

KENNETH GOLDSMITH
sucking on words

film script

information as material

music by Rob Lavers with film of Kenneth Goldsmith walking around Manhattan

Kenneth Goldsmith: “This is 100% teddy-bear.”

Woman in street market: “This is so hot, so sixties.

Kenneth Goldsmith: “It is so great, isn’t it?”

Woman in street market: “We’re loving life.”

Kenneth Goldsmith: “See you soon.”

Woman in street market: “See you Papa.”

KENNETH GOLDSMITH sucking on words

[text on screen]

“writing is fifty years behind painting” – Brion Gysin, 1959

[Simon Morris on screen with following credit]

Simon Morris
Artist

Simon Morris: “I’m suspecting you are not going to buy into Kenny’s line that he always likes to quote from Brion Gysin of “literature is fifty years behind painting” – would you buy into that or not?”

[Bruce Andrews on screen with following credit]

Bruce Andrews
L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poet

Bruce Andrews: “Oh, I generally would. I mean, certainly, if you are talking about poetry. Other genres of literature would be even more ridiculous and moribund, the idea of narrative or fiction, the idea of creating verisimilitude based on characters and plot situations - completely hokey Victorian notion. The creative writing people are generally, you know, total, total hacks. You know, they are living in another, that are living in some previous century, or living in some previous planet. They’re still involved with this therapeutic, crappy ideology about letting students express their inner selves and these little epiphanies of lyric blubble, you know, I mean, it’s a joke, it’s a terrible joke.”

[Kenneth Goldsmith on screen with the following credit]

Kenneth Goldsmith

Kenneth Goldsmith: “I choose poetry. I see those works as being direct, directly aimed at poetry. Direct hits on poetry – if you want to put it like that. Poetry is, hah...the leading poets in America who get the prizes are the equivalent of academic nineteenth century style figurative painters. These are people that have no idea that modernism ever, ever happened.

[scrolling text]

Conceptual writing is the
poetics of the moment.

It fuses avant-garde impulses
of the twentieth century

with technologies of the
present.

The material morphs between
the web and the printed page.

It draws attention to the
materiality of the word
and the conceptual nature
of this type of literature

– the writing is the idea

and the idea is the writing.

[Book title] ***HEAD CITATIONS***

[Text on screen]

800 misheard lyrics

[Kenny speaks the following words as the wrapper/hook for the project]

Followed by Goldsmith’s reading from *Head Citations*...

1. This is the dawning of the age of malaria.
2. Another one fights the dust.

3. Eyeing little girls with padded pants.
4. Teenage spacemen we're all spacemen.
5. A gay pair of guys put up a parking lot.
 - 5.1. It tastes very nice, food in the parking lot.
6. One thing I can tell you is you got to eat cheese.
7. She was a gay stripper.
8. Fly like a negro to the sea.
9. Hey you, get off of my cow.
10. Oh, we are sailing, yes, give Jesus pants.
 - 10.1. All we are saying, give hippies a chance.
 - 10.2. All we are saying is good piece of cheese.
 - 10.3. All we are saying is kids need a dad.
11. She's giving me head citations.

[Text to appear on screen]

**“We don’t need the new sentence,
the old sentence re-framed is good enough.”
– Kenneth Goldsmith**

using extant material

Kenneth Goldsmith: “Um, I’m interested in de-familiarisation of normative structures in language, um, and it’s very simple to do, you know, um, the whole project is based on re-framing normative language, putting it into another container, um and suddenly it becomes new. We don’t need the new sentence, the old sentence re-framed is good enough.”

[Text on screen]

information management

Kenneth Goldsmith: “This is what we do, everyday, all day long. Some of us call it writing, shifting material from one form into another. This is what we do, we organise our information.”

“I believe that information management is the way we are writing now and will continue to write in the future. I will go even further by saying that I believe that writers don’t need to, uh, “quote” write, add any more new texts in the world, the Douglas Huebler: “There’s enough objects in the world, I don’t feel the need to create any more.” Um, right now it’s become very apparent to us that there’s enough language in the world, that we not create any new language. Rather, rather the interest is in the re-mix, uh, the accumulation and the filtering. We become intelligent agents. We are making our way through this mass of language that’s now at our fingertips. We are intelligent agents and that’s the job of the writer now is to become an intelligent agent. And each person then, each writer then figures out their way to carve their own path through this mass of information. Hence, making each writer a unique writer. I’m not, in any way, suggesting that we become robots. In fact it’s quite impossible. The way I make my way through this mass of information is quite different from the way you’ll make your way through it.”

[Robert Fitterman on screen with the following credit]

Robert Fitterman
Poet and Professor at New York University

Robert Fitterman: “There’s a couple of things that I think are important here. One is that, L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E writing, really is an extension or a last hurrah of modernism for me. It doesn’t really, sort of, step in to, um, the issues, for me personally, that are most compelling about postmodernism. So, in that modernist tradition or trajectory, you are still really looking at a kind of ‘make it new’ aesthetic or ‘make it new’ moment. And I think Kenny’s right, and I would agree with this, that, you know, ‘make it new’ is not really very interesting after, after 1990. And you have a lot of other choices: make it relevant; make it fucked up; uh, you know, make it all come together. Um, and I think, you know, especially, I think, as a kind of postmillennial gesture – there’s a kind of inventory in the air. Um, instead of making it new, how do we collect what we already have been making new for a hundred years.”

[Book title] *No.111*

[Text on screen]

600 pages of rhyming r phrases, sorted by syllables and alphabetized.

Simon Morris: “Ok, so Kenny do you want to tell us about no. 111. You often talk about the hook or the wrapper for each of your bookworks and uh, I just wondered what the wrapper was for this one?”

