AN EXAMINATION OF A SPECIFIC NETWORK OF POETICS
FROM THE REALM OF
LANGUAGE - IMAGE - SOUND RELATIONS

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Realm Of Language - Image - Sound Relations

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ABSTRACT

It is my intention in this paper to examine the
network of poetic relations which I explore in my art
work.
This document is divided into two main sections:
part one deals with a number of art historical foci in
regard to language, image, and sound relations. Part two
focuses on selected video works of mine which synthesize
aspects of this art historical data. In both sections a
set of ideas intrinsic to the work will be defined.
Language, image and sound elements in my work are
not dealt with in a hierarchical manner. Since these
elements appear simultaneously in the video work, the
following writing will approach them in a way which
examines how they function individually as well as in
relation to each other.
It is the artist's intention to create a resonant
poetic network through the dynamic interaction of
language, image and sound elements.

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Part I

<u>Historical Foci In Regard To</u>

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One of the more illusive fields of investigation
that Marcel Duchamp explored was the set of relationships
that exist between an image or object, and language that
is presented to accompany that image or object. His art
works and the processes involved in generating those art
works take on the function of encapsulating ideas. In
Duchamp's work language serves various functions, i.e.
titles for given works, inscriptions and notes which
pertain to the work.

Duchamp's use of language often sets up a field of
meanings through punning and word play which give clues
to the pluralistic reading of his work. At times
nonsense is employed to mislead intentionally. The
conceptual distance between object and external ideas
related to language give the viewer the chance or
responsibility to complete the work through their own
associative powers.

The ambiguities embodied in a work of art draw the
viewer into a continuing process of deciphering the
suggested meaning a work carries. The greatest works of
art are ever expanding in terms of their suggestive
qualities.

One such work is Marcel Duchamp's La Mariée Mise À

Nu Par Ses Celibatares, Même or The Bride Stripped Bare
By Her Bachelors, Even also known as The Large Glass,
1915 - 1923. The work is a large construction 2.7 meters
high on two glass panels. The background is transparent
glass upon which lead foil, lead wire and oil paint
create a complex composition of numerous symbolic
elements. A fascinating set of poetic correspondenses
are generated by Duchamp. The accompanying set of notes
for The Large Glass is called the The Green Box. The
combined viewing of The Large Glass and The Green Box
form a cryptic, paradoxical whole.

> Duchamp has said of it,'The Glass is not to be
> looked at for itself but only as a function of
> a catalogue I never made.' In fact in 1934 he
> published his 'Green Box', a compilation of
> documents, plans, sketches and notes made in
> connection with 'The Large Glass' between 1912
> and 1915.[1]

The Green Box sheds light upon a set of abstract
symbols which comprise The Large Glass. The notes in
"The Green Box" are not intended as a one to one
explanation or interpretation of the symbols in "The
Large Glass" but as poetic qualifiers. The notes become
an external language perspective system, containing
poetic definitions of the symbols used in The Large
Glass, information about processes involved in the
manifestation of these symbols, descriptions of the
interrelated functioning of the symbols and ideas for
some projects which were never completed.

John Golding writes about a printed edition of the notes.

> Each of the slips of paper in 'The Green Box' was reproduced in exact facsimile and these were then assembled in a deliberately random order, so that their arrangement varied from box to box. Although they fail, and indeed were not intended to explain 'The large Glass' rationally, the written notes compliment their visual counterpart and they help illuminate a work which Duchamp has aptly described as 'A wedding of mental and visual concepts.[2]

One takes an active role in assimilating the expanded poetic realm that Duchamp created. Part of the process of unraveling the enigmatic nature of the work involves deciphering how the visual language of symbols functions with the writing. Eventually the written counterpart defines its own perplexing poetic syntax. The exploration of the relationship between the actual art work and the notes is intriguing because every viewing lends new meaning due to the work's ambiguous poetic nature. The passage through the work's vast labyrinth of ideas is enlightening.

Footnotes

1. John Golding, <u>Marcel Duchamp, The Bride Stripped Bare By</u>
    <u>Her Bachelors, Even</u> (New York: The Viking Press, 1972),
    p. 12

2. Ibid.

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    <u>The Bride Stripped Bare By Her Bachelors Even</u>. New York:
    Jaap Reitman Inc., Art Books. 1960.

Golding, John. <u>Marcel Duchamp, The Bride Stripped Bare By Her</u>
    <u>Bachelors, Even</u>. New York: The Viking Press, 1972.

Schwartz, Arturo. <u>The Complete Works Of Marcel Duchamp</u>
    New York: Harry N. Abrams Inc., 1970.

Networks of Multiple Meaning

The poetic application of a word or image is not limited to the use of a single meaning, nor to all of their various possible definitions. Instead, any particular word or image is the center or essence of a network of meanings.

These meanings are derived from many sources. Definitions; connotations; associations - verbal, visual and autobiographical; image puns; literalisms; the sound quality of a word based on phonetic intonation; colloquialisms; idioms and figures of speech are all relevant to the network. This network is established both logically and intuitively.

The multiple meanings that the chosen word or image carries are then established within a constructed context. This context is created through the process of bringing together a number of these networks or fields of meaning. Often more than one connection is created between any two fields.

Through the viewing of a work, contexts are constantly created and altered. The viewer carries the memory of contexts that have been explored while entering new contexts. Thus as more networks are connected into the structure, a layered interwoven fabric of poetic relations is established. The act of choosing specific

fields of meaning and establishing connections between these fields is central to my working process and way of seeing. This set of relations presents a world with many interpretations. Its plurality is achieved through the construction of a work comprised partially of informed nonsense.

