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Structure

Surface

Daria

Dave F. Farbrook

and the second second

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to Joe Farbrook, my brother. And to all of you who loved Carl Fernbach-Flarsheim's art and wondered whatever happened to esoteric art in general...



Broadview Farm Summer Camp, NH 1968

During the summer months we took the family to New Hampshire to get out of the city. We had two black Siamese cats, Sidney and Othello. They had never been in the country before. They both took to the barn and we rarely saw them until it was time to leave at summer's end. I think there were fewer mice in the barn that year.

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ART

(Greek: Artios meaning "Complete")

Skill in conducting and human activity; the principles or methods governing any branch of learning or craft.

- https://www.dictionary.com/

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This is a small community and without the support of dear friends close to my father, interested artists, published material both online and material left for me in carefully preserved condition, I could never begin to attempt a dialogue of this magnitude. I want to thank UBU Web, Arie A. Galles, Professor Emeritus of Painting/Drawing at SOKA University, Sid Sachs, Director of Exhibitions, Rosenwald-Wolf Gallery, University of the Arts, and my father, who was both my teacher and friend. "Dad, it took me 58 years to understand what you wanted me to know at age 16..."



The village VOICE, February 19, 1970

FORWARD

2/22/2020

Describing the landscape of art through history is much like describing a legacy in terms of a map. It all depends on how scaled and detailed the map is. Below is an excerpt taken from the Philadelphia Inquirer (1967) describing a painting that is essentially a blank canvas, the "canvas of clues" are what Carl Fernbach-Flarsheim would actually term as '*Cues*' that the viewer would need to understand what the artist is communicating. Cues are like monuments that the viewer can recognize and perhaps that is a good way to get acquainted with this brief history in time.

The Canvas of Clues

"Landscape with Church," however, is no picture at all but a canvas of clues to a landscape with neat printing identifying the spots where the artist would have you see a "TREE" or a "3-YEAR –OLD CAR." The artist Carl Fernbach-Flarsheim, of the Tyler School of Art, has filled the spot where he would have painted a church with a legend, "CHURCH IS HERE, THE BELLS SHALL TOLL IN 15 MINUTES." - The Philadelphia Inquirer ¹

Benjamin Tammuz wrote: The artist's studio is the place where the whole *fate of Art*, its spiritual content, its range, its technique is decided. He explains, "The studio is not the ivory tower sealed off from the world's experiences outside, but it is a place of open walls, a lens on the remotest distance and a transparent view of time and space. These filaments of the imagination are invisible, yet strong in social impact and more vibrant with personal contact. Artists, who are working in what appears to be mute isolation, struggle, yet have the means to understand and make themselves understood.²"

There are constant discussions on forms, artistic trends that are on both on a conscious level and the intangible. The dichotomy about describing trends in the aesthetic is that it is based on looking back. It can be viewed with more clarity through the years that have gone by, as recognizable monuments emerge. Ultimately, the artist's map is of intuition, an expression that directly leads into the ways of genius.

Art becomes described in terms of influences and the vagaries of imagination coalesce into important influences seen at some later time. The Post-Impressionists not only had close connections with the Japanese print of two hundred years before; the Cubists not only had close affinities with African and Oceanic primitive sculpture; but themselves initiated trends which dominated the arts of all Europe and the Americas for the first half of the twentieth century.³

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I Mirror Poem - Carl Fernbach-Flarsheim⁵ Letter to Ian - March 15, 1966

European artists, Max Bill and Oyving Fhlasrom originated the term Concrete Poetry in the early 1950s and its early methods found in Noigandre's manifesto "Pilot Plan for Concrete Poetry." In 1958, they issued a manifesto that said the use of "words as indifferent vehicles were void of life, without personality, without history, taboo-tombs in which convention insists on burying the idea.⁴"

E.E. Cummings and Ezra Pound intended poems to be abstract. Words became a topography of information between the artist and viewer. Every topo-image became a configuration and identifiable in shape by ideograms, words themselves became typographical innovations. The surroundings or the environment of an image can be an associative context. In the case when the image is forced into the sequence, it is placed in context with the text and intended to be understood in the same way. The logic of the configuration at a fundamental level was based in

part on the psychological way the brain processed sequential modes between the right and left hemispheres organizing and perceiving information and in turn present the structure in terms of sequences.⁶

