

Dia Art Foundation

Kostas Anagnopoulos and Charles North

Readings in Contemporary Poetry

Tuesday, February 9, 2016, 6:30 pm

Introduction by Vincent Katz

Kostas Anagnopoulos was born and raised on the West Side of Chicago. His mother was a seamstress and his father was the editor of a Greek-American leftist newspaper. Anagnopoulos is the founder and editor of Insurance Editions. He has published six chapbooks, including *Irritant* (Ugly Duckling Presse, 2007), *Various Sex Acts* (Insurance Editions, 2008), *Some of my Reasons* (Insurance Editions, 2013), and *Night Loop* (Insurance Editions, 2015) and a book titled *Moving Blanket* (Ugly Duckling Presse, 2010). Insurance Editions will publish *What Works*, his latest chapbook, in early 2016. He lives in Jackson Heights, New York, with his husband and daughter.

Kostas Anagnopoulos' poems seem like trains of thought. They might be interior dialogues; they certainly don't feel like bits of overheard dialogue, or scraps from daily life, the tried and true matter of many an earnest scrivener. Kostas is able to reel it out, which I appreciate, as that is not easy to do, connect one line to the next, an excellent interlocutor no doubt. And he seems to favor life, if there is a choice, which I also appreciate. For example, he writes,

That's poetry for you
Put it away now and listen to me
I've taken care of everything
We won't dwell on the future
It's misleading, plain wrong
And there's more where that will come from
(from "Irritant")

I like Kostas best when he limits himself to a more restricted framework than the multi-section poem allows. Some of his poems are humorous, some are mysterious, some are humorous and mysterious. Most of all, they give the impression of an actual person, but one you can't quite pin down. That impression of actuality is heightened by the dedications some of his poems receive. One wonders who these lucky people are, what marvelous things they did to deserve being the dedicatees of such marvelous poems. The poems themselves certainly won't tell us. There's a feeling of secret knowledge in them too. For the rest of us, we just get words, like:

We must be here for a reason
Other than money
No embellishment, no ornamentation
Here for everyone and no one
All and nothing
My title is Mr. or something
Because there are no other options
We must have emptiness

And we, because we love poetry's sublunary mystery, must have Kostas Anagnopoulos. Please help me welcome him to Dia.

Charles North is the author of fifteen books of poems and prose, including *The Year of the Olive Oil*, *The Nearness of the Way You Look Tonight*, *Cadenza*, *Complete Lineups*, and *What It Is Like: New and Selected Poems* (Turtle Point Press/Hanging Loose Press, 2011). With James Schuyler, North edited *Broadway: A Poets and Painters Anthology* (Swollen Magpie Press, 1979) and *Broadway 2: A Poets and Painters Anthology* (Hanging Loose Press, 1989). North has been Poet-in-Residence at Pace University, New York, since 1997. He lives and works in New York City.

Charles North is one of the most delightfully erudite poets you will come across. Paradoxically, though, his language and frames of reference are eminently accessible. What makes his poetry particular and stirring is his elegant play with the English language itself. That, above all, is the over-riding subject of his work.

One of North's early poems is titled "A Few Facts About Me," but it would be a rash reader or listener who would take the words that follow at face value:

I am moved often, and easily
without knowing why or finding it appropriate
to be a consequence of somebody else's unfathomable will.

That there is also a romantic strain in North's poetry is not at odds with his more conceptual bent. On the contrary, this strain exists in sympathy with, because of, one is tempted to say, the bravado of the poet's handling of syntax, the bold paths he cuts and lanes he manicures in the gardens of his poetic making.

North is obsessive about words, how they are used, and we are the beneficiaries. In "Eye Reflecting the Gold of Fall," he writes:

Some words ("like 'fuck'") require objects some of the time;
others
Are content to be themselves, suspended like a chair,
Covered in green ink.

His most recent poems, some of which he may be reading tonight, show North's facility reaching ever-more-dazzling speeds. "The poetry is too much with us," he writes. Then counters it with, "You can't say that." But we can. It is. Which is why we are so excited to welcome Charles North to Dia.