

THIS IS A COLLECTION of improvised asemic texts. The word "asemic" means "having no semantic content." These pieces contain handwriting gestures, letters and symbols, characters from other writing systems such as Chinese, Arabic and Korean, fragments of letters, and new symbols of my own devising. Thus, they incorporate writing, but at an infra-verbal level.

I produce these works while physically excited but mentally still. Usually late at night, when stoned and drunk, with intense music such as drum'n'bass or dub reggae playing, in a "no mind" state. That is to say, the part of my mind that composes ideas into words and sentences is not operating. Rather, I make a mark, pause and look, make another mark and so on, until the page feels complete. There is an element of dance in my movement. An intuitive, rather than logical, process. Quite similar to Zen art.

The American poet Jim Leftwich taught me the word "asemic." His asemic work is one source of inspiration. Two Belgian poets, Henri Michaux and Christian Dotremont, produced a lot of work on this interstice between writing and visual art. The Australian poet Cornelis Vleeskens independently arrived at a related style, although he doesn't refer to his work as "asemic." All of these inform my work. Note that all of these people are or were practising verbal poets. Conversely, I don't regard the work of the abstract expressionists as asemic. Their compositions tend to use free gestures rather than writing-like gestures.

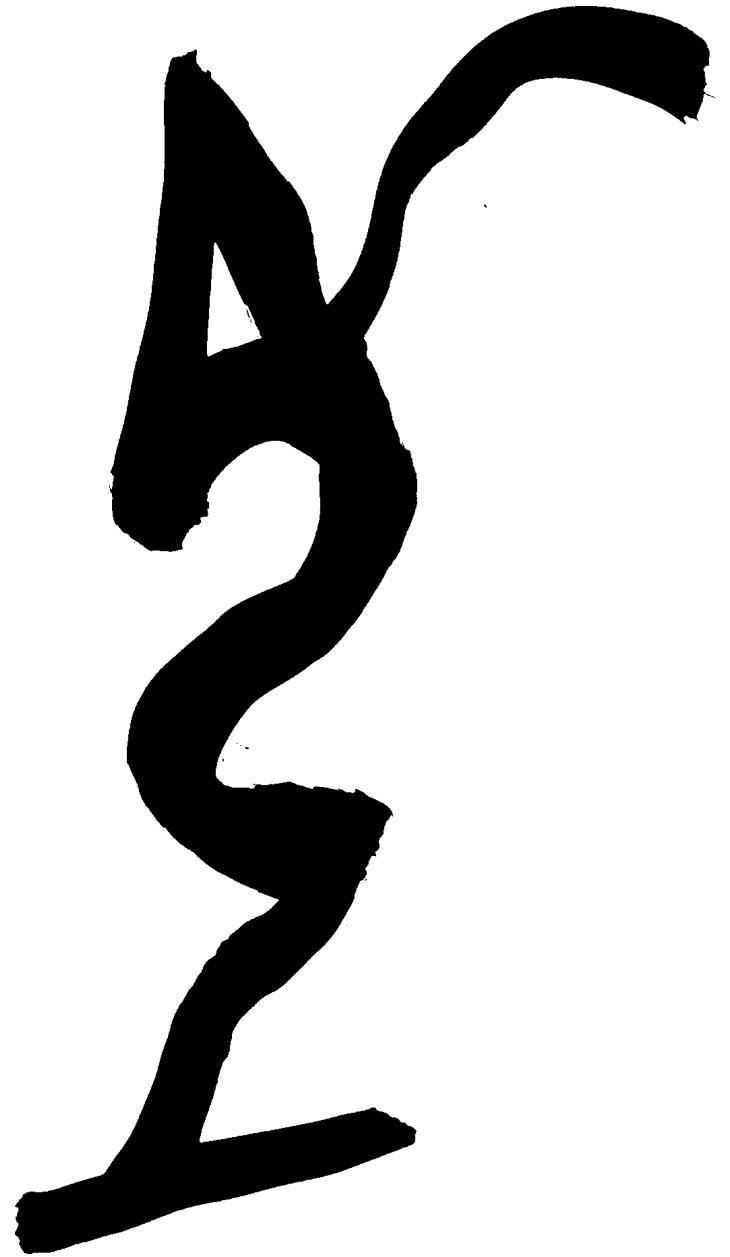
Crazy Running Style Chinese calligraphy, avant-garde Japanese calligraphy such as was practised by the Gutai and Bokujin-kai groups, certain tendencies in contemporary visual poetry, and illegible graffiti lettering are all part of what I see as an asemic stream. In May 1999, I began publishing a little magazine titled asemic, to weave the threads of this tradition into something more coherent.