As the movement spread across the world there would be much debate on the direction that this expression would take. The popularity began to take hold in the 1960s and adopted by poets and became less abstract. It became a combination of literature and visual art, the

term "poesia visiva⁷" became the word to describe the experimental fusion of word and image. The media began to incorporate photography, film, and soundscapes in combination. A synthase of literary, visual, kinetic and sound.⁸ The typewriter, and the computer were harnessed by artists as they explored the technology that became available. The "Boolean Typewriter" was coined by Carl Fernbach-Flarsheim to describe his method, "We are surrounded by a causal reality, bordered by our concepts of birth and life. Inside this reality we stabilize ourselves by making decisions.⁹"

It is important to note that there is no single approach to the definition of concrete poetry. Artists developed their own unique techniques that evolved over time. Diversity of the threedimensional, shifting poetry became both wordplay and graphics in space. Messages over time. Artists in Europe created important contributions to this movement but equally important are the contributions from Japan, Brazil and the Americans. Lionel Kearns described it as, "One word acknowledged at a time, changes in meaning and is both evolving and impressive.^{10"}

"The poem is a machine," said that famous man, and so I'm building one.

Or at least I'm having it built, because I want something big and impressive and automatic.

You see, people will stand in front of it and insert money, dimes or quarters,

depending upon the poem's locus.

Yes the whole thing will clank and hum and light up and issue a string of words on colored ticker-tape.

Or maybe the customers will wear ear-phones and turn small knobs so the experience will be more audile-tactile than old fashioned visual.

In any case they will only get one line at a time,

This being the most important feature of my design which is based on the principle that,

In poetry, "one perception must immediately and directly lead to a further perception,"

And therefore the audience will be compelled to feed in coin after coin.

Now I admit that the prototype model that you see on display is something of a

compromise, as it has a live poet concealed inside.

But I assure you that this crudity will eventually be eliminated

Because each machine, I mean each poem, is to be fully computerized

And so able to stand on its own feet.

-Lionel Kearns, "Kinetic Poem" (1968)

Yet there are still feelings supported by European artists that concrete poetry was best understood by the European Art Movement, *et al.*

Mary Ellen Solt writes about Concrete Poetry in The United States: "Although a few isolated poets have been making concrete poems for some time, it would be an exaggeration to speak of a concrete poetry movement in the United States. The American concrete poet finds himself in the strange position of being associated with a new formal movement whose origins are foreign and many of whose foundation stones were laid by E. E. Cummings and Ezra Pound.¹¹"

In her view, American poetry developed into a term called "Projective Verse" and differs from the formality of style originated by Cummings and Pound. Briefly, Projective Verse principles have common elements in association but methods are based in field composition as opposed to pre-conceived patterns. Described as "open verse" because the poet is not restricted to formal rules. Except those monuments that arise as necessary for the artist to convey 'the aesthetic breath' (the perception of thoughts and feelings as a whole), to the viewer.

I found it interesting that art historians in trying to point to a definition to describe and categorize this phenomenon, were depending on artists who could best describe their work. Art critiques and historians looked to artists such as John Hollander to fine tune the definition. Hollander was one among the artists of the '60s poets, who created his works with a typewriter.

One critique writes, "As a scholar, editor and accomplished poet—working in many different forms—Hollander also provided a thorough explication of the process in his 1969 collection Types of Shape.¹²"

I think it's impossible to say 'whom is the best' by the intrinsic fact that the manifesto of this movement invited all artists representing the openness of this emerging phenomenon, to manifest imagery on diverse media. The defining merit should be based on contemplating the imagery that by its aesthetic would be understood, rather than implementing a dependency on ratings as "Better," "Best" and "Better Than" that has totally no meaning. Understanding the aesthetic, the internal process of the viewer, transcends the judgement of the viewer. I feel, therefore, that it is irrational to say about the aesthetic of this art who has or had the most talent.

