



# Michael Ned Holte

MICHAEL NED HOLTE IS A FREQUENT CONTRIBUTOR TO ARTFORUM WHO JOINS CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE OF THE ARTS AS A VISITING FACULTY MEMBER NEXT MONTH. EARLIER THIS YEAR, HE ORGANIZED THE EXHIBITION "BEFORE & AFTER SCIENCE" AT RICHARD TELLES FINE ART IN LOS ANGELES, AND LAST MONTH HE WAS A MEMBER OF THE CURATORIAL TEAM FOR "PRESENT FUTURE" AT ARTISSIMA 15 IN TURIN, ITALY.



**3** "California Video" (Getty Center, Los Angeles) Truth be told, even on multiple visits to "California Video" I couldn't get through more than a fraction of the "old" and new time-based work on display. Glenn Phillip's exhausting and exhaustively researched survey was a deft act of recovery, unearthing gold by artists both familiar and obscure (Cynthia Maughan, Jay McCafferty, and Wolfgang Stoerchle, to name a few). After several years of high-profile scandals, the exhibition also suggested that the once-stodgy Getty may have found a renewed sense of purpose: namely, the careful framing of an unruly, richly layered, still-vital West Coast artistic legacy.



William Wegman, Selections from Spit Sandwich, 1970-73, still from a black-and-white video, 18 minutes. From "California Video."

**1** Beijing 2008 Summer Olympics Note to artists—and you know who you are: Stop attempting to produce spectacle. The real thing is always so much more, well, spectacular. New characters and narratives (Michael Phelps, Yao Ming's homecoming, creepy underage gymnasts, and so on) emerged daily at the twenty-ninth Olympiad, but the biggest story of the games was China—a concept as much as a country—which beat the United States in the gold medal tally and out-Hollywooded Hollywood with a jaw-dropping opening ceremony in Herzog & de Meuron's "Bird's Nest." If China's symbolic eclipse of the US wasn't obvious from the first fireworks, a camera trained on the VIP crowd revealed a sweaty, lame-duck W. distractedly slapping a flimsy American flag against his thigh and checking his watch. Enough said.

Gustave Courbet, The Shaded Stream at the Puits-Noir, ca. 1860-65, oil on canvas, 25 1/4 x 31 1/4".



**2** Gustave Courbet (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) and Peter Saul (Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach, CA) As evidenced in these overdue retrospectives of two gutsy, obsessive painters, Courbet and Saul capture(d) their respective epochs with blunt pictures that consistently and unapologetically offend(ed) political correctness and painterly taste. Both shows were overwhelming—the former (curated by Gary Tinterow and his team) in quantity, the latter (curated by Dan Cameron) in density. While the Met's heavy-handed and prudish sequestration of Courbet's infamous *Origin of the World*, 1866, attempted to make the painting scandalous anew (the otherwise virtuosic show's only wrong note), the generous helping of Saul's lurid Technicolor canvases at the Orange County Museum naturalized his perversity—almost. Truly perverse is that Saul is still situated on art's outskirts. Here's hoping that genre painting's toxic avenger gets his own Metrospective in the next hundred years or so.

**4** Mark Flores (David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles) For me, no artist has captured desire and longing as complexly as Flores did in his second solo show at David Kordansky. The pieces on view—mostly luscious, labor-intensive works on paper—allusively stitched together the cult of Antinous (the deified consort of the Emperor Hadrian), the bulletin boards of collage artist Jess, images of spectral film stills of Judy Garland, and the color theory of Johannes Itten. Who knew the orderly pedagogical exercises of modernism could be such a turn-on?







View of Chris Lipomi, "Uzihektaka Wakipi" (The Cave Project), 2008, private pedestrian tunnel, Los Angeles.

**5** **Michael Asher** (Santa Monica Museum of Art, CA) and **Chris Lipomi**, "Uzihektaka Wakipi" (The Cave Project) (Los Angeles) Asher chronicled the decade-long history of the Santa Monica Museum of Art by reconstructing every temporary wall the museum has built for its past exhibitions, creating a labyrinthine palimpsest of aluminum studs; Lipomi inscribed a "retrospective" of his own ten-year career—one largely spent tweaking the work of other artists, from Jean-Michel Basquiat to Thomas Kinkade—on the cavelike walls of a private pedestrian tunnel under a thoroughfare near his midcity apartment. To experience Asher's work I signed a liability release; for Lipomi's civic intervention I trespassed. While Lipomi poked fun at an artist's self-mythologizing search for origins, Asher's indexical pileup—near his own house, too—was, endearingly, more of a sly solo retrospective than its deferential premise suggested.



