

# F R O N T P A G E

## New Expansion Plans for the Whitney

On Nov. 9, shortly before the highly publicized opening of the Museum of Modern Art's new Manhattan facility on Nov. 20, the Whitney Museum of American Art announced its own new expansion scheme, to be designed by Renzo Piano, the architect behind the Menil Collection in Houston, the Nasher Sculpture Center in Dallas, an expansion to the Morgan Library in New York, and an addition to the High Museum in Atlanta currently under way. The project will increase the Whitney's overall size from 98,000 to 124,000 square feet, and nearly double its exhibition and public spaces. A final design is still in the works; budget figures and a construction schedule have not yet been released. Museum officials begin presenting the new plan to the city's Landmarks Preservation Commission this month.

The new nine-story building will be situated behind existing brownstones owned by the museum on Madison Avenue and on 74th Street, preserving the individual identities of the various structures, including the Whitney's original 1966 Marcel Breuer-designed facility. Two of the Madison Avenue brownstones will be demolished to make way for a glass entry hall and small garden; the Breuer entry will provide access to the auditorium and museum shop. Transparent, enclosed bridges will connect the new building with the old and link the galleries, at locations that Breuer had designated for a future addition. Preliminary plans call for a skin of textured, copper-and-aluminum panels that would complement the older building's dark granite exterior. The new structure will contain expanded gallery space, plus an auditorium and education and research facilities, and new spaces for the museum's restaurant, museum shop and administrative offices.

The Whitney's announcement comes less than two years after the cancellation in spring 2003 of a \$200-million expansion by Rem Koolhaas. That plan called for an 11-story structure that would have projected out over the Breuer building. The post-9/11 economic climate and concerns that the design was too aggressive contributed to its being scrapped.

## Art in the Blogosphere

It's no secret that the number and influence of on-line Web logs, or blogs, have grown dramatically over the last couple of years. Although the contemporary art scene has yet to produce a blog as consequential as *ronsilliman.blogspot.com* has been for the poetry world or *dailykos.com* in politics, there are now quite a few interesting art-related blogs. Here is a list, briefly annotated, of some that I've found to be worth regular visits.

—Raphael Rubinstein

### [artsjournal.com/artopia](http://artsjournal.com/artopia)

So far John Perreault's *artopia* is the only instance of a blog created by an established art critic (I'm not counting New York critic David Cohen's great [artcritical.com](http://artcritical.com), which is really more of an on-line magazine). In contrast to many other art blogs, which are patched together out of links to other sites and brief comments or rants by their authors, Perreault's blog is devoted almost exclusively to fully developed exhibition reviews. Hosted by the on-line arts digest [artsjournal.com](http://artsjournal.com).

### [artsjournal.com/man](http://artsjournal.com/man)

Written by Washington, D.C. critic Tyler Green, *Modern Art Notes (MAN)* blends coverage of breaking news stories, such as the resignation of the Getty's director, with venting on assorted topics from museum missteps to a *Vogue* article on Elizabeth Peyton. Since Green became a critic for Bloomberg News, his contributions to his own blog seem to have diminished in scope. Also hosted by [artsjournal.com](http://artsjournal.com).

### [fallonandrososof.com/artblog](http://fallonandrososof.com/artblog)

Created by the Philadelphia artist team of Roberta Fallon and Libby Rosof, this site offers capsule reviews of gallery and museum exhibitions in the Philadelphia area, as well as coverage of lectures and openings. It's updated daily, with plenty of photos and contributions from others besides Fallon and Rosof. This blog is unabashedly local-written by Philadelphia artists for Philadelphia artists—yet thanks to Fallon and Rosof's clear writing, unfussy graphics and assumption of the inherent strength of the Philadelphia art scene, it should be of interest to outsiders as well.

### [art.blogging.la](http://art.blogging.la)

Run by Caryn Coleman, co-owner of a gallery called *sixspace*, this site offers brief reviews of gallery and museum shows in the Los Angeles area, sometimes by guest bloggers, with a few bits of news and commentary thrown in. Coleman also chronicles her art jaunts to New York and Miami.

### [iconoduel.org](http://iconoduel.org)

Dan Hopewell's enthusiastic, informed, intelligent commentary on the art scene in his hometown of Chicago and elsewhere. *Iconoduel* offers considerably more intellectual content than most art blogs. Helpfully, Hopewell tells you what books he's reading, divided into the categories of "on the nightstand" and "piled on the floor."

