

Eroticism, Poetic Concretism, and Visuality (1960–1970) (Paris, 18–19 Dec 20)

Paris, Musée national d'art moderne – Centre Pompidou, Dec 18–19, 2020

Deadline: Jul 10, 2020

Maria Elena Minuto

The erotic imaginary and the relation between body and text nourished the daring experiences of neo-avant-garde visual poetics in the 1960s and 1970s by establishing themselves at the core of "verbi-voco-visual explorations" (McLuhan, 1967). In 1960, the Romanian-born French poet and artist Isidore Isou published *Initiation à la Haute Volupté*, a provocative experimental novel widely considered as a founding text of erotic art history and literature. Inspired by Dada and Surrealism, the author created one of the most compelling examples of hypergraphisme in post-war literature, presenting sophisticated interactions between erotic desire and verbo-visual interactions. In using letters as a visual medium, Isou wanted to find out "how a letter could be just as beautiful as a figurative or non-figurative object in art."^[1] Isou's book is just one of many examples of neo-avant-garde verbo-visual eroticism with examples ranging from Lettrist metagraph novels and Gerhard Rühm's poetic montages (*Erotic scale studies*, 1966) to Dieter Roth's artists' books (*Mundunculum*, 1967), and Ketty La Rocca's photocollages (*Intellettuali in collegio*, 1965-66). While there is no dearth of studies on the connections between eroticism, gender, and visual arts (see Rachel Middleman, *Radical Eroticism: Women, Art, and Sex in the 1960s*, 2018; Alyce Mahon, *Eroticism & Art*, 2005; Robert C. Morgan, Carolee Schneemann: *The Politics of Eroticism*, 1997), there are at present no critical analyses available on the impact of erotic imagery on Concrete and Visual Poetry within the context of post-war visual poetics.

Conceived by Maria Elena Minuto (KU Leuven; ULiège) and Mica Gherghescu (Bibliothèque Kandinsky – Centre Pompidou), the conference aims at reconstructing and assessing the intriguing relationship between poetic eroticism and viscosity in the 1960s and 1970s in a rich corpus of literary works, magazines, and ephemera starting with the Bibliothèque Kandinsky – Centre Pompidou collections and expanding the reflection to other relevant examples (e.g., S. M. Martini, *Il libro dei segni d'amore*, 1979; E. Miccini, *Eros & Ares*, 1979; A. Spatola, *La vergine di Norimberga*, 1978; G. Baruchello and G. Lascault, *Alphabets d'Éros*, 1976; J. Blaine and J. F. Bory, "L'érotisme dans la poésie matérielle," *Approches* no. 2, 1966). Concrete and visual poems such as *Eeroo-tic* (Paul De Vree, 1971), *Sweethearts* (Emmett Williams, 1967), *Rose-Eros* (Timm Ulrichs, 1962-69), and *Organismo* (Décio Pignatari, 1960) eroticised the space of printed pages by creating typewriter compositions to be "assembled" and "disassembled" while picture-poems and verbal-visual writings such as *Io sono io, io sono me* (Tomaso Binga, 1977), *Una questione di principio* (Lucia Marcucci, 1965), and *Non commettere sorpassi impuri* (Ketty La Rocca, 1964-65) engaged with a feminised eroticism and radical sexuality by employing a large variety of different techniques (collages, cut-ups, fold-ins, ready-mades) to include context and media fragments. These are just a few exam-

ples of an extraordinary body of intermedia and interdisciplinary works that are "neither word nor image alone but somewhere or something in between" (Kostelanetz, 1970) combining an analytical reflection on language with a "dialectical tension between textuality and visuality" (Goldsmith, 2008).

Without losing sight of the vast cultural heritage and references of historical avant-gardes as well as of Beat Poetry, Fluxus and Situationist visual-erotic production, the symposium concentrates more specifically on some pivotal questions regarding the interrelationship between Eroticism, Poetic Concretism, and Visuality in neo-avant-garde experimental writings: What happens when eroticism encounters the visual forms of poetry and the verbal elements of art? How does erotic imagination work in Concrete and Visual Poetry and how does it inform our understanding of and experiences with? To what extent and in which ways does eroticism affect and trigger verbo-visual research, inter-artistic practices, and cross-disciplinary inquiries? How does the neo-avant-garde's verbicovisual poetry perform "desire in language" (Kristeva, 1982), and how does it still reverberate today through engaged visualities, performative, and activist bodies? We welcome papers from scholars, research fellows, and PhD students of any discipline in order to prompt an interdisciplinary and international debate on the issues, and to examine a unique body of works that illuminate the far-reaching conceptual and poetic implications of post-war verbo-visual eroticism.

Key Words: Avant-Garde; Neo-Avant-Garde; Eroticism; Concrete and Visual Poetry; Interdisciplinarity; Intermediality.

Topics may include, without being limited to:

- 1) Historical and cultural legacies (e.g., Kurt Schwitters' *To Anna Blume*, 1919; Hannah Höch's *Die Erotische Freiheit*, 1920; Marcel Duchamp's phonetic anagram *Rose Sélavie*, 1920; Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's *Scatole d'amore in conserva*, 1927; Claude Cahun's *Aveux non avendus*, 1930; Antonin Artaud's *Le Théâtre et son double*, 1938).
- 2) Theoretical and aesthetic shifts: the avant-garde and the neo-avant-garde's verbo-visual eroticism.
- 3) Transnational and transcultural perspectives: erotic imagery in Lettrist metagraph novels, Concrete, and Visual Poetry and experimental writings from Brazil, to Sweden, and Central Europe.
- 4) Interdisciplinary approaches to the neo-avant-garde's verbi-voco-visual eroticism including concrete, visual, phonetic, sound, and performative poetry.
- 5) Politics and eroticism: the Italian *poesia visiva* phenomenon and beyond.
- 6) Intermedia forms and interartistic practices: poetic eroticism in typewriter compositions, verbal-collages, permutations, objects, and picture-poems.

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Proposals for paper (title and abstract of 700 words) and a 200 words curriculum vitae, in English or French, should be sent before July 10, 2020 to Maria Elena Minuto (mariaelena.minuto@kuleuven.be) and Mica Gherghescu (mica.gherghescu@centrepompidou.fr) with the subject line "Eroticism, Poetic Concretism, and Visuality, (1960-1970)."

The candidates will be informed of the selection before August 30, 2020 via e-mail, and the presented papers could become subject of a future publication.

"Eroticism, Poetic Concretism, and Visuality (1960-1970)."

Host Institution: Musée national d'art moderne – Centre Pompidou, Paris. December 18-19, 2020.

Language conference: English and French.

Scientific Partnerships: KU Leuven, Belgium – Departement of French, Italian and Spanish Literature; Université de Liège, Belgium – Department of Modern Languages and Department of Historical Sciences.

Scientific Committee

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[1] Isou, Isidore. *Les Champs de Force de la Peinture Lettriste*. Edited and translated by David W. Seaman in *Visible Language* 17, no. 3. Ohio: The Cleveland Museum of Modern Art, 1983.

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