

Timglaslet Editions (Hg.)  
Alphabet in Decay

#10.17436/etk.c.056  
#Alphabet  
#Ausstellungskatalog  
#Kurator (Museumskunde)  
#Unlesbarkeit  
#Verfall (Motiv)  
#Visuelle Poesie

DDC: 686.219 Andere nichtlateinische Alphabete und Schriftzeichen

Alphabet in Decay – International exhibition of visual poetry beyond language.  
Artists and authors from 11 countries. Curated by Timglaslet Editions, Sweden.  
Exhibition @ etkbooks store, 05.11.2021-26.11.2021

“the fact that the letters of the alphabet are instantly recognizable is one of the foundations of language and of poetry. but what happens when individual letters lose their meaning and become unrecognizable? this exhibition brings together works by visual poets and artists from around the world who have tweaked and manipulated the letters of the alphabet to the point where they have become illegible and decayed, or devised new representations of individual letters.” (Joakim Norling, Timglaslet Editor)

Mehr: [www.timglaslet.com](http://www.timglaslet.com)

Alphabet in Decay  
© Timglaslet Editions und edition taberna kritika, 2021 (diese Edition)  
etkcontext 056  
etkcontext – Digitale Objekte (ISSN 2571-9068)  
edition taberna kritika, [www.etkbooks.com](http://www.etkbooks.com)

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek:  
Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet und archiviert diese Publikation;  
detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über <http://www.dnb.de> abrufbar.

DOI: 10.17436/etk.c.056

## **Alphabet in Decay -- Visual Poetry Beyond Language**

Three years ago Ugly Duckling Presse published a book called “Understanding Molecular Typography” by the fictional writer H.F. Henderson (in actual fact, the graphic designer Woody Leslie). The book presents the theory that the letters of the Latin alphabet were once formed by alphabetical atoms, called typtoms, which bonded in the primordial alphabetical soup and formed the basis of a molecular typography. The book is of course a one hundred pages long spoof, an elaborate joke at the expense of the alphabet. It is also a beautiful book, which takes apart the letters at the seams, categorizes the parts and investigates how they relate to one another. It is totally unscientific but fun to read and the many illustrations look very much like a certain type of visual poetry.

I wouldn't mention “Understanding Molecular Typography” if it wasn't for the fact that these kinds of parodies only occur when there is something to parody, and the last ten to fifteen years has seen a growing distrust of not only the ability of language to express trustworthy political or emotional statements, but of language itself. In visual poetry this has led to the rise of asemic writing but also a strong tendency among visual poets to dismantle the alphabet and produce poems which stipulate that a poem doesn't even have to contain recognizable letters. Some of these poems look remarkably like Leslie's blueprints for his molecular typography. “Alphabet in Decay” tries to harness this tendency in visual poetry and present a number of different approaches to its main concept.

The Norwegian poetilde bjerke torset is one of a number of writers who have taken asemic handwriting beyond the analogue and beyond the poetic line. Her work “echo ergo echo” is an asemic investigation into the letter “e”, turning it into a hive of undulating lines, unrecognizable as the letter it started out as. A related approach is employed by Richard Biddle, whose messy, inky, expressive poem originated as an attempt to imagine an alien alphabet. “G” by Canadian poet and activist mwpm is another work which oscillates between meaning/representation and abstraction, bearing a resemblance to the upper case letter “G” but in fact devised as a layering of images of buildings in various stages of decay.

One of the key works in the exhibition is Derek Beaulieu's excerpt from his book “Aperture” (2019), in which he makes use of the detritus from the sheets of dry-transfer lettering he favours in his visual work: “Letters no longer adhere to surfaces faithfully; they flake and crumble, crack and crumble. These poems reflect the lack of cohesion: the letters crumble away from meaning, leaving rough traces of what would have been meant.” Barely recognizable as letters, Beaulieu's poem reflects language in a state of decomposition.

