

Dia Art Foundation
Readings in Contemporary Poetry
Adam Fitzgerald and Simone White

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Dia:Chelsea
535 West 22nd Street, 5th Floor
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Introduction by Vincent Katz

Simone White received her MFA from the New School. She is the author of *House Envy of All the World* (Factory School/Heretical Texts, 2010), *Unrest* (Ugly Duckling Presse, 2013), and the collection *Of Being Dispersed* (Futurepoem Books, 2016). She lives in New York, where she is Program Director at The Poetry Project.

Simone White's poetry is rooted in various kinds of knowledge, but she never preaches from poetry's sacred pulpit. Rather, she allows, she intimates. She also can be up front, in your face, it's just that details are subsumed into a larger flux, the flux of languages, ancient, contemporary, and beyond.

"Then I begin to hear the call of Los Angeles," the first piece in *Of Being Dispersed*, is formal, in six-line stanzas, it seems as though it might be autobiographical (it refers to "my husband," "my papa," "Voices of the dead," which the narrator does not "deal in," and "an old friend" in West Hollywood). But it is the phraseology that starts to stick in one's memory — "where dead negroes can't get in your house" "Los Angeles of the hidden garden, of the carved-up / starlet, acres of strange dick" — and you come away in a multitude of places: not just Los Angeles, not just a poem, not just biography, not just.

I love White's love of the instrument — this thing we are all using daily, contributing to, in different ways, at different times. She continually traces (one wants to say "caresses") words — from Greek, Latin, French, to English, to American. Of course, the "Dispersed" of her title comes from the Greek word *diaspora*, and there is a deep humanity beneath the humor and occasional bile these texts embody.

There is bright contemporaneity to White's poetry, and every word has specific weight. Her poetry is pointed and round, and it is for our time. Please join me in welcoming Simone White to Dia.

Adam Fitzgerald received an MFA from Columbia University. His debut collection of poems, *The Late Parade*, was published by Liveright in 2013; his second collection, *George Washington*, also from Liveright, appeared earlier this year. Fitzgerald organizes The Home

School, a biannual poetry & arts conference for poets. He teaches creative writing and literature at Rutgers University, the New School, and NYU. He lives in New York City.

Adam Fitzgerald is prolific. His lines seem to race across the page, yet there is verbal density everywhere along the way. He is also restless. He loves form, and yet is equally enamored of moving. One gets the sense he is impatient, not wanting to be tied down, and the reader — at the least the contemporary, urban-identifying, reader — probably shares Fitzgerald's impatience and is thus gratified by his changeability.

Critics have focused on the detritus of contemporary life one finds in such recent Fitzgerald poems as "The Remake," with its roll call of things and people that have "come back": *Jurassic Park*, the Clintons and the Bushes, LL Cool J, Doc Martens, etc., and "Eternal September," which is a list that mashes up kitsch, the blues, and critical theory, among other things. Then there's "Here Comes the Hotstepper," which begins "Unlike my older brother, I generally enjoyed the nineties."

But in my opinion, these details, important as they are, are not the main deal of Fitzgerald's poetry. He is not simply "commenting" on social disfunctionality, and he is certainly not wallowing in the past, or re-imagining it as a golden age. Take a poem such as "Big Data," which contains the lines:

Plywood dentures unguilate
trinal outliers. Oceanic
sensibilities edify and expunge
crisp figments. Tracklayers
shuffle.

These lines, I would argue, are much more typical of Fitzgerald's modus operandi, i.e. his willingness to let language be his guide. His is an athletic thrusting, a phrase I once used to describe the poems of a very different poet, James Merrill. We tend to associate Fitzgerald's poetry with the New York School, and that is right, because those poets realized that silly-seeming wordscapes actually contain all seriousness, all glee, all joy, and all tragedy.

No, we must not take Fitzgerald's poetry to be the result of simple bouts of observation, or research. His is rather an adventure in poetry, and in it, we can find, not only Fitzgerald's own fantasies, interests, and hopes, but our own as well. Please join me in welcoming Adam Fitzgerald to Dia.