

Dia Art Foundation
Readings in Contemporary Poetry
Steve Dickison and Julie Ezelle-Patton

Tuesday, February 13, 2018

Dia:Chelsea
535 West 22nd Street, 5th Floor
New York City

Introduction by Vincent Katz

Steve Dickison is the author of *Disposed* (Post-Apollo Press, 2007) and the forthcoming *Zora Neale Hurston's Liberation Music Orchestra* (Omnidawn, 2018). From 2002 to 2006, with David Meltzer, he coedited the music magazine *Shuffle Boil*. Dickison is coeditor of the anthologies *Prison/Culture* (City Lights Foundation, 2009) and *Homage to Etel Adnan* (Post-Apollo Press, 2012). He has also edited and published various works under the imprint Listening Chamber. His work has recently been published in *BAX 2015: Best American Experimental Writing* (Wesleyan University Press, 2016), as well as in the magazines and journals *Amerarcana*, *Aufgabe*, *BOMB*, *Hambone*, *Mandorla*, *pallaksch*, *pallaksch.*, and *Vanitas*. His work has also appeared online at *EOAGH*, *Evening Will Come (the Volta)*, *ONandOnScreen*, and *Open Space* (San Francisco Museum of Modern Art). Dickison lives in San Francisco, where he is director of the Poetry Center at San Francisco State University. He teaches at SFSU and California College of the Arts in Oakland.

Somebody once said, "This guy spends so much time letting other people do their thing that he doesn't get enough time to do his own thing." The same could be said of Steve Dickison. As Director of the Poetry Center, Steve has introduced audiences to countless readers from various backgrounds. That kind of presentation and dedication to the work of others is time- and energy-consuming. There's not always enough left at the end of the day to write, and after that, to publish.

I think a key to Steve's success as a poet comes from the inspiration he draws from other artists — poets and visual artists, sure, but I am thinking primarily of musicians, and within that vast range, primarily musicians of the American vernacular, and here, namely jazz.

A poem from his *Wear You to the Ball* series has the subscript “After Don Cherry” and shows Dickison wafting from the literal to the transfigured, a moth given to and yet apart from the flame:

...ornaments in heaven
an encrustation of bijoux, night jewels
peppering and salting the stretched black spread
catches in the pockets of air in one's cheeks

In two recent texts, *Zora Neale Hurston and Liberation Music Orchestra*, Dickison plays with what the sound of prose can do to poetry. Can it transform it into an analogue of the musics that speak so presently to this poet? He asks questions of the poetry itself, and the other social circumstances surrounding:

Like note/s preceding a downbeat, floating elevator pre-tapshoe sounded not hammered home, “You could be further under”
(from “Liberation Music Orchestra”)

He will take you in a dream to a place where music, despite difficulties, ever dwells. We are very glad he is here tonight in New York City. Please welcome Steve Dickison.

Julie Ezelle-Patton's poetic work emphasizes collaboration, conservation work, curating, improvisation, and literary and musical composition. Her work has appeared in *Critiphoria* as well as the anthologies *BAX 2016: Best American Experimental Writing* (Wesleyan University Press, 2017), *Big Energy Poets: Ecopoetry Thinks Climate Change* (BlazeVOX, 2017), *What I Say: Innovative Poetry by Black Writers in America* (University of Alabama Press, 2015), and *I'll Drown My Book: Conceptual Writing by Women* (Les Figues, 2012). She has performed in music, literary, and art festivals and venues in the United States and abroad. Patton is the author of *Teething on Type* (Rodent Press, 1996), “A Garden per Verse (or What Else Do You Expect from Dirt?)” (*Hat*, 1999), *Notes for Some (Nominally) Awake* (Portable Press at Yo-Yo Labs, 2007), “Using Blue to Get Black” (Crayon, 2008), and the forthcoming works *B* (Tender Buttons Press) and *Writing with Crooked Ink* (Belladonna). *The Building by the Side of the Road* (About Place Journal, 2012)

chronicles Ezelle-Patton's adventures creating Let It Bee Ark Hives, an artist housing and conservation project based in her hometown, Cleveland.

Julie Ezelle-Patton is hard to describe. She moves faster than you can realize. I like receiving communications from her, as I see that everything she does is improvised, at a high level of play. Everything is intentional; nothing is taken for granted, ever. And that is inspiring. It makes you, the audience, energized, wanting to participate, in life, in language, with the same *joie de vivre* she perennially exhibits.

The trick is, while Julie makes it seem natural, even easy, it is very complicated. To seem this free depends on a lifetime of practice and research. Julie has a unique way of combining European and African traditions. Of course, Jazz already is a synthesis of traditions. But Julie finds the intersection of a Modernist Dada-influenced sensibility with the most inventive wordplay edge of jazz artists.

Julie is an accomplished visual artist and likes to work with words in images in a 21st Century version of Concrete Poetry. I am curious as to just how she will translate this visual work to the stage, as she recycles parts of words, limbs if you will, into other words. There is no one way to read one of Julie's visual poems, yet the meanings are very clear.

Here's one reading of her poem *ID*:

My be loved country - call police? - just ice? - good nest & mercy mer sea - sum - id

Finally, I would like to highlight Julie's political nature. It is present in everything she writes and does; her gift is to be light, not heavy, while always saying what needs to be said. Julie will be joined by Paul Van Curen on guitar. Please welcome Julie and Paul.