

## Visual Arts Journalism: Newsroom Pressure and Generational Change

A survey of more than 300 journalists finds visual arts writers and critics addressing issues of race, gender, identity—and relevance



In a survey of art critics and writers about the priorities and pressures of their work, the art collective Postcommodity was mentioned by survey respondents when asked to name artists they believed were worthy of championing. Shown here is a view of Postcommodity's "Repellent Fence," ("Valla Repelente"), which was installed across the U.S./Mexico border in 2015 near Douglas, Arizona © Postcommodity, photo credit: Michael Lundgren, courtesy: Postcommodity and Bockley Gallery

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At a time when we are increasingly understanding the world through art and images, the journalists who make sense of visual culture are facing a critical moment of generational change and insecurity.

In that very top group of six, Saltz, known for ardent and engaging writing, as well as social media showmanship, was ranked immediately behind Smith. The Pulitzer board praised him for “a canny and often daring perspective on visual art in America, encompassing the personal, the political, the pure and the profane.” Others in this august group are [Holland Cotter](#), the other co-chief art critic at The New York Times; [Peter Schjeldahl](#), art critic at The New Yorker; [Ben Davis](#), national art critic for artnet News; and [Christopher Knight](#), art critic for the Los Angeles Times.

Except for Davis—an outlier in this pantheon, and more on him in a moment—all of these critics have been writing about art for more than 30 years and work for legacy publications, many with long traditions of publishing art criticism regularly. Schjeldahl is the most veteran among them. He’s been writing for more than 50 years. This indicates that influence may be accrued and tied to the reputation and reach of a critic’s publication. Except for Knight, notable as the only West Coast critic and perhaps the only one writing for and about a local region, they are all also based in New York, a critical proving ground for the art world.

Davis is the only critic in this top tier working for a web-only publication, and he’s been writing for fewer years, about 15. Among his peers, he’s known for trying to make sense of the more image-driven arts writing of the internet era, what he calls “post-descriptive” criticism, and his much-discussed collection of essays “[9.5 Theses on Art and Class](#),” published by Haymarket Books in 2013, was nominated for Best Work of Criticism by the International Association of Art Critics. Davis, who got his start at a community newspaper, the Queens Courier, and has written for a range of publications including The Brooklyn Rail, e-flux, The New York Times, and Slate, is currently working on a book about artistic appropriation.

Read the whole article, here:

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