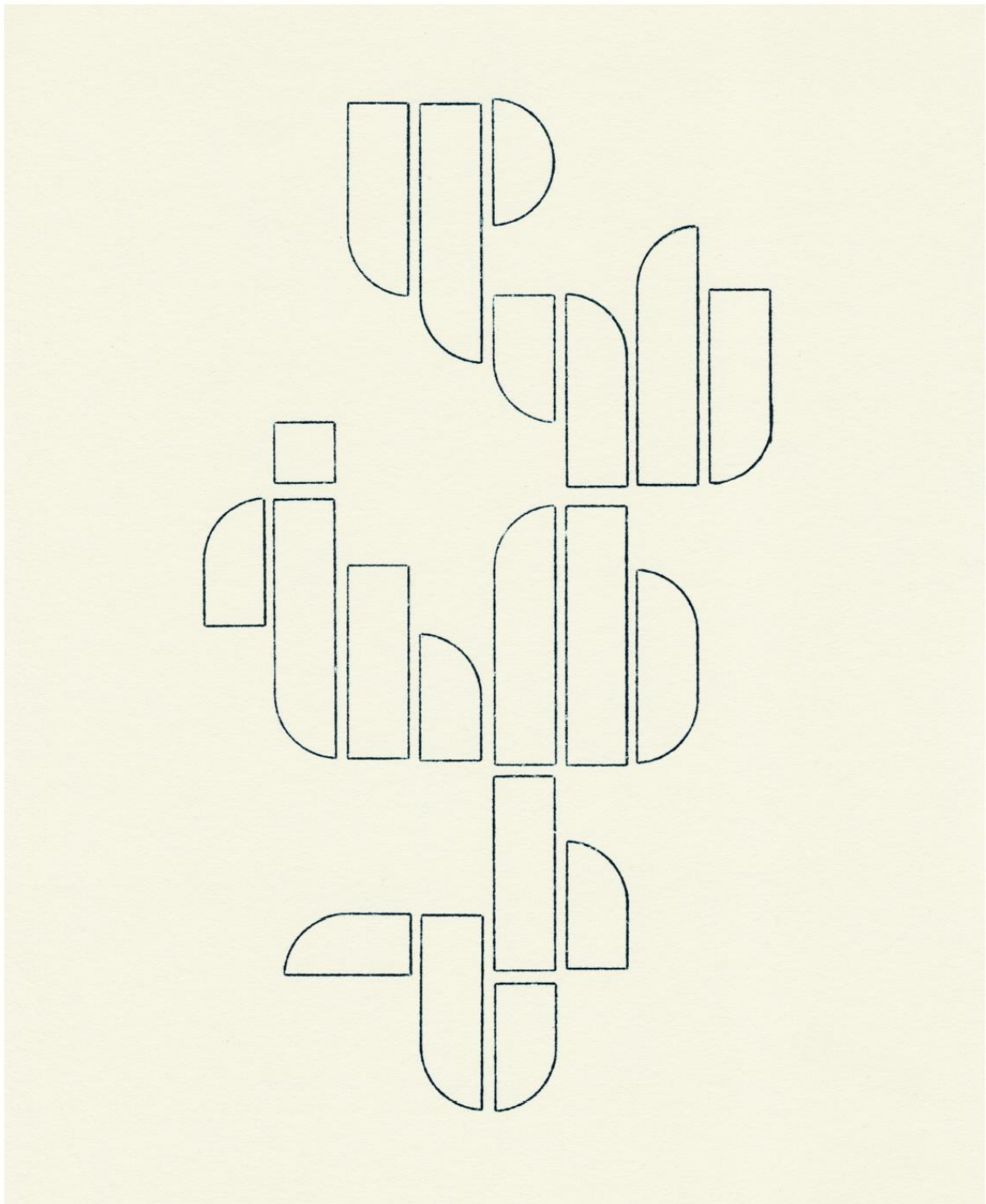
Another aspect of a radical distrust of language and meaning is the invention of private alphabets and writing systems, accessible only by the poet themselves. Such systems are operating in the works of Rosaire Appel (“Slack Tide 2”), Bruno Neiva (“Patchwork Alphabet”) and Helen Frank (“A very small cause...”). All three have different approaches but their work remains enigmatic, esoteric but still recognizable as language-systems.

Kenneth Goldsmith famously claimed that with the advent of digital media, concrete poetry finally found its true place in the world and quite a few of the poets and artists in this exhibition rely on digital manipulation to achieve their ends and also “publish” prolifically on social media. Catherine Vidler’s favoured tool is the simplest available, Microsoft Paint, and the characters and symbols available “out of the box” in the app. With these simple building blocks she weaves rhizomatic structures which point to new fields of application for the alphabet. Another poet employing strategies analogous to weaving is Imogen Reid. Much of her work starts out as book pages full of text, which are manipulated until they lose all meaning and acquire the qualities of a kind of abstract, ambient writing, reminiscent of finely woven textiles. Her work in this exhibition approaches pattern making from a slightly different perspective, proceeding from a simple, written “x”, which is repeated and manipulated until it starts to resemble the embroidery of an autistic mind. In her own words: “x is a multiplicity, an accumulation of possibilities that resist the tyranny of fixed meaning.”

