

## The Past, Present and Futures of Art Criticism

January 14

### The central topic

A brief introduction, and a few words on today's topic: what is art criticism?

What do we see when we look at works of art? How do we interpret, judge, and contextualize them?

A Hyperallergic cartoon: what should art criticism do? And a suggestion from Peter Plagens.

The results of a 2002 Columbia School of Journalism survey.

My interest in the topic, activity as a critic, and work as a teacher.

### Early experiments in art criticism, and the birth of a new genre

Plato and Aristotle; Giorgio Vasari; Roger de Piles and Jonathan Richardson the Elder.

The rise of the French Salon; La Font de Saint-Yenne, and the cancellation of the 1749 Salon.

Denis Diderot, and his reviews of the 1765 and 1767 Salons.

Diderot on paintings by Jean-Baptiste Grueze and Claude-Joseph Vernet.

The growth of daily newspapers, and the *feuilleton*.

### Art criticism and modernism

Charles Baudelaire, on passion, politics, and poetry; Félix Fénéon and Guillaume Apollinaire.

Harold Rosenberg and Clement Greenberg – and Jackson Pollock and Frank Stella.

Michael Fried, and “Art and Objecthood,” published in 1967.

*Artforum*, founded in 1962, and Rosalind Krauss.

### Artists enter the fray

Allan Kaprow, Donald Judd, and Robert Smithson. Andrea Fraser and Coco Fusco.

### Especially notable contemporary critics...

Roberta Smith and Jerry Saltz; Okwui Enwezor, Claire Bishop.

### And prominent local voices

Mary Carole McCauley and Cara Ober.

Rebekah Kirkman, Maura Callahan, Alex Oehmke, and Michel Farley.

### Some thoughts about criticism today...

Online criticism: advantages and drawbacks, or difficulties.

Allegations of a crisis in art criticism: James Elkins, and the curators of *Documenta XI* (2002).

*Time Out's* playful rating of critics; Hennessy Youngman's (Jasyon Musson's) *Art Thoughtz*.

Teju Cole, Jason Farago, Andrianna Campbell-Lafleur, and arts.black.

Jarrett Earnest's *What it Means to Write About Art* – and thus echoes of Leo Steinberg?

### ...and criticism in years to come

Increasing de-centeredness, with the profusion of self-publication models.

Consequently, a more diverse chorus of voices, and novel uses of language and image.

But also, paradoxically, a centralization of the discourse, in a few prominent venues?

An increased commitment to causes related to social justice, and institutional critique?

Closing thoughts: Tavares Strachan, at the BMA.