

**JORGE EDUARDO EIELSON:
THE MAN WHO KNOTTED STARS AND WORDS**
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Jorge Eduardo Eielson was born in Lima, Peru, on April 13th, 1924. His father, a North American of Scandinavian origin, disappeared when he was very young and he was told that he had died. He was raised by a family from the capital, about which he always spoke as if it were his own: his mother, two older sisters and a younger brother who died prematurely.

In his youth, Jorge immediately demonstrated marked artistic tendencies: he played the piano (the entire family loved music), he drew continuously, he recited passages from his favorite authors and invented objects with whatever material he could find. During some of the numerous interviews that he gave, Jorge himself recognized a connection between his varied ethnocultural roots and the variety of his creative interests, without excluding his curiosity for science, philosophy and religion: "My four cultures", he pointed out, "are Spanish, Italian, Swedish and Nazca".

At that time, the Peruvian capital had not yet undergone the degradation of more recent times—times that Eielson had predicted in his novel, *Primera muerte de María* (*First death of María*), written in the 1950s. There was a relatively stable economy in Lima then, and there were rich cultural movements open to new stimuli coming from large international centers. Thus, young Eielson was able to nourish his curiosity for European culture. He learned English and French, read Rimbaud, Mallarmé, Shelley, Eliot, the mystics and classics from Spanish Golden Age, the Iberian poets of the 20th Century and, naturally, the great North and South American poets: Poe, Whitman, Darío, Vallejo, Neruda, Borges. With a restless personality and vivacious and inquisitive intelligence, as a boy he changed schools repeatedly, until the last years of high school, when he had José María Arguedas for his Spanish professor, who had just begun to gain recognition as a writer and ethnologist. Arguedas, impressed by the adolescent's talent, befriended him and introduced him to the artistic and literary circles of the capital. And this is how he began his search for knowledge about the ancient cultures of Peru, which, at the time, were practically unknown or, even worse, scorned by a traditionally Hispanophile and anti-Indigenous official culture.

In 1945, at the age of 21, Eielson won the Premio Nacional de Poesía of Peru for his first book of poetry, *Reinos* (*Kingdoms*), and the following year he won the national award for theater. From his study of poetic writing and attracted by the pairing of tradition and innovation in his country, along with his friends Javier Sologuren and Sebastián Salazar Bondy, he compiled the anthology, *La poesía contemporánea del Perú* (*Contemporary Poetry of Peru*), (Lima, 1946).

During this same period, he started painting his first canvases, in which the influence of two artists that were important for his formation (Klee and Miró) is noticeable. Eielson did not believe excessively in academic learning—and he would never change his mind—nonetheless, he decided to attend drawing and painting classes at the Academy of Fine Arts in Lima, probably because of his friendship with the director,

Peruvian artist Ricardo Grau. Paradoxically, shortly thereafter, Grau himself—who, in his day, had studied in Paris at André Lothe's atelier—advised him not to attend the courses, considering those studies inadequate for Eielson.

In 1948, in collaboration with the painter, Fernando de Szyszlo, and in the only existing gallery in the capital at that time, Eielson exhibited a collection of works that attested to his versatility: drawings, water color paintings, oil on canvas, painted and burned wooden constructions, surrealist objects and metal spiral-shaped mobiles. During that period, he wrote for various local newspapers and directed the magazine dedicated to art and literature, *El Correo de Ultramar*, in collaboration with Jean Supervielle, son of the poet Jules.

That same year, 1948, he traveled to Paris on a scholarship from the French government. Paris had been the natural hub for Latin American intellectuals for more than half a century and Eielson felt at home right away. He frequented the Latin Quarter, in those days in full existential effervescence, and he spent many hours each day and night in the caves of Saint-Germain des Près, with writers from all over the world, who shared the opinion that the post-war *Ville lumière* was the center for culture and the fulcrum for creativity of all kinds. He discovered Piet Mondrian's art and he joined the MADI group and was invited to participate in their first abstract art show, held at the *Salon des Réalités Nouvelles*. The MADI group was headed by Arden Quin and Volf Roitman and included followers from Buenos Aires such as Lucio Fontana, Tomás Maldonado and G. Kosice. As a consequence of his participation, Eielson was also invited to exhibit at the prestigious gallery for the avant-garde, Colette Allendy.

