

# Visual Poetry

An International Anthology

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*Guest Editor:*

Harry Polkinhorn

*Visible Language*

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The quarterly journal  
concerned with all  
that is involved with  
our being literate.

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# Visual Poetry

An International Anthology

Visual poetry is usually approached from a “formalist” critical viewpoint which attempts to classify works based on the ways that they work with the “negative” page space, how they graphically alter the conventional signifying functions of poetic language. Such approaches all too commonly lack a sufficient appreciation of the cultural, social and political dimensions of visual poetry. Furthermore, since visual poetry uses elements from the visual arts and from poetic language, theories based primarily in one or the other of these media can not do justice to the visual poem. The present anthology, therefore, is international in scope, forcing a comparatist critical methodology and thereby laying the basis for a fuller theory of visual poetry, one which takes into account questions of place, history and specific cultural formation. Seven countries are represented (Brazil, Cuba, Italy, Mexico, Portugal, Uruguay, United States). Short introductions and selected references, prepared by the country curators, are included.

*An article by:*

**Harry Polkinhorn**

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# Visual Poetry

## An Introduction

In the summer of 1990, the Núcleo Post-Arte group in Mexico City sponsored the Third International Biennial of Visual Poetry (the first two had been in 1986 and 1988). Mail artists and experimental poets from over forty countries sent in work for these exhibitions, which were put up at sites around Mexico City. In addition, colloquia, performances and debates complemented the formal exhibitions. Out of the intensive collaborations made possible by these events, artists from Brazil, Cuba, Italy, Mexico, Portugal, Uruguay and the United States decided to work together to assemble an anthology of visual poetry from their respective countries. The idea was to present a representative sampling of works which each of the country “curators” considered important in the world of experimental visual poetry and related practices.

Visual poetry occupies a genuine “inter-media” space between linear poetry (that which relies upon syntax, style and traditional versification for its effects) and the visual arts. Visual poetry comes in a variety of forms each of which features a treatment or treatments of language emphasizing so-called negative space, frequently activating as well the substrate upon which the work is printed, drawn or painted.

In a purely formal sense, visual poetry manifests the full range of signifying potentialities of any developed art form. From the minimalist works of a Sol Lewitt to the neo-baroque extravaganzas of an Ana Hatherly, this art form has taken advantage of the full repertory of expressive and compositional strategies which artists of our era have developed and used. What all share, however, can be characterized as the return of the repressed body of art through visual poetry's highlighting of substrates and activation of the perceptual ground as in the figure/ground relationship.

At the same time, visual poetry not only shares in but exacerbates the cultural and semiotic negotiations which characterize its cousins among the arts (linear poetry, prints, easel painting and so on). Because it is considered a kind of mixed form combining graphic elements and language, the visual poem calls into question the underlying epistemological assumptions of both linear writing and non-language visual imagery. This is another way of saying that the visual poem formally generates meaning in a significantly different way, and an important part of this meaning has to do with the ways visual poems highlight the usually unexamined dimensions of art's distribution and theorization in a given society. The following pair of questions polarizes and concretizes these abstractions: is the work to be printed, bound and distributed in book form (emphasis on undoing seriality and syntactic conceptualization; dismantle metaphor)? is it to be mounted and displayed in a gallery or museum (emphasis on undoing spatality and visual perception; dismantle metonymy)? In either case different social and economic considerations come into play.

Consequently, theoretical approaches growing from and based on either linear writing or the traditional visual arts will inadequately serve in the case of visual poetry.

First and foremost, issues of place, history and specific social formation must be addressed prior to or at the minimum as a central part of any critique of visual poetry. The creative circumstances of artists, their concrete practices of creation and distribution and other relevant country- or class-specific conditions must be adduced, such as the relative presence in a particular society of alternative cultural spaces.

Only then will a theorization of the subtle or aggressive questioning of formal boundaries which visual poetry manifests have its necessary grounding. Genre theory as such stresses the formative role of these suppressed boundaries. Visual poetry renders them much more consciously political than is the case with other related art forms. The inclusion/exclusion balance, powerfully and covertly policed by genre, is upset by the visual poem, which “bares the device” in a strictly material fashion. This it achieves through a negativization of art’s impulse towards idealization. The goal: to increase individual consciousness in order to improve social conditions.

Visual poetry, perhaps more than the other art forms to which it is most closely related, interrogates the political and psychoanalytic dimensions of the “image.” This understandably leads visual poetry to a preoccupation with the visual media of a given society (print advertising, television, video, film, photography), a questioning of the role of the visual image in that society, and, at a more general level, concerns with visibility as such, the complex processes of seeing by means of which we are constituted as social and private subjectivities and can thereby extend our creative and productive reach through time and space. The works presented here offer many fascinating and challenging examples; the international scope of this collection makes possible a cross-culturally based set of comparisons by means of which the above claims can be tested.

*An article by:*

**Philadelpho Menezes**



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*Visible Language*, 27.4  
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## Brazilian Visual Poetry

Historically, one must understand the course of Brazilian visual poetry as divided into three moments. The first is the period of *concrete poetry*, theoretically formulated by the Noigandres group at the beginning of the 1950s, but which found its typical compositional procedure, its aesthetic differentiation, after 1955 under the direct influence of the serial and combinatory poetry of the Swiss-Bolivian Eugen Gomringer, as presented in his book *Constellations*, already published in 1953. Until then the experiments of the Brazilian group had been characterized by the incorporation into regional poetry of the processes used by late French symbolism (Mallarmé), futurism and the English-language modernists (Joyce, Cummings, Pound), updating Brazilian poetry. From the second half of the 1950s until the beginning of 1964, the movement continued to be active, always showing features of what we now identify as concretism: the geometric and permutational ordering of words, grouped by sound similarities or semantic proximity.

After the conclusion of the concrete poetry movement, we enter the second phase of Brazilian visual poetry, characterized by



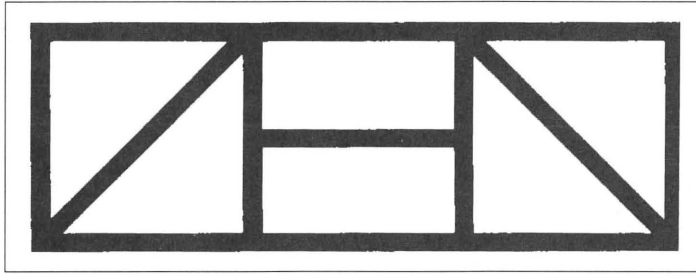
ADROGA  
RIAADO  
RARIAA  
RROGAR  
ADORDR  
OGADO  
ROGADO

Valnei Andrade

*Druga*

Drugs





**Pedro Xisto**

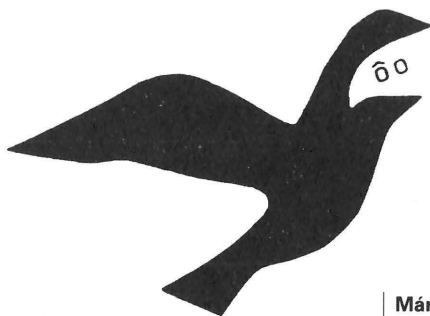
*Zen*

*Zen*

the search for a wordless poetry, culminating in *process-poem*. This movement had for its basis the interesting concrete poetry of Wladimir Dias-Pino, who is distinguished from the Noigandres group by carrying, already in the middle of the 1950s, graphic and visual elements over to the verbal sign. *Process-poem*, however, was marred by the grand, sterile error of trying to formulate a poetics with no semantic level, of the mere graphic coordination of visual elements deprived of all significance.

The third phase comes from the debacle of *process-poem* and has lasted to the present. It is marked by the absence of organized movements, by a theoretical and critical silence of the visual poets, and by a return to compositional modes already traditional in modern poetry, including a return to verse.

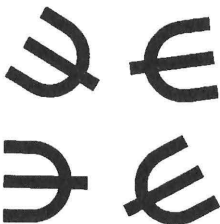
For example, present in this micro-anthology of Brazilian visual poetry are these revisionist currents that are also spread throughout the world at this time of crisis for writing. Hence the calligrammic forms of Luiz Sergio

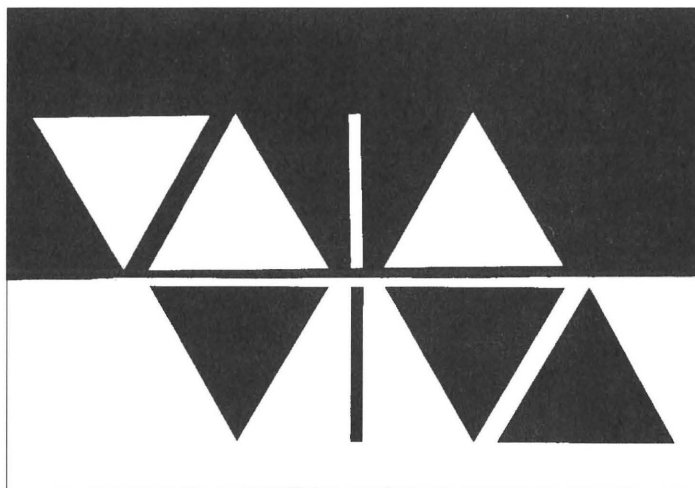


**Márcio Almeida**  
Vôo  
Flight



**Hugo Mund, Jr.**  
*Homem-Ra-Flor-Pássaro*  
Man-Frog-Flower-Bird



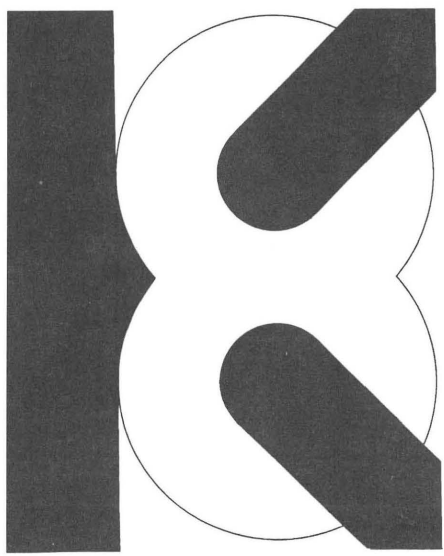


| Augusto de Campos, *S/Titulo*, Untitled

Modesto, orthodox concrete poems without retouching of Wladimir Dias-Pino and Franklin Valverde, the concrete poem as daring final-art of Augusto de Campos and the verbal poem of Valnei Andrade, disguised by a packaging which gives it a visual configuration, bearing witness to the revitalization of the traditional compositional modes of classical experimentalism.

On the other hand, there is an anti-semantic vice created by the graphic dysfunctioning that we see as a legacy of *Process-poem*, like the *collage* poem. Note, here, that this tendency partakes of a general panorama of international visual poetry, as a development of Italian *poesia visiva* of the 1960s, which fits with an anti-intellectualism and with the general tendency of an experimental society characterized by “synaesthetics,” in the acceptance of the Italian poet Lamberto Pignotti.

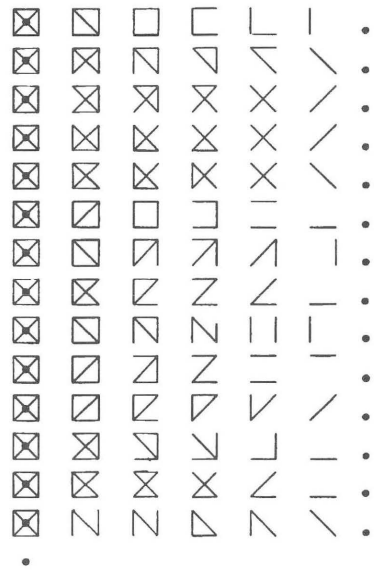
Yet, if it is possible for recent Brazilian poetic experimentalism to stand out, one can say that, on the contrary, this comprises a “semantic choice.” What characterizes this

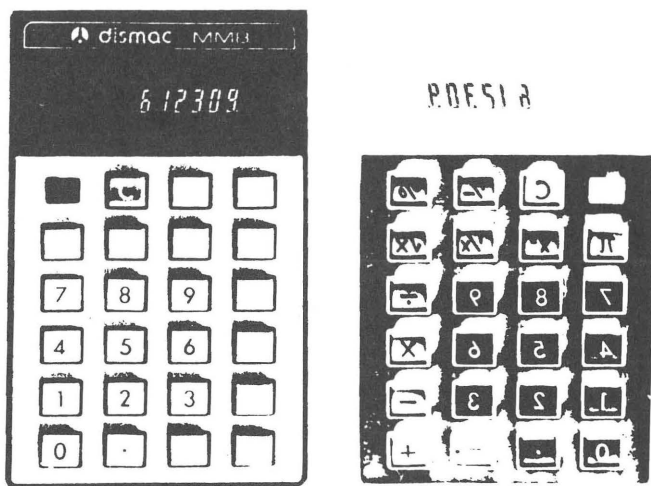


**Villari Herrmann**  
*Koito*  
Coitus

400

**Neide Dias de Sá** |  
*S/Titulo*  
Untitled





Philadelpho Menezes, *Poesia*, Poetry

semantic choice would be the recuperation of the dimension of signifiers that oblige the observer of the visual poem to move toward a kind of reading that attentively deciphers the sign combination presented in each work. In this poetry the iconic visual sign articulates itself with the verbal sign — in what we could call *intersign syntax*. The poem produces a chain of signifiers to be understood and read something like an *intersign semantics*.

