

Dia Art Foundation

# Anne Waldman and Lee Ann Brown

Readings in Contemporary Poetry

Thursday, February 23, 2012, 6:30 pm

Introduction by Vincent Katz

## Lee Ann Brown

Lee Ann Brown was born on October 11, 1963, in Saitama prefecture on the outskirts of Tokyo, at Johnson Airbase. She grew up in Charlotte, North Carolina, with a couple of years in Heilbronn, Germany. She received a BA in Women's Studies and American & English Literature from Brown University in 1987 and an MFA from Brown in 1993. She is the founding editor of Tender Buttons books and the author of *Polyverse* (Sun & Moon, 1999) and *The Sleep That Changed Everything* (Wesleyan, 2003). She just received the Fence Modern Poets Series Prize for her book *In The Laurels, Caught*, the first installment of a multi-book project called *NC Ode*.

A child of schools, and tales out of school, Lee Ann Brown comes from a Language-y approach to text, though always with a specifically playful cadence. As she made plain in an early poem: "Words // weren't enough for her. // She often made / high cat cries / and danced hard / on the blue carpet." Sexual politics dance hard with conceptual high jinks in her poems. Particular details of lives, at times far from the cultural spotlight (which, of course, makes them culturally relevant), leaven the stew, as in her ballad, "She Sings To The Little Animals On Her Bed." Brown relies on a collage of voices — friends, colleagues, lovers, fellow travelers — poets or those suffused by poetry. Collaborations and quotes, references, reverences, fill her pages, so much so that one is charmed by her deferences, combined as they are with palpable ambition for poetry's possibility. Lee Ann Brown's poetry makes a living pact between desire and document, and it is always a pleasure to hear her voice. Please welcome Lee Ann Brown to Dia.

## Anne Waldman

### IN HER OWN WORDS:

was conceived on the 4th of July 1945 before her father took off from Fort Bragg to Germany. Her parents were on 47 Macdougall Street, Greenwich Village, where Anne grew up and continues to live in NYC. She went to public schools and to Friends Seminary and then Bennington College, where she got a BA in Literature in 1966. She made it out to the Berkeley Poetry Conference in the summer of 1965 while still an undergrad & heard & met Olson, Duncan, Dorn, Ginsberg, Lenore Kandel et al. She co-founded *Angel Hair Magazine & Books* with Lewis Warsh and was the editor of *SILo* mag at Bennington 1965-1966, which published Stan Brakhage, Robert Kelly, Alain Robbe-Grillet, and others. She took a Vow at Berkeley to help create this kind of vital poetics environment...& to include more women & diversity in the mix! And she took a vow to cultural activism. Frank O'Hara told her to come and work at MoMA as a volunteer but she could not afford to, alas...!!! And then almost immediately she was hired as assistant Director at the newly forming Poetry Project in 1966. She worked there over a decade...& within that time frame founded with Allen Ginsberg and Diane di Prima *The Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics* program at Naropa University in Boulder, Colorado, where she is still a core faculty member and Artistic Director of the Summer Writing Program.

What is remarkable about Anne Waldman's poetry is how she has maintained her voice throughout relentless permutations. A classic and perhaps ultimate, in our age at least, shape-shifter, she has moved from clear, daily poems of a young person to the glamorous full-tilt performer as *Fast Speaking Woman* (the title of her 1975 *City Lights* book) to investigator/documenter of cultural situations in an incantatory, ritualistic, experiential set of modes that almost always includes performative elements. She has often collaborated — with dancers and musicians but also with visual artists and with other poets. I love the plain talk and open-book quality of her early poems, and I think it's important to recall poems like "Giant Night," which tell of her interior New York City life, while we are experiencing her more recent, battle-inflected work. Waldman is the author of numerous books, several in the Penguin Poets series. In 2009's *Manatee/Humanity* (Penguin), Waldman's poetry reaches a fever pitch of experimental poetics, called into play to deal with, to come to terms with, to do battle with, one of many egregious failures of the human race to act with responsibility and humility. Visually (and sonically) the text ranges from full-page blocks to centered strands; in one section simultaneous texts in different fonts parallel each other down the page. In 2011, Coffee House Press published *The Iovis Trilogy: Colors In The Mechanism Of Concealment*. At

1009 pages, it feels just right. *The Iovis Trilogy* makes clear Waldman's commitment to the Shambhala concept of being a warrior in the world. Instead of passively bemoaning the entrenched state of human affairs, or endlessly trying to escape from it, in this epic Waldman confronts history and the present, and particularly the male-centric nature of that history, in a series of incantations and spells, replete with collaged elements, demonstrating her central position in a lineage of modern epic poets, including Pound, Olson and William Carlos Williams, whose epic *Paterson* made such brilliant use of collage technique. Waldman, too, encompasses multitudes, as letters and other texts permeate her thriving ocean of engagement. Throughout it all, she manages to retain vestiges of the girl's voice with which she began this journey. We are very happy that Anne will be joined tonight by cellist Ha-Yang Kim.

### **Ha-Yang Kim**

Born in Seoul, Korea, Ha-Yang Kim is a composer, cellist, and improviser, who has performed Balinese gamelan music, studied Karnatic music, and has worked with Meredith Monk, Cecil Taylor, John Zorn, Christian Wolff, Lee Hyla, Kronos Quartet, Evan Ziporyn, Louis Andriessen, Alvin Lucier, and Elliott Sharp, among others. Ms. Kim has been an Artist-in-Residence at ISSUE Project Room and at numerous universities and colleges in the US and Europe. *Ama*, a CD of her own compositions is available from Zorn's Tzadik label. Currently, she is preparing releases of her music for several labels, and in the Fall, JACK Quartet will perform and record her 40-minute work, *Threadsuns*.

Please help me in welcoming Anne Waldman and Ha-Yang Kim to Dia.