

Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's **DICTEE** A Marathon Reading

Saturday, December 4, 2021, 1 to 6 p.m.
Meldman Family Cinematic Arts Park
University of Southern California

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

- Theresa Hak Kyung Cha (1951–1982) was a groundbreaking artist who worked in text, performance, and video.
- Dictee*, released in 1982, is Cha's most famous work. The experimental book blends elements of the novel, poetry, autobiography, and cultural critique.
- This event marks the 70th anniversary of Cha's birth. Deaf and Hearing volunteers, including USC students, will read *Dictee* in its entirety, simultaneously in spoken language and ASL.

“Dictee’s mix of narrative, poetry, and images destabilizes historical and biographical narratives in favor of a concentration on the workings of language.”—Timothy Yu, poet

THERESA HAK KYUNG CHA

Theresa Hak Kyung Cha (1951–1982) was an artist who worked in multiple mediums, including writing, performance, and video.

Cha was born in South Korea in 1951, and emigrated to the United States with her family in 1963. She spent her teen years in San Francisco, and studied literature and art at UC Berkeley at the height of the 1960s protest movements, earning two BAs, an MA, and an MFA.

Cha began her career as an artist in the mid-1970s, producing boundary-pushing works in multiple mediums. She taught video art at Elizabeth Seton College, was awarded an artist residency at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, worked in the design department at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and was an editor and writer at Tanam Press, which published *Dictee*. She married the photographer Richard Barnes in 1982.

Dictee is Cha's most famous work, and we can't know what this powerful artist might have done next. A week after *Dictee* was published, Cha was raped and murdered. She was 31.

DICTEE: MULTILINGUAL, MULTIGENRE, AND MORE

A *dictée* is a type of exercise often used for learning French. It involves listening to a speaker, and writing down what you hear. Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's book *Dictee* is written in Korean, English, French, Latin, and Chinese, and language itself is one of its main subjects. Cha was fluent in Korean, English, and French, and used multiple languages and experimental approaches to text in *Dictee* as a way of exploring language, meaning, power, and more. Several critics have interpreted *Dictee*'s multilingualism as decolonizing or anti-imperial.

Dictee is not only multilingual, it is also multigenre. Is it a novel? Poetry? Memoir? A diary? It has been called auto-ethnography, and mostly it has been called a hybrid or multigenre experimental work. Some scholars have noted that Cha used techniques from film (e.g., rough cuts or quick cuts; visual images for exposition), and indeed Cha worked in video as well as text, and some of her core artistic influences were filmmakers.

SOME ARTISTS WHO INFLUENCED THERESA HAK KYUNG CHA

Marguerite Duras
Stéphane Mallarmé
Samuel Beckett
Carl Dreyer
Alain Resnais
Chris Marker

SOME ARTISTS WHO WERE INFLUENCED BY THERESA HAK KYUNG CHA

Elaine Castillo
Cathy Park Hong
Jane Wong

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

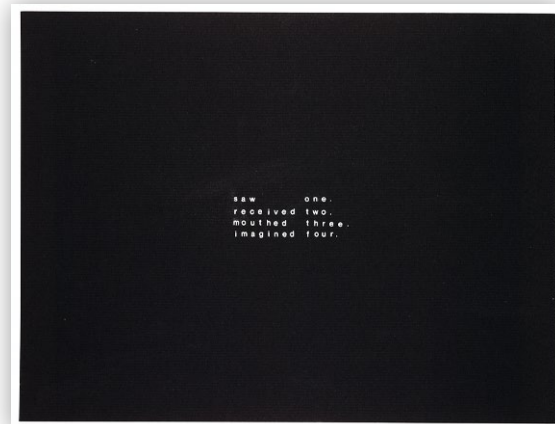
- What are the major themes of *Dictee*?
- How does the simultaneous reading of *Dictee* in multiple languages relate to the subject matter or form of the text?
- Why do you think Cha structured *Dictee* around stories of mythological and historical figures? Why do you think she chose the figures she did?
- Why do some critics interpret *Dictee*'s multilingualism as decolonizing or anti-imperial?
- What is the relationship between language and power?

IF YOU LIKED THIS EVENT, YOU MIGHT WANT TO CHECK OUT:

- Gyopo | gyopo.us
- Kaya Press | kaya.com
- Electronic Arts Intermix | eai.org
- 1/11/22 at USC: [East L.A. Taiko: Live! Welcome Back, Spring 2022](#)
- 1/21/22 at USC: [Art, Identity, and Power: An Evening with MC Rocky Rivera and Muralist Audrey Chan](#)



Theresa Hak Kyung Cha: *Surplus Novel*, 1980; porcelain jar, with typewritten text on paper; 1¾ x 2½ in.; collection of James H. Cha. Photo: Benjamin Blackwell, courtesy of the Theresa Hak Kyung Cha archive at the University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive.



Theresa Hak Kyung Cha: *It Is Almost That*, 1977 (detail); white press-type letters and white pastel on nineteen sheets of black paper; 9 1/2 x 12 1/2 in. each; University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive; gift of the Theresa Hak Kyung Cha Memorial Foundation.



Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's hands on her typewriter, 1981. Photo: James Cha.

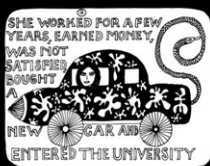
Analyse de l'œuvre

Par Éléonore Quinaux
et Marie-Sophie Wauquez

Moderato cantabile



LePetitLittéraire.fr



IT IS ALMOST THAT

A COLLECTION OF IMAGE+TEXT WORK BY WOMEN ARTISTS & WRITERS

DISCOVER MORE AT THE USC LIBRARIES

MELISSA MILLER of the USC Libraries selected the following resources to help you learn more about this event. Electronic resources are accessible through the search bar on the USC Libraries homepage at libraries.usc.edu but may require the user to log in using their USC credentials.

BOOKS

- ◉ Eleanor Antin et al., *It Is Almost That: A Collection of Image+Text Work by Women Artists & Writers* (Los Angeles: Siglio, 2011).
- ◉ Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Apparatus: Cinematographic Apparatus: Selected Writings* (New York: Tanam Press, 1980).
- ◉ Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Dictee* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2021).
- ◉ Theresa Hak Kyung Cha and Constance Lewallen, *Exilée; Temps Morts: Selected Works* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2009).
- ◉ Marguerite Duras, *Moderato cantabile* (Lemaitre, 2016).
- ◉ Marguerite Duras, *The Lover; Wartime Notebooks; Practicalities* (New York: Everyman's Library, 2018).
- ◉ Roger Pearson, *Stéphane Mallarmé* (London: Reaktion Books, 2010).
- ◉ Dorothy J. Wang, *Thinking Its Presence: Form, Race, and Subjectivity in Contemporary Asian American Poetry* (Redwood City: Stanford Univ. Press, 2013).

JOURNALS

- ◉ Constance Lewallen and Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, "The Dream of the Audience: Theresa Hak Kyung Cha (1951–1982)," *Woman's Art Journal* 24, no. 1 (2003): 53.

MIXED MEDIA

- ◉ Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Mouth to Mouth* (New York: Electronic Arts Intermix, 2001).
- ◉ Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Permutations* (New York: Electronic Arts Intermix, 2001).
- ◉ Yun-ah Hong and Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Memory/all echo* (New York: Women Make Movies, 1991).

