## **BOOKS ON BOOKS**

CURATED BY ROBERT BOLICK

## Review of "COUP DE DÉS (COLLECTION)"

2024/03/19 BY ROBERT BOLICK

January 18-May 1, 2024	
ed. Michalis Pichler	
Exposition littéraire autour de Mai re-readings and re-writings of U	Ilarmé recalls an exhibition of the same name by Marcel Broodthaers from 1969. The exhibition is centered around In Coup de Dés Jamais N'Abolira Le Hasard across different media.
and appropriations by other auth Broodthaers, Bernard Chiavelli, J	a vast number of editions of Mallarmé's <i>chef d'oeuvre</i> as well as many of its historical and contemporary editions, nors such as Claude Balif, Fritz Balthaus, Derek Beaulieu, Jeremie Bennequin, Christopher Brennan, Marcel Jim Clinefelter, Lucien Desalmand, Mario Diacono, Sammy Engramer, Marie Louise Erlenmeyer, Cerith Wyn Evans, N paul Heimbach, Angela Graser, Barry Guy, Felix Philipp Ingold, La Bibliotheque Fantasique, Brian Larosche,
Alexandra Leykauf, Benjamin Lor	y, aar neuroach, Angele Orasse, san y Goy, ein r imppingolo, aa builoneque anasinque, brind tooche, (A Stephane Mallarmé, Michael Mara da, Guido Aolinari, Anochas, Francoise Morel, Nonsikelelo Multit, Henri Pousseur, Nicolas Richard, Mitsou Ronat, Sam Sampson, Camille Soula, Ultralab, Klara Vith, and Eric Zboya.
	riety of publications that feature the phrase <i>Coup de Dés</i> on the cover without explicitly referring to Mallarme. rith the assistance of Center for Book Arts staff.
Twice a day, a turn-of-the-centur	ry pianola is playing Un Coup de Dés Jamais N'abolira le Hasard. MUSIQUE, created by running a 288mm tracker r
	y a catalogue with texts by Craig Dworkin, Annette Gilbert, Luc Boltanski, Arnaud Esquerre, Ryoko Sekiguchi, uctions of the works, co-published by Center for Book Arts and Spector Books.

Why should an obscure poem like Stéphane Mallarmé's groundbreaking *Un Coup de Dés Jamais N'Abolira le Hasard: Poème* (1897) have become the cornerstone of an art-industrial complex of literary, critical and artistic responses ranging from essays, books, edited collections, countless editions, and appropriations in the form of fine press *livres d'artiste*, book art and sculptures, films and theater, ballets and fado, musical compositions, digital programs and installations,

Marcel Broodthaers à la Deblioudebliou/S

Exposition littéraire autour de Mallarmé

Vernissage dinsdag 2 december 1969 Tentoonstelling van 3 tot 20/12/69 Wide White Space Schildersstraat 2, Antwerpen Open 14-18 u. - Tel. 03/381355



Michalis Pichler

Exposition littéraire autour de Mallarmé

Inaugurazione 14 dicembre 2016 Mostra dal 15/12/16 al 28/01/17 Kunstverein Milano Il Lazzaretto, Via Lazzaretto 15, Milano Aperto lu-ve 10-16 e su appuntamento www.kunstverein.it



Left: Invitation to Marcel Broodthaers' Exposition Littéraire autour de Mallarmé at the Wide White Space Gallery, Antwerp, December 1969; image courtesy of MACBA.

Right: Invitation to Michalis Pichler's Exposition littéraire autour de Mallarmé, Kunstverei



and even pavement art? It was never even produced under Mallarmé's hand in the form he intended. We have the poet's manuscripts and proofs. We have his sonin-law's efforts with the publisher Éditions de la Nouvelle Révue Française (NRF) in 1914 to present *Un Coup de Dés* in accordance with Mallarmé's plans. In many ways, their liberty of including the preface from the 1897 *Cosmopolis* version so unsatisfactory to the poet paved the way for artistic/editorial interventions and art-industrial complex to come.