Kenneth Goldsmith: “Um, over the course of four years, I collected words that ended in the sound of ‘schwa’ which I’m told encompasses not only ‘ah’, but ‘ear’, ‘ur’, ‘err’ and, or related things around the ‘r’. Um, when I began to, um, read the book, which I’ll read from in just a second, it seemed to resonate with what I’d heard about the Sanskrit word ‘aum’ which actually is pronounced ‘ah’, ‘uh’, ‘um’ which goes from the back of the throat to the mouth and then out through the lips, so it’s I, ear, err, all

about swallowing and spitting out and pronouncing. So, over the course of four years, I just simply, um well the title is 2.7.93 – 10.29.96. So, during those dates anything that I heard that ended in that ‘schwa’ word, or, I’m sorry, that ‘schwa’ sound I collected and alphabetised and organised by, by syllable. So the first chapter goes one syllable words a-z, the second goes two syllable words a-z and we finally end up at the end with a 7,228 syllable chapter which is D.H.Lawrence’s *Rocking Horse Winner* in its entirety, um and the only constraint being the fact that it ends with the word ‘winner’ and anything that came before it was counted as syllables.”

Followed by Goldsmith’s reading from *No.111*...

A, a, aar, aas, aer, agh, ah, air, är, are, arh, arre, arrgh, ars, aude, aw, awe, Ayr, Ba, ba, baa, baaaahh, baar, bah, bar, bard, bare, barge, barre, Bayer, beer, bere, beurre, bier, bla, blah, Blair, blare, blear, bleh, blur, boar, board, Boer, boor, bore, bored, Boz, bra, bras, Brer, brrrr, bur, burr, C.O.R.E., ca, cah, car, card, care, caw, cha, chaar, chair, char, chard, chaw, cheer, cheere, Cheers, Cher, chiere, choir, chord, chore, Claire, claw, clear, cleere, coeur, Coors, cord, core, corps, course, crawl, crore, cur, curr, curs, czar, d'or, da, där, dare, daw, dawed, dear, deer, derre, dire, diur, door, dor, dore, dour, draw, drawe, drear, droor, duh, dure, dyere, e'er, ear, eere, eh, Eh?, eir, 'er, Er, er, ere, err, eyr, fa, fã, fair, faire, far, fas, faugh, fawe, fayre, fear, fer, fere, ferre, fier, fiord, fir, flair, flaw, fleer, floor, flour, floure, foiah, for, för, force, Ford, ford, fore, fors, four, IV, foure, fra, frere, frore, fur, fyr, ga, ga', gah, gair, gar, gaw, gear, geere, giour, gnar, gnaw, goore, gore, gourd, grah, grarh, gras, graw, grrrr, Grrrrr!!, guard, gyre, ha, haah, hah, Hair, hair, här, hard, hare, harr, harre, haw, hawe, hear, heer, heere, heir, her, here, herr, hir, hire, hoar, hoard, horde, hors, hour, heure, huh, Huh?, hurr, hwor, ia, ier, ire, ja, jaar, Jah, jar, jaw, Jaws, jeer, ka, kar, ker, kir, kna, knar, knarre, knur, Kurd, la, La!, lair, lard, lare, laud, law, lawe, lawed, Lear, leer, leh, lere, lier, Loire, loore, lor, Lord, lord, lore, lough, lourde, Ma, ma, mar, mare, Mars, Maude, maw, mawe, mere, mha, mire, mirre, moi, Moor, moor, moore, more, mors, moure, mwa, myre, myrrh, na, nah, nahhh, Nair, nar, nard, naw, ne'er, near, nerd, nha, noir, nor, nur, nya, nyeh, o'er, oar, oor, oore, or, ore, our, oure, Pa, pa, paar, paas, pah, pair, paire, par, pard, pare, paw, pear, peer, per, perr, perre, pers, pier, poire, por, pore, pour, poure, prayer, preyere, pshaw, pur, purr, qua, quaa, quaer, Quah, quaire, quar, queer, quire, R, r, Ra, raa, rare, raw, rawe, rear, rer, rere, rh, roar, ruhr, sa, saar, sard, sarge, saugh, saw, sawe, scar, scare, schmeer, schwa, score, scour, sear, Sears, seer, sere, serr, Shah, shard, share, Shaw, shawe, shear, sheer, shere, shire, shmeer, shore, shour, shoure, shur, Sir, sir, sire, slaw, slur, smear, smeer, smore, snare, sneer, snore, soar, soor, soore, sore, sour, spa, spar, spare, sparre, spear, spere, sphere, spoir, spore, spur, square, squaw, stair, star, stare, steer, steere, stir, stoor, store, straw, sur, sure, svår, swa, sward, swear, swere, swoore, sword, swore, t'a, ta, taa, tar, tare, Tarr, Taur, taw, tawe, tear, tear, teere, ter, tha, thair, thaire, thar, thaw, their, ther, there, they're, Thor, tor, tore, tour, toure, trois, Tsar, 'twere, tweer, Tzar, ugh, uh, Ur, ur, urr, urre, vair, var, veer, Vuh, wah, War, war, ward, ware, wear, weer, Weir, weir, wer, were, werre, wher, where, Where?, whir, whirr, whore, whurr, wir, Wire, wire, word, wore, worre, wors,

worse, ya, yaar, yard, yare, yaw, yeah, year, yeer, yer, yere, yheere, yoore, yore, you're, your, youre, yr, yre, Za, zha, Zsa;

Ninth syllable

I a lone she-bird of his feather, I am paid squat for my slave labor, I asked knowing damn well the answer, I believe that gay rights are neither, I bet they raise your rates every year, I buck I snort I whinny I tear, I don't have Simcity anymore, I Don't Wanna Be Called Yo Niga, I dream of Jesus and nine others, I found that remark very obscure, I got out in 1984, I got tha fever for tha flavor, I had a dentist who was over, I had glass sticking out of my ears, I had to go and see the doctor, I hate you. Who do you think you are?, I haven't answered my phone in years, I hit him with my bag of quarters, "I" is dropped unless the reader hears, I just want to mow down panhandlers, I like to fart in elevators (-:-), I never sang for my grandfather, I often dress up like my hamster, I own my own body but I share, I put out a large stack of paper, I rapidly read printed matter, I rarely shoot down an idea, I seem not to bother anymore, I shot an arrow into the air, I slick up my hand with warm water, I still haven't made up my mind here...

