

Jack Bankowsky, 'Best of 2016'  
*Artforum International*, December 2016, cover, pp. 200-201

# ARTFORUM

DECEMBER 2016

I N T E R N A T I O N A L



## BEST



## OF



\$15.00



12>

## 2016







Photo: Timothy Greenfield Sanders

# JACK BANKOWSKY

JACK BANKOWSKY IS A CRITIC AND CURATOR AND *ARTFORUM*'S EDITOR AT LARGE. HE CURRENTLY ORGANIZES THE SPRING SEMINARS FOR ARTCENTER COLLEGE OF DESIGN, A SERIES THAT BRINGS NOTABLE ARTISTS AND WRITERS TO THE PASADENA, CALIFORNIA, CAMPUS.

1

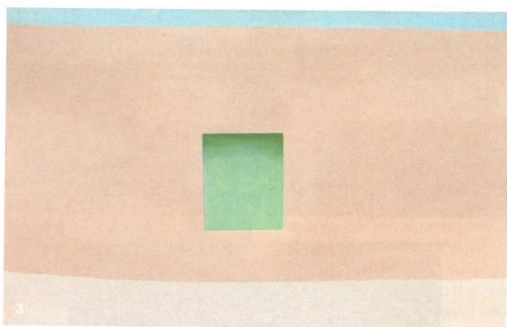
**KAI ALTHOFF (MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, NEW YORK; CURATED BY LAURA HOPTMAN AND MARGARET EWING)** Consult the deliberately tattered (and conspicuously incomplete) checklists at the gallery's entrance; savor the catalogue's contentious curator interview ("KA: I think you are blind. . . . LH: I am most certainly not blind"); and lose yourself in the vertiginous, granny's-attic mise-en-scène that threatens to gobble up the jewel-like easel paintings which stud the chaos. If Althoff bites the hand that feeds as hard as he does—and, what's more, performs his ingratitude for all to see—this has everything to do with an artful ecology that depends as much on what transpires beyond the edges of the canvas as within the frame, and yet to say as much fails to capture the work's singular poetry. If I had to pick one flourish among a hundred to betoken Althoff's oblique genius, it might as well be the jeweled brooch (paste, of course!) that threatens to slip between the cracks of the tatty Deco settee on which it casually alights. MOMA risked a finger in reaching out to this *monstre sacré* in the making, but bravery has been repaid with the show of the year.

On view through January 22, 2017.



2

**JORDAN WOLFSON, COLORED SCULPTURE (DAVID ZWIRNER, NEW YORK)** From the moment *Colored Sculpture* locked its televisual eyes on me, my knees were putty. A belated convert to Wolfson's toxic poetry, I fell hard for this, the artist's second animatronic colossus. The brutal choreography, the creepy spoken chant in Wolfson's own disarmingly prosaic voice, the cartoon blush on demon spawn Huckleberry E. Neuman's freckled cheeks: *Colored Sculpture* taps the same poetic font as the artist's febrile video works, but here his compulsive vision is honed—and fiercely embodied. When a man loves a sculpture . . .



3

**GEORGIA O'KEEFFE (TATE MODERN, LONDON; CURATED BY TANYA BARSON WITH HANNAH JOHNSTON)** Such is the magnitude of the O'Keeffe persona—prairie noble, old-soul mystic, American original—that it can be difficult to separate the art from her divahood, a task this UK tribute, the first in more than twenty years, manages to accomplish by giving equal time to the vivid life and the indelible art. Bringing together some hundred works, the show looks beyond the bleached cow skulls and sex-part flowers of the cliché, revealing a painter whose near abstractions cement her status as a signal modernist.



4

**"DAVID HAMMONS: FIVE DECADES" (MNUCHIN GALLERY, NEW YORK)** With museums around the globe ready to turn cartwheels to land this artist's half-century retrospective, Hammons handed the coveted honor to a secondary-market dealer, ex-Goldman Sachs trader, and dad to Donald Trump's national finance chairman, long his pointed choice as agent. "But why, oh why?" well-meaning curators everywhere beat their chests. Because it is not the way "we" do things. Because Hammons's art—its long-standing subjects being race and class and the way they undergird the almost-all-white art machine he continues to play like a fine instrument—consists as much in his performative inhabitation of the system as in the objects on view in this astutely honed sampling from across his career. Who needs the imprimatur of a museum when you can commandeer a capacious town house in Manhattan's toniest neighborhood and drop by to tweak the fruits of your life's work when the spirit moves you?



1. Kai Althoff, *untitled*, 2011, wood stain, Plexiglas, rubber, metal, fabric, and silk-screen ink on wood. Installation view, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2016. Photo: Kai Althoff. 2. Jordan Wolfson, *Colored Sculpture*, 2016, mixed media. Installation view, David Zwirner, New York. Photo: Dan Bradica. 3. Georgia O'Keeffe, *Wall with Green Door*, 1953, oil on canvas, 30 x 48 1/4". 4. View of "David Hammons: Five Decades," 2016, Mnuchin Gallery, New York. From left: *Untitled*, 2015; *Which Mike do you want to be like . . .?*, 2001; *Tribal Art*, 2007. Photo: Tom Powell. 6. Herzog & de Meuron, Tate Modern addition, 2016, London. Photo: Marcus Leith.







