

## Ouvert Oeuvre: Openings & Touching in the Wake of the Virus, Poems by Adeena Karasick

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**A Review of Ouvert Oeuvre: Openings & Touching in the Wake of the Virus**

Poems by Adeena Karasick. Visualized by Warren Lehrer. Price \$28.95. Published by Lavender Ink, New Orleans, Louisiana, US

Amy Henry

<https://www.eyemagazine.com/blog/post/open-to-interpretation>

**A typographic and literary collaboration between Warren Lehrer and Adeena Karasick dramatizes responses to the pandemic. Review by Amy Henry**



*Ouvert Oeuvre: Openings & Touching in the Wake of the Virus* is a striking publication that gives voice (and form) to the challenges, triumphs, interactions and realisations of our post-pandemic world, writes Amy Henry.

In this engaging hardback, writer, designer and book artist Warren Lehrer has visually staged powerful lines by poet, performer and cultural theorist Adeena Karasick. Raw emotions and meaning jump off the page in stirring alliterations, capturing observations made throughout the years of lockdowns and transitions caused

by Covid-19.

**Introductory spread from *Ouvert Oeuvre: Openings & Touching in the Wake of the Virus*.  
Top. Adeena Karasick in performance.**



With a nod to concrete poetry, Lehrer creates a distinct textual rhythm that calls to the reader, emphasising and vocalising Karasick's evocative wordplay. The chaos, pain, hope and connections (or absence of) experienced during the pandemic are inescapable in these playful visualisations. The reader is engaged, actively participating in the experience as the words and layouts investigate human interactions in ever-evolving environments.

The book is divided into two sections, each featuring an extended poem. The first comprises seven 'openings' signified by large roman numerals. In the first there is a statistic that expresses the global reach of the virus: 'As of 23.03.23 663 million worldwide have been exposed.'

Despite the potentially sombre subject matter, Lehrer's typographic explorations lighten the tone of the book, making it instantly engaging for the reader. In 'Opening III', the spreads (below) include numerous bold 'o's among the regular sans letters, encouraging the reader (unwittingly) to form a round shape with their mouth as they read.

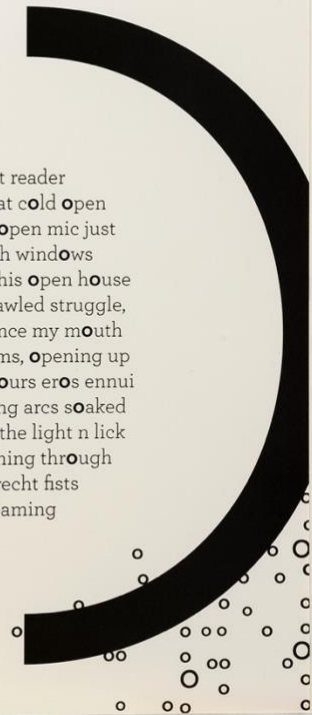
# Opening

[sic] fictiOns  
dictiOns  
dichOtomies  
definitiOns  
cOntractiOns, extractiOns  
Opening parentheses,  
indeces,  
hypOtheses

