processes has become apparent to me, which compel me to write and solicit your participation. So here's what I ask you to do: take this letter and place it somewhere in your trusty Volvo, which you speak about with so much fondness. Smoosh it in the windshield, beneath the footmat, under the hood, wherever you decide. Please make sure both 'vehicles' touch so that they are subject to shared experience. In this way, words and transport are conjoined by incidence.

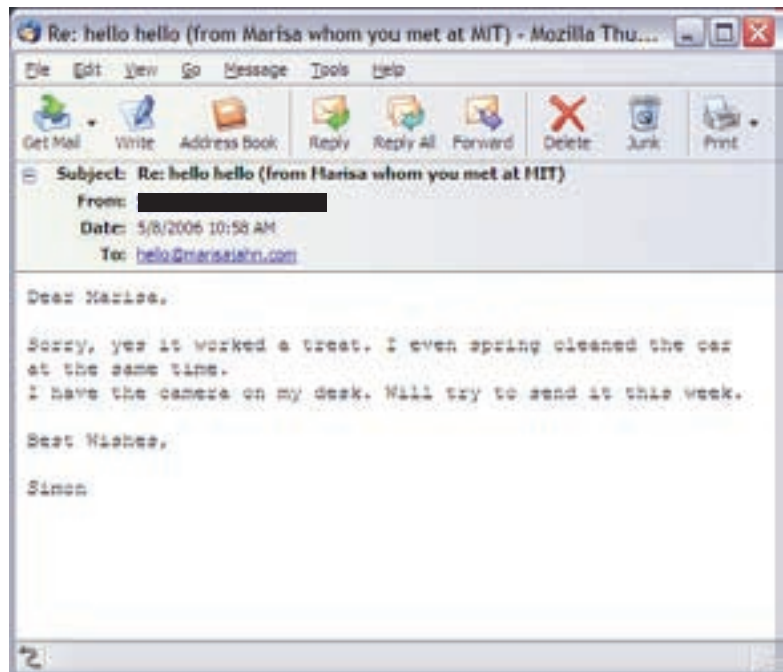
If you choose to send correspondence or evidence/documentation it would bring me great pleasure.