Erika Vogt, *I Arrive When I Am Foreign (Centennial Tin)*, 2006, color photograph, 46 1/2 x 92".

**6** **Erika Vogt** (Daniel Hug, Los Angeles) At Daniel Hug, Vogt's large vertical photographs and video projections situated the body—namely the artist's, doubled in each work and activating curious industrial relics—in the attenuated zone of obsolescence between mechanical and digital imagemaking. A typically disorienting photograph, *I Arrive When I Am Foreign (Centennial Tin)*, 2006, features Vogt standing on an image of herself, holding a freshly opened, hundred-year-old can of peas. Everything about this auspicious debut, including several gritty relief "drawings," was similarly enigmatic and charged with the rush of time.

Richard Aldrich, *Untitled (1 of 2)*, 2007, oil and wax on panel, 15 1/2 x 11".



**7** **Richard Aldrich** (Marc Foxx, Los Angeles) With quiet theatricality, Aldrich's solo show at Marc Foxx gallery last fall gamely employed almost all of painting's modalities—gestural abstraction, monochrome, landscape, portrait, language as image, surface penetration, and addition. A smart installation revealed fickle plurality and weird coherence. My favorite work was a nearly-but-not-quite-matched pair of unexpectedly lush, multihued abstractions—one large, one small—that faced off across the gallery. Aldrich's paintings are stand-ins: for him, for you, and for even stranger paintings surely to come.

Andrea Zittel, *My Linoleum Floor*, 1995-98, two parts, gouache, pencil on paper, each 11 x 15".



**9** **Andrea Zittel, Monika Sosnowska. 1:1** (Schaulager, Basel) Zittel's exhibitions guarantee viewers meticulously crafted objects, but often feel incomplete because the museum or gallery can't easily capture the adventurous everyday experiences that account for at least half of this artist's work. But this survey, curated by Theodora Vischer, served the artist well by including rarely seen gouaches on paper; ironically, though modest in size, these collectively articulate the enormous scale of her surprisingly mutable project by illustrating the complex integration of objects into daily life. In the show downstairs, Sosnowska's hallucinatory sculptures, ranging from handheld to building-scaled, drew upon the architectural ruins of Eastern European modernism—routinely photographed by the artist as research material. In turn, the iconic sculptures almost felt like photographs of themselves. Both shows—different as they were—seemed perfectly situated in a building (by Herzog & de Meuron, again) that confidently conflates sculpture, image, and architecture.

**8** **Lawrence Weiner** (Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles) and **Live Reading/Performance of the Texts of Lawrence Weiner (Beyond Baroque, Venice, CA)** Weiner's wordy, all-caps retrospective (organized by MOCA's Ann Goldstein and the Whitney Museum of American Art's Donna De Salvo), dramatically punctuated with a few well-orchestrated gestures such as *One Quart Exterior Green Industrial Enamel Thrown on a Brick Wall*, 1968, actually tamed MOCA's vast warehouse venue—a rare feat. Even more satisfying were interpretations of Weiner's texts in *Beyond Baroque's* decidedly not-vast "black box" theater. Readings, skits, recollections, and roasts (spearheaded by executive director Fred Dewey) by artists such as Kathryn Andrews, John Baldessari, Steve Roden, Ed Ruscha, Tamara Sussman, and Stephanie Taylor made for an appropriately irreverent, sometimes nutty tribute to Conceptual art's unlikely superstar.



View of Lawrence Weiner, "As Far as the Eye Can See," 2008, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. Photo: Brian Komech.

**10** **James Benning, casting a glance** (REDCAT, Los Angeles) Benning's sustained meditation on Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty*—the Earthwork and the film—made its US debut at REDCAT this past fall. Like Smithson's 1970 16-mm masterpiece, *casting a glance* intertwines documentary and fiction for allegorical potential. Smithson once wrote, "A great artist can make art by simply casting a glance," and, similarly, Benning has defined an artist as "someone who pays attention and reports back." Few works better exemplified those aphorisms in the past year than this keenly observed antispectacle by the most important landscape artist working today. □

James Benning, *casting a glance*, 2007, color film in 16 mm, 80 minutes. Production still.

