

jetsam in the laminar flow and/or find the threads in redhats and/or litter a keyboard with milletseed so that exotic songbirds might tap out their odes to a nightingale and/or transcribe the letters pressed onto the platen when stalactites drip on the homerow keys and/or reconstruct the ruins of a bombed out capital i and/or reinvent the canonic works of western art as a series of roadsign glyphs and/or commission an artist to paint the large ass of marcel duchamp and/or use a dotmatrix printer to sound out a poem in which each line is a series of pauses whose length is determined by formatting codes and then record the squeal and lurch of the printhead moving across the paper and then replay the noise and then have it transcribed as chamber music for cello or voice and/or compose a text acknowledging that words are fourdimensional objects in spacetime and/or write an essay on the collected works of jane austen treating the text as a tour de force lipogram that never once makes use of any characters in the sinhalese alphabet

A N D O R

Isn't a construction a beginning of a thing like a seed? Isn't it a segment of a larger totality, like an elephant's tail? Isn't it something just about to emerge—not quite structured—never quite structured...like an unfinished church with a sky ceiling?

tapeworm /'tāp,wɜrml

noun

a long ribbonlike
body with many
segments that
can become
independent

Published on the occasion of *Tapeworm*, a collaborative exhibition based on Darren Wershler-Henry's text *The Tapeworm Foundry: andor the dangerous prevalence of imagination*, opening November 20, 2008 at the University of Pennsylvania.



This catalogue has been made possible by the generous co-sponsorship of the Penn English and Creative Writing Departments.

curator's introduction

by kaegan sparks

À l'infini

John Lennon once told a reporter, "Yoko got ideas like other people have diarrhea. It's like she's got diarrhea of the mind." It's true that ideas came to me like I was tuning into some radio from the sky. So I was always frustrated that I couldn't realize most of my ideas. But by instructionalizing my artwork I was, in effect, delegating the final outcome of it to others...now, I could just write instructions. It freed me.

- Yoko Ono ¹

The divorce of idea and production was a liberating impulse, an abrupt redefinition of the work of art that cultivated a collaborative spirit and sensitivity to whim—a culture fertile for the birth of Fluxus in the sixties. Reducing art to its mere mention in words suddenly rescued many a discarded brainchild, restoring it to a perpetual, public status as an abstract possibility open to re-appropriation. As Henry Martin articulates in his introduction to George Brecht's *Book of the Tumbler on Fire*, a 'heterospective' compilation of his own instruction works that he called an exhibition in book form:

"Music after all has little place for noise, literature little room for word salad, none of the sciences of the transmission of information are very tolerant to any of the forms of static. Fluxus, with a suitable disorder in its techniques, was a wild-goose chase in everything ephemeral." (p 18)

Likely cousins to this school of thought, Allison Knowles and Yoko Ono carried on the instruction-work vanguard with their respective event scores and instruction paintings, or "exchanged menus in the air."²

As with many other hallmarks of modern art, the instruction piece can be traced back to Marcel Duchamp. In 1919 he famously directed his sister to construct her own wedding gift by suspending a geometry text book from a balcony and leaving it to be tousled by the

curator's introduction

wind.² His notes titled “Speculations” included lists of phrases like “buy a dictionary and strike out all the words that can be stricken.” Duchamp is said to have commented: “These notes all had something in common: they were always written as an infinitive. ‘A l’infinitif’ means doing things, finally doing that, which I never did.”³ Like Ono, Duchamp was relieved to shift the creative process from hand to the mind, in all its infinite burgeoning.

In devising the syntax of an exhibition, a curator is allowed a curiously similar capacity to instruct and construct a system of his own. Presaged by Harald Szeemann’s 1969 show *When Attitudes Become Form*, the *Großausstellung* or “great exhibition” model has transformed curatorial praxis into a generative enterprise. Instead of arranging a preexisting palette, a top-bottom exhibition scheme allows an artist-curator to commission work according to a conceptual recipe. Hans Ulrich Obrist’s recent *do it!* project, an ongoing and expansive exhibition staged online, on television, in catalogue form and museums internationally, reinforces the notion of curator-as-instigator. The artworks constitute an evolving dialogue between artists producing and fulfilling sets of instructions, dispersing the curator’s architectural role and making him the activator of an organic system. Any exhibition of new work entails an element of chance in its composite, but here open formulae for individual pieces amplifies the indeterminacy—the synapse from phrase to substance is vast. What to make of an idea? It is precisely this provocative gamble that has made the notion of an embryonic, unrealized piece such a staple of twentieth century conceptual art.