Take for example a line from "Telling Motions", a work which explores many of the ideas presented above, 'The shadow of a word from the glass wings of a housing...'. The word 'wing' is used as a pun, where the idea of both the 'wing of a house' and the 'wing of something that flies' are brought together. Consequently the poetic ambiguity functions as a specific nonsense connection between fields of meaning.

Nonsense Structures In The Work Of Art

An informed sense of nonsense can convey many ideas. Nonsense often humorously communicates about a situation while simultaneously presenting other trains of thought. A nonsense statement can present a particular logic while concurrently disrupting it, thus implying a set of ideas that do not depend on an internal logic for understanding.

Nonsense subverts a linear logic by grafting more than one logical system together. The artist presents an informed nonsense situation for the viewer. The viewer then interpolates the relationship between the various underlying concepts by applying his/her own powers of association and personal connection. Thus the viewer experiences fields of meaning instead of a single meaning. The viewer goes through an instantaneous sifting process attempting to trace the component logics back to their source. Then the viewer draws a conclusion based on the relationships suggested by the juxtapositions. The distance between lines of thought force the viewer into an active role of attempting to bridge this conceptual gap. If the lines of thought have no apparent relation, the viewer will either find nonsense a source of frustration or will take a creative role in the act of interpretation.

When a nonsense statement is extremely perplexing, it asks of the viewer a high level of participation. Certain Zen Masters would use nonsense statements called Koans to help bring their pupils to an enlightened state. By learning to deal with complex structures of this nature we also learn to understand better the seemingly infinite complexities of our daily lives.[1]

Art works may contain collisions of lines of logic and/or aesthetic systems, presented as informed nonsense. Through the manipulation of these structures the artist can communicate a set of intuitive relationships that stimulate an active role in the decoding of the work.

Footnotes

1. Isshu Miura. Zen Dust. (New York: Harcourt, Brace &
    World, Inc., 1966), p. 179.

The Image Pun

The image pun is a means of generating a pluralistic language/image environment. The multiple meanings of a chosen word are connected with an associated image or set of images. Each image can correspond to one of the meanings of the word.

Making a literal translation of one meaning of a chosen word is one method of deriving an image pun. Take for example the work of the artist Michael Snow, Multiplication Table. In this work Snow utilizes a photograph of a small drawing of an actual table (one that could be used for the process of eating). His work plays off of the multiple meanings of the words 'multiplication' and 'table'. The 'table' is a small drawing whose scale has been 'multiplied' by blowing up the photograph to a large scale. The meanings generated in this self referential work are also 'multiplied' through a resonant literal and metaphorical cross referencing. Snow also triggers through language an image in the mind of the viewer of a literal 'multiplication table'. Thus, besides being self referential, the work also refers to an external reality.

An early example of this kind of image pun is Marcel Duchamp's Trébuchet, mentioned in the chapter of this paper on "Readymades". The word trebuchet (trap) is a

pun on the chess word trébucher, the french word meaning 'to stumble over'. The art object is a coat rack which is fastened to the floor. The viewer both literally and conceptually 'stumbles' over this art work. Its precarious place in art history also likens it to a chess move.

I use the image pun as one kind of linking mechanism in poetic language-image-sound networks.

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    Associates, 1980.

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    New York: Harry N. Abrams Inc., 1970.

An Examination Of The "Readymades" of Marcel Duchamp

The concept of the "Readymade" was invented by Marcel Duchamp. As an enlightened Dadaist gesture Duchamp chose a series of objects, indifferent to their aesthetic appeal, and displayed them in the art context.

> Probably the most 'difficult' of Duchamp's concepts and creations are the 'Readymades'. They are outrageous yet logical demonstrations of his suspension of the laws of artistic causality, for he has substituted for the traditional 'hand-made' work of art such ordinary, mass produced, machine made articles as a snow shovel, a comb, a bottle rack or a bicycle wheel (set upside down on a kitchen stool)...The substitution of an anonymous article of everyday use for the conventional painting or sculpture can be understood only as an intellectual or philosophical decision.[1]

Over time the concept of the "Readymade" has been misunderstood. Some writers have suggested that the objects were chosen for their beauty which Duchamp denied. They were chosen to manifest conceptual concerns. The expanded notion of the "Readymade" now includes both aesthetic and conceptual underpinnings, a coupling of understanding and misunderstanding in relation to Duchamp's original concerns.

The "Readymades" revealed new ways of thinking about the creation of an art work. It is through this set of works that the notion of appropriation was revealed. As a result an artist can manipulate pre-established objects, music, images, writings and situations to an

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artistic end.   The manipulation includes the following

strategies: a part of an object or situation may be used

to stand for the whole;   the formal properties of chosen

pre-established material may be utilized;   associative

properties of an object or situation may be drawn upon.

Emphasis is placed on how the appropriated material

functions within a constructed context.

The notion of displacement is central in the

establishment of "Readymades".