Forty-three

Eeeaaarrghh! I pictured smashing his face in ... kicking his scrotum back up into his torso ... digging the fucker's eyes out ... going for a field goal with his head over and over..., even if it is not good for us we become addicted. And we become enslaved. And when we become enslaved we are constantly thinking of that thing wherever we are, from the mountains to the prairies ... FUCK MISS AMERIKA ... to the oceans ... HO HO HO CHI MINH ... white with foam ... 1 2 3 4 WE DON'T WANT YOUR FUCKING WAR ... God Bless Amerika, grab me Chewie. I'm slipping -- hold on. Grab it almost ... you got it. Gently now all right easy, easy hold me Chewie. Chewie! With a little higher just a little higher, he found himself (as any writer can confirm) having to produce by the end of the day a series of words arranged in a way that has never been imagined before, history that ends up on a page and no longer exists in the past -- it has only a present and a future. It is in effect a score to be realized by the reader,

[Text on screen]

“You really don’t need to read my books to get the idea of what they’re like; you just need to know the general concept.” – Kenneth Goldsmith

Simon Morris: “There is much more, an emphasis in, in conceptual writing on the reader being an active proponent of the meaning - of actively engaging with the work.”

[Text on screen]

the reading experience

Kenneth Goldsmith: “Well, I mean, that’s, that, that is a, a primary concern of L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E writing was its political concern. Was that the writer is no longer, is not coming from on high and speaking down to the audience but instead is presenting a field of disparate and disjunctive language that is meant to be put back together by the reader so as that the reader and writer are somehow on the same plane, a sort of, you know a readerly text. There’s a problem with it, I mean. I was going to talk about, I was going to talk about Marxism. I was going to talk about the seventies and sort of socio-political structures but in fact, where the work failed — and this is very interesting — is that it wasn’t. It had a utopian vision that the actual reader would pick up the pieces and put them back together again. But the problem was it lacked readership, ok. Yes, yes people read it but more people didn’t read it. So, it’s making this grand social gesture of saying, saying come and put me back together and people were absolutely repelled by the form and refused to reconstruct that language, ok. So, in fact, they were very traditional in demanding a readership, a participatory readership. Almost putting a gun to the head of the reader and saying come, come and reconstruct this, this language. When in fact, people weren’t interested in reconstructing that language. And I think this is one of the great, you know, one of the great tragedies, because um...it’s very sad. It, again, it demanded a readership. I don’t demand a readership. I sort of start off by saying I assume no readership.”

Robert Fitterman: “I like what Kenny said in the blog about ‘thinkership’ – that word works for me. You know, with a project like *Day* if you read, you know, I read maybe thirty or forty pages and you know, and I love it. I found it a really important text for me. I don’t think I need to read any more than that. Um, but poets aren’t used to that. And now that Kenny really is in this community of poets and poets are the ones who are publishing the work and writing on the work and judging the work. Poets are really challenged here to think about reading in a different way. The experience of *Day* does not happen while you are reading it the book. The experience happens like right now – we are having a conversation about it. It didn’t happen for me when I read the book in this way. But I had that experience, I remember, as a young person reading Stein. You know, it wasn’t really about what happened on the page. It was about walking away from it and thinking about it on the street. You know, it’s much more, I think the experience we have when we look at art. So, I think it’s really successful in that way and really challenging. L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E writing came up against the same thing. A little bit, it was like, you know: ‘how do we read this?’ But the difference was that you were, the intention was that you were going to read it and that you could analyse it and that you were meant to read it, line by line. Um, that’s not the intention with a book like *Day*.”

Kenneth Goldsmith: “I often say I don’t have a readership, I have a thinkership. Um, you know. So, I don’t have the expectation that people are going to read and I actually think it’s very interesting because I think that, that a writer often writes with the expectation that somebody’s going to read the book and IF THEY DON’T GET READ, IF THE BOOK ISN’T READ, writers get really offended. I say, I don’t expect you to read my book but you should know the ‘wrapper’ as I call it and uh, that may almost be enough for some people and that’s fine. For other people, of course it’s there to engage with and I’m told, I’m told that it can be a mesmerising and hypnotic

experience to read these books. I don't find them mesmerising and hypnotic. I find them boring. I can't possibly read them. I fall asleep when I proof read the things. You know. But I love the fact that they exist."

Robert Fitterman: "I think that's one of the challenges of this kind of work, is that there are different ways to think about reading and we have to think about, maybe that word isn't really working, you know. Maybe we need another word."

[Text on screen]

Maybe we need another word.

[Book title] ***FIDGET***

[Text on screen]

every move my body made for a day

[Kenny speaks the following words as the wrapper/hook for the project]

Kenneth Goldsmith: "The book *Fidget* was a recording of every move my body made on Bloomsday, 1997, from the moment I woke up to the moment I went to sleep."

Followed by Goldsmith's reading from *Fidget*...

Eyelids open. Tongue runs across upper lip moving from left side of mouth to right following arc of lip. Swallow. Jaws clench. Grind. Stretch. Swallow. Head lifts. Bent right arm brushes pillow into back of head. Arm straightens. Counterclockwise twist thrusts elbow toward ceiling. Tongue leaves interior of mouth, passing through teeth. Tongue slides back into mouth. Palm corkscrews. Thumb stretches. Forefingers wrap. Clench. Elbow bends. Thumb moves toward shoulder. Joint of thumb meets biceps. Elbow turns upward as knuckles of fist jam neck. Right hand clenches. Thumb rubs knuckles. Fist to right shoulder. Right elbow thrusts. Knuckles touch side of neck. Hands unfurl. Backs of hands press against flat of neck. Heels of hands push into jaw. Elbows raise. Fingers wrap around neck. Thumbs tuck. Hands move toward jaw. Cover ears. Tips of fingers graze side of head. Hairs tickle tips as they pass. Thumbs trail behind fingers. Arms extend. Fingers unfurl. Shoulder stretches. Arms out. Legs bend at knees. Pelvis thrusts right. Left knee drops to bed. Right knee drops to bed. Left leg extends. Right hand grabs. Elbow moves toward nose. Touches. Fingers open. Air from lungs expelled through nose. Thumb and forefinger pinch, wiping mucus from lip. Mucus pools in right nostril. Wipes. Index finger blocks right nostril. Exhale. Mucus out right nostril. Elbow extends. Fingers open. Forefinger caresses outside of thumb. Breathe.

