

Edited by Matthew Abess, Patrick Lovelace, Stephen McLaughlin, and Danny Snelson

BLURB by Tan Lin

Seven Controlled Vocabularies imagines a world creating itself with a combination of bold, boring, and broccoli.

Besides being a book framed by metadata--performing metadata as a dispersal of the book's 'substance'--7CV is a creative treatise anthropologizing current administered worlds. As such it exists where utopian and the dystopian cleave, and where atopia (no place) posits Open (Heidegger). What can (should?) be salvaged from the apparent apocalypse of bar codes, pharmaceuticals, post-disco, Walmart-type superstores and reality programs at the level of the concept and of material practices? 7CV makes us attend the most banal and transparent aspect of contemporary experience with renewed insight and interest. I'll never view a Post-It note the same. Nor perhaps my experience of waiting at an airport during a flight delay.

Tan Lin is the first poetic conceptualist with personality; it is no wonder he has paid scholarly attention to Eliot. But what was tradition has dissipated, as if it so needed, into detritus, and that cultural clog of ingredients are what you find “controlled” in SCV. In my estimation, this is the best book of poetry written yet this century, and precisely because the politics it demands are yet to come, but their context already so familiar.

Seven Controlled Vocabularies is the motherboard of buffet books. A visual uppercut for the eye, how delicious it was to be simultaneously relaxed and irradiated by this book. Log-on to experience this data-path, this collection of families and driftwood diaries. Here is a commanding insistence for a more generous code on how to get down to the fish-guts possibilities of post-modern reading and communication.

In Tan's beautifully generic landscape, one feels they may be watching a home movie that they forgot happened to them. Instead of a 'fantasia of the library', *Seven Controlled Vocabularies* is writing, followed by reading, as continuous lapsus. Lin's text is an imperceptible traversal of modular glancing; a transcription of the moment before one begins looking at a painting, a dictation of television static, or an index to the intermediary we know today as the 'post-medium condition'. *Seven Controlled Vocabularies* is a very relaxing novel and can be absorbed in under one minute. I have yet to encounter such a work that makes me think I am falling asleep while checking my e-mail.

“Tan Lin’s Tan Lin”

If you read just one book composed mostly of paratextual matter this year, it should be *Seven Controlled Vocabularies and Obituary 2004*. *The Joy of Cooking*.

