CUT PAPER THINKER – a few thoughts with
Klaus Peter Dencker

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(Photo: Christin Rodewald, 2005)

Figure 1: Klaus Peter Dencker "Die Poetische Theorie
der Visuellen Poesie" (The Poetic Theory of Visual
Poetry), 2012.

1 - **What is this?** or **If this is poetry,
what is he writing it in, and how do
we read it?**

Media

To know what it might mean to call any work
visual poetry we can start by examining
what media are in use. In Klaus Peter
Dencker's case, it's cut printed paper, some
ink, and that's pretty much it. An analog
practice, though with materials only a digital
technology and society could produce. The
materials belong to different classes,

categories and canons, ... You can cut this
up the way you like to make your theory of it,

but with such an analysis of the medial basis we have a first approach to getting what this is.

Language

A next question is What orderliness underlies the way meanings occur in these media? What systems for decoding or encoding appear that allow us or require us to think of it, or some aspect of it, as language. A language is proven in its usefulness for exchange. The semantics in play is cross-medial and the syntax highly mitigated by disjunctions that gap the space between discourse systems. Here classes, categories and canons are reduced to codes, and revalued for the grounding they give to inference. How do I know to read this as meaning that? Because there is system there for referring back and implying forward.

Poetry (Poetic)

The next step, in this way of getting into the topic, is to ask What of that which is happening in this language/these languages makes me want to or ought to call it poetry? If poetry is an effect experienced in the processing of language (broadly conceived), what more precisely is this effect in experience? Many traditions answer this question with something like: indeterminacy, polyvalence, figurativity, metaphor, layering, openness, suggestiveness. A good cognitive scientific formulation of a near standard idea of what poetry does comes from Adrian Pilkington:

"extended search of weak implicature"[1]

Meaning that poetry composes material to signify strongly (enough to hold attention and desire in the reading) but not definitively, appealing to and rewarding attention in its search for meaning, but not allowing it to land once and for all on a particular meaning. "Weak" in the sense of not assuring the implicature it strongly suggests. This is almost exactly the formulation of "indeterminacy" that has come to define our discourse on modernism, the avant-garde, and experimentalism in the arts, including poetry.[2] It serves

as a classic common reference for what makes a language work poetry or a language experience poetic. Extended search of weak (meaning strong, but not sticking, inconclusive, open-ended) implicature.
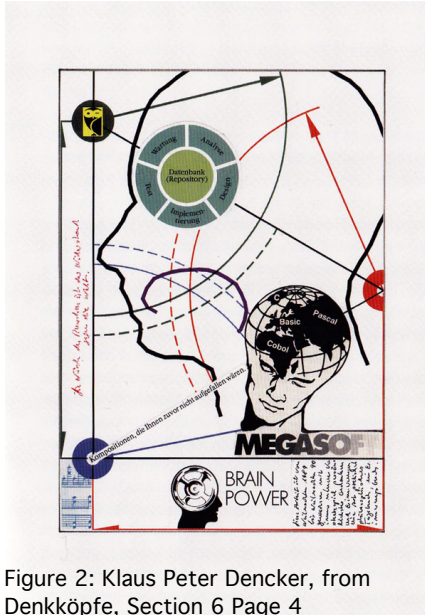
So, how do we read it?

Figure 2: Klaus Peter Dencker, from Denkköpfe, Section 6 Page 4

So, how do we know how we read it, to know if how we read it is poetic? An argument for poetics in other medialities requires a phenomenology of reading across media. The question of reading order comes up immediately. Whatever we're reading (fixating ocularly for a mental construal), how do we string it together into something readable, hence a text?

In print tradition, the convention of where to look next is set, though it differs from culture to culture and from special case to special case. Confronted with a non-lineated visual field, there are also "orders" in how the field (text) will end up being read, but in general these are neither linear, nor set. Reading order is the outcome of graphic/optical forces, carrying semantic forces, encountered by an active attention out to find and grapple with these forces, landing on materials to construe from them a reading. This process and its outcome are unpredictable, but far from random, being some averaging between what is offered (affordances) and what is used and how, (performance). Because this takes place in the behavior of the eyes, and of a closely related mental attention, it can be studied, both introspectively and empirically on test readers. Our reading is something we can learn to read. Thus it becomes a basis for literary analysis of visual texts, establishing how they are read and what we can make of that.[3]