> Here again , the process may be concerned with
> the physical, or more abstractly with the
> logical context of the object...   Displacement
> from physical context is achieved by changing
> the visual angle from which an object is
> ordinarily perceived and by isolating it from
> its ordinary surroundings.   This is the
> principal at work in the 1913 Bicycle Wheel
> (the fork is upside down screwed to a kitchen
> stool), the 1914 Bottle Dryer (to be viewed
> hanging from the ceiling like the 1917 Hat
> Rack), and the 1917 Trap (a coat rack designed
> for the wall but nailed to the floor)
>   Displacement from ordinary logical context
> is achieved by re-naming the object, the new
> title having no obvious relationship to the
> object as ordinarily understood.   This process
> is exemplified in the 1914 Pharmacy a
> commercial print of a winter landscape); In
> Advance Of The Broken Arm (1915, an ordinary
> snow shovel); in the 1915 ,Pulled At Four Pins
> (an unpainted chimney ventilator); and in
> Fountain(1917, a urinal).
> ...The 'Readymade is sometimes a pun in three
> dimensional projection. Trap (Trébuchet) is
> then an example not only of physical
> displacement, but of logical displacement as
> well since the word itself is a pun on the
> phonetically identical chess term trebucher,
> the french word meaning 'to stumble over'.   The
> pun is also used in the titles of Apolinere

Enameled(1916-1917); The 1919 bearded and mustached
Mona Lisa, L.H.O.O.Q.(when read in french becomes
'she has a hot bottom'); and Fresh Widow (1920) a
pun on french window.[2]

Implicit in the "Readymades" of Duchamp is the act
of seeing common everyday objects in an enlightened
manner.

This action of using "Readymades" as art is often
said to blur the distinction between art and life. The
important distinction here is not that art and life are
interchangable. Life is made up of a series of processes
of which the making of art is one. However, by observing
life through the literal and metaphorical perspectives
which Duchamp posed, we can come to understand the world
at large in a new light. We can begin to see inside
objects and actions the beauty of their functioning and
through displacement a beauty in their malfunctioning.

Lao Tzu suggests "The wise man... studies what
others neglect and restores to the world what multitudes
have passed by."[3]

Footnotes

1. Marcel Duchamp, George Heard Hamilton and Richard
   Hamilton. <u>The Bride Stripped Bare By Her Bachelors,
   Even</u>. (New York: Jaap Rietman Inc., 1960), Appendice.

2. Arturo Schwartz. <u>The Complete Works Of Marcel Duchamp</u>.
   (New York: Harry N. Abrams Inc., 1970), p. 32.

3. Ibid., p. 34.

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   York: Jaap Reitman Inc., 1960.

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   New York: Harry N. Abrams Inc., 1970.

Film And Video's Relation To The "Readymade"

The process of film and video creation can be analogous to the use of the "Readymades". An ordinary location is filmed or videotaped. Thus what is before the lens has a "Readymade" potential for use in an artwork. This film or tape is the first level displacement for the subject of the image. The manipulation of this image, its placement in relation to other images, its relation to a given soundtrack or language structure and the manipulation of the formal qualities of the image, form a constructed context through which the image takes on meaning. Consequently the image functions like a "Readymade"; the original meaning is shifted; new meanings are generated in the constructed context.

Sound Poetry And The Expressive Power Of Intonation

A number of artists have been interested in the exploration of phonetics in writing poems. One literary artist to explore this area was Lewis Carroll, aka Charles Dodgson. His nonsense poem Jabberwocky written in 1862 is an interesting early example of what came to be known as phonetic poetry. The following is an exerpt from Jabberwocky.

> 'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
>   Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
> All mimsy were the borogoves,
>   And mome raths outgrabe.[1]

Paul Sheerbart's Kikakoku ! Ehrolaps of 1897 has often been cited as the earliest phonetic poem. Der Grosse Lalula by Christian Morgenstern was composed five years later.

The Dadaists produced a series of fine phonetic works. Raoul Hausmann and Hugo Ball were the forerunners followed by Kurt Schwitters.

In his diary Hugo Ball said:

> With this kind of phonetic poetry we altogether
> renounce language that has through journalism
> become corrupt and impossible. We withdraw
> into the innermost alchemy of the word, even
> surrender the word itself, and thus preserve
> for poetry its last, holiest domain.[2]

It is interesting that Ball mentions alchemy in his reflections about poetry. Many of the basic ideas presented in this paper suggest a transcendent means of viewing the world. By attempting to embue mundane artifacts with a greater value through contextual manipulation, a situation is created which is analogous to alchemical processes.

Another phonetic poet interested in using mundane materials in a transcendent manner was Kurt Schwitters. His numerous Merz works are constructed of scraps of paper, advertising snippets and other materials. Through contextual manipulation, he created art works of great beauty out of materials which were essentially valueless.

Schwitters phonetic works are incredibly rich in their suggestive use of sounds produced solely by the voice. The following is an excerpt of Schwitters' poem - The Ursonate.

        Tuii tuii tuii tuii
        Tuii tuii tuii tuii
        Tee tee tee tee
        Tee tee tee tee
        Tatta tatta tuiiEe teiiEe
        Tatta tatta tuiiEe teiiEe[3]

It was Raoul Hausmann that triggered Schwitters interest in phonetic poetry. Schwitters famous Ursonate of 1932 was:

> Deliberately constructed like a piece of
> music. It was developed melodically and
> rhythmically as a work intermediate between
> spoken poetry and sung music, bold in its
> consistent use of purely phonetic means,
> conventional in its articulation as a sonata.[4]

When we examine spoken language we find a vast grey area of non-codified (in the dictionary sense) phonetic communication. This vocal communication takes the form of hissing, guttural utterances, sighs, yells, laughter,etc., as well as abstractions thereof. The ability to understand this form of communication rests in the collective subconscious. Our daily communication depends on these utterances which augment the meaning of codified spoken language.

The Phonetic poets were in a sense mining the collective subconscious. Their works transform the grey areas of communication into vehicles of poetic expression.

These poets were not the only group to explore phonetic expression. The Scat singing of performers like Louis Armstrong and Ella Fitzgerald, the early rock and roll nonsense syllables of Little Richard -"A Wop Bop Alu Bop A Wop Bam Boom", and numerous other popular entertainers have all used phonetics in their work.[4]

These performers and artists show that the pure sound of words has an expressive power. By manipulating the sound qualities of words, an artist can establish a signifying layer which augments the meaning of a given

art work.

