

# Roberta & Jerry



A FILM BY ALISON CHERNICK

*"I'm going to talk about art as if you know nothing. I know nothing—that's a thrilling place to be, because really, in front of every single work of art you've ever seen, you have never seen it before. And that to me is an amazing thing that we discount all the time."*

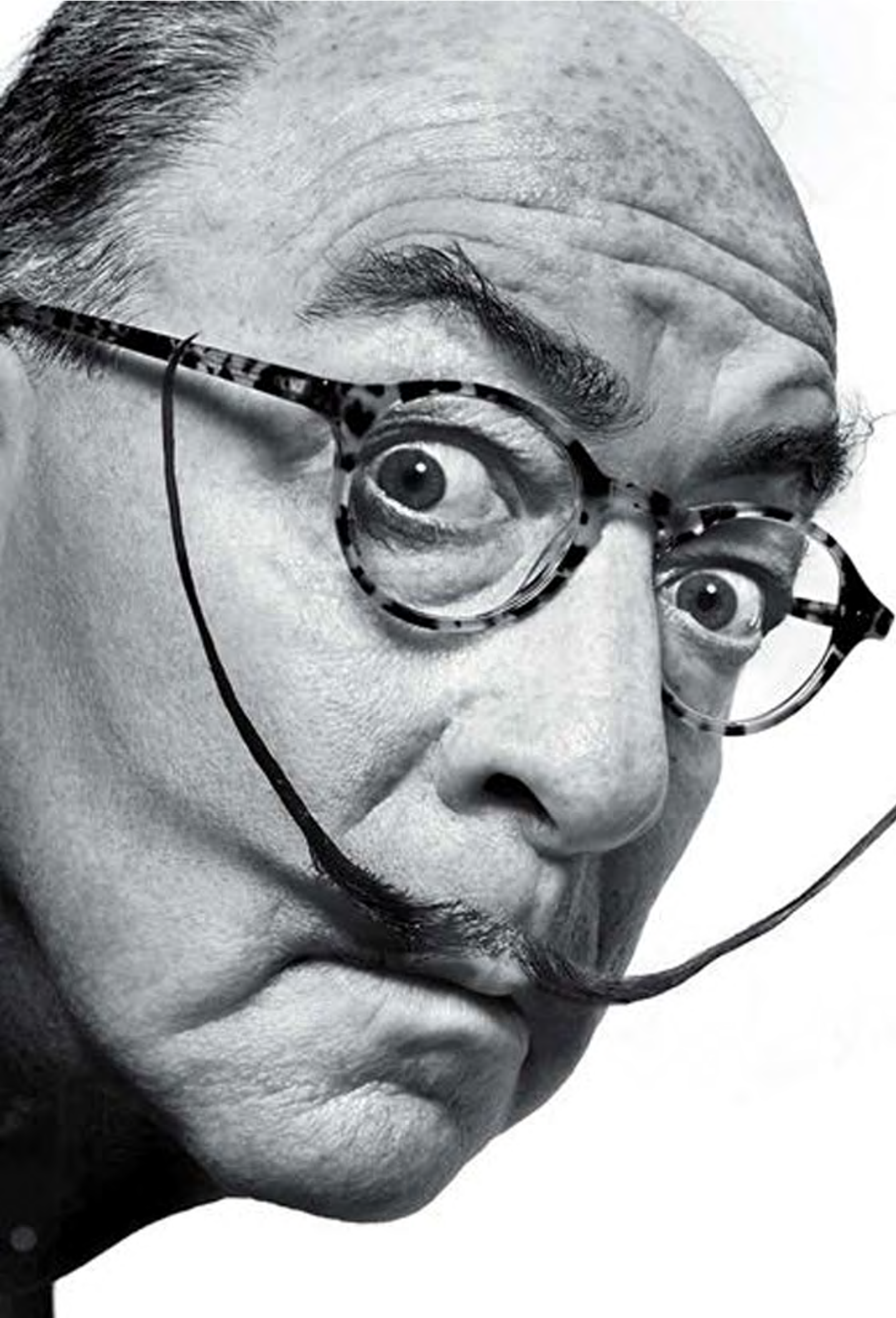
- Jerry Saltz





Married for over thirty years, Jerry Saltz and Roberta Smith are a kind of yin-yang powerhouse couple at the forefront of the New York art scene. They have written about art for the past three decades. Their processes and minds are wholly distinct but together they've shaped discourse on art in America. Once a long distance truck driver, Jerry writes for New York Magazine and Roberta is Chief Art Critic of the New York Times, the first female to hold this position. These two fierce individuals constantly lecture, write, and engage with the worlds of art and politics. They are the epitome of cultural dialogue in action.





