

## Michael Joseph Winkler - An Artist with a Genuinely Interdisciplinary Career

In 1978, Michael Winkler was composing electronic music (he was Managing Director of the Public Access Electronic Music Studio at **and/or**, a multi-disciplinary contemporary art center in Seattle). That year, the National Association of Jazz Educators published his “Geometrisons Concept,” a method of producing visualizations of tonal relationships in music. Geometrisons was published as a visual teaching aid and it earned him a Special Award from the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers.

He began producing his well-known visualizations of the patterning of the signs of language in 1980. For the next 7 years, he created large-scale intermedia works involving both language-based imagery and experimental music. He was awarded a Fellowship from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts in 1984 and a Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts in 1985. That year, he also received a LINE II Association Book Award for his artist’s book “Word Art / Art Words.” In 1987, he presented his large-scale intermedia work, “WORD WORKS” at the New Music America Festival in Philadelphia.

Several of his artist’s books in the 80’s and 90’s attracted the attention of an international community of poets and writers. They described the works as ‘Semiotic Poetry.’ In 1998, “Where Signs Resemble Thoughts,” was included with work by authors such as James Joyce, Victor Hugo, and Gertrude Stein in the landmark anthology, *Imagining Language* (published by MIT Press—Ed. Rasula & McCaffery). The artist’s books were acquired for the special collections of many prominent art and literary libraries—major collections are housed at: The Museum of Modern Art, Brooklyn Museum, Yale, Stanford, UCLA, University of Chicago, and the University of Pennsylvania (U. of P. presented a 22 year survey of his project at its Rosenwald Gallery in 2004). Works from the project have also been exhibited at: Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston; Nexus Contemporary Art Center, Atlanta; Kansas City Art Institute; Kassel Art Museum, Germany; King Stephen Museum, Hungary; Academy of Fine Art, Poznan, Poland; and other major museums and galleries.

In *SignalGlyph*, his 2005 Net Art Project presented by [turbulence.org](http://turbulence.org) and the North American Center for Interdisciplinary Poetics, the ‘proof-based’ mathematical foundations of science are challenged—it uses accurate historical information and genuine mathematical alternatives presented in a fictional context.

A multi-disciplinary coalition of international researchers who believe language originated in the Pleistocene era became interested in his project in 2010. He was invited to write a feature article for the Pleistocene Coalition’s research publication - <http://pleistocenecoalition.com/newsletter/may-june2010.pdf>

In 2015, he was commissioned by Daimler Mercedes-Benz to create a work which would represent Daimler in a special exhibition of art commissioned by major corporations in Germany. He completed the commission in a studio set up on site at the Mercedes-Benz plant in Kassel. In the work, a common origin of basic forms inherent in the mechanism of human perception is treated as underlying both the patterning of the signs of language and the structure of mechanical systems. It was exhibited at the KULTUREBAHNHOF in Kassel (Daimler Blog: “A Touch of Documenta”).

He published an article in 2015 which is at the center of the emerging discussion about the role of ‘signs’ in cultural theory. His article, “New discoveries should reopen the discussion of signs” has been the most downloaded article on the topic of signs since its publication ([philpapers.org/rec/WINNDS](http://philpapers.org/rec/WINNDS)).

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