

*Editorial Influence*

Everyone is a critic, but no matter the source, I want art criticism to excite, inspire, and inform me. Quality criticism provides me with a succinct and entertaining overview of the work, and a (hopefully) engaging discussion of its background, themes, and visual elements. Based on that information, the level of the writing, and my trust in the critic's opinion and analysis, I determine if I want to see the work in person. If yes, I form an expectation of what my viewing experience will be.

The writers behind the words, and their writing style and experience, must also intrigue me. They must be quick-witted, articulate, passionate, knowledgeable, and irreverent. Astute, objective observers of life, they sometimes come to the art world from surprising fields. (Jerry Saltz, the renowned senior art critic and columnist for *New York* magazine, was a long-distance truck driver). In their stylish and substantive prose, often injected with historical and pop culture references, they employ a vast vocabulary that both enlightens and engages me.

Most important, art writers must have, and are firmly committed to, a clear, strong point of view—good or bad—on any aspect of the work. (Sometimes the review of the work is more provocative than the work itself.) This trait bonds me editorially to the writers. Without it, I cannot become fully immersed in their reviews and count on them to be my gateway to the work.

For me, reading art reviews, as much as the works they cover, should be a thought-provoking and heart-hitting experience.