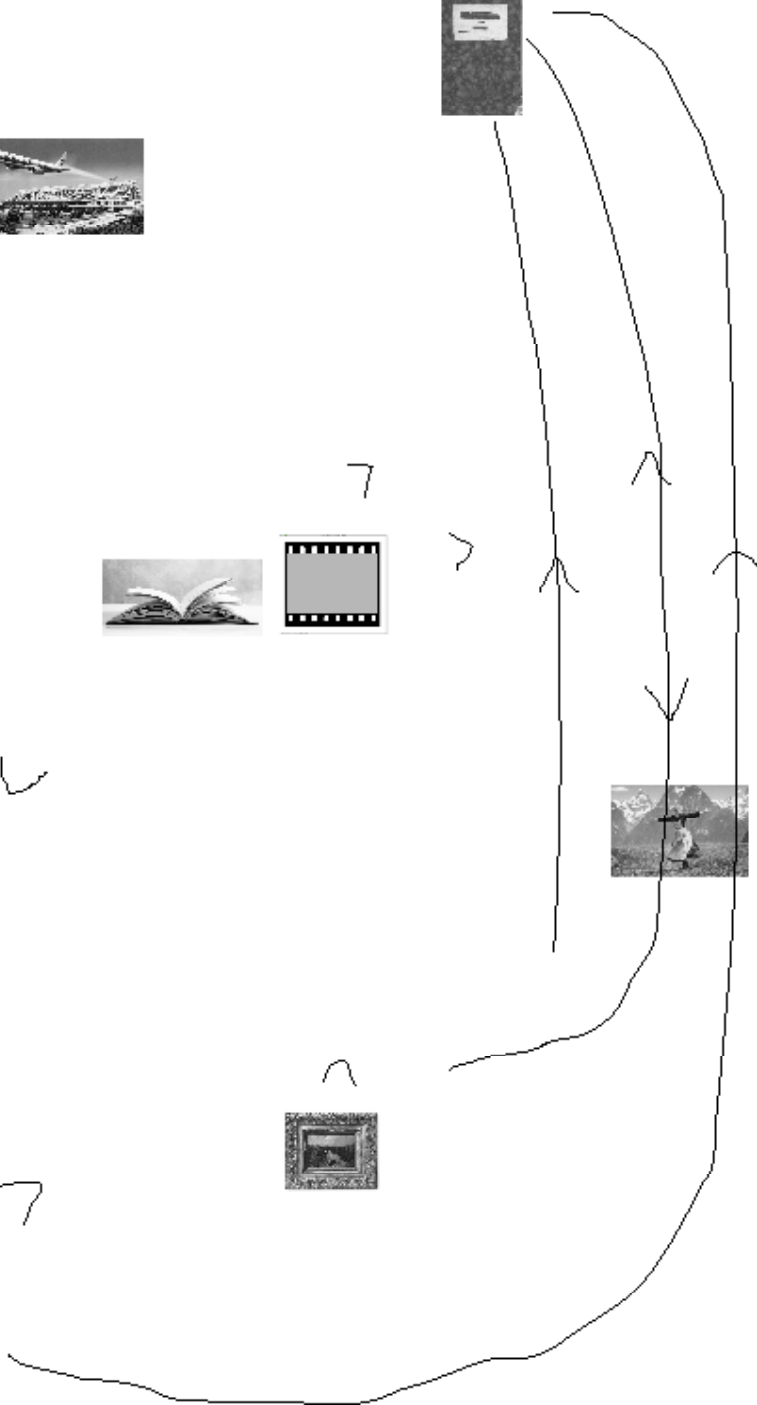
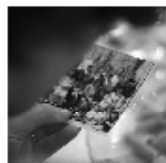
It's got a 4/4 beat. You can dance to it. I give it a 10.

Better than hyperbole!

I laughed. I cried. I felt ten feet tall.

A roller coaster of hi-jinx.

If you read just two books this year with *The Joy of Cooking* in the title, make sure one of them is Irma Rombauer's *The Joy of Cooking* and the other one is *Seven Controlled Vocabularies and Obituary 2004*. *The Joy of Cooking* by Tan Lin.



這本書將拯救世界, 它的作者是佛!
另外, 超現實主義的規則這本書!
他喜歡誰需要認真對待它的理論是一個傻瓜。

Digital Post dish next to the Possum.
Read the small number of boiling down effects.
A barcode human entertainment everyone will equivalent.
It does not reflect any group of people like the power of language.
But this book will save the world, it is the author of buddha.
Black and white are executed in this written.
I think that he is a fool theory.

I went through the purchase process with this seller only to receive an email telling me they could not provide the product at the price advertised and therefore they were canceling my order. Sounds like false advertising to me, since they are still offering the product at the same price.

Tan Lin's work finds us bobbing in a Great Pacific Garbage Patch of language, bits of which can be pasted together to make a raft of a design that Otto Neurath could never have predicted. It's a snapshot of how we read in 2009: terminally distracted yet managing to find, here and there, meaningful connections.

Tan Lin's dazzling new book is pure fire in the hands. I love the roughness and humor and brag and tenderness in his work as he carries the reader through rooms of passion and loss, illuminating the darkest recesses of the human soul. He takes us back to the womb, and from there on to childhood, to a searing sexual awakening, to the wonder and humor of parenthood—and, finally, to the depths of adult love. An unforgettable reading experience from one of the finest poets writing today.

“The one book of all cookbooks in English that I would have on my shelf — if I could have but one.”

Kudos to Tan Lin for writing the first Asian American cookbook of molecular somnambular gastronomy! *Seven Controlled Vocabularies* is a must for the serious home practitioner of culinary arts and for foam/ethnic enthusiasts everywhere.

7cv is a system that contradicts the thought. The system delivers.

7cv displays differences in tissues, reducing noise while maintaining the frame. Cavities and borders or vessels and edges: a technological breakthrough.

