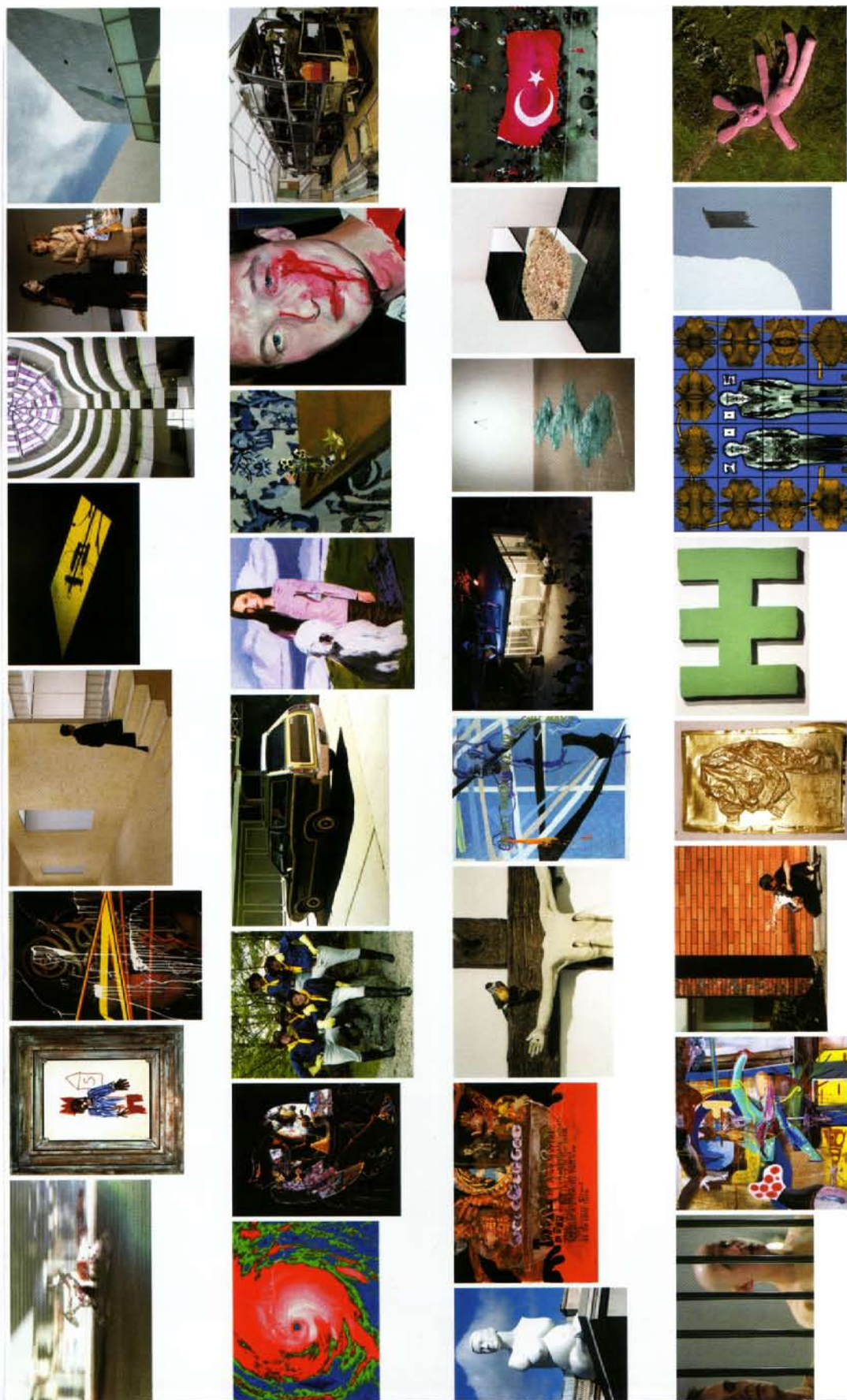


# ARTFORUM

BEST OF 2005

DECEMBER 2005 I N T E R N A T I O N A L



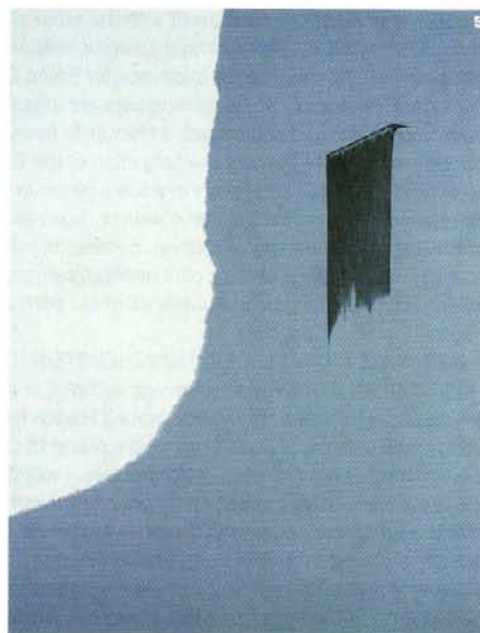


# Daniel Birnbaum

A CONTRIBUTING EDITOR OF *ARTFORUM*, DANIEL BIRNBAUM IS RECTOR OF FRANKFURT'S STÄDELSCHULE AND DIRECTOR OF ITS PORTIKUS GALLERY. HE IS ALSO A COCURATOR OF "UNCERTAIN STATES OF AMERICA," CURRENTLY ON VIEW AT ASTRUP FEARNLEY MUSEUM OF MODERN ART IN OSLO, NORWAY.

**5 TRISHA DONNELLY** (KÖLNISCHER KUNSTVEREIN)

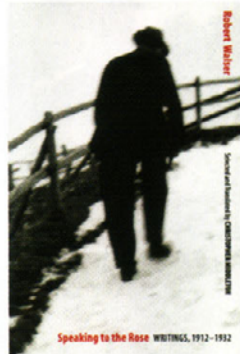
The ponderous illusions of solidity and the nonexistence of things are this artist's materials, someone once said to me. And I agree.



5. **Trisha Donnelly, *Untitled*, 2005**, pencil on colored paper, 26 X 20".



## BOOKS BEST OF 2005



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### TRISHA DONNELLY

This book is a false journal. *Speaking to the Rose* (University of Nebraska Press; translated by Christopher Middleton): A collection of the texts Robert Walser wrote in microscript, is, like a character he describes in one text, "half shut, half open."

Walser's microscript writings were done in "pencil area," an interior location, expressed through the writer's penciled detritus. Originally believed to be a code, it turned out just to be very, very, very small, hatefully small, hysterically small prose, hidden on paper slips, book jackets, and the backs of rejection letters. On translation, the found five hundred original sheets grew to an engorged two thousand pages.

I have no distance from these texts. Their economy of thought is a confusion. Walser folds up Goethe like a newspaper and places him under his arm: "He'd have liked to have a kitten to stroke along with him, or a puppy, or better still, a girl." His Goethe rows on lakes, sightseeing dumbly, looking at the sky thinking of those good people who may be thinking that very moment of Goethe.

Walser writes air free. Talking to himself. Suspicious is what he can make a certain kind of reader. Consider his endlessly agitated aesthetic stated acutely in "She addressed me in the formal style": "Doing something presupposes desisting from something else you've completed or begun to do, and at root her abuse was something like a proof of her satisfaction with me, yet satisfaction with someone brings no satiety to the soul and mind, and repose is glad to renew itself in restlessness." And these were notes—unedited. Blatant! Perhaps private, perhaps not, they are utterly aware—the way a single letter is aware of its surrounding word.

Journals (and the contemporary malady of journalishness) are full of solitude and feigned humility, as small as personal; Walser's microtexts are the opposite. Or, small script = large human. Smallness makes text liquid, lose-able, ubiquitous. Walser is a scale explosion.

Trisha Donnelly is an artist based in San Francisco.