

# CONCLUSION

## How to read about contemporary art

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In some ways the final section on comparative writing formats—and perhaps the book as whole—could just as plausibly be titled *How to Read About Contemporary Art*: *what* do these different authors say, and *how*? For the fledgling art-writer, alongside looking at acres of contemporary art, nothing beats reading all you can, and analyzing closely how your favorite writers—of whatever stripe—get their ideas across. **Is it the writer's brilliant intuition about art, or their heart-stopping vocabulary, or the erudition behind their words?** Remember to read not just for content (*what* are they saying?) but for style (*how* are they saying it?). Do not plagiarize, but feel free to steal other writers' winning techniques and inspiring vocabulary. **You want your writing to speak meaningfully to others interested in art.** If your text confuses rather than illuminates, scrap it and start again. If your writing regularly appeals to art-haters, that is nothing to brag about. *Trust your experience of the work, and the thoughts it provoked in you.* Reinforce your thinking by acquiring real knowledge about art—always the shortest route to alleviating art-writing fears.

If a catalogue essay alienates you from an exhibition you'd enjoyed before reading it, or a museum wall-text transforms the interesting artwork on view into something odious, such writing must be deemed unsuccessful. **The art-writer's job must be to enhance, not obfuscate or destroy, the pleasure of art.** Good art writers never sound as if they are struggling to cook up something to say, or miming words spoken before (by someone else), or clinging to jargon to weigh their words with gravitas. Intimidating the reader is never their goal. **Good art-writing knows that art is meaningful; therefore meaning does not have to be forced upon it,** only discovered, enjoyed, and put into plain words.