7cv detects all flows. Opposite flows traveling in parallel.

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c*****n@*****.com

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l*****n@*****.com

Dayton, OH, 45431

online@flipkart.com

t*****0@*****.com

Urbana, IL, 61801

t*****n@*****.org

New York, NY, 10004

m*****7@*****.com

Clovis, NM,

w*****r@*****.com

Royal Oak, MI, 48067

Topo:

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718-259-3xxx

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732-661-1xxx

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Satellite: *NSEW*

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IP/09/5 Brussels, 05 January 2009

A **0.1768 degrees:**

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CFII/MEI On Medical Leave... for now.

A: _____ **Walter Forred, MD** PHX 602-
368-5633

www.myflightsurgeon.com

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Tan Lin's book is a striking example of how verbal and visual disjunction and conceptual/formal variability and experimentation has been used in contemporary poetry and contemporary criticism. Lin thinks through the theory, consumer culture, memory, & landscape and when he has finished he has produced a compelling and vivid text that is capable of astonishing the reader with how deftly it moves between found objects, Louis Vitton sweaters, metadata, an old girlfriend's musical taste, and consumer advertising culture. Whether one reads the book for its critical insight, its conceptual and formal originality, or Tan Lin's unique and important poetry is not important. What is important is that you read it.

Tan Lin's poetry is just way too cool. In *7 Controlled Vocabularies*, Lin makes language pop, sizzle, melt, careen, dodge, sparkle, and reform[ulate]. Lin's poems are as chic as they are sharp and ingenious. This new book is a dazzling display of aesthetic élan and as charming as Magritte's pipe.

The body text is printed with ink composed of a heavy petroleum distillate and carbon black. The pages are made of a buffered, 60-lb, off-white machine finished coated paper, sewn into signatures with white linen bookbinding thread, and its endpapers are pasted to the book's boards with a pH neutral polyvinyl acetate and fitted with undyed cotton cloth hinges, and the boards are covered in an acrylic-coated cotton cloth.

“簡短的聲明中稱讚文學產品”



Tan Lin's controlled vocabularies index a literacy whose diffusion articulates the perpetual dislocation of crisis in the "American Landscape," a Field Guide stretched border to border "like paint." The book is ambient not because it inhabits the shifting attentions of a natural world external to the book, but because that natural world in fact operates as if it were a book by Tan Lin. "Every era attempts to return to its version of the natural." And Every Era Entertainment gets the natural it deserves. And every era should have saved more lira.

Carrying around this book is like carrying around your iPod.

*Seven Controlled Vocabularies and Obituary 2004. Joy of Cooking* enacts a new brand of networked poetics, perhaps the first of its kind. The book explores more than textual production or the language of poetry or the university system of publication—though it does all these things with wit and charm. Most of all, it lovingly traces the delicate strands of universal values tangled in today's network culture: emotions mapped on databases, memories tagged with metadata, death circulating by RSS feed, beauty written in barcode. To be certain, these aren't the silken strands of yesterday's poetry, but the lines of code and stretches of attention span that pervade contemporary life. And precisely because of this technico-philosophical acuity, the book startles its readers with an immanent familiarity and captivating—Lin would say 'relaxing' or 'ambient'—readability. Opening to any page, the reader can't help but stretch along with Lin's captivating anecdotes, brimming with luxurious puzzles and startling insights. Lin's voice is as generic as ad copy and as intimate as your best friend (via Skype). For anyone who's ever felt affection toward moist towelette packets at a diner or wondered about our place in the technological present, *Seven Controlled Vocabularies* simply can't be shelved, it demands reading.

Tan Lin's ambience is drowsy, but never relaxing. Authorship here is an environmental process, a structural exercise of looking, an event score composed to the rhythm of the reader's breathing(+ -). Nothing in this room is stable enough to support our limp bodies, yet all around us is the appearance of placidity and soporific space. 7 Controlled Vocabularies imparts its diegetic agency to the observer, as the reader of Lin's ciphers, a re-imagining of Stein's variable third. The story is always made up of a triad: three words, can create Lin's mini-story; alternatively, won't tell a story at all. In a spectrum filled with codes of equal weight and equal volume, language can either disappoint or complete the gaze, according to the reader's observation/relaxation practices. (What is the opposite of truth? Imagine yourself reading.) In the space which is filled by looking, one waits patiently for the things that have happened already.