Darren Wershler-Henry’s *The Tapeworm Foundry* inherits this historical vein in a text faithfully formulaic yet unusually compelling in its fruition: a single rambling, unpunctuated sequence of possible projects, ranging from quirky and absurd to highly ambiguous and allusive, all highly informed by the avant-garde of the twentieth century. *Tapeworm’s* fabric is pure prospectus. The mini-premises that comprise it, linked by the pulsating conjunction ‘and/or,’ compose a run-on rhizome of countless other projects.

Some of the schemes are mischievous and/or farcical (“compose a love poem called

curator's introduction

charged particles in which each line consists of a single word ending in the suffix ion...and/or take a cow that Damien Hirst has cut in half and then use it to make a squishier equivalent of a humongous potato print"). Some intimate a specific preexisting work, contemporary ("encode it in a helix of dna" – Christian Bök, *Xenotext Experiment*), or historical ("drift aimlessly through the streets of the city for days on end" – Situationist International). Some are more vague, often using "it" without an antecedent, leaving the notion open: "figure out a way to do it without metaphor," "write without your fingers blushing," "eclipse the differences."

Tapeworm as an exhibition challenges a group of artists to realize Wershler-Henry's language. Like performances of written music, each piece is simply one nuanced rendition of the general prescription. The text is less parameter than catalyst; contributors act not as blindly contracted executors but interpreters. While the thrill of the writing is in its fanciful possibilities, its actualization, in recruiting external energy to flesh out what the author did not, engenders a new dimension. *The Tapeworm Foundry* is self-sufficient on the page, and yet, as anyone who's stood before the field of delicate lead traces that comprise a Sol LeWitt wall work can testify, sometimes the impact of conceptual work lies indeed beyond the equation.

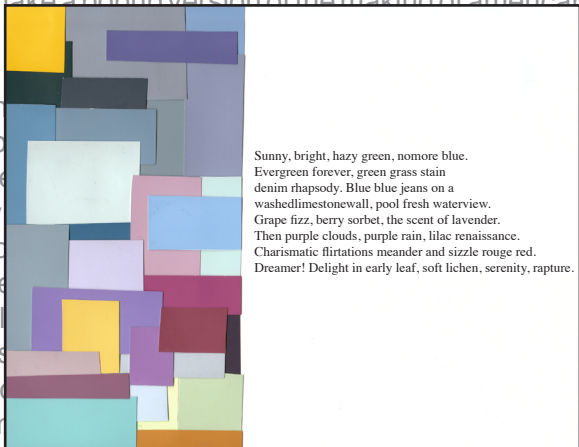
Of course, there is some tentative risk involved: is this defective reasoning—is the language medium a crucial constraint? One may doubt whether this conceptual pivot defeats the charge of the source piece, whether the very presence of the works dilutes the reading of their formulae. Will the pieces live up to their terms, or pale compared to the power of their suggestion? In describing *do it!* and its precursors, Bruce Altshuler highlights the provocation of a viewer's simultaneous "awareness both of what is and what might have been"⁴—it is precisely this clashing of imagination and product that sustains the exhibition. Furthermore, the work is never finished. As Wershler-Henry's subtitle and looping of text (the last term connects back to the beginning) seem to imply, instruction pieces provide an inexhaustible stimulus—the creative virus will live on.

grace ambrose

publish the results in a prominent medical journal and/or write a poem using only the names of paint swatches from a hardware store and then arrange the colours syntactically and/or make a pop-up version of the making of americans and/or plan

some actions for the grain of rice and then make it pointy and inhale by rolling a big snowball eventually form the poem made impossible by some one else's and/or naturally and/or make and/or write for a word term that he or she uses and/or connect the road place a completed m

and/or regret not having sported a suit the colour of an unripe lemon nor a red paper gendarme hat because alas one cannot think of everything and/or annotate a blank



