

Dia Art Foundation

# Charles Borkhuis and Ariana Reines

Readings in Contemporary Poetry

Tuesday, May 12, 2014, 6:30 pm

## Introduction by Vincent Katz

### Charles Borkhuis

Charles Borkhuis is a poet, essayist and award-winning playwright. His books of poems include *Alpha Ruins* (Bucknell U., 2000), *Savoir-fear* (Meeting Eyes Bindery, 2003), *Afterimage* (chax, 2006), and *Disappearing Acts* (chax, 2014). His radio play *The Sound Of Fear Clapping* was aired over WNYC. He is the former editor of *Theater:Ex* magazine, an experimental theater/performance publication, and he was for 15 years curator of the Segue Foundation poetry reading series. His plays *Barely There*, *Present Tense*, and *Flipper* were produced in New York in 2013.

Some of Charles Borkhuis's mellifluous ponderings hark back to an earlier century, as in his *Dinner With Franz*, published in 1998, which begins, "his body as a disappearing act // false sky inside a room / of changing dimensions // . . . where the stitches . . . open // onto an abyss between dinner // and dissolution . . ."

Elsewhere, Borkhuis riffs off film-noir genre language, toughing it up with a street bravado the genre often hints at but remains too timid to achieve. In "Beyond Recall," from *Savoir-Fear*, he writes:

I was piecing my face together  
from the photo shop  
. . .  
I was femming my butch  
with daisies protruding from my skull  
. . .

Humor matches wits with eroticism, natch, in many of the *savoir-fear* poems: "cheery christmas video porn / sticks all the presents in the right places" but something bigger is lurking here too, something that had been hinted at in *Dinner With Franz*: "even on firm ground eating a ham sandwich / with your eyes open there is this / missing link to leap / from one 'I love you' to the next" (both quotes from the poem "Holiday").

Charles will be opening his reading by playing the first section from a radio play titled *Foreign Bodies* that was produced for NPR and aired over WBGO radio as part of the Jazz Plays series. The play was directed by Juanita Rockwell, and the performers are: Bill Raymond, Francesca Rizzo, Quinn Raymond, and Dan Southern. Sit back, relax, and enter the Theater of the Mind's Eye.

### Ariana Reines

Ariana Reines is author of *The Cow* (2006), *Coeur de Lion* (first published 2007; second edition 2011), and *Mercury* (2011), all published by Fence Books. Her play *Telephone* was presented at the Cherry Lane Theatre in February, 2009, and won two Obie awards. In 2009, Reines became Roberta C. Holloway Lecturer in Poetry at the University of California at Berkeley.

Ariana's poetry is deceptive. Sometimes she seems to just be talking, and a lot of that is talking trash — about herself, her boyfriend, other people. There are poems of invective that follow a tradition going back at least as far as Archilochus. But then she has these sweeter, more un-defended moments, such as the opening to her poem "Salve":

Saint Clare had flaxen hair  
They keep in a glass boat in Italy.  
Keats had hair that is also in Italy.  
Saint Joan's hair was shorn. She wore a hat of flames.

Then Ariana has transformational moments that remind one of the early rants of Patti Smith channeling Rimbaud — the feeling that suffering and doing every possibly vulgar thing to one's body will result in spiritual transcendence. Simultaneously, Ariana's poetry is outsourced: her accomplishment is pilfering from Ashbery, Burroughs, Celan, Cixous, Proust, Rilke, Stein, etc., and making it sound like Reines.

Ariana has scoured the depths, and that has earned her a place in a certain constellation. As Allen Ginsberg wrote, when Kerouac was jealous of his ecstasis, "It's hard to eat shit and not have visions." But there is another stream in Ariana's writing, particularly in *Mercury*, and it may be there, after a while, she is headed. In "0," a poem about her grandparents and mother, she writes, "Life I love in me / I do / You / Luster of this world that fills me / I complete my own picture by knowing how to stay in the frame" (from "0" in *Mercury*, p. 233). Ariana Reines is going places, and tonight we get to follow along. Please welcome her to Dia.