

BURiED in THE SNOW

**J.A. DEATON
MAXIMILLIAN GUY
BROOK HSU
BEN MEDANSKY
SYDNEY SHEN
NOBUO UEMATSU**

AT

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The boy is tearing the book. He loves to tear it.

Example of the first use of symbols for grammatical analysis (Barnard, F. A. P. (1836). *Analytic Grammar; With Symbolic Illustration*. New York: E. French.) Image courtesy of Karl Hagen. *The Early History of Sentence Diagrams*, 2015. Accessed February 2019.

I. HOW TO EXPRESS ZERO IN ROMAN NUMERALS

On his keyring, there is a card to the public library and a "key" for opening up bottles of beer. Her apartment has three doors and a gate, corresponding to the keys on his ring. I use the relative locations of the library card and the beer key to remember which key goes to which door, and which goes to the gate.

I removed the beer key and the library card one day. When I put them back into the ring, they were in a different order—I couldn't figure out which key went to which door—the syntax of the place has changed, but not by any logic of its own; The cypher had shifted.

Imagine a ring with a million keys, and someone keeps asking you to lend your library card.

-N. Hitchcock, Chicago, IL

BURIED in THE SNOW is a configuration of artworks from the curator's personal collection, joined by additional works by Brook Hsu and Maxamilian Guy, along with the titular work by composer Nobuo Uematsu. The adjacent work is not included.

Fig. 1
Dieter Roth *Stupidogramm*
(*Stupidogram*), 1962 Pencil on printed paper b: Pencil on printed paper 6 x 4" (15.2 x 10.2 cm) The Judith Rothschild Foundation Contemporary Drawings Collection Gift (purchase, and gift, in part, of The Eileen and Michael Cohen Collection) 2913.2005 © 2019 Estate of Dieter Roth Courtesy Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY

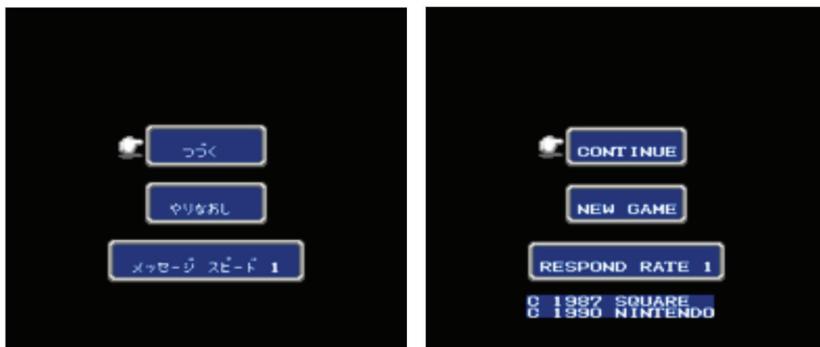


Fig. 2-3 Main menu screens, Final Fantasy I (Square, Nintendo), Left: Japanese release (1987), right: North American release (1990)

Nobuo Uematsu is the principal composer for the videogame series Final Fantasy. He authored the extensive scores for over half of the series's releases, each comprising of nearly 100 individual tracks. To understand Uematsu's work on the series, his music must be contextualized by the game. Final Fantasy is a series of fantastic narratives in the role-playing genre unfolding similarly to a novel, with a beginning, middle and end. Throughout the gameplay, the player controls a number of different protagonists within the story, switching back and forth as the game dictates. The player's capacity to determine the narrative's development is relatively limited. Instead of offering an open-ended world, the player is guided through a story with the understanding that narrative completion is the goal. In these game worlds, each of Uematsu's compositions are associated with different narratological components--either a character, a location, or the occasional cut-scene. These associations are the gum that holds the music to the game play. The game itself may require hundreds of hours for a player to complete, during which they may sometimes spend hours within a single location while solving puzzles, playing mini-games, or accruing points in order for their character to develop the abilities required to progress the game's narrative. It is perhaps easily explained that each composition, for this reason, loops from its end back to its beginning--offering the player a sort of sonic continuity to the scenario they are playing through within the larger game narrative.

