

All the very **BEST** and a little of the **WORST** of 2006

ART It was a year of gigantism: A huge show of **Dada**. Norman Foster's diamond-faceted **46-story tower**. A **\$135 million Klimt**. The **Lower East Side galleries** kept gaining stature. And the **Morgan Library** bulked up without sacrificing its charm. BY MARK STEVENS AND KAREN ROSENBERG

10 **"DADA," AT MOMA** Marcel Duchamp probably influences more artists (whether they know it or not) than Jackson Pollock does. Even so, Dada remains the least popular modern movement among the general public. That paradox made "Dada" at the Museum of Modern Art unusually enlightening. The show both told the historical story of Dada and held up a telling, sometimes cruel

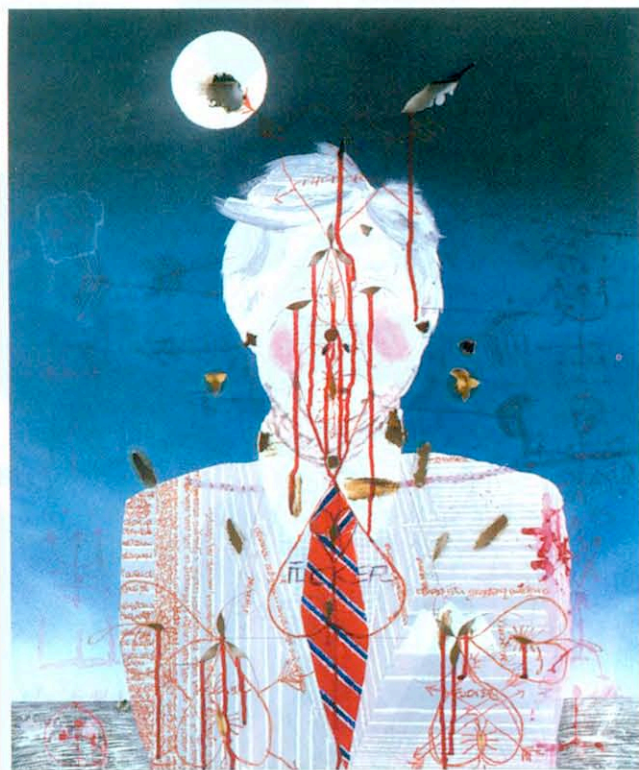
mirror to the practice of art today. Is there a better critique to be found—of the worlds of celebrity, money, gender, and art itself—than Duchamp's mustachioed *Mona Lisa*? Or a more fly-opening surprise than his urinal?

9 **MIKA ROTTENBERG, AT NICOLE KLAGSBRUN** It's rare to see art about gender politics that doesn't feel heavy-handed. Rottenberg's

video installation *Dough* showed an obese woman in a sweatshop-like setting whose tears, stimulated by allergies and conveyed through an assembly line, caused bread to rise. It was a fascinating New York solo-gallery debut by the 2004 Columbia MFA grad, who transforms women's bodies into Rube Goldberg machines—a bizarre commentary on the division of labor.



Goya's *Maja and Celestina*, 1824–25.



Barnaby Furnas's *Heart Fuckler*, 2006.

8 **ANDREA ZITTEL, AT THE NEW MUSEUM** Why aren't there more museum surveys of mid-career female artists? This one, an approachable presentation of Zittel's podlike furniture, felted-wool dresses, and other neo-Bauhaus lifestyle experiments, appealed to bourgeois design fetishists and radical conceptualists alike. It made quite a few museumgoers wish for a trip out to A-Z West, the Mojave Desert Taliesin where the artist tests her creations on a varying cast of young art pilgrims. It also ginned up the anticipation for the New Museum's debut on the Bowery next year.

7 **"KARA WALKER AT THE MET: AFTER THE DELUGE"** The Metropolitan Museum is not meant to be hip, radical, or quick-off-the-mark. That's why "Kara Walker at the Met: After the Deluge" was so surprising. The museum gave this

contemporary African-American the freedom to roam through its collections and put together whatever show she wanted. She came up with a provocative exhibit about race that was sharp but not tendentious, juxtaposing her own work with images of storms, race, and the sea. Her perspective was open, incomplete, playful, and exploratory—values every museum should occasionally embrace. Even the Met.