Test Case

In a study I conducted in 2000 for dissertation research into visual reading, I used an iconic page[4] from Klaus Peter Dencker's *Denkköpfe*, a classic of his long text style from 1989, engaging visual language materials cut from popular print media, setting up a strong a reference field for questions of science of the mind and new media[5]. The space of this page is asymmetrically filled, with a concentration of items in the lower, and particularly lower right portion. An approximate diagonal from lower left to upper right divides this denser region from the emptier upper portion, characterized by fewer and larger figures and more continuous lines. Figure 2, below, shows the viewing paths of the first seven subjects in a test of 21, which, typical of the results as a whole, highlight how this graphic difference corresponds to a difference in attentional behavior. Figure 1 shows one example from the set, corresponding to one person's reading as reported retrospectively for the first seven steps.[6]
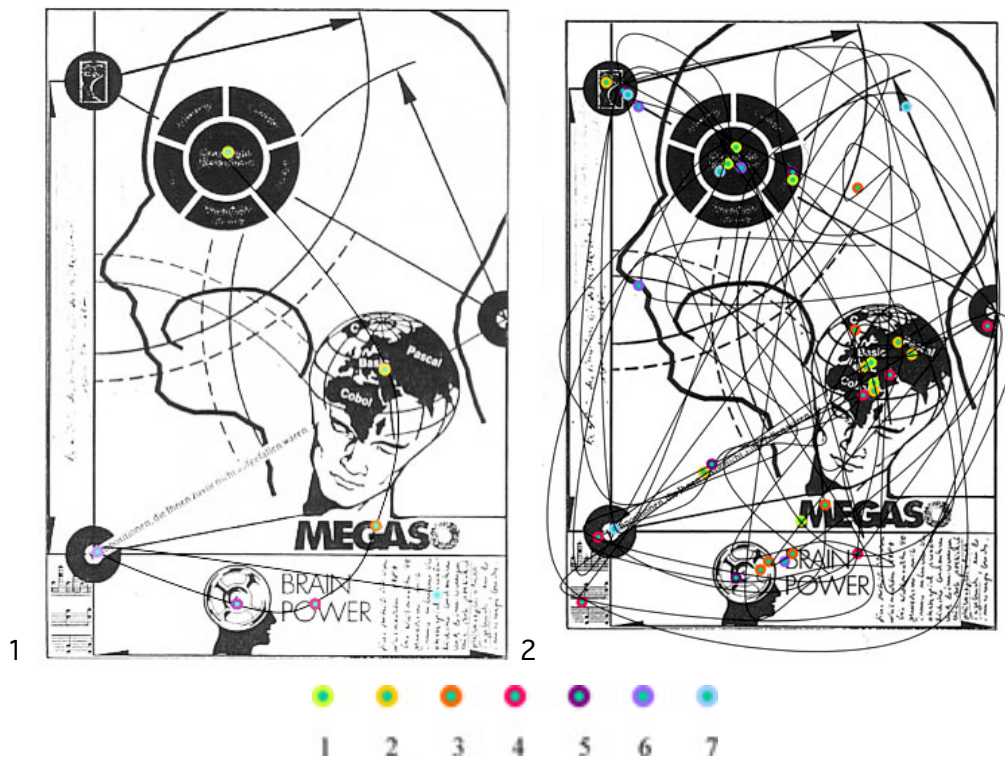
Reading Order

The results of this test showed a strong consistency in how the gaze of readers moved into and "through" the text. With rare exceptions, everyone viewing this piece recorded their first gaze at one of two locations, either the large segmented circle at upper left, or the globe-head figure lower to the right. Of those who looked at the circle first, most looked at the head next, but no one who looked at the head first looked next at the circle. In other words, no one went up/left from the elements they first landed on. Everyone continued down/right. The reader of Figure 1 above is typical in this respect, though readers differed in how they explored the lower right region once they got there. The effect could be ascribed to the lingering influence of engrained page-reading conventions, but there are sufficient visual cues in the work that contradict this directionality to counterbalance the influence if it existed. Invariably two or three further fixations went to items lower and to the right before attention again found its way up into the "quieter" region of the segmented circle. The result is an empirically discerned basic current in the text, a page-specific reading order drawing attention downward to the right and keeping it occupied in that region, from which it might continue only later to explore the less dense region in the upper half.

As we try to explain the phenomenon, we observe a basic partitioning in the work, a strong delineation of the page into two basic zones, inflecting attention's movement and the construction of meaning along this divide. A spatial level of meaning is at work extablishing the current of viewing: in the one zone, the head turned up, open forms, loose lines, little text, uncrowded page, a wide thin arc line marking the division and angling everything at the margins away toward the center, reinforcing the framing on the large head and the segmented circle. The owl, perched on its strong perpendicular crossing lines, confirms this stability further, anchoring it in a pure vertical/horizontal orientation. A gaze to the circle is as a result a relatively leisurely gaze. Attention landing there finds less to draw it away. The lines and arrows offer traction more than they direct movement, and the distance between the circle and any next point of interest (other than the owl) holds potential competing attractors out of the frame.