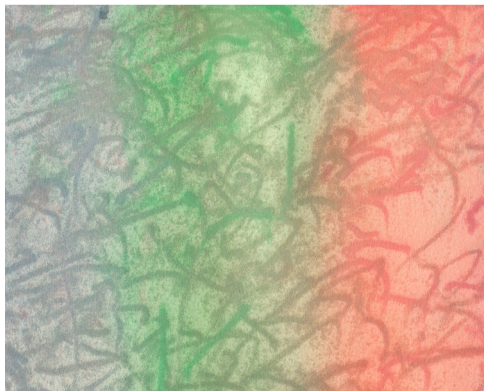
and then make living paintings by brushing samples onto glass sheets coated with agaragar andor write on yellowing velvet andor vomit alphaggetti onto the page as an homage to rob ert rau schenb erg and jubal brown andor title a story the fall of the ho people choose the art in a ba order i like yo that is these t gramm end of each line to the first word of the following line andor continue to consider yourself very likeable andor take a cow that damien hirst has cut in half and then use it to make a squishier equivalent of a humongous potato print andor work flat for a while andor do concrete poems in needlepoint andor write poems for your pets not



manya scheps

fucked up and or replace the stairways in a piranesi drawing with escalators and then sell it as a blue print for a goth shopping mall and or use some squirt guns to paint a water colour picture and or collect one subway transfer per minute for an hour at a


given subway station and or collect transfers for another hour or an hour from every subway station underground for days or even weeks and or are the sacrifices that we make when doing this stunt in teams in between the transfers and or use every word in your text and or put a sock in it and or write the other haiku that basho wrote for chrissakes and or write poetry and or novels and or observe for an hour in the wet soil of a luxemburg and or the undersides of elementary school desks encrusted with gum and or bolt it to a



here you collect transfers for another hour or an hour from every subway station underground for days or even weeks and or are the sacrifices that we make when doing this stunt in teams in between the transfers and or use every word in your text and or put a sock in it and or write the other haiku that basho wrote for chrissakes and or write poetry and or novels and or observe for an hour in the wet soil of a luxemburg and or the undersides of elementary school desks encrusted with gum and or bolt it to a

hibit the

scatological parody of a landscape painted with tea by milorad pavic and then entitle it a landscape tainted with pee and/or document what is going on in a room not necessarily but possibly the one that you might be occupying and/or write a novel that might have done in the year of his disappearance for nonexistent monuments found somewhere in the world but you know what i mean and/or illustrate that with a drawing and/or start a pataphysical software company and/or write a book that is distant and/or imagine a poem called ideas for poets



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arielle brousse

Why do people stare at you? What do they say? Do you care for your cuticles? Are you aware of vessels in the eye? Have we time for one? How do I open this? What do they use it for? Where is the odor of apricots? How do I unscrew it? Are we there yet? Which states have you been to? Which zone is this? Did professional sex force her to alter emotions? Do you opt for or against irrevocable acts? Can you make it hard? What does it taste like? Is it Kansas?

They are trying to know me without having to navigate themselves. They tell themselves what they want to hear. Mine are ragged like thorns. They are difficult to overlook when one looks through them. We have forty-five minutes to our name. Use the tab. They can be reused for pipes or armor. It is released with pressure. Counterclockwise to loosen. Location is relative. I am not well-traveled. This is Zone Three. Suppression is a form of alteration. All acts are irrevocable; our follow-up has infinite possibility. I can petrify it. There is a citrus bite. It is Kansas.

artie vierkant

The piece documents the development of an organic network amongst a group via structures imposed individually on each by physically displaced actors. Participants are placed in a room with access to paper, writing instruments, personal computers and text message-enabled cell phones. They are dictated instructions written by external actors according to a time-based algorithm decontextualized from a major social event: the 2008 election projections of four different media outlets. Each numerical value relates to a different simple task or provocation—written by an anonymous group contracted over the internet, Darren Wershler-Henry, and the artist—which the participant enacts until they are fed a new task (in relational real time, as the projected returns change). Taking cues from Oliver Herring's Task, Trisha Brown's exploration of structure and the commonplace, Oulipo, and John Conway's Game of Life these instructions create an architecture for emergent behavior through the complex interactions of simple rules.