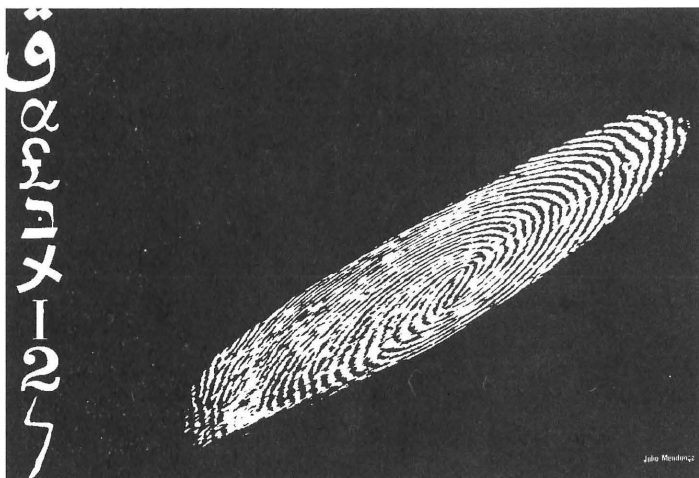
Some examples of this poetry are the poems of : Villari Herrmann (a coitus between the K and the number 8 = coito, in Portuguese); Florivaldo Menezes (a score caught in nature); Pedro Xisto (a symmetrical geometry composed of the word *Zen*); Ana Aly (the word *city* camouflaged in the buildings of a cybernetic metropolis); Julio Mendonça (a galaxy like a fingerprint or vice versa); Márcio Almeida (the word *flight* forming in a gestalt emptiness of the wings of a bird); Sebastião Nunes (bold humor against the bust of official culture); and mine (the word *poetry* found on the back of a calculator).



**Sebastião Nunes**

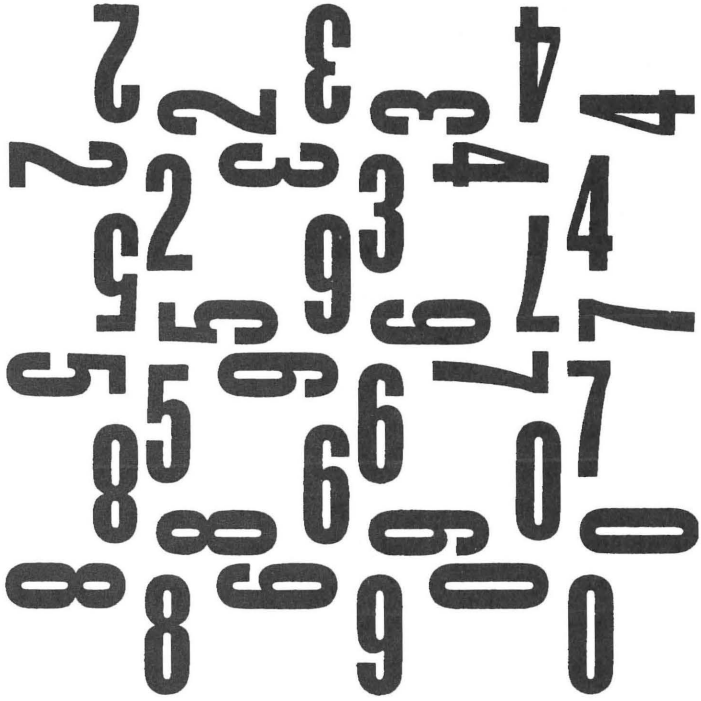
*S/Título*

Untitled



| **Julio Mendonça**, *Galáxias*, Galaxies

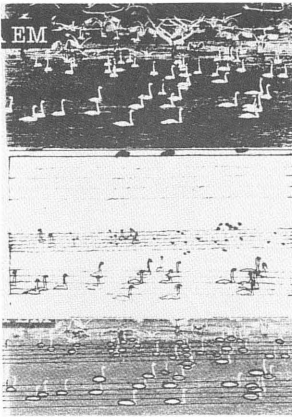
These works give an idea of a poetics whose sense of experimentation resides in the recuperation of diverse levels of meaning that are pulling visual poetry back from the exclusively sensorial and anti-intellectual sphere that the postmodern wave takes for normal. Pitting itself, in contrast, against the easy formulas of the classical avant-gardes, which culminate in the verbal geometricism of concretism, *intersign poetry*, “montage poetry” or even “semantic visual poetry” described above is a unique development that has formed itself in the interior of the Brazilian poetry of the last two decades. Today it is situated in what we could call the post-modernity of resistance, an avant-garde wave or project achieving its own integrity insofar as it confronts the aesthetics of the museological past and the present marked by the general rule of the sensory and anti-semantic schizophrenia. Leading to the semantic field, *intersign poetry* gives current experimentalism an ethical foundation for the projects of the avant-garde, a notion absent from the standard experimentalism of our time.



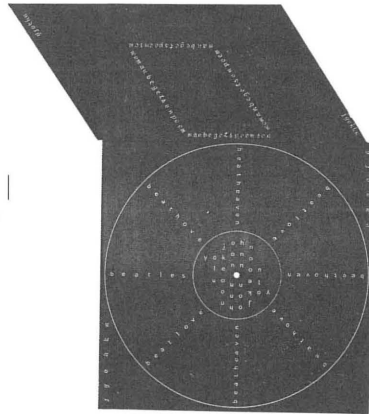
| **Wladimir Dias-Pino**  
*Numéricos*  
Numericals



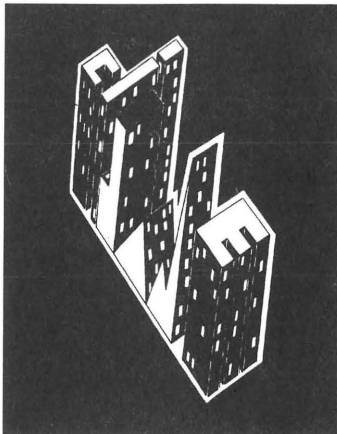




**Florivaldo Menezes**  
*O Lago das Signos*  
The Lake of the Signs



**Luis Sergio Modesto** |  
*S/Titulo*  
Untitled



**Ana Aly**  
*Cidade*  
City

## Poet Notes

**Almeida, Márcio.** Almeida is a poet and journalist born in Oliveira (Minas Gerais) in 1947. In the late 1960s he emerged as a member of the *process-poem* movement. He is the author, among others, of *Orwelhas Negras* (1985).

**Aly, Ana.** Born in São Paulo in 1959, Aly is a visual artist and graphic designer who has participated in exhibitions of visual poetry in Brazil and abroad. She is the author of *Objetos Diretos* (1982).

**Andrade, Valnei.** Born in Ribeirão Preto (São Paulo) in 1965, Andrade has participated in exhibitions of visual poetry in Brazil and is author of the book of poems *O umbigo/embigo ambíguo* (1985).

**de Campos, Augusto.** Born in São Paulo in 1931, de Campos was one of the founders, in 1953, of the Brazilian group Noigandres. Years later he participated in the creation of the international movement concrete poetry. He is the author of *Viva-Vaia* (1986).

**Dinas-Pino, Wlademir.** Born in Rio de Janeiro in 1927, Dias-Pino participated in the founding of Brazilian concrete poetry in 1956/57 and organized the *process-poem* movement in 1967. He works in television programming and is the author of the book of poems *Numéricos* (1963), among other titles.

**Herrmann, Villari.** Born in São Carlos (São Paulo) in 1942, Herrmann is a prosecutor. He has taken part in exhibitions of visual poetry in Brazil and abroad and is the author of *4 poemas* (1971), among other books.

**Mendonça, Julio.** Mendonça is a young São Paulo poet and participant in exhibitions and publications of visual poetry in Brazil.

**Menezes, Florivaldo.** Born in Presidente Prudente (São Paulo) in 1931, he participated in international anthologies of visual poetry and is author of the book *Inverso* (1972).

**Menezes, Philadelpho.** Born in São Paulo in 1960, he is professor of communications and semiotics at the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo. He organized the First International Exhibition of Visual Poetry of São Paulo and is author of several books, including *Demolições (ou poemas aritméticos)* (1988).

**Modesto, Luiz Sergio.** Born in Rio de Janeiro in 1953, Modesto is a professor of law and author of the book of poems *Concerto de mente/ teatro de mente* (1985).

**Nunes, Sebastião.** A poet and publicist born in Minas Gerais, Nunes participated in the process-poem movement in the 1960s and 1970s and is author of *Antologia Mamaluca* (1988), among other titles.

**Pignatari, Décio.** Born in Osasco (São Paulo) in 1927, Pignatari was also a member of the Noigandres group and one of the founders of Brazilian concrete poetry. Professor of communications, he is the author, among other publications, of the book of poems *Poesia pois é poesia* (1986).

**Valverde, Franklin.** Born in São Paulo in 1960, he is a journalist and is active as editorial coordinator of EDUC (Editora de PUC-SP). Valverde has taken part in anthologies and exhibitions of Brazilian experimental poetry.

**Xisto, Pedro.** A poet and diplomat from Pernambuco who died in 1986, Xisto was a member of the concrete poetry movement of the 1950s and 1960s. He authored several books, including *Caminho* (1979).

## Selected Resources

(organized by date)

Menezes, Philadelpho. 1991. *Poética e visualidade—uma trajetória da poesia brasileira contemporânea*. Campinas: Editora da UNICAMP.

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Campos, Augusto de. 1978. *Poesia, antipoesia, antropofagia*. São Paulo: Cortez e Moraes.

Dias-Pino, Wladimir. 1973. *Processo: linguagem e comunicação*. Petrópolis: Vozes.

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Campos, Haroldo de. 1969. *A arte no horizonte do provável*. São Paulo: Perspectiva.

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Campos, Haroldo de, et al. 1965. *Teoria da poesia concreta — textos críticos e manifestos*. São Paulo: Duas Cidades.



*An article by:*

**Pedro Juan Gutierrez**

Translations from Spanish  
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*Visible Language*, 27.4  
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## Cuban Visual Poetry

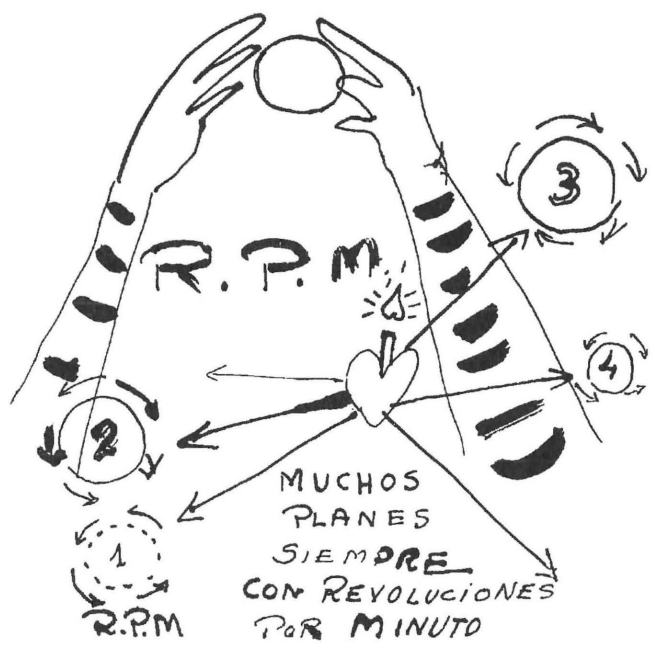
In his book titled *Avant-Garde Poetry in Cuba*, Roberto Fernández Retamar discusses Cuban visual poetry.<sup>1</sup> Retamar points to Manuel Navarro Luna's *Surco* (1928) as the most typical of Cuban avant-garde poetry. After citing numerous Cuban poets who were inspired by vanguardism in the 20s and 30s, Retamar notes as essential characteristics of avant-garde poetry the

*abandonment of stanzas, of rhyme, of measure, with the purpose of offering maximum liberty to the poet; the frequent abandonment of capital letters and punctuation signs; altered typographic disposition, sometimes — as in the best poems in Surco — in the manner of the Spanish poet Antonio Espina, who in turn took it from the French "paroxyst" poet Nicolás Beaudouin. Nevertheless, Cuban vanguardism never produced bold examples of this "typographic writing on three planes." At most, it has left us examples such as:*

**In them go  
the rich  
the able  
the privileged**



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Sandú Darié  
Sin título  
Untitled



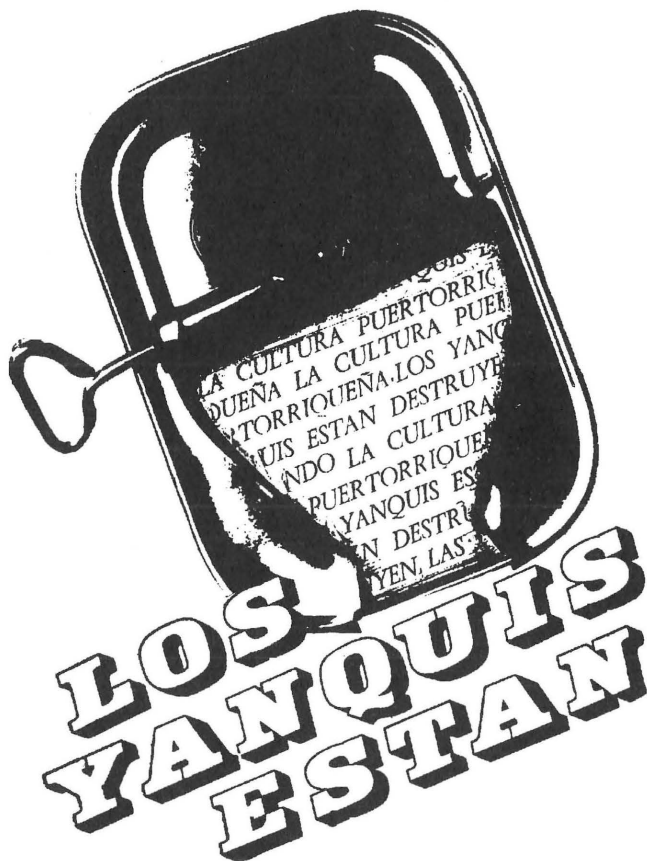
*More frequently it was the disposition of words on the page attending to their meaning. The word "fall," for example, was laid out with the letters giving the impression of descent from one extreme of the page to the other; the opposite happened with the word "ascend," etc. Or it was the entire sentence that responded — in the design — to the meaning : as in "Azotea," by Navarro Luna:*

I  
g  
o  
u  
p  
t  
h  
e  
s  
t  
a  
i  
r  
w  
a  
y

**A cold sweat  
runs over me**

**and**

*Frequently the words seem to be arranged by chance. But always they manage to avoid giving the impression of having been serenely arranged. A legacy of Apollinaire's calligrams, they appeared to want to substitute modernist "musicality" with a visual sense in the poem.*



**García Chaple**

*Página de "Revolución y Cultura," Enero de 1976*

Page from "Revolution and Culture," January, 1976

In his conclusion Retamar asserts:

*The avant-garde, understood as the summary of the European isms, had an ephemeral life in our poetry, a conscious sense of movement towards new forms. As Esténger said, parodying a phrase of Enrique Díaz Canedo, "In Cuba 'avant-garde literature' has hardly existed."<sup>2</sup> This provoked a violent response throughout Cuban poetry, but it had neither the persistence nor the intensity to leave us works of much importance. As a result of the breath of fresh air which it brought with it, Cuban poetry took two basic paths: pure poetry and social poetry, which had a vigorous national representative in black poetry.*

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After these changes in the 20s and 30s, poetic experimentation entered a long period of dormancy. Almost no one was interested in trying new ways. One must remember that the arts were well sealed up; in the visual arts a drawing was a drawing and an oil an oil. It didn't occur to anyone to mix anything even in the most minimal fashion. Never in the world could a charcoal drawing be contaminated with a little collage and a few touches of crayon.

