



WRITING ON WATER
WRITING ON AIR

POETRY INSTALLATIONS BY CLARK LUNBERRY
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH FLORIDA
THOMAS G. CARPENTER LIBRARY AND BEYOND

IN APPRECIATION

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POETRY INSTALLATIONS BY CLARK LUNBERRY

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH FLORIDA

THOMAS G. CARPENTER LIBRARY AND BEYOND

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Published by
University of North Florida
Thomas G. Carpenter Library

1 UNF Drive
Jacksonville, FL 32224

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ISBN: 978-0-9894660-1-1

(front cover)

Water On Water
2007

Thomas G. Carpenter Library
University of North Florida

(back cover)

Sensation
2011

Thomas G. Carpenter Library
University of North Florida





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Thomas G. Carpenter Library
and the lake at dusk.

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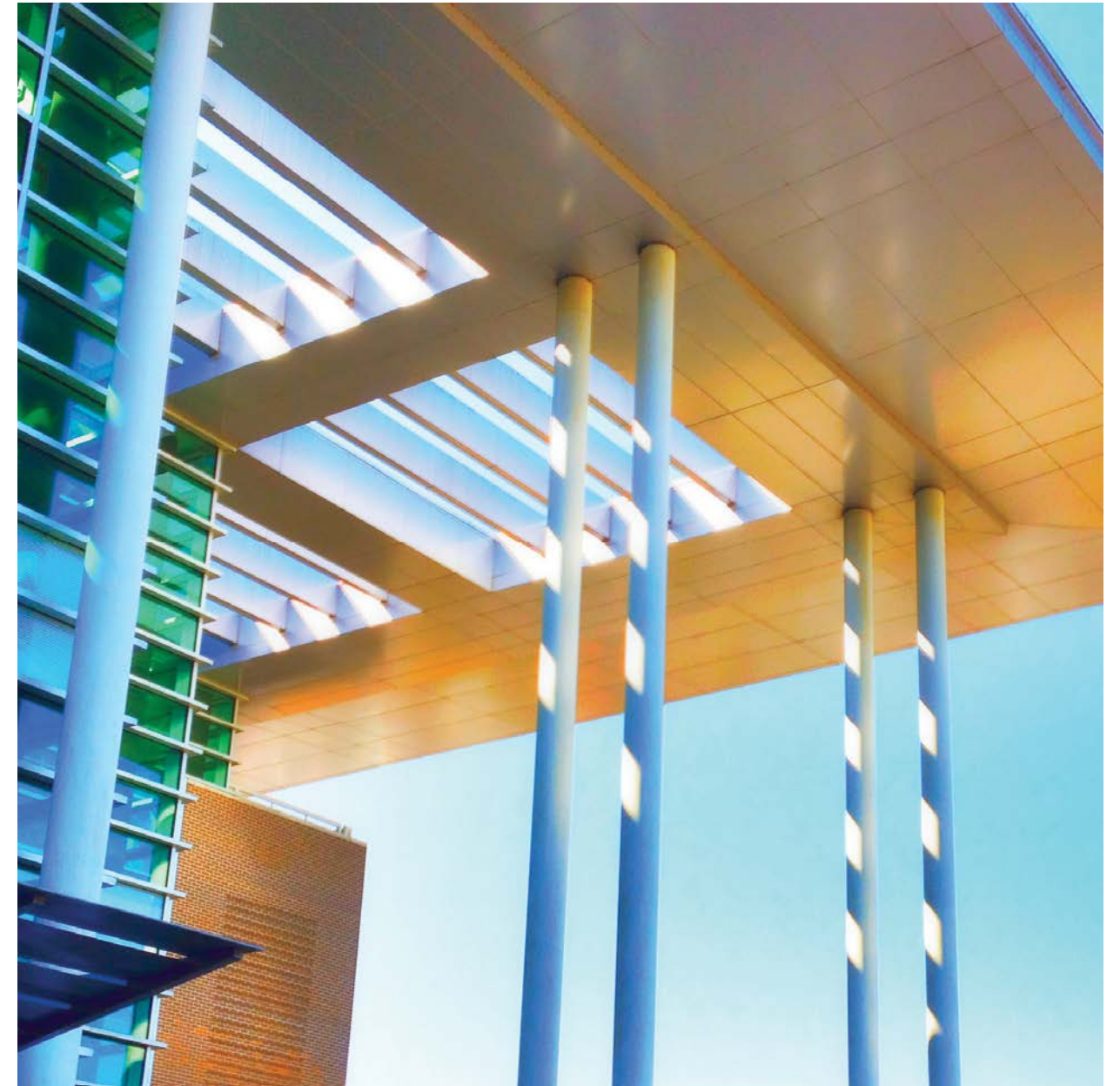
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The Thomas G. Carpenter Library

The Thomas G. Carpenter Library at the University of North Florida is named in honor of the University's founding president, Dr. Thomas Glenn Carpenter, who served for 11 years in that role. Construction began on the library building in 1978 and completed in 1980. In 2005, an expanded and renovated four-story building was opened to help address the University's growing student population and need for additional library services. The \$22.5 million project increased the building's footprint from 120,000 square feet to 199,000 square feet. In 2007, the American Institute of Architects, Jacksonville Chapter, recognized the building architects, Rink Design Partnership Inc., with an Award of Merit for their design of the UNF Library addition and renovation.

During 2014-2015 the library's first and second floor were renovated to create a Library Commons that offers an enhanced teaching and learning environment. The Commons fosters critical thinking, cultural growth and collaboration. The \$1.9 million project included new furniture and carpet, improved technologies, created tutoring spaces, and increased seating.

Mr. Andrew Farkas was the founding director of the UNF Library (1970-2007), which became the Thomas G. Carpenter Library in 1980. Dr. Shirley Hallblade, the first library dean, retired in 2013. Dee Baldwin served as interim dean until 2014. Dr. Elizabeth Curry is the current dean.



Creating Connections and Collaborations

Dr. Elizabeth Curry, Dean



A library is more than a place where books, magazines, and other materials are available for people to borrow. A library is a forum for new ideas, an escape to other worlds, a connection among different people and a place for personal growth. The library stimulates scholarship, creativity and shared knowledge.

This book documents a series of stellar projects that are examples of our commitment to collaboration and interdisciplinary learning at the Thomas G. Carpenter Library. The previous library dean, Dr. Shirley Hallblade, initially welcomed UNF English Professor Clark Lunberry's work into the library. When I became the library dean and discovered Lunberry's work extended internationally, I felt compelled to publish this collection. My hope is that readers will see the world through a different lens as they peruse the photos and text. I am grateful to Michael Boyles and Sam Kimball for their continued support of Clark Lunberry's work.

Lunberry's installations in the Library were tailored to our mission and our goals. The Thomas G. Carpenter Library supports the educational goals of the University by providing information resources and services that encourage study and learning, support instruction and academic programs, facilitate research and scholarship, and engage the university-at-large as well as the broader community. Our goals are characterized by a commitment to excellence, and relevance to the diverse needs of our constituents as we:

- advance the educational experiences of students and create opportunities for the lifelong learning skills;
- advance the strengths and scholarly engagement of the faculty;
- support the quality of academic programs at the University; and
- advance community outreach and partnerships.

Since the Library Commons opened in 2015 we have encouraged an even greater level of collaboration. The library has forged numerous partnerships including the Academic Center for Excellence's tutoring and supplemental instruction, the Writing Center's specialized assistance, the Athletic Department's study space, One Stop's orientation, UPD's Safe Stop, the ITS Help Desk and Library support for faculty through the Center for Instruction, Research and Technology. We have also partnered with the Art & Design Department with a sculpture competition that resulted in two extraordinary additions to our art collection. I look forward to many more collaborative projects in the future as the library continues to foster connections and creativity.



Writing on Water—A Dialogue

A. Samuel Kimball

— Inscribing clay tablets, prisms, terra cotta cylinders, tortoise shells, pottery, coins. Chiseling rocks, basalt slabs, pillars, headstones. Carving into wood. Writing on papyrus and parchment. Pressing movable type onto paper. Texting on a smart phone. Typing on a virtual keyboard. Pinging the cosmos with radio waves in search of extraterrestrial minds. In a world of electronic writing into the Cloud, why not on water?

— Why not. And yet, to what end? The text describing the first installation imagines someone asking: “But what does it mean? What’s it meant to mean?”

— When I took some students to the first installation, one exclaimed: “That’s pretty cool even if I don’t know why.” A second replied: “It’s a puzzle. The words describe themselves. They form a sentence that refers to something that turns out to be the sentence itself.” A third suggested that “It’s like Magritte’s pipe.” She was referring to the Belgian surrealist’s famous painting with the words, “*Ceci n’est pas une pipe,*” carefully handwritten, below the image. The image of the pipe, of course, is not a pipe but a representation of one.

— So in the installation, the word “water” is not the water. But without quotation marks, it becomes water on water...

— The letters that spell the word float on what the word names.

— Likewise the phrase “water on water.”

— What is more, when it rains or when the wind stirs the pond, water falls on or ripples over the words, so that it is then the water itself that is on the word “water” that is on the water...

— And the point?

— We think we know the difference between words and the things to which they refer. If we wanted to smoke a pipe, we would not try to light up an image of a pipe. But how often do we confuse our words with what we think they name, forget to put quotation marks around our words to distinguish them from their referents? What happens when we believe our statements to be accurate descriptions of others and the world rather than to be projections of what we wish or fear? When we swear at someone out of anger, don't we think the target of our hard feelings really is what we are calling this person? Do we remind ourselves that our representation of someone who infuriates us is not the same as the flesh and blood person, and that our curse reduces the person to something less than he or she really is?

The Futurist dream of an “unequivocal and unambiguous” connection between word and world to the contrary, there is a gap, a distance, a barrier between “water” and water (*agua, eau, Wasser...*). The word does not quite touch the thing itself: as the second installation suggests language, the “murmur of words,” thereby wounds and is itself wounded.

— Adam in Garden of Eden before the Fall gave each aspect of the world its proper name, yes?

— Like God touching his index finger to Adam's (the bodily basis of indication and, in grammar, of the indicative mood), as if teaching Adam to name the world.

— Before the first sin, before the shame that led Adam and Eve to cover themselves, hide from God...

— ... and lie. On the second day of the creation, having previously brought light to the “formless void and darkness” that covered the face of the deep, God made a dome and commanded that “it separate the waters from the waters,” as if there were a time when words were as transparent as the water that covered the cosmos. But after the Fall, words are wounded.

— And wounding.

— A provocative implication of Lunberry's work, beginning with “Water on Water,” thus water separated from

water (a faint intimation that Adam and Eve will be separated from Eden). Like Magritte’s painting, this installation minds the difference between language as statement of fact and language as performance, between language that describes how the world is and language that projects our desire for how we want the world to be or to be like. Don’t we find much political discourse misleading, partial, dishonest, defensive, or offensive — the objectionable language always being someone else’s? And don’t we denounce the other’s denunciation of our language? When it comes to politics, aren’t we wounded and wounding in the course of playing the language game for keeps, forgetting that our words are not Adam’s before the Fall?

In exile from Eden, Adam had to toil, Eve to suffer the pangs of childbirth, their labor and language constituting the murmur of archetypal wounds. Henceforth language divides humans, leaving us to suffer in the isolation of our first-person consciousness.

— Murmur translates the babble that erupts when the biblical tower collapses?

— Aren’t the words floating on the water outside the library a visual echo of the Babel-like soundtrack playing inside the library? A continuous recording of individual voices reading aloud what they had been reading silently, the resulting “sound-collage” interrupts the expositions, the arguments, the explanations, the narrative trajectories — in short, the meaning or purpose — of the books from which the students were reading.

— In the fifth installation, “No Such Thing,” the 12 battery-operated radios in the library tuned to different stations are similarly self-interfering.

— The library’s volumes are not of one mind. The murmuring voices of the sound-collage and the collectively mis-attuned radio voices bespeak the multiplicity of booked voices that libraries archive, including voices that have waged war against one another, that have enslaved their enemies, that have perpetrated crimes against humanity. Thus might a murmur of words also include a murmur of suffering the memory of which libraries preserve and yet conceal in the very peace and quiet that these structures provide.