In contrast, Hollander's opinion was: "One certainly needs no artistic talent in order to draw a good bit, and certainly not to rough out a silhouette. It's not a lack of talent, but an absolutely dreadful educational system that prevents everyone from being able to draw a little. My process takes advantage of two modern advances: the image reduction/enlargement capabilities of today's copiers, and the conveniences offered by computer word-processing programs.¹³ "



THE PHILADELPHIA YEARS

1964-1968

"Philadelphia from 1956- 1976 played a significant role in contributions to the vernacular avant-garde and experimental art, there were over 70 artists who came to Philadelphia at varying times.^{14"} - Sid Sacks



"Carl Fernbach-Flarsheim" Arie A. Galles

During 1964 through 1968 Carl Fernbach-Flarsheim was actively showing his art work and taught at Tyler School of Art at Temple University. Arie A. Galles writes: My teacher and friend, Carl Fernbach-Flarsheim, was my guide and profound influence.¹⁵

Carl opened the door for many exhibitions and collaborative efforts in the US. He gave technical commentary that generated interest for many artists to show their work all over the world.

In 1966, Carl curated for The Arts in Fusion: An International Exhibition at Tyler School of Art of Temple University. He assembled an international exhibition of artists

entitled *The Arts in Fusion.* Contributions were drawn from artists working across the United States, Western and Eastern Europe, Brazil, and Japan.

Carl was honored to have artists such as David Antin, Leonard Belasco, Dieter Roth, Emmet Williams, George Brecht, Earle Brown, John Cage, Ian Hamilton Findlay, John Furnival, Alison Knowles, Jackson MacLow, Terry Riley, Jerome Rothenberg, Wolf Wostell, Dick Higgins, and others, come or contribute.

With Robert Goodman, who was an Electrical Engineer, he developed a kinetic sound sculpture in 1968 that was a marvel in both technology and the aesthetic. He participated in the exhibition titled "Software" at the Jewish Museum in 1970.



Kinetic Sound Sculpture Carl Fernbach-Flarsheim

COME CLOSER TO PERCEPTION

1971 - 2020

The resurgence of concrete poetry evidenced in the 1990s as written by Peter Mayer makes an interesting argument. "In digital 1990s, the innovations of concrete poetry are starting to make a new kind of sense. In the 'rule-breaking' page mutations of David Carson, the typographic riffing of "Tomato," and the abstract electronic mark-making of Neville Brody's "Fuse," the concrete poets of an earlier generation have found a perhaps unexpected legacy. Thirty-year-old 'verbicovisual' experiments of the McLuhan era, painstakingly worked out at the typewriter or laboriously drawn by hand, are beginning, like the newly resurrected media prophet himself, to look prescient and timely again.¹⁶"

Mayer goes on to suggest that the resurgence of concrete poetry is in part due to the counterculture authenticity of the movement in countries under which free expression is sharply curtailed by political censorship. But what does that mean? Has the spiritual aspect of concrete poetry over time become another tool of propaganda and its true authenticity been lost under the rush of another generation?

Bill Bissett and other artists breathe new life into the second generation, creating a new language within the language. Bissett does not suggest that you read writing, simply that you look at it. Concrete poetry and conceptual writing are both meant to be stared at and not read as we typically understand the term "reading.¹⁷⁻¹⁸"

Derek Beaulieu suggests that concrete poetry can be broken down in three forms of expression: Dirty, Clean and Conceptual:

- Dirty; a discussion of the politics of waste, illegibility, asemic writing and what Sianne
 Ngai articulates as a "poetics of disgust;"
- Clean; is typified by visual poems that eschew "exterior objects and/or [...] subjective feelings," and;
- Conceptual; the theoretical framework of results in books that are "impossible to read in the conventional sense" and demand new web-based reading strategies that include "skimming, data aggregating, the employment of intelligent agents" which "imitate the way machines work."

He sites that Goldsmith advocates for writing which demands that the reader apply digital reading tropes. Beaulieu includes artists such as Vito Acconci (1972), Paul Auster (1986), Robert Smithson (1996), Sianne Ngai (1998), Max Bense (2013), Xu Bing (2013), Edwin Abbot (2014), to name a few artists that have carried on the passion¹⁹. UBU Web²⁰, a resource of names of artists, has a more complete list of artists as recent as 2018 and is periodically updated.



Carl Fernbach-Flarsheim, The Boolean Image; Boolean image sketch from the Broadview Farm Notes (cf. Bowles and Russell, 1971)²².

