

## JIMMY RASKIN

Jimmy Raskin was a poet. At the age of nineteen, however, Raskin stopped writing poetry to devote himself entirely to exploring and manifesting the conditions under which what he calls 'the Poem' might remain an achievable possibility in this day and age. Toward this end, Raskin has unwaveringly developed a theatrical multimedia universe, fluidly combining writing with sculptures and the production of props for lecture-performances. Collages typically appear alongside videos, cartoons, and diagrams of what he has determined to be the essential existential problems confronting the central figure of the 'Poet Pure.' Since 1989, a diverse body of work has emerged, marked by remarkably consistent subject matter and a restricted set of visual motifs, all in the service of Raskin's mysteriously pedagogical aims. His illustrational project articulates a dualistic cosmology—a grandiose effort that attempts to capture and affirm the fundamental opposition between, on the one hand, the 'Spirit of the restless Poet' under the expressive mode of 'Inseparability' and, on the other, 'Critical Distance' under the mode of 'Simultaneity,' or what he calls 'Infinite Juxtaposition' and the figure of the 'Documentarian.'

Ultimately, modes of expression themselves are Raskin's medium. His sources are few, but intensely engaged and idiosyncratically referenced. Roland Barthes's 'rustle of language' comes back to haunt the artist time and again; entire exhibitions can be directly about specific poems by Arthur Rimbaud, such as "Vowels" or "The Drunken Boat." Raskin's major book to date is titled *The Prologue, The Poltergeist & The Hollow Tree, On Friedrich Nietzsche's Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

If the mode of the Poet is rigorously distinguished from the mode of the Critic, it is because the artist has been fundamentally attracted to their potential yet uneasy fusion. Raskin has had deep insight into the dangers of one mode killing the other, which is perhaps why his work has so arduously separated the two. He shows us with clarity and persistence, however, that any work of art worthy of the name, any potential Poem, must stage one *and* the other.

*Jimmy Raskin was born in Los Angeles in 1970. He lives and works in New York. A graduate of CalArts, Raskin has exhibited his work and staged "lecture-performances" in institutions, art galleries and other non-traditional gathering places internationally since the mid-1990s, notably at the P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, Thread Waxing Place, Foundation 20 21, Greene-Naftali, Cooper Union, Miguel Abreu Gallery, SculptureCenter (all in New York), as well as at the Centre Pompidou, Paris, Real Art Ways, Hartford, The Swiss Institute, Paris, and KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin. He was also selected for the Art Statement sector of Art |42| Basel. In 2009, he participated in the group exhibition Breaking New Ground Underground curated by Thea Westreich at Stonescape, a private museum in Napa Valley, California. He was also included in For the blind man in the dark looking for the black cat that isn't there, a major group exhibition organized by Anthony Huberman at the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis. The show traveled to the Museum of Contemporary Art, Detroit, ICA, London, de Appel Arts Center, Amsterdam, and Culturges, Lisbon. Raskin's book Corner Jump was published by Onestar Press in 2012, and his third one-person exhibition at Miguel Abreu Gallery, "Petals Ears & Tears," took place in 2013.*