

## “Poetry of the street and poetry of transparency”

Alain Arias-Misson (Brussels, Belgium 1936)

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...At the end of 1969, Alain Arias-Misson invited us to join him in a Public Poem project, which he called “A *MADRID*” (in Madrid, Spain). If that was not the first “Public Poem” in history, since Alain had experimented with the concept for the first time in Brussels a couple of years earlier (*Vietnam*), it was the first in the sense that the *actors* involved with the action consisted on the one hand of a group of political activists who carried the huge (human-sized) letters and, on the other hand, of some of the principal streets and squares of the city, such as the Paseo de Recoletos and la Castellana, the Plaza de Cibeles and the Carrera de San Jeronimo. The streets and squares of Madrid served as the support (page!) or frame for *A MADRID* but also as a chorus; and in accordance with the nature of the sites, monuments, buildings visited on that day of February 1970, they took on the signifying permutations enabled by the sequence of letters in *A MADRID*: such as DADA, MARIA, MARINA, DAR, RIADA, RIMA.. Individuals, streets and squares, letters, words... all caught up in an effervescent, playful and provocative poetic action as we crossed through the center of the city until we arrived with ARMA (weapon) in front of the Palacio de las Cortes (the Spanish Congress), at which time the police assumed *their* expected role, and put a full stop to the Poem. But this “full stop” was very relative, as that action could be said to be the point of departure of the grand career of public poet pursued by Alain ever since.

A year later, on April 3<sup>rd</sup> 1971, Alain would carry out his second public poem entitled PALABRAS FRAGILES (or “fragile words”), in which he blocked a central street of Madrid with a giant, inscribed (fragile words) plastic sheet, the poem realized by cars bursting through the plastic, poeticizing the street...

...And a year later, at the end of June 1972, Alain and I, with my group of “poetic agitators” arrived in Pamplona in order to take part in that festival, unique in the history of the avant-garde: the “Encounters of Pamplona”, bringing together experimental artists from around the world in all the disciplines for the first time to Spain. This event was brought back to public view recently in a magnificent exhibition at the National Museum of Reina Sofia (MNCARS),

Madrid... Alain, with his human-sized punctuation signs, assisted by the “poetic agitators”, carried out his accurately designated “*Punctuation Poem of Pamplona*” linking institutions (Parliament) and monuments (Hemingway), latrines and police in a clearly subversive manner...

...When Alain situates his public poetry in relation to ritual (as in *PALABRAS FRAGILES*), and I would dare say as a sort of poetic liturgy, he anticipates certain aspects of his conception of his “object” poetry in the form of three-dimensional and transparent containers, such as his *Theater Boxes*, his *Cages of Desire*- or, in this exhibition, his translucent *Plastico-Concretism*, created in New York in the 1970's. He has disseminated his words here throughout the transparency of plexiglas objects or multi-layered acrylic compositions: a pure space of poetic writing—in which letters and words, figures and morphemes and spaces inter-related in unexpected forms and illuminate new ways of feeling and understanding life...

This is an excerpt from a text written by Ignacio Gomez de Liaño for the catalogue of the exhibition “Poetry of the street and poetry of transparency” at the Freijo Gallery from September 10<sup>th</sup> to October 31<sup>st</sup> 2015.

Links web:

<http://galeriafreijo.com/en/exposicion/poesia-de-calle-y-poesia-de-transparencias-2/>

