

POETRY BEYOND TEXT

VISION, TEXT + COGNITION

Public Exhibition at the Royal Scottish Academy
Lower Galleries, The Mound, Princes Street, Edinburgh
12 Nov.- 18 Dec.

A two-year research project exploring how we 'read',
view, and interpret the visual aspects of poetry and
the interaction of visual images with poetic text,
featuring newly commissioned work.



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Exhibition Opening

Friday 11.11.2011 7pm – 8.30pm

Previous Exhibitions of 'Poetry Beyond Text' in 2011 were exhibited at the Visual Research Centre, Dundee Contemporary Arts & Edinburgh Poetry Library.

Poetry Beyond Text: Vision, Text and Cognition is a multi-disciplinary research project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and based at the Universities of Dundee and Kent. The project uses methods from literary criticism, aesthetics, experimental psychology, fine art and creative practice to study how readers respond to hybrid works which combine the textual with the visual, including digital poetry, concrete and visual poetry, artists' books, text film and poetry combined with photography.

This exhibition includes fascinating and innovative commissioned works in all of these forms, as well as sculptural and interactive works, records of the processes of collaboration and creation, and other research findings. Contributing poets and artists include Will Maclean, John Burnside, Giselle Beiguelman, Thomas A. Clark, Marian Leven, Robin Robertson, John Cayley, Simon Biggs, Deryn Rees-Jones and Robert Sheppard & Pete Clarke,

Robert Sheppard and Peter Clarke collaborated on three prints with poems: *Forme*, *Lyric* and *Manifest*. Each of these prints contains poetic text on various scales, some resembling 'headlines' or titles, others reading as fragmented and repeated 'body' text. There is a visual assembly of these component elements that is suggestive of Russian Constructivist prints, combining abstract colour shapes, blocks of text, and oblique angles and these historical visual influences interact with a 'poetic of increased indeterminacy and discontinuity, the uses of techniques of disruption and of creative linkage', to apply Sheppard's own description of the 'Linguistically Innovative Poetry' movement in which he has played a notable part. The word manifest teases the viewer with overtones of manifestos, of historical references and political activism in its dynamic layout. There are visual overtones as well of the dynamic aesthetics of Rodchenko and Popova, whose work from the brief period from 1917-1925 produced energetic and stylistically groundbreaking visual art with text.

Recently they have made the work 'This is not Guilt' and a series of silkscreen prints with Letterpress about a significant derelict location in Liverpool 'Tangled Scree'.

The text for 'Tangled Scree' is a quennet (the near-sonnet, but haiku-influenced form invented by the instigator of Oulipo, Raymond Queneau). It was composed using some photographs Pete took of some derelict sites in Liverpool, particularly with respect to the adjective-noun phrases that make up most of the text. Pete then designed the work using the text rather than the images. Indeed, one version is a text-only version, but others use colour to complement the language.

'This is Not Guilt' and 'Tangled Scree' series are a combination of silkscreen print with traditional letterpress. They attempt to create a visual equivalent for Robert's poems, thinking about visual tension in terms of compositional structure and fragmented surfaces. I collect letter type and the works use various fonts to try to replicate and or dislocate the patterns of speech. I am interested in the relationship between looking and reading, with the images and surfaces creating interference, a dialectical sense of images held somewhere between construction and falling apart.

Pete Clarke moved to Liverpool in 1978 after studying at Chelsea School of Art, West of England College of Art [Bristol Polytechnic], Burnley Municipal College and living for a time on the Isle of Wight and then London. He is MA Course Leader and Principal Lecturer in Fine Art at the University of Central Lancashire, Preston. He makes paintings, prints and installations, exploring collaborative strategies within contemporary practice.

Robert Sheppard moved to Liverpool in 1997 and works at Edge Hill University where he is currently Professor of Poetry and Poetics. Books include *Twentieth Century Blues*, *Warrant Error* and *Berlin Bursts*.



Research Questions

In a culture marked by rapidly diversifying forms of visual and textual presentation, the interaction of textual and graphic forms is crucial to the development of critical, creative and scientific thought. There is much relevant research taking place within humanities, art practice and psychology, but only a small body of work links all these disciplines.

As an interdisciplinary project 'Poetry Beyond Text' addresses this issue, focusing on four key research questions:

1. When art works combine textual and visual elements, how do the modes of attention specific to reading text and viewing images interact and modify each other?
2. What factors determine whether the combination of textual and visual elements in such works enriches or limits their meaning and aesthetic value?
3. How are evaluative and interpretive responses to such works affected by the development of enhanced reflective awareness about the processes involved?
4. How can critical and psychological models of perception and aesthetic experience inform and be informed by the creation of new works of art?

