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Kaleidoscopic Erasures

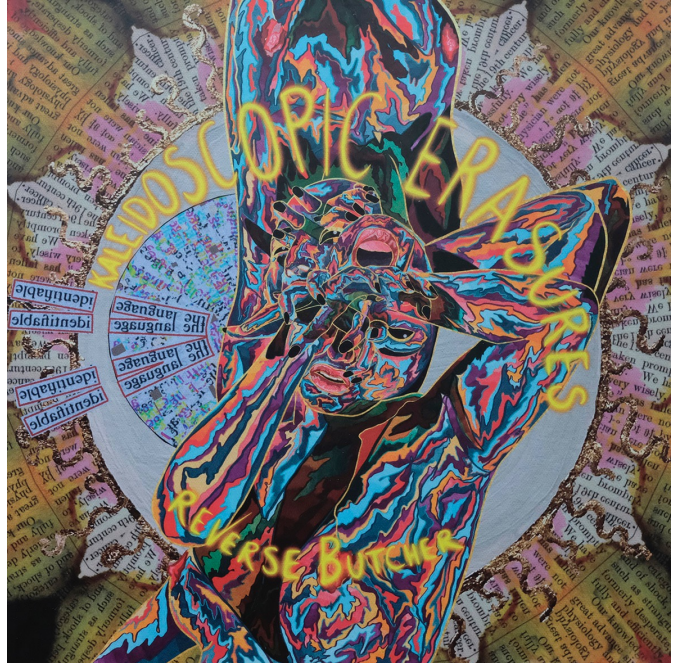
By rVb

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MORE than one hundred years ago, the French symbolist poet, Stephane Mallarmé (with “Un coup de dés”) opened the floodgate for the creative possibilities for space, an image value in its own right, on the page. Since then, all hell – quite rightly – has broken lose. So ... let it flood, let it shine, let it unfurl endlessly across the page. It is necessary now to say things that cannot be said with those polite, straight lines that used to stutter across pages in rows and columns.



The textual, in truth, always was the textural. We must read the image as much as the word, with its own rhymes, rhythms, resonances, repetitions, reversals, realignments, reminding that the word and the image are in this together and always have been.

Visual poets work at the interstices between these modes of meaning, the dark crevices of which are like those between the whorls on the surface of the sun, or the surface of the brain. Who knows how far down they might plunge and plunder into unconscious personal and cultural matter, cycling up again to the surface with what (as-yet) untold treasure?

The kaleidoscopic transformations in this body of work – the multiplication, rotation and overlays – build a monster that sings. But a monster whose voice is always surprising in its tender focus and guile. Here is the working of a clock face that has no before and after, no passage of time. This geometry has the freedom and constraint of the mandala built on centre, concentric peripheries and symmetries. With these structures meaning is specifically shaped, this way and that, as the spotlight of central focus inevitably also creates the out-of-focus, the peripheral, the refuse, waste, detritus. But that which is marginalised and erased as semantic overflow, like compost, becomes vital, visual fodder and context. Open up this can of worms and you get very rich soil.

Lines of text become lines of force, like the alignment of particles of meaning in invisible, electromagnetic, semantic pattern fields. Reading, as it fans around a hierarchy of repetition and reflection, appears final and declarative (each image has a definitive title), but is always provisional, random, implicative, local, contextual, funny. Like the spin of life.

There are hints here, in "Kaleidoscopic Erasures" of an alignment between these small, page geometries, with larger universal geometries, the cosmic operating systems, the mathematics of the stars, suggested in designs like "The Earth Vertical", "The Miniature Immense." There may also be correlations of both those geometries with the realities and mysteries of a bodily intelligence – "The Oppressed Sensual Temperament", "I Taste a Flavour in my Ears", "A Sensation of Philosophy" and "Meta Blood System." At core, these hints echo the co-identity of those other two central, mutually-orbiting dimensions, the word and the image, the textual and the visual, the semantic and the semiotic.

Here are new literatures underway, building the new literacies. Repetition in pattern is entrancement, in all its senses. To be entranced is to be transported out of a familiar mind state into another state. Perhaps this is all we can say, since the other state may be beyond the realm of reporting, out of the realm of language, light from a meaning-free zone.

The contemporary page is not a page with something on it, but a page that is something as itself, with all its spaces and elements in active array, perhaps pointing upstream along the psychosemantic stream to a more common ground between the usual dualities of meaning making. We must be willing to read this event on its own terms. We go along with it, or we go nowhere. Thence, these works are not difficult. We can readily enjoy the slipping and sliding between modes. rVb gives us enough rope. Euclid and Gutenberg, time-bound conveners of the line and grid, might themselves still enjoy this spin through the reading of the future.