(¹) first, the book title as mesostic² line filters³ and selects proper city names as wing words⁴. the city name mesostics assemble each poem from snippets⁵ chosen in their order of appearance within each city chapter. last, fractal timelines⁶ animate worlds of lines, colors, and symbols implied by each city character and text properties. generative⁷ poetry composed by ideas translated into code, deliberate rule breaking⁸ through chance⁹ or bugs¹⁰, and digital humor¹¹ .

jean-pierre hébert, santa barbara 2011

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¹ *in visible cities* (or *ivc*). this statement was written under length constraint. for greater clarity. these notes provide some required explanations.

² after john cage's exploration and extensive use of the form. in the classic acrostic poem, the set of the leftmost letter of each line, vertically aligned, creates a meaningful word or sentence. in the *mesostic poem*, the letters are allowed to be anywhere within each line (there are additional rules and variations). once vertically aligned, these letters constitute the mesostic line or *mesoline*. reference: *the music of verbal space: john cage's 'what you say'* by marjorie perloff (ubuweb paper: http://www.ubu.com/papers/perloff02.html).

³ the goal in *ivc* is to have, for the title page, a mesoline that reads *in visible cities*. thus one needs to select 15 city names among the 55 cities in the book, so that within the 15 names selected each of the 15 letters needed for the mesoline can be found, one letter per city name at a time. interestingly enough it has been possible to select the cities for *ivc* in the order in which they appear in the chapter and type (cities of desire, love, design, death, etc…) cross tabulation.

⁴ the words and letters left on each side of the mesoline are then called the *wing words*. reference: *the music of verbal space: john cage's 'what you say'* by marjorie perloff (ubuweb paper: http://www.ubu.com/papers/perloff_cage_conceptualist.pdf).

⁵ each page refers to a city, and contains a poem in the mesostic form. the poem is composed from snippets of text cut from the city chapter. they are —again, chosen so that within the snippets selected each of the letters contained in the city name can be found, one letter per snippet at a time. these letters constitute the mesoline reading as the city name. these letters are typographically flipped 90 degrees, so that the mesoline is more easily read from the side. again, it has been possible to select the snippets in the natural order in which they appear in their chapter. each poem is composed from the wing words with as many lines as there are letters in that city name.

[6] all the drawings result from a concept of fractal timelines expressed in software. series of fractal clock hands mark second, minute, hour, date, month, year, century, etc… at several fractal scales. as all these hands turn to mark date and time, they are set to emit in place lines and/or symbols, colors, letters, words, etc…, (all graphical elements that create the drawing) at the place where the hands are at each instant. these emissions are informed by the structure of the book, its chapters, and its text, as well as by the characters of each city. so the illustrations are both the result of the book itself, of decisions about how to consider the book, and also of chance and time.

[7] generative poetry is created by a set of generating rules. these rules may be applied by cutting and pasting with scissors and glue, or by writing with a pen or a typewriter on paper, or with a word processor. they can also be translated into custom software. in *ivc* all the texts and illustrations are generative: i expressed all my conceptual intentions in software, which i then trust to conduct the generative process. running the software creates image and text files to be the material for the book. scissors, typewriter or software are just the tools that implement the generative concept in the real world where books live.

[8] when rules take the place of principles, don't let them get in your way. references: *anarchy* by john cage, also note 8 here after, and http://www.atlassociety.org/tni/short-course-rule-breaking-0

[9] again, refer to *silence: lectures and writings* by john cage (wesleyan university press). also http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/john_cage

[10] bugs are those unavoidable programming errors that can create horrid or delightful accidents, as well as watercolor or printmaking do: bugs are a real contributor to the creative process.

[11] humor should always be present, whatever the medium. it's always light, fun, and damn serious altogether. as digital becomes the de facto medium of the 21st century, we of course want and need humor in our new century as we use our new digital tools.