There, he met Raymond Hains, with whom he maintained a long-lasting friendship, and through whom he made contact with the "nouveaux réalistes" and with Pierre Restany, who was considered the spiritual guide and theoretician of the group, who would repeatedly occupy himself with the Peruvian artist's work. Shortly thereafter, Eielson considered his geometric, constructivist and neo-plastic period finished, and he moved to Switzerland on a UNESCO scholarship for his journalistic articles. There, he met Max Bill. In Geneva he returned to writing, attracted by the location of literary text in a visual space, or rather on stage. He created few, however, very original theatrical productions. In 1947, in Lima, he had written a play called *Maquillaje*, which was staged in 1950, provoking perplexity and even a certain amount of scandal. Later on, as a theatrical author, he would stay in line with Beckett, who was the contemporary author with whom he felt closest, both for his sensibility and for his idea of what theater should be.

In 1951, he took a trip that would prove fundamental and definitive for his life, moving to Italy for summer vacation, in the company of poet Javier Sologuren. As soon as he set foot on the peninsula he knew that he had found his home away from home. Upon arrival in Rome, he decided to stay there and asked his friend to have his books and personal effects sent to him from Paris, thus beginning the long and intense exploration of his Latin roots. Having traveled extensively, on brief or extended journeys, with internal and external trips, Italy proved to be his definitive residence—for more than fifty years, and until his death. In the 1980s, he moved

permanently to Milan and he ritually spent each summer in Sardinia, in the Nuoro Province. There, his friend and Sardinian painter, Michele Mulas, inherited a house in the woods, which they restored together and transformed into an enchanting ecological and artistic home.

In 1952, he won another contest, this time organized by the Experimental Center of Cinecittà in Rome, in order to attend a course in cinematographic directing. Even though it is certain that cinema was one of his great passions, and regardless of his initial enthusiasm, he did not stay there long. He left the cinema, disgusted by certain aspects of the environment.

In 1953, he exhibited some of his *mobiles* at the *Galleria dell'Obelisco*, the most important Roman space for artistic innovations at that time. On that occasion, he met Emilio Villa, who wrote an astute review about his work, which was published by the magazine, *Arti visive*. Villa introduced him to Ettore Colla and to Alberto Burri, among others, and with Burri he established a stimulating relationship that lasted through his famous "purses" period, which he completed in the studio in Via Aurora, which Eielson frequented assiduously. Giuseppe Capogrossi was also interested in Eielson's *mobiles* and he introduced him to Carlo Cardazzo, who was opening a gallery in Rome. However, the artist decided to continue down his own path and to persist with his own research, resolving not to accept the invitation and concluding this phase of his experimentation.

The following period was one of interior withdrawal for visual research, during which he went almost every afternoon to Corrado Cagli's studio, in Via del Circo Massimo, where the artist from the Marches introduced him to Afro, Mirko, Salvatore Scarpitta, Richard Serra and others. During those years, he also met some of the so-called "artists of the Piazza del Popolo", such as Piero Dorazio, Achille Perilli, Mimmo Rotella, Antonio Sanfilippo, Carla Accardi, Cy Twombly, Roberto Sebastián Matta, shortly before the beginning of Italian pop art, in which Eielson never participated. This was a period of intense dedication to writing, during which he produced one of his most significant collections of poetry, *Habitación en Roma*, and two novels, *El cuerpo di Giulia-no* and *Primera muerte de María*, which, however, were not published until much later. This was also the period during which he discovered Zen Buddhism, which would lead him to an ironic, visual and conceptual style of writing, with a subsequent refusal for literature in its most traditional and expressive forms, and to a new approach towards the practice of artistic activity.