<http://galeriafreijo.com/en/artista/alain-arias-misson/>

**Alain Arias-Misson** born in Brussels in 1936.

He was four years old when his family left Europe for New York; returning to Belgium after the war at the age of thirteen where he studied for three years, a period which imbued him with classical culture. The rest of his education was in the United States in New England, graduating from Harvard U. in Greek and French literature. He left for Algeria, where he taught during Year One of the Revolution. Shortly afterwards he settled in Spain in 1963, where he helped to create the experimental poetry movement of Spain in the sixties with Spanish friends Joan Brossa, Ignacio Gomez de Liaño, Herminio Molero and others. In 1967 he visited Belgium where he worked closely with the concrete poet Paul De Vree and co-edited his review, *De Tafelronde* in Antwerp; he also collaborated with the avantgarde magazines *Phantomas* and *L'VII* in Brussels. In Belgium he invented his first « Public Poems »- a way of « writing on the street like a page ». He exhibited often in the avantgarde galleries of Belgium and in the Netherlands, which culminated in the big *Concrete Poetry* exhibition of the Stedelijk Museum of Amsterdam in '72, where he showed- and sold -his first “plastico-concretist” poem. During the same period he worked closely with the *Lotta Poetica* group in

Italy , with scores of exhibitions throughout Europe (Documenta), Japan and South America.

In 1974 he returned to New York for several years where he showed at the Emily Harvey Gallery and published several novels and critical articles on literature and the arts .

In 1998 he returned to Europe in Venice and Paris, where he now lives and works with his companion, writer and designer, Karen Moller.

Since 1967 he has performed a score of "Public Poems", a way of "writing on the street" which he invented in Brussels. To begin with on his own initiative, and later invited by various institutions, such as the "Beethoven Public Poem" for the Beethoven Bicentennial invited by the City of Bonn; the "Teutonic Public Poem" by the Literaturhaus of Berlin, Germany; the same for the Modern Museum of Bielefeld, Germany; the "Proust Public Poem" by the Centre Georges Pompidou through the Revue Parlée, Paris ;the "Punctuation of Pamplona Public Poem" by the City of Pamplona through "Encuentros"; the "Hollywood Monsters Public Poem" by the Otis Art Institute, Los Angeles, the "POEMX" public Poem by the International Poetry Festival of Knokke, Belgium; the "Public Sinking of Venice Poem" by the Fondazione Bonotto, Venice, Italy.

Alain Arias-Misson has published four art books in Europe and nine novels in the United States.

#### Solo Exhibitions (selection):

2015 September *"Poetry of the street and poetry of transparency"*, Freijo Gallery, Madrid, Spain.

2015 March 18 « *Plastico-Concretist works 1970's* » MuKHA, the Contemporary Arts Museum of Antwerp, Belgium.

2014 *Public Linguistic Poem II* BKW Gallery, Brussels, Belgium.

2013 « *The Public Poem Reactivated Project* », Galerie Lara Vincy, Paris, France.

2013 *The Public Linguistic Poem* for the Opening 25th Anniversary of MuKHA, Antwerp, Belgium.

2013 « *The Public Poem* » Galerij v-editie, Anvers, Belgium.

2013 « *The Public Poem, Documentary Show* » Emily Harvey Foundation, New York City, USA.

2013 *Video of the Public Poems 1972 – 2011* Whitebox Art Center, New York, USA.

2011 « *The Public Poem Extension Program* », Fondazione Berardelli, Brescia, Italy.

2009 *"Les cages du désir" et poèmes visuels* », Galerie Lara Vincy, Paris, France.

2009 « *Les cages du désir* », Galerie Depardieu, Nice, France.

2007 « *The Visitor*, » Galleria Entropyart, Naples, Italy.

2006 « *The Poet revisits persons places and peripeteia*, » Galerie Depardieu, Nice, France.

2005 *Rétrospective 1965-2005*, Spazio Culturale Lazzari, Treviso, Italy.

2003 « *Pièges chamaniques* », Galerie Lara Vincy, Paris, France.

2002 *Piccolo teatro di lampadine sciamaniche*, Emily Harvey Associazione Culturale, Venezia, Italy.

2001 *Little shamanic light bulb theatre*, Emily Harvey Gallery, New York, USA.

2001 *La chapelle chamanique*, Fondazione Villa Buttafava, Gallarate, Italy.

2000 *Monografica di Alain Arias-Misson*, Museo di Bolzano, Italy.

1998 *Shamanic Strips and Your Household Shamans*, Galleria Caterina Gualco, Gênes, Italy.