[scrolling text]

Can a parallel be drawn
between

Kenneth Goldsmith's work
and
the violent images of car
crashes in Andy Warhol's
'Death and Disaster' series?

When an argument occurs in
Goldsmith's transcriptions

language fails, it stumbles

When we are angry, we repeat
things and as meaning starts
to falter, language is
ruptured.

Are these holes in language
the equivalent of Warholian
slippages?

For me, these are the same
as the floating flashes that
occur in Warhol's silkscreen
process where the ink
hasn't quite caught the
canvas.

At various points, the trauma
of the car crash punctuates
the surface of the image

And we get what the analyst
would refer to as eruptions
of the Real, ruptures of the
surface or 'visual pops'.

Roland Barthes referred to
this effect as the punctum:

a cut; a tear; a wound;
a prick; a speck; something
that bruises and is poignant
to the reader.

Is language torn in Goldsmith's
work?

Kenneth Goldsmith: [long pause] You know, it's funny, I don't. I don't see so much the tear as I do, as I do the build up. I think that, that language has been torn enough and ruptured enough. I think the entire twentieth century, um, was based around, around the rip. I think what we're interested in now is, is the accumulation and the re-shaping and the re-building of this once fractured vessel. Because, after Modernism, there was no more work to do. Language has been pulverised and atomised so much that there was really nothing else to do. What are you going to do, take a grain of sand and chop it up even further or are you actually going to forget about deconstruction and begin some sort of re-construction acknowledging and re-building this vessel. Acknowledging the cracks in it. We're not going back but instead we have to, kind of, look at wholes again. I'm not interested in rips. I'm actually interested in wholeness. I'm interested in an articulated sentence that is, uh, uh semantically correct. I'm interested in, in semantic intactness. I'm not interested in atomisation. I think that was a very, very twentieth century concept. Now, I think if we de-familiarise once again our sense of intact language and re-frame it and put it somewhere else, it becomes extremely disjunctive once again. So, it's a different means of getting a disjunction through wholeness. Um, and to me, it's very fascinating. I'm interested in things remaining as they are [pause] and not tearing them.

[Book title] *SOLILOQUY*

[Text on screen]

every word I spoke for a week.

[Kenny speaks the following words as the wrapper/hook for the project]

Kenneth Goldsmith: "Ok, this is a book called *Soliloquy*. It was every word I spoke from the moment I woke up on a Monday morning to the moment I went to sleep on the following Sunday night. It is completely unedited, um. And, um, I wanted to see how much one average person speaks in a week, I wanted to actually weigh language and I came out in fact with I guess about a 500 page book. Now, I talk a lot - so this may not be an average person."

Followed by Goldsmith's reading from *Soliloquy*...

How about I join you in bed? What do ya how about a little activity? Can I? Why? I thought it was O.K. to kill myself unless I fucked you first. Can I put my finger in your ass? All the way up? Why? That's on tape.

Just to spice up the tape a little bit, right? I said that just to spice up the tape. I love you hoo ha? Ew, it's not my fault that your in in in such a bad mood. Really? Really stop or, yeah? You actually your body's so good now. No, really, you're thin and so good. Strong, muscular, and pretty. And soft and smooth. Mmmmm, I'm getting a lick. I'm gonna get it's even more soundtrack to Head. OK, alright, I'll turn it off. OK. I'll turn it off. I'll turn it off. I can't turn it off. We already had had one! Of me! Getting blown! That was all on tape. Sure it was. I started the tape first thing this morning. So it's all so it's all. No, it's over and I'll tell you another thing, there's no part of you that's on this tape. Your voice or your actions or nothing will appear. It's all me. Oh, big deal! It's something that I never heard before! It's noises that I've never heard from you before! No I don't! No I don't! You too. You too. Yeah, all. It's a good thing I get my way. You love your pussy licked and it's a good thing that you get your way cause you get your pussy licked. I get my. You get your pussy licked. I'm not saying anything that I don't normally not say. Why? Oh, well be on the tape. I can't turn the tape off. But you're probably not gonna get anything cause there's no language. The tape will shut off if there's no language. I have it programmed, I mean, it was slurping. It won't catch you. I mean, why? Come on, this is art! I mean, look at what I do for your art! Look what I do for your art! Look what I do for your art! Look what you do for your you get naked in front of audience of thousands and you're crawling around and you can see your pussy and here she says I don't want to be on the tape. It's so contradictory! And it's O.K. for your art but it's not O.K. for my art! And I in in in the one with The Bordems and your crawling under the plastic and you can see your vagina! And yet... you can see the whole pussy. Of course you can when you're crawling around but do I ever say anything? No. It's for your art. And so this art is like our life and then you're saying no, we can't have it. Oh, it's only special when it's like like Art and when it's like life you can't have it. I get it. No, I'm making the most ridiculous argument because you're because you're like giving me a hard time about my art project. Why don't you say that instead of saying I don't want that on tape?! I mean, is that a joke? These tapes, nobody will ever hear these tapes, Cheryl. How can you say you're self conscious when you're like the nude, the nude, the nude artist of the century? It's pretty close. And Head? So, this is simulated to. It's it's mediated by the tape medium. I can't believe... look, if we had no language. I will, if there's no language. No. There's no language. I want to give you a demonstration. Watch this red light. See I'm talking now? Now I'm talking? See? It's like magic. And you have the highest voice of anyone. I don't. Speak. Do you have the highest voice ever? Call me Harpo. I'm gonna go clean up. Good night. No, fuck it. I hate sex. Especially with you. Go to bed.

