

Alphabets (seen in profile)

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FEDERICO FEDERICI

home: <http://federicofederici.net>

archives: <http://leserpent.wordpress.com>

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According to Marcel Broodthaers, «since Duchamp, the artist is the author of a definition»¹, i. e. a calculated shift of the object from its original context to establish new interpretive paradigms. This thought process, continuously submitted to interpretation, also addresses the need of making the inquiry into the nature of art explicit. The statement appears to openly contradict those positions rejecting any definition, whether it is meant to draw Art closer or farther. The methodological approach of proceeding by definition entails the capability to select signs or objects and manipulate them not as bare finds, but as the original, specific elements of the relational perspective to build.

In *One ball total equilibrium tank* (1985), Jeff Koons encased a basketball at the centre of a silicon sealed glass tank filled with distilled water. The outstanding realism, inspired by the real object replacing its representation, is counterbalanced by the absolute neutrality of the context. To all appearances, this work comprises several heterogeneous motifs: the aesthetics of Geometry with its exaltation of the full and the empty; the invisible force fields of Physics; the ordinariness of playful childhood called to mind by the ball itself with its unique dark grooves; the socio-economic implications epitomized by the *Official Spalding* brand and the role of basketball in social emancipation. This *stand-alone* artwork didn't conform to the savage neo-expressionist paint-

ing dominating in that time, but the matter couldn't be settled once and for all within the *en vogue* remake of Ready Made Art: the deceptively simple arrangement actually implies quite a complex project, from both a practical and a philosophical point of view. The gravitational field was to be perfectly balanced without introducing further hydrostatic drifts, to express that purest, unperturbed status of the spirit attaining a perfect balance between aspiration and reality. The fact that the ball was not asymptotically stable at the absolute centre of the tank is, from my standpoint, an enrichment rather than an issue. This sort of counter-futuristic effect addresses both Man's substantial ineptitude at the purpose and the fuzziness of that «[...] point of intersection of the timeless/ with time [...]»² which the seeming one frame shot of a bouncing ball would tend to exclude.

The process of search, displacement and redefinition has often been a latent stimulus to re-code quotes from one text into another, hence Literature from all times has served as a proper written matter from which to pick plots, sentences or lines to reframe into an entirely new context. The broadening of contemporary perspective has gradually included the internet as a huge trading area, engendering artworks which exploit networks as relational devices and merge logos, slogans, acronyms or shreds of files into powerful markers of a new slang. As of the early 21st century, *Flarf*

poetry has explored algorithms-aided writing techniques (such as *googlism*) and «*simulated multiple authorship*»³ to sample and manipulate ready-made text-objects. In that connection «[...] whatever-what may be art, or more precisely that whatever-what may become art, is decisively distinct from the notion that everything is art.»⁴

The practice of asemic writing sets itself apart from this. While not entirely defying the rules of language, it insists on their being implicit and hints at them. Despite it sometimes subsumes obfuscated letters, numbers or other recognizable symbols, it doesn't barely consist of blurring meanings under the syncopated rhythm of handwriting. It is a pretended act of enunciation whose meanings remain beyond reach, undeciphered and to not decipher. Asemic writing naturally expresses a lack of a kind of realism, for the symbols in that polysemic spectrum are not elements of reality. Writing doesn't predict the outcome of reading: its an ongoing negotiation. Borrowing the terms from the debate on the so-called Copenhagen interpretation, underlying meanings are the hidden variables within the quantum state of the text. This is not a question of definition, though. The asemic writer *is not* the author of a new definition, nor is he skilled in drawing new alphabets of symbols generating meaning according to certain shared rules. He is not essentially and functionally interested in meaning which, in the breakdown of the hyper-connected society, tends to be the dregs of the permanent production and consumption of second hand information.

The more the traits of meaning are paired down, the more asemic writing becomes a pure experience of aesthetic value, though watching is in no way compensatory to reading. It's rather a new experience in itself.

Upon a closer look, seeing comes before speaking, objects before words, drawing before writing ever since Palaeolithic graffiti.