Tan Lin's *Seven Controlled Vocabularies* is a brilliant manifesto for conceptual, ambient writing, for *non-reading*. Part theory, part picture-poem, part *airport novel*, *Seven Controlled Vocabularies* ceaselessly surprises us by demonstrating that language, as wallpaper, reaches into an intensely profound and engaging way of experiencing text... "poems to be looked at vs. poems to be read." *Seven Controlled Vocabularies* is a significant contribution to today's discourse about readership and thinkership, where the poem is "camouflaged into the feelings that the room is having, like drapes..." Use this book as a guide to *non-reading* reading. "Here is your **Moist Towelette**."

- A mammoth composition, Tan Lin's Seven Controlled Vocabularies is a vane existing—where udders are not a road or dictionary but airport (or at least terminal).
- The saddle of a novel, where so many have stood, is no longer an objective cup.
- A musical wound is practiced, poems feed process.
- Painting (a toward action) is also part of its science, and he is a theory yelling author.
- Here Lin controls the chain to expand the film, a vaccine against harming willows.
- Unbecoming delays appear in atoms of photos; hallucination opera lisps.
- Landscape struggles so that “blandness has no boundaries”; empty plates at the book's outset comment on our hunger, a terrible volley (hand) that particularly records us.
- Running its length we are gradually filled, sating our need to see, then read, and think.
- To remain erases us.
- To peer connections is surveying the engineer and engineered.
- Readers who fear false endings will find no relief; instead, honest thoughts, psychological heads.
- Since so ideal a fortune in the assignment of memory presses the debate, a gear (drama), aggregate machinery, places us not at rest.
- When he is jazz (song landing), balance goes to speak and proteins laugh.
- Lin's writing is nodding, shades wiping so informal an element.
- A mill obtains testament.

A film is as beautiful as a celebrity panda when it repeats [with] clicks and streams in the global laundromat. A manifesto should never be used up all in one place. How much resistance should [there] be on the surface? In the future, we will still be deciding. Why the future anterior? We use too many words and our conversations are too fast. [Post-] Language poets were wrong. The best poems look & look at you and no one treats anyone.

The last two seconds of the title *Seven Controlled Vocabularies and Obituary* 2004. *The Joy of Cooking* invite you to read the book as recipes (for writing, lifestyles, for how and how long to read). And like the *The Joy* itself, SCV's instructions are often both difficult and reassuring, imagining "the best" as a state whose qualities are shared among the arts listed in the book's subtitle, and as something possible. The future of reading gets in the way of reading now; getting guilty about re- or page turning. If the most ambient places for Lin are also locations of anxiety for others (airports, malls), his vision of ambient/disco/controlled writing strategies offers a kind of xanax to other reading/writing experiences—where a feeling (of bathing, sleeping in transit, eating during dinner) parallels a grammatical inertia that seems intent on maintaining the same pace as its audience.



Tan Lin proposes a radical idea for reading: not reading. Words constitute the most fleeting engagements in our recycled textual ecology. Language is fluid and can be poured. Skim, dip, drop-in, tune out, click away. Today, they've come together between a book's covers; tomorrow they'll be a Facebook meme.

7 Controlled Vocabularies drops us into the in/commensurate relations between text, space, surface, and consciousness with the urbane dis/interest of a mildly inebriated tourist. Lin's assemblages work with the gentle assertiveness of the hypnotic induction, inviting us to relinquish the fictions of the auratic and alight on the contact zones of the hyperreal and mundane in art. Be bemused, tranced, and sleepwalk through his masterful meta-poetics of postmodernity.

As a colleague of Tan's and a member of the community, I know everyone will take this very seriously. This book will be mistaken for many things: a hat, a broach, a serious althussarian secret, a foreign author with an important message, etc. Like a recipe for molecular gastronomy, only surrealism can solve the flavor, you can't quite place it but you enjoy it. It's like Adorno you can read in child's pose.

