26 Alphabets
(for Sol LeWitt)

derek beaulieu, editor
My own creative practice encompasses both visual poetry and conceptual writing. As the discussion around conceptual writing develops, I am intrigued by the line between these two genres and how they may intersect.

26 Alphabets (for Sol LeWitt) is the third project of this type I have edited. For each of the first two volumes, Simplex 17 (2007) and Lego 50-15 (2008), I presented a group or artists, poets and writers with a constrained vocabulary (a single sheet of dry-transfer lettering and the original patent for Lego, respectively) and requested they create a product using only the materials provided. I afforded room within the completed collections for every received piece with no editorial interference.

My task as editor was simply to approach a series of potential contributors with a set of instructions and then gather the responses.

With this pair of instruction- and constraint-based collections completed, I felt it appropriate that I turn my focus towards Sol LeWitt’s instruction-based conceptual artwork.

Sol LeWitt, in his “Sentences on Conceptual Art”—thirty-five sentences which operate both as a manifesto and as a piece of conceptual art in their own right—postulates that

28. Once the idea of the piece is established in the artist’s mind and the final form is decided, the process is carried out blindly. […]

29. The process is mechanical and should not be tampered with. It should run its course.

This shared processual base for conceptual art and conceptual writing is not to suggest that conceptual writing is a temporally-displaced adjunct to conceptual art, but instead that the two can be seen to share aesthetic values, and that conceptual art can be understood as a moment of Oulipian “anticipatory plagiary.”

LeWitt’s statements on mechanical procedurality are also vital for conceptual writing, as “[t]o work with a plan which is pre-set is one way of avoiding subjectivity”.

Materiality here is not one of humanist poetic—‘the stuff of poetry’—but rather one that is developed through the sheer mass of the extraordinary ordinary.

— derek beaulieu
contributors

Gareth Jenkins
Lorenzo Menoud
Oana Avasilichioaei
Helen Hajnoczky
Robert Fitterman
Donato Mancini
Gregory Betts
Jonathan Ball
Nico Vasilakis
Mark Laliberte
Eirikur Orn Norðdahl
Christian Bök
Harold Abramowitz
Johanna Drucker
Giles Goodland
Ross Priddle
Gitte Broeng
John Bennett
Crag Hill
Peter Ganick
Jeff Hilson
Peter Jaeger
Nick Thurston
Stephen McLaughlin
Kjetil Roed
kevin mcpherson eckhoff
ABCÉDER v. intr.
Hi folks;
in response to the work of Sol LeWitt,
this is a project invitation:

* 
On a single sheet of paper
in letters approximately one half inch tall
write the alphabet
from A to Z
*

send finished pieces to
derek beaulieu
2 - 733 2nd avenue nw
calgary alberta
canada T2N 0E4

by December 31st, 2008.

All pieces will be published in a limited edition
(with 2 copies to every contributor) Spring 2009.
In this sentence we find every letter of the alphabet, a system whose jumbled combinations fail to express the *empty word*—zero symbols—this dark question at the heart of our language, an invisible epsilon.

Jonathan Ball

*the empty word*
JOG VERB
QI KLUTZ
FAD CMW
SPHYNX
apple juice  
BREAD  
Corn Flakes  
dental floss  
eggs  
frozen fish  
Gravy Gran.  
hand soap  
Ice Cream  
Jam  
kaban  
Lemon Juice  
Milk  
nivea soft  
OJ Juice  
Parsley  
RADIO TIMES  
Soup  
TV MAG  
unsalted butter  
vanilla essence  
Washing-up liquid  
Xmas Cake  
YOGURT  
Zero Taste
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
UVWXYZabcdefg hijklmnopq
rstuvwxyz

Stephen McLaughlin
Rotterdam, 2009
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ ÆØÅ

ÆØÅ
the alphabet
from A to Z