One of the side-effects of employing the loop as a primary compositional structure is that it facilitates within the player a sometimes involuntary recall of each scene of the game; called "music-related memory."¹ This sonic association infuses recollection with an air of sentimentality. In fact, this is arguably the most emotionally textured component to the world of the game, for completing the game sans audio is of course possible, though not necessarily enjoyable. The bond between each composition and its associated location is so strong, that when a track is heard when divorced from the gameplay, those who have dedicated substantial time to the game will likely remember the location bound to the composition. This is not surprising because even as a player may be focusing their attention on the narrative of the game--character development, plot etc--they spend the most real time with Uematsu's songs.

While this bond between a musical and pictorial media is nothing new--it can

1 Jäncke, Lutz. "Music, Memory and Emotion." Journal of Biology. BioMed Central, August 8, 2008.

雪に閉ざされて

プレイング・ポイント ← エアリスを失った驚しみを引かずのまま、まっ白く冷たい世界に足を踏み入れたクラウド達。無邪気に遊ぶ子供達。そして
 秘められたエアリスの過去……。ピアノではちょっと表現しにくい曲かもしれませんが、指節を離れて音程気をついで下さい。圖からは、右手が2分節
 ごとにメロディーとオブリガートを演奏しますので1分節単位でプレイしましょう。

♩ = 106

A Cmaj7

The first system of the musical score is in 3/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The tempo is marked as ♩ = 106. The system is labeled 'A Cmaj7'. The right hand (treble clef) plays a melody starting on G4, moving to A4, B4, and C5. The left hand (bass clef) plays a bass line starting on C4, moving to D4, E4, and F#4. The bass line includes fingerings (1, 2, 3, 4) and dynamic markings (p, sfz).

Bm7

The second system of the musical score is in 3/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The system is labeled 'Bm7'. The right hand (treble clef) plays a melody starting on G4, moving to A4, B4, and C5. The left hand (bass clef) plays a bass line starting on C4, moving to D4, E4, and F#4. The bass line includes fingerings (1, 2, 3, 4) and dynamic markings (p, sfz).

Cmaj7

The third system of the musical score is in 3/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The system is labeled 'Cmaj7'. The right hand (treble clef) plays a melody starting on G4, moving to A4, B4, and C5. The left hand (bass clef) plays a bass line starting on C4, moving to D4, E4, and F#4. The bass line includes dynamic markings (p, sfz).

be found in advertising jingles, opening title sequences of television shows and films—the looping nature of Nobuo Uematsu's compositions proposes a sort of containment that is not analogous to other occurrences also facilitating recall of the images they are prescribed to. The additional layers of interaction and coinciding emotional engagement amplify this relationship exponentially. Because advancing the narrative is contingent on the player's interaction with a fixed set of rules, a player's memory is augmented by the possibility to produce the precise situation over and over. The result is a “frozenness” unique to video games. Uematsu's employ of the loop accommodates this relationship between a player and game.² In the case of Final Fantasy, the player may even decide to stand up and walk away from the controller, leaving the characters to fend for themselves—they typically stand in the same spot and wait for the player to return... Standing and listening to whichever of Uematsu's tracks is associated with where they are in the game world.

The score of the game is intended to emotionally orient the player within the narrative, but does not directly dictate their actions on a rule-based level. The Final Fantasy series is novelesque in its plot arc. As noted above, the rules of the game while they may seem open at points, provide a narrative funnel from beginning to end. From a distant perspective, there is no room for substantial deviation, though minor player decisions can affect correspondent minor elements of a character's development. The game tree of interaction is quite limited within the series on the whole. Uematsu's compositions provide a formal counterweight to the narrative funnel, allowing for an open-ended, subjective interpretation via each track's associative powers.

