



An article by:

Enzo Minarelli

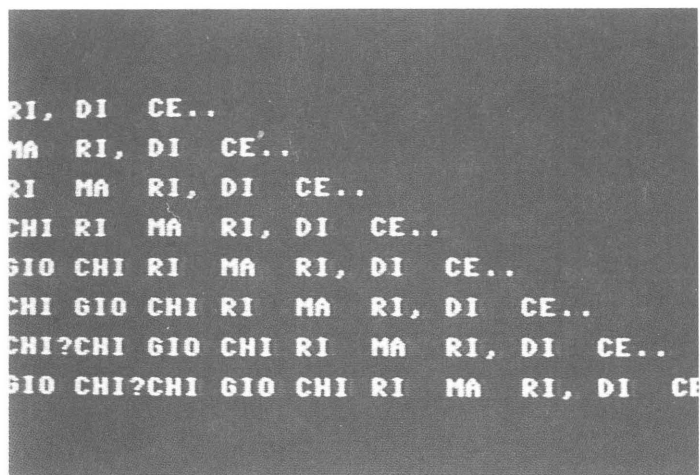
Translations from Italian
by Harry Polkinhorn
Visible Language, 27.4
Enzo Minarelli, pp. 422-435
© *Visible Language*, 1993
Rhode Island School of Design
Providence, RI 02903

Italian Visual Poetry

With less than ten years before the century's end, anyone who looks objectively at the panorama of Italian poetic experimentation sees that it is still in the process of tentatively affirming the role of the historical groups. This cornucopia is now open to attack by whoever lays claim to the rights of primogeniture. Another twenty years have passed, yet *poesia visiva* (visual poetry) continues to be practiced, thus defining writing as symbiotic or new, even by the aficionados of concrete poetry of the Brazilian stamp.



Ugo Carrega
Attorna elle poesia?
Round the Poetry?



| **Antonello Ricci**, *Offerta verbale*, Verbal Offer

Faithful kamikazes, the proto-poets have continued to use little of the selfsame originary order (only recently a Milan show has placed the accent on the lyric qualities of the word in the verbal-iconic binomial, making the scale dip whereas it was thought to have been balanced). Such defense, not to say diffusion, of the primary origins of a contemporary visual poetry has not stopped a rapid development of the idea: a show-census kept at the Della Grazia Archive in Milan a year ago registered another hundred visual poets. This large group (one could define it as “epi-gonic”) exhibits the very worst tendencies to which facile practitioners of visual poetry are prone — they contaminate style, mix signs — one tries too hard to upset, another to improvise. Nothing fresh is added. Instead all we have are the expected self-promotions on the part of the herd. Such a “thickening of the margins” through over-population has only achieved a wider diffusion of their mediocre products. This is positive only if we look at all poetry as a test for the democracy of the masses.

VERISMO

...enti, che...zavano di capi
 ...ingere la p... non era inganno,
 ...contro la r... ahimé serenamente
 ...nessa a caso o... più o meno ma
 ...di verismo ill... ciò che conti
 ...anche oggi.

Ma noi ci limitiamo a stimolare la r...
 ...one, oltre i fr... in correnti, sulle div...
 ...talora grandi... si che senza esitazione
 ...uniscono... medesima etichetta.

...cinnia e l'ir... in trappole. Certo
 ...certati di... ironismi che, trall...
 ...adano scarpe vecchie, come quei di m...

...di recente ha delimito l'esteta...
 ...ngli, «genio dell'*ekfrasis*», come se

...solo un descrittore dannunziano, è
 ...attore, certo peculiare, del format...

...tradotto nelle *équivalences* di una t...
 ...moderna di ascendenza baudelair...

...rica come *artifex additus artificij*, più
 ...ome iperrealismo materiale: chiari di lun...

...na cultura che pure è del numero dei più
 ...za meraviglia, ma paradossalmente è cred...

