

D. I. Y. Conceptual Book:

Day by Kent Johnson

Cut out and place on text where you see fit

Day

If the 836-pp. *Day* established Kenny Goldsmith as without a doubt the leading conceptual poet of his time, the 836-pp. *Day* by Kent Johnson may well be remembered for nudging the politics of Conceptual Poetry out of blithely affirmative, institutional framings, and into truly negational, critical spaces.

—Juliana Spahr

Recent trends in technologies of communication have already begun to subvert the romantic bastions of "creativity" and "authorship," calling into question the propriety of copyright through strategies of plagiaristic appropriation... Such developments have caused poets to theorize an innovative aesthetics of "conceptual literature" that has begun to question, if not to abandon, the lyrical mandate of originality in order to explore the potentials of the "uncreative," be it automatic, mannerist, aleatoric, or readymade, in its literary practice... Such activity (employing self and ego-effacing tactics via uncreativity, unoriginality, appropriation, plagiarism, fraud, theft, and falsification as its precepts) has become one of the most radical, if not one of the most popular, limit-cases of the avant-garde at the advent of the millennium. With *Day*, Kent Johnson claims his place as one of the major figures of this new writing, showing, in single move, how Conceptual Poetry has been nearly forty years behind the politics of Institutional Critique.

—Christian Bök

As he once asked, at the blog of the Poetry Foundation (though with what seems in retrospect a disingenuous banality), "Nearly one hundred years after Duchamp, why hasn't appropriation become a valid, sustained[,] or even tested literary practice?" Here now, Kent Johnson wagers the query with a vengeance, brazenly upping the ante of Uncreative dialectic by throwing down before us a readymade gesture that is nothing but dizzying in the synthesis of its conception: a flagrant appropriation of a Conceptual work's Authorship and Copyright, categories which themselves had been branded into this same text, in flagrant appropriation by another K (yes, me), in first, antithetical instance. Thus, here at Boring Ranch, in gamble with a gambol, he claims all the cow chips, one could say, with the searing, asterisked irony of a double-K smoking iron. His *Day* emerges hot and bright from the dead-dark of an innocent pre-dawn, a sort of authentic Afterlife that rises from the "original" simulacral body in which it had lain (latent and expectant). As in the best of Sherrie Levine, but more radically still, it summons us, now, that we might think harder in its sudden light. Indeed, Kent Johnson's *Day* stands as the first Conceptual gesture of its kind in the history of American poetry: An open, literal theft of an entire "book," exhibited without shame, as a new and strange Work of Art in our Museum of Modern Poetry. I can only tip my hat.

—Kenny Goldsmith

Kent Johnson's previous book is *Homage to the Last Avant-Garde* (Shearsman, 2008). He lives in Freeport, Illinois.

KENT JOHNSON



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