



# **Simone Hine**

## **type**

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In its constant dialogue with words, visualisation makes it possible to read not only what words "mean" but also what they cannot convey without supplementation. It makes us see certain visual stimuli while reading; but it also, philosophically, makes us see something of the ways that we read the world.<sup>1</sup>

As I write this program, 'type', the work, exists for me only as an internal visualisation, not as a finished work installed in 'the farm'. 'type' has been described to me, in words, and parts of it have been shown to me, but its final appearance and effect must be imagined, envisioned. This is not, of course, uncommon. Programs, particularly where installation or performance art is concerned, are necessarily written before the exhibition is completed, before the author of the program sees it, even though such programs are generally ostensibly 'about' this unseen work. Quite simply, in order to write about an installed work before it is completed is to envision the work, through descriptions provided by the artist, personal expectations, and so on. As the viewer of 'type' reads the typed passages that inhabit two of the six boxes they become involved in, as with much reading, their own process of visualisation.

These elaborately constructed boxes, which one could imagine contain the personal effects of the lone feminine figure who appears fascinated by them as she wanders across a grassed field, instead, contain only varying images, in varying mediums, of the scene just described. The scene 'itself', the source of these images, remains absent, existing for the individual observer only in the unmapped terrain of the shifting ground constructed between the convergences and divergences of the boxes' contents; in an ephemeral space amongst the multiple layers of imagery presented a single scene may be envisioned in the mind of the viewer: a scene from which the images may be thought to derive, but which they have produced. The images in 'type' that make this process most explicit are the typed variations of the image, which, like all verbal descriptions, require a type of double vision on the behalf of the reader: as the visual print is read, another scene, invoked by this print, is visualised.<sup>2</sup> Standardised print is an important aspect of the conditions for such reading, producing a certain transparency in the visual image of the writing itself, as the unique pictorial qualities of handwriting are replaced by the generic sight/site of the printed page.<sup>3</sup>

It seems significant, however, that 'type' presents the process of typing, not just the result. With this move, vision is split once more: the reader visualises not just the words and the scenes described, but also the letters yet to come, the letters being typed as we read. The mechanical movement of the typewriter accentuates the physical construction of the signifier, the materiality

of the sign, blocking any simplistic move towards transparency in the word-images; as the image of the type is accentuated, it becomes more than just a transmitted 'meaning'. This aspect of 'type' is particularly apparent when, at one point, the type describes its own construction: "A mechanical typewriter imprints words onto a page [...]" In the work of Friedrich Kittler, the typewriter has a significant historical position in the development of contemporary theories of language. For Kittler, after the typewriter (which began to be mass produced in the 1860s), and its literal enactment of language as the manipulation of codes, writing can no longer be seen as the expression of an individual soul.<sup>4</sup> Extrapolating from Kittler, the work of Jacques Derrida, for example, becomes possible through the typewriter and the resulting separation of language from the controlling 'expression' of an author. Certainly the movement of *differance*, already implicit in the preceding discussion of the irreducible movement through which the viewer reads the imagery and constructs a scene, seems enacted in the processes of spacing, of memory and expectation, of retention and protention, that occurs as we watch the type unfold on the screen before us. The standardised type of the typewriter (in 'type') then, is ultimately not a simplification of the process of producing visions from words, but a complication of this. Like writing, all imagery relies on certain codes in its production and reception, it is always part of a history of representation through which the visual world becomes comprehensible, though the effects of these constructions remain unforeseeable and unknowable.

'type' moves between representations and objects, with the grass and boxes appearing as both images and as physical objects within the installation. In a sense, a version of the central scene, of the figure walking with a/the box is physically recreated in the space of the gallery. Though, the omnipresence of the sound (not emanating from any particular representation, but engulfing the installation as a whole) works to accentuate the artifice of the positioning of the objects in the gallery, as the viewer becomes immersed in another representation, rather than having any simplified access to some banal reality of the objects. Of course, there is one crucial element missing from this physical recreation of the scene: the figure. Instead of being carried in her hands, the boxes hover above the grass, supported by that most invisible of gallery objects, the plinth, here forced into visibility by the grass that surrounds it (just as this landscape, itself often an invisible background for scenes of human drama, is brought to the fore). Our vision is always disciplined, it does not exist outside of the historical and institutional contexts in which it operates, nor can it be located outside of the machines of sight that supplement it; vision is a constantly negotiated assemblage.<sup>5</sup> By drawing our eye to the margins of our vision, and by emphasising mediation and structures of representation, 'type' invites a consideration of this organisation of vision. The process of envisioning can often be instructive in such a consideration, as our processes of visualisation may betray a visual order disciplined by the machines of sight,

the codes and conventions of cinema for example, that it is inseparable from. When we fill in the gaps of writing to visualise a scene, or when our visual memory necessarily acts selectively in its recall of an image (a memory of 'type' itself, for example)<sup>6</sup>, this necessarily betrays something of our ways of seeing, but this constant process of envisioning also provides a space to re-visualise, to re-imagine the world in terms other than those given to us.<sup>7</sup>

**Kyle Weise**

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1. Peter Schwenger. Fantasm and Fiction: On Textual Envisioning. Cultural Memory in the Present. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1999. p.73.
2. ibid., pp.85, 99.
3. ibid., p.14.
4. Friedrich A. Kittler. "Gramophone, Film, Typewriter." Trans. Dorothea Von Mücke. Literature, Media, Information Systems. Critical Voices in Art, Theory and Culture. Amsterdam: G+B Arts International, 1997. p.43-45.
5. Jonathon Crary. Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century. October. Cambridge, MA: MIT P, 1992. John Johnston. "Machinic Vision." Critical Inquiry 26 (1999): 27-48.
6. Would the plinth have been included in a visual recollection of 'type', without the supplement of the program?
7. Schwenger, p.130

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