...presentata come «avanguardia» senza ave...
 ...re la sclerosi irrimediabile delle formule

...Incapaci queste di... qualità ed o
 ...naltà dei fenomeni... abusivamente

...Leonardo nei suoi disegni di anatomia e di
 ... non fa *trompe-l'oeil*, opera un passag...

...sua scoperta e proprietà che apr...
 ...ivamente scientifica — che lo pu...

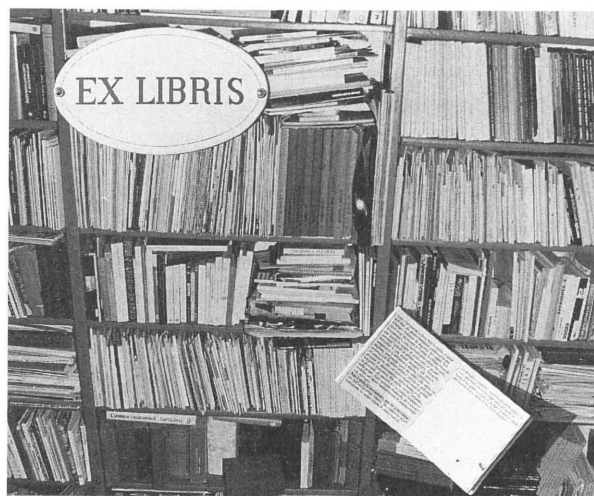
...l'osservatore un'immagine...

Labels
 PIGNOTTI

Lamberto Pignotti

Verismo

Verism



Eugene Miccini, *Ex Libris*, Ex Libris

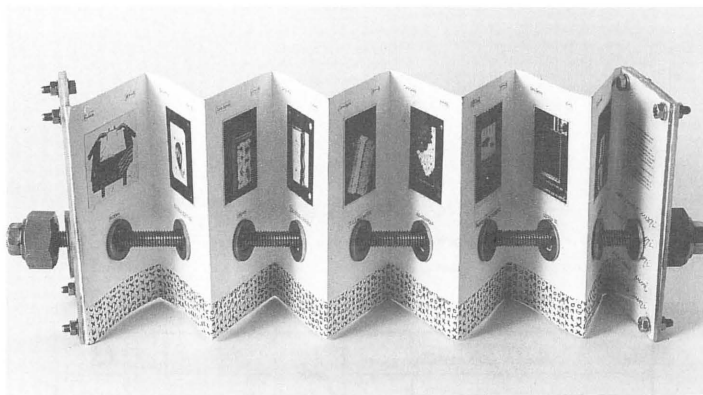
Yet, even though this assault is in progress, the movement appears to be stalling. Why? Because we have an almost total absence of a market, at first vainly branded as the evil of a somewhat bland capitalism. However, this market is long overdue to exercise some natural selection, even to the point of cleansing the movement of its defiling agents. Why? Because the critic-sponsor who baptized *poesia visiva* is unsuccessful. The consequent penetration of the art gallery is nothing but aestheticism, because the season of the great collective exhibitions of the 1970s is over, and half the 1980s coincided with the ascent of the Left to power in many regions and cities in Italy. The public entity is always a little loathe not to say reluctant to support poetic experimentation since if there is a marginal aura in the process of creation, a no-man's land, a kind of alternative organization of the "officialness" whereby personal initiatives are launched, one finds also an unbridled activism composed of self-promotion, even self-celebration, where quality counts less than money, managerial control less than aesthetics.



Let me stress here that these are odd, compressed fossils which lack a genuine criticism, forcing the poet to become his own editor. Lacking a gallery, the poet must also create his own showplace. Accumulations of work made under these circumstances are long in incubation. Each poet changes this sense of positivity, intent on the various alternatives although with an air of fatigue, but also waiting impatiently, shivering with frenzy.