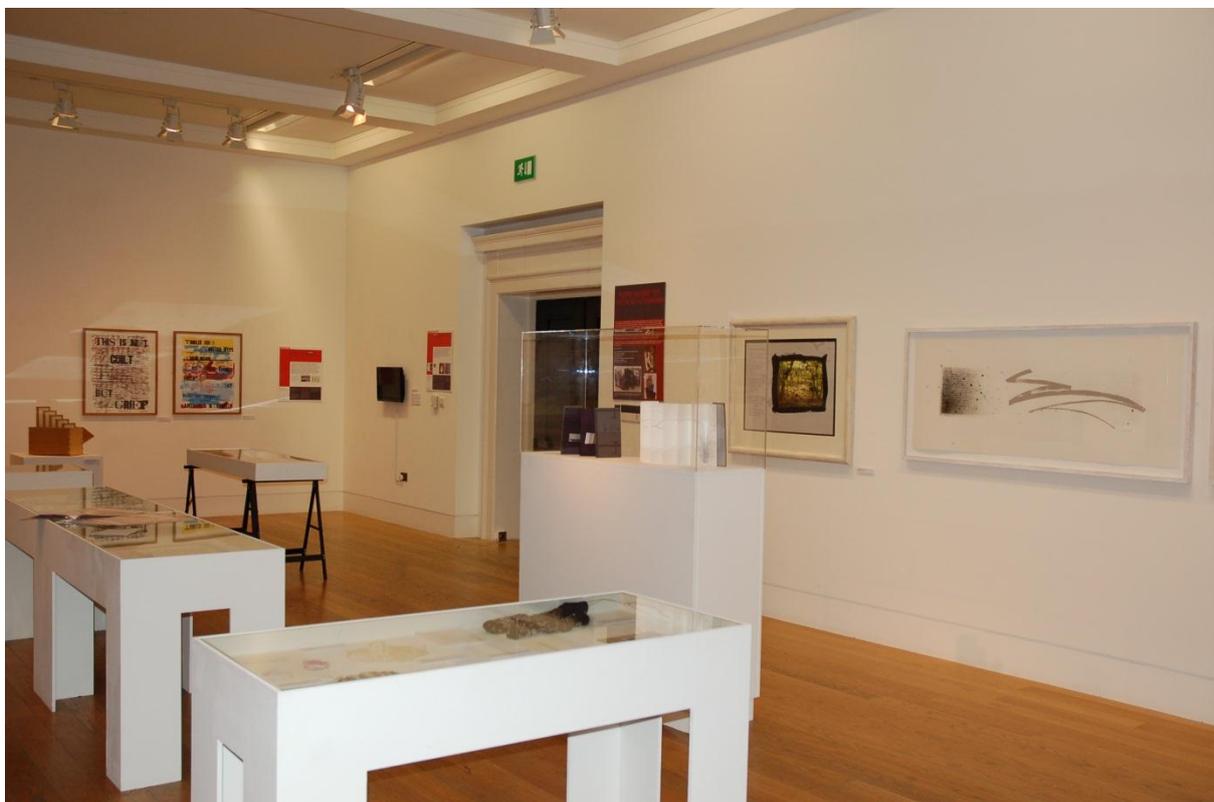
The project will contribute to knowledge and the development of new ideas within literary criticism, creative practice and experimental psychology. The outcomes will be of interest to scholars, scientists and practitioners in all these fields, as well as to the wider public audience for poetry, visual art and digital media.

The 'Poetry Beyond Text' project forms part of the wider AHRC programme, 'Beyond Text: Performances, Sounds, Images, Objects' (2007-12), which involves over 40 individual projects and aims to 'create a collaborative, multi-disciplinary research community'.

Why '*Beyond Text*'? The 'Beyond Text' programme is highly diverse, and different projects interpret this term in different ways. For us, as the 'Poetry Beyond Text' research group, 'beyond' does not imply transcendence, nor the non-textual. Rather, it implies an exploration of the dynamic relations (at the level of creation and reception) between poetry as text and other elements of poetic works. These other elements include visual images which may be combined with poems (such as photographs, prints, drawings), but also the visual and material properties of poetry itself: the shape of the words on the page (especially in Concrete and Visual Poetry); the feel and structure of the book or other material form (notably in Artists' Books); the code and intermedial processes of poetry in digital media; the temporal and material aspects of time-based poetic works, including Text Film and Digital Poetry. In another sense, 'beyond' also implies the cognitive processes and constraints

which enable and frame our responses to poetry, as well as the imaginative and creative processes involved in its making and its reflective interpretation.

www.poetrybeyondtext.org





Tangled Scree 2012

