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Lycett, Robert

Attitudes to reading: drifting towards objects and events

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Rob Lycett  
www.breakingthings.info  
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“Attitudes to reading: drifting towards text objects and events”  
Leeds College of Art  
7th April, 2016

/\*  
“If you have the words, there’s always a chance that you will find the way.”  
Seamus Heaney  
\*/

thinking playfully  
a man  
harmonizing text -

observe, record, draw out  
traced

‘we share some words...’ is a long, self-generated poem, that is

an observation  
a record  
a tracing  
a drawing  
of an experience of BEING in the LIBRARY here at the Leeds College of Art.

I take the view that books are CUSTODIANS of LANGUAGE  
-some do this better than others.

My attitude to reading is one of DRIFTING and COLLECTING in the library. (Guy  
DEBORD / Walter BENJAMIN)

Acts of HYPER-READING - as opposed to DEEP READING - these are terms used by  
N. KATHERINE HAYLES in relation to her theories of ELECTRONIC LITERATURE  
(Writing Machines)

She considers the DIGITAL as transforming literature from  
OBJECT into EVENT

A poem organises TIME (William Carlos WILLIAMS), both as object and event

This is a key aspect of my work, which is a SLOW MACHINE that will organise time,  
using a DATABASE of language APPROPRIATED (Kenneth GOLDSMITH) through  
acts of drifting and hyper-reading

The machine produces poetic RESIDUA, which is captured, situated knowledge  
(Samuel BECKETT - Six residua)

ACTUALISED into a stable book MODE  
EVENTUALISED into a digital PERFORMANCE (PROJECTION)  
STILLNESS is CHALLENGED

“Digital kills stillness” Babette MANGOLTE

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My PROCESS begins with pen and ink and paper, composing VERSE-LIKE  
structures

Similar in visual form to Renga - 3 lines, 2 lines - superficially

I often began with the middle line of the triplet, allowing associations and narrative  
strands and situations to emerge

In the library I made 150 of these VERSE and they are INDEXED in the final 30 pages  
of each of the books, which is a chronology of process. The DEWEY number of the  
source book is in the margin to POSITION the SOURCE in the library space but not  
the author or title.

This captured language is stored in five lists - one for each line. This is the database  
for the machine to query (Raymond QUENEAU - chance is an issue)

Each of the books contains 1000 verse, generated by a process which is informed  
by CHANCE operations. Line by line, the poem is constructed/assembled/produced  
(John CAGE, Kenneth MARTIN, Darrell VINER)

The RHYTHMS of my original verse are evident within the generative poem, which is the RESIDUA of the machine-like process. The verse are numbered sequentially from 1 to 1000

Five books have been produced, each representing an OBJECT MODE of the electronic poem

The PROJECTION is a PERFORMANCE / EVENT - which occasionally pauses to allow the audience to situate their reading. It is UNSTABLE.

Within the randomness of the poem we strive to recognise meaning and pattern. This APOPHENIA is a human desire which seeks the GHOSTS and FAIRIES within the machine. BUT none are there.

What remains are beautiful GLITCHES - random events that reveal some of the inner nature of language.