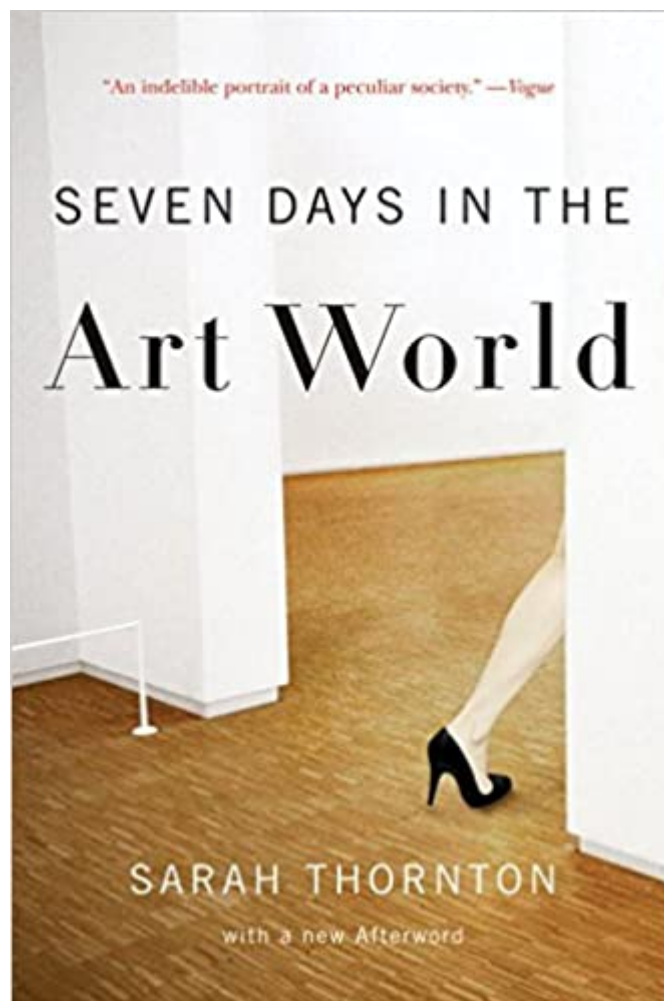


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# Seven Days In The Art World



## Synopsis

"An indelible portrait of a peculiar society." •VogueSarah Thornton's vivid ethnography•an international hit, now available in twenty translations•reveals the inner workings of the sophisticated subcultures that make up the contemporary art world. In a series of day-in-the-life narratives set in New York, Los Angeles, London, Basel, Venice, and Tokyo, *Seven Days in the Art World* explores the dynamics of creativity, taste, status, money, and the search for meaning in life. 8 illustrations

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. The hot, hip contemporary art world, argues sociologist Thornton, is a cluster of intermingling subcultures unified by the belief, whether genuine or feigned, that nothing is more important than the art itself. It is a conviction, she asserts, that has transformed contemporary art into a kind of alternative religion for atheists. Thornton, a contributor to Artforum.com and the New Yorker, presents an astute and often entertaining ethnography of this status-driven world. Each of the seven chapters is a keenly observed profile of that world's highest echelons: a Christie's auction, a crit session at the California Institute of the Arts and the Art Basel art fair. The chapter on auctions (where one auction-goer explains, [I]t's dangerous to wear Prada.... You might get caught in the same outfit as three members of Christie's staff) is one of the book's strongest; the author's conversations about the role of the art critic with Artforum editor-in-chief Tim Griffin and the New Yorker's Peter Schjeldahl are edifying. Thornton offers an elegant, evocative, sardonic view into some of the art world's most prestigious institutions. 8 illus. (Nov.) Copyright © Reed Business

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**\*Starred Review\*** Art and business, personal quests and personality cults, big bucks and the triumph of concept over beauty, being cool and in the know—these are the cardinal points in the contemporary art world. Enter Thornton, an art historian and sociologist with moxie and a brilliant game plan. Willing to ask obvious questions, she infiltrates the seven circles of this competitive realm. An astute observer and stimulating storyteller whose crisp sentences convey a wealth of information, Thornton marvels at the military precision of a Christie's auction and the wild improvisation of an art-school critique. On to Art Basel, a major international art fair where the hard buy—rather than the hard sell is the rule since an artist's reputation is tied to those who own his or her work. Thornton witnesses the final stage in the judging and presentation of the Turner Prize, watches editors at work at Artforum, attends the coveted Venice Biennale, and spends a dizzying day with the wizardly artist-entrepreneur Takashi Murakami. Thornton's uniquely clarifying dispatches from the art front glimmer with high-definition profiles of artists, dealers, critics, and collectors, and grapple with the paradoxes inherent in the transformation of creativity into commodity. --Donna Seaman --This text refers to the Unknown Binding edition.