- 1998 *SHAMANIX !*, Emily Harvey Gallery, New York, USA.  
 1996 *Arias-Misson, Works from 1974 to 1996*, Farsetti Arte, Prato, Italy.  
 1996 *Pyramidopolis*, Galeria Cruce, Madrid, Spain.  
 1995 *Angels*, Chapitre XII, Bruxelles, Belgium.  
 1995 *Angels*, Galleria Derbylius, Milan, Italy.  
 1995 *Alain Arias-Misson*, Sarenco Club, Vérone, Italy.  
 1994 *Installazioni di Arias-Misson*, Domus Jani, Centro Internazionale per l'Arte Totale, Illasi, Italy.  
 1988 *Floating Mind Theatre*, Galerie J. & J. Donguy, Paris, France.  
 1987 *Piret's*, Costa Mesa, Californie, USA.  
 1974 *Olé, the Public Poem!*, Studio Santandrea, Milan, Italy.  
 1972 *Poesia Visiva*, Galleria Brescia, Italy.  
 1972 *Arias-Misson*, Centre Culturel Américain, Brussels, Belgium.  
 1972 *Arias-Misson*, Galleria Il Canale, Venice Italy.  
 1972 *Olé, c'est moi le Public Poem !* Studio Santandrea, Milan, Italy.  
 1971 *Alain Arias-Misson* Galleria Brescia, Italy.  
 1971 *Alain Arias-Misson*, Mercato de Sale, Milan, Italy.  
 1970 *Alain Arias-Misson*, Galleria Tool, Milan, Italy.

#### Collective Exhibitions (selection):

- 2014: 13 December: *Venice International Performance Art Week*, Palazzo Mora, Venezia, Italy.  
 2014: 16 October: *Escritura Experimental en España, 1963-1983*, Circulo de Bellas Artes, Madrid, Spain.  
 2014: 18 September: *La scrittura visuale, la parola totale*, Museo Nitsch, Napoles, Italy.  
 2014: *Idea del Arte*, Museo de Arte de Santander (MAS) , Santander, Spain.  
 2014: *Visual Poetry*, Castello Visconteo, Pavia, Italy.  
 2014: *Visual Poetry*, Palazzo delle Prigioni, Venice, Italy.  
 2013 *The Character of the Collector*, MuKHA, Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst, Anvers, Belgium.  
 2012 *Spirits of Internationalism*, Van Abbe Museum, Eindhoven, Netherlands.  
 2009 *Encuentros de Pamplona 72: Fin de fiesta del arte experimental*, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia (MNCARS), Madrid, Spain (28 October 2009–22 February 2010).  
 2008 *La Parola nell'immagine*, MART, Museo di Arte Contemporaneo di Rovereto e Trento, Italy.  
 2006 *Parole Azioni Suoni Immagini*, Museo Pecci, Prato, Italy.  
 2005 *Carlfriedrich Claus and related artists*, Chemnitz Kunsthaus, Germany.  
 2004 *Poles Together Poles Apart*, Biennale di Venezia, Collaterale, Venice, Italy.  
 2004 *Construction in process*, Biennale de Łódz, Poland.  
 2001 *The Leonardo Project* Museo Ideale Leonardo da Vinci Vincy Italy  
 2000 *Sentieri interrotti* Palazzo Bonaguro Bassano del Grappa Italie  
 1998 *POESIA TOTALE* Palazzo della Ragione Mantova, Italy.  
 1997 *Dadaismo & Dadaismi*, Palazzo Forti, Verone, Italy.  
 1995 *L'Ultima Avanguardia, Poesia Visiva e dintorni*, Musei di Spoleto, Italy.  
 1993 *Et tous ils changent le monde*, Biennale de Lyon, France.  
 1992 *De Bonnard à Baselitz, Chefs d'oeuvres de l'Estampe*, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris.  
 1991 *Sei Lirici della poesia visuale internazionale* Collegio Cairoli, Pavia, Italy  
 1990: *Sei lirici della Poesia Visuale Internazionale*, Archivio di Nuova Scrittura, Milan, Italy  
 1990 *International Visual Poetry*, Otis Art Institute, Los Angeles, USA.  
 1989 *The Poelitical Object*, Spanish Cultural Center, Goethe Institute, New York, USA.

