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ARTS AND LEISURE DESK

ART/ARCHITECTURE: THE YEAR IN REVIEW -- THE CRITICS/10 MOMENTS; Richer, And Cloth, Were Abundant

By ROBERTA SMITH (NYT) 1254 words

Here are not the 10 best, but 10 noteworthy items, in loose order:

1. **A HELL OF A TOWN** -- Despite all that has happened and may lie ahead, New York, New York remains an amazing, combative, nurturing place, especially for art. Globalization and high rents notwithstanding, it still attracts untold numbers of artists and art-fixated nonartists; teems with galleries, alternative spaces and great museums; has the public transportation system to tie it all together and is among the best anti-aging agents on earth.

2. **SWEPT AWAY** -- Among the museum exhibitions whose visual inundations left one feeling shaken and recharged were the Met's extraordinary assembly of Renaissance tapestries; the Sackler's revelatory show of Chola bronzes in Washington; and the Pompidou's out-size Surrealist survey in Paris, where the paintings never stopped.

3. **MOST GRATIFYING DARK-ROOM EXPERIENCES** -- Could we have watched more video this year? From Documenta (Steve McQueen) to the Whitney Biennial (Omar Fast) to art fairs, video ruled, stultified and exhilarated. Some of the best in New York galleries: Brice Dellsperger at Team, Eija-Liisa Ahtila at Gasser & Grunnert; Kutlug Ataman at Lehmann Maupin (twice); Payne and Ralph at Gavin Brown and Annika Larson at Andrea Rosen. Last but not least, the New York premiere at the Ziegfeld of Matthew Barney's "Cremaster 3," the overlong but still amazing final installment of his five-film epic. With the wise elimination of spoken dialogue and Jonathan Bepler's extraordinary score, "3" is either a late masterpiece of silent film or the most ambitious music video yet made.

4. **LEAST GRATIFYING DARK-ROOM EXPERIENCE** -- The Guggenheim Museum's rotunda, which was painted black on the occasion of the "Brazil" exhibition and, because of budget problems that extended the show by four months, remained black longer than the average arctic winter.

5. **MOST GRATIFYING NEWS STORY** -- The Guggenheim's problems culminated this fall when the museum's leading trustee, Peter B. Lewis, awakening after nine years to the responsibilities of trusteeship, informed the museum's director, Thomas Krens, that he would have to shape up fiscally or heads would roll.

6. **BEST DEVIATION FROM THE WHITE-BOX GALLERY** -- The scruff-of-the-neck impresario Kenny Schachter found a home for his peripatetic Rove exhibitions in a tiny building on a gangs-of-New-York alley in the West Village and let the sculptor-architect Vito Acconci design it. The angled steel-mesh walls and foldout shelves have a boutique, space-capsule, curiosity-cabinet-cage effect that both welcomes and challenges art.

7. **BEST VIOLATION OF THE WHITE BOX** -- Extreme-performance veteran Marina Abramovic's 12-day public fast, conducted with ritualistic fastidiousness on three cantilevered platforms (one of them plumbed), riveted crowds that were an essential part of the experience for viewer and artist alike.

8. BEST LATE ARRIVALS -- The New York gallery debuts of 66-year-old Rosie Lee Tompkins's fabulously pictorial quilts at Peter Blum and 52-year-old Roger Ballen's searing photographs of people living on the margins of South African society at Gagosian uptown.

9. BEST INTERACTIVE PAINTING SHOW -- Rudolf Stingel's exuberant silver-foil-on-foam-board works, which the artist cut from silver walls inflicted with sgraffito by visitors to an earlier show in Italy. At the Paula Cooper Gallery in Chelsea, Mr. Stingel provided more fresh foil surfaces for New Yorkers to mar to their hearts' content -- or more accurately until he decided that he had enough to work with and do-not-touch signs went up.

10. GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN -- The art dealers Holly Solomon, Allan Frumkin and Giovanni Intra; the artists Michel Majerus, Frank Moore, Larry Rivers, Anne Poor, Andrew Forge, Matta, Niki de Saint Phalle and Patterson Ewen; the curators Carole Kismaric, Catherine Voorsanger and Elka Spoerri; the patrons Vera List and Phyllis Wattis; the architect Samuel Mockbee; the critic Emily Genauer; the museum director J. Carter Brown; the art-book publisher Paul Gottlieb.

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