Notes from the Cosmic Typewriter
The Life and Work of Dom Sylvester Houédard

Edited by Nicola Simpson

Occasional Papers
Kinkon Biobib  
Life and Work of Dom Sylvester Houédard  

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This chronology is both selective and partial, emphasising Dom Sylvester Houédard's artistic over religious and other activities, and public over private ones. Based on scarce existing published biographical and bibliographical sources (particularly *Ceolfrith 15*, edited by Charles Verey in 1972, and the catalogue *Visual Poetries* of 1971), and some primary sources, it lists events where Houédard had an active involvement (group and solo exhibitions – focusing on UK based ones, and those where a catalogue was published; talks, readings and performances – including recordings; collaborations), significant artworks, monographic publications (broadsheets, folders, cards, pamphlets, monographs, exhibition catalogues, anthologies) and serial publications (articles and magazines – with editors named for reference on the first mention of a title).

**Categories**

- Group and solo exhibitions in the UK, where a catalogue was published; talks, readings and performances (including recordings and collaborations), significant artworks, monographic publications
- Broadsheets, folders, cards, pamphlets, monographs, exhibition catalogues, anthologies and serial publications
  - Articles and magazines

**1924**

- Pierre-Thomas-Paul Joseph Houédard born in Guernsey, Channel Islands, on 16 February.
- Peter Houédard attends school at Elizabeth College, St Peter Port, Guernsey. Many years later he would write an article about this time: 'Memories of a catholic childhood', *The Tablet*, 26 March 1977, pp. 306–7.

**1936**

- Mother dies; father dies 1939. Evacuated to UK in 1940.

**1942–49**

- MA Modern History, Jesus College, Oxford (interrupted by military service). Early published poems.

**1944–47**

- Army intelligence. Posted in India (Bangalore), Sri Lanka and Singapore (1946–47). After discharge, worked for a brief period in the Ministry of Food.
1949
- Joins monastic life at Prinknash Abbey (Benedictine), Gloucestershire. Dom Sylvester Houédard ordained priest in 1959.

1951–54
- PhL, Sant’Anselmo, Rome (Thesis on liberty in Sartre).

1954
- ‘Immaculate Conception’ (Sackner Archive) and other ink and watercolour figurative drawings.

1960

1961

1962

1963
- ‘Moire Poem 6 Typestract’ (Sackner Archive) and other early typestracs (term given by Edwin Morgan to Houédard’s typewriter-made visual compositions), signed as ‘dsh’.
- BBC 3 radio talk ‘International Beat movement’ with Alexander Trocchi and George MacBeth, 4 March.
  - Also in: The Aylesford Review (ed. Brocard Sewell), v. 5, n. 3.

1964
- Collaboration with Edward Wright at the School of Graphics, Chelsea School of Art. Wright was also ‘typographical editor’ for Openings during its first years.
- Work on an anthology of concrete poetry for publishers Feltrinelli and Calder (never appeared).
- ‘Eyear’ talks on concrete poetry at Royal College of Art (RCA), 2 March, and Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA), London, 12 May.
- Participant at the (1st) International Exhibition of Concrete and Kinetic Poetry, St Catharine’s College, Cambridge, 28 November–5 December.
  - Xmas poem, Roundwood Press, Kineton [card].
  - Rock sand tide (Openings Wallpoem 1), Openings Press, Daneway [broadsheet].
  - ‘How to read concrete’ in Link (ed. David Holmes), n. 6. Also in: September/October; November/December.
  - Ou (ed. Henri Chopin), n. 22.
  - Signals (ed. David Medalla), v. 1, n. 5.
1965

- Founder and Vice-President of the Association of Little Presses.
- ICA talk on typewriter art ‘Machine poetry/ Poetry machines’, 22 April.
- 2nd International Exhibition of Experimental Poetry, St Catharine’s College, Oxford, 7–18 June.
- Participant in Chieko Shiomi’s Spatial Poem n. 2 event, December.
- * Frog pond plop* (Opening 6), Openings Press, Woodchester [origami folded lettered quadrant and documentation sheet].
- *Typstract* (Plakat 1), Openings Press, Woodchester [broadsheet].
- *Vienna circle* (Polluted Lake Series 8), Renegade Press, Cleveland [pamphlet].
- *Between Poetry and Painting*, ICA, London [group exhibition catalogue].
- *Between poetry and painting: Chronology*, ICA, London [accompanying pamphlet with essay by Houédard].
- Max Bense, Elisabeth Walther (eds.), *Konkrete poesie international* (rot 21), Walther, Stuttgart [anthology].
- ‘The wider concrete’ in *Link*, October/November.
- *And*, n. 4.