In traditional texts, written words are both a landscape and a soundscape. This duality can no longer be maintained, to make room to experiences of the textual stimulus out of interpretive schemes and conventions in general. While the whole language is squeezed and the semantic, phonetic, orthographic terms are overcome and melt into the asemic compound, the whole text is charged with a veiled semantic value which startles the reader and conveys a sense of ultimate spiritual unity. Every piece of asemic writing is original, in the sense that it may be at the origin of a set of signs which will not further be manipulated or used elsewhere. No convention is established between the writer and the reader to fulfil textual expectations, no matter whether the starting point is a low resolution dot printed document or a stained paper rip. Every technique of unpredicted scrambling or disruption in the flux of meanings offers an environment of permanent creation, wherein to take to the extreme or to turn around the words of the american anthropologist and linguist Edward Sapir: «no two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached».⁵

Marcel Duchamp once stated that «as soon as we start putting our thoughts into words and sentences everything gets distorted, [...] we never understand each other».⁶ At this stage, asemic writers don't actually distrust language. They address the linguistic turn from a different perspective, weakening the hitherto often tacit idea that reality is either a language habit or a legacy. Words and sentences are not their aim, they focus on non-linear patterns. The occurrence of repeated clusterings or of stronger marks may deceptively suggest the presence of rigid hierarchical structures, but the word-sign duality never

gets solved. No syntactical residual points to a precise language and the edge between meaninglessness and meaningfulness is always missed.

Rather than the total equilibrium envisaged by Koons, asemic texts undergo a permanent brownian motion, which inhibits sharp trajectories while unfolding subtler perspectives. Primary signs may find themselves merged with already informed ones, as if ground by some uncalibrated machine of enunciation. The strong relational force between the signs themselves tends to shift the focus from orthography and syntax to almost topology, plunging asemic texts into metric spaces. No longer does the artist act «[...] like a mediomistic being who, from the labyrinth beyond time and space, seeks his way out to a clearing».⁷ His invasive surgeries cut the stirred nerves of communication, dissect texts and layouts against the backdrop of intangible digital languages, crammed with jingles and banners, dovetailed into a strategy of osmotic capitalistic propaganda. As opposed to this micro-textual assembly line, asemic texts are flickering pointers, muted enunciators, not oriented semiotic segments, challenging the reader to renegotiate an active relationship with the text itself, hanging in the balance between reading and watching but contrasting both. Meanings are compressed tree rings within the text, whose presence is intensified, but not resolved, by an all-pervading bark of signs. Unlike Pierre Huyghe's *Timekeeper* (1999), where a series of concentric paint layers reveals the timeline of the gallery wall, the asemic coating of the texts prevents the corrosion of meaning. Huyghe's procedure, which may recall Mimmo Rotella's *décollage*, naturally lends itself to multiple authorship and to the paradox of generating multiple distinguishable copies of the same artwork, as much as «asemic writing is somewhat like dramatic writing and even entertainment script forms

[...]»⁸, a persuasive flux of characters into which «each reader-writer-viewer breathes unique life [...] and individual signs like actors».⁹

Without an univocal message to barter, the gap between authorship and beholdership is left intentionally vacant.

NOTES

¹Haidu, Rachel: *The Absence of Work. Marcel Broodthaers, 1964-1976*, Cambridge (MA) 2010, p. 183.

²Eliot, Thomas Stearns: *The Dry Salvages* (V, vv. 18-19), in: *Ibid.: Four Quartets*, New York 1943.

³Mohammad, Kasey Silem, online, (13/11/2016).

⁴Kyndrup, Morten: *Art and the Enunciative Paradigm. Today's Objectual De-differentiation and Its Impact on Aesthetics*, in: «Nordisk Estetisk Tidskrift», 25-26, (2002), p. 30.

⁵Sapir, Edward: *The Status of Linguistics as a Science*, in: *Ibid.: Culture, Language and Personality*, (ed. D. G. Mandelbaum), Berkeley (CA) 1958, p. 69.

⁶Duchamp, Marcel, cit. in: Tomkins, Calvin: *Ahead of the Game*, London 1968, p. 34.

⁷Duchamp, Marcel: *The Essential writings of Marcel Duchamp*, (ed. M. Sanouillet and E. Peterson), London 1975, p. 138.

⁸Jacobson, Michael: *SCRIPTjr.nl Interview Conducted by Quimby Melton*, in: *Works & Interviews*, Leipzig 2016.

⁹*Ibid.*