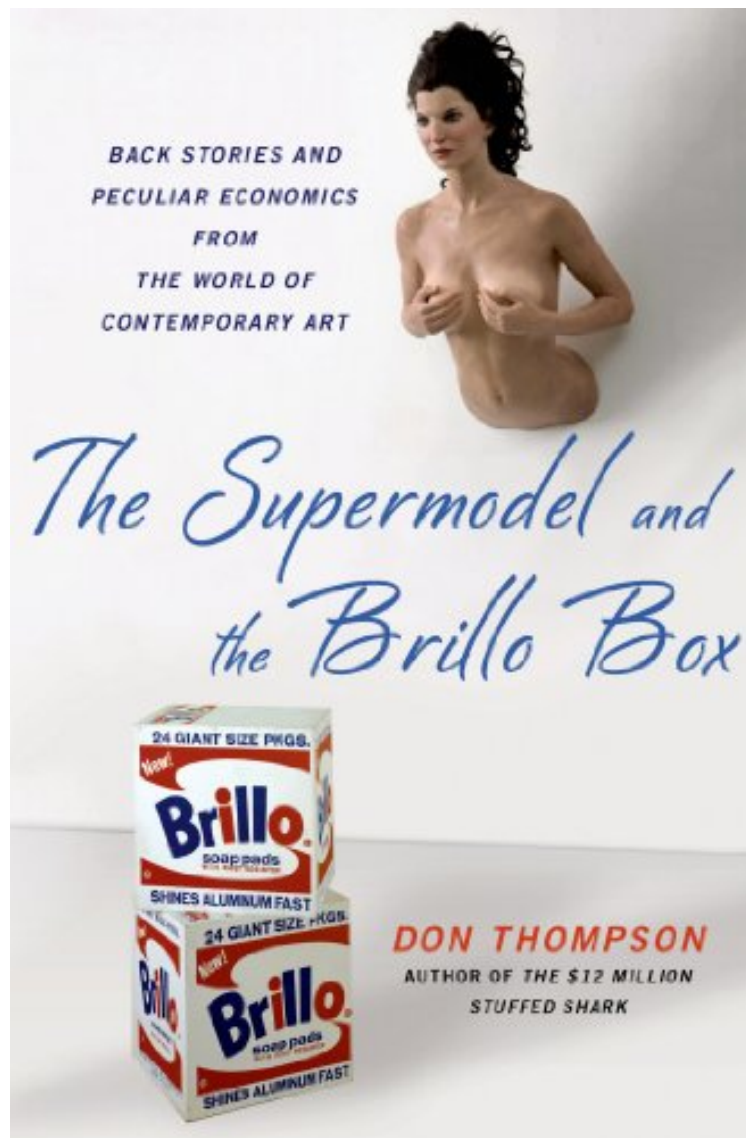


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## The Supermodel and the Brillo Box: Back Stories and Peculiar Economics from the World of Contemporary Art

Don Thompson

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**Don Thompson : The Supermodel and the Brillo Box: Back Stories and Peculiar Economics from the World of Contemporary Art** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Supermodel and the Brillo Box: Back Stories and Peculiar Economics from the World of Contemporary Art:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. The Art World After the \$12 million Stuffed Shark By Tom Groenfeldt This doesn't have the freshness of the "\$12 million Stuffed Shark," which was excellent at dissecting the art

