



**Trisha Donnelly** February 24 – April 6, 2008

**The Renaissance Society**  
at The University of Chicago

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at The University of Chicago  
5811 South Ellis Avenue  
Chicago, IL 60637

**Museum Hours**  
Tuesday - Friday: 10 am - 5 pm  
Saturday, Sunday: 12 - 5 pm  
Closed Mondays  
www.renaissancesociety.org

## Trisha Donnelly

February 24 – April 6, 2008

**Opening Reception: Sunday, February 24, 4:00–7:00pm**  
Featuring a talk with the artist from 5:00–6:00pm

## As Free As the Squirrels

No other humanist discipline has undergone as rigorous a self-examination as the visual arts. Well above and beyond an investigation into the nature of its being, the field of art has gone so far as to canonize works of so-called "anti-art." From the 1917 debut of Duchamp's infamous *Fountain*, which consisted of simply a urinal bearing a signature, to the sustained assault on visually waged by conceptual artists, art by all accounts should have succumbed to its self-willed dismantling quite a while ago. Needless to say, this has yet to pass. Through earnest efforts artists have, however, expanded art's definition to the point where art is no longer a discrete class of objects or activities but instead a way of looking; art as a process of self-reflexive meaning-making, one that need not be mediated by illusionistic representation. A small tin of shit proudly produced and canned by the artist, Piero Manzoni himself, or a piece of candy courtesy of Felix Gonzalez-Torres are but two beautiful birds in a forest of signs that would render our existence legible. But despite exercising its right to remain silent, gregariously flirting with the irrational, and reveling in illegibility, art is still plagued with making sense in what is less a forest of signs and more a semiotic jungle as any and all things may assume a meaning no longer reserved for the more traditional work of art.

Tell me why the ivy twines? As if Trisha Donnelly's art needs a reason. Like ivy, Donnelly's work is as it does. Now that art is no longer a privileged site of meaning, Donnelly is as free as the squirrels to produce art whose justification would be its mere existence. Given that meaning may be produced with or without it, Donnelly is the first to admit that no one needs her art. In exchange, she has carte blanche to roam the highways, byways and interstellar lo-ways of thought with nary a care as to what makes sense save to her.

Calling hers a 'body' of work is almost claiming too much coherence for a highly heterogeneous output that includes drawings, photographs, audio works, sculptures, events (Donnelly is very wary of the term performance), and videos. Although it is tempting to cast her as the consummate post-medium artist, in her case that is already an over-determined category, for Donnelly genuinely has no medium. If anything she is a pre-medium artist, where "medium" could just as soon refer to a psychic. Not overly concerned with form, her art is the precipitate of a belief system fashioned within a web of signification where logic and superstition are virtually indistinguishable. When posed before any of her work, the question of

why becomes interchangeable with why not. Donnelly has developed a form of martial art and given lectures describing an alternate dimension. The latter, entitled *THE 11th PRISMATIC*, betrays her penchant for the rites and rituals of explanation in a broader sense. While much of the work is performative in nature, Donnelly avoids any relationship to an audience that the designation "performance artist" might imply. In addition, Donnelly's art, for all its freedom, tends to assume relatively conventional forms. In this respect it is very much legible as an art that, once slandered for being cryptic and hermetic, would now cite these terms as new-found inalienable rights. Any charges of obscurity are predicated on a claim to disclosure that Donnelly never undersigned. Instead, Donnelly would take stock in an artistic legacy whose liberatory potential has become, by her standards, over-burdened with a self-consciousness symptomatic of an excess of meaning; an excess she would prefer to convert into beliefs ranging from quizzical to outlandish. The result is an art that can be whatever. Accordingly, what she may do when invited to exhibit is often anyone's guess. The choice of attire (cocktail, festive, proper, black tie) for attendance at the opening reception, per T.D., is yours.

### Related Events

OPENING RECEPTION  
**Sunday, February 24, 4:00 to 7:00 pm**

POETRY READING  
**Tuesday, March 4, 5:30 pm**  
**Carla Harryman**

One of the preeminent Language poets, Carla Harryman is the author of twelve books of poetry, prose plays, and essays. A 2004 recipient of the award in poetry from The Foundation for Contemporary Performing Arts, Harryman is widely acknowledged as an innovator in poetry, prose, and interdisciplinary performance. She teaches Women's Studies, Creative Writing, and Literature at Wayne State University in Detroit. This event is presented in conjunction with Poem Present, with support from Poets & Writers, Inc. through a grant it has received from an anonymous donor. This event will take place in Classics Hall room 110. (Classic Hall is 1010 E. 59th St.) FREE.

