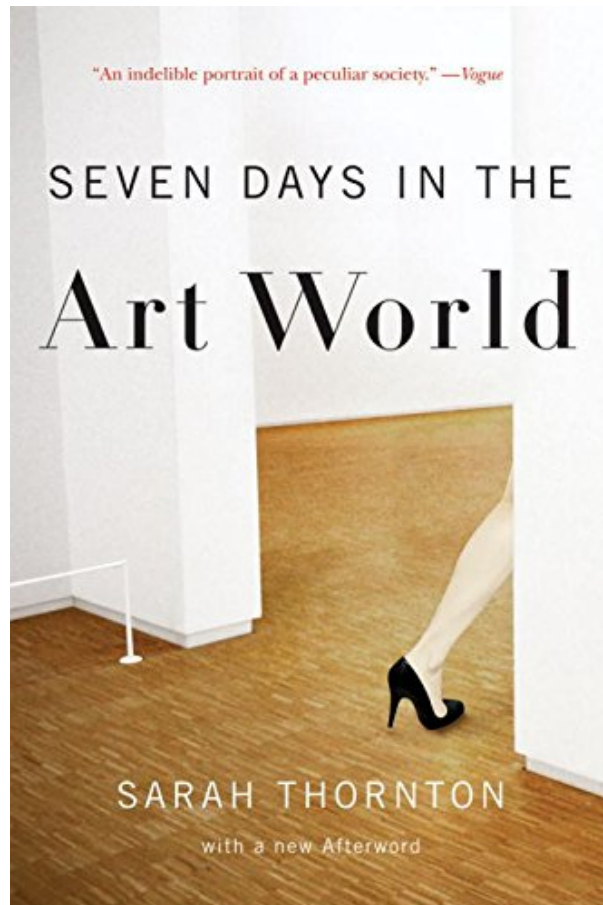


# SEVEN DAYS IN THE ART WORLD BY SARAH THORNTON



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*"An indelible portrait of a peculiar society." —Vogue*

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SARAH THORNTON

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**Seven Days In The Art World By Sarah Thornton.** Modification your behavior to hang or throw away the moment to only chat with your close friends. It is done by your everyday, don't you feel burnt out? Now, we will certainly show you the extra behavior that, really it's a very old behavior to do that could make your life much more qualified. When feeling tired of consistently chatting with your pals all spare time, you could find the book qualify Seven Days In The Art World By Sarah Thornton then read it.

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Being "in" isn't the same as being "insightful."

By REC

I asked two people about this book before reading it. A woman who worked at Sotheby's said it amounts to gossipy beach reading for a future gallery intern. The other, who is an arts journalist herself, said it was great.

It certainly offers a snapshot overview of key practices within the art world. However, the author lacks any sense of analytical distance that could offer true insight, this coupled with a tinge of self-absorption that lets the reader know just how "in" she actually is, when that doesn't really need to be a subject. (For example, she refers to Robert Storr, previous director of the Museum of Modern Art, as "Rob" Storr" and then waxes poetic about how much she enjoyed swimming in an exclusive pool at a 5 star hotel in Venice.)

The book concludes with her explanation of "ethnography" and her chosen research methods, which seems to

lend academic authority to the work, yet remains unconvincing. The book is basically thrilling tale of the lives of precious elites who are extremely interesting and beyond the reach of plebs like you (but not her).

However, as a practicing artist in NYC, I found aspects of the book that treated the artist's side of art world disappointing. For example, I've been through and conducted many an academic critique. Thornton's treatment of the art critique hardly deals with the art at all or what was said about it, and simply narrates in detail the mood of the room, how people shuffle about, etc. I guess the crit she visited was simply that boring, but I've been in many when people breakdown, some cry, some argue, get nasty and go into hysterics. Her crit was dull.

Another chapter, the most disappointing, was the "the studio visit." Her single visit was with Takashi Murakami, whose studio practice so radically different from almost any other artist on earth it's essentially irrelevant "ethnographically." One quote claims Murakami's operation makes Warhol's Factory look like a lemonade stand. He employs dozens of people on two continents and travels so much he rid himself of an actual home. Fascinating, yes. Helpful for understanding how studio visits function within professional art practices, not at all. If you want to know what studio visits are like, this chapter will be misleading.

I recommend the book as being entertaining and mostly informative, yet the author mistakes being "in" with being "insightful" and the reader should keep this in mind.

111 of 118 people found the following review helpful.