[Text on screen]

“Contemporary writing
requires the expertise
of a secretary

crossed with
the attitude of a pirate.”

-Kenneth Goldsmith

Simon Morris: “One of the things I’ve been interested in, we talked about, is being the OCR demon and peeling language off the page. And, I think this is something that is new. It is about technology and I love that wonderful quote from Jackson Pollock in 1951 where he says: “Every age must find its own technique” You know, he’s basically saying for Christ’s sake I can’t paint a naked woman on a couch in 1951 when the atom bomb’s just gone off and there’s the radio and there’s aeroplanes flying between countries. It’s a completely ridiculous concept to do. And although these L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poets from before, across the twentieth century have materialised or concretised the word, have played with this kind of um, uh [sigh & pause] different relationship to language. There is something that Kenny and others are able to do now by shifting large quantities of text through the internet. Um, he talks about peeling it off and the materiality of language that you can almost pour it, and the fluidity of language, into almost any container. And for me, ok, yeah Bruce and other people have been ripping away um, context, they have been ripping away containers for a long time and that’s perfectly valid but using the internet and using this technology, it allows the language to be shifted at great speed and at great quantities and its creating some really new [loud inhalation & pause] interesting works, objects that are really kind of, problematic. For me, it’s Susan Sontag. She talks about art has to rupture your sense of order. And that, for me, it does. I get books like *Day* and I’m like: “This is really disturbing.”

Robert Fitterman: “It’s funny you would say that quote from Pollock. Rimbaud says the same thing, you know, in 1850. Art has to be absolutely modern and relevant. And, um, Chaucer actually says the same, you know: ‘Out with the old books – in with the new’. It is, that’s the exciting thing about Kenny’s work, I think, and this whole movement. It is present. It’s relevant. And, it’s relevant to this technology. And, um, I’ve said elsewhere, that, you know, poets and text artists are living in a very privileged moment where the, the central invention of our day is language based. And so, to not take that on, seems almost irresponsible to me. I mean, how can you not have a language, have a dialogue in poetry and technology at this moment. Um, so, again, if we look at where this is coming from, in terms of the history of the avant-garde and L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E writing etc., the kind of destruction of syntax that was really important, that took place 20 years ago isn’t really what we find in technology. What we find in technology, in what Kenny’s interest is especially...um, is to take these large chunks of language because we can. Um, you know, in my own practice I take large chunks of language from the internet because I can. You know, and if it’s on my computer, it’s mine. That’s the way I think of it. So, I think it’s really relevant.”

[Book title] *DAY*

[Text on screen]

A transcript
of every word
and letter

that appeared in a
copy of

The New York Times

from

Friday,
September 1st 2000

[Kenny speaks the following words as the wrapper/hook for the project]

Kenneth Goldsmith: “Ok, so this is a book called *Day*, which is a transcription of every word and letter that appeared in a copy of the New York Times for Friday September 1st 2000. Wherever there was a word or letter it was transcribed and re-published into a 900 page book.”

Followed by Goldsmith’s reading from *Day*...

THE NEW YORK TIMES, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 2000 LK A17
BACK-TO-SCHOOL SALE
GIRLS’ ARIZONA
ON SALE
SALE 9.99
TOP
Sale 7.99
Reg. 11.99
Rib Cotton Top.
S-XL for girls’
Sizes 7-18
SALE 15.99
TOP
Sale 15.99 Reg. 19.99
Fleece crewneck.
Polyester/cotton.
S-XL for girls’

Sizes 7-18
SALE 15.99 CARGO JEANS
Sale 15.99 Reg. 19.99. Flare-leg
cotton cargo jeans. Girls' sizes
7-16. Slims also available
SALE 19.99 JEANS
Sale 19.99 Reg. 24.99. Embellished flare-leg jeans.
Girls' sizes 7-16. Slims also available
A SALE 11.99 Reg. 14.99 Next Era®
beaded screenprint top. S-XL for
girls' sizes 7-18
B Sale 21.99 Reg. 24.99
l.e.i. ® flare-leg jeans.
Girls' sizes 7-16
Slims also
available.
SALE 21.99
JEANS
Sale 21.99 Reg. \$26
Zana di® belted
flare-leg jeans.
Girls' sizes 7-16.
GIRLS
ROCK
SALE 11.99
TOP
A
i.
e.
B
l.
SALE 11.99
TOP
Sale 11.99 Reg. 14.99
Anxiety® puckered top.
S-XL for girls' sizes 7-18.
SALE 21.99
L.E.I. ® OR ZANA DI®
FLARE JEANS
SALE 12.99 JEANS
D
SALE 9.99
SHIRT
A
Z
AZ
KIDS'
MULTIGEAR
SALE
ARIZONA FILLS IN

THE DETAILS
MULTIPOCKETS! BUNGEES!
ZIPPERS! COOL FABRICS!

C. Sale 9.99 Reg. 12.99

Pieced logo shirt. Boys'
Sizes S-XL

D. Sale 12.99 Reg. 14.99

Sale prices effective 8/27-9/4, 2000 unless otherwise
Noted. Percentages off regular prices, as shown. Regular
prices are offering prices which may not have resulted in
actual sales. "Now" prices represent savings off regular
prices which may vary. Any event designated as a "sale"
excludes Value Right merchandise. Merchandise selection
may vary from one JCPenney store to another.

[Text on screen]

"I am the most boring
writer that has ever lived."

– Kenneth Goldsmith

Kenneth Goldsmith: "With *Day*, you know people get up in the morning and say I've read the newspaper. Ten minutes later they are done. They throw it in the recycling bin. I've read the newspaper. I'm going to tell you, you've never read the newspaper, you have never read the newspaper. And after doing that book, I can never read the newspaper in quite the same way."

