

ARTIST'S BOOKS

PAUL CHAN: FOR FONTS SAKE

Nicola Trezzi

NICOLA TREZZI: *Over the last two years you have made four publications: Sade for Fonts Sake, The Essential and Incomplete Sade For Sade's Sake, Waiting for Godot in New Orleans: A Field Guide, and Phaedrus Pron. The first two are related to your project presented at the Venice Biennale and at Greene Naftali in 2009. The third documents your project presented in New Orleans with Creative Time in 2007 and the fourth is an homage to Plato written with a font from Sade for Fonts Sake. Tell us about these projects and Badlands Unlimited.*

Paul Chan: Badlands Unlimited is an experiment in the form of an independent publishing house. We specialize in publishing art books in an expanded field. What this means is that, with the advent of electronic books (e-books), I wanted a way to think anew the relationship between texts and images within the reading experience, and how this new format can

exist alongside paper books to enable other kinds of engagements and pleasures. We launched in 2010. The first books are based on my work and are published as both e-books and paper books. And in the case of *Godot*, the hardcover book was published by Creative Time, while the e-book version is being co-published by Badlands and Creative Time. The paper books are available at bookshops and the e-books are available for the Apple iPad, Amazon Kindle and other e-readers. In 2011 we'll have a new season of books by other artists and writers who are also interested in making books in an expanded field.

NT: *Samuel Beckett, the Marquis de Sade and Plato are male figures who are not artists but have been influencing many artists, philosophers and movie directors like Pier Paolo Pasolini, who appears in an animated version in your work My Birds...Trash...the Future*

(2004), together with Beckett. Why this choice?

PC: It wasn't a choice. They choose you.

NT: *It seems you are substituting the creation and production of objects (works of art) with other types of commodities that follow a different channel of distribution. Why?*

PC: It's more a matter of following where the object wants to go. What is being made with Badlands belong elsewhere: not in exhibition places but in places where books naturally go. The challenge though is to make them in such a way that once they go where books are supposed to belong, they naturally reveal themselves as what they always were: books that don't belong with other books.

NT: *Do you believe in the figure of the artist as an intellectual?*

PC: I don't know if I believe in the figure of the artist as an intel-



Cover of Paul Chan's *Phaedrus Pron*. Photo: Mathieu Malouf.

lectual. But I know the intellect is enlarged only when it comes across something that extends to the point of breaking the very idea of intelligibility, which is the fundamental province of art.

NT: *What is the role of your portal The National Philistine (www.nationalphilistine.com) in your editorial projects?*

PC: I don't know what role *National Philistine* plays. It's a good question and I hope to figure it out in the not-too-distant future.

AMSTERDAM

KUNSTVEREIN: GUERRILLA BRANDING

Maxine Kopsa

In 2009, independent curators Maxine Kopsa and Krist Gruijthuijsen co-founded Kunstverein, a non-profit curatorial organization based in Amsterdam. Kunstverein is a showcase for exhibitions, lectures and presentations, as well as an independent publishing house with branches in New York and Milan. Maxine Kopsa tells us about the organization.

Maxine Kopsa: Kunstverein was started by Krist Gruijthuijsen and myself as a reaction to the current cultural climate in Amsterdam. There was a time when this need was far less distinct, when Amsterdam appeared almost saturated. The situation has since changed, quite drastically shifting Amsterdam from a city where production and support was rampant to one

where it seemed on the verge of neglect. Put differently, Kunstverein arose out of a personal and positive need as well as a sense of necessity to fill gaps and initiate or excite discourse.

By way of its untraditional makeup, one free from regular institutional structures, Kunstverein is able to actively question conventional exhibition models. It's a place where shows, presentations and lectures are largely performative in nature. Kunstverein Publishing, which includes its own in-house magazine, *Ginger&Piss*, is a key part of Kunstverein's activities. Books available in Kunstverein's Store For Independent Publishing are directly connected to projects on view. Kunstverein as a whole is thus a space of production, and, importantly, also the instigator of

a new community. With a membership system in place, Kunstverein speaks directly to its audience — more so than a gallery or museum perhaps — not least of all because the space is intimate and, moreover, domestic. These qualities ensure that the visitor (and member) feel a stronger sense of commitment or 'relationship' towards Kunstverein and that we, in turn, feel the same commitment towards a tangible audience.

But perhaps most newsworthy is the fact that Kunstverein is a working franchise model, introduced outside its time-honored German-speaking context, that aims to rethink and modify the long-established format of *Kunstverein* without any tangible connection whatsoever to its cited 'big brother.' In addition to Am-



Cover of Kunstverein magazine *Ginger&Piss*.

sterdam, there are now two other branches: New York and Milan. As a franchise, Kunstverein establishes an ongoing dialogue among its various branches. In a collective desire to work transnationally, the respective curators of each Kunstverein respond to both a personal and in our minds a broader contemporary social need.