### [digitalmediatree.com/tommoody](http://digitalmediatree.com/tommoody)

The site of New York painter Tom Moody, who shares with viewers images of his own paintings, his studio process, his visual passions and assorted enthusiasms. He also devotes a lot of space to the work of other artists who share his interest in the intersection of abstraction and digital art. Mesmerizing digital animations and occasional comments, always opinionated and thoughtful, on exhibitions and art-world developments.

### [fromthefloor.blogspot.com](http://fromthefloor.blogspot.com)

Commentary on the New York gallery scene by art lover Todd Gibson. Covers everything from auction previews to discussions of the right way to pronounce Romare Bearden's first name. When MOMA reopened, he had a nice post about 10 New Yorkers he knows who probably won't be able to afford the museum's new \$20 admission.

### [electricsskin.com](http://electricsskin.com)

This site bills itself as "a black art magazine focusing on articles that present new visions of art throughout the black diaspora." *Electric Skin* mainly offers links to articles on other sites about exhibitions of black artists around the country and the world. Also posts content such as a conversation between Chris Ofili and DJ Spooky and a three-part report on an art conference in Nigeria.

### [jameswagner.com](http://jameswagner.com)

New York gallery going with lots of photos, not very much text. Like many bloggers, Wagner loves his digital camera and his site is full of colorful street photographs. Also devotes a fair amount of space to politics and protests.

### [newsgrist.typepad.com](http://newsgrist.typepad.com)

"Politics of art and culture in the digital age" is how painter Joy Garnett summarizes the focus of her web site *Newsgrist*. Most of the content comes via other sites, but this is a useful clearinghouse for a wide range of events and articles.

### [dennishollingsworth.us](http://dennishollingsworth.us)

A studio journal from abstract painter Dennis Hollingsworth, with striking photos of works in progress and tangential images of everything from Queen Elizabeth II posing with a platoon of kilt-wearing soldiers to a construction project in Barcelona, pictures of other artists' work and Hollingsworth's dogs.

### [livejournal.com/users/burgertime](http://livejournal.com/users/burgertime)

A profusely illustrated on-line diary by New York art student and budding graphic designer Keren Richter. The diary is mostly devoted to Richter's musical likes and career moves, but the site is worth a visit for her stylish, Aubrey Beardsley-meets-Karen Kilimnick drawings.

## Legal Duel Over Picasso Portrait

A noteworthy portrait by Picasso, *Woman in White* (1922), was recently seized by the F.B.I. at the home of Chicago collector Marilyn Alsdorf. While Alsdorf is suspected

of knowingly transporting stolen property across state lines (in December 2002 she had the painting shipped from Los Angeles to Chicago), the larger legal issue revolves around the ownership of the painting. Does it belong to Alsdorf, who, together with her late husband James, purchased it in 1975 for \$357,000 (today the painting is valued at \$10 million), or is

the rightful owner Thomas Bennigson, a California man who claims that the Nazis stole *Woman in White* from his grandmother, Carlota Landsberg, during the Second World War?

A depiction of a big-boned woman in a white dress holding a book in her hands, the painting dates from Picasso's neo-classical period and is one of a group of

works, including the Metropolitan Museum's identically titled *Woman in White* (1923), thought to be portraits of American exile Sara Murphy. In the 1920s, Murphy and her painter husband, Gerald, were the center of a glamorous circle on the Côte d'Azur. Landsberg purchased the painting from a Berlin art dealer in the mid-1920s. In 1938 or '39, she sent it for safekeeping to Justin K. Thannhauser, a Parisian dealer and collector who was one of Picasso's chief patrons. Subsequently, both Landsberg and Thannhauser fled to the United States, and in 1940 Thannhauser's art-filled, four-story Paris home was looted by the Nazis.

After the war, the German government recognized Landsberg's claim to *Woman in White*, but despite the efforts of both Landsberg and Thannhauser, the painting was never located. Thannhauser, who returned to Europe in the 1970s, died in 1976, after donating most of his collection to the Guggenheim Museum. Landsberg died in New York in 1994.