The allowances granted to the player for interpretation push Uematsu's songs, in part, towards the category of toys.³ Toys (as opposed to games) are typically the objects of open-ended play, in which the player determines the structure of play for themselves rather than adherence to a set of clearly defined rules. The only rules that are bound to a toy are suggestive, and inherent within its design. If the toy is a toy car, then a child will likely imitate the sounds of a car with their mouth. If the toy is a figurine, a child will likely pretend as if it is doing something that a person might do. If the toy is a stick, and perhaps a toy sword at the same time—a matter of interpretation—the stick has come unmoored from its “stickness” and becomes something else; its manipulation is integrated within the “magic circle” of play, thus breaking the above imperative about play and design, or at least expanding it into a larger world that influences play.⁴ Important to these examples is that the

2 Manetas, Miltos. “Happiness Is Heavy.” Made in USA/ Bernadette Corporation, 2000.

Miltos Manetas describes his experience playing “F/A-18 Hornet”—an early recreational flight simulation game. He marvels at the player's ability to execute the same sequences of game-play ad infinitum. For Manetas, this quality demonstrates a frozenness—much like in photography—due to the preciseness of each reenactment, and the player's ability to relive in-game scenarios. “F/A-18 Hornet” is the subject of his 1996 video work entitled Miracle.

3 Juul, Jesper. “The Loose Ends.” Edited by Marinka Copier and Joost Raessens. In *The Game, the Player, the World: Looking for a Heart of Gamesness*. Proceedings of Level Up: Digital Games Research Conference, Utrecht University, Utrecht. 2003. Accessed July 26, 2019.

Jesper Juul cites game theorist and developer Greg Costikyan's description of the avatars in Will Wright's games, including *The Sims*, as more akin to “toys” than the typical avatars. This terminology relates to a relative lack of in-game direction given to the player in establishing goals. Instead, players are invited to proceed based on their own sentiments, which in this case often have to do with projection, or memesis. Importantly, toys are seen as a product of interpretation and a confluence of contextual circumstances.

4 Salen, Katie, and Eric Zimmerman. *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003.

B' Cmaj7

1 2 3

8va -

Bm7

1 2 3

8va -

A⁺m7

1 2 3 4 5

8va -

Gmaj7

1 2 3

8va -

(D.C. time with Repeat)

C Em7

1 2 3

Dm7

8va -

1. Cmaj7

8va -

Bm7

8va -

2. Cmaj7

8va -

F#m7

8va -

object of the play has discrete physical characteristics—a thing with clear boundaries. Equally important is that the players are propelled by something within their imaginations—they are activated.

A part of what makes Uematsu's compositions for Final Fantasy unique is that by their own internal logic maintain some toy-like qualities in their open-ended interpretation and formal composition. When the player leaves the controls—prompting the avatar to do nothing but stand and await their return—the music assumes the same waiting status. Its loop reiterates the stasis of the character. The needle's location on the track as the user returns is inconsequential not just in game play, but within the logic of the composition. It will always return to the precise moment of when the player left the controls in the first place. In this sense, the composition is as static as the disengaged avatar. It waits to jump to life as the player picks up the controller, despite the fact that the track has continued to play.

The activation of the compositions is not just a byproduct of proximity to the rest of the gameplay. It is inbuilt to the compositions themselves. If we were to visualize most songs—to draw it on a piece of paper—either as notation, or as a simple line, its edges would not meet one another—there would be no direct linkage between the end and the beginning. However to consider Uematsu's work, we start to think in the form of a barrel or a circle, whereas the barrel turns, and like a phonograph cylinder, inevitably ending up in the same place it started.

Here we have identified in Uematsu's compositions two seemingly competing formal traits: The first akin to that of the toy, which can be held, carried and manipulated by means of interpretation as it is brought into the magic circle, and secondly the geospatial qualities of a location, in that his tracks are architectonically enveloping—seemingly echoing forever off the encoded walls of the gamespace. In this way, his compositions can at once be encircled and encircling.

