

Questions about Creativity

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Introduction

The purpose of this book was to develop and to promote neopoemings – I thought that when I ask different people about neopoemings, there would be many recipients who will hear about this phenomenon. In the course of subsequent interviews I realized that I am asking more for the sake of my own artistic development (although neopoemings remain relatively important to me). Both by inviting Artists to these interviews, as well as by asking particular questions, I was primarily motivated by my need of learning something about various issues related to the creative process.

I would like to present the works of various people to readers who have contact with my activity – if only to show a certain context of my actions. Oh – the promise that I will prepare this book was also meant to encourage people to answer my questions.

Piotr Szreniawski

- You wrote the book "How to Pleasurably Stop Smoking". Is art a good addiction for you?

Good question. The notion of addiction that seems truest to me is that an addiction is behavior that the addict feels compelled to continue even in the face of terrible consequences. According to this definition of addiction, which I've read in the work of people such as Dr. Gabor Maté (In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts), addiction doesn't require a drug, a substance. People can be addicted to gambling, for instance. They continue even in the face of terrible consequences. They can't stop until somebody stops them. I've often encountered the idea that artists must have no choice about whether they continue with their art; according to this idea, they should not be able to stop being artists--for them to be genuine artists. Just as one can't stop breathing.

But not too many people would say that we're addicted to breathing. If you want to retain the idea that an addiction is harmful, then you probably won't agree that we're addicted to breathing. Because breathing is not harmful. Unless one is in a very bad way, such as with terrible, incurable lung problems, where each breath is torture--but also life-sustaining. I think of addiction like Maté does, and as a harmful thing. But I also think of it as something that strong illusions sustain. Strong illusions that, once dispelled, essentially free us from the compulsive behavior. Addiction may have a physical component, as in the case of alcohol, tobacco, heroin, cocaine, etc. But in addictions, we think we need it more than we do. We think we need it for things that it doesn't actually supply. Getting over illusions is the main obstacle to getting over an addiction. Dispelling the illusions that sustain an addiction kill it like understanding how a magic trick works. Once you understand how a magic trick works, you just can't be fooled by it anymore. Similarly, once you understand that the addiction isn't giving you the wonderful things you think it gives you, you are cured of craving the object of the addiction.

But I haven't answered your question. Certainly art can be an addiction. One can do art rather than deal with what one needs to deal with. And then fool oneself into thinking that one's art is so important that one must indeed neglect everything else. That's thinking like an addict. Thinking like an artist might be different than that. There's a love of truth in art. Art is a way of finding our way to the truth. Not hiding from it. There's pretending in art. But it's pretending toward the truth, in strong art. There's that old idea that fiction is truer than life, more real than life. That means it's toward finding and dealing with the truth, not hiding from it. Art deals with the truth and the beauty in the truth, even when the truth is ugly. Or that is the aspiration of art. The love of truth that is fundamental to strong art counter-balances the nature of art as illusion, creating truth as presented in or represented in illusions. Which, when you think about it, is necessarily the way we represent ideas, because ideas are not like stones and chairs--they must be invoked as ideas that remain invisible, not worldly things. Art entangles us in illusion but it also aspires to truth.

Like other things to which one can be addicted, art can be a harmful addiction in which one desperately depends on illusions that eventually destroy us. But, unlike so many other things that can be addictive, there is this countervailing aspiration in strong art to truth and its pursuit, its acknowledgement, its value. In story. In image. In song and dance.

So, while art can be an addiction--which I interpret as necessarily harmful--it can also be something else, something positive, something infused with the life force, with the power and necessity of breath, prana, and truth. I think we all are aware of both of these in our experience as artists. Continually. Thanks for the great question which made me think about addiction vs art, Piotr.

- Are poets similar to computers (which - as you wrote - are language machines)?

That question would raise the hair of quite a few people. Especially many poets. It's provocative. The idea that poets are like computers would often encounter the response that, no, they are the opposite--poets are alive, are the quintessence of humanity, of life, of liveliness. I think it's important to understand that while, yes, poetry is indeed toward that vitality, that liveliness, that utter humanity, computers are not simply the quintessence of the opposite, of the robotic, the zombified, the spiritless, the deadened. While we do encounter that--a lot--in our experience of computing, many of us have to be creative with computers. That's our job, or part of our job. The job we get paid for and/or the job we see ourselves doing in life. It's important that we be able to be creative and thoughtful--and fully alive--even beyond what we would normally be capable of--in our use of computers. We need it. The world needs it. Marshall McLuhan saw technology as extensions of the body and mind. The telescope as an extension of the eye. The telephone as an extension of our ears and voices. The car as an extension of our legs. Computers as extensions of our memory and cognitive abilities (among other things). We need to be able to bring our full creativity and humanity to our use of computers, or these extensions of ourselves are merely nasty claws that hurt people rather than instruments of our vision and compassion.

- Can mistakes in programming bring interesting artistic results?

Yes, they can. Although most programming mistakes result in the program not running at all. And most of the programming mistakes that don't kill the program aren't all that interesting. But occasionally, yes. As in evolutionary change. In some types of art, the unexpected is very unlikely to be welcome or fecund. In more adventurous, less fully played-out art, there is room for the unexpected. In the work I do that I get excited about, there's usually lots of room for the unexpected and at least as much room occupied by the unknown. When I don't really know if it's going to turn out well at all, that's exciting and might indicate we're on relatively new territory. Someone said that it isn't experimental if you know the outcome before the experiment is finished. In a related vein, Bachelard said "If one doesn't put one's reason at stake in an experiment," in *Le Surrationalisme* (1936), "the experiment is not worth attempting."

- What forms of publication/presentation fit your works best?

I've been publishing almost all of my stuff on the net since 1996. So I try to create art that works well there. But the last couple of years, I've also published a couple of books. And I try to make that stuff work in print as well as my other stuff works on the net. I'd like to develop a version of Aleph Null that would do well in a gallery (via 'gallery mode'). I think if you put your mind to thinking about the special properties of the media/um you're working in, and attending to all the dimensions of the art, it should work OK in any medium. I'm going to see if I can develop some good prints of some of my collaboration with bill bissett.

- How important is rhythm in your creations?

You're on the money today, Piotr. Yes, rhythm is important to me. I was a drummer in a band. And my interactive audio work involves the synchronized layers and sequences of sound files. And there's a visual rhythm slider in Aleph Null. So, yes, rhythm is important to me. Rhythm is part of pattern, and pattern is crucial to art.

- How to use changes in a piece of art or in a poem? What do you think about adding something to older works?

That's one of the possibilities of web-published work on your own site. I've done that. I added new parts to the Nio project, for instance, years after the original project was finished. Also, I added new stir fry texts to the Stir Fry Texts. The Stir Fry project is ongoing. I think adding new parts to old projects can strengthen them.

- Poets said that my works are comics, but comic artists said it's poetry. Not being accepted, I started creating „poemicals”. Do you ever feel that your creations „don't fit”?

I've found your poemicals of use and of value to me. Just thinking about Aleph Null in terms of poemicals or comics has been useful. For instance, thinking of this slideshow as poemical: http://vispo.com/aleph3/images/bill_bissett/slidvid13. This is from my collaboration with bill bissett. In this slideshow, the 'panels' are circular. Each circle is a 'panel', sort of. I've been thinking of a book of these, where I add 'captions' of some sort. In comics, as you know, 'captions' are pretty much any text that is in the gutter or in thought balloons, or at the top of the panel, as happens in comics. The captions would contain a story of bill bissett's life, perhaps.

Here's another one to think of in terms of poemicals: http://vispo.com/aleph3/images/jim_andrews/alchemy/slidvid6. Think of each circle, again, as a panel. This slideshow is of Aleph Null chewing on public images concerned with alchemy and cosmography.

Much of my work is some kind of hybrid. Something crossed with something else. Innovation is one of my main passions. Trying to do things that haven't been done before. So, of course, even when, as art, as poetry, it's strong--which isn't all the time--it often doesn't fit in very well to what has already been done. That's part of the consequence of trying to create relatively innovative work. It comes with the territory. There's some pain involved in one's work not fitting in well. Some rejection. Some resistance. Some resentment. But there's also the thrill of really fresh and strong art. That thrill, that joy, that achievement, that totally surprising experience of beauty, of the literary, of the interactive, of visual art, of audio art--that

never-the-same-twice experience of terrific generative art--that is a rewarding countervailing motivation against the negative aspects of not fitting in.

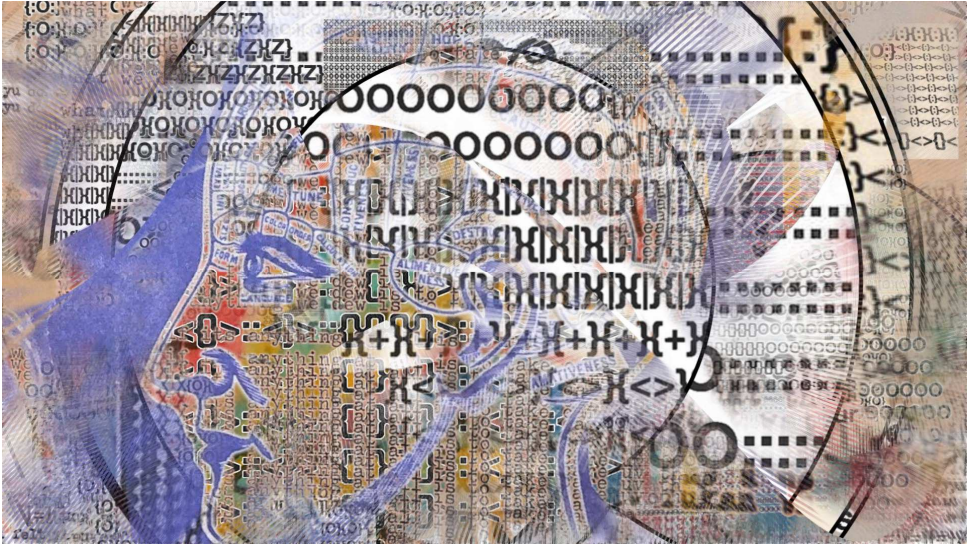
- I would like to develop „neopoemicals”, using the experience of poemicals, and also expanding it a little bit. On one hand I would like to go towards origami, shredding paper and doing similar things, but on the other hand I would like to use computer programs better. How to use computer programs to create interesting neopoemicals?

I'm not sure what sort of difference(s) you're thinking of between 'poemicals' and 'neopoemicals'.

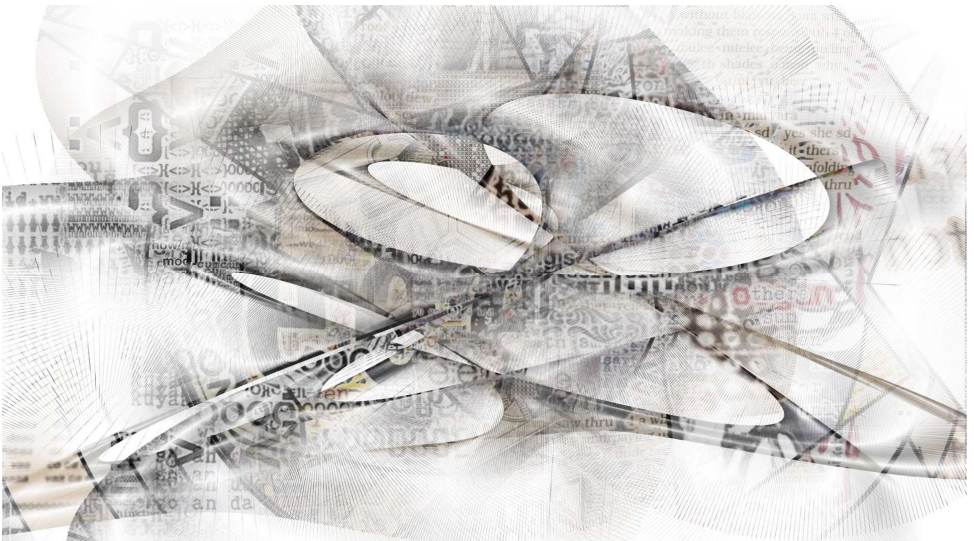
Another idea I've thought could be good, in a certain sense, is to use panels as a way to present my slideshows of images. I have maybe close to a hundred slideshows of images, each of which is quite unified. I need a way to present all those slideshows in one interface in a compelling way. You can see that http://vispo.com/aleph3/images/bill_bissett is a better way to present a bunch of slideshows than is <http://vispo.com/dbcinema> . But they're both still not optimal. So, instead, imagine a page that looks like a page of comics. You see multiple panels, like a page of a comic. And perhaps each of the panels has a caption. And in each panel is a poster image from a slideshow. A big splashy poster image. When you click a panel, that takes you to the slideshow. And when you click the 'back' button, you go back to the poemical. That's using comics/poemicals not in the most creative way, but as a frame, really, for presenting slideshows of images. But as a really good frame, I think.

- I think that Canada is an empire of visual poetry. Do you think neopoemicals could be interesting for Canadian visual artists?

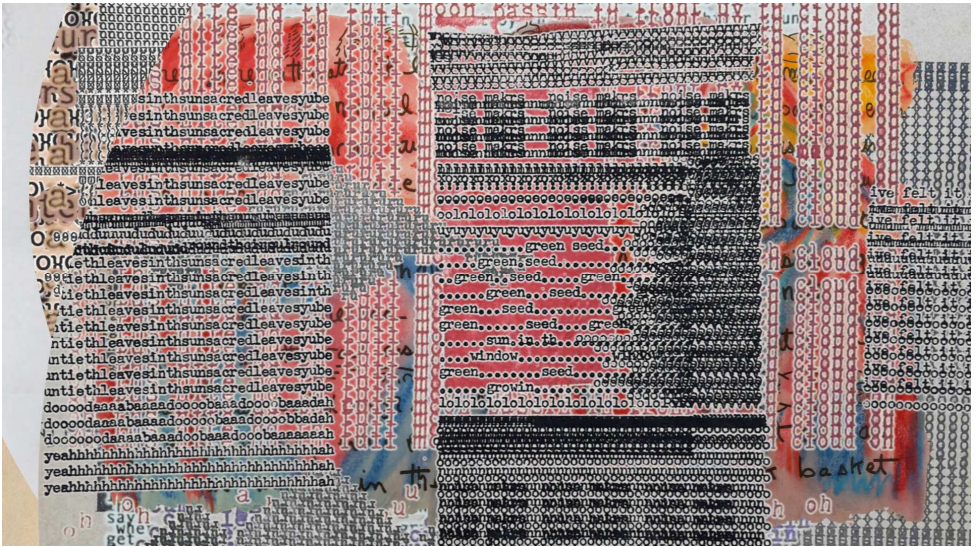
Ha. Canada as an empire of visual poetry. It's still fairly marginal, really, visual poetry. Even in Canada. But yes there has been and still are some good visual poets here. Why do you describe Canada as an empire of visual poetry? In any case, yes, poemicals and neopoemicals should be interesting to Canadian visual poets. bpNichol, one of the most prominent of the Canadian visual poets, did a lot of his main work as a visual poet in the comics, or, as you call it, poemicals form.



