

The New Criterion

Art

February 2007

Exhibition note

by [Hilton Kramer](#)

On "Saul Steinberg: Illuminations" at the Morgan Library and Museum, New York.

"Saul Steinberg: Illuminations"
Morgan Library & Museum, New York.
November 30, 2006-March 4, 2007

When we enter the world of Saul Steinberg's drawings, we find ourselves enclosed in a paradise of delightful absurdities. What we normally think of as the reality of daily life has everywhere been transformed into an animated landscape of wit and paradox. Everything we see in these drawings—nearly 100, from every phase of Steinberg's career, are on view in this fetching exhibition—is either too big or too small, and the force of gravity has been suspended in favor of objects and figures that enjoy the liberties that Steinberg has created for their benefit. Even words are endowed with the power to remain aloft, and a Christmas tree may serve as a suitable costume for a Santa Claus.

Despite the inveterate zaniness of Steinberg's art, however, it would be a mistake to regard these deli

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Hilton Kramer is the editor and publisher of *The New Criterion*, which he founded with the late Samuel Lipman in 1982. Since 1987, he has also been the art critic for the weekly *New York Observer*, and for many years has written the "Critic's Notebook" column in *Art & Antiques* magazine. His "Media Watch" column was published weekly in *The New York Post* from 1993 to November 1997. Mr. Kramer was born in Gloucester, Massachusetts, in 1928. He studied at Syracuse University (B.A., 1950), and in the graduate schools of Columbia University, Harvard University, Indiana University (School of Letters), and the New School for Social Research. He has served on the faculties of Indiana University, Bennington College, the University of Colorado, and Yale University. He has lectured widely at museums and universities in this country and abroad. He began publishing literary criticism in 1950, art criticism in 1953. Over the years he has contributed to *Commentary*, *The New Republic*, *National Review*, *The New York Review of Books*, *The American Scholar*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Atlantic*, *The American Spectator*, *Partisan Review*, *Modern Painters*, *The Boston Globe*, the *London Times Literary Supplement*, and the *London Sunday Telegraph*. Mr. Kramer has been the editor of *Arts Magazine*, and the art critic of *The Nation*. In 1965 he joined the staff of *The New York Times* as art news editor. He was appointed chief art critic of the *Times* in 1973, and remained in that position until he resigned in 1982 to become the editor of *The New Criterion*. Mr. Kramer is the author of two volumes of criticism--*The Age of the Avant-Garde* (1973) and *The Revenge of the Philistines* (1985)--and of critical monographs on the art of Milton Avery, Gaston Lachaise, and Richard Lindner. He is the editor of

The New Criterion Reader (1988), and co-editor (with Roger Kimball) of *Against the Grain: The New Criterion on Art and Intellect at the End of the Twentieth Century* (1995), *The Future of the European Past* (1997). Mr. Kramer's most recent book, *The Twilight of the Intellectuals: Culture and Politics in the Era of the Cold War*, was published by Ivan R. Dee in April 1999. He is currently at work on *Abstract Art: A Cultural History*. Mr. Kramer serves on the board of trustees of the New York Studio School.

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This article originally appeared in *The New Criterion*, Volume 25 February 2007, on page 51

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