



## Vera's Room The Art of Maria Chevaska

Authors: **Hélène Cixous and Tony Godfrey**

Released: **September 2005**

Paperback  
144pp  
130 b/w and colour ills  
1 904772 29 3  
£19.95

*Vera's Room* is the first monograph on the artist Maria Chevaska, who is most celebrated for her evocative treatment of language in paintings, where paint is poured onto the surface to form words. Like Joseph Kosuth, whose highly visual art also uses language as its main ingredient, she works at the heart of the rich historical relationship between art and words. Borrowing, or rather "collecting," from the short stories of Beckett, Kafka and Raymond Carver, or the political tracts of Rosa Luxemburg, Chevaska's paintings are fragments of narratives that invite the viewer to decipher a story that remains perpetually deferred. The texts are often just words, verbal lulls that frequently occur throughout conversation which both heighten and thwart the sense of being presented with a tale. Through the onomatopoeic paintings of the *Company* series in particular one can hear an echo of Raoul Hausmann and Kurt Schwitters' sound poems. There is also a great concern with time in Chevaska's paintings. The gestures in her *Mimic* series where she painted signing hands, in effect producing an extended dactylographic dictionary, emphasise duration in both a literal and philosophical way. In this sense Chevaska's work is reminiscent of On Kawara's date and Roman Opalka's number paintings.

Alongside the paintings Chevaska often creates sculptural interventions that disturb the largely wall-based schema of her work. These objects – referred to as "prosthetics" by the artist – are simply constructed from a variety of materials including cloth hardened in kaolin, wool fleeces, linen, padded quilting and rubber, their final form poised between apparent utility and artifice. Her most recent work, *Vera's Room*, is an ongoing project of memory and mourning that creates an alternative space whose contents change over time and according to the locations of its installation. Exploring her Polish origins through her alter ego Vera Kasmiach, Chevaska has accumulated objects that have actual connections to her life and past and others that have been seemingly passed to her by Vera. In this monograph *Vera's Room* takes the exclusive shape of a scratch book filled with material elements of truth and fiction. Printed on newsprint and including commentary by the eminent French philosopher Hélène Cixous this section forms the central piece of the book.

*Vera's Room* traces and documents Chevaska's rich and complex work through texts and illustrations. Two specially commissioned essays provide an art historical and philosophical context to the work while extensively illustrated art work sections offer an exciting overview of Chevaska's oeuvre to date.

**Hélène Cixous** is the founder of the experimental Université de Paris VIII at Vincennes, whose faculty included Michel Foucault, Tzvetan Todorov, Félix Guattari, and Gilles Deleuze. She is the author of, among others, *The Laugh of the Medusa*, 1976, *Promethea's Book*, 1983, and *Stigmata: Escaping Texts*, 1998.

**Tony Godfrey** is Academic Director of the Sotheby's Institute of Art, London. His books include *Conceptual Art*, 1998, *Drawing Today*, 1990, and *The New Image: Painting in the 1980s*, 1986. He taught at Yale, New York and Oxford University.

**For review copies or further information please contact [press@bdp.demon.co.uk](mailto:press@bdp.demon.co.uk)**

### Black Dog Publishing Limited

Unit 4.04 Tea Building 56 Shoreditch High Street London E1 6JJ  
T 44 (0)20 7613 1922 F 44 (0)20 7613 1944 E [press@bdp.demon.co.uk](mailto:press@bdp.demon.co.uk) [www.bdpworld.com](http://www.bdpworld.com)

