

## *Poetry should be made by all [JAM]*

Lesley Kaiser

This video animation renews the maxim *Poetry should be made by all, not by one* (*La poésie doit être faite par tous. Non par un*). The text originates with Isidore Ducasse (Comte de Lautréamont) c. 1869.

In the late 1960s this maxim was given life as a speech-bubble graphic in a poster (Figs 1 & 2) that Daniel Cohn-Bendit was involved in distributing along with the Situationist-influenced *On the Poverty of Student Life*, the pamphlet which precipitated the so-called Strasbourg University scandal [1966]. The repercussions of events in France and the resultant impact on students in Auckland in the late sixties and early 1970s led to events such as Jumping Sundays – students taking over Albert Park with free festivals (Fig. 3); and the Situationist poster (Figs 1 & 2) was printed on the last page of the University of Auckland student newspaper *Craccum*, 13 April 1972 [*Big Smoke*, p. 320]. In 2000, Michele Leggott commissioned John Barnett and me to produce a new edition of the speech-bubble version of the maxim as give-away stickers [Fig. 6] to accompany the publication of *Big Smoke. NZ Poems 1960–1975*, Auckland University Press [Figs 4 & 5].

*The link of Strasbourg to Auckland is revived in JAM.*

*To be well wrought, a maxim does not need to be corrected. It needs to be developed*

Lautréamont

Aphorisms and maxims have been a way of communicating around the globe since great antiquity, and are pivotal to, and at the core of, this animated text video artwork.

*Language is a virus*

William Burroughs

**Specific physical context & design:**

Format: landscape, 720 x 576 pixels [8.30 minutes loop]

Directed by L. Kaiser, the final piece has been technically animated by Logan Austin, AUT.

This video **visually** animates several maxims including *Poetry should be made by all, not by one* in both French and English. Each maxim is jammed between other works, though they are linked stylistically. I invited Janet Lilo to add her work into this *Poetry should be made by all* collaboration (i.e. to be jammed within the jam, and have the maxim translated into Maori within her work). *Light Bytes [JAM/Poetry]* draws visually on my documentation of an on-going public projection work *Light Bytes at night* (in collaboration with Kezia Barnett), and the sound track is a New Zealand musical composition by Michael Renkema.

The resulting *Poetry should be made by all [JAM]* to be shown in Strasbourg in 2006 and in Auckland in 2007.

**Key words:** Video, Visual Art, Installation Art, Culture, Philosophy, Literature, Sociology, Photography, Documentation, Text and Image, Concrete Poetry, Semiotics, Maxims, Aphorisms, Situationist, Strasbourg, Auckland, Urban Screens.

**Images referenced**



Fig. 1 Situationist poster (1969)



Fig. 2 (Close up)



Fig. 3 *Jumping Sunday* Auckland, 1970



Fig. 4 *Big Smoke*, Auckland, 2000



Fig. 5 *Big Smoke*, 2000



Fig. 6 Free Stickers. L. Kaiser & J. Barnett, 2000

## CREDITS

### *Poetry should be made by all [JAM]*

Director: Lesley Kaiser  
[JAM/Poetry] Animation: Logan Austin

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#### Featuring

*Light Bytes [JAM/Poetry]* – Lesley Kaiser

Music: *Centre* by Michael Renkema

*Light Bytes at night* text animations and digital photos

Lesley Kaiser & Kezia Barnett

Based on text works produced by

Lesley Kaiser & John Barnett

French translation: Patrica Burgetsmaier

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*Urban Beat [JAM/Poetry]* – Janet Lilo

and

Lesley Kaiser & Logan Austin

Maori translation: Chaz Doherty

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**Research context:** Traditionally aphorisms and maxims have been read in philosophical and literary contexts, but there is little research concerning their use in contemporary art. This project explores how cultural knowledge that is encoded in verbal aphorisms and maxims can be revitalised and communicated visually, and has two aspects – generating new works from the maxims selected, and exploring modes of dissemination and distribution/documentation.

#### Lexicology

APHORISM: Def.: ‘the finest thoughts in the fewest words’ (Davis, 1991, p. 246)  
Dictionary Def.: ‘1. a short pithy maxim 2. a brief statement of a principle’

MAXIM: Dictionary Def.: ‘a general truth or rule of conduct expressed in a sentence’  
Def.: ‘a maxim is a guide to conduct rather than thought’ (from Roget’s International Thesaurus)