With the inclusion (and increased availability) of the machine used in the conventional sense as a tool to assist the reader of concrete poetry in aggregating data and improving the way the messages are conveyed into the aesthetic mix would also suggest a new way of looking at the conceptual writing. Science directly infuses the tools needed to change a movement for another revolution.

Beaulieu goes on to include a discussion of the ambient poetics, artists such as Brian Eno and Tan Lin, "writing to be stared at but not read, much as ambient music is to be heard but not listened to²¹"

In 1993, I built my first computer with a SoundBlaster[™] audio card. I wanted to know, was the use of the

machine valuable to the explanation of the character of our verbal perceptions? Inspired, I painstakingly inputted one of my father's poems. Each letter and number equidistant from the next, just as my father had done on canvas. As I finished the work, I used the SoundBlaster software that came with a crude text reader, I employed the reader over the work and out came the mechanical vocal "A B \acute{c} D E I N T R B R R 0 O 4 R.."

As I sat and listened to it all the way through it occurred to me that speeding it up may

produce a different result. As I sped up the reader, slowly what emerged was a series of tonal modulations that reproduced a tone song. This is an example of the use of technology to expose the meaning of Conceptual Art.

Concrete poetry is also theatre, sculpture, music scores and scripts and science. The script below with the expectation to be performed is almost eerie in that the performance supersedes the common experience of a burial.

Rite: Right: Write

PEOPLE PARK IN TYLER'S LOT. HARRY ASKS THEM TO LOCK UP PURSES AND TO FORM LINE OUTSIDE OF WALL ON BEECH AVENUE.

AT 8:35 1st TAPE IS TURNED ON (BY JOHN FROM CLASSROOM)

2ND TAPE IS PUT ON AFTER EULOGY AND PLAYS UNTIL 10.

SCENE 1: INITIATION

(A SCRENE PLACED PERPENDICULAR TO WALL BLOCKS VIEW AND ENTERANCE. MASKS WITH DIRECTIONS ATTACHED ARE IN 2 PILES, LABLED – ACTIVE, PASSIVE.)

(Gail) CHOOSES 4 PEOPLE FROM RANDOM PLACES IN LINE TO GO BEHIND SCREEN. (Dave) AND (Ernie) HELP IN SELECTION OF MASKS AND SEE THAT DIRECTIONS ARE READ. THIS CONTINUES INTO SCENE 2 AT 15 SECOND INTERVALS – CONTROLLED BY (Marty).

SCENE 2: VIEWING

(INSIDE OF WALL. OPEN COFFIN – LID NEARBY – WITH PLASTER FIGURE. IS ELEVATED ON CINDERBLOCKS. A LARGE BASIN OF WATER IS NEARBY. 6 CARDBOARD CUT-OUT MASKS ON POLES ARE LEANING AGAINST WALL. AREA IS SOMEHOW ROPED OFF AND GROUND HAS AN ABUNDANCE OF LEAVES)

- 1. PEOPLE START REACTING TO THEIR CUES.
- 2. WHEN EVERYONE IS SEATED. (Cliff) GIVES A EULOGY. HE PUTS THE LID ON THE COFFIN.
- 3. WHEN BELLS ARE HEARD ON TAPE MOST HAVE CUES. (Cliff) TELLS OTHERS TO FOLLOW COFFIN. (HE USES FLASHLIGHT)

LEADS TO SCENE 3.

SCENE 3: BURIAL

(ONTO A LARGE SHEET OF PAPER PLACED ON THE GROUND BETWEEN 2 SMALL BUILDINGS A DRAWING, OF AN OPEN DUG GRAVE, TO SCALE – IS ON THE OTHER HALF OF PAPER. 2 GRAVESTONES ARE IN VIEW. FLOODLIGHTS ARE SET UP TO LIGHT AREA WHICH IS WAITING WITH PROJECTOR SET UP ON A TABLE)

- 1. WHEN PROCESSION ARRIVES (Lois) TURNS ON LIGHTS FROM INSIDE.
- 2. Cliff DIRECTS PALL BEARERS TO PLACE COFFIN ON DRAWING OF GRAVE.
- 3. INTERMEDIA BEGINS NUMBERS CHANT LED BY (Dave)
- 4. WHEN A WHISTLE BLOWS Harry STARTS PROJECTOR.