Nevertheless, visual poetry survived. In his book *New Signs*, the Italian Lamberto Pignotti asserts that generally speaking art today is enjoyed with little attention. He adds:

*It is possible that this distancing makes possible a curious enough effect: for example, one sees visual (or almost visual) poems on looking at a publicity poster, an illustrated magazine cover, or a page of*

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**Samuel Feijóo**  
*La Muerte alegre*  
Happy Death

*comics. You will say, then, that visual poetry existed already before visual poetry. Very true, but you didn't notice it. And in the end, therein resides the secret of artistic discovery . . . . Also the contrasts between light and shade existed before Caravaggio, and seascapes before Salvador Rosa, just as the forest existed before Ruysdael. . . .*<sup>3</sup>

Thus Cuban experimental and visual poetry slept peacefully, without disturbance until the 1960s, or so it seemed to the Cuban critic and researcher José Pratts Sariol, as well as to the poets Fayad Jamís and Cintio Vitier, with whom I consulted. On January 1, 1959, the Cuban Revolution was victorious. The social upheaval of course affected culture. It was a true eruption in all senses. At that moment many things began in Cuba: mass literacy campaigns, huge print runs for books, the beginnings of the film industry, substantial impetus to literature and the visual arts, material support for works, students who were lovers of the arts and so on.

In all this commotion it's worth emphasizing that since the 1960s there began to crystallize what later would become the Cuban school of the poster, nothing less than the sum of the expressive synthesis of image and word. The Cuban poster incorporated the best of world graphics; it assimilated this dialectically, and I am convinced that hundreds of these posters are visual poetry of the highest degree.

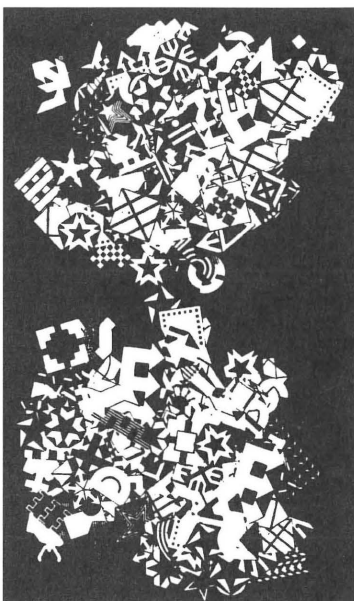
Two of our best poets are also painters and draughtsmen who increasingly create their experiments with mixtures of texts and drawings. They are Samuel Feijóo and Fayad Jamís. Feijóo — folklorist, researcher, writer and poet — has published much since the 1960s in his magazine



Duarte  
Sin título  
Untitled



Adalberto Suárez  
*Maximo Gómez*



**Felix Beltrán**  
*Composición, III*  
Composition, 3

420

**Aldo Menéndez González** |  
*Peinando el mes*  
Combing the Month





*Signs*, put out by the Central University of Villa Clara. It is characterized by its creole humor and its philosophical playfulness. Feijóo works in black and white, collage, bad-painting. *Signs* is an amazing compendium of Cuban visual poetry. Fayad Jamís also dedicated years to cultivating this kind of poetry with a highly developed visual sensibility in which the writing is incorporated as a visual value and loses almost all its semantic significance.

The designer Félix Beltrán also has achieved recognition by purifying and synthesizing signs in a highly personal vein. Another interesting example is the poet, actor and dramatist Francisco Garzón Céspedes with his book of poetry *Desde los órganos de puntería*, in which he offers a typographic elaboration of works.<sup>4</sup>

Since 1987 two well-known visual artists have experimented in this line: Zayda del Río has illustrated his own poems with sufficient persistence and grace to receive the attention which others in Cuba had previously achieved only sporadically. The other is Luis Miguel Valdés, who in 1987 began to draw using a computer and video equipment, incorporating color, movement, music, texts, voices and effects. Sound texts have been attempted in the excellent electronic music studio of ICAP, but until now without success.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Retamar, Roberto Fernández. 1970. *Avant-Garde Poetry in Cuba*. Havana: Casa de las Américas.

<sup>2</sup> Esténger, Rafael. 1950. *Cien de las mejores poesias cubanas*. Havana: Mirador.

<sup>3</sup> Pignotti, Lamberto. 1974. *New Signs*. Valencia, Spain: Fernando Torres.

<sup>4</sup> Céspedes, Francisco Garzón. 1971. *Desde los órganos de puntería*. Havana: Editorial UNEAC.



*An article by:*

**Enzo Minarelli**

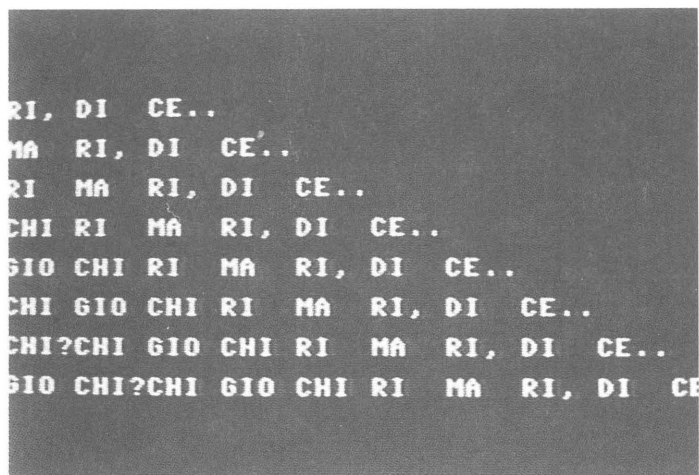
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## Italian Visual Poetry

With less than ten years before the century's end, anyone who looks objectively at the panorama of Italian poetic experimentation sees that it is still in the process of tentatively affirming the role of the historical groups. This cornucopia is now open to attack by whoever lays claim to the rights of primogeniture. Another twenty years have passed, yet *poesia visiva* (visual poetry) continues to be practiced, thus defining writing as symbiotic or new, even by the aficionados of concrete poetry of the Brazilian stamp.



**Ugo Carrega**  
*Attorna elle poesia?*  
Round the Poetry?



| **Antonello Ricci**, *Offerta verbale*, Verbal Offer

Faithful kamikazes, the proto-poets have continued to use little of the selfsame originary order (only recently a Milan show has placed the accent on the lyric qualities of the word in the verbal-iconic binomial, making the scale dip whereas it was thought to have been balanced). Such defense, not to say diffusion, of the primary origins of a contemporary visual poetry has not stopped a rapid development of the idea: a show-census kept at the Della Grazia Archive in Milan a year ago registered another hundred visual poets. This large group (one could define it as “epi-gonic”) exhibits the very worst tendencies to which facile practitioners of visual poetry are prone — they contaminate style, mix signs — one tries too hard to upset, another to improvise. Nothing fresh is added. Instead all we have are the expected self-promotions on the part of the herd. Such a “thickening of the margins” through over-population has only achieved a wider diffusion of their mediocre products. This is positive only if we look at all poetry as a test for the democracy of the masses.

## VERISMO

...tenti, che... zavano di capi  
 ...ingere la p... non era inganno,  
 ...contro la r... ahimé serenamente  
 ...nessa a caso o... più o meno ma  
 ...di verismo ill... ciò che conti  
 ...anche oggi.

Ma noi ci limitiamo a stimolare la r...  
 ...one, oltre i fr... in correnti, sulle div...  
 ...talora grandi... si che senza esitazione  
 ...uniscono... medesima etichetta.

...cinnia e l'ir... in trappole. Certo  
 ...certati di... ironismi che, trall...  
 ...adano scarpe vecchie, come quei di m...

...di recente ha delimito l'esteta...  
 ...ngli, «genio dell'*ekfrasis*», come se

...solo un descrittore dannunziano, è  
 ...attore, certo peculiare, del format...

...tradotto nelle *équivalences* di una t...  
 ...moderna di ascendenza baudelair...

...rica come *artifex additus artificis*, più  
 ...ome iperrealismo materiale: chiari di lun...

...na cultura che pure è del numero dei più  
 ...za meraviglia, ma paradossalmente è cred...

...presentata come «avanguardia» senza ave...  
 ...re la sclerosi irrimediabile delle formule

...Incapaci queste di... qualità ed o  
 ...ualità dei fenomeni... abusivamente

...Leonardo nei suoi disegni di anatomia e di  
 ...non fa *trompe-l'oeil*, opera un passag...

...sua scoperta e proprietà che apr...  
 ...ivamente scientifica — che lo pu...

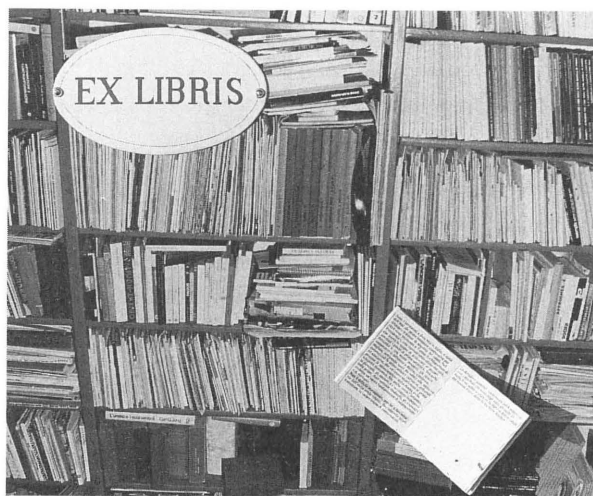
...l'osservatore un'immagine

Labels  
 PIGNOTTI

Lamberto Pignotti

Verismo

Verism



Eugene Miccini, *Ex Libris*, Ex Libris

Yet, even though this assault is in progress, the movement appears to be stalling. Why? Because we have an almost total absence of a market, at first vainly branded as the evil of a somewhat bland capitalism. However, this market is long overdue to exercise some natural selection, even to the point of cleansing the movement of its defiling agents. Why? Because the critic-sponsor who baptized *poesia visiva* is unsuccessful. The consequent penetration of the art gallery is nothing but aestheticism, because the season of the great collective exhibitions of the 1970s is over, and half the 1980s coincided with the ascent of the Left to power in many regions and cities in Italy. The public entity is always a little loathe not to say reluctant to support poetic experimentation since if there is a marginal aura in the process of creation, a no-man's land, a kind of alternative organization of the "officialness" whereby personal initiatives are launched, one finds also an unbridled activism composed of self-promotion, even self-celebration, where quality counts less than money, managerial control less than aesthetics.

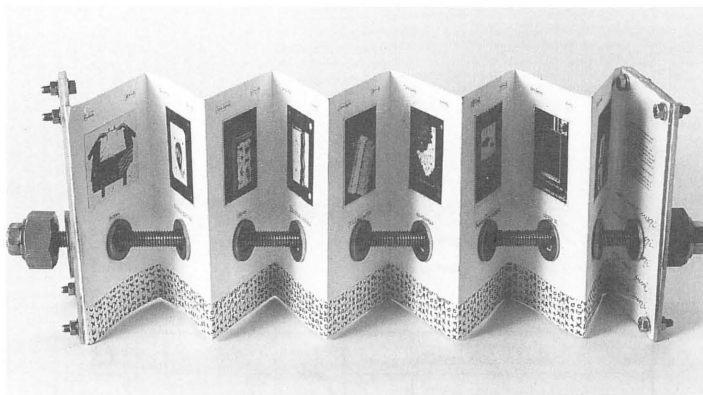


Let me stress here that these are odd, compressed fossils which lack a genuine criticism, forcing the poet to become his own editor. Lacking a gallery, the poet must also create his own showplace. Accumulations of work made under these circumstances are long in incubation. Each poet changes this sense of positivity, intent on the various alternatives although with an air of fatigue, but also waiting impatiently, shivering with frenzy.

The exhaustion of the verbal-iconic line is evident, at least in terms of the development still anchored on the page that does not disturb its basic rhythm. In the diverse shadings of the general definition of visual poetry, all of these matters of the rapport between word and image have always gone against "movement," or through permutation, addition or subtraction they have added to the body of the message, systematically translating the communication medium. Put otherwise, we have had enough of this sense of the physicality of the page, of this rectangular container, which is a kind of internment between empty and full space, between life and death. All this clearly refers to the European situation, while in the American, above all the Central and South American, with grave social tensions still unresolved, "visual" poetry retains its impact, it takes on a political weight and responsibility often to the detriment of poetic quality. Originally, Italian visual poetry also had an ideological or anti-publicity dimension. Its success can be seen in contemporary Italian graphic taste; indeed, historical visual poetry has continued to be much blamed for the imperialism of some of the preferred techniques of *poesia visiva*.

