

Dia Art Foundation

# Alan Gilbert and Paul Chan

Readings in Contemporary Poetry

Thursday, April 26, 2012, 6:30 pm

## Introduction by Vincent Katz

### Alan Gilbert

Born 1969 in Fargo, North Dakota (same birthplace as Peter Schjeldahl, he notes), Alan Gilbert, received his BA from University of Colorado, Boulder, and his MA and PhD from the SUNY Buffalo. Gilbert is the author of the poetry book, *Late in the Antenna Fields* (Futurepoem, 2011), and a collection of essays and articles entitled *Another Future: Poetry and Art in a Postmodern Twilight* (Wesleyan University Press, 2006). A second book of poems, *The Treatment of Monuments*, is forthcoming from Split Level Texts in the fall of 2012. His poems have appeared in *BOMB*, *Boston Review*, *Chicago Review*, *Denver Quarterly*, *Fence*, *jubilat*, and the *Nation*, among other places. His writings on poetry and art have appeared in a variety of publications, including *Artforum*, the *Believer*, *Bookforum*, *Cabinet*, *Modern Painters*, *Parkett*, and the *Village Voice*. He has contributed catalogue essays and entries to a number of biennials, group shows, and solo exhibitions. He is the recipient of a 2009 New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship in Poetry and a 2006 Creative Capital Foundation Award for Innovative Literature. He lives in Brooklyn.

Alan Gilbert is a contemporary specimen of that exotic but perennially flourishing species known as the poet-critic. From Baudelaire on, poets have felt the need, in the face of inventive visual art and galvanizing social change, to take up the gauntlet of writing, usually in prose, about those phenomena. In the tradition of Apollinaire, Pound, Denby, Baraka, Myles, and others, Gilbert has developed a sophisticated style and approach to the arts, literary and visual, and beyond, whose authoritative voice claims its position in current debates not only about what is new and aesthetically vibrant, but also what is challenging in its cultural viewpoint.

Gilbert's first book of poems was published relatively late, considering his acknowledged presence on the poetry scene. I first heard Gilbert read in 1999 and was immediately impressed. Here was someone who was really a poet — his poems spoke from a place of tradition, of visceral knowledge of forms of poetry, combined with a contemporary sense of sound, rhythm, and surface detail. The poems collected in *Late In The Antenna Fields* — with its striking cover by Paul Chan — ratchet that early accomplishment up several notches. In particular, there is a recognizably Beat sadness that infiltrates the poems, without becoming a deadening refrain. Gilbert's awareness of human folly and suffering is leavened with humor in these poems, lightly inserted as it is into larger, musical, contexts. Each line seems to come from a different place, but miraculously they all add up to one experience. His poem "The World One Summer," concludes,

That's how the dining experience came to be called splatter.  
You said it all felt very post-disco.  
Sitcoms are funnier without any sound.  
But in the quiet of the night I occasionally hear weeping.

I welcome you to the mellifluous, confounding, melancholic, funny world of Alan Gilbert, poet.

### Paul Chan

Paul Chan was born in 1973 in Hong Kong and raised in Omaha, Nebraska. Solo exhibitions and screenings of Chan's work have been organized by the Museum of Modern Art, New York (2003), the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2005), Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston (2005), Blanton Museum of Art, Austin (2006), Portikus, Frankfurt (2006), Serpentine Gallery, London (2007), and Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (2007). His work has also been included in major group exhibitions such as the Carnegie International (2004), Lyon Biennale (2005), Whitney Biennial (2006), Istanbul Bienali (2007), Art in America: 300 Years of Innovation at the Shanghai Museum of Contemporary Art (2007), and Sydney Biennial (2008). Chan has allocated a central role to the figure of the Marquis de Sade in his recent works, including *My laws are my whores* (2008) and *Sade for Sade's Sake* (2009), the latter of which was included in the Venice Biennale that year. He is the author of the artist books' *The Essential and Incomplete Sade for Sade's Sake* (2010) and *Phaedrus Pron* (2010). Chan lives and works in New York.