5. WHEN Harry GETS TIRED OF SHOWING FILM, Dave, Harry, Ernie, John, Cliff (MAG-AUTA?) CARRY COFFIN OFF ANYWHERE –

EVENTUALLY PUT IN BASEMENT.

INTERMEDIA CLASS GOES AWAY (FAR) UNTIL 10 O'CLOCK, RETURNS TO CLEAN UP.

Carl writes: "The danger in creating programs, platforms, and manifestoes lies in attempt to form a cosmic logic. The interior contradiction buried in any manifesto, including any thoughts voiced here, is a virtue which goes to work destructively the moment a thought is born. Thus, the more undigested, the less "understood" a program is, the greater the chance for its survival.

Recognition of this phenomenon is essential in reaching any basic decisions for an alternate structure to the artists' environment. For example, an alternate structure based upon what "art" should or should not be, digs its own grave the moment it is conceived. Similarly, a structure which doesn't demand of the artist a dropping of psychic comfort, of giving up his own vested interest in the present system; a structure which doesn't make the concept of "making it" in the material sense, or the concept of personal popularization irrelevant, does not accept the fact of interior contradiction and thus carries within it the seed of ultimate disillusionment and failure.

Equally, a structure which recognizes only economic inequities and hopes to solve problems by creating protective 'rivetments' around the artist doesn't recognize the ever shifting relational cues to which man needs to respond in order to enter the creative process.²³ "

The implications above are far reaching and by no means settled, perhaps some artists choose to ignore the essential philosophy of the movement and replace it with concepts and explanations that are easier to make the consuming public understand. There is a certain pragmatic interest in making explanations that are easily quantifiable and measureable and attract new students to the art.

While understandable, the journey of discovery has by no means ended. The spirituality of the movement is just as essential as the material components. There doesn't seem to be a definable box and perhaps that is the true authentic spirit of this movement. As science changes and more knowledge of our universe becomes available with no judgement of the experience, so too, the artist brings more clarity to the alternate structure of the cosmos. The artist must adjust to the new information "for when the scientist finds it necessary to make a revision of the rules, so does the poet.²⁴"

Page 1.

"Landscape with Church" review, The Philadelphia Inquirer (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania)
 18 May 1967, Thu • Main Edition • Page 35
 [https://www.newspapers.com/clip/14054452/carl_fernbach_flarsheim_landscape_with/]

2. Benjamin Tammuz, page 1, "Art In Israel," Edited by Max Wykes Joyce Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, Crafts & Design made in Palestine/Israel from the 1880's to 1960. Bios of major talents are followed by examples of their work. B/W and color Chilton Book Co; First U.S. Edition, (1967).

Page 2.

3. Benjamin Tammuz Art In Israel,/page 1, (1967).

4. Poetry: Concrete Poetry By: Michael J. Vaughn, March 13, 2008 (https://www.writersdigest.com/writing-articles/by-writing-goal/improve-mywriting/concretepoetry)

5. I Mirror Poem, Carl Fernbach-Flarsheim, Letter to Ian, March 15, 1966

6. Lecture: On the meaning of the visual; Twelve theses regarding the visual and its interpretation, Dr. Mihai Nadin, October 1982,

http://www.nadin.name/index.html?/publications/articles_books/onthemea/onthemea.html

Page 3

7. Media Actors Ensemble 20 years, the round table 1953/1973: Event: ICC, Antwerp (28 June 1975-17 August 1975) The exhibition was curated by the ICC in collaboration with Paul De Vree. It gives an overview of the evolution of the Round Table in the Dutch-speaking region in the sixties grew into the center of the evolutionary poetry, in the sense that from 1956 a connection was found with the experimental poetry, and in the course of time is organic developed in successive stages of objective poetry, concrete poetry, sonorous poetry, visual poetry to the last of the poesia visiva. Outside the exhibition drew attention also to other contemporary poëzie- and kunstrichtingen in the magazine to bid had come as the fantasmagie, the essentialism, the integration, the mannerism, and figures as Paul Van Ostaijen, Boris Vian, Raoul Hausmann, Man Ray, Marcel Duchamp, Albert-Birot and Guy Vaes. The exhibition was initially conceived from the document, supported by visual art, poetry and

sonorous experimental film.

