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Preliminary Workshop Proposal 5/25/99

Text Electronic: Media as Performer & Publisher

part of the Art Is an Emergent Phenomenon series developed by Burning Books
for the Santa Fe Media Institute, Summer 2000

Original works of fiction and philosophy, previously “unpublished,” will converge with
new media, developed on the spot to explore innovative ways of distributing perceptions
and thought. Possible avenues for exploration include:

• multi-media performance
• gesturally stimulated writings
• movement as language innovator
• spatially enriched spoken word visualizations
• alternate approaches to “publishing” on the web, such as erasable digital tablets (with
  analog initiators), downloadable scrolls including voice emulators, and viewer-
  interactive holographic international “tele-grams.”

Writers, singers, semanticists, theorists, and software / hardware designers will work
together to expand non-linear and non-commercial avenues for verbal communication. In
the tradition of Homer (not Simpson) and Native American elders, myth and practical
wisdom might be effectively soft-wired into the human system through its sensory ports:
sight, sound, skin, enzymatics, and musculature. Two facts to explore: 1) emotions by
themselves create all the necessary glandular and metabolic changes that actions require
[William James, Principles of Psychology], and 2) languages, vocabularies, and
information -structuring patterns presage emergent phenomena [J. P. Crutchfield “Is
Anything Ever New? Considering Emergence”]. It may be true that the more words for
things the more ways to be; and art — chaos and order working together —
quintessentializes the concept of emergent phenomena.
Multi-lingual and multifarious, this workshop engages a variety of interpretations of “the code” [Woody Vasulka’s use of the word] to devise alternative approaches to an expanded notion of the encoding and decoding processes.

Invited participants to include:
Laurie Anderson, one-sentence novels,
Robert Ashley, avant-garde opera for television
Marghreta Cordero, waving the wand of electriccharisima
Paul De Marinis, low-tech / high effect “readable” installations
Kyle Gann, rhythm-based voice activators in composition
Marie Goyette, philosophical dances with samplers at hips and feet
George Lakoff, Cognitive Sciences, University of California – Berkeley, useful questions
Ana MacArthur, hologramatic texts generated by participants
Larry Polansky, chance-accessed texts with music hyper-strings
Laetitia Sonami, performance stories utilizing the digital “ladies glove”
Mark Trayle, macho-spiritual guitar automatism
and others to be announced, including distinguished workshop designers from 1999
Joan La Barbara, James Crutchfield, Steina Vasulka, and David Dunn.

Workshop designer is writer / bookmaker Melody Sumner Carnahan, M.F.A. graduate (Center for Contemporary Music) from Mills College who has worked with electronic music composers and performers for twenty years, including Robert Ashley, John Cage, and Yoko Ono. She has created texts that formed the basis for award-winning works, including the compilation audiocompact disc (The Time Is Now, Independent Publishers Award Finalist, Unabridged Audiobooks, 1999); performances (Laetitia Somani, Has/Had, Honorary Prize, Ars Electronica, 1997), and films (Laetitia Somani, What Happened, Juror’s Prize, Black Maria Festival, 1995). Originating editor of Burning Books, she has published over thirty short works in magazines and anthologies, and has three books in print. She has received acknowledgments for her work from the National Endowment for the Arts, the California Arts Council, and Tamarack Foundation. Charles Shere, the Tribune, wrote, “There have been few precendents to this kind of sustained avant-garde literature with a moving, human content.” Kyle Gann, the Village Voice, recently described Carnahan’s work as “the most musical prose since Gertrude Stein.”

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To read samples and reviews of Sumner Carnahan's writing, visit the website:
www.readsouthwest.com/bbooks.html