

UCSD Visual Arts chairman David Antin to create sky poem over La Jolla beach

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UCSD'S VISUAL ARTS CHAIRMAN DAVID ANTIN TO CREATE SKY POEM OVER LA JOLLA COAST ON SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 3

David Antin, noted poet, critic and performance artist who chairs the Department of Visual Arts at the University of California, San Diego, will create a sky poem over the beach at La Jolla from 1:30-3:30 p.m., Saturday, September 3 (weather permitting, Sunday or Monday if not).

The haiku-styled sky poem will be written by a team of five aerial skytypers who will fly from Palm Springs to execute the letters in the sky. Antin will direct the aerial team from a command post at the La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art.

The poem will consist of 18 to 24 characters per line, and there will be three or four lines of type. Each line will be approximately five miles long, according to Antin.

"Each letter will be about 2,100 feet, which is taller than the Empire State Building at 1,414 feet," he said. "If the weather conditions are right, the poem will be visible over a 10-mile radius. The poem will take the Skytypers people about three minutes to write, and should remain in the sky for approximately the same time."

The aerial literary event will be the second for Antin. The first was executed in May 1987, over the Santa Monica Pier. The logistics of Antin's sky poems began with some "Twilight Zone" overtones.

Antin had contacted Skytypers, Inc., the only skytyper in the country, and one of perhaps five existing skywriters, for price quotes. (Skytypers write in what appears to be a vapor dot matrix formation, as opposed to a vapor script.)

Antin told owner Greg Stinis that he had been fascinated by skywriting since childhood. He recalled an incident when he was about 11 years old, watching a skywriting event at Rockaway Beach, Long Island: "The pilot was writing out 'I.J. Fox....'," Antin began. Stinis finished the sentence, saying, " 'Fine furs'. That was my father."

Antin said he knew, then, it was a match. Stinis, Skytypers' chief, programs the sky messages with an on-board master computer which networks to smaller computers in the other four planes. His vapor formula is a secret, he says, but concedes that parts of his father's original formula have been incorporated into his own. "Even though there are many formulas, and I have tried them all, I like what I have come up with," he said.

The Skytypers were responsible for simultaneously executing the Olympic symbol, five interlocking aerial rings over Los Angeles for the summer Olympics in 1984.

The skypoem project will be sponsored by the La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art, which has received a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts for Art in Public Places. The University of California will also contribute to the event.

Suggested vantage points for the event are: Point Loma's Cabrillo Monument, the top of Mt. Soledad and Torrey Pines Park.

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