

Image: A screenshot of one of his latest experiments with interactive digital art. (2015)

[Dr. Nicolas Rivas](#) is a physicist, writer and (digital) artist from Chile. He just finished his doctorate in physics at the University of Twente. *“My biggest inspiration were my parents, both philosophers. Our house was full of books, we had no television, and we used to have long conversations during dinner, about anything: history, art and philosophy of course. My father was always taking ideas to their deepest level, and that way of thinking stuck with me. He published a few books of philosophical poetry. My mother passed on to me the love for literature. We always discussed the books she recommended. When I was young I loved writing, I started with poetry. Then for a while I was into science fiction, and wrote my own stories. My favourite assignment at school was writing essays. Some aspects of writing I consider to be art (poetry) but it is a very crafty art. Even when the topic is boring, the act of writing is always a joy, looking for the right words and finding the right structure; a puzzle where you can be creative.”*

“Some specific writers that inspired me are Nicanor Parra, a Chilean artist and poet that Chileans like to say invented ‘memes’; and Macedonio Fernandez, a writer who constantly played with the structure of books. He created novels that always remind you of the fact that you’re reading, and about the strangeness of the book as an object and the act of reading. I like this intelligent self-reference, as a form of ‘naked’ honesty, the ‘truth’ of the mirror (similar to Magritte’s paintings: ‘the viewer and the painting inside the painting’). It is relaxing to tell the reader ‘this is fiction’, so you can start something new and honest.”

“We had computers at home since the very first ones (286’s), because my father was also a programmer. That influence is expressed in me as a physicist. As a kid I was already programming and hacking games with friends. Now I use this knowledge for my work in science, and also use it as a tool for artmaking. Not many artists control programming so it’s an interesting way to make works others won’t do so easily.”

“Compared with the arts, creativity in science is more constrained. In maths and physics ‘wrong’ is clearly defined and there’s no arguing (you can’t really ‘bullshit’ around). But you can be creative when you choose the problems to study, and in the way of tackling them. Interpreting and formulating the results, it’s just like telling a story. I take it as an odd genre of literature.”

In 2014 Dr. Rivas was one of the artists for the project “[DEPRODUCTION](#)” (curated by SinQuenza, during the Artist-In-Residence FLOW&FOCUS FAST-FORWARD, thanks to the festival De Kaaij in Nijmegen, The Netherlands). The sub-title of the project was: *Less Production, More Impact*. Inspired by the term [degrowth](#), artists were searching for sustainable ways of living (consuming) and creating.

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===== A poem =====
! Cholera,
! infectious disease,
! communicable disease,
! disease,
! illness,
! prostration,
! shock,
! daze,
! blind,
! unsighted,
! blind,
! people,
! populate,
! overpopulate,
! live,
! stand up,
! support,
! shelf,
! ridge,
! formation,
! commencement,
! graduation,
! completion,
! finalization,
! mop up,
! termination,
! expiration,
! blow,
! go,
! be,
! personify,
! body,
! scheme,
! dodging,
! turning away,
! avoidance,
! escape,
! recreation,
! athletics,
! extracurricular activity,
! pedagogy,
! instruction,
!
===== poet.py 0.01A =====

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===== A poem =====
! love and love life and lovemaking,
! sex,
! feeling,
! Hollywood,
! tone,
! pitch,
! position,
! role,
! activity,
! process and treat,
! negotiate and negotiate,
! go through and implement,
! oblige,
! accommodate and oblige,
! cause,
! kick up and call forth,
! pick and pluck and plunk and plunk down,
! flump and plonk,
! vino,
! varietal,
! vino,
! vintage,
! vino,
! inebriant,
! hard cider,
! cyder and cider,
! scrumpy,
! cider,
! scrumpy,
! cider,
! scrumpy,
! cider and cyder,
! sweet cider,
! cyder,
! hard cider,
! alcoholic drink,
! drink,
! aerophagia,
! deglutition,
! aerophagia,
! deglutition,
! consumption.
!
===== poet.py 0.01A =====

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Images: Two “automatic” poems by *poet.py 0.01A*, a program written by Nicolas Rivas (2014)

For this project Nicolas wrote a computer program that, would “write” a poem automatically, you only have to write one word and hit enter. “*It uses a network of publicly available categorized word lists, so the program connects synonyms and jumps between general or particular categories.*” In less than a second a poem the size of an A4 would fill the screen, starting with your word. A push of a button, would print “your” poem. “I didn’t try to make ‘traditional poems’, that would be far too hard, but rather explore what poetry lies behind this network of words, and the way of displaying them.” This work explores the frontiers between “romantic crafts” and “soulless” mass-production. “*We believe poetry to be one of those aspects*

where computers are not relevant. With this work I reflect about 'meaning' in poetry. Random connections between words and short definitions can become, sometimes, very poetic."

"It was my first Artist-In-Residence, I felt surrounded by interesting and inspiring people and got high quality input in a stimulating environment. The place was so 'romantic', architecturally, with the boats and the impressive bridge, and gave me a circus-like feeling. I got the chance to experiment, it was a big challenge. Learning from constant feedback. It was very fulfilling to interact with other artists and experience their creative process in synergy. I wish I could've stayed longer."

Two years ago Dr. Rivas and SinQuenza started a project over the mobile application whatsapp ("whatsappart"). In conversation they created "new" smilies, using the existing emoji and signs (unicode). This evolved into other "emoji-art-projects".

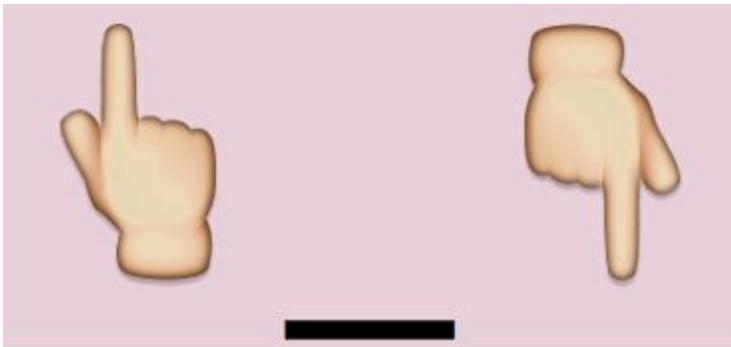


Image: appandown
Part of the collaborative project between
Dr. Rivas & SinQuenza (2015)

"I like to experiment in a poetic way with 'internet language', to help people realize the symbolic digital world we use and spend so much time in, and show it was taken for granted a long time ago. I like to take those symbols out of context. It's a very complex and very present, parallel language, that is here for us to play and communicate with."

They discuss how emoji became a fundamental part of digital communication. These small images, or symbols, can be related to "old school" hieroglyphs or chinese ideograms, with the power to connect people interculturally. Emoji are also political, and can deal with sensitive topics, as for example the recent decision to add [various types of skin color to emojis](#). Together they propose "Emoji", and its evolution to be the new "internotional" world-language.

Quotes and works: [Dr. Rivas](#) physicist and digital artist.
Text and interview [SinQuenza](#), curator and artist, July 2015.