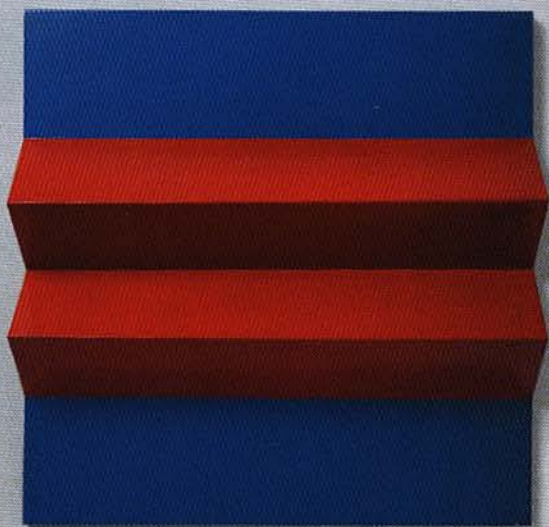




# Scott Rothkopf

A SENIOR EDITOR OF ARTFORUM, SCOTT ROTHKOPF IS AN ART HISTORIAN AND CRITIC. HE IS THE AUTHOR, MOST RECENTLY, OF "JEFF KOONS, PAINTER," PUBLISHED IN *JEFF KOONS: HULK ELVIS* (RIZZOLI, 2009).

Charlotte Posenenske, *Faltung (Fold)*, 1966, spray paint on aluminum, 29 1/2 x 29 1/2 x 5 1/2".



**1** **New York gallery flashback** Markets of all kinds got a bad rap this year, but New York's galleries bucked the broadsides with historical shows of such quality and focus they gave local museums a run for their dwindling money. The lion's share of attention went to well-deserving surveys like "Manzoni: A Retrospective" at Gagosian Gallery and "Zero in New York" at Sperone Westwater, but discerning smaller exhibitions abounded. L & M Arts presented "John Chamberlain: Early Years" and the exquisite "Philip Guston 1954–58," which served as a welcome counterbalance to the recent privileging of the artist's later cartoonish output. Mitchell-Innes & Nash brushed the cobwebs off the underestimated Allan D'Arcangelo and off marvelously encrusted Leon Kossoffs from the '50s and '60s, while Paula Cooper mounted a stately précis of David Novros's early work. There was a gorgeous selection of Charlotte Posenenske's fragile yet stern metal prototypes at Peter Freeman, Inc., and Skarstedt Gallery peeked behind the seams with "Barbara Kruger Pre-digital," a perfect history lesson for a generation in the thrall of purloined imagery and slick digital effects. Any one of these shows would have been a marvel, but taken together they reminded us that a surfeit of riches need not always be an embarrassment.

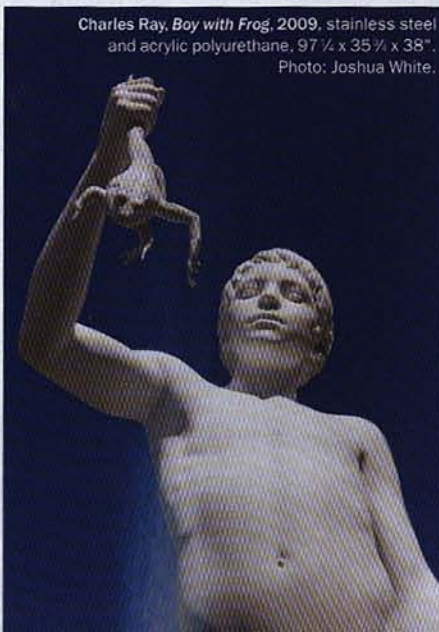


Marcel Duchamp, *Étant donnés*: 1° *la chute d'eau*, 2° *le gaz d'éclairage*... (Given: 1. The Waterfall, 2. The Illuminating Gas... ) (detail), 1946–66, mixed media, 95 1/2 x 70 x 49". © 2009 estate of Marcel Duchamp/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris.

