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THE YEAR IN CULTURE

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ART

(The Year in...)

The Cold War, fifties brushstrokes, and a pickup artist run amok.

1 *The Clock*, Christian Marclay

I imagine Darren Aronofsky onstage at the Academy Awards next February, announcing, "And the winner for Best Picture is ... Christian Marclay's *The Clock*." Movie stars would be dumbstruck; the art world would cheer. Marclay's film, painstakingly assembled out of time-specific clips from classic movies, was a 24-hour odyssey of chronology.

2 THE CHAUVET CAVE PAINTINGS, IN 3-D

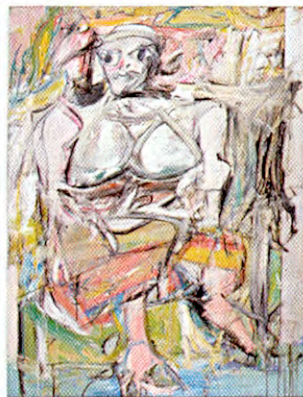
Speaking of movie theaters, I yelped when I saw the panoramic shots in Werner Herzog's astounding *Cave of Forgotten Dreams* and gleaned that 30,000 years ago, painters in southern France could draw with atmospheric and linear perspective. Mammals have never been rendered better.

3 "DE KOONING: A RETROSPECTIVE," AT MOMA

The transcendently sensuous show of almost 200 works by the Dutch-American master Willem de Kooning teemed with visual wisdom, annulling the many ridiculous critical complaints that this cloudburst of artistic genius was too big or passé. A painting supernova.

4 "ALEXANDER MCQUEEN: SAVAGE BEAUTY," AT THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

Art made me gay! I was shaken to my hetero core by the unbridled



originality, brazenness, and riveting vision on display in the Met's Alexander McQueen show of clothes that became sculpture that turned into art. Dismissing this as "only a fashion show" is like saying Mozart only wrote songs.

5 "BLISS," RAGNAR KJARTANSSON

This twelve-hour performance with ten Icelandic opera singers, all repeatedly performing the divine final aria of *The Marriage of Figaro*, created a replicating masterpiece of love, redemption, and Icelandic insanity.

