

Concrete Poetry - International Exchanges Symposium

This event took place on 14 February 2015, 11.30am - 5.00pm

Venue: Seminar Room, Ground Floor, Alison Richard Building, 7 West Road, Cambridge, CB3 9DT

This symposium explores the active cross-fertilisation, exchange of ideas and regular correspondence between poets and curators living internationally during the late 1950s and 1960s including Stephen Bann, Ian Hamilton Finlay, Edwin Morgan in the UK, Ernst Jandl in Austria and Brazilian poets such as Edgard Braga, Augusto and Haroldo de Campos and Pedro Xisto. Presentations from speakers Stephen Bann, Viviane C. da Anunciação, Vanessa Hanneschläger, Eduardo Kac, Drew Milne and Greg Thomas will contextualise these transnational exchanges in the light of broader developments internationally within literature and the visual arts of the period reflecting on networks and movements within concrete poetry, its critics and its lineage.

This event is part of a series of exhibitions in Cambridge coinciding with the 50th anniversary of the first international exhibition of concrete, kinetic and phonic poetry held in Cambridge in late 1964 including [Beauty and Revolution. The Poetry and Art of Ian Hamilton Finlay](#), Kettle's Yard, curated by Stephen Bann; *a token of concrete affection*, Centre of Latin American Studies, curated by Bronač Ferran and [Graphic Constellations: Visual Poetry and the Properties of Space](#), The Ruskin Gallery, curated by Bronač Ferran and Will Hill.

Concrete Poetry - International Exchanges is supported by the AHRC Digital Transformations Theme Fellowship; Arts Council England Grants for the Arts; the Centre of Latin American Studies, University of Cambridge; Kettle's Yard, Cambridge and Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for the History and Theory of Biography, Vienna.

The Centre of Latin American Studies event page can be found here:

<http://www.latin-american.cam.ac.uk/events/concrete-poetry>

Images from the event can be found here:

<https://kinkoncambridge.wordpress.com/2015/02/15/photographs-from-concrete-poetry-international-exchanges-symposium/>

PODCASTS AVAILABLE TO DOWNLOAD

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| Part 1 | Bronač Ferran – Introduction (03:53) |
| Part 2 | Stephen Bann - <i>Concrete Poetry: The Aesthetic/Historical Penumbra</i> (46:21) |
| Part 3 | Greg Thomas - <i>Concrete Poetry in Britain: Locations and Chronologies</i> (38:38) |
| Part 4 | Vanessa Hanneschläger - <i>Inside Outsider – Outside Inside: Ernst Jandl and (Inter)national Concrete Poetry</i> (38:07) |
| Part 5 | Viviane Carvalho da Anunciação - <i>A Critical Felix Culpa: Concrete Poetry in Brazil</i> (36:53) |
| Part 6 | Eduardo Kac - <i>Dispelling Myths of Origin</i> (46:15) |
| Part 7 | Drew Milne - <i>Ecology without nature: Ian Hamilton Finlay and contemporary poetics</i> (36:36) |

ABSTRACTS

Stephen Bann

Stephen Bann is Emeritus Professor of History of Art and Senior Research Fellow at Bristol University. He entered King's College, Cambridge, to read history in 1960, and gained his Ph.D. in 1967. He was elected Fellow of the British Academy in 1998, and appointed Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 2004. Among his recent publications is *Distinguished Images: Prints in the Visual Economy of Nineteenth-Century France* (2013). In 2014 he published his letters (1964-69) from the Scottish poet, artist and garden designer, Ian Hamilton Finlay. Also in 2014, he was guest curator for the exhibition of nineteenth-century historical painting and Sculpture in Europe, *L'Invention du Passé*, which took place at the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon. His collection of works by Finlay is currently on show at the Kettle's Yard Gallery, Cambridge, under the title *Beauty and Revolution*.

Concrete Poetry: The aesthetic/historical penumbra

Retrospective views often tend to iron out the complex interaction of factors that characterises any artistic 'movement'. Notions of influence frequently imply a misunderstanding of the subtle negotiations that the poet or artist makes with the inherited culture. This paper is a preliminary attempt to define some of the specific literary, aesthetic and philosophical options that appealed to concrete poets in general, and to Ian Hamilton Finlay in particular, in the course of the 1960s.

Greg Thomas

Greg Thomas is a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Edinburgh, where he is undertaking a three-year research project on politics in the life and art of Ian Hamilton Finlay, part of which involves looking at Finlay's staged battles with public and cultural institutions as an element of his creative practice. He has recently published articles in *Studies in Scottish Literature*, *Scottish Literary Review* and *Journal of British and Irish Innovative Poetry*, and is preparing a book manuscript on concrete poetry in Britain based on his PhD research.

Concrete Poetry in Britain: Locations and Chronologies

Recounting the overlapping narratives of concrete poetry's reception and development in Britain during the 1960s is a task that has not generally been undertaken in an equitable and broadly-focused manner. This partly reflects a pervasive tradition of critical hostility to the style in Britain, partly the ambiguity of that "style" itself, and a related tendency within those narratives which have appeared to focus on particular poets or groups of poets, often reflecting particular cultural and social attachments as well as certain stylistic proclivities. This paper attempts to provide an introductory overview of the multiple locations and chronologies of concrete poetry's early development in Britain; amongst other things, this will involve relaying some unknown facts and dates unearthed through primary research, bringing to light the work of some little-known poets and pushing into dialogue the work of poets generally considered in isolation from each other, and touching on the characteristics and significance of regional literary and artistic culture in Britain during the 1950s-70s.