The exhaustion of the verbal-iconic line is evident, at least in terms of the development still anchored on the page that does not disturb its basic rhythm. In the diverse shadings of the general definition of visual poetry, all of these matters of the rapport between word and image have always gone against "movement," or through permutation, addition or subtraction they have added to the body of the message, systematically translating the communication medium. Put otherwise, we have had enough of this sense of the physicality of the page, of this rectangular container, which is a kind of internment between empty and full space, between life and death. All this clearly refers to the European situation, while in the American, above all the Central and South American, with grave social tensions still unresolved, "visual" poetry retains its impact, it takes on a political weight and responsibility often to the detriment of poetic quality. Originally, Italian visual poetry also had an ideological or anti-publicity dimension. Its success can be seen in contemporary Italian graphic taste; indeed, historical visual poetry has continued to be much blamed for the imperialism of some of the preferred techniques of *poesia visiva*.

Perhaps only in Brazil has the phenomenon of concrete poetry known how to transform itself into a kind of "officialness" that was questioned in its early years. In each case, the ideological purpose manifested a dated heritage. True ideological purpose is that capacity to act in the depth of the structure created. Then poetry, experimental or of



Massimo Mori

Kata - logo from Codex

Kata - logo from Codex

whatever kind, becomes a blunt weapon. How many have really *read* poetry or *seen* an exhibition?

We are arriving at the end of a century that has produced much energy. Nothing remains but to train a searchlight on some inexplicably obscure wrinkle of history, reassessing some inexplicably muted suggestion and opening some narrow passageway towards the certainty of soon seeing the light again.

Videopoetry is currently “enlivening” the tired practice of Italian visual poetry with its active rapport between the poetic word and image in movement. Our future experiments depend on that poetic-televisual binomial. In the conception of those who consider it a necessity, videopoetry is attaining an indispensable urgency. The use of technology still makes the difference in research, but a technology undertaken without “poetic conscience” is nothing. Videopoetry is a phenomenon in growth; whatever the reason for its late development, what is important is its great capacity for the movement of images, the fascination of that video-

~~FENIX HOTEL~~

~~ROMA - VIALE GORIZIA N. 9 - TELEF. 850741~~

Sig. _____

App. N. _____

Mr. _____

Apt. N. _____

Mese		10	11	12	13
Appartamento - Apartment	4.500	4.500	4.500	4.500	4.500
Mezza pensione - Halfboard					
Prima colazione - Breakfast					
Colazione - Lunch					
Pranzo - Dinner					
Vivando alla carta - Meals à la carte					
Cantina - Cellar					
Acque minerali - Mineral Water		200	300	200	300
Caffetteria - Coffee or Tea - Oranged					
Bar					
Biancheria - Laundry - Dry cleaning					300
Telef. urbano - Local telephone calls					
Telefono interurbano - Long Distance telephone calls					
		, insieme			
		1.500			
Totale del giorno - Total for the day	4.500	5.120	4.820	4.820	5.120
Ripporto - Sum carried over		4.500	9.620	14.440	19.260
Pagamenti - Payments		9.620	14.440	19.260	24.380
Totale - Total					

pagate

Il _____

IMPOSTA SULL'ENTRATA
SODDISFATTA IN ASSORBITO



Stamp on the bill

Si prega saldare il conto il giorno della sua presentazione.
You are kindly asked to settle the bill the day of its issue.

