



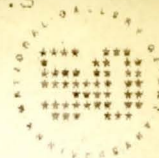
INSTITUTO DE INVESTIGACIONES
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National Gallery of Art

Oct 23 7.00
 Opening dinner
 Wednesday



CRITICS' CONFERENCE

OUTLINE OF TOPICS

(October 23-26, 1991)

INTRO

THE HISTORY OF ART CRITICISM

10/23/91

Keynote Speaker, A. Richard Turner
 Department of Fine Arts, N.Y.U.

I. THE CRITIC AND THE EDITOR: REPORTING AND CRITICISM

(Opening Panel, 10/24/91)

9:30 - 10:45 a.m.

moderator: Kay Larson, New York Magazine

panelists: Milton Esterow, Artnews
 Paul Richard, Washington Post

Critics are often asked by their editors to be reporter, critic, and educator simultaneously. At the same time, aesthetic interests must be balanced with the concerns of the public and the demands of the publisher. How does a critic respond to these diverse factors without compromising his/her own artistic concerns? What is a critic? What are the distinctions between criticism and journalism; academic vs. journalistic criticism?

ISSUES:

- 1.) How do newspapers, newsweeklies, and other publications cover the arts? What are these decisions based on? Should this be changed?
- 2.) Editors can create "sensational" headlines for a feature story to attract readers. What are the problems associated with "sensational" or "celebrity" reporting as they relate to the visual arts?
- 3.) How does a critic respond to the editor who makes coverage decisions based only upon "newsworthiness"?
- 4.) Editors usually have limited space for writing on the arts, and often wish to limit it to 'coverage'. How can the critic write journalistically and also raise significant critical questions?

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THE CRITIC AND THE EDITOR: REPORTING AND CRITICISM (cont'd).

5.) How does a critic approach a situation where s/he is asked to write potentially conflicting pieces, i.e. a preview piece and then a review?

II. THE CRITIC, THE ARTIST, AND ETHICS

(Panel, 10/24/91)
10:45 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.

moderator: Bill Wilson, Los Angeles Times

ISSUES:

What is the critic's responsibility to his times; to artists? Many artists have their own vision of art history - should critics be influenced by an artist's vision? How close should critics be to artists?

- 1.) How do staff critics justify cultivation of sources - among individual artists and in museums?
- 2.) How does critic retain objectivity when a curator or artist is also a friend?
- 3.) Is it right for critics to collect or accept gifts of art? What are the historical precedents?
- 4.) To what moral arbiter does a critic speak, if any?
- 5.) How does a critic deal with a work of art/exhibition whose primary purpose is political rather than aesthetic?

III. GLOBALISM (open panel)

(Panel 10/24/91)
2:00 - 4:00 p.m.

moderator: Michael Brenson
panelists: Sylvia Williams, Museum of African Art
Rick Hill, Institute of American Indian Art

Art education in the United States has traditionally been focused on the European tradition. How does the critic address the art of other cultures?

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GLOBALISM (con't)

ISSUES:

- 1.) Multi-culturalism: How do critics cover non-European art?
- 2.) Is it possible for critics of one culture to understand art of another culture or subculture?
- 3.) Globalism: Advanced international communication and new economic relations are factors that are dissolving geographic barriers. What is the responsibility of U.S. museums and critics to engage in international exchange? To cover exhibitions outside the U.S.?

IV. THE CRITIC AND THE COMMUNITY

(Panel and break-out sessions, 10/25/91)
10:15 - 11:45 a.m.

moderator: Peter Flagon, Newsweek
panelists: Kenneth Baker, San Francisco Chronicle
Mike Nelson, assistant managing editor,
Kansas City Star

The critic always writes with an audience in mind. How does the critic define "audience" for herself/himself?

ISSUES:

- 1.) How should the critic write for an audience that does not share the critic's views, as when one writes about contemporary art for non-specialists?
- 2.) How does a critic deal with "community standards"?
- 3.) Does the critic have an obligation to take a stand on controversial issues such as NEA grantmaking, museum deaccessioning, or multiculturalism in the arts, and to keep his readers informed of such a stand?
- 4.) The critic writes for a community of which s/he is also a part. How does the critic broaden his/her base and still speak to her/his community?
- 5.) What is the responsibility of the critic in developing a viable arts audience? Should s/he write for the real audience or the ideal one?

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THE CRITIC AND THE COMMUNITY (Con't)

6.) How have "alternative" publications contributed to a broader critical viewpoint overall?

LUNCHEON (Porcelain Gallery) with Guest Speaker
12:15 - 2:15 p.m.

V. MUSEUMS AND EXHIBITIONS

(Panel, 10/25/91)
3:00 - 4:30 p.m.

moderator: Steven Madoff, Artnews
panelists: Jack Flam, Wall Street Journal
Robert Storr, Museum of Modern Art

What kind of relationship should exist between the critic and the museum - adversarial, complementary, or both?

ISSUES:

- 1.) Special exhibitions have become the mainstay of museum programs. Should the critic be concerned with the decisions governing such special exhibitions including content, installation, financial support, etc.? Why are some works included, excluded?
- 2.) What are the pros and cons of interchange between curators and critics? Should a critic seek outside sources for in-depth knowledge?
- 3.) How does the critic deal with exhibitions presented by specialists whose expertise is greater than the critic's?
- 4.) What can the writer say about the organic, breathing whole that is a good exhibition? What can she/he say, that the curator did not know already?
- 5.) Should the critic be concerned with encouraging corporate funding? Should the critic take special care to mention corporate funders when they have sponsored an exhibit?
- 6.) A museum's permanent collection often resides in a journalistic limbo. Does it violate the news orientation to give more attention to permanent collections? Even if it does, does the critic nevertheless have a responsibility to highlight the permanent collection, given the difficulty of attracting new donations in the current economic climate?

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BREAKFAST ROUNDTABLES

- I. Conservation and the Traveling Exhibition
(10/25/91)
- II. Professional Development: Ideas for Improving
the Conditions and Options for Criticism around the Country.
(10/26/91)