It is interesting to observe the learning process of language. Many cultures transmit information through ritual language to their young. Often the phonetic qualities of communication are memorized and it is not until much later that the actual meaning of an utterance is learned. Take for example the Latin spoken in the Catholic Church or the Hebrew spoken in a Synagogue. It is often the intonation and phonetic qualities of religious services which move the listener.

In terms of language, image, and sound relationships, one can see the resonant power of communication in places of worship. Whether one believes in God or not, it is hard to deny the expressive beauty exhibited in religious architecture, art, music and ritual language.

It was this concept of linking the expressive qualities of the sound of words with the possible meanings a word carries that influenced much of my video works. Often on the first listening to a song or poem, the intonation of its delivery generates one aspect of the meaning. This relates directly to the sound qualities the phonetic poets and others were fascinated by. As the viewer returns to the work, and the meaning of individual words come into play, the viewer will experience an expanded notion of the meaning of the work. If words are presented with the intonation of a television commercial,

one kind of meaning is generated. If they are presented with the qualities of a religious service, another set of associations will be triggered. As the viewer comes to understand what the words mean in relation to the tone in which they are being delivered, a complex field of meanings is generated.

When signifying codes which are not normally presented together are used in art works, a situation which is similar to that of the nonsense statement (described in another chapter of this paper) is generated. A situation is made manifest where a high level of viewer participation in decoding the work is again created.

Footnotes

1. Lewis Carroll, <u>The Annotated Alice</u> (New York: Bramhall House, 1960), p. 191.

2. Werner Schmalenbach, <u>Kurt Schwitters</u> (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1967), p. 210.

3. Ibid., p. 213.

4. Ibid., p.214.

5. Langdon Winner, <u>The Rolling Stone Illustrated History of Rock And Roll</u> (New York: Random House, 1976), p. 40.

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Ball, Hugo. <u>Flight Out Of Time</u>. New York: The Viking Press Inc., 1974.

Carroll, Lewis. <u>The Annotated Alice</u>. New York: Bramhall House, 1960, p. 191.

Schmalenbach, Werner. <u>Kurt Schwitters</u>. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1967.

Winner, Langdon, <u>The Rolling Stone Illustrated History of Rock And Roll</u>. New York: Random House, 1976, p. 40.

Digital Delay Voice Treatment

Another example of the expressive use of voice in my
music is in the creation of a background of tonal
layers. Creating these layers involves the making of
digital loops using a digital delay. The digital delay
is a sound sampling and treatment unit.

One function of the device allows the user to sample
a voice tone. The voice tone is then repeated over and
over, decreasing in volume with each repetition.
Additional tones can be entered and mixed with the first,
creating a harmony.

One function of the machine allows for the creation
of an infinitely repeating loop. At a chosen time while
singing into the digital delay, the infinite loop
function can be engaged creating a vocal drone loop. Any
kind of sound which can be generated with the voice can
be entered into the machine: vocal beats, tones, words
and word fragments can all be entered. A simple set of
voice sounds can become an underlying beat structure
through the use of this device.

A new vocal fragment can be input into the structure
when desired. The speed of repetition can be altered
with a direct correlation to the pitches of the given
samples. If the speed of repetition is increased the
pitch will go up and conversely if the speed is slowed

down the pitch will be lowered.

The Use Of The Digital Delay For Instrumentation

The digital delay is not limited to altering vocal sounds, it can treat any sound entered into it. Fragments from pre-recorded music, tapes, and/or records can all be used as source material. Again the digital delay that I employed forms a one second loop out of the sampled material. Fragments of sound shorter than one second can be interjected into these loops, creating a seamless polyrhythmic sound module.

Many of these loops can be layered, forming a complex linear architectural rhythmic structure.

Since the sound sources which enter into this structure are often pre-established (taken from the realm of pre-recorded music or sound), these structures can be considered a collection of micro-musical "Readymades". Much of the underlying structure of the score to my work called The Water Catalogue was made in this manner.

Looking At Perception And The Relative Nature Of Time
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Looking at time is difficult. One cannot be removed from it to study it from the outside. We know that in our perception, time takes different forms. Experience tells us that time expands and contracts, though we measure it objectively by a shared standard. We say that time 'flies' when we experience it from a pleasurable perspective and that it 'drags' when we are waiting or experiencing some form of difficulty. It is interesting that both of these figures of speech are movement based. The latter deals with friction or gravity while the former suggests the inversion of this concept - weightlessness.

Just as our perception of time passing is related to our psychological state, the notion of an objective time measurement exists relative to motion.

> What was still more astonishing was the
> discovery that lapse of time depends on
> motion; that is to say two perfectly accurate
> clocks, one of which is moving very fast
> relatively to the other, will not continue to
> show the same time if they come together after
> the journey.[1]

Our indeterminate life-spans make time an entity with physical ramifications. We are aware that we are constantly aging as time is passing. We cannot grasp time and make it stop before us. Thus the ephemeral nature of time passing has been a focus for the

inquisitive throughout the ages.

Since the advent of photography, film and video we have the ability to look at processes in time as never before. Through slow motion and high speed photography we can observe behaviors that are lost to the naked eye and begin to see inside the time of events. The simplest of mundane gestures takes on the aura of a dance as it begins to reveal the inner workings of its motion. There is an inherent beauty to how mechanisms function that is often ignored in our daily life.