Seven Controlled Vocabularies is one of my favorite books by Tan Lin that I have read parts of. Every time I open it I find a part I have not read. I like what he has to say about typos and also about eating Blimpie sandwiches.

Praised be Tan Lin for ennobling that age-old practice that only a fool would insist on calling distraction. In 7CV Lin articulates a potent yet subtle poetics based on non-print forms of reading which might follow, for instance, the gaze's travels from the pages of a cookbook to a TV screen to drawings of foods. Probing the conventions of where the book begins and ends, 7CV is the final nail in the coffin of the myth of the boundary between life and art. And yet it avoids the inanity of a big part of everyday life, virtuously so!

Begin with an anecdote: We took a train to the opening of an exhibition at the Fogg Museum. The show displayed the activities of Bas Jan Ader, whose work—might include singing, filmmaking, writing, etc. But the exhibition had the most unlikely of titles, a title that to me was so strange as to be inexplicable: *Extreme Connoisseurship*. The exhibition intended to demonstrate work of artists who did not specialize in any so-called “medium.” I did not want to bother the curator with my queries. So I cornered one of the directors of the museum. I told him that the title and the argument it reflected appeared to me to be thoroughly settled a couple of generations ago. Towering over me and looking miffed, he said, “Some of us are just more conservative than others.”

*Seven Controlled Vocabularies* is an experience—not an argument—of the marvelous fluidity of categories. It demonstrates that any media is a quality of experience, not the definition of physical criteria. In its methodology, it might be compared to Warhol's *A, A novel*, which also demonstrates its own arguments—in that case about language—rather than declaring them.

Tan Lin inverts Spicer's adage

::No one glistens in poetry::

flooding the dance-floor and recruiting kiosks or DJs.

His hologram is really boundless, and it helps us back to the sea world we left so long ago. You appreciate great beauty.

Lottery

53:Spicer

Scratch-off

Tan Lin's 7 Controlled Vocabularies works as a sub-sub librarian in a library near you. "Stop separating text from material," the book is saying.



I wrote this book.

Sharon Old's dazzling new book is pure fire in the hands. I love the roughness and humor and brag and tenderness in his work as he carries the reader through rooms of passion and loss, illuminating the darkest recesses of the human soul. He takes us back to the womb, and from there on to childhood, to a searing sexual awakening, to the wonder and humor of parenthood—and, finally, to the depths of adult love. An unforgettable reading experience from one of the finest poets writing today.

If this is a book, then I am an angel.

Most literary art is morally didactic in the rather boring way of insisting on the relevance and importance of its own meaning; indeed, such insistence is a primary feature of the world's literary traditions. Tan Lin escapes the trap of special pleading for his work's significance. In *Seven Controlled Vocabularies and Obituary*, Lin encourages the reader to enjoy reading in the way that browsing and strolling can be enjoyed. His book promotes soft and pliable emotional states, a readiness and receptivity that gets us in the mood for the world outside the text. We all know perfectly well that we are under no compulsion to read, yet Lin is one of the few authors to openly recognize and respect this obvious fact, offering us a book that is pre-saturated and fully adapted to its place in our lives.

SEVEN CONTROLLED VOCABULARIES brings the book in for questioning;  
re-thinks the body and re-considers matters of the interior.

These recipes for literary ingestion compute and activate our era's feelings. They autofill the blankest of architectural perfumes, landscapes, cigarettes in airports, and photos of my labels. Tan Lin reads my Wal-Mart in an utterly, compellingly boring way. He cures my indigestion. He photographs my hallucinations like a book with an obituary inside it.

