



THE INDEPENDENT VOICE OF THE VISUAL ARTS

Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, New York

Volume 33 No. 2 November/December 2018

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50 YEARS OF CHICAGO

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\$8 U.S.

New Art Examiner

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www.newartexaminer.org

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The New Art Examiner is indexed in:
Art Bibliographies Modern, Art Full Text &
Art Index Retrospective and Zetoc

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WANTED: WRITERS

The **New Art Examiner** is looking for writers interested in the visual arts in any major metropolitan area in the U.S. You would start with short reviews of exhibition in your area. Later, longer essays on contemporary visual art issues could be accepted.

Please send a sample of your writing (no more than a few pages) to:

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The New Art Examiner is a publication whose purpose is to examine the definition and transmission of culture in our society; the decision-making processes within museums and schools and the agencies of patronage which determine the manner in which culture shall be transmitted; the value systems which presently influence the making of art as well as its study in exhibitions and books; and, in particular, the interaction of these factors with the visual art milieu.

EDITORIAL POLICY

As the *New Art Examiner* has consistently raised the issues of conflict of interest and censorship, we think it appropriate that we make clear to our readers the editorial policy we have evolved since our inception:

1. No writer may review an exhibition originated or curated by a fellow faculty member or another employee, or any past or present student, from the institution in which they are currently employed. The *New Art Examiner* welcomes enthusiastic and sincere representation, so the editor can assign such an exhibition to other writers without the burden of conflict of interest.
2. There shall be no editorial favor in response to the purchase of advertisements.
3. The *New Art Examiner* welcomes all letters to the Editor and guarantees publishing. Very occasionally letters may be slightly edited for spelling or grammar or if the content is considered to be libellous.
4. The *New Art Examiner* does not have an affiliation with any particular style or ideology or social commitment that may be expressed or represented in any art form. All political, ethical and social commentary is welcome. The *New Art Examiner* has actively sought diversity. All opinions are solely of the writer. This applies equally to editorial staff when they pen articles under their own name.
5. The general mandate of the *New Art Examiner* is well defined in the statement of purpose above.

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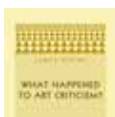
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To Our Readers

The editorial staff of the New Art Examiner regrets our oversight in not including any female art critics in last issue's introduction. Roberta Smith of The New York Times should have been noted, among others. We tried to find any photo of the New Art Examiner's co-founder, Jane Addams Allen, to no avail.

Like many other areas, art criticism has been traditionally dominated by men. But as the contents of our recent issues have shown, that has started to change. We are sure that there are numerous female and non-white male art critics of more than local reputation that should be acknowledged. Therefore, we will be setting up a special page on our website (newartexaminer.org) to list these writers. We call on you, our readers, to help us lift up their voices by adding to this list. For a person you would like to have included, please send us the name, photo (if possible), and a link to a sample of the person's writing to nae.segard@comcast.net. We would like to have this open-ended list up on our website by early January, 2019.

The Editorial Staff

50 Years of Chicago Contributions to Art and Architecture: Introduction

Fifty short years ago, Chicago was seen as a relative backwater in the arts. Over the past half-century, though, the city has blazed to the forefront in the fields of theatre, music, food and Art. New York remains the center of the art world but it may now be looking over its shoulder.

In the 1960s, Chicago's art world, by comparison to New York's, was very slow. As Rhona Hoffman, noted contemporary art dealer, has written, "There were only a handful of galleries in Chicago showing contemporary art. The great Chicago collectors bought their art in Europe and New York. Things changed in 1967 when the Museum of Contemporary Art opened."

Things changed even more when a motley group of six artists, called the Hairy Who formed. Building on the efforts of Surrealists and the prior Monster Roster, the Hairy Who began exhibiting at the Hyde Park Art Center in 1966. The art press saw their work as an outré example of art from Chicago and a direct attack on New York abstraction.

Over the next half-century, Chicago has been the art breeding ground for the outsider art movement, the art fair phenomenon, graphic novelists like Chris Ware and advances and reevaluations of Black artists from AfriCOBRA to Theaster Gates and Kerry James Marshall.

There is an air of excitement and new energy coursing through Chicago and its art scene. While the once-solid art community of artists and not-for-profit institutions is no more, a rich variety of diverse voices and DIY spaces is taking shape that will determine the direction that the city pursues in future decades. *The New Art Examiner* will be watching and reporting on all these exciting developments. We invite you to join us in following those efforts and seeing us as your credible source for the latest information.

The Editors



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1960s

The Hairy Who?: The Ones Who Started it All

by Nathan Worchester

Two years before the 1968 Democratic National Convention—three years after a young Bernie Sanders was arrested in 1963 at a South Side protest—while Claire Zeisler was weaving and knotting fiber to minimal fanfare—just as Henry Darger affixed his 10,000th cut-out cherub to a watercolor backdrop in his darkened apartment to the distant accompaniment of Richard Nickel’s pickaxe—the Hairy Who sprouted up at Don Baum’s Hyde Park Art Center.

Educated at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and associated with a larger set known as the Chicago Imagists, the Hairy Who (not to be confused with The Who, the Guess Who, or New York pop art) were unmistakably a product of the aesthetic, psychological and political forces unleashed during the ‘60s.

And yet “Hairy Who? 1966-1969,” an ongoing survey exhibition currently at the Art Institute, feels remarkably timely. At a moment of radical conflict within our own culture, the works of Jim Nutt, Gladys Nilsson, Suellen Rocca, Art Green, Karl Wirsum, and Jim Falconer demonstrate how artists can respond to strange times without losing themselves to convention, impersonal irony, or, worse yet, some sort of narrowly-defined ideology.

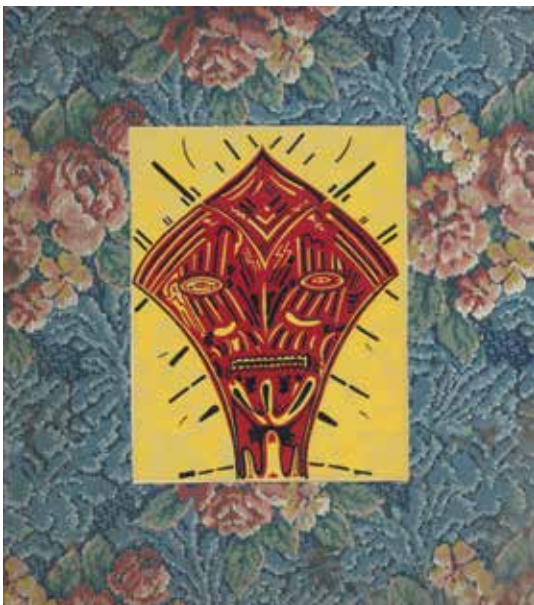
Nutt, Nilsson et al. all have their own things to say and their own ways of saying them. Still, there are commonalities within the group. Their pieces are usually funny, sometimes angry, and unabashedly sexual. In general, they do justice to the spirit of their age without sacrificing their individual points of view or down-to-earth Chicago-ness.

Though the Hairy Who’s output may superficially resemble pop art, their mode of engagement with popular culture distinguishes them from the likes of Warhol and Lichtenstein. Chicago doesn’t really *do* clinical detachment, and neither do its artists. Nutt’s cartoon-influenced “Officer Doodit” paintings, for example, reflect a playful give-and-take across the arts; better that than another humorless highbrow dissection of popular forms. Green’s *Occupational Hazards* seems like a close cousin of Bill Plympton’s efflorescent animations. Meanwhile, Nutt’s exuberant *PFFFFPHTT* brings to mind the frenetic line work of cartoonist John “Derf” Backderf.

Speaking of *PFFFFPHTT*, it is one of many pieces that are best understood within the context of the times. The “wet bombs” being launched from the face’s anus-like aperture register as a kind of Yippie-ish burlesque

(Left) Jim Falconer, *Untitled*, 1968. (Right) Suellen Rocca, *Bare Shouldered Beauty and the Pink Creature*, 1965.

Images courtesy of the Art Institute of Chicago.





(Above) Gladys Nilsson, *The Great War of the Wonder Women*, no date.



(Right) Art Green, *Consider the Options, Examine the Facts, Apply the Logic* (originally titled *The Undeniable Logician*), 1965.

Images courtesy of the Art Institute of Chicago.

of the very real bombs being dropped on North Vietnam during Operation Rolling Thunder.

Along similar lines, Green's *Consider the Options, Examine the Facts, Apply the Logic* scores a direct hit on the hyper-analytical Establishment attitude epitomized by ColdWarrior Robert McNamara. Along with Green's civil engineer father (insert leftist-with-Daddy-issues joke here), McNamara served as the model for the seated figure in the painting. In retrospect, the late '60s really were the twilight of the Organization Man. Appropriately enough, in Green's painting, the underlying base on which McNamara rests is collapsing.

Green's painting achieves an odd unity between the (visually) logical and illogical, reinforcing the piece's underlying themes and recalling Cubist experimentation with perspective without being crudely imitative of it. McNamara/Green Sr. is a data-driven idealist attempting to impose order on a chaotic world; even his shadow is three-dimensional. Importantly, however, its three-dimensionality conflicts with that of the speech bubble overhead and of other objects in the painting. As with the Hairy Who themselves, perspective and logic give way to perspectives (refreshing) and logics (less refreshing than troubling).

Viewed from 2018, certain other features of the Hairy Who's drawings and paintings intentionally or unintentionally recall a bygone Zeitgeist. By 1966, psychoanalysis had reached a zenith of popularity and

scientific credibility among the United States' cultural elite. It is possible, if at times speculative, to observe imagery, forms, and processes influenced by psychoanalysis or psychology in the works on display.

The inky shadows in Wirsum's *Untitled (Study for Broken Balloon Series)* resemble nothing so much as Rorschach blots. The hair of Nutt's *Wiggly Woman* has a similar Rorschachian quality. Less speculatively, Nutt's and Rocca's pieces often amount to an externalized thought process, the thinker shuffling or sprinting through that well-trafficked intersection of urban anomie and ambient young person horniness. Pretty universal, pretty true, and, thus, pretty effective. Incidentally, Rocca's later pieces such as *Bare Shouldered Beauty* are more effective in this respect than her sketchy early contributions.

Nilsson's comes close to free association in *Untitled (Reach)*, *The Floating Audience*, and other works, offering her own window onto the relation between psychological processes and artistic creation. A caption for Nilsson's *Two Ladies* provides additional context: "Unlike her husband, Jim Nutt, who created preparatory drawings to guide his painting, Nilsson worked spontaneously directly on the painting, first delineating her figure's outlines and then sealing them behind a monochromatic background." Nilsson's cartoony ink or acrylic figures flow into and out of each other, creating a weightless, densely human world all her own.



(Left) Jim Nutt, *Untitled*, 1966. (Right) .Karl Wirsum *Screamin' J Hawkins*, 1968. Images courtesy of the Art Institute of Chicago.

The literal marriage of Nutt and Nilsson points up another distinguishing feature of the Hairy Who and of Chicago more generally: namely, a willingness to enter into conversation or collaboration with each other or with others on the local scene. Green's *Questioning Tower* echoes (or was echoed by) the famous towers painted by Roger Brown, another SAIC-er and Chicago Imagist operating at the same time. Interestingly, Brown and Green collaborated on the 1973 piece, *Roger Brown and Art Green*, which is also in the Art Institute's collection, though not on display in this exhibition. In keeping with the Hairy Who's penchant for visual humor and puns, the two artists appear to have "stitched together" their respective halves of the artwork.

In short, "The Hairy Who? 1966-1969" is a clear success, and not just because it gives critics a jumping-off point for talking about the '60s. Its relatively simple chronological arrangement lets viewers trace the development of each artist and of the group as a whole. For example, in one of Falconer's untitled pieces, a grotesque collectress exclaims, "We just love your paintings." It therefore comes as no surprise that Falconer chose not to participate in all of the group's exhibitions.

"Hairy Who? 1966-1969" is on exhibit at the Art Institute of Chicago through January 6, 2019.

Nathan Worcester is a writer and assistant editor of the *New Art Examiner*. All comments welcome via nworcester@gmail.com.

1970S

Past Time Has Come Today

by Evan Carter

“The Time is Now!,” a new exhibit at the Smart Museum of Art, invites viewers to take a deep dive into the history of modern art that unfolded locally on Chicago’s South Side. The museum sits on the University of Chicago campus and, under the new direction of Alison Gass, seems to have become more conscious of its role in the Hyde Park community. “The Time is Now!” is a milestone exhibition that extends the cultural reach of this museum and the community it inhabits.

Without getting too deeply mired in institutionalized white guilt, it is worth noting that the University of Chicago has played a significant role in stifling the cultural growth of this community (and still does in some ways) in spite of its efforts to make up for it. So, it is understandable that those aware of, and who feel affected by, this history may have bittersweet emotions about this exhibition.

But the work should be elevated and celebrated, and the power of this project is far greater than any apology. Curator Rebecca Zorach is a historian of activist

Marion Perkins,
Standing Figure 1940’s.



Wadsworth Jarrell, *Neon Row*, 1958.

art from the 1960s and ‘70s (as well as 15th – 17th century European art) and has written on Chicago-based art projects and movements such as the Art & Soul art center and the AfriCOBRA collective. The aesthetic breadth of “The Time is Now!” is framed through this historical lens.

Two large galleries of the Smart are divided into roughly five rooms that address various topics relevant to the South Side’s artistic and cultural history. “Crisis in America,” “Gender and Feminism,” “The Street,” and “Black Publishing” are just a few of the many paths this exhibition invites viewers to take. It begins with examples of work that feel plucked from the art historical narrative of the mid-twentieth century. Upon entering, we are greeted with ventures into social realism, abstraction, and surrealism. There are even a few pre-1960 pieces, such as Marion Perkins’ *Standing Figure* dated from the late 1940s or a 1946 print by Elizabeth Catlett from a series titled “The Black Woman.”

The artists of this time were thoughtfully engaged in artistic modes of expression and material exploration. Wadsworth Jarrell’s *Neon Row* stands out as a masterful encapsulation of the vibrant nightlife on



Nathan Wright, *Bound*, 1971.

63rd Street in 1958. This atmospheric painting sits on the wall above a 1975 print by José Williams depicting the same street 17 years later, after the elevated train tracks were constructed. The juxtaposition of these two works speaks to the dramatic changes in the South Side during this time period.

Jarrell's free yet meticulous hand generates an image imbued with the richness and complexity of what he saw. Williams' print is stark and mechanically tight in its photographic rendering and limited tri-tone palette. The relationship between these two works embodies a sense of loss, transition, and cold acceptance.

The internal psychology of this bleak narrative is further explored with adjacent works like Nathan Wright's 1971 oil painting, *Bound*. Wright deployed surrealist methods and aesthetics to depict a male Black figure literally tied down by the overwhelming constraints of history, religion, politics, and modern-day consumerism. The symbols are heavy and abundant, but the scene is set in a spatial void, further emphasizing senses of isolation and futility.

Art historical tropes are used more overtly in Norman Parish Jr.'s *Gyrations of American Gothic*, which depicts the iconic Grant Wood figures as younger and Black. Curiously, the male figure foregrounds the female figure. She seems to be eyeing her supposed husband somewhat blankly. Perhaps it is suspicion, doubt, or maybe admiration. Parish is a loose painter, but the other Black figures wear clearer expressions of

fear, paranoia, and anger. An American flag divides them from a group of white figures that stand by blankly with little emotion other than contentment, implicating their privilege, apathy and complicity in an oppressively racist system.

The role of women and the feminist movement during this time begins to make its appearance in this exhibition with works by Carolyn Lawrence, Barbara Jones-Hogu, Christina Ramberg, and Suellen Rocca, to name a few. Jones-Hogu's contributions include *Black Men We Need You*, a 1971 screen print depicting a mother and two children with the words of the title bursting with colorful urgency in the background and foreground. Silhouetted faces in profile make up significant portions of the composition, as does more text in the lower right corner that reads 'Black Men, preserve our race. Leave white bitches alone.'

This loaded and urgent call to action speaks to the skepticism of white feminists held by Black women during this time. Though this division is mentioned in the wall text, it is less apparent in the inclusion of Chicago Imagists Suellen Rocca and Christina Ramberg, whose paintings grapple with how the female form functions in mass consumer culture and sexually repressive social regimes. Works like Jones-Hogu's suggest these issues were not as pressing to Black women as the issues of solidifying a familial structure and being heard in their community.

Though some of the aforementioned work posits the Black male as a central figure, the works of the AfriCOBRA movement express a greater sense of unity in their mission to portray the Black community in a way

Norman Parish Jr., *Gyrations of American Gothic*, 1969.



that was altogether more honest, positive, unified and progressing toward a brighter future. Made up of men and women, this movement continued to utilize the print methods a number of these artists were already exploring, and a reoccurring use of text evocative of the psychedelic designs of the countercultural appeals to utopian ideals.

The AfriCOBRA artists did not shy away from addressing oppression and the struggle for equality. One fascinating artifact is embedded in the surface of a screen print by Gerald Williams titled *Wake Up*. A page taken from the John A. Williams novel *The Man Who Cried I Am* describes the King Alfred Plan. Though this excerpt is a work of fiction, it was circulated as not only a kind of subversive marketing strategy but as fictive expression of something very real: the practical failures of the civil rights movement in the face of soaring political rhetoric.*

While John A. Williams' novel gets a mention in the description of Gerald Williams's print, it has far greater resonance with this work than one might guess. When the fictional King Alfred Plan was circulated amongst activists in the late 1960s, the extent to which it was real was debated. One young civil rights activist and member of the Black Panther Party, Clive DePatten, testified to the effects of the King Alfred Plan before the House Committee on Internal Security. After he spoke, a congressman informed him the plan had already been investigated by the FBI and

Frederick D. Jones, *The Lady and The Bird*, Early 1960's.