Video and other materials can be found at writing.upenn.edu/wh/involved/series/art/

emotionally difficult questions with evasive answers and/or address the United Nations with your intentions and/or write an encyclopedic novel about a whale but maintain throughout that the whale is a fish not a mammal and/or write a series of haiku about Barrett Watson and Bruce Andrews and Lyn Hejinian but sign it using the pseudonym Lang Po and/or remove specificities and then convert to ambiguities and/or learn that paisleys are based on Hindu glyphs stolen from India by a clan of Scottish weavers and then think of an alternate history in which Indian castes not only develop a system of tartans but also compose ragas for duos consisting of bagpipe and sitar and/or type the words Dylan Thomas on a piece of paper but leave the paper on the roller and then submerge the entire typewriter in a solution of white alcohol calling the resulting object Underwood Milk and/or dial a number at random and then finagle your way into reading poems to the person who answers and/or pick some names out of the phone book and then enroll them in the book of the month club and/or author a sound poem consisting solely of noises made by a spindryer

Do not do this again
This is too weird
Pardon me?
No, thank you
I gotta go to the bathroom
I'm not really interested, hun
I'm having dinner
I'm the cleaning lady
You're speaking to Joe Blow

Maybe another night
I'm not interested in anything
I got something fryin'
Um, I'm the babysitter
K John, what you want.
No thanks
I'm watching a game
Not this evening
I'm dressin' my leg right now

Audio mp3s can be found at writing.upenn.edu/wh/involved/series/art/ pan sonnet on one of the little plastic paratroopers from a box of green army men and then throw the soldiers one by one from a balcony onto the audience below and/or write a

brooke palmieri

end of endlessness and/or stop going to class and/or let the birds out of the john cage and/or refuse to recreate your socalled system and/or write a book that consists solely of a very long title and/or tear the roof off and/or point out that you have more creativity in your pinky than all of this bourgeois merde and/or make famous poems more efficient by abstracting them into commercial catchphrases so that for paradise lost by milton you might say ive fallen and i cant get up and/or write poems

on the backs of stolen k
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and then dub this readin
it up to eleven and/or tra



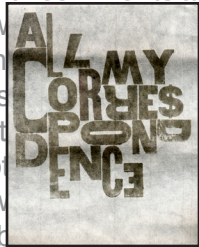
Further abstracting Milton's canonical "Paradise Lost" from its ten magisterial books (the literary establishment's required reading for cogent conversation at your next cocktail party, trolley ride, or Job Talk), this experiment posits a sociological theory of reading in just moments! In three easy steps tackle all forms of "literature!" Simply open up your g-mail account, e-mail yourself the title of the desired work, and consult the 'Sponsored Links' column on the right-hand extremity of your browser window for a list of slogans distilling your chosen text into its essential historical, anthropological, and literary merits.

it good and/or clog up subway
cars during rush hour with cumbersome objects such as bass cellos or packing

to see what the hell is causing all the goddamn noise andor write a treatise on the
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or bearbaiter or bodyservant or carnival geek or surgeon or contact lensman or
elvis impersonator impersonator or fudgepacker or ghoul or hangman or hayward**



robin mcdowell

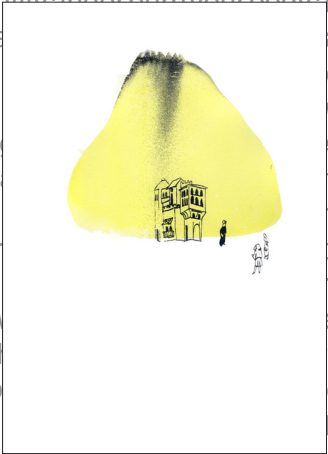


page with comments and quotations on postit notes and then annotate the postit notes with words of different colors and sizes. When you run out of words, you can use words from other books and discover new words and meanings. This is a vast world of words and meanings that underlies works of art and literature. You can replace collage with words from other books in uppercase and lowercase and then swap them out for a few of the same words. You can also replace them with the verbs from another book and make a huge paper boat from all your correspondence and then climb aboard to sail away and engage in unathorized pyrotechnic displays be they verbal or otherwise and attach them to the forks of your fork and stick them into the spokes and work against your better judgment and work as hard as you are because you are the one who has stolen the complete set of words with action photographs and statistics including number of publications and

