I have recently completed a page-by-page response to E.A. Abbott’s Flatland, a Victorian science-fiction satirical novel which posits a two-dimensional universe inhabited entirely by polygons.

For each page of Abbott’s novel I have traced, by hand, a representation of each letter’s occurrence across every page of text. The generated result is a series of superimposed seismographic images which reduce the text in question into a two-dimensional schematic reminiscent of EKG results or stock reports.

This project builds upon my previous work in concrete poetry, and a theorizing of a briefly non-signifying poetic, where the graphic mark of text becomes fore-grounded both as a rhizomatic map of possibility, and as a record of authorial movement.

Much as the Victorian novel A Human Document gave rise to Tom Phillips’ ongoing graphic interpretation A Humument, Flatland has resulted in a book-length interpretation of the graphic possibilities of a text without text.

Derrida, writing on Blanchot, asked “How can one text, assuming its unity, give or present another to be read, without touching it, without saying anything about it, practically without referring to it?” Each page of my graphically-realized Flatland is a completely unique, diagrammatic representation of the occurrences of letters. By reducing reading and language into a paragrammatical statistical analysis, content is subsumed into graphical representation of how language covers a page.


– Derek Beaulieu
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Colophon:

Assembly of this edition of Flatland was completed on Bastille Day - July 14th, 2015 in New Orleans, Louisiana.

The covers were hand printed on a 19th century 9"x13" Kelsey Excelsior letterpress on vintage Strathmore laid paper, while the front and end sheets are salvaged ecru felt-finish stock, and the interior pages were pigment printed on 50% cotton Stenocraft English Bond. All interior text has been set in Cochin, 10 & 11pt.

This book has been hand-stitched in a limited edition of 40.

Project brokered by Jessica Smith.
Book design by J.S. Makkos & G. Fink.
Production with R. Howard.
derek beaulieu is the Visual Poetry editor at UBU and the author of KERN.