To offer a comparison to another relatively new mode of aesthetic expression by which to measure the above analysis, we can look at the ways in which animated .gifs have evolved into their current cultural context. The animated .gif format, as a moving image, is contained in a similar formal manner to Uematsu's looping compositions, and now finds itself in a privileged position maintaining among images as a syntactical element ---within language, in that it may function as a replacement or stand-in for words in textual conversation. This is also increasingly the case with emojis which are the most recent iteration of emoticons. In fact, animated .gifs in chat culture (which have been increasingly mainstreamed in recent years) is now propagated by inbuilt functionality of popular chat software.⁵ The origins of these images and their linguistic potential can be traced to online forums.⁶ Their usage follows two specific conventions. The first is a hybrid of an avatar and actual text: The image of a figure accompanies text and is positioned in such a way to impress that the figure is vocalizing the textual content. The second is that of a reaction, which is often posted in reply to posts following the first convention. In this case, a figurative image supplants text completely,

Salen and Zimmerman define the "magic circle," in part, as the state in which players reach a consensus on the rules of the game, allowing it to be played. Players' goals within the game, and any rule-based competition are defined by the magic circle. In open-ended play, the magic circle is permeable-incorporating a variety of objects, locations and interactions, based on the whims of the player(s).

5 Tinder. (2016). Los Angeles, CA: Tinder, Inc.

In 2016, the commercial dating application Tinder included an updated chat feature which allows users to insert animated .gifs directly into the chat window, in lieu of text.

6 Senft, Theresa M. "Emoticon." Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., October 8, 2018.

Gmaj7

System 1: Treble clef, G major. Chord Gmaj7. Rhythm: quarter notes. Fingering: 1, 2, 3, 4. Fingerings: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. Fingerings: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. Fingerings: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1.

Cmaj7

System 2: Treble clef, C major. Chord Cmaj7. Rhythm: quarter notes. Fingering: 1, 2, 3, 4. Fingerings: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. Fingerings: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. Fingerings: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1.

Bm7

System 3: Treble clef, B minor. Chord Bm7. Rhythm: quarter notes. Fingering: 1, 2, 3, 4. Fingerings: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. Fingerings: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. Fingerings: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1.

Cmaj7

System 4: Treble clef, C major. Chord Cmaj7. Rhythm: quarter notes. Fingering: 1, 2, 3, 4. Fingerings: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. Fingerings: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. Fingerings: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1.

Gmaj7

System 5: Treble clef, G major. Chord Gmaj7. Rhythm: quarter notes. Fingering: 1, 2, 3, 4. Fingerings: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. Fingerings: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. Fingerings: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1.

all while maintaining contextual legibility.⁷ It is often the case that the animated images are themselves low resolution, filmic crops of larger narratives, i.e. a seconds-long sequence from a popular film in which an actor performs an expression that equally shares relevance to the original source narrative and the online conversation it is injected into. This phenomenon of linguistic resituation is not exactly unique to online chat culture—the quotation of lines from movies or books made in vocal conversation is similar—yet the supplanting of text with image in this context disallows for vernacular misquotation by the precision of its reproduction.

Structurally speaking, Uematsu's compositions, and animated .gifs make birth from the same constraints imposed by silicone-based computing—contending with issues of file weight, resolution, and the necessity to gauge efficiency and elegance in their production. They are also divorced from their initial narrative contexts in the same manner, and are then accelerated into a plurality of situations within robust, decentralized communication networks where standardized image interpretation is native on a technical level. Uematsu's work and animated .gifs share a common trajectory in the manner in which they are mobilized—or encircled—that their aesthetic containment by employing the loop as their essential narrative form provides the open-endedness required to resituate them within various contexts, while simultaneously preserving their initial narratives.