Conversely, focusing on the head slightly further down, the gaze is held and deflected differently, into a tighter clustering of elements, and a tighter series of fixations, on the particular continents (labelled with names of computing languages) covering the scalp/globe, on the portions of text, or the other salient graphical elements. The head stands in more and "tighter" relationships than the circle, characterized by a greater number of near-neighboring attractors, and shorter distances of movement from one to the other, than is the case for the segmented circle. There is a different pressure, density and acceleration in this region, for the thinking eye looking for meaning. The initial biasing that probabilizes first acts of attention to the two spots sets up a temporal direction in the visual exploration, which contains this inflection.

Topology

What we notice we are reading, then, rather than a line, is a topology, circuits, a spatialized set of items whose relations hold independently of the exact sequence they are taken up in. The order is present not as a single direction, linearly sustained, but as a reentered stream, continually repeated and run each time differently. Cycling through items activates them within the process of construal (reading, building sense), establishes, thickens, prunes, complicates, abandons or restores their relations. The order in which a topology is activated makes a difference, a difference that stays, mitigated, where the order is rewritten.

Meter

Topology takes the place of line in this poetics, but as we observe there is still meter. The effect of the difference between the up/left and down/right regions, on a gaze looping back and forth among items across the two regions, is a metrical alternation, a variation in perceivable measures, back and forth, on and off, stressed and unstressed between two intensities, the closeness/quickness of attending effort in the lower right region, and the more loosely rising and sustained gaze at or around the segmented circle. The pull downward and to the right, even beyond the initial viewing, remains felt as a tendential visual weighting however the gaze at a particular moment is moving, whether with it or against it. The total variation of perceptual values along the looping and reentered line of topological search adds metrical detail to the reading, with patterning in variations as fine as the visual system can handle or the visual surface offers elaborating and complicating the base pattern I observe here as binary. However the visual field is arrayed, as eye and mind discern and associate various visual elements within it, a topology emerges bearing particular perceptual dynamics as if in code form, activated when sense-seeking, visual/mental attention arrives to read it. Scanning or

jumping from spot to spot, attention is simultaneously laying a base beat for its ongoing reception of visual units in ocular-cognitive sequence, just as we do reading or hearing words in auditory-cognitive sequence.

Network

Observing attention's flights and landings[7] as movements in a process of construal, of inner building, rather than just of orientation and spatial/material discernment, brings us to the explicitly semantic layer of analysing visual textual reception. It is hard to believe in any firm distinction between things that appear and things that mean, but to use the distinction for what it's worth we can call everything so far discussed the proto-semantic[8], and note that with the theory of protosemantic visual cuing (a theory we have in highly evolved form especially in the legacy of Bauhaus design theory, Swiss design, Concrete Art aesthetics, and gestalt perceptual psychology) we have (at the very least) the equivalent of a theory of prosody in verbal/textual literature. The use of visual intake in a project of construal makes it semantic, where construal builds meaning from everything "handled" by the eye and mind in seeking to interpret, think or understand. The meaning a text of this nature delivers is hence not to be conceived in the image of a statement, as the meaning of a conventional poem is traditionally (questionably) imagined. The non-linearity of visual reading brings with it a non-finality. The utterance cannot be a statement in the same sense, as it cannot have a period. Rather than the linearly structured sentence-statement, we must think the meaning as network. Here the texture is decisive, the complication of lines of reading that cross and resequence themselves, the thicketing of relations and implications. It is in fact a structure for trellising that grows only slowly as element after element is sensed and sorted, associated, defined, guessed at, translated, re-ascribed, re-associated, re-sensed, re-sorted, re-networked, re-wired into the evolving "whole" that makes this scanning a reading, and into the inner lived event of this that makes that meaning.

The question of anything being visual poetry, or worth calling this, comes down to the experience a reader has in pursuing construal among the networks of given visual material. In this text, a page from the sequence dedicated to the artist Arakawa[9], we
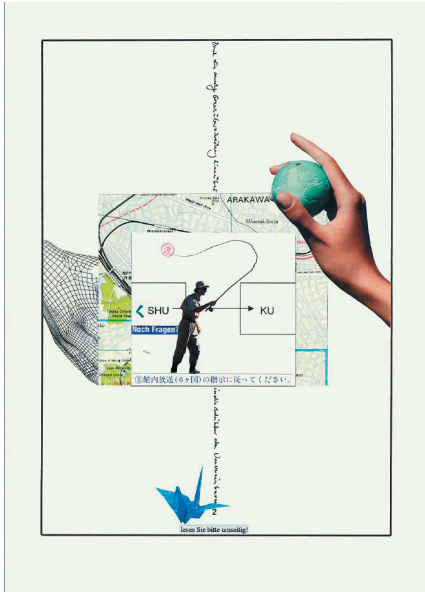
Figure 3: from *Arakawa - Under Construction*, Page 2