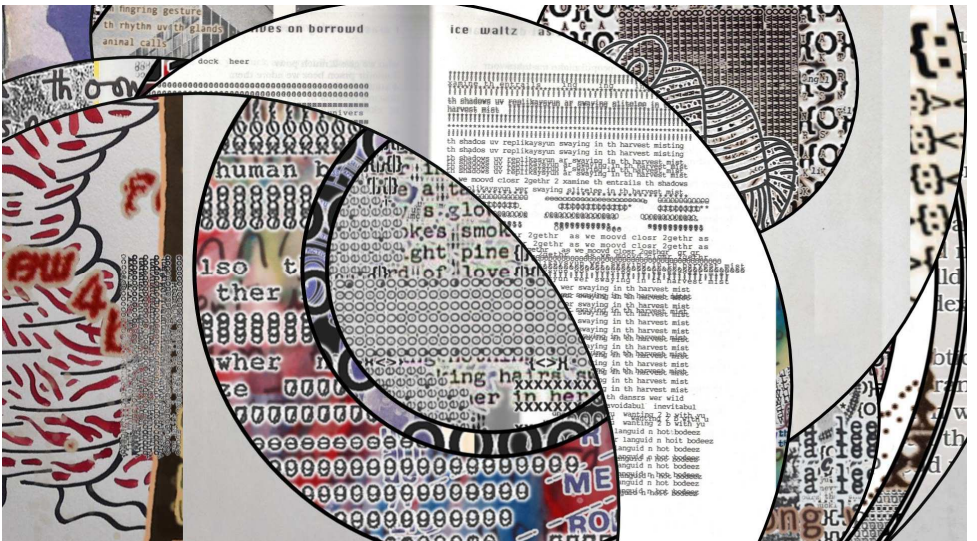
http://vispo.com/aleph3/images/bill_bissett/slidvid19/index.htm?n=46
Collaboration between Jim Andrews/bill bissett. The homepage of the collaboration is http://vispo.com/aleph3/images/bill_bissett



http://vispo.com/aleph3/images/bill_bissett/slidvid20/index.htm?n=6



http://vispo.com/aleph3/images/bill_bissett/slidvid21/index.htm?n=204

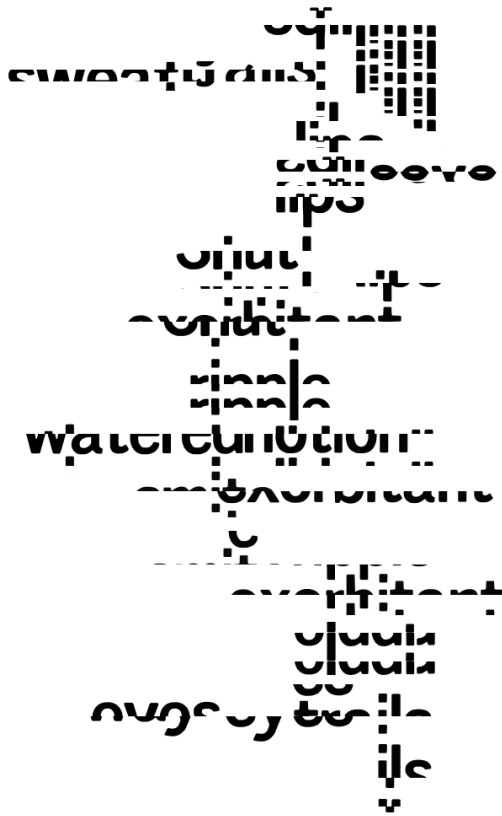


http://vispo.com/aleph3/images/bill_bissett/slidvid21/index.htm?n=253

Volodymyr Bilyk

- How can an artist be understood?

To be understood is not an artist's job. Sure, having a statement or a manifesto might help to clear things out, but that's optional. The work speaks for itself. If an artist needs such crutches to get the piece working – that's his problem. The thing with the majority of artist's attempts to be understood is that it undermines what they are trying to do. Usually, it is just awkward, but sometimes it can be detrimental to the artist's work. Being understood is an aftereffect of the work done. There is a long standing and hideously pointless debate on whether or not art should be accessible. I think it is a matter of perception. As the one on the receiving end – i think it is my responsibility to understand what i'm perceiving. If you make an effort – you will probably get the point no matter what. If one wants the point to be chewed and digested for him – that's not an artist's responsibility. No one's entitled to explain anything.



- When I read Eneida by Kotlyarevsky, the thing that amazed me was the humour. What do you think about the old masters (who were sometimes really innovative), and how important is humour to you?

Humor is a transformative force. While everyone knows for sure what it is – it is beyond definition and it can take any shape or form depending on the field of use. Basically, it is an artistic equivalent of radiation. Its use always results in something else. And it is really hard to handle in an effective manner.

As for Kotlyarevsky's Eneida – you gotta respect Eneida for what it really represents. It is not just a travesty as it is commonly referred to. If you simplify matters – it is just another loose tongue-in-cheek translation of Virgil's Aeneid and in turn based on Osipov's parody of Virgil's original. But somehow it managed to transcend its sources and go beyond so far the very fabrique of reality cracked and everything stopped making sense. In that regard, it is very much like Tristram Shandy – way ahead of its time. Eneida is one of the most viciously subversive pieces of literature ever. It took the plot and the gimmick elsewhere and then spun it the other way around – making it new in the process. It is punk AF. The reason why Kotlyarevsky's Eneida is such a powerful work is because it flipped the bird and started doing its own thing. Because „Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law”. It wiped the floor with the rules so clean the surface became mirror-like and it reflected the rays of the sun back at it and the sun got roasted on its rays. That's how you make art.

- My biggest poetic success was in Lviv, when I shouted my poems to over a hundred people. What are the most important and interesting places in Ukraine where visual poetry and similar arts are presented? Or is it simply internet?

– Short answer: Don't know – don't care.

Long answer: I've stopped caring about that a long time ago and don't want to bother any time soon. Despite the fact that there are seemingly a lot of platforms and channels for the poets to operate in Ukraine – all this infrastructure is designed to perpetuate the existing status quo. Publisher's forum, its Poetry Festival, Meridian Chernovitz, Art Arsenal and so on – it is more of the same or even more of the same or so much more of the same it is more of the same all over again.

Let's get this thing straight: I'm the man who built his entire career on the internet. No one gave a flying damn about me, no one helped me, no one gave me the opportunities, no one endorsed me. All I got in Ukraine was complete ignorance, mockery and ridicule. And I'm bitter. Back in 2014 I was interviewed in 3AM magazine which is rather well-respected and prominent publication. Was it any useful for my position in Ukraine? Not in the slightest. I wasn't even mentioned in the study of foreign affairs of Ukrainian writers. However, old dudes who get low-key translations are all over it. I'm omnipresent digital man. I don't exist in Ukraine. I'm a citizen of ether.



- You use different names for what you do, such as scanography, but sometimes you use more general names, for example poems or pieces (at least this is the way they are presented). What can you say about categorizations of works, and about how you give titles to your works?

I think it is stupid to differentiate forms of creativity. No matter how you call it or categorize – it is still creativity. As for categorization – there are commonly accepted forms with certain criterias. There is no point in making things up when you can call simply as what it is. The titles are trickier. I tend to title something after it is finished. I don't like to go title first – it is not very productive outside of mental exercising. The way the title is given depends on the case. Sometimes it is general summary of the thing. Other times it is more about tone or theme of the thing. Then it can be something random.

For example, my last book „Roadrage”. Originally, the title stemmed from the document in which i was gathering drafts. It was called like that, because that way it would have been in the very bottom of the folder and easy to locate. Why that particular word? Because i don't like gibberish titles and there was a document named Rice. However, that document was basically a dump of stuff I liked but couldn't use anywhere. It was broken, scattered and disjointed. I was trying to make sense of it but it just wasn't coming together. I was suffering from burnout and extreme prostration at that time so i was clinging to anything like a drowning man – and so i was staring at the title of the document and dawned on me. Roadrage is an aggressive or angry behavior exhibited by a driver of a road vehicle. Why just not

write poems that do just that? That's how concept of what eventually became Roadrage came together. Then the title fell off as i wanted to make it more specific. But none of the alternate titles ever stuck and i kept calling the thing Roadrage regardless. When I approached the publisher regarding this issue he simply said that there is no point in changing the title if it perfectly describes the concept. That's how the book got titled.

- When do you reject works submitted to Brave New World Magazine and other projects that you edit?

1 If the submission somehow violates the guideline.

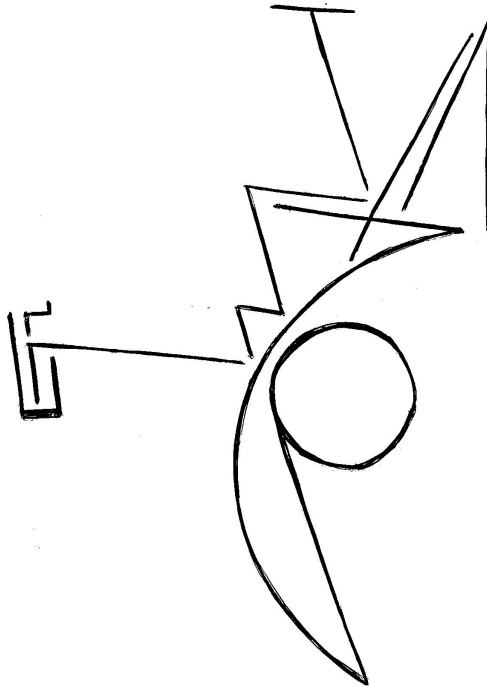
2 if the submission contains abusive, racist, sexist, otherwise hateful content

3 oddly enough, the other reason to reject is when the mag is called Brave New World instead of Brave New Word. It is not that hard to memorize if you give a shit. Which is usually not the case.

Over the course of last two years i've got around a thousand of submissions and more than a third send pieces to Brave New World Magazine. What a way to present yourself in a good way.

- How important is contrast in visual poetry, and in other forms of creativity?

Contrast works when you have something to compare with. Otherwise - depends on the context and the artistic intent. No „one-size-fits-all” solution.



- What do you think about minimalism in poetry, and how important are different fonts, for example in your font collages?

Depends on the context and the artistic intent. There is no „one-size-fits-all” solution. Some stuff works when it is all flowery. The other stuff works when it is dried up to the skeletal form. Some stuff really shines when it is torn apart while the other needs to be drowned in the verbal matter in order to do its carnal business.

The use of different fonts is motivated in the same manner. Sometimes it makes sense to do it. Sometimes not. Sometimes it doesn't really affect the piece in any substantial manner.

- Could you say something about the project with the black comic panels?

I read a lot. I take a lot of notes. As a side-effect of this practice – i get a lot of stuff that ends up in my Cabinet of Curiosities. One day i noticed that i have a lot of black panels culled from different sources. I find them fascinating. So i decided to make a blog about it. In a way – it is an abstract narrative. An appropriate perpetual abstract narrative. The reason why i made it as a blog is because for some reason it was never done before. I thought there must be a blog about black panels.

- I would like to develop something I call „neopoemings”. What to do to promote it? How to create interesting pieces?

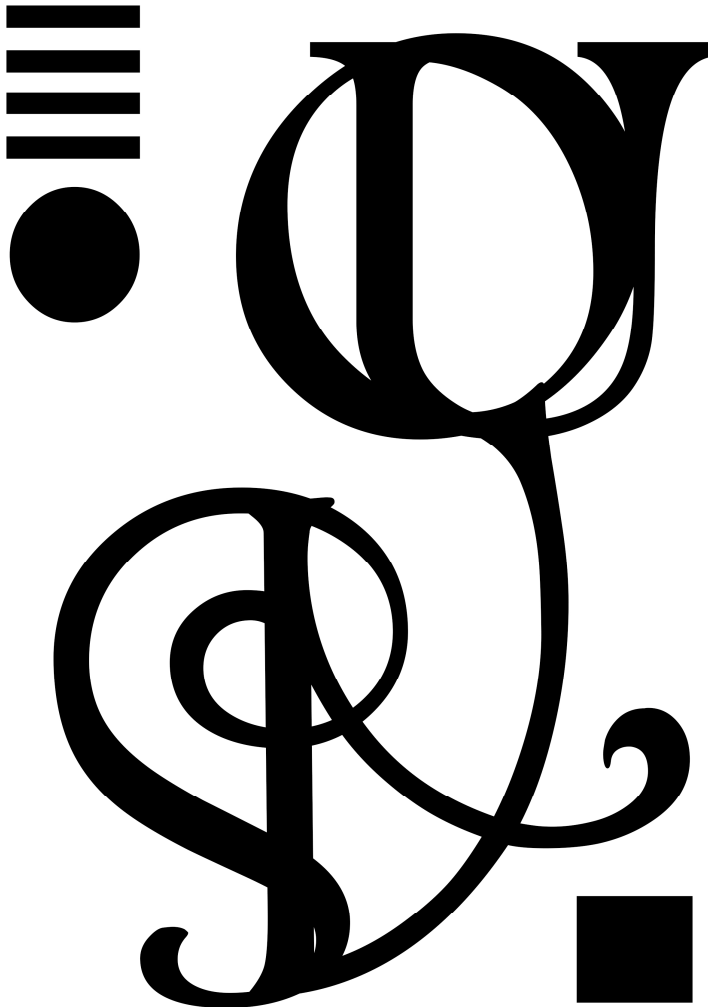
The promotion of the novel aesthetics requires a significant amount of connecting the dots. You need to set up the lineage of the concept – explain where does it comes from. At the same time, you need to work out the tools for the thing. The key is to explain how it works, what it is and what it is not and what makes it different or special. You need to describe what it is in an exquisite details and deconstruct the whole thing so that the mechanics would be completely accessible. Then you need to gain multiple perspectives on the subject. It is important to get them from the credible and well-respected sources. Otherwise, the whole affair will be deemed as a self-promotion antics.

As for the second question – every aesthetics got its own portfolio of sorts – all possible combinations of the concepts or just prominent ways of applying it. At the initial stage – i would concentrate on gathering as many diverse examples as possible and commenting their innerworking in detail.

- Are poems objects? For example when there is a photo of a visual poem, is the photo more important, or the specimen (the particular piece of paper with ink on it)? How important is the form of publication for you?

The form of publication is an illusion for the most part. It is the way the thing can be consumed by the reader, watcher, listener, et al. The piece can be presented in a variety of ways and provide different or equal experiences if done right. I don't think the piece should be locked in a singular state if it can be transformed or translated into another form and retain its artistic qualities. For me, the key is – whether the thing works at all in a specific medium. If yes – then why not. If not – I just don't use it.

Every medium got its merit. It is a matter of perspective and purpose. Some stuff works better on paper and some stuff works better on the screen. Then there is some stuff feels better when it doesn't exist. It all depends on the particular piece and the way it works.



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BNW: <https://bnw-mag.blogspot.com>

Roadrage: <https://zimzalla.co.uk/049-volodymyr-bilyk-roadrage>

Petra Schulze-Wollgast

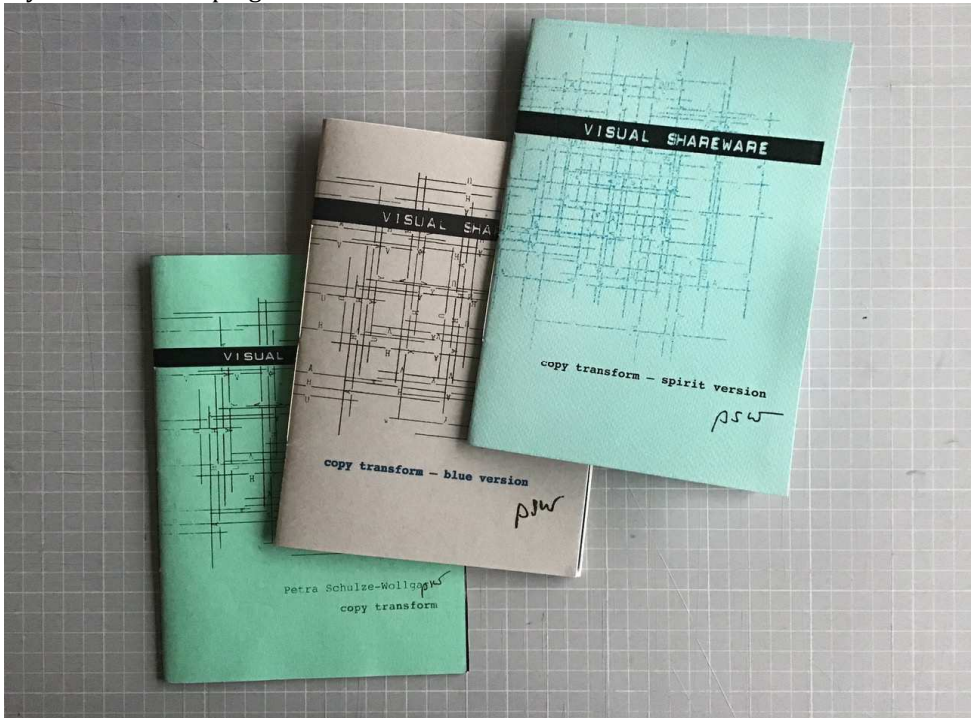
- Your „copy transform” chapbook from the „Visual Shareware” series is my favourite. Can you tell us something about the brochure, about the blue version, and about the whole series?