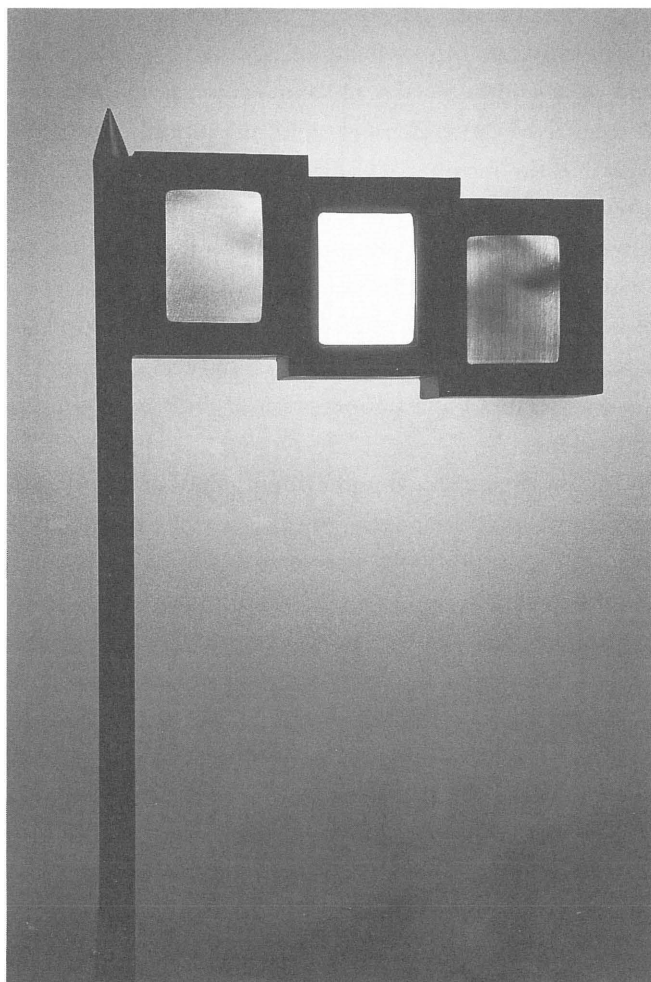
N° 11218

TOTALE - TOTAL

50
24.430

430

Luciano Ori
Insieme
Together



Enzo Minarelli

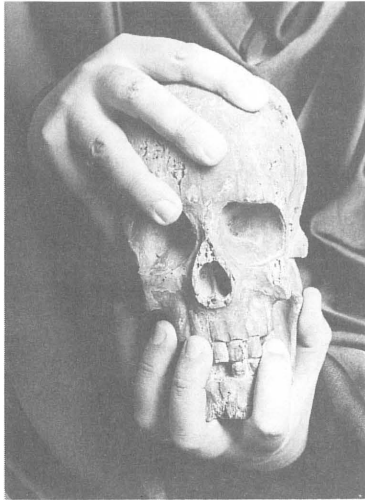
La bandiera

The Flag (sound poetry video installation)



page that continually changes, decking out in new dress the old instruments of visual poetry. Further, videopoetry becomes a kind of total poetic machine, and therefore finally the synaesthetic dream-reality of the futurists is achieved. In an "environment," videopoetry occupies an architectonic space, creating an interweaving of lights and monitors, of sound poetry and objective elements combining presence and absence of the same poet, amid the movements of the images and the movements of the mechanical constructions. Terms like "videopoetry" and "video-sound poetry" (the difference, in substance, is given by the sound stream that in the first case is a generally literal poetry, while in the second case it is a sound poem) refer to products of the most rigorous style, featuring a domination of the technical means subordinated to a higher conception of that visual-poetic development.

Given the expected and evident crises of the written word related to linear poetry, the poetic word now finds its ideal collocation in the live spectacle of sound poetry that is given as a para-dramatic intervention: this distinction is important because the theater (scene, diction, movements, plot) has nothing to do with that sound poetry which moves uneasily along narrative lines sustained by the virtuosity of the author, but rather on and within the phonetic physicality of the word itself. It is moved by an oral tide that operates at the level of the single phoneme, although it tends towards a significant phoneticism, an ambiguous conduct of the "voice" instrument liberated from constraints and conscious of every minimal tonality, every minimal rhythm. The voice is analyzed in all its components — phonetic "noise" — and a solid rapport is established with the technological apparatus, which thereby exceeds the potentiality of the unprocessed voice. Making constant reference to the musical score, the electronic medium pursues that impossible project of poetry, using the rhetorical apparatus as support.



Corrado Cicciarella

L'uomo folle, poesia in video
The Mad Man, videopoem

Sound poetry is now considered the threshold for future written poetry to cross; it presents a way to abandon the linear text that remains present only as a scheme of execution or poetic score, visual notation or trace. The poet must acquire a fine grasp of time in orality, the sense of duration or the weight of seconds and minutes. He must quickly understand the importance of the cut and use of montage. It is the magnetic tape, not the page, the microphone and not the typewriter that he explores.

