

The Best Art Writing of 2010 01/02



Paper Monument

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2010 will be remembered as the year that [e-flux journal](#) secured its place at the center of serious conversation. Operating without an academic imprimatur or an obvious ideological commitment, the journal, like the organization whose name it bears, combines intelligence, commitment and outright speculation with energy and audacity. e-flux offers a model for how good things might get done in an uncertain future, and at a time when such paths are increasingly hard to find. They also published [Going Public](#), a collection of essays by Boris Groys, who makes a timely reminder of what criticism is supposed to do. Mapping out the necessary conditions for judgment regarding numerous topics in contemporary art, Groys invites the reader to consistent, productive disagreement. Writing with an enviable mix of economy, clarity and power, Groys produces an intellectual feast that is somehow both sustaining and impossibly light.

The success of e-flux recalls nothing so much as the early [Semiotext\(e\)](#), itself undergoing something of a renaissance thanks, one suspects, to the dedicated work of Hedi El Kholi. Scoring a surprise hit in 2009 thanks to Glenn Beck's repeated endorsements of [The Coming Insurrection](#), the venerable press doubled-down this year with quality offerings from Tiqqun, Christian Marazzi, and Peter Sloterdijk. The first two, as part of the Intervention Series, shared with the Sternberg/Gillick/e-flux volumes the people's award for elegance in combination with rare, back-pocket suitability.

As literature, [Paper Monument](#)'s 2010 edition of "From the Editors" was one of the most enjoyable reads of the year in any idiom. Equal parts farce and tragedy, the brief, collectively written pseudo-memoir confirms the art world as the world's largest untapped source of humor. Also deserving notice from the same volume were Roger White's "On The Aesthetic Edutainment of Man," Timothy Aubry's "How to Behave in an Art Museum" and Claire Jarvis' "Fully Empty."

Slightly outside the usual frame, Astra Taylor's "Serfing the Net," from the *Zombie Baffler*, was a thorough and much needed critique of the ideology of digital capitalism, while David Graeber's "[On the Sadness of Post-Workerism](#)," though dating from 2008, seemed finally to receive the attention it deserves in informing the myriad discussions of that topic. Both essays were brought to my attention by Sarah Resnick, whose presence within [Triple Canopy](#) is another reason, as if we needed one, to pay close attention to that organization.

Ben Davis's "[On the Age of Semi-Post-Postmodernism](#)" engaged directly with the complexity of the present moment, refusing a flight into this or that idea of "the contemporary" while his "[9.5 Theses on Art and Class](#)" gave an apparently un-publishable voice to an unarticulated, if widely held sentiment about the economic reality of the art market.

Sticking with the vagaries of publishing, Sheila Heti's novel [How Should a Person Be?](#) while not strictly art criticism, or even non-fiction, nevertheless approaches art and art-making with an honesty and power that demands attention. [East of Borneo](#) arrived from beta with Jennifer Krasinski's masterfully engaging [article](#) on Brody Condon's inspired *Level5* madness.

Holland Cotter finished up yet another year as the best newspaper critic writing today: take your pick but I thought his [response to Tino Sehgal](#) was a highlight, while over at what remains of the Voice, Christian Viveros-Fauné's delightfully enraged [response](#) to *Skin Fruit* almost made the whole thing worth it.