For copy transform I took some of my typographic work and put it on a small table photocopier machine. I was quite impressed how the impact changed in comparison to the original works.

When doing the photocopies I wished I could also print in Blue with the photocopier, but I didn't could get blue toner for my machine. Later when I got in touch with mimeo printing I could realize it with a second edition, „copy transform – blue version”.

Recently I found an old spirit duplicator and I printed a third edition with it, „copy transform – spirit version”.

Funny thing it was not my plan to make this editions when I created the photocopier version. This is in fact quite typical for my working, things happen and my work is developing unforeseen.



- I would like to ask you about the meta level – sometimes you type about typing, and for example the title „Is there a Plan behind the Plan” also sounds interesting in the meta level context. Do you take notes on what projects you are planning?

Actually, I don't really plan my work, I sometimes make a short note of ideas – but just not to forget them again. The meta-level usually comes later – for example when I'm looking for a title. I always hang my works on the pinboard after their creation and communicate with them, so to speak. I find it interesting myself what associations, cross connections and meta levels arise.

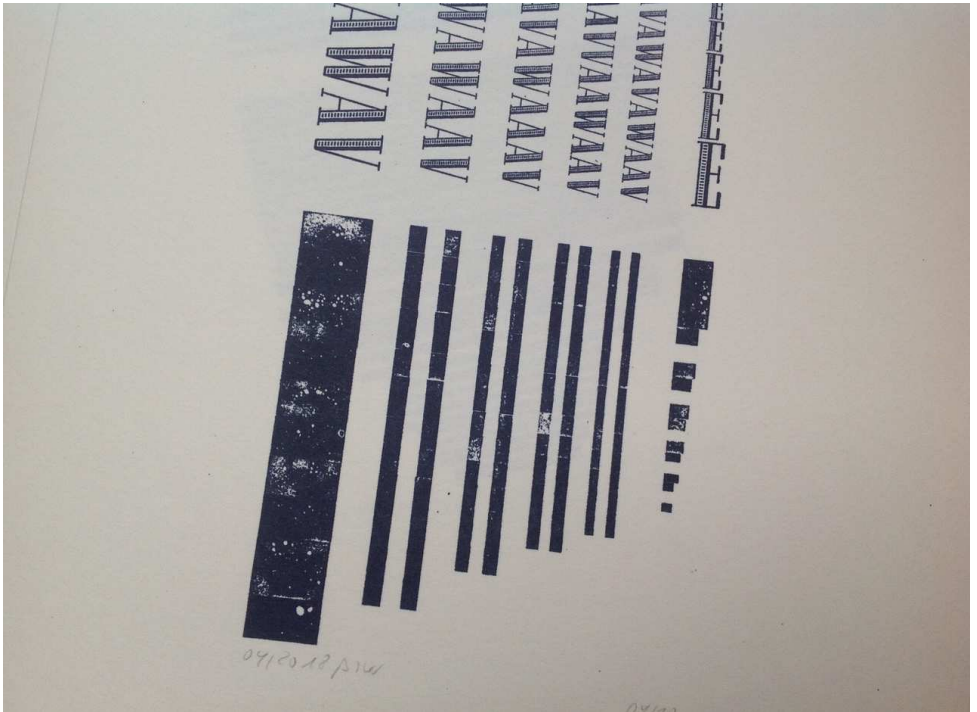


– It's interesting to read the explanations of the technique used on your publications (for example „dry transfer lettering on white lines“). Are these just notes, or should they influence the reader?

For me, the used technique is an essential part of the creation of my work. I'm experimenting with outdated printing and duplication techniques — and that is sometimes reflected in the title. I think it does something to the viewer, at least it's an explanation.

– What do you think about tradition, regarding old writing and printing machines and techniques?

I'm just fascinated by these old print making techniques and machines. Doing by hand, slowly. ;)



- Is using the backside of the font more encryption or censorship?

Interesting question, could definitely be both. I don't want to decide that – at the end it is unreadable!

It's just an example for finding a meta level: But this is another nice example of the meta-level that can arise.

Actually, I print the backs of the letters first of all because of their geometric shape, and the constructions that can be created from them. But these backs also often have a beautiful structure.

When I printed the backs of the metal type letters, for example, I noticed that the perforated structure of the feet often looks like galaxies. This resulted in the title of the series, „The Backside of the Universe“.

- You exhibit your works in many places. How do you find places to exhibit?

For me, the exchange with like-minded artists is important — and extremely inspiring. And I found my concrete poetry community mainly through the social networks. There is it, where I exhibit my work :)

Sometimes I am also invited to exhibitions in the real world then.

- Can you tell us something about ToCall?

Last year I found an antiquarian copy of the last edition of Tlaloc published by Cavan McCarthy in the 1970s. At that time there were many such anthological,

periodical, independent magazines in which poets and artists could publish their works. I was extremely fascinated by the idea and simplicity – and it was printed on the mimeograph. I was just so excited that I decided to print a magazine about visual and concrete poetry on my mimeograph.



– You sometimes concentrate on the shape of poems. Are you searching for new forms, or do you want the reader to notice the form?

Since I'm interested not only in letters but also in geometrics, indeed, I want the reader to notice the form of texts and poems.

– I'm interested in the sphere where poetry and comics overlap – it's mostly visible between experimental comics and visual poetry (I call it neopoems). Do you like it when arts meet?

For sure, I like the discovery of new spheres. With printing typographics I found my way in the field between art and literature – and that's great!

– Which do you prefer: the square, or the A4 format? And why?

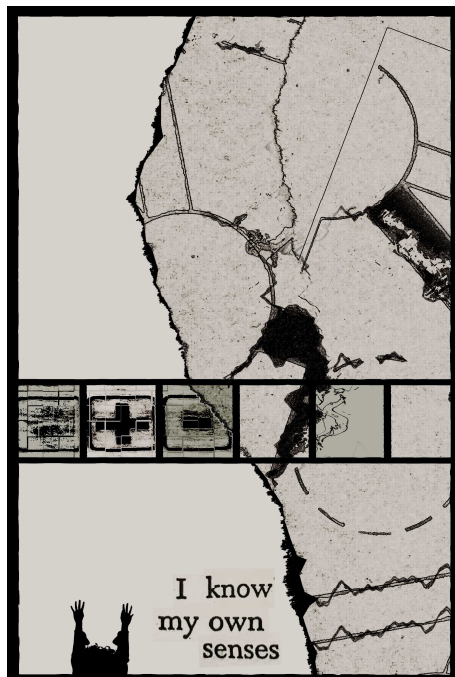
I prefer the technically more suitable. For the typewriter I often choose the square because I can then turn the page. For my mimeograph, the A4 format is the most effective, then I don't have to cut anything. And the A4 paper is often cheaper.

<https://pswgallery.tumblr.com/tagged/backside-of-the-universe>
www.psw.gallery

JC Mendizabal

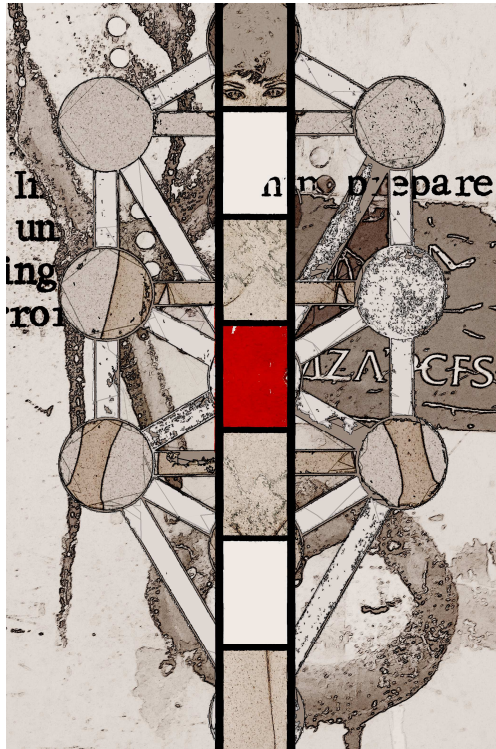
- Do art and music have something in common with religion, for example with shamanic practices?

Yes, from my point of view they are two ways of looking at the same thing – two different approaches to working with spiritual or shamanic spaces. Through trance states (gained through breathing, dancing, fasting, drumming) or through creation, ritual, etc one can expand the underlying assumptions and vision that hold you tied to a particular complex of habits. It's not necessary for someone to be aware that's what they're doing (or to describe it in similar words) – the act of relating to the world in this creative way makes it „shamanic“ or spiritual in the way I see it. When you work with shifting the way you see the world and yourself by creating you are working with „shamanic“ or „psychedelic“ spaces, even if you use different words to describe these spaces. Anytime you access areas within you (or outside of you) that are normally hidden or purposefully shut out, that is a „spiritual experience“ from my point of view. That also doesn't mean that the art itself needs to have any specific references to religion or spiritual practices. The presence of „spiritual“ signifiers is completely irrelevant to its inherent power to invoke an altered state or at the very least a momentary shift in perspective. Often the presence of such signifiers is a short cut to let the audience know what is happening (often as a way of marketing) – in the process framing the creation within a pre-established set of definitions.



- You come from El Salvador, and now you live in the USA. How do places where you stay influence your works?

Living in El Salvador allowed me to experience at least 2 or 3 different cultures – the city culture of San Salvador, which was very influenced by the USA but still had a particular character of its own, the countryside culture which was a lot older and grounded in a very different way of looking at the world and the culture that my grandmothers showed me which was even older, and rooted in a way of perceiving people and events that is almost lost now. I perceived an archetypal weight in almost every story my grandmother would tell me about the world – a weight that was (and is) nearly impossible to translate by simply repeating her words. In these stories and descriptions, I could perceive a kind of inherent magic which tends to be banished by the standardization of the modern city. Moving to the USA allowed me to interact with the modern and postmodern culture of San Francisco directly, as well as encounter people that came from other places in the world. This opened me up to very different ideas and points of view. It also opened me up to the psychedelic counterculture which evolved in the 90s in the Bay Area. This is where I first encountered electronic dance music, ambient music, ecstatic dancing, etc.



- I am interested in the field where poetry and comics overlap. Do you think there are works that can be both seen as experimental comics and as visual poetry?

Yes. Often that's how our work has been described – as a kind of visual poetry. (A friend said of our comics: „Sometimes when I read your stuff, I doubt my ability to understand English.”) Many of our comics don't have a clear storyline and yet there is a relationship between the words and the images that is more poetic than illustrative. As much as possible we strive to reach the edge of what can be understood – something that is just beyond language while still using language and other symbols and signifiers as imperfect pointers.



- How important is text in your works?

Although some of our graphic pieces are completely devoid of text, it is always present in one way or another. There are some pieces where the text is gone because it was removed at the last minute – in other words, the piece was created around a piece of text. And then, when the piece started to take shape, I realized that the text itself may no longer be necessary. In those cases I still perceive the old text as a kind of absence that can be gleamed through the shapes and symbols that remain. In other cases, the text is written first and the graphics are created around

the text, to clash with it and somehow complement it. Yet in other cases, the text is a final touch – an emergent meaning from a random scanned page or from a street advertisement, etc. In all these cases, the text is not meant to define the piece, or to communicate a final meaning. Instead it's meant as another element that adds to the complexity of the different elements interacting with each other.

- What do you think about abstraction and asemic writing – are these things similar?

For me, asemic writing seems to imply a kind of meaning – it promises meaning and then doesn't fulfill that promise. It's similar to what I do with music – where there may be a sample of text that is so buried in other sounds that the listener can perceive a voice saying „something” but they can't tell what the meaning is. You can hear enough to tell that „a voice is saying something” – the primary message of the message is achieved: its existence as message. But no further meaning is forthcoming. So asemic writing, while not having meaning in itself, still holds on to „a meaning of meaning” – within a graphic piece it can hold the place of text, saying this is where the explicit meaning would be found if there were any. Abstraction would go a step further in breaking down any possibility of meaning – or simply allowing you to create or place meaning where you see fit.

- How should comic frames be used?

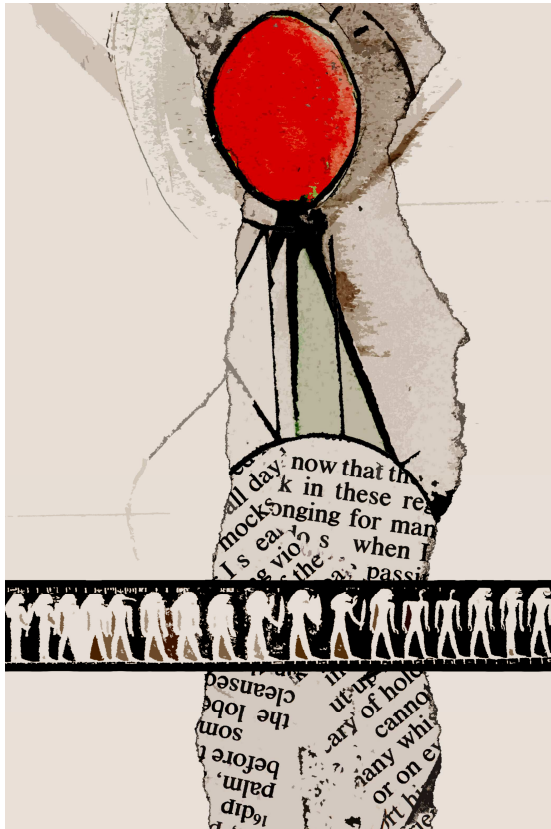
I don't think there's any rules for how they should be used or not used. In our comics, we have some books where there are clear comic frames in a traditional style and other books where there are no frames at all – just a full page collage or an implied sequence of scenes or chambers without boxes around them.

- Can you tell us something about Radio Free Clear Light?

RFCL was initially born as a music night of improvisation; an experiment in impromptu shamanic invocation. Eventually, it grew to become an identity around which we could experiment with all kinds of creation – including visual art. When I say „we” in relation to RFCL, in my mind I include all the many people that have been a part of it over the years (since 1995) whether they only worked on one comic, one piece of music, or whether they worked with me for years. One of the main principles of RFCL has been to focus on the process of creation rather than on the final result. We design a process and then see what comes out – instead of imagining a result and then trying to figure out a way to make that result happen.

- Your music was performed by an orchestra – how do such things happen?