Perhaps only in Brazil has the phenomenon of concrete poetry known how to transform itself into a kind of "officialness" that was questioned in its early years. In each case, the ideological purpose manifested a dated heritage. True ideological purpose is that capacity to act in the depth of the structure created. Then poetry, experimental or of





**Massimo Mori**

*Kata - logo from Codex*

*Kata - logo from Codex*

whatever kind, becomes a blunt weapon. How many have really *read* poetry or *seen* an exhibition?

We are arriving at the end of a century that has produced much energy. Nothing remains but to train a searchlight on some inexplicably obscure wrinkle of history, reassessing some inexplicably muted suggestion and opening some narrow passageway towards the certainty of soon seeing the light again.

Videopoetry is currently “enlivening” the tired practice of Italian visual poetry with its active rapport between the poetic word and image in movement. Our future experiments depend on that poetic-televisual binomial. In the conception of those who consider it a necessity, videopoetry is attaining an indispensable urgency. The use of technology still makes the difference in research, but a technology undertaken without “poetic conscience” is nothing. Videopoetry is a phenomenon in growth; whatever the reason for its late development, what is important is its great capacity for the movement of images, the fascination of that video-

~~FENIX HOTEL~~

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Appartamento - Apartment	4500	4500	4500	4500
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Prima colazione - Breakfast				
Colazione - Lunch				
Pranzo - Dinner				
Vivando alla carta - Meals à la carte				
Cantina - Cellar				
Acque minerali - Mineral Water				
Caffetteria - Coffee or Tea - Oranged	200	320	200	300
Bar				
Biancheria - Laundry - Dry cleaning				300
Telef. urbano - Local telephone calls				
Telefono interurbano - Long Distance telephone calls				
	<b>, insieme</b>			
	1.500			
Totale del giorno - Total for the day	4.500	5.120	4.820	5.120
Ripporto - Sum carried over		4.500	9.620	14.440
		9.620	14.440	19.260
Pagamenti - Payments				24.380
Totale - Total				

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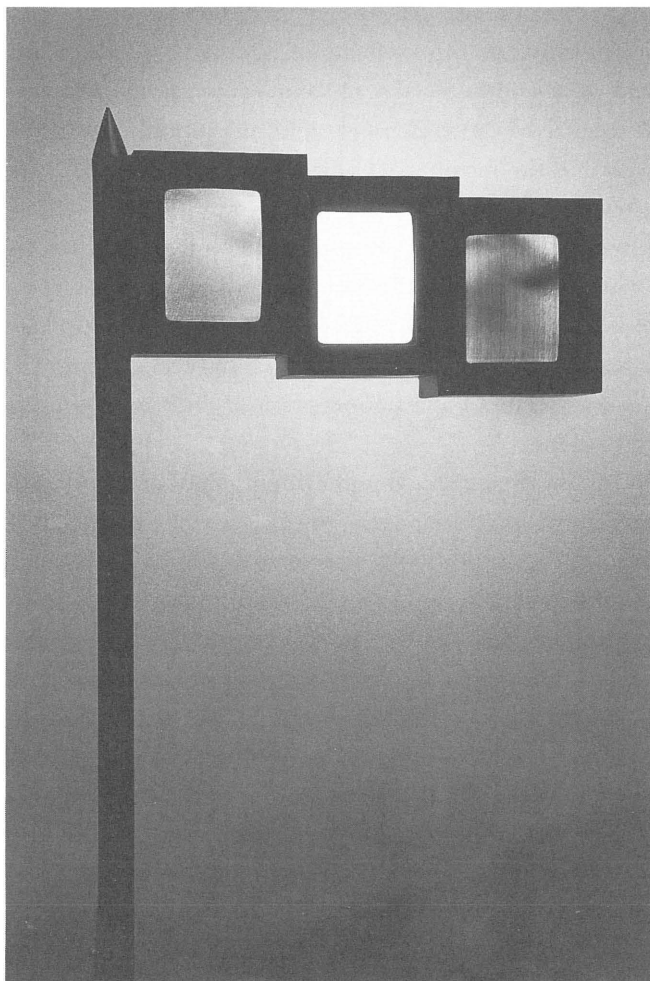
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Luciano Ori  
Insieme  
Together



**Enzo Minarelli**

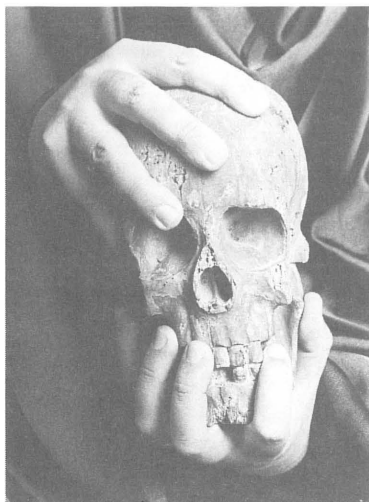
*La bandiera*

The Flag (sound poetry video installation)



page that continually changes, decking out in new dress the old instruments of visual poetry. Further, videopoetry becomes a kind of total poetic machine, and therefore finally the synaesthetic dream-reality of the futurists is achieved. In an "environment," videopoetry occupies an architectonic space, creating an interweaving of lights and monitors, of sound poetry and objective elements combining presence and absence of the same poet, amid the movements of the images and the movements of the mechanical constructions. Terms like "videopoetry" and "video-sound poetry" (the difference, in substance, is given by the sound stream that in the first case is a generally literal poetry, while in the second case it is a sound poem) refer to products of the most rigorous style, featuring a domination of the technical means subordinated to a higher conception of that visual-poetic development.

Given the expected and evident crises of the written word related to linear poetry, the poetic word now finds its ideal collocation in the live spectacle of sound poetry that is given as a para-dramatic intervention: this distinction is important because the theater (scene, diction, movements, plot) has nothing to do with that sound poetry which moves uneasily along narrative lines sustained by the virtuosity of the author, but rather on and within the phonetic physicality of the word itself. It is moved by an oral tide that operates at the level of the single phoneme, although it tends towards a significant phoneticism, an ambiguous conduct of the "voice" instrument liberated from constraints and conscious of every minimal tonality, every minimal rhythm. The voice is analyzed in all its components — phonetic "noise" — and a solid rapport is established with the technological apparatus, which thereby exceeds the potentiality of the unprocessed voice. Making constant reference to the musical score, the electronic medium pursues that impossible project of poetry, using the rhetorical apparatus as support.



**Corrado Cicciarella**

*L'uomo folle, poesia in video*  
The Mad Man, videopoem

Sound poetry is now considered the threshold for future written poetry to cross; it presents a way to abandon the linear text that remains present only as a scheme of execution or poetic score, visual notation or trace. The poet must acquire a fine grasp of time in orality, the sense of duration or the weight of seconds and minutes. He must quickly understand the importance of the cut and use of montage. It is the magnetic tape, not the page, the microphone and not the typewriter that he explores.

Sound poetry's capacity to create dialogue, to attract and therefore to encompass, to pull in and to coagulate the contributions of the other media, to set out a protagonist's role is what counts. This is *polypoetry*, already theorized in the first years of the 1980s, and in reality much practiced, although many ignorant and unaware poets do not have the critical wherewithal to define the theoretical shape of it. *Polypoetry* is one of the rare innovations of the end of this century — it extends the already numerous and fruitful variations of body art, performance art and happenings.

By way of conclusion, I transcribe the *polypoetry* manifesto, which first appeared in the 1987 Valencia, Spain catalogue *Tramesa d'Art*:

1. Only the development of the new technology will show the advance of sound poetry: the electronic media and the computer are the true protagonists.

2. The "language" object must always be somewhat investigated at its minimal and maximal levels: the word, basal element of sound experimentation, assumes the connotations of multiple words, penetrates to the interior and turns outward to revivify. The word must be liberated to its polyvalent sonority.

3. The elaboration of sound does not admit limits, must be pushed further to the threshold of pure noise, a meaningful noise: sound ambiguity, whether linguistic or oral, has exploited the full instrumental apparatus of the mouth.

4. The recuperation of the sense of time (the minute, the second), outside of the canons of harmony and discord, because only montage is the true parameter of synthesis and equilibrium.

5. Language and rhythm, the tonal values, are real vectors of meaning: first the act of reasoning, then the act of feeling.

6. Polypoetry is conceived and realized through live spectacle, yet committed to sound poetry as the first given or point of departure for the creation of linkages with:

- musicality (accompanied or rhythmic line)
- mimicry, gesture, dance (interpretation or amplification or integration with the sound theme)
- images (television or slide, as association, explanation or redundancy or alternative)
- light and space
- costumes and objects.

## Selected Resources

(organized by date)

- Paolo Della Grazia et al. 1989. *Archivio della Grazia di Nuova Scrittura*. Milan: Mercato del Sale.
- AAVV. 1989. *VideoSoundPoetryFestival*. Ferrara: Sala Polivalente, Palazzo dei Diamanti (catalogue).
- Caruso, Luciano. 1989. *Far libro*. Florence: Centro Di.
- Barilli, Renato. 1984. *Informazione 60-80*. Imola-Piacenza: Edizioni die Comuni di Imola e Piacenza.
- Minarelli, Enzo. 1983. *3ViTrePAIR*. (LP sound poetry records). Edizioni di Polipoesia Cento.
- Minarelli, Enzo. 1982. *Visioni Violazioni Vivisezioni*. Ferrara: Edizioni del Comune di Bondeno.
- Accame, Vincenzo. 1981. *Il segno poetico*. Milan: Zarathustra Edizioni-Spirali Edizioni.
- Barilli, Renato. 1981. *Viaggio al termine della parola*. Milan: Feltrinelli.
- Carrega, Ugo. 1980. *Scrittura attiva*. Milan: Il Mercato del Sale.
- Pignotti, L. and S. Stefanelli. 1980. *La scrittura verbo-visiva*. Rome: L'Espresso.
- Burnai, I. 1979. *Baobab*. (audio-cassette of phonetic information). Reggio Emilia: Elytra Edizioni.
- Ori, Luciano. 1979. *La poesia visiva (1963-1979)*. Florence: Vallecchi.
- Barilli, Renato. 1978. *Parlare e scrivere*. Macerata: La Nuova Foglio.
- Spatola, Adriano. 1978. *Verso la poesia totale*. Turin: Paravia.
- Barilli, Renato. 1979. *Parlare e scrivere*. Macerata.
- Ballerini, Luigi. 1975. *La piramide capovolta*. Padua: Marsilio.
- Eco, Umberto. 1968. *La struttura assente*. Milan: Bompiani.
- Pignotti, Lamberto. 1968. *Istruzioni per l'uso degli ultimi modelli di poesia*. Milan: Lericci.

*An article by:*

**César Espinosa**

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Translations from Spanish  
by Harry Polkinhorn  
*Visible Language*, 27.4  
César Espinosa, pp. 436-443  
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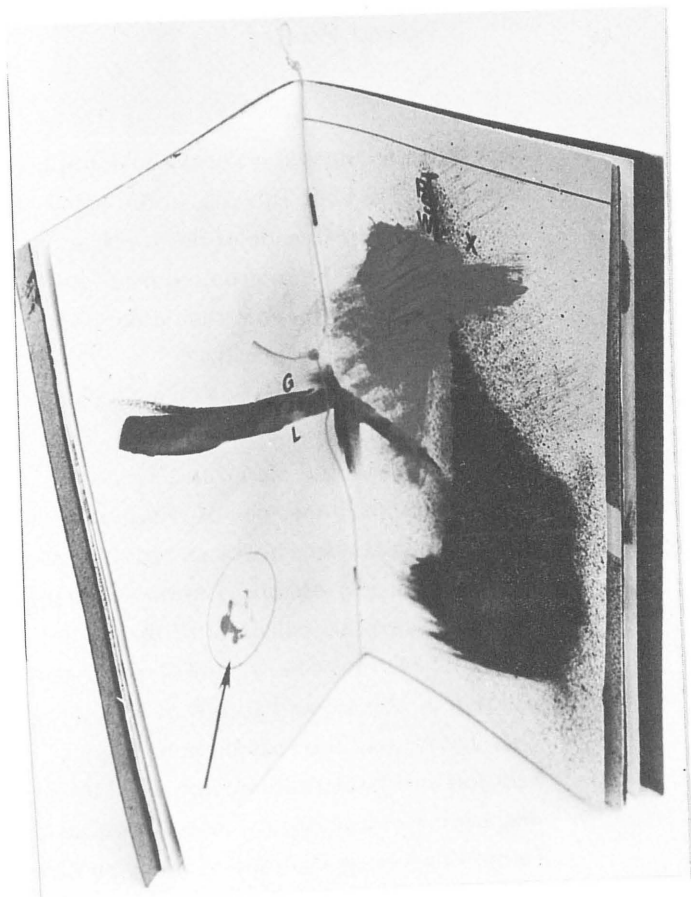
## Mexican Visual Poetry

With the sole antecedent of the ideographic writing of José Juan Tablada, in the 1920s, it was not until the decade of the 1960s and then because of the international success of Brazilian concrete poetry, that visual poetry in Mexico would be revitalized.