8. A brief guide to Concrete Poetry, May 5, 2004 (https://poets.org/text/brief-guideconcrete-poetry).

9. Carl Fernbach-Flarsheim, The Message Behind The Media: The Boolean Image/ 'Conceptual Typewriter', "SOFTWARE" Exhibition Catalogue (1970) ("Prosthetic Knowledge Picks: Typewriter" By Prosthetic Knowledge, Jan 16, 2013. http://www.rhizome.org)

10. Lionel Kearns, "Kinetic Poem" (1968) Prehistoric Digital Poetry | An Archaeology of Forms, C. T. FU N K HOUSER, (1959–1995)

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11. Mary Ellen Solt, From Concrete Poetry: A World View (1968, Indiana University Press) (www.ubu.com/papers/solt/us.html)

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12. Michael J. Vaughn, Poetry: Concrete Poetry, March 13, 2008 (https://www.writersdigest.com/writing-articles/by-writing-goal/improve-mywriting/concretepoetry)

13. Michael J. Vaughn, Poetry: Concrete Poetry, March 13, 2008 (https://www.writersdigest.com/writing-articles/by-writing-goal/improve-mywriting/concretepoetry)

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14. Sid Sachs: Of the Philadelphia Years "Invisible City" American Publisher 2020 Invisible City Philadelphia and the Vernacular Avant-garde Supported by a Discovery grant from the Pew Center for Arts & Heritage, initiated by Sid Sachs of the University of the Arts, Invisible City's goal is to increase awareness of the cultural contributions of Philadelphia at mid-century. This interactive website consists of transcribed oral histories of vital participants in Philadelphia's avant-garde community of the 1960s and 1970s with videos, images and an extensive chronology.

15. "Carl Fernbach Flarsheim" Drawing, (1967), Arie Alexander Galles. Professor Emeritus, Painting/Drawing, Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo, CA. (www.ariegalles.com/tylertemple.html) Page 7

16. Peter Mayer, "Concrete poems just are," Spring, 1996 (http://www.eyemagazine.com/feature/article/concrete-poems-just-are)

17. Bill Bissett, "a study uv language what can yew study" Rush: what fuckan theory; a study uv langwage. Eds. Derek Beaulieu and Gregory Betts. Toronto: Bookthug, (2013). 85–99. Print.

18. Bill Bissett, orthography, "RUSH: what fuckan theory; a study uv langwage" (1971 2012) that "when yu want to know what writing is mor than anything yu look at writing" (bissett "a study" 87).

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19. Derek Beaulieu, BA, BEd, MA., Text Without Text: Concrete Poetry and Conceptual Writing. Department of Humanities University of Roehampton (2014)

20. UBU Web, Top Tens [By Year], http://www.ubu.com/resources/feature.html

21. Derek Beaulieu BA, BEd, MA., Text Without Text: Concrete Poetry and Conceptual Writing Department of Humanities University of Roehampton (2014).

22. Mary Ellen Solt, From Concrete Poetry: A World View (1968, Indiana University Press) (www.ubu.com/papers/solt/us.html)

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23. Carl Fernbach-Flarsheim, 1968-69. Private Collection.

24. "for when the scientist finds it necessary.." Concrete Poetry: A World View. [Anthology] Ed. Mary Ellen Solt, Bloomington, IA: Indiana UP, 1968. 248 (ibid: http://www.ubu.com/papers/solt/us.html)

A LEGACY UNFOLDS

Introduction 10/3/2019 9:21 AM



In August, 1977 one late afternoon in our home in New Mexico, my memory of a conversation I had with my dad. He was sitting on the couch. This was before I thought about making a recording of our conversations. As those memories returned I wrote them down and as I researched his work, I included references that supported the memories I had of that day:

Understand what I was searching for, I

was looking for order in the cosmos. I knew that there was more than the phenomena hitting our senses and our interpretation of that. It was too chaotic. The world was larger than man's senses and intuition. When the computer came and code became the order that operated the machine, I knew that we (mankind) had hit upon a plausible explanation.

Was this the answer? Could I apply these concepts to help explain the cosmos?