

Dia Art Foundation

Basil King and Gregoire Pam Dick

Readings in Contemporary Poetry

Tuesday, February 10, 2015, 6:30 pm

Introduction by Vincent Katz

Gregoire Pam Dick (aka Mina Pam Dick, Jake Pam Dick, et al.) (aka Hildebrand Pam Dick, Nico Pam Dick et al.) is a writer, artist and philosopher living in New York City. She's a native New Yorker. She received a BA from Yale and an MFA in Painting as well as an MA in Philosophy from the University of Minnesota. Her writing has appeared in *Aufgabe*, *BOMB*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, and; her philosophical work has appeared in a collection published by the International Wittgenstein Symposium (Kirchberg am Wechsel, Austria). Dick is the author of *METAPHYSICAL LICKS* (BookThug, 2014) and *DELINQUENT* (Futurepoem, 2009).

Gregoire Pam Dick has carved out a space in contemporary writing where none was before. The usual reference points, even those suggested by her own predilections, are not useful, are misleading, unless being misled might be considered useful in itself. Instead of being all those things, Dick's writing is none of them. Significantly, it subverts the usual strictures of prose, while drinking wholeheartedly from the font of poetry. The proof is in the sound, and it is in there, that mess of all the above, that her voice, against even its own intentions perhaps, emerges.

Pay attention to the ludic quality in this passage, how accurate it is as criticism, and yet how it touches on names without becoming referential. It ends up being its own commentary on itself:

No future is punk, no wave is past! The no's important. The idea of the continual yes is a vapid idea. Yes dies into no, no revives as yes. Like chance contortions, Mars bars of music, teenage Jesus and the jerking off, our DNA, no-yes New York — how they come back! If you let them.

Please help me welcome Gregoire Pam Dick to Dia.

Born in England before World War II, **Basil King** sailed back with his mother during the war and has written about being bombed and surviving on a life boat. Later, as a teenager in Detroit, interested in art, he heard someone mention Black Mountain College and headed there himself. He studied with many of the luminaries at the college, including Charles Olson, about whom he has also written. King has been painting for the last six decades. He began to write in the 1980s and is now actively practicing both arts.

His books include *Identity* (2000), *Warp Spasm* (2001), *Mirage: A Poem in 22 Sections* (2003), *77 Beasts/Basil King's Bestiary* (2007), *Learning to Draw/A History* (2011), and, most recently, *The Spoken Word/The Painted Hand* (2014). In 2010 he exhibited his visual art at Poets House in New York. He is also the subject and narrator of a 2012 film, *Basil King: Mirage*, by the artists Nicole Peyrafitte and Miles Joris-Peyrafitte. In November 2014, he narrated *Black Mountain Songs*, including a few of his poems, as part of the BAM Next Wave Festival.

Robert Rauschenberg famously stated he worked in the gap between art and life. Basil King, another Black Mountain College attendee, works constantly in life and constantly in art, especially the life of art, the history of art he has seen or which resides in recent memory. He is a spokesman, and also an observer. A participant and a commentator. And significantly, he is a painter and a writer.

King's writing lightly surfs above the surface of genre, neither poetry nor prose, or both.

He is somehow able to slip poetry into his prose remembrances, which are more than remembrances. They are aesthetics, philosophy, social history. And the poetry seems well at ease, shoulder to shoulder with the prose. "From the abstract to the figure /," he writes, "From the figure to the abstract // It is one thing to survive / It is another to prevail".

King learned abstract at Black Mountain, lived abstract in New York City, then slowly, became attracted, in his art, to the figure. So he must see them going back and forth, not in a straight line. He survived, that is lived, and watched at close quarters some who would prevail. King himself is prevailing now, if to prevail means to have one's work recognized for continued and growing relevance to ever-younger generations.

But not if it means to be victorious, to prove more powerful than the opposing forces. "The victor is not pride, and the victor is not," wrote Kerouac, and King knows the truth of those words.

When I first met Basil King, and Martha King, on the occasion of an exhibition on Black Mountain College in Madrid, the empathy was instantaneous. We had a few beers in a pub called La Granja, and we were immediately back downtown. I've argued elsewhere that

Basil King is a feminist, a humanist, an empathist, and for that, a unique artist in our midst.

Please join me in welcoming Basil King to Dia.