In 1959, Eielson returned to his visual work, ready to explore his most remote American roots. Leaving behind him the excesses of the avant-garde, he adopted heterogeneous materials, such as dirt, sand (sometimes even ordering it directly from the coast of Peru), clays, animal excrements, powdered marble and iron, and even cement, with which he "sculpted" the surfaces of the canvas. With these materials he built an austere, desolate, abstract and almost metaphysical landscape, in reality, according to his own declarations, mirroring the landscape of the Peruvian coast. With these works—these fantastic "infinite landscapes" that, when compared to his literature, can possibly be linked to his novels—Eielson developed a long and complex relationship with the Lorenzelli Gallery of Milan and Bergamo; various times

the collaboration was interrupted abruptly, other times it was re-established, but most definitively it represented an excellent support for him in the Italian art scene, before his return to Paris and later to the American continent.

In the meantime, although he had left his country—without knowing that it would be definitive, and for which he was criticized by Salazar Bondy—, in Lima he was not forgotten. On the contrary, interest in his poetry was growing and spreading, especially among the newer generations. In 1959, when his writing had already taken a different approach, *Canción y muerte de Rolando* was published in Lima, an example of neo-Baroque poetry, written in 1943.

In his artistic work, his landscapes gradually began to be populated by the human image, obtained from every kind of clothing: shirts, coats, jeans, wedding and evening dresses, socks, shoes, neckties, gloves, hats, etc. This interest for the symbolism and social function of the wardrobe is partly present in his novels, in a predominant way in the collection of poetry written shortly thereafter (*Noche oscura del cuerpo*, 1955) and more elaborately in his performances and installations that he would create later on. At the same time, by manipulating garments of clothing—wrinkling, ripping, burning, twisting and, finally, knotting the garments—he steadily moved towards a definition and confirmation of his special artistic sensitivity for textiles.

In 1963, gaining awareness of the great energy and beauty enclosed in the knot, Eielson began the first series of his *quipus*, with textiles of vivacious colors knotted and stretched over the frame. In his use of the Quechua word as a title for his artwork, he was not trying to imitate but rather to cite the famous compositions of knotted strings that were used as a linguistic code by his pre-Columbian ancestors. In this way he achieved a true cultural, plastic, magical and symbolic synthesis, in which he recovered the language of the ancient Amerindians—as understood in its most visual aspect—in close harmony with one of the fundamental elements of Western art: the European loom. The canvas/loom duality is rendered into a new aesthetic object that coincides, albeit with a different sign, with Fontana's "spatial concept", which also identified this same duality as being the only protagonist of his work. However, the knot itself can be found in every phase of civilization, as it performs the simplest practical function and embodies the most sophisticated mythical, magical and sacred conceptions. Eielson was conscious of this and did not attempt to re-elaborate any language, but rather to propose a plastic and chromatic entity, focusing on its less explored archetypal content.

The complex entirety of meanings that the knot implicates occupies a prominent position in Eielson's work, which is transmitted through his personal expressive code. For him, the knot is a graphic sign, the aesthetic foundation and nucleus of color. It is also a point of union between the pre-Columbian history of his culture and his historic and artistic present. Other Latin American artists have searched through the Mayan and Aztec codes, or in other forms of pre-Hispanic art, for a sign that could modulate their contemporary languages with the suggestion and profundity of such historic roots. Among these, through their different pictorial inventions, were Matta from Chile, Lam from Cuba, Torres García from Argentina and others. However, only

Eielson found an artistic and anthropological foundation in the Peruvian *quipu* and knew how to transform the ancient Quechua sign into the aesthetic and semantic nucleus of an exquisitely modern language.