I met the conductor of the Symphonic Orchestra in El Salvador during a visit to El Salvador. He listened to some chamber pieces I had written while studying classical composition. He liked them and offered me the chance to write a piece for the Orchestra. I jumped at the chance and spent approximately a year working on a piece: „Canto Para Ser Perseguido” which was eventually performed by the Orchestra. It was a great honor to have my music performed by the national Orchestra – and even more, to see that the musicians enjoyed what they were playing and they were happy with it.



- Does your art influence people around you?

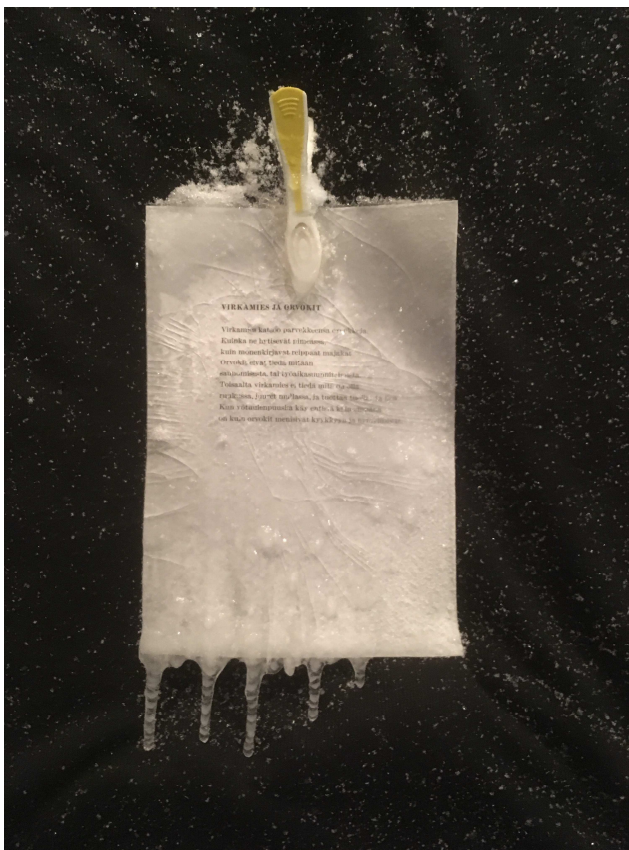
Since I try as much as possible to not focus on results I don't spend much time thinking about how my art will influence or not influence anyone. I simply know that I've put a lot of attention and effort into it, and if someone looks or listens (or reads) carefully, they will find it there. At that point, it's up to them to find it and convert it into something for themselves. My part of the equation is done.

www.blacknotemusic.com

Tuomas Timonen

- Is paper important to you, and why?

This is a difficult question. Yes, paper is important to me, or furthermore, paper is essential or even fundamental to me. I still write my first drafts by hand. Suffering from hyperactive mind I find it pleasingly restrictive that – when writing by hand – I need to focus on what I'm trying to write. In addition, I find paper very easy and practical as an application. I can take it anywhere in the world and it works without wifi, I can take it into woods without worrying whether its battery is going to die. So I'm totally not born digital... In fact, just the opposite. Finland's history, or economic history, is based on forests. Or – so to speak – wood. And paper is made of wood. And, especially nowadays, when we face the importance of forests considering for example climate change... So, every time I take a piece of paper in my hand I feel I'm connected to my history, and at the same time I can't escape the feeling that I'm wasting our global resources.



- Your project „asetelmia_makulointi” is really great! How do you work on it?

First a few words about the background of the project. My poetry collection 'Still Life' did not sell despite the positive criticism. When the publisher decided to maculate the unsold books, I thought that once the books were destroyed anyway, it could also be turned into a playful art project. So, with the help of my friends and colleagues, I bought all the unsold 483 copies of that book.

The purpose of the project is to come up with as many ways as possible to destroy the book and to compile pictures and key information from these into the project's Instagram page. At first I asked some artists that I know to join the project, and after the start several artists have contacted me and wanted to participate in the project.

My own ideas of extermination have come by accident after an intense beginning. Or thematically. For example, I thought it would be fun to cook a book, and therefore I started to think about different cooking-related destruction methods like baking, grilling, braising.

Since there are still some two hundred books left to destroy, I think that I may need at some point to reduce the ambition in terms of ideas and begin to recycle the ideas that I use. I'd be happy to return – perhaps because I am also a trained carpenter – to some tools that I already used: a saw, a drill, an ax, chisels ... And at the same time of course, still I'm looking for new artists who would be interested in participating in the project.



- Could you say something about your plays and directing them?

I've written both traditional chamber dramas and highly experimental one-letter plays. Years ago, when I began writing plays, I had two central, aesthetic and/or theoretical aspirations in mind. The first was that play and drama should be separated. That play should not mean just one possible (stage) narrative, that is, drama, just as „painting” does not just mean „landscape painting”. My second effort was to apply the so-called total book idea to the play (unfortunately I can't find the article where I found that term). This means that the play could consist of a wide variety of materials, not only dialogues, monologues and stage directions, but also journal entries, lyrics and receipts.

When directing my own play, I am by no means „loyal” to the text. I'm referring to the dilemma, which is sometimes encountered in the theater, that the staging of the play doesn't please or represent the authors vision. So, when I direct my own play, there is no concern that the author will be hurt by my interpretations! As a director, I do not think so much about what the play is about, rather I focus on what the performance is about. That is, what kind of performance I want to make, and how could I use my play in that particular performance.

Also, as a director, I have to meet the challenges I have written. For example, in my miniature play „Ö”, which consists of just one letter „Ö” written in the lower right corner of the strip... I mean, how a single letter “Ö” should be read and interpreted to produce a theatrical performance. It is about association and imagination, and of course, knowing and using the means and possibilities of theater – without forgetting tradition – as much as possible.

- What was your best artistic idea?

In the context of destroying my books? Oh, I'm sorry, I really can't decide! Was it that I burned a book in a black forest? Was it that I tried to make coffee? Or was it that I made a line of ghosts for a Halloween party?

- What is your first association with the term „neopoemics”?

To be honest, I didn't know the term until you mentioned it! I'm bit of a tourist in the field of experimental (visual) poetry, so I'm not so aware of different flavors, terms and genres.

- I would like to develop neopoemics, understood as combining elements of visual poetry with elements of experimental comics. And I'm using my experience of creating many poemics – so I'm looking at my older works from a perspective. Neopoemics often include publishing with changes (for example each copy of an album is different, publishing different, independent works, and then putting them together as a book, or the other way round – publishing something as a brochure or book, later presenting some changed fragments of it – perhaps it reminds of asetelmia_makulointi). What should I do to make neopoemics really interesting?

Oh, I'm afraid I can't say anything very specific. But in general I believe it's always question about context and concept. What is the context of the work, and how does the context *work* with the work, what is the play between the work and its context. And, as for concept, the question is, I believe, how clear and/or innovative

the concept is. Some might say that I use here term „concept” as a synonym for „idea”, and to some extent I do, but still I prefer the term „concept” when we are talking about interdisciplinary works.



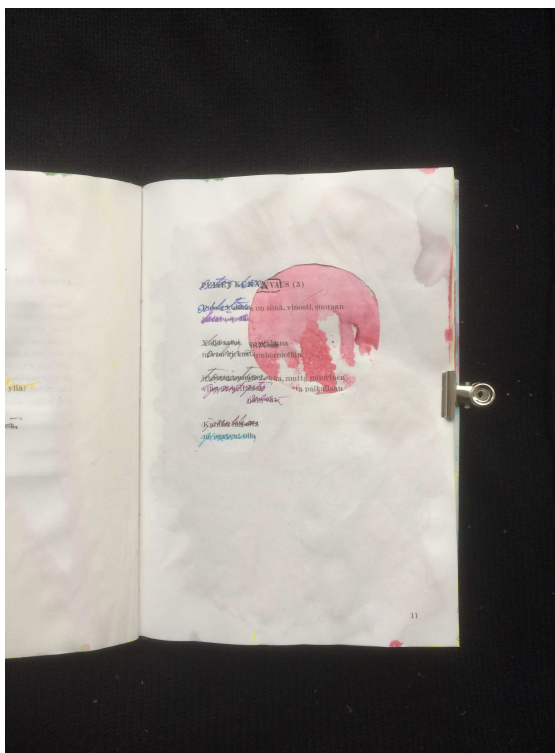
- I often find something innovative in Finnish poetry (visual poetry and more). How does the situation of such poetry look in Finland? Are there a lot going on, for example at festivals, workshops?

Clearly, there has been a huge change in Finland in the 21st century regarding the field of poetry. On the one hand, traditional, large publishing houses publish little poetry (because it is not economically viable), and on the other hand, small publishers and self-publishing publishers – not to mention online forums or IG poetry – are living in their heyday. It seems that the experimental field of poetry is

doing well in Finland: everything – from photographic collages to minimalist sound poetry – is now being published – in various forums – in the name of poetry.

- I have read Kalevala (translated into Polish) many years ago, I'm fascinated by the stories, but also epic „climate”. I even wrote something called „Pseudokalevala” where I imitated the rhythm and wrote stories about Väinämöinen. I hope you are not mad about that. What do you think of the major forms of poetry, such as epics and other really long poems (including the larger forms of visual poetry)?

First of all, of course, I'm not angry that you've used the Kalevala – on the contrary, it's a tribute! In fact, a major project is currently under way in Finland, based on the Kalevala. In it, many esteemed musicians grab the Kalevala and, based on and inspired by it, reinterpret it in a way reflecting our times. I find this project interesting because it looks at a difficult and somewhat dusty, high-culture associated with Kalevala from the perspective of popular culture. The project kind of re-popularizes the Kalevala, making it a folk culture again.



https://www.instagram.com/asetelmia_makulointi

Khairulsani Ismail

- What techniques do you use in your works?

Mixed media technique is my main media in all artworks.

- Your drawings often show suicide. Why is that?

What we do in our present life ? Without personal boundaries people are actually killing themselves physically, emotionally and mentally and are always being manipulated, used, or violated by others. They allow us to separate who we are, and what we think and feel, from the thoughts and feelings of others. What I wanted to show is that in modern world we are just not killing others, but also are killed ourselves. We make our own problem. We killed others for that reason and at the same time we also killed ourselves with the problem we created.

- How important is calligraphy to you?

It shows beauty for the art works. Make it stand apart from others.

- What do you think about asemic writing?

To create something about thinking and creativity.

- Can you tell us something about PoemicsMag that you edited?

Very tedious job. It take a lot of time. And the first PoemcMag I made is about my political view about what happened in my country.

- You took part in two exhibitions of poemics in Lublin, your works were also present in anthologies of poemics, and you were/are a member of the poemicstrip blog. What do you like about poemics, and do you think it should be promoted more?

Poemics give you better visual on what you wanted to tell. It give a work more sense, scope and visualize it with deep understanding on the stories. I still used it in artworks for my art exhibition. So it should be promoted more with bigger audience.

- Do you keep in touch with many Malaysian poets and comic artists?

Not really. I'm not a poet or comic artists. I'm more on artist side, doing painting.

- What cultures - besides Malaysian - influence you?

All. We need to know others and to be fair to others. Know their cultures and it will give us better view and understand about them more. It will make world more colorful.

- Can you tell us something about your other activities and interesting experiences?

Doing painting and exhibit it. Exhibit the artworks will give you 'something', you can feel the viewers about what you do and thinks. It make you so close to them. You know some of you artworks is related to them. That is the best experience. When they debate your artworks, at that time you know your art are attached to them.

- What are your artistic goals?

Be more creative and productive.

APA ITU POEMICS?

Dalam ertikata mudahnya "poemics" adalah jalinan daripada 2 bentuk karya iaitu penulisan puisi (poetry writing) dan melukis komik (comics drawing). Daripada jalinan ini maka terhasillah istilah "poemics" (nama ini telah menjadi nama khas didalam pengistilahan nya).

penulisan puisi
(poetry writing)

melukis komik
(comics drawing)

a b c d e f g h
i j k l m n o p q r
s t u v w x y z

+



=



POEMICS

BRBT tidak bertenggangjawab diatas segalanya. Karya-karya ini bersifat kreatif semata-mata.

"Poemics" juga boleh diertikan sebagai penulisan puisi didalam bingkai-bingkai komik dengan bentuk penceritaan komik.

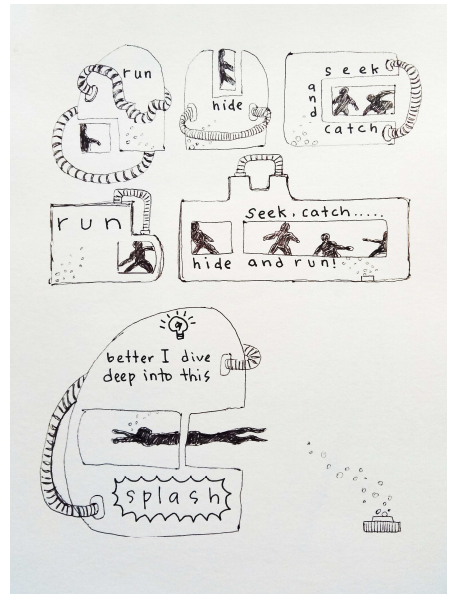
- maklumat lanjut boleh lah dikutip dihalaman berikut iaitu <http://poemicstrip.blogspot.com>

© saniismail 2011

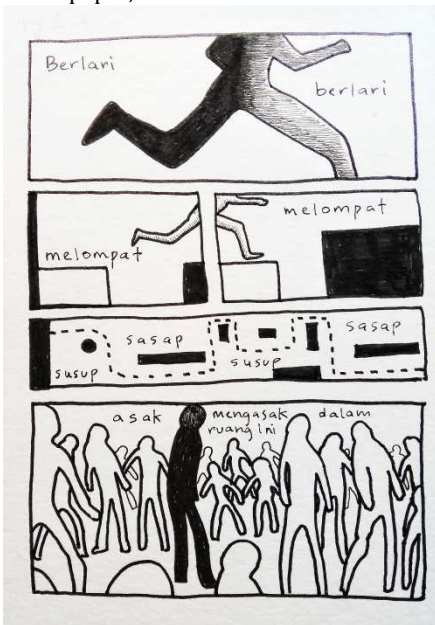
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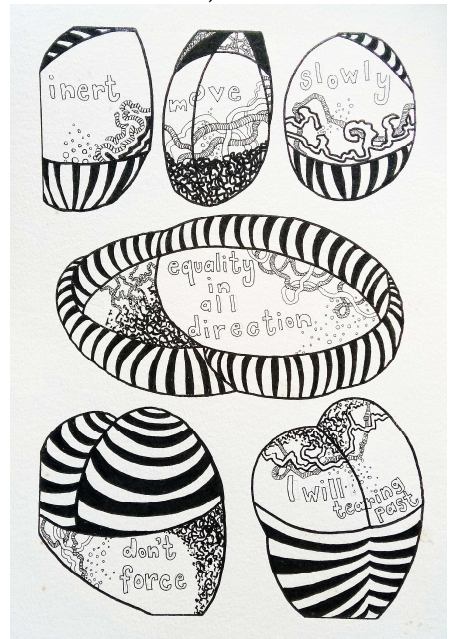
Poemics Mag 1st edition, page 24, pen and ink on paper, A5.



Seek, Run and Hide, pen and ink on paper, A5, 2017.



Poemics Mag 2nd edition, page 13, pen and ink on paper, A5.