discern elements in some sequence, and sense some topology take focus as we explore it. Again a dual zoning is noticed, here more explicitly with the strong central full-length vertical, but also with the slightly off-center repetitions of this pivotal structuring, first the boxed letter groups "SHU" and "KU", balanced left and right with bi-directional arrows between them, then, on a tilted axis, the pair of hands, one full-color with a ball raised for throwing, the other in wireframe rendering, backgrounded behind the image fields at the center of the work. Contributing perhaps most dynamically to the metrics of this page is the angled rod and curved line of the fisherman, just off-center to the left. The red ink seal at the end of his line answers the much bigger green globe ball about to be thrown by the facing hand, and the implied movement in the figure's bodily posture sets up a counterpointing diagonal with the hand. At several levels, along overlapping axes, the page sets up dual zonings, with the effect that back and forth scanning of the visual elements activates clear beats with metrical effect, laying a baseline for the ongoing process of semantic search and assembly.

If we start with SHU and KU, we can try to decipher them. If they are Japanese, as we assume from the context, maybe even a quick online search can help. Assuming the search engine is guessing correctly which Japanese characters I mean, I get for SHU, "Main", as in "principal", "chief", "important man". Here I can associate Arakawa. For KU I get "Ward", as in "district" and "section". Is the translation reliable, or relevant? Am I totally on the wrong track? I notice the background image behind the fisherman is a map. In the upper right corner is the word Arakawa. It is the name of a prefecture, a district, in Japan. But also the name of an important man. Important enough to have this text dedicated to him. Important enough to be known almost only by his last name. Did he fish? Not that I knew. A text under SHU asks if we have any further questions (noch Fragen?). We do. The KU morpheme appeared also on the previous page of the series, page one in fact. The SHU morpheme apears for the first time on this page, page 2,

rhyming with KU, distinguished by its consonants. The place name and the name of a person. Are they the same? How closely do they relate? On the next page, the pair is complimented by a third morpheme, centered on a line below them: SA. What does it mean? My search gives me "Difference", and "variation", graphicalizing the semantic relation it draws between Shu and Ku. Shu-sa-ku. A clear meaning forms. The triad closes as a circuit. Shusaku. With a little research or familiarity, we know this is the artist's first name. Shusaku Arakawa. The ambiguity aroused in the steps it took to construe this, the openness in the syntactic bonding that makes of loose morphemes a word, remains in the ongoing reading to a greater or lesser degree, depending, kept active in the combinatorics of how these morphemes and others forming "Ara-ka-awa", continue appearing arranged on subsequent pages.

Indeterminacy in Intermedia

Finding Arakawa's name in this text is a guarantor that what we are doing here is reading, and that the reading builds and pays. It represents the beginning of the growth of a network or thicket of meanings and meaning material that will accrue as a reading if we continue. It will grow and transform as long as we engage with it, by continuing to attend. Everything this text is about, or says, or presents, is yet to be discovered in this analysis. But already we are at the point where we can know what we are dealing with. The question of whether it is a text or visual art is answered in how sustainedly the reading can be carried forward, to what extent the construal advances in steps that build upon each other, yielding a sequencing of meanings that achieves salience, maintains some coherence, and has articulable import. The question of whether in this process poetry is happening is answered in the experience we have of that construal. What was our definition? "Extended search of weak implicature". Do we have that? Is that enough? It at least appears intended. Highly articulated polyvalence is everywhere in the text, as it is in Klaus Peter Dencker's practice generally. The hands, one wireframe, one high-res flesh-tone, are a typical example. They reappear in the rest of the text, we recognize them, wirehand and flesh hand, yet each time triggered by a different material image. Regularly what appears as a clear object, theme or protagonist in Klaus Peter Dencker's texts exists as ambiguous territory in the zoning of an undecideable conceptual

construction, a stochastic manifestation webbing its form in between events of appearance in differing materials, showing at various scales and to various modalities. The Arakawa sequence was first published in print in a collection called "Ambiguity & More" (2010) in the *C'est mon Dada* series with Redfox Press (Country Mayo, Ireland). The title is justified with this work in it, and labels something essential to the poetics at hand. Indeterminate language-like behavior in readable visual media. We have what we need to call this visual poetry. But what is significant about finding poetry being done in visuals? What difference does the difference in media make?

Let's look at the Arakawa series for some answer.