1966

- Member, National Liturgical Commission; corresponding member, International Committee for English in the Liturgy.
- *An Exhibition of Concrete/Spatial Poetry*, Midland Group Gallery, Nottingham, 18 February–5 March.
- ‘Aesthetics of the death wish?’ discussion with Gustav Metzger, Mark Boyle and Ivor Davies, Ravensbourne College of Art and Design, 23 May.
- Destruction in Art Symposium (DIAS) co-organiser (member of the ‘DIAS Honorary Committee’) and participant, 9–11 September, including parallel events.
- ‘Intermedia’, Subscription Rooms, Stroud, 16–23 October.
- *A book of chakras: 8 yantric poems*, Watford School of Art, Watford [folder].
- *Womb word*, Press SMV, Daneway [broadsheet].
- *Arlington-Une*, South Street, Sherborne [group exhibition catalogue].
- *An Exhibition of Concrete/Spatial Poetry*, Midland Group Gallery, Nottingham [group exhibition catalogue].
The Golden Mile: An Exhibition of Kinetic + Concrete + Related Work, Arnolfini, Bristol [group exhibition catalogue].

Concrete Poetry: Britain, Canada, United States, Hansjörg Mayer, London [group folder].


Bob Cobbing, Eyearun (WF Folder 1), Writers Forum, London [folder: notes by Houédard].

‘Aesthetics of the death wish’ in Art and artists (ed. Mario Amaya), v. 1, n. 5, p. 49.


‘Ergot & Argot’ in Link, October/November.

The flip side of language’ in Isis, A Magazine for Oxford University, 16 February, p. 13.

Beloit Poetry Journal, v. 17, n. 1 (Chapbook 9), Fall, Concrete Poetry Issue (ed. Stephen Bann).

Bo Heem E Um (ed. Thomas A. Clark), n. 1.

Ikon (ed. Douglas Sandle), n. 3 [cover design].

Joglars (ed. Michael Palmer), n. 3.

Resurgence (eds. Roger Franklin, Michael Horovitz), v. 1, n. 4.

1967

Gloucestershire Ode Construction Company founded.

‘Nonlocal Problems / Molecular Insights’ (Sackner Archive) and other early poem-objects (laminated plastic objects incorporating found materials) and assemblages.

Collaboration with David Medalla’s Exploding Galaxy (a fruit of this collaboration will be 12 dancepoems of the cosmic typewriter, published in 1969).

(1st) Brighton Festival, 14–30 April.

‘o-zone’ performance of Tristan Tzara’s Coeur à gaz, translated by Houédard, RCA, 19–21 April.


‘Freewheel’, organised by Furnival and Houédard, at the Midland Group Gallery, Nottingham, 5–20 May, and Arts Council Gallery, Cambridge, 10 June–1 July.

International Festival of Concrete Poetry, Falmouth School of Art, 24–25 June.

Antonio Sena, Dom Sylvester Houédard, David Medalla, 1st exhibition with Nicholas Logsdail at Lisson Gallery, London, 1 June–1 July.

‘Je reviens dans 5 minutes’ proposal for typing ballet on giant typewriter, Festival de Fort Boyard, Rochefort, 10 June.

Collaboration with the Bath Academy of Art, Corsham. John Furnival (on staff with Hansjörg Mayer and Tom Phillips) organised various projects with Houédard, including Arlington Two: an Exhibition of Work executed at Bath Academy of Art in Collaboration with Outside Poets, Arlington Mill, Bibury, 13 July–14 August.

Scrambled Ego: An Exhibition of Concrete Poetry, East Kent & Folkestone Arts Centre, Folkestone, 25 November–5 December.