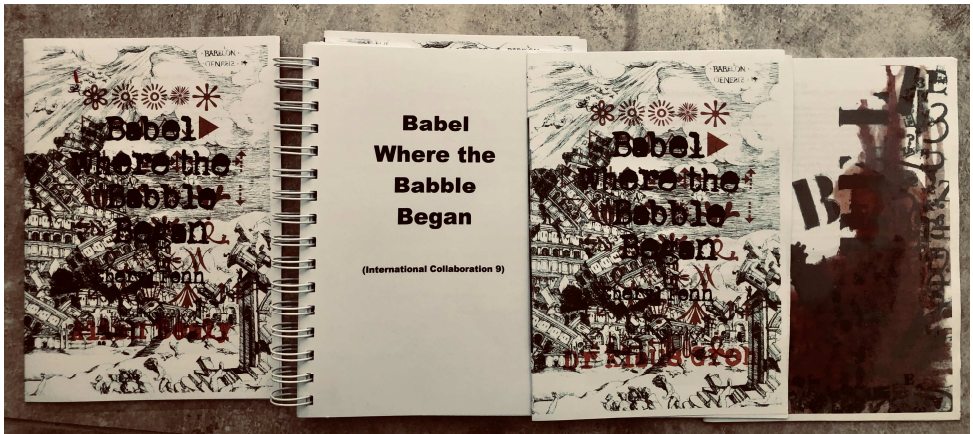
Equality, pen and ink on paper, A5, 2017.



We forget and let them all die and take care of themselves,
watercolor, pen and ink on paper, A5, 2018.



Cheating, acrylic, collage, charcoal on paper, A5, 2017.



- I've read that your handwriting is really difficult to read. When does asemic writing begin and end?

Thanks for this opportunity to put my thoughts into words Piotr – it's a good exercise. I just want to say from the outset that although I have an academic background, much of work is done outside these parameters of learned knowledge. By this I mean, there MAY be theoretical references/guidelines, but my work and thoughts are mostly intuitive. As I have not formally addressed quite a few of the questions you raise, my views may change rapidly ☺!

Asemic writing – (we all know this): Exploration of the term 'asemic writing', reveals that there are very few variations in definition. It is generally perceived to be wordless writing, with open, or no semantic content. This means that it may actually be part of a preliterate phase, although it is often relegated to a post-literate phase. Pre-literate is lost when obtaining legibility. It's almost the return to abstraction when very able artists – I think of Picasso started to shed reality in order to find an essence. One can replicate reality – and then what? One can write, and then what? How does the language artist use writing as subject matter? It cannot appear as 'words'/phrases on a canvas – it appears as sentimental or obvious (not that I am against either in the right context); therefore writing becomes abstracted. Creative investigation into WRITING I think will naturally abstract it. Let me say too – a lot of what we see is without concept or philosophy, it appears just decorative – again, no problem with that, but the work has no depth and I think this lack is what causes many arguments as to the validity of this art form. So perhaps that's the beginning of asemic writing – before the start of legibility? Its end...we haven't got there yet! Perhaps we will end up with minimalist works like *Korean* (1962 and 1963) by Jo Baer.

Through primary school we are all taught to write in a uniform way, but strangely, this drawing form has a life of its own. It's not long before each student has

his or her own interpretation of the alphabet and as adults; it is not unusual for many to return to a scribble form. So that would confirm the notion that asemic writing happens in many instances before even learning to write legible script?

I would take this to mean that it's essence is childlike and intuitive, an abstract expression of what children see adults do. As their verbal skills may still be largely unformed when this play begins to occur, one could infer that the child's intention *is* to communicate, but in a very personal way – a self informed way. A child's line of writing scribbles may not even resemble letters or words, and as they can speak before learning to write, they attend to wholeness first (the lines) rather than singular units (letters). Learning to write, as we all remember, is a lengthy and complex process, bound by blue lines and particular size requirements. How I battled to conform and even now, the sight of official, tiny blue or green blocks into which I have to squash my garrulous, unruly letters becomes a cause for alarm.

Children also employ a multisensory approach. I term this 'the zone'. I see it when students are working on an art piece they are completely engrossed with – they hone in as more senses are engaged, and they become one with what they are doing: concentration is sharpened as a faintly trancelike state is achieved. Asemic writing works the same way for me. My writing IS difficult to read – and that was done on purpose ☹ – I had a LOT to say about a great deal of things, but they are secret things – things which need to be written, but not read. So, I just adjust the legibility of my writing in order to be understood – or not – depends on the audience. My writing is then a fluid space, dependent on recipient.

An important point here for me: many have said that asemic writing, because it has no semantic content has no meaning. I beg to differ here in terms of my own practice. This is of course where the discussions, contentions and debate enter the fray. What is asemic writing? How does the individual describe it, as opposed to a collective definition? Is it only asemic when it has no meaning? Does the vacuum of meaning asemic writing is intended to address mean that because I write with meaning that it is therefore not asemic writing, even though it is illegible? Is asemic writing just an extension of visual poetry? Is it possible that because I write with illegible intention, but with intention none-the-less, I leave no space for the viewer? Of course not! I know I create two types of asemic writing – the asemic glyph which is loaded with conceptual meaning – (I definitely load it – if the reader cares to load it – or not is not mine to determine), and illegible but meaning-filled script. An example of asemic glyphs would be the Bhubezi Alphabet.

- Over two hundred people sent their mail art to the exhibition „Mail Art Makes the World a Town” organized by you. How did you do that?

In 2010 I joined IUOMA – International Union of Mail Artists (Ruud Janssen, Netherlands). This move proved key to about 3 years of intense personal artistic growth and international outreach. Mail Art in South Africa is not a common practise at all – it's very time consuming, demanding (if you want to be on top of the game) and, if you follow an unspoken rule – you return artwork when you are sent artwork. If one is generous with the network, it is very generous back, and in two years I had a massive amount of correspondents and was the proud owner of BOXES of Mail Art –

all of which was viewed with my eyes only...I brought some South African artists into the ring, but sadly, I am not in contact with anyone in South Africa who is still a part of this practice.

Anyway, I decided to share the wonderful gleanings in the form of an exhibition. Something which still remains today as a result of that exhibition (as far as I am aware the only one of its kind in South Africa), is the assembly book – Mail Art Makes the World a Town – I borrowed the phrase from the Novgorod Codex –

see: <http://www.historyofinformation.com/detail.php?entryid=3909>

18 of this publication is about to be assembled. I will stop at 20 as that appears to be a good number and postage has become prohibitive. Some parts of the world are also charging for postal collections and some items are returned – Argenita for example is proving difficult. The assembly book collection has given the most intriguing results and some artists such as TICTAC (Germany) have participated from the beginning.

She and I still maintain very close artistic communication as I am in complete admiration of her work.

Another offshoot has been The New Alexandrian Library. I have one of the biggest collections of Artists Books in South Africa. I think there are over 1000.

[http://www.cherylpenn.com/Mail_Art_Makes_The_World_a_Town__Catalogue_by_Cheryl_Penn_\(South_Africa\).pdf](http://www.cherylpenn.com/Mail_Art_Makes_The_World_a_Town__Catalogue_by_Cheryl_Penn_(South_Africa).pdf)

– What is the key to good communication in experimental art?

Communication through successful, experimental art (I use this term in its imprecise definition except to say it is the exploration of new ideas in order to extend the boundaries of ‘art’) lies in the ability to adequately express the very personal realm of the subconscious. That I think, may be a key to success: it should be conceived and presented in a personal way, without resorting to shock value. It should be technically sound – by this I mean: those who try to pass off badly made, ill-conceived works as ‘experimental’, should rather keep those experiments as part of a visual diary and not expose the work to the public until the ‘experiment’ is ‘successful’. One does not feed a bad baking experiment to the public – ones’ close companions may be subjected to a ‘taste and tell’, but not the public. I would define ‘experimental’ as the making of thoughts flesh. Being able to communicate thoughts, realizing them from the abstract to reality. The result of a thought must be accessible – if that is ones intention. As I said, sometimes I wish to remain ambiguous, but in saying that I am still communicating in a **respectful** way to an audience who I hope will gain SOMETHING from what they are viewing. Very importantly, successful experimental art should have a conceptual/philosophical underpinning. I realise that may offend many, but nothing for nothings sake is not to my taste.

– Can you tell us something about your biggest solo artistic project?

I have had solo exhibitions, but I am essentially a collaborator – I far prefer the sound of an enormous choir and the impact it makes to a piping solo – no matter how beautiful. There is a power and togetherness that lies in working collaboratively. So my ‘solo-ness’ often lies in being the conceiver, executor, collector and curator of a collaborative project. For example, my biggest work (still ongoing) is *An Encyclopedia of Everything*. This is a collection of nearly 600 small books which deal with EVERYTHING.

See: <https://an-encyclopedia-of-everything.blogspot.com>

I have swapped book for book through this body of work, so I have made A LOT OF BOOKS! This goes back to your previous question – how does one successfully communicate through experimental art? Books for me are the perfect medium for experimental art – and vade mecums are even better still. Not all ideas are good, but all ideas crave a voice. In giving an idea a platform, one leaves space for better things to emerge – creative strangeness which often are hidden behind an initial thought.

Having said that, on the day you sent this list of questions I had decided to have another solo SOLO exhibition. This will take place D.V. at Eye4Art Gallery, opening 31 August as an ‘event’.

P.S. – the exhibition was VERY successful – for which I am grateful. It involved paintings with 15 layers per work. Yes – I suffer from ADHD!

Come to think of it, I have another very large project which is a few years old – *The Authentic Massacre of the Innocent Image*. I do paintings – some upwards of 3 meters long and cut them up. I will do a ‘performance’ – I’m not sure if I like that word – called *The Sacrilage of Van Gogh* on that day where I cut a very laboriously produced copy of *Starry Starry Night* into 24 pieces. I have cut up 105 paintings! There are pieces of my work all over the world, and quite a few are used as book cover for handmade books. I worked out that’s nearly 200 square meters of work.

Another collection of books as I mentioned earlier is The New Alexandrian Library. This too is a collection of artists books – mostly unique, or limited editions where I have swapped with artists all around the world. I have literally hundreds of books to document – I think it will take me a lifetime – sadly, but I will put out a catalogue of at least 60 of them when I get a minute.

<http://newalexandrianlibrary.blogspot.com>

– I’ve watched a report about #FeesMustFall student strike in South Africa on Al Jazeera. What do you think about paying for studies?

To be honest I left lecturing at University because of politics – internal and student! I think studying is a privilege which comes at a cost because it has a value, but I think I will leave my thoughts there. I don’t ‘do’ politics, although I do ‘do’ religion. I miss the days of constructive and respectful debate, before everything became politicized.

- You teach lots of courses, visual poetry, asemic writing... Is your teaching a form of promotion of experimental art?

Very definitely, but more than that, I think it is a gateway to intuitive creative freedom. There is always a product, but for me, as a process based practitioner, process opens many doors to intuitive thinking. The cross-pollination of disciplines creates new thinking patterns and allows successful movement from the concrete to the abstract and back again. The subject matter of my courses is writing – it could have been portraiture/landscape, but **everyone** can write – and have a personal form of handwriting, created from their own brain-eye-hand action. The following will give you an idea – it comes from my summation notes on the first module:

*In the introductory class we saw that **portraits** operate on many levels, using different techniques. **Although we are creating art, we are using a landscape of language to explore the visual image.***

*We are using words – their look and feel – their power to give a palimpsest quality to artwork. We have discussed the **liminal space** in depth: what is its function?*

How does it function? What anxious, but exciting journeys open up for us in this space? A good thing to remember is that every searching person has liminal spaces in their lives. These spaces (the distance between what we know and don't know, or the unploughed tract between where we are, to where we wish to be) exist in everyone's lives: the trick is to grant them a voice. As soon as we acknowledge 'I don't know', we begin the journey 'to know'.

*We discussed **the abundant metaphor of the seed**, the fact that it is the promise of life, a liminal space where, with the right treatment, something miraculous happens.*

The courses are very experimental in nature, and some people balk at my methodologies, (which includes narrative therapy techniques) not quite GETTING their experimental nature – until they DO get it! I have wonderful success stories – which is great to me. Every time I give I class I take it too – I am teacher and participant, so I am as much involved in the process as everyone else. In fact, on Saturday an architect wrote and said that two years later she is still unpacking what she learnt on this different sort of journey.

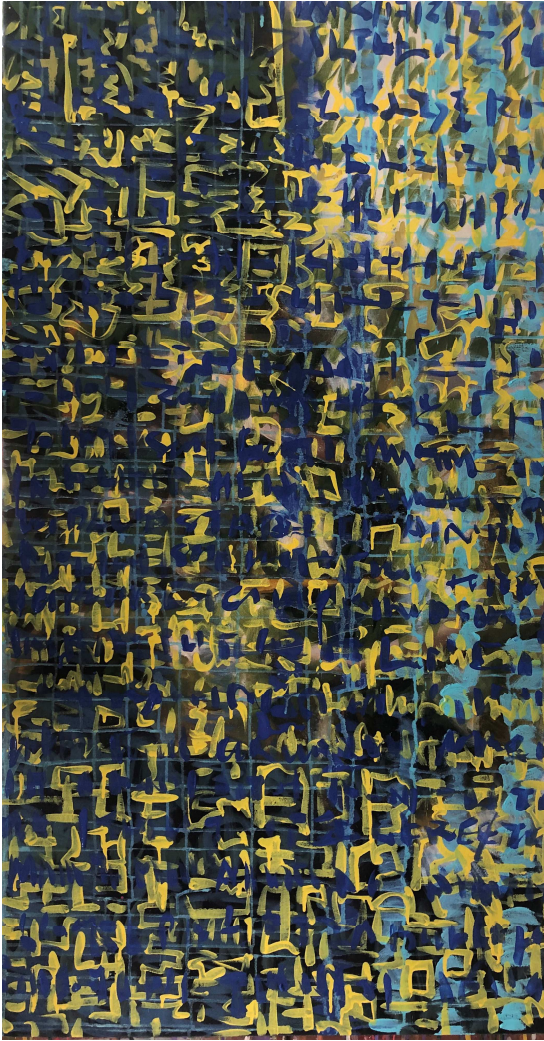
- How can a hobbyist be a great artist?

Yes – by becoming proficient in their craft and expanding their own boundaries of what constitutes 'ordinary'.



- When I had a short lecture at our library, I said that I'm a little bit afraid to say what you do to books. I mean Altered Books. How do people react to this kind of activity?

That makes me smile ☺. I had a friend who owned a paper recycling plant. I went through a tour of the factory and got the fright of my life! There were MOUNTAINS – and I'm not exaggerating of books with people sitting at the foot of these mountains tearing them apart from the spine. I immediately rescued the few I could (I caught a plane home) and these are the books I alter. They were 'rescue books'. I was not allowed to even have them – so they were reborn into something else. I think it is a gift to take a discarded book and reuse it/re-purpose it into a unique artwork.



- I understand your Vispro as visual prose, that is prose that should be looked at, and not read. How would you like the field to develop? Do you think it can be widely recognized? And do you think I could use elements of visual prose in my neopoemings?

I coined the term 'vispro' because I was not satisfied with my work being categorized as vispo – visual poetry. In fact, I'm uncertain what ½ of the work categorized as vispo has to do with poetry. It feels more like prose most of the time, accompanied by an image of some sort – hence the new phrase. I'm not sure if it will be widely recognized now – perhaps I should have done more homework, but I was feeling quite strongly about that particular segregation one strange morning. Sometimes, as I've written before, it's good to just give voice to an idea and expose others who may be interested to it and see where it goes from there? I WISH I had more time to explore the idea further – and I do, everyday that I work, but the theory of it will have to wait – as you said – too much to do! Neopoemings, which explores

the territory of visual poetry and experimental comics (as I understand it) already seems to use shortened prose formats. Cross pollination of ideas, sharing and collaborations can only enhance ones own perceptions if correctly fed – like many clean rivers running into an endless turquoise sea, which will never be full, for evaporation structures clouds which restructure water, and on the cycle goes.