The sequence was inspired by the occasion of an international online conference on the work of Arakawa and his life-long partner Madeline Gins.[10] Klaus Peter Dencker's generous impulse to contribute, at my invitation, was based on an admiration for Arakawa and Gins' major mixed-media work, *The Mechanism of Meaning* (1979 in its first published version)[11], a work which certainly demands consideration in the history of mixed- and inter-medial writing, as well as for its philosophical significance. One section of that work addresses the topic of "Ambiguous Zones", and reveals an indeterminist ontology underlying the artists' poetics. The section includes a panel entitled "About the network of AMBIGUOUS ZONES OF A LEMON", showing this single object of mental focus "Lemon" as a dispersed weave of variants: "Lemon", "Model of a lemon", "Drawing of a Lemon", "Actual lemon", "Cut-out of a lemon", "Sliced lemon", "Memory of a lemon", "Area of a lemon", "This is a lemon", "After lemon", etc. Each time lemon is revisited, entrained as a repeated node in a renewed circuit, lemon is different, raising the question, when is it ever the same? Below the diagram, a few short notes are appended, including this as a basic principle:
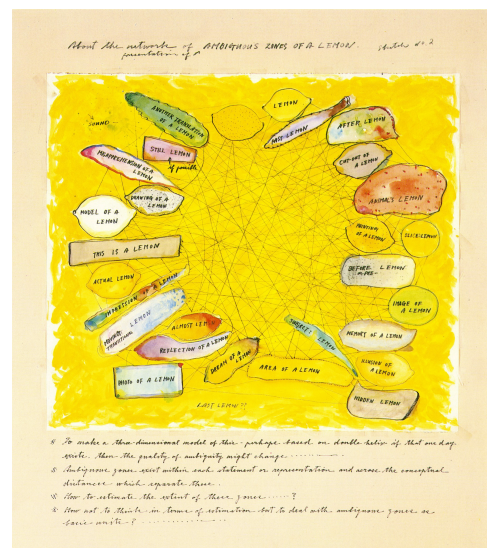

Figure 4: Arakawa and Gins, from *The Mechanism of Meaning*, Section 3. Ambiguous Zones, "About the network of Ambiguous Zones of a Lemon".

Ambiguous zones exist within each statement or representation and across the conceptual distance which separate (sic) these.

The philosophical observation pursued in this panel speaks to a whole career (actually two) dedicated to articulating, concretising and realising indeterminacy as a mode of perception and social existence. "Blank" was the starting point in post-Dada, early conceptualist Arakawa's practice: "Part of doing is always blank."[12] And "tentativeness", also isomorphic with indeterminacy, was central to the efficacy the artist/poet-turned-architect pair sought from architecture, "procedural architecture", for realizing their Reversible Destiny project, dedicated to the question of how not to die: "Staying current with bioscleave, remaining alive as part of it, involves keeping pace with the tentativeness it brings to bear…".[13] Experimental poets, and experimental artists in various practices, have taken indeterminacy as the focus of their craft and target of their effort at innovation. Arakawa and Gins saw tentativeness as the key to an aesthetic strategizing aimed at overcoming "the code of automaticity" and learning how not to die. They learned this strategy as artist and poet, amplified it as philosophers, and in order to achieve it, together became architects. As I have narrated elsewhere[14] the story
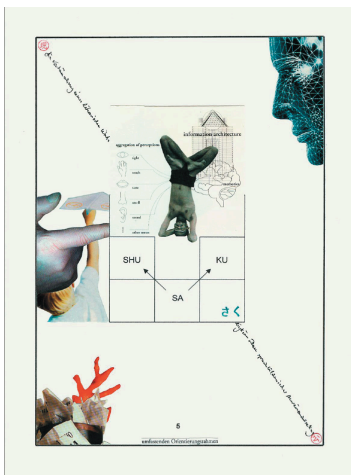

Figure 5: from *Arakawa - Under Construction*, Page 5

of Arakawa and Gins is the story of a visual/literary poetics that became an architectural practice, just to carry out its business. In migrating media with a somewhat consistent content, Arakawa and Gins were seeking certain (architectural) conditions for its reception. In their analysis, only something that communicates body-wide is capable of stirring up tentativeness in a modality capable of impacting the "organism that persons" and effecting change in life, e.g. by extending it: "Questions need to be asked in a 365° way."[15]

Although Klaus Peter Dencker was not lead in his practice to abandon graphics for construction – his great contribution is the clarity that comes of his consistency - his work is precisely distinguished by the inclusion of a certain