Elliot Hunter, *Grasshopper*.

proved to be fictional. But the young activist, and others who testified in years to follow, argued that the King Alfred Plan, in spite of its fictional nature, was representative of the institutional and systemic racism being perpetrated in America years after civil rights for all American had supposedly been achieved. As is often the case, art can elucidate a greater truth.

Activism and organizing, in conjunction with creative expression, is what generated such a potent collection of movements and ideas during this period on Chicago's South Side. The show goes on to present not only more artworks but an archive of documentary photographs by Bertrand "Bert" D. Phillips and others as well as histories and artifacts of the South Side's publishing and public art institutions.

There is far greater ground to cover here, and the far greater course would be to go and experience it yourself. A lot of history is on display that has been unavailable to a larger public for nearly a half century. This exhibition seeks to change that. It is about time.

* Emre, Merve. "How a fictional racist plot made the headlines and revealed an American truth," *The New Yorker*, December 31, 2017. Accessed 10/18/2018. <https://www.newyorker.com/books/second-read/how-a-fictional-racist-plot-made-the-headlines-and-revealed-an-american-truth>

Evan Carter is a contributing editor of the *New Art Examiner*. He earned his MFA degree in 2017 from the University of Chicago and wrote about Documenta 14 in a prior issue of the *Examiner*.

1980s

Outsider Art: An Issue of Nomenclature

by Lisa Stone

Why (not) Chicago?

Chicago has evolved into the center for the recognition, scholarship, promotion, collection, and exhibition of non-mainstream art, historically and institutionally as well as geographically [Ed. Note: Such recognition and collection began in earnest in the 1980s].

The city is the southern node of an axis of artistic inclusion along Lake Michigan's western shoreline, culturally and regionally connected to Milwaukee and Sheboygan, Wisconsin. The Milwaukee Art Museum and John Michael Kohler Arts Center, respectively, have embraced folk, self-taught and vernacular art through exceptional collections and exhibitions.

A brief overview of Chicago's postwar-to-the-present art history helps set the stage for Chicago's receptivity to art from outside the academic mainstream. In his exhibition, "Art in Chicago: Resisting Regionalism, Transforming Modernism" (Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 2006) Robert Cozzolino wrote about artists, and the city, and succinct summation, "anti-mainstream instincts" as "the leitmotif of 20th century art in Chicago."

While Chicagoans had firsthand access to what has been considered canonical modernism, its art world consistently fostered assertive individuality rather than a codified style as a measure of modernity. Chicago artists, critics, and collectors valued risk-taking and a dedication to authentic self-expression as evidence of an *avant-garde* mindset. Many of the city's artists derided the emulation of fashionable trends and established styles, organizing alternative groups to aggressively reject the status quo. They expected innovative form but demanded that art convey an emotional intensity that approached the visceral.¹

We can look to the histories and legacies of the Art Institute of Chicago and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC), and the city's cultural climate of risk-taking. Origins of the environment of inclusion must include the renowned art historian and educator, Helen Gardner (1878–1946), known for her radical *Art Through the Ages*, the first history of world art in

one volume, published in 1926 (with many successive versions).

In teaching the history of art at SAIC, her approach was to encourage artists to focus on the aesthetic details of the art of the past before learning the historical details and to study art history so they could be *their own art critics*. Professor Harold Allen recalled his beloved teacher and colleague in his essay "Helen Gardner: Quiet Rebel":

"Gardner was in the vanguard of a generation of art historians who learned to appreciate not only modern art with all its surprises but also primitive, aboriginal, and folk art, and the previously overlooked arts of Russia and Hispanic America, which, in spite of high aesthetic quality, had been largely disdained by earlier scholars."²

In the same essay, Allen described Gardner's protégé, artist and art historian Kathleen Blackshear, who taught at SAIC from 1926 to 1961:

"Where Miss Gardner was solid in Classical and Renaissance, Miss Blackshear was an enthusiastic missionary for Modern and Primitive. Together they taught History of Art to a generation of SAIC students."³

Blackshear was a progressive teacher who encouraged her students in expansive studies and to explore cultures and genres outside their own, particularly non-Western cultures. Following in Gardner's and Blackshear's footsteps, artist/art historian Whitney Halstead and artist Ray Yoshida were profoundly influential as artists, teachers, prescient thinkers, and collectors who exposed students to a wealth of non-mainstream art as art, unqualified.

Longtime art critic and booster of Chicago art, James Yood (1952–2018), encapsulated the cultural, intellectual, art historical *placeness* of Chicago to which these educators and many others contributed, writing:

“...it all comes down to an expanded consciousness of what constitutes culture here, the sense that its possibilities are everywhere embedded in lives all around us, that culture is not something that sits on its ass in a museum, its status confirmed by professional cognoscenti, but can happen anytime anywhere, with its greatest energies coming from the streets, not the boulevards.”⁴

Artists

Reflecting on the historical receptivity of Chicago’s people and institutions to art from beyond the academically-sanctioned, self-identified center, the question, “Why so many great self-taught artists lived and worked in Chicago?” is often raised. The short answer is: non-mainstream artists live and work in many places, but art from outside the academic mainstream has been recognized and, to varying degrees, robustly embraced in Chicago and the Midwest. The exhibition history supports this receptivity.

An extensive (albeit likely incomplete) exhibition chronology, from 1941 to 2018, can be found in *Chicago Calling: Art Against the Flow* (2018, Intuit: The Center for Intuitive and Outsider Art, 158–169). An incomplete list of extraordinarily original non-mainstream artists that lived and worked in Chicago and the vicinity includes Henry Darger, William Dawson, Lee Godie, David Philpot, Aldo Piacenza, Pauline Simon, Drossos Skyllas, Gregory Warmack (known as Mr. Imagination), Derek Webster, Wesley Willis, and Joseph Yoakum.

This is not to mention the large number of artists from beyond Chicago whose work has been exhibited, interpreted, and collected in the city, including the internationally acclaimed artists Emery Blagdon, James Castle, Sister Gertrude Morgan, Horace Pippin, Bill Traylor, Martin Ramírez, and Adolf Wölfli, to name just a few. Many of the Chicago-area artists became ensconced, to varying degrees, in Chicago’s elastic art scene, and several have become known, appreciated, exhibited, and collected in wider national and international spheres. Being outside the mainstream need not always imply ignorance of it. A few of the above-mentioned artists, particularly Godie, Skyllas, and Simon, had magnetic relationships to the Art Institute of Chicago, reframing the supposed impassible chasm between non-mainstream artists and the academy.

The Collectors and Collections

Many Chicago artists have engaged with all manner of folk art, objects from material culture, and non-mainstream art. A kind of “artist’s museum” collecting sensibility emanated from the SAIC, where assembling collections of source materials and living with objects of interest in great density was encouraged. In Chicago, this legacy is preserved and still performing at SAIC’s Roger Brown Study Collection, which Brown referred to as the Artists’ Museum of Chicago.

Yoshida, who preferred the identity of *responder*, rather than *collector*, assembled an outstanding home collection, which he dubbed the Museum of Extraordinary Values. Yoshida’s collection was the progenitor of Roger Brown’s and likely many other artists’ collections and is preserved at the John Michael Kohler Arts Center (Sheboygan, Wisconsin).

Collectors have played and continue to play a critical role in the self-taught scene in Chicago. Myriad private collections are filled with work by self-taught, outsider, and folk art from many cultures. There’s a very non-formal, non-Miesian, living-with-art approach that favors salon-style, more-is-more arrangements, where genres are mixed and objects are in conversation.

What to call it

Definitions for non-mainstream art vary widely and have recently evolved, as the approach to art from places other than the academy, or not specifically made for a mainstream art audience, is being reconsidered and recalibrated in an attempt to rectify the many descriptors. While it would simplify matters to sidestep the issue of designation, a discussion of the terms is necessary to understanding this tradition’s history in Chicago. “Self-taught” and “outsider” have been the most widely used and debated.

The term “self-taught,” introduced by the New York art dealer, Sidney Janis, in his 1942 book, *They Taught Themselves*,⁵ is the most benign of the many terms in use. It’s arguable that all artists are to a certain extent self-taught, and those with academic training aren’t fully formed and determined by their studies or their exposure to the history of art and contemporary practices. Indeed, the artistic process itself is not inherently formulaic, and all good artists rely on internal well-springs of individuality and intuition.

The term “outsider,” introduced unwittingly by the British art historian Roger Cardinal in 1972,⁶ was intended as an English equivalent for Jean Dubuffet’s

term *art brut*, referring to artists who are uninformed by mainstream culture due to a variety of circumstances, in many cases confinement due to psychiatric illness or developmental disability. The term has been used indiscriminately and comes under particular fire as an exclusionary term, implying a false dichotomy devised by self-identified insiders, who control the terms of engagement, and so-called outsiders, who in most cases neither choose to engage nor self-identify as outsiders.

Most art from other genres isn't hobbled by the question of what to call it or where to place it in the scheme of the larger art world(s), and nor do definitions for other genres and categories cause more confusion than clarity. The firewall between self-taught and academic art, never completely effective, is becoming more porous. Currently condoned terms include "non-mainstream," "outlier," and just plain art/artists, which I prefer. Peter Schjeldahl, in his *New Yorker* review "Old South: The extraordinary work of Bill Traylor" (October 8, 2018, p. 76) wrote:

"How should Traylor's art be categorized? What won't do are the romantic or patronizing epithets of 'outsider' or 'self-taught,' which belong to a fading time of urges to police the frontiers of high culture. These terms are philosophically incoherent. All authentic artists buck prevailing norms and develop, on their own, what matters in their art."

Curator Lynne Cooke wrote:

"No all-embracing, neutral descriptor fits its wildly eclectic creators. 'Self-taught' has been ubiquitous largely because of its straightforward descriptive tenor... Each of the monikers identifying it subsets—folk, 'modern primitive,' naïve, visionary, vernacular, isolate, outsider, and more—is also problematic or inadequate. Why then, do I introduce, as I propose to do, yet another—'outlier'—into this minefield of nomenclature? The specifics of time and place are always relevant to both the choice of a term and how it is expected to perform. To the basic dictionary definition of 'beyond the statistical norm' should be added colloquial inflections in current usage: typically today's outlier is a mobile individual who has gained recognition by means at variance with expected channels and protocols. Having no past usage in the field and

so not freighted with negative associations that cling to so many earlier terms, 'outlier' is also unmistakably of our era; it situations the project in the present.⁷

Outlier/Outliers was formally introduced 10 months ago, and it's too early to determine if it will supplant any or all of the other terms. I have argued for years to use "artist" unqualified, and then consider an artist's work and situate in contexts, as is necessary, to understand and interpret it. I would make one exception and refer to Chicago's own Lee Godie—as she described herself—as a French Impressionist.

This essay is culled from the longer essay, "Chicago Called, Artists Answered," co-authored by Stone and Kenneth C. Burkhardt, in the exhibition catalogue, *Chicago Calling: Art Against the Flow*, accompanying the exhibition of the same title now at Intuit: The Center for Intuitive and Outsider Art, through January 6, 2019, which then travels to Paris, Heidelberg, Lausanne, and Amsterdam.

Lisa Stone is curator of the Roger Brown Study Collection and senior lecturer in the Department of Art History, Theory, and Criticism, both at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Endnotes

- 1 Robert Cozzolino, "Chicago's Modernism," *Art in Chicago: Resisting Regionalism, Transforming Modernism* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 2007), 10.
- 2 Harold Allen, "Helen Gardner: Quiet Rebel," Lisa Stone and Jim Zanzi, *Sacred Spaces and Other Places: A Guide to the Grottos and Sculptural Environments of the Upper Midwest*, (Chicago: The School of the Art Institute of Chicago Press, 1993), 158-9.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 James Yood, "Chicago The Place," *Take Me To The River* (Chicago: Intuit: The Center for Intuitive and Outsider Art, 2006), unpaginated.
- 5 Sidney Janis, *They Taught Themselves: American Primitive Painters in the 20th Century* (New York: Dial Press, 1942).
- 6 Roger Cardinal, *Outsider Art* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972).
- 7 Lynne Cooke, "Boundary Trouble: Navigating Margin and Mainstream," *Outliers and American Vanguard Art*. (2018, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, National Gallery of Art), 3-4.

Two Top Sculptors Recall their Time in Chi-Town

Neil Goodman is a noted contemporary sculptor who arrived in Chicago in 1979. He taught at Indiana University Northwest in Gary, Indiana for thirty-eight years, where he is currently Professor Emeritus of Fine Arts. He divides his time between studios in Chicago and the Central Coast of California. His current exhibition, “Close Proximity,” is a retrospective of both indoor and outdoor works at the Museum of Outdoor Arts (MOA) in Denver, Colorado.

Richard Rezac lives and works in Chicago. His sculpture and works on paper have been shown nationally and internationally since 1975. His recent solo exhibition, “Address,” presented at the Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago earlier this year, is currently on view at the Blaffer Art Museum at the University of Houston through December 8, 2018. Rezac has received fellowship grants from the Guggenheim Foundation and, in 2006, the Rome Prize from the American Academy in Rome. He is an adjunct professor at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Neil Goodman: Tell me about the early ‘80s for you in Chicago. I remember first meeting you and [Rezac’s wife] Julia [Fish] through Richard Deutsch at the loft you were subleasing from Ron Cohen and JoAnne Carson on Hubbard Street in Chicago. At that time, there were several alternative galleries in the vicinity, and this was a bit of an artistic hub for many young artists as they were attempting to get their foot in the door.

Richard Rezac: We came here together in 1985. My wife, Julia Fish, was teaching for three semesters at the University of Iowa, where she met Richard Deutsch, who was there as a Visiting Artist. Through Richard, we met his partner Bruce Clearfield, and then Ron Cohen and JoAnne Carson, as well as Diane Simpson and other artists in Chicago. At the time, Ron was teaching at the University of Chicago. Even with very few connections initially, I felt that Chicago was a welcoming city and larger and more expansive than any place I had lived before. The museum collections and exhibitions were a compelling factor for us in being here, as they are especially important and accessible.

By comparison, we witnessed life in New York, visiting often while we were in graduate



Neil Goodman (left) and Richard Rezac.

school in Baltimore. And we knew, instinctively, that the fast-paced, crowded and expensive nature of New York did not suit us. And while we had numerous artist friends in Los Angeles, that also was not right, so the size and structure of Chicago had much to offer.

Neil: How did your rural roots affect you, and what influence did they have on your work?

Richard: I was raised in a suburban environment actually, at the edge of Lincoln, Nebraska. But most of my relatives did operate farms, and my family visited them regularly, and as an adolescent, I did spend summers on my grandparent’s farm in Kansas, and certainly that experience of nature and open landscape resonates still, and perhaps an attention to subtlety was formed there.

Neil: Tell me about Hudson and Feature, Inc. In the history of Chicago art, Hudson seemed to be a dealer that opened doors for many artists and signaled a counterpoint from the dominant regionalism of the time.

Richard: I became represented by Feature, operated by Hudson, even before we moved here, and we only met in person while installing my first show there. For many artists, I think, Hudson was a pivotal figure in Chicago, and his gallery and the exhibitions he organized were a point of contact at that time because his shows were surprising and thorough. He was remarkable, completely honest and responsive, as professional as one could wish for, and his visual memory or recall was photographic—as clear as anyone else that I have known.

Neil: Yes, I remember your first show at Feature gallery well. For many years, I kept the postcard from that show—a veiled sculpture—in my hall of fame—a collection of hundreds of announcements that I turned into a large-scale installation in the entrance to the fine arts building at Indiana University Northwest. I always loved both the hardness and softness of that image as well as the ambiguity of scale.

Feature must have been a natural fit as both you and Hudson had a stylistic independence that was very different than the prevailing aesthetic identified with Chicago at this time. Perhaps your confidence and clarity as an artist, like Hudson as a dealer, was implicit in your professional relationship. Also in the context of Chicago sculpture at that time, your work seemed to ask questions that were uniquely yours. Hudson in that regard seemed to be the right dealer at the right time in Chicago.

Richard, in the course of close to thirty years, I have seen numerous exhibitions of your work. What has always impressed me has been the singular focus and clarity of each sculpture. From an outsider's perspective, your work transitions from one sculpture to the next, and although the images vary, your signature seems embedded in each of your works. With this thought in mind, do you ever get stuck and struggle to find new images?

Richard: There were certainly periods in the beginning when I had serious doubts about what could, or should, follow, but in the last fifteen to twenty years, I would say, this has rarely happened. Because drawing is always the first step in my process, this allows me to search for possibilities in a deliberative and open-ended way, leading to an idea worth pursuing.

Neil: Both you and Julia are well-known artists with both long careers and a long marriage. Although you live and work in the same building, yet with separate studios, the obvious question is how much do you talk about each other's work.

Richard: Very little. We talk about the art that we see, particularly when we travel, and sometimes that is in connection to our own work. But within our ongoing studio work, finished or in process, we do not have regular discussions, mainly because we understand that decisions made need to be respected, especially given the private and deliberative nature of our work.

