

SEEING OUT LOUDER

Art Criticism 2003-2009

by

Jerry Saltz

Hard Press Editions

Lenox, Massachusetts

Hudson Hills Press

Manchester, Vermont and New York, New York

Seeing Out Louder,
Art Criticism, 2003–2009 by Jerry Saltz

A Hard Press Editions Publication

© 2009 Hard Press Editions, Inc. (complete)

© 2003–2009 Jerry Saltz (essays)

Published as part of the Mission Critical Series.

Series Editor: Raphael Rubinstein

Reviews in this book have appeared previously in other books and periodicals
as listed herein.

Published in the United States by Hard Press Editions, Inc.

45 Walker Street, Lenox, MA 01240

In Association with Hudson Hills Press, LLC. Manchester, VT and New York, NY

Publisher and Executive Director: Leslie Pell van Breen

Founding Publisher: Paul Anbinder

ISBN 13: 978-1-55595-319-5

Designed by Michelle Quigley

Managing Editor: Anne Bei

Assistant Editor: Liz Riviere

Printed in USA by BookMasters, Inc. Ashland, OH

Front Cover Image:

Andreas Gursky

Bah Rain 1, 2008

118-7/8" x 86-1/3"

C print mounted on plexiglass in the artist's frame

Andreas Gursky, Artists Rights Society (ARS) New York

VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn

Back Cover Image:

Olafur Eliasson

The Weather Project, 2003–2004

Mono frequency light, panel, fog machine, mirrored foil, steel

26.7 x 22.3 x 155.44 m

Installation view, Turbine Hall, Tate Modern, (The Unilever Series)

Courtesy of the artist, Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York, and Neugerriemschneider, Berlin © Olafur Eliasson

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Saltz, Jerry, 19 –

Jerry Saltz : Seeing Out Louder, Art Criticism 2003–2009

— 1st ed.

p. cm.

ISBN-13: 978-1-55595-319-5

1. etc. etc.etc.

I. etc., etc., etc. II. Title. III. Title: Seeing Out Louder, Art Criticism 2003–2009

etc. 2009

etc.

etc.

As Always, to the Art World

Thank you to Jonathan Gams for asking me to do this book and making the experience so fun, easy, and exciting. Special thanks to Michelle Quigley for her elegant book design, and to Anne Bei Golden and Liz Riviere at Hard Press Editions for helping to see this process through.

Thank you to the ever excellent writer/editor/curator Vince Aletti for hiring me at the *Village Voice* in 1998. He changed my life. Jared Holt changed my life again in 2007 when he asked me to be the art critic for *New York Magazine* and so has *New York Magazine's* brilliant editor, Adam Moss. My editor at *New York*, Chris Bonanos, is the best editor I've ever worked with.

Thank you to my friends and colleagues who are such amazing sounding boards and moral boosters. You know who you are, including: Carroll Dunham, Laurie Simons, Jackie Saccoccio, Peter Schjeldahl, Carol Becker, David Shirey, Walter Robinson, Clarissa Dalrymple (whom I can never repay), Julian Lethbridge, Francesco Bonami, Laura Hoptman, Massiliano Gioni, Ali Subotnick, Cheryl Donegan, Scott Rothkopf, Rebecca Wilson, Mark Rapport, Cornelius Tittel, Amanda Sharp, Anne Bass, Sarah Thornton, Robin Cembalest, Ann Philbin, Dave Hickey, Kim Mitchell, Betsy Ennis, Matthew Slotover, Oliver Wasow, Matthew Weinstein, David Colman, Collier Schorr, Linda Norden, and Ken Johnson.

Finally, to the love of my life, Roberta Smith, the best art critic alive and the best female critic ever. She made me the writer and the person I am, sneaked me some of my best ideas, and has given me a life I would never have dreamed possible and I wouldn't trade for the world.

Table of Contents

Foreword

Jerry Saltz	15
-------------------	----

Introduction

Bow Wow and the Big Meow.....	17
-------------------------------	----

Section I / Art in Babylon

Permanent Difference and the Changing Same.....	23
---	----

Can art change the world? Where are we now?

Seeing Dollar Signs	31
---------------------------	----

Is the art market making us stupid?

