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Anderson, Jonathan A. "Ten Contemporary Artworks from the 2010s."
Curator Magazine. January 3, 2020.



Kris Martin, "For Whom ...", 2012, © Sean Kelly Gallery

This list makes no attempt to identify the ten most influential or historically important works of contemporary art over the past decade. This list is much more personal and haphazard than that. Rather, these are ten works from the past ten years that have, for one reason or another, gotten under my armor and stuck with me. They have repeatedly come to mind and slipped into my conversations, and in several cases have elicited fairly extensive thinking and writing.

Kris Martin, *For Whom* (2012).

This 3-ton bronze church bell was originally cast in the year 2000 for a church in Germany, commemorating the beginning of the new millennium. Due to an engineering failure, it was never installed in the church's bell tower. Martin bought this mute, homeless bell and mounted it to a steel mechanism on which it swings silently, without a clapper, at the top of every hour. *For Whom* takes its title from John Donne's famous "Meditation 17" (1623), a profound statement of faith and human solidarity in the face of death. It is thus, on one hand, a haunting emblem of human mortality. On the other hand, it is also a powerful image and

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artifact of post-Christian Europe: this traditional ecclesial form (by which Christians have marked the meaning of human living and dying) is displaced from the body of the church and functions without any audible public voice or resonance, but it remains intact nevertheless. It is precisely this compromised but enduring meaning that Martin is particularly interested in: “We all share the same thing. We all have questions about religion, about death, about the end, about life after death. I mean we all face the same problem: that it’s just a big question mark... But you cannot step out of religion, because you are a religious being anyway.” Some form of the question is, as he says, unavoidable: “you cannot avoid the biggest question in life—the meaning of it.”

<https://walkerart.org/collections/artworks/for-whom-dot-dot-dot>