In certain cases, and often that is in the selection of a particular work, or works, for an exhibition, we will solicit an opinion from the other, like an editor might.

Neil: Yes, that is always an interesting question, as sharing a space has both the obvious advantages of a shared voice, yet there is a certain autonomy and reserve which also occurs when living in such close proximity. Interestingly, and perhaps it has something to do with aging, that the voice that you hear becomes mostly your own, both parties seem to acknowledge that solitude is an essential fabric of the creative experience.

Is teaching an inspiration? You started teaching at SAIC in their continuing education painting program when you first moved to Chicago. Since then, you have taught on a part-time basis at the School for all of your career in Chicago.

Richard: I have always found teaching to be pleasurable and satisfying. But it has also been independent of my own studio work. I certainly appreciate the rewards that come with teaching when I feel that I am contributing to someone's education. Also, the affiliation at SAIC has connected me to a broad and diverse community of people at the School and Museum, and if I was not teaching, my circle of colleagues would be much smaller.

Neil: What is different about Chicago now?

Richard: Well, if you are referring to the 1980s and now, so many things are different. In the visual arts, numerous institutions are larger and more active, more international in reach. The non-profit, artist-run spaces, like N.A.M.E. and Randolph Street, are now largely gone and replaced by a good number of energetic, modest galleries opened mainly by artists themselves. Then many galleries that have long-standing status here contribute to the city just as they have for decades. More young artists remain or move to Chicago than in the recent past, which I take it as a promising sign. The relative expense to live and work here, paired with the city's cultural benefits, is an encouragement.

Neil: Alan Artner was perhaps the longest-running newspaper critic in Chicago. He wrote for the *Chicago Tribune* and he had two columns each week. The one on Friday reviewed gallery exhibitions, and the Sunday column was devoted to mostly museum exhibitions.

Alan seemed to be hugely supportive of your work, and without pause, covered all of your Chicago exhibitions. Was his writing important for you?

Richard: Yes, I certainly paid attention to his criticism. He gave thoughtful consideration to his reviews and articles and clearly cared about Chicago art and was able to cover so much during those years that he wrote.

Neil: How do you feel about contemporary criticism?

Richard: My reading in this regard centers on artists' monographic books or exhibition catalogs, and that writing is less critique and more in the realm of scholarship. The contemporary criticism carried in daily or monthly publications is so widespread, it is difficult for me to summarize or assess. I read it mostly online, and that easy access must make for a much larger audience.

Neil: What sculptors or other artists do you look at?

Richard: That is a very long list, and I hesitate to start. But some constants for me are many of the European Modernists, such as Mondrian, Schwitters, Brancusi and Matisse; the American Minimalist artists generally; many of the Italian Arte Povera members; and too many contemporary artists to begin listing. However, other works of art by anonymous artists or artisans have had a profound impact on me, including Asian ceramics [and] sculpture from antiquity.... In fact, we have a New Guinea yam mask that has taken a prominent place in our living space since we bought it in 1973, and very few art works have affected me as much.

Neil: What is your ideal scale?

Richard: Well, human scale, but each sculpture, by way of its drawn study, demands a specific size and orientation, so human scale is usually in there, at least by inference. I can identify a process of making and the outcome of the object, and most often their size is at, or less than, torso size. I take that term to mean not only measured size—close to our bodies, but also the implications of structure and reference.

Neil: I always appreciated the inconvenience of how you made a sculpture, as there is a certain middle-class work ethic behind each of your sculptures. Although the forms were often referential, the ambiguity of meaning seemed rooted in labor. For sculptors of our

generation, hand and touch seemed to connect us with form, yet perhaps that is an increasingly romantic notion. Would you have someone else make your work, and do you have an assistant?

Richard: No, it is essential to me that I do everything myself, as much as possible. I do have the actual casting of bronze and aluminum sculptures done at an outside foundry, with all of the preliminary and finish work done by me.

Neil: We are both at a formidable age, with hopefully long histories in front, yet when we look at the roster of artists and dealers we started our career with, we most definitely see that the landscape has changed. This past year, both Jim Yood and Dennis Adrian died, as well as Richard Gray, Roy Boyd, and Phyllis Kind. You mentioned that Jim Yood was also important for you. You were in Rome together and spent time together at the SAIC.... He also wrote about your work. This perhaps leads into the next question, particularly as we first met when we were young artists beginning our career in Chicago: do you like getting older?

Richard: Not necessarily, but what can you do? The benefit with time is experience and, for artists, I suppose, a wider perspective.

Neil: How do you think your work will be seen in one hundred years?

Richard: Well, who knows, but I suppose understood as largely abstract, as the sources in most of my works are oblique and quite personal. And obviously grounded by both the art and architecture of the past and present that I know has influenced me.

Neil: Often with artists, a major exhibition is both the catalyst for a large shift or some kind of reassessment of the work. How has this affected you?

Richard: After this exhibition organized by the Ren [Renaissance Society], at least for now, I don't see a recognizable shift in approach or emphasis. I am eager to continue with several works that are in process, to resolve or finish those, as well as initiating new work. But I also do welcome the cause for reflection that the realization of such a show brings, the sense of a clean slate and quiet time.

Continued on page 19.

Chicago Art Splinters in Search of New Directions

Edited by Maggie Taft

When painter Derek Guthrie and Jane Addams Allen launched the *New Art Examiner* in 1973, the magazine was but one of many new art institutions around town. That year, N.A.M.E. Gallery and feminist spaces Artemisia and ARC (Artists, Residents of Chicago) also opened their doors, with other spaces soon to follow, like Randolph Street Gallery in 1979. Artist-run and federally funded, these alternative spaces energized Chicago's art scene in the '70s and '80s.

The culture wars that followed over the next decade and into the early 1990s dismantled these art spaces. In 1991, two years after a Robert Mapplethorpe retrospective featuring photographs with homosexual themes sparked a public and political uproar, Senator Jesse Helms proposed an amendment forbidding the National Endowment for the Arts from funding projects that might be deemed offensive.

The Senate passed it, and federal funds soon dried up, affecting individual artists as well as galleries and other spaces that had relied on grants to support their full slate of exhibitions, performances, and other art activity. The

government's efforts to regulate culture shifted the tenor of the art world across the country and weakened local communities.

Institutions that had formed the bedrock of Chicago's art scene began to disappear. In Chicago, Randolph Street Gallery shuttered in 1998. Five years later, Artemisia closed too. *New Art Examiner* ceased publication in 2002, gutting Chicago of one of its primary mouthpieces for the arts.

The following excerpts offer snapshots of the transformations that took place during the 1990s and 2000s. All are culled from the final chapter of *Art in Chicago: A History from the Fire to Now* (University of Chicago Press, 2018), the first history of Chicago art from the nineteenth century through to the present day.

This excerpt, from the final chapter, presents a chorus of artists, critics, and curators explaining what's happened in Chicago since the 1990s through a series of conversations, interviews, and reflections. As the remembrances and observations suggest, the history of this recent period is still being formed and written.

John Corbett: In the mid-'90s...I asked myself, why do I know so much as an amateur art historian about New York's art history and even Los Angeles' art history, and I know so little about Chicago's? So I started looking around and quickly figured out that the reason was that there was an underdeveloped infrastructure. Art historians hadn't turned their attention to it, but that didn't mean that there wasn't a rich repository of material. I also just have the collector gene, which sent me out into the world. I realized there was still a lot of stuff in secondhand shops that was primary source material for this history....And then there was the fact that a lot of the people who were part of Chicago's art history were still alive. It turned out that all you needed to do was call them and they would say, "Come on over. I've got an attic or a basement full of whatever." I did that a number of times.

You also have to figure Jim Dempsey into that whole mix. We had a mutual fascination, and we started talking to one another. That's basically what we started

Dawoud Bey, *Lauren*, 2008.



the gallery for—to explore the history of art in Chicago. ...Part of what worked in our favor was that there was a latent need. Institutionally, there was almost no interest. But there were a handful of rabid collectors, and a lot of people who were interested in having the story of Chicago art told to them in segments.

Peter Taub: The focus of MCA programming went beyond performance art—we prioritized the content and quality of artists' expressions, but in terms of form we focused on interdisciplinary dance and theater, as well as experimental music. And from early on we aimed to produce and present about a third of the projects in collaboration with other Chicago organizations. We always wanted to make the institutional resource of the MCA into a shared platform that attracted and served a broader public....My sense is that a generation of artist-run galleries in Chicago, places like Randolph Street Gallery, N.A.M.E. Gallery, Artemisia Gallery were very much part of the culture wars. We wanted to be visible and powerful as organizations—similar to how individual artists were claiming space for their diverse identities and visions. That played into the decision to buy our own building. Other organizations took an opposite approach, saying, "Screw that. We're just going to focus on programming."...those organizations lacked viability for the next generation of artists after the intensity of the culture wars—and that's why it made sense to close in the late '90s.

Lin Hixson: Randolph Street closed in '98. And the same thing was happening all over the country, in every major city — experimental, artist-run organizations were closing. Randolph Street brought together a lot of different forms and people into one space, one room even. It was a meeting place. After it closed, things became more distributed in the city.

Karen Reimer: What emerged to pick up some of the slack after Randolph Street and N.A.M.E. folded were a group of small galleries known collectively as the Uncomfortable Spaces: the Ten in One Gallery, Tough Gallery, Beret International Gallery, and MWMWM Gallery. They weren't committee-driven like RSG and N.A.M.E., but many of the artists from those committees showed with them. I showed with Beret, run by Ned Schwartz. They were ostensibly for-profit, but I don't think they made much money. The four of them coordinated publicity and openings, and their shows were important in maintaining a critical art community.



Amanda Williams, *Ultrasheen*, 2004-2016.

There continue to be small galleries mostly run by artists who are paying for it out of their pockets. But there are other organizational structures and financial solutions too—curating collectives and crowd-funding and stuff like that.

Temporary Services [Brett Bloom and Marc Fischer]: We started working together after the culture wars of the '80s and '90s, when Republicans stirred up controversies about arts funding as part of an attack on the country's broader welfare safety net. This produced massive cuts to arts spending, for which artists and arts administrators were ill prepared. Experimental spaces across the country lost their funding, and many dissolved. In Chicago and nationwide, the infrastructure supporting non-commercial, experimental, and socially engaged art was crumbling. We did not want to make art for commercial purposes; we wanted to experiment and push at the boundaries of what art is and what it could do. We needed to create our own infrastructure for making work in these ways and sustaining our community. Around the time, in the late '90s, artists were becoming increasingly engaged in global political contexts like anti-globalization movements. There was a very healthy, large community of people doing actions in the streets, organizing massive gatherings. Groups like Pilot TV, Version Fest, and the Department of Space and Land Reclamation staged public interventions and jam-packed discussion and screening programs to facilitate the kind of radical conversations that the gallery and museum world would never accommodate. Chicago became an important center for making art outside of the gallery system. Mess Hall,

an experimental cultural center that operated out of a small storefront in Rogers Park, hosted exhibitions and events that explored the intersections of art, urban planning, collective action, food politics, skill-sharing, alternative economics and much more.

Michelle Grabner: In the winter of 1999, my husband, Brad Killam, and I began hosting exhibitions in a small concrete-block (in Oak Park) situated between our stucco house and our two-car garage....Nearly 20 years later, the Suburban has hosted more than 350 artists' exhibitions and projects.

Friesenwall 120 in Cologne, Thomas Solomon's Garage in LA, Dogmatic and Bodybuilder & Sportsman galleries in Chicago, Matt's Gallery in London, and Bliss in Pasadena each served as inspirations for the Suburban. But its grounding and longevity is fostered in a working combination of critical theory and a conventional family life in the Chicago suburbs.... The Suburban's marginality and smallness allows it to have ambiguous edges while staying rooted in the customs of Chicago's vicinity. Its Oak Park locality and its Midwestern regionality reterritorialize and reimagine art's official discourses. In a vernacular landscape, the Suburban has dodged commercial and not-for-profit exchange, offering instead a range of associations far removed from the power of predictable cultural transactions.

Faheem Majeed: I arrived in Chicago in 2002.... I didn't know anything about art in Chicago. I walked in blind. Early on, I got a show at Steele Life Gallery on 47th and King Drive. It caught fire, and it's gone now. But I met a bunch of artists there, and they told me about this place called the South Side Community Art Center. They told me that if you don't know anyone,

Dorchester Projects, 2009-ongoing, photographic documentation, Dorchester Avenue, Chicago, 2014.



Michael Rakowitz, *The invisible enemy should not exist* (Room G, Northwest Palace of Nimrud, Panel 19), 2018. Relief from Middle Eastern packaging and newspapers, glue, cardboard on wooden structures, 93.31 x 57.48 x 3.15 inches. Photo courtesy of Rhona Hoffman Gallery.

that's where you go... When I was starting [as curator] at the South Side Community Art Center, Charles Miles was the director. His approach was more like that of a docent. He would welcome you to the center and run you through the history. But he was also the founder of the poetry collective called EarCandy, and they would have these parties that would go until four in the morning. I remember being really frustrated with him because I was so serious about hanging these shows, and then he would have these parties and people would bump into the artwork. ...Back then, I wanted a quiet space for two people, and this dude would have two hundred people in the gallery at four o'clock in the morning dancing all around the artwork. It took me a while to catch up to that.

Caroline Picard: I started the Green Lantern Press as an apartment gallery and small press in 2004. Over the years, I had roommates who would help with the project in various ways. It was always an interesting dynamic because our sense of privacy would fluctuate according to whatever public event was happening. We would have a living room art exhibition or a music show, and strangers would be walking around, using our mugs to get water. I think that experience helped shape my aesthetic.... In hindsight, it seems like I moved here at the end of a low point. The *New Art Examiner* and Art

Expo had just folded. There was concern about the fact that Chicago had lost a vital Midwest-centric publicity outlet and worried speculation that the city was incapable of supporting an international art fair. But the 2004 Stray Show, a Chicago art fair featuring independent, artist-run, and idiosyncratic art spaces, seemed to indicate that the city was bouncing back. Then Kavi Gupta started his Merchandise Mart art fair, sold it, and now we have Tony Karman's EXPO Chicago on Navy Pier. It seems like there's less critical art coverage in print today, but there's more online. One thing that's remained consistent is a model for artistic practice that involves developing an artist-run exhibition space while teaching and building one's own career. You see this with Michelle Grabner, who used to run the Suburban in Oak Park, Theaster Gates and the Dorchester Projects, or Edra Soto with the Franklin, to name a few. Artists integrate their own studio practice with fostering public platforms. These two facets are so concurrent as to seem inextricable.

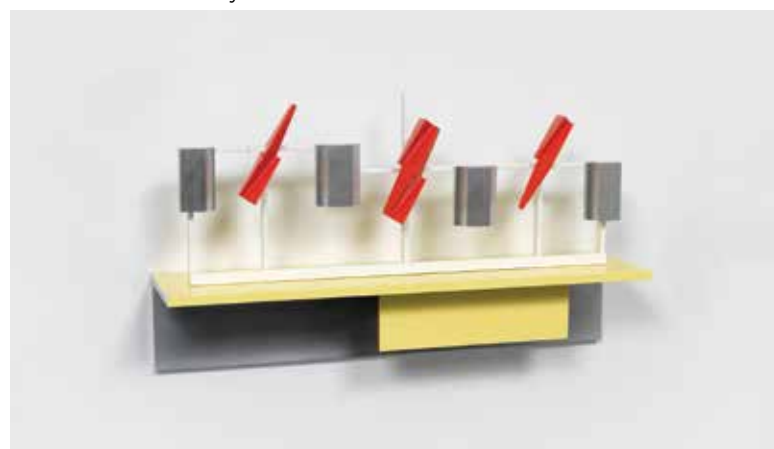
Dan Peterman: The Experimental Station, in name, began around 2003, but I'd been working at that South Side site since the mid-1980s. I was taking ownership of a pretty run-down building and transitioning it from the Resource Center, a nonprofit recycling organization, into a multifaceted model of art, urban ecology, and locally embedded enterprise. ...The "building," as it became known, had been a site for incubating alternative ideas dating back to late 1960s. There was a counterculture history that wasn't being maintained or looked at outside of the neighborhood, but it included a cache of used bike parts, recycled materials in exchange for books, community gardens, food initiatives, tool-sharing, etc. Unpacking that was almost like being an archaeologist. ...We ended up tapping into every skill set. We built a brick oven, part of the

multifunctional model, where food was linked to urban ecology, to plants, and also to a pragmatic need to cook lunch every day. A community was forming and different activities were being adjusted, fostered, and curated into something.

Michael Rakowitz: I remember being at a Yankees–White Sox game with Stephanie Smith [then a curator at the Smart Museum] in August 2006, soon after I moved here, and listening to her speak of her Smart exhibition called *Feast*, involving people like Dan [Peterman] and Theaster Gates and Dan Wang, all of whom I'd just met at the Experimental Station. It really spoke to me about how much Chicago accommodated a nexus of people coming together. And there was something about the speed: people slow down here, and they actually look at you when they're talking to you. It's generative.

With Robert Cozzolino, Maggie Taft is co-editor of *Art in Chicago: A History from the Fire to Now* (University of Chicago Press, 2018). The book is the first single-volume history of art in Chicago from the 19th century through the present day.