Moreover, Eielson's knot is the moment in which his various expressive codes reunite, from painting to canvas, to objects, to poetry, and it is also a reunion of the two dimensions in which his investigation develops: the material and the metaphysical. This appears visibly in two of his canvases, so emblematically entitled: *Nudos como estrellas* and *Estrellas como nudos* (*Knots like stars* and *Stars like knots*). So, the knot is also that which ties the sky to the earth, the body to the sky, the soul to the viscera. And from here originate the infinite variations of the same knot that exercise multiple tensions, creating spaces that are dynamic, diagonal, triangular or rhomboid, which often conduce toward circular oases where energy is released by the knotting, which then spreads and relaxes into a great serenity. Other times, in place of the knot and its different tensions, bands of twisted fabric, which can be flags, garments of clothing, or pure games of colored or neutral textiles (jute, cotton, wool, velvet, etc.), which are presented as three-dimensional sculptural objects, freed from the loom.

After the Biennial of Venice in 1964, where he exhibited his first knots, Eielson obtained prestigious international recognition and was able to bring his works to important museums like the MOMA and the Nelson Rockefeller Collection of New York. He also repeatedly received invitations to the *Salon de Mai* and to the *Salon des Comparaisons* in Paris, and exhibited in numerous private galleries.

In 1967 he resided in New York and frequented the Chelsea Hotel environment, where he met the most celebrated American artists of pop art and of the then incipient conceptual art. In the meantime, in Lima, his collection of poetry, *mutatis mutandis*, was published—ten years after it had been written. Upon his return to Paris, halfway into May of 1968, he actively participated in the demonstrations throughout the period, which would leave a deep impression on his creativity.

In 1969 he was invited to the historic show in the Kunsthalle of Zurich, *Plans and Projects as Art*, in which he presented *Escultura subterránea*, a series of five imaginary and unattainable objects that had to be buried in five different cities around the world, and which were linked to his personal history: Paris, Rome, New York, Eningen and Lima. At midnight, on December 16th 1969, at the Sonnabend Gallery of Paris, he "inaugurated" the *Escultura subterránea* in person, while in the other four chosen cities simultaneous "burial" ceremonies were held.

During that same year, Eielson made a proposal to the American space program for the placement of one of his "sculptures" on the Moon. NASA responded with a suggested future date, seeing how at that moment, during the time of the "Apollo program", the project was unrealizable. He then proposed the dissemination of his ashes on the surface of the Moon, having always considered the Earth's satellite to be the ideal cemetery for poets.

In 1971 his novel, *El cuerpo de Giulia-no*, was published in Mexico by Joaquín Mortiz, thanks to the interest that Octavio Paz showed in it. Eielson maintained a cordial friendship with Paz that they established while he lived in Paris. The novel, which

takes place in Venice, expresses the author's perplexity regarding the ambiguities of life (Giulia is and is not Giuliano, is both love and friendship, grace and vulgarity) and makes an important reference to the Peruvian world and to the code of the *quipus*. It is precisely in this novel that the famous symbolic triads appear, already mentioned in catalogues and in other texts written about Eielson's work:

one white knot	life
two white knots	love
three white knots	god-paradise-good
one black knot	death
two black knots	war
three black knots	hell-the devil-evil
one red knot	blood
two red knots	reproduction
three red knots	stars
one yellow knot	flowers
two yellow knots	fruit
three yellow knots	the sun
one blue knot	air
two blue knots	water-rivers-lakes-rain
three blue knots	the sky
one green knot	earth-plants-trees
one orange knot	fire
one violet knot	the moon

His following works are similar to "subterranean sculptures": the *Ballet subterráneo*, performed inside a moving car on the Paris Metro; the performance *Natación* (*Swimming*), in the Parisian countryside (the photos show the artist swimming naked in an immense field of lavender in bloom); the *Concierto de la Paz*, in Document N° 5 of Kassel, on invitation by Harald Szeemann; the performance of *Giulia-no*, based on the aforementioned novel, at the Biennial of Venice in 1972; the performance *Gran quipu de las naciones*, at the Munich Olympics, interrupted by the tragic anti-Semitic terrorist attack; the performance *Paracas-Pyramid*, at the Kunstakademie of Düsseldorf, on invitation by Fritz Schwegler.