Mudras: silent gesture poems by Dom Sylvester Houédard and Jon Willcocks, s.n., S.l., 1967? [folder].

Six Concrete Poems: Brighton Festival 1967, Chelsea School of Art, London [group exhibition catalogue; designed by Edward Wright].

Aktual Art International (Stanford Art Book 8), Stanford University, Stanford [group exhibition catalogue].

An Exhibition of Concrete Poetry, East Kent & Folkestone Arts Centre, Folkestone [group exhibition catalogue].

Festival de Fort Boyard: Programme de la soirée du 10 VI 67, s.n., Paris [poster for this event that never took place, organised by Henri Chopin and others. All programmes/posters compiled in: Festival de Fort Boyard 1967 Edizioni Il Punto, Torino, 1970].

* International Festival of Concrete Poetry, Falmouth School of Art, Falmouth [group exhibition catalogue].
* June exhibition, Lisson Gallery, London [group exhibition catalogue].
* Broadsheet (ed. Hayden Murphy), ns. 1 and 2.
* Decollage (ed. Wolf Vostell), n. 6, July.
* ICA Bulletin, n. 165.
* Integration, n. 7/8.
* Resurgence, v. 1, n. 7

1968

- ‘Poetry in Action’ talk, with Cavan McCarthy, Leicester Arts Festival, 21 February.
- ‘Look-ats and See-thrus’ lecture at Winchester College of Arts, 22 February.
* deus-snap (Openings Card 2), Openings Press, Woodchester [card].
* mini-posters, South Street Publications, Sherborne [pamphlet].
* five wall poems (South Street Wall Poem 1–5), South Street Publications, Sherborne, 1968? [group folder: ‘Semaine euclidienne franco-britannique’ broadsheet by Houédard].
* ken cox memorial: the sun-cheese wheel-ode, a double-rolling-gloster memorial for kencox, South Street Publications, Sherborne [group folder].
* Arlington-Quadro, South Street Publications, Sherborne [group exhibition catalogue: cover and introduction by Houédard].
* Jean-François Bory (ed.), Once again, New Directions, New York [anthology].
* Mary Ellen Solt (ed.), Concrete Poetry: A World View, University of Indiana Press, Bloomington [anthology].
* Bo Heem E Um, n. 4.
* Controverse, n. 2, October.
* Exit (eds. John Hall, Ian Breakwell), n. 5/6.

1969

- Concrete Poetry, Fine Arts Gallery, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, 28 March–19 April.
- Shelter, Arnolfini, Bristol, 28 June–5 July.
- ‘Logorhythms’ talk at Coventry College of Art, 15 October.
* tantric poems perhaps (WF Folder 2), Writers Forum, London [folder].
* 12 dancepoems from the cosmic typewriter by dsh (Aplomb Zero 1), South Street Publications, Sherborne [pamphlet].
* to catch a whiteman by his manifesto, Bath Academy of Art, Corsham [folder: collaboration with BAA students].
* Mostra di Poesia Concreta; Poesia Concreta: Indirizzi, Concreti, Visuali e fonetici, Biennale di Venezia, Venice [group exhibition catalogue].
* Concrete Poetry: An Exhibition in Four Parts, University of British Columbia Fine Arts Gallery, Vancouver [group exhibition catalogue].
* And, n. 5.
* Broadsheet, n. 6.
* Kontexts (ed. Michael Gibbs), n. 2.
* Janus 69, March/May.
Second Aeon (ed. Peter Finch), ns. 8/9 and 10, 1969.

1970
  * gum cock: poems, Watford School of Art, Watford [folder].
  * ode to the colonels (Openings Card 8), Openings Press, Woodchester [card].
  * splendid weeping, s.n., S.l. [broadsheet].
  * successful cube tranceplant in honor of chairman mao (Openings Card 7), Openings Press, Woodchester [card].
- Pages (ed. David Briers), n. 1, Autumn.
- Second Aeon, n. 11.
- Stereo Headphones (ed. Nicholas Zurbrugg), n. 1/2/3.

