

HAIR

Poem for a Circle

Darcey Bella Arnold

Sandy Caldow

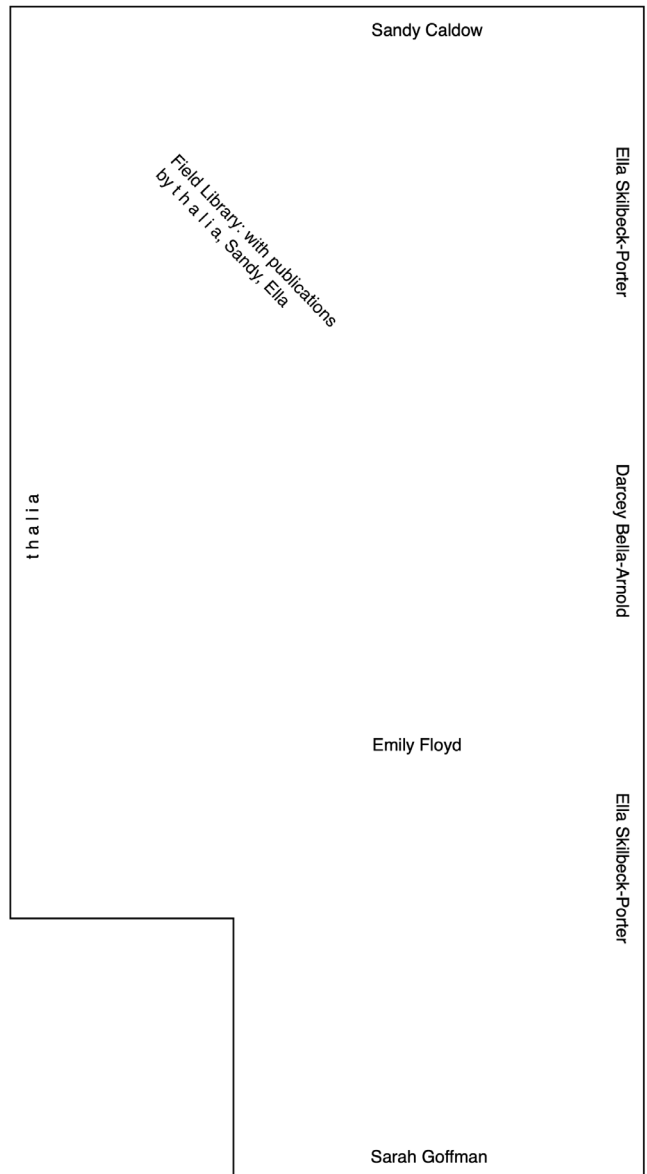
Emily Floyd

Sarah Goffman

Ella Skilbeck-Porter

t h a l i a

10 – 31 October, 2025



Darcey Bella Arnold

Left Right (breastfeeding poem), 2023

Acrylic and flashe on cotton duck

150 x 200 cm

Sandy Caldow

A Rose Arrows, 2017

Pine wood, synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Arose, A Row, A Rose, 2017

Pine wood, gold leaf, synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Emily Floyd

Kesh Letterpress, 2017

Steel with black oxide coating

Dimensions variable

Sarah Goffman

Untitled, 2025

Window painting using Jif cream cleanser

Dimensions variable

Ella Skilbeck-Porter

Concrete Pool (Three Swims), 2023

Rotate, 2025

Surfacing, 2025

I hug the line, 2025

Interleaf, 2025

Inkjet prints on paper

230 x 420 mm each

t h a l i a

Nuclear Fears, 1986

Oil on canvas

Feminist Reviewing Literature Artistic Works, 1986

Literature

Critique Literature Knowledge Analysis Feminist

Still

Your Tool Literature, 1986

Literature Militant Investigation

Inkjet print on paper

210mm x 297mm

Field Library includes publications by Sandy Caldow, t h a l i a and Ella Skilbeck-Porter

All works courtesy the artists © the artists

A rose is an arrow

Before children can learn to write, they draw. Squiggles transform into circles, the first shape a child makes and thereby the first symbol, and jags turn into straight lines. With these gestures at hand they can start to form the letters of an alphabet, and from here on the processes of thinking and writing are kind of merged.

Going back to early mark-making reminds us that writing is drawing, and that the letter — and the written word — are images. However, the semiotic processes of reading often eclipse that of seeing. Reading replaces looking. As thalia writes: “Familiar shapes in familiar environments are invisible. We do not see words, we read them, which is to say we look through them at their significance, their contents. Concrete poetry is first of all a revolt against the transparency of the word”.

Visual poetry, aka concrete poetry, merges the semiotic systems of writing and visual art, drawing out the visual, physical and material dimension of written language, revivifying and representing anew. Because language, once made physical, through writing, sculpting, or recording, becomes a plastic material, capable of being shaped to create disjunct, oscillation, spark in an ongoing interpretive process where the reading-viewing often hinges intrinsically on the placement of the text and the dynamic interplay of both the viewing and reading event.

In poem for a circle, six visual poetry and art practices converge on the theme and form of a circle. The polyvalent circle as symbol, letter, number and sound, and as implicit reference to eternal return, is embodied and metaphor-phosed through the form of visual poetry. The O becomes in turn the mother’s body that breastfeeds, circulating white ink in a feedback loop. The sculptural loops of a materialised invented language (Kesh) arranged on the floor spelling out a poem. The drawn loops of the writing system of shorthand where writing and image become one. The O of the earth and the unified call of relational eco-poetics, and the breath of the swimmer as they swim loops of the pool. The O, like language, spins and returns, circulating and reinventing, rolling and taking on many forms.

Returning to the image is similarly a return to the body, and the ideological battle between the word and the image has historically been read in gendered terms. Visual poetry, as an intermedial fusion of text and image, becomes a site of intervention that continues the feminist project, moving beyond hierarchies and borders, and favouring plurality inside and outside of language.

Ella Skilbeck-Porter
Oct 2025