In 1973 the second edition of *Reinos* was published in Lima, almost two decades after the first (1945), for which its author had been awarded the National Poetry Award, and in 1976 the editorial Albin Michel published the French translation of *El cuerpo de Giulia-no* (*Le corps de Giulia-no*). That same year Eielson went to Venezuela, where he presented *Paracas-Pyramid* and a photography exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art of Caracas. He then traveled to Peru, where the Institute of

Culture published a vast selection of his poetic works, edited by Ricardo Silva-Santisteban, entitled *Poesía escrita*. That title, according to the author's wish, would remain unchanged for following editions of his poetry, regardless of the noticeable differences in content from one edition to the next, as in the editions published in 1989 in Mexico and 1998 in Bogota, until, with the arrival of the new millennium, and with the beginning of a new phase of intense and innovative creativity, new collections and titles were suggested.

During his stay in Peru, in 1976, Eielson dedicated himself with fervor to the study of pre-Columbian art, paying special attention to textiles, which he considered the most extraordinary products of textile art of all times, endowed with freshness and modernity that never cease to amaze. The demonstration of their wonder is in the impression they made on talented artists such as Klee, Miró, Picasso, Mondrian, Torres García, Matta, all the way to Keith Haring and many others.

In 1978 he was awarded the Guggenheim grant in New York for his literature and in 1979 he exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art in Mexico, after which he dedicated time to writing about pre-Columbian art. Some of his essays and articles ("Puruchuco", "El arte y la religión Chavin", "Luz y transparencia en los tejidos del antiguo Perú") were published in art magazines, such as *FMR*, by Franco Maria Ricci; others, like "Escultura precolombiana de cuarzo", were transformed into books, accompanied by original and unusual photographic material.

In 1983, a collection of poetry that Eielson had written in Rome in 1955 was published for the first time, in a bilingual edition of Spanish and French (translated by Claude Couffon), called *Noche oscura del cuerpo/Nuit obscure du corps*. Nonetheless, and regardless of the elegance of the French versions, the edition did not convince the author, who considered the series, in reality, incomplete. Later on, he regretted having included poems that in successive editions seemed to be an integral part of a different collection: *Ceremonia solitaria* (as can already be seen in the Vuelta edition of *Poesía escrita*, 1989).

His activity continued in the field of visual arts with personal exhibitions at the Museum of Fine Arts in Caracas in 1986, at the Third Biennial of Trujillo in Peru in 1987, at the Centro Cultural de la Municipalidad de Miraflores in Lima and at the Biennial of Venice in 1988.

In 1987 the publishing house Fondo de Cultura Económica de México published his novel, *Primera muerte de María*, whose title reiterates the title of a poem from 1949 and would appear again in other installations and performances. The novel is presented as a collage of two moments in writing: the first version of history, where the author had wanted to show directly his vision of Peruvian reality; and the successive series of reflections that would awake in him, in 1980, the re-reading of that old text. This second moment of writing creates a second version –that appears to be inserted into the first– in which the problem of writing, itself, both loved and hated by Eielson throughout the story, returns to its foremost position.

In 1989, the publishing house Vuelta, directed by Octavio Paz, republished *Poesía escrita*, as previously mentioned, in a substantially different version from the previous Peruvian edition. Firstly, the Mexican edition omitted all of what the