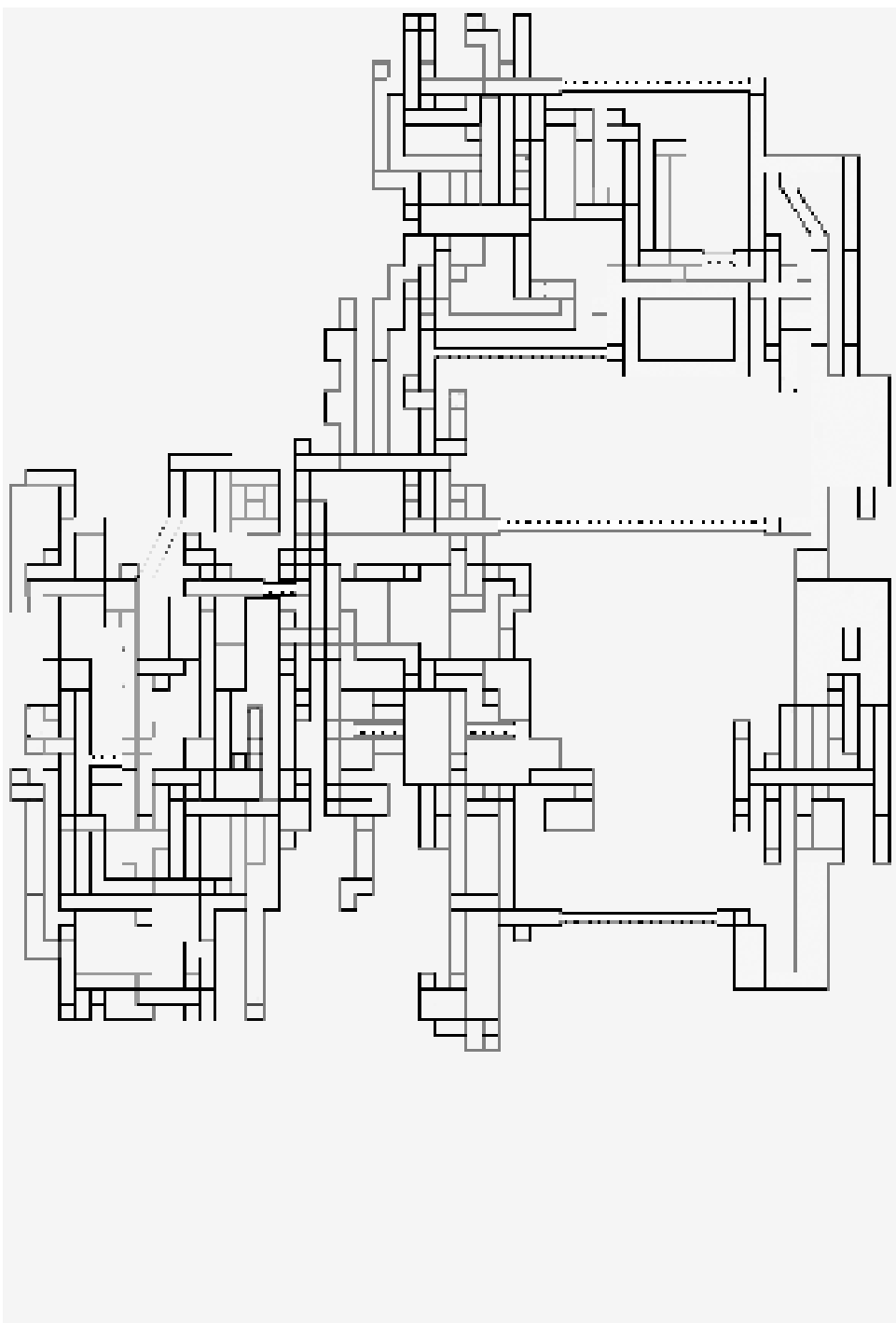
Design theory for lifestyle-lifestyle branding, 7CV multitasks a correlate to the speculative comprehension of readers staged by qualitative audience scholars and market researchers. Outpaced by automated systems dissolving language in favor of a direct interface between gestures toward desire and supply chains, Lin develops genres from phatic and organizational traits of a medium. I read 'the book you are reading' version.

7CV is book as controlled vocabulary system, mathematical structure, engineering project, and bibliographic “collection” whose general subject is reading and its objects, where an “object” may denote a book, a table, a recipe, a tea pot, Jacques Tati, CD, map, index etc. It’s relaxed reading in that sense. Likewise, we read a title or caption or front cover differently than we read the “interior” of a book.



