

New York Times Eliminates Art Coverage of Tri-State Area

Ben Davis, September 1, 2016



Jonah Bokaer, *NEITHER* (2016). Video Still of performance and choreography for camera. Courtesy of the Parrish Art Museum.

When the *New York Times* arrives on subscribers' doorsteps this weekend in New Jersey, Westchester, Long Island, and Connecticut, it will be a different paper. It has officially terminated arts coverage of the tri-state area, along with coverage of food and theater.

The news comes via an [article in Deadline](#), which quotes an email to staffers from metro editor Wendell Jamieson on the decision:

[Times editor-in-chief] Dean Baquet and I have decided that the resources and energy currently devoted to these local pages could be better directed elsewhere. Therefore, we will publish our final reviews and features in the New Jersey, Westchester, Long Island and Connecticut editions on August 28. The Metropolitan

section as it appears in New York City will still be published and circulated throughout the region, but it will no longer include zoned content...Sorry about this, folks. I want to thank you for all you've done, all the fine writing you've given our readers. I wish you all the best.

Susan Hodara, a long-time art reporter who covered Westchester and Connecticut, said that the termination was a loss for the region. "I understand that the *Times* is a business and it has to look out for itself, but a lot of the institutions here are struggling to get the word out," she said via phone today. "For artists and museums, it is really important that people know what they are doing. How do you make that happen?"

Hodara's most recent piece appeared on August 26. She said it was one of three stories she had in the pipeline for the *Times* when word came of the changes. "It seemed pretty fast for some of us," she added, though she also noted that coverage of the region had been squeezed for some time.

According to Deadline, the *Times* has framed the decision as "structural and philosophical, not economic." In order to survive in the news business, large publications have increasingly looked to a global audience. In April, the *NYT* announced a \$50 million investment in a major international digital expansion, as it made a play to become the self-described "indispensable leader in global news and opinion."

The flip side of that international focus is that stories that appeal mainly to a local audience are harder to justify—and art institutions, restaurants, and theater are almost by definition local news.

This leaves tri-state arts leaders distraught. Reached by artnet News, Katonah Museum of Art head Darsie Alexander offered this comment:

I think the elimination reflects a general mainstreaming of art coverage that suppresses the work of non-urban, often quite alternative venues. Regional coverage tells people about their immediate communities and invests them in the cultural landscape of the local, which often features leading, ambitious programs. We always see an uptick in attendance after

a Times review, which for better or worse carries a lot of weight with our audiences. This is a long way of saying this is really disappointing for the many organizations like the KMA trying to have an impact. Online platforms will increasingly be filling these holes in coverage.

Lynn Honeysett, executive director of the [Pelham Art Center](#), said that the “sudden death” of the *Times*’s coverage was short-sighted, given the marked expansion of arts in the region:

While I can sympathize with the New York Times grander aspirations, it hardly seems reasonable to forsake the needs of local readership in order to stretch to that goal. What happened to the business maxim ‘secure your base, then expand’? The Times is doing a great disservice not only to the arts, but to the very core of its readership. I wouldn’t be surprised if local readership falls dramatically.

In recent years, several notable figures have passed through the title of Regional Critic for the *Times*, including Benjamin Genocchio (formerly the editor of this publication, and now the head of the Armory Show), and Martha Schwendener, who is now a must-read voice on the *Times*’s New York City review team.

Follow [artnet News](#) on Facebook.