maximum of mediality graphics can transmit. His poetics, too, must be considered in its nature as intermedia, conducting a discourse that overarches the various modalities brought together to do the communicating. His positioning in the history is based on the difference this inclusion makes, as contrasted with the extreme minimalist mediality of the concrete poetry tradition. Eugen Gomringer, Swiss father of literary concretism, emphasized Klaus Peter Dencker's role here[16]. Klaus Peter Dencker, clearly, took the path of opening the fuller field of mediality called "visual", while retaining and developing a concretist/constructivist rigor in his new broader practice. Despite how this is sometimes framed,[17] this was more a recovery than an advance. Visual poetry existed before and was wider than concretism. Concretism, by virtue of its rigor, brought the idea of visual poetry to a sharpness it had not achieved previously, and became relatively well known. But the practice it presented, to many as the only visual poetry out there, was a highly restricted practice. Going beyond concretism meant continuing with the potentials visual literary practice had brought into play with Apollinaire, El Lissitzky, Moholy-Nagy, Max Ernst, John Heartfield. It meant advancing in an engagement with contemporary media materialities along with other serious experimenters doing the same. While Klaus Peter Dencker stands out in the German-language context as the clear next step beyond concrete poetry, it is important to understand the field he was working in in relation to the already more visual Brazilian concretism of the 1960s and 70s, the Wiener Gruppe and Gerhard Rühm, in France the "poesie elementaire" movement of Julien Blaine and the extensive networks collected in his prodigious journal *DOC(K)S*,[18] and in Italy with the *poesia visiva* movement[19], whose media-critical visual language practice was particularly advanced.

The "more" of visual poetry

Having now this second volume of collected works, we see a whole career in answer to the question of what "more" was available to visual poetics, beyond the just words of verbal poetry or concretism. The field Klaus Peter Dencker not only opened, but worked prodigiously, remains sharply delimited in certain senses: he sticks (aside from his film work) to the page and to found print materials, and to a certain Swiss cleanliness and Constructivist flavoring in his page design. But decisive in his contribution is the range,

or volume, he opens in the field he lays out on pages. More than a style or a palette, the materials choice Klaus Peter Dencker makes is about coordinating and charging a space, setting up ranges of similarity and difference at the perceptual level, to leverage constructions of relation and blank at the semantic level. In particular we can observe the span between flat geometrical elements and implied volumetric and in-motion, body-based elements, and again between these corporeal symbols and the more or less visually simple letterforms of words. These spans, between flat-line and full-bodied and between body and word, are always stretched in his texts, as dimensions of a basic range in which he finds the language-nature of his visuals. Between these sets of poles lies the whole of the medial space open to a visual poetics based on the page.

What is gained in this medial range, activating poetic processes of construal in a broader medial encounter, is on the one hand the embedding of these processes in readerly modalities closer or more adequate to the inner experience of poetic search and inference, and more relevant to how thoughts are encountered and trasmitted in everyday media culture. I said before that raising the question of poetics in other media requires a phenomenology of reading in other media. Establishing a major oeuvre in another mediality, and developing a complexly inflected, poetic "language" system in that mediality, delivers that phenomenology as a reader experience. In every sense that made the linguistic experimentalism of the LANGUAGE poets a LANGUAGE poetry, the oeuvre Klaus Peter Dencker contributes witnesses to an intensive, sustained project of visual-linguistic investigation, making his just as clearly a VISUAL LANGUAGE poetry. We learn the syntax of visual attentional search as we make the effort of visual attentional search, and the semantics is what we encounter as meanings come to mind and interrelate on the basis of how we entrain things in our ongoing visual/mental uptake. The insight that language is transcendent to media, that mind is intermedial, that poetic is a phenomenon of experience transcendent to the language that triggers it, and the discovery of new worlds of literary effect in visual materials taken for the full richness of their syntactic impact and semantic import, all these are delivered in the reading experience of a visual poetry constructed to these dimensions.

Another thing gained, to bring this to an end where there is no period, is precisely the dimension most unavailable for articulation in printed verbal text. The body as a regular node in the cross-lingual circuits Klaus Peter Dencker composes for us to read, mixing with words, inflects the language-reception experience with a felt dimension absent in strictly verbal, or even most graphical, deliveries. Languages differ from one another in part according to how they wire their semantics. Words connect to their meanings via dictionaries, with a grammar to set the rules for encoding and decoding. Visuals pass through resemblance, imaging, to invoke meanings as recognitions, plus the inflection that comes of their integration in a complex field or series. This is the basic opposition. The body triggers viscerally.

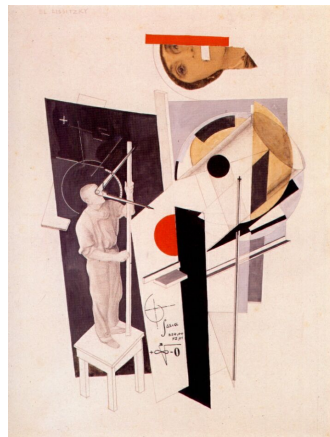Figure 6: "Schoolgirls' Dream"1924

Figure 7: El Lissitzky, "Tatlin at Work" 1921

Figure 8: Andrew Topel, "COMIX - harnessing the power of language" 2015

The graphic force of body forms in Klaus Peter Dencker's works, which we can place in a strong tradition from the beginnings of photomontage to recent work using digital tools, presents a conundrum to a theorizing of the linguistic nature and function of visual materials. Their mode of signification, included in a textuality intermixed with words, other images and abstract geometric graphics, gaps a span conventional linguistics would view as ungappable. At one end they approximate the abstraction of linguistic signs, entering an expressive plane with them to take on language-like functions in a read text, and at the other they suggest the phenomenality of a real perceived presence standing outside the text, a full body, intimating a perception that would potentally include all dimensions. The "H" formation in Moholoy-Nagy's humorous and elegant