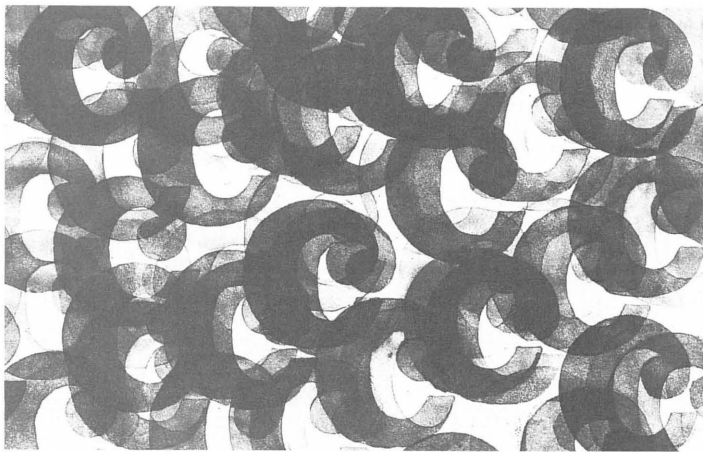
One of its heralds was Octavio Paz, a great friend of the São Paulo Noigandres group. In books like *Blanco* and *Topoemas*, Paz displays his knowledge of Hindu thought and the mandala structures according to the idea of “signs in rotation.” Another pioneering cultivator of verbal-visual writing in the 1960s was Mathias Goeritz, the German artist resident in Mexico and author of *Messages of Gold*. Later texts and visual poems by Jack Seligson and Jesús Arellano appeared in the magazine *Punto de Partida*,<sup>1</sup> as well as texts by Felipe Ehrenberg, the only Mexican published in the 1975 Spanish anthology titled *Writing in Liberty*.

Throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, in an isolated and sporadic form, a few poets and artists declared themselves interested in renovating language. Among these writers were Enrique González Rojo, Ricardo Yáñez and Roberto López Moreno. Artists’ groups like the No-Group put on performances and

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**Salvador Carrillo**  
*Sin título, libre objeto*  
Untitled, book object



**María Eugenia Guerra**

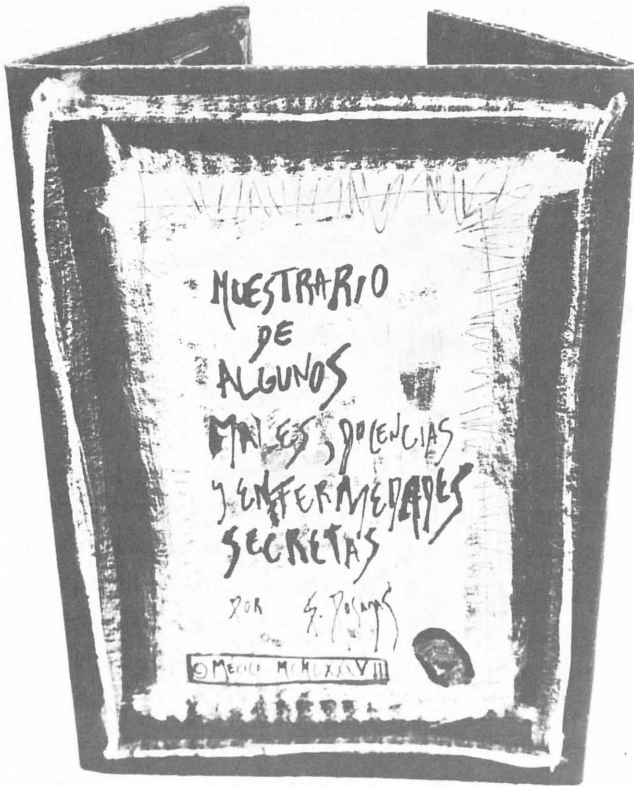
*Sin título, tintas*

Untitled, inks

Visual-Frame Narrative performed urban, topographical poems, etc.; Guillermo Villegas and Consuelo Deschamps staged their visual score *Andante* in 1976; Laura Elenes launched her project *Atelén* for sculpture, sound and now computer; in 1978 Pablo Espinosa's book and exhibition of semiotic poetry titled *The Semiophage* appeared.

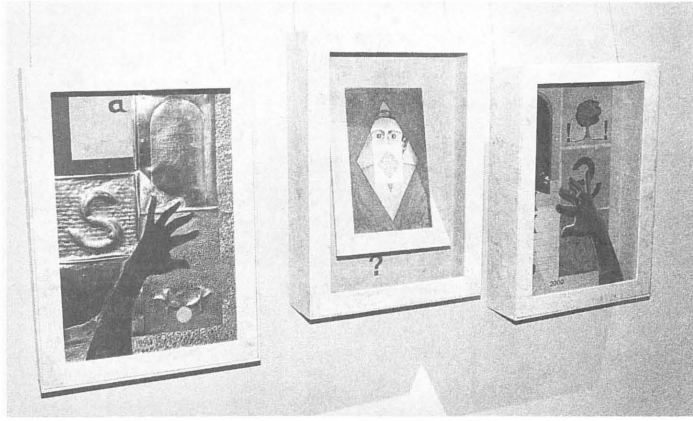
In addition to the landmarks mentioned above, throughout these years there was also an outpouring of related phenomena — book-objects, multimedia events, neographics, psychomusic. These all featured an intensive exploration of signifiers, even if indeed the majority of these projects had no greater theoretical or propositional repercussions.

At the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 90s, with few exceptions, the art and poetry of Mexico have focused on the official and created polished, graceful jewels. Hegemonic academicism still reigns and the virtuoso specialists break lances with all that smacks of the hybrid, the mixed, the “impure.”



**Felipe Posadas**

*Mustrario de algunos males, dolencias y enfermedades secretas*  
Pattern Book of Several Evils, Pains, and Secret Illnesses



**Adriana Espinosa**

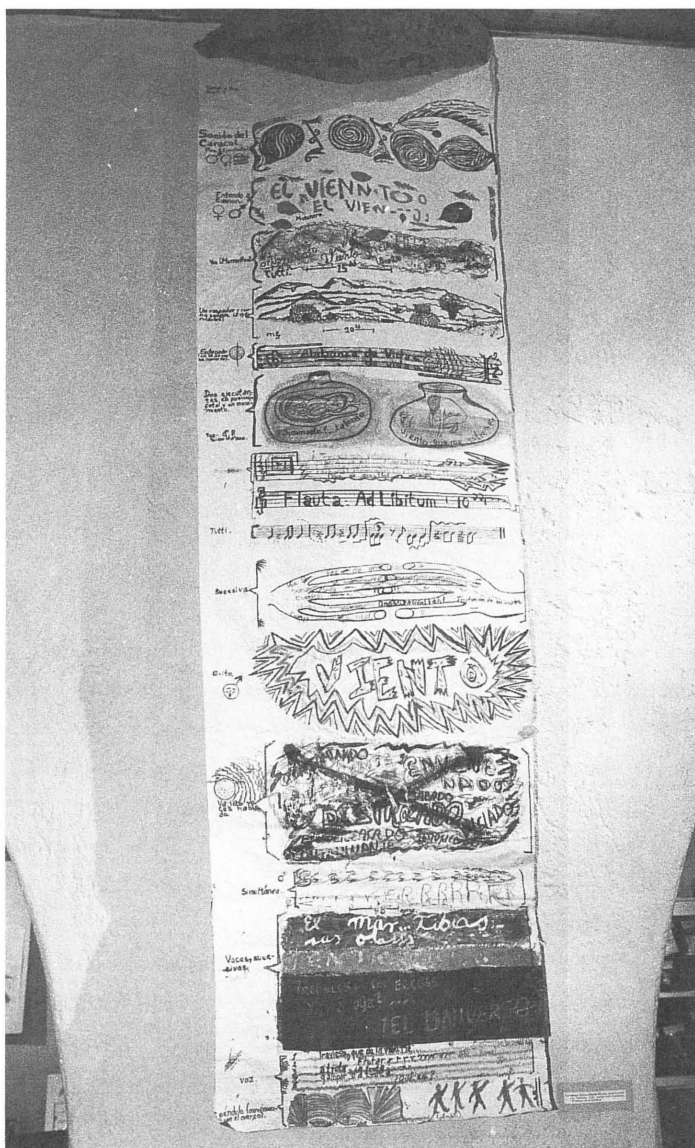
*Página mutable, instalación gráfica*

Mutable Page, graphic installation

In the last analysis, the *intermedia* artists constitute hardly a handful: The Santo Domingo Center with Guillermo Santamarina and Armando Sarignana; the Society of Spectacles team with Dulce Mariá López and Daniel Rivera, “El Archivero” of Jani Pecanins and Gabriel Macotela; in Monterrey the alternative press “La Palma”; in Jalapa groups close the the University Gallery; in Mexicali the PAVAC group, among others.

Given such a panorama plagued by protectionist conservatism, in 1985 the call went out for the First International Biennial of Visual and Experimental Poetry in Mexico. These exhibitions have by now been held three times. Each was realized with participation from forty-one countries, resulting in ten catalogues and two documentary publications forming a theoretical and historiographic body of material formerly nonexistent in this country.

At the same time, in each of the biennials the Mexican section under the title POEMEX has been exhibited, with the participation of thirty to forty Mexican artists and writers.



**Gloria Garcia**  
*El viento*  
 The Wind



**Leticia Ocharán**

*Poe-Cia, instalación*

Poe-Cia, installation

They have presented sculpture and photocopy within the tradition of *poesía visiva*, as well as visual scores and poetry action events, sound works, computer works, etc.

The participants in the Mexican section have been principally young artists in the visual arts interested in experimentation with language; among them are César Martínez, Mónica Mayer, Víctor Lerma, Felipe Posada, Adriana Espinosa, Genaro Maya, as well as better known artists like Leticia Ocharán, Felipe Ehrenberg, Laura Elenes and Jorge Perezvega. Among the writers and poets these novelties are still too excessive; the exceptions have been Lourdes Sánchez, Perla Schwartz, Carmen Boullosa and Roberto López Moreno.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> *Punto de Partida*, No. 18, March, 1970.

*An article by:*

**Fernando Aguiar**



Translation from Portuguese  
by Harry Polkinhorn  
*Visible Language*, 27.4  
Fernando Aguiar, pp. 444-466  
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## Portuguese Visual Poetry

The emergence of contemporary experimental poetry in Portugal began in 1959 with the publication of an article by Ana Hatherly in which a concrete poem was included, and with the publication of E. M. de Melo e Castro's *Ideograma* in 1962. However, even though there was never an organized group of experimental poets, this has not stopped some poets from joining forces to publish magazines and to sponsor exhibitions, nor has it stopped their work from being as creative and productive as that of other, analogous, foreign movements.

In addition, the activities of Portuguese poets actively contributed to the spreading of avant-garde poetry on the international level. As a demonstration one can point, for example, to a letter which E. M. de Melo e Castro sent to the literary supplement of the *Times* which strongly influenced various English and Scottish concrete poets, according to the testimony of Dom Sylvester Houédard in the exhibition catalogue *Quadlog* (1968), and that of Bob Cobbing and Peter Meyer in *Concerning Concrete Poetry* (1978).

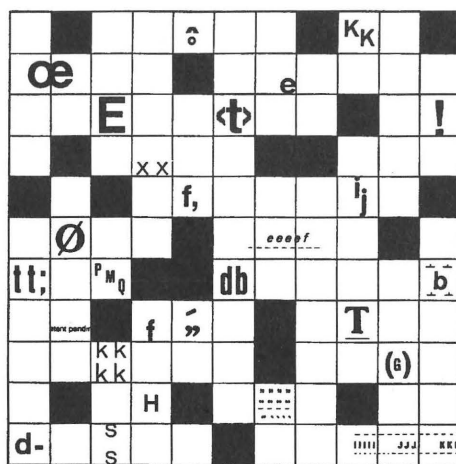
Principally during the second half of the 1960s, concrete poetry was sharply attacked and ridiculed by official criticism as



António Aragão  
 Electrography  
 Electrography

António Aragão |  
 Sem Titulo  
 Untitled





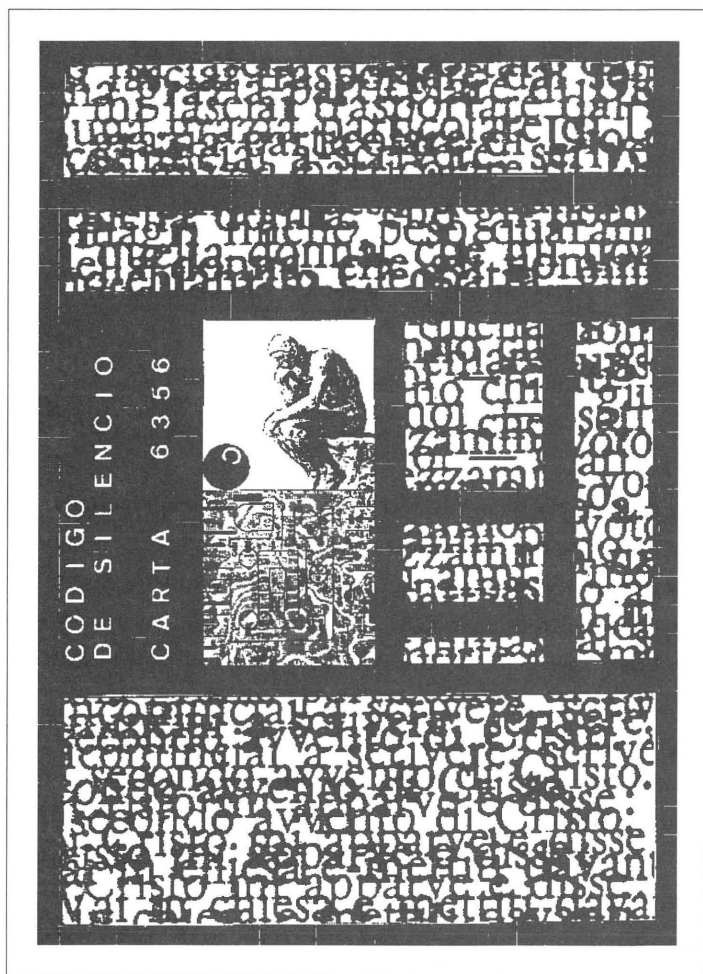
**Fernando Aguiar**

*Palavras Cruzadas - Problema No. 01*

Crossword Puzzle - Problem No. 1

intellectually retrograde, very little open to experiences and innovation. However, one should not forget that this was during the ferocious censorship of a right-wing dictatorship which monitored all artistic activities that showed any kind of innovation. Beyond the transgression of the traditional rule of poetry, experimental poets clearly linked themselves with a leftist ideology. Thus their works were doubly suppressed: whether in relation to the poems' formal aspect or their contents.