Or are we making it stupid?

Biennial Culture	35
------------------------	----

The art world parties down.

Where the Girls Aren't	39
------------------------------	----

In the art world, the prime real estate is still a men's club.

Silence of the Dealers43
Chris Ofili loves this work.

The Ambassadors49
An American critic's (royal) epiphany.

Feeding Frenzy.....57
Are art fairs the triumph of the corporate avant-garde?

Hammered.....61
Auctions are like stripteases, enticing the audience
with what's just out of reach.

The Art World Jungle.....65
The Chelsea art district, David Zwirner, and the new fall season.

Dire Diary69
The gushy artforum.com items read like
the *Us* magazine of art criticism.

Inky Depths.....73
Celebrating art and artists, magazine-style.

Frieze After the Freeze77
An art critic witnesses the beginning of the end.

Section II / Institutional Babylon

How to Rebuild the Guggenheim.....83
The museum's next director, whoever he or she is, has to do one
thing first: dump Thomas Krens.

At the Crossroads87
Under a new director: will the Whitney's future be brighter than
its recent past?

Return Engagement91
Is the Museum of Modern Art already running out of space?

A Modest Proposal95
Some ideas for a better Museum of Modern Art.

One Year After	99
Is the Museum of Modern Art becoming a madman who thinks it is king?	

Section III / Back to Babylon

Babylon Rising	105
Reasons to be cheerful in the new season.	
Super Babylon.....	109
The new season in New York begins with a super paradigm.	
The Battle for Babylon.....	113
More artists, gallerists and curators are taking matters into their own hands in New York.	
No Next Chelsea	117
Survival of the fittest.	
Poor Memorial	123
The Pseudo-solutions for the World Trade Center Memorial.	
After Shock	127
An optimistic reassessment of the British art scene.	

Section IV / Ruminations and Resolutions

The Richter Resolution	133
Calling for an end to a fashionable trend in painting.	
Idol Thoughts	137
The glory of <i>Fountain</i> , Marcel Duchamp's ground-breaking "moneybags piss pot."	
Night at the Museum.....	141
Wanting to have sex in a museum.	

Sale Away	145
Couldn't six Texas millionaires chip in and buy a group of Judds?	
Reaction Shot.....	149
Does John Currin live up to the hype?	
We Are Theirs	153
Sarah Morris' new film reverses Warhol's dictum about 15 minutes of fame.	
Invasion of the Sculpture Snatchers	157
Curators Shelly Bancroft and Peter Nesbett hold Cady Noland for ransom at Triple Candie.	
Not Buying It; "Not for Sale" at P.S. 1	161
When curators bite the hand that feeds and offend everyone in the process.	
Modern Gothic	165
Elusive, deluded, and chic, a new version of an old style takes a hold among young artists.	
Blotto, Meet Buzzed.....	169
The spirit of abandonment in "Drunk vs. Stoned."	
The Alchemy of Curating	173
Curating is a dark art, not a science.	
Termite Theory	181
Cutesy, craftsy, and unavoidable.	

Section V / Art in the Trenches: Gallery Reviews

Wasted Youth.....	187
A collaboration between superhot artists Dan Colen and Nate Lowman instantly looks dated.	
You Light Up My Life	191
Art market darling Terence Koh dances with skeletons and brightens the Whitney lobby.	

Sherman's March of Time	195
An artist comes of age.	
MoMA's Sex Change	199
The museum's Pipilotti Rist show cheekily feminizes a bastion of masculinity.	
Buona Serra	203
Mission accomplished: MoMA builds a museum for one of the big guys; heckava job, MoMA.	
It's Boring at the Top.....	209
A master of optical buzz goes flat.	
The Emperor's New Paintings.....	213
Is Damien Hirst more than hype, hubris and money?	
Thunderstruck	217
Shocked and awed at the Great Salt Lake.	
Cash, Clowns, and Carnival	219
Martin Eder and Cosima von Bonin, two German artists in Chelsea.	
Two Coats of Painting.....	223
Tony Shafrazi, the man who tagged <i>Guernica</i> , tries another way of superimposing new art and old.	
Currin Events.....	227
John Currin's money shots: lasciviousness, voyeurism and the inner life of paintings.	
The Seventh Circle	231
Nan Goldin is giving us the moment before she will turn to ash.	
Queen of Night	235
Kara Walker's language of tattered words and shadow plays.	
Charnel Knowledge.....	239
Carroll Dunham's wounded beasts get medieval on their own asses.	
Hell Bent.....	243
Tamy Ben-Tor's Dostoyevskian gallery of contemporary lost souls, louts, louses and ignoramuses.	

