

Benjamin Forster's practice explores drawing, bringing together digital and biological technologies, installation and print to trace the boundaries of logic, economy and the role of the artist in art making. He received a Bachelor of Visual Arts with First Class Honours from the Australian National University, and was an artist in residence at Canberra Contemporary Art Space in 2009. In 2010 he relocated to Perth to complete simultaneous residencies at Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts (PICA) and SymbioticA. Forster was the winner of the 2010 Fremantle Arts Centre Print Award Non-Acquisitive prize. His Drawing Machine project was exhibited in Hatched 09: The National Graduate Exhibition at PICA, as well as the International Symposium on Computational Aesthetics 09 in Victoria, Canada.

(www.emptybook.net)

Liang Luscombe is an independant artist, writer and curator based in Melbourne.



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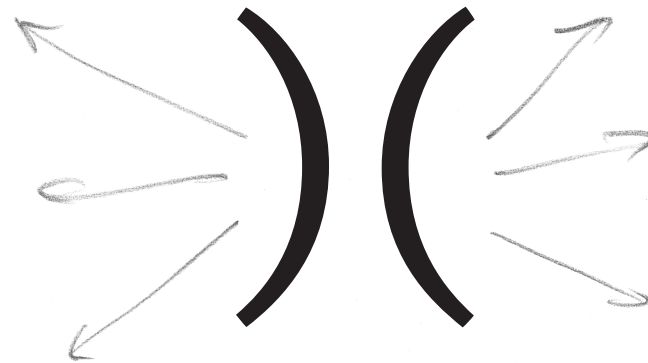
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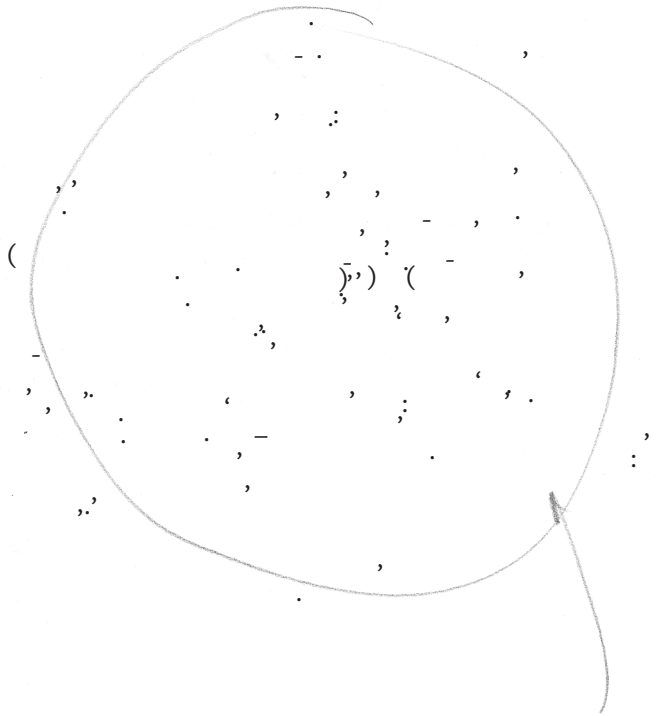
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benjamin forster
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all the punctuation within
this essay redistributed..

All the books, no matter how diverse they might be, are made up of the same elements: the space, the period, the comma, the twenty-two letters of the alphabet... In the vast Library there are no two identical books. From these inconvertible premises he deduced that the Library is total and that its shelves register all the possible combinations of the twenty-odd orthographical symbols (a number which, though extremely vast, is not infinite): In other words, all that is given to express, in all languages.

– Jorge Luis Borges, *The Library of Babel*

PAGINA UNO...

Benjamin Forster's practice in the past has used computers as an analogy for systems of logic and rationality. Through playing off these elements in his work, Forster achieves a dynamic practice that crosses computer programming, drawing and installation. Previously, Forster's artwork has found its way into books yet this exhibition marks a more deliberate investigation into the linguistic structures of the written word.

Jorge Luis Borges' short story *'The Library of Babel'* visualises the universe in the shape of the library. The infinite possibility of combinations within the library leads the narrator to believe that the library must contain great truths, and predictions for the future within the glut of information. This appears a bleak dream as the text leaves a lasting image of the library as an enduring and impenetrable monument.

For this exhibition Forster has published a book in which he has deleted all of the printed words, leaving only hand written notes of other readers on the page. In this action Forster has placed emphasis on those responses and ideas that we build from reading. A study of our changing interaction with the written word, Forster highlights the resonance formed between readers and text.

This kind of abstraction is then tweaked in his following work, in which he has erased all the text, leaving only the punctuation on the page. This resembles a series of abstracted notations - Forster shifts the viewers reading of the surface from linguistic to pictorial. Through this shift in our gaze, we start to see the written word as clutter. Forster's reduction not only has a lightness of weight but also appears as a diagram for future drawings, a dot-to-dot of pauses on the page.

Although Forster's exhibition is rich in complexity, it is important to note the simple basis of his investigation: the space, the period, the comma and the alphabet, a system we use everyday. However unlike Borges' narrator, Forster does not attempt to find meaning in the written content of language. Instead he uses the structures of possible combinations to investigate how this meaning is stored and presented within the book.

Liang Luscombe.