1971
- Founding editor of magazine Kroklok (4 issues, 1971–76), launched at ICA, 16 February.
- ‘gay – fab – bat’ (Chelsea College of Art & Design Library) and other early reversible poems using transparent laminated structures. ‘O big nil – (Epitaph for) Lin Piao’ (The John Rylands Library) and other embroidered reversible textile poems possibly produced from around this time.
- BBC Radio 4 World at One interview, 21 February.
1972

- *Dom Sylvester Houédard*, Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle, (augmented) solo retrospective exhibition, organised by the Ceolfrith Arts Centre and V&A, 19 July–9 August [invitation card and poster].
- *I'amour-nowel*, Openings Press, Woodchester [card].
- *Dom Sylvester Houédard (Ceolfrith 15)*, Ceolfrith Arts Centre, Sunderland [catalogue edited by Charles Verey, published on the occasion of the Laing Art Gallery retrospective exhibition; designed by Donato Cinicolo].
- *like contemplation* ([WF Folder 11]), Writers Forum, London [folder].
- *Kroklok*, n.3, December.
- *Stereo Headphones*, n. 5, Winter.

1973

- Plans for a monograph based around Verey’s *Ceolfrith 15* to be published by Routledge and Kegan Paul, never realised. The 83-page catalogue would remain the most comprehensive publication by and about Houédard to date.
- Interviewed by Eric Mottram at The Poetry Society, London, 9 April (recording, King’s College London Archives).
- *un et une*, Openings Press, Woodchester [card].
- *GLOUP and WOUP*, Arc Publications, Gillingham [group folder editd and introduced by Bob Cobbing].
- *Stereo Headphones*, n. 6.

1974

- *Begin Again*, solo exhibition, LYC Museum and Gallery, Brampton, April [invitation card].
- *Eurovispo–73: An Exhibition of Visual Poetry by Four Europeans*, s.n., S.l. [group exhibition catalogue].
- *Begin Again: A Book of Reflections & Reversals* (LYC Publication 1), LYC Publications, Brampton [pamphlet published on the occasion of the exhibition at the LYC Museum and Gallery, introduced by Stefan Themerson].
- *Robin Crozier, Portrait of Robin Crozier (Ceolfrith 25)*, Ceolfrith Arts Centre, Sunderland [artist’s book with contribution by Houédard].
- *ABC*.

1975

- *For the 5 Vowels*, Quintet, typestract (British Council Collection).
- Collaboration with Derek Jarman, including contributing to the Latin dialogue of his first feature film *Sebastiane* (1976), and theological and historical advice for *Caravaggio* (1986).
- *key impressions*, New 57 Gallery, Edinburgh [exhibition catalogue: Houédard and Alan Riddell].

1977

1978

1979
- *Cratylus*, XV Bienal de São Paulo.

1980s
- Infirmarian monk.
- *le petit troglodyte, yes but ii..., sibyl & psalmist..., t’ai: peace typewriter poems*, circulated as folded photocopied sheets, 1983–86.
- Reading with Peter Middleton, King’s Poetry Series, King’s College London, 6 March 1984 (recording by Eric Mottram, King’s College London Archives).
- *The Space in the Heart of the Lotus: Bede Griffiths, a Benedictine in India*, 1987 [documentary film distributed in VHS introduced by Dom Sylvester Houédard].

1992
- Dom Sylvester Houédard a.k.a. dsh dies on 15 January, age 67.
- Memorial exhibition at the Cairn Gallery, Nailsworth, February [frog pond plop invitation card].
- dsh: Openings 92, South Street, S.l., 1992? [folder].

1993

1994
1995

- *sand rock tide*, Cairn Gallery, Nailsworth [card].
- Bob Cobbing, Thomas A Clark (eds.), *In memoriam dsh*, Writers Forum, London [pamphlet: anthology of work by Houédard; afterword by Cobbing].

2000


2009


2010

- *frog pond plop: The Yoga of Concrete*, solo exhibition curated by Nicola Simpson, NUCA Gallery, Norwich, 24 September–16 October [invitation card].

2011

- *Concept as Concrete Form: Visual Poetry, Texts and Typography*, University of Derby, School of Arts, Design and Technology, Derby, 13 September–14 October [group exhibition].

2012

- *Dom Sylvester Houédard and the Cosmic Typewriter*, one-day creative symposium, South London Gallery, 2 December.