Libraries keep the voluminous secrets of countless words dying to be read. Don’t the unreadable number of books, straight-jacketed on row after row of shelves, beckon to us as whispered invitations, ghostly commands, disembodied pleas: “Read me!” “No. Read me instead!” “What about me? Don’t neglect me!” “Keep my memory!” “And mine! Keep my words alive, please!” Who can walk through a library without an apprehension of how little one will have read before one’s own voice, merging into the murmuring to which this installation bears witness, becomes water on water?

— A bleak prospect.

— And yet Emily Dickinson turned the prospect of disappearing into a paradoxical poetic self-affirmation.

Thus does C. L.’s sixth installation, “Bodies of Water: Somebody — Nobody (for E.D.),” repeat E.D.’s two

questions: “I’m Nobody! Who are you?” and “Are you — Nobody — too?”

— Why?

— Because they translate Socrates’ imperative — “Know Thyself.” How are we to do that? We are to turn our eyes from the self we see ourselves to be to the act of seeing this self, regarding this self, asking how it feels to be this self. Narcissus looks into the water and loses himself in his own reflection, thereby rejecting Echo, who then disappears into her mimic words, the murmuring wound of a nobody that will not heal. But if, with E.D., we could learn to see through ourselves, by means of but beyond ourselves, perhaps we could find a way to the other side of the wounding, isolating murmur to which C.L.’s installations draw our eyes.

— How so?

— In “Nature,” Ralph Waldo Emerson reflects on his experience in terms that the water, trees, and sky of C.L.’s fourth installation recall. Beneath the sky and among the trees, Emerson says, “I feel that nothing can befall me in life . . . no calamity (leaving me my eyes), which nature cannot repair.” In the wound-relieving reverie that follows, Emerson imagines himself “standing on the bare ground,” his head “uplifted into infinite space,” he is no longer a self-naming somebody: “all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing” as “the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me.” Emerson’s is an experience that Lunberry’s installation “Floating Form Less” envisions: “in liquid light,” “a liquid sight,”

even “a violent sight” in the fear of eyes stricken by an unnamed “calamity,” and finally a “remembrance”: “The lover of nature is he, whose inward and outward senses are still truly adjusted to each other; who has retained the spirit of infancy even into the era of manhood,” Emerson writes.

On the other side of woundedness, language can make happen something that is nothing less than miraculous, something bound to the “spirit of infancy.”

— What do you mean?

— I believe that Lunberry’s projects harken back to feelings a child might be imagined to have had upon learning that it can name the world. Most children, of course, learn words as sounds and acquire their mother tongue as speech. Some children, however, learn words differently — for example, as the changing motion and configuration of fingers. I am thinking of those who are deaf — in particular, of Helen Keller, who learned words as a kind of writing with, through, and by means of water. Blind and deaf at 19 months, Helen Keller at six discovered that things have names when she felt in one hand her teacher’s same finger-gestures over and over and in the other a pump’s flowing water. Out of the blue Helen Keller’s world exploded into a previously unimaginable order and coherence as she grasped (at) something shocking, something invisible, something she had not known she had not known and that would precipitate her out of her isolation and into a communicative rapport — with her yard, her home, her family, other people, herself, and words. She suddenly felt, held, and otherwise caught the water and

the strange signifying movements of another person's fingers and in that instant recognized that water could be named, that the name could be spelled, that its letters could be used to write other words, countless words, and that each and every word could be shared without the thing it names having to be present.

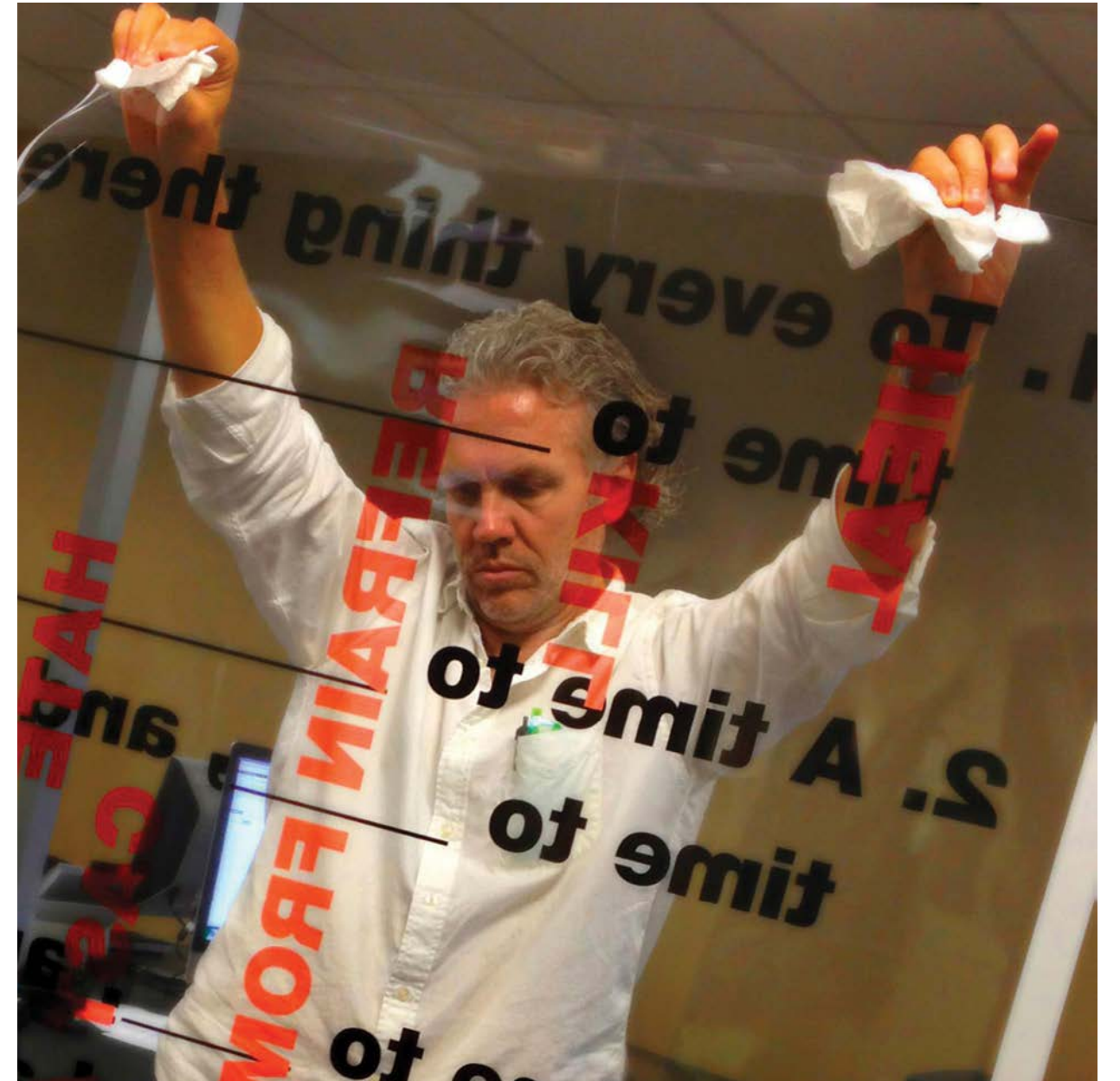
— A baptism into the life of language?

— Yes, and into the woundedness that language causes and relieves, inflicts and atones for. Therein does Lunberry's work invite viewers to apprehend something miraculous about the ability of our species to symbolize, to communicate at a distance, to bridge some of the differences between the privacy of one mind and another, to cooperate, to write on water or in the air, and in doing so to pray. Lunberry's work thus touches on something about language in general and writing in particular concerning the way — a way at least, a beautiful way — to reverence.

— So be it.

— So be it.

▶
Clark Lunberry preparing materials for an installation.



Seeing in Time, Reading in Motion

Clark Lunberry

NOTHING...

WILL HAVE TAKEN PLACE...

BUT PLACE...

— Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898), *Un Coup de Dés*

Instead of asking the more familiar and time-honored question of what is a poem, a better, more fitting one might now be: *where* is a poem, and *when*? For poetic language, set loose, no longer necessarily settles solely into the kinds of solutions once fixedly bound in books, printed on published paper, but today — whether we like it or not — floats fluidly, promiscuously even, into an ether of more ephemeral, fragile form, while offering a rich and unsettling disorder of now new, and newly mediated, beginnings.

From such thoughts of a poem's place and time, a poem's form and formlessness, several years ago I began creating at and around UNF's Thomas G. Carpenter Library what came to be called Writing On Water / Writing On Air poetry installations. With the vital assistance of students, colleagues and friends, I placed poems on the pond

in front of the library and, later, inside the Library's stairway windows overlooking that pond. These UNF projects have since led directly to various installations at sites around the world, with recent projects completed in Paris, France; Durham, England; Toronto, Canada; Tokyo and Hiroshima, Japan; and at Stanford University.

These short-term and site-specific installations first began, almost accidentally, as part of a course that I was teaching at UNF on visual and concrete poetry. One day, speaking of alternative sites and surfaces for a poem, I asked the students, hypothetically and half-jokingly, "What if a poem were written on water?" Pausing, my students and I then began to wonder, "Yes, *what if*..." What if a poem were written in that way? What difference would it make if a poem's words were floating on a pond (instead of being printed on paper)? How would that poem's language — its actual material, its fluid message — be read and seen, thought about differently? And, importantly, how would such a writing on water even be done?

After much investigation into the many technical challenges arising from such an unusual endeavor, practical solutions for Writing On Water were eventually found, with each letter — around 7 feet x 7 feet — cut from thick plastic sheeting (bought in 100-foot rolls at a hardware store); these large letters were then, with the aid of a kayak, clipped with clothespins onto lines of twine that were tied to wooden stakes pounded into opposite shores of the pond. Following this procedure, the first installation, WATER ON WATER, was completed in the spring of 2007.



One of several locations for reading the UNF Writing On Water installations has always been within the Library's four-story stairwell, its tall stairway offering a dramatic "bird's eye view" onto the pond below. With the stairway's tall windows and its unique vantage very much in mind, later installations expanded to include a Writing On Air in which large words were printed onto sheets of transparency film and attached within the



window's metal frames. Once in place, the words on the windows were then seen, and seen through, in relation to the words simultaneously seen on the water. In kaleidoscopic motion, those walking up and down the library's stairs moved (like a passing cloud) through the poem, as the poem moved porously through them. Each particular arrangement of language gave way to another, and then to another, in temporary and contingent alignment to the readers' own floating movements through the stairway. Constituted and dissolved — in space, by time — the installations and their various readings were thus arranged and rearranged by the self-directed movements of those passing through them, with the *where* of the poems converging with the *when*, their time and place entangling.

In Stéphane Mallarmé's revolutionary poem *Un Coup de Dés (A Throw of the Dice)*, first published in 1897, the capitalized phrase "NOTHING / WILL HAVE TAKEN PLACE / BUT PLACE / EXCEPT / PERHAPS / A CONSTELLATION" is dispersed spatially, haphazardly, across several pages, its boldly printed words merging and mixing amongst other parts of the poem. UNF's Writing On Water / Writing On Air installations, with

their multiple (moving) vantage points, have incorporated within them a similar dispersion of a poem's particular time, of its particular place. For the words of these installations float ephemerally as a constellation upon the water's surface and upon the library's transparent windows, while several later installations have also included sound collages heard within the library's stairway or in its elevators and showcases.



As short-term installations, the words on the water and windows have long since vanished and are now no longer anywhere, "light/less" — "sight/less," having taken place as but fleeting formations of language. What remains of these projects is the remembrance of moments in time, moments that have been liquefied, liquidated, but which are nevertheless photographically recollected in this book. For something of these installations endures in the form of memory, and in their documenting images, photographic impressions that — eliding the poems' temporal and spatial dimensions, their animating breath of intended self-destruction — offer a limited afterlife of their own, like the trace of an event that otherwise has disappeared into thin air, or been erased by the waves of water.