One of the important investigators of motion was Edweard Muybridge. In 1872, Muybridge went about studying the movement of horses' legs, using innovative photographic gear which he adapted and/or developed. This particular motion study was the catalyst which led him through an exhaustive study of the movements of animals, including an interesting set of photographic studies of people performing various tasks. Using a number of cameras and triggering devices, Muybridge was able to break down movements into sequential images. His title for this vast photographic series is <u>Animal Locomotion</u>.

His numerous studies of motion are fascinating. Though they were done under the guise of scientific experiment, Muybridge developed a specific aesthetic

which in its peculiarity, displays a curious beauty.

Muybridge is often cited as being the father of the motion picture.

> The Scientific American in its issue of 19
> October 1878 had made a suggestion which
> anticipated the motion picture. On its first
> page it published six drawings of Abe Edgington
> walking and twelve of him trotting, all made
> from Muybridge's photographs. If the readers
> cut out the drawings and mounted them in a
> zoetrope, said the article, the horse would
> apparently walk and gallop when the drum was
> revolved. (The Zoetrope, invented in 1833, was
> a popular scientific toy. Looking rather like
> a lamp shade with vertical sides, it consisted
> of a revolving drum with a strip of sequence
> pictures mounted on the inside. Each picture
> faced a slot cut in the opposite side of the
> drum and when it revolved the pictures were
> seen briefly one after the other, giving the
> illusion of movement).[2]

This line of inquiry into motion over time has been explored by a number of scientists. Dr. Harold E. Edgerton's studies of stroboscopic photography, from the 1930's to the present, reveal incredible qualities which never before were available to the naked eye. His photographs and films have an undeniably arresting aesthetic quality which, like Muybridge's, blurs the distinction between scientist and artist.

One thought to be addressed in the poetic study of motion over time is the nature of function. In speaking with Dr. Edgerton, I asked him if he had aesthetic criteria that made his photographic works successful. He replied that generally if the photograph was successful

in capturing the information necessary to complete the experiment, it also held a fascination in the aesthetic realm.[3]

Footnotes

1. Bertrand Russell, <u>The ABC Of Relativity</u> (New York:
   George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1958), p. 20.

2. Kevin MacDonnell, <u>Edweard Muybridge - The Man Who
   Invented The Moving Picture</u> (London: Weidenfeld and
   Nicolson, 1972.), p. 25.

3. Dr. Harold E. Edgerton, Lecture, <u>The Artist Speaks
   On Light</u>, Massachusetts Institute Of Technology, 1985

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    George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1958.

Repetition In Relation To Time

There is no normal time in everyday life. Our
perception of time keeps us in a state of flux. Travel,
media, and psychological effects create a shifting
perspective system through which we observe time's
passing.

Though we never leave 'real time', we can experience
it differently by focusing on illusions or events which
intentionally manipulate our awareness of its passing.
Works in film, video, theater and dance manipulate time
in that they present condensed (edited) information in a
particular sequence. Sometimes information is presented
which is greatly extended in time.

The use of repetition has a particular effect on our
sense of time passing. In music, film, video and dance
works, repetition forms an almost static object in time
which after a certain number of cycles, dissolves our
ability to estimate duration. By focusing on repetitious
'time objects', one becomes one with the relatively
static motion. Time is thus experienced in a new way.

Some viewers, being somewhat unaccustomed to this
kind of repetition, experience various psychological
states. A viewer may experience boredom for a time and
then transcend that boredom by focusing on the given in a
more extended manner. Relationships are observed which

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would not be apparent on a single viewing. At some point during the repetitions, the viewer's thoughts may become focused on him/herself. The repetition may throw the viewer out of the film due to a first level saturation effect, or the viewer may be accustomed to the viewing of repetitious work, and go into a trance-like state. The repetitious sound and/or image combination functions as a trigger for associations and reflections on the part of the viewer. Thus the viewer is provided with a mental space which shifts between a set of aesthetic intentions presented in the images by the artist, and the personal associations which the work provokes.

Certain tribal rituals involving repetitious rhythmic structures may stimulate a similar state of consciousness.

The Drone In Relation To Time

A drone is a continuous tone which is held for an extended duration. The drone is an important musical component that manipulates time. Like repetitious time structures, a drone may exhibit only small internal changes. We depend on clues in our environment for a sense of time. By removing these clues, we become submerged in the drone's own environmental qualities.

The drone has a long musical tradition both in Eastern music and in the organ point of Western music. I became interested in the drone as a reflection of our contemporary acoustic environment. As a child I rode in a dinghy with a small motor. As I traveled across the water I sang harmony to the tone of the motor. I also sang with the tones generated by a lawn mower. Drones permeate our daily acoustic environment; the sixty cycle hum of a fluorescent light, the sound of a car, plane or train as it moves at a constant rate, and the whir of machines at work all produce drones.

The Manipulation of Qualities of Light to Reflect Emotional States

Various qualities of light stimulate different emotional states in the viewer. Specific memories and associations are triggered by specific light conditions. Artists can record images in particular light environments to reflect psychological states. By presenting chosen music or sound with these images a psychological state can be reinforced. Music can also function as an ironic or disruptive device which plays against the mood generated through lighting.

Throughout history artists have explored qualities of light. The chiaroscuro lighting in a painting by Vermeer creates one such atmosphere. Claud Monet explored light conditions with an almost obsessive drive to capture subtle shifts in mood in relation to light and color. The film maker Andrei Tarkovski uses qualities of light with a mystical precision.

Qualities of light are inextricably connected to our understanding of time. By presenting the light qualities of certain times of day or night the artist lends further emotive power to a given image.

In section II of this paper I will describe a selected set of my video works. I will also examine how I applied the principles presented in Part I, to these works.

