

Reading Room: Installations by Jondi Keane, Alan Prohm, and Shaun Gallagher

Slought Foundation, Philadelphia, April, 2007.

<http://www.slought.org/content/11386/>



Slought Foundation

Reading Room was an experimental exhibition arranged to accompany the Second International Arakawa + Gins: Architecture + Philosophy Conference/Congress, held at Slought Foundation and the University of Pennsylvania from April 4 - 6, 2008. Organized by Jondi Keane, with fellow artist/theorist Alan Prohm, and philosopher of cognitive science Shaun Gallagher, it involved environments constructed especially for the reading of particular texts by Arakawa and Gins. Each room tried to make the reader aware of the concrete role the body plays in the mental work of reading, literalizing the message of the text in the visitor's physical experience.

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Word Rain

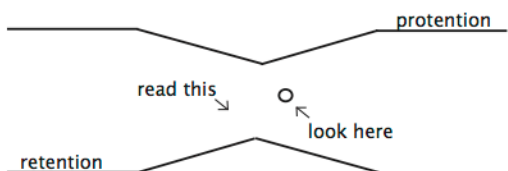
a biotopological reading room

by Alan Prohm

This room arranges an inter- and intra-textual encounter with and between the reader and two books.

At the center, on the rotating podium, is Madeline Gins' 1969 experimental classic, *Word Rain*, open to pages on which certain conceptual metaphors for the act of reading occur, in the course of writing direct observations on the act of reading, and offered for reading to the visitor.

On the walls and floor, bits and pieces of a long sentence from Madeline Gins' and Arakawa's essay on "Elementary Biotopology", in *Making Dying Illegal* (2006), are scattered, more or less from left to right. Reading them requires moving around the room, picking up pieces and trying variations to find their fit in the sentence. The sentence, as it gets pieced together, seems to pick up language from the book at the center of the room, which in turn can rotate to scan the room for a quotation that contextualizes it within the evolving corpus of Arakawa and Gins' writing. The active, participatory, and body-driven activity of construal is, of course, revealed in the end as the main protagonist of both texts, elliptically proving the point of biotopology.



Legend: for "construal" read "personing"





When the speaker speaks at the rostrum, enunciated words are made to fly, they bounce off her, stream forward and fall back to her face and body.

Word Rain, 1969

...no matter how concrete and palpable she might judge her body to be, all that she happens as spills out and overflows as tributaries/trajectories/mass-energy conduits of knowing and non-knowing that land there where attention alights; that is, for herself, an organism that persons will always be only organized and redistributing gatherings of landing sites.

Making Dying Illegal, 2006



Speaking about platforms, in the almost physical sense, I rested on at least three.

Word Rain, 1969

Being oblivious to any aspect of what is happening would be unthinkable for a biotopologist.

Making Dying Illegal, 2006