WATER ON WATER

March 2007

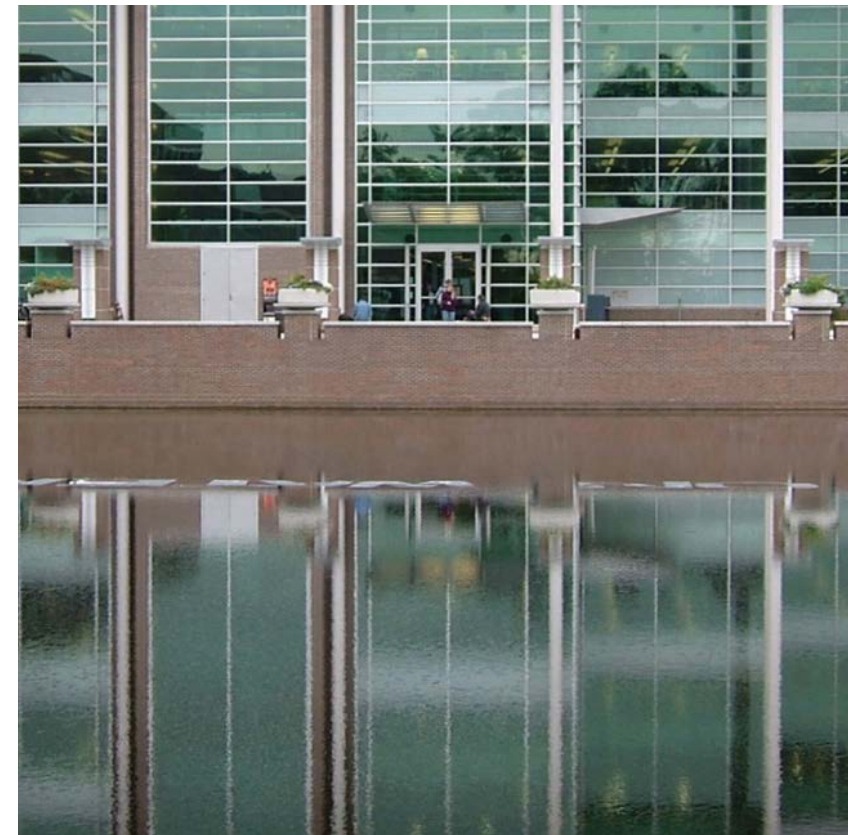
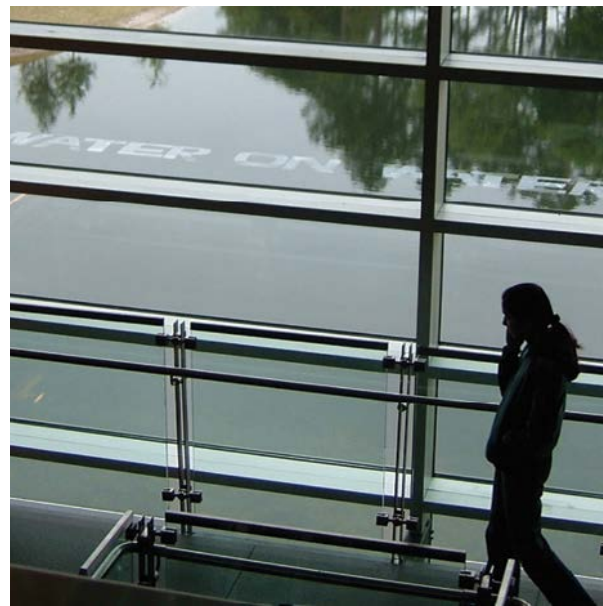


“With words-in-freedom we will have: Condensed metaphors. Telegraphic images. Maximum vibrations. Nodes of thought. Closed or open fans of movement. Compressed analogies. Color Balances. Dimensions, weights, measures, and the speed of sensations. The plunge of the essential word into the water of sensibility...”

— Filippo Marinetti, “Futurist Manifesto”

As if arising from out of nowhere or nothing, something about this simple line of language — WATER ON WATER — seemed, as an initiating gesture, immediately appropriate for the first installation in 2007. For these three words (or two, since one word — WATER — is repeated) somehow fulfilled the Futurist directive for “words-in-freedom,” and for that desired “[Node] of thought,” for “Compressed analog[y]... , plung[ing]...the essential word [OF WATER] into the WATER of sensibility...” After all, the words of this poem stated concisely and precisely *what it was* at the very moment that it was stating it: a *saying* of what was being seen (WATER), a *seeing* of what was being said (WATER), conjoined by its own literal, prepositional placement on water. The power of this poem was that, in all its isomorphic simplicity, its watery meaning was self-identical with its watery appearance, unequivocal and unambivalent. And if, looking out onto the words on the water one day, someone were to ask (as someone inevitably would), “But what does it mean? What’s it meant to mean?,” all one would have to do is point to the pond, to the thing itself floating on the water, an extended index finger silently directed to those “essential” words, as the succinct, the self-sufficient response, of X equaling X, water equaling water, equaling WATER ON WATER.





MURMUR
OF WORDS

MURMUR
OF WOUNDS

April 2006



“Let me roll in my wounds, through the heavy air and the sea; in my pains, through the silence of water and the harmful air; in the tortures which jeer at me, through their fiendish and billowy silence.”

— Arthur Rimbaud

During the first week of this second installation, the words on the water read simply: “MURMUR OF WORDS.” Then, for the second week, the piece was discreetly adjusted to read: “MURMUR OF WOUNDS” — the “R” removed from “WORDS,” a “U” and an “N” secretly added, creating in the change a subtle if forceful shift in tone and message.

Heard in the four-story stairwell of the library — its tall windows facing directly onto the words on the pond — there was an accompanying sound-collage composed of the recorded voices of 25 randomly selected library readers, all of them recording what they had been reading. Echoing throughout the stairway, the various voices were heard mingling into a murmur, while the poem on the pond was seen directly below (as if those words on the water were describing what was, at that very moment, being heard in the stairwell).

Like murmuring ghosts in the machine of the library’s own architecture, those many hidden voices thus created the curious effect of a liquid language invisibly inhabiting the space. At any one moment, three or four such voices could be heard simultaneously sounding throughout the stairway, their dense layerings entangled within the otherwise sonorous wave of words.



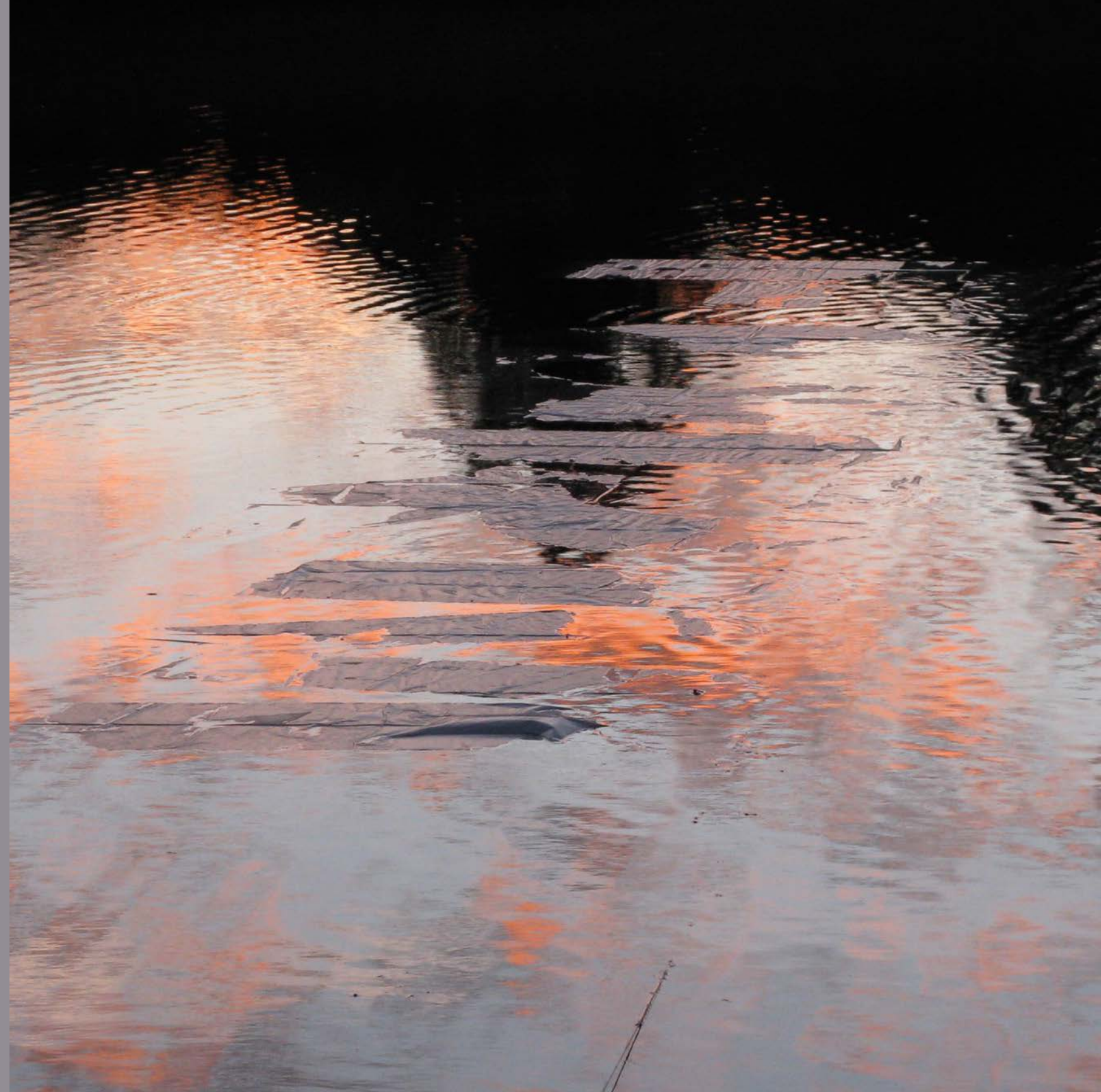


FLOATING

FORM

LESS

November 2009





The words FLOATING / FORM / LESS remained on the water for the duration of this third installation, while those on the various stories of the library's windows changed, reading when the installation began, IN LIQUID LIGHT / A VIOLENT SIGHT / REMEMBRANCE, shifting during the second week to A LIQUID SIGHT / IN VIOLET LIGHT / REMEMBRANCE.

Also, in the library's two main elevators, a recording was heard — hidden within clocks hanging on the elevators' walls — of people interviewed in front of the library describing the sights and sounds before them. While beneath each clock, affixed to a Mason jar, a living goldfish swam about, accompanying viewers on their rides through the building (the goldfish, a floating reminder of the pond just outside the building — its tiny eyes seeing us, seeing it). Through the muzak of language, the recorded words transported something of the sensual experience of being directly in front of the library into the confined (sarcophagal) space of the transporting elevators, transferring linguistically-described aspects of the library's open exterior — the people, the trees, the buildings, the water...the fish — into its contained, controlled interior.