markets, especially the evening auctions at Christie's and Sotheby's. But Don Thompson does a great job of moving the story forward. He is probably never going to be required reading in graduate art programs eagerly recruiting new students and their tuition spending. He reiterates a point he made in the first book, that critics and gallery owners and auction houses agree that 85 to 90 percent of contemporary art is not good, or awful, they just disagree in which 10-15 percent is great...usually finding much of it located in their own stable of artists. London and New York between them have about 80,000 resident artists, writes Thompson. "75 might eventually become mature artists with seven-figure incomes, and another 300 might show in mainstream galleries and earn six-figure incomes from their art. On the next tier are several thousand artists with some gallery representation who supplement their income waiting on tables, teaching, or writing, or who receive support from their domestic partners or from their local welfare authority." There are thought to be 15,000 artists walking the streets of New York or London at any one time, calling on dealers and seeking representation. "It's a wonder MFA recruiters haven't been prosecuted for fraud. But that's probably true for a range of graduate programs, from social work to journalism. He bravely lists the 20 top contemporary artists -- no woman is on the list -- and the most popular would rank between 25 and 50, he says. He also lists the top galleries and notes that the two top auction houses would rank high just on their private dealing. Want to find the next great market? Try Havana where an excellent grad school is turning out great artists. Thompson also looks at evolving markets in the Middle East and China, new museums, huge acquisition budgets, the evolving roles of galleries, auction houses, fairs and internet sales (pretty disappointing so far after two decades of efforts). Great on the uber galleries -- loved the comment from Charles Saatchi, not exactly a babe in the wood when it comes to the business of art. "I adore Larry Gagosian, but I always hear the theme music from 'Jaws' playing in my head as he approaches." This is mostly the top end of the art market, but also a look at what is happened to the mid-level galleries. The sums of money involved are amazing.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Half a good book; worth the read  
By Michael Bertolacci  
This book is worth reading for the first half alone. Actually, it's only worth reading the first half, period. After getting off to a stellar start with a strong sense of narrative, things get boring. But I would not have that assessment detract from the quality of the first half of the book which was as interesting as the cover suggests.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Interesting perspective on contemporary art  
By Peter While  
Some themes were the same as 12 million dollar stuffed shark, additional detail and new explorations make for an insightful and worthwhile read. Good blend of economics and social study. A unique exploration of the "Market as Medium"

Acquiring contemporary art is about passion and lust, but it is also about branding, about the back story that comes with the art, about the relationship of money and status, and, sometimes, about celebrity. The Supermodel and the Brillo Box follows Don Thompson's 2008 bestseller *The \$12 Million Stuffed Shark* and offers a further journey of discovery into what the Crash of 2008 did to the art market and the changing methods that the major auction houses and dealerships have implemented since then. It describes what happened to that market after the economic implosion following the collapse of Lehman Brothers and offers insights and art-world tales from dealers, auction houses, and former executives of each, from New York and London to Abu Dhabi and Beijing. It begins with the story of a wax, trophy-style, nude upper-body sculpture of supermodel Stephanie Seymour by Italian artist Maurizio Cattelan, which sold for \$2.4 million to New York collector and private dealer Jose Mugrabi, and recounts the story of a wooden Brillo box that sold for \$722,500. *The Supermodel and the Brillo Box* looks at the increasing dominance of Christie's, Sotheby's, and a few uber dealers; the hundreds of millions of new museums coming up in cities like Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Beijing; the growing importance of the digital art world; and the shrinking role of the mainstream gallery.

"Bringing an economist's curiosity to the inner workings of the contemporary art market, Don Thompson manages once again to explain, in laymen's terms, how a lot of it works." Sarah Douglas, Culture Editor, *The New York Observer*

"Don delivers entertaining and thoughtful insights into the inner workings of the art business, and does so in style! Check for Don's pointers on how to play the quiz of the contemporary art market. Very rewarding reading." Sergey Skaterschikov, Founder, Skate's Art Market Research

"A highly readable account of the booming market for contemporary art, post 2008. Art economist Don Thompson lays bare the world of high-octane auctions, canny collectors, culture-hungry new economies and opaque million-dollar art deals." Georgina Adam, art market columnist, *The Financial Times*, London

"I started reading *The Supermodel and the Brillo Box* and could not put it down until I finished it! Interesting to read about a world one knows well looked at through a different perspective. For anyone who wants to learn about the art market is a must read." Pilar Ordovas, Ordovas gallery, London, and former deputy chairman for Postwar and Contemporary art, Christie's Europe

About the Author  
Don Thompson is an economist and Emeritus Nabisco Brands Professor of Marketing and Strategy at the Schulich School of Business at York University in Toronto. He has taught at Harvard Business School and the London School of Economics, and is the author of 11 books. He writes on the economics of the art market for publications as diverse as *The Times* (London), *Harper's Magazine*, and *The Art Economist*. He lives in Toronto, Canada.