

# NEW YORK

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## Opening Night at the Whitney Biennial: The Art Crowd Is Not Impressed



Mika Rottenberg's Valkyrian milkmaids.

*Courtesy of the artist and Nicole Klagsbrun Gallery;  
Image courtesy of The Whitney Museum of American Art*

It was hip to be squared at the opening of the 2008 Whitney Biennial last night, where a slew of artists in the sculpture-heavy show went for big raw boxy installations. Think the skeletal frame of a house, cubes of cracked glass, a resin block, a pool-size bin of kitty litter, slices of offices and rooms and houses. With its organic materials and echoes of architecture, the show sometimes looked like *Janson's History of Conceptual Art* meets Home Depot. We're not sure what it all meant, but don't miss [Mika Rottenberg](#)'s cool ramshackle barn in which you watch videos of Valkyrian milkmaids and baying goats.

As a whole, the hometown show (more than half the artists now live in New York) wasn't quite wowing the crowd. "It could have used a jolt of sexy painting," *Artkrush* editor Paul Laster complained. There was not much politics, even less sex. The dominant aesthetic was so tentative and half-done that one rival institution's curator wondered if artists racing to make deadlines hadn't finished. Then an SVA professor thoughtfully explained: "It's what they're teaching in schools now. It's non-iconic."

Buzzy works included the powerhouse lobby office from Jason Rhoades (the gifted L.A. artist who died of heart failure in 2006), Phoebe Washburn's room-size ecosystem run on Gatorade, and Eduardo Sarabia's witty storage room of art knockoffs by Koons, etc., which thoughtfully included an order catalog. Said Chelsea dealer Robert Goff: "It's awesome — because it looked finished." — *Alexandra Peers*