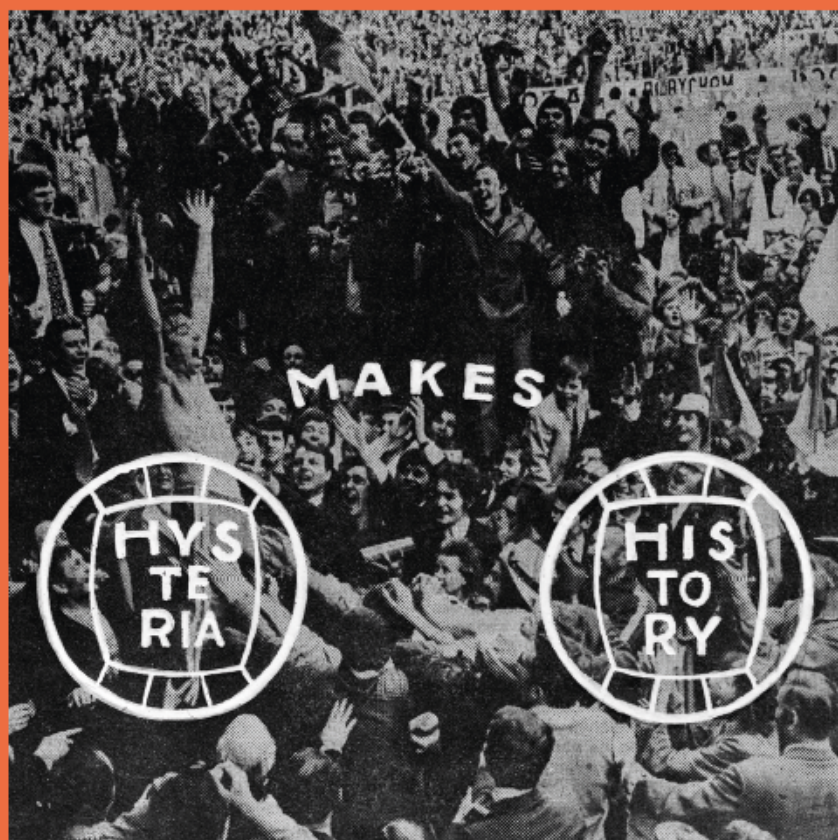


Engaged Visuality

The Italian and Belgian Visual Poetry Phenomenon
in the 1960s and 1970s



EDITED BY MARIA ELENA MINUTO AND JAN DE VREE

DE GRUYTER

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Transculturalism, Verbovisuality, and Intermediality in Italian and Belgian Poetic Counterculture

"All preaching is an attack on human freedom. Poetry is no longer the chambermaid of princes, prelates, politicians, parties, or the people. After all, poetry itself is awareness."
Paul de Vree's *Toute prédication*, 1967¹

"[A] visual and public literature can only be based upon a type of 'open' global communication that implies all forms of fruition."
Adriano Spatola, *Verso la poesia totale*, 2nd ed., 1978²

Introduction

Engaged Visuality is the first historical and theoretical work to approach the Italian and Belgian visual poetry phenomenon in the 1960s and 1970s with regard to the historic avant-gardes, transnational networks, and neo-avant-garde experimental literary magazines from transcultural, comparative, and interartistic perspectives.³ Connecting the fields of the visual arts, comparative literature, and intermedia studies, and combining historical patterns, comparative analysis, and intermedial approaches, the volume is a new and seminal step in the study of two pioneering countries in placing knowledge transfer, artistic cooperation, and poetic activism at the core of the European visual poetry phenomenon.

Visual poetry was one of the main literary and artistic postwar intercultural movements to acknowledge collaborative, interdisciplinary, and multilingual dimensions of language that highlighted the local and global networks of experimental poetry in the 1960s and 1970s, as well as its diverse lineages, aims, and pathways, even if at times convergent or parallel. Belgian cosmopolitanism, its geographical position at the crossroads of Europe, and neo-avant-garde literature, in both French and Dutch, as well as the heterogeneity of the Italian visual

1 Paul de Vree's *Toute prédication*, 1967, red marker and black varnish on paper, 44 × 33 cm. "Toute prédication est un attentat à la liberté de l'homme. La poésie n'est plus la femme de chambre des princes des prélats, des politiciens, des partis ou du peuple. La poésie est enfin elle-même, une prise de conscience."

2 Adriano Spatola, *Toward Total Poetry*, trans. Brendan W. Hennessey and Guy Bennett (Los Angeles: Otis Books/Seismicity Editions, 2008), 81.

3 For the notion of "interartistic" applied to visual art and postwar visual poetics, see Eric Vos, "The Eternal Network. Mail Art, Intermedia Semiotics, Interarts Studies," in *Interart Poetics: Essays on the Interrelations of the Arts and Media*, ed. Ulla-Britta Lagerroth, Hans Lund, and Erik Hedling (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1997), 325–336, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004650947_029; Leo H. Hoek, "La transposition intersémiotique: Pour une classification pragmatique," in *Rhétorique et image*, ed. Leo H. Hoek and Kees Meerhoff (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1995), 65–80, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004650619_008.

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Engaged Visuality: The Italian and Belgian Visual Poetry Phenomenon in the 1960s and 1970s
edited by Maria Elena Minuto (Université de Liège; Royal Holloway University of London)
and Jan de Vree (M HKA Museum, Antwerp). Editorial assistance: Irene Cimò (Università
degli Studi di Milano).

This publication was made possible through the financial support of M HKA
(Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp).

M HKA

ISBN 978-3-68924-120-9

e-ISBN (PDF) 978-3-68924-004-2

Library of Congress Control Number: 2026930435

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie;
detailed bibliographic data are available on the internet at <http://dnb.dnb.de>.

© 2026 Walter de Gruyter GmbH, Berlin/Boston, Genthiner Straße 13, 10785 Berlin

Cover image: Paul de Vree, *Hysteria Makes History*, 1973. Photo-emulsion on canvas 68 × 95 cm.

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Proofreading: Aaron Bogart

Cover design: Katja Peters, Berlin

Typesetting: Sven Schrape, Berlin

Printing and binding: Beltz Grafische Betriebe GmbH, Bad Langensalza

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