

## **s'pos )in( : delicious risk-taking for both artist and audience**

Every once in a while, there is a happening in the art world that catapults us into a heightened state and keeps us “wired” all through the night. The world premiere performance of **s'pos )in(** at the Oeno Gallery in Bloomfield, Ontario on August 18<sup>th</sup> was such an evening.

The sold-out audience was treated to the new text'painting composition performed by artist Alice Teichert accompanied by vocalist Alex Samaris and jazz bassist Bram Geilen.

**s'pos )in(** is a unique synthesis of language, music, and painting. Thirty-two panels, 58 x 46 cm (18”x 22”), of gorgeous text, handsomely framed, lined the gallery walls. These innovative experimentations with text on paper provide the musical score for a rhythmic performance using voice and one instrument. Black and white signs - apostrophes, curved vertical lines, parentheses, the spaces between letters and words, and between lines, the size of the font - are elements used to elicit a response and to direct the reading and performance. (For example, when words or letters overlap, there is the possibility for more than one performance voice or when the number of spaces between letters in a word increases, the tempo slows).

The title of the performance suggests casual musings, imaginings, experimentation, possibly riffs, as in jazz – on letters, words, phrases – a playfulness that appears on the pages in verbal jokes such as “mmm'eye tongue”, or transposed letters - HAT/ EAR/ HEART like an incoming breath coming from the top (HAT) to settle through an eye-curve via (EAR) into the HEART.

Art truly is a dialogue. Alice Teichert takes her place in a wave of artists returning to a space where art and the word, on the page or spoken, are not separate. Text'painting has been a part of her oeuvre since the beginning. **s'pos )in(** is drawn from her life's experience with music, text, and art.

I felt like a listener attending a premiere by the early John Cage or our own Murray Schafer, both innovators of non-conventional graphic notation, purposeful silences and soundscapes and influenced in turn by New York's *Fluxus* artists. I remembered too, the visual poetry and sound poems of Toronto poet, bpNichol and others Teichert knew in the 80's. (Nichol collaborated with artists around the world, among them, Murray Schafer and visual artist Barbara Caruso.)

Meaning is elusive. Alice Teichert's performance piece continues the modernist intention of exploding traditional ways of seeing and listening, of shaking things up and fragmenting the act of looking so that we must struggle to make things out. The words and letters of her text'paintings only make sense when viewed from a fresh perspective. She invites us to leave the familiar, to listen and see anew. It is definitely worth the risk.

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