Uematsu's scores, once divorced from the gameplay and sited in a concert hall and performed live, become orchestral by translation. From 2002 through 2010, he also lead the rock band The Black Mages, who performed some of his less environmental arrangements—battle themes, etc. His other band, Earthbound Papas, which was formed in the wake of The Black Mages breakup, and performs similar titles. In other cases, his compositions appear as sheet music to be played at home, purchasable soundtracks in the iTunes store, and YouTube videos showing only a still image of the video game that is associated with the song.

Within the video game Nobuo Uematsu's work positions itself as the narrator. The characters do not hear the music, but rather feel it. This maneuver allows the music-as-narrator to impart the characters emotions onto the player. This becomes evident, especially in compositions linked to singular events rather than locations, which are the songs most often performed by Uematsu's rock bands. However, his other compositions, those tied to a location within the game, project the emotional texture onto the place. As with most dimensional spaces entered via one's personal device, in particular a stationary one such as a console or home computer, are dually sited—they are within the screen, yet they are also without it. Uematsu acknowledges this in form in his composition Prelude—a work appearing in nearly every edition from the series. This piece stands out from the rest of the game's soundtrack because it is cued during the opening credit sequence and continues at the interstitial menu screen, coinciding with text inviting the player to begin or continue the game (Fig. 1-2). The tonality of the composition is similar to those assigned locations in gameplay, suggesting that it too inhabits a space. It does, in fact, but its location is not one of the game, but the space where the console is sited—player's bodily space—outside of the screen.

7 Asuncion, Justin. "Reaction Images." Edited by Y. F. Know Your Meme, October 24, 2019.

J. A. Deaton (American, 1937–2000) Joseph Arthur Deaton was an artist, engineer and baseball player. Born in West Texas, he spent his early life on the Deaton Ranch in Terrell County, TX. Working in oil on canvas and panel, he produced numerous works en plein air throughout the American Southwest, including the Northern Mexican states of Coahuila, Chihuahua, and Sonora. He worked as a civil engineer, and later as a part of the Gemini engineering team at NASA's Kennedy Space Center, Cape Canaveral, FL, and the Johnson Space Center in Houston, TX. Deaton was drafted by the national baseball team the Atlanta Braves after being scouted at a game in Coahuila, Mexico. He trained with the team for one season before moving with his family to Venice Beach, CA and shifting his focus to civil engineering.

Maximilian Guy (American, b. 1989) Lives and works in Chicago, IL. In his practice, he assembles videos, cut silhouettes, text, and dramatic lighting into larger, often theatrical installations and thought experiments. He clumsily pursues themes of post-racial discourse, existentialism, social-psychology, cosmopolitanism, and self-affirmation. Responding to the context of Chicago and his own upbringing in New York City, his work constructs a personal mythology. He has a BFA in Interdisciplinary Sculpture from the Maryland Institute College of Art, and an MFA from the Department of Art Theory and Practice at Northwestern University. Max has exhibited work at Prairie, The Back Room, and Bar 4000, Chicago; Moonmist, Houston; 321 Gallery, New York; What Pipeline, Detroit; Federico Vassorri, Milan; Nudashank and Franklin Street, Baltimore; he has performed at Signal and Canada Gallery in New York, The Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Sector 2337, and Comfort Station.

Brook Hsu (b. 1987 in Pullman, Washington) Lives and works in New York. Hsu received her BFA from the Kansas City Art Institute in 2010 and her MFA from Yale University, New Haven in 2016. She has exhibited nationally and internationally, including at the Renaissance Society (IL), Bahamas Biennale (MD), BBOLA (CA), Deli Gallery (NY), Double Double Land (Toronto, Canada), Carrie Secrist Gallery (IL), Galleri CC (Malmo, Sweden), GRIN Contemporary (RI), In Lieu (CA), Page (NY), Vacant Farm (MO), Vernon Gardens (CA).