Finally I would like to mention two works which show an uncanny resemblance to Woody Leslie’s “typtoms”, without being consciously in dialogue with his book. German artist and printmaker psw’s “Modular Type”, employs plastic stencils, once used in drawing studios, to build a visual poem which harnesses the architectural qualities of typography without the visual structure actually approaching legibility. Similar alphabetical “building blocks” are present in Stephan Wagner’s “Chi-Rho”, from his series “Broken Alphabet”, inspired by quantum theory. Wagner claims he “explodes letters in his manual particle accelerator” and what better image of a fragmented alphabet, which has decayed to a point where poets themselves have lost trust in its ability to create meaning?

Joakim Norling  
Editor and publisher  
Timglasert Editions





# Alphabet in Decay

**International exhibition of visual poetry beyond language.**

Artists and authors from 11 countries. Curated by Timglaset Editions, Sweden. Above: "Modular Type" by psw (Germany).



**Bengt Adlers**, born in 1950 in Malmö, Sweden. Lives in Malmö and Nice, France. Works with words and pictures in mingling connections. Picturesque Poems and Poetic Pictures that can give birth to books and exhibitions.

Work: *Alfabetisk punktering/Pointless Letterstruggle*, 2021. Corkstamps on paper. When letters are let loose and in total freedom, they easily mingle and construct a black hole in the creation of implosion. The end of language ...

**Fernando Aguiar**, born in Lisbon, Portugal, 1956. Made 48 solo exhibitions and published 38 books of poetry and anthologies of international visual poetry. Since 1983 participated in 124 international festivals of poetry and performance in 26 countries. Organized several collective exhibitions and international festivals of performance and poetry.

Work: From the series *Reensaíos*, which revisits a set of visual works, started in 1978 and which I have developed over the years. This series includes, in addition to two-dimensional visual works of small and large dimensions, installations and performances, such as the one I presented at the Centre Georges Pompidou, in 1984.

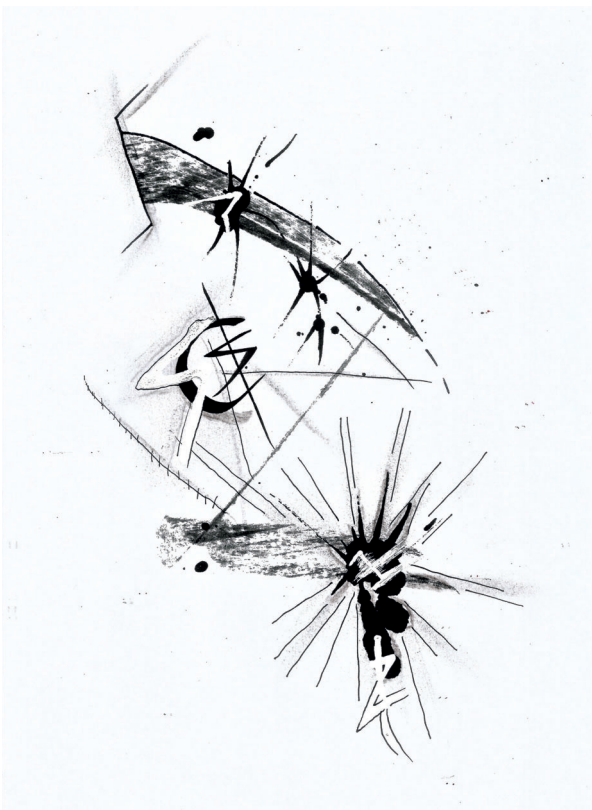
**Rosaire Appel**, lives and works in New York, USA. I draw writing and sound using both analog and digital methods. Our languages are what connect us, and abstract visual language is the territory I am exploring. In addition to exhibiting these drawings, many of my visual books are available online. [www.rosaireappel.com](http://www.rosaireappel.com)

Work: *Slack Tide 2* is a rendition of: "Tide is high/ Tide is low/ Water know/ Which way to go." Language, like the ocean, needs its rules to maintain its coherency. *Slack Tide 2* uses a digital asemic font that I created a few years ago.

