

POETIC ARCHITECTURE:

A series of twelve progressively more difficult quizzes, with two unexpected pieces of correspondence, dedicated to the

©onceptual Poetries and its Others Symposium [University of Arizona Poetry Center, May, 2008], whose artfully designed program guide, complete with

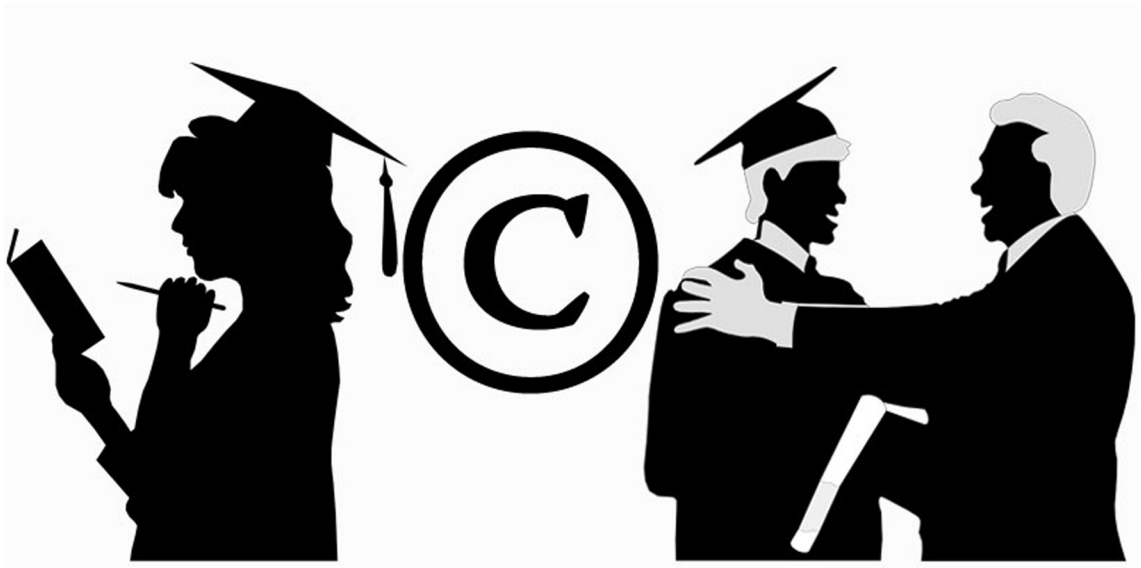
©onceptual Poet photos and bios detailing book publications and academic affiliations, rivals that of any exhibit brochure of any Fine Arts Museum of the world, for which we should be thankful, of course, as such instructive over-the-top irony is rare, even for our current avant-garde scene, where an exorbitant surplus of unintentionally staged moments of Dramatic Irony so often makes one gape in dazed wonder, as if the vista were Dubai, or something of the sort.

POETIC ARCHITECTURE

Kent Johnson

Photography by Geoffrey Gatza

***BlazeVOX [books]
Kenmore, NY***



Warm-up Question

[It is not necessary to answer this one, only to think about it (in the sense of setting the mood), before tackling the Quizzes below.]

Is poetry ever distinct from architecture? Can it exist, in the most material sense, without it? Think of writing practices, their technologies, and enclosures: pens, paper, computers, printing presses, ateliers, summer retreat cabins, salons, conferences, academic offices, classrooms, publisher buildings, the reading space, and so on. Again: Is poetry ever separate from architecture? One might protest: "But architecture is a form of poetry, really," which, if true, would not cancel the possibility that there is an "always/already" indivisible macro-historical conflation of practices. What do you think?



Quiz #1

- 1) *Can a conceptual poem have a blueprint?*
- 2) *Does a door connect the "inside" and "outside"?*
- 3) *What kind of door should it be: swinging or sliding?*
- 4) *Is there plumbing and where does it go?*



Quiz #2

- 1) *Is a dactyl a brick or a gargoyle? Justify.*
- 2) *What is the relationship of engineering to conceptual poetic architecture? Is the architect-poet responsible for designing a structure that can actually be built? If so, why?*
- 3) *Can concepts of architectural acoustics (reflection, diffusion, diffraction of waves) be applied to conceptual poetry? Specifically, is the turn toward spatial rigor in concert hall structures by acoustical architects like Leo Baranek, Harold Marshall, and Michael Barron (the isolation of orthogonal parameters so as to fine-tune sound reflection and reverberation via the control of initial time-delay gaps) an argument of sorts for further (and urgent) investigations into rigorous prosodic structure, without which poetry is fated to continue its downward spiral into incomprehensible sonic and semantic muddle? Investigation, that is, not in the banal sense of traditional Western forms, but in the sense of Oulipean mathematical rigor, or the fractally complex prosodies of advanced rap (which make avant-garde formalists, of whatever shade, seem like clog dancers)...*
- 4) *Are words in a conceptual poem a) rooms b) furniture c) walls d) vestibules e) windows f) corridors g) other? Explain.*