6 **BARNABY FURNAS, AT MARIANNE BOESKY** He's been hyped steadily in the glossies since emerging from Columbia's art school in 2000, but this Saatchi-sanctioned painter silenced naysayers by pulling off a high-profile fall show in Marianne Boesky's new gallery. The large-scale canvases featuring tidal waves of poured pigment didn't quite justify their epic proportions, but they revealed confidence and a willingness to experiment.

Even better were the smaller watercolors laced with burns, slash marks, and Celtic curses—formal innovation with a touch of voodoo.

5 **PIERRE HUYGHE, "A JOURNEY THAT WASN'T," AT THE WHITNEY BIENNIAL 2006** The only artist in this year's Whitney Biennial to truly flesh out the show's "Day for Night" concept (a dystopian, artifice-laced riff on François Truffaut's *La Nuit Américaine*), Huyghe made an enchanting pseudo-documentary about a search for a rare species of albino penguin, cutting from Antarctic ice floes to a rainy nightscape of Central Park. (New Yorkers, through the Public Art Fund, were invited to appear on set.) The resulting video installation conveyed a familiar yet surreal landscape: Wollman

Rink haunted by the specter of global warming.

4 **"SNAP JUDGMENTS: NEW POSITIONS IN CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN PHOTOGRAPHY," AT ICP**

Most people seem to know more about Antarctica than about Africa. And when they do think about Africa, they envision war, disease, poverty, and crisis. In its survey "Snap Judgments," the International Center of Photography created a rich, new, and bracing image of the continent. The photographs ranged from delicate portraits to depictions of slums, from jazzy fashion shots to cool meditations on modern identity. What emerged was contradictory and surprising—Africa seen, at last, through African eyes.

3 **"DAVID SMITH: A CENTENNIAL," AT THE GUGGENHEIM** Sculpture is so difficult for museums to show that even David Smith, the greatest American sculptor of the twentieth

century, is today more admired than exhibited. In "David Smith: A Centennial," the Guggenheim not only collected his work in unusual depth, it also created an installation that was a tour



Kara Walker's Cotton Hoards in Southern Swamp, from the series "Harper's Pictorial History of the Civil War (Annotated)," 2005.

de force. The eccentric shape of the Guggenheim overwhelms most works of art, but Smith's sculpture appeared completely at home there. His surreal pieces came alive in the open space and the radiant daylight, and his geometries made sublime sense. Art and architecture, in a brilliant rhyme.

2 **NORMAN FOSTER'S HEARST TOWER**

New York City long ago lost its architectural edge. Its new buildings tend to be slick, conventional, and boring. Lord Foster's Hearst headquarters—a soaring zigzag attached to an Art Deco base—is an essential exception to this demoralizing trend. It disrupts the eye and enlivens the street. It arouses intense feelings of both like and dislike in New Yorkers, a sign of healthy architectural passion. Its hollowed-out interior, which has the otherworldly quality of a stage set, has even become a hot

ticket. It isn't easy to view unless you know someone inside.

1 **"GOYA'S LAST WORKS," AT THE FRICK** Museums, galleries, and artists should challenge, not just reflect, the fashions of our time. This show was a masterpiece of understatement and concision—values rarely found in this blowhard era.

In a small space, the Frick captured the breadth of the aging painter's imagination, presenting superb examples of his painting and drawing, and his haunting, strangely modern character. At the center of the exhibit was a collection of magical ivory miniatures; Goya would cover the surface with carbon black and then, using drops of water and some watercolor, find and improvise

phantasmagorical scenes. No exhibition of 2006, however grand, seemed larger than this small one.



Stinker

The louisiest show in the art world was not, this year, a traditional museum or gallery exhibition. It was The Money Show. The big money show at the auction houses, galleries, and in the press. No work of art excited the art world half as much as the extraordinary prices paid for art. In one Impressionist-and-Modern sale, Christie's did about \$500 million worth of business. A hedge-fund magnate reportedly paid \$137.5 million for a de Kooning *Woman* painting. What stank was not the money per se—money, after all, is just money—but the abject surrender of the art world to careerist, cash-grubbing attitudes.