Sound poetry's capacity to create dialogue, to attract and therefore to encompass, to pull in and to coagulate the contributions of the other media, to set out a protagonist's role is what counts. This is *polypoetry*, already theorized in the first years of the 1980s, and in reality much practiced, although many ignorant and unaware poets do not have the critical wherewithal to define the theoretical shape of it. *Polypoetry* is one of the rare innovations of the end of this century — it extends the already numerous and fruitful variations of body art, performance art and happenings.

By way of conclusion, I transcribe the *polypoetry* manifesto, which first appeared in the 1987 Valencia, Spain catalogue *Tramesa d'Art*:

1. Only the development of the new technology will show the advance of sound poetry: the electronic media and the computer are the true protagonists.

2. The "language" object must always be somewhat investigated at its minimal and maximal levels: the word, basal element of sound experimentation, assumes the connotations of multiple words, penetrates to the interior and turns outward to revivify. The word must be liberated to its polyvalent sonority.

3. The elaboration of sound does not admit limits, must be pushed further to the threshold of pure noise, a meaningful noise: sound ambiguity, whether linguistic or oral, has exploited the full instrumental apparatus of the mouth.

4. The recuperation of the sense of time (the minute, the second), outside of the canons of harmony and discord, because only montage is the true parameter of synthesis and equilibrium.

5. Language and rhythm, the tonal values, are real vectors of meaning: first the act of reasoning, then the act of feeling.

6. Polypoetry is conceived and realized through live spectacle, yet committed to sound poetry as the first given or point of departure for the creation of linkages with:

- musicality (accompanied or rhythmic line)
- mimicry, gesture, dance (interpretation or amplification or integration with the sound theme)
- images (television or slide, as association, explanation or redundancy or alternative)
- light and space
- costumes and objects.

Selected Resources

(organized by date)

Paolo Della Grazia et al. 1989.
*Archivio della Grazia di Nuova
Scrittura*. Milan: Mercato del
Sale.

AAVV. 1989.
VideoSoundPoetryFestival.
Ferrara: Sala Polivalente, Palazzo
dei Diamanti (catalogue).

Caruso, Luciano. 1989. *Far libro*.
Florence: Centro Di.

Barilli, Renato. 1984.
Informazione 60-80. Imola-
Piacenza: Edizioni die Comuni di
Imola e Piacenza.

Minarelli, Enzo. 1983.
3ViTrePAIR. (LP sound poetry
records). Edizioni di Polipoesia
Cento.

Minarelli, Enzo. 1982. *Visioni
Violazioni Vivisezioni*. Ferrara:
Edizioni del Comune di Bondeno.

Accame, Vincenzo. 1981. *Il segno
poetico*. Milan: Zarathustra
Edizioni-Spirali Edizioni.

Barilli, Renato. 1981. *Viaggio al
termine della parola*. Milan:
Feltrinelli.

Carrega, Ugo. 1980. *Scrittura
attiva*. Milan: Il Mercato del Sale.

Pignotti, L. and S. Stefanelli.
1980. *La scrittura verbo-visiva*.
Rome: L'Espresso.

Burnai, I. 1979. *Baobab*. (audio-
cassette of phonetic information).
Reggio Emilia: Elytra Edizioni.

Ori, Luciano. 1979. *La poesia
visiva* (1963-1979). Florence:
Vallecchi.

Barilli, Renato. 1978. *Parlare e
scrivere*. Macerata: La Nuova
Foglio.

Spatola, Adriano. 1978. *Verso la
poesia totale*. Turin: Paravia.

Barilli, Renato. 1979. *Parlare e
scrivere*. Macerata.

Ballerini, Luigi. 1975. *La piramide
capovolta*. Padua: Marsilio.

Eco, Umberto. 1968. *La struttura
assente*. Milan: Bompiani.

Pignotti, Lamberto. 1968.
*Istruzioni per l'uso degli ultimi
modelli di poesia*. Milan: Lericci.