

.. And when I walk in my neighborhood -- she went on --

FIN

I mean I read as I walk. My attention oscillates -- chasing my glimpses -- touching my encountering. With things. Things. Had put out their feelers. Waiting for their tactility. To be (re)activated -- by the moment -- at the moment -- they come into being. Before or when I find them -- when or after they are "found". Past tense and passive voice -- from before to after -- between them and they. A quasi-distance -- if only I keep a distance -- from naming it. By placing a prefix quasi- -- making something known -- an almost- getting-real object -- quasi-fying -- situated in whatever that quasi- is oriented towards: quasi-fying a noun into a verb makes the noun a quasi-noun. This is the secret between thing and I -- I, thing, find = as quasi-distances cut our relationships into quasi-things, quasi-Is, quasi-finds

Xuan Ye

My neighborhood is just like any other neighborhood. Simply concrete. Letters on packages -- mean nothing -- garbage on the ground. Residents dwell in the little boxes. Just like any other residents -- children go to universities -- become lawyers and doctors -- consume letters on sale -- listen to viral contagions. Out of the same little boxes. Same machines of expression. Same systems of behaviors. Smile like a stock image -- pleasure lasts for a catchphrase. I walk from my neighborhood to the next neighborhood. Box after box

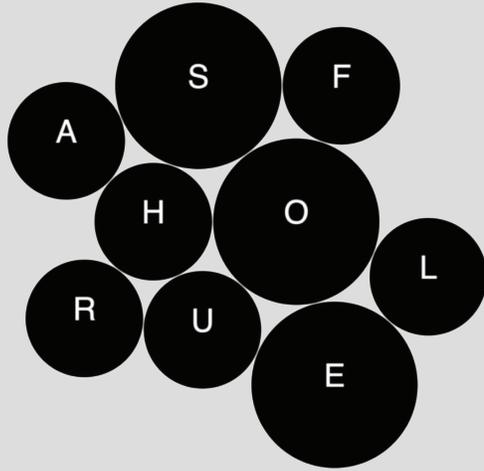
I am walking -- knowing that my surroundings are the outer environment where my body is. Also aware of the inhabitant. Contained in the inside. Whose fingers press down. Each letter on the keyboard. Transcribing a total simulacrum of my surroundings, deriving as it emerges -- surfaces in my mind. The unexamined habits of mind -- fall into the representationalist's false alarms, immediately -- making references = making sense = mattering. And here I am. Communicating with what my eyes see my tongue speaks my ears hear my mind minds. The phenomena my senses are attaching to -- inherited from my memory, experience, knowledge. Attaching like a magnet -- attracts the end of the electrons -- of my attention -- my being -- myself. The seduction of controlling the appearance of the world is winking at me. I pick up my pace

When senses are. Where words join. Mind shifts into an associative -- disposition -- enabled by coupling. A found poem -- that cannot locate

-- that does not land on the concrete. Objectivity. Every time I try to decipher. It slips -- unattainable \approx ungraspable. I am wandering in the echoes of passing signs -- wondering in the noise of slipping meanings. A word is a word and at the same time not a word. A word is a word just because it's not a word. "The living word is not to be detached from the thing or the fact or the experience", said the Zen master. The living word is a propensity. The living word is the inability to fix meaning -- it catalyzes the process -- just as process can include object. I can't help going that way -- a void of question marks. What does this message mean? Where does it come from? Who is sending it? To me? A speculation on a speculation

Meanings in all nakedness -- going in and out through my senses. Triggers, be they physical, emotional, or social -- interweaved into a web of meanings -- a world wide tissue of coalitions. Like this text functions as structuring device for the progress of the text. Unembodied voices hide behind the backdrop -- mouseover ventriloquism. Every single click leads to every single "Hello world!" A world that's constituted by the alphabets in the #advertisement #discount #popsong #sourcecode #meme #newsfeed #speechrecognition #hashtags. Web, a representational discourse -- cast from natural language -- cradled in the computer language -- consequently, contingently connected by words. On-and-off-line. Relentlessly troping -- a semiotic galaxy of physical and symbolic power = a reality of material-semiotic construction -- intersecting and diffracting through linkages, databases, and web sites through the cybernetic network. In an endless web of combinations, our attention is distributed. We've become distributed human beings -- O2O (online-to-offline) cyborgs. We are uncoded to forge the new human universals