Richard Rezac, *Untitled (14-04)*, 2014. Courtesy of the artist and the Renaissance Society.



Sculptors Stroll Down 1980s Chicago Art

Continued from page 15

Neil: Often the public sees the romance but not the fierce editing process that goes into a piece of art. In this regard, your work has always seemed to embody that focus, as clear statements of thought resolved in both size and material with an unrelenting rigor and attention to detail. Throughout the many years of looking at your work, I always felt that you said what you

wanted in a way that asked the viewer to look closer and harder at the world. With this thought in mind, what advice would you give to a younger artist?

Richard: Most importantly, I think, is not to be in a hurry. If one commits to working as an artist, to recognize that it is a highly personal and incremental process, so patience makes it possible. Also, to only put work out into the public that you are proud of because forming that habit is affirming and reinforcing.

EXPO Chicago: What Comes After the Art Bubble Bursts?

by Phil Barcio

Google the phrase “too many art fairs,” and you’ll see a consensus is building about an impending “art fair bubble.” Dozens of recent articles contemplate the glut, not just in art magazines, but in publications like *Forbes*, *Bloomberg*, *The Economist*, and *The New York Times*.

Last January, *Artnet News* published “the Definitive Calendar of International Art Fairs for 2018.” It listed 80 major fairs. Where once there was an art fair season, the season now lasts 12 months. For now, Chicago’s showcase fair—EXPO Chicago—is holding its own. But history suggests that will not always be the case.

If you travel to multiple fairs, even on multiple continents, you notice many of the same dealers and see work by many of the same artists. Yet even as novelty wanes, new fairs continue popping up.

For dealers, the economics are dire—booth fees can top \$100,000 if they are lucky enough to be invited to show. Add shipping costs, travel expenses for employees, and factor in a 50/50 revenue split with artists, and the break-even mark for galleries can surpass \$200,000. A fair with 100 participating dealers must

generate \$20 million in art sales just to maintain the myth that profits are possible.

Here’s some historical context to show how far the art fair phenomenon has come. If anyone had published a “Definitive Calendar of International Art Fairs” in 1980, it would have listed only two entries: the Chicago International Art Exposition and Art Basel.

Art Basel was the mother of the modern art fair concept. It was founded in 1970 in Basel, Switzerland, by Ernst Beyeler, Trudl Bruckner and Balz Hilt, three art dealers who believed that if they invited enough prestigious sellers to show their best stuff at the same time in one place, wealthy collectors from across the globe might consider it worth their while to travel there to take advantage of one-stop shopping. The first Art Basel included 90 galleries and 30 publishers and attracted around 16,000 visitors.

Michigan-based print dealer John Wilson was the first to believe Chicago could support a similar fair. His inaugural Chicago International Art Exposition in 1980 included 80 dealers and attracted around 10,000 visitors. Over time, however, the Basel and Chicago art fairs evolved in quite different ways.

Art Basel grew steadily, becoming the most prestigious annual gathering of art dealers and buyers in the world. After being purchased in 1994 by the multinational Swiss bank UBS, the brand expanded to Miami Beach and Hong Kong and sprouted other fairs focused on luxury assets besides art, like cars.

The Chicago International Art Exposition (CIAE) meanwhile, lasted 13 years of which, at least half the time, it was recognized as the top American art fair. For the first nine years, it was held in the strangely cool, rickety old barns of Navy Pier.

Panorama of Expo Chicago 2018 during Vernissage. Photo by Justin Barbin.





A guided tour group at Expo Chicago. Photo by Jasmine Shah.

It earned both local and international respect from artists, dealers and collectors alike. When it was forced to move after the 1989 fair due to the pier's planned renovation, CIAE lost its cachet.

By the time Navy Pier reopened in 1992, it was a sprawling network of malls and convention spaces, and the fair found itself attracting more tourists than collectors. Facing pressure from two rival upstarts—the International Gallery Invitational and Art Chicago—the Exposition folded.

One of those upstarts—Art Chicago—did not stay in Chicago for long. The organizers moved their fair to Miami, where they renamed it Art Miami and grew it into what is now the most attended art fair in the US, predating Art Basel Miami Beach by a decade.

After Art Chicago left Chicago, the organizers of The International Gallery Invitational, headed by Tom Blackman, confusingly appropriated its name. The “new” Art Chicago reclaimed Navy Pier as its home and, for a while in the mid-1990s, returned Chicago to a place of prominence on the international art fair scene. By then, major art fairs were popping up everywhere, and competition to attract top dealers was becoming stiff.

Rather than opting for exclusivity, Art Chicago opened up participation to essentially any dealer who could afford the booth fee. By the year 2000, more than 200 dealers participated. The quality of the art was not competitive, and again the reputation of the city as a serious art fair destination declined.

The end for Art Chicago came in 2005, when organizers advertised that instead of being held indoors at

Navy Pier, the fair would be held outdoors in Grant Park. They stiffed the contractors, who thus refused to set up the tents. Dealers arrived with crates of art to an empty park. At the last minute, the owners of the Merchandise Mart, which was already hosting the Chicago Antiques Fair that same week, made room for Art Chicago to share the space. The following year, Merchandise Mart Properties, Inc., bought Art Chicago and rebranded it as Artropolis: a multi-faceted modern, contemporary, folk, outsider, and emerging art fair extravaganza.

Some people welcomed Artropolis, while others despised it. All that mattered, however, was the bottom line. In 2012, the organizers abruptly canceled the fair, stating in their press release, “It is our conclusion that the great majority of the art fair market in the United States has gravitated toward the coasts.”

Our current fair, EXPO Chicago, emerged from the ashes of the ruined Artropolis. EXPO's founder and director, Tony Karman, returned the fair to Navy Pier. He recognized the location's iconic status and also returned to the idea of a smaller, curated fair. A select group of Chicago and international galleries cajoled other galleries and were instrumental in pulling the new fair away from the brink. The seventh edition of EXPO Chicago, which wrapped up in late September, demonstrated, undeniably, that wealthy collectors, blue chip dealers, and interesting and important contemporary artists once again regard Chicago as a serious competitor on the international art fair circuit. Over 38,000 people attended the 4-day event.



Panorama of Expo Chicago 2018. Photo by Jasmine Shah.

How long can it last?

Perhaps the right question to pose now is not whether EXPO will survive when the bubble bursts, or even necessarily how to protect it, but rather what can we learn from history to build off of EXPO's current status to create something bigger and more relevant to the entire city.

Stephen Eisenman, Professor of Art History and Past President at Northwestern University, says, "Let's have a 'People's Art Expo', supported by the city, the museums and the commercial galleries. It could have juried and unjuried exhibits in various media, booths for social practice, political and performance art, lessons in various media by volunteers, areas of expressive, political protest, and information about how to obtain free/reduced price admission to museums and galleries all over town."

Eisenman suggests expanding to sites like Millennium Park or "a closed-off Michigan Avenue in front of the Art Institute," to reach beyond commercial interests and appeal to a wider demographic representative of this city's actual population and culture.

Michelle Grabner, esteemed artist, writer, curator and Crown Family Professor in Painting and Drawing at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, agrees. She notes that it would speak much more to the health of the local community if the city and people of Chicago supported an "Art Week" instead of a single commercial fair. Says Grabner, "Not everyone needs to be involved in the commercial gallery system. EXPO offers something to push against. It's not about that one thing being everything to everybody. It's about that

one thing establishing a hierarchy for other types of artists to resist and overthrow."

The "Art Week" concept already exists in several other cities. One of the most successful models is "Miami Art Week," which involves multiple consecutive large fairs (Art Basel Miami Beach, Art Miami, Pulse, the New Art Dealers Alliance (NADA) fair, etc.), as well as dozens of peripheral events, from scrappy beachfront motel pop-up galleries to immersive exhibitions funded by private businesses. In addition, every Miami art museum and big private collection opens a major exhibition during Art Week, and all over town there are

artist talks, mural tours, experimental installations, spontaneous happenings, cool parties, and innumerable sanctioned and unsanctioned collateral events.

Obviously, we're not Miami—they have palm trees. And Dubai has glitz. Hong Kong has deep pockets. Basel has prestige. New York has attitude. The secret to "Art Week Chicago" is not to copy what other cities do. It's to make it representative of who and what we are.

Embrace our history. This is the Second City—home of the New Bauhaus, the Monster Roster, AfriCOBRA, Joan Mitchell, Henry Darger, Elizabeth Murray, Kerry James Marshall, Richard Hunt, Jessica Stockholder, and hundreds of other pioneers. This is where the *Wall of Respect* was painted. Half a dozen of the most expensive, most famous paintings ever made live in this city, as do a half million or so of the poorest citizens of this country, many of whom have virtually no access at all to the arts.

The volatile history of Chicago art fairs is part of the idiosyncratic heritage of this city, but it can only be relevant to our common future if the young (in body or in heart) among us can transform that history into the embryonic stage of a broader, more experimental, more inclusive Art Week ecosystem—something worthy of our status as unique cultural leaders, with the potential to survive and prosper.

Phillip Barcio is an art writer and fiction author whose work appears regularly in *Hyperallergic*, *IdeelArt*, *La Gazette Drouot* and the *New Art Examiner*. His fiction has appeared in *Space Squid* and the *Swamp Ape Review*. He has work forthcoming in *Western Humanities Review*.

Artists of Color Take Charge of Art Spotlight

by Jeffreen Hayes

"In Chicago, one can work experimentally and find the space to do it. Chicago is affordable, so it allows artists to have space."

—Meg Duguid, artist, curator and archivist

Over the past fifteen years, and quite rapidly in the past five, Black artists, artists of color and women artists have become synonymous with Chicago. Say the names Richard Hunt, Kerry James Marshall, Dawoud Bey, Jessica Stockholder, Edra Soto, Theaster Gates, and Amanda Williams outside of the city, and individuals usually respond with amazement that Chicago has artists of high caliber. Then, the follow up question is, "What is it about Chicago that has kept some of the most internationally-renowned artists in the city?"

One the reasons is what artist, curator and archivist Meg Duguid stated in the opening quotation. Her sentiment is shared by many in our city. Chicago is a place where artists have space to do the work they need to do. Working experimentally, testing ideas and honing their craft, artists in Chicago can grow and succeed without the pressures of other international art centers. Certainly, an artistic community that values experimentation and gives artists the leeway to take

risks makes for a ripe environment for different ways of working for all artists, and especially artists of color.

Though Chicago does not have the vast ecosystem of visual art spaces that New York or Los Angeles enjoy, there is already a strong system of non-profits, art centers and galleries supporting Chicago artists. The visibility of Black artists, artists of color and women in the art world is a result of these artists having access to the spaces that have developed and pivoted in response to the evolving needs of the city's artistic community.

Through these organizations, artists such as Nick Cave, William Estrada, Brendan Fernandes and Arnold Kemp receive research support, exhibition opportunities and grants for projects that might not receive support from other funding sources. Gems in the community are alternative and artist-run spaces like the Franklin, Roots & Culture, Threewalls and Produce Model, where many artists receive their first exhibition or grant. Alternative spaces, art centers and galleries help to buoy and often are the foundation of the ecosystem of art museums in Chicago.

What goes unnoticed is the curatorial heft associated with these spaces, which is equally as important as the physical space they provide and the experimental ethos they embody. Chicago-based curators are

Candida Alvarez, *Estoy Bien*, 2017. Latex ink and acrylic on pva mesh. Photo courtesy of Patrick Pyszk.



the unsung heroes behind some of the artists defining the 2000s, particularly those from overlooked communities.

When asked about what makes Chicago a place for marginalized artists, curator Neysa Page-Lieberman says, “Chicagoans support far more than they compete with each other. For those of us dedicated to increasing visibility for marginalized artists and practices, we support each other with fierce dedication. Your victory as a curator is also mine. Your raised profile raises us all.” In addition to the curatorial victory, which is successfully organizing an exhibition, helping to increase an artist’s visibility and making a space for artistic development accessible, the victory of Chicago’s artists’ rise in the art world is our victory.

The rise of Chicago’s artists in the middle of the 2000s forged a path for women artists of color to be seen in ways that did not necessarily exist in the past. We are in a moment of revisiting the canon and the ways in which art institutions and organizations have been and are culpable for exclusionary practices. While Chicago is a place where artists can experiment freely and live affordably, it has its challenges with accessibility and inclusion.

What is exciting about this time in Chicago is the growing presence of women artists of color on the international stage. Three such artists who have been consistently working in Chicago—Candida Alvarez, Edra Soto, and Amanda Williams—share their thoughts about Chicago.

Painter Candida Alvarez, known for her colorful and vibrant abstract paintings that serve as a call-and-response for her memories, has lived in Chicago for twenty years and has taught at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago for the same amount of time. As a working artist and art educator, Alvarez has kept up a steady studio practice. While in the city, she created SubCity Projects, a two-year project (2004–5 and 2009–10) started in an elevator.

Of the artist-run project, Alvarez says, “I founded SubCity Projects in Chicago’s Fine Arts Building as an alternative exhibition site inside a fixed elevator carriage... then I moved it inside my studio. The key element was the glass door and windows that allowed viewers to peep inside and see the artist interventions.” Chicago has a history of artist-run spaces that add to the vibrancy for overlooked artists. As Duguid shares, “These projects are really seen as a hybrid practice



Edra Soto, *Graft*, 2010. Installation for “Out of Easy Reach” curated by Allison Glenn at the DePaul Art Museum. Photo courtesy of the artist.

where [artists’] interests and curiosities are full-filled in more ways than just the creation of work.”

The last five years have seen Alvarez’s visibility increase with a solo exhibition at the Hyde Park Art Center, a survey of her career at the Chicago Cultural Center, and public art work on the Chicago’s Riverwalk and a collaboration with fashion house Comme des Garçons. Of her time in Chicago, Alvarez expressed excitement about her survey, saying, “The highlight of my 20 years of living in Chicago was knowing that my 40-year survey of paintings entitled ‘Candida Alvarez: Here,’ curated by Terry R. Myers at the Chicago Cultural Center was attended by 40,165 people!”

Edra Soto, an interdisciplinary artist, also has a hybrid artistic practice that includes artmaking, curating, and co-directing an artist-run space, The Franklin. Her work engages with art and design, incorporating the built environment and cultural development within neighborhoods. When thinking about what makes Chicago a place for artists, she shared, “The Chicago art graduate student overflow has fostered the importance of the artist-run culture for many years. This is the culture that artists with rigorous and non-conforming practices tend to subscribe to and adopt as an idyllic community model.”

With a growing presence in the art world, Soto has recently completed national residencies at the Headlands Center for the Arts, the John Michael Kohler Arts Center, and Art Omi. In addition to a steady exhibition

history at such venues as the Arts Club of Chicago, Pérez Art Museum Miami, and the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Soto has curated a number of exhibitions. For her, Chicago has been an important place to develop because she attended the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and, like many graduates, stayed after completing her studies. She explains that after graduate school and through her relationship with “the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and soon after with the artist-run community,” she “found [her]self in fertile ground.” She shares, “I received some validation and became part of several art communities.”

Living and working in Chicago is the basis for Amanda Williams’ work. An artist trained as an architect, Williams, too, has experienced a growing visibility in the art world. Her watershed moment came through her “Color(ed) Theory Series,” in which Williams examined the social and cultural constructions of colors as they relate to the Black experience by painting abandoned structures in urban areas.

Her international presence became solidified upon her selection to represent the United States in the 2018 Venice Architecture Biennale with a Chicago-based artist, Andres L. Hernandez, in collaboration with another Chicago-based artist, Shani Crowe. Collaboration is an under-valued characteristic of Chicago artists’ visibility when thinking about this city and the rise of marginalized artists. As Page-Lieberman states, “When we collaborate beyond our city borders, we see our communities’ thirst for what we do and our potential for impact.”

Amanda Williams, *Currency Exchange, Safe Passage*, from “Color(ed) Theory Suite,” 2014–16. Photo courtesy of the artist.



Williams reinforces the notion that Chicago’s art ecosystem provides some structure to the art community, saying, “The idea that you approach your craft with a certain integrity and commitment permeates the air. There’s no celebrity. That ethos is undergirded with an infrastructure of arts centers, non-profit arts institutions and artist-led spaces that incubate making/creating.” She continues, “An unheralded ingredient in Chicago’s secret sauce is the quiet work of collectors, patrons and city agencies working to expand ways to sustain artists.”

This last part is crucial to the ecosystem. In addition to the collectors, patrons and the city agencies, the philanthropic community plays an important role in the development of our arts community. Chicago’s foundations and philanthropists understand that the vibrancy of our arts community and the elevation of artists on the international stage are important. While they do not typically provide direct support to artists, they do give to many of the non-profit art spaces, museums and arts centers through grants. This allows these organizations and institutions to do the work of building platforms for our artists.

Chicago’s art ecosystem provides a number of ways to help sustain artists, particularly artists who have been traditionally overlooked by the art world. When we look at artists and begin to ask how we are in this moment of visibility, we must look at the world that surrounds them. Artists, arts organizations, curators, patrons, and philanthropy depend on each other. Without one, the others cannot truly be sustained.

With the visibility and acceptance of Black artists, artists of color and women in the art world, there is a system that is making it possible for them to do the work that they do, whether through participation in a community, risk taking, failure or collaboration. The art world is not only watching how Chicago fosters contemporary artists but also beginning to make room for them. Kudos to Chicago!