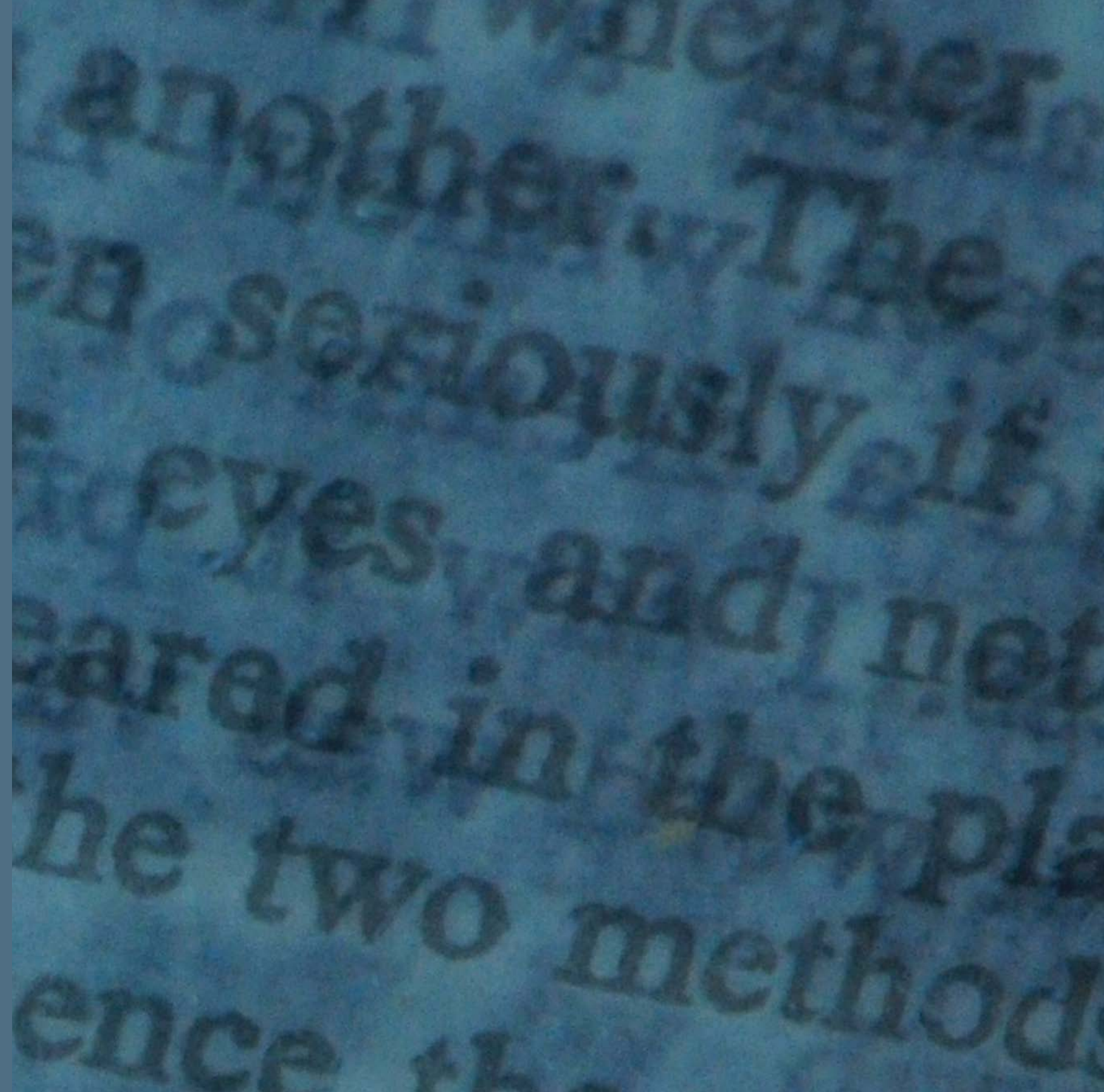
Finally, in the library's entryway showcases, ten goldfish (in ten separate goldfish bowls) swam about for the duration of the installation, their floating forms moving ceaselessly in the entryway's transitional space between inside and out, interior and exterior, with a printed picture of watery waves just behind them.





SENSATION:
WATER
TREES
SKY

March 2011



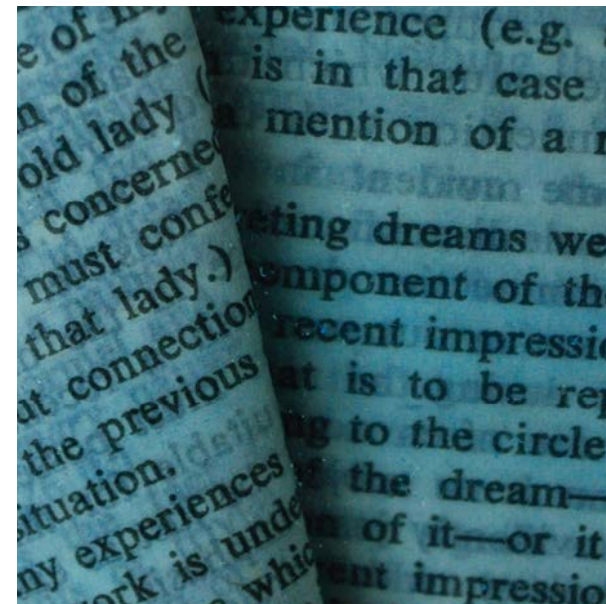
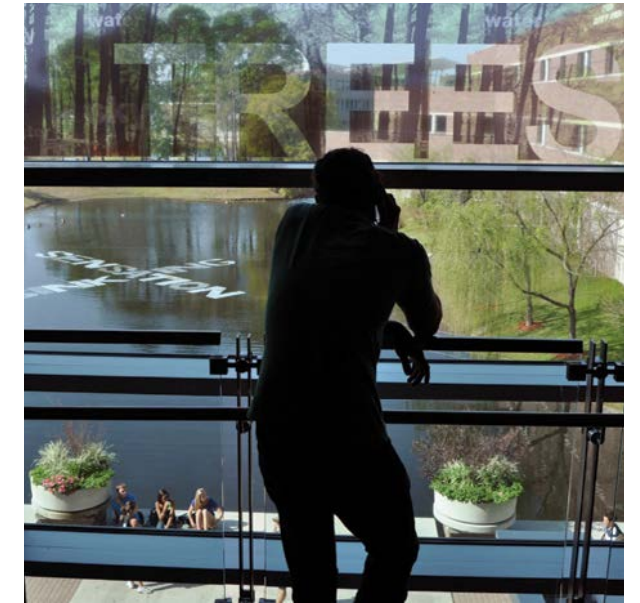
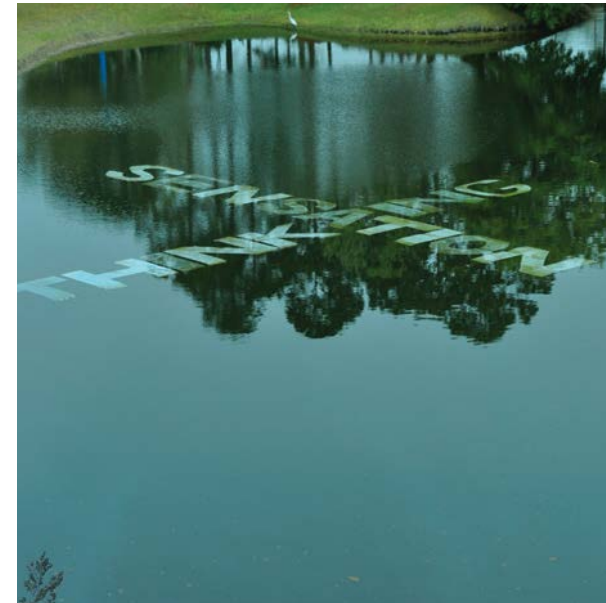


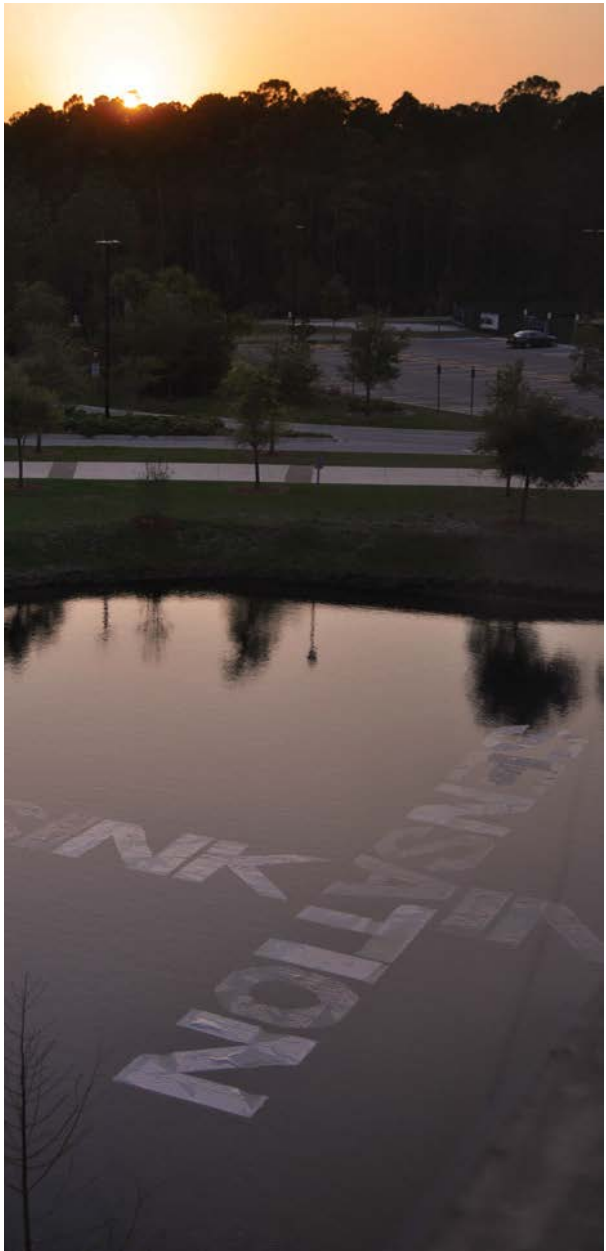
“Carried by light, / images remain // while sensation / is so evanescent // as to be always beyond / belief.”
 — Rae Armantrout, from “Outer”

Pond: During this first week, the intersecting words on the library’s pond read SINKING SENSATION; during the second week, with the S of SINKING changed to a TH, it became THINKING SENSATION; and, finally, during the third week, THINKING was removed, leaving SENSATION to float alone on the water.

Stairway: On the library’s windows, the word WATER was printed onto a transparent image of water; just above that, TREES was printed onto an image of trees (aligning with the trees outside); and at the top of the stairway SKY was on an image of a clouded sky. Heard throughout the stairway was a sound-collage of water splashing, geese squawking, and jets flying overhead, along with the constant noise of footsteps on stairs (creating the uncanny sensation of being followed as you moved up or down the steps).

Showcases: Books were stacked tightly together, arching around large glass jars, each with a single book immersed in water. All books in the first showcase had the word “water” somewhere in their titles; in the second, each had the word “trees”; while in the third, “sky” was in each of them. After a month in water, the three submerged books (by Freud; Cézanne; Breton) had severely decayed, revealing new arrangements of language in their varied de-compositions.





