

'Mama always told me not to look into the eye of the sun / But mama, that's where the fun is' Bruce Springsteen

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Is put out
by art's
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ceremonies

J.J. Charlesworth:
Wonders why
we're burying
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in the past

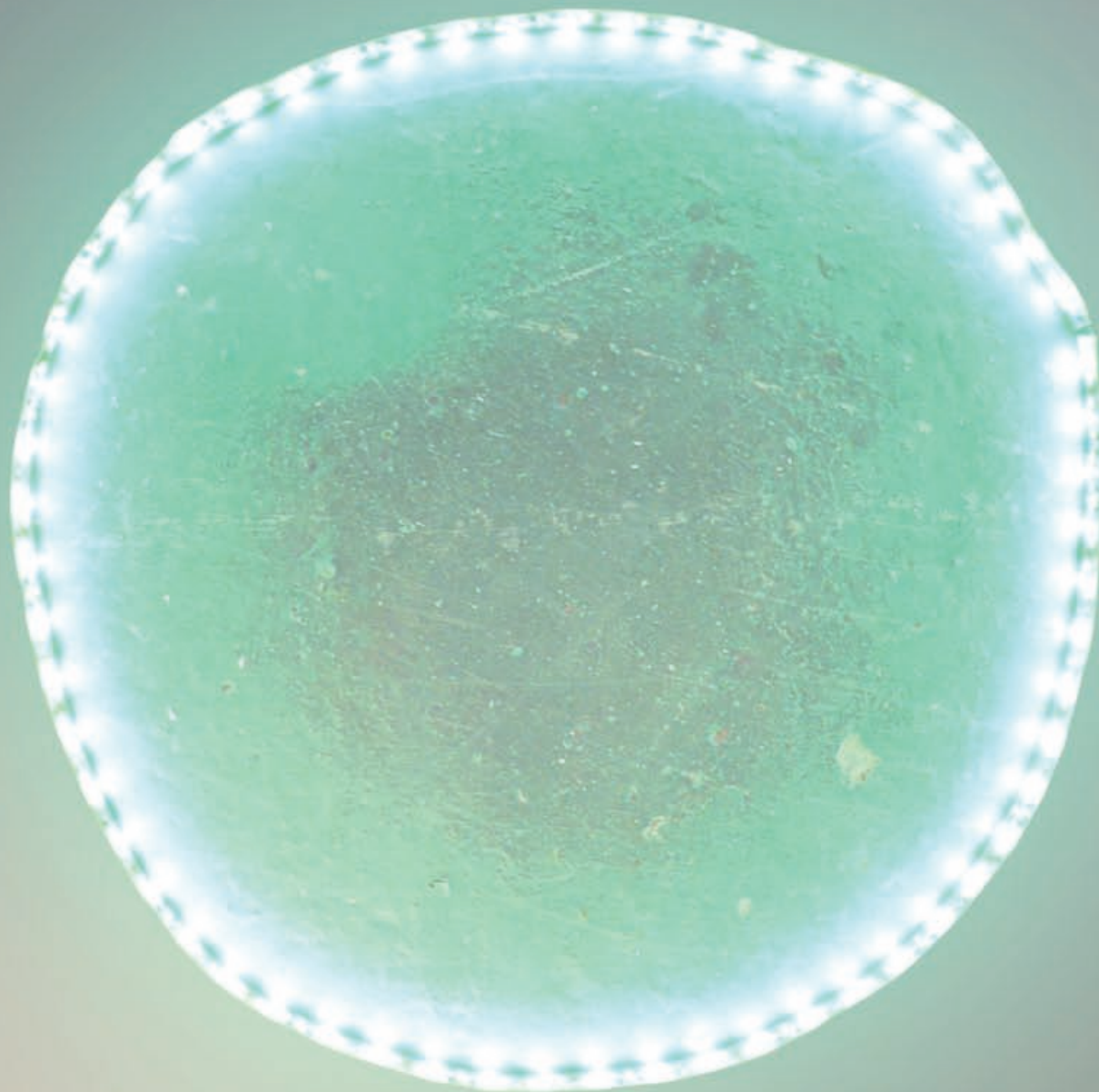
Brian Dillon:
Assesses the
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FUTURE GREATS