In December 2001, *Woman in White*, which hadn't been publicly exhibited since the Alsdorfs bought it, turned up in an exhibition at David Tunkl Fine Art in Los Angeles. Seeking to sell the painting for Alsdorf, Tunkl then shipped it to the Freeport in Geneva for viewing by Paris dealer Didier Imbert. In the course of researching the painting, Imbert contacted the Art Loss Register, an international organization that helps track down stolen art works. Upon discovering the painting's history, the organization notified all the parties involved of its troubling provenance. At this point, the painting was shipped back from Geneva to Los Angeles. Until he heard from the Art Loss Register, Bennigson, a recent law-school graduate who is Landsberg's sole heir, not only didn't know the painting's whereabouts, he was not even aware of its existence, since his grandmother had never mentioned *Woman in White* to him.

In December 2002, after negotiations broke down between them, Bennigson sued Alsdorf in Los Angeles Superior Court for return of the painting. A hearing for a temporary restraining order was scheduled for Dec. 20, but on that same day Alsdorf had the painting shipped back to Chicago, thus triggering the F.B.I. investigation and recent seizure. Alsdorf, who has filed a countersuit against Bennigson in an Illinois court, contends that she and her husband bought the painting in good faith from New York dealer Stephan Hahn, who had legally purchased it

from the Paris gallery Renou & Poyet. No hearing dates have been set for Bennigson's and Alsdorf's lawsuits, nor for the government's forfeiture proceedings against Alsdorf. In the meantime, *Woman in White* remains impounded in a safe in Alsdorf's home.

—Raphael Rubinstein

## Levy Auction in Paris a Blockbuster

Last fall, Paris's Tajan auction house held a three-day sale on Oct. 5, 6 and 7, of more than 850 items from the collection of the late New York dealer Julien Levy and his recently deceased wife, Jean. Executors of the U.S.-based Levy estate took a gamble by sending the works to Paris for auction, but the sale proved a success. It brought more than \$9.1 million, just above the \$6.8-8.1-million presale estimate.

Levy opened his influential New York gallery in 1931. During its 18-year run, the venue specialized in contemporary art, especially photography, and also presented the first U.S. exhibitions of members of the Paris-based Surrealist group. Before his death in 1981, Levy donated his archives to the Art Institute of Chicago, and in 2001 more than 2,000 photographs from the Levy collection entered the Philadelphia Museum of Art as part gift, part purchase. Organized by Paris dealers Marcel and David Fleiss, the Tajan sale included paintings, sculptures, works on paper and other objects that had a personal significance for the Levys, and many were pieces that they lived with for years. Among them were works by Man Ray, Duchamp, Ernst, Dalí, Gorky, Tanguy, Victor Brauner, Erro, Eugene and Leonid Berman, Leonora Carrington and Chryssa.

Among the highlights of the auction, Gorky's 1943 painting *The Pirate II* sold for \$1.5 million (est. \$1.3-2 million), and a Joseph Cornell construction, *Dovecote: Apparent Places of the Stars* (1954-56), brought \$120,000 (est. \$50,000-60,000). Some of the more unusual objects on offer included a 1900 Frank Lloyd Wright stained-glass window, which brought \$54,000 (est. \$45,000-55,000). A prehistoric North American stone sculpture, *Stone Bird* (ca. 1000 B.C.), sold for \$94,000, far above its \$5,000-\$6,000 estimate. Final prices include the buyer's premium, which is 17 percent of the first \$125,000, and 12 percent of any amount above.



Picasso, *Musketeer with Pipe* (1968), \$7.2 million, at Christie's.

## Contemporary Art Bolsters Fall Auction Results

The results of this fall's big evening sales in New York of Impressionist, modern and contemporary art were generally impressive, and certain works commanded enormous sums. Overall, however, the season was a bit unbalanced; a number of key lots of Impressionist and modern art faltered, and most of the energy in the auction rooms centered on contemporary works. When the fortnight of evening auctions ended, Sotheby's came out on top with a \$353.1-million total, below last spring's \$403.6-million take, but well above the \$244.1 million it earned in the fall of 2003. Christie's total, \$280.7 million, outshone its spring \$204.6-million earnings as well as the \$223.5 million it garnered last year in its fall sale. Phillips de Pury & Co., participating only in the contemporary-art week, and highlighting an important single-owner sale of contemporary photographs,



Gauguin, *Maternité II* (1899), \$39.2 million, at Sotheby's.

