

Dia Art Foundation
Readings in Contemporary Poetry
Christine Kanownik and Ron Horning

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

Introduction by Vincent Katz

Christine Kanownik is the author of the chapbook *We Are Now Beginning to Act Wildly* (Diez Press, 2012) and the collection *King of Pain* (Monk Books, 2016). Her poetry can or will be found at *EOAGH*, *Fence*, *Huffington Post*, *jubilat*, and *Poetry Crush*, among others. She lives and works in New York City.

In her poem, "Practical Magic," Christine Kanownik asks, "can I, like the sea, be both obscure and adored?" We, as readers, want to answer, "Yes," and so we do. Her admirable ambition, to be both huge and invisible, is worked out in her poetics. Her lines appear gracefully, we are able to follow her passages, and yet, her poetry is even more capacious than her stated ambition.

Her poems feel unpretentious, like someone thinking aloud, but there is surprising specificity in her language and unexpected turns of thought. An air of depression creeps in occasionally, but it's almost always a smokescreen. The poet brings it up as an emblem of big city life only to knock it down by means of another of urbanity's tropes: the ability to push ahead regardless. One poem begins:

the week has passed again
I'll ask someone who knows
and it will be a day, again
without strife

The comma after the word "day" significantly shifts the empathy in this passage toward continuing, the "again" taking on an extra emphasis. Elsewhere, Kanownik is able to communicate something essential about being human in a poem ostensibly about "Fencing." As she puts it, "knowing isn't / the point".

Yet Christine Kanownik knows a lot more than she lets on in her laconic lines. She knows "Miracles aren't all white doves." She knows that music doesn't come from a computer. I am excited to see where she takes her poetry and us. Please welcome Christine Kanownik.

Born in Ohio, **Ron Horning** grew up in Peru and Brazil and, after moving to New York City, worked as a bookshop clerk, a short-order cook, an advertising copywriter, a freelance journalist, and a financial editor and analyst. His poems have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *Vanitas*, and *The Hat*, and he's written prose for *Aperture*, *The Village Voice*, *LA Weekly*, *index*, and *The Brooklyn Rail*. From 2001 to 2005 he edited the poetry newsletter *I Saw Johnny Yesterday*. In 2014, *Color Treasury* published a trio of poems titled *From Philip Drunk to Philip Sober*. In 2016, *Untitled* brought out a collection of three more poems, titled *Blind Date*. Horning lives with his wife, the artist Anna West, in Beacon, New York.

Ron Horning's poems have a visual solidity on the page that their aural adventures do their devilish best to subvert. He regularly composes multiple long-lined stanzas, each divided into a mere handful of sentences, making excerpting from them a sweat-inducing dare to the critic or commentator. They seem like long, involved, sentences in prose, but, instead of dutifully conveying the listener to a predicted destination, they wind and wend, and eventually end, but the trip, not to mention interstices encountered en route, ramifies and results in an experience more than exponentially delightful.

Horning has also written short, short-lined, poems, but the long, limber, limb seems his native precinct. However, in a recent series, from which he'll be reading tonight, Horning pulls back from his prolific profusion to play word games in a more focused zone. "October 15" is in rhyming couplets, beginning:

A new bird has been discovered on the edge of the marsh.
Tomorrow morning the Secretary General will issue a harsh
Protest to the following nations. Talk about fun:
Glynis Everhard and her pet rattler enjoy the sun.

So there is still the hopping about: we'll never know which nations. Whether his poems take the form of travelogues, memoirs, or interior monologues, Horning's linguistic precision is razor-sharp. We always feel we are left hanging — at the end of a line or poem — at the exact syllable intended by the poet.

Geographic realities — New York, San Francisco, Ohio, Greece — make their presence felt in Horning's work, and there is a film-noir-ish ambience hanging over some of the writing. But more than anything, it is the writer's conscience, his devotion to manipulating narrative and blurring generic distinctions, that remains in one's head, long after the last limo has departed. Please welcome Ron Horning to Dia.