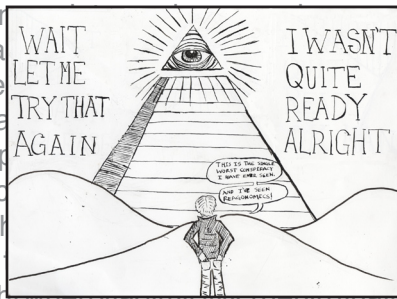
ink and then get a sharp pin and read it by giving yourself a prison tattoo of the text and/or move away from guns 'n' ammo and/or misunderstand the lyrics of popular songs in order to make them funnier or smarter so that in the former case you hear bob marley sing i shot the sheriff though i swear i was in silky pants but in the latter case you hear jon bon jovi choking on his beer and attempting to give himself a tracheotomy with the broken bottle and/or treat the author who is not armed to a little target practice and/or note the lack of seriousness in a camaro chasing after dozens of musical theatre castmembers and/or use a knife on the hood of your car to transcribe the most illegible photocopy of a text and/or think about it from a fighter jet's perspective for a change and/or obtain illicit copies of the passion considered as snuff film and then have your priest deliver them to your friends at the dungeon and/or spell it out in atoms at bikini atoll and/or knock the teeth out of anyone who won't write a more interesting list than this one and/or lease an abandoned church in order to reenact the demise of the members of mayhem but then burn down the church and perform their whole back catalog and/or make each letter in your text out of plastique placing all the letters that comprise a word onto the face of

sofie hodara

people to like what has happened to your writing and/or clog up commemorative brass plaques of your principled spell it and/or sentence space and/or copy bleed de force lipography and/or drive on record a drum and/or pack all in it for as long embed the real it when a per other authors parochial and testament as an act of hostility towards trinitarian values and/or luxuriate in the way that everything rubs up against everything else and/or devote your career to writing



the same way that you might have written on the edges of your highschool math book and then shuffle the pages before you bind them and or write haiku noting that stonehenge is actually a circle of big pi symbols made out of rock and or mass market it as if it is both obtainable by all and producible by all and or remove random keys from your typewriter before you begin to write and then forget which ones have been removed and or write with your head between your hands and or posit a novel in which a time traveller first appears at the denouement and then proceeds backwards to the beginning through a series of non sequiturs and or smoke your



ILLUMINATUS!



BICYCLE DAYS OF FUTURE PAST!

vladimir zykov

about them and or paint it on the soles of your shoes and then walk around while your shoes are still wet and or write a piece entitled nodes consisting of short homages to the letter n and or make people believe make believe people and or



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Leave sister a after I people a there.

There its. To

Text B

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The opening included a reading of Darren Wershler-Henry's *Tapeworm* and collaborative renditions of other *Tapeworm* phrases, including:

andor write each letter of a shakespearean sonnet on one of the little plastic paratroopers from a box of green army men and then throw the soldiers one by one from a balcony onto the audience below...andor cover a refrigerator with fridge magnets that spell out poems from the food section of tender buttons by Gertrude Stein and then fill the contents of the fridge with the corresponding comestibles...andor write it under the rims of coffee cups...andor operate a sidewalk fastfood cart whose menu consists of items drawn solely from the pages of the futurist cookbook by ft marinetti

and a temporary installation/performance based on "andor make a rhizome...andor stage a reading in a bathroom stall" by Cecilia Corrigan.

Special thanks to James LaMarre, Trisha Low, and the Kelly Writers House for their assistance with this exhibition.

Title page quote: Yoko Ono, "To the Wesleyan People," *Grapefruit*, unpaginated

Introduction notes

1 Yoko Ono, "Mix a building and the wind: An Interview of Yoko Ono by Hans Ulrich Obrist," www.e-flux.com/projects/do_it/notes/notes

2 Yoko Ono, "To the Wesleyan People," *Grapefruit*, unpaginated

3 Bruce Altshuler, "Art by Instruction and the Pre-History of *do it*," e-flux.com

4 Quoted in Hans Ulrich Obrist, "Some fragments on the history of do-it-yourself art," e-flux.com