Jeffreen M. Hayes, Ph.D., is a curator and executive director of Threewalls, a Chicago non-profit organization dedicated to contemporary art practice and discussion.

Rhona Hoffman: Gallerist with the Golden Eye

It is not only artists who have been advancing Chicago art over the past 50 years. Another stakeholder has been the gallery community. Two gallerists who have been around since the late 1970s are Rhona Hoffman and Carl Hammer. The R.S. Johnson Gallery dates back to 1959 and is the oldest existing gallery on Michigan Avenue. Stanley is a long-standing dealer, but he and his wife, Ursula, are also avid collectors. Our interview with him will appear in our next issue.

Rhona Hoffman is seen as a pioneering gallerist who, for more than 40 years, has possessed a keen eye for artistic talent. She co-founded the Young Hoffman Gallery in 1976 with her husband at the time, the late Donald Young. She opened her own gallery in 1983. Among the early artists she introduced to Chicago were Sol LeWitt, Gordon Matta-Clark, and such women artists as Cindy Sherman, Barbara Kruger and Jenny Holzer. Rhona was honored this year by the Chicago Artists Coalition for her lifetime achievement.

Rhona Hoffman: We started on Ohio Street but then moved in 1979 to 115 West Superior. We moved into that building along with Jack Lemon of Landfall Press. I moved to Chicago around 1959 and, in 1961, I bought a Leon Golub painting from Allan Frumkin Gallery. I bought a Richard Hunt from Bud Holland.

In 1965, I organized a lecture series for the Art Institute and went on the Woman's Board there. Then, in 1967, the MCA [Museum of Contemporary Art] was formed, and I was asked to be on that board and stayed there until 1974.

[When the museum store opened, she did all the buying for it]. That was interesting because all the men on the board didn't think it would be successful. ...The store was a major success from the get-go.

Tom Mullaney: So, with this background, what makes you say you want to be a dealer?

RH: We never said that. What happened was that I got divorced and David Hoffman offered me a job. So, that's how I became a dealer, but I was always interested in art, from the time I was a small child. There was no other life I was [as] dedicated to as the art world.



TM: I go back to 1980 in the Chicago art world. When you say these names "Lemon," "Allan Frumkin"—they all resonate, but people today don't know anything about what Chicago was like back then.

RH: Oh, a lot of people do. There's a new book coming out, published by the Terra Foundation [for American Art], that's all about art in Chicago from its beginnings in the 19th century so everyone will be able to know all about the Chicago art scene.

TM: I don't remember whether it was 1979 or 1980 when John Wilson started an art fair [the Chicago International Art Exhibition]. That is like the dividing line. People liked it in the beginning and it was very successful, but it has led to something which is now really gigantic.

RH: No, that's not really true. Because it was gigantic for its time. But what happened is that the enthusiasm for it didn't happen. John Wilson failed financially and then Tom Blackman took it over. And then he ran it into the ground and it ended. Along comes Tony Karman who had worked with Tom and Bob Wilson and, since he was a part of that whole operation, he was a logical choice. But Tony [who understands] business [is] a fair-minded person and honest and everything else.

TM: I understand that there was a circle of gallery owners, you being one, who, in 2015, stepped up to rescue the fair, saying "Chicago really needs this. The galleries want to come to Chicago and so, to resurrect it in the right way"...

RH: It was all Tony's idea. But, when he said he was going to do it, we all said we'd be happy to go around trying to get other galleries to come back to the fair [now EXPO Chicago].

TM: So, with your and other peoples' imprimatur, you got a lot of those key galleries to come back?

RH: Right. Well, because it had been an international fair. The thing that made it work, primarily, in the first place, is that Chicago is a collecting city. It's been collecting since the 19th century. The entire Art Institute's career started with the trustees buying Impressionism and then going with generations of Chicagoans became collectors and were very generous with their collections going to museums. So the history of collecting in Chicago is great.

The other thing is the greater Midwest. I always tell people they live in big houses with plenty of wall space to hang art, and people do buy art. So, they were attracted to come here. Tony has been an incredible impresario.

TM: How has the art fair phenomenon changed the way you do business?

RH: Well, it started out slower, but it's grown geometrically bigger. And now, you will find that some galleries will do 50 to 80 percent of their business at art fairs. There are galleries, one in particular though I don't think they'd like me using their name, they do 10 to 15 art fairs a year. They have an entire staff that does nothing but art fairs. They represent 40 artists. So, people go to fairs because you can see so much art in one place.

TM: Would you say you are in the 50 or higher percentage?

RH: I don't do 50 percent of business there.

TM: What is the biggest misunderstanding collectors have about the trade?

RH: I don't know. [Really?!]

TM: What about artists who may give you a hard time?

RH: I've never experienced that.

TM: Really? That just fall in love with you?

RH: No. We treat each other very fairly. And we like each other. The only disgruntled artist I had trouble with was Scott Burton. No, for whatever reason, I've always worked with artists [trails off]. First, we always

do what every artist wants, so why would they be disgruntled? We're very easy to work with.

TM: Are there business dealings that become artistic friendships?

RH: Yes, I'm friends with a lot of artists. It's an intimate relationship, a close relationship. We're talking about ideas, you end up talking about how's the family, it becomes a very personal relationship. We go to each other's houses.

TM: What's the biggest challenge you face in your career? You've moved several times.

RH: Yes, this is our sixth move. [Rhona left her Peoria Street address and moved earlier this year to 1711 West Chicago Avenue.]

TM: You needed to do it.

RH: I didn't need to. I wanted to. I didn't renew my lease. They wanted to raise the rent too high. And I like building spaces. The biggest challenge? To keep raising enough money to keep the gallery running because rents are more expensive and then there's shipping, insurance, you've got postage and printing.

An art gallery is a very small business. We pay the same for our insurance as IBM. We pay the same for printing as IBM. And to do what you want to do and the way you want to do it.

Sol LeWitt, *New Structures*, 1990.
Courtesy Rhona Hoffman Gallery





Carrie Mae Weems: *Sea Islands Series*, 1993. Courtesy of Rhona Hoffman Gallery

TM: Do you have to travel a lot, or does the art come to you?

RH: I have to travel and the art comes to us. I met the artist we're showing now through another artist we show.

TM: Is this artist [whose show sold out] like the other find you showed recently, Nathaniel Mary Quinn? Is this new artist like Quinn who people say "Better get in now because this guy is really going to go far"?

RH: No, no one has that. My crystal ball is broken. A friend of mine, who is a curator in New York and whose taste is quite similar to mine and we've worked together in the past, told me about Quinn, and I went to Bed-Stuy, where he was working in his studio.

And I loved the work and gave him a show. And because of the strength of the work, not the strength of my gallery but the strength of the work, it caught on. I'm saying we've been fortunate enough to pick artists who are strong enough to attract the buyers and the collectors.

TM: You have a strong sense of humility there.

RH: I'm not humble.

TM: Well, I would say that you're exactly humble. What gives you satisfaction today after four decades as a gallerist?

RH: The same things. I love art. I love looking at it. I like dealing it. I like artists. I like collectors. I like museum people.

TM: The same things...

RH: Well, because it's always changing. And a lot of the art we show reflects the world, and the world

is changing politically and socially, and art is changing with it. Change is necessary.

TM: Have you ever been tempted to become a collector?

RH: I am a collector. I collect cooking bowls.

TM: I heard you a year ago at one of your 40-year retrospective shows [say] that, "If I'd only bought some of this stuff, I'd be rich."

RH: That was a financial statement. The last paintings we showed [were] by Robert Ryman. His paintings then were

\$35,000. So, I had a 40% discount—no, Robert gave the dealers only 33 1/3%. But I had it at home and I loved it dearly and I did buy it. But then, years later, dealers need money, and I sold it. I wish I hadn't sold it. And now, there are works that were \$5,000 and are now worth millions of dollars. That would have cushioned my life a bit.

I'll give you an exact example. So, Feature Gallery had a show with Jeff Koons. He had three of the basketball equilibrium tanks. The show sold out. I bought one, Donald Young bought one and Lew Manilow bought one, each of us for \$2,500. That's what I mean.

TM: But you're a collector in general.

RH: In general. I collect tools, candlesticks.

TM: Adopting an historical perspective over the last 40 years: what about the art scene do you miss most, and what about the art scene today do you value most?

RH: The thing I miss the most was when it was less hectic. Back then, on Saturdays, the collectors would come to the gallery, sit around the table and talk about art. That doesn't happen too often. I mean people, individually, would come to the gallery, but there was no collective spirit within the gallery itself where that happens.

TM: And what still gives you pleasure?

RH: Finding the art, showing the art, being with the artists, being with the collectors, being with other dealers who are friends and with who we share a commonality of taste. It's a microcosm world and, for me, it's the one world that stays interested in art. We're interested

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Carl Hammer: Pioneer Advocate of Outsider Art

Carl Hammer opened his gallery in 1979, soon after Rhona Hoffman. He too had a good eye for quality but had to endure a rougher time gaining acceptance for the kind of art he decided to specialize in, work by self-taught or outsider artists. Now, he is seeing the fruits of his dedication as museums nationwide are scrambling to acquire material by those very artists.

Tom Mullaney: When did you open your gallery, and where was it located?

Carl Hammer: We opened in 1979 at the 620 N. Michigan Avenue building where Richard Gray and all the other great, historic Chicago galleries were located.

TM: Was Bud Holland over there?

CH: Bud Holland was not in that building, but he was over in that area. It was a very exciting time. First of all, being a neophyte gallerist, surrounded by so many others. Richard Gray, who already to me was a legend. He kind of served as a role model for me. I looked at how he ran his gallery with dignity and how much respect he engendered.

TM: What about Allan Frumkin?

CH: Frumkin was there, though I didn't get to know him like the other gallerists.

TM: What led to your decision to become a gallery owner?

CH: I had been teaching high school at Evanston Township High School for over 20 years. So, my ex-wife and I had begun to collect unusual Americana art, and it started basically in the antiques world and evolved out of that into the work of folk artists.

And that area of art was very broadly define[d]. We found ourselves drifting toward that area that only later was to become known as "Outsider Art." So, we started collecting and then started doing shows around the Midwest.

TM: That must have started then around the '60s....

CH: Started around the '60s and almost a 10-year period of time before I opened the gallery. And when my wife decided she didn't want to teach anymore, we



decided to open at 620.

TM: What was the Chicago art scene you remember in those days?

CH: I remember a gallery named Phyllis Kind being a great

inspiration to me since she was representing the Imagists, pretty much. And she also mounted a few shows of outsider artists, like Howard Finster and a couple of other artists. And I was really entranced and made many, many ventures to that space on Ohio Street, and a lot of her artists started on to the artists that we were representing in our gallery and, as a result, that kind of synchronicity, that body of work that Phyllis was showing at the time really inspired my direction.

TM: Was it more of a scene where artists, collectors and gallery owners knew each other? Now it seems much more anonymous.

Bill Traylor, *Untitled Man in "High-singing blue" with bag and umbrella*, pencil and poster paint on found cardboard, 17 x 13 inches. 1939-1943. Photo courtesy of Carl Hammer Gallery.





Mr. Imagination in the midst of his creations, including a bottlecap throne and suit.

CH: Yes, it was like that, but now it's much more diverse and not as connected as it was then. I hated to see that district bust up and move over to River North because, back then, I thought it was just the ideal, classic gallery scene.

TM: You began just as Art Chicago began

CH: Yes, exactly right. We did not exhibit the very first year. The second year, we were permitted to. I mounted a one-person show of work by Bill Traylor, the classic outsider artist who is having a full-scale retrospective in Washington, D.C. in early October. I'm flying in for that. And we sold everything. Well, it was dirt cheap then. But people fell in love with Traylor's work.

TM: How have EXPO Chicago and art fairs changed the way you do business now?

CH: Well, at the time, you had to do it [Art Chicago]. People were excited about it and about going there. Now, over the period of time where it's mushroomed to the number of art fairs that go on almost every week of the year, I see them as less of the Bible [than] as a selling device. Plus, it's so incredibly expensive now. You can't get into an art fair without spending \$40,000 and upwards to do a show.

TM: I started going and writing about Art Chicago. It knocked me for a loop when, 4 or 5 years in, it was called the best American art fair.

CH: Well, first, it was the only one, and then it became the best one and it maintained that reputation for a long time. I think one of the disasters that cut a huge

rip in that was when Thomas Blackman had the art fair in a tent in Grant Park.

TM: That was good for a year....

CH: It was good for a year and then everything fell apart. We arrived, we had all paid our fees. When we arrived to start setting up, nobody was there. The tents were there, the wings of the tent were flapping in the breeze and it was just a sinking, sinking feeling. And that same year, the Merchandise Mart came in for the rescue.

TM: Kennedy and the Mart did it right for the first year or two before it fell apart. Then Tony Karman's credibility with the dealers went a long way, and a group of gallerists gathered around Rhona and Richard and promised that Karman would do it right.

I went around in 2015 and asked many gallery owners why they had returned, and they said, "Well, we trust Richard and we need to be in Chicago. It's too important a city."

TM: You sometimes hear that people don't really understand how the business works. And what's the biggest misunderstanding collectors have about the trade?

CH: It's a mixed perception in that respect [prices are open to negotiation] No, long-time collectors are pretty savvy in knowing how they can work the various dealers they have relationships with. And that's been very helpful with the marketplace having a certain kind of respect with dealers. You probably get your best deals by being faithful to the particular program the dealer is working with and who the dealer is promoting.

But it's a tricky business, because a lot of people... have no idea how much the operation of a gallery costs. It's more than taking the commission and putting it into the bank. You have promotions, travel and art fairs, all kinds of things. We've fought a bit of an uphill battle because the outsider material wasn't always as accepted as it is now as part of the canon. It's really only about in the last 10 years that has really turned around and people are recognizing it.

TM: You are not going to be in EXPO this year. What's changed?

CH: We've learned that we need to make at least enough money in order to participate. To be honest with you, there are too many art fairs in the world now. As a result, we're not seeing the people flying into Chicago. There's only one art show here at EXPO. But, when you

go to Miami or New York or L.A., they have several art fairs going on, and that brings a greater mass of the marketplace.

TM: Can you pinpoint the biggest challenge you've faced?

CH: Probably is keeping the focus of the gallery on the representation of artists like Bill Traylor, Joseph Yoakum, Henry Darger and others. Even professional art people, look at the Art Institute of Chicago, not one piece of Bill Traylor's artwork is in their collection. This is one of the great names and one of the great artists of the 20th century.

TM: You have to go to Milwaukee to see a Traylor.

CH: Yeah, you're exactly right. Or to New York and other places. I think the biggest challenge we've had is convincing our collecting public and seeing the changing attitude that lets the public [know] that the self-taught artists' work can be and is worthy of consideration. It doesn't mean that all outsider art is good automatically.

We've also made a conscious decision to go after artists from the academic perspective. That amalgamation of those two programs has made the gallery much more robust.

TM: You must still have had the challenge in the '90s when it still was not accepted.

CH: Exactly.

Eugene Von Bruenchenhein, *Untitled # 366*, 1955. 16.5 x 15 inches. Photo courtesy of Carl Hammer Gallery.



TM: So, when do you feel you turned a corner? 10 years ago?

CH: About the turn of the century. There's a big art fair in New York called the Outsider Art Fair. Roberta Smith of the *Times* has called it her favorite art fair anywhere. And that show has probably done more to put the outsider artists on the roadmap of collectability. Now, all the museums around the country are scrambling to get some of these top names in their collection.

TM: What gives you satisfaction today after four decades in the business?

CH: Well, I like to think we've proven our worth in terms of a gallery presenting interesting material to the marketplace and to create, though the artists we represent, an exchange of ideas that helps to explore the creativity of both the self-taught and the academically-trained as well.

TM: You have represented some artist's estates. Name some.

CH: Well, we represented the Traylor estate, we represented the Henry Darger collection that Nathan Lerner owned, we represent several important Chicago artists like Mary Lou Zelazny, who teaches at the School of the Art Institute.

Lately, we've been increasingly associated with the Chicago Imagists. And it's been very rewarding. People are coming to us. And they fit into the program so well because they themselves were the early discoverers of these outsider artists. That's why it's so rewarding like, for example, Paschke, Roger Brown and Ray Yoshida, they were all collecting these guys.

TM: Have you succumbed to becoming a collector? Sometimes I've heard dealers say to avoid that since all your profits will go into that.

CH: I've got a kind of collection, but they are kind of little, private items. They're not the blockbuster pieces that we sell and walk out the door. I can't afford to hang on to them.

TM: Given this 40-year historical perspective, what the quality of the Chicago art scene that you miss most?

CH: Well, over that span, we've lost some pretty important gallerists, and to watch that history dissolve away and to see the younger art galleries on the scene,

Continued on page 42.

1968–2018: Iconic Chicago Architecture

by Lauren Whitney

Introduction: Walking around Chicago is an amazing experience. I've had my camera close by for the past 15 years, and still I'm amazed. It wasn't until 2009 that I realized photographing architecture was not just my passion, but my responsibility and purpose. This city is known for its architecture. It is the birthplace of the skyscraper and city planning. Many people consider Chicago to be the capital of modern architecture.

Chicago is where new prototypes and trends in architecture have taken off. In a way, Chicago collects excellence when it comes to architecture. I always find driving or walking around the city peaceful, particularly in the early morning when the sun hits the top of the buildings. In a forever-changing city saturated with people, it is a great feeling to take in the buildings that withstand the elements and age alongside us.