5

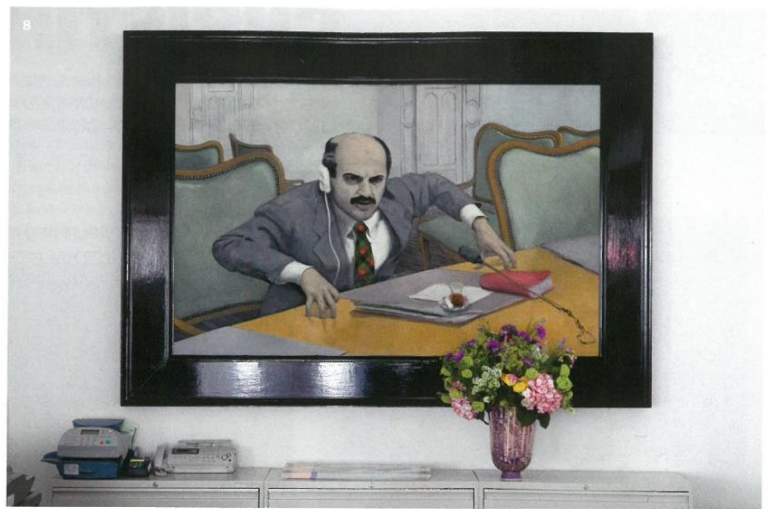
**WADE GUYTON (LE CONSORTIUM, DIJON, FRANCE; CURATED BY NICOLAS TREMBLEY)** How do we humans stand in relation to the technological wonders of our own (or, anyway, of our cleverer brethren's) creation? Like victims, most of the time, cursing the jammed printer while the meeting goes on without us. Who could have predicted that this everyday moment of technological (read: human) failure would, with Guyton at the keyboard, provide an avenue to reinvigorate the painterly body as such, or that, a dozen years on, said body would look as hale as it does in this ravishing installation of thirty new unpainted paintings conceived especially for Le Consortium's galleries?

Co-organized with Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain, Geneva, where it is on view through January 29, 2017.



6

**HERZOG & DE MEURON, TATE MODERN SWITCH HOUSE (LONDON)** That the art in the inaugural hang failed to live up to the real estate dampened the thrill, but I'm confident I'll ultimately love to love Tate's new wing as much as I love to hate that temple to contemporary art's demotion to lesser spectacle, Turbine Hall. From the gorgeous brick lattice that encases the ten-floor pyramid (by day it filters light inside; by night the tower beckons from afar like a lantern) to the broad halls slashed by dramatic views, from the varied menu of comfortable galleries to bells-and-whistles extras like the dramatic ninth-floor restaurant and rooftop viewing terrace, Switch House gives the expanded public for art—which it sometimes seems Tate singlehandedly invented—someplace to go!



5. Wade Guyton, *Untitled*, 2015–16, ink-jet print on canvas. Installation view, Le Consortium, Dijon, France. Photo: André Morin. 7. Laura Owens, *Untitled*, 2016, acrylic, oil, vinyl paint, silk-screen ink, charcoal, pastel pencil, graphite, and sand on wallpaper. Installation view, CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, San Francisco. Photo: Johnna Arnold. 8. Lukas Duwenhögger, *The Rift*, 2004, oil on canvas. Installation view, Artists Space, New York, 2016. Photo: Jean Vong. 9. Alex Katz, *Richard Bellamy*, 1960, oil on linen, 40 x 35 1/2". 10. View of "30/130: Thirty Years of Books and Catalogs, etc.," Bob Nickas at White Columns, 2015, White Columns, New York.

7

**LAURA OWENS (CCA WATTIS INSTITUTE FOR CONTEMPORARY ARTS, SAN FRANCISCO; CURATED BY ANTHONY HUBERMAN)**

San Francisco, the land of next big things, seems a fitting place to launch the "smart" painting—smart like a smartphone, which we all know can be pretty dumb. Text a question to the enormous, immersive painting (Owens papered, flocked, and painted all four walls of the Wattis's spacious main gallery), and it answers you back—literally—though the answers can be pretty lame. Stupid/smart is the yin/yang of Owens's art: She dumbs painting down, subjects it to slapstick, interrogates it, humiliates it, tricks it into showing its hand. Her paintings of painting break down and reassemble the exposed scaffolding of painterly convention until the pictures that emerge start to look like the smartest art around.

8

**LUKAS DUWENHÖGGER (ARTISTS SPACE, NEW YORK)**

Duwenhögger shares with Althoff both the busted-time-machine syndrome—what unnameable old-fashioned moment (or several of them) are we visiting?—and a certain kinky, coded sociality, the mores and manners of which remain tantalizingly beyond our grasp, if only just so, like a dream that slips away as the sleep falls from one's eyes. What is queer here, in other words, is, well, queer. It's pre-Stonewall, that's for certain, if not quite Wildean—indeed, it might be thought a bit *Forgetting Elena* murky if it weren't so formally inventive and graphically replete. Entirely new to me, the work of this sixty-year-old, German-born, Istanbul-based artist made for a fitting final fling for both the venerable alternative space's Greene Street incarnation and its ear-to-the-ground director, who put the organization back on the map.

9

**JUDITH E. STEIN, EYE OF THE SIXTIES: RICHARD BELLAMY AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF MODERN ART (FARRAR, STRAUS AND GIROUX)** Gee, I guess we missed all the fun.

10

**"30/130: THIRTY YEARS OF BOOKS AND CATALOGS, ETC.," BOB NICKAS AT WHITE COLUMNS (WHITE COLUMNS, NEW YORK)** Well, maybe not *all* the fun. The impulse to spotlight the "termite" writing and curating of Robert Nickas over any number of his "white elephant" peers counts as an inspired intuition. This show of 130 (count 'em!) publications produced over three decades suggests that the early-warning system this stubborn independent has fine-tuned in a life spent under the floorboards and behind the scenes has proved unfailingly on the money, if sublimely unconcerned with the payday. □