Section II

SELECTED VIDEO WORKS

S.he

Over a number of months, A series of poetic
observations were recorded in notebooks for the video
work S.He. In the video, the language component takes
the form of a number of short descriptions. Almost all
begin with "S.he is...". These descriptions are
sometimes contradictory, sometimes self referential in a
mocking way. At other times the words refer to an
elaborate set of external ideas and images.

The lines are spoken in a quiet voice almost
liturgical in nature. They are delivered within a
musical framework which moves through a set of
permutations of tonal variations, comprised of voice
loops (fragments collaged and treated),a drone, a tonal
series which relates to the pitches in the voice loops,
and a repetitive drum machine rhythm. The tonal
variations run through their permutations based on the
varying lengths of the loops and the sequence of the
tonal series. One such loop takes longer to go through
its cycle than another, consequently each cycle brings to
light a slightly different combination of sounds when
presented together.

The images that comprise S.he were shot in Super-8
film and transfered to 3/4" video. The images were later
transfered to 1" video.

The majority of the images used in S.he were shot from a train window on a trip from Boston to New York City. These images move from left to right across the screen focusing on architecture and landscape. Because of the combined motion of the train with the differing motion of the camera, the elements which make up the frame appear to move at different rates and through different trajectories. When a landscape is viewed at a 90 degree angle from the direction in which one is traveling, objects (visual phenomena) at different distances appear to be moving at different velocities. That which is closer to the viewer appears to be moving faster than situations at a distance. Focusing on this set of relations draws attention to the relative nature of observation in terms of the viewers vantage point.

The slow motion manipulation of both the Super-8 image during the transfer process and the 1" video image after transfer, further highlights this perceptual phenomenon.

The language in S.he presents a set of thoughts which take form through a constellation of poetic relations. Often the image to language relationships are created at a distance in time. An image will be presented and the language which qualifies that image will be presented at another time in the tape. Thus only after viewing the entire work do certain relationships become apparent.

There is a metaphorically pivoting quality to these relations, where a word adresses one field of thoughts in one image context and is further qualified through subsequent abstractions and juxtapositions in other contexts.

The text from S.he follows.

S.He

S.he is the energy that remains constant

S.he is made of he and she

S.he is a perfect window

S.he is a seaman singing songs about the sea

S.he is a resemblance

S.he is a moving housing for a train of thought

S.he is the train as a moving housing

S.he is the train as a thought

S.he is the train as light

S.he arrives at the proper wording

S.he is a shifting perspective

S.he is this action of escaping - this outlet /
    passageway

S.he is a release giving vent to emotion

S.he is the means or opportunity to do this

S.he is this small hole or opening

S.he is a triangular window in an automobile for
    ventilation

S.he is going through the motions

S.he is redundant

S.he is plumbing

S.he is a container that is aware of itself

S.he is a barrier

S.he is a protective device

S.he is used as a means of confinement

S.he is fencing

S.he is the perfect foil

S.he is cyclical

S.he is the water cycle

S.he is a film of water

S.he is a river of light

S.he is a bridge in thought

S.he is a sanctuary

S.he is still motion

S.he is vapor

S.he is luminous

S.he is a reflection of emotion

S.he is rust

S.he is a translation

S.he is the language of light

S.he is erosion on the face of a house

S.he is not herself today

S.he is a receptacle

S.he is a catalogue of connections

S.he is a crystalline pulse

S.he is a building in thought

S.he is a step toward fear

S.he is in the drink

S.he is that which slips away before it can be grasped

S.he is a shifting construction

S.he is the embodiment of surveillance

S.he is the evidence

S.he is the key witness and the prime suspect

S.he is the house and the inhabitant

S.he has time in hand

S.he is collapsed time

S.he folds

S.he is empty and full

S.he is knowingly confused

S.he is a lover with incredible endurance

S.he is a perfect moving beauty

S.he is indefinite

S.he is floating

S.he climaxes and falls asleep

S.he is under constant repair

S.he rests in a resonant nest

S.he pivots at the angle of pain articulation

S.he is this house in a word

S.he finds release in song

S.he becomes this blank building

S.he is an accumulation

S.he believes in doubt

S.he finds a home in paradox

S.he is a film of water in relation to evaporation

S.he makes a better door than window

S.he is a radiator

S.he is a moving destination

S.he is traveling

S.he is one that can be held

S.he is a philosophy that changes constantly and need
not be notated

S.he is the architecture of thought

S.he is a liquid passageway / an electric current

S.he is a stream of electrons

S.he is indivisible

S.he is on / off

S.he is a circle

S.he spills a drink occasionally

S.he is afraid of pain

S.he is a watch

S.he never climaxes

S.he is a borderline sense of humor

S.he frustrates expectation

S.he is intuition

S.he is a labyrinth

S.he is a game

S.he is a liar

S.he is just listening

S.he makes you think about where you might be instead

S.he reads about a location where S.he is not

S.he is a vehicle

S.he is clarity in oscillation

S.he is watching the falling

S.he is an interior resonance

S.he is the sound of flight

S.he is the fallen light

S.he is the logic in doubt

S.he is the logic in doubt

S.he is the moment of perfect light

S.he is the perfection of decay

S.he is a transmission

S.he is a driver

S.he is a filter

S.he is the pressure of time

S.he is in a state of disrepair

S.he is sounding out situations

S.he is flight of stairs toward darkness

S.he is an architectural melodrama

S.he is unsure

S.he watches the aging process

S.he is revolving both open and closed

S.he is the sex of a building

S.he is a fascination with slippage

S.he is thought in circles

S.he is up in the air

S.he is a drink on the house

S.he is a song with the pitch of the roof

S.he is warmth

S.he is vernacular

S.he is a womb / a pivoting system

S.he is a double take / a second glance

S.he is time out

S.he bet with the house behind her

S.he is a roomer

S.he dwells in the house of innuendo

S.he is a rumor

S.he is built

S.he is a wry smile

S.he dwells in self supporting architecture

S.he is a tautology

S.he is a navigation system

S.he calls the shots

S.he knows the shots are empty

S.he watches the blue through a window

S.he knows there is nothing to hold onto

S.he is drifting

S.he is alone

S.he is one

S.he is the energy that remains constant

The Water Catalogue

The Water Catalogue is a video work of mine which
uses images of water in various contexts to explore a
series of different metaphors. The Water Catalogue
combines original songs, texts, a musical soundtrack and
Super-8 images transfered to 3/4" video then to 1",
defining a poetic network which passes through a set of
emotional states.