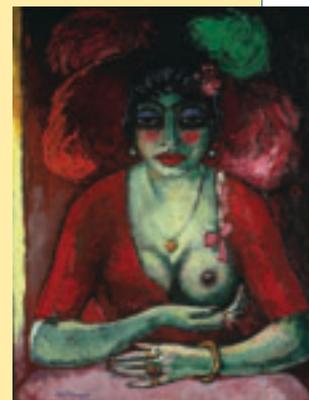
raked in \$44.9 million, significantly more than its \$25.9-million spring take and far above its \$14.7-million total last autumn.

Final prices quoted here include the auction house commissions: Sotheby's and Phillips de Pury & Co. charge 20 percent of the first \$100,000 and 12 percent of the rest. Christie's rates are 19.5 percent of the first \$100,000 and 12 percent of anything above. Estimates do not reflect commissions.

### Impressionist and modern

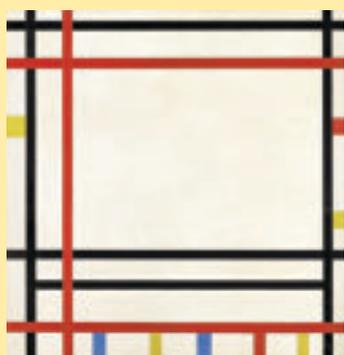
Kicking off the season a day later than usual due to the presidential election, Christie's evening sale on Wednesday, Nov. 3, produced solid results, but its tone was rather subdued. The auction's total, \$128.2 million, was within its \$111.7-157.9-million presale estimate, and 47 of 58 lots found buyers. *London, the Parliament, Effects of Sun and Fog*, a luminous 1904 painting by Monet, was the evening's top lot. It sold for \$20.2 million,

above its \$18-million high estimate. Second was a lively 1938 canvas by Miró, *Caress of the Stars*, from the collection of the late T.V. producer Nathan L. Halpern, which brought \$11.8 million (est. \$6-8 million). Van Dongen's auction record was broken when his 1905 painting *Femme Fatale*, once in Ingrid Bergman's collection, was knocked down for \$5.9 million (est. \$3.5-4.5 million). Prices for Picasso's late works have been rising dramatically over the past few seasons; this time, his large, colorful 1968 canvas *Musketeer with Pipe* brought \$7.2 million, well above its \$6-million high estimate. Despite these successes, significant lots by Cézanne, Vuillard, Giacometti and Léger were bought in.



Van Dongen, *Femme Fatale* (1905), \$5.9 million, at Christie's.

In its sale the following night, Sotheby's sold 48 of the 61 lots offered and



Mondrian, *New York/Boogie Woogie* (1941-42), \$21 million, at Sotheby's.

1899 Tahiti painting *Maternité II*. It sold for a staggering \$39.2 million, far above the unpublished \$30-million estimate, and a record auction price for the artist. Modigliani's large portrait, *Jeanne Hébuterne (in front of a Door)*, 1919, also set an artist auction record when it brought \$31.4 million, above the \$30-million high estimate. Mondrian's auction record was shattered when his late abstract painting *New York/Boogie Woogie* (1941-42) from Hester Diamond's collection fetched \$21 million (est. \$20-30 million). New auction records were established for Henry Moore (\$8.4 million), Chaim Soutine (\$6.7 million) and Barbara Hepworth (\$1.1 million). Contrasting with these successes, important lots by Renoir, Degas, Picasso and Kandinsky failed to find buyers.

### Contemporary

The week of contemporary-art sales began at Phillips de Pury & Co. with an extraordinary evening auction of 65 lots from a collection of 184 photographs being sold by Baroness Marion Lambert, wife of

the banker Philippe Lambert. Every lot sold, nine new artist auction records were established and the night's total, \$9.2 million, was well above the \$6.3-million high estimate. The top lot, Barbara Kruger's *Untitled (I Shop Therefore I Am)*, 1983, trounced its \$120,000 high estimate to sell for a whopping \$601,600, a record auction price for the artist. Among other highlights, *No*, a 1992 self-portrait by Charles Ray, from an edition of four, brought \$534,000 (est. \$300,000-400,000). Another self-portrait, Cindy Sherman's *Untitled No. 92* (1981), from an

edition of 10, sold for \$478,400 (est. \$250,000-350,000), a record auction price for the artist. Mike Kelley's auction record was broken when his 1991 self-portrait with stuffed animals, *Ahh . . . Youth*, also from an edition of 10, was knocked down for \$411,200 (est. \$150,000-200,000).