"Schoolgirls' Dream" from 1924 is a great example. On the one hand it asserts a unitary lexical sign function based on conformity to a system of letter forms, on the other it projects a manifold human presence with very specific and charged bodily import.

The valence of angle or tilt, a dimension Klaus Peter Dencker exploits exhaustively as an articulatory device, helps us understand the weight and function of body signs in these texts. The tonality articulations of this sort deliver is received, we know from the science on mirror-neurons, via an empathy in the kinaesthetic imaging, an activation in one's own body of a matching sensation to complete the communicative circuit initiated in the sign. Its meaning at this level is a kinaesthetic activation in the reader, a recognition and re-firing of the tilt, posture or gesture as proprioceptive content projected into the object of perception. We saw this already in the attention study on the example from *Denkköpfe*, where an image-based recognition of head-posture established the proto-semantic spatial organization of the page. In his *LW Sequenz* (1996), the body plays a particularly muscular and vigorous role in the presentation of image and text materials. And in his elegiac series on the catastrophe of US Empire, *Dero ABECEDARIUS* (2001), body forms carry a tremendous pathos and tragedy, anticipating 9-11 in a dramaturgy of reaching, leaping, and falling from great height. Integrated into the resource base for articulation and inflection in a demonstrated visual poetry, this bodily dimension is a "more" that more than validates visual poetry as an expansive departure from conventional textual literature or concretism. This Klaus Peter Dencker has given us.

The beauty, thought and story that emerge in the actual reading is your own experience. Enjoy.

Conclusion – or, **So, do we have a visual poetry by now, or what?**

In the history of visual literacy and literarity, Klaus Peter Dencker plays a very special role. What he achieved, others had proposed. What others invented, he proved. He is part of a tradition which for most of its over 120 years of existence has been perceived as a short-lived phenomenon, whether because supposed to be brand new, or because believed eclipsed in a passed historical moment. Visual poetry has been invented so

many times since the 1890´s that it's hard to understand how it hasn't always existed. No one is better cut out to testify that it has than Klaus Peter Dencker. Well-precedented and far from alone in his field, Klaus Peter Dencker is nevertheless uniquely decisive in the history of visual poetry. Active with passionate *Konsequenz*, as German allows us to say, since the 1960's, he bridges everything you would need to bridge to establish once and for all visual poetry as a gapless, solid, constant multi-stream current and literary-historical development of obvious significance. His continuity/consistency has bequeathed us an oeuvre of indisputable girth, length and density. The question of a convincing corpus has been answered. Volume One of this two-volume collected works would have sufficed for this. Volume Two greatly expands the answer.

The consistency of practice this second volume adds further testifimony to, supplies the basis for a technical poetics as detailed and generative as any verbal poetics. The sustainedness of his chosen medium, the recognisability of his text-image practice as a linguistic activity, gives us as solid an object of study as we could want for examining the critical phenomenon behind this hypothesis, this wager, visual language, for visual poetry. In steady steps back through Wiener Gruppe, Concretism, Dada collage, Bauhaus, Constructivist photomontage, Klaus Peter Dencker connects us to the root of visual language as an aesthetic project and visual literature as a progressive (counter-)cultural ambition. Even just taken on his own, independently of the rich traditions and movements in which his work is embedded, Klaus Peter Dencker constitutes a full-bodied corpus and tradition for visual poetry. Re-embedded, or re-mixed on the worktable of visual poetry history – which no one has done more to document and demonstrate than he – he enriches the thicket of visual poetic practice with a tremendous growth and flourishing. With the publication of this second volume of Klaus Peter Dencker's collected works, visual poetry can at last rest, pretty assured of its existence.

Notes

[1] Adrian Pilkington, *Poetic Effects: A Relevance Theory Perspective* (John Benhamins Publishing, 2000).

[2] E.g. Marjorie Perloff, *The Poetics of Indeterminacy: from Rimabud to Cage* (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1999).

[3] This poetics has a classic history of elucidations: for example Mallarmé's "Préface" to *Un coup de dés* (Paris 1897), Paul Klee's *Das denkende Auge* , Gyorgy Kepes' *Language of Vision* (1947), and Franz Mon's "Zur Poesie der Fläche" (1963).

