

Los Angeles Times | ENTERTAINMENT

[LOCAL](#) [U.S.](#) [WORLD](#) [BUSINESS](#) [SPORTS](#) [ENTERTAINMENT](#) [HEALTH](#) [LIVING](#) [TRAVEL](#) [OPINION](#) [DEALS](#)

Weekly Ad

[MOVIES](#) [TELEVISION](#) [MUSIC](#) [CELEBRITY](#) [ARTS & CULTURE](#) [COMPANY TOWN](#) [CALENDAR](#) [THE ENVELOPE](#)
[IN THE LOCAL NEWS:](#) [DOLLY PARTON](#) | [JENNIFER ANISTON](#) | [BET AWARDS](#) | ['THRILLER' JACKET](#) | ['TRANSFORMERS: DARK OF THE MOON'](#)
 Search


Culture Monster

ALL THE ARTS, ALL THE TIME

[« Previous](#) | [Culture Monster Home](#) | [Next »](#)

Art review: Joe Amrhein at Another Year in L.A.

June 23, 2011 | 5:30 pm

(6) (29) (2)



It's easy to poke fun at the jargon that clogs the channels of art criticism. Phrases like "a nihilistic tease" and "pre-postmodernist cool" invite snickers. It's harder to do what Joe Amrhein does, to play into and feed off of that insular artspeak at the same time, to be wry and not just disgruntled, to construct something delectable from the intellectual debris.

Amrhein worked as a sign painter in the '70s and '80s, and has retained that trade's emphasis on bold clarity to gently mock the obfuscatory tendencies of art writing, and the limitations of verbal communication in general. In the mostly new works in his thoroughly enjoyable show at Another Year in L.A., he paints in vivid enamel on translucent Mylar one letter, word or phrase per strip, then layers or interweaves the strips in various configurations. Some pieces, like "Kitsch," are quite legible, a drumbeat progression of words read from top to bottom, back to front: "Little More Than Testosterone-Driven Post-Adolescent Derivative Kitsch." In other works, illegibility is part of the

L.A. Times on Facebook

Like 84K

[Sign Up](#) Create an account or [log in](#) to see what your friends are recommending.

Michele Bachmann talks 'flake' flap, John Wayne gaffe

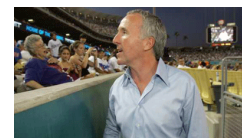
489 people recommend this.



advertisement



In Case You Missed It...


MLB slams McCourt in bankruptcy court filing

Home prices up for the first time in eight months

Neville Longbottom is a

point and the visual humor. Among the dozens of descriptive phrases in German and English in “Detailfülle” is “Freudian,” hiding in plain sight behind the others in large gold-leaf letters, not far from “Lucidity,” similarly obscured.

Droll, early text paintings by John Baldessari come to mind, as do the language works of Lawrence Weiner and Jack Pierson, as well as the clever verbal subversions of Tauba Auerbach. Amrhein’s lettering is crisp and vivid, and by using fonts familiar from signs touting special promotions and declarations of quality, he infuses the work with a vaguely upbeat positivity. The alphabet is a visual wonderland, as these pieces attest, and the building blocks of a spectacular and doomed tower of babble.

-- Leah Ollman

Another Year in L.A., Pacific Design Center, Suite B267, 8687 Melrose Ave., West Hollywood, (323) 223-4000, through July 29. www.anotheryearinla.com/

Image: Joe Amrhein, "Kitsch," from *Another Year in L.A.*



Twitter: [@culturemonster](https://twitter.com/culturemonster)
Facebook: [culturemonster](https://www.facebook.com/culturemonster)

More in: [Art](#), [Art review](#), [Critics Choice](#), [Galleries](#), [Leah Ollman](#)

◀ PREVIOUS

More from Culture Monster

NEXT ▶



Art review: 'Weird Walks Into a Room (Comma)' at the Box



Art review: Enrique Martinez Celaya at L.A. Louver

Alzheimer's vs Dementia

Learn to recognize if your symptoms are normal aging or Alzheimer's.
www.JohnsHopkinsHealthAlerts.com

Charity Art Show

The Flammable Heart Exhibition during National Health Center Week
www.FlammableHeart.com

ADS BY GOOGLE

Comments (2)



Add a comment...

Comment



William Wray

Glad he didn't use actual debris like a lot of today's artists, that's considered really intellectual. To smart for me.

1 · Like · Reply · Sunday at 8:11pm



William Wray

Nice to see the clean craftsmanship of his work embraced. Hand made rather than found is so much more interesting.

Like · Reply · Saturday at 7:51pm

Facebook social plugin



'battered war veteran'



Newsweek's 'Diana at 50' **cover**: offensive, or no big deal?

The Latest Most Viewed Most Emailed

Health researchers try to link up with more Hispanic women 6/29/2011, 3:00 a.m.

On the Web: A literary marriage, a writer's lessons and more book news 6/28/2011, 12:01 p.m.

'The Bachelorette' recap: With Bentley gone for good, J.P. becomes the front-runner 6/28/2011, 11:59 a.m.

Poll: Conspiracy behind the Rihanna-Chris Brown fiasco at BET Awards? 6/28/2011, 11:57 a.m.

Wimbledon: Sabine Lisicki upsets Marion Bartoli to advance to semifinals 6/28/2011, 11:52 a.m.

LA DEALS



\$90 for complete facial package at Skin Care by Jennifer (reg. \$225)

Stay connected:

RSS twitter facebook



Explore the arts: See our interactive venue graphics

About the Reporters

Mike Boehm
Jori Finkel
Lisa Fung
Christopher Hawthorne
Reed Johnson
Christopher Knight
Charles McNulty
David Ng
Kelly Scott
Sherry Stern
Mark Swed