The following evening, Sotheby's scored a solid success; it sold 50 of 62 contemporary works for a total of \$93.4 million, compared with the auction's \$104-million high estimate. The star lot, Rothko's 1954 abstract canvas *No. 6 (Yellow, White, Blue Over Yellow on Gray)*

achieved some record-breaking prices. But the evening's \$193-million total fell short of the \$203-million low estimate, and a number of key items were bought in. It was widely reported in the press that the company, in order to attract sellers, had offered undisclosed guarantees for certain lots, a risky strategy in a shaky market. Nevertheless, some works performed exceedingly well, including the night's top lot, Gauguin's bright

*Yellow on Gray*), brought \$17.4 million, far above its \$12-million high estimate, and a new auction record for the artist. The second biggest price was attained by a charcoal drawing by Jasper Johns, *0 Through 9* (1961), fetching a hefty \$10.9 million, over its \$9-million high estimate. Among the sale's other highlights, Joan Mitchell's 1956 painting *King of Spades* brought \$2.7 million, an auction record for the artist, and Mark Tansey's 1984 painting *The Key* sold for \$1.2 million (est. \$700,000-900,000), another artist auction



Martin Kippenberger, *Terrorist/Tourist* (1997), \$612,800, at Phillips de Pury & Co.

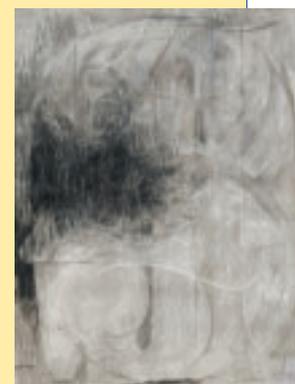
record. Though it was greeted by loud hissing throughout the room as it appeared on the block, Richard Phillips's portrait of George W. Bush in acid pink and gray, *The President of the United States of America* (2001), sold for \$142,400, well above the \$90,000 high estimate and a record auction price for the artist.

Christie's Wednesday evening sale, Nov. 10, was similarly lively. The auction total, \$92.5 million, was near the \$94-million high estimate; 59 of the 63 lots offered sold, 26 of those for over \$1 million. The top lot was Warhol's large *Mustard Race Riot* (1963), which brought \$15.1 million, compared to the unpublished \$15-million estimate. Robert Motherwell's auction record was broken when his large painting *Elegy to the Spanish Republic No. 71* (1961) sold for \$2.9 million (est. \$600,000-800,000), and a new auction high was set for Lee Bontecou, when her untitled 1960 relief brought a resounding \$847,500 (est. \$500,000-700,000). New auction records were set for Dan Flavin, whose "monument" for V. Tatlin, 1964-65, brought \$735,500 (est. \$400,000-600,000), and for Carl Andre, whose *Steel-Magnesium Plain* (1969) garnered \$903,500 (est. \$400,000-600,000). *Not Afraid of Love*, a life-size sculpture of an elephant covered in a sheet, by Maurizio Cattelan, whose prices continue to soar at auction, sold for \$2.8 million (est. \$700,000-900,000), a short-lived auction record that was broken the following evening.

The season closed with Phillips de Pury & Co.'s upbeat sale on Nov. 11, which pulled in \$25.6 million, at the midpoint of the \$20.9-29.3-million estimate. Only four of 58 lots were bought in. Francis Bacon's 1979 painting *Oedipus* was the top lot, selling for \$3.6 million (est. \$4-6 million). *The Ninth Hour*, Cattelan's imaginative sculpture of the Pope hit by a meteorite, went for \$3 million, the artist's new auction record, and Jeff Koons's painted wood sculpture *Bear and Policeman* (1988) sold for \$2.9 million (est. \$2.5-3.5 million). Among other highlights, Martin Kippenberger's presciently topical diptych *Terrorist/Tourist* (1997) brought \$612,800 (est. \$200,000-300,000), and Tom Friedman's untitled lifesize figure made of countless wooden sticks (2001) went for \$310,400 (est. \$100,000-150,000).



Warhol, *Mustard Race Riot* (1963), \$15.1 million, at Christie's.



Jasper Johns, *0 Through 9* (1961), \$10.9 million, at Sotheby's.



Rothko, *No. 6 (Yellow, White, Blue Over Yellow on Gray)*, 1954, \$17.4 million, at Sotheby's.

—David Ebony



Barbara Kruger, *Untitled (I Shop Therefore I Am)*, 1983, \$601,600, at Phillips de Pury & Co.