

TIM GAZE, *Glyphs of Uncertain Meaning* (Minneapolis: Post-Asemic Press, 2021)

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The volume *Glyphs of Uncertain Meaning*, authored by Tim Gaze, points out the great challenge of the contemporary times: what will be the future of individual imagination in the “civilisation of the image”?! Bearing a title that raises countless questions and possible meanings, immediately warning the reader about its contents, the book contains *glyph* compositions, in a plural palette of meanings. Seen as a writing art that tries to explore the potential of the letter as a component of the word, as an art located at a deeper level than that of the words, the *glyph* composition thus integrates itself into *asemic writing*, or the graphic line that resembles writing but that is, in fact, unreadable. By creating a universe of interpretation in a unique manner, the *glyphs* offered by Tim Gaze are graphic images made of unique combinations of the (sometimes calligraphic) black line on the white space, in constant surprising distortions. The combinatorial elements found in the *glyph* compositions in the book are, therefore, the black line / the black dot and the white space of the paper, in completely unfamiliar associations that at times seem to resemble, somewhat distantly and with a bit of effort, the motion of the graphic line in the world’s different types of writings: the Latin alphabet, the Chinese characters, the Hebrew, Arabic, Sanskrit scripts etc. By referencing the different writing systems, it is no coincidence that the author, in the creation of these glyphs, also used different writing instruments, like pens, pencils, marker pens, the Chinese brush with bottled ink, and the atomiser spray bottle with ink, according to his preface, which mentions that only the paper had been of a single type: ordinary white A4 sized office paper. Moreover, as Tim Gaze openly declares, the sources of... influence for his *glyph* compositions are: Henri Michaux, the Oriental calligraphy and, partially and indirectly, concrete poetry and visual poetry.

As a field of analogies, symmetries and contrapositions, the reading of the wordless figures proposed by *Glyphs of Uncertain Meaning* is transformed into a personal experience in the construction of the image and it is up to the reader to decipher the viewed *glyphs*, depending on their own cultural expectation horizon. At a quick glance, the graphic images seem to sometimes resemble a pensive human face, resting onto an inexistent hand (p. 28); other times they resemble a human facial expression during the act of speech (p. 71, p. 72), or a dance reduced to the pure gesture of the motion (p. 89), the... somewhat danced motion

seemingly recurring in a ballroom (p. 205), or a moon hanging from the sky (p. 108) or a flock of birds (p. 213) etc. All of these *glyph* compositions thus require the viewer to be able to focus visions, to think figuratively in a provocative asynchrony: the *glyph* compositions belong to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but are effortlessly reminiscent of cave paintings, of the time of proto-writing or of the time of the dispute – in a permanent peaceful rivalry – between painting and words, between the visual image and the verbal expression, the two means by which human beings try to explain the real, the un-real, the sur-real, the para-real...

As variations on a pre-established theme, upon a lingering gaze, these *glyph* compositions seem to settle into a puzzle that tries to reconstruct an original moment in the history of writing, from the desire to recover the early age of writing, when the visual image suffered a metamorphosis and went through different stages of verbal expression. A *glyph* composition from the final part of the book seems to bring together all of the writing systems of the world, making them meet inside a dizzying motion (p. 173), a meeting somewhat anticipated by the previous *glyphs* that recover either the line of the Chinese logograms, of the Japanese writing and of the Hangul Korean alphabet (p. 30), or the line of the Cuneiform writing, as a line of the origins of the Greek alphabet and the Latin alphabet (p. 33), or the line of the Arabic and Sanskrit calligraphies (p. 179), while the oldest writings known by humankind (Cuneiform and Chinese) also appear side by side in a surprising *glyph* (p. 36). As instantaneous improvisations in black and white, some *glyph* compositions can also be interpreted as intertextual references at the viewer's discretion. Thus, one *glyph* composition (p. 106) seems to resemble Constantin Brancusi's sculpture *Princess X* (1916) and others (p. 102, p. 102, p. 18) resemble Wassily Kandinsky's paintings *Several Circles* (1926), *Circles in a Circle* (1923), or his *Compositions* series (1913, 1923). In search of a pure form, Constantin Brancusi managed to renew the language and the artistic view in the contemporary sculpture, and Wassily Kandinsky, one of the pioneers of abstract art, endowed the geometric forms with the experience of emotion, both artists recognising the enormous latent power of the visual art. Reminiscent of an... artistic subconscious, Tim Gaze's *glyphs* recover the process through which the direct observation of the real world enters a process of abstraction which plays a decisive role both in visualisation and in the verbalisation of thought. A complex phenomenon, the visual image follows its own logic in order to reach an extra-individual consciousness that led to the emergence of writing (in all its versions), a rapid system for humans to connect and to choose between the infinite forms of the possible and the impossible. In other words, in accordance with the *glyph* compositions in the book, the visual imagination

seems to be defined as the visual part of one's own fantasy that precedes and that is simultaneous with the verbal imagination.

As minimal compositions, which, at times, are reminiscent of the single-character Japanese calligraphy, Tim Gaze's *glyph* compositions illustrate two universes, which I would call *the universe of black on white* and *the universe of white on black*. Regardless of the stylistic register to which they would be assigned, the *glyph* compositions from this book are variations on the same theme of black and white, which transpose the gesture of drawing and/or writing into act, in order to discover different possible meanings within these *improvisations* that had been left to the will of the... moment. Partially figurative, partially abstract, Tim Gaze's *glyph* compositions can, in the end, also be interpreted as a space of confluence for the cultures whose forms of cultural expression are completely different. Moving beyond the linguistic borders, the black line in motion on the white space of the paper develops an exciting act of creating meaning, an act that aims to recover a semantic continuity in a place where, apparently, only discontinuity can be glimpsed. The author ("an English-speaking Anglo-Celtic Australian man") follows a specific creed, made known to the reader in the preface of the book, namely the desire to transform the incomprehensible into an access way ("to reach for a form of expression which can communicate across cultures"), is successfully fulfilled by/through the present book ("My book could be seen as multicultural, or as part of a new, global culture") through the proposed type of graphic thinking: the clear line that bears a meaning hidden in an imaginary space.

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