NO
SUCH
THING

March 2012

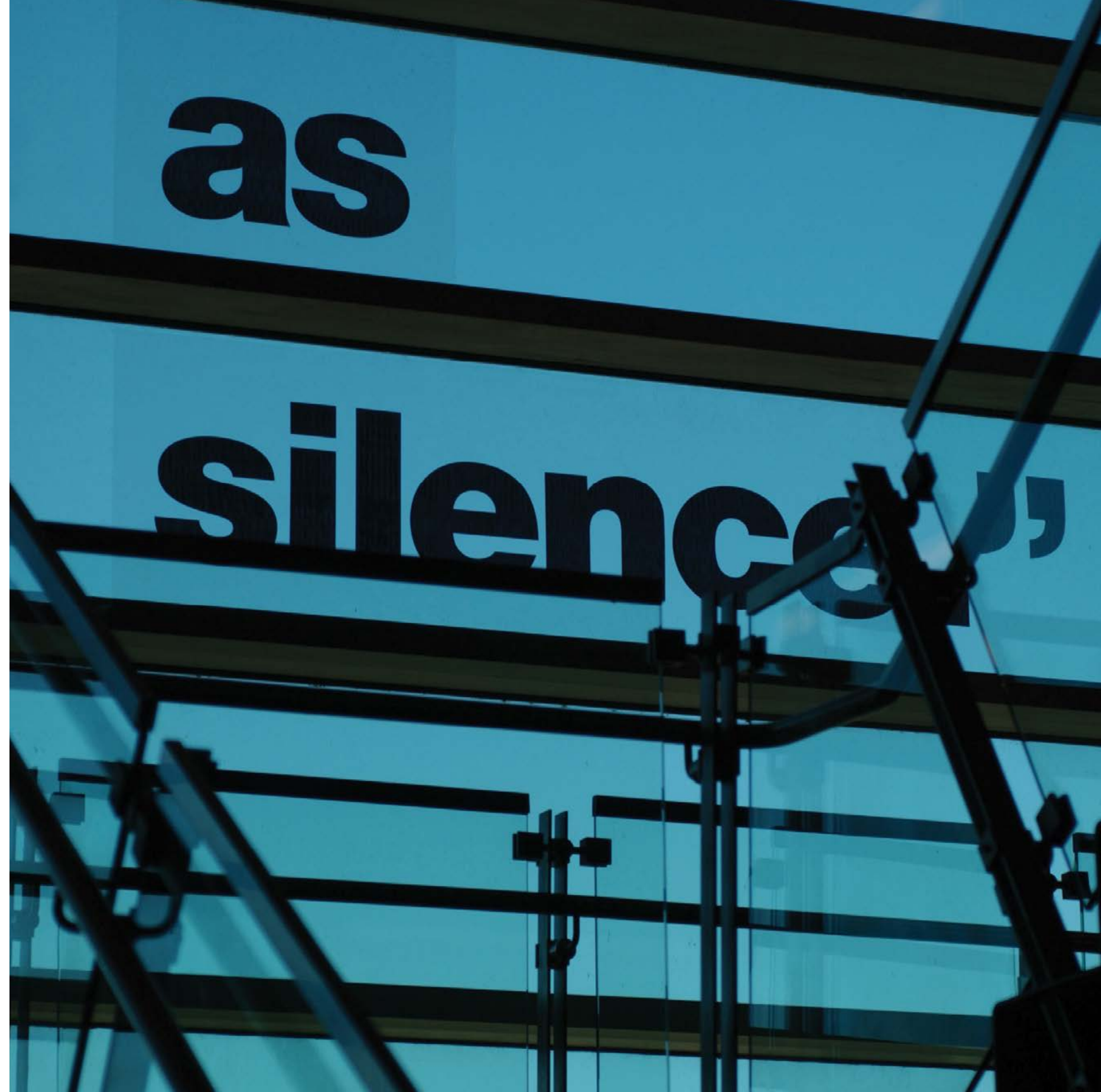




In conjunction with UNF's John Cage Festival celebrating the American composer's centenary, this installation was made up entirely of Cage's own words. On the pond, there was the large word SILENCE floating alone on the water. While on the library's windows, one read the words THERE IS between the first and second floors; above that, NO SUCH THING; and, at the top of the stairs, AS SILENCE. This line, "There is no such thing as silence," is one of Cage's most well-known, *and* most paradoxical. And with this installation, there was materialized something of Cage's evocatively mixed message, with the word SILENCE written largely, *loudly*, on the water, while the words on windows — the sentence only fully read if moving to the library's top floor — imparting a conflicting thought, one of denying silence: NO SUCH THING.

In the library's showcases, there was an accompanying display of 12 battery-operated radios arranged in a row (with Cage's face printed boldly behind). All of the radios were tuned to different stations and, entering the library, you could faintly hear their transmissions mixing together — of songs, of words... staticky signals and muffled voices — broadcasting behind the glass. Over time, one by one, the batteries died on each of the radios, the showcases gradually going silent.

The final event of this installation, its final *silencing*, was when the word SILENCE was unceremoniously pulled from the water, restoring the pond to its uninscribed condition, back to its silent surface.





BODIES OF WATER

March 2014





Weeks One and Two: On the library’s pond, parts of Emily Dickinson’s poem about being a “Nobody” were written on the water. The familiar words of that poem’s opening line — “I’m Nobody! Who are you?” — appeared to float upon the library’s pond, reflecting vividly in the light of day (yet disappearing entirely in the dark of night). While inside the library’s stairway, the first line of the poem’s second stanza — “How dreary – to be – Somebody!” — was also written, spatially staggered between the first floor to the fourth.

Weeks Three and Four: After two weeks, there was a pared-down revision of the words on the water, a new formation in which the original two-part question “I’m Nobody! Who are you?” was radically reduced, with just the single large words SOMEBODY and NOBODY made to intersect at the center of the pond. Inside the library, a similar reduction occurred, such that all that remained of the previous sentence were the two small words “to be –” suspended alone (as if into thin air). With this new arrangement, the words “to be –” were then seen in direct relation to the SOMEBODY | NOBODY intersecting on the pond, as bodies of water overlapping in motion, bodies of water crossing in time.

I’m Nobody! Who are you?
Are you – Nobody – too?
Then there’s a pair of us!
Don’t tell! they’d advertise – you know!

How dreary – to be – Somebody!
How public – like a Frog –
To tell one’s name – the livelong June –
To an admiring Bog!

— *Emily Dickinson*





The Uncomprehending Window

Paris, France

March 2010

*"I no longer see poetry but between the lines. It is no longer for me, it has never been for me, in books.
It drifts in the street, in the sky, in the dismal workshops, above the villages.
It hovers magisterially over life which, at times, disfigures it."
— Pierre Reverdy*

In conjunction with the John Ashbery in Paris Conference, Writing On Air poems were installed directly onto the eight windows of the conference room at the *Institut Charles V – Université Paris Diderot*, in Paris. For this project, various fragments of Ashbery's own poetry (from his Paris period, ca. 1955-1965) were used, locating within them references to windows, to the air and sky, to Paris and the French language, to the light and sight of the city... Then, joining the words with the windows of that particular room, and with Paris as the remarkable backdrop, graphic manifestations and expansions of Ashbery's language were developed in relation to the unique setting and circumstances presented. This writing on the windows offered the rare opportunity to write on the Parisian air, the words floating over the city's rooftops, often aligning with, while even "at times, disfigur[ing]," its many notable monuments: the *Colonne de Juillet* on the *Place de la Bastille*, the Notre Dame Cathedral, the Basilica of the Sacre-Cœur, the Pantheon and, in the distance, the Eiffel Tower.





Providing Positioning

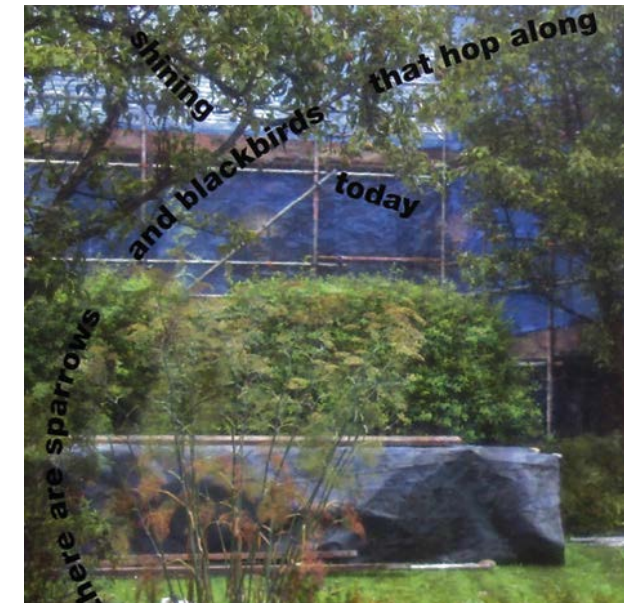
Durham, England

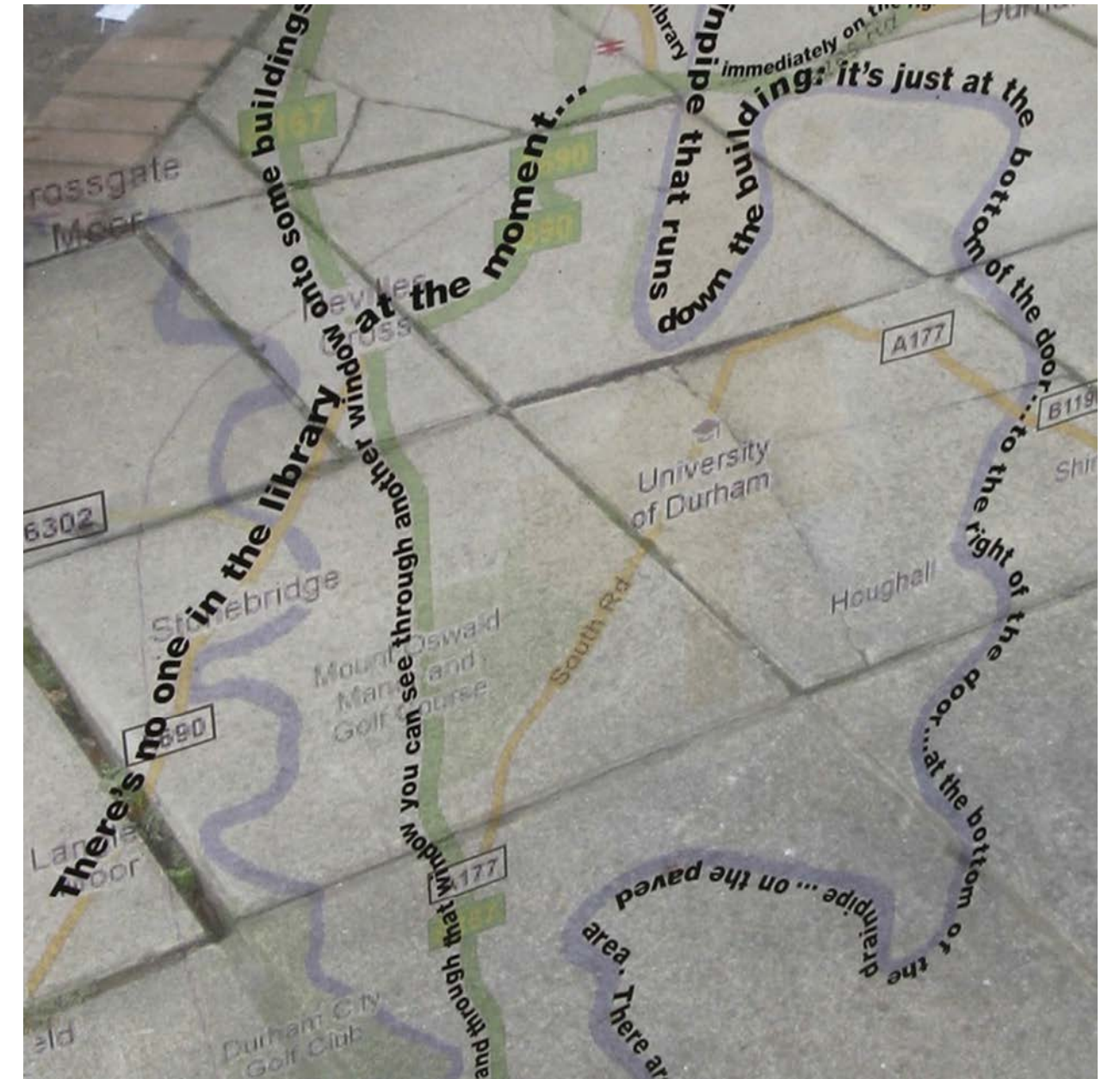
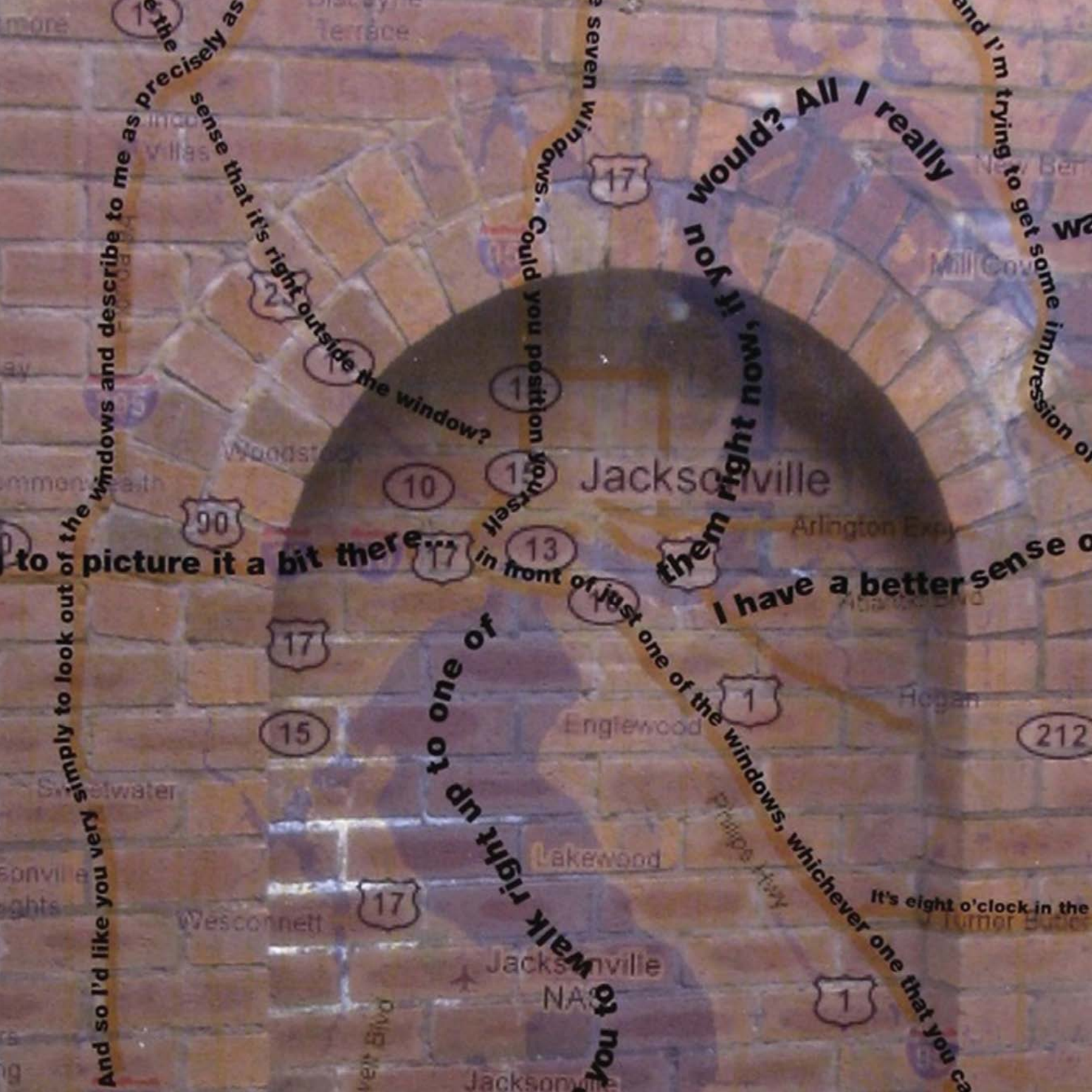
September 2010