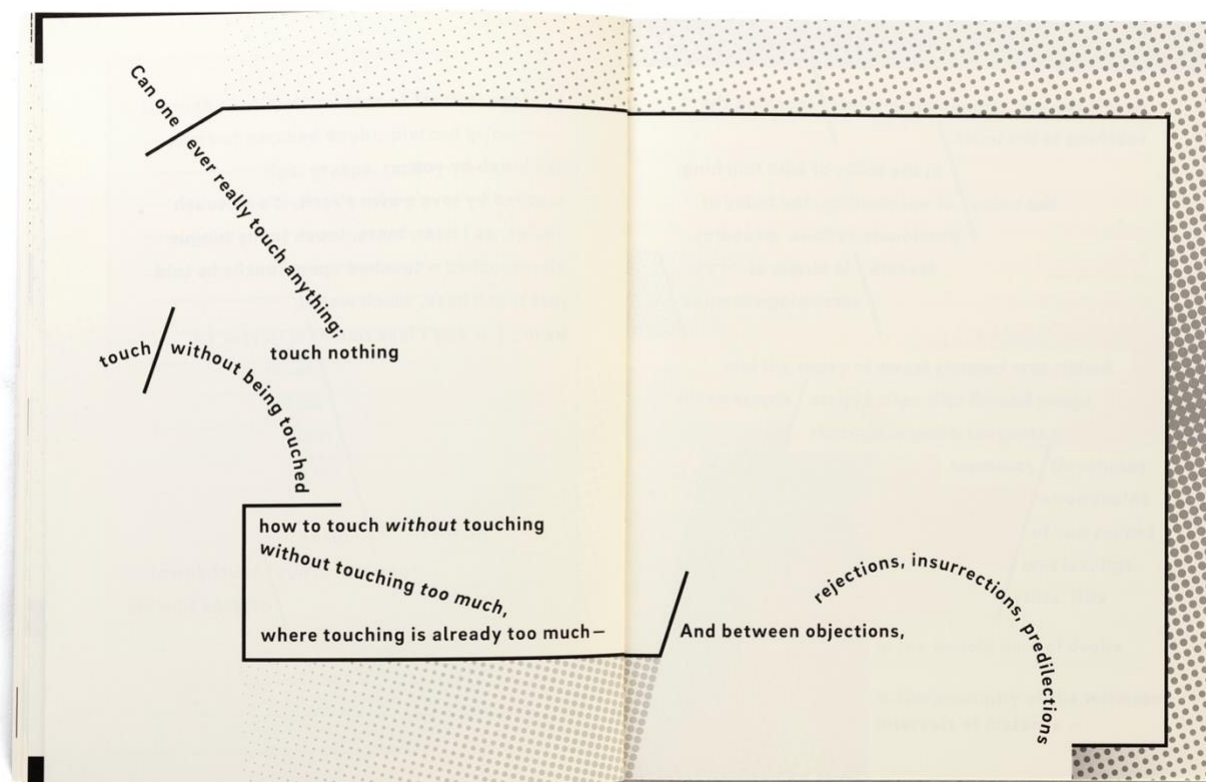


The letter is Opening.

Opening to what constant reader  
whose open wardrobe what cold open  
of which open sea whose open mic just  
open my head and the high windows  
Open this day, this door this open house  
of whispered screams, scrawled struggle,  
open the space of emergence my mouth  
your legs open these idioms, opening up  
and toward the open air hours eros ennui  
audible in the mouth aching arcs soaked  
sea spray semantics open the light n lick  
rimmed slit wet whirr opening through  
rock cleaved seas span sprecht fists  
scents Opening in the gloaming



The second section, *Touching in the Wake of the Virus* (a 'Panddendum') focuses on navigating connections. With a nod to Jaques Derrida's *On Touching*, the poem expresses 'how touch is fundamental to being human', with spreads in which Lehrer plays with the poem's vocal exploration using angles, distinct partitions and connections.



The publication comes to a close with an invitation to read the poems again, this time with an audio component. The reader is presented with a QR code that links to another collaboration – this time with Grammy-award winning composer and musician Frank London. These powerful recordings, delivered with such fervour by Karasick, can be found [here](https://soundcloud.com/earsay/karasick-openings-book-soundtrack).



The carefully produced book is section-sewn and stamped with three different foils on a three-piece hardcover binding. It is offset printed on acid-free ultra-black paper and published by Lavender Ink in New Orleans, Louisiana.



*Ouvert Oeuvre: Openings & Touching in the Wake of the Virus* demonstrates the crafting of a sensory experience and will interest anyone with an appetite for linguistic and typographic experimentation. It evokes the chaos of Covid yet, as the authors say, “The poems foreground language as an organism of hope’.



*touching* soundstreams //  
of fingered fraught /////  
this new era, of throbbing  
sated, *plaise* please play //





Karasick and Lehrer (above) will be celebrating the launch of *Ouvert Oeuvre: Openings* at the New York City based Center for Book Arts on 6 October 2023 at 7pm (EST). The in-person event will feature a performance / reading, followed by a moderated conversation with the duo. There will also be food, drink and a book signing.

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