The gravitas of Saltz is derived from the extent to which he is a character. He participates in the process of building himself into this character. He is everywhere at once. Coming from humble origins, he is hardly the 'white upper class New York art critic' that the world is familiar with. Saltz is raw, confrontational, and humorous. He is interested in the underbelly of human experience and in shining a light on these uncomfortable places.

This documentary will follow Saltz and Smith over the course of a year, diving into their daily routines and prolific capacity for creation, critique, and ingenuity. The film will capture the magical eccentricity of Saltz' mind while Smith geniously counterbalances. It will focus on Saltz and his comrade-in-arms, highly esteemed peer and partner. Smith has an equally distinctive voice as a critic. Described as 'straight-eyed,' her style bounces off against Saltz's whirlwind approach. To say that Smith and Saltz are powerhouses is to sell them short: they are giants in discourse.



To confine their story or characters to a box or superimpose a specific narrative would go against the grain of what is most interesting about them. As such, the film will tell their story through a cinema verité style, an accumulation of intimate moments from the grist of their lives. Framed as a love story that is laced with a radical intimacy, the couple will open up a humorous, incisive dialogue expanding beyond the art world into contemporary culture, politics, and history. It will be an opportunity for us to reflect on this incendiary moment in history, as we live it, through the critic's eyes. It's a meditation on the role of the critic, and the ability to weigh shades of gray against hard black and white binaries. What is the role of the critic? The film will explore the impact this has on art and artists. It will compare and contrast the superficial — for example, we will walk and talk with Saltz as he takes his daily trip to Dunkin Donuts for a caffeine fix. These quirks will be woven seamlessly with commentary on art and politics while always staying relevant. The structure will follow this general movement: a year in the life of a New York City high brow / low brow art critic couple.

\*There will be cameos by Lena Dunham (their goddaughter) and Larry Gagosian, amongst others.



IMPORTANT  
*ART CRITIC*

*DEFENDER of TASTE and CULTURE....*

JERRY SALTZ



**SUCKADELIC**

**SUCKADELIC**

Jerry Saltz Action Figure  
New York Magazine





## DIRECTOR'S **BIO**

**Alison Chernick** is a Grammy-nominated New York-based writer/director and filmmaker.

Chernick's first documentary was on contemporary artist Jeff Koons, titled *The Jeff Koons Show* (2005). Her second feature-length documentary on artist Matthew Barney, titled *Matthew Barney: No Restraint* premiered at the Berlin Film Festival in 2006 and was acquired for theatrical distribution by IFC and The Weinstein Company. Shortly after, she founded the production company Voyeur Films. She directed a film on Roy Lichtenstein to accompany the Tate Modern exhibition *Lichtenstein: A Retrospective* in 2013 titled *Diagram of an Artist*. Her short film on designer/artist Martin Margiela titled *The Artist is Absent* premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival in 2015. Her latest feature documentary, on violinist Itzhak Perlman, titled *Itzhak* was nominated for numerous awards including the 2019 Grammy Award for Best Music Film. It was the opening night film at the Hamptons International Film Festival in 2017 and received a worldwide theatrical release in 2018 followed by a PBS *American Masters* broadcast release. A new short film commissioned by The National Gallery of Australia titled *Jackson Pollock: Blue Poles* will be released on PBS and premiered at the MoMA.

Chernick is the recipient of a National Endowment for The Humanities award, a New York Women in Film and Television award, a Loreen Arbus grant and a Woman of Her Word grant. She was invited to judge for the National Endowment for The Humanities in 2018.

Chernick's documentaries have been screened at various museums around the world, including the five Guggenheims, the Smithsonian, SFMOMA, and the Walker. She has written for the Sundance Channel, Showtime, SyFy, MTV, VH1, The History Channel, and National Geographic. Her commissioned short films often center around themes of art, fashion, music, gastronomy, and health. In 2010, Chernick was signed for global commercial representation.

[VoyeurFilms.net](http://VoyeurFilms.net)