Ben Medansky (b. 1988) was born in Scottsdale, AZ and received his BFA from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2010. His work has been exhibited at LAX ART, Cooler Gallery, The Underground Museum, among other venues. Medansky's ceramics are included in the permanent collection of the Los Angeles Museum County of Art. He has been reviewed in The New York Times, Architectural Digest, LA Times, among others. He was the recipient of the Maison & Objet Americas Rising Talent in Design Award. Ben has created exclusive work in collaboration with Herman Miller, the legendary Bergdorf Goodman, and world-renowned designer Kelly Wearstler. Medansky has been a visiting lecturer at The American Museum of Ceramic Art, California College of Art, and The School of the Art Institute of Chicago. He has taught at Ox Bow School of Art and was an artist in residence at The Headlands Center for the Arts. Medansky lives and works in Los Angeles, CA.

Jon Rafman (b. 1984) is an artist and filmmaker whose work examines the effects of contemporary technology, particularly on interpersonal relationships. Recent solo exhibitions include "I have ten thousand compound eyes and each is named suffering" at Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, "Jon Rafman" at Westfälischer Kunstverein, "Jon Rafman" at The Zabludowicz Collection, London, "The end of the end of the end" at Contemporary Art Museum St Louis, "The Nine Eyes of Google Streetview" at the Saatchi Gallery, London, "Remember Carthage, New Online Art" at the New Museum, NY and also at Palais de Tokyo, Paris. Group shows include Manifesta 11, Zurich, 9th Berlin Biennale, Berlin, "Speculations on Anonymous Materials" at Fridericianum, Kassel; "The Photographer's Gallery, London; "Nine Eyes" as part of the Moscow Photobiennale, 2012; "Screenshots" at William Benton Museum of Art, Connecticut; "The Greater Cloud," Netherlands Media Art Institute, Amsterdam and "From Here On," Les Rencontres d'Arles: International Photography Festival, Arles. Jon Rafman lives and works in Montreal, Canada.

Sydney Shen (b. 1989, Woodbridge, NJ) Lives and works in New York City, NY. Shen creates sculptures and installations that evoke a sense of object dread. Informed by a range of historical and contemporary sources—including Peking opera, supernatural horror fiction, and the darkest recesses of the web—Shen frankensteins organic and synthetic materials such as Chinese and Western medicinal aromatics, 3-D-printed plastic, and biological specimens to produce uncanny environments. Recent solo and two-person exhibitions include "Poor Thing" with Kyung Me at Hotel Art Pavilion, Brooklyn (2018); "Four Thieves Vinegar" at Springsteen, Baltimore (2017); "What's Worse Than The Void Is Matter" at Hotel, Brooklyn (2017); and "Bone Apple Tea" at Holy Motors Project, Hong Kong (2016). In May 2019 she will present her first international solo exhibition at Sophie Tappeiner in Vienna. Group exhibitions include Deitch Projects, New York; Aike-Dellarco, Shanghai; Weekends, London; Fused Space, San Francisco; Et Al, San Francisco; and American Medium, Brooklyn. Shen is also the founder of Gesualda, a handmade fine jewelry and apparel company.

Nobuo Uematsu (Uematsu Nobuo, born March 21, 1959) is a Japanese video game composer, best known for scoring most of the titles in the Final Fantasy series by Square Enix. He is considered to be one of the most well known composers in the video game industry. Sometimes referred to as the "Beethoven of video games music", he has appeared five times in the top 20 of the annual Classic FM Hall of Fame. Uematsu, a self-taught musician, began playing the piano at the age of twelve, with English singer-songwriter Elton John as his biggest influence. Uematsu joined Square in 1986, where he first met Final Fantasy creator Hironobu Sakaguchi. The two later worked together on many titles at the company, most notably in the Final Fantasy series. After nearly two decades with Square, Uematsu left in 2004 to create his own production company, which included the Dog Ear Records music label. He has since composed music as a freelancer for other games, including ones developed by Square Enix and Sakaguchi's development studio, Mistwalker.