Peruvian edition had grouped together under the name of "poesía visual". This decision made by the author actually excluded something that, for the reader, was useful in illustrating the process that had brought him to write poetry that was steadily stripped of its rhetorical support, steadily more essential, disenchanting, ironic and, finally, iconic and visual, until the complete omission of words. Naturally, Eielson had his reasons: the Lima publication, with all of its merits, had showed that the passage to visual forms could not be done without the formal support of an artistic edition that could efficiently illustrate the author's visual idea. And for him, something more than a traditional style of typography was necessary. The same problem presented itself again at Vuelta's studio. He then decided to edit out the series entitled, *naturaleza muerta, eros/iones, canto visible* and *papel*, and in exchange he included the complete version of the collection of poetry, *Noche oscura del cuerpo* (1955), published in a single edition just a few months earlier in Lima. He completed the series of *Ceremonia solitaria* (1964) and *Arte poética* (1965), and introduced the previously unpublished *Ptyx* (1980). Another anthological selection that respects this last division was published in Florence, Italy, in 1993, in a bilingual edition with translations in Italian, once more faithfully entitled *Poesía Scritta*.

In 1990, shortly after the publication of the Mexican edition of *Poesía escrita*, Eielson traveled to Mexico, invited by Octavio Paz, to participate in the exhibition called *Los privilegios de la vista (The privileges of sight)*, in the International Center of Contemporary Art. Upon his return to Italy, he presented a personal exhibition at the Italo-Latin-American Institute of Rome (ILLA), with which he effectively marked his return to artistic activity in Italy and put an end to his geographic and cultural nomadism that, although on one hand had enriched and diversified his methods of expression, on the other hand had caused him to procure some incomprehension, both in the artistic and literary fields. This did not allow the great anxiety about variation, mobility, innovation and surprise to focus properly, as much in his plastic work as in his literary production, attesting to his unrelenting and authentic search for a multidisciplinary and multifaceted personality.

In his own opinion, two events were very useful for a more integral evaluation of his work: the first, in 1993, when he prepared a vast exhibition of his visual work in the prestigious Galleria delle Stelline, in Milan, entitled *Il linguaggio magico dei nodi (The magical language of knots)*, which included paintings, assemblage, sculptures, photography and two installations dedicated to Leonardo da Vinci, all of which accompanied by an excellent catalogue. The second event, in 1995, was the publication of the volume *El diálogo infinito*, by the Universidad Iberoamericana de México, featuring a long conversation with the author of this article, illustrated with color photographs and reproductions of some of his artwork. There, the artist touches on varied topics, clarifies possible ambiguities and defines his position regarding art, literature and culture in general.

An important effort finally to put the universal nature of his work into focus, without making the mistake of categorizing (which is often comprehensible for those who have studied him), was completed in London in 1997, by William Rowe. On

October 23rd and 24th, at the Institute of Latin American Studies, of the University of London, experts on contemporary Latin American art and literature gathered for the International Conference "The visual and literary works of Jorge Eduardo Eielson"; on this occasion a CD-ROM was presented that reviewed his entire career and discussed connections between his different expressive codes.

In 1998, in Bogota, Norma published a final compilation of that which, until then, could be considered the entirety of his poetic writing: entitled, once again, *Poesía escrita*. For the first time, this volume offers various poems that were either previously unpublished or that had been published in literary magazines and which, for their characteristics and for the period in which they were written, could be attributed to previously published poetry collections (*Reinos, Doble diamante, Tema y variaciones, Ceremonia solitaria*). It also includes a single act for theater, *Acto final*, in addition to four previously unpublished series, *Cuatro parábolas del amor divino* (1943), *De materia verbalis* (1957-58), *Pequeña música de cámara* (1965) and *Esculturas subterráneas* (1966-68), and concludes with *Ptyx*, as in the Mexican edition.

As a visual artist, Eielson was very active and present during the last years of his life, overcoming the illness that was steadily debilitating him and the grave mourning over the death of Michele Mulas, who passed away in December 2002. In 1997 the Galleria Lorenzelli of Milan hosted a personal exhibition, with six paintings representing constellations and an installation-performance called *La escalera infinita*. The following installation was *La Última Cena (The Last Supper)*, at the Fattoria di Villa Celle, Gori Collection, in Tuscany, in 1998; and he participated in the vast review "From the avant-garde to the end of the millennium", organized by Jorge Glusberg in the exhibition hall of Culturgest, in Lisbon, in 1999. In 2000 an entire number of the magazine *more ferarum* was dedicated to Eielson and, in 2001, the Museum of Art of the Universidad Mayor de San Marcos prepared a tribute-exhibition called, *La entidad del argumento (The entity of the discussion)*, while the international conference dedicated to his literary and artistic works was underway.

