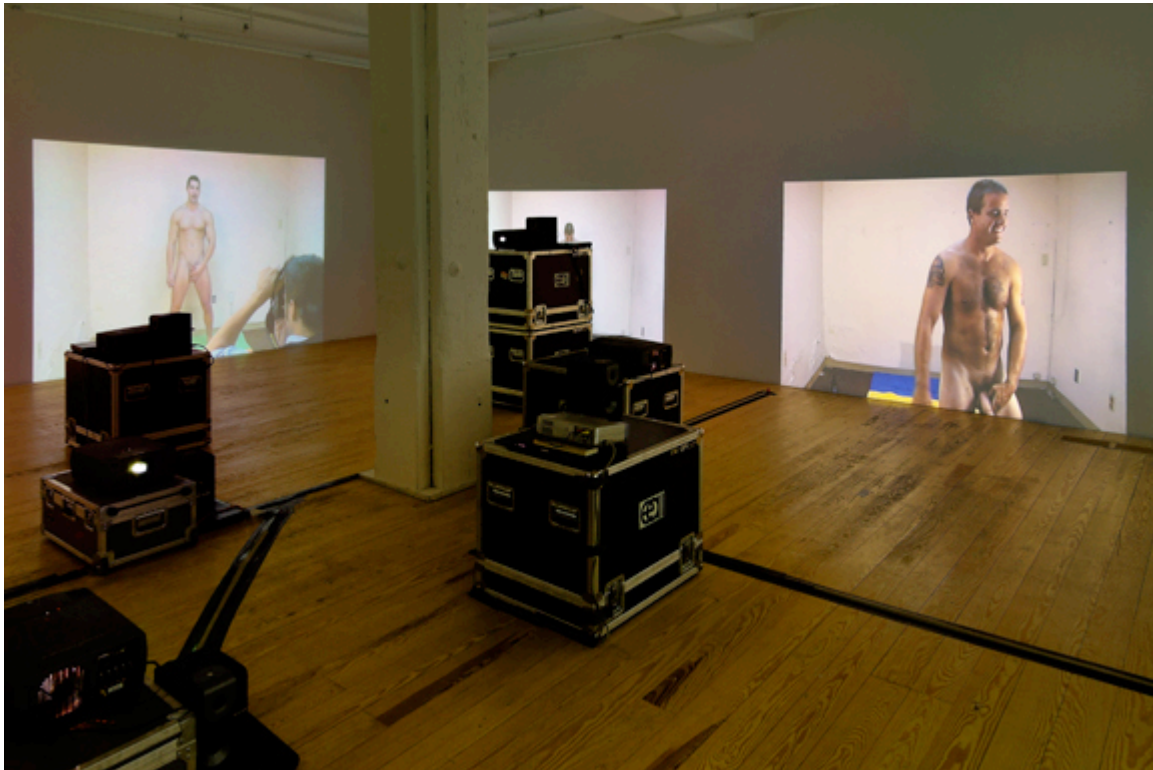


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Unearthed classics and reinvented forms: The best Art of 2009
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JERRY SALTZ Senior Art Critic for New York Magazine

In 2009, change came to the art world; batons were passed. Sculpture moved away from room-filling installations to explore the substrata of recombining strategies, appropriation, and found objects in individual works. Painting became more pliable, viable, and visual. Video explored the world as a living specimen, looking into culture, ethnography, anthropology, and sociology. Performance went beyond its own belly button to look at the belly buttons of the world. Meanwhile, mid-career older artists and underknowns made their presence felt. The Metropolitan Museum had a yearlong field day of rotating shows; the Guggenheim started to shake off the horror of twenty years under the recently retired Thomas Krens. If audiences can handle the uncertainty of not knowing what's next in art, the coming year will be rich indeed. In the meantime, let's celebrate what just passed.



Sterling Ruby: The Masturbators, Foxy Production

Ruby's randy show featured nine large video wall projections of buff naked men masturbating, each alone in the same scuzzy cubicle. A few of the subjects fail to ejaculate; one uses a girlie magazine to get going; another gives a double thumbs-up on completion; another stretches forward and licks himself clean. The Masturbators is an amazing analog for art's exhibitionism, voyeurism, neediness, weirdness, and ways of doing things in public that you do in private. It mixed Nauman's ideas about video, Acconci's ways with sex, De Sade's aggression, male sexuality, the visual, and the vulnerable.

FOXY PRODUCTION

623 W 27 ST NYC 10001 USA +1 212 239 2758, INFO@FOXYPRODUCTION.COM, WWW.FOXYPRODUCTION.COM