Thousands of miles (and the Atlantic Ocean) separate Florida from England. For this installation, at a University of Durham poetry conference, such separations were imaginatively mediated by the mediations of language. This bridging was realized by using words from a 45-minute trans-Atlantic telephone conversation during which the view from the Durham windows was painstakingly described by British students, their recorded voices later transcribed for the installation.

On central windows, the students' words were printed onto images of water, the lines of language shaping into waves. On side windows, the words followed the streets and rivers of Durham and Jacksonville, twisting and turning upon the transparent maps of each city.

Through the windows, from the telephone, there was a seeing out-of-sync with itself, but a seeing nonetheless, even if time-delayed, time-tempered, with lines of sight promising, offering, to come into contact. For this installation pointed, through the warp and torque of time, toward a faint echo of connection where so much depends upon a "sapling," a "drainpipe," a "chimney," a "bee on the lavender."





Crossing Over (After Hakuin)

Hiroshima, Japan

July 2011

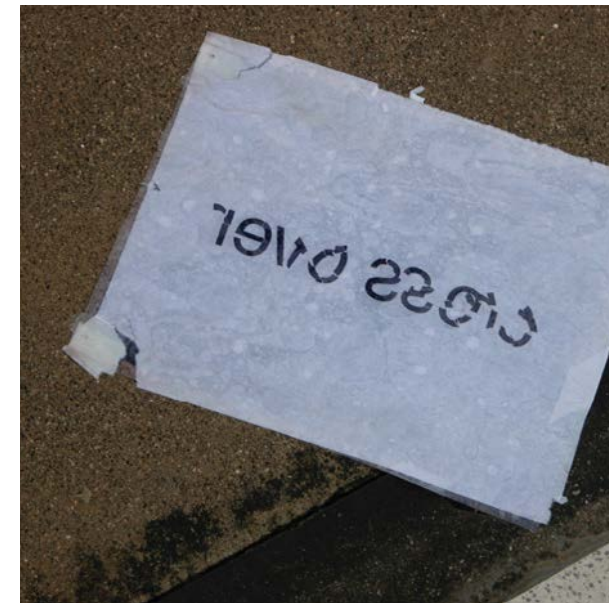
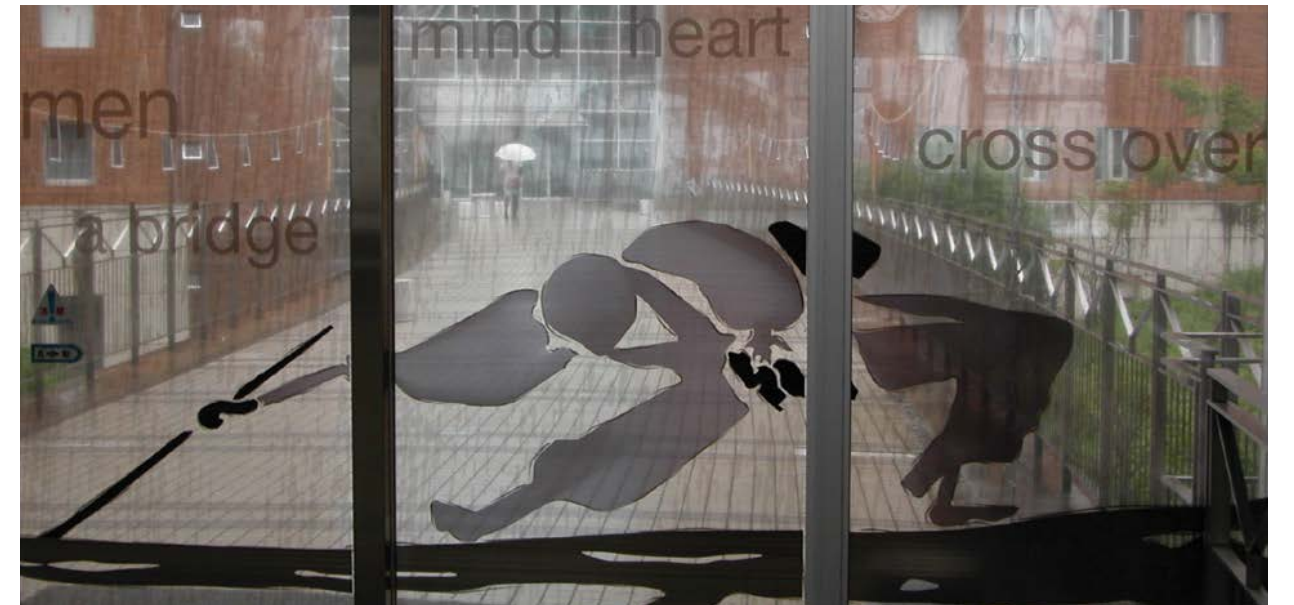
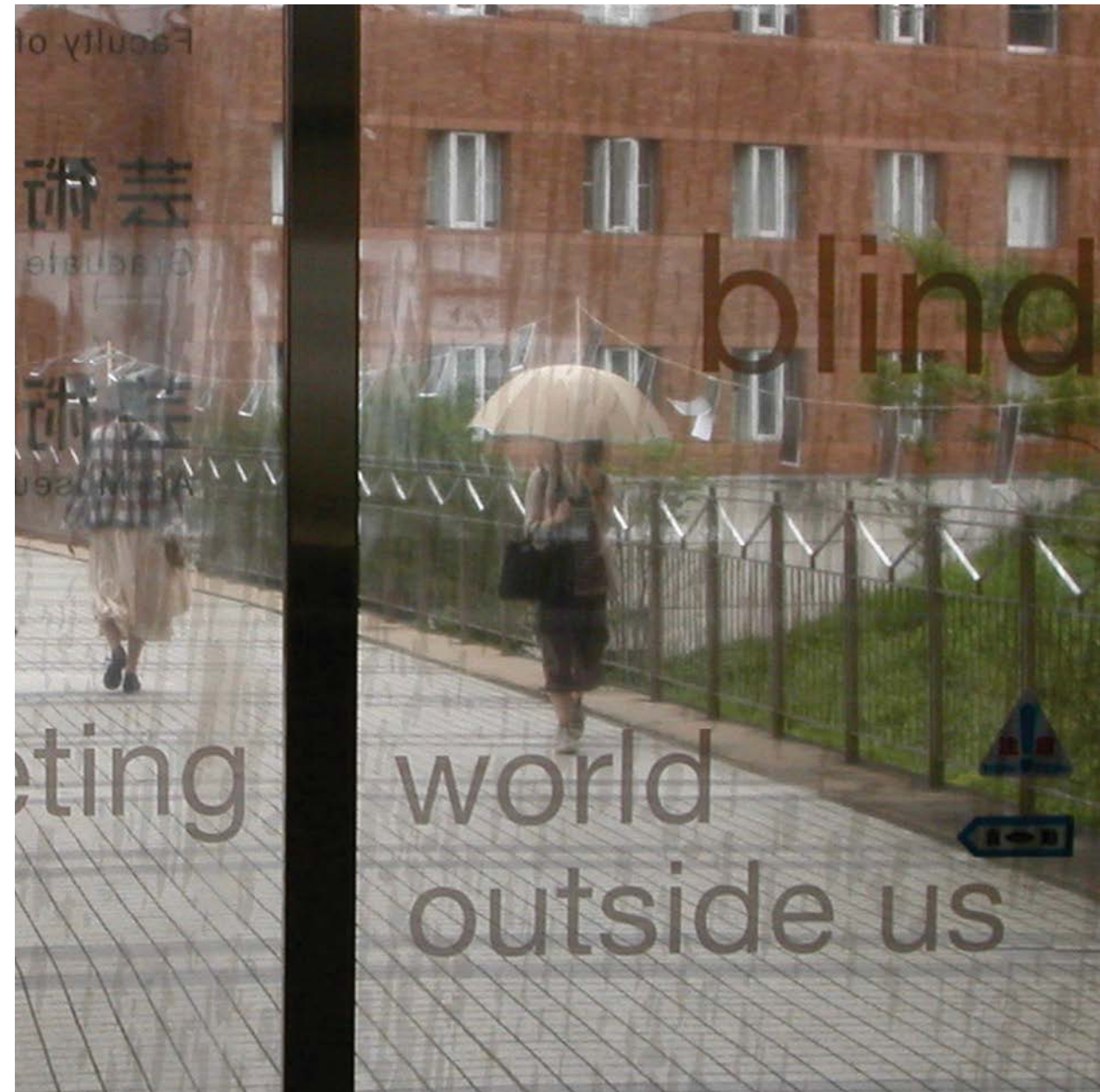
“Gods and Buddhas in reality have no form... They have been given form because of our necessity. But do not rely on names and forms.”

– Hakuin Ekaku (1686-1769)

The site for the Hiroshima City University project included two sets of windows and electric doors connected by a bridge between buildings. With this bridge in mind, the men from Hakuin’s scroll painting *Three Blind Men on a Bridge* were greatly enlarged and, alongside them, the poem inside the painting was placed, on one set of windows, in Japanese (in the form of falling rain), and on the opposite, in English translation. As the electric doors opened and closed, the blind men’s walking sticks extended and retracted as people moved in and out of the buildings. Outside, two lines of twine stretched across the bridge and, clipped upon them, were smaller images of Hakuin’s blind men superimposed onto “tsunami stones,” along with words from his poem. Over time, the sheets of paper, out in the rain, fell to the ground, landing below.

An unexpected change on the windows involved a chemical reaction with the printed ink in which humidity from the Japanese rainy season caused the blind men to develop a doubled, x-rayed image, a ghostly after-effect, enhancing further their fleeting form, or absence of form.





Neither Here Nor There

Toronto, Canada

March 2012

For a conference on the “(An)Aesthetic of Absence,” held at the University of Toronto, three sets of windows were used. First, overlooking the city, with Toronto’s landmark space needle in the distance, a large Japanese *enso* — a circle representing emptiness — was placed onto the glass. This calligraphic mark, signifying “nothing,” contained within it the word “absence” translated into 46 languages.

In another room, the familiar binary — ABSENCE / PRESENCE — was turned on its head, as it was 12 times slightly misrepresented as, for instance, PRESENCE / ABSINTHE; PRECIOUS / ABSENCE; PRESENCE / ABSTINENCE; PRECIPICE / ABSENCE...