With this exhibition and edited catalogue *COUP DE DÉS (COLLECTION)* at the New York Center for Book Arts, Michalis Pichler does not so much ignore the question as answer it by extending the art-industrial complex. The exhibition and catalogue are more than a mere display and list of over 150 works. Taken together and with his own artistic practices, they represent a multi-faceted artwork in its own right. The core constituent of this artwork is Pichler's extensive collection of editions of *Un Coup* 

*de Dés*, critical works and the numerous instances of the century-plus of appropriations, including his own, of the poem. In effect, Pichler has developed the activity of collecting, appropriating and publishing into an artistic practice.

*(COLLECTION)* is the second and further developed instance of Pichler's practice. The first occurred in Milan in 2016 with an invitation card appropriating the format and title of Marcel Broodthaers' *Exposition littéraire autour de Mallarmé* at the Wide White Space in Antwerp in 1969. Pichler appropriated not only the title and card of Broodthaers' exhibition, he appropriated its content, redisplaying Broodthaers' landmark *UN COUP DE DÉS JAMAIS N'ABOLIRA LE HASARD (IMAGE)* and many of the editions of the poem that Broodthaers had included.

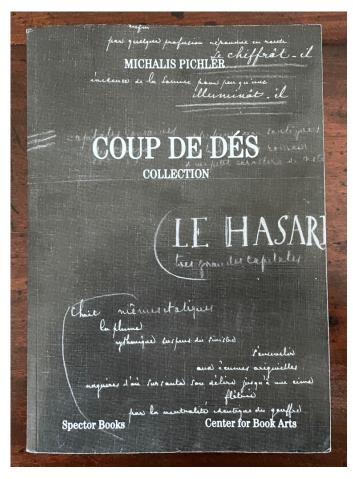
With its introduction of his landmark (*IMAGE*), Broodthaers' exhibition marked a transformative moment for the Mallarméan art-industrial complex. By blotting out the lines of Mallarmé's poem with strips of black ink, Broodthaers elevated image over text. In its wake, we have had

- Jérémie Bennequin's (OMAGE DÉ-COMPOSITION), (OMAGE) and (FILM)
- Raffaella della Olga's (CONSTELLATION), (PERMUTATION) and (TRAME)
- Sammy Engramer's (ONDE) or (WAVE)
- Benjamin Lord's (SEQUENCE)
- Michael Maranda's (LIVRE)
- Richard Nash's (*ESPACE*)
- Aurélie Noury's (*RUBIK'S CUBE*) and (*POSTER*)
- Michalis Pichler's (SCULPTURE) and (MUSIQUE)
- Sam Sampson's (((SUN-O)))
- Klara Vith's (DISCOURS I-III)
- Eric Zboya's 2018 (VECTEUR) and (TRANSLATIONS)

