

An American Gothic... or a Pound of Prevention

Manifest destiny: In "Excerpts from the Vancouver Lectures," Jack Spicer relates the story: Yeats, 1918, a train bound for Los Angeles. His wife in a trance, automatic writing, taking dictation from "spooks." Yeats poses the question: "What are you here for?" And the spooks reply: "We are here to give metaphors for your poetry."

Poetry, according to Ezra Pound in *The ABC of Reading*, is language concentrated, condensed. Pound postulates that poetry "is the most concentrated form of verbal expression." It is this metaphorical (or possibly malaphorical) condensation, this condensed cultural automatic writing, or dictation, that I strive for.

Throwing Apples at the Sun and *Eye Sling Shot Lions* are enhanced CDs that consist of integrated multimedia compositions of sound, images, poetry, and QuickTime movies. Each disc also contains 30 minutes of original music and spoken-word poetry.

The 1995 release of *Throwing Apples at the Sun* could best be typified by the substitution of referential density for narrative coherence. The linear logic of story telling gives way to the field of intertextuality and the beauty of sliding signification. With the release of *Eye Sling Shot Lions*, this impulse is extended and elaborated through the incorporation of a series of loosely structured micro-narratives. This confluence of overt referent and micro-narrative weaves an open text, mirroring the archetypal patterns in tragic poetry.

Both discs are the direct result of the semantic experimentation begun while I was at the Cranbrook Academy of Art. These early syntactic and formal explorations of typographic form, image, and music serve as the foundation for both discs. In the most basic thematic terms, both discs are attempts to construct meditations on power, religion, language, and culture through construction of computer "applications."

Utilizing Allegiant Technologies' Supercard allowed me to examine the idea of the work of art through the filter and language of a standard computer application. Specifically, the ability to easily adhere to Apple Computers' human interface guidelines allowed for an interesting semantic slippage between the language of the "application" and the language of the artwork proper. I involved myself in the process of mapping upon this desktop terrain, with its familiar menus, windows, and dialog boxes, a series of home movies, poetic sound fragments, typographic experiments, photo-montages, and spoken word texts. During the construction process, there was a constant interplay between intent and a sense of natural wholistic growth.

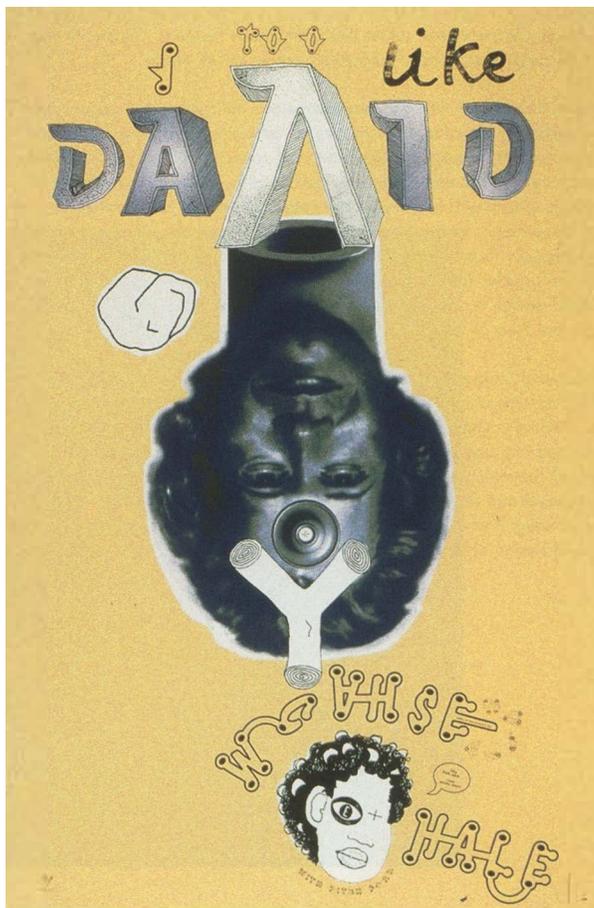
The formal construction of both pieces, and the thrust of all of my work, has been based upon a series of related concepts dealing specifically with macro-procedure. On a macro-procedural level, we may, with a little effort, reduce all creative acts down to a two-step process consisting of analysis and synthesis. Obviously, this process may be extended with the introduction of numerous other processes, including analysis, selection, definition, ideation, implementation, and evaluation. And while this collection of processes represents an abstraction of the actual physiological creative process, it is this "mapping" that allows us to begin to understand the complex, non-linear, and interrelated acts that comprise all creative endeavors.

The first phase of construction for both discs, could most easily be categorized as the creation of individual, traditional media that was informed by their respective disciplines. For instance, during the creation of the fonts for *Throwing Apples at the Sun*, typographic tradition, history, and formal principals were examined in a semi-rigorous analytical phase, only to yield to a synthetic phase that dealt primarily with cultural association and marginalized typographic forms. The second phase was typified by hybrid processes. For instance, pieces of music were written, composed, and constructed utilizing some of the primary principles of digital video editing, or utilizing ideas borrowed from photography. This phase yielded typography constructed as poetry, prose generated as if it were music, and video edited with an intimate awareness of haiku. The

third and final phase of design and construction continued to blur the distinction between the media. At this point, the design and construction process became extremely wholistic, kinetic, and organic. Disparate media were brought into the authoring environment, and the process of finding commonalities and themes began.

As in traditional Western music composition, theme gave way to modulation and finally recapitulation. As in non-traditional Western music composition (rap), flow, rupture, and looping structures were emphasized. As in traditional English composition, the four master tropes of figurative language – metaphor, synecdoche, metonymy, and irony – were articulated. And as in the Russian Formalist movement, the process of "defamiliarization," or strange making, was a primary focus.

Throwing Apples at the Sun and *Eye Sling Shot Lions* have given me the opportunity to involve myself in a process of over-simplification or mapping. I have made maps of the varied terrain of self expression. I have attempted to rigorously approach and understand the fundamental principals underlying different artistic disciplines and then use the rules, not be used by them. I strive to see the big picture, to understand the method and means by which a human being can express something deeply personal. *Throwing Apples at the Sun* and *Eye Sling Shot Lions* represent these honest attempts.



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