Fantastic Read

By D. Moulton

Sarah Thornton's book offers an attentive, ethnographic eye to art, artists, and the world in which they exist. She writes clearly and with great attention to detail not only to the art, but the people and super-sized personalities that they house. This and her access to many of the major art events in the world (Basel etc.) kept me turning to the next page.

At one point I was a little wary of her comparisons of art to a sort of religion for some (thought it was overstated), but her arguments are strong and persuasive and she's definitely changed my mind. Also, the reader doesn't finish this book with a full understanding why some art is valued as much as it is. (But honestly, I didn't expect this. That's an answer we may never have.)

All-in-all, I have to agree with the Publisher's Weekly review above on auctions and the book as a whole. Thornton truly offers an "...elegant, evocative, sardonic view into some of the art world's most prestigious institutions."

\$12 Million Stuffed Shark was the book that started this whole art book kick I'm currently on and I had to know more about the hidden quirkiness of this ever-growing area of interest. This was the next must-have on my list and I wasn't let down.

Highly recommended.

62 of 67 people found the following review helpful.

Excellent guide to today's wacky art world

By S. McGee

This is, hands-down, the single best guide for outsiders to the inner life of the art world, from the fledgling artists hoping to make their mark to the affluent collectors and the dealers, curators and advisors who surround them.

Her structure is carefully chosen and works beautifully -- breaking the art world down into seven parts, each devoted to a specific group or dimension (the auction, the studio visit, the art fair, etc.), she sheds light on the



characters and issues that arise in the context of each. There is enough overlap to make this structure function -- for instance, we encounter gallerists Jeff Poe and Tim Blum first at ArtBasel, then rejoin them as part of her chapter on visiting Takashi Murakami's studio(s), where Poe and Blum discuss an upcoming retrospective with the artist and museum curators. To me, the most intriguing and enlightening part of this structure was the way it shifted, from one chapter to the next, from a view of the art from the outside (the perspective of the collector or the critic, say) to the inside (the creative process itself.) So, a chapter about the "crit" process at CalArts is followed immediately by one about the vast artworld schmoozefest that is ArtBasel (with the NetJets booth and the omnipresent champagne).

Thornton has an eye for that kind of telling detail that only the best journalists possess and a knack for knowing (most of the time) how to use it best. For instance, in the studio visit chapter, she spots the passports of Blum and Poe are crammed full of visas and entry and exit stamps -- not just a random observation but one that reflects the global nature of the art market itself, which requires its participants to dash from visiting a collector in Russia to an art fair in London and on to visit a studio in Beijing. The only downside of this "ethnographic" approach is that sometimes the details that she observes and includes as a result of this feel less useful -- we don't care how heavy her handbag begins to feel at ArtBasel, or how the Japanese car drivers in Toyama jump to open doors for visitors so that no fingerprint mars the shine on the car.

I've attended a number of Christie's auctions, stuffed into the uncomfortable press section that Thornton describes so accurately, and watched the bidding process. Reading this section, I felt as if I were back there again, experiencing the moments of boredom and tension that she chronicles so compellingly. There is no disconnect between my experience and her portrayal of it -- just additional level of background detail that I had never appreciated before (such as the fact that Christopher Burge has nightmares of being caught naked or without his sale "book" in front of an audience of a thousand angry would-be bidders).

The only area in which Thornton fails to deliver is describing the creative process itself in a way that the average reader will find comprehensible and compelling. But that, I suspect, is as much due to the inherent difficulty of discussing a visual art in words -- certainly, the young art students she profiles struggle as much themselves to do just this.

What impressed me the most -- in addition to the high level of reporting and writing -- was Thornton's ability to weave a path through all the politics and ego that fills the art market (and makes comparable nonsense on Wall Street and in Washington look like child's play in comparison...) Even as she chronicles the auction scene, she doesn't get caught up in the buzz and excitement or fall victim to the too-easy trap of criticizing people for being willing to pay outrageous sums for works of art. She addresses those concerns, most effectively in an anecdote where one collector, charged with selling her parents' immense collection to create a charitable foundation, muses on the auction process: "It's been a real loss of innocence... When you think of all the good that money could do... Nobody in the auction room thinks about that." But Thornton doesn't dwell on that, any more than she succumbs to the gushing that is all too often part of the art market. It's an admirably balanced portrayal.

All in all, a tour de force.

Anyone looking for more insider-y glimpses of the art world might turn to *Collecting Contemporary*, by a major collector, or to a novel penned by the wife of a hedge fund manager who is a force of sorts in the New York art scene: *Lulu Meets God and Doubts Him*.

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