

## Bruce Hainley

**1 The Simpsons** A comic Möbius strip of form/content—or is it thinking/feeling? The episode with Homer as an outsider artist taking pointers from Jasper Johns typifies what's at stake: the most acute and omnivorous analysis of contemporary American culture extant.

**2 Robert Ryman** The intimate, Steinian, self-selected survey of his work for a single room at SF MOMA was, well, perfect. One summer day I walked across the street from the Ryman room to a selection of Vincent Fecteau's sculptures in an otherwise dismal show at the Yerba Buena Center. The artists' very different but quietly connected works became a primer in how to understand the other, and how to pay attention. The experience set a standard for whatever "looking at art" is: a private search for something weird, luminous, and counterfactual.

**3 Jack Smith** I was going to choose Mike Kelley's 1994 Whitney survey—which demonstrated the fun braininess roiling in LA's too often derided culture and focused attention brightly on the city's art—but his amazing stuffed animals kept reminding me of Jack Smith's penguin, Yolanda, and how much his P.S. 1 retrospective mattered. That moldy wonder necessitates believing in trash, enjoyment, and the pornography of thinking what you actually think.

**4 Porn** Given: Desire and bodies desiring are more complicated than generally thought. Which is why what gets deemed pornography is fascinating and why it has punctuated the decade's art—from the sweet cherries of Richard Kern and Nobuyoshi Araki to Jeff Burton. Returning the favor, the stroke magazine *Honcho* provided an opportunity for various artists to expand their conceptual investigations. In its pages, Collier Schorr tenders cock, balls, anus—but as sites of vulnerability weirdly militating against "real" masculinity; in Tillmans's spread, the mohawked guy asks, "Do you want to party in my hole?," bearing a new, more verisimilar hardcore. Porn is stimulating whether or not it comes with the cachet of "art." When documentary pornographer Dirk Yates, in his "Private Collection" video series, tracks the gradual

negotiations between actual "straight men" (Marines, cowboys, jocks, the proverbial guy-next-door) rather than between shaved actors playing men, the results provoke more thought than do so many "art videos."

**5 Claude Wampler** Anyone who thinks Vanessa Beecroft is showing them anything new about fashion, sex, performance, or art cannot have considered Wampler for more than two minutes. If you want the real deal on objects becoming active, an interrogation of the body as performance, as object—her opera *Bucket* provided complex drama about the upheaval of the personal via Pat Benatar; her installation *Kinderkill* slurpily invited kids to stick their tongues in an electric socket—attend to everything Wampler does.

**6 Larry Clark** His landmark shows at Luhring Augustine; his most daring and creepily beautiful book, 1992; his careful, contemplative appropriation of teen detritus (as in a strange, sexy loop of a young state champion being interviewed by Bryant Gumbel, repeating how much he wants to wrestle)—in all his work, Clark creates a Venn diagram of what is most overwhelming about a decade marked by the complicated im- and explosive emotions of men in a culture enthralled by, yet ignorant of, masculine interiority. Even if Clark were only responsible for launching Harmony Korine (*Gummo*; *The Bad Son*) and inspiring Steven Meisel (Calvin Klein basement porn shoot), Corinne Day (photos of George Clements and Kate Moss), and Richard Hawkins (his Ivan Depinida suite of collages) to do some of their most inventive and personal work, he would still be definitive.

**7 Hudson** I never leave Feature, Inc., without feeling happier, uplifted, and inspired to work harder, even when I find disagreeable what is shown (which is rare): so many revelations, mostly unassuming—and antithetical to most of the crap that rallies critical goo-gooing. Many days of the week, many weeks of the year, Hudson (and the artists he shows—B. Wurtz rules!) is one of the few reasons the art world

seems worthwhile. Salute his sublime sensibility; his belief in pale, intractable things.

**8 John Ashbery** I bow deeply before him: the greatest living writer. Ashbery has bestowed in the last decade alone four books I would argue are his best: Endlessly alive and tender, *Flow Chart*; *Hotel Lauréamont*; *Can You Hear Bird*; and, most recently, *Girls on the Run*, provide abundant examples of the strange wonder of the world in words.

**9 Visionaire** This decade's most important consideration of fashion and glamour was delivered during Hilton Als's editorial tenure at *Vibe*—but sadly that lasted barely a year. To track what was and wasn't going on in fashion and design, the best place to turn was *Visionaire*. Not that every issue succeeds, but when the editors allowed Bill Cunningham to put his lens to what he loves, or devoted themselves to Rei Kawakubo's lumps and bumps, or sent the issue out in a Louis Vuitton leather attaché envelope they delivered hot the luxury, chic, and fun that makes fashion fashion. For all that, it's maybe the gaga sexiness provided by the editors themselves—Stephen Gan, Cecilia Dean, and James Kaliardos—that makes me sigh.

**10 The Sirk Effect** Newly struck prints of four of his films received recent screenings, and their Technicolor beauty (even when shot in black-and-white) still overwhelms. But there has been little acknowledgment of the Sirk Effect in the '90s. Good or bad, the look of contemporary photography (school of Crewdson, etc.) is Sirkean: staged and exposing the setup of the staging, in vivid color, with "unnatural" lighting, even when mimicking "natural" light. In film, Todd Haynes's exemplary *Safe*, and the best part of *Velvet Goldmine*, paid homage to Sirkean qualities of alienation and imitation but, like Sirk, never at the expense of life and heart. Sirk said that lighting and camera angles constitute the philosophy of the director, and his was a philosophy that fits the decade—strange and amazing from any angle, and inconsolable. □