It was in this context that there appeared in July of 1964 the first issue of the magazine *Poesia Experimental*, organized by António Aragão and Herberto Helder, which in 1965 inaugurated the exhibition "Visopoems" in which the following artists participated: António Aragão, Salette Tavares, E. M. de Melo e Castro, Herberto Helder and António Barahona da Fonseca. The first Portuguese happening, "Concerto e Audição Pictória," was held in the concrete framework of this exhibition. Also in 1965 the *Jornal do Fundão* published a special supplement dedicated to con-



**César Figueiredo**

*Código de Silêncio — Carta 6356*

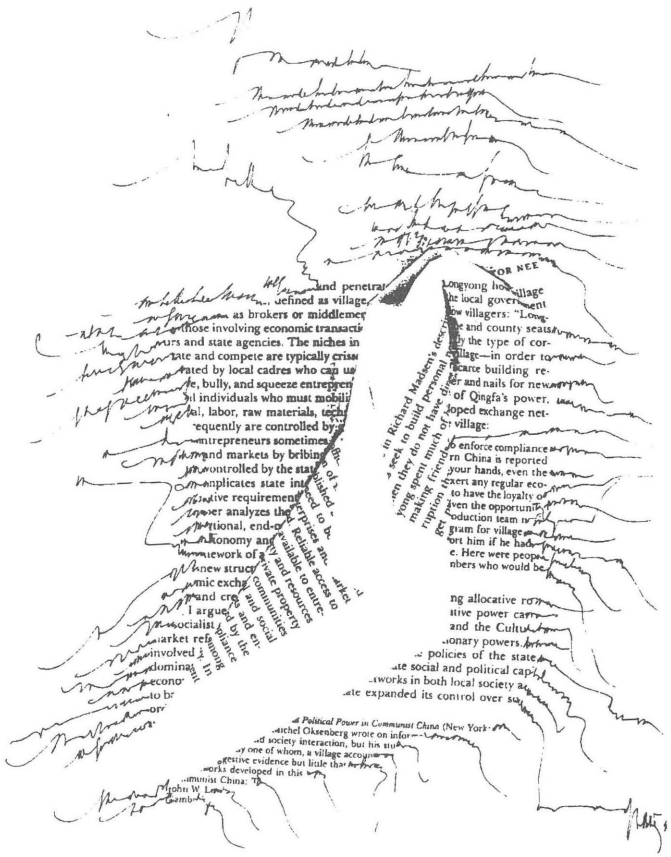
Code of Silence - Letter 6356

crete poetry. Organized by António Aragão and E. M. de Melo e Castro, this contained critical articles and experimental poems of António Ramos Rosa, Salette Tavares and José-Alberto Marques, among others. These happenings, as well as the publication of *Proposição 2.01 — Poesia Experimental* (1965) of E. M. de Melo e Castro, and the publication of the magazines *Operação* and *Hidra*, witnessed the esconcing of experimental poetry within Portuguese literature.

In the meantime, and in spite of all editorial, social and political constraints, the activity of a few experimental poets at that time — Ana Hatherly, E. M. de Melo e Castro, António Aragão, Salette Tavares and José-Alberto Marques — was truly extraordinary, with the publication of books, the above-mentioned magazines and the sponsorship of exhibitions.

After this first somewhat polemical phase, and following the 1971 publication of António Aragão's *Um Buraco na Boca*, the first Portuguese experimental romance, the first *Antologia da Poesia Concreta em Portugal* was brought out, put together by José-Alberto Marques and E. M. de Melo e Castro. This book brought together poems by fourteen authors, among them Abílio-José Santos, Alberto Pimenta, Ana Hatherly, António Aragão, Salette Tavares and Silvestre Pestana, as well as those by the anthologists.

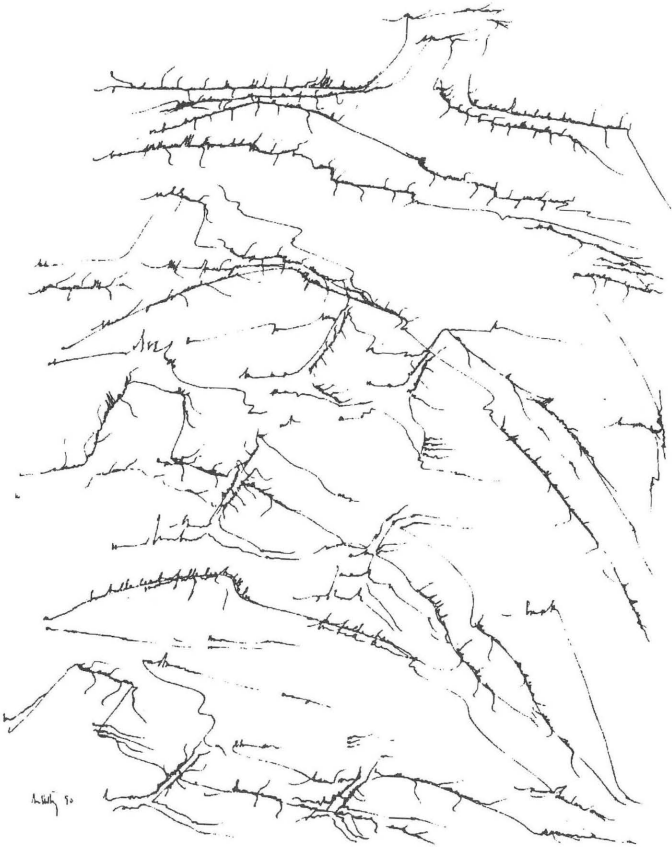
During the 1970s, with book publication picking up, Portuguese experimentalism underwent a rapid evolution, just before 1974 and, especially after the coming of democracy. Letters, words and spatial games on the page were no longer the principal elements in poetic creation and other signs, images, as well as other materials and supports, were beginning to be used. Poem-objects, installations, experimental films and poetic events were realized which transcended the two-dimensional page, giving to poetry color, mass, sound and movement, making it more expressive and communicative.



Ana Hatherly  
Le Pli - No 1



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**Ana Hatherly**  
*Homage to Edgar Allan Poe*

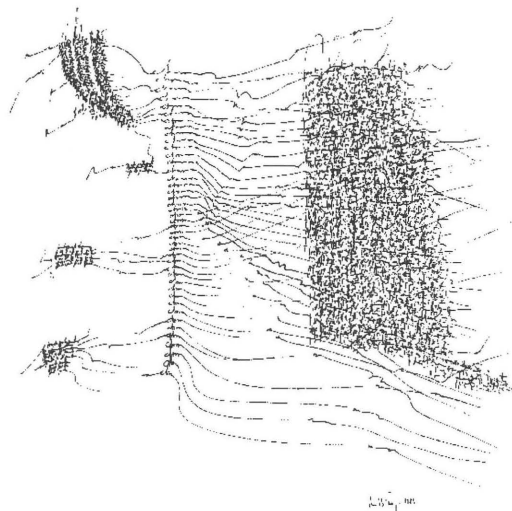




Ana Hatherly, 1998

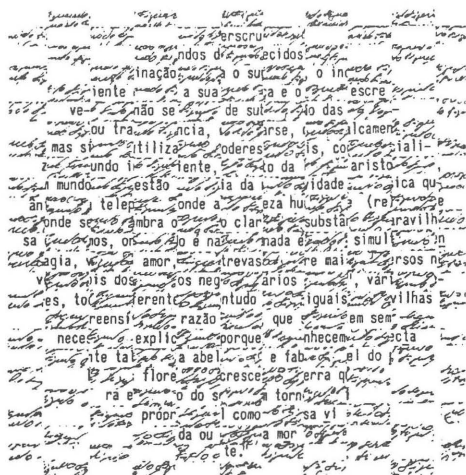
Ana Hatherly  
*Anabelle-Lee*

Ana Hatherly  
*Homage to Edgar Allan Poe*



Ana Hatherly, 1998





| César Figueiredo, *Explosivo Solar I*, Solar Explosive I

In 1977 three events witnessed the beginning of the idea of poetic performance of poetry as act and living presence. The first took place in the Quadrum Gallery in Lisbon, where Ana Hatherly presented a performance entitled “Rotura.” The second was a group show “Anima,” a dramatization of experimental poems, by the Portuguese Society of Writers. The third of these events occurred in the Lisbon Zoo, where Alberto Pimenta scandalized the public by exhibiting himself in a cage (with the sign “Homo Sapiens”) next to the other cages containing monkeys in the Chimpanzee House. Also in 1977, twelve experimental poets participated in the XIV Biennial of São Paulo, Brazil, included in the section “Great Confrontations — Space Poetry.”

In 1980 “PO.EX” was inaugurated in the National Gallery of Modern Art. This was an important exhibition of visual and avant-garde poetry. Working in visual poetry, experimental film and video, installations and poetry performances were António Aragão, António Campos



Rosado, Ana Hatherly, António Barros, E. M. de Melo e Castro, José-Alberto Marques, Salette Tavares and Silvestre Pestana. The book *PO.EX — Textos Teóricos e Documentos da Poesia Experimental Portuguesa* by Ana Hatherly and E. M. de Melo e Castro was published in 1981. This featured a rather comprehensive study of the experimental movement from the beginning of the 1960s.

Accompanying early 1980s technological developments were the first experiences in the fields of photocopy, computer and videopoetry. Also, visual poetry was increasingly becoming the focus of creative interest, removing itself from a concept of poetry as a form of expressing sentiments and emotions. After the second half of the 1980s, experimental poetry gained a new dynamic with the realization of diverse exhibitions, both national and international, and with the participation of Portuguese poets in innumerable magazines, exhibitions, anthologies and festivals abroad.

In 1985 Fernando Aguiar and Silvestre Pestana organized the project “Poemografias,” made up of an exhibition and the publication of a book. The exhibition was presented in four cities and contained unpublished poems by Abílio-José Santos, Alberto Pimento, Ana Hatherly, Antero de Alda, António Aragão, António Barros, E. M. de Melo e Castro, Fernando Aguiar, José-Alberto Marques, Salette Tavares and Silvestre Pestana. The book *Poemografias: Perspectivas da Poesia Visual Portuguesa*, contained critical texts and recent visual poems by the poets mentioned above and included contributions by the critic Egídio Álvaro and of the musicologist Jorge Lima Barreto.

In November of that year, these same poets and António Nelos, António Dantas, Emerenciano and others made up a representative Portuguese “Poemografias” which opened in the Zenzontle Gallery at the International Biennial of Visual and Experimental Poetry in Mexico, whose participants came from over forty countries.



bcc f hh jklmm ppq

bcc ef hh jklmm ppq

bcc eef hh jklmm ppq

bcc eeef hh jklmm ppq

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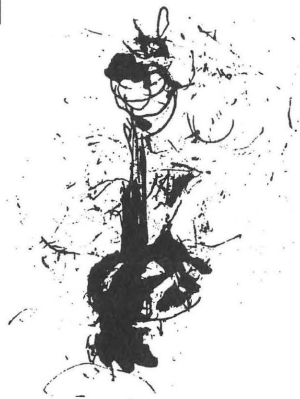
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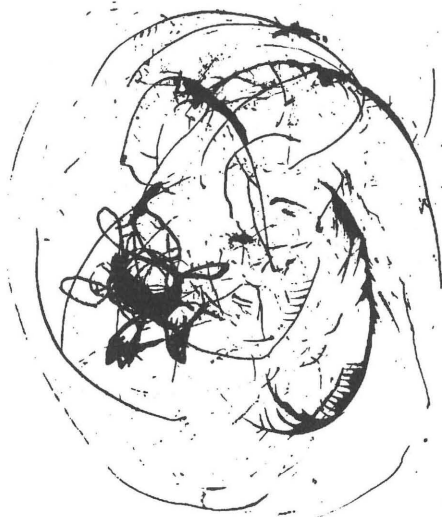


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**Alberto Pimenta**  
*The Birth of a Flower*  
(sequence of five parts)



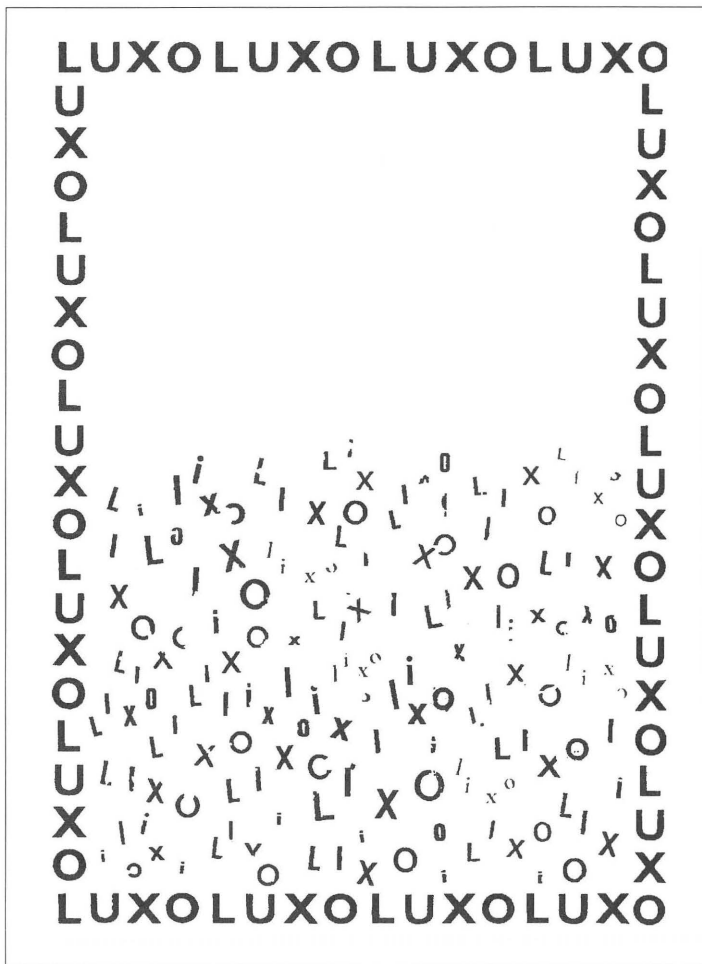
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In 1987 the First International Festival of Living Poetry was held in the Dr. Santos Rocha Municipal Museum in Figueira da Foz, Portugal, organized by Fernando Aguiar. The Festival displayed works of some 219 participants from twenty-nine countries, presenting original pieces of visual poetry, poem objects, poetry installations and holographic poetry gathered from some 1,300 documents on avant-garde poetry.

