

TOP TEN



Nicole Cherubini

Nicole Cherubini is an artist based in New York, where her solo exhibitions at D'Amelio Terras and Smith-Stewart opened last month. Her work, paired with sculptures by Taylor Davis, will be on view at the MIT List Visual Arts Center in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and at Museum 52 in New York next year.



From top: George E. Ohr and Josephine Ohr with their children, Biloxi, MS, ca. 1895. Photo: Ohr-O'Keefe Museum of Art. Magdalena Abakanowicz, *Abakan Red*, 1969, sisal, mixed media. Installation view, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, 2007. From "WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution." View of the Agnes Martin Gallery, Harwood Museum of Art, Taos, NM, 2007. Photo: Rick Romancito.



1 POTTERY, POLITICS, ART: GEORGE OHR AND THE BROTHERS KIRKPATRICK, RICHARD D. MOHR (UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS PRESS, 2003) Scholar Richard D. Mohr delves into the lives of George E. Ohr and the brothers Cornwall and Wallace Kirkpatrick, showing how their amazing work is foundational to contemporary American art. The brothers were activists: One held the position of mayor; they had their own newspaper in Anna, Illinois; and their "radical Republican" wares had subversively anarchic implications that went over conservative Democrats' heads. (Reverse the party names, and it is a lot like our condition today.) George E. Ohr was a revolutionary. His work contrasted ceramics (precious objects covered in glaze) with clay (the abject material base) and teased out the conceptual implications of both. Along with awe-inspiring misshapen vessels, he produced photographs, text pieces, and performances—all of which seem freakishly prescient today. As Mohr declares: "The Ohrian truth is out, clay is shit, shit is clay. Glaze it, gussy it up with handles, it's still shit—for a misanthropic artist, the perfect medium."

2 AGNES MARTIN In an octagonal room at the Harwood Museum of Art in Taos, New Mexico, are seven identically sized canvases by Agnes Martin that can be contemplated while sitting on four stained-yellow benches designed by Donald Judd. Martin spent much of her life in New Mexico, and this room, illuminated by a skylight centered in the domed ceiling, offers the rare chance to see her work in the same light in which it was created, and in which it was first understood. Soon after my visit, I heard a recording of Martin's 1987 Skowhegan lecture, known as "Beauty Is the Mystery of Life," which completed my understanding of this brilliant artist.

3 "WACK! ART AND THE FEMINIST REVOLUTION," P.S. 1 CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER, NEW YORK This exhibition was a gift. All my thanks to its curator, Connie Butler. It made me realize that the most progressive ideas have already been articulated, and that artists are still searching for people to listen.

4 PETRA Petra, a nonprofit curatorial project started by Montserrat Albores in Mexico City, operates principally through appropriation. To paraphrase Albores (and mirror Petra's curatorial conceit): It is a site without identity and location, a chameleon-like entity that can exist only if objects in the world are there to be appropriated. Petra copies not only preexisting objects and texts but also itself, evolving as an object without memory and therefore without a future. Exhibitions have addressed evil and the double; a show opening this month in Mexico City takes as its subject possession. The exhibition will investigate authorship, and with it, the ego—a theme clearly relevant to Petra's collaborative identity.

5 MEVLANA MÜZESİ, KONYA, TURKEY The mausoleum of the thirteenth-century mystic Mevlana Celaleddin Rumi is the most ornate building. The interior, filled with turquoise, amber, and emerald, is lined with infinite sarcophagi draped in elaborate fabrics, each with a large to immense turban on top. One tries slowly and impossibly to take in every object; there is not a moment of space. Finally, one enters a square room that—while constructed with the same care and impeccable craft as every object passed—is nearly empty. Each detail—from the beauty of line in each plank of wood on the floor to the hand-marked plastering of the walls—becomes present. Everything can enter the mind equally and completely. Abundance and emptiness coexist in total harmony.