**Francesco Aprile**, born in Caprarica di Lecce, Italy, 1985. Author of asemic writing, visual poetry, asemicglitch writing, glitch, code poems, git poems, asemic cinema, wrong writings, abc asemic books etc. He is the director of the literary movement "New Page" (founded by F. S. Dòdaro in 2009), the co-founder of the magazine [www.utsanga.it](http://www.utsanga.it) (2014, with C. Caggiula), and the founder of the group "Contrabbando Poetico" (2011). He is part of the collective "Electronic Cottage", and he joined the group "New Situazionism" (D'Angelo-Menguzzato, 2019).

Work: *slurry poem* is based on the erasing process of the language; it is a slurry-word compressed by hyper-invasive communication. There are only fragments emerging from this process. The new speaker will have several language fragments as a non-monolithic and transversal language.







**Sacha Archer**, born in 1984, lives in Canada with his wife and two daughters. Recent publications include *Mother's Milk* (Timglasen), *Hydes* (nOIR:Z) and *Jung Origami* (Enneract Editions) with two forthcoming chapbooks, *Immortality* (Viktlösheten) and *KIM* (knife fork book). Archer's concrete poetry has been exhibited internationally. Find him on Facebook and Instagram @sachaarcher, or on twitter @sachaarchermeat

Work: *Attic and Cellar* taps into the psychic extremes of the living house, the space that not only shelters, but with which the occupants converse and grow. Both the attic and the cellar as those spaces most ignored in the anatomy of a house by the occupants greet us uncertainly, and likewise, we enter them warily. In these spaces, spaces which are part of our intimate home, we suddenly exist differently, less comfortably – we become more acutely aware of space and our place in it – the conversation changes.

**Derek Beaulieu**, born in 1973, Canada. The author of 25 books of poetry, prose and criticism. He is the Director of Literary Arts at Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity and can be found online at [www.derekbeaulieu.ca](http://www.derekbeaulieu.ca).

Work: This piece is an excerpt from *Aperture* (Penteract Press, 2019), a series of Letrasen-based concrete poems, each consisting of the crumbling fragments of letters arrayed to suggest shattered neon signs flickering on abandoned streets. Brought into dayglo hue by Aathony Etherin and Clara Daneri, *Aperture* strives to imagine a conversation in the rubble of poetry.

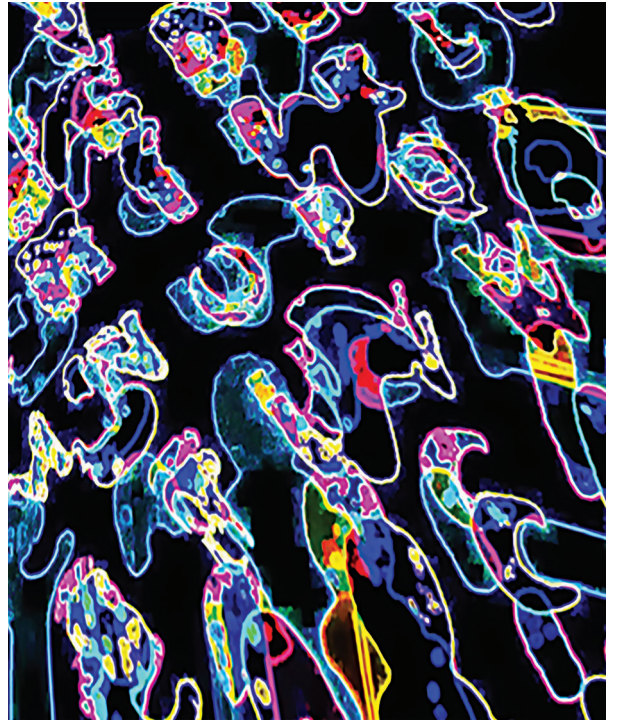
**Richard Biddle**, born in 1968 in the United Kingdom. He has an MA in Performance Writing and his work has been published in numerous journals and anthologies. He has produced three books of visual poetry. His work explores the realms between language and art.

Work: *Failure*, one of 26 images to be found in his book *Messages From Elsewhere – An Alien Graffiti*, is asemic mark-making, a writing born of play, an attempt to replicate something that doesn't exist...

**vilde bjerke torset**, born in 1993, Norway, is an artist and poet based in London. Her recent publications include the poetry chapbook *WHAT IT MEANS WHEN YOU DREAMS: A to Z* (AFV Press, 2021) and the artist's book *Pareiologia – Dotremont's Daughter* (Timglasen, 2020). She is the founder of SCRYPTH.

