

Dia Art Foundation

Amy King and Alan Davies

Readings in Contemporary Poetry

Tuesday, December 8, 2015, 6:30 pm

Introduction by Vincent Katz

Amy King is the author of the poetry collections *Antidotes for an Alibi* (Blazevox, 2005), *I'm the Man Who Loves You* (Blazevox, 2007), and *Slaves to do These Things* (Blazevox, 2009). Her chapbooks include *The People Instruments* (Pavement Saw Press, 2002), *The Citizen's Dilemma* (2003), *The Good Campaign* (2006), and *Kiss Me with the Mouth of Your Country* (Dusie Press, 2007). Her 2011 collection *I Want to Make You Safe* (Litmus Press) was named one of the best poetry books of the year by the *Boston Globe*. King teaches creative writing at SUNY Nassau Community College and serves on the executive board of VIDA: Women in Literary Arts. In 2015, King received the Women's National Book Association Award, joining the ranks of Pearl Buck, Rachel Carson, and Eleanor Roosevelt.

The reader of Amy King's poetry is excited by an almost giddy impulsivity in her metric. One gets carried off by such lines as:

And in the joys we implode with,
elbows favor clapping thunder,
the animal languages,
a hot bed at 2 am,
the genitals' gait unabated,
bullets that loosen their tune...

But if one is justified in feeling swept off one's feet, one should not neglect to finish reading this sentence, which concludes:

...songs that insist on knowing,
and men who watch their children go
for the rain to begin her ode.

A certain breathlessness, a breathiness, dissolves into quite another tone and mode. It is slowed down. One wants to call it melancholic.

She knows how to handle the heft of the long poem. Her lines activate with presence that is specific, each time, to the circumstance.

A poem is a hat with no thumbs

She writes, and we believe her. Please help me welcome Amy King to Dia.

"**Alan Davies** was spawned on the Canadian prairies / and lived in various spots across that country through high school. Then / college in Massachusetts / a year in Boulder / and final removal to New York City. He learned a great deal from the company of John Wieners. He is the author of a bunch of books / including *Active 24 Hours* (Roof Books) / *Name* (1986, This Press) / *Signage* (Essays, Roof Books) / *Candor* / *Rave* (1994, Roof Books) / *Raw War / ODES & fragments* (2013, ellipsis press). In addition to poetry / Alan writes literary criticism / book reviews / critical theory / plays / songs / and aphorisms. He has just completed a libretto called *Guantanamo-Ghraib*."

Speech is a matter of
choice, language of
necessity.

Writes Alan Davies in his 1986 book NAME.

In short stanzas, he is shifting gears, and registers. But all his output registers as poetry. Nothing here has the feeling of appropriation, even if it were appropriated.

The poem continues:

Off the top of my head I
would say that you
don't

understand this. But I
take it from my head
that you do.

There is a challenge, and then the challenge is challenged. Davies keeps bringing the poem down, to earth, to land where sounds are rough and people glum. In this, his poetry is humanist, activates contemplation, to be followed by action. His poetry is very physical.

Sounds accrue, meanings shaft. Occasional lyricism slips in, as in this short piece from *ODES & fragments*:

it ends
and then the wind
begins

again

to bend

against the alder tripping
lures of light

Prepare to enjoy the active, meditative world of Alan Davies!