As I walk, I read. Outside the little boxes -- HOUSE FOR SALE -- bold and UPPERCASE -- standing tall and upright in the yards. Two Ss, two Os, two Es, one F, one L, one H, one A, one U, one R -- bubbles of letters -- my mind rearranges them --



like an Internet search -- thousands of memories and combinations --
 programmatically -- transcoding across dictionaries -- semantically
 believable within my human capacity. It goes

...

Ear of Hue Loss
 Our False Shoe
 Of a Sheer Soul
 Oh Soul See Far
 Rose Leaf Uh So
 Lush As Foe Ore
 Her Aloof Uses
 Slur Ease Hoof
 Lo He Fears Sou
 Hours Seel Oaf
 Oral Fuse Hose
 Ousel For Shea
 Floe Hear Us So
 Heal Us Eros of
 Foul Sea Heros

...

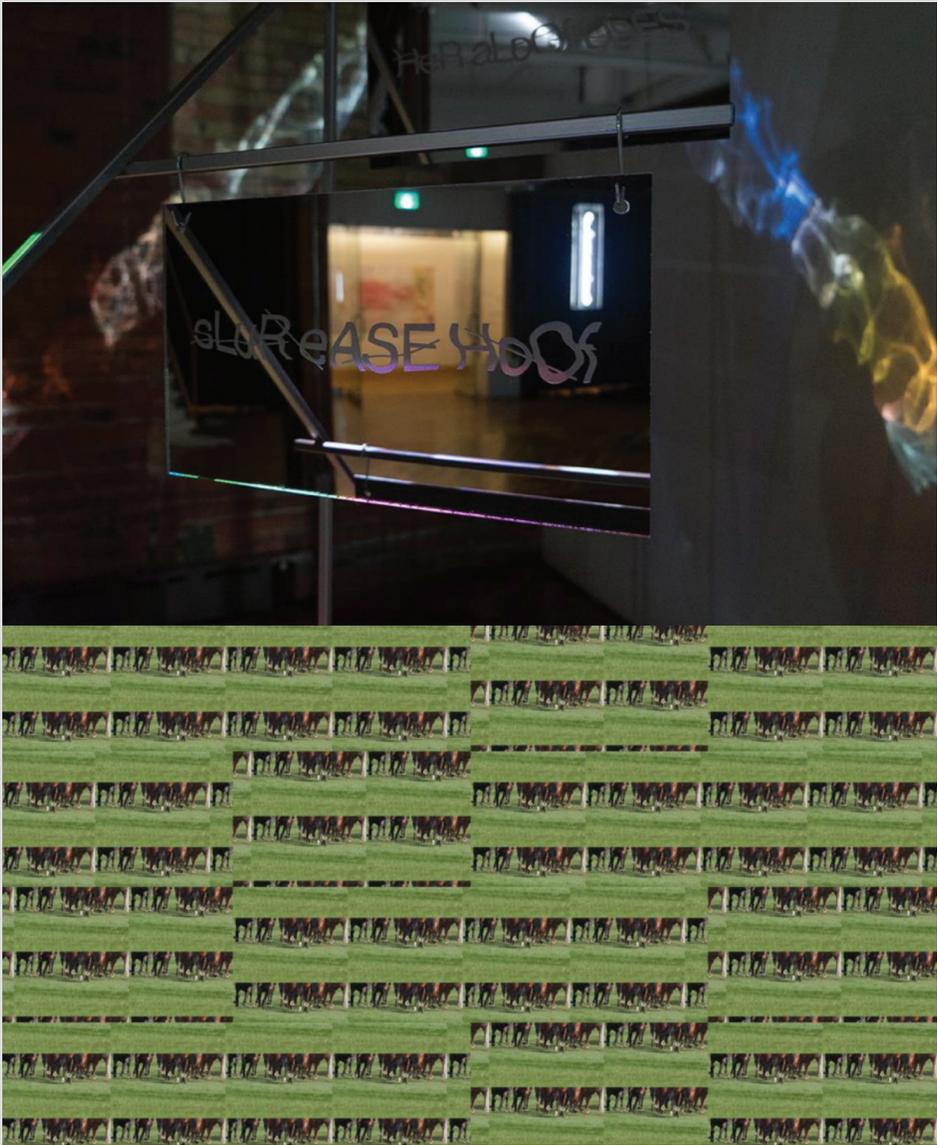
A found poem. A found image = at the same time a found text.
 Malleable orderings. Cryptic meanings. "What is a text without
 certainty?" I keep walking. I mean a momentum keeps moving my
 body forward. The inertia that's determined by -- the mass of me -- the
 me that's not the me from the just now that's not the just now. From the
 beginning when I launched this journey. From time zero, a continuum
 of encountering grows. What if time moves from bottom to top, instead
 of from before to after. Are we arising to the Sun?