New stars for 2011



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Brigitte Waldach and Pliny the Elder

PARTY LIKE IT'S 1929

The 2010 Art Awards: What the New York Artworld Is Really Up To

LIFE IS A CABARET, at least for a reduced group of New York swells. Fresh off private and commercial flights from the art fairs in Miami, they catch sparkling glimpses of themselves in Guy Trebay's *New York Times* society columns (emitting bon mots like real-estate mogul Aby Rosen's gem that fair shopping helps megacollectors 'socialize with people at their same level') while encouraging masses of hangers-on to share the good life the old-fashioned way: vicariously.

Despite the fact that we know that art society – like the rest of the country – has recently split unequally into haves and have-nots, it can be hard to figure out which party to find more loathsome in this twenty-first-century *Gatsby*-inspired fandango: the frantic joiners with noses pressed against the glass, or the fat cats partying like it's 1929. To borrow a maxim from the late Susan Sontag, the artworld, like the real world, can be parcelled according to the following formula: 10 percent of its population is selfish, no matter what, and 10 percent is empathetic. The remaining 80 percent – elbow-throwing, eye-gouging strivers to a person – can be moved in any direction. This helps explain the pathetic fuss kicked up about a recent pseudo art event dolled up as a Hollywood-style prize show. Conceptualised, fetishised and directed by droll art-ironist Rob Pruitt, December's 2010 Art Awards mobilised the artworld's cutthroat nine tenths for yet another bandwagonesque pastiche of Marie Antoinette. If published accounts are to be believed, there was more fun in watching reruns of *Saved by the Bell*.

Heathers-like in its rehearsed contempt for anything save 'popularity', the second iteration of this ill-conceived fundraiser to benefit the Guggenheim Museum and White Columns proved, like much auction-house funny business



ideas from Andy Warhol's 1963 *Sleep* to dangling David Blaine over the Thames in a plastic box). Duplicitous even with itself, this format was soon trumped (by design?) by the New York artworld's dog-eat-dog social Darwinism. According to Artinfo's Andrew Goldstein, 'This time around, the subtleties of this outrageous burlesque of an event may have been lost'. Quoting one of the many artists revolted by the proceedings, Goldstein recorded this unattributed complaint (because the artworld is self-censoring) in his quietly devastating piece: "I'm disgusted by this. I am a serious artist, I go to my studio every day and I make things. This is the last time you'll see me here."

words CHRISTIAN VIVEROS-FAUNE

today, to be a deflating embrace of middlebrow American culture. An event whose grossness is matched only by the cupidity of its invitees – guests were segregated and fed according to levels of wealth and success – the Art Awards pulverised in one night the record for 2010's most craven art show. Previously contested by Bravo's *Work of Art* and the New Museum's detestable exhibition *Skin Fruit*, Pruitt's art-as-celebrity-parade shindig is to art what the *Weekend at Bernie's* franchise has been to filmmaking – regular instalments of camp, corn and sight gags that predictably turn out both hackneyed and witless every time.

Styled according to conventional artworld wisdom, the 2009 Art Awards were originally conceived in the faux-facetious spirit of an 'artwork' (that convenient cover for shit

This sort of 'irony' about the artworld isn't irony any more – it's groupthink. Sophistry of the highest order, the Art Awards present the ideal Wikipedia illustration to accompany Fredric Jameson's definition of postmodernism as the cultural logic of late capitalism – with Kylie Minogue's hindquarters and James Franco's grey teeth thrown in for good measure. Neither irony nor satire – for the latter, look no further than Jon Stewart's 'advocacy satire' and its efficacy in shaming congressional Republicans into passing the 9/11 First Responders health bill – what events like Rob Pruitt's Art Awards provide is the oldest excuse in the book for pompous venality, à la mode stupidity, and having cake and eating it, too. I hope they choke on it.