

TYPING EXPLOSION

press kit

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TYPING EXPLOSION

a brief description of the typing explosion

Part performance art and part poetry assembly line, The Typing Explosion's poetry-performance happenings defy categorization.

During a typical performance the trio stages guerilla poetry construction on the sidewalk or in an office. Three typists in vintage 1960's secretarial clothing are seated behind three Olivetti Valentine typewriters. Above them, an overhead projector displays the rules of participation and code of conduct. To the left is a box of titles in a card catalog and to the right lies a vintage shredder. Participants begin by approaching the typists and selecting a title from the card catalog. The catalog contains over 3000 previously unused titles provided by the typists, as well as blank cards for participants to write their own title if they choose. Participants hand the title to the first typist, along with the usual donation of one dollar, and the process commences.

After a series of passes, punctuated by bells, horns and whistles (a secret language that the typists use, in lieu of speaking, to communicate with each other) an original work is created. Each poem takes about five minutes to complete and up to three poems can be in progress at one time. Although each participant chooses a title and receives a poem individually, sharing is encouraged and usually an impromptu community of exchanged readings occurs.

Whether opting to observe or actively participate, the Typing Explosion's performances are intended to engage its audience in the process of poetry as it unfolds, emphasizing the humor, spontaneity and excitement of collective creation.

The Typing Explosion has expanded and adapted its poetry-performance machine to produce a sort of symphony for typewriters, dance movement, and spoken word. They wrote, produced, and performed Dear Diane: A Typing Explosion Play, the most successful show in the history of the studio series at On The Boards in Seattle, WA. In response to critical praise and popular acclaim, the group produced Merry Christmas, Anyway at Seattle's Little Theatre, and have recently toured New York with a new work This Is a Test, receiving rave reviews in the Village Voice and Time Out New York. This piece will be premiered in Europe during the 50th Venice Biennale in Italy this summer. Typing Explosion published T.Y.P.O. The Typing Explosion Union Local 898's Touch Typing Method for Typewriters in spring 2003.

For more information contact Rachel Kessler @206.323.3420 Thank you for your consideration.

TYPING EXPLOSION

quotes

The Typing Explosion is intended to engage its audience in the process of poetry as it unfolds, emphasizing the humor, spontaneity and excitement of collective creation.

“It demonstrates that there can be this energy and fun in poetry. It can be spontaneous, and it can be joyous, and it can be many things.”

Academy of American Poets

“The Typing Explosion is new and hot and completely original... Subversive and even breakaway in the sense of eschewing the arrogance of poetry... Hellbent on persuading audiences to participate.”

USA Today

“Rapidly clicking keys... punctuated by burping horns, a constant chiming of bells and the periodic shriek of whistles... generate an assembly line of sound, one whose secret center is the actual production of serious writing.”

Seattle Times

“The writing world lost poetry when it switched over to digital tools! Remember the delicious smell of warm typewriter ribbon? That thrill when you sank your fingers into an old card catalog?”

San Jose Mercury

“Percussive not merely in the physical production of poetry, but the literary effects are also percussive. Jazz-riff methodology in composition, with interweaving leads, themes raised, set aside, revisited, and enough changes in time to keep a percussive snap, forming a whole greater than each worker-hero of the collaborative poetic realm.”

Jim Brewer, Allied Arts

“Anachronistic office equipment meets post-feminist sensibility... Droll, funny and avidly surrealist, Typing Explosion’s play ‘Dear Diane’ is one of the more original and frisky experimental performance ventures to surface in Seattle”

Misha Berson, Seattle Times

“Turning... their normally silent poem-typing ritual into a... very funny series of sketches. ‘Can I streets? Can I slush? Canaries like twitter,’ went one fractured phrase, proving that the Typing Explosion’s process, like any assembly line, is adaptable for production of just about anything.”

The Village Voice

TYPING EXPLOSION

a brief description: extended remix

All I Really Need (haiku)