Vanessa Hanneschläger

Vanessa Hanneschläger is a researcher at the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for the History and Theory of Biography and working on a dissertation on 20th century Austrian and Slovene literature at the University of Vienna. She was a contributor to the research platform *Handkeonline* and is currently developing a virtual (anti)biography of Ernst Jandl and editing the correspondence between Jandl and Ian Hamilton Finlay (2016).

inside outsider – outside insider: Ernst Jandl and (inter)national concrete poetry

Ernst Jandl (1925-2000) was a skilled networker, who found recognition among international experimental poets at a time when the restorative atmosphere of post-war Austria did not allow avant-garde art to gain solid ground. Even within the national scene, mutual approval was not a matter of course as demonstrated by Jandl's relationship with the Vienna Group. This talk will give an overview of Jandl's concrete poetry contacts within the borders of his country as well as abroad, especially focusing on the lively correspondence with Ian Hamilton

Finlay. The spotlight will also be turned to the role of literary periodicals and magazines in the process of institutionalizing 'the new poetry', as Jandl called it. The significance of this term for Jandl's poetics will allow insights into his choice of literary 'relatives'.

Viviane Carvalho da Anunciação

Viviane Carvalho da Anunciação lectures English language poetry and edits the e-journal *Almatroz* at the Federal University of Bahia, Brazil. She is a visiting scholar at the Centre of Latin American Studies at the University of Cambridge. Her current research project involves tracing intercultural dialogues between Concrete Poets in Brazil and the United Kingdom. Viviane completed her Ph.D. at University of São Paulo and Queen's University, Belfast. Her thesis, 'Exile, home and city: the poetic architecture of Belfast', was shortlisted for best thesis of the year 2012 at the University of São Paulo. A book version of this work is being published in March, 2015. She also has published articles on Concrete Poetry and translations of Northern Irish poets, such as Seamus Heaney and Paul Muldoon.

A Critical Felix Culpa: Concrete Poetry in Brazil

Throughout almost sixty years of existence, concrete poetry divided literary critics in Brazil. Since its formal outset in 1956 with the Exhibition of Concrete Poetry at the Modern Art Museum of São Paulo, until the end of the nineties, its writers have been severely criticized. However, such a belligerent reception corresponded to cultural discourses that were in an emergent phase in Brazilian society. The aim of this paper is to contextualize concrete poetry in the history of literary criticism in Brazil and to offer an alternative reading of its artistic and political importance. I wish to argue that this revisionist approach would safeguard the movement from sterile critical rivalry and pre-conceived ideas.

Eduardo Kac

Eduardo Kac is internationally recognized for his experimental poetry and his bio art. Kac created his first digital poem in 1982 and his first holographic poem, or holopoem, in 1983. His relentless investigation of the new possibilities of poetic creation in new media also led him to realize works of biopoetry and aromapoetry. His anthology, *New Media Poetry: Poetic Innovation and New Technologies*, published in 1996, was the first book on digital poetry. A second revised and expanded edition was published in 2007 as *Media Poetry: an International Anthology*. Documentation of Kac's poetry is collected in the bilingual book *Hodibis Potax* (Édition Action Poétique, Ivry-sur-Seine, France, 2007). www.ekac.org

Dispelling Myths of Origin

Many international anthologies often cite the Noigandres group as the origin of the concrete poetry form, when in reality both the term "concrete poetry" and the form itself precede the Noigandres group's claim to it. The poets that constitute the group have often presented their work as the departing point of visuality in Brazilian poetry, when visual and syntactic experimentation in Brazilian literature have a long history that clearly begins with Baroque poetry. More importantly, Wladimir Dias-Pino, a founder of Brazilian concrete poetry who exerted clear influence over the Noigandres group, remains largely unknown. This presentation will demonstrate the multiple origins of concrete poetry and will highlight the work of the revolutionary poet Wladimir Dias-Pino.

Drew Milne

Drew Milne has been the Judith E Wilson Lecturer in Drama & Poetry, Faculty of English, University of Cambridge since 1997. In 1995 he was writer in residence at the Tate Gallery, London. He edited the occasional journal 'Parataxis: modernism and modern writing'; co-edited 'Marxist Literary Theory: A Reader' with Terry Eagleton (Oxford: Blackwells, 1996); and edited the anthology 'Modern Critical Thought' (Oxford: Blackwells, 2003). He has published a number of critical essays on drama, critical theory and poetics, including an essay entitled "Adorno's Hut: Ian Hamilton Finlay's neoclassical rearmament programme" [*Scottish Journal of Literary Studies*, vol. 23, no. 2 (Nov. 1996), 69-79.] His books of poetry include: 'Sheet Mettle' (Alfred David, 1994); 'Bench Marks' (Alfred David, 1998); 'The Damage: new and selected poems' (Salt, 2001), and 'Go Figure' (Salt, 2003). A large volume of his poetic work is forthcoming from Carcanet.

Ecology without nature: Ian Hamilton Finlay and contemporary poetics

This talk explores the status of nature in Ian Hamilton Finlay's poetics, taking some cues from recent discussions in ecological and environmental aesthetics, such as Timothy Morton's *Ecology without nature: rethinking environmental aesthetics* (2007). Finlay engages different grounds to support his poetic forms. His poems remain, accordingly, somewhat apart from their various embodiments. Whether working with sundials, hankies, gardens or paper, the environmental contexts evoked are persistently marked by an art/nature hierarchy, posing apparently neo-classical challenges to environmental pastoralism. Specifying the wit and power of Finlay's ecological poetics suggests a new optic on subsequent poetics that owe something to Finlay, and a critical foil to eco-poetics and nature writing.