

PART I  
SPECIAL AMERICA MANIFESTOS

## WHAT IS SPECIAL AMERICA

E-Poetry Conference Proposal / SPECIAL AMERICA / Claire Donato & Jeff T. Johnson

SPECIAL AMERICA is a performative gesture toward viral digital media poetics. Via an exploration of empty rhetoric and ambiguous political speech, its idiom is the slogan. The slogan is directed toward the reader and toward the slogan itself; it is a reflection of the reader and itself—i.e., a screen with all of the reflective, kinetic and representative properties therein.

The project began simply, as an installation of 1” buttons that said SPECIAL AMERICA. The buttons were distributed on pin cards left in public locations in Providence, RI. We wanted to see if people would wear the buttons without knowing what they referred to, and we found that people wore the buttons without knowing anything about SPECIAL AMERICA.

The E-Poetry launch of SPECIAL AMERICA will include artifactual material as well as digital material elements. We are interested in the interaction between these two modes of discourse. All of this will point back to the SPECIAL AMERICA web site, which is currently being developed, and will be maintained subsequent to the conference.

We plan to present SPECIAL AMERICA as a campaign during the E-Poetry conference. By the time we give our presentation (which will carry performative resonances with a stump speech), E-Poetry attendees will already be aware of SPECIAL AMERICA, and their place in it.

What follows is the working mission statement for SPECIAL AMERICA.

## WHAT IS SPECIAL AMERICA

Mission Statement / SPECIAL AMERICA / Claire Donato & Jeff T. Johnson

Neutral speech does not exist; ambiguous speech is all that exists.

Speech cannot be neutral; it is always ambiguous.

SPECIAL AMERICA is a surface. It is a circumstance. SPECIAL AMERICA is a status. It is a status update. SPECIAL AMERICA is viral. It is a social virus.

SPECIAL AMERICA is an analog hack.

Thank you for taking time out of your day to be a SPECIAL AMERICAN. SPECIAL AMERICA is an upstart outreach non-partisan organization located at the intersection of politics, poetry, patriotism and fate. The organization is currently located in Brooklyn, NY, and was founded on the simple principle that, despite religious, racial, sexual, aesthetic, athletic, philosophical or partisan-like differences, all Americans can agree with the following statement: *America is special, and so am I.*

America is special and, therefore, Americans are special. Indeed, America is a special place, and lots of special people live here. For this reason, SPECIAL AMERICA prides itself in representing a country of people who celebrate holidays, experience mood swings, watch television, exercise, bask in the warm, spring rain, and take medicine.

Whether you say it out loud on television or whisper it softly to yourself as you drift off to sleep, you have asserted yourself just by being here. It is important to recognize that America is special in order to recognize that you, as an American are, by default, a SPECIAL AMERICAN. Now, you may be thinking: 'What's so special about America?' That, friends, is what SPECIAL AMERICA is all about.

## WHAT IS SPECIAL AMERICA

Post-performance statement / SPECIAL AMERICA / Claire Donato & Jeff T. Johnson

SPECIAL AMERICA took shape at E-Poetry Buffalo as a parafictional duration performance, accumulative and elaborative. Conference attendees contributed to SPECIAL AMERICA as presentation/performance text and via ongoing discourse, and participated in SPECIAL AMERICA by collecting and affixing buttons to their persons. Findings will be incorporated into future versions of SPECIAL AMERICA. We foresee a *SPECIAL AMERICA READER* with multimedia interface, along with a series of themed digital and live/mediated presentations—e.g., THE MELANCHOLY OF SPECIAL AMERICA, TEACH SPECIAL AMERICA, SPECIAL AMERICA DAYS, NORTH AMERICA SOUTH AMERICA SPECIAL AMERICA, &c.

Twitter has become an important medium for SPECIAL AMERICA's exploration of the slogan in a social media context. Follow us @specialamerica. The SPECIAL AMERICA web site ([specialamerica.org](http://specialamerica.org)) will continue to be developed as an archive provocation, but we clearly see more Twittering on SPECIAL AMERICA's horizon. We would like to further develop SPECIAL AMERICA as a multi-pronged web campaign, incorporating promotional/viral video and podcast programs (e.g., SPECIAL AMERICA Family Ours).

Indeed, the future of SPECIAL AMERICA is vast and glimmering.

PART II  
E-PO 2011 NOTES  
MADE BY JEFF T. JOHNSON

a number of people were here what we're doing there's a packet of course the pdf version we'll have a gallery in a second not able to attend til very late set of performances prduced like dance continuity at the time to either show you can go at 9 to whom this festival is dedicated indeed we are here the irony is not here with us

when he opens the gallery except to point out the Liverpool translations however larger sense again this is a Latin American cyber conference as we go along key contents as is typical when there are events given logistics catered here as possible today tonight and there's a banquet in my heart

tonight the general flow at squeaky wheel location so the James Joyce papers of the later 20<sup>th</sup> century for her reading the last 48 hours and then chris cheek etc. as you can see here do something with the space has its permutations just a little bit of after setup so then the next three days the exceptions of course

DISORIENTATION AND ALGORITHMIC INSTABILITY

WHY AREN'T YOU SAYING ANYTHING

THE CARCASS OF CINEMA

THE SPECTATOR IS ALWAYS WRONG

WOULDN'T A HAMBURGER TASTE GREAT RIGHT NOW

ACTIVATE THE AUDIENCE

WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO READ ALOUD

WHAT ISN'T SPECIAL AMERICA

MEAT ROSE & HAIRS

WHAT IS YOUR DREAM EPROJECT

when you get up close it starts to wobble

rx[ressing the crosshatch fragments badly filtered to look at it thanks for coming by what he'd done in the surface to perform photographs out of gesture can't get close enough renegotiated considering for example blowup hand sense of turgid on procedures playing himself here spilt the commentary of what had doing that earlier bound