During the Festival's symposium, various poetry performances and interventions were offered by poets of different nationalities and a huge selection of video poems, videos of poetry performances, records and cassettes of sound poetry, as well as computer poems and films of experimental poetry was presented, making up the most significant manifestation of avant-garde poetry realized in Portugal. Meanwhile other names became identified with this movement, of whom we should mention César Figueiredo, Gabriel Rui Silva, Rui Zink and Gilberto Gouveia.



**Fernando Aguiar**  
*Retrato Social*  
Social Portrait



**António Aragão**

*Urra Urra/Ora Ora/Mesmo Mesmo*  
Roar Roar/Same Same/Well Well



**António Aragão**

*S.O.S. — Céu*  
S.O.S. — Sky

Currently experimental poetry finds itself in an interesting situation: on the one hand we can draw the balance from these thirty years of poetic activities, as much in the exhibition “Concrete. Experimental. Visual — Poesia Portuguesa 1959-1989,” organized by Fernando Aguiar and Gabriel Rui Silva, just presented in Bologna, Italy, and in Paris, France, as in the publication of the complete poems of Alberto Pimenta, E. M. de Melo e Castro, and soon, of Ana Hatherly and Salette Tavares. On the other hand, and above all, the newer poets continue their intensive poetic research on different levels with varying physical supports. Overall, Portuguese experimental poetry can be characterized as having a great creative capacity and an enormous poetic and theoretical production, in spite of the fact that the poets who have systematically dedicated themselves to experimentalism are very few.

## Selected Resources

(organized by date)

Among some 150 publications of Portuguese experimental poetry (books, anthologies, catalogues, magazines and newspaper supplements), the following have been selected as historically important.

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de Melo e Castro, E. M. 1990. *Trans(a)parências*. Lisbon: Tertúlia Editora.

Pimenta, Alberto. 1990. *Obra Quase Incompleta*. Lisbon: Fenda Edições.

Aguiar, Fernando and Rui Silva, Gabriel, eds. 1989. *Concreta, Experimental, Visual — Poesia Portuguesa 1959-1989*. Lisbon: Ed. ICALP.

Aguiar, Fernando, ed. 1987. *1o Festival Internacional de Poesia Viva*. Figueira da Foz: Ed. Associação Poesia Viva.

Cavallo, Giancarlo. 1987. *Mappe dell'Immaginario — Poesia Visuale Portoghese*. Salerno: Ed. Il Campo.

Pimenta, Alberto. 1986. *Metamorfoses do Vídeo*. Lisbon: José Ribeiro Edições.

Aguiar, Fernando and Fagundes Duarte, Luis, eds. 1985. *Poesia Visual: E Preciso Mexer com a Palavra*. Supplement of *Jornal de Letras, Artes e Ideias*, No. 145, April 16, 1985.

Aguiar, Fernando and Pestana, Silvestre, eds. 1985. *Poemografias — Perspectivas da Poesia Visual Portuguesa*. Lisbon: Ulmeiro.

Hatherly, Ana. 1983. *A Experiência do Prodígio — Bases Teóricas e Antologia de Textos-Visuais Portugueses dos Séculos XVII e XVIII*. Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda.

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Pimenta, Alberto. 1978. *Il Silenzio dei Poeti*. Milan: Feltrinelli.

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de Melo e Castro, E. M. 1965. *A Proposição 2.01* (first theoretical essay on Portuguese experimental poetry, followed by an international anthology). Lisbon: Editora Ulisseia.

de Melo e Castro, E. M. 1962. *Ideogramas*. Lisbon: Guimarães Editores.

Hatherly, Ana. 1959. *O Idêntico Inverso*. Article published in *Diário de Notícias* on concrete poetry, accompanied by a proposal for a concrete poem.

## Poet Notes

**Aguiar, Fernando.** Aguiar, born in Lisbon in 1956, works primarily as a visual and performance poet. He has published books of poetry and anthologies of experimental poetry. He has had various one-man exhibitions and participated in some 130 group exhibitions around the world. He has participated in poetry and performance festivals world-wide and regularly organizes exhibitions and festivals of performance and poetry in Portugal.

**Aragão, António.** Aragão, born in Madeira in 1924, is a painter, poet and historian. He was the author of the first Portuguese experimental romance (*Um Buraco na Boca*) and has written several books of poetry. Aragão has participated in various exhibitions of painting and visual poetry. In recent years he has dedicated himself to photocopy art, through which he has created his most recent poems.

**Figueiredo, César.** Figueirdo, born in Porto in 1954, is interested in photocopy art, a medium in which he has created the major part of his work. He has participated in various international group exhibitions and collaborated on art and literary magazines. He regularly curates exhibitions of photocopy art.

**Hatherly, Ana.** Hatherly, born in Porto in 1929, received a doctorate from the University of California at Berkeley and is professor at the Universidade Nova of Lisbon. She is author of various books of poetry, fiction and literary criticism. In recent years she has been interested principally in baroque poetry, having written numerous articles on this subject, as well as the book *A Experiência do Prodígio: Bases Teóricas e Antologia de Textos-Visuais Portugueses dos Séculos XVII e XVIII*. She has created a television program on the art of the avant-garde.

**Pimenta, Alberto.** Pimenta, born in Porto in 1937, has written around thirty books of poetry, prose and criticism. His poetic works are collected in the book *Obra Quase Incompleta*. Pimenta has created two television programs, the second of which shows various contemporary poets. He has staged poetry performances and happenings in different countries. Pimento has books published in Italy, Spain and Brazil.



*An article by:*

**Clemette Padín**

Translations from the Spanish  
by Harry Polkinhorn  
*Visible Language*, 27.4  
Clemette Padín, pp. 468-480  
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Rhode Island School of Design  
Providence, RI 02903





# Uruguayan

## Visual Poetry

Jakobson's image characterizing the poetic function of language as the projection of the paradigmatic axis on the syntagmatic axis seems ideal for explaining the phenomenon of experimental poetry. He says: "The poetic function projects the principle of equivalence of the axis of selection on the axis of combination." Equivalence alludes to repetition or reiteration of accents, rhythms, phonemes, syllables, structures and so on. The projection of the paradigmatic recurrence is concretized on the syntagmatic plane, even if in poetry.

si raspara .....  
 .....haría signos  
 izando el cero innato  
 del vacío inhalador ..  
 .....nieve roja

atrás ..... leche oscura ..... envés visible  
 más atrás ..... sol en negro .....

fallas entre letras .....

citas .....

..... K. Lasswitz .....  
 ..... T. Wolff .....  
 ..... L. Carroll .....

iniciales .....

..... J. L. B. .... transfnito  
 ..... G. G. ....

..... y .....la irrestricta ya.....engomado

.....  
 al sonar .....  
 ..... lo evaporado  
 .....  
 frotada .....  
 escritura transparente  
 del espectro insoluble

EXCITANTE  
DESINTERESADA  
EXTRAVIADA  
DESTELLANTE

CASTIGADA  
DESTELLADA  
ARRASTRADA

SUBSUMIDA EN LO VAGO

CONSECUENTE  
ELOCUENTE  
OBSECUENTE  
SOBRESALIENTE  
DISPLICENTE

SUMERGIDA

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INFRINGIENDOTE  
TU POEMA GRAFICO  
MOJON DE KILOMETRO CON OJOS EN BLANCO

SAXO  
CRUEL  
SADICO  
SEXOPATA  
IRONICO  
IRONSIDE  
IRON MAIDEN  
BLUES  
BLUE JEANS

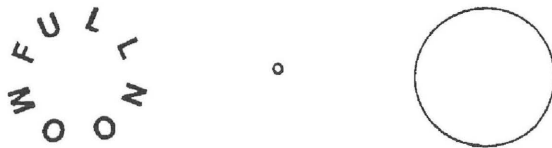
ARRASTRADA  
CASTIGADA  
CON LOS OJOS BIEN EN BLANCO

**Gustavo Fernández Insua**  
*Sin título*  
Untitled

In Peirce's words, in poetry icons or non-verbal codes (or analogical signs, those that work by similarity) are projected on words or symbols (or signs by contiguity) — in other words, the projection of codes that are not specifically verbal or linguistic transforms “words” into icons or figures.<sup>1</sup>

The experimental poem wants to be not only grammatically analogical, in the manner of Chinese ideograms, but also requires a syntax, an ordering in discrete units just as does logical thought or discursive language. (In reality, the classical poetic forms, such as the sonnet, the ten-line stanza or haiku, do not possess a totally logico-formal “corpus” because words must be ordered analogically in verses, tercets, quatrains, rhythms, rhymes, in formally rigorous structures.)

If we follow Hjelmslev's point of view, we see that the formal aspect signals a poem, that is, the form in which a determined content is expressed. Whatever this form may be, that which denotes the poetic is the special characterization that takes the form of expression.<sup>2</sup> For example, let us suppose that we have a referential content that denotes “full moon” and that it can assume this linguistic form. Nevertheless, if we refer to this as “silver plate” (“plato de plata”) we already have at least two formal features that modify the expression, leading to the poetic: metaphor (substitution of one element by another) and the repetition “plat” and “plat.” We can even further transgress expression and say, for example, “needle-hole of thirst” or to use iconic codes:



Note that the form of the content follows the same “full moon”; what has changed is the form of expression.



## EN BLANCO Y NEGRO

Estar o no estar



ESTAR en  
la luna  
o  
en  
la lona  
(ignorando si la cuenta es progresiva o regresiva)

PARECER un animal de bruces  
siendo sudor y polvo  
y por lo tanto tierra

SER cielo o suelo

Ser o no ser    más que  
arena  
s  
o  
b  
r  
e  
ARENA

## ZONA

Con la cabeza rapada se arropan  
 cuerpo sobre cuerpo  
 sobre cuerpo  
           cuerpo  
           cuerpo

sobre/el/ajedrez/de/la/plaza/custodiada

ZONA ZONA ZONA

zona

zona

zona zona zona

y se lluen  
 como viejos pilots de cuero negro  
 encorvados  
 mugiendo  
 con sus caras de niños

**Luis Bravo** |  
*Zona*  
 Zone

(a uno de ellos se le cayó un papel escrito  
 con sangre,  
 como un pañuelo que periera en la  
 última huída,  
 antes que el gas lo suicidara:

“como ángeles  
 resistiendo los embates del Oscuro

desde la atroz alegría  
 les estamos cambiando el mundo”

P+L+BR+S  
 -A-A--A-  
 -+--+--+

**Celma García**

*Palabras*

Words

Because of these arguments much criticism holds that poetry, in its essential being, takes its origin from these formal “figures” and not from content. Just as rhyme and alliteration, for example, are phonic operators and metaphor is a semantic operator, so also image or the disposition of verses, words, syllables or letters, whether or not including iconic figures, is a visual operator with its power of expression whether or not determined by linguistic sense itself.

Finally, does the term “poetry” connote the determination of the semantic in the literary work? This is a crucial point on which there is no agreement. For some, if the poem is not capable of signifying or expressing a literary meaning, whatever its form may assume, it is not poetry. For others, to limit the poem exclusively to the literary is to grossly limit its possibilities of expression. This anthology of experimental Uruguayan poetry in 1990 exemplifies both positions.





## Poet Notes

**Amanda Berenguer** was born in Montevideo. His published books include *Joint Declaration* (1964), *Prime Matter* (1966), *Composition of Place* (1976), *Identity of Certain Fruits* (1983), *The Lady of Elche* (1987) and others. Julio Cortázar has said of his work, "Each page lead me on a vertiginous fugue on the immediate and measurable, displaced me to this territory where at times — a few but sufficient — we feel that it would be worth the trouble to have lived to encounter reality." In 1973 he published a record *Dictions*, which signified a new level of experimentation with the spoken word. He has participated in various conferences of visual poetry, among them the III Biennial of Visual, Alternative and Experimental Poetry put on in Montevideo and Mexico.

**Luis Bravo**, poet, critic, performer and professor of literature, has published *Put around the Heart in Flames* (1984), *Claraboya, You Are the Moon* (1985) and *Rain* (1988). He has put on poetic shows and recently offered courses on Uruguayan literature in Madrid, Spain.

**Jorge Echenique**, born in Durazno in 1957, is a visual artist, poet, composer and performer, who works at the National School of Fine Arts. He has organized events as well as interdisciplinary exhibitions, blending the most diverse experimental languages (video, computer, graphics, installations, performances, etc.). Editor of the magazine *MC5*, coeditor, in São Paulo, of the magazine *Odradek*, he has put on countless performances of poetry as well as collective and individual exhibitions.

**Celma García**, born in Montevideo in 1970, is a professor of literature. She participated in "Experimental Poetry Conference" (Uruguayan-Brazilian Institute, 1989); in the III Biennial of Visual, Alternative and Experimental Poetry in Montevideo and Mexico (1990); and in "Retinas and Improvisations" (Macintosh Institute of the Book, 1990); and has various publications in literary magazines and poetic performances to her credit.

