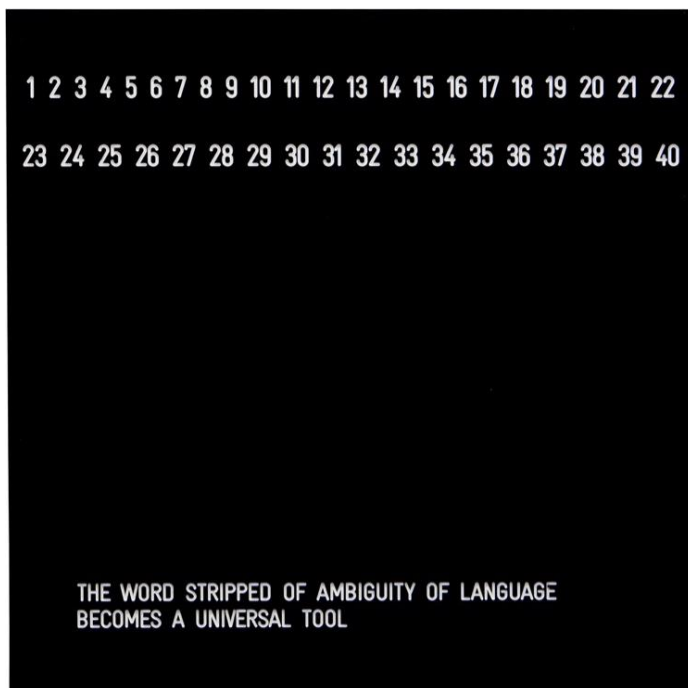


## Image Writing. Verbo-Visual Arts from the Late Twentieth Century to Today | Language, Process, Narration



Vincenzo Agnetti, *Assioma, The Word Stripped of Ambiguity of Language Becomes a Universal Tool*, 1971  
Courtesy Archivio Vincenzo Agnetti, Milano

The second volume of the journal “piano b” devoted to the verbo-visual arts explores the intense relationship between word and image from the late twentieth century to the present through diverse research topics and perspectives. The critical contributions focus in particular on the analytical and behavioural experiments of the 1960s and 1970s, the countercultural experiences of artist-run spaces and the developments of intermedia practices in the last years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The analysis of the language structure and the limits of logo-iconic representation is at the core of the concrete poetry investigations and conceptual practices

that, during the Sixties, found new dimensions in a performative and processual way by inviting to “see the field of experimental poetry not so much as a confused, fragmentary area in dispersion, but as the coexistence of various lines of march bound up in a dense network of connections and exchanges” (Adriano Spatola, *Verso la poesia totale*, 1969).

This vibrant context of transcultural and cross-disciplinary scope encompasses the main themes and tendencies of aesthetics between the 1960s and 1970s, namely the materiality of writing, the possibility of conceiving words and images as manifestations of a single thought and the quest for a dialogue with other expressive forms and techniques: typography, painting, design and photography.

From the *konstellationen* of Eugen Gomringer and the tautologies of Joseph Kosuth to the surface texts of Franz Mon and the metaphysical interrogations of Giulio Paolini, from the poems *Frisbees* by Giulia Niccolai to the *poèmes publiques* by Alain Arias-Misson, art claimed - in the name of a diffuse and transversal aesthetic - the need to exist beyond the text, beyond the mere writing. Even Dick Higgins's *Intermedia Chart* (1995) and its “updates” by Philip Corner (2009), Richard Kostelanetz (2013) and Lamberto Pignotti (2019), forcefully recall the attitude of a historical and cultural moment characterised by the interaction between different artistic expressions: happenings, conceptual art, concrete poetry, performance, mail art and visual poetry.

In the wake of this vanguard artistic-literary panorama, from the mid-60s, experimental festivals and exhibitions became the vehicles of new relations between verbal and figurative arts, processes of visualisation and thought, writing and matter. These events were held both in institutional locations, including the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, the *Kunstmuseum in Lucerne*, the *Kunsthalle* in Berne and the *Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna* in Turin, and in alternative artist-run spaces such as *Art Metropole* in Toronto, *Artpool* in Budapest, *Centro Tool* and the *Mercato del Sale* in Milan, *Franklin Furnace* and *Printed Matter* in New York and *Zona* in Florence. These initiatives were pivotal for the wider and international context of cross-references and shared experiences that deeply informed the eclectic panorama of neo-avant-garde intermedia visualities, ranging from the seminal collection of Fluxus texts *An Anthology of Chance Operations* (1963) to the countercultural urban happening *Parole sui muri* (Fiumalbo, 1967-1968), the pioneering show *Language to Be Looked At and/or Things to Be Read* (Dwan Gallery, Los Angeles, 1967) and the groundbreaking exhibition *Information* at the MoMA in New York (1970).

In the last decades of the twentieth century, in a socio-cultural context changed by the *après-coup* of '68, the critical reception of poststructuralism and the de-

bate on the postmodern condition, the hybrid and experimental legacy of these experiences was re-examined, re-worked, and re-enacted through new intermedia practices that fostered the processes of citation, fragmentation and rewriting in the light of a renewed interest in narration. Moving along these lines of research, the second volume of *Scritture di immagini* features a series of historic-critical contributions on the topic of verbo-visual art in the contemporary era that analyse specific and exemplary case studies.

The *vexata quaestio* of the possibility of reading Carl Andre's alphabetical grids and elements through the aesthetic lens of concrete poetry is considered by Andreas Hapkemeyer (Museion, Bolzano) as one of the most significant episodes of the shifting relationships between two generally separate artistic traditions. Maria Teresa Roberto (Art Historian, Turin) identifies in the practice of writing between 1968 and 1969 a crucial point in the research of several Arte Povera exponents, such as Alighiero Boetti, Emilio Prini, Gilberto Zorio, Giovanni Anselmo, Giuseppe Penone, Michelangelo Pistoletto, Luciano Fabro, Pier Paolo Calzolari and Giulio Paolini, analysing their works for the exhibition catalogue *Processi di pensiero visualizzati. Junge Italienische Avantgarde* curated by Jean-Christophe Ammann for the Kunstmuseum of Lucerne (1970). Employing documentation conserved in the Archivio di Nuova Scrittura, Duccio Dogheria (Archivio del '900, Mart, Rovereto) reconstructs the fundamental activity carried out by Ugo Carrega in Milan as a driving force behind self-managed cultural and exhibition venues between 1969 and 1996. The essay by Sara Fontana (Università degli Studi di Pavia) addresses the anthropological research pursued by Armando Marrocco in the 70s in a series of procedural operations centred on the visual aspect of words and the process of writing. Bianca Trevisan (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Brescia) examines Vincenzo Ferrari's paintings and artist's books by focusing on his semantic and analytical approach to word and image. Finally, Arianna Fantuzzi (Università IULM, Milan) highlights the interartistic attitude and the narrative vocation in several episodes of Italian artistic research in the 1990s.

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