**2** **"Marcel Duchamp: *Étant donnés*"** (Philadelphia Museum of Art) Mountains of exegesis have piled atop Duchamp's eternally beguiling *Étant donnés*, 1946–66, but nothing has been more illuminating of the artist's mad process than this tailored look at his preparatory studies and related ephemera, much of it previously unseen. Standard lore tells of the master's public renunciation of art in favor of chess, while he secretly toiled for twenty years on his final chef d'oeuvre. And toil he did! This faceted gem of an exhibition, organized by Michael R. Taylor, brought to vivid, poignant life the hardware-store rummaging and continual puttering of an artist who had supposedly forsaken—yet never escaped—the thrill of the studio and the hand.

**3** **Charles Ray** This was a banner year for that deliriously methodical tortoise of a sculptor Charles Ray. First, Matthew Marks Gallery in New York presented an understated yet stunning trio of 1980s works, including *Ink Line*, 1987, which magically distills several histories of sculpture, to say nothing of institutional critique, into its glistening, attenuated form. At François Pinault's Punta della Dogana in Venice, Ray unveiled *Boy with Frog*, 2009, an eight-foot-tall alabaster hallucination of a child staring intently at the amphibian he dangles by its hind leg. That the animal is more minutely rendered than its captor suggests the intensity of the child's absorption in his prize and his obvious obliviousness to his own lack of clothing. The work soon became a favorite spot for souvenir photos by tourists who seemed equally unembarrassed in the presence of this sensitive if slightly creepy monument to innocence and wonder.

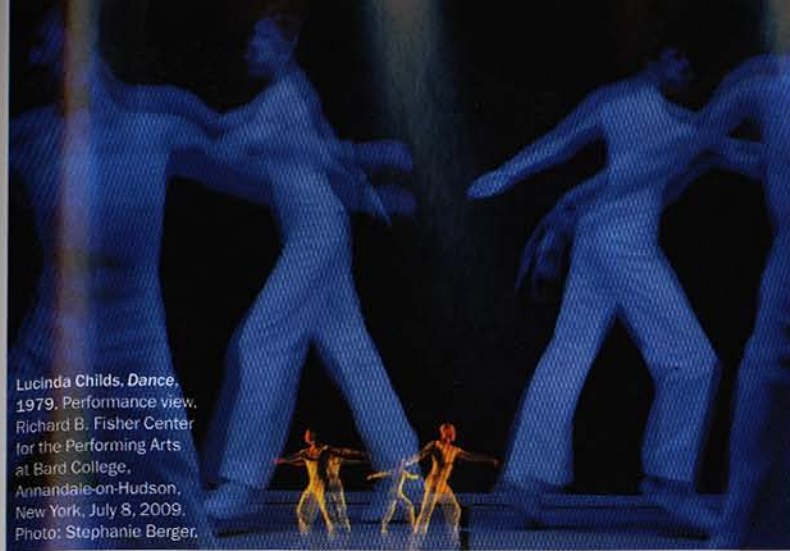
Charles Ray, *Boy with Frog*, 2009, stainless steel and acrylic polyurethane, 97 1/4 x 35 1/4 x 38". Photo: Joshua White.



**4** **Aretha's hat** If Charles Ray's oversize epebe wins my vote for sculpture of the year, the runner-up would have to be Aretha Franklin's BeDazzled inauguration hat—a staggeringly hypertrophied piece of millinery that garnered reams of press, loving spoofs, and one hundred thousand Facebook friends. Although it threatened to overshadow her face (and everyone else on the dais), Aretha's exuberant headgear is the enduring emblem of a high point in our nation's optimism and pride.

Aretha Franklin performing at the inauguration ceremony for President Barack Obama, Washington, DC, January 20, 2009. Photo: Jason Reed/Reuters.





Lucinda Childs, *Dance*, 1979. Performance view, Richard B. Fisher Center for the Performing Arts at Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York, July 8, 2009. Photo: Stephanie Berger.