SPECIAL AMERICA IS RADICAL APPROPRIATION

epoetics as elsewhere all my dreams are of the net so we're happy robots pathological enunciatory protocols for this there must be otherness at work as noise and invisibility a consumption and cohabitation they are muted in fact even more reacting to my voice reacts to loudness oe digital ambience render culture each rhythmic event is a transient more complex parameters construct & construction revealing to certain processes the ear is not a computer for the next thing as a prepossessing stage to recognize discerning for the happy robot loosing representations to manipulate speech I don't want to control everything time stretch granular synthetic clouds that means the spectrum but not just playing them back instructions for the machines to trigger the samples close reading does not fix the text extend set perform life pre-defined

head in my hands detached for I I becoming detached opening copy familiar death  
gathering not night not ears leather tower bound pros not in years thetic tools to prove  
this morning burnish highlights over the structure solution teething black screen

so rare as to be nearly utopian execute play

buffalo 90s poetics program: practitioners teaching in phd programs, which has been implemented in mfas. how do you use those university resources? make public—syllabi, manuscripts, sound archive. archival function of web. epc. no funding. lagavulin is my favorite of the unblended scotches. how pennsound has been possible. exactly who's downloading. more than billy collins in scale. 40k files. neh turned down for grant b/c not engaged primarily with preservation? no wav standard. mp3. archive/preservation ideology. must be hidden. access somehow violates preservation. attack of the difficult poems: essays and inventions. language reproduction technology. one tech does not replace another. f or x po. what we don't know. democratic space on the web. what poems do in the world reading and thinking interactive value social function not object itself, not individual poem. transcriptive device. more images than letters. cultural memory is becoming digital. alphabetic culture soon to be eclipsed but not replaced. mass literacy and post-literacy. sound recording. 1877 edison first recording of human voice mary had a little lamb. sound is new form of textuality. speech mode and nonspeechmode perception. his maser's voice. reenacts conditions for dialog without presence. gramophonic poem. textual and transcriptive distinction unclear. a certain divergence can be noted. puts the memory in the text. alphabetic writing makes its on marks on language. writing is a storage medium which scores language being stored. language as material not just means. fabric of writing. orality's interior horizon. when you sniff the speech you find language under that. not its fixed char. structures not storage faculty. danny snelson deformation of rosmarie waldrop's reproduction of profiles. creeley dialogues patricia tomaszek. archives to create new work and fundamental to scholarly work. first tweet, best tweet. exemplary interpretation. shift of frame is performance gesture. timbre & voice. accent is new wilderness of poetry performance. available through audio/digital representation. crucial new textual feature. a work of art always exceeds/excludes its material conditions. alphabet and book are technologies. you hear it but it doesn't hear you. as if alive or alive one more time. movies would fill the tv airwaves.

theory of the filed how does e-poetry askact what is poetry when e-poetry gets bigger, not better defined method tool artistic presentation & critical exercise public facing events cultural organization

secret inner verses of nat lang lib frnt seven 8<sup>th</sup> directive mysterious vapor ware lang is unborn within and eveywhere it will die when the within in=s everywhere there is a within we can read and desire language is unfree there lang is no longer unborn there lang dies here and now lang becomes unfree calls upon WITHIN us all to misdirect destroy return within any process that fails to allow lang to remain unborn

PART III  
E-PO 2011 SOURCED POEMS  
MADE BY JEFF T. JOHNSON

WHEN YOU GET UP CLOSE IT STARTS TO WOBBLE  
after cris cheek

expressing the crosshatch fragments  
badly filtered to look at it thanks  
for coming by what he'd done  
in the surface to perform  
photographs out of gesture  
can't get close enough  
renegotiated considering  
for example blowup hand sense  
of turgid on procedures  
playing himself here spilt  
the commentary of what had  
doing that earlier bound

AMERICA IS ALSO WORDS

after Judd Morrissey and Mark Jeffery

The mic is close    close  
Rather than to reference a prior event  
In all kinds of words    consider the distance  
Planted to detect    for this unusual posture  
To have to carry along the bottom    or visiting alien  
Prominent in the evening clear of the tape    look she  
Said feather    do I detect an accent    I forget, in  
It is tempting to become a landscape

NIAGRAA

UNFIXED / HAPPY ROBOT / UNFIXED  
after Sandy Baldwin, Leonardo L.  
Flores, Wilton Azevedo & Joerg  
Piringer

epoetics as elsewhere all my dreams  
are of the net so we're happy robots  
pathological enunciatory protocols  
for this there must be otherness at  
work as noise and invisibility a  
consumption and cohabitation they  
are muted in fact even more reacting  
to my voice reacts to loudness or  
digital ambience render culture each  
rhythmic event is a transient more  
complex parameters construct &  
construction revealing to certain  
processes the ear is not a computer  
for the next thing as a prepossessing  
stage to recognize discerning for the  
happy robot loosing representations  
to manipulate speech I don't want to  
control everything time stretch  
granular synthetic clouds that means  
the spectrum but not just playing  
them back instructions for the  
machines to trigger the samples close  
reading does not fix the text extend  
set perform life pre-defined