

BlazeVOX Interview with Anne Gorrick

Tell me about your book.

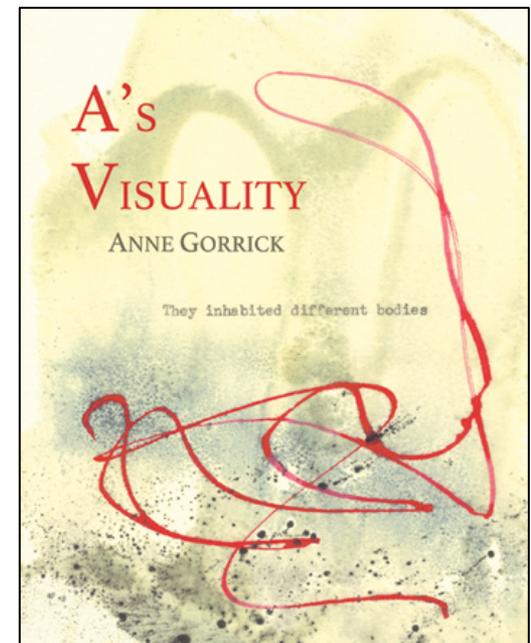
A's **Visuality** is a book in two parts that seeks to reconcile and erase a line between the textual and visual. I often can't tell the difference between looking and reading, finding myself reading landscapes and visual art, as much as looking at text.

The first part of the book began as a series of unbound artist's books. Each book is a series of 16 pages of encaustic monotypes with typewritten text, and collaged and drawn elements. After I made these books, I realized that I could transcribe the text from each one to make a blocky, vaguely sonnetty shaped poem. The text for each poem is vandalized and furiously repurposed from various art history texts mostly dealing with the artists Johns, Mitchell and Rauschenberg. That each artist's book could simultaneously exist as a transcribed poem seemed a revelation in quantum poetics, or a poem existing in two ways, in two places at once.

The second part of the book is literally love songs to paint colors. For many years, I curated a reading series, **Cadmium Text**, at the Gallery R&F Handmade Paints in Kingston, NY, a paint manufacturer of indescribably delicious encaustic paint and oil sticks. The reading series was again an effort to connect the textual and the visual by floating poetry in a gallery setting. In these poems, I took all the text describing R&F's paint colors, and processed it, and made poems out of it. Structurally, many of the poems resemble the work I did in **Kyotologic**, a rewriting/revisioning of the **Pillow Book of Sei Shonogon**.

What influenced this book?

All the readers I heard at Cadmium Text, the work of Jasper Johns (who famously worked in encaustic, one of the paint types manufactured at R&F), friends who were doing innovative work in various disciplines (Lynn Behrendt, Geof Huth, Maryrose Larkin, Scott Helmes, Steve Cotten). I remember boring the pants off



some friends at MOMA during the time I wrote this book; I was hypnotized by a small show of Picasso's guitars - painted ones, collaged ones, sculpted ones. It's my favorite thing ever: working in variations on the same form. I was also trying learn Johns' cross-hatched "usuyuki" marking making at the time, and a Cadmium listener gifted me with a bottle of handmade walnut ink, which made it into the artist's book.

Where does this book fit into your career as a writer?

It's part of a long investigation into a particular strain of mysterious poetic forms that I am not quite ready to give up. I play with them one more time in a manuscript of poems I've been working on about different perfumes: a block of text that hugs the right side of the page, with scroll-like text cascading on the left, broken up by text that bridges both margins between sections. In some ways, I think I them as polyvocal musical scores and have read the poems this way.

This book also closes the circuit on the textual and visual for me. I'm not writer or artist. I'm both, and the book is both.

As for "my career as a writer?" I work in educational administration, and poetry has always been something I love and could do all the time, but it's not something I could ever afford to quit my day job for. So I sneak it in wherever I can, which can get very tricky, difficult sometimes. The sense of not enough time is always at my back.

If you had to convince a friend or colleague to read this book, what might you tell them?