1. 1969 – 875 North Michigan Avenue (formerly the John Hancock Building)

Architect: Skidmore, Owings & Merrill

Lead architect: Bruce Graham

Structural Engineer: Fazlur Khan



Currently carrying the simple title of 875 North Michigan while official naming rights are being sorted out, many Chicagoans simply call this “Big John,” but, for me, it's the Hancock. I've always thought of this building as so handsome and mighty. I also appreciate how it was a trendsetter—its construction took chances, like using a composite of concrete and steel. It was also the first mixed-use tall building that included a parking garage, which just so happens to be my favorite.

2. 1972 – CNA Center

Architect: Graham, Anderson, Probst & White



This building is so much fun and, since a young age, I have loved looking for it in the skyline. You really can't miss “Big Red,” known formally as the CNA Center. The reason why it's admired and sticks out has everything to do with the fact that it's painted red. Other than that, it's just a simple building. Simple is good—yes—a red, simple building is better.

3. 1973 – Aon Center (at sunset)

Architect: Edward Durell Stone & Associates,
Perkins+Will



Keeping things simple is always successful. Architect Edward Durell Stone knew that, as did Perkins+Will. This is why the Aon Center is so beautiful. Its sleek and simple design is why this building stands out in the skyline and is timeless. Its white exterior gives the Aon Center the ability to transform throughout the day and year. In particular, it takes on many moods and colors during sunrises and sunsets. This tubular

steel-framed structure was originally clad in white Carrara marble. Unfortunately, the marble could not withstand Chicago's harsh winter weather and began to crack. In 1990, a deconstruction and reconstruction from white marble to white granite took place, costing approximately \$80 million.

4. 1973 – Willis Tower (formerly the Sears Tower)

Architect: Skidmore, Owings & Merrill

Lead architect: Bruce Graham

Structural Engineer: Fazlur Khan



Once the largest retailer in the world, Sears, Roebuck and Company recently filed for bankruptcy. Time is telling and markets change, but Sears will forever be a part of Chicago history. In the 1970s, they purchased land for the future site of their headquarters. Little did they know they would be taking on and commissioning a building that would forever change architecture, especially the skyscraper.

This building is genius. There is no doubt that when you mention Chicago architecture, the Willis Tower—or Sears Tower as Chicagoans still call it—is always among the buildings listed. It was once the world's tallest building. It remains the world's tallest steel building. It was among the first skyscrapers to use the tubular structural system, pioneering a concept still used today. The architectural concept of the Willis Tower was once illustrated by its principal architect by using bundled cigarettes. The building consists of nine tubes, really nine skyscrapers, bundled together. This created structural support, along with concrete reinforcements set into bedrock. Everything about the Willis Tower was so well thought-out, thanks to the very close collaboration between its principal architect and engineer.

5. 1983 – 333 West Wacker Drive

Architect: Kohn Pedersen Fox Associates



This corner has a storied history, so it's only proper that a magnificent building should stand there proudly. The curved green-blue glass building follows the bend and three branches of the Chicago River, also known as Wolf Point. 333 West Wacker Drive has always been at the top of my list of buildings that I love to photograph. Wolf Point had been a resting point for traders, and it hosted their first settlement before it became Chicago. So, whenever I see it, I can't help but think about how its curving is a salute to the river and its surroundings that evokes the color of the river with its green-blue glass. Meanwhile, the opposite side of the building has a remarkable notch at the top, saluting the city's street grid.

6. 1984 – Crain Communications Building

Architect: Sheldon Schlegman of
A. Epstein and Sons.



It's good to be different. I like different. But when the Crain Communications Building was completed, not everyone felt that it was different in the right way. You either appreciate the uniqueness of this building or you're not a fan. Both stances are understandable, but I'll argue that this is an awesome 1980s building. I've always known the Crain Communications Building as "The Diamond" because that's what I've always seen,

with a bit of an Egyptian flare due to the alternating bands of white aluminum, stainless steel and reflecting glass. The design gives the illusion that the building is split down the middle, though it actually is just slightly disjointed. I have so many images of “The Diamond”, but my favorites are just before the sun is going down when the building is at its most stunning.

**7. 1985 – James R. Thompson Center
(the “Space Ship”)**

Architect: Helmut Jahn



I’ve always been on the fence about the James R. Thompson Center. Ultimately, what made my mind up was really understanding the design and thinking behind the materials, colors, and curves. This space—some call it a spaceship—brings together government and the public. It took inspiration from a neoclassical dome; in particular, from the old Chicago Federal Building’s dome. The Thompson Center sliced the dome in half, and allowed the public to be a part of government. This bold, brilliant building deserves to be saved, though there are several publicized obstacles following years of neglect, and budget remains a major issue. It is Illinois’ responsibility to rehab it, repurpose it, or find someone willing to maintain and care for it.

8. 2004 – Charles M. Harper Center

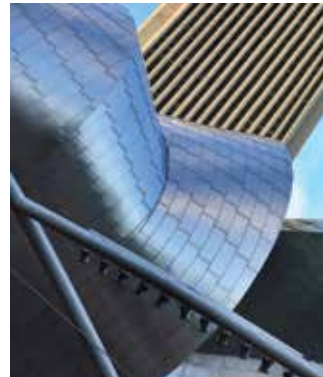
Architect: Rafael Viñoly



Glancing at the Charles M. Harper Center on the campus of the University of Chicago, it’s only natural to do a double take back at Frank Lloyd Wright’s Robie House just across 58th Street. When you’re inside and enter into the Rothman Winter Garden, you’re taken aback by how beautiful it is. That is because the Harper Center is influenced by—and is a tribute to—Robie House and Rockefeller Chapel, both adjacent to it. You would never think that Prairie Style (Prairie School) and Gothic Revival could mix until seeing and experiencing this building. Rafael Viñoly’s goal was to also design a space of unity, a place where people gather to collaborate, as well as to accommodate the latest methods for teaching and research in business and economics.

9. 2004 – Jay Pritzker Pavilion

Architect: Frank Gehry

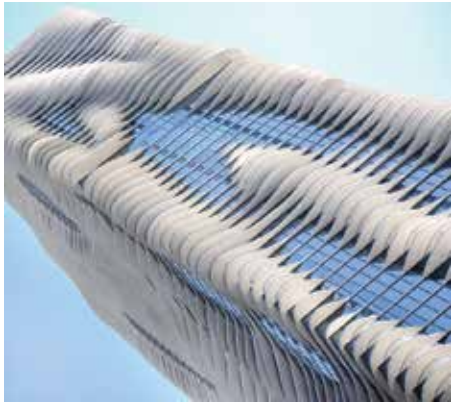


Part of Daniel Burnham’s big plan was a park for the people. Millennium Park is just that, with the Jay Pritzker Pavilion serving as the bandshell. However, this is not just any bandshell. It can be considered one of the most successful public spaces. What I love most about the pavilion are the steel ribbons and how they stretch out to the audience. I also appreciate the buildings

behind the steel ribbons; it's as if they too are a part of the performance as an architectural collaborator.

10. 2009 – Aqua

Architect: Jeanne Gang, Studio Gang Architects



I shot the Aqua just before sunrise. The concrete balconies so beautifully captured waves of water, and I was excited for what it could be upon completion. It turned out that Aqua is spectacular in every way, particularly in its thoughtfulness towards sustainability. Soon after it was finished, I was gazing at it when it started to snow. Those moments of such peace are forever in my memory due to how breathtaking it was. The balconies give the residents an experience of interacting with one another, as well as the vantage point to view other landmark buildings. Its name is also very fitting, with the design resembling waves from wind picking up water on Lake Michigan. The building is a vertical landscape of peace and tranquility.

11. 2009 – Trump Tower

Architect: Adrian Smith, Skidmore, Owings and Merrill



Regardless of your political views, please look at this building for what it is—purely stunning. The Trump Tower is the tallest reinforced concrete structure in

the world, the tallest residential building in the world, and the second tallest building in Chicago. This very tailored building's sleek design is certainly memorable. I'm not so sure we needed the big sign. Thankfully, while gazing upon this building, I'm too distracted with how much I appreciate the curved rounded edges, especially in the early mornings or right before sunset.

12. 2017 - River Point

Architect: Pickard Chilton



Much like 333 West Wacker Drive, River Point reflects the river. In fact, you can see the river in the building's reflection as you walk on the east side of the building. The arch bellows in and is directed right at the river. It thrills me to see this building in its location. Its name is fitting since it sits where the branches of the river connect. What the building and its history have in common is opportunity. This is the first downtown skyscraper built since the recession.

All photos by Lauren Whitney.

A Chicagoland native, Lauren Whitney has been a freelance architectural photographer since 2009. Photographing architecture is not just her passion, but also her purpose and responsibility.
www.laurenwhitneyphotography.com

What Ever Happened to Art Criticism, Part Two

by James Elkins

This is the second part of a two-part essay on art criticism. Part One appeared in the September/October 2018 issue of the New Art Examiner. Thanks to everyone on social media who commented on Part One. Please send all comments, criticism, and suggestions to jelkins@saic.edu. This essay will be revised for publication, and all contributors will be noted in the text.

At last—more than fifteen years since the 2002 Columbia University National Arts Journalism report mentioned in Part One—there is a new survey of art critics. Thanks to [Mary Louise Schumacher](#), who assembled the survey as a Nieman Fellow at Harvard University, it's possible, for the first time in a generation, to get an overall picture of art criticism in North America.

Schumacher's full survey results will be published soon by Nieman Reports at Harvard University.¹ Meanwhile she has published an essay, "[Critics and Online Outlets Leading the Vanguard in Arts Writing](#)." I'll report on some of her findings and then consider a half-dozen tendencies that have emerged largely since the 2002 survey.

Schumacher's survey is extensive. Respondents were asked 107 questions about their jobs and the state and nature of art criticism. A couple of highlights: Question 71 was, "Please name three artists who you are especially interested in championing today." The 182 answers are fascinating because there is virtually no agreement! Four people named Kara Walker with Anicka Yi, Hank Willis Thomas, and LaToya Ruby Frazier chosen by three people each.

There's a slightly longer list of artists chosen by two people, and then the responses go on and on with artists chosen by only one person each—448 rows in Schumacher's spreadsheet. This is vastly different from the 2002 survey, which revealed a consensus view of top artists—the sort that would be chosen by respondents whose median age was 47. (Schumacher's respondents are almost evenly distributed from age bracket "26-35" up to age bracket "over 65.") The 448-row spreadsheet of favorite artists is a clear sign of the efflorescence, diffusion, elaboration, and multiplicity of the contemporary art world.

Question 44 was, "Who do you believe are the most influential art critics working today?" Here the 222 responses reveal a very different pattern. Instead of a long list of individuals, there's a clear clustering of preferences—and it's every bit as conservative as the 2002 survey.

The top responses are: Roberta Smith (117 votes), her husband Jerry Saltz (86), Holland Cotter (69), Peter Schjeldahl (56), Ben Davis (25), and Christopher Knight (21). From there the number of votes per critic trails off rapidly: Barry Schwabsky, Hal Foster, Hilton Als... the entire list is only 141 rows deep, not 448. I find this disheartening.

Some of the top names are new (it's nice to see Ben Davis, Hrag Vartanian, and Jillian Steinhauer), but most were on the 2002 survey. It looks like critics are still reading one another for information (that was a surprising result of the 2002 survey), even though they are looking at many new artists.

In 2002, Susan Sontag was near the top, even though she didn't write art criticism. This time she's vanished from the list. Jerry Saltz's ascendancy to the second spot is surprising given that the respondents are other art critics, not general readers.

Some contemporary artists have writing practices that can be thought of as art criticism as well as part of their art practice.

Jerry Saltz, Parenthetically

Saltz has been one of the most energetic critics out there since his days crisscrossing the country teaching part-time on both coasts and in Chicago (I first met him in Chicago around 1988.) I am no longer surprised by the ongoing lack of serious response to his work, but I wonder if it ever concerns him.

Even with a Pulitzer, there's a near-vacuum of thoughtful criticism of his criticism. My own response is in [What Happened to Art Criticism?](#), and I still think it's mainly right. (I said he avoids thinking about critical principles and theories by proposing he responds spontaneously, without preconceived ideas—even

though historically and philosophically speaking, that just isn't possible.) Recent longer notices of his work, like Dushko Petrovich's "*Jerry Saltz Butts In*," tend to be journalistic or impressionistic.

What's crucial about Saltz's work as criticism is his intention to evade reflection on judgment or its absence and to proceed without nameable or consistent arguments or positions—the very things that characterize any critic, no matter how iconoclastic, and which no critic, no matter how agnostic or allergic to “ideas,” can avoid. Criticism of critics, I think, is just as important as criticism itself. It doesn't help that critics snipe about other critics or simply praise them: there's a need for reflective assessments.

Back to the Survey

Question 85 was, “Rank how important the following are to your work”: (a) “Describing works of art,” (b) “Helping my audience understand art,” (c) “Making judgments about art,” and (d) “Adding my own insights about art.” The equivalent question in the 2002 survey was the one that underlay my pamphlet, *What Happened to Art Criticism?*, because it showed clearly that most respondents thought art criticism should describe and not judge. In the new survey the results aren't as clear, because (d) overlaps (a), (b), and (c). It's clear, however, that judgment remains a minority interest. In the rankings, the top choice was (b), “Helping my audience understand art.”

Option (c), “Making judgments about art,” was the least popular choice, with just 22% of respondents picking it for their #1 ranking. This corresponds well with what I have observed since *What Happened to Art Criticism?* With few exceptions, visual art criticism remains laudatory, descriptive, evocative, impressionistic, and neutral.

In the essay, “*Critics and Online Outlets Leading the Vanguard in Arts Writing*,” Schumacher reports on five examples or streams of “vanguard” writing that emerged from her survey. The first is *Triple Canopy* (launched in 2007); the second is *Dis* (founded in 2010); the third is *Black Contemporary Art* (founded 2011); the fourth is Teju Cole, who writes the “On Photography” column for *The New York Times Magazine*; and last is Maggie Nelson.

It's an interesting list. Like *n+1*, *Triple Canopy* doesn't publish traditional art reviews, and a given contribution might be “a piece of experimental writing, a performance, a digital game, an art object,” or “a public discussion.” *Dis* is also interesting for the media and

forms it employs, so it might be said that all three represent a tendency to combine media in order to produce criticism, rather than writing it directly. *Black Contemporary Art* is an example of a platform for specialized subject matter, and the last two—Cole and Nelson—are individuals.

The heterogeneity of Schumacher's list is a good reflection of the disparate responses she collected, and another sign of the disarray of current art criticism.

Emily Colucci is an observer of the art and cultural scene, with essays on subjects as different as Patti Smith's inexplicable interest in carrots and “conservative camp” at Brett Kavanaugh's Senate hearing.

Six Directions

Criticism has changed tremendously in the fifteen years since the Columbia University survey. Here are six directions that have emerged in art criticism in the last two decades. Criticism seems to be increasingly diverse, and by some measures, it is—but by others, it remains conservative.²

(a) *Artist/writers*. Some contemporary artists have writing practices that can be thought of as art criticism as well as part of their art practice. For example, in Andrea Fraser or Gregg Bordowitz's work, the line between criticism and art practice can be either intentionally effaced or meaningless. These days, there are a number of such experiments, like Roger White's theatrical “*Gallery Libretto*,” from Dushko Petrovich's *Paper Monument*. This conflation of categories is something new: for poststructuralists from Robert Smithson and Art & Language to Tacita Dean, critical writing has been distinct from visual artwork.

There is not much reflection on this topic, probably because it is still usually assumed that practice informs critical writing or vice versa—that is, they are distinct. Aria Dean has said that her art and writing are “curiously out of step,” suggesting the two are related but are not quite a single project.

(b) *New forms of cultural criticism*. Even in late modernism, art criticism denoted writing exclusively on specific art practices or pieces. Now there are many writers who mix their writing on fine art with writing

on any number of other subjects. *Rachel Ellis Neyra* is a theorist and critic whose first book, under preparation, will involve “listening closely for unruly sounds made by what we otherwise quarter off as the visual, textual, and narrative” in Puerto Rican, Nuyorican, Chicana/o/x, and black aesthetics. *Emily Colucci* is an observer of the art and cultural scene, with essays on subjects as different as Patti Smith’s inexplicable interest in *carrots* and “conservative camp” at Brett Kavanaugh’s *Senate hearing*.

In this kind of criticism, the art is woven into wider cultural narratives. Other examples include *Doreen St. Félix*, a cultural commentator at *The New Yorker* who also writes on art; Sarah Nicole Prickett, who writes on a *range of art subjects*; and *The White Pube*, a high-energy blog run out of Liverpool and London by two writers who describe themselves as “art critic baby gods” who “wanna write GOOD ~ have politix.”³

Exhibitions by a wide range of curators count as criticism because they intervene in existing art historical or market narratives.

(c) *Curation as critique*. This category of critics has always included curators, even well before the emergence of curation as a major part of the art world. Exhibitions by a wide range of curators count as criticism because they intervene in existing art historical or market narratives. This is as true of Okwui Enwezor as it is of *Marina Reyes Franco* or the Swedish-Cherokee curator and editor *America Meredith Joseph Grigely*, who has the office next to mine at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, is an artist who runs the *Hans Ulrich Obrist Archive*: a collection of all of Obrist’s catalogs and other materials since the early 1990s. Grigely teaches seminars in the archive. The project is not only curating the curator—although that would be a critical act in its own right—but articulating differences and points of overlap between curation, archive, and criticism.⁴

(d) *Writing + performance + video*. The websites *Dis*, *n+1*, and *Triple Canopy* are examples of platforms for art criticism that largely avoid first-person writing directed at particular artists or venues, and instead produce art criticism as an effect of projects that may combine performance, video, and other strategies.