**Gustavo Fernandez Insua**, born in Montevideo in 1966, is an instructor of sociology. He is a graduate of the "Artigas" Institute of Education with texts published in various magazines, including *Subterranean Gas*, *Wall*, *MC5*, among others; coproducer of the multimedia "Retinas and Improvisations"; and coordinator of the weekly "Comic Culture."

**Clemente Padín** has published *Open Horizons* (1969, second edition 1989), *Angles* (Italy, 1971), *From Representation to Action* (France, 1975), *Signographics and Texts* (U.S.A., 1990) and regularly travels abroad to give courses on Latin American art.

**Carlos Pellegrino**, born in Montevideo, directed the journal *Maldoror* (1971-1984). He is author of *I Play You a Fist of Dogs* (1971), *Versatorio* (1973), *Clear* (1976), *Box* (1983), *Yod* (a novel, 1984) and *Zarpa* (1988). He is also a musician and videomaker.

**Eduardo Roland**, born in Rosario in 1958, is a poet, musician and professor of Spanish and education through literature. In 1986, he traveled to the United States having won first prize in a literary competition sponsored by the United States embassy in Uruguay. He has recently published his first book of poems *Leaves in White and Other Shades* and participated in the III Biennial of Visual, Alternative and Experimental Poetry in Montevideo and Mexico (1990).

**Dardo Villaverde**, a poet, journalist and a visual artist, studied painting with Gustavo Alamón in Tacuarembó. He resides in Paso de los Toros.

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(organized by date)

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- Padín, Clemente. 1990. *Breve Panorama de la Poesía Experimental en Argentina, Chile y Uruguay*. Montevideo: IMM.
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of Wisconsin Press.

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del Sur.

Acuña de Figueroa, Francisco.  
1890. *Obras Completas*.  
Montevideo: Biblioteca Nacional.



*An article by:*

**Harry Polkinhorn**



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*Visible Language*, 27.4  
Harry Polkinhorn, pp. 482-493  
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## Visual Poetry from the United States

For reasons having to do with the size, historical relations to Europe, the native flowering of commodity capitalism and the ethnic/social mixtures of which the nation is composed, the United States has had a peculiar relation to culture in general and to poetry and visual poetry in particular. It is commonly accepted that in the case of literature, the European line culminated only in the middle of the nineteenth century in our first specifically *American* literature in the works of Poe, Melville, Whitman, Emerson, Thoreau, Dickinson and Hawthorne. The visual arts remained hopelessly in the thrall of European influences at least until the massive blow inflicted by the Armory Show (1913), if not as late as the early 1950s when abstract expressionism began to have an influence abroad.

Poetry in which the visual aspects of language play a significant role has always been regarded as a freakish aberration, mildly fascinating, but not worthy of being included in serious treatments of American culture except as a sidelight. However, as Geoffrey Cook put it, "Visual poetry is a cry by the poet that the content of the past is



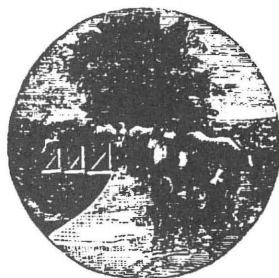
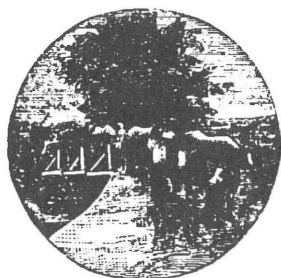
**Paul Zelevansky**

from *Case for the Burial of Ancestors, Book 3*



## A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS:

My job is done. It is time to settle accounts. In the end, of what use was this history to me? The Hegemonians had their pictures, and we have to construct our own. Yet, it's important to understand that when you're lying down at the close of a long day, *hope* and *imagination* are the operative words. Hope will give you a reason to continue. Imagination will put you in the right place at the right time. But *memory* is the only proof you have that anything has happened at all. So take notes, gather your artifacts, and keep good records in preparation, because old age turns the memory to soup and other forms of proof may be required by everyone else.



**Paul Zelevansky**

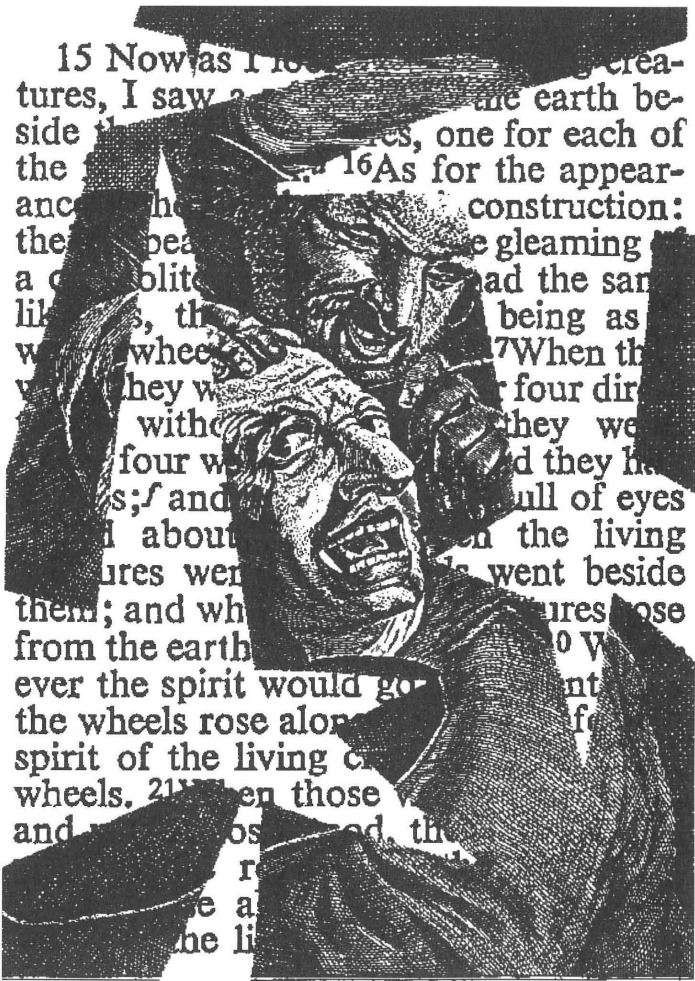
from *Case for the Burial of Ancestors, Book 3*

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FISH & LEAVES FREEZE IN THE LAKE  
 V [ ]  
 ] [ ]  
 N [ ]  
 C [ ]  
 S H E W A L L S  
 E V  
 I V  
 A V  
 ] V  
 F V  
 C V  
 L V  
 I G V  
 C V  
 RATTLE AT NIGHT V  
 ] V  
 C V  
 N V  
 E V  
 S V  
 L I E S I N T H E W A L L N E A R I  
 F I S H & L E A V E S P I P E S  
 T H I C K W A L L N A R R O W  
 H

Karl Young  
Untitled





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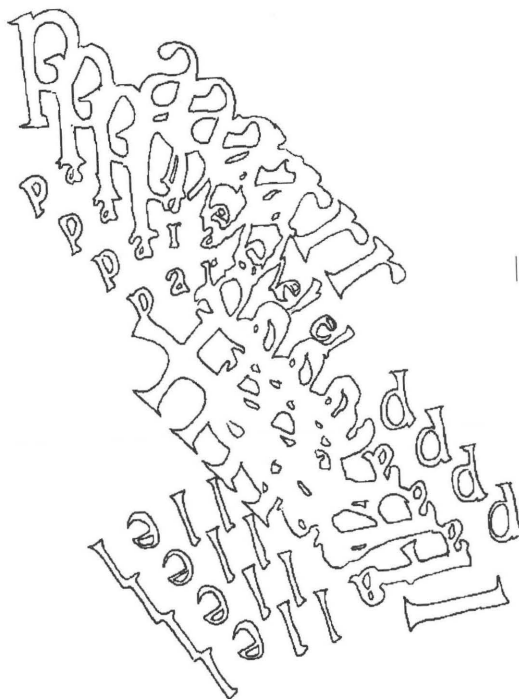
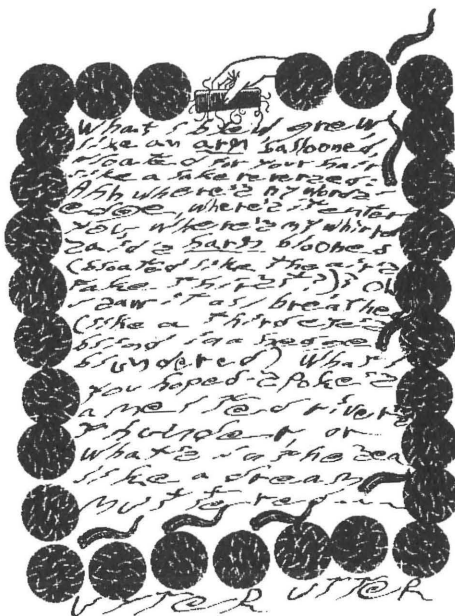
**FEELING**

Stephen-Paul Martin  
*Feeling*

cancerous & a new skin must be sewn to contain the dreams of the future.”<sup>1</sup> Visual or non-linear poetry is “the inter-medium between literary and visual art.”<sup>2</sup> In spite of critical misunderstanding, according to Higgins “there are a surprising number of pattern poems and near-pattern poems in American literature.”<sup>3</sup> The first known visual poem in the United States dates from 1674, by Edward Taylor.<sup>4</sup> Still, until recently there has been little evidence of a strong native tradition of visual poetry. Even as late as the 1950s, very few Americans participated in concretism. Then in the 1960s Fluxus artists worked consciously with the visual properties of language and visual poetry’s closely allied form, the “artist’s book,” underwent a revival among those conceptual artists whose work featured language (for example, Sol LeWitt, Lawrence Weiner, John Baldessari). Then in the post-concrete period, we must extend “visual poetry” to include hypermedia and video art which take written or printed language as their base. Although linear poetry of course continues to be practiced, we are fortunate to have increasing poetic activity in those areas mediated by technology, especially the computer, which is making possible the cross-fertilization of previously separate art practices.

Today several journals regularly publish and review visual poetry. Among these are *Central Park*, *PhotoStatic*, *Score*, *Inkblot*, *Generator*, *Kaldron*, *American Book Review*, *Lost & Found Times* and *Afterimage*. The most important collection of visual poetry in the country is the Ruth and Marvin Sackner Archive, Miami Beach, Florida, which is international in scope. Among those artist-writers known as experimental poets, the following have been selected for their current presence in North American visual poetry as defined above: Mielke And, Guy Beining, John Bennett, Jake Berry, Dick Higgins, Crag Hill, Karl Kempton, Richard Kostelanetz, Stephen-Paul Martin, Mike Miskowski, Liz Was, Chris Winkler, Karl Young and Paul Zelevansky.

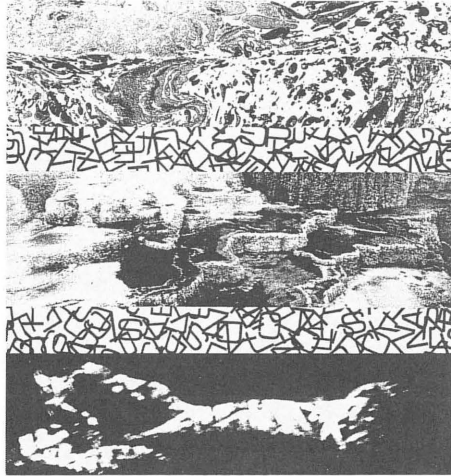
John M. Bennett  
Utter Utter



Crag Hill  
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**Miekal And**

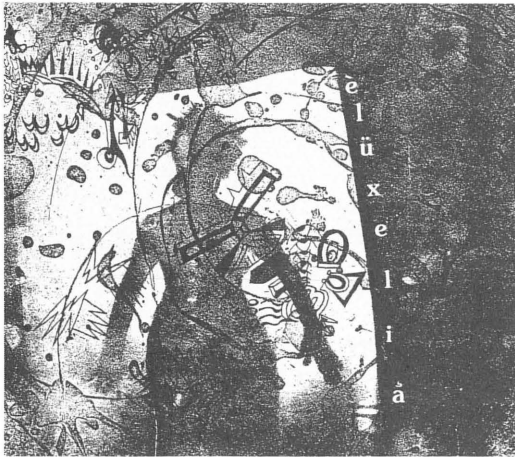
*The Electric Samara Lightbook*

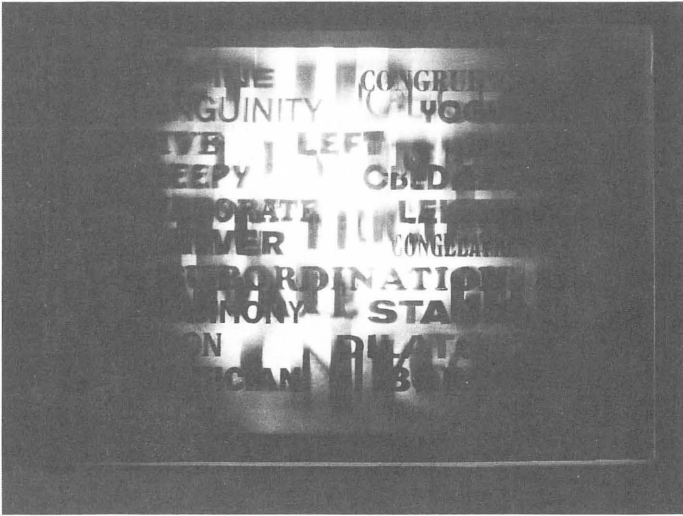


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**Liz Was**

*from Onion Leaves, Her Map Untended*





**Richard Kostelantez**  
*One Side of Antitheses*

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Geoffrey Cook. 1979. Visual Poetry As a Molting. *Precisely*, 3/4. 141.
- <sup>2</sup> Dick Higgins. 1987. *Pattern Poetry: Guide to an Unknown Literature*. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 233.
- <sup>3</sup> Dick Higgins, *Pattern Poetry*, 109.
- <sup>4</sup> Dick Higgins, *Pattern Poetry*, 110.



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