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### Best Non-Museum Art Goings-On of 2009

Posted by *Andrea K. Scott*

There was no shortage of great museum surveys in 2009, from the shimmer of Bonnard's late paintings at the Met to the shenanigans of Martin Kippenberger at MOMA. And "Marcel Duchamp: Étant donnés," which just closed at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, will permanently top my bucket-has-a-hole-in-it list of the shows I wish I'd seen, but didn't. Back in New York—but far from museum mile—art continued to thrive in the trenches. Here's an alphabetical line-up of some of what got my attention:

#### **Troy Brauntuch, at Petzel**

One of the riskiest shows I saw this year was also among the most generous. Brauntuch pulled back the curtain on his art-making process, exhibiting his archive—sketches, rubber stamps, photographs, clippings—alongside his paintings. Full disclosure, which might've debunked a wizard, only served to strengthen his powers.

#### **Carroll Dunham, at Gladstone**

Painting about painting, painting about sex, painting about the dilemma of painting about sex. Not to mention painting about "Étant donnés." Dunham's brainy, beautiful canvases have to be the most eye-popping objects ever made in a dialogue with Duchamp's anti-retinal art.

#### **East Side Story**

West Chelsea may still be the epicenter of the New-York art world, but the number of spaces run by the young and experimentally-minded on the East Side, downtown, is now close to fifty. West of Tenth Avenue, it's easy to feel trapped in a gated community. But off the grid, across town, galleries crop up next to discounted underwear stores and bodegas, from the wilds of South Chinatown (James Fuentes) to Frank Stella's former studio on a residential block of East 9th Street. (Taxter & Spengemann). Get your feet wet on Orchard Street, home to some whip-smart galleristas—Rachel Uffner, Lisa Cooley, Nicelle Beauchene—and the curatorially adroit Miguel Abreu. While you're at it, get a pickle at Guss'.

#### **Jutta Koether's Best-Of List, in Artforum**

Artforum is, for better (critical perspicacity) or worse (incomprehensible jargon), the gold standard of year-end lists in the

art world; no publication casts a wider net, soliciting picks from artists, as well as critics and curators. The German-born painter Jutta Koether wins a place in my heart for her wildly passionate, avowedly feminist refusal to quantify: “As a woman artist I feel I must reject the “best of” register. I wish not to think about who or what is No. 1 but to expand it violently: The very best thing? Art. The very best thing? Life. Citizenship. Renewal. Things that make things alive... . Now figure out how to stand in that fucked-up-world-commodity-space as a painting.” Brava!

### **“Ree Morton: At the Still Point of the Turning World,” at the Drawing Center**

Morton’s life story reads like a Hollywood melodrama (Navy wife leaves family for art school, launches promising career, dies tragically young in a car crash), but her art was pure poetry. And I’m not just talking about the T.S. Eliot poem that lent the show its title. With his ingenious selection of drawings and “drawings” (irresistible, pocket-size wooden constructions) curator Joao Ribas tempered Morton’s whimsy, which we expected, with a post-minimalist fascination with systems, which was a surprise.

### **Performa 09, Seemingly Everywhere**

“Overwhelmed is the new black.” So one friend summed up the torrent of performance-art let loose on the city by the indefatigable art historian RoseLee Goldberg: more than a hundred events unfolded in eighty venues over twenty-one days. I didn’t see enough (who did?) and what I caught ran the gamut from fascinating (Omer Fast’s politically-charged game of telephone, played by pros like Jill Clayburgh and Lili Taylor) to excruciating (Candice Breitz’s theatrical folly, in two acts, of four sets of twins “waiting for Godiva”). Still, I’m already jonesing for Performa 11.

### **“Picasso: Mosqueteros,” at Gagosian**

I’ll admit it. I was taking a break from Picasso. Something about the crushing weight of all that genius. So it was with a surly sense of obligation that I saw this show the first time. The second, third, and fourth times? Chalk them up to the sheer bad-ass brilliance of an unstoppable master at the ferocious end of his days.

### **Sara Greenberger Rafferty, at Uffner**

In this conjuring act of a solo show—one of the most memorable debuts of the season— photographs became watercolors and comedy turned grotesque. Who knew that an image of Goldie Hawn, let alone one of a rubber chicken, could emanate a transubstantial mystery worthy of the shroud of Turin?

### **Keywords**

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