Artists’ groups have explored similar territory. Among many examples, *Our Literal Speed*, IRWIN,

South Africa’s *Center for Historical Reenactments* and *Keleketla Media Arts Project*, and the *Raqs Media Collective* have paid special attention to the relation between art criticism and art history. The IRWIN *East Art Map* remains one of the most extended attempts to intervene critically in existing art historical narratives. (Medium matters here: the website is very different from the *book*.)

Another unique combination of criticism and performance is Lori Waxman’s *60 wrd/min art critic*, in which artists are invited to bring in work for an on-the-spot critical review of 100-200 words. In Waxman’s words, the project is “an exploration of short-form art writing, a work of performance art in and of itself, an experiment in role reversal between artist and critic,” and “a circumvention of the art review process.” Also in my institution, *Seth Kim-Cohen*, known principally for his writing on *sound art*, works on new critical forms including “performances-as-criticism... with and against musical accompaniment, with video.”⁵

(e) *Criticism in podcasts, films, and videos*. I owe this category to Lori Waxman, who read a draft of this essay and pointed out that an increasing number of art criticism projects don’t rely on writing at all. There’s the long-running *Bad at Sports*, which I contributed to several times—it was wonderfully informal and unpredictable—and the videos, podcasts, and TV channel on *Art21*. Lori also mentions TV shows like *The Next Great Artist* (2010-11) that featured Jerry Saltz in a panel of critics, artists, and curators; *School of Saatchi* (2009) which had Tracey Emin and Michael Collins as judges; and *I Love Dick* (2017-2018), an adaptation of Chris Kraus’s 1997 novel of the same name.⁶

The websites *Dis*, *n+1*, and *Triple Canopy* are examples of platforms for art criticism that largely avoid first-person writing directed at particular artists or venues, and instead produce art criticism as an effect of projects that may combine performance, video, and other strategies.

(f) *Fiction and criticism*. Many respondents to the 2017 survey showed interest in mixtures of fiction and criticism. In Part One of this essay, I mentioned one of the original, and still most radical, examples, Proust. Recently there has been a resurgence of interest in mixing fiction with art criticism (and art history). It’s a

subject I am studying, and I think it is helpful to distinguish among disparate possibilities.

First there is fiction (novels, usually) that include passages of art criticism. Ben Lerner's novels, like *10:04*, are examples. Lerner writes well-informed criticism, but it is assigned to specific characters and set within boundaries in the narrative.

Recently there has been a resurgence of interest in mixing fiction with art criticism (and art history).

I would like to distinguish this strategy from fiction that includes criticism but also embodies it throughout the text. An example is Don DeLillo's 2010 novel, *Point Omega*, which contains a description of Douglas Gordon's 1993 *24 Hour Psycho*; after those opening pages, the novel develops a narrative that enacts a similar "anguish and anxiety."

That's two possibilities. There is also fiction that describes the art world or artists, and so acts as art criticism. Some of Tom Wolfe's novels fit that description, and so do Rachel Kushner's *The Flamethrowers* and Kevin Wilson's *The Family Fang*.⁷

Beyond these three is a largely uncharted region in which art criticism appears in and as fiction, metafiction, and "creative nonfiction"; Maggie Nelson, Susan Howe, Anne Carson, and Claudia Rankine have been written about in these terms.⁸

It would be wonderful if there were texts theorizing these and other possibilities. But relatively little has been written beyond case studies. It's a great opportunity for scholars in search of dissertation topics.

Conclusion

Art criticism is consistently interesting. It resolutely resists anything more than provisional ordering. It continues to avoid judgment in favor of description; it favors neutrality and praise despite the encroaching market; it imagines itself to be in perpetual crisis or decline; it attaches itself to many media and voices; and it has no central texts, practitioners, or problematics.

Despite its disappearance from newspapers and other mass media, it is even more uniform, more widely produced, and I think less read, than in 2002. Its historians and observers, like me, convene conferences and edit books on its history, condition, and prognosis, but those have little effect on the continuous disarray of the field. My main interests in art criticism are still

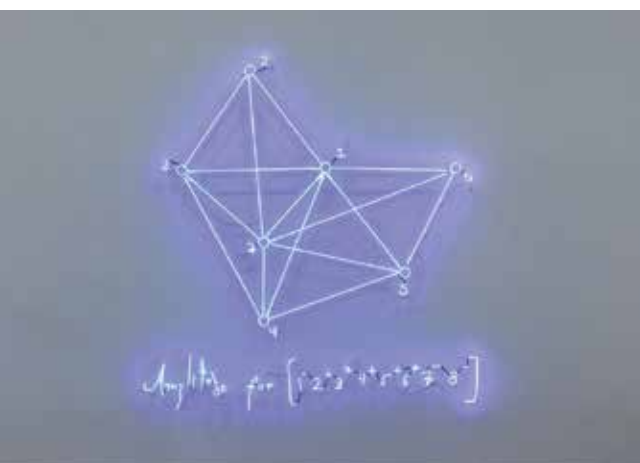
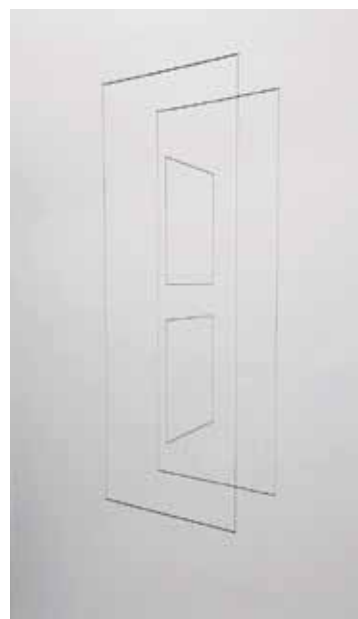
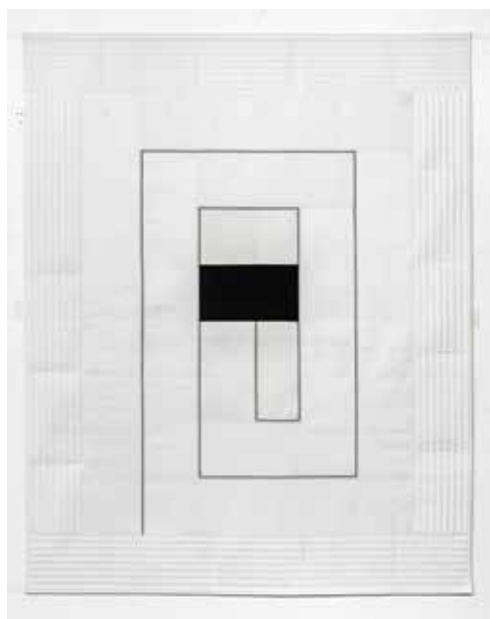
its insouciance about its concepts and its hope of locating a place to speak that is somehow outside of system, practice, or precedent.

James Elkins is an art historian and art critic. He is the E.C. Chadbourne Professor of Art History, Theory and Criticism at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. His most recent book is *What Heaven Looks Like*. All comments welcome via jameselkinks.com.

Notes:

- 1 Schumacher is art and architecture critic with the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* and 2017 Arts & Culture Fellow with the Nieman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard University.
- 2 I thank Seth Kim-Cohen, Daniel Quiles, Dushko Petrovich, Lori Waxman, David Getsy, Delinda Collier, and Sampada Aranke for ideas. These descriptions and choices are mine.
- 3 It's not always clear whether the new narrative forms and subject matters of these writers put them at a conceptual distance from existing visual studies, art history, art theory, or political critique. In the field of visual studies, for example, it's an *ongoing question* whether unexpected subject matter and theory produce new discourse.
- 4 There is relatively little on the subject of curatorial theory; Terry Smith's *book* remains the principal source, despite some *reservations*. Without a consensus idea of curation, it would be as difficult to distinguish curation from art criticism as it has been for the *October* school to articulate the relation between art history and criticism.
- 5 Kim-Cohen, email, October 2018. Despite a large literature on multimedia and the post-medium condition and an equally diverse literature on *performativity and criticism*, I don't know of any writing assessing the nature and possibilities of art criticism when it spans multiple media. (Always happy to hear of examples!)
- 6 As in (b), it's an open question whether these podcasts, films, TV series, and videos bring new content to criticism along with their new forms. Some rehearse familiar sorts of responses that can be found in written criticism. It would be useful to have a careful study of one of these to see what positions and arguments it has that are medium-specific in the sense that they could not be found in written sources.
- 7 I thank Lori Waxman for these last two.
- 8 A useful parallel for the dialectic between fiction and criticism is the so-called "novel-essay," a form that appeared in the early 20th century and for a while threatened to engulf the novel, stalling its plot and freezing its characters into mouthpieces. The principal example is Robert Musil's endless *The Man Without Qualities*, and the principal scholar is Stefano Ercolino. I wonder if this might be a more useful starting point than the general poststructuralist interpretation of fiction as political critique.

Works that Caught Our Eye at EXPO Chicago



(Top left) Seoulgi Lee, *U: If your tail is long, it would be trampled upon*, 2016. Korean silk, collaboration with Korean Nubi quilter of Tong-Yeong, 195 x 155 x 1cm. Seen at Gallery Hyundai booth.

(Top center) Richard Hull, *Moth*, 2017. Monotype. 36" x 24", Photo courtesy of Manneken Press. Seen at Manneken Press booth.

(Top right) Jong Oh, *Line Sculpture*, 2017, string, paint, metal bars, 38x16x16". Image courtesy of Marc Straus Gallery. Seen at Marc Straus Gallery booth.

(Left) Andrea Galvani, *Study on Amplituhedron*, 2017-2018. 6500K neon, cobalt blue blown glass, 210 x 255 x 8 cm / 82.7 x 100.4 x 3.1 inches. © Andrea Galvani. Image courtesy of the artist. Seen at Eduardo Secci Contemporary booth.



(Left) Thomas Lanigan-Schmidt, *Fragments from Holly Solomon's Bedroom Set*, 1988. Mixed-media, 88 x 88 x 1/2 inches. Image courtesy of the artist and Pavel Zoubok Fine Art. Seen at Pavel Zoubok Fine Art booth.

(Right) Aida Muluneh, *The American Dream*, 2017, archival digital photography, 31.5 x 31.5 inches. Image courtesy of Jenkins Johnson Gallery. Seen at Jenkins Johnson Gallery booth.





(Top left) Bisa Butler, *Les Sapeurs*, 2018. Cotton and silk, 42 x 60 inches. Image courtesy of Claire Oliver Gallery. Seen at Claire Oliver Gallery booth.

(Top right) Abelardo Morell, *Camera Obscura: View of Hotel de Ville, Paris*, 2015. Archival pigment print, 45 x 60 inches. Image © Abelardo Morell/ Courtesy of Edwynn Houk Gallery, New York. Seen at Edwynn Houk Gallery booth.

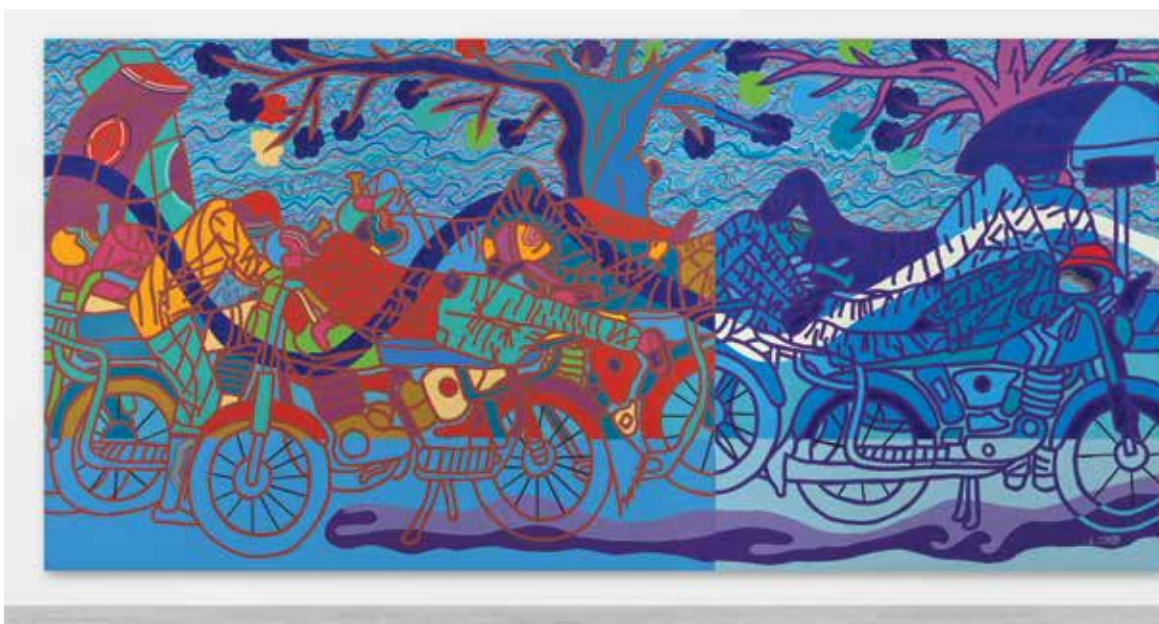
(Right) Robert Polidori, *Michel Anguier by Jacques d'Agar, 1675 Salle la surintendance de Colbert, Salles du XVII, Aile du Nord – R.d.C, Château de Versailles*, 1984. Color coupler print, 60 x 50 inches. ©Robert Polidori. Image courtesy Edwynn Houk Gallery, New York. Seen at Edwynn Houk Gallery booth.



(Left) Hank Willis Thomas, *The Clown*, 2018. Mixed media including sport jersey, 200 x 162.5 cm / 79 x 64 in. Image courtesy of Maruani Mercier Gallery. Seen at Maruani Mercier Gallery booth.



Ajarb Bernard Ategwa, *Sweet Dreams #2*, 2018. Acrylic on canvas in two parts, 239.5 x 299 cm (94 x 118 in) and 239.5 x 199.5 cm (94 x 117 in), overall, 239.5 x 498.5 cm (94 x 196 in). Photo by Matthias Kolb, courtesy Peres Projects, Berlin. Seen at Peres Projects booth.



Rhona Hoffman

Continued from page 28.

in climate change, we're interested in everything that happens. Art is talking about what's happening in the world. And so you have a big vision, big perspective, when you're in the art world.

TM: Are you finding that collectors now are much more informed about art?

RH: Many of them are. And many are not. I think the museums have done a rather good job of educating the public. For example, in Chicago, there are collecting groups, people who pay money to be in a special group within the museum. They do lectures, they meet artists.

TM: Richard Gray was elected to the board [of trustees] of the Art Institute a number of years ago and handled himself superbly in that unusual role of being a gallerist on the board. Do you think about whether a gallerist can make a contribution as opposed to this strict dividing line?

RH: There is no strict dividing line anymore. But you may not hear that from trustees because usually we don't have enough money to do that. After Richard's memorial service, we had a dinner and there were six museum people there and collectors. Everyone knows each other. It's not a family but a very big group of people who find art interesting, beautiful and indispensable.



Barbara Kruger, installation shot, 1990. Image courtesy of Rhona Hoffman Gallery.

Carl Hammer

Continued from page 31.

there's not that kind of cohesive community in the art scene anymore. You almost have to declare your allegiance to a particular gallery owner or two and hang out whenever they have an event as opposed to how it used to be an amazing camaraderie where everyone hung out together and you had this wonderful energy that we had for a long time in this River North district, and I miss that the most.

TM: What do you really like about today's art scene?

CH: Well, it's a lot broader in terms of its appreciation for different things. I am seeing a more informed public coming to confront the new ideas that are often hurled at them. I have to say, it's fun to see this discovery and rediscovery of new forms.

I can't say I'm ending up a rich man but, in terms of my experience, this time has been among the richest experiences I've ever had in my lifetime—being an art dealer and exchanging ideas about any particular given artist you're hanging. Yeah, I enjoy that exchange. It's really great.

These Artists Invite You to Look and Listen

Two powerful exhibitions featuring black female artists kicked off the fall art season in River North. “How Do You See Me?” at Catherine Edelman Gallery and “Things Are Not Always What They Seem: A Phenomenology of Black Girlhood” at Carl Hammer Gallery both offer a space for these strong artistic voices to be seen and heard. The artists in both shows come from a variety of artistic backgrounds, but an overarching theme of black identity is present in all the works.

Vanessa German’s “Things are Not Always What They Seem...” features large sculptures of various figures built out of collected objects, plaster, and string. Each stands erect, like saints in a cathedral. Their pieced-together nature recalls African power figures and Haitian voodoo spirits.



