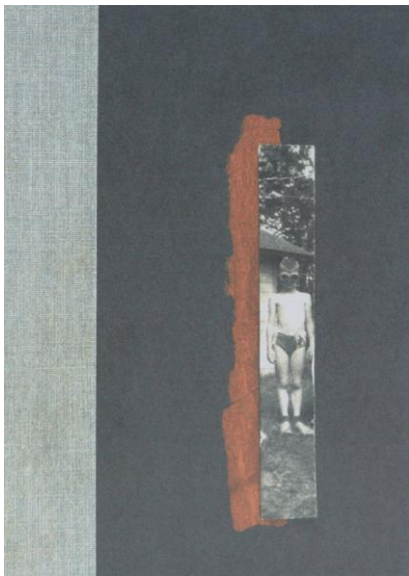


Making a Visual Poem

“All visual writing is a rejection of, by which I mean an expansion of, regular writing.” –The Last Vispo Anthology: Visual Poetry, 1988-2008, Jim Leftwich

Even if you don’t consider yourself an artist or writer, the act of creating gives you new avenues for understanding poetry and art. But unlike traditional poetry, which has a very low barrier of entry for those inspired by what they read, visual poetry often introduces significant technical barriers to its creation.



My first tip is to try to start with what you already know: If you love taking photos, use your phone or camera for your images. If you know how to use Microsoft Word, or Google Slides, or some other program or app, try that. Get started.

Visual poems also don’t *necessarily* require as much technology as it may at first seem. Try creating by hand. Paint, or cut up paper, or draw in the sand. If you want to share your poems, you’ll need to take a photo or scan what you

create, but you don’t need to work entirely in a program in order to create a visual poem. For examples and inspiration, look at Naoko Fujimoto’s *Glyph: Graphic Poetry* (mixed media and paintings), Anne Carson’s *Nox* (photographs of personal ephemera), Susan Howe’s *That This* (collage and photocopies), and Krista Franklin’s *Under the Knife* (photography, mixed media, and book arts).

Here is a list of other resources:

Programs to Create Visual Poems – Low Learning Curve

These programs/apps/websites are fairly quick to learn. They are often free or cheap, and there are lots of tutorials on YouTube, LinkedIn, and at your local library because these programs tend to be used in corporate environments.

- Google Slides
- Microsoft PowerPoint
- Canva
- Figma

Programs to Create Visual Poems – High Learning Curve

If you already have a lot of experience with visual art, or if you have very specific things you are trying to do, you might need a software program with a lot of features. These programs often take much longer to learn, though keep in mind you only need to learn the parts that apply to your specific practice.

- Adobe Illustrator – Good for a mix of words and images or drawings
- Inkscape – Free alternative to Illustrator
- Adobe Photoshop – Good for very image/photo-heavy poems. Text is difficult to edit in Photoshop
- Gimp – Free alternative to Photoshop
- Adobe InDesign – Good for very text-heavy poems. Images are harder to work with

Resources for Images to Work With

Be sure to investigate the rights to any images you use.

- [Public Work by Cosmos](#) – Search engine for public domain images
- [Wikimedia Commons](#) – Includes public domain images
- [Library of Congress Digital Collections](#) – Historical documents and images
- [Biodiversity Heritage Library](#) – Scientific drawings
- [NASA Images](#) – Photos of space