[www.vildebjerketorset.com](http://www.vildebjerketorset.com)

Work: *echo ergo echo* explores the asemic fragmentation of the most used letter of the English language. If there are parallel universes, are there parallel alphabets? If so, the piece is where they overlap. If not, it is our one shared “e” repeated in perpetuity.



**Andrew Brenza**, born in 1976, is an American visual and experimental poet. His recent chapbooks include *O* (nOIR:Z), *Geometric Mantra* (above/ground press), *Poems in C* (Viktlösheten Press), and *Waterlight* (Simulacrum Press). He is also the author of a number of collections of visual poetry, including *Automatic Souls* (Timglasen), *Gossamer Lid* (Trembling Pillow Press), *Alphabeticon & Other Poems* (Redfoxpress), *Album, in Concrete* (Alien Buddha Press) and *Spool* (Unsolicited Press). His newest book, *Smear*, was recently published by BlazeVOX Books.

Work: From a series titled *O*, *O-25* represents what I have come to think of as lyric poetry in a post-expression, post-language, quantum world. Specifically, it is an effort at capturing the potential of expression, its infinite pre-lingual energy, like representing the miracle of the flower within the seed. This effort is contextualized by the complications of linguistic articulation in the modern age, where all utterances seem trapped in the machines of political bias and propaganda.

**Hart Broudy**, born in 1945, Canada, is a graphic designer, writer and visual poet whose work has been published and exhibited in North America and Europe since 1970. He lives and works in Toronto, Canada.

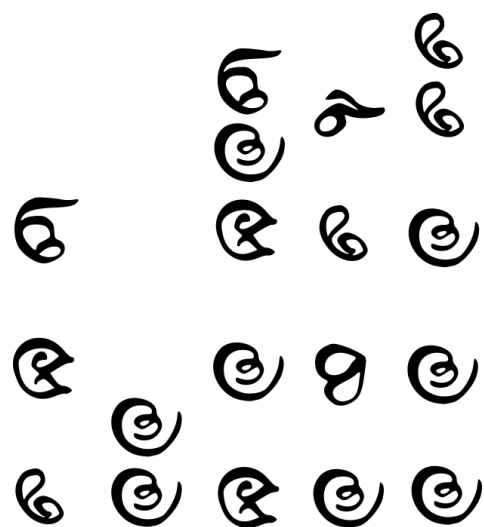
Work: Decay provides the foundation for new life. Thus culture. Thus language. *Transitions2* explores this complex energy of dissolution in the weaving and glowing streamers and embers of uncertainties.

**Angela Caporaso**, born in 1962, is a visual artist from Caserta, Italy). She has been active in figurative arts since the 80s, exhibiting repeatedly in Italy and abroad. Many of her works are part of public and private collection adding numerous publications to her credit. She is focusing on visual poetry and artists books, working with collages, trash-art and, more recently, digital formats. [www.angelacaporaso.com](http://www.angelacaporaso.com)

Work: *Domande* is a visual poem made between 2020 and 2021 by superimposing manual skills and digital technique. It's a collage of incomprehensible letters because "life is full of unanswered questions and the audience have to search answers beyond in the world of imagination".

**SJ Fowler**, born 1983, is an English poet, writer and artist, originally from Devon and now living in London. His work has become known internationally in the fields of asemic writing, concrete poetry, sound poetry, poetry curation, performance and collaboration. [www.stevenjfweller.com](http://www.stevenjfweller.com)

Work: *Atrocita* is an asemic poem working through its own material – indian ink and spit – moving from legibility to open meaning. It is taken from the book *Aletta Ocean's Alphabet Empire* (Hesterglock Press), which was a volume of hand-made poems exploring the eros-less sexuality of the internet age through a singular aesthetic of black indian ink, mess, smudge, grids and scrawls.



**Helen Frank**, United Kingdom. In the tradition of the French literary avant garde, she playfully explores mathematically creative methodologies by inventing and enacting constraints that function as a structure to produce art work. She exhibits and works internationally as a member of the Oupeinpo, (the visual art iteration of the OuXpo groups who work in parallel to the Oulipo). Her work has appeared in various international publications, some of which are in the Tate Collection (UK) and the Bibliotheque National (France).

Work: *A very small cause which escapes our notice determines a considerable effect that we cannot fail to see, and then we say the effect is due to chance* (2020). The title of this piece is a quote from Henri Poincare, the French mathematician who realised that there was a deterministic system underlying Chaos Theory. A font had been made from a hand drawn portrait of Poincare and the quote has been typed using that font.