With the coming of the new millennium, as previously noted, he put an end to the parenthesis of verbal silence and published a few new poetry collections, the first of which were *Sin título* (Madrid, 2000), written between 1994 and 1998, and *Celebración* (Lima, 2001), written between 1990 and 1992. Both books confirm the great lyrical abilities of the author, the refinement and austerity of his language, touched by a sweet, ancient and wise irony. There is particular emphasis placed, especially in the first book, on the conjunction of the various expressive codes, drawings and words, images and color, written and painted languages, the objectives he had always sought to attain, and fully realized. Following these books, *Nudos* was published in 2002, where the expression through words is accompanied by the drawing, and *Del absoluto amor* of 2005, dedicated to Michele, who had passed away shortly beforehand. More new anthologies followed, with new titles: *Canto visible* (Pistoia, 2002), *De materia verbalis* (Mexico, 2002), *Arte poética*, which was edited by Luis Rebaza Soruluz (Lima, 2004).

Toward the end of his life, he was given an unexpected light and a tender affective comfort by the discovery of the existence of a sister, Olivia Eielson. Michele having

already passed away, he actually spent his last summer with her, in 2005, in the beloved house in Sardinia. With surprise and emotion, they slowly discovered surprising and meaningful affinities and similarities.

Regardless of the quantity and variety of Eielson's visual proposals, there is no doubt that the *quipu* is his central invention. However, it must not be forgotten that he also practiced a very personal style of painting, which consists of a brilliant review of pre-Hispanic textiles, and that he produced objects and installations that were inspired by his own writings and, to a lesser degree, by those of other authors. In the literary world, he knew how to pass from one genre to another with elegance and originality. It is not surprising that today he is considered one of the greatest poets of the Spanish language and that his poems have been translated in twelve languages. He certainly never accepted the definition of "poet": in the first place, because he preferred to be considered simply "a worker of words", according to his own definition, or "a worker of images", "a worker of color", "a worker of space"... His objective was not simply to challenge a system that always requires the same "product" for market interests, but instead, and more profoundly, his untiring and Proteic activity responds to fidelity toward himself and to his interior freedom. A freedom that permitted him to move, with extreme naturalness, from one field of contemporary artistic expression to the next; and it also gave him the opportunity to develop a global, cosmopolitan and planetary vision. The actuality of his work rightfully resides in this continuous "displacement", with the aim of creating a sort of network of interactive relationships between rationality and magic, between the sacred and the profane, between affectivity and concept, between the visual and the verbal, between ancient and modern. A twin universe, equal to that which contemporary physics has revealed, which does not admit hierarchy of any sort, no fixed points, no "cornerstone".

During one of our conversations, talking about the visual arts (but we could easily paraphrase and apply it to his literature), Eielson responded as follows to the classical question: to which artists of all time he felt indebted or with whom he shared the most similarities:

I could distinguish between father-artists, mother-artists, sibling-artists, friend-artists... I would like to say that I truly love this huge family of mine, which includes the Greek Cycladic artists, the pre-Hispanic artists of America, the Zen artists of Kyoto, the sculptors from black Africa, the Florentine and Flamenco painters of the Fifteenth Century. And later, Leonardo, Goya, Van Gogh, Cézanne, Picasso, Miró, Malevich, Mondrian, Klee, Schwitters, Torres García, Duchamp, Pollock, Burri, Calder, Brancusi, Rothko, Fontana, Klein, Hains, Manzoni, Beuys, some of the conceptual artists and others of Italian "Poor Art". What better family could one desire?