The work uses the catalogue form, skipping from one
modular section to another in a somewhat random fashion.
This form of nonsequitur editing is carried by the music
which utilizes sound elements to function as segueways
from one image section to another. This kind of editing
forces the viewer to reestablish continuously his/her
relation to the given information. The images function
as associational triggers, giving the viewer the
opportunity to explore their own reflections. The viewer
is forced to come to an understanding about how each
modular segment functions in relation to the entire work
as it unfolds. The accumulated memory of these desparate
elements form a poetic network of pluralistic meaning.

Though the structure of The Water Catalogue is
essentially non-narrative it relies on the use of tension
and release to bring the viewer through its twenty-seven
minutes, culminating in a climactic final section

comprised of a very rapid schedule of edits.

Much of the music I composed for the work relies on the use of layers of digital one second loops. A continuous low drone underlies most of the work which when removed allows silence to be felt in a physical way. Each of the sections plays off of the drone which functions as a tonal center. The work is comprised of repetitious rhythmic structures which are layered and overlap. Sections of music in The Water Catalogue function as abstractions of popular dance and 'rap' music.

The final section of The Water Catalogue is among other things a parody of the popular "MTV" (Music-Television) format.

A "Prophet" synthesizer which allows for individual programming of 'voice' parameters was used throughout the work. Thus specific sound characteristics were generated exploring aspects of attack, decay, envelope shape, pitch, and timbre. Sound was further "treated" in a 16 track recording studio. where elements of psychoacoustic space were manipulated.

The final stereo mix-down was digitally recorded and bumped directly to 1" video. The digital recording allowed for perfect sound reproduction without the loss of a generation due to re-recording

on tape.

Much of the video in The Water Catalogue is
played back at a slow speed and re-recorded. This
manipulation of video develops an incremental movement
through the given material. One premise the work
explores is the following; by altering the speed of
an architecturally repetitive image structure, the
images can be placed in sync with a repetitious
synthetic rhythmic audio structure. A series of trial
and error speed alterations of the 1" video image were
made in relation to the pre-recorded sound. Time code
windows were placed on the image, giving the image a
specific place in time in relation to other images on
the same tape.

A special software package was developed by Russ
Sassnett, a graduate student and research associate at
the MIT Film/Video department. He created a system
which could duplicate the trial and error image to
sound relations previously generated. This was
facilitated by feeding the computer the coordinates of
the "in" and "out" points of both the real time
placement of where the images were to be in the
finished tape, as well as the the time code
coordinates of the slowed down material. The computer
then determined the appropriate tape speed for the 1"
video machine to travel in order to replicate the

trial and error material.

This program helped to facilitate the choreographing of image to sound, creating dancelike motions in common objects and architectures, as well as translating the mundane gestures of people into dance oriented movements.

The following are transcripts of the language used in the work.

The Wake

The wake is a time line

Moving out to the edges where sand is made.

The water clock is timeless but not silent.

Erosion whispers on the depth of time.

The swimmer goes diving in memory.

Though certain details have been washed away

Other thoughts rest in curious enclosures

Temporarily suspended above the current.

The pool of thought is clear on the surface.

At its greatest depths light barely passes.

A water wheel is turning,

Turning for a lifetime

Make Light Of Water

Make light of water.

Make light of water.

A confused wave made its way to the TV.

It was thinking back on the old days,

Reflecting on its past.

It left a residue of salt on the circuits.

Corroded the wires,

Disrupted the current.