Killing Fields	247
Thomas Hirschhorn, art and the unbearable image.	
Clusterfuck Aesthetics	251
A manic-depressive panic attack in the face of profound information overload.	
Mourning Glory	255
British artist Steve McQueen engages with history both as a participant and an outsider.	
She's Not There	259
Sharon Lockhart's "Pine Flat" photographs, all subject matter and no content.	
Anal-Retentive Warrior Princess	263
Sarah Sze's magical, maniacal ways of looking at structure and space.	
Heaps and Consequences	267
Tara Donovan's undulating, otherworldly river valley.	
Dealing with Race.....	271
Ellen Gallagher's work is inventive, eye-catching and kitschy.	
Mr. System and Dr. Death	275
Luc Tuymans renders everything though the same shadowy scrim.	
Leviathan	279
Matthew Barney's <i>Drawing Restraint 9</i> touches on everything.	
Female Trouble	283
A plea for Lisa Yuskavage to return to her dirty-secret past.	
Hard Attack.....	287
Critics clash on painters Christopher Wool and David Reed.	
Not Just Hot Air.....	291
Elephant Man.....	295
Douglas Gordon and Minnie at Gagosian.	

The Icon and the Iconoclast	299
One of the best shows of the season—Rudolf Stingel at Paula Cooper Gallery—takes place at an empty gallery.	
The Parallax View	303
Mark Grotjahn undoes the insanity of a single perspective.	
The Artist Who Fell to Earth	307
Janine Antoni, riveting events and inert objects.	
Vito de Milo	311
Radical work from the 1960s and 70s by Body Art pioneer Vito Acconci.	
Thinking Outside the Box.....	315
Trisha Donnelly’s art is difficult—and electric.	
Only the Lonely	319
Richer, riskier new work from photographer Katy Grannan.	
Desolation Row	323
Gregor Schneider turns a white cube into a black hole.	
Both Sides Now	327
Paul Chan’s apocalyptic landscapes.	
Critiqueus Interruptus.....	331
Andrea Fraser replaces sensationalism with adoration.	
A Thorn Tree in the Garden.....	335
Andrea Zittel is Robinson Crusoe and Mad Max by way of Walden Pond, St. Augustine, and Greenpeace.	
The Sublime is Us	339
In new work by Klara Liden, the unfathomable feelings of being alive.	
Reasons Without Meaning	343
Neo Rauch’s contradictory, hallucinogenic spaces.	
Gypsy	347
Amy Sillman, a nervy painter who loves mid-century abstraction.	
Head Case	351
Jim Nutt, a key member of Chicago’s Hairy Who.	

Section VI / The Big Cats of Babylon

The Tempest.....	357
Jackson Pollock's acts of aesthetic desperation.	
Sacred Monster	361
Was Francis Bacon one of the greatest painters of the 20th century or just a fascinating mess?	
Art As Salvation.....	369
Arshile Gorky drew his way to greatness.	
Our Picasso?	373
Robert Rauschenberg draws a line in the psychic sands of American sexual and cultural values.	
Hell Holes.....	379
A survey of Lee Bontecou's sexual, terrestrial, and celestial work at MoMA.	
Architectural Follies	383
A fiasco from Diller, Scofidio, and the Whitney.	
Snakes in a Box.....	387
Brice Marden has breath-taking ways of making things.	
Relentless Tempest	391
Elizabeth Murray's distinctive place in American Art.	
Restoration Drama	395
Daniel Buren's Guggenheim installation turns the museum into a kind of sex machine.	

Section VII / A Short History of Babylon

New York Canon: Forty Years of New York Minutes	401
---	-----

Section VIII / Talking in Babylon

Jerry Saltz interviewed by Irving Sandler	425
---	-----