Simon Morris: "It's disturbing and it's difficult and it's challenging but, you know, maybe that's the good thing that kind of difficulty of encountering *Day*, something like *Day* and thinking what the hell is this thing. And I found it really beautiful the fact he'd stripped all the headers, the shouters, the font sizes, the text & image and he'd literally just poured this material back into a single font and a single point size and I became aware of the fascistic nature of news. Because I just take it for granted on a daily basis because I read in a conventional manner when I read a newspaper I just accept the way it is delivered to me but they're incredibly sophisticated the structural arrangements that they deliver the news to you in and it's only when it's removed that I became aware of it and I think that's one of Kenny's key strategies as an artist moving into poetry is someone who makes the invisible visible."

Kenneth Goldsmith: "You see *Day* is the greatest book ever written. It's got love, it's got passion, it's got war, it's got hate, it's got heroicism, it's got peace, it's got greatness, it's got athleticism. I mean it's got the most amazing stories in the world and I think better stories than any fiction writer could ever possibly construct. This is the most interesting book in the world: *Day*. And the reason is that the newspaper is the most interesting book written every single day. A book, and this is McLuhan says this, every day a new book is written. And not only once, not only the *New York Times*, but a different book of the same magnitude is written hundreds and hundreds

of times around the globe each day only to be discarded the next day, an entire new one, uh, is written. And this is...fiction is silly after the newspaper.”

Simon Morris: “You do get this flattening of language which is very Warholian. I was struck when you came to York College and there was that...for me, it was just a Warhol moment when you read out this list, which you’ve performed for us again here of, of clothes, of vestments, of articles, um and, and their sizes and their, their descriptions. I mean, it was just unbelievable, it was just like language just disappeared, just completely flattened out. And...”

Kenneth Goldsmith: “That, that, I think, and again nothing was really touched in that. The works weren’t shredded at all. It was simply taking that thing and re-framing it and flattening the hell out of it. And having it lose its meaning and its context, its economy and becoming, well, you know, very rhythmic, very lyrical, the repetition of things. You know, this is also the thing with language, it’s very hard to get away from, from rhythm in language. You know, I’m, thinking, this language, the one I know...English is set to, uh, very rarely can you get away from rhythm. I think that, uh, uh, the, ah, you know the modernists really tried but I don’t think they did a very good job, I think the language itself is so rhythmic that even if you are reading something like a clothing ad, it’s very hard to get away from, from that beautiful sense of rhythm in the English language. People have been trying too hard, I think, I think people have been trying too hard to write. I don’t think we need to try very hard at all, it’s all there.”

Kenneth Goldsmith: “Warhol, again — to get back to Warhol — said that the movies were not really the action on the screen. They were purposely no action so that the action happened in the audience. There would be chatter between two people there, there would be people getting up, leaving coming, going and then there’s also all the action in your mind: the subjectivity, the thoughts, the dreams, the fantasies that are happening in the internal mind while this so quote blank screen is showing so Warhol moves the theatre into...the theatre becomes the performance space. And the movie is simply a catalyst for a performance that happens again and again spontaneously. That happens every time anybody’s in the movie theatre but instead we, we give ourselves away and throw ourselves on to that fantasy on the screen. I mean, this was so smart ignoring again the familiarity of the mundane that’s around us. In fact, this was, sort of, a Judson theatre dance approach, was that walking across the room is an act of dance in and of itself. So, you know again it’s uh, it’s all these ideas, I believe, taken into language.”

Simon Morris: “Now, I do think, looking at the [Charles] Bernstein stuff as well, I do think it is an attack on language, not in a, not in a negative sense but in the sense they want to try and find a better relationship to language. It goes back to the modernist idea that you test the boundaries in order to define more strongly your relationship with the subject.”

[Barbara Cole on screen with the following credit]

Barbara Cole

Editor of Open Letter: *Kenneth Goldsmith and Conceptual Poetics*

Barbara Cole: “I think my, my, sort of hesitation about the notion of it being an attack I think is also in some ways it’s a celebration of language and um, um, for all of Goldsmith’s talk about sort of falling asleep and that no one would really want to read this as he himself doesn’t really want to read the works that he produces. Um, there’s something very celebratory, there’s an incredible energy in wanting to spend the sort of time on these works and to produce such, such volumes which seems, to me to not just be purely sort of aggressive attack.”

Simon Morris: “I don’t mean an attack in a negative sense. I do find in the way he’ll define more closely his relationship to language going back to that um, uh, where is it, Greenberg, the self-reflexive approach...”

[scrolling text]

“What had to be exhibited
was not only that which
was unique and irreducible
in art in general,

but also that which was
unique and irreducible
in each particular art.

Each art had to determine,
through its own operations
and works, the effects
exclusive to itself.

By doing so it would,
to be sure,
narrow its area of competence,
but at the same time it
would make its
possession of that area
all the more certain.”

– Clement Greenberg

Simon Morris: “I’m totally agreeing with you. I think because he loves language so much and he enjoys it so much, he’s really testing the boundaries of language so he

can take possession of it more clearly. So he's only attacking it in order to form a stronger relationship to it."

Kenneth Goldsmith: "I think they, the modernist game to know language better, was again, ultimately through deconstruction which I actually consider to be part, part and parcel of modernism.

[scrolling text]

"I'm more interested in
knowing language better

in the way Warhol was
knowing image better

by simply turning
the camera on to it and
letting it run."

– Kenneth Goldsmith

[Book title] ***THE WEATHER***

[Text on screen]

a year of transcribed weather reports

[Kenny speaks the following words as the wrapper/hook for the project]

Kenneth Goldsmith: "This book is called *The Weather*, it's an entire year's worth of one-minute radio weather report transcriptions from the local New York news station."

Followed by Goldsmith's reading from *The Weather*...

Well, for too long the air felt like it was coming from Greenland, but for today it's coming from Shamrock, Texas, Cloverleaf, and also Greenville, South Carolina. It'll be mild, going to sixty-four, partly cloudy tonight, low forty-eight. Tomorrow partly sunny, high fifty-seven, chillier Wednesday, with clouds and sun, high forty-six, it's likely to rain on Thursday. Currently in midtown forty-nine degrees, relative humidity eighty-three percent, wind northeast three miles per hour, forty-nine heading for sixty-four.