爛花園

耳朵, 色相耗損
 我們的假鞋,
 一副陡峭的魂
 哦, 靈魂望遠
 玫瑰葉, 嗚, 這般
 鬱鬱蔥蔥, 像敵人礦石
 她牢落不群, 用途
 在于口述,
 保險絲燒斷的管
 浮冰, 聽見我們如此
 愈合我們, 愛欲
 腐爛的深海英雄

As I speculate, more signals arrive -- more rhythms grow. Into the depth of my vision to the end of the road. I am getting closer and closer to something. Yet forever afar like the Moon. When we choose the Moon, we talk to the Moon. As if the submitter of the message is the receiver of the message. As if we are who we are talking to -- we are the aliens -- we are the Moon -- where I come from is where I am going to. From time zero, I sent the signals to myself

“Silently and serenely, one forgets all words,
Clearly and vividly, it appears before you”



Fin is an installation consisting of laser engraved plexiglass panels, mirror films, metal structures and a projection of a coded animation of image data. The title Fin refers to the shape of the installation which looks like the flattened appendage commonly seen on aquatic earthlings used to navigate in the water. And in Fin, which also means the end of a film or narrative in French, the Fin cuts through the pixel waves from one urban landscape (commercial signages) to another that is constructed by a networked archive of stock images, deploying vision and hope for the ideal habitat or the end place we call “home”.

Fin starts by reorganizing the letters of the commercial slogan HOUSE FOR SALE. Out of 39583 possibilities of anagrammatic transformations, words are selected as imageries that sparkle off the senses, conjuring an altogether romantic atmosphere, a temporal displacement that adds to the disorientation of the entire exhibition. The liberation of individual letters from their original syntactic arrangements turns into equivocal word splashes. The final text, as a result, is a 15-line verse.

The lines are then reverse-engineered into distorted visuals in the form of a CAPTCHA, which is now an outdated type of challenge-response test for determining whether a user is human or not. The letters (sometimes numbers) that form CAPTCHAs are usually twisted, wavy and deformed, though believed to be recognizable by humans, in the early days of the Internet, rather than by bots or artificial intelligences. On some level, CAPTCHA is an anthropomorphic projection or a human tendency to draw a boundary characterizing the dualistic human-machine relationship. Theoretically speaking, CAPTCHA is only legible to humans and aseptic to robots.

The anagram originates from a kindred cryptic context (as CAPTCHA) and can be traced back to remote Antiquity in various cultures. In ancient Greece, it was used to decipher mystical meanings in names (Wheatley 74). Interrelating anagrams with CAPTCHAs is akin to bridging the verbal and literary tradition with the contemporary, casting light through the dark tunnel of linear time—it has always already been here—undermining the dichotomy of now and past, human and machine.

