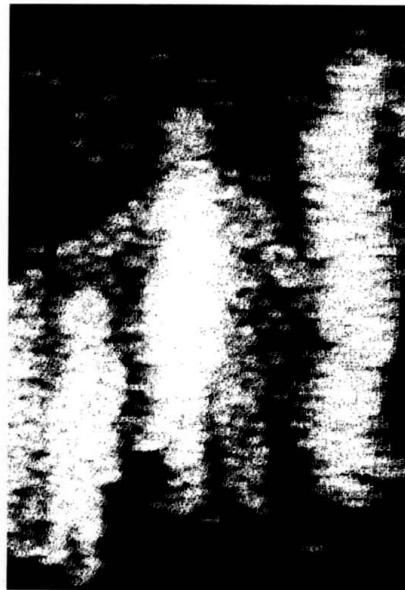


PARIS

CHARLES SANDISON

GALERIE FRANK

The gallery is plunged in darkness; words in motion float on the walls. The simple characters and the mostly white-on-black projection immediately evoke the computer, but at a rudimentary stage, far from the latest innovations of digital imaging; Charles Sandison is happy to forego the temptations of technological virtuosity. “Born a writer in an artist’s body,” as he says of himself, Sandison writes programs—chains of orders and choices, syntactic sequences—that generate words and bring them to life, regulating their movements and their connections, but only to a certain extent, since the systems created this way are half deterministic, half aleatory. Controlled by algorithms used in the simulations of molecular dynamics, the words appear, evolve in space, collide, self-destruct, gather, or mask themselves and then disappear, in recurrent cycles: For instance, in *Peoples* (all works 2003), the words gradually form silhouettes that are more or less identifiable as human; in *Lines*, sentences with gaps in them shift laterally, following the joints of a brick wall, while words slip diagonally from the top and at times stop in order to complete a sentence. Sandison’s works are situated at the crossroads of various practices, without being reducible to any of them: While they certainly share a kinship with research on systems and chance, they also reflect on language and explore relationships between the work and space.



Charles Sandison, *Cohesion*, 2003,
computer code and panoramic digital
projection, dimensions variable.

The principal interest of Sandison’s installations resides in the link they forge between apparently contradictory data: between word and form, poetry and code, the organic and the digital. The words used are simple, immediately comprehensible, and emotionally charged, yet they are rendered abstract through repetition and the evacuation of context: Thus, adjectives in *Cohesion* (“weak,” “ugly,” and “stupid”; “other,” “slow,” and “invalid”; “void” and “sick”), unable to form sentences, instead constitute shapes, inventing an update of Apollinaire’s *calligrammes*. The arrangement established in *Lines* extends this poetic creation by playing with the viewer’s reading reflexes and the deconstructing of the sentence in order to invent other relationships between words—now freer since they escape linearity on the one hand and the constraints of syntax on the other. No narration here, but evocative fragments, as in a half-erased text, on which one might project one’s dreams freely. This freedom is paradoxical, since these apparently random gaps in the system of language are in fact programmed through the intermediary of another code; and the text, seemingly defective, is revealed to be the faithful translation of a well-ordered musical score. This poetic association of chance and the system is amplified finally by the constant motion that animates these sets of which we only ever see a fragment and which obey laws similar to those of the biological existence (birth, life, and death) and social life (encounters, the impulse to approach or flee) of living organisms.

—Guitemie Maldonado

Translated from French by Jeanine Herman.