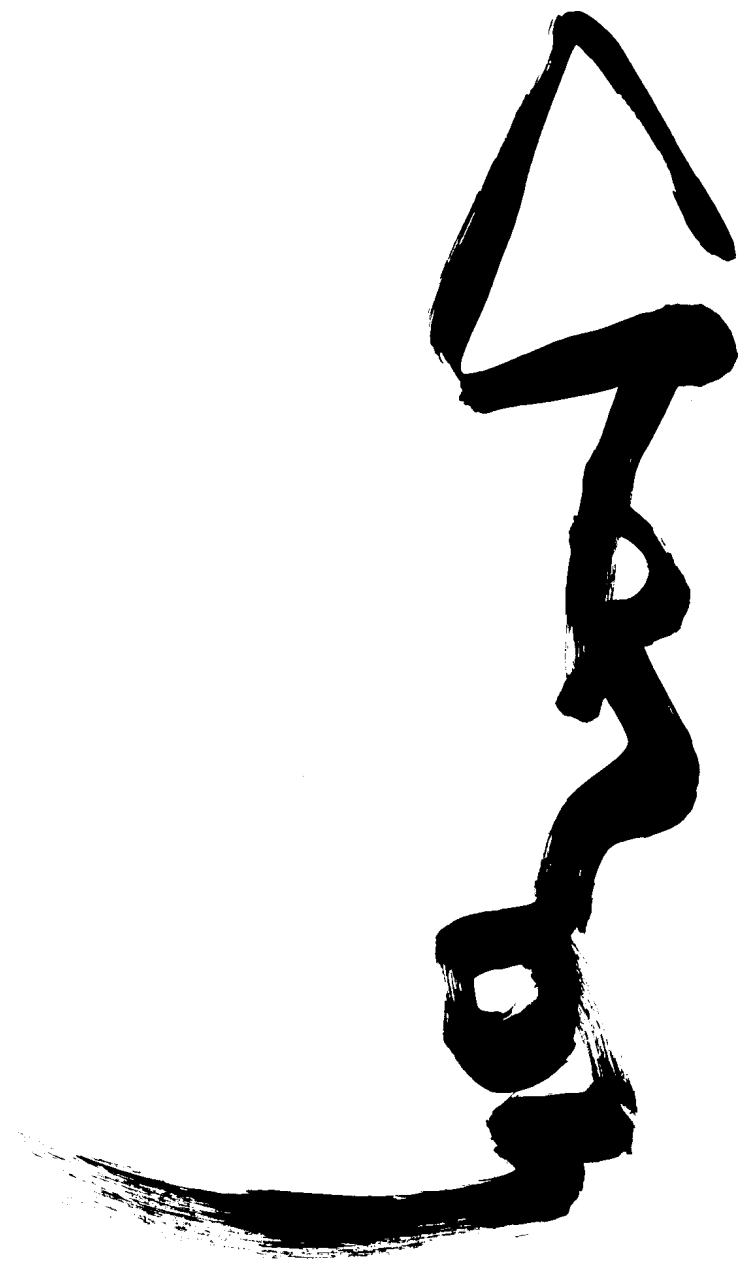
Chinese ink landscapes are said to be written. Hand-drawn Javanese batik designs are also said to be written. In Asian cultures, calligraphy, painting and poetry are intertwined. I perceive the asemic tradition as a Western attempt to generate a similar fusion of these separate streams of culture.

Asemic texts have no writer-intended meaning. If you the viewer perceive a meaning, you've created that meaning yourself. This is a mystery.

Many of my emotional states are unspeakable in words. Only through asemic writing can I express what's inside me.

As a writer of prose and poetry in several styles, I feel as if I've arrived at the event horizon between writing and not-writing, a point on the edge of chaos. The air is sweet here. Only words lie; asemic texts cannot lie. Here is the oxygen of truth.



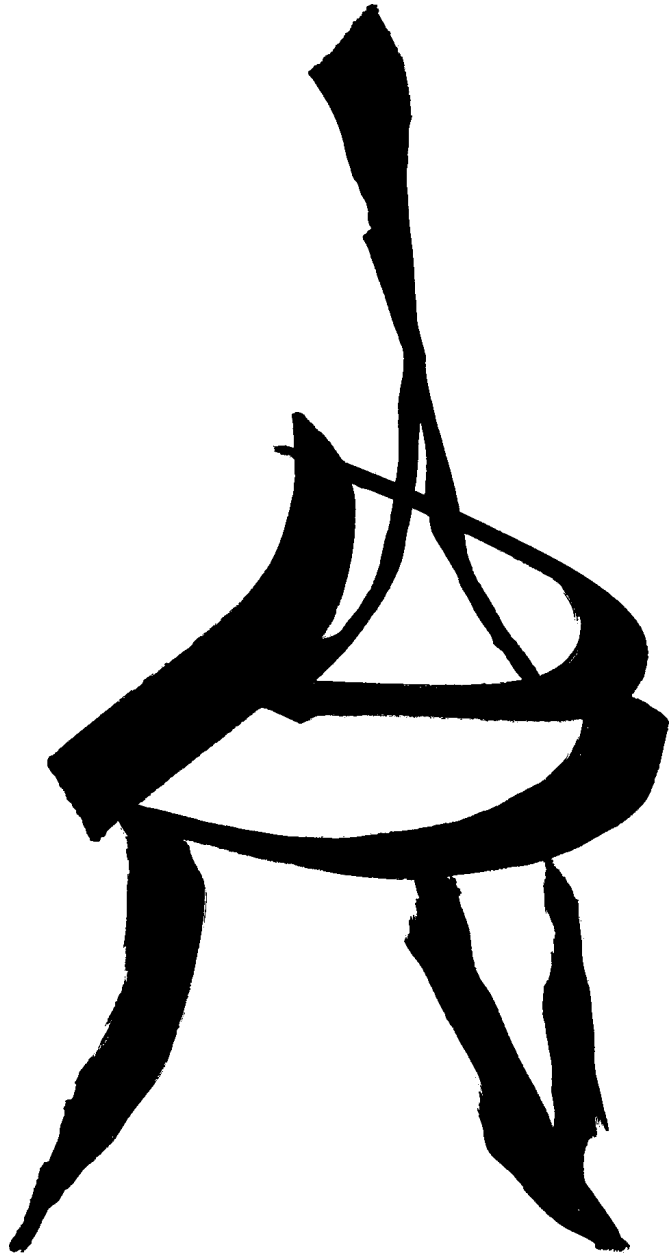


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