The wise man said "there is no new thing under the sun" and I think that is absolutely true. I also teach the history of language and writing in the course I run – understanding the history of anything allows us to contextualise ourselves, not matter how far we have gone from the source. I think that's an important thing though – NOT to stray too far from the source. The source is our own private engine

of creativity, which ultimately is our own responsibility not to 'pollute'. By this I mean maintaining integrity to the creative calling. I think vispro has actually developed itself, without being coined as a phrase?

While stating at the outset that I am not bound in my work to theory, although I know a lot of it, so this appears contradictory, much work is needed to formalize the elements/categories of vispro in order for it to survive it's history I think. Again, I know there is a perception that everything is a 'free-for-all', and people get offended by parameters, but I think such things enhance knowledge as there is something to push against.



- You wrote once about creating a mythology. Can you tell us something about it?

You brought up another of my favorite, neglected solo artistic works! One which I have taken out, and dusted off for the upcoming exhibition – so thank you. ***The Bhubezi Mythology*** (Bhubesi is 'lion' in Zulu) is the story of the Women Who Hold Up the World.

See: <https://bhubezi.blogspot.com>

Basically it is the story of 10 women (at first there were 8) who are taken from history in one or another way, and it tells the TRUE story of these mystery women: Mona Lisa, Hatshepsut, Pandora, Magenta, Lyrech (that's me – my name spelt backwards as the scribe) – with her assistant Pehemefer the Egyptian, Hypatia, (from the Alexandrian Library), Empress Zhangsun, Shahrazad (from 1001 Nights), Cynisca (a Spartan woman who broke into the male olympic games and won a gold in

her first chariot race) and The Traveller. There are a variety of assorted guardians of these women including the Global Flaneur, Pilot, Singer to Sleep, Tokoloshi, The Red Giraffe, Lammasseu – and not too many others that I can think of. The mythology involves their REAL origins – for example Pandora. She did not like the advances of a prominent townsman, so he slated her and blamed her for all the evils in the world by saying she was the origin of evil. In reality, she was the one who gave us blue butterflies and the Charlston.

Here follows the article for the limited edition catalogue for Letters to Spring:

The Bhubezi Mythology begins with the unraveling of a unique book titled **The Chronicles of Lyrehc**, found quite by accident in 2008 by a researcher in an unused library repository at the Durban City Hall. What follows is the story as best deciphered by the researcher who wishes to remain anonymous. The following has been garnered from her notes:

„The Bhubezi Tribe, a race of warrior women has been here far longer than we, living among us when need be, but generally inhabiting another 'olam',„ They had migrated from the center of the earth to Durban (Nabrud) where, in the area of the Durban City Hall they constructed a transport machine with which they could do intergalactic travel.

Colonial architects designed and built the Durban City Hall, a classic neo-baroque structure right on that spot in the early 1900's. Once the solid, physical structure of the City Hall was in place, the transport machine became increasingly difficult to use. This was due in part, to the extensive subatomic deconstruction of body molecules needed to bypass the monolithic edifice. Eventually, only one woman could do this – The Transporter.

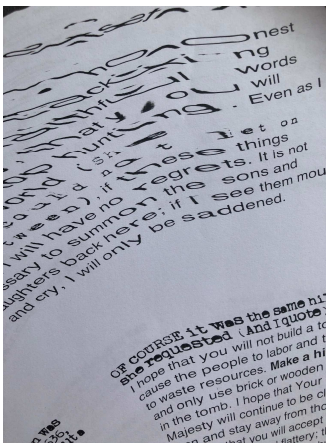
But all that is lost in the annals of time. It appears as though the result of several attempts to use the machine in order to repair the Pillars of the World has resulted in Magenta and Sienna being lost Between. Their attempts to fix The Bridge at the divide requires certain KEYS. Since that time, others have cottoned on and an entire litany of people, some known to you, and some not, have entered the battle to save the Bridges Between. There are only two extant books relating to this mythology, Volume 1 (The Chronicles of Lyrehc) and Volume 2, which is on display for the exhibition. Whoever chooses this book, or rather, whoever this book chooses, will find themselves entwined within the mythology, voyaging with The Traveller and daydreaming with The Red Giraffe.

Just to let you know, history, much of it, should be re-written, but it's convenient that it remains as is. This way, the Women Who Hold Up the World work undetected at keeping society functioning in a hostile world; they keep families together while LIFE attempts to tear all the goodness from within fragile (more fragile than you would ever believe) human structures. We only have a feeble grasp anyway. You'd be SURPRISED at the people who have traversed the pages of history and who are part of this story: Leonardo da Vinci, Mona Lisa, Pandora, van Gogh, Hatshepsut: Hapshetsut – there's an interesting person – let me just fill you in on some details regarding this Egyptian Pharaoh-ess.

Hatshepsut is said to have reigned for 22 years – but of course we know this is not the case (refer Chronicles of Lyrehc). In EXACTLY 1510 BC, Hatshepsut had the vision of the loss of the Bridges Between. Together with Ineni the great architect, it became her ambition to build structures, which would house articles needed for Bridge repair. The buildings and their important contents would need to last (human time) until the appearance of the Red Giraffe and the Traveller – and appear they did – (See The Authentic Massacre of the Innocent Image, Paintings # 65, # 66 and #67). But lest I overwhelm you at this stage, I'll leave the story here – after all, another portrait of this Bhubezi Queen WILL be found and the chronicle will continue. As for Hatshepsuts Needle – that's another WHOLE story!

For the exhibition, van Gogh and his younger brother were involved – the REAL Starry Night had to disappear into the hands of as many people as possible. It was a performance piece.: **The Sacrilege of Van Gogh.** I'm sure you've read of Vincent's tempestuous relationship with his brother Theo. But are you one of the few who know there was a third Van Gogh brother, Cornelius, who was raised in the Netherlands, but worked, married and died in South Africa – (don't believe all those facts you read either). If you did know this, you DIDN'T know that Theo sent the painting *The Starry Starry Night* to Cornelius in 1890, just prior to his very suspicious death. It was sent that he could be the official custodian of this work, vital to mending the Bridges Between. Have you every wondered why Van Gogh painted like he did? He could actually SEE the portals to Between.

Back to Cornelius; in 1889, at the age of 22 Cornelius came to South Africa working as an engineer, first for the Cornucopia Gold Company in Germiston and then for the Nederlandsche Zuid-Afrikaansche Spoorweg-Maatschappij in Pretoria. He died (as history goes) during the Boer Wars, but actually, he was held as a prisoner of the Moorish Derwish until the end of the Second World War. He died, never revealing the hiding place of *The Starry Starry Night*. I cannot reveal how I came into possession of this artwork, but I have it in my custody as you see before us today. I also have a letter written to me by Cor Van Gogh, giving me instructions as to the fate of this fabled painting.



Michael Orzechowski

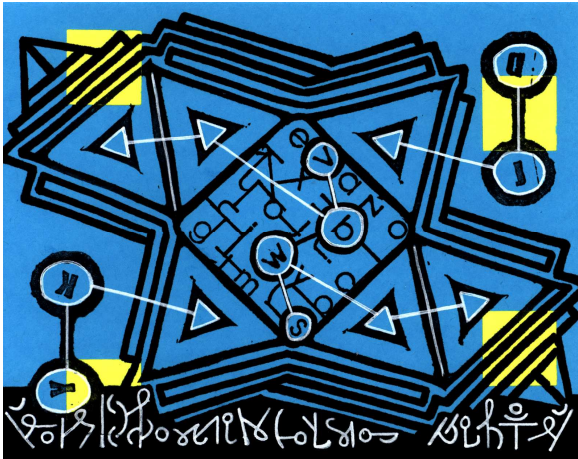
- How important is concept in art?

I think maybe it is relative to your audience and the individual creator. Personally for me it isn't always that important. Most of my work is automatic, thoughts aren't there while in the process so to speak. They are but it's different. Important thoughts, ideas, patterns and performances come when I sleep, drive, do yardwork, or am just intentionally sitting still and existing. I like and want to make conceptual stuff, but I don't overthink it. When I come up with something conceptual it's a spontaneous thought, the same as my non conceptual work. However, I want to comment on the state of the planet and humanity much more than I do. This is important to me, but the ideas don't come as often as I would like, and I don't force them.



- What do you think about variants and repetitions?

Variants are essential and necessary, If I understand this part of the question correctly. With variation a piece can go from good to bad, bad to good, good to great, etc... Stories can be told with simple variants from one frame to the next. Even the simplest of variation. A 45 degree rotation. I use repetition in my work often, in some cases it helps form a narrative. I have a repetitive technique that I use often, I'll maybe touch on that in the next question. Variants are essential and necessary, If I understand this part of the question correctly. With variation a piece can go from good to bad, bad to good, good to better, etc... Stories can be told with simple variants from one frame to the next. Even the simplest of variation. A 45 degree rotation. I use repetition in my work often, in some cases it helps form a narrative. I have a repetitive technique that I use often, I'll maybe touch on that in the next question. Variants are essential and necessary, If I understand this part of the question correctly. With variation a piece can go from good to bad, bad to good, good to better, etc... Stories can be told with simple variants from one frame to the next. Even the simplest of variation. A 45 degree rotation. I use repetition in my work often, in some cases it helps form a narrative. I have a repetitive technique that I use often, I'll maybe touch on that in the next question. Variants are essential and necessary, If I understand this part of the question correctly. With variation a piece can go from good to bad, bad to good, good to better, etc... Stories can be told with simple variants from one frame to the next. Even the simplest of variation. A 45 degree rotation. I use repetition in my work often, in some cases it helps form a narrative. I have a repetitive technique that I use often, I'll maybe touch on that in the next question.

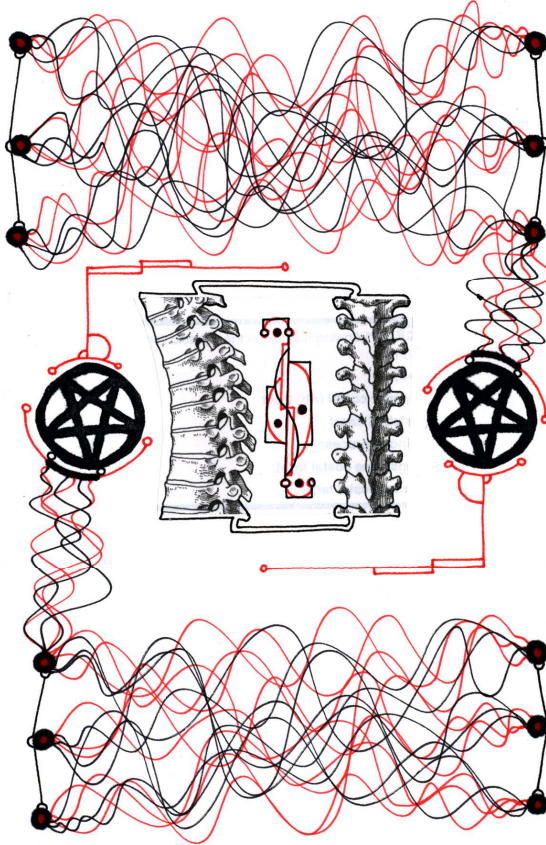


- How do you choose which technique to use? Can you tell us something about your favorite technique?

I might begin to sound repetitive here. I don't really choose. I keep a lot of supplies and materials around me during the day while I work. I have a lot of things

going on all the time. In many instances it's the material and supplies that choose which technique.

One of my favorite techniques is a basic one. Rotate whatever I'm working on and repeat the mark in an adjacent area. Simple and effective. It is a symmetrical technique. In some cases, recently referred to as bio-symmetrical. I like the sound of that.



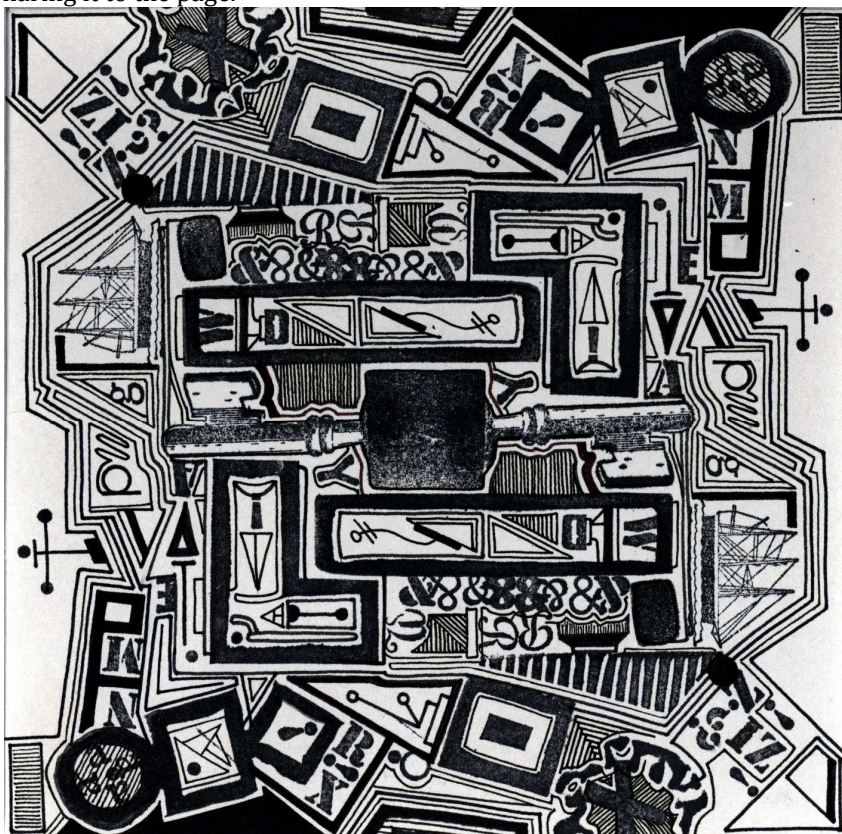
- There are lots of interesting spoons in your posts. How do spoons become artworks?

The spoons just sort of happened. Like everything else, I can't explain it. A spontaneous event that blossomed into a lengthy ongoing series. The spoons are nonsense and I love this. Any object can become art/poetry.

- You are the founder of Experimental Comics group on facebook. How did you come up with the idea? Do you like being a founder, an organizer and a moderator?

I was looking for a place to post these kinds of images, there was nothing there, so I made my own. I don't necessarily like being a moderator. I don't like the trouble that comes along with it. I don't like enforcing rules and guidelines. [Administrating anything on the internet can be quite a psychological trip] For this reason the group didn't turn out as intended. Originally it was called abstract comics. I had high hopes.