**6** **New York's up-and-comers** Lest one think the city was beset by nostalgia in these unsettled times, three promising homegrown talents blossomed into maturity with breakthrough shows this year. At the Swiss Institute, Marlo Pascual presented her starkly funny mash-ups of thrift-store photographs and other found artifacts and flora, signaling the emergence of a smart, quirky vision. Alex Hubbard—playing Fischli & Weiss or an unhinged Jessica Stockholder—exhibited a pair of ambitious videos at Team that documented the making and unmaking of teetering sculptures and sprawling assemblages. And Josh Brand unveiled a new body of photographs at Art Basel Art Statements and Herald Street in London. His small, mostly cameraless pictures played to the ongoing fascination with abstract photography, but did so less with high-minded theorizing than with a modest sense of discovery, a keen feeling for color, and an elegant, nimble touch.



Marlo Pascual, *Untitled*, 2009. mixed media. Installation view, Swiss Institute, New York.

**5** **New York dance flashback** Just as local galleries cast a sharp eye on the past, three of the city's most venerable dance companies resurrected remarkable and seldom-seen collaborations between choreographers and artists from the late '70s and early '80s. The year 1979 came blazing back with Trisha Brown's Rauschenberg-designed *Glacial Decoy* at BAM and Lucinda Childs's *Dance*, restaged at Bard College and the Joyce Theater. Set to a Philip Glass score, the taut, limpid movements of Childs's dancers unspooled behind a scrim on which was projected Sol LeWitt's film of the piece from thirty years ago, prompting a dizzying convergence of vertiginous perspectives and temporal dissociations. Meanwhile, the Kitchen revived Karole Armitage's landmark punk ballets of the '80s with vintage sets and decor by Charles Atlas, Jeff Koons, and David Salle. Armitage's high kicks and lascivious energy felt dated in the best possible way—like the contents of a time capsule freshly opened.



View of Josh Smith, "Currents," 2009, Luhring Augustine, New York.

**7** **Peter Doig** (Gavin Brown's Enterprise and Michael Werner Gallery, New York) Historians should know better than to speak of an artist's "transitional" work before seeing where the so-called transition winds up. Yet the enduring fascination of Doig's double-venue show was not so much the impact of any one pared-back picture but the feeling of an artist at the height of his powers giving himself up, ceasing to be the painter we had come to know. Rarely does one witness the brave metamorphosis that these sometimes debonair, sometimes struggling, but always searching canvases revealed.

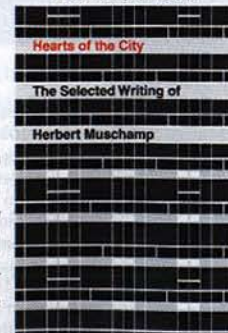
**8** **Josh Smith** (Luhring Augustine, New York) While Peter Doig reduced his painterly vocabulary, Josh Smith ramped his up, nearly to the breaking point. He melded digital photography, computer editing, color printing, silk-screening, and fat squishy gestures on canvases that looked like they were in the process of masticating and regurgitating themselves. Dumb, gutsy images of fish and leaves served as irritants in this quickly flowing image stream, but the connoisseur's attempt to cull the wheat from the chaff only proved how necessary all the parts were to the relentlessly churning whole.

Joan Miró, *Rope and People*, 1935, oil on cardboard mounted on wood with coil of rope, 41 1/4 x 29 1/4". © 2009 Successió Miró/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris.



Peter Doig, *House of Flowers (see you there)*, 2007–2009, oil on canvas, 118 x 78 1/4".

Cover of *Hearts of the City: The Selected Writing of Herbert Muschamp* (Knopf).



**9** **Hearts of the City: The Selected Writing of Herbert Muschamp** (Knopf) The late Herbert Muschamp was both an inspiration and a gadfly to all those whose feelings for architecture ran high. His unstinting advocacy for a generation of seismic talents and for the cause of big ideas and challenging buildings in the face of petty bureaucrats and crass commercialism remains unmatched in the past quarter century—as does the erudite ebullience of the voice emanating from these engrossing pages.

**10** **"Joan Miró: Painting and Anti-Painting 1927–1937"** (Museum of Modern Art, New York) Miró's cataclysmic achievement tends to be obscured by the treacly lyricism propagated on posters and postcards of his work. This exhibition, expertly organized and installed by Anne Umland, recaptured the vulgarity of Miró's pop-cultural samplings and the savagery of his sculptural attacks on that plane we call painting. □