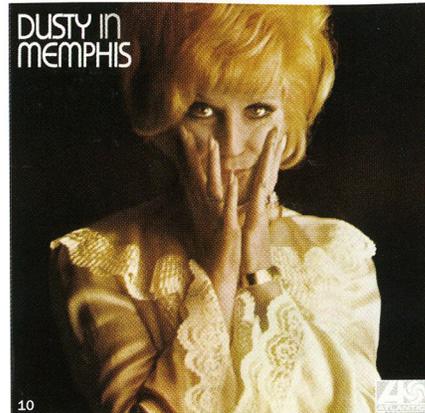
6 PORZELLANKABINETT (PORCELAIN GALLERY), CHARLOTTENBURG PALACE, BERLIN In *The Arcanum: The Extraordinary True Story* (Warner Books, 1998), Janet Gleeson recounts the history of the struggle to create porcelain—a material whose secrets were known only in Asia—in eighteenth-century Europe. Augustus the Strong developed a fancy for the vitreous white clay, known then as “white gold.” Hoping to produce it himself, he for years imprisoned the young alchemist Johann Frederick Böttger, who had boasted that he could discover the formula. The Charlottenburg Palace’s *Porzellankabinett*—adorned floor to ceiling with pieces from China and Japan, all held in place with gold brackets affixed to the mirrored walls—is another example of this madness. The room was so loved and coveted in its time that replicas were made for the Rosenberg Castle in Copenhagen and the Royal Palace in Dresden.

7 “PART OBJECT, PART SCULPTURE,” WEXNER CENTER FOR THE ARTS, COLUMBUS, OHIO Among the many ideas curator Helen Molesworth puts forth in this exhibition is her observation that Marcel Duchamp had a close relationship with the handmade object, as evidenced both by his *Boîte-en-valise*, 1935–41, and the 1960s-era reconstructions of his readymades. These works, along with the other beautiful sculptures on display—by Lynda Benglis, Alberto Burri, Eva Hesse, Lucio Fontana, Robert Rauschenberg, and others—show the artist’s hand can resonate conceptually. I return constantly to the reproduction of Duchamp’s own 1964 blueprint for a remake of the 1914 readymade *Porte-bouteilles* (Bottle-Dryer). The drawing shows the piece in views from the top and side—depicting it as an object, not a sculpture. But with Duchamp’s simple addition of his signature—written OK MARCEL DUCHAMP—he transforms the object back again, and tells us everything is all right.

8 “NEOHOO DOO: ART FOR A FORGOTTEN FAITH,” MENIL COLLECTION, HOUSTON I learned about Rudolf Steiner’s blackboard drawings by way of my three-year-old son’s Waldorf education. Steiner created these abstractions of line and form while expounding, in his many lectures, his unique mysticism. “NeoHooDoo: Art for a Forgotten Faith,” curated by Franklin Sirmans, features magnificent works that, like Steiner’s drawings, blur the line between the physical and the spiritual. Essays in the accompanying catalogue discuss the intrinsic importance of spirituality to art, a point neatly summed up by contributor Arthur C. Danto: “Spirit is not something learned, and there is no remedy for its lack.”

9 WILLIAM KENTRIDGE, *THE MAGIC FLUTE*, BROOKLYN ACADEMY OF MUSIC, NEW YORK William Kentridge’s production of *The Magic Flute*, which debuted in 2005 at La Monnaie, the Royal Opera House in Belgium, before premiering last year in New York at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, was impeccable: Line became tone became color became pitch became form. Seeing an artist take on such an expansive collaboration was amazing. With Kentridge’s *horror-vacui* vision, the pure pleasure of hearing Papageno’s aria would have made Mozart squeal with delight, as did I.

10 DUSTY SPRINGFIELD, *DUSTY IN MEMPHIS* (ATLANTIC RECORDS, 1969; RHINO RECORDS, 1992) Every day I hear it, and every day I love it. She is forever wonderful. There is nothing more I can say. □



Clockwise from top: Cover of Dusty Springfield’s *Dusty in Memphis* (Atlantic Records, 1969; Rhino Records, 1992). Pepán Osorio, *Lonely Soul*, 2008, mixed media. Installation view, Menil Collection, Houston. From “NeoHooDoo: Art for a Forgotten Faith.” Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s *Magic Flute*, 1791, in a production directed by William Kentridge, 2005. Performance view, Brooklyn Academy of Music, New York, April 9, 2007. Photo: Stephanie Berger. Marcel Duchamp, *Plan de Porte-bouteilles (Plan for Bottle-Dryer)*, 1964, pencil on heliographic paper, 19¼ x 46½". © Succession Marcel Duchamp/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris.

