



**PIRATES  
AND  
FARMERS  
  
DAVE  
HICKEY**

Ridinghouse

## Pirates and Farmers

### Essays on Taste

Dave Hickey

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- Essays by one of the most astute art critics of the past 50 years, on subjects such as the art biennale, academia, formalism, artistic quality and the power of influence
- Dave Hickey rails against the absurdities of the art world in a book that is just as relevant today as it was on publication 10 years ago
- A writer with a cult following, Hickey died in 2021

*"As an art critic, [Hickey] doesn't do what most people want from art criticism. He doesn't provide his readers with a neat intellectual framework through which to view everything they see, like a Clement Greenberg or a Michael Fried, and he doesn't really do beautiful description either ... Instead, Hickey gives you intricately structured argument and gorgeous prose ... Reading him you want to forget that the art market is a game of Hungry Hungry Hippos between Ukrainian oligarchs and Qatari princesses ... You want to be the thing you advocate; you want to ride the wave, mount the dais, and speak the truth."* – **Los Angeles Review of Books**

Arguably one of the most astute critics working today, Dave Hickey's multi-decade career as a leading cultural commentator is characterised by his blend of high and mass culture and his fervent critique of the celebrity-driven culture of the 21st-century art world. Following his 2012 announcement of self-imposed exile from art criticism, this new body of essays once again questions and challenges the cultural status quo. With his trademark humour, Hickey has declared that: 'I miss being an elitist and not having to talk to idiots' in a field that, he believes, is defined by the commoditisation of art and the self-referential tendencies of criticism itself. This new body of shorter essays by the author of *Air Guitar: Essays on Art & Democracy* and *The Invisible Dragon: Four Essays on Beauty* looks at more contemporary phenomena: super-collectors, the trope of the biennale and the loss of looking.

**Dave Hickey** (1938–2021) was arguably one of the most astute art critics of recent times. His multi-decade career as a leading cultural commentator earned him the nickname 'the *enfant terrible* of art criticism'. He wrote for major publications in the United States, from *Rolling Stone* to *Art in America* and the *New York Times*, as well as for *frieze*, *Parkett* and the *London Review of Books* in Europe. His book *Air Guitar: Essays on Art and Democracy* was a memoir of 'love songs for people who live in a democracy'. Hickey was awarded a MacArthur 'genius grant' in 2001.