STAGED READING  
**Friday, March 7, 8:00 pm**  
**Memory Play**  
by Carla Harryman

Harryman is widely acknowledged as an innovator in poetry, prose, and interdisciplinary performance and nothing exemplifies this more than *Memory Play* where "the audience," writes Sara Schulman, "is invited into a whirlwind exploration of hierarchies through the mouths of Bosch-like talking animals." The hierarchies mentioned being social, political, economic, biological and evolutionary. This event is supported by a UChicagoArts grant from the Arts Planning Council. This event will take place at University Theater located in The Reynolds Club, 5706 S. University Avenue. FREE.

CONCERT  
**Thursday, March 13, 8:00 pm**  
**Jack String Quartet**  
**Georg Haas, In iij. Noct.,**  
**String Quartet No. 3, 2001**

John Pickford Richards, viola  
Ari Streisfeld, violin  
Christopher Otto, violin  
Kevin McFarland, cello

This concert marks the return of the Jack String Quartet. With ringing endorsements from the likes of Helmut Lachenmann and Matthias Pintscher, the JACK Quartet has emerged as one of the country's premier string ensembles. This evening they will perform Georg Friedrich Haas' *Third String Quartet*, a roughly 45-minute work of mind-numbing beauty in which no two performances could ever be the same. This event will take place in the gallery and is FREE.

CONCERT  
**Saturday, March 15, 8:00 pm**  
**Ensemble Dal Niente**  
**A Luciano Berio Recital**  
*Sequenza I* for voice (1966)  
*Sequenza IX* for clarinet (1980)  
*Chamber Music* (1953)  
*Les mots sont alles* for cello (1976-7)  
*Autre Fois* (1971)  
*Musica Leggera* (1974)  
*Folks Songs* for mezzo and 7 instruments (1964)

Dal Niente is quietly building a reputation as one of the finest chamber ensembles in Chicago. Led by Kirsten Broberg, they have been playing to packed houses as was the case here last fall. They return this evening with an all Berio bill with featured performers Alejandro Acierito (clarinet) and Isabel Castellvi (cello), Amanda DeBoer (soprano). This event will take place in the gallery and is FREE.

CONCERT  
**Sunday, March 16, 7:00 pm**  
**Millenium Chamber Players,**  
**guest soloist Victoria Bass (cello)**

György Ligeti, *Cello Concerto*, 1966  
Gene Gutché, *Cantilena* for Horn and Strings, 1950  
Carmel Raz, *Breathing for Ensemble*, 2008  
Sarah Ritch, *Collage*, 2008  
Luciano Berio, *Sequenza XIV*, 2002  
Ayaka Nishina, *Membrane*, 2004  
Henri Dutilleux, *Trois Straphes* (1976-1982)

Led by Maestro Robert Katkov-Trevino, the Millennium Chamber Players are Chicago's newest critically-acclaimed chamber ensemble. This two part bill will feature chamber works—Ligeti's seminal Cello Concerto and two newly commissioned works by young composers (Raz, Ritch)—and works for solo cello. This event will take place in the gallery and is FREE.

CONCERT  
**Tuesday, March 18, 8:00 pm**  
**Ossatura w/ Ensemble No Amnesia**

Elio Martusciello (electronics)  
Fabrizio Spera (percussion and electronics)  
Luca Venitucci (accordion and electronics)  
Lisa Goethe (flute)  
Mike Hartman (electronics)  
Marina Peterson (cello)  
Gene Coleman (bass clarinet)

Improvisation represents the backbone of the music played by Ossatura (Martusciello, Spera and Venitucci). Their music is marked by a sequence of sound blocks and diversified interlocking timbres and shapes, where detailed textural work alternates with rhythmic accelerations and highly dense sound events. Take all of that and multiply it by two as they will be joined by the well seasoned members Ensemble Noamnesia. This event will take place in the gallery and is FREE.

POETRY READING  
**Sunday, March 30, 2:00 pm**  
**Helen Mirra**  
**Cloud, the, 3**

Poetry remains an important aspect of Mirra's practice. An absolutely stunning publication *Cloud, the, 3* is an exceptionally adroit follow-up to *Names and Poems* and *Alow*, Mirra's first two poetry-based artist books. Mirra will read from *Cloud, the, 3* which tracks words and ideas through the index of John Dewey's *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (1920). A former Chicagoan, Mirra has had numerous solo museum exhibitions including a 2001 exhibition at the Society. She currently teaches at Harvard University. This event was funded in part by Poets & Writers, Inc. through a grant it has received from an anonymous donor. This event will take place in Swift Hall room 310 (3rd floor lecture hall). Swift is the building directly east of Cobb Hall.

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