

<http://counterpathpress.blogspot.com/2016/09/interview-with-w-scott-howard.html?view=magazine>

Interview with W. Scott Howard,
presenting this Thursday at the SubText event!



W. Scott Howard teaches poetics and poetry in the Department of English at the University of Denver. He received his Ph.D. in English and Critical Theory from the University of Washington, Seattle, where he was a member of the *Subtext Collective*. Scott worked at Powell's Books (1990-93) where he co-managed (with Vanessa Renwick) the *Small Press & Journals* section, the *dewclaw* reading series, the *prism* interdisciplinary discussion series, and also managed the *Critical Theory* section. His interviews in *PLAZM* magazine (1993-97) are noted in the documentary film, *Helvetica* (2007). Scott is the founding editor of *Reconfigurations: A Journal for Poetics & Poetry / Literature & Culture*. His multigraphs for *Reconstruction* include *Water: Resources and Discourses* (2006) co-edited with Justin Scott Coe; and *Archives on Fire: Artifacts & Works, Communities & Fields* (2016). His collections of poetry include the e-book, *ROPES* (with images by Ginger Knowlton) from Delete Press, 2014; and *SPINNAKERS (The Lune)*, 2016). His work has received support from the Modern Language Association, the Pew Charitable Trusts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Beinecke Library, Yale University. Scott lives in Englewood, CO and commutes year-round by bicycle.

CP: Can you talk about your plans for the event at Counterpath? What will you be presenting?

WSH: I'll be presenting selections from my poetry and also from my critical and theoretical writing concerning intersections of text/image & page/screen.

CP: How did you become interested in this project?

WSH: My current research, writing, and teaching projects all go back to the 1990s, when I was working at Powell's Books where I co-managed (with Vanessa Renwick) the *Small Press & Journals* section, the *dewclaw* reading series, the *prism* interdisciplinary discussion series, and also managed the *Critical Theory* section. That's when my world changed fundamentally (after so many years of formal education in college and graduate school). During those years (before computerized inventory and internet shopping) Powell's was at the center of the literary world of new and used books. I began to see the physical book—and the whole store, for that matter—as a charged medium at the crossroads of individual and civil liberties. How the page engages the polis. That's when I began reading books by Susan Howe, Nathaniel Mackey, Lorine Niedecker, Lyn Hejinian, Tom Raworth and many others who were working within and against counter-paths shaped by the so-called Objectivists and L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E writers. I found myself increasingly drawn to works that questioned anew the space of the page, the linguistic mediation of social dynamics, and the praxis of hybrid forms that staged radical integrations of aesthetics, lyric subjectivities, historical materialisms, and visual media. Such was the interdisciplinary and political ethos at Powell's. We were all keenly aware, as section managers (and struggling artists), that our work was a form of ethical activism.

CP: Can you describe the process of developing and completing what you're going to present?

WSH: I'll be reading and briefly discussing one or two facing pages from my book, *SPINNAKERS*, which will be published in November by The Lune—thanks to the dynamic and visionary work of Joe Braun and Indigo Deany. Each poem in *SPINNAKERS* is a two-page assemblage consisting of prose poem, lyrical erasure, and Morse translations. They're all *sound forms in time*—phanopoetic SOS broadcasts. I also have mp3 files of the code and will play one or two of those. These *spans in rek* are anagrammatological protests and prayers from suburban apocalyptic midnight potlucks. Individually and collectively, these poems amplify the spatial-temporal, textual-visual dynamics between wind/sail and sound/speak, transmitting tragic joy within and against headlong crisis culture.

CP: How do you see this project fitting in with other aspects of your work?

WSH: The lyrical/concrete/discursive poems in *SPINNAKERS* are part of a larger collection, *Transfigurations*, that also includes another sequence of text/image poems, *ROPES*, that was published in 2014 as an e-book from Delete Press. *ROPES* is a collaborative assemblage—as all books are fundamentally—and includes vital visual work by Boulder artist and poet, Ginger Knowlton. All of the poems in *ROPES* are in dialogue with Ginger's images and vice versa.

CP: What other projects are you working on?

WSH: *SPINNAKERS* also emerges from a context of other projects, some recently published and others forthcoming. During 2015, thanks to a fellowship from Yale, I was conducting research at the Beinecke Library for my critical and theoretical writing on Susan Howe's poetry, prose, and performance art. Working with the vast collection of materials in the [Susan Howe Papers](#) archive has immeasurably enriched my life, my teaching, and my writing. As I mentioned a moment ago, I've been engaged with Susan's work since the 1990s. *Articulation of Sound Forms in Time* (Awede, 1987) continues to be one of my favorite small press volumes. The dynamic fusions in those unnumbered facing pages of texture and motion, sound and vision are both singular and characteristic of *how* Howe astonishes. Take for example, her recently published, highly collaborative, multi-modal projects: *Spontaneous Particulars* and *TOM TIT TOT*. Two of my recent publications respectively address these curatorial assemblages and their interdisciplinary contexts: "[Archives, Artifacts, Apostrophes](#)" (*Denver Quarterly*, 2016); and "[TANGIBLE THINGS / Out of a stark oblivion](#)" (*Special Collections Showcase*, 2015). These and other essays and an interview with Susan Howe all contribute to a book typescript in-progress.

Posted by tr

