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Poetry Editorial: Seeing Words

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Singing Apple Press

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Seeing Words

by

Camilla Nelson



glas-wen by Rhys Trimble

This is an issue of images: twenty poets explore how we see with and through words, in as many different ways. The roll call is long so I will try to be brief.

Allen Fisher's excerpts from *loggerheads* present image as text: to what extent can the formal arrangement of material be understood as poem? How can the lines generated by the interweave and overlay of wire, paper, and water be understood in terms of language? **Rhys Trimble's** work continues these meditations: how do words function as things (and vice versa) in this vision? Trimble's collages explore what is being viewed and how. His work reorients scale, asking us what our priorities are in reading: do we give the same attention to the foreground as we do to the background and what do these terms mean in reading writing? **Nancy Miller** presents another perspective, or several coalesced. Her work presents a palimpsest

of images overlaid where word contours make a map. **Brook Pearson's** words question the colonizing violence we engender through this imaging of space. Miller and Pearson's works implicate us as readers of maps in the (re)making of these territories. How we inhabit spaces continues to matter in representation. Inhabitation is given another dimension by **Mari-Lou Rowley's** video work. As viewers we are both inside and outside the frame. We are invited to share the subjective digital view whilst being physically removed (excluded) from the landscape Rowley's poem depicts. This disjuncture expresses a simultaneous alienness and belonging to these digital and physical landscapes.

Derek Beaulieu highlights punctuation as pathfinders in his pages. When all the words (or most) are removed, can we still find our way with only commas and question marks as our guide? Although this edition is specifically concerned with image many of these images are visual depictions of sounds. Beaulieu's work allows only the onomatopoeic words to persist. The brackets and full stops become a score: how do we see this music? **Fay Stevens** presents us with another form of sound score. Her words trace a walk in a way that takes us back to the journeying of Miller and Rowley's work: what marks do sounds make and how do we map them? **Karen Barton's** concrete poems continue this questioning, forming shapes from sounds, and **JR Carpenter's** text marks the spot where sound and silence interface online – how can we hear when the sound is turned off? – and so we inadvertently stumble across the paradox of the written word itself. **Andrew Taylor's** poetry is visual noise; the sound of the cityscapes is given to us in black and white as well as colour. **Matt Martin's** poster poem keeps us in the land of technicolour, conjuring a web of association out of water. **Elizabeth Godwin's** vigorous imagery maintains these colourful meditations: how are we able to bring colour to the mind's eye when we are blinded by black and white? This question of what is visible and invisible is further explored in **Scott Tarbuck's** poems. **Gary Barwin** visualises a language of beetles and **Tim Brennan** offers a poetics of fractured reflections.

Sarah Switzer presents us with a vista; **Harriet Fraser** offers us a view. Fraser's work positions us very concretely back in the landscape, reflecting on what it is to make marks in and on the land and who is licensed to make these marks when the land belongs to everyone. Where Fraser explores the material qualities of the view – what does it mean to inhabit a view? – **Lucy Burnett's** climate change poetics reorients us by way of language reform. What are the words we use to write about climate change and how can they be renewed/made strange in order to maintain their impact? How can we rework these words to guard against becoming blind to implicit ideology? **Reuben Woolley's** spatial rearrangement of syntax repositions us in relation to the written word once more. And finally we come to **Jaime Robles'** beautiful wax works: the material finally eludes us, the words vanish before our eyes; all that is solid, melts.

CAMILLA NELSON is a language artist, researcher and collaborator across a range of disciplines. Visit her website for more information: www.singingapplepress.com.