Many soundtracks and arranged albums of Uematsu's game scores have been released. Pieces from his video game works have been performed in various Final Fantasy concerts, where he has worked with Grammy Award-winning conductor Arnie Roth on several of these performances. From 2002 to 2010, he was in a hard rock band with Square Enix colleagues Kenichiro Fukui and Tsuyoshi Sekito called The Black Mages, in which he played electronic organ and other keyboards. The band played various arranged rock versions of Uematsu's Final Fantasy compositions. He has since performed with Earthbound Papas, which he formed as the successor to The Black Mages in 2011.

Nathaniel Hitchcock is an independent curator and researcher currently based in the United States. He holds a BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, with an emphasis in Art History, Theory, and Criticism, and studied in the MediaArHistories International Masters Program at Donau-Universität Krems, Krems, AT. In 2012, he co-founded the project space East Hampton Shed, East Hampton, NY. He was the 2013-2014 Curatorial Fellow at Rhizome at the New Museum. He has organized numerous exhibitions at galleries, museums and project spaces, including solo presentations by Chelsea Culpritt, Stephanie Hier, Brian Koskka, Marisa Olson, Angel Otero, Rafaël Rozendaal, Pascale Marthine Tayou, Rebecca Ward, and Quay Quinn Wolf. His research focuses on the intersection of art and technology in relation to forms of interface, immersion, and the image. He is currently the Director at Liberal Arts Roxbury, Roxbury, NY.

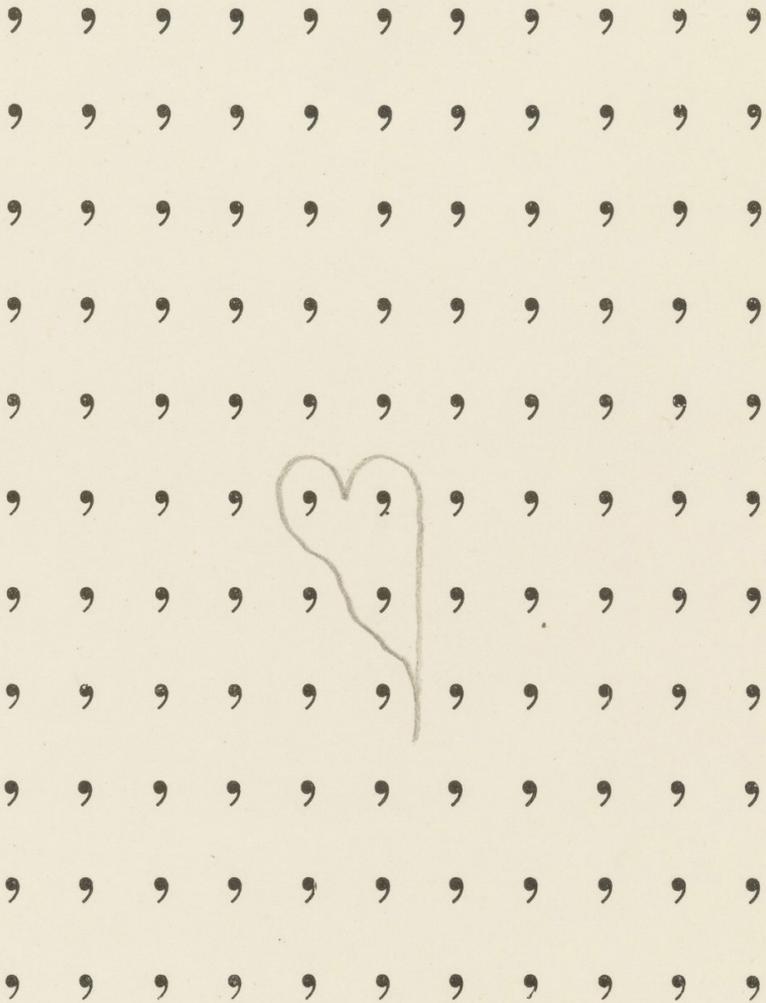


Fig. 1

D R 62