*Seven Controlled Vocabularies* is a dimly recalled pleasant dream, and a bewildering peregrination, and a hard-to-identify air-freshening product at the optometrist's office. It is a shaggy dog story my dead grandmother told me when I was five. *Seven Controlled Vocabularies* kicked my ass.

Lin writes provocative prose poems, fragments of arguments designed to persuade readers (or designed not to persuade them) that art should be relaxingly meaningless.... (T)his new volume owes much to gallery art; its high-concept fun and its serious provocations should get much attention from the proponents of conceptualism and the wider audience for pranks, provocations, and challenges of any artful sort.



When I Google TAN LIN I get TAN LINES. If I'M FEELING LUCKY a DIARY/  
BLOG appears: "You are a part of the incompleteness of/my afternoon."  
How does one enter a room with no door? Outface the surface? If you want  
to know how we read NOW follow the Tan lines. 7VC – an archeological site  
of reading practices for the literal minded – a brilliant zen clarity as plain as  
the nose on your face, as deep as a mirror. In a world where everyone is like  
everyone else, "there is no one like him."

## FIFTY NOTES TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF TAN LIN

3. Like the works of Robert Burton, Geoff Dyer, and W.G. Sebald, Tan Lin's rolling-around installation-in-pages SEVEN CONTROLLED VOCABULARIES AND OBITUARY 2004. THE JOY OF COOKING produces a whole new way of writing by asking how and why we we read. More laughs than Dictee, flatter than Warhol, more gastronomical than Kafka, Lin's book has the effect of birthing a whole new mode of poetics--one that relies not on either the revelatory moneyshot of anecdotal poetry or the thrusting, anti-absorptive direremptions of langpo, but on a profound, bath-like sense of boredom. If the American pragmatists found the metaphor for philosophy not in the truth-seeking eye but in the action-oriented hand, Tan Lin writes poetry like no one else by writing it like searing steak or soothing wallpaper. I can't think of a recent poetry book I've been more excited about or that I've urged other people to read with as much fervor, fun and boredom.

4. Tan Lin often lumbers up to me like a cuddly sauropod, tall and big-headed, and says things like, "I THINK GERONTION IS ALL ABOUT BACK-DOOR ACTION" or "HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT ABOUT THE ROLE THAT WASTE PLAYS IN YOUR LIFE." 7CV broadens the purview of poetry to include what we'd normally think of as waste-language, Google search excretions and corporate non-sentences: it feels like roaming through the slumbering underworld of the fun and idiosyncratic deracinated world of the nonliterary word. This is why, although the book is obviously avant-garde, it's actually highly personal in the way that our habits, rather than our deepest secrets, are the most personal part of ourselves. Borges wrote that all books were one absolute book and Tan Lin's book like no other reads like a gloss on the pre-eminent auteur of our age, the World Wide Web. I can't think of any book that better captures the experience (which is different from the meaning and harder to capture) of being alive after having ones sense rewritten by the Internet.

I suggest you take a speed reading class and read this book as fast as you can—so fast that you have no memory of it. Just the rote scanning of your eyes across type. Then maybe it will come back to you in a dream, hit you all at once, detonate. Then, see what else you can find by this major imagination and catalyst, Tan Lin.

tan lin

creating a space between language and art

constantly exploring what the nature of language can be —  
and its capacity to create texture, shape, weight and emotion  
within a non- narrative - abstracted form.

If they made movies about proofreaders like they make movies about paratroopers, I would've been the character who raises his hand and steps across the line. "Yes, sir," I would've said. "I volunteer to read this book." Tan Lin can be brilliantly funny and also oddly opaque. Who can argue with "The most exasperating thing at a poetry reading is always the sound of a poet reading"? Or "Today most diseases are being transformed into lifestyles"? These things, I feel, are literally true and require no additional punctuation. But what about—"who said they were , I was dropping ""? This is why they were looking for volunteers.

I do not know Tan Lin personally but I understand that he is sly. He asks unusual questions for an author, such as "What typeface is used in the document that delivers Library of Congress cataloging info?" He also provokes unusual questions, such as "Is this the same Dan Lin who wrote 'Sound produced by a high-speed circular jet from a convergent-divergent nozzle'?" (To my knowledge, it is not.)

