

## bpNichol : IN VISUAL RANGE

bpNichol (1944-1988) is probably best known to poetry readers for his epic transmutational poem *The Martyrology*. Yet however diverse and engaging is *The Martyrology*, no less so is the large body of visual language work that Nichol pioneered throughout his career.

Perhaps more than any other Canadian writer (or American writer, for that matter), Nichol explored a range of expression and creativity in the visual language media that was unsurpassed. This range included concrete poetry, visual word puns, semiotic and semaphoric puzzles, visual alphabet systems, panellogic narratives, watercolour wordscapes, abstract letter drawings, alphabet studies, and more.

As evidenced in his notebooks, Nichol spent as much time exploring the visual nature of the alphabet and language as he did in writing works like *The Martyrology*, *Still* or *Journal*. Each creative work informed the other, and were often in progress at the same time. In his notebook *The House of the Alphabet*, for instance, Nichol pursues his visual H Studies 1-16, while at the same time writing a narrative entitled *The Realism Publishing Co. Inc.*, making notes for a segment of T.R.G. (Toronto Research Group) theory, and writing a lengthy footnote to Book V of *The Martyrology*.

The poems in this issue of *The Capilano Review* should give the reader a broad spectrum of Nichol's visual work spanning nearly a 30-year period, from the mid-1960s to the late 1980s. Although most of the work here is previously unpublished, we've included a few works not readily available to a reader due to their having been published in obscure, hard-to-find periodicals or chapbooks.

I want to thank jwcurry who was invaluable in the selection of the works presented here, and wish to thank Ellie Nichol for allowing both of us the opportunity to discover works we had not encountered before.

Richard Truhlar  
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