**Anna Hedenrud**, born in 1980 is a Swedish artist working in the interface between different forms of art. She is also co-editor of Viktlösheten press.

Work: This piece was created by digitally transforming eight ink drawings of chameleons, creating an alphabet of eight syllables. It is part of the visual poetry book *on ameocho* (Timglaset Editions, 2020), which revolves around camouflage, transformation and our reliance on the alphabet for communication.

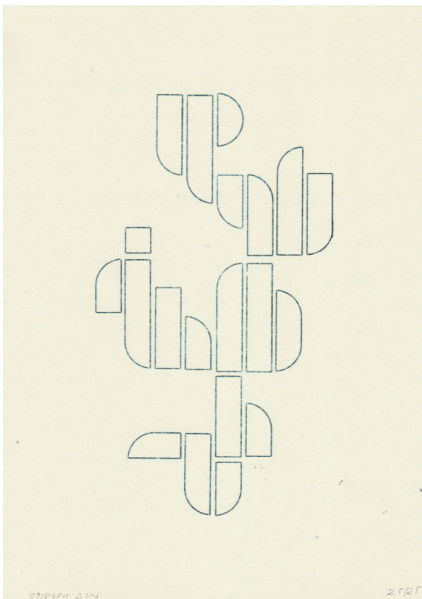
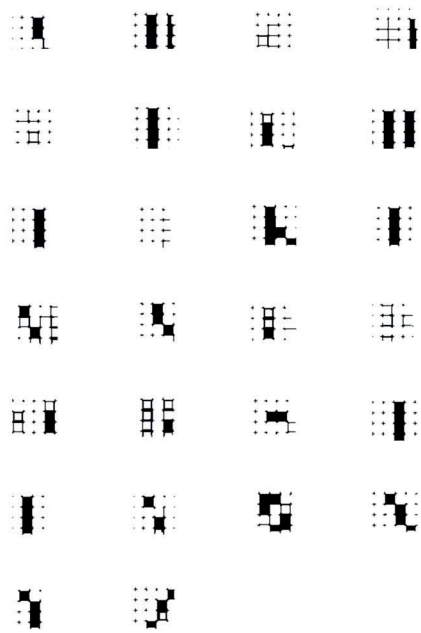
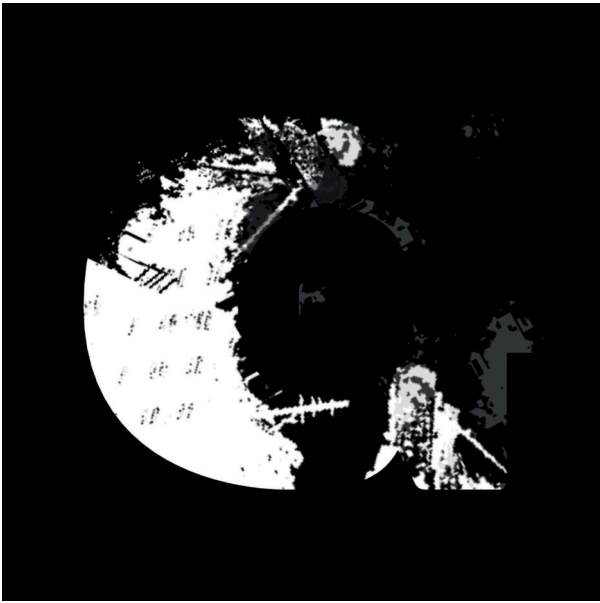
**Geof Huth**, born in 1960, USA, has practiced visual poetry since he learned of concrete poetry while living in Bolivia in 1974. He creates visual poems in many forms, including as handwritten or typed pieces, sewn collages, sculptures, paintings, and as poems written into sand, snow, accumulated pollen, and the condensation on bathroom mirrors. His latest books of visual poetry are *Lines of Thought: Fidgetglyphs* (Compass Rose Books, 2021) and *In Chancery* (Redfoxpress, 2021).

Work: *Fylfot* is a simple one-character visual poem (which I call a choerm). The original fylfot is an ancient symbol from the British Isles, the equivalent of the pre-Nazi swastika. The term is often used now to distinguish between a symbol of evil and one of innocence. My version of the fylfot is designed to eliminate its strict four-armed form, give it a serpentine freedom and claim this as a symbol of life and movement.

