

New Media Poetry and Poetics (Gallery)

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Poetry has entered the digital realm, and has been changed by the experience. No longer composed of just static texts on a page or the language that makes up these texts, contemporary poetry has undergone some intense re-wiring at the hidden levels of pixel and sub-text machinery. In this situation, we deal with an expanded notion of "poem" as praxis of surface level and sub-textual computer code levels, and an expanded awareness of the digital poem as process. The reading and reception of this writing occurs in a networked context, in which the reader becomes a participant and helps shape the form of the new media poem. This hybrid category can include, as I enumerated in the CFP for this special issue, "multimedia digital works (image/text/sound) as examined through the lens of 'writing,' specifically any of those concerns central to poetry rather than narrative: reader as active participant in the 'ergodic' sense, the use of stochastic methods and chance procedures, and the complex relations between the author, reader, and computer-as-writer/reader which evolve from that interaction." Modes of work that foreground the digital medium (such as "codework") were also encouraged. There have been many terms for such work used in past scholarship on the topic, including "digital poetry," "E-poetry," and a number of other terms. But by "new media" in this context, I mean very specifically writing which engages with digital, programmable media and which operates in a networked context. And by "poetry," I mean specifically the paradoxical understanding of poetic texts as "language objects" defined by a kind of semiotic or aesthetic praxis as distinct from, for example, conceptual artists' use of text to merely convey ideas, or hypertext novelists' use of texts to tell stories. Such an investigation looks back to innovative traditions such as intermedia, sound poetry, concrete poetry, Oulipo and Jackson Mac Low, while looking ahead to ways in which programming and networked environments can create new possibilities for reader participation.

This Gallery is the supplement to a corresponding issue of LEA on "New Media Poetry and Poetics," that attempts to model critical responses to new media poetry through a range of articles and poetic essays. Here in the Gallery, we have examples of what might be described as poems or artworks which use text in ways that engage or foreground aspects of the digital medium.

Participants featured in the Gallery section here include current luminaries of new media poetry mIEKAL aND, Camille Bacos, Nadine Hilbert, Gast Bouschet, Aya Karpinska, Daniel Canazon Howe, and Jason Nelson.

MOTIONTEXT FERMENT, mIEKAL aND's collaboration with Camille Bacos, combines Fluxus and hypertext approaches with multimedia (video, sound) to evoke a planned obsolescence in the battered glyphs that populate their Bablyon Ministry of Misinformation. Referencing the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, the location in Iraq which also coincides historically with the source of alphabetic writing, aND and Bacos weave a compelling critique of the US invasion of Iraq as a threat to language itself, that fundamental element of our ecosystem. aND and Bacos also explore the limits of intelligibility and communication through a language of glyphs that aND invented himself. Certainly this is an evocative metaphor for the notion of code in the electronic medium, and the world map of aND and Bacos demonstrates the awareness of language as part of ecosystem, and therefore part of our networked consciousness.

Nadine Hilbert and Gast Bouschet's project The Trustfiles demonstrates an equally political engagement with multimedia. Featuring text, photography, video, and a participatory interface that varies throughout, The Trustfiles takes a paradoxically mystical view of political action by transubstantiation of documents from interventions and from the web itself into a beatific homage to networked consciousness. Most importantly, Hilbert and Bouschet's project demonstrates a constant performative oscillation between text and code structure in which fragments of news are reported and then obscured or garbled by intervening code. The result is a kind of beautiful chaos.

Open.ended, Aya Karpinska's piece with Daniel Canazon Howe, offers an experience of reader participation in which the reader helps to write a poem by manipulating two cubes and the words written on them in a three dimensional environment. The somatic, intimate vocabulary of the poems produced through this process evokes the body by referring to an oddly exteriorized, polymorphously spectral bodily space that does not seem bounded in the usual ways.

Jason Nelson's multimedia poem Hymn of the Drowning Swimmer employs a diverse set of interfaces that the reader has to learn. These "responsive poems, aural and visually connected texts, directed animations" trope notions of text in digital space as an ongoing flow of code and language. The reader wanders through these dark hymns into videogame-like scenarios that employ "mouse-controlled magnetism," tableaux of imagery and sound, and fragmentary poem-texts for which there is no correct order of reading.

***The LEA New Media Poetry and Poetics Special Issue is available at:
http://leoalmanac.org/journal/vol_14/lea_v14_n05-06***

Author Biography

Tim Peterson is a poet, art critic, and independent scholar. He is the editor of *EOAGH: A Journal of the Arts* and currently acts as a curator for the Segue Reading Series in New York City. His first book of poetry, *SINCE I MOVED IN*, is forthcoming from Chax Press in 2006. Chapbooks include *CUMULUS* (Portable Press at Yo-Yo Labs) and *Trinkets Mashed into a Blender* (Faux Press/e). His poetry and criticism have appeared in *Antennae*, *artsMEDIA*, *Colorado Review*, *Fascicle*, *Five Fingers Review*, *Harvard Review*, *Jacket*, *RAIN TAXI*, *Transgender Tapestry*, and other places.

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Nisar Keshvani, Editor-in-Chief

Established in 1993, Leonardo Electronic Almanac is, jointly produced by Leonardo, the International Society for the Arts, Sciences and Technology (ISAST), and published by MIT Press, is an electronic journal dedicated to providing a forum for those who are interested in the realm where art, science and technology converge. For over a decade, LEA has thrived as an *international peer reviewed electronic journal* and web archive covering the interaction of the arts, sciences, and technology. LEA emphasizes rapid publication of recent work and critical discussion on topics of current excitement with a slant on shorter, less academic texts. Many contributors are younger scholars, artists, scientists, educators and developers of new technological resources in the media arts.

New Media Poetics and Poetry Special

Guest edited by **Tim Peterson**

- :: Code as Language - *Loss Pequeño Glazier*
- :: Lens: The Practice and Poetics of Writing in Immersive VR (A Case Study with Maquette) - *John Cayley with Dimitri Lemmerman*
- :: Numbered Space and Topographic Writing - *Lori Emerson*
- :: Digital Poetry: From Cybertext to Programmed Forms - *Phillippe Bootz*
- :: Concrete and Digital Poetics - *Manuel Portela*
- :: Writing the Virtual: Eleven Dimensions of E-Poetry - *Stephanie Strickland*
- :: _Net.Drenching -- Creating The Co[de][i]n.Text_ - *Mez*
- :: Morphing Into New Modes of Writing: John Cayley's riverIsland - *Maria Engberg*
- :: 'Virtual Typography': Time Perception in Relation to Digital Communication - *Matthias Hillner*

New Media Poetics and Poetry Gallery

Curated by **Tim Peterson**

- :: Hymns of the drowning swimmer - *Jason Nelson*
- :: open.ended - *Aya Karpinska and Daniel Canazon Howe*
- :: MotionText Ferment - *mIEKAL aND and Camille BacoS*
- :: The Trustfiles - *Nadine Hilbert and Gast Bouschet*

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