



The echo is where

A Contributory Art Exhibition

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Finnegans Wake by James Joyce is one of the most curious books ever written. It is circular, with the final words of the text leading us back to the beginning. Although the book is largely in English, Joyce made use of about 80 other languages, and coined many other melodic, tactile words to suit his singular vision, including ten 100-letter words. He spent 17 years on it – *Finnegans Wake* was published on 4 May 1939.

The book is “an ark to contain all human myths and types” (Hélène Cixous); “joyous and totally brilliant wordplay” (Patrick Watson); “a great comic vision” (Anthony Burgess); “as close as our chaos could come to the heights of Shakespeare and Dante” (Harold Bloom); “a vast dream . . . where the dead can speak, where humans are animals and vice versa” (Finn Fordham); and “reflects women’s position as leaders of linguistic and social change” (Michelle McSwiggan Kelly).

Joyce’s wife, Nora Barnacle, called it “chop suey”; Joyce’s patron, Harriet Shaw Weaver, said that “the poor hapless reader . . . is in imminent danger . . . of being totally lost to view,” and Joyce’s friend, Ezra Pound, said of the book: “Nothing short of divine wisdom or a new cure for the clap can possibly be worth all the circumambient peripherization.”

I am in the midst of a multi-year project to gloss / illustrate / disrupt each of the text’s 628 pages. LOTS OF FUN WITH FINNEGANS WAKE incorporates scholarly material, random and idiosyncratic responses and reactions, and the input of people I know, who I ask to add their own words, markings, and images directly on the originals. Pages from the project have been published in journals in Canada, England, Ireland, Israel, and the U.S., and artwork from the project has been exhibited in Antwerp, New York, and Toronto.

Because Joyce plundered and yoked together a multitude of sources – from the Bible to barroom songs, from Shakespeare to shouts in the street, from the cricket pitch to passing commentary by friends and others – I consider *Finnegans Wake* to be the most compound and collective artwork ever created. Joyce used the entire world as grist, and wanted to gather the entire world within its pages.

The echo is where invites a wide audience to participate in the making of an artwork. I have expanded 43 pages (126 – 68) and will display them in the gallery. Audience members will be encouraged to make their own contribution directly on the artwork, which measures 2 feet X 65 feet. Archival felt pens, graphite, archival glitter glue, acrylic and paintbrushes will be provided. Some may choose to bring their own items or objects to affix to the artwork, and neutral pH adhesive will be available.

Two pieces of music will be looped as background accompaniment: “Ballet mécanique” (1924) by George Antheil and “Ces dames aux chapeaux verts” (1929) by Germaine Tailleferre.

All contributions and additions to the artwork will be integral and essential elements of the finished piece, and participants will be encouraged to sign their name on the artwork.