BIBLIO	PHAGIA	
Ve refuse to think a text without a body. Materialzirtlichkeit.	Art/literature indicated here, that it would return to everyday life.	
We are only interested in what isn't ours. Law of human. Law of Bibliophagia.	Whatever force in this direction will be good.	
ve are only interested in what bit t ours, Law of numan, Law of Dibilophaga.	One cannot rely on Bibliophagia as such. It can be mobilized for the most	
Ve make many acquaintances, choosing but a few as favorite meal. We are	different politics.	
olemists, but also anthologists: we devour only the opponents we consider	-	
ourageous	From until . The transfiguration of taboo into totem. Against, and	
herefore we have never wanted to devour everything. Only what we feel.	Administration of the second s	
tuly what we lie. Or what we pretend to feel.	Against the white cube. Against Duchamp.	
octry exists in the facts. Worn books colorful and grey, yellowed paper, obsolete	Against the cultivated practice of the autonomous aesthetic sphere.	
outents, are aesthetic facts. Satin-mait photographs from the 1980's, paginations.	Every passion borders on the chaotic, but Bibliophagia borders on the chaos of	
lank pages. Name lists, indexes, printer's ink. That which is left, that which is	memories. The natural lust in demolishing, a literary drunkenness, nurtured from	
eglected, vanquished and gathered together under the name of the outdated.	memories.	
he aimless derivé in the forest of cheap second-hand bookshops and flea-	As the age is miraculous, Bibliophagia was born from the dynamic rotation of	
arkets. Overflowing banana boxes. Books for 1,00 Euro, 1,50 Euro, 2,00 Euro.	destructive factors:	
	Cutting, tearing out.	
he reading of Bibliophagia is a roaming around, permanent curvature, a circular	Wolkershitten / Colling in	
overnent, it has nothing in common with the movement f progress. It is a reading of rabble and ruins, of garbage		
f progress. It is a reading of rubble and ruins, of garbage ad left-overs, of the expelled and the lost.		
1-3 bel Nacht	Negative Space: Holes, Cuts, Cutting Windows and Tunnels	
bidinal economy: the anal bibliophile, who preserves head 8-13 km	Lost situations	
e mint copy, stores away the book, shrinkwrapped, Januar Masterial Weight Weight Weight Wei	Objet penfu 26 Se, 6ect 55 The verso of fragments	
The oral bibliophile, who enjoys the book, with	overe - Doppelginger	
rty hands maybe, not protecting much, reads it to death,	Chamaeleons	
r physically interacts with it, like a child.	e Butterflies Production mistakes	
gile and illogical. Agile the New Book, born of Bibliophagia. Agile poetry.	Shadows when turning the page	
gile Bibliophagia. Agile and candid. Like a child.	Pages glued together	
	Erasing, Filtering, Highlighting	
eading Reading Reading Reading Reading Reading Reading Reading Reading Reading	Crossing Queering	
county economic terming terming	Queering Blacking	
	Rebinding	
he reader cannot protect themselves against the erosion of time, unless they eat	Folding	
he book, which is no more than a substitute (the spoor or promise) of moments lost" in reading.	Inserted pages Cut-off spines	
To be able to write, one has to have read. To be able to read, one has to	Curve quits	
ave lived.	Invention, through copy and surprise.	
ibliophagia first of all indicates the intense relation between reader and book, as loved book, its being read, being loved. The Ur-Bibliophage would be the child	A new scale: with letters in books, children in laps.	
at enjoys its picture book to a degree that it gets consumed.	Bibliophagia is a Friday night bar with birds singing in the condensed forest	
	of cages, a thin fellow playing Rembetiko and Helena browsing the internet.	
book, any book is for us a sacred object: we do not listen to everything that	The present is all there, online."	
erybody says, but read even "the torn scraps of paper in the streets".	We have a plural and actual base - the forest of data, online second-hand	
suggestion of El Lissitsky (also Carrión): Don't read. fold	bookshops, flea markets, wastepaper bins and the library.	
color		
build	Our quotes are mutilated and approximative, like the left-overs of a torrential direction.	
he millionaire-contribution of all the errors. The way we (don't) read. There is	* Re-writing and ruminating.	
nly print. Reproducibility.		
	Everyday love, desire and the capitalist modus vivendi. Absorption of the sacred enemy. To transform into a reproducible totera.	
	Everything digested. Barbarous, credulous, picturesque and tender.	
	Internet surfers. Bibliophagia. The forest and the library The kitchen. The sea. Bibliophagia.	
	the second s	

Like Broodthaers' (IMAGE), each of these appropriations remakes the poem (and sometimes a previous artist's remaking) through its parenthetically indicated tag. For instance, Pichler's (SCULPTURE) replaces Mallarmé's pages with plexiglas sheets and Broodthaer's blottings with abrasions. But Pichler's parenthetical tag (COLLECTION) is omnivorous. It consumes again Broodthaers' Exposition, eating Mallarmé's poem in its several incarnations; devours all the parenthetical appropriators, including (SCULPTURE); swallows the many other appropriators lacking a parenthetical tag; and picks its teeth with works that merely allude to the poem's title.

The reverse of Pichler's displayed print *Bibliophagia* (2024) reveals this cannibalistic metaphor as central to the artistic practice that yields (COLLECTION) as an artwork in its own right. Visitors may miss the import of the print's reverse side until leaving the exhibition because that side is not displayed, although it can be found on the free copy offered onsite.



COUP DE DÉS (COLLECTION): Books and Ideas after Mallarmé Michalis Pichler (ed.)

Perfect bound paperback. H240 x W170 mm. 280 pages. Acquired from AHA-Buch, 22 January 2024. Photos: Books On Books Collection.

