

Openings & Closings – The Richard Kostelanetz Bookstore

Preview: June 10, 6–8 pm

Open: 11 June – 1 October 2011

'Richard Kostelanetz (born 1940, New York) is an American writer, artist, critic, and editor of the avant-garde. He is infamous for his prolific and often biting prose. In his short fictions (some only 2 words long) and visual poetry, RK employs a radically formalist approach consisting of arrangements of words on a page using such devices as linking language and sequence, punning, alliteration, parallelism, constructivism, and minimalism. His literary work challenges the reader in unconventional ways and is often printed in limited editions at small presses. Kostelanetz's nonfiction work *The End of Intelligent Writing: Literary Politics in America* (1974) charged the New York literary and publishing establishment with inhibiting the publishing and promotion of works by innovative younger authors. Among his other works are *Recyclings: A Literary Autobiography* (1974, 1984), *Politics in the African-American Novel* (1991), *Published Encomia*, 1967–91 (1991), *On Innovative Art(ist)s* (1992) and *A Dictionary of the Avant-Gardes* (1999, 2001). In 1970 Kostelanetz co-founded and directed the innovative annual aptly called *Assembling*; thirteen editions of "otherwise unpublishable" art and literature, including *The Complete Assembling* were produced between 1970 and 1982.' – The Encyclopedia Britannica

This is pretty accurate, literate, and fair, in my judgment, not only placing me as 'avant-garde' but identifying me as a 'radical formalist' (...) acknowledging as well my ambitions to produce work both innovative and classic. What's missing are the factors that makes the entry such a genuine surprise to me. Though the radical character of my art and activities is identified correctly, there is no acknowledgment of the difficulties I've continually encountered professionally, functioning as I have with no positions, no power, no patrons, no agents, no 'elite' affiliations, no loyal commercial publishers, no favorable reviews in the most prominent media, considerable integrity, no best-sellers let alone good-sellers, no publicists (other than myself, alas), no literary-political machine whose tail I could be, a distance from fashion, scant notice in the most prominent reviewing media, no single 'handle' such as poet or critic by which my work can be grasped, disadvantageous race and gender, and endless obstacles (still) in getting my strongest work into print. Most of the magazines publishing me have small circulations, rather than large. Some of my books were even self-published, which has been regarded as suicidal professionally. Since some colleagues find it remarkable that I've survived at all as a writer, recognition in Britannica was unthinkable to me (and no doubt to others) until it happened. (...) Culturally backward though this venerable encyclopedia might have been in the past, perhaps it no longer is.

For reasons closely connected to Kostelanetz's practice we feel it is consistent to become a Bookstore dedicated to the artist. *Openings & Closings – The Richard Kostelanetz Bookstore* will host and sell all of RK's publications (over 80 titles). As well, rare artifacts, editions and smaller artworks will be on view in a secret backroom. This includes a now very rare, complete set of *Assembling* 1 through 13. A series of commissioned essays by special-guest authors taking the practice of Richard Kostelanetz as a starting point, will appear at irregular intervals and will be available for sale during the Bookstore's short lifespan. Please check our website for updates on Hush Hush events and special evenings dedicated to books and other such things.

Openings & Closings – The Richard Kostelanetz Bookstore is conceived in dialogue with Hyo Kwon and Goda Budvytyte.

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Opening hours: Wednesday–Saturday, 12–6 pm

With generous support by Amsterdams Fonds voor de Kunst, Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds, Mondriaan Foundation, SNS Reaal Fonds and Kunstverein's (gold) members