



'Waiter! I don't like cheese with holes!'

'Don't worry, Sir. Just eat the cheese and leave the holes at the side of the plate.'

American minimalist artist Carl Andre (b. 1935) has not publicly expressed his feelings about Emmental, but he did once make this statement: 'A thing is a hole in the thing it is not'. It's a dictum that seems to have as much to say about the nature of holes as it does about the nature of things. In other words, doesn't the converse logic apply: If a thing is a hole, then surely a hole is also a thing? Not simply an absence or a void, a hole is a material fact.

It's this 'thingness' of holes that issue 2 of 'Inscription' is concerned with. Scholars of the material text have been focused on the physical characteristics of the page, poring over the details of paper stock, parchment making and book construction. But in the process they are also confronted routinely with holes -- needleholes made in order to stitch pages together; tunnels made by bookworms and other pests; large irregular gaps as a result of flaws in the animal hide; pinpricks used by medieval scribes to mark out the layout of a manuscript page. Historically, the text is riddled with holes. They are not aberrations or quirks so much as integral features. The evolution of the book is unthinkable without them. We must have holes.

The contributors to this issue reverse the polarities of our reading, asking what is revealed if we focus not on the surface but on its perforations and gaps. What can these lacunae tell us about how texts were used in the past, and also their meanings in the present? In various different ways,

then, these essays show us new ways to do something tricky and counterintuitive: to 'read' a hole. Heather Wolfe's article uses the archive of seventeenth-century landowner and MP Sir Thomas Temple to explore 'early modern information management systems', innovating with holes and string to deal with paperwork. But her spellcheck's insistence on correcting 'filing-holes' to 'filling holes' inadvertently highlights contemporary archival dilemmas about how to categorise these perforations -- are they damage to be repaired or valuable historical evidence? Deidre Lynch and Craig Robertson, in their co-written piece, are also concerned with the history of filing, showing how widespread practices of pinning things to the page in the long nineteenth century anticipated the advent of the punched hole file. From this perspective of media archaeology, the book begins to look a very different kind of entity, provisional rather than permanent, and defined not in terms of its wholes but its holes.

James Misson analyses not holes 'in' the page but 'on' it, following one particular textual gap through six centuries and through various iterations in manuscript, typography and digital code. He shows that leaving a space presents a technological challenge and could often be a very physical process. As he puts it, 'textual absence must be constructed as material presence', in the form of wood and metal, or spit and paper used to separate pieces of type. Louis Lüthi also reflects, in a different context, on how gaps can assume their own material form. While Melville's doorstep novel 'Moby-Dick' may have been published in abridged form for time-pressed readers, Lüthi describes how these excisions have in turn made their way into publication: an uncanny, 'erratic and disjunctive' mirror image of the novel.

Galina Oustinova-Stjepanovic provides a fascinating insight into the 'Last Address' monuments being installed in Moscow and elsewhere to commemorate the long-disappeared victims of Stalinist terror. These plaques, with distinctive square apertures in place of an image, raise the question of how holes can signify, not only in the politically charged context of contemporary Russia, but perhaps more broadly amid fraught debates about public memorialisation and monuments. Michael Marcinkowski poses some similar questions, via his creative work which punches holes in the sonnet form. These circular voids might be unreadable, but they are perhaps eloquent in pointing us toward the gaps and elisions in the canon: white spaces that highlight just how white the literary tradition is. The question, for Paul Reynolds, is not so much what holes can say as what they can do. His 'Synthetic Glossary' provides a bewildering but playful ontology, exploding the hole into a multi-faceted thing with many

different behaviours. His starting point, as an artist and maker, provides a kind of interaction in which the hole is no passive entity but an actant, a 'third hand' working alongside his own.

For the artist Myriam Dion the hole has something of a similar agency. Aleksandra Kaminska and Juliette De Maeyer's interview with Dion investigates her practice of working with newspaper, cutting it to create intricate patterns reminiscent of lacework. But the outcome is as dependent on the material as the artist: incisions on the recto create unexpected meanings and juxtapositions on the verso. Dion's work involves a particular kind of spatial thinking, and an acute awareness of the two sidedness and topology of the hole. In contrast to Dion's painstaking filigree creations are the bullet holes fired through a book by South African-born artist Kendell Geers, which he discusses here in an interview with the editors of 'Inscription'. It's a violent act that leaves behind oddly delicate patterns of gunshot residue on the otherwise totally blank pages, asking maybe whether -- in certain contexts -- holes might be more eloquent than words. Simon Morris's photo-essay also makes the hole speak for itself, presenting without commentary a purely visual record of one of the most curious holes in the history of conceptual art -- Jan Dibbet's not-quite-square hole, a trick of perspective dug into a school playing field in the 1970s. Our cover image for this issue gives us a hole in the sea, not the ground -- a momentary chasm opened up by one of Fiona Banner's massive 1.5 tonne 'Full Stop' sculptures. Scaled-up punctuation marks, they were dropped onto the seabed by environmental activists Greenpeace to put a stop to damaging dredge trawling practices.

