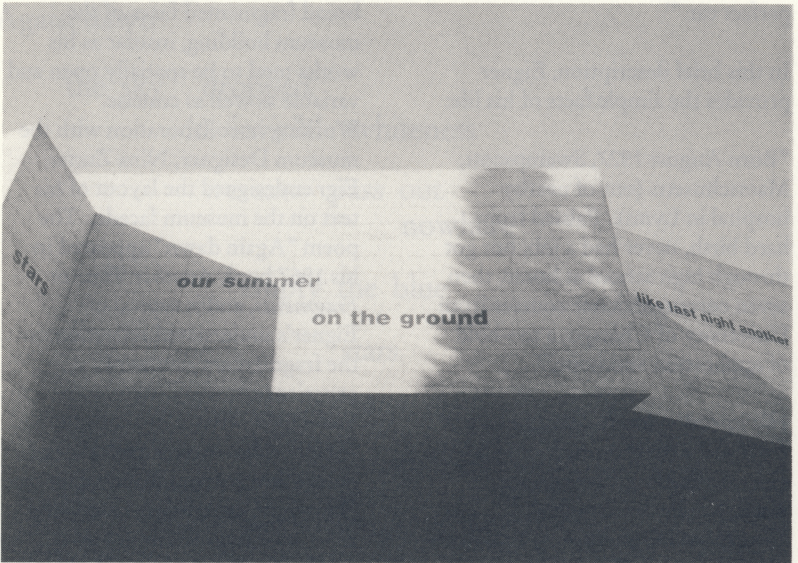


Larry Eigner  
MATRIX/BERKELEY 159

University Art Museum /  
Pacific Film Archive  
mid June - mid October 1993

"Again dawn," 1967 and 1993 (inscription detail)



"Eigner's book is charming. I haven't got such a relaxed feeling from anything in years," wrote William Carlos Williams in response to the publication of Larry Eigner's first book of poems, *From the Sustaining Air*, published by Robert Creeley's Divers Press in 1953. "There is no tension whatever, but a feeling of eternity. It is hard to say how he has achieved this in the world today. As far as I can see it comes from a perfect ear."<sup>1</sup>

In this brief description, Eigner provides the simple facts of his life:

"Born August 1927, Swampscott, Massachusetts (out of nearby hospital in Lynn). Palsied from hard birth, never had a job, but got through high school at home, then seven correspondence courses from University of Chicago, a toe-hold of application and hope."<sup>2</sup>

His introduction to poetry came in 1949 when he "bumped into Cid Corman reading Yeats on the radio."<sup>3</sup> The two began corresponding and soon Corman was publishing Eigner's poems in his seminal periodical, *Origin*. Of the same generation as Robert Creeley and Charles Olson, Eigner uses simple language and everyday images to create an effect of heightened awareness and contemplative repose. His work has inspired a host of contemporary poets, including Charles Bernstein, Ron Silliman, Lyn Hejinian, Jack Foley, and Barrett Watten.

While a number of contemporary artists, including Jenny Holzer, Barbara Kruger, and Lothar Baumgarten, have recently combined textual elements with architectural forms, this project is more directly inspired by Siah

Armajani's 1987 collaboration with John Ashbery on an inscription for the Walker Art Center/Minneapolis Sculpture Garden footbridge and Maya Lin's incorporation of a biblical quotation in the Civil Rights Memorial in Montgomery, Alabama. These projects indicate the extraordinary aesthetic potential that exists for the integration of architecture with literary forms.

Eigner's poetic style is ideal for the broad fragmented faces of the museum building, insofar as his works tend to be spatially open and variable as well as concise.

Working in collaboration with the museum Designer, Nina Zurier, Eigner designed the layout of his text on the museum facade. The poem "Again dawn" appeared in his 1967 book *Another Time in Fragments*, and is typical of Eigner's understated reflection on the fragmentary nature of experience.

"[Eigner] has created melodies of perception," wrote Robert Duncan, "fabrics of experience, spaces and times so intensely felt in his spiritual body—this poet so living by, in, and through, words—I know of no comparable focus."<sup>4</sup>

Larry Eigner moved to Berkeley in 1978 where he continues to live and work.

Lawrence Rinder

Special thanks for their help with this exhibition to Lyn Hejinian, Jack Foley, and Robert Glück.

Again dawn

the sky dropped  
its invisible whiteness  
we saw pass out  
nowhere  
empty the blue  
stars  
our summer  
on the ground  
like last night another  
time  
in fragments

Notes

1. William Carlos Williams, letter to Robert Creeley, 1953.
2. Larry Eigner, quoted in the introduction by Samuel Charters to *Larry Eigner: Selected Poems*, ed. Samuel Charters & Andrea Wyatt (Berkeley: Oyez, 1972), p. xi.
3. *Ibid.*, p. xii.
4. Robert Duncan, jacket flap for *Another Time in Fragments* by Larry Eigner (London: Fulcrum Press, 1967).

Selected bibliography by the artist (since 1953 more than 30 books by Larry Eigner have been published):

*From the Sustaining Air.*  
Palma de Mallorca, Spain: Divers Press, 1953.

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Swampscott, Massachusetts:  
Privately printed for the author,  
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*On My Eyes.* Photographs by  
Harry Callahan. Highlands, N.C.:  
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London: Fulcrum Press, 1967.

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Act / Around: Selected Prose.*  
Introduction by Douglas Woolf,  
edited by Barrett Watten. Oakland,  
CA: This Press, 1978.

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Scalapino. Oakland, CA: O Books,

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*From the Sustaining Air.*  
Republished by The Coincidence  
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*areas lights heights: Writings  
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