**Kamilla Jørgensen**, born in 1969, Denmark, is a visual artist, writer and translator.

Work: *Exterminate All the Brutes!* (2021), 36x20 cm, paper, inkjet, cigarette burns. The title is a quote from Joseph Conrad's novel *Heart of Darkness* and also the title of a book by Sven Lindqvist.





**Dona Mayoora**, aka Don May, born 1978, USA, is a bilingual visual and experimental poet, artist and author, published in India and Sweden. She is the creator of *Calligraphy Stories* , and presently a Sullivan Scholar at MFA of the Americas.

Work: *Fragments* explores the process of decaying, when some letters regenerate as other letter(s) of the alphabet. Its DNA exists in another form. Medium: Fountain pen inks on calculator paper roll.

**mwpm**, born 1987, is a Canada-based poet, occupying the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe, and Neutral peoples. mwpm is the author of two chapbooks: *Cryptopoems* (The Blasted Tree, 2018) and *tm* (Timglaset Editions, 2018).

Work: *G* (2021) represents the letter in an advanced stage of decay; its fragments recognizable as pieces of a whole to the enlightened audience, but could just as easily be mistaken for separate letters, or separate objects devoid of meaning. This piece was created by layering images of buildings in varying stages of demolition.

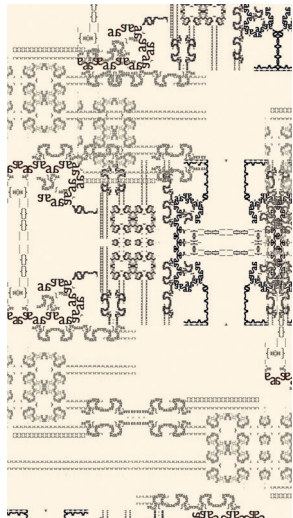
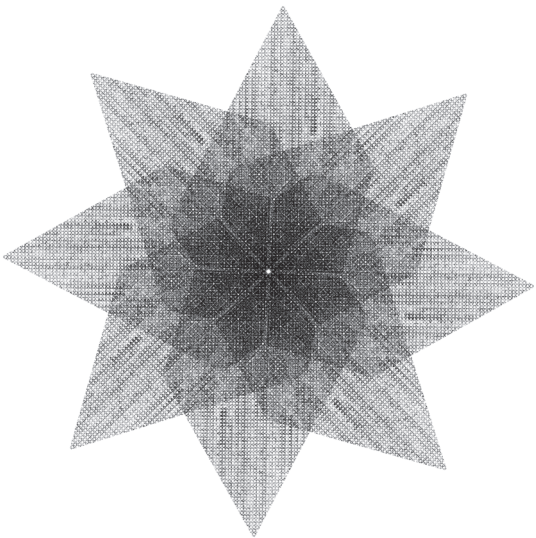
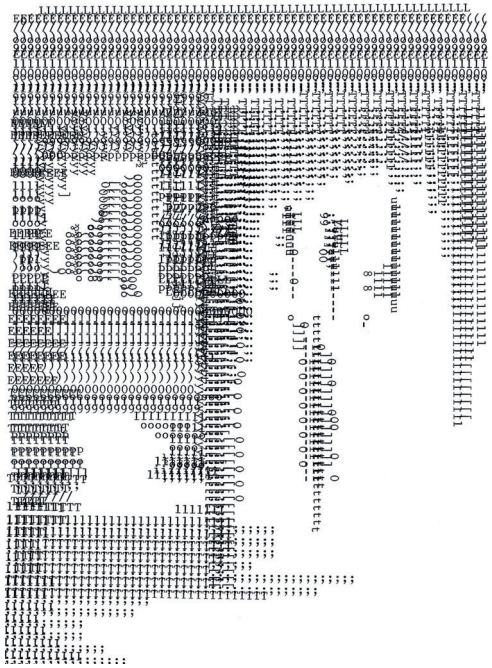
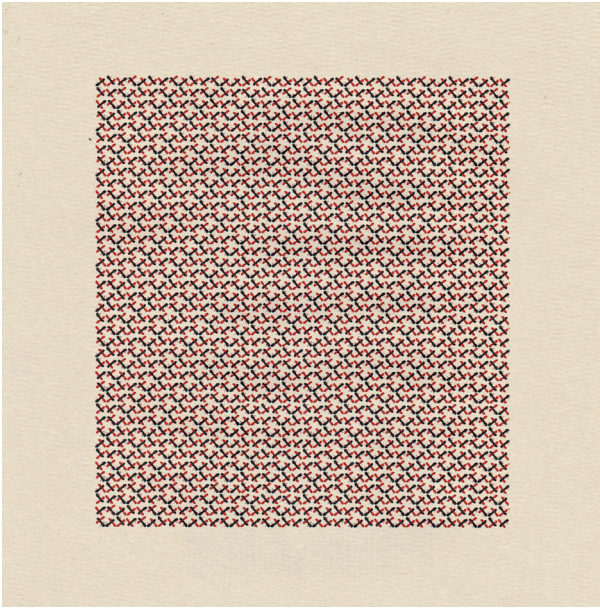
**Bruno Neiva**, born in 1983, is a Portuguese text artist, poet, translator, and teacher. He has recently published *Selected Text Art 2010-2020* through Hesterglock Press. [brunoneiva.weebly.com](http://brunoneiva.weebly.com)