There's going to be some sunshine today. The temperature will get up to sixty, uh, interior sections could get into the low sixties, maybe not like seventy, uh, like we got yesterday, but still, pretty comfortable. Then tonight will be partly cloudy, it'll chill down into the thirties. A cooler day tomorrow, with the wind off the water, and a mix of clouds and sun, high

tomorrow forty-four. Clouding up, followed by some rain Thursday, especially late Thursday, Thursday night and into Friday, Friday night, with Friday's high back into the fifties. Right now it's fifty-six and partly cloudy, or partly sunny in Central Park, temperature today going up to fifty-nine.

Kenneth Goldsmith: “*The Weather* is simply a record of what happened over the course of a season. But, in fact, the absurdity of reducing meteorological occurrences to a one-minute reduction is the most useless and ridiculous thing in the world. This is the most complex system, happens to be the weather system. The atmosphere in which we breathe and it's reduced down to something that either aids or abets your commute. I mean, it's absolutely insane.”

Barbara Cole: “That is potentially why so many readers get so angry by what he's doing, I think, because he's actually, he's, he's, um [pause] pointing out that what we think we have a very clear relation to, we don't at all. We don't actually hear the way we speak, that we don't necessarily hear all the ums and the ahs and the incredible repetition. *The Weather* really points out just the endless redundancy and repetition that we are subjected to that we somehow think is not as fascistic and really sort of insane, how much repetition we are subjected to.”

Barbara Cole: “I don't, I don't think that people necessarily, I know, I've tried to talk about uncreative writing and what that is and people initially think that it is trying to write something that's boring but when they begin to understand he's actually encouraging students to plagiarise or encouraging us to actually just throw away notions of ownership or proprietary or copyright or intellectual property and suddenly that's much more threatening to people.”

Robert Fitterman: “It's disruptive. And no one would have thought, the ways things were sort of going in kind of late modernist and maybe even in some of the postmodern writing, or what people think of a postmodern. No one would have thought that returning to language that was so, um [pause] comprehensible would have been so disruptive. You know, the idea of the opaque, um, didn't really sort of carry itself beyond the nineteen-nineties in terms of writing. So, it's really, uh, yeah it's really disruptive. People are really pissed off.”

[Text on screen]

“Uncreative Writing is bullshit. It's a bad joke with a mediocre setup and no punchline.

It needs to be coddled ironically, then mocked, then derided, then destroyed.

As an exercise, fine - as art, idiotic.”

– posted by ‘Rain Delay’ on Ron Silliman's blog on January 28, 2007

Robert Fitterman: “It’s really disruptive. It breaks down all of our expectations about what a book of poetry should be, even what a book should be, about what creativity is, about what the imagination is all about. So, it’s very disruptive in all of those ways. I can imagine someone would think it’s perverse and you’d probably, if you were trying to get an academic job wouldn’t want to talk about these books...yeah, they’re disruptive.”

Robert Fitterman: “Even a kind of experimental writing community, from moderate to radical doesn’t accept this work, um, because it likes to say this isn’t writing, right? So, I, I find that so curious and interesting and there is this interesting history. I think the same thing happened with *Ulysees*, the same thing happened with *On the Road*, the same thing happened with Whitman. This isn’t writing, as if that mattered, as if that were the point. Ok, it’s not writing, ok it is writing – what’s the difference? What’s that all about? And especially this late in the game when so many people have written so much about blurring those boundaries, it just seems sort of old fashioned to me.”

Kenneth Goldsmith: “The kind of test limit of my work, for myself is, if I can ask myself the question while I’m doing it, ‘Is this really writing?’ if it’s an immediate question ‘yes’, then I don’t bother doing it. But, if it says to me ‘This can’t possibly be writing, I’m just copying something, how can this be writing?’ Then, to me, it’s extremely interesting. This is not writing, this is simply transcribing. You know, as, as, you know the famous, uh, uh, Truman Capote on Kerouac: “That’s not writing, that’s typing.” The most beautiful thing I’ve ever heard. You know, um, at the end of the day, the actual physical activity of sitting down, in front of the keyboard, moving the fingers, in to a word-processing programme confirms that it is in fact writing. It’s not baseball.”

Barbara Cole: “I think that’s why the Poetry Foundation, his work a week or two ago on the Poetry Foundation is actually going to be potentially groundbreaking. His work a week or two ago is providing him with an audience he doesn’t normally have.

Simon Morris: “I think it’s like a literary bomb that maybe hasn’t exploded yet. He’s put it there and it’s kind of ticking away and it’s making us all very nervous.”

[Book title] *TRAFFIC*

[Text on screen]

a day of transcribed traffic reports

[Kenny speaks the following words as the wrapper/hook for the project] “*Traffic* is a um, full transcription of a twenty-four hour traffic cycle in New York taken from the same source as the Weather. Um, they give traffic and transit on the ones, which means every 10 minutes. Um, I chose the worst day of the year, the worst traffic day of the year which was a, right before the holiday weekend. Um, I got the idea for it from Warhol who was asked why he started his ‘Death & Disaster’ series and he said: it was Friday before the worst traffic day of the weekend and a guy came on the radio and said: “millions and millions are going to die on the road this weekend”. And

that's the epigraph for the piece and it is nothing but textual gridlock. This is from 6 O' Clock in the evening"

Followed by Goldsmith's reading from *Traffic*....

6:01 Probably the easiest way, uh, to talk about the East River right now from the Triboro Bridge on down to the Battery Tunnel is just to tell you what's moving, and what's moving is the Manhattan Bridge going into Manhattan, everything else right now is gonna be a slow ride no matter which way you go, including the Triboro, which is picking up a lot more traffic at this point. FDR Drive, you're jammed right off the Brooklyn Bridge up to the 40's with an accident. Southbound delays Triboro pretty much all the way down to the Battery now. And the, uh, West Side Highway is horrible. You got delays 120's going south and this delay goes way past Chelsea Piers, all the way down to the Battery. Yesterday it took somebody well over two and a half to three hours to cut through traffic like that. So budget at least two hours to use the West Side going south. And, uh, the interior avenues in the 40's and 50's still a mess, especially going east of Ninth Avenue. As you, uh, make your way across the Hudson, though, Lincoln Tunnel slower than the Holland Tunnel back to Jersey. There's a lot of 40th Street traffic at the Lincoln Tunnel right now. GW Bridge don't bother. The upper level's gotta be over a half an hour, lower level near that much. Palisades Parkway approach'd be better. On the Deegan south we still have that stalled bus by Willis Avenue in the right lane. And, uh, troubles on the Cross Island north now in Queens at Hempstead Turnpike. Tractor-trailer wandered on, that's along the right side. As we've been saying, alternate side parking will be back in effect for tomorrow.