Pichler's 2016 and 2024 exhibitions add another constituent practice to this project: that of performance art, but with the visitor as performer. Like a work of performance art. an exhibition has a venue and displays that serve as the stage setting. Performance art and exhibitions are both time-delimited, fixed within the period and hours of the venue's availability. Where the length of a performance is constrained by the artist/performer's stamina, this exhibition's is constrained by the visitor's stamina. Fortunately with Pichler's performances, a less-thanindefatigable visitor has something other than a leaflet of performance notes as guide and souvenir: the volume *COUP DE* DÉS (COLLECTION): Books and Ideas after *Mallarmé*. This volume's three essays and two book excerpts work together with the snapshots of the exhibition to put forward this premise that (COLLECTION) is intended as an artistic work in its own right.

In addition to recapitulating the Bibliophagia manifesto. Pichler's introductory essay provides the background to the appearance and editioning of Un Coup de Dés and also explains the relevance of the two bookexcerpts. Pichler's translation with Misaki Kawabe from Ryōko Sekiguchi's book"*Nagori*" is welcome apart from any role it plays in (COLLECTION). As a concept, *nagori* has popped up in book art with Victor Burgin's 2020 essay "Nagori: Writing with Barthes" and with *Nagori* (2023), a sculptural artist's book by Ximena Pérez Grobet and and Kati Riquelme. Depending on context, *nagori* can mean the ephemeral imprint of withdrawing waves, a lateseason wistfulness for the taste of earlyseason fruit or tea. what remains after the passing of a person, an object, an







event, or the atmosphere of something missing. Pichler ties this to the absence of an authoritative edition of the poem.

The sense of something missing also comes up in the second book excerpt: Luc Boltanski and Arnaud Esquerre's *Enrichment: A Critique of Commodities* (Polity, 2020). Pichler enlists them to establish what distinguishes a collection from a heap on the one hand and a stockpile on the other (pp.73-90), not merely accumulating items in a collection but curating according to governing principles, similarities, differences, and the feel for what is missing. (Recall the "missing" bird on both sides

of *Bibliophagia* above?) In a sense, the act of collection or curation is a form of appropriation, and in that sense, Pichler's governing principle of collection has been the appropriation of appropriations but always with a hungry eye for the next. To paraphrase *Bibliophagia*, Pichler has made many acquaintances and chosen but a few as his favorite meal.

Here, Annette Gilbert's essay chimes in to assert that "curating has now ascended to a full-fledged artistic practice in its own right" where "literary curators are also increasingly succeeding in creating 'a new artist-like identity' for themselves and inscribing their 'collections' as autonomous works of their own right in their own oeuvre, of which Michalis Pichler's COUP DE DÉS (COLLECTION) ... is a striking example." (p.52)

Tellingly, Gilbert's assertion comes in the context of mapping the field of "appropriation literature" as a manifestation of the pressures of an affluent society giving rise to "new strategies of artistic production and the creation of meaning" (p.29), echoing Felix Stalder's observation: "in the digital condition, one of the methods (if not the

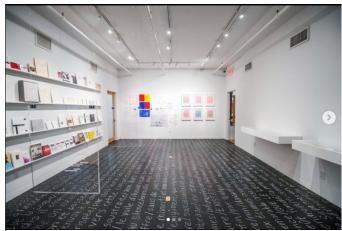


As with the 2016 exhibition, the majority of items on display were accessible, making the exhibition a rare hands-on experience.

most fundamental method) enabling humans to participate [...] in the collective negotiation of meaning is the system of creating references." (p.31) And what is Pichler's collecting if not a systematic creation of references among the works in *(COLLECTION)*?