Work: *Patchwork Alphabet*, digital, 2021. In this altered alphabet each letter marks its own territory – a desolate patchwork of lines, dots, and blots.

**psw** is a Germany-based artistic discoverer in outdated printmaking techniques. She creates abstract TypoGraphics and duplicates her work with mimeographs – making books from her work. She is also the creator of the ongoing mimeo printed ToCall Magazine and TYPE-WRITTEN artists' book series.

Work: *Modular Type* (2021).





**Imogen Reid**, born in 1968, United Kingdom, completed a practice-based PhD at Chelsea College of Arts, her work has appeared in Experiment-O, ToCall, Not Your Best 1, Lumin Journal, The Abandoned Playground, Beir Bua, Poem Brut Projects and The Aesthetic Directory. She has a chapbook with Timglaslet.

Work: X marks a spot that is malleable and moving, it can signal no entry, an error, a kiss, a signature, an unknown identity, it can be an axis, a crossroads, covert, or blatantly x rated, turning and returning, something and nothing, x is a multiplicity, an accumulation of possibilities that resist the tyranny of fixed meaning.

**De Villo Sloan**, USA, visual poet and literary theorist. He studied with Robert Creeley at the State University of New York. He was extensively involved in the mail art surge and “underground” literary zines of the 1980s. He currently hosts a blog, Asemic Front 2, and contributes to the “New Concrete” and asemic writing communities.

Work: When I began this series, I envisioned an asemic equivalent to Samuel Beckett’s *Stories & Texts for Nothing*. This piece – other than earning my designation as “asemic concrete” – has no title and was influenced by my recent communications with visual poet Jim Leftwich. Jim’s writing and conversation made me aware of the issues from Existential philosophy inherent in “asemic” writing and art.

**Danni Storm** is a Danish artist and poet. He is the editor of small press Non Plus Ultra and Danish literary journal Addenda.

Work: *Vega* is a visual poem made by using analogue and digital techniques. The piece is built by shapes of typed V’s, scanned in bitmap and digitally edited in Photoshop and InDesign.

**Catherine Vidler**, born in 1973 in Newcastle, New South Wales, is an Australian poet. Her recent collections include *wings* (Cordite Books, 2021), and *lost sonnets, 3rd iteration* (etk-books 053, 2019).

Work: Untitled digital work.



**Stephan Wagner**, born in 1967, is an artist and poet from Québec. I write concrete poetry since the 80s. I'm increasingly interested in the non-reducible elements of language, especially in my bilingual Canadian context, where language is strongly connected to identity.

Work: *Chi-Rho*, from my series "Broken Alphabet". Inspired by quantum theory, I explode letters in my manual particle accelerator, to see what comes out of it. The results are never planned beforehand. Watercolour, 26x18 cm.

**Terri Witek** is an American poet. Her most recent book is *The Rattle Egg* (2021); her work is also included in *Judith: Women Making Visual Poetry* (Timglas, 2021). Witek's many projects and performances with visual artist Cyriaco Lopes are represented by the Liminal in Valencia, Spain, and with Lopes she team-teaches Poetry in the Expanded Field in Stetson University's MFA of the Americas. [terriwitek.com](http://terriwitek.com)

Work: *M\_M* (2021). The empty boudoir mirror she inherits can no longer cast a "spell" of repetition. So it's free to become its own botched transmission – in this case by re-biologizing itself with human hair and rubber children from a mid-century dollhouse.

Die edition taberna kritika wird vom Bundesamt für Kultur (CH)  
mit einem Förderbeitrag für die Jahre 2021-2024 unterstützt.  
Die Reihe *etkcontext* wurde unterstützt von



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