

Seven Days In the Art World by Sarah Thornton

Notebook: Curationism

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Location: Ottawa Division, Ontario, Canada

I didn't have time to re-read this so detail is missing. Her writing is very, very good!

From the introduction

- The near-modern scene - late 2004 - July 2007
- A larger number of art centers: NYC, London, Berlin, LA
- The art world is larger than the art market
- Six main roles:
 - artist
 - dealer
 - curator
 - critic
 - collector
 - auction-house expert
- The art world is a "symbolic economy" where people swap thoughts and where cultural worth is debated rather than determined by brute wealth

From the Contents

- The Auction
- The Crit
- The Fair
- The Prize
- The Magazine
- The Studio Visit
- The Biennale

From the Author's Note

Done as an ethnography of a social world but with many adjustments from the academic view of ethnographic reporting

- Except where requested, the participants are named because:
 - Artworks are not interchangeable
 - artists are caught up in a game of recognition
 - Therefore the others must be named
 - It becomes, then, a social history
- The main investigative technique of ethnography is "participant observation"
 - firsthand experience of the environment
 - careful visual observation
 - attentive listening
 - casual on-the-hoof interviewing as well as
 - formal in-depth interrogation
 - the analysis of telling details and
 - key documents
- Participation generally transforms the researcher
- Value neutrality is important
 - must avoid overt judgment, moral indignation & showy outrage
 - the art world's warring factions would have destroyed her project if she had taken sides with any of them
- Has access, not an "insider"
 - as a writer, could have written critique
- The ethnographic sense has influenced the book in many ways
 - ethnography is an experiential way to gather data, as distinct from the archival research of historians or the statistics of economists. Seven Days mimics that experiential form and gives the reader a strong sense of "being there"
 - The choice of details is based on whether they seem to reveal social structure, institutional frameworks or cultural patterns. Not gossip or chitchat.
 - The book is ethnographic in its multi-vocal quality
 - Used "reflexive ethnography". Requested feedback from the participants, not to give them editorial power but rather to fully explain their positions. This greatly improved the factual accuracy and helped her to improve the insights
 - The structure of the book "comes out of" the structure of the Art World