



Anrold Dreyblatt, *The T-Project*

REMEDiating HANDWRITING

as a Cultural Practice in the Age of
Mechanical Reproduction

17 to 18th June 2004
Bauhaus-Universität Weimar
Hausknechtstraße 7

Conference Director Sonja Neef

*organized by the Bauhaus University Weimar
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Culture, Bauhaus University Weimar*

REMEDIATING HANDWRITING as a Cultural Practice in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction

This symposium forms the second part of a series of three international symposia on handwriting as a cultural practice in contemporary arts and media. The symposium is organized by the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis (ASCA) in collaboration with the Bauhaus University Weimar. Whereas the first symposium (Amsterdam 2003) questioned the concepts of authenticity and copy in relation to handwriting,

the focus of this second symposium is on cultural practices and technologies to remediate handwriting for new print and visual media — such as photography, (silent) film, microfiche, Xerography, fax, as well as the digital media. These new technologies situate handwriting in a new perspective and, thus, ask for a reinterpretation of handwriting.

The central idea of this symposium is to rethink the concept of writing — what is writing, what is its cultural function, and what are its modes of articulation? These questions will be studied from the point of view of writing tools. “Writing,” according to Villém Flusser, “derives from the Latin word ‘scribere,’ which means ‘scratching.’ [...] Writing thus was originally a gesture to engrave something into an object while using a wedge-formed tool (‘stilus’).” Due to the appearance of quill, pencil, and pen, this archaic gesture of scratching and engraving is transformed into a gesture of drawing and gliding with a stylus on a writing surface to leave there a material trace marked by writing liquids. The writing gesture then changes again, and more dramatically, through the practice of setting pre-manufactured types. The basic move of writing, now, resides in pressing buttons. Along with the loss of the stylus, another dimension specific for the writing hand gets in danger, that is an individual style, a character which functions at the same time as a letter and as an expression of identity.

And yet, our present writing culture cannot be thought of without a ‘stylus,’ be it a pencil or a ball-point to write on paper, chalk to write on blackboards, spray to write on walls, or a stylus to write on a tablet-PC. These practices all produce something that doubtlessly qualifies as writing and yet differs from the writing default established by typesetting

media. The aim of this symposium is to explore the cultural realm in which handwriting is situated today. What is the relation between contemporary handwriting practices and writing which unfolds in traditional print or digital media? Do they re-interpret, or — to echo Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin — “re-mediate” previous media, and if so, how? Are there cultural practices which resist such remediation? To what extent are mediated and re-mediated handwriting constituting individual or cultural identity? Does the remediation of the western Latin alphabet affect other writing systems and vice versa? And can re-mediation of handwriting also function as an intervention in new media? By addressing these questions from different viewpoints, and challenging monodisciplinary views on the concepts of “mediation” and “remediation”, the symposium aims at contributing to a comprehensive interdisciplinary theory of handwriting.

FRIDAY, 18TH JUNE

9.00 **Roger Lüdeke**, München
*Simulated Hand-Writing in William Blake's
Songs of Innocence and Experience*

10.00 **José van Dijck** (Amsterdam).
Writing the Self. From Diary to Weblog

11.00 coffee/tea

11.15 **Jan Simons** (Amsterdam)
Filmic writing: from Potemkin to Dogville

12.15 **Sonja Neef**, Weimar
*Hand-Saving and Screen-Writing.
On Microsoft Screen-Saver Sports*

13.15 lunch

14.30 **Begüm Firat**, Amsterdam
*ReMediating Islamic Calligraphy through
the Photographic Image: on Shirin Neshat's
Women of Allah series*

15.30 coffee/tea

15.45 **Eric Ketelaar**, Amsterdam
Writing Archival Machines

16.45 **Arnold Dreyblatt & Jeffrey Wallen**, Berlin
From the Archives

18.00 closing

THURSDAY, 17TH JUNE

16.00 welcome/registration

16.30 **Sonja Neef**, Weimar
Introduction

16.45 **Ayelet Zohar**, London
The Politics of Palimpsest

17.45 coffee/tea

18.00 Keynote address:

Richard Grusin, Detroit
*Signature, Identity, Content: Remediation
and the Persistence of Handwriting*

Respondens: José van Dijck