Projected from the ceiling, the tidal currents in Fin are animated by a web application, which takes Fin’s navigation one step further into

Wheatley, Henry Benjamin. *Of Anagrams*. London: Printed for the author, 1862.

text-image intertextuality¹⁹, exemplifying “how language is suspect to so many variables: linguistic, imagistic, digital and contextual” (Goldsmith 71).

Every two minutes, a keyword randomly selected from the 15-line verse is used to search through the Getty Images database, with the keyword output being one random image from the database, with the aid of Javascript programming and the API of the Getty Images database. In the container of a four by four grid, the images are repeated in the background and algorithmically undulated into moving waves. Slowly and hypnotically, the waves and the 15 typographic sculptures of anagram-CAPTCHAs interweave into a visual-verbal narrative. It illustrates an alien and illegible landscape, as the words can throw us back to visuals remote from the initial text sign when dropped into a semantically driven image search (Goldsmith 69).

In modern information science, image archives are built in CBIR (content-based image retrieval) (Wallace 83)—“textual metadata remain[ing] a necessary intermediary in most image search techniques” (Wallace 84)—which means that keyword searches are integral to the networked digital archive. In other words, the keywords create textual images corresponding as closely as possible to the visual and the textual-visuals are networked into socially-produced discourses (Wallace 123).

More specifically, Getty Images, the Leviathan of digital images, is the largest corporation manufacturing the majority of stock photography in the market (Frosh 131), centralizing commercial visual culture. The representational power and cultural authority of the stock image ecosystem creates a textual-visual monster whose “absolute sovereign dominates the body-politic”:

“...Getty incorporates individual images as the state does to singular persons, simultaneously reproducing its own hierarchy and promoting its own legitimacy as a total archive: each photograph, in both its generality and its susceptibility to reconfiguration, acting as a kind of homunculus of the larger body to which it belongs...” (Frosh 133)

Goldsmith, Kenneth. *Uncreative writing: managing language in the digital age*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2011.

Wallace, Doireann. "Words as Keys to the Image Bank." *Revisualizing Visual culture*. Ed. Chris Balley and Hazel Gardiner. New York: Routledge, 2010.

Frosh, Paul. "Beyond the image bank: digital commercial photography." *The photographic image in digital culture*. Ed. Martin Lister. London: Routledge, 1995.

The generic nature of stock photographs makes them informational: they are alienated from “a particular referential source” and “a specific intentionality of use or reception”; they are “amenable to replication, alteration and fragmentation” (Frosh 134). As Frosh further points out, the informational structure of stock photography is referentially and interpretively ambivalent (135).

On the one hand, stock images are always staged to reflect the trends of visual culture anticipated by cultural intermediaries (e.g. Getty Images and its clients: advertisers), so that consumers can immediately associate them with their consuming demands. According to Foucault’s logic, “it is a generative system that governs the production of statements” (Frosh 134). On the other hand, businesses use stock images that embed this semantic ambiguity to elide the accountability of explicit communication, thus placing more responsibility for meaning-making in the hands of the audience. This freedom of interpretation, however, is illusional because the images are produced based on a stereotypical photographic indexicality and conventional classifications of photographic genres. Stock photography’s “parsimonious plurality of meanings” are “dependent upon the probabilistic calculation of decodings” by photographer, cultural intermediaries, and consumers (Frosh), which is to say the semiotic possibilities of stock photographs are overtly limited within layers of feedback loops within the cultural production, consumption, and distribution of stock images, behind the walls of institutional and ideological visibility.

Fin invites scanning eyes and scattered attentions for a grand cruise in the G=A=R=D=E=N teeming with life and stories depicted in the ocean of stock images, where a total textual-visual archive that is also an ideal existence constitutes a simulacrum of the over-simplified world, the textual-visual environment that feeds us and that at the same time we interoperate within.