

Mimicry in nature takes on many forms ranging from self-defense to pseudocopulation. The lyrebird, an Australian songbird whose name becomes quite ironic in the phoenetic pronunciation, can replicate nearly 20 other birdcalls in addition to an index of jungle noises. It is not uncommon to hear the exactitude of his song range from car engine or a fire alarm to the discharge of a rifle, a chainsaw coming to life and the delicate click of a camera's shutter; all done for the purpose of impressing a mate yet the compositions are also a portrait of its surroundings and history.

Enter Michael Winslow. Winslow, a man who most anyone of a certain generation recalls as the freakishly gifted Larvelle Jones from *Police Academys 1* through *7*, is a man who, like the lyrebird, can mimic virtually any noise with his mouth. This talent enlisted him in any number of B-films in the Eighties and he is, for some, the hands-down grandfather of beat-boxing. *The History of the Typewriter as Recited by Michael Winslow* (2009) is titled as such because Winslow was undoubtedly the only person capable to represent the cultural and technical complexity of this work.

Ignacio Uriarte's newest video is a continuation of the artist's research and use of the office place complete with all its textures, materials, behaviours and structures combined as a total medium. He then filters this data through a language of art history including minimalism, conceptual art, hard-edge abstraction, land art, etc. The parameters for any given project are predetermined by the chosen medium's limitations, e.g. the A4's dimensions, the centimetre-wide ergonomic zone in the tablet that captures the perfect handwritten stroke on the A4's page, the myriad tonal variants of A4 found in paper marketed as 'white'; all build an endless potential of trajectories for monochromes and conceptual work that are meticulously (and masochistically) rendered in this bi-lingual fashion to analogise actions and processes legible (if not totally uncanny within cultural consciousness) to anyone who has worked in a cubicle or walked through the galleries of MoMA.

The History of the Typewriter as Recited by Michael Winslow is a tautology of self-description much in the way that a drawing is a document of its making from beginning to end. It recalls the iconic work from 1961 by Robert Morris *Box with the sound of its own making* where the object through an internal recording self-described its origin and outcome. Taking a sampling of nearly every model of typewriter from the 1880s to the 1980s, one can imagine an entire history of the last hundred years in all its World Wars, manifestoes, universal classics and private love letters in makes called Triumph, Invicta, Imperial, and Optima; mythologies found in Olympia, Urania and Hermes, Duchamp in the 1924 Underwood and our own Michael Winslow in the 1915 Faktotum. The title of this video is both that and the work's content as Uriarte has recorded this title phrase over and over through the keystrokes of each model so that the eponymous nature becomes meta-referential and almost onomatopoeic in form, subject matter and meaning.

Uriarte describes his own practice as a 'typology of the error', a call-and-answer between man and technology and each other's constant battle with accomplishing an objective perfectly despite the respective Sisyphean pride and reason for being. When this project is first described it sounds, from the beginning, like an exercise in failure as the range of sounds found across the many models of typewriters would be so subtly nuanced that the ability for man to replicate them through physical means is absurd. Like a *cantastoria* Winslow does not disappoint and a timeline of every technological *clic*, *chuc*, *stach*, *fhiit*, punctuated by swiffs of paper and reeling cranks comes forth from the actor's Cheshire cat grimace of oral, lingual and larynxical contortions. The result is not unlike the 'click consonants' of South Africa's Xhosa language, a cacophony of cryptophasic phonemes or some glossolalic language that might have been included on the Voyager Golden Record of 1977 intended for any intelligent extraterrestrial life.

In effect Uriarte has created an au(o)ral monument to memorialise the epoch of a device that usurped the handwritten delicacy of scripture, the fingerprint of the individual's voice, and then was itself made obsolete towards the end of the 20th Century with the advents of word processing systems, computer technology, and so on. No one born in the last decade will know what it means to press a key that is not merely touch sensitive: the musculature of the finger atrophied in the obvious need for a better method. Here the ironic relationship between man and machine is unmistakable. *The History of the Typewriter as Recited by Michael Winslow* is a diachronic map of technological anthropology, a history of Modernity and at the same time mimicry as eulogy.

