

Excerpts from a Lecture Given by Janet Koplos

...It seems pretty clear that even this narrow subject I've chosen, critical language of contemporary craft, is a moving target. I think that's a healthy thing. Someone recently asked me if I thought the golden age of craft was over. I said, only if you define craft by what it was in the '60s or the '90s or any other specific period. It's changing, just like any living thing. I could make the case that it is actually altering the conventions of *art* nowadays, but that's another lecture.

Now that I've been descriptive of the way things were and are in certain writing periods, I'll allow myself to be somewhat prescriptive. At least, I'll tell you that the criticism I'm interested in is "experiential." I'm not claiming that it's the only worthwhile thing, but today when academic and *Artforum* styles are so influential, when context and contemporary references are so important, I want to make another pitch for direct experience and straightforward discussion. The artwork is what it's all about, why we're here, so the best we can do is look at it, think about it, analyze it in words we know. It seems to me that the plea for a new language is actually a declaration of a need for clear thinking and *appropriate* language. That's something anyone can do through individual effort. The crafts would benefit from better writing. So would art.

...I remember Florence Duhl saying that some art-world person had told her that crafts could not be art because they were not capable of metaphor. That is an assertion that craft is always literal; it is what it is and it does not imply meanings, only uses. Like a vase is just something you put flowers in and does not allude to, say, the body. That's ridiculous, of course, and not just now but throughout recorded history!...

-Janet Koplos
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