

BEYOND TEXT

Poetry Beyond Text

Vision, Text and Cognition

Introduction

This research project uses psychological, critical and creative methods to study how readers respond to the visual aspects of poetry, and involves researchers in English, Comparative Literature, Fine Art and Psychology.

Works Studied include:

Visual or concrete poetry
Artists' books and prints
Digital poetry
Poem-Photography books

Psychologists have established typical patterns of eye-movements for reading text and looking at pictures, as well as models of the cognitive processes reflected by such looking behaviour. What happens when readers are presented with art works which combine text and images? If the text and image are separate elements, do we look at text or image first, or move rapidly from one to the other? If textual and visual elements are fully integrated, do we adopt a 'reading' or a 'viewing' approach to the text? Arising from these questions are more general ones. How are our visual exploration strategies affected by the presentation of the art work and the previous knowledge of the reader? How do different reading strategies influence our assessment of the interest, meaning and aesthetic value of the work? What determines whether the visual aspect enriches the meaning of the words (and vice versa), or whether each element limits the force of the other?

Team Members

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Aims and Objectives

1. To study the viewing / reading experience of 'visual' poetry, visual / textual artists' books and digital poetry, with reference to the cognitive, affective and evaluative processes that occur while viewing images and reading text.
2. To share creative and analytical interpretations of visual-textual hybrid art-works, as well as new art works, widely amongst public, artists, poets and academics.
3. To integrate the methods of literary criticism, experimental psychology, and practice-based research in fine art and poetry, so as to open up new possibilities for interdisciplinary research in the arts and humanities.
4. To evaluate critically the aesthetic consequences of readers' perception of image and text interaction in literary and artistic works.
5. To generate a dynamic dialogue between empirical, theoretical-historical and creative modes of understanding, and investigate methodological and theoretical issues arising from this dialogue.

Research Questions

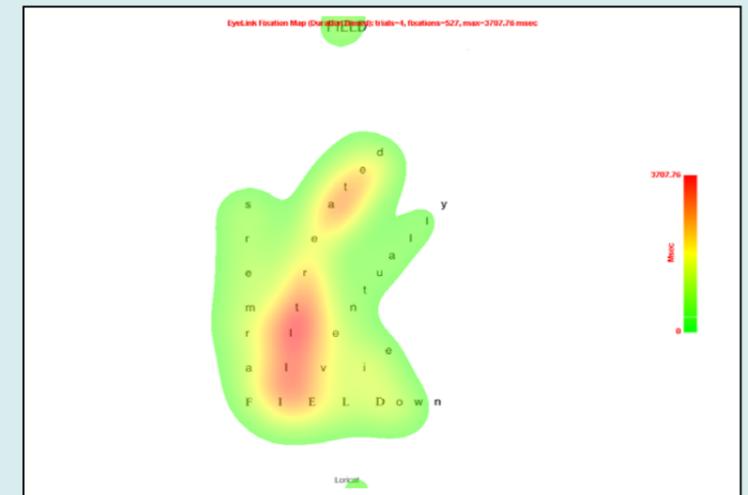
1. When art works combine textual and visual elements, how do the modes of attention specific to reading text and viewing images interact and modify each other?
2. What factors determine whether the combination of textual and visual elements in such works enriches or limits their meaning and aesthetic value?
3. How are evaluative and interpretive responses to such works affected by the development of enhanced reflective awareness about the processes involved?
4. How can critical and psychological models of perception and aesthetic experience inform and be informed by the creation of new works of art?

Methods

1. Eye-Tracking.
2. Creative Methodologies: Commissioning of Works.
3. Discursive Interaction with Participants, using 'reflective feedback loop'.
4. Tests of visual / textual 'thinking'.
5. 'Translation' between visual and textual forms.



Miriam Mallalieu, 'Response to Jim Carruth's poem "The eason Turns" ' (graphite, scored by turntable stylus, and then partially re-stitched, with photographic layer underneath



Eye-Tracker Heat Map of 'Field', by Jim Carruth

Outputs:

- Exhibitions of commissioned works and experimental results
- Website
- Journal Articles