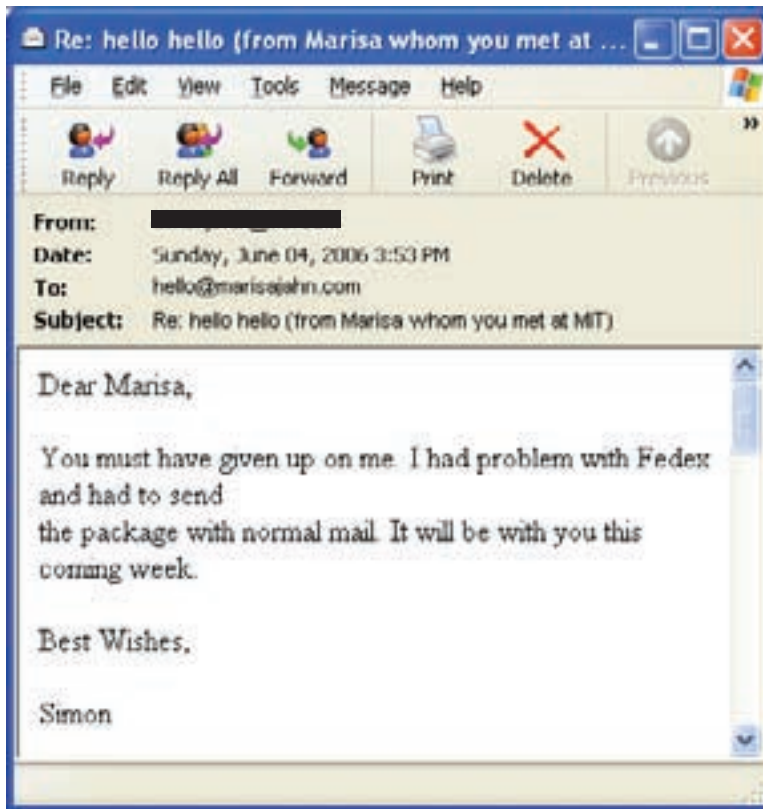
Warm Regards,

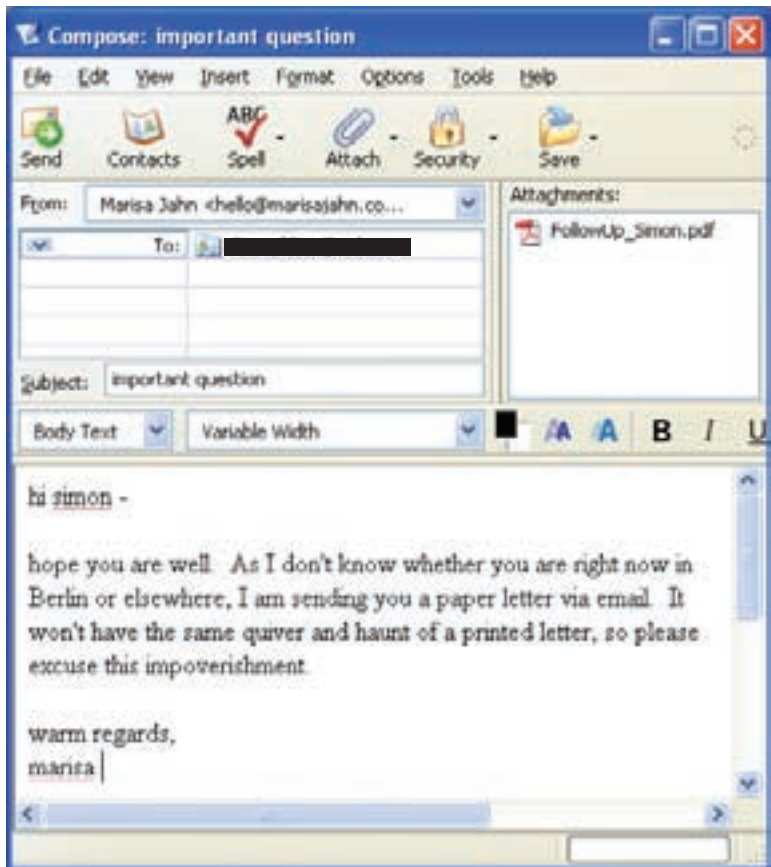


Marisa









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### to:

Simon Starling  
Maybachufer 25  
12047 Berlin  
Germany

April 22, 2007

Dear Simon:

Hope you are well and enjoying the Spring. It's been so pleasant here in Cambridge when I wake in the morning I wonder how the weather could be so gentle and temperate.

Per our last exchange, you mentioned you had taken photos of my letter, wedged into your windshield and enjoying a good adventure. You also mentioned that you FedEx'd me the photographs.

A series of incidences compel me to write. At the end of last year, a box of my personal belongings and files were stolen. I think I recall that the camera you sent was in that box, but upon closer inspection I curiously cannot recall whether I ever actually received the camera at all. The thing is, I had spent so long imagining what it must have been like for that letter that I can no longer distinguish what is real or only fantasy. Like a phantom limb or lost child, the life of this letter possesses me; I have to know more.

So I'm hoping you can let me know whether the photographs went something like this: I am the letter, wedged in the rear view mirror. The wind, entering the car from both rolled down windows, rumbles about the car, stirring up the sand accrued in the pits of the car and abrasing all surfaces. In the photograph, the rear view mirror reflects what appears to be a bright warm desert and low-lying houses. There are several photographs taken from the same perspective that depict your traipse through sand, shrub, green.

In another: the force of the wind has knocked the rear view mirror from the windshield. You've taken care to bind the letter and mirror together with a patch of duct tape; they lie on the front seat. In the photograph, the mirror faces up, reflecting a swath of sky framed by dark silhouettes of the car's interior.

The set of third photographs are taken by someone presumably at the shore of a very still lake, their back to the morning. A swimmer, whose face is obscured, holds their arm into the air with the mirror-letter facing the camera catching colors otherwise unseen.

Was it indeed something like this?

Warm Regards,



Marisa

*... I wonder what did happen to that first letter?*