

ARTS & CULTURE



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Culture Watch: 'Asco: Elite of the Obscure, A Restrospective'

September 21, 2011 | 10:01 am



'Asco: Elite of the Obscure, A Retrospective, 1972-1987,' C. Ondine Chavoya and Rita Gonzalez, eds.

Hatje Cantz, \$60

The catalog for the Los Angeles County Museum of Art's [fine exhibition](#), "Asco: Elite of the Obscure, A Retrospective 1972-1987" is a chunky, two-inch thick book that surveys the intermittent collaborations of the artist-collective Asco over the course of 15 years. It's everything a reader wants from such a book -- plus one thing that represents a negative, though increasingly common, turn in such publications.

The good: Virtually everything Asco and its collaborators undertook is gathered in 432 illustrated pages, together with period documents. An index would sure help, but essential source material is offered.

The not-so-good: Also featured are 19 essays, none presenting a full historical narrative. ("Asco and the Politics of Revulsion" comes closest.) Sixteen writers instead slice and dice the work, about one author for every nine months of Asco's lifespan. The museum presents its curatorial perspective in the galleries, then co-opts and preempts almost every potentially contradictory interpretation of Asco's art in the accompanying book.

ALSO:

[Culture Watch: NT Live's broadcast of 'One Man, Two Guvnors'](#)

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-- Christopher Knight

twitter.com/KnightLAT

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When the essay is as important as the art to give it context , it's not good art.

Reply · 1 · Like · September 21, 2011 at 10:03pm



Catherine Conroy

Yes, Donald Frazell ASCO again. So much discussed and disgust.

Reply · Like · September 24, 2011 at 2:24pm



Donald Frazell

Oh, I see, the banner across the top, this is an advertisement. So that makes sense, after all this time thinking you were an art cirtc, you are really a marketer. Now it all comes together....

Reply · Like · September 21, 2011 at 10:40am



Donald Frazell

Good Lord, this is the fourth article on these bozo's. are you areally that desperate for attention in the substanceless PST? Well, yeah.

art collegia delenda est

Reply · Like · September 21, 2011 at 10:14am

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