Vanessa German, *Notes on the Absence of Sacredness: How Little Black Girls Die*, mixed media assemblage, 2018. 77 x 30 x 18 inches. Courtesy of Carl Hammer and Pavel Zoubok galleries

German’s sculptures have something to say. They stand perched atop piles of wood and chairs, using any means possible to get the viewer’s attention. Each character, though small in stature, is at eye level with the viewer. The sculpture titled *Notes on the Absence of Sacredness: How Little Girls Die* holds out a black porcelain child as glass jewels stream from her eyes like tears. It is paying homage to girls forgotten by a broken

system; black girls who are found dead in the streets and overlooked because they are deemed to be too lost or too dangerous.

German is a self-taught artist working in mediums that run the gamut from performance and photography to video. Her mother was a fiber artist, which shows in German’s ability to practically weave with objects. Her works are carefully curated in a way that illustrates the concept of phenomenology and connects it to something almost spiritual. There are layers of history and experiences that create consciousness, just as these statues are layered and organized.

“How Do You See Me?” at Edelman Gallery puts the viewer on the spot. These artists join in a collective question and begin a powerful dialogue. There are physical and metaphorical layers of history and material that permeate through each piece, creating their own sort of phenomenology.

Not unlike German, Alanna Airitam layers history in her photographs. In an interview, she talks about walking through museums full of painted portraits in gilded frames: “It feels like they are looking down at me.” Her portraits do not judge. The subjects offer up flowers and fruit. *Saint Lenox* holds a large bouquet of flowers as the light carves out intricate lines along the red cloth of her turban. It is reminiscent of Jan van Eyck’s red turban in *Portrait of a Man (Self Portrait?)*. The photographs juxtapose themes from the Dutch Renaissance and the Harlem Renaissance. Both art periods emerged out of war and social upheaval.

Unlike the cold gazes from historical paintings, the subjects in this project are welcoming the viewer. The details of the skin are rich and textured and the lighting spot on. However, the photographs are displayed on top of a piece of damask paper. The pattern detracts from the beauty of the photographs by flattening the images and giving them a feeling like they are floating on a computer desktop.

The physical layering of photographic elements in Endia Beal’s project is a great device for creating implied layers of perception. The women in Beal’s photographs stand in their homes against a backdrop depicting the setting of a corporate office. The background is a photograph of a hallway in the Yale University administrative office where Beal once worked. The women are dressed in their best business attire, prepared for an interview in a corporate office.

Beal is a formally-trained photographer with an M.F.A. from Yale. During her time at that institution, she found out that, in the office she worked in, her hair had become the topic of conversation for several of her coworkers. As part of her graduate studies, Beal created a body of work called “Can I Touch It?” in which she invited those coworkers to approach and touch her hair. By putting those people on the spot, she is turning the tables and troubling their perceptions.

Beal’s is not an isolated incident, but one that is emblematic of a subtle but pervasive dysfunction in the corporate world including institutions as renowned as Yale University. The work featured at Edelman Gallery unifies Beal’s experience with those of some of her students. The photographs are accompanied by quotes from each woman on the topic of corporate America:

Kennedy, 20

“As a black woman in corporate America, straightening my hair should be MY personal choice. Why is it okay for me to come to an interview with a weave in my hair and be accepted, but not with my Afro? It’s not right. We want to be accepted just the way we are.”

In this photograph, Kennedy stands, facing the viewer. The corporate backdrop lines up with the edge of a framed picture. The hand of Adam from the Sistine Chapel reaches out to touch, not the hand of God, but the hair of a black woman.

Medina Dugger gives a different perspective on hair. “Chroma” is an homage to Nigerian photographer J.D. ‘Okhai Ojeikere’s series documenting the unique hairstyles and head wraps of Nigerian culture. The original

series consists of two thousand black and white images. Dugger, having moved from California to Nigeria in 2011, began exploring the same hairstyles now updated with the availability of modern supplies.

Dugger creates an expert palette of colors in each image. The technical prowess of her editing shows the signs of a commercial photographer. This complements Ojeikere’s portraits, also created in a commercial style. Her lighting and printing of the images are done with a keen eye. Dugger adds color both with the thread used in the hairstyles and with the backgrounds. There has been some post-production manipulation of the hair and background colors. The result of her careful editing is a color palette both modern and precisely balanced.

The compositions have simplicity to them, as though they could be found on the wall of a hair salon. Those that diverge from the original series are more interesting. Aside from the color palate, the project itself is a bit soft-spoken, especially in contrast to the other projects in the exhibition.

These two shows are compelling because they are unafraid to address the viewer. Identity comes to the forefront as the artists represent their subjects with generosity and admiration. The tone of each piece directs the viewer to consider the subjects on their own terms, not dictated by fear or fascination, like the judgments of corporate America or the negligence of its justice system. They will not be quiet or relax their hair or any other part of their being. Their voices must resound in collected disorder “until justice rolls out clear and sharp for all of our daughters.” [from *Love Poem for Nia Wilson #1* by Vanessa German.]

Alanna Airitam, *Saint Lenox*, 2017. © Alanna Airitam.
Courtesy of Catherine Edelman Gallery



Rebecca Memoli

How do you see me?

Catherine Edelman Gallery, 300 W. Superior St.,
Chicago, IL 60654

Vanessa German—Things Art Not Always What They Seem: A Phenomenology of Black Girlhood

Carl Hammer Gallery, 740 N. Wells St., Chicago, IL 60654

Rebecca Memoli is a Chicago-based photographer and curator. She received her BFA from Pratt Institute and her MFA in Photography from Columbia College. Her work has been featured in several national and international group shows. Her latest curatorial project is “The Feeling is Mutual.”

“Anonymous Women”

Patty Carroll at One After 909

Dramatically foreshortened as if it belongs in a Marvel comic book, a large, foreboding meat cleaver threatens to fly off the edge of a tabletop cornucopia of cooked goose, sausage, whole fish and carved ham. The server of the feast in *Meaty* (2017), wearing a fur coat and outfitted with a wire egg basket in place of a head and baguettes for arms, regally presents herself as if offering a hearty *bon appétit!* The setting’s photographic rendering is surrealistic, hallucinogenic, nightmarish and hilarious.

Welcome to the brilliantly psychotic, introspective and satirical world of photo artist Patty Carroll’s “Anonymous Women,” a silent, theatrical place where a woman’s self-identity gets displaced and devoured by the artifacts and schizophrenic demands of domesticity and is viewed through the opening or closing of luxurious stage curtains. Each environment is presented as if it’s the beginning scene of a mystery or the last act of a drama.

Copious drapes and fabrics are to be found in each of the sets. In real life as in stagecraft, curtains sequester one from the world. From the studio, lost in her work, Carroll hears birds singing outside but doesn’t see them.

“Anonymous Women” is an ambitious, ongoing series with subsets that began around 2005-2006, starting with “Heads” and “Draped.” The theme behind this evolving body of work, which confabulates Carroll’s real self with her home-centered furnishings, is consistent throughout and makes a serendipitous fit with the current Zeitgeist in terms of trending women’s empowerment concerns and the Me Too and Time’s Up movements.

Each work is a kind of referential or psychological self-portrait wherein a deep, critical self-awareness is made palatable through mind-blowing opulence and visual game playing. The female figure always appears alone, so that the viewer may imagine himself or herself as a participant who shares some responsibility for events.

Each elaborate setting is artfully and painstakingly assembled. The concept for a scene might begin with a general idea, such as “stripes” or “plates,” with a single prop or household accessory, or with a rudimentary thumbnail sketch. If the availability of interesting neighborhood thrift store, the insufficient inventory



Patty Carroll, *Meaty*, 2017. Archival digital print, 38x38”
Photo courtesy of One After 909 Gallery.

knickknacks seems to be surprisingly low at your might be attributable to the voracious tchotchke hunting of Patty Carroll and her assistants.

Baroque and Gothic aesthetics are channeled with a horror vacui that makes much use of patterned tapestries and decorative adornments. The influence of 17th century genre painting from the Dutch Golden Age is reawakened to meet Ira Levin’s *The Stepford Wives*.

In each context, a mannequin fills in for a human model and is surrounded by so many objects that, as Carroll says, “her stuff has to do her in.” She transports observers into this comedic, jaded world, and like any good mystery writer, entices us to search through the minutiae of details and patterns, none of which seem accidental; not the cherub on the lamp base in *Domestic Bliss* nor the diminutive, furry toy animal creeping over the worn armchair that spills its stuffing in *Walled In*.

A major distinction between the mystery genre and Carroll’s oeuvre is that, in a thriller, one might not know in advance who the next victim will be, or who did it; in Carroll’s world, the woman is always the victim, asphyxiated by the psychological burdens of her own baggage.

Her thoroughly mastered tricks of the trade possess much in common with those of advertising, graphic arts, fashion and commercial photography. Depth

of field is spectacular, and the balanced compositions always draw the eye to the center of attention. Lighting avoids hot spots, shadows are kept to a minimum and color saturation can be intense.

Carroll studied with some giants of photography, including Gary Winogrand, Aaron Siskind and Art Sinsabaugh; she's also a certified Adobe Photoshop expert. Like the photographic works of Ruud van Empel and Tim Walker, or the richly patterned paintings of Kehinde Wiley, each of her pieces presents irresistible visual abundance.

Carroll's work brings to mind Cindy Sherman's conceptual portraits, as both artists explore issues of female self-identity; the main difference being that Sherman focuses on intertwining her own image with archetypal women found in popular media, while Carroll succumbs to the material accessories and gimmicks that preoccupy and overwhelm her subjects.

Mad Mauve (2018), smothered and buried in furlongs of funereal mauve drapes, is illuminated by a sedate light emanating from two faded purple lampshades. She's clutching two lusterless and lifeless roses in her right hand. One imagines the smell of death at the sight of the figure reclined on a plum armchair beneath the weight of her situation. If there were a soundtrack here, it would be *Radio Mystery Theater*.

Sad songs are the most piquant, and Patty Carroll's gloomiest and most somber moments share a pathos that speaks in any language. *Darkly* (2016) avoids postmodern glitz and settles for gravitas. In a black room, behind black curtains, a black, double-breasted Victorian dress adorns a headless standing mannequin, whose uncoupled head is to be found within an oval mirror on the back wall, completely shrouded in

black cloth that is fastened around the neck with a black and white beaded collar, suggesting that this could be a reflection of the spectator. The similarity to a burqa is not entirely coincidental in that Carroll's niece served in the U.S. Marines in Iraq in the years immediately following 9/11.

So much in *Darkly* is black, including the Royal typewriter, telephone handset, vases, flowers, lace and carpet. If brightness is a sign of hope, the only prospect herein is the white paper in the typewriter with white keys, the pearls, jewelry and a gold telephone base, these hint that attempts to communicate might bring a ray of sunshine into this lugubrious setting. The illumination of only select parts of an otherwise dark composition, a device favored by Rembrandt, in Carroll's work gets re-introduced into more contemporary middle class living rooms.

A few of the other works in this exhibition are very bright: *Smothered*, *Yellow Wallpaper*, *Domestic Bliss and Ghastly* appear drenched in a soft light that bathes the retro but postmodern assemblages. Within these dazzling scenes are premonitions that one's brightest moments might remind us to be wary of self-inflicted "sugar" overload.

As if to make this point, a dagger-shaped fragment of a broken plate plunges into the heart of the protagonist who is over-burdened by her matronly collection of pretty decorative plates (*Revenge of the Plates*, 2017). Like a pop music diva, Carroll beguiles us into falling for excessively easy narrative readings of her visual stories while, like Nancy Wilson, also indulging in shimmering, soulful subtleties.

"Anonymous Women" is the second exhibition at One After 909. The gallery opened in June 2018 and is located in Chicago's new arts district in West Town. Gallery owner Stano Grezdo, accomplished former curator of the Ukrainian Institute of Modern in Art in Chicago, is committed to featuring art that responds to contemporary issues of social awareness.

Bruce Thorn

Patty Carroll, *Yellow Wallpaper*, 2018. Archival digital print, 38x38". Photo courtesy of One After 909 Gallery.



"Anonymous Women," September 7-October 20, 2018
One After 909, 906 N. Ashland Ave., Chicago, IL 60622
1-312-608-2265 galleryoneafter909@gmail.com

Bruce Thorn is a Chicago-based painter and musician. He has degrees in painting and drawing from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and the University of Illinois at Chicago. He is a Contributing Editor with the *New Art Examiner*.

David Hockney

Gray Warehouse

On an uncommonly warm evening in September, a crowd gathered at the Carroll Avenue outpost of the Richard Gray Gallery for an opening that marked the unofficial start of the Chicago art season. David Hockney arrived fashionably late to his most recent show, dressed in his usual dapper uniform of checked jacket, colorful tie, driver's cap and ever-present cigarette.

Inside, he made his way through the throng of people slowly, amiably stopping to pose for pictures and allow a few words from each of the admirers who crowded around him as he headed for the bar.

The chatter amongst some gallery-goers that evening was full of eager speculation regarding the news that Hockney's *Portrait of an Artist (Pool with Two Figures)* is set to become the most expensive work by a living artist ever sold at auction when it reaches the block at Christie's in November. Yet work of a wholly different nature filled the walls around them.

"Time and More, Space and More..." presents, simultaneously, the artist's recent video works and photographic drawings. The former works take the lead, as one is confronted upon entry to the main gallery with four nine-channel monitors that surround the viewer. They offer up the same view down a bucolic stretch of road in Yorkshire, England, each depicting a different season.

The power of *The Four Seasons, Woldgate Woods, 2010-2011*, lies in its concurrent manipulation of time and perspective, providing viewers as it does with the challenge of keeping up with what amounts to be the passing of a representational year, an impossible task as the seasons carry on around the body simultaneously.

To carefully take it in, one must literally turn one's back to another screen.

The use of repetition of location and space within this work pose an equal challenge, at once compelling the viewer to focus on details and ground themselves in a quickly developed familiarity while maintaining a pace that renders the task nearly impossible.

In the primary gallery space hang Hockney's recent large-scale photographic drawings. True to form for the artist, each of these monumental multi-sheet works on paper, mounted on Dibond, has the lower corners blunted. There is a current of uncanniness that runs through the series, which depicts Hockney's California studio.

The curious, almost voyeuristic, perspective they inhabit is compounded by their more surreal touches and meticulously-rendered details, such as the electrical outlets of *Pictures in an Exhibition* that are directly at odds with the obviously manipulated figures that occupy the image's center. These works hover in the vague space between rendered depiction and reality; they compel the viewer to ground themselves in the familiarity of space, only to have it elude them through the inclusion of unfathomable elements, like the numerals that rest easily on the utility carts of *Focus Moving* and their empty counterparts in *Seven Trollies, Six and a Half Stools, Six Portraits, Eleven Paintings, and Two Curtains*.

The treatment of figures within these works bears an opaqueness typical of Hockney; the static postures and neutral expressions call to mind the subjects of his early paintings. Indeed, the works on view in "Time and More, Space and More..." could only be those of a



David Hockney
Seven Trollies, Six and a Half Stools, Six Portraits, Eleven Paintings, and Two Curtains 2018.

Photographic drawing printed on 7 sheets of paper (109 1/2 x 42 3/4" each), mounted on 7 sheets of Dibond. Edition of 12 109 1/2 x 299 1/4" overall. © David Hockney. Photo by Richard Schmidt.



David Hockney
Inside It Opens Up As Well,
2018. Photographic drawing
printed on 7 sheets of paper
(109 1/2 x 42 3/4" each),
mounted on 7 sheets of Dibond,
Edition of 12, 109 1/2 x 299 1/4"
overall. © David Hockney. Photo
by Richard Schmidt.

prominent, late-career artist. To indulge in the luxury of disorientation is a privilege earned only through a life-long practice, as are the patient meditations on the passage of time and the simultaneously introspective and retrospective use of the artist's own studio as subject.

This is underscored further by the works that book-end the exhibition. Upon entry to the building itself—a 5,000 square foot, bowstring-trussed industrial structure, renovated by Wheeler Kearns Architects in 2017 and transformed into an ancillary space known as the Gray Warehouse (rumored to soon be the exclusive home of the gallery in Chicago)—one is greeted with Hockney's iPad-rendered self-portraits, numbered *I-IV*, before having the chance to enter the gallery space proper. As one leaves the gallery on the opposite end of the space, they encounter the final photographic drawing, *In the Studio, December, 2017*. It is considerably smaller than its counterparts in the exhibition, measuring a mere 32"x 90" to the others' monumental scale at an average of 8'x24'. It hangs by itself on the northern wall. This is the only other work on view in the exhibition that contains an image of Hockney.

Here, the artist stands static, his arms slack at his sides. Lacking the dynamics of expression that overwhelm the self-portraits at the entrance, he is surrounded by more than a dozen works in his studio with a distant look fixed on his face. A fitting image on which to end the show.

"Time and More, Space and More..." offers gallery-goers the opportunity to reflect not just on Hockney's major contributions to the contemporary cultural canon, but on the subtleties of his skillful manipulation of perspective and, indeed, viewership in these twilight years of his career.

Bianca Bova

Gray Warehouse is located at 2044 West Carroll Avenue. The current Hockney exhibit runs through November 21, 2018. The gallery is open from Wednesday to Saturday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Bianca Bova is a Chicago-based curator and art critic. She has worked with national and international contemporary art organizations including Sitelab, Gunder Exhibitions, and EXPO Chicago.

David Hockney, *Focus Moving*, 2018
Photographic drawing printed on 2 sheets of paper
(67 x 42 7/8" each), mounted on 2 sheets of Dibond.
Edition of 25, 67 x 85 3/4" overall (hexagonal)
© David Hockney. Photo by Richard Schmidt.



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