It is hard to write about a visual medium so Thornton tells us about the people who make it. Her stories are interesting, but more reportage than artistic. I was glad I read it on an iPad so I could google the works instead of relying on her description of them. I now know more about the art world, but not much more about the art.

If "all the world's a stage" then Sarah Thornton's "Seven Days in the Art World" captures some entertaining performances by elitist cabals of the contemporary art world in seven acts. Over the span of five years, cultural sociologist Thornton visits seven different stages during the rise of mass contemporary art consumption: Christie's auction house in Manhattan; a critique session at a California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) seminar class in Los Angeles; Art Basel in Switzerland; Tate Museum's Turner Prize competition in London; Artforum magazine; Japanese artist/celebrity Takashi Murakami's studios; and Venice Biennale. Although Thornton's "participant observations" on the surface are predictable and reinforce the stereotypical attitudes and scenarios affixed to the "high class" art world, her insider access offers readers a closer look at the personas and relationship dynamics of those at the top of their game in the art market. Christopher Burge,

Christie's chief auctioneer, with his script book in hand does a final rehearsal run in preparation for the night auction's bidding blitz. At Art Basel, Thornton meets Tim Blum and Jeff Poe, owners and art dealers of a Los Angeles gallery as they are installing their Japanese star Takashi Murakami's painting. Artists are rarely seen at auctions and artfairs where money does most of the talking for collectors on the prowl. (Many dealers and collectors maintain close relationships with one another as a way to buy-in and cultivate an artist's body of work.) Art dealers, collectors, curators, and writers are all taste-makers validating or shunning an artist and/or artwork's significance. Martin Creed, past Turner prize winner says to her, "If the artists create artworks, then the judges create a winner. Whoever they chose is a reflection of themselves." Prime space in terms of physical location at Art Basel and Venice Biennale or advertising in the Artforum magazine, vie for optimal promotion and branding. And if you were curious as to the players' positions and ranking, Thornton provides a telling snap shot as Murakami's entourage board an airplane. "The seat assignment offers a near-perfect representation of the hierarchies of the art world. Murakami sits by himself in 1A, a window seat in business class... Blum and Poe sit in 2C and 2D. The MOCA people are in economy, row 18. Desmarais is nearby, in 19. The six Kaikai Kiki staff members are aligned in row 43." Art can be a very lucrative business machine with the right combination of talent and invested supporting cast. The book portrays the upper-crust of the art world as a playground for self-satisfying, money seeking egos and art as a conversation, a religion, a representation of one's cultural worth. The actors also display the power and influence their position holds. Thornton's writing is free flowing and mostly easy to read aside from maybe the one too many name dropping encounters. She does describe the main characters that she interviews at length as some reappear in another scene. But readers are still expected to have some knowledge of the art world or enough interest to familiarize themselves with it.

A disappointing book. The "interviews" don't sound real. Real people just don't talk the way the subjects are portrayed as talking - with ready made canned philosophies that happen to coincide with the author's own (self satisfied and uncritical) view. Sometimes they even coincidentally use the same hacky phrases the author uses in her own faux-thoughtful ponderings. The prose style is nearly unreadable too. Very high school paper-ish. It's a really good idea for a book though. It would be nice to see it re-done in the hands of a more honest and less artless author. And it's not like there isn't a lot of interesting stuff in the book. I just don't trust it - and it's a slog.

A well-paced read, albeit already dated by 2015 (nowadays artists are collaborating with fashion

and media in ways that was advised against circa the time of this book's writing). Ninety percent of the content is relevant to today's art scene, and the author is embedded and respected as an insider by everyone she encounters. She moves among the different aspects of the world from artist to dealer to auction house and beyond, to share the complexities of this elevated world in a readable, humorous and sympathetic voice.

Interesting peek into the art world but I also found myself confounded by the absurdity of it all as well. I'm an art fan and beyond some remedial art history courses at university I'm certainly not one to judge about "value" but getting past the halfway mark I felt I cared less and less. I probably wouldn't recommend it unless someone is very interested in the art scene (especially more modern and contemporary art).

A fun, great read for someone who wants an overview of the art world in the broadest of strokes. There are wonderful journalistic details here but don't pick this up looking for deep dives into the various art worlds outside of areas that a major newspaper would cover (hence the title -- auctions, galleries, magazines, etc.) It gives a glimpse into how the art world at the highest levels functions.

A great read! Eye opening for me! Well composed and written! Read it!

All the different aspects of art- its creation, when it's sold, etc

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