Harold Offeh's photographs, meanwhile, present the aperture of the mouth unable to speak, stopped up with crystals. And Erica Baum, too, plugs up holes to change their function. Her concertina-folded booklet of images of pianola rolls turn their punched holes into a kind of illegible found poetry, a cipher of enigmatic dots and dashes. Our pull-out print, Carolyn Thompson's 'The Beast In Me', is a collection of quotations from eight different novels, fragments that all begin with the word 'I'. The resulting circular narrative is a kind of quasi-autobiography, which can be read starting anywhere, but which contains in its centre a giant void. Diana Frid and Carla Nappi are our digital artists-in-residence, collaborating with Ian Truelove to turn their striking images of wormhole-eaten books into an immersive AR experience, giving us an odd worm's-eye view and rendering the page a peculiarly 3D object. Our vinyl record, meanwhile, is Christian Bok's specially-commissioned meditation on black holes, 'Supermassive', which takes us on a voyage into a void of an entirely different scale.

That is not the end of the pull-outs, fold outs, supplements and extras in this issue. We bring you in addition a hole-related postcard by Dieter Roth and Yoko Ono, and a bookmark from Miranda July. 'Inscription' is a publication of many parts, revelling in its dispersed quality. In this respect we model ourselves on one of our biggest influences, 'Aspen' (1965-71), a New York-based multimedia magazine edited by the remarkable but still little known Phyllis Johnson (1926-2001), and published by Roaring Fork Press in New York City. 'Aspen' famously took the form of a box containing a miscellany of inclusions, including posters, booklets, 8mm reels of film, essays, music scores, posters, DIY miniature cardboard sculptures, and a flexidisc. (You can see why we like 'Aspen'.) Johnson called 'Aspen' 'the first three-dimensional magazine', but in fact the original meaning of 'magazine' as something like a depot or holder for goods (from the Arabic 'maḡzin', 'maḡzan' ('storehouse'), from 'ḡazana' ('store up')) already anticipates this sense of a spacious container -- and we here at 'Inscription' love this idea of a journal as a space for holding non-aligned, non-harmonised items; of something-approaching-coherence meeting something-approaching-flux.

On the following spread you can see a copy of 'Aspen' issue four: it's based around the work on Canadian media theorist Marshall McLuhan and was designed by Quentin Fiore, and features, among its loose box-held parts, a record of early electronic music by Mario Davidovsky and Gordon Mumma ('for French Horn and Cybersonic Console'); a description of a nature trail for the blind; and a John Cage prose poem titled 'How To Improve the World (You Will Only Make Matters Worse)'. Even the advertisements follow this jostling-atoms format: a folder contains small booklets and sheets for the Sierra Club, United Airlines, MGB autos, Rémy Martin, and others.

Later editions of 'Aspen' featured pieces by Andy Warhol, Samuel Beckett, Sol LeWitt, Roland Barthes, Susan Sontag, Timothy Leary, Morton Feldman, Robert Rauschenberg, Yoko Ono and John Lennon, and a pre-publication excerpt of J.G. Ballard's 'Crash'. That is a line-up! 'Aspen' 3 was designed by Andy Warhol and came in what looked like a package of Fab laundry detergent. 'Aspen' 9 -- the Psychedelic Issue, subtitled 'Dreamweapon' -- had the words 'Lucifer, Lucifer, Bringer of Light' printed on the back and included inside Benno Friedman's chemically stained frames from Western movies. (You can read digital scans of the contents of all 10 editions of 'Aspen' at ubu.com.)

You'll notice that this issue displays many other diverse influences, beyond 'Aspen', however. Working with Fraser Muggeridge studio, we've meticulously designed each of our

articles to follow the conventions of a specific, earlier journal that we value and wish to acknowledge, from T. S. Eliot's 'Criterion' to the schlocky pulp print aesthetic of mid-century science-fiction magazine 'Amazing Stories'; from the 1970s political activism of 'Spare Rib' to the arch, media-savvy innovations of 'Art Monthly' -- along with thirteen others. This issue is all about eclecticism rather than uniformity and coherence. The look, font, and layout of each of our features is different: eighteen journals for the price of one.

In part, it's an investigation into the ways that forms, as D.F. McKenzie wrote, effect meaning: do the political, literary and artistic commitments of those journals shape our articles if our articles assume the 'mise-en-page' and typography of these precedent journals? What is the effect of this kind of visual quotation? It's also a celebration of the rich history of journal publishing. In the early years of the twentieth century, after all, journals were the crucial medium through which the boldest writing reached the world. Wyndham Lewis' 'Blast' was founded with the help of Ezra Pound as the voice of the Vorticist movement in 1914; Harriet Shaw Weaver's 'The Egoist' part-serialised James Joyce's 'Ulysses' a few years later; and Harriet Munroe's 'Poetry' ran from 1912, publishing early work by Wallace Stevens, H.D., and T.S. Eliot. (Triumphantly, it still exists today: the entire archive of 'Poetry' is available online for free, via the wonderful poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/archive).

If books are one-off heavy-weights, then journals have a lightness that encourages risk, and a seriality that creates connections and personality across editions. Journals work the minor miracle of being both item and series: the pearl, and the string of pearls. Here at 'Inscription' we aim for the mobility of the seventeenth-century pamphlet, the intellectual rigour of the monograph, the walk-through-wonder of the art gallery, and that delighted dance between form and content that Phyllis Johnson (again: we need to know more about Phyllis Johnson!) encouraged. 'Inscription' comes at you, each time, from an unexpected angle. Stay tuned.

Sincerely,

Editors



Aspen Issue 4