Craig Dworkin's essay bizarrely and brilliantly connects Mallarmé with another system of creating references: Alphonse Bertillon's identification system for the Parisian Préfecture de Police. Not only did the Bertillon system overlap with Mallarmé in the 19th century, it turns out that its principles map directly onto Mallarmé's conception of Le Livre as stacks of unbound sheets filed in the cubbyholes of a filing cabinet and awaiting a theatrical performance of a séance leader's withdrawing sheets to arrive at a poem (rather than the *flic*'s pulling them to arrive at the identification of a suspect). Dworkin goes on to make convincing links to Klaus Scherübel's styrofoam edition of Le Livre, to Dan Graham's "Poem Schema", to Ernest Fraenkel's Les Dessins transconscients de Stéphane Mallarmé, to Mario Diacono's and Marcel Broodthaers' blotted versions of the poem, to Derek Beaulieu's tattered sails (after un coup de des), and to Rainier Lericolais' and Michalis Pichler's die-cut perforations, among others. All of which leads to Dworkin's assured conclusion: "The editions and appropriations of UN COUP *DE DÉS* alone are substantial enough to have led to an exhibition, and a sense of the assembled collection. UN COUP DE DÉS (COLLECTION), as an artistic work in its own right." (p.67)

The "Catalog" section, which includes over 150 pages of images of book covers and spreads variously at 1:5, 1:2 and 1:1 scale against a black background, presents more items than are displayed in the exhibition. One of them is Pichler's



Courtesy of Center for Book Arts



Before the opening, the poem was chalked onto the floor of the main display room. Within minutes of the opening, the visitor traffic had erased most of it.



On the wall: *Bibliophagia*, 2016 and 2024. Hanging: *UN COUP DE DÉS JAMAIS N'ABOLIRA LE HASARD* (*SCULPTURE*) 2016; Against the wall: *UN COUP DE DÉS JAMAIS N'ABOLIRA LE HASARD* (*MUSIQUE*) 2009 Michalis Pichler

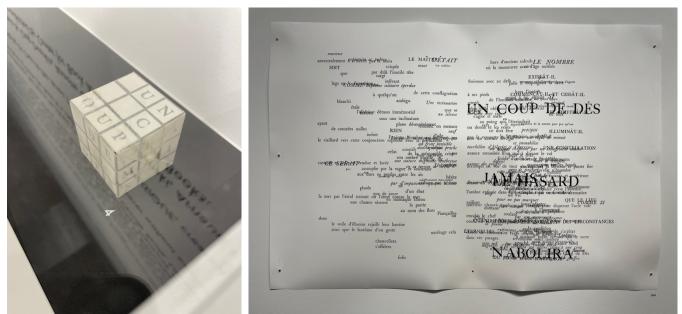
editorial intervention in that very first editorial intervention in the poem: the PRÉFACE required of Mallarmé in 1897 by *Cosmopolis* and reproduced by his son-in-law in the 1914 edition. Here Pichler's annotations call out 10 key aspects of the poem and Mallarmé's thoughts about it that would lead to the overlapping industry of artistic homage, appropriation, expropriation, transculturation, transvaloration and cannibal translation or bibliophagia as Pichler variously puts it.

This contribution from Pichler not only echoes many of Annette Gilbert's points in mapping the field of appropriation literature but also confirms her assertion: "Pichler's project ... positions itself decidedly both as an independent *artistic* work and as artistic *research*, which demonstratively opens itself up to chance and serendipity through its collection policy – in resonance with a dice roll as the object of the collection ...." (p.39).

*COUP DE DÉS (COLLECTION)* — the bookwork — belongs in any library with an interest in Mallarmé, book art or the cutting edge of contemporary art. The exhibition at the Center for Book Arts closes on 1 May 2024. Copies of the catalogue for sale remain on hand as do free copies of the print *Bibliophagia* (2024) and the invitation from Pichler's 2016 *Exposition littéraire autour de Mallarmé*.



UN COUP DE DÉS JAMAIS N'ABOLIRA LE HASARD (MUSIQUE) 2009 Michalis Pichler



UN COUP DE DÉS JAMAIS N'ABOLIRA LE HASARD (RUBIK'S CUBE) 2005; UN COUP DE DÉS JAMAIS N'ABOLIRA LE HASARD (POSTER) 2008 Aurélie Noury

würfelwürfe 59



Paul Heimbach was perhaps the first after Marcel Broodthaers to use translucent paper in an artist's book interpretation of Mallarmé's poem. In würfelwürfe, for each roll of the dice, the results on the upper faces appear on a recto page, the results on the bottom faces appear on the verso.