[4] Black and white in the test because it simplifies the stimulus, but primarily because in the early 2000's that's all there was visible in print (cf. *Visuelle Poesie,* Hrsg Eugen Gomringer 1996). Re-running the test with the color version in Volume One of the collected works, and comparing the results, would tell us precisely the impact of color on the direction of attention in reading these texts.

[5] Concerning the thematic concern of the Denkköpfe series, Klaus Peter Dencker writes:*"So ist die Visuelle Poesie, wie ich sie verstehe, neben dem kalkulierten Spiel, dem gegen die Tradition gerichteten Experiment und dem mit ihren Erfahrungen entwickelten künstlerischen Entwurf, neue Sensibilisationsprozesse einzuleiten, einerseits Spiegel und Antwort auf die Entwicklung der Medienlandschaft, auf die in diesem Jahrhundert besonders starke wechselseitige Befruchtung und Durchdringung der Künste. Anderseits ist sie eine Kunstform in der Entwicklung unserer Informations- und Kommunkationsgesellschaft, eine Kunstform, die im besonderen Maße auf neue Formen der Medien reagieren kann, eine literarische Form unabhängig vom Buch, die sich kreativ und innovativ in interaktive Kommunikationsmodellen einzubringen vermag."* Klaus Peter Dencker, *Visuelle Poesie* 1965-2005, Berlin: Kunstbibliothek/Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Preußischer Kulturbesitz, 2006, p. 197.

[6] Alan Prohm, *Visual Poetics: Meaning Space from Mallarmé to Metalheart*, Dissertation Stanford University, 2004. The essay, "Attention Tracking: Some Empiricism for a Visual Poetics" is a reworked chapter section dealing with this empirical test and the original methodology developed for it. The paper is available at https://alanprohm.files.wordpress.com/2013/08/attention-tracking-prohm.pdf

[7] "As we take, in fact, a general view of the wonderful stream of our consciousness, what strikes us first is this different pace of its parts. Like a bird's life, it seems to be made of an alternation of flights and perchings." (William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, New York: Henry Holt, 1890, Dover Edition 1950, p. 243)

[8] Steve McCaffery, *Prior to Meaning: The Protosemantic and Poetics*, Northwestern University Press, 2001.

[9] *ARAKAWA – UNDER CONSTRUCTION – Sequence & Progression*, Klaus Peter Dencker, Ahrensburg 2009. Klaus Peter Dencker's note on the text: "ARAKAWA – UNDER CONSTRUCTION, was made in 2009 as a work to honor the 85th birthday of Eugen Gomringer's in January 2010, and also at the request of Alan Prohm, for AG3: ONLINE – The Third International Arakawa and Gins: Architecture and Philosophy Conference, March 12-26, 2010 (Griffith University, Brisbane/Australia). Shusaku Arakawa had already in the early 60's produced a remarkable project, „The Mechansim of Meaning", as a Work in Progress, which in many of its elements came close to visual poetry."

[10] *AG3, 3rd International Arakawa and Gins Conference: Architecture and Philosophy* conference on the work of artists Arakawa and Gins, on-line 14-26 March 2010 at http://ag3.griffith.edu.au/ (currently offline).

[11] Arakawa and Madeline Gins, *The Mechanism of Meaning – work in progress (1963-1971,1978). Based on the method of Arakawa,* New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1979.

[12] Arakawa and Madeline Gins, *Pour ne pas mourir / To not to die*, Tr. François Rosso, Paris: Éditions La Différence, 1987, p. 10.

[13] Madeline Gins and Arakawa, *Architectural Body* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2002), p. 49.

[14] "From Literary Device to Architectural Procedure: on Arakawa and Gins and the Becoming-Architecture of Literary Method", forthcoming in Journal of Poetics Research at http://poeticsresearch.com, originally for *WritingPlace*, 2nd Int'l Conference on Architecture and Fiction, Dept't of Architecture, Technical University of Delft, Nov 2013.

[15] *Architectural Body*, p. xiv.

[16] *Visuelle Poesie eine Anthologie* Hrsg. Eugen Gomringer, Reklam, 1996.

[17] Including in 1992 by the poet himself: "From Concrete to Visual Poetry, with a Glance into the Electronic Future", published in translation on Thing.net

[18] About this journal and these networks, cf. Philipple Castellin, *DOC(K)S mode d'emploi: histoire, formes & sens des poésies expérimentales au Xxe siècle*, Paris: Al Dante, 2002.

[19] One strong statement of the totality claimed by poetics confronting media, visual and beyond, is Adriano Spatola's 1978 *Verso la poesia totale*, published in translation as *Toward Total Poetry*, Los Angeles: Otis Books, 2008.