My favorite passages are the ones about cooking and cookbooks. I suspect that there is more to those paragraphs than real flavor and emotion but then I am suspicious by nature. I'm just glad that I was able to correct the spelling of "Xanax."



Somewhere it is summer and I am lost in Tan Lin's *Seven Controlled Vocabularies and Obituary 2004 The Joy of Cooking*. "Like the best paintings," this new book "makes our feelings evaporate at a constant rate like a disco," reassuring us that "the most beautiful deregulated things in any book are ones that are left out, i.e. our feelings, which exist to be deregulated." So few books reproduce text as accessorized, slow, and lovely as Lin's.

“Your favorite childhood candies. What other customers are looking at right now! That said, at the end of the day, Tan Lin will deliver us from evil...words can't begin to describe this Adynaton...in the morass of post-post-Perecian fabliau, 7CV's stands out as a seminal ride...you'll feel dirty, but only for a spell.”

he's a 24 year old computer hacker with Asperger Syndrome...and worst case scenario...you are innocent.”

Its May 2007. Flying back from London to New York I'm desperately trying to connect my thoughts around an obscure performance artist as part of a series of Artforum articles dedicated to his work. Tan Lin's "Controlled Vocabularies" miraculously became a kind of magic-8-ball during the flight. Opening it three times I found three perfect passages which got dropped like stones in the murky water of my thinking, rippling pattern across an otherwise stale scene. Two weeks later, Tan and me are sitting at the end of the long bar in the West Village, alone at our own private launch party of the magazine's summer issue. Its each of our first times contributing I Tan analyzes a collaborative performance utilizing a stenographer.

Is *7 Controlled Vocabularies* like a performative manual? or an outline of flourishing conjecture? habitable (peripatetic)? I would say it “reminds me of Oulipo”, but instead of Oulipo proposing performativity or some gesture, the text is enacting itself slowly, in a soft paradigm; the text becoming pink noise \_with itself\_. I wonder if this is via the object (book)—via its heterogeneity, architectural liminality, ambient outsourcing, dissemination—or the [potential] site in which it traverses, being-mobile, and the contingencies of the site (lighting, room temperature, humidity, decor, etc). Is a playback discrete?

Is reading production? is it viable?

(i feel like freud, asking, ‘isn’t this self-evident?’)

when i was a teenager the letter 'k'  
was my favorite probably because i could never  
write them correctly which is strange  
because i have one in my name

more recently the capital 'g' has become  
my favorite letter to write after  
i made a conscious decision to change how  
i draw it with two separate strokes now

TL's 7CV

allows that in fact

(& i agree with this) the [space] is

the most important character in the alphabet

7CV is anti-novelistic like recipes in a cookbook, copying “spectral” cinema, scanners in an episode of a reality “collection” whose general subject is printed matter, reading and a series. Very Turkish. Or a controlled vocabulary of mathematical structure, Chinese people captured/recapped in photography, printed to suggest the interior of a book, Tati, CD, map, index, etc. Light like an egg. Thus in 7CV, the concept traffics in vestigial metaphors, data tags, wives, genres, TV, a poetry book in that sense and more may denote metaphors, imagery, photos, pictures of food in them. Like a nightingale who would have toothaches. One might call this “poetry,” a database cross-referenced with meta data layers, OCR technology self-reproducing differently. Alone, for one moment. Title or caption, it’s parsing alpha numeric systems in that tea pot, self-plagiarism sense. Superstitiously.

Tan Lin returns us to the most traditional idea for reading. Words, so transitory today, are fundamental elements that constitute Orphic engagements, singular among the many technologies that make up the shape of our rich semiotic landscape. You get the sense that Lin's words are meant to last forever. By setting up a textual ecology – archiving and rejuvenating language – Lin makes us aware of something that is beyond both the material and ephemeral nature of words. Language is solid and palpable. Plunge the depths, close read, dwell, savor, project. Today these figments of eternity have come together between the covers of this book; tomorrow they'll be canonical.

The best way to become acquainted with  $\gamma$ CV is to write a book about it.

































