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Waiting for Godot in New Orleans: A Field Guide

Paul Chan

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Praise for Waiting for Godot in New Orleans

“Spellbinding” —Artforum

“An unforgettable example of ephemeral public art.” —The Nation

“An art project that had everything, or at least a lot: objects, words, images, ideas, emotions, discourse, actions, lessons, beauty, politics, criticality and generosity.” —The New York Times

“The most moving and meaningful ‘Godot’ we are ever likely to see.” —The Times-Picayune, New Orleans

In November 2007, artist Paul Chan collaborated with the Classical Theatre of Harlem and New York public arts group Creative Time to mount free performances of Samuel Beckett's Waiting for Godot on the streets of New Orleans. Two years after Hurricane Katrina, New Orleanians were still waiting for help to recover and rebuild. Godot rang with fierce immediacy, and thousands attended the play, which starred New Orleans native and television star Wendell Pierce (HBO's acclaimed series The Wire).

Waiting for Godot in New Orleans: A Field Guide, publishes for the first time the research materials, photographs, drawings, writings, and documents produced and gathered during the making of this multifaceted project, which included the free outdoor performances; theater workshops, educational seminars, conversations, and dinners; a Shadow Fund; and a short film.

Reflecting how the project was organized, the book is divided into eight chapters: Remember, Picture, Relate, Organize, Appear, Play, Film, Reflect. Waiting for Godot in New Orleans: A Field Guide is designed to introduce the key ideas, strategies, and histories that motivated the making of the project. This e-book unfolds like an imaginative roadmap that details how art can respond to, and reflect upon, social struggles large and small.

Waiting for Godot in New Orleans: A Field Guide features:
- Over 200 photographs, drawings, and illustrations that detail the making of Godot in New Orleans.
- New essays and interviews by key project members, including Paul Chan, Christopher McElroen (Classical Theatre of Harlem) and Nato Thompson (Creative Time).
- Essays by Susan Sontag, Terry Eagleton, and Alain Badiou that illuminate the social and philosophical dimensions of Samuel Beckett’s work.
- Interviews with artists, collaborators, and community members from New Orleans offering insight into how the city responded to Godot.

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