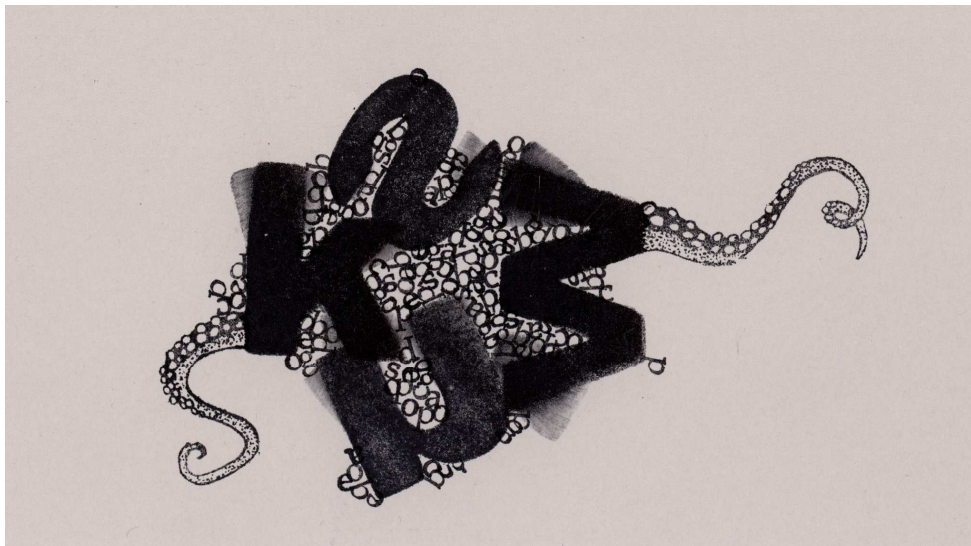
I added many artists whose work I admire to the group. It just didn't take off. I think if someone more well known had created this group it would have turned out different. I had to change the title, which I like, to experimental comics in order to mold the group into what it developed into. I do like curating, finding work that I like and sharing it to the page.



- You studied at The Art Institute of Atlanta. What did you learn there?

I learned where not to go to school for design. After one year at the AIA I switched to a non-accredited portfolio school called The Creative Circus. I went to

the Circus for I think 3 or 4 semesters, where I learned a great deal about myself, design, book making, typography and typographic design. All of my time in college, as well as several years before and after, were troubled and are a cloudy part of my life.



- Do your followers influence you? a) yes b) no (just kidding, please elaborate).

Absolutely. I would prefer to refer to them as peers, friends, connections etc... Everything that comes into our range of senses is capable of influence. Once realized and it becomes a natural effortless ability. You have one more tool in your toolbox.

-What would you like to achieve in art, poetry, in your creations?

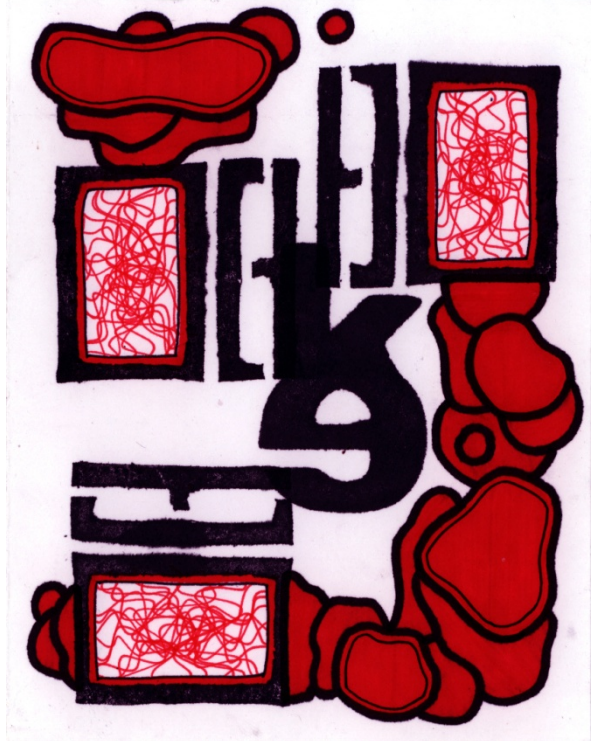
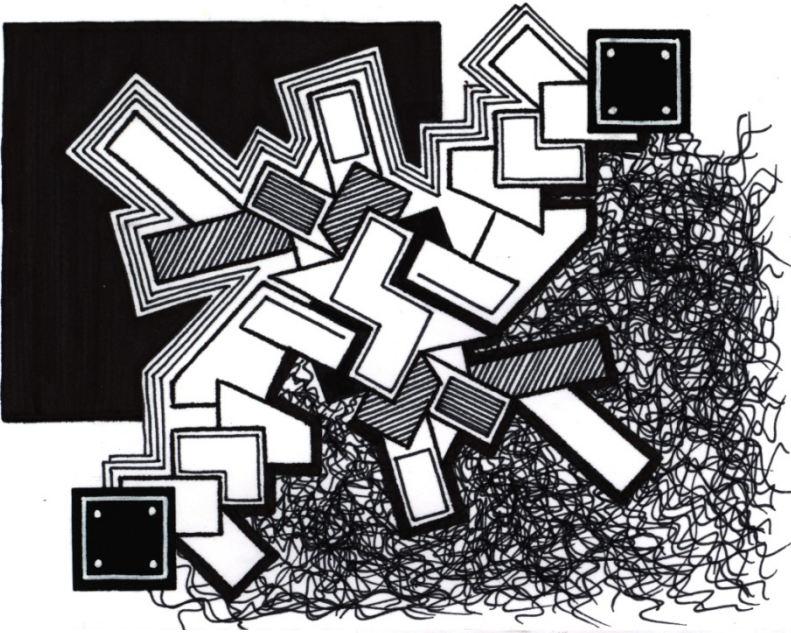
I just want to feel good. I don't want to worry. I don't want to be anxious. Maybe selfish but I don't just want these things for myself, I want everyone else to feel this way too.

- I would like to develop something I call neopoemics – the area where visual poetry and experimental comics overlap. What do you think about the idea?

I think this is a brilliant idea and I want to see more.

- In which directions should experimenting with comics go?

Any and every direction anyone will take it in As long as it doesn't lead to harm.





- When you compose an image, do you think about frames as of a thing from comics or from films?

Both, but in an unfamiliar foreign language (which may not even exist) with no subtitles/translation, so that I could view/read/listen them with my own imaginations and logic to compose an entirely different visual language or take it as an abstract composition. In addition, I imagine a high speed bullet train passing through those images and I depict that image as abstract strokes and other elements, whooshing that train through different frames each time.



- **Your works are full of details. How do you achieve so much precision?**

I approach my works in two different ways.

1. Not approaching it at all, until inspiration takes me over. I will forever be grateful for these moments.

2. I carry an idea around for n number of days before I compose that image. My thoughts recapitulate that idea, exploring numerous styles and logics. This helps me to visualize a clear cut image even before I sit down to draw.

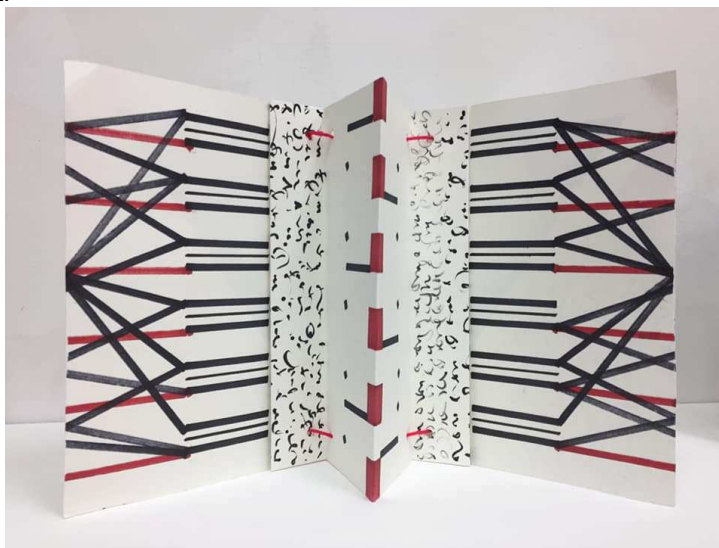
- **Which form of expression do you prefer: asemic writing, computer art, drawings, or other? Or is everything poetry?**

I like to view everything with the eye of poet. Everything else spread out from there. Some may think it's ludicrous. We are not born with a user manual which directs us how to use our mind. We absorb actualities and details by seeing, hearing, and paying attention to our environs. Everything begins from there. We then decide how to process those thoughts and where to take those thoughts from there. If I don't understand something, that shows lack of my knowledge in that area. I have a choice to remain ignorant or learn about it. Even then, sometimes we fail. Ten years ago or so, I have read somewhere about a scientist who dedicated his whole life studying about eels. But he remained unsure about the exact way eels migrate to Sea and reproduces. When somebody asked about his research, he recited a haiku about it instead.

Poetry shouldn't be always in verses. It can take many forms especially if we try to see it with a different set of eyes. My preferred method of quick composition is always Asemic writing with ink on paper. I tried to explore on visual poetry using Asemic as a medium. But I like to work on all medium and interface. Last year I did a whole series (Minimal Asemic Visual Haiku) of work using a selfie App. If you give me a piece of paper, I will figure out a way to create a visual out of it. Creating shouldn't be about the material we use.

- You use various kinds of iterations in your works. Do you repeat by creating the same thing from the beginning, or do you create variations of the first version? Or perhaps you have a different method?

If we analyze simple answers like yes or no under a microscope, we may suddenly realize that it act as a character from Roman Fleuves. Unlike language an image is a compacted form, but conveys several logics/views/readings from different perspectives. Sometimes I try to iterate an image to visualize each perspective. This may sound so automatic. Experimenting, even with poetry, is essentially automatic. But very exciting, because rePETition is different than repetITion.



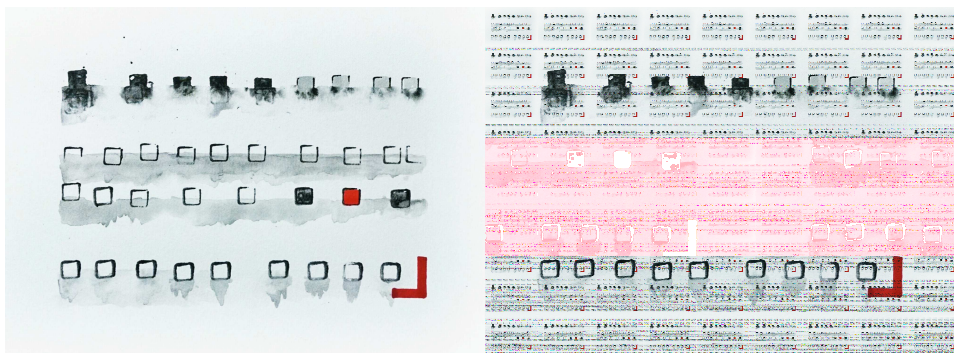
- You often write titles or short comments about a form or concept of a work (for example „1 pm“, „Two comic strip Senryu (human haiku) poems“ or „Translating a poem“). How important are such comments and titles of your works?

My first preference is always titlelessness. Title is a closed see-through window, author is trying to impose something or guide reader/viewer/listener to somewhere even before they start to read/view/listen. Titlelessness is an open window, a bridge, silent abstract invitation, a blank canvas reader/viewer/listener

could fill in later on. It can also be eye of the storm or calmness before Tsunami or a silent protest. Titlelessness is grain of sand on the shoreline. You may even find unnoticed autobiography of the ocean on that gain. Titlelessness lets you experience something on your own.

– Which form of presenting your works is your favorite? Exhibitions? Books? Chapbooks? Social media?

Being creative is my first priority. Everything else is relative. Being said that, my first choice of presenting my work is always on social media (I'm just a regular person; I do not have art agent, literary agent, publicist etc...). It's also a platform where we can share our knowledge liberally with others. I also try to share my published poems from print media on one or more (depending on the friend-list) of my social media handle, because not everyone can buy and read printed periodicals. My second preference is book. When opportunities arise, I'm also open to other forms, including exhibitions, for presenting my works.



– How to promote innovative forms of art and literature?

Right now, through social media, a touch with our fingertip. We can always use various social media platform to find people with similar interests and could go forward from there.

<https://www.instagram.com/dmayeroora>

<https://www.facebook.com/dmayeroora>

<https://www.facebook.com/CalligraphyStories>

- Where does the border between decoration and mutilation of human skin lie?

The body is part of identity. What it looks like, how it behaves, how and in which colours it is dressed are all aspects related to cultural order. Body decoration has a centuries-old tradition, known since ancient times. In ancient Egypt, people decorated their bodies with jewellery, makeup and tattoos, which were not only a privilege of the high-born, but also had a magical and ritualistic character. Similarly, the body of Princess Ukok found in a tomb protected under the ice crust for 2,500 years on the border between Mongolia and China is embellished with tattooed drawings, reflecting her high social position in the nomadic community of Pazyryk. In addition to the beautiful clothing in which she was buried, a wig with a refined hairstyle, jewellery made of various materials and ores, and a number of other items with which she was equipped for her journey into the afterlife, the princess had with her a sachet with cosmetics and a collection of dyes – including powdered calcium phosphate used to decorate the body with tattoos.

Certainly, this form of embellishing the body was painful until at least the second half of the 20th century, when techniques more advanced than dyed thread pulled under the skin or using a piece of wood or stone to strike a bird's feather over the surface of the skin were invented. The pile of the feather was filled with dye flowing into the top of a pointed hoopoe pricking the skin, leaving ink drops beneath it. Until recently, the first method was used in prison culture, including in Poland, the second one comes from the ancient Chinese tradition. Both have their place in ritual and initiation, and both require considerable pain resistance. However, often it was not the individual who was the most important when marking the body, but the content of the drawings left on it. For example, medieval outlaws had symbols burned into their skin which, depending on the circumstances, could save them in the future or exclude them from the community as criminals.

A much milder and more pleasant form is mehendi, i.e. henna used in Hindu culture and some Arab countries. Sophisticated, ornamental patterns adorning the bride's hands and feet are an immanent part of the marriage ceremony and have symbolic and erotic significance. How distant from this is the custom of binding women's feet in the Chinese tradition – which was observed until the early 20th century. It was extremely painful, but also had an aesthetic character, and over time ceased to be associated with belonging to a social class, becoming an erotic fetish.

In my opinion, one of the most moving examples of the ritual use of tattoo today is that by The Ramnami Samaj, a sect of Harijan (Untouchable) Ram, whose members tattoo the name of their god Ram onto their own bodies. The words of god are inscribed in the skin, they embody the idea of a god hidden in signs and present in cultural consciousness. The writing reflects the believer's devotion and recognition from Ram, but it is also an expression of submission to god and reliance on a sect that has dominated the religious life of the region with Ramnas in India since the 1890s. The tattooed faces of The Ramnami Samaj members are known from

the Inked Faces project by Italian reporter Mattia Passarini, who in her documentaries and photographs tries to capture disappearing cultures and rituals from around the world. So, when it comes to cultural and religious affiliation, this border between decoration and mutilation is very fluid.

However, I understand that your question is an indirect reference to my photographs from the *Body Texts* series. This collection is the result of a number of attempts to translate critical bodily states into discursive language. On individual parts of my body I posted descriptions of the condition of each, any discomfort or pain experienced, sensations associated with the behaviour of its organs. In this piece, the body and its surface became the canvas of a story written simultaneously with experienced sensations. I recorded two types of texts in these photographs – gesture and word: the signs of the body and the signs of writing that try to translate each other.



Małgorzata Dawidek, from the *Body Texts* series, no. 01, photo, 2016.

– My sensei, Paweł Kutermankiewicz, currently teaches in a dojo in Birmingham. You had an exhibition in that city. Coincidence? By the way, I would like to ask your opinion on training the body.

I have not had the opportunity to meet the master, but when it comes to „body training” in the Eastern tradition, I have many years of Tai Chi Chuan and Kundalini Yoga training behind me.