Finally, in a room looking directly onto one of the University’s historic Romanesque buildings, transparencies were placed on the windows with printed images of that adjacent building’s prominent architectural features visually aligning. In addition, aerial views of the University were included, with the bold words NEITHER HERE NOR THERE disorientingly labeling something of the setting itself, pointing to an absence between the site and its citations.





In One Ear & Out The Other

Paris, France

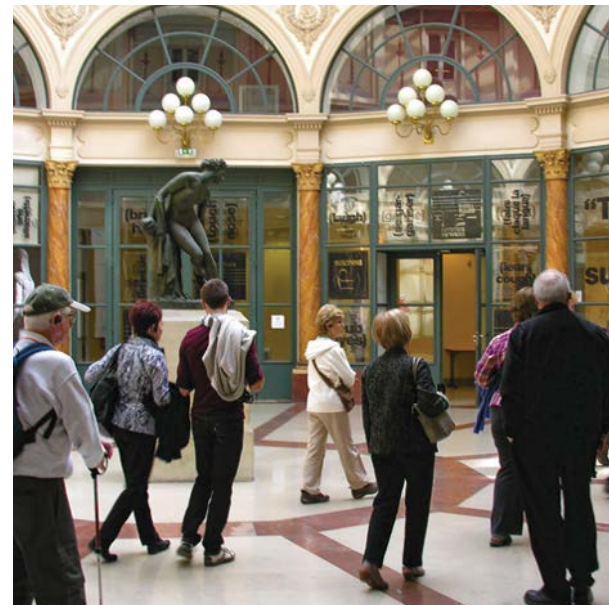
March 2012

At the center of Paris' *Galerie Colbert* stands a statue of Eurydice, soon to die, a venomous snake wrapped about her foot. There is no sign of her famous lover Orpheus, the musician who would subsequently descend into the underworld, having wooed the gods with his music, pleading for his lost love's return. In place of Orpheus, though, there was an unlikely substitute, the words of another musician, the American composer John Cage, for a conference organized by the *Université Sorbonne*. This installation partially surrounded Eurydice's statue and was composed of language emerging directly from Cage's *Song Books* and from his book *Silence*.

A number of Cage's striking musical notations were used (which included such phrases as, in French, "*Un coup de chance*" and, in English, "continuous and vanishing"). Elsewhere, Cage's stage directions were bilingually included, from a performed reading instructing a reader to interrupt the lecture and, for instance, "blow your nose" or "*lever la main*" (hold up hand).

During the installation, Eurydice was (as perhaps instructed by the gods) turned away from the written windows, unseeing. But, listening, might she have been aware of Cage's words dancing just behind her, whispering... in one ear and out the other?





A Scene Of Sight

Palo Alto, California

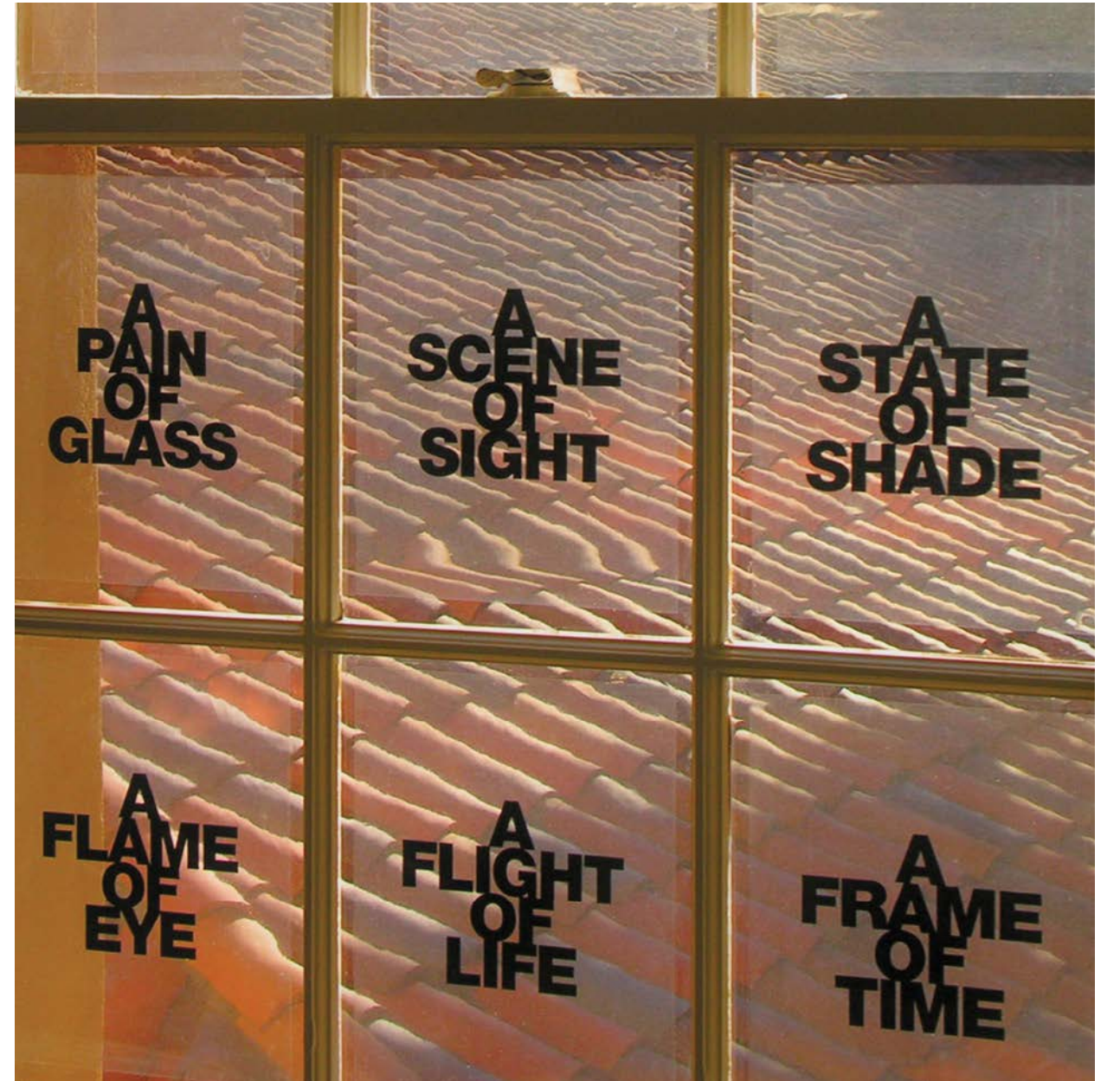
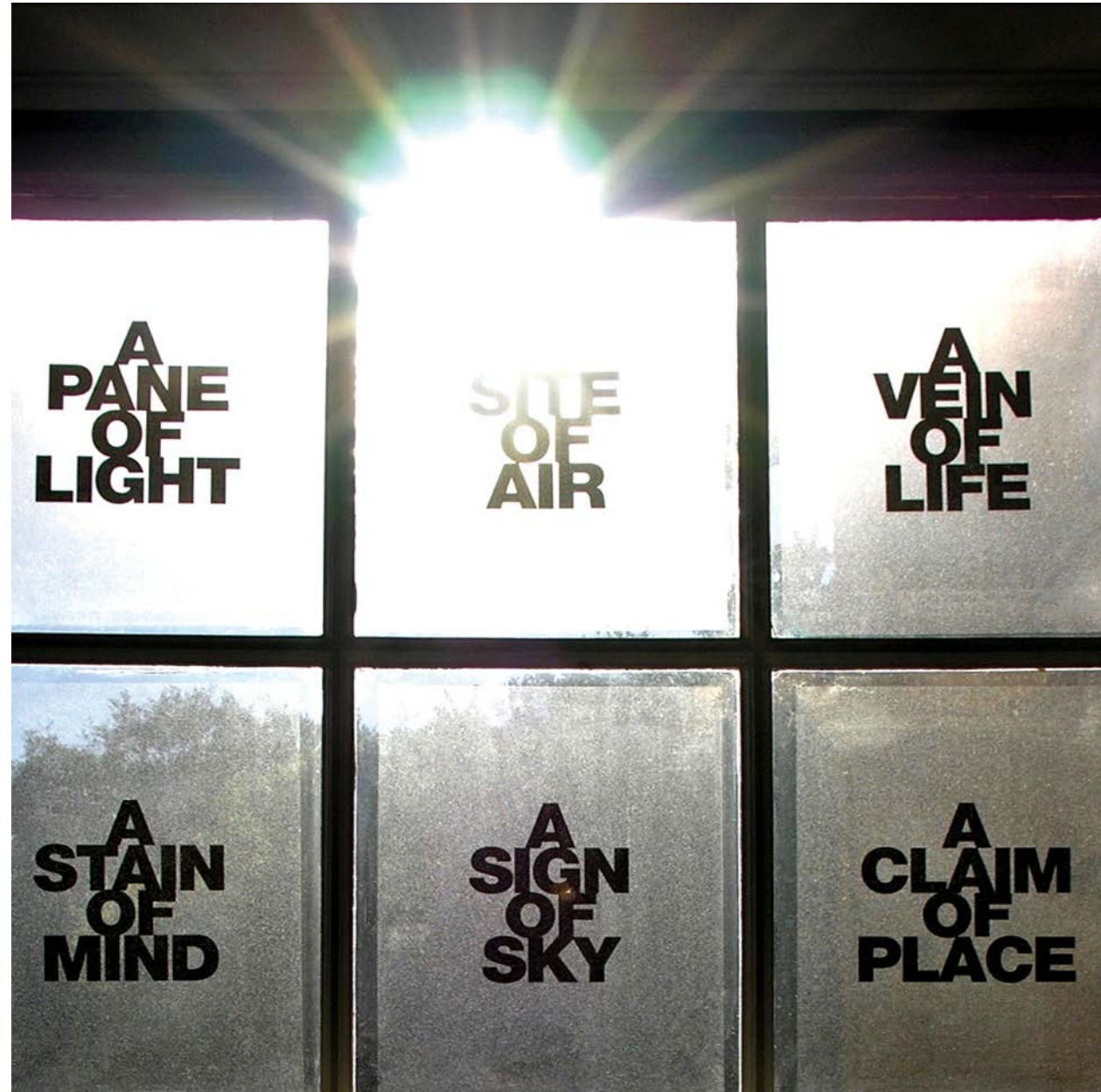
June 2013

The theme of the conference at Stanford University was “Performance and Temporality.” With these terms in mind, a Writing On Air installation was created for the windows of three unique settings. For an interior window, an Old Testament passage, where time is central to its message, was printed: “To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven.” The subsequent listing of time’s “purpose” (“to heal,” “to mourn,” “to dance,” “to keep silence” . . .) was lifted and reprinted vertically, and in bold red, over the altered passage, with the phrases “a time to” and “a time of” alternating from top to bottom.

On another window overlooking the campus, a grouping of linked phrases was placed onto individual panes of glass. Words were selected for the play of reference enacted by the setting and the scene, the windows and the words: A SCENE OF SIGHT, A SITE OF AIR, A PANE OF LIGHT, A PAIN OF GLASS, A FRAME OF TIME, A SIGN OF SKY...

In an adjacent building, large black arrows were placed in all of the windows, pointing in conflicting directions and offering mixed signals out of the building and onto the sidewalk beyond (signals that, with the cast shadows, multiplied the already-confused message).