I've been pleasantly surprised with this book that friends who are non-poets are enjoying it too. Maybe the color plates of the artist's books help create an "in" to the work. Read it because your sensibilities of curiosity and wonder are still revving, because the book is filled with text and art bodies, fields.

You might see a sudden long vista in a gallery of closed woods.

Tell me about the last literary reading you attended.

I just saw Bernadette Mayer and Clark Coolidge read, and George Quasha perform (with Clark Coolidge on drums, Charles Stein on voice and David Arner on piano) at Bard College. I live nearby.

When did you realize you we're a writer?

I always was. It wasn't something I became. As soon as I acquired language I wanted to write it down. I've been writing seriously for a loooooong time. My parents are word game people - my mother is a Scrabble goddess and my dad likes New York Times crosswords. So maybe it's not so weird that I fell from their

tree. When I was six years old, I wrote my first “novel,” having filled up a college-ruled piece of paper with writing. “College-ruled” paper was a huge thing to me when I was a kid.

Tell us about your process: Pen and Paper, computer, notebooks ... how do you write?

All of the above. The FOLIOS in this book were typewritten on an old green 50s typewriter, and then transcribed onto a computer. The “Chromatic Sweep” section based on paint color descriptions was heavily processed on a computer. I keep notebooks, a notebook of things I want to Google search to make poems out of, lists, stacks of old books to make into new objects. I’m fussy about pens. I like Muji notebooks. I like fountain pens, but I don’t use them. I’m not particular about my writing space, and am glad not to over-ritualize it. I’m often working on overlapping manuscripts, with a beautiful row of black document boxes lined up on a shelf above my desk. My desk is an old, massive oak one that my husband used to rebuild motors on when he was younger. It’s very scarred, which is pleasurable.

How do you handle a bad review of your work?

I try not to believe the bad ones too much or the good ones. I just want to do my work.

Which writer would you most like to have a drink with, and why?

I’m not sure he drank, but I’d love to hike and chat with Vladimir Nabokov in the Chiracahua Mountains chasing butterflies during June of 1953 when he was writing *Lolita*. I think it might have been a late spring, so the butterflies were elusive. He stayed in Portal, AZ, where a good friend of mine lives now.

And I would definitely have a drink with Frida Kahlo. I DID have a drink at her house in Mexico City, but she wasn’t there anymore.

What's the biggest mistake you've made as a writer?

I’m not gregarious enough. I’m usually happiest writing, being outside, moving through the world, hiking, biking (or it was tennis, running).

What's the worst advice you hear authors give writers?

I hate it when people say “write what you know” and “be specific.” There’s so little magic in that. I don’t believe that language is solely photorealistic and utilitarian. Why CAN’T language be like paint? I’m

waiting around waiting to hear what language comes to tell me. Magic happens for me when I don't try to control things too much. Could be a big mistake, but it is joyful.

What scares you the most?

Not doing the things I'm scared to do, so I try to push myself.

Where do you buy your books?

I try to buy books from publishers first, then SPD, and then Amazon. I also buy a lot of used books, because my appetites exceed my budget. Plus I'm always finding things that are out of print.

Who are you reading now?

1491: New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus by Charles C. Mann; poetry by Joy Harjo; **Bombyonder** by Reb Livingston; **Sun Stigmata** by Eileen Tabios; **Fire Season** by Philip Connors; a book about indigo dye; a book about plants of the Northern Chihuahuan desert; a book of images of the architecture by Luis Barragán.

I always have a lot of things going at once. Clouds of books settle on me.

What is your favorite TV show at the moment?

We don't watch TV. When we asked our cable company to come out and remove the cable line, they said they never got that request before. We do have a TV though to watch movies, etc. I am liking **Girls**, but haven't seen the recent ones.

Bonus Round:

What do you want the world to know about you? Make it juicy ...

Juicy hmmm. That would be about the juice. I'm a little overly interested in perfume, which they call "juice." Being aware of scent is like being able to "see" another dimension and it makes the world so much richer. At this moment, I'm wearing Amber Noir by the Sonoma Scent Studio, a drenched liturgical scent.

Poetry is as much a sense to me as smell. A way of echolocating to find the edges of the world.