- 1989 *El Objeto Poelítico*, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia (MNCARS), Madrid, Spain.
- 1987 *Homage to Leonardo* by Francesco Conz Verona Italy
- 1987 *Auf Ein Wort*, Gutenberg Museum, Mainz, Germany.
- 1986 *Poesia Visiva*, Museo Santos Rocha, Gulbenkian Foundation, Portugal.
- 1986 *Estampes et Livres d'Artistes du Xxe siècle* Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, France
- 1985 *Das Poetische ABC*, Musée de Berne, Switzerland.
- 1985 *Logomotives* galeria ON Poznan, Poland.
- 1982 *Figura 3*, Leipzig Museum, Germany.
- 1980 *EXPOSICIO DE TRAMESA POSTAL "Mail Art" 3Metronom* Espai del Centre de Documentacio d'Art Actual, Barcelona, Spain.
- 1979 *International Audio and Visual Mail Art Fair*, Galerie Lara Vincy, Paris, France
- 1978 *Sesta Biennale Internzionale della Grafica d'Arte* Palazzo Strozzi, Prato, Italy
- 1977 *Visual Poetics* Museu de Arte Conteporanea, Sao Paulo, Brasil
- 1977 *Le Texte à l Question* Musée de Calais, France
- 1976 *Experimental Poetries* Polytechnic of Central London, U.K.
- 1975 *Wolf Moderna Museet Stockholm*, Sweden
- 1975 *Recycling* Israel Museum Jerusalem Israel
- 1975 *Dutch & Belgian Visual Poetry* Institut Néerlndais de Paris, France
- 1975 *Languag & Structure in North America* Knsington Arts Association, Toronto Canada
- 1975 *visual poetry international* De Doelen Rotterdam, Holland
- 1975 *visuele poëzie* Badhuis Kunstcentrum, Holland
- 1974 *Concrete Poetry* University of Nevada, Las Vegas, U.S.A.
- 1974 *Verbotettura* Galeria La Bertesca Genova Italy
- 1974 *Visual Poetry*, ICA, London, England.
- 1973 *Oeuvres photographiques d'artistes* Konsthall, Söderälje, Swenden.
- 1973 *Hors Langage* Centre National d'Art Dramatique Nice, France
- 1972: *Konkrete Poesie*, Stedelijk Museum of Amsterdam, Holland.
- 1972 *inhibodress*, communications, Surry Hills, Australia
- 1971 *expo internacional de proposiciones a realizar* CAYC Buenos Aires, Argentina
- 1970 *Text-Buchstbe-Bild* Kunsthau Zurich Musée des Beaux Arts Switzerland
- 1970: *Konkrete Poesie*, Stedelijk Museum of Amsterdam, Holland.
- 1970 *Concrete Poetry* Indiana University, Bloomington, U.S.A.

#### Public and Private Collections:

- MuKHA Musée d'Art Actuel, Anvers, Belgium.
- Museo Reina Sofia, Madrid, Spain.
- Getty Museum, Los Angeles, USA.
- Musée d'Art Moderne LAM, Lille, France.
- Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Netherlands.
- Museo MART, Rovereto e Trento, Italy.
- Museo di Arte Contemporaneo di Bolzano, Italy.
- Museo Pecci, Florence, Italy.
- Cabinet des Estampes, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, France.
- Stadtsgalerie, Stuttgart, Germany.
- Dresden Museum, Germany.
- Collection Arturo Schwarz, Milan, Italy.
- R. & M. Sackner Archive, Miami, USA.
- Fondazione Luigi Bonotto, Bassano, Italy etc...
- Archivo Lafuente, Santander, Spain.
- Museo di Bologna