6:11 Well, we've been telling you how bad the rush hour's been in Midtown and through Manhattan and it's only getting worse right now. We've been, uh, checking out the FDR Drive just south of the Triboro. This delay goes straight on down to the Brooklyn Bridge. And the northbound side, there was a crash in the 40's with delays right off the Brooklyn Bridge going north. And the West Side, I'm telling you, it can take you upwards to two and a half to three hours to sit in this mess from the 120's all the way down to the Battery Tunnel. I'm not seeing any movement at all right now around the Chelsea Piers area, around the 40's, up in the 90's. It's just horrible on the West Side. Eighth Avenue's gonna be bad, Teens all the way up to Columbus Circle. You got a ton of traffic right now on Seventh Avenue out of, uh, the area of Central Park, all the way down, going past Times Square. Broadway's being impacted by that too. On the East Side steer clear of Second Avenue. Because of the dump-off off the 59th Street Bridge and coming out of the Midtown Tunnel, you've got delays on Second Avenue from the 80's all the way down to the Teens. And the East Side side streets through the 40's and 50's are an absolute mess. Big problems right now across the East River. The only thing south of the Triboro that's moving is the Manhattan-bound Manhattan Bridge. Other than that, forget it. And right now off the Verrazano we've got troubles, Brooklyn-bound lower level there's an

accident. It's a flipped over car, the Brooklyn-bound lower level of the Verrazano on the ramp to the Belt. This will impact the upper roadway too. So right now coming out of Staten Island coming off the Verrazano, it'll be very slow.

Barbara Cole: “The challenge for students is that they are all too happy to not want to read. And usually the role of the text is to sort of, either it's a requisite task they have to attend to. It's something they have to read and therefore they sort of resent it. Or it's something they feel they need some kind of information and so they want to digest it as quickly as possible and find out what they need in order to just regurgitate that knowledge back. Um, and so the sort of conceptual literary artifact I think challenges them in a way which at first they are incredibly resistant to — and then at least in my experience — they are incredibly excited by. Somehow, once they sort of understand what that project is, it opens a whole new possibility and they suddenly become very playful and they want to do conceptual papers and they want to, you know, respond to the exam in a conceptual way and can they sort of have that more playful innovative response and that's, I think, actually the revolution in a way that I think perhaps students can respond to Goldsmith in a more interesting way than scholars can sometimes. Scholars are really angry at this work.”

Barbara Cole: “I never cease to be amazed that students seem... I mean, I think perhaps Goldsmith is making us uncomfortably aware of how really conventional and traditional the academy is even though we might think that we are teaching contemporary writing or innovative ideas of the avant-garde, actually we are incredibly conservative in what we are presenting to students. And students prove, time and again, that they are actually ready and willing and able to read much more innovative texts and to think in a more innovative way than we ourselves might be.”

Barbara Cole: “I've talked to a number of people who are either friends with Kenny or great supporters, um and privately there is often times or a moment in the conversation a question of doubt or suddenly, um, this sort of, that same anxiety, is he maybe playing a joke on us. That seems to be, um, the most common anxiety among even supporters of Goldsmith that, that perhaps everyone is slightly afraid that this is actually some sort of hoax that he's playing. People seem secretly afraid that perhaps they are not seeing through the joke or they are not in on the joke. That is, often times, that was the response that Gertrude Stein met for so many decades that people really thought she was playing a joke on the literary world. And certainly the volume of language in *No. 111*, or in *Soliloquy* or *Day* seems to challenge readers in the same way that Stein was challenging.”

[Text on screen]

Reader: Why don't you write the way you talk?

Gertrude Stein: Why don't you read the way I write?

Barbara Cole: “It's very difficult after reading Goldsmith to then pick up any writer, even a writer that's considered incredibly disjunctive. Suddenly, um, someone like Pound or Elliot or Zukofsky just seems incredibly clean and sort of artificial and in no way difficult to interpret. It's sort of seemingly very crafted, very controlled. Um, in

2000 I saw Goldsmith in an undergraduate class, talking to undergraduates at the University of Buffalo and the students were sort of bringing up all of these other writers they thought were interesting. Primarily L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poets, post 1960's writers, um, where as most teachers I think would sort of say: 'Oh yes, that's a good idea and that's a good comparison and that's an interesting parallel. Um, Kenny just sort of smiled and said: 'Wow, what I'm doing is so much more avant-garde than that, isn't it.' And he just sort of like laughed at their ideas of the innovative and was just pointing out that what he was doing is far more innovative. And, in a way, he is right. I mean, it could be seen as arrogant. But I think, um, again, the comparison to Stein is fitting that Stein was happy to say that what she was doing was far more experimental than Proust or Joyce or anyone else at that time. And I think Goldsmith has a right to make that claim now."

[Text on screen]

"Goldsmith is our James Joyce
for the 21st century."
- Christian Bök

Film ends with Kenny walking around Manhattan to sound track by Rob Lavers

Film credits roll...

KENNETH GOLDSMITH
sucking on words

a film by Simon Morris

critical commentary: Bruce Andrews, Barbara Cole and Robert Fitterman

film & lighting: Fiona Biggiero & Jerome Harmann-Hardeman

film editor: Christine Morris

sound: Jarrod Fowler

original musical score: Rob Lavers

i n f o r m a t i o n a s m a t e r i a l

DVD

Video

England/USA

Colour

59 minutes 39 seconds