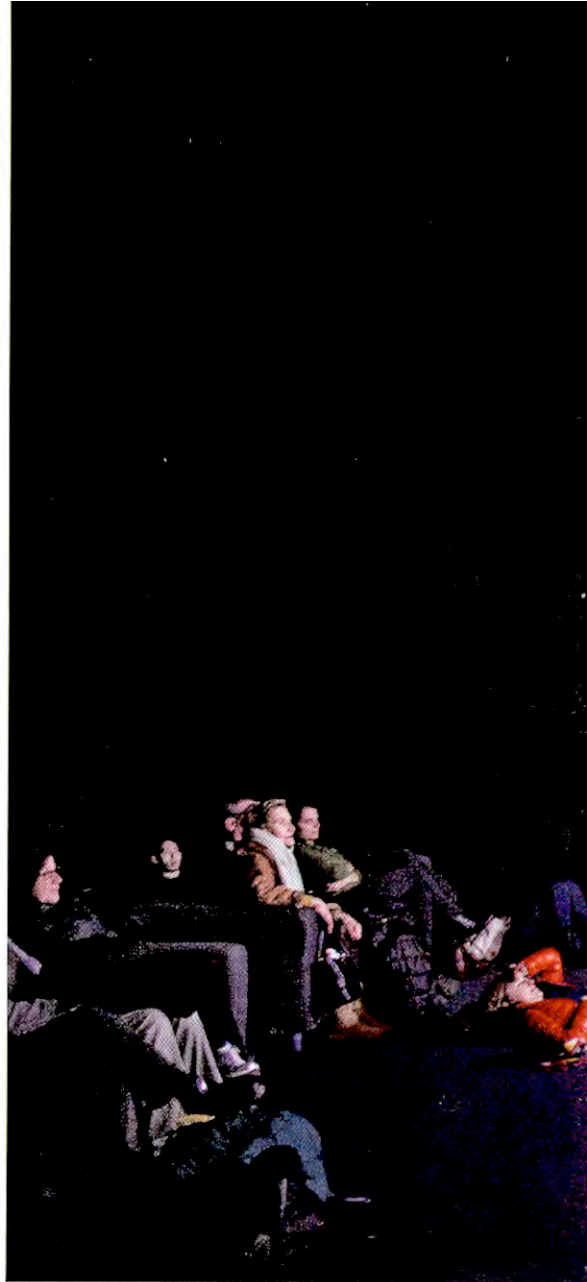
6 "DANA SCHUTZ: IF THE FACE HAD WHEELS," AT THE NEUBERGER MUSEUM

Given the continued imbalance in the

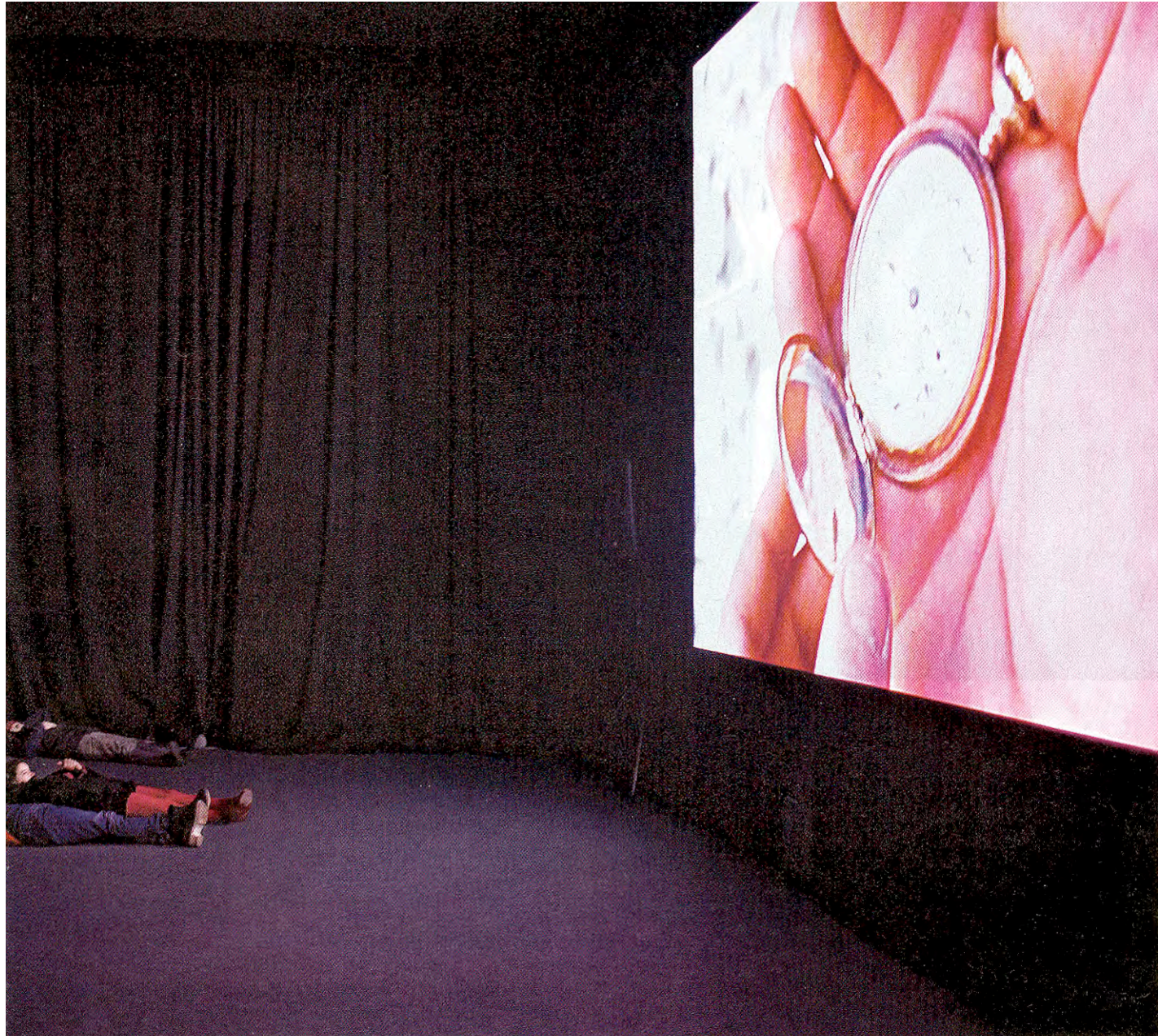
system, for a woman to paint at all is still a political act; for her to do so in a vaguely gestural figurative style is almost insurrectionary. The show proves that like all outstanding artists, Schutz probably has an extra wrinkle in her frontal lobe.