Sound of Water

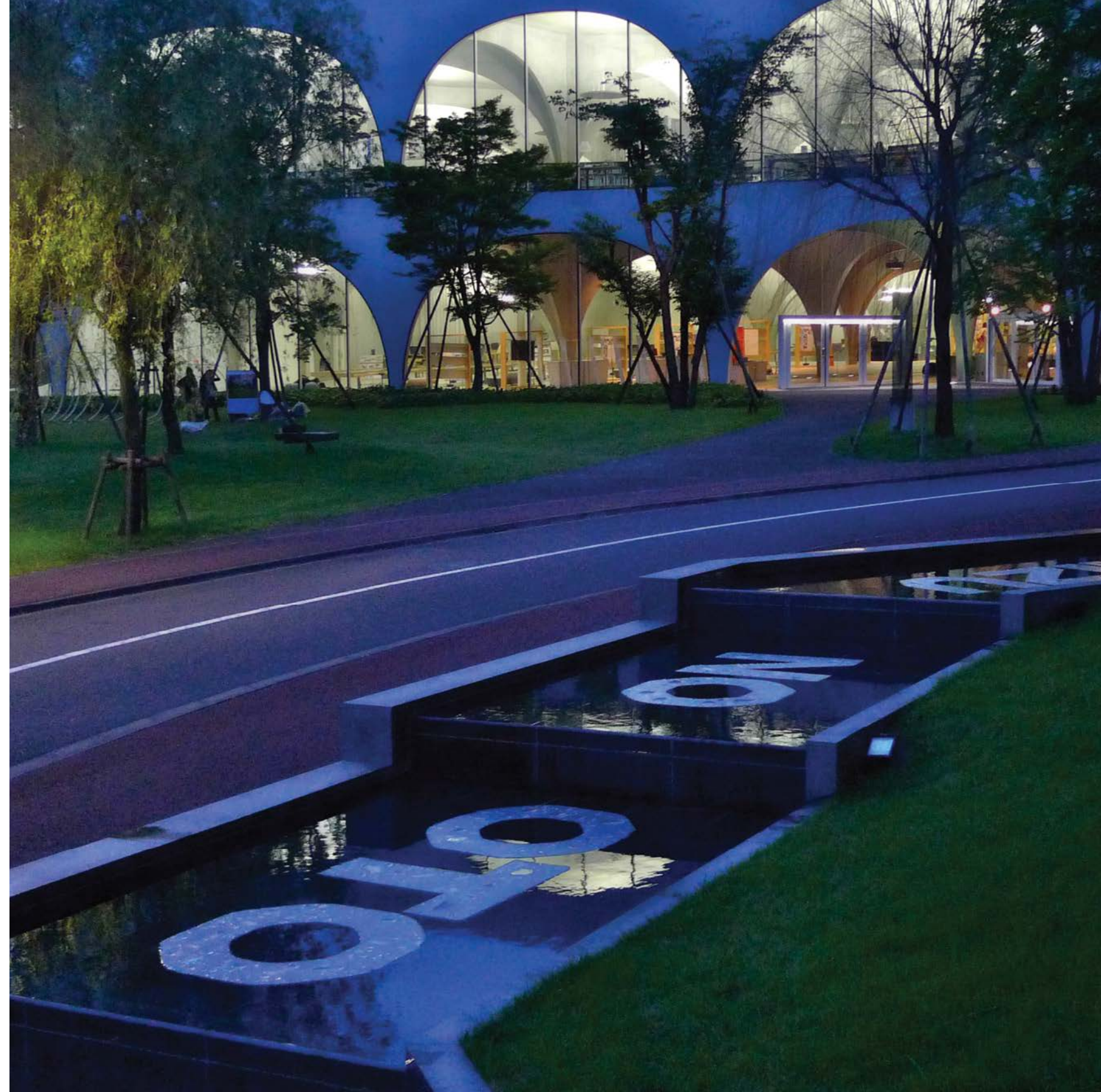
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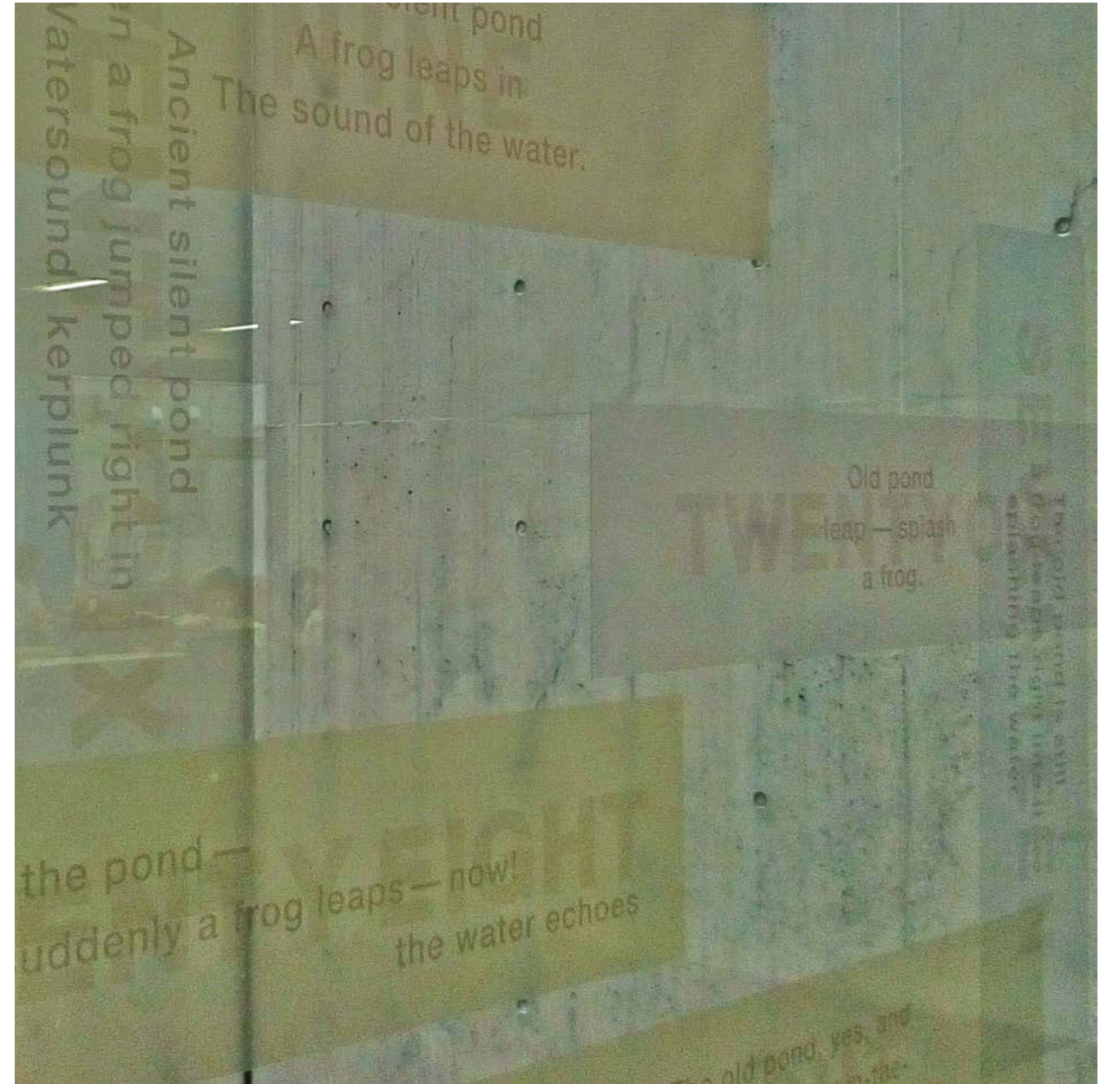
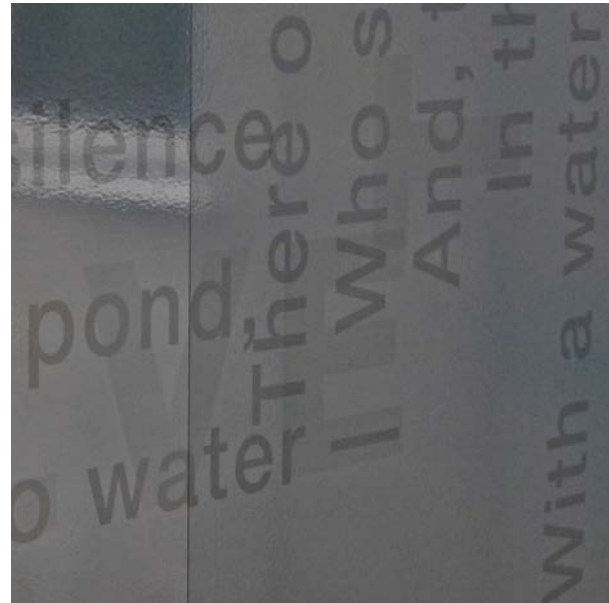
July 2015

an old pond / a frog jumps in / the sound of water
ふるいけや かわずとびこむ みずのおと

For the Writing On Air installation at Tama Art University, 30 different translations of Basho's frog haiku were printed onto transparencies and placed on two sets of windows. In their vertical and horizontal configurations, these numbered and overlapping translations displayed something of the noisy abundance of the translators' efforts to transport the haiku from one language into another. Alongside these translations, Basho's haiku was also affixed in two Japanese scripts. However, each version was split down the middle, disrupting the clear flow of the poem. With the English translations alongside their Japanese equivalents, all was then read and seen as if suspended like a cloud, as if written on air.

For the Writing On Water installation, Basho's haiku was reduced from its 17 syllables down to five, *MIZU NO OTO* (sound of water), placing those romanized words onto a series of nearby pools. Walking alongside the installation, you could hear the sound of water moving from one pool into the next, creating the synesthetic effect of reading what you are hearing (and hearing what you are reading), the haiku's words flowing into their material message.





“And Then The Windows Failed”

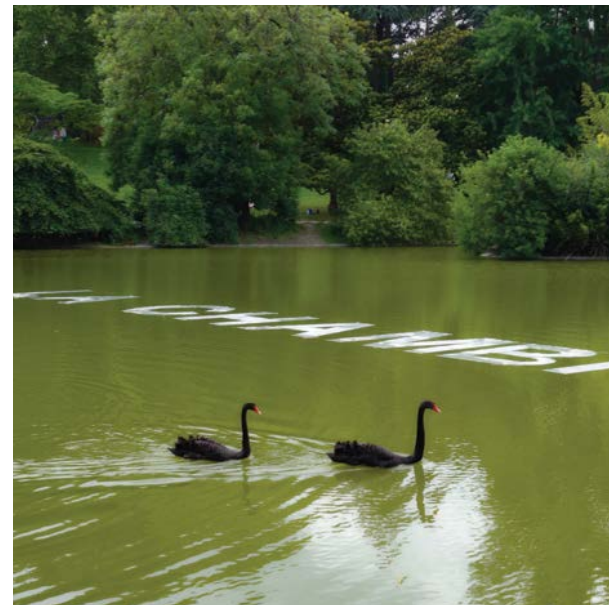
Paris, France

June 2016

Inside Paris’ *Fondation des États-Unis*, parts of an Emily Dickinson poem were placed on the windows, written on air. This poem is of a death witnessed (*one’s own*) and of the sound of an “interposed” fly “heard...when I died.” On the room’s large windows were the poem’s own words of “windows [that] “failed,” of a sight that was not seen, that “could not see to see.” Multi-colored flies filled the panes of glass below, while “Thoughtless birds” flew above the site, dispersed across the tall windows.

Across the street, inside the historic *Parc Montsouris*, other lines from the poem — “the Stillness in the Room... the Stillness in the Air” — were written on the water, translated out into the shared French air: *LE CALME DE L’AIR... DE LA CHAMBRE*. These lines remained on the pond for several days before black swans intervened, attacking the words with their beaks, leaving the letters in an illegible jumble at the center of the pond. However, the two words *LA CHAMBRE* were left mysteriously intact, undamaged, and so those words stayed in place for the duration. It was as if, with the swans’ violent intervention, the stillness — *LA CALME* — had vanished from the air and suddenly only the room remained — *LA CHAMBRE* — floating alone on the pond, alongside the swans that now floated tranquilly alongside it.





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* Conference installation

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many thanks to Dr. Shirley Hallblade, the Dean of UNF’s Thomas G. Carpenter Library from 2006-2013, an early and enthusiastic supporter of my UNF installations, and to current dean, Dr. Elizabeth Curry, for the continuing support of the work and for commissioning this book.

I am also grateful to UNF’s Center for Instruction and Research Technology (CIRT), and in particular Michael Boyles, a crucial collaborator in the Writing On Water / Writing On Air installations, both at UNF and elsewhere.

Finally, among the many students, colleagues and friends who assisted me with my installations, I’d like to thank Carolyn Brass, Erik DeLuca, Michael Dimmitt, Thomas Karst, Grant Kittrell, Ayla Lunberry, Noah Lunberry, Jamee Mikell, Joseph O’Connor, Clark Ogier, Jefree Shalev, Erin Sterchi, Dave Wilson, and, in particular, Kelley Predieri (out in the kayak).

Clark Lunberry

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