Just clean underwear
Three inches of whiskey and
Half your attention

In the summer of 1998, three young women boarded Seattle city buses, lugging old electric typewriters, slightly uncomfortable in their pantyhose and looking like they'd stepped straight out of the typing pool in 1965. Rachel Kessler, Sarah Paul Ocampo, and Sierra Nelson set up their three typewriters on café tables during a busy gallery opening, posted Rules of Conduct and Rules for Participation, and waited for someone to approach them. Within minutes, a line of people trailed down the sidewalk, craning their necks to watch the prim-looking secretaries type instant poetry like furious robots. The clatter of pounding keys, the ding of call bells and bicycle horns honking attracted a crowd. While the typists clacked out verse on their machines, they did not speak to each other or any of the people gathered. Instead, they relied on a secret language of bells, horns and whistles to communicate when one typist was finished with a stanza and ready to pass the poem to another. The poems they composed were based on a title suggestion from audience participants, who selected a title from the typists' card catalog or wrote their own title on an index card. Many passing by would refer to the posted rules, and then consult a fellow on-looker. As people began to figure out that these ladies in secretarial drag were typing completely original, tailor-made poems, on the spot, for a dollar, they stood patiently waiting in line for over an hour. After three and a half hours, the typists were exhausted, their fingers numb, and they had to stop typing and turn people away. This first "type-in" performance garnered media attention and the loyal affection of the arts community almost as instantly as Typing Explosion's poems are typed.

Typing Explosion Union Local 898, comprised of Seattle, Washington (USA) poet/performers Sarah Paul Ocampo, Rachel LaRue Kessler, and Sierra Nelson, was conceived five years ago and has performed countless times up and down the West coast of the U.S., as well as New York City, receiving both national and international recognition. Part performance art and part poetry assembly line, The Typing Explosion's poetry-performance type-ins defy categorization. Producing nearly 5,000 poems-on-demand to date, the

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trio stages guerilla poetry construction in such diverse venues as art museums, nightclubs, libraries, beauty salons, rock festivals, gala events, dive bars, bookstores, galleries, theaters, as well as on the street – in intimate settings and for audiences of thousands.

A typical poetry-generating performance by Typing Explosion begins when an audience member chooses a title from over 300 original, pre-typed index cards provided by the typists (no title is used twice), or writes his or her own. Three typists in vintage 1960's secretarial clothing are seated behind three Olivetti Valentine typewriters. After the audience participant gives this title card to the first typist, typist #1 begins the poem. The paper the poem is typed on is then handed back and forth between the three typists as they take turns writing completely original, spontaneous verse on the page, creating a collaborative piece of writing. Up to three poems are worked on at one time. The typists DO NOT SPEAK, punctuating their process with bells, horns and whistles (a secret language that the typists use, in lieu of speaking, to communicate with each other). Meanwhile, the audience participant watches the poem progress from typewriter to typewriter until one of the typists deems a poem complete. The typists alert the audience that a poem is finished by honking their bike horns in unison. The participant signs for his or her poem, and receives an original Typing Explosion poem with an official stamp created from the title she or he chose. Audience participants may do what they like with their poems – read them aloud (generating an impromptu community of exchanged readings), swap with other participants, post them on-site, keep them secret and folded in their pockets, frame them, or give them away. The Typing Explosion keeps a carbon copy of every poem produced.

In addition to this type of performance, Typing Explosion has expanded and adapted their unique text-generating process to create original Visual and Audio Installations, Full-length Multimedia Theatrical Pieces, One-of-a-Kind Interactive Performance Works, and Publications. Previous projects include the feature-length theatrical piece *Dear Diane: a Typing Explosion Play*, which premiered at On the Boards in Seattle (May-June 2001), manipulating the setting and machinery of the Office to compose music, dance and dialogue. This interactive piece's extended, sold-out run was the best-attended performance in the history of On the Boards' studio series, receiving funding from the Cultural Authority of King County, Artist Trust GAP Grant, and the Brenamen-Jaechs Foundation. The Bellevue Art Museum commissioned their interactive poetry/hair salon audio and visual installation "Salon" with site-specific, interactive performances as part of their "Shaping Stories Exhibition", funded in part by the NEA (Dec-March 2002). Foxy Boss published T.Y.P.O. The Typing Explosion Union Local 898's Touch Typing Method for Typewrit-

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ers in spring 2003, funded in part by the Seattle Mayor's Office of Arts and Cultural Affairs. They have recently toured New York with a new work-in-progress "This Is a Test", receiving rave reviews in The Village Voice and Time Out New York. This piece will premier in Europe during the 50th Venice Biennale in Italy summer 2003.

On-site "inner-office" poetry installations of their spontaneous work occur all over Seattle in art galleries and lofts, abandoned offices and warehouses, and wherever they can set up shop. Typing Explosion has performed with acts such as art-rock band Negativland, singer-songwriter Erykah Badu, 33 Fainting Spells dance company, The Black Cat Orchestra, and writer/spoken word artist Michelle Tea of Sister Spit in Seattle, Portland, and San Francisco.

Typing Explosion's notoriety reached international proportions with feature articles in USA Today, The Washington Post, San Jose Mercury, Seattle Times, Seattle P-I; Jane, Spin, BUST, Allure, Sunset, and Resonance Magazines; and interviews on Studio 360 New York, KUOW American National Public Radio, and Canadian National Radio.