The TV was solid state,

Simulated blue - black and white

On the top of the set was a blue box

Above the blue box light

On the circular box in tiny letters it said

When it rains it pours

The Glass Bottom Boat Crew

A crystal glass filled to the brim

Was flung from a glass bottom boat

I was drifting nearby on a red air mattress

Keeping myself afloat

The crystal skipped like a stone

And on the water table left little rings

And the tone that it made when it tapped the surface

Made the crew of the glass bottom sing

I dove down under the water

And listened to the crystal clear sound

Somber taps were leaking through

When the waves began to pound

I held my breath and fathomed this

From Deep down below

Beneath the surface of the sound

Being tossed to and fro

The waves kept perfect time

As they broke on the shore

The glass bottom boat crew moved to the beat

As they watched me through the floor

Yet the crew of the glass bottom boat

Couldn't sing to save their life

So they chanted these words with determination

To relieve their life long strife

Can you float me a loan

Loan me a float

Fly like a loon

Loan me a boat

Can you sing like a loon

A blue blue tune

Sing with the motor

The Fireman

A fireman went on vacation to let off some steam

The fireman was once a water boy

To be a fireman was his dream

The fireman feels the force of the water

When he holds the hose and sprays

He spends his time praying for fires

Waiting for days and days

The fireman is now water skiing

Skiing at his leisure

The fireman takes a tumbling spill

As part of his pleasure

The higher the knots the harder you fall

It's a rug of knots, not soft at all

The skier leans into the liquid

Making temporary walls of white

Water frozen in this position

Create temporary halls of light

The angel of the hydrofoil

Hovers over the lake

The fireman watches with a drink on the rocks

And wonders if she is a fake

Then the fireman with fire in his eyes

Slowly began to speak

Knowing full well of the fires down below

Made his knees go somewhat weak

He said, I saw a man walking on the water

I saw a man moving on the ice

I was thinking of a walk on the water

I have thought of this once or twice

There's been a lot of talk about the water walk

And water wings as well

When the well runs dry of things to say

They're be another story to tell

The first man was a carpenter, moving on the water

The second man was a fisherman moving on the ice

His ice fishing house is a holy hovel

Inside, its a snug warm place

A fisherman can find heaven in winter

Far from the human race

The Thesis Video - "Telling Motions"

Telling motions is comprised of three main
sections. The first section of the tape presents a
poetic text, a set of video images (transferred directly
from super-8 film to 1" video) and an original score.
The images that are included relate directly to word play
in the text. The second section of the tape presents an
image/sound alphabet translation system. First a letter
is presented and then a short image and sound fragment
1/3 second in duration is displayed as the coded
substitution for this letter. All of the letters in the
alphabet are presented, establishing an image/sound
alphabetical key. Punctuation marks are also presented
and given image-sound substitutions. The code is
presented in the format of a song. This section of the
tape is called 'Key-Code'.

The images that form this code as well as the music
fragments of which it is comprised are culled from the
first part of the tape. These fragments function as
associational triggers, carrying meanings established in
the first section of the tape in abbreviated form.

The third section of the tape presents specific
lines from the text as presented in part one of the tape,
along with a translation of this text utilizing the
image/sound code as presented in the 'Key-Code' section

of the tape (part 2). Thus a nested network is established.

The notion of the creation of a personal poetic pictographic language system is at the heart of this project. A study of alphabets and related systems of communication was undertaken before a decision about the inclusion of particular images was made. I was interested in the exploration of the collision of a "Readymade" system, highly objective in nature (the alphabet), with a subjective poetic network of observations in the realm of language, image and sound relations.

A special edit list compiler was created by Russ Sasnett to help facilitate the editing of the modular 'Key-Code' section of the tape and the third 'Translation' section. An IBM personal computer was used as a controller for the 1" video decks. Particular video and sound segments were chosen and entered into the computer. In this case, each of these segments was interfaced with the computer keyboard. As designated keys were struck, an edit list was created and subsequently the edits were performed by the computer. In terms of Telling Motions, this system was a perfect creative - poetic tool.

The original conception of Telling Motions dealt with the placing of the code presented in the 'Key-Code'

section of the tape on a video-disc. By interfacing the video-disc with a personal computer, very quick edits could be performed. A viewer could enter any typed information that he/she wanted to and then see the sound/image translation of this information . It seemed more interesting to develop a linear video tape which would create a particular context, generating meanings that the code would carry outside of its alphabetical function.

The Telling Motions tape synthesizes the various relations of language, image and sound that have been previously adressed in this paper.

The music moves through continuous slow changing tonal swells along with a repetitious vocal drone loop. The environmental qualities of the music present a floating atmosphere where the experience of time is addressed.

The work presents a poetic structure of language play, alliteration and phonetic investigation which relates directly to the images in the tape, developing a network of poetic correspondences. The intonation of the voice lends a particular feeling to the mood of the music.

The images were preconceived. Specific natural light conditions were sought to reflect particular moods.

Telling Motions utilizes modular editing strategies

and nonsequitur juxtapositions which 'make sense' in terms of the overall work. The modular qualities of the alphabet functioned as a model both in the choice of images and in the method of shooting those images.

The following is a transcript of the language used in part one of <u>Telling Motions</u>.

Telling Motions

Revolving drums

Revolving drones

Carriers,

Evaporation memories

Mapping the light trappings of a loss of resolution

I resolve to revolve in the realm of telling motions

For instance the incidents of coincidence at a distance

With lilly light lies letting levels slide

A floating vessel side slipping against the tide

Back and forth

Teeter totters

Seesaws

Back and forth

Drifting and shifting on a rotating schedule of skids

The gist is mist or moist with the tumbling twist

Of telling motions

The puzzle of puzzles is presented

Through sets of swollen notions

That swivel off the light machine

Calculating error as an entrance

The shadow of a word

From the glass wings of a housing

Is cast in darkness

Setting in motion a sonic vision

Through systems both nervous and circulatory

With a balance beam

The diver

Bit by bit

Bit by bit

Room reconstruction

A turn of events with circular breathing

Adds an air of tumbling willy nilly

From signs to sighs

Things go the way of pressure

The path of least resistance

Mistaken identities and mixed metaphores

Are mumbo-jumbo at the core of a boring book

With splintered words and enterings of dust

A scatter brained scheme to simply dodge and weave

While boxed boxing terms

Tell telling motions to collide and generate sparks

Floaters and bobbers were born building histories

Of fabrication on the fly

In the light of sound substitutions

The grafting of the glancing shivers and shunts

Casting reflections which are gathered and gone over

A true wheel within a wheel pivots, switches back

Turns in on itself

A spine of light binds and blinds

As telling motions turn

Summary

It is my intent as an artist to present works which are resonant in nature. Through the synthesis of historical data and the exploration of intuitive processes, the artist can create a personal world. The poetic network of meanings that this world presents provides the viewer with a alternate perspective through which to observe the world at large. The artist gives the viewer the opportunity to re-see aspects of reality that are often lost in the velocity of daily life.