Aaron Moulton

Aaron Moulton is a curator of contemporary art and, with his wife Mette Ravnkilde Nielsen, founder of the commercial gallery FEINKOST in Berlin.



The Invention of Letters

Since my last e-mail, when I mentioned the idea of a series of typewriter drawings, I have been thinking and experimenting non-stop and I came up with a work that I think would go very well with *The History of the Typewriter as Recited by Michael Winslow* and fit very well in the space. It's not a series of typewriter drawings but something similar. Here is the story:

I found this website:
<http://www.codestyle.org/css/font-family/sampler-CombinedResults.shtml>

The website lists the various fonts installed in more than 90% of the computers worldwide as of today. It is separated by platform: Mac, PC, and Linux. On the list you can read for example that Helvetica is installed on 100% of Macs but in less than 8% of PCs; Arial is installed in around 98% of both Macs and PCs. This information is important for web-designers because they need to pick fonts that almost everybody can display and read on their computers because they were and continue to be pre-installed by the software companies.

It also foreshadows how the written text on the internet will look like in the future: pretty much the same, because no responsible designer will take the risk that their website is not displayed properly.

I only selected the types of fonts that are installed in more than 90% of MACs and PCs as of May 2010. They represent 'The survival of the fittest' fonts. Often the types are not the best or best-looking. For example, Arial is a poorly done copy of Helvetica. Microsoft didn't want to pay royalties to the designers of Helvetica, so they designed their own type. It is a bit like Aalvar Alto's furniture. If you see his (3 legged stacking) stool, you would probably first think of Ikea then of Aalvar Alto who designed it. Ikea probably made a dozen of quite similar copies that are now household designs that we all know.

For this suite of prints, I try to show the character of each font by displaying the full alphabet in a mantra-like composition that makes very visible the character of each font (the length and density of each letter) and allows the reader/viewer to read the alphabet in different ways and orders. I selected these seven not particularly beautiful fonts for different historical, mostly entrepreneurial reasons that shape the visual appearance of the stuff we see and read today when we turn on a computer.

I think these would be a nice counterpoint to the *The History of the Typewriter as Recited by Michael Winslow* film: 100 years of history vs today; writing with a typewriter vs writing with a computer. In both cases there is a rather spiritual presence of the written word and the writing tool.

Ignacio Uriarte

Excerpt from an email to Leigh Robb on 20 May, 2010

Ignacio Uriarte

The Invention of Letters
Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts
26 June – 25 August, 2010

Curated by Leigh Robb

List of Works

The History of the Typewriter as Recited by Michael Winslow
2009
HD-Film (RED) on BluRay
20 mins, 52 secs

The fonts installed in 90% of MACs and PCs worldwide as of June 2010 (Arial, Arial Black, Georgia, Courier New, Times New Roman, Trebuchet MS, Verdana)
2010
7 piezo prints on Hahnemühle Potorag
dimensions variable

Biography

Ignacio Uriarte was born and raised in 1972 in Krefeld, Germany. From 1992 to 1995 he studied Business Administration in Madrid and Mannheim and went on to work for corporations such as Siemens, Canon, Interlub and Agilent Technologies in Germany, Spain and Mexico. Parallel to his administrative work, he studied screenplay at the Centro de Artes Audiovisuales in Guadalajara, Mexico from 1999 to 2001 resigned from his last full-time business job in 2005, dedicating himself to what he describes as, office art. He has lived and worked in Berlin since 2007.

In 2010 Ignacio Uriarte has a solo show at Galerie Feikost, Berlin, Vierter Stock, Berlin and the Kunstverein Arnsberg and also features in the group exhibition Drawing Time at Ensemble Poirel. Ignacio's work can be found in the public collections of La Panera, Lleida; CAM, Alicante; ARTIUM, Vitoria; Fundación Marcelino Botín, Santander; MUSAC, León, Colección Jumex, Mexico City; and the FRAC Piemonte. Ignacio Uriarte is represented by Galerie Feikost, Berlin and Nogeuras Blanchard, Barcelona.



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