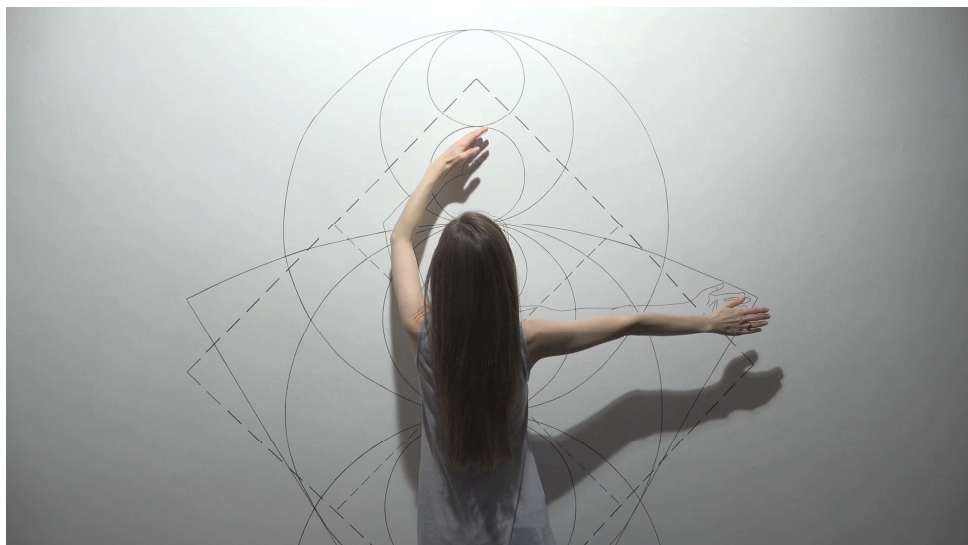
Seneca, who was sick with angina, in his letters to Lucius described his ailments and methods of dealing with them. He listed physical work, walks and

exercises as effective methods not only for maintaining good physical condition, but also mental health.

Christianity contributed greatly to the separation of body and spirit. Especially the female body was, and in some Christian cultures still is, seen as a hotbed of sin. The materiality of female corporeality is related to biological changes, monthly bleeding, childbirth, the puerperium period, which has been perceived as impure for centuries, condemned for alleged contact with Satan and burned at the stake. On the other hand, the ideal body of a Christian woman is her iconic representation, i.e. disembodied, and therefore also a sinless and miraculously fertilized mother of god.

Cartesian dualism for years deepened this isolation of body and mind. In my opinion, this is a great humanist offense. Only feminism built on the phenomenological concept of the body combined it with the mind, feelings and spirituality. The body has become part of the intellectual-spiritual-material complex, which determines the identity of each of us. The perception of a human being as an integrated subjectivity also dependent on history, politic, and socio-cultural contexts.

So, body training – yes, but body taming – no.



Malgorzata Dawidek, *Modulor*, performance, Galeria Entropia, Wrocław 2017.

A frame from a video by Andrzej Jodko. <https://vimeo.com/252718209>

– In English-speaking countries, the achievements of, for example, South America or even Poland in the field of combining poetry and comics appear to go unnoticed – they announce their own activities (e.g. anthologies) as „the first in the world”, although such things have long been created. Is cultural imperialism, e.g. of England or the USA, noticed by artists?

This is a very interesting observation. The phenomenon you mention is felt in many areas. One of the leading French feminist philosophers, H el ene Cixous, already noted in the 1980s that French feminists read everything that their English-language friends publish, while their own texts have to wait a long time for translation and reading by English-speaking academics and activists. To date, several important French texts, e.g. in the field of body history, have not been translated into English, but can be found, for e.g. translated into Polish.

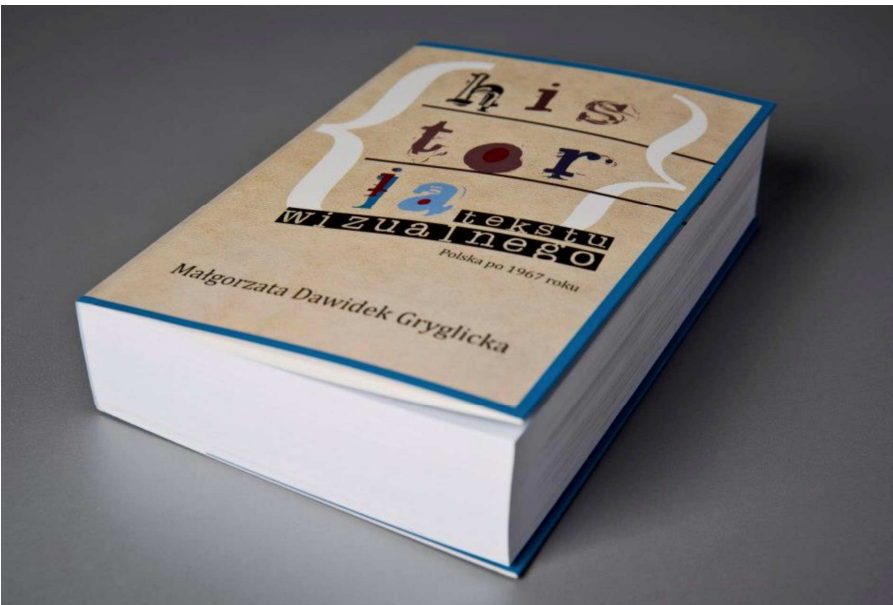
This, of course, is slowly changing, although the presence of Central and Eastern European authors' publications is incomplete in English, and the knowledge of their work depends on the seriousness of the work and the curiosity of individual researchers. I have to admit, however, that when I talk to British academics and when I mention the names of artists, writers or continental philosophers, I often hear – „but, I do not know who is this”. At the same time, I mean flagship names from my perspective – e.g. Dubravka Ugresi c, Herta M uller, Jolanta Brach-Czaina, who fit remarkably into the contemporary feminist discourse and whose works are translated.

Insufficient representation of Polish authors in research in Western Europe results in limited knowledge of our culture. Recently, I translated several poems by Halina Po swiatowska into English, which I discussed at several conferences devoted to the relations of the body and literature. They elicited a sensational reception among British students and academics because they revolutionize the approach to female corporeality and the language of its description. No English poets wrote about the body in that manner. Virginia Woolf claimed this language as early as 1926. Po swiatowska's work is the perfect answer to this appeal. And this is just one example.

On the other hand, artists and writers of totalitarian communist countries who had been creating for years in a deficit of information, literature and access to intellectual goods of the free West had a powerful thirst for knowledge that arose outside the Iron Curtain. Acquiring this forbidden knowledge became a tool for contesting the political system of that time. Academies read everything that came to us from the West, learned languages and tried to incorporate into global trends, and the artists tried to embed their own creativity in new semantic contexts that hadn't yet been entirely understood, which was quite utopian. This fact, however, resulted from the need to make up for losses and to build an identity on an intellectual plane beyond borders. The artistic world treated English as a universal medium connecting countries inside and outside the region of communist countries. For example, the Hungarian conceptual artist, Endre T ot, one of the leading representatives of international mail art, sent simple messages in English to and from artists outside the block. These trends were articulated probably most literally after the fall of the communist regime by the Serbian artist Mladan Stilinovi c, who in one of his paintings proclaimed the slogan: „An artist who cannot speak English is no artist”.



Małgorzata Dawidek, *Fold-ups*, Contemporary Museum in Wrocław, 2011.
The work belongs to the collection of The Contemporary Museum in Wrocław.



Małgorzata Dawidek, *History of Visual Text, Poland After 1967*,
ed. Ha!Art, MWW, NCK, 2012. Photo by Edyta Dufaj.

- You act as a theoretician of, among others, concrete poetry. However, I sense that you want to be more appreciated as the author of works of art. Does theory lead to better practice, or is it easy to jump from the world of art research to the creation of it?

As far as the order of events goes, my story is quite the opposite. I am an artist who became an art historian. After graduating from the Lublin High School of Arts, I studied painting in the studio of prof. Jerzy Kałucki at the Academy of Fine Arts in Poznań, where after defending my diploma I worked as an assistant for several years. At the same time, I also studied at the Faculty of Artistic Education at the same university, where I defended my second diploma in drawing, in the studio of prof. Jarosław Kozłowski. It was there that my interest in conceptual art and visual text developed. My fascination with literature and language found reflection in the artistic implementations I created at that time. Over time, I wanted to learn more about the history of combining text and image in art, so I tried to explore the subject. I started with studies on ancient and medieval texts – technopaegnia, *carmina figurata*.

Researchers of antiquity and medievalists did their homework, but their studies were not discussed in art history classes. It was the end of the 90s, the internet was still in its infancy, and there were no publications on the subject in libraries. I decided to collect some materials myself and find artists working with the textual medium. I was asking lecturers, literary friends, other artists, I was translating scraps of Noigandres history found somehow on the Internet. I was very lucky that the profile of the AT gallery at the Academy of Fine Arts was oriented towards conceptual and poetic activities. It was there where I met Emmet Williamms from the Fluxus group and his wife Ann Noel, invited by Tomasz Wilmanski. I found the first Polish clues of visual texts in Wrocław, supported by Jaromir Jedliński, who at that time lectured on the theory of contemporary art at the Academia. I began regular correspondence with Marianna Bocian, I visited Barbara Kozłowska, Zbigniew Makarewicz, Michał Bieganski, and Stanisław Dróżdz. There was also an extraordinary chance of an internship at the Wrocław Avantgarde, whose director at the time was Wojciech Stefanik. For almost two months I explored the gallery's archives, wrote, and interviewed art and literature theoreticians. I wondered, why had nobody done this before? Why are there no exhibitions of all these poets so strongly present thirty years earlier? Six months after starting the query, I had so much material that I decided to write a master's thesis on the history of concrete poetry.

My work was very pioneering, but, I did this research out of pure passion, curiosity and desire to find my own place on the visual text history map. **To me, visual poetry was an absolutely fascinating phenomenon and language – the main tool of my own artistic practice. For me, a lack of knowledge on this subject would mean a lack of knowledge about the roots of my own art.** After the defence of my thesis, Jarosław Kozłowski supported my idea of developing my theoretical work into extensive research, then, after passing exams I received a

doctoral scholarship at the Modern Art Department at the Faculty of Art History of the Adam Mickiewicz University. After five years of travel, studies, and queries I defended my PhD thesis promoted by prof. Piotr Piotrowski.

Throughout this period, I was an active artist and lecturer at the Faculty of Painting at the Academy of Fine Arts. So, there was no jump, of which you ask for, only natural development, exploration, permeation of disciplines, hunger for knowledge. I think that in my case artistic theory and practice feed on each other. Understanding one's place in the history line of a given phenomenon or artistic trend allows one to not only avoid forcing an already open door, but above all to develop (self) creative awareness, the language of talking about one's own art and self-criticism.

- In your piece „Two Memories” you approach asemic writing, but at the same time conceptualism feels present. When creating, should you think about which labels will be applied to the finished piece?

I never think about it. I am aware of the sources from which my creative assumptions flow, because I reach for them at work, but I have no influence on how the work will be perceived by the recipients. I'm not interested in classification either. I can rebel against it or accept it, but I have no influence on it.

Let's take the example of *Two Memories* you mentioned. This is a very personal piece in which I recall two memories of my grandfather. My grandfather, whose biography is shocking, died tragically during martial law beaten brutally by the militia. It was 1982. I was less than six years old. I have very few memories of my grandfather. Two come to mind – when he taught me how to ride a bike and when he was sliding around with me on a frozen lake. In *Two Memories*, I recalled these two scenes. I started with a smaller format of paper (60x90 cm), on which I tried to reconstruct them from memory. As I was not able to reproduce all the details, $\frac{3}{4}$ of the drawing remains empty. It is the whiteness of waiting, loss and mourning. The recalled memories occupy only a small part at the bottom of the page. I tried to reproduce the details in them – What was grandpa wearing? What shoes did he have? What kind of hat was he wearing? How was he holding me? Was I alone or was my sister with us? Where did the dog run? What was the weather like? What colour was the sky? The memory of those events is fractured. After some time, I remember more details. So, I go back to the abandoned sentences, I add something in between the lines, overwrite subsequent verses. And more. Some memories displace others. Or they build up. After some time, I realized that this piece needed a larger scale, so I moved it to a studio space – this form of drawing was realized in 2016 during my artistic residence at the Slade School of Fine Art in London. The process was similar.

Two Memories has a performative form. This is a work with my memory, running it, searching, returning to its repository, to memories of my grandfather. From my perspective, it's not a mechanical drawing, but a lively and emotional notation. This is a palimpsest story of unhealed loss. Deeply private, which through the medium of drawing breaks the borders of privacy by becoming part of a public declaration – a great big FUCK YOU to the regime system that took my grandfather from me. It is a story rooted in historical experience. So, I do not see it as *écriture*

mecanique or *écriture automatique* – which I value because I believe that asemic writing has the potential of writing in general – but I see it rather as *écriture historique* – that is, re-constructive writing made from the position of my own existence, but embedded in the broader plan of historical experience.



Małgorzata Dawidek, *Two Memories*, drawing, 650 x 220 cm, documentation of the process, Artistic Residency, Slade School of Fine Arts, London 2016. Photo from the artist's archive.

- What is your greatest piece? How much work did you put into it? Did anyone help you?

I don't think about my work in these categories. I'm more interested in the creation process itself, gathering information, assembling elements, combining facts, seeing them in different contexts. Each project realization requires a different way of working, different preparation, different research, different focus. Some arise in periods of particular importance in my personal life, others during in-depth research, some are created intuitively, based on a tacit knowledge. I would not like to value them.

I do, however, value cooperation with artists or specialists from other fields. I have been collaborating with British artist and curator Naomi Siderfin since 2019. My another project is being created with the support of an IT team from University College London. Such collisions are very fertilizing for my work.



Alphabet, ed. Tomasz Wilmański, recording: Cezary Ostrowski, Galeria AT, Poznań 2004. Photo from the artist's archive.

– You teach at university, present at conferences – but do you use your voice in your artistic undertakings? Can your pieces be performed through voice?

Yes. I've created three sound pieces: *The Introvert Dictionary* is an art work based on the principle of alliteration, i.e. repetitions of letters and sounds in a poem. It was registered in the studio of Cezary Ostrowski in Poznań and published on a collective disc released by the AT gallery for the exhibition „Alphabet” in 2004. *The Senses Diary* is a collection of five essays written from the perspective of each of the senses. The piece was recorded in cooperation with sound engineer Szymon Straburzyński in the Feature Film Studio in Wrocław in 2013. In the same year, I also worked on a visual and sound project for children entitled *A Fairy Tale About A Man Called Ram Tam Tam*, which was presented at the Children's Art Biennale at the Zamek Culture Center in Poznań. The text was interpreted by Piotr Dąbrowski, an actor of the Polish Theatre, and translated into sign language by Dominika Mroczek.

In addition, in one of my last performances, *Aporia&Epiphany* (2019) a key element is whisper. In turn, in the performance *The Book of Hours* (2019) I use abstract sounds issued by the body, which are inarticulate and result from a long process of working with the body on the border of dance.

- What do you think about my neopoemics?

This is a very interesting idea that fits into the history of visual text and opens new doors for it by using multimedia. I was interested in how titles work in your pieces. On your blog – impressive not only because of the enormity of the work done but also because of the content – my attention was drawn to the collection of „old poems meant for changing“. The title suggests that the reader may expect to read unfinished poems or ones revealing the author’s workshop. Meanwhile, the volume actually functions as a complete collection. The title is therefore misleading but significant. Tempting. Going further, there is a poem in this volume entitled „experiencing unreality“. And this central slogan opens a wide field of interpretation shifting readers to the concept of simulacrum, virtual life or fixation. In addition, combining languages, codes, the use of keyboard shortcuts in the content of the poem, I am talking about your piece =-0, is a form of language evolution, expanding its possibilities and pushing it to its limits. It seems to me that this is what poetry is about, collisions of certain contradictions and balancing on the border of senses so as to create new creative and cognitive values.

- How does one organize an exhibition of neopoemics which would attract attention?

That is a question about how to organize a good exhibition in general. But I don't have the answer.

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