

Grand Arts Presents:

a new project by

PABLO HELGUERA

THE
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PLAYERS



JUNE 12 – JULY 25, 2009
DISCUSSION/PERFORMANCES
SAT. JUNE 13TH 2PM & 8PM

Please join Grand Arts and Pablo Helguera for an
Opening Event: Friday June 12, 6-9pm
at **Grand Arts** and a
Public Discussion and Performance of
The Juvenal Players Saturday, June 13th,
performances are at **2pm and 8pm**
at **Grand Arts**

The discussion/performance events are **free**,
but reservations must be made at least one week in
advance due to limited seating. **Please be sure to*
arrive at least ten minutes before performance time, as visitors will not
be admitted late!

To reserve seats,
please call Lacey Wozny
at Grand Arts 816.421.6887

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

APRIL 29, 2009

THE JUVENAL PLAYERS

Who was Juvenal Merst? Why is he rarely discussed in today's art circles, despite the great influence he exerted amongst the artists of his generation? Why is his work so hard to find today, and why was he apparently forgotten? This project, planned and directed by Pablo Helguera, will realize a tribute in accordance with Merst's request for it to happen a few years after his death. The Juvenal Players is a play that tells the story of an art period, an immediate past, an enigma lying at the core of contemporary art today. Prior to each performance, Grand Arts will host a discussion with prominent curators and critics that will examine the life of Juvenal Merst in its own historical context. This hybrid event of art theory, performance and lively debate seeks to serve as a fitting homage to this significant artist.

Of the artist's work, Pablo Helguera writes: "Juvenal Merst's work renounced categories. He broke the line between certainty and uncertainty, between fact and fiction, looking for that border between them. Writing a play in his memory is a way to recognize his historical importance."

Juvenal Merst (1967-2003) was an American artist whose work ranged from performance to sculpture and photography. His projects often appropriated minimalist and conceptual strategies to mount a fierce critique of his social surroundings, with an emphasis on the art scene of his time.

Born in Wilmington, Delaware, he moved to Chicago in 1985 where he developed his first works and opened an alternative space. In the mid 90s, Merst moved to New York where he achieved notoriety through his provocative works. Despite his remarkable success in the onset of his career, Merst stopped exhibiting his work publicly, with the result that his work is now known mostly by art world insiders.

Despite his apparent retreat from the art scene of his time, Merst was keenly interested in making his work highly visible in the long term and influencing the perception of his historical place in art. In his last will, Merst expressed the wish that an event in his memory would take place exactly seven years, to the day, from his demise. According to curator and art historian Sonja Stillman, "Merst wanted to find the kind of distance in time which is close enough for us to feel that it still belongs to our contemporary period, but where we begin to notice slight inconsistencies between that past and our present; similar to the appearance of a movie made a few years ago which starts showing the first signs of age. Merst always wanted to grasp that seemingly impossible parallax of time, the blind spot between long-term and short-term memory." Merst's famous parting statement, which inspired Helguera's tribute, included the following words: "I want you to be at that time where the memory of me has started to vanish, but not too much, with the purpose that you may still retain the most important aspects of those memories but have eliminated by now the incidental and unimportant details. You all will be the players of my own life, the narrators of my story, and to you I entrust it. I wish I was there to see my life be told."

The Juvenal Players will be presented at Grand Arts, Kansas City on June 13, 2009. A tribute exhibition to the work of Juvenal Merst will take place at Grand Arts, opening on June 12, 2009. The project will travel and will be presented at The Kitchen in New York in the Spring of 2010.

Pablo Helguera (Mexico City, 1971) is a visual and performance artist. He has presented his performance work at MoMA, PSI, Liverpool Biennial, Havana Biennial, Performa05, ICA Boston, MCA Chicago, RCA in London, the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington DC, and many other venues. He has been the recipient of the Creative Capital Grant and the Guggenheim Fellowship. He is the author of six books, including *The Pablo Helguera Manual of Contemporary Art Style* (2005), *The Witches of Tepoztlán (and other Unpublished Operas)* (2007), the novel-memoir *The Boy Inside The Letter* (2008) and *Artoons* (2009). Of upcoming publication is a collection of his performance lectures, *Theatrum Anatomicum (and Other Performance Lectures)*.