7 THE WOMEN OF "PERFORMA 11"

Though wildly uneven, Performa once again generated triumphs, including Frances Stark's sex life of chat rooms; Maria Petschnig's naked strangers on a stairway; Iona Rozeal Brown's hip-hop Kabuki Aesop's tale; Laurel Nakadate and James Franco's theater auditions as blood sport; and Liz Magic Laser's fantastic cracking of the news-cycle codes. All deserve a berth in the upcoming Whitney Biennial.



PHOTOGRAPHS: BENJAMIN NORMAN/THE NEW YORK TIMES/REDUX (THE CLOCK); © WILLEM DE KOONING/COURTESY OF THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, NEW YORK (WOMAN 1)



Christian Marclay's *The Clock* at Paula Cooper Gallery.

8 "THE SOCIAL FAILURE," AT MACCARONE

Curator Bjarne Melgaard created the best installation in last summer's Venice Biennale, *Beyond Death: Viral Discontents and Contemporary Notions About AIDS*, and followed it with this wildly untamed exhibition and journey into pleasure, pain, abjection, and what one visitor called "the failures of heterosexuality."

9 "OSTALGIA," AT THE NEW MUSEUM

This buildingwide show of art from the former Soviet bloc, *Ostalgia*, indicated that curator Massimiliano Gioni is now master of his own form of large-scale exhibition as narrative, time machine, pleasurable pedagogy, historical potboiler come to life, and insight.

10 LISA YUSKAVAGE AT DAVID ZWIRNER

Just as I was dismissing Yuskavage's new candy-colored paintings of young buxom monstrosities as more of her typical calendar-art sci-fi kitsch, my wife whispered to me, "These are all sacrifices." Though I'm still not a fan, I suddenly reeled from the sight of a painted knife with blood on it beneath a table with a headless female body on top, all of it standing in for the bodies of women and the body of painting. **JERRY SALTZ**



AND TWELVE HONORABLE MENTIONS ...

Rob Pruitt's wonderful silver Warhol statue in Union Square, just steps from the Factory ... Lynda Benglis's impressive that's-not-a-dildo-that's-art-dear New Museum retrospective ... The Whitney Museum's Glenn Ligon survey, the year's strongest first-rank exhibition of a strong second-rank artist ... The Frick's temporary reinstallation of Bellini's blissful St. Francis in the Desert at eye level ... Jennifer Wynne Reeves and Lori Ellison for excellent under-the-radar exhibitions ... Todd Levin's "Night Scented Stock" at Marianne Boesky, joined by other big gallery group shows like "La Carte D'Après Nature" at Matthew Marks and "Invitation to the Voyage" at Albus Greenston, showing that assembling art from all over the style and era

map can contain multitudes ... The Met's new Islamic art galleries, so visually electrifying that the first few times I left I was certain I needed Botox to relax my startled expression ... David Altmejd's melding of cases, werewolves, bad taste, mystic crystals, and amazing sculpture ... David Hammons's abstract paintings enshrouded with beautiful speckled coverings seemed to gather themselves into reincarnated ghosts and shamanic presence ... Swirling skyward in one of America's greatest buildings, "Infinite Variety: Three Centuries of Red and White Quilts" transformed New York's Park Avenue Armory into quilter heaven ... Anna Betbeze's gitty wool-based wall works which look like animal pelts crossed with ratty old rugs and Constructivist paintings.