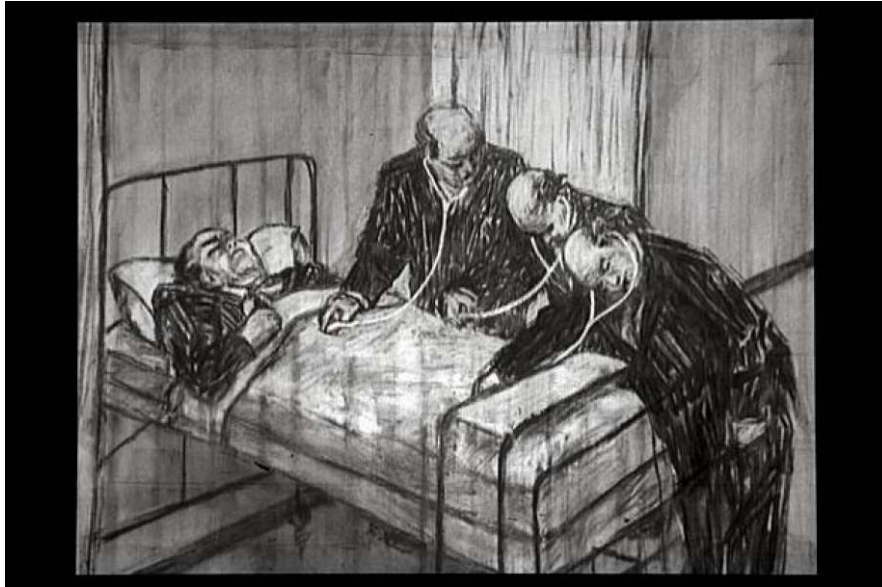


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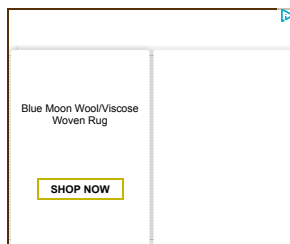
2009 in review: Art

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By **Kenneth Baker** Published 4:00 am, Sunday, December 27, 2009



William Kentridge's "History of the Main Complaint" (still) 1996, 35 mm animated film transferred to video. Part of the "Theme 2 -- Thick Time: Soho and Felix" portion of "William Kentridge: Five Themes" at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, March 14-May 31, 2009.



High: "William Kentridge: Five Themes" The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art gave the South African artist ample space to demonstrate why he is among the most admired creative people at work today.

Low: "Wallworks" If not the worst show of the year, the most disappointing in being the first outing of Yerba Buena Center for the Arts' new curator, Betti-Sue Hertz.

Most improved: Southern Exposure, the beloved alternative art venue, having reinvented itself architecturally, stands poised to do better work than ever.

MVP: Collectors Doris and Donald Fisher, for crafting an arrangement with SFMOMA to keep their stellar collection in the city and available to the public, after their plan for a museum in the Presidio ran aground.

Top 10

Dragon's Gift: The Sacred Arts of Bhutan With it, the Asian Art Museum brought a largely unknown world of Buddhist artifacts to light.

Galaxy: 100 or So Stars Visible to the Naked Eye Berkeley Art Museum Director Lawrence Rinder found treasures and connections hidden in the BAM's permanent collection.

Splendid Grief: Darren Waterston and the Afterlife of Leland Stanford Jr. In the year's riskiest show, at the Cantor Center, painter Darren Waterston deftly combined his own work with Stanford archival material to re-create a Victorian "mourning parlor."

Chagall and the Artists of the Russian Jewish Theater, 1919-1949 A mingling of media powerfully evoked a brief intersection of artistic modernism and Jewish theatrical tradition.

Squeak Carnwath: Painting is No Ordinary Object Lucky is the painter whose mid-career retrospective shores up her reputation as did this bracing survey at the Oakland Museum of California.

Looking In: Robert Frank's "The Americans" No doubt remains as to the importance of the Swiss photographer's early '50s take on America, but all the pictures together showed what staying power means in photos.

The J-Street Project The Contemporary Jewish Museum brought to town British conceptual artist Susan Hiller's remarkably compelling photo and video survey of every place in Germany with a name referring to Jews.

10 x 10 x 10: An Invitational Exhibition Asking 10 curators to choose 10 pictures each by as many local photographers, the San Francisco Arts Commission assembled a museum-

worthy show.

Emerald Cities: Arts of Siam and Burma The Asian Art Museum acquired a cache of rarities from the **Doris Duke Charitable Trust** and unveils most of it here for the first time in grand style (through Jan. 10).

Frank Lobdell Figure Drawings A nicely deployed survey of a major Bay Area painter's life drawings, produced alongside other notable contemporaries such as Richard Diebenkorn and **Nathan Oliviera**, whose drawings are also sampled (through Feb. 21).

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