



## Pirates and Farmers: Essays on Taste

*Dave Hickey*

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## **Pirates and Farmers: Essays on Taste** Dave Hickey

Arguably one of the most astute art and cultural critics working today, Hickey's collection of essays questions and challenges the cultural status quo.

He recently announced his retirement from the field of criticism due to the new extreme popularity and oversimplification and commoditisation of art, he said 'I miss being an elitist and not having to talk to idiots.'

Author of popular books such as *Air Guitar: Essays on Art & Democracy* and *The Invisible Dragon: Four Essays on Beauty*, Hickey's newest body of essays looks at the super collectors, the trope of the biennale, the loss of looking and much, much more!

## **Pirates and Farmers: Essays on Taste Details**

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Author : Dave Hickey

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# From Reader Review *Pirates and Farmers: Essays on Taste* for online ebook

**Malini Sridharan says**

I love "Pirates and Farmers" and the essays on cool and unconscious self. This would have been four stars if I had not been forced (after many other annoying but somewhat forgivable signs of 70's dudeness) into accepting that he was a lame-o oldster by the following:

"{Hugh Hefner] not only transformed awkward adolescents into aspiring playboys (civilizing them just a little), he transformed the cheerleader next door into a potential playmate, a pneumatic Aphrodite with her own desires and cosmo

...more

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Nov 25, 2013 Ryan rated it really liked it

Another provocative essay collection from the Sam The Eagle of the art world which includes a send up of UFC, a takedown of Hunter S. Thompson and general admonishment of fellow critics (including Robert Hughes for refusing Hickey's offer to blow a few rails with him). In short; classic Dave Hickey.

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Nov 20, 2013 Bryan Rountree rated it it was amazing

Shelves: favorites

While I am still waiting for *Connoisseur of Waves*, Hickey's official followup to *Air Guitar*, I am happy to make-do with *Pirates and Farmers*.

While not smacking me in the face with the seminal "importance" of *Invisible Dragon* or the aforementioned MacArthur-genius-grant-deserving fun of *Air Guitar*, this tight collection of essays still falls in the "win" camp for me.

The entire eponymous premise that we are all either pirates or farmers is totally bunk, by the way, but I am happy to roll with it. F

...more

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Mar 11, 2014 Mark rated it really liked it

Read Dave Hickey - the dude is smart, funny, blunt and filled with love for art and artists and the truth.

These essays are jammed with quotable lines you'll wish you had jotted down or highlighted. Hickey rangles everything into his art essays - history, music, tv, rock and roll, sex, personal narrative - it's a crazy, intoxicating mixture that I just cannot get enough of. There are only a few books of his stuff out there. If you love art - and great writing about art - you need to absorb this ...more

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Feb 15, 2014 Eric rated it really liked it

Our favorite self-proclaimed "formalist" art critic is not going gently into that good aesthetic night. Where most of his ilk bury the reader in theory and jargon, Hickey is first and foremost a storyteller who happens to use art as his main character. Pointed, cranky, fun, insightful, and smart. Here's to Captain Dave and all the pirates.

flag Like · see review

Jan 17, 2014 Kathleen rated it it was amazing

"Some works of art ARE demonstrably better than others, and, ultimately, it matters, because good art resists obsolescence and evaporation. If you look and see nothing, there's nothing there. It's elevator music, hospital furniture, AM radio."

flag Like · see review

May 19, 2014 Zach rated it liked it

I prefer Hickey's cultural criticism to his essays on the art world.

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Feb 03, 2014 David rated it really liked it

His critique of academia and discussion of formalism are bang on. More references to Waylon than all the books I have read combined.

flag Like · see review

Kristian rated it liked it

Aug 08, 2016

Alana Celii rated it liked it

Dec 16, 2015

Paige rated it really liked it

Sep 09, 2014

Chris Oliveria rated it liked it

Feb 23, 2016

Eric rated it really liked it

Oct 10, 2014

Sophia rated it it was amazing

Sep 02, 2014

Sacha Feinman rated it it was amazing

Nov 11, 2014

Ruby Tweak rated it it was amazing

Dec 31, 2018

C rated it liked it

Aug 13, 2015

Caren rated it really liked it

Nov 26, 2017

Don Gochenour rated it it was amazing

Jul 07, 2014

John rated it really liked it

Mar 26, 2016

Morgan Elder rated it it was amazing

Feb 08, 2017

JP Perelman rated it liked it

Jan 19, 2014

Parlez Vous rated it really liked it

Jan 03, 2018

Brian rated it really liked it

Jun 17, 2015

Elisabeth Munsterhjelm rated it really liked it

Aug 08, 2016

Michelle rated it liked it

Dec 26, 2015

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## Sketchbook says

Provocateur Dave Hickey, art critic and sometime noisemaker about pop culture, gasbags til hoarse. Out of 23 short essays, recycled from other venues, about 4 are worth your attention, though diehard fans will applaud anything he burps.

He initially startles with wonderful pronouncements like why don't people say what they *really* think about this or that artist; why give graduate degrees in art; and why should artists be funded? Then, he never develops his own conversation. It's strictly hit and run, without focus -- and without an editor.

He postures far too much with I-Dids: "I did a lot of drugs...I hitched rides on private planes...I shot up speedballs...I rode shotgun...I paid top dollar for an ounce of Vitamin B6...I tried to fuck a nubile starlet...I stayed up all night to write...I discovered the advantage of gambling over cocaine..." Ah, dude, you dunit all, we know. And now, yes, and now, your last cigarette is down to a wee butt.

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## Troy says

Ok. I need to tell you that I studied with Dave, and he changed my life. He introduced me to some of my favorites, such as, *The Field of Cultural Production*, *Blood Meridian*, Gilles Deleuze, Jane Jacobs, *Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, *Taste and the Antique*, countless art, and endless books.

And as much as I love this book and Dave's ideas, I have some complaints:

First, this is a collection enthrall to the ideal of the superior man. Enthrall to the idea that some greater beings are born and not made. Now, of course, Dave is more lubricious than that. He claims that good artists spring, Athena-like, from the decision to stop making bad art. That's how good artists are made. (Think of Baldessari's piece "I Will Not Make Any More Boring Art.")

Second, there's just too many titties. I never got into the whole 60s and 70s dick-swinging "I'm a man and I like to fuck" writing. All the man-children of Henry Miller (and earlier Celine), Bellow/Mailer/Roth/Updike,

all turned me off with their blathering boisterousness about their sexual proclivities. I don't care about Vast Numbers of Women Slept With. You can turn me on, that's cool, but don't just check list a series of conquests like a military history book for wargamers. And although Dave viciously slams Hunter S. Thompson for being an elitist piece of shit, I also hate H.S.T.'s proud affirmations of his masculine ability to imbibe more drugs than me or you, and Dave does that too. Speaking of, there's too much "I did it like this. I did it like that. I did it with the wiffle ball bat." Too much, "I did hundreds of lines with Willie Nelson off of Nico's ass while Swedish twins gave the three of us head." If you name check, I want more than a reference point, Bolaño-like, of someone to Google at some later point (which I guess I'm doing myself right-fucking-now). I want Catullus' bitchy smack downs, putting hip hop lyricists to shame.

Enough of the complaints. As far as the arguments go, this carries forth some similar notions as what's in *Air Guitar*. Basically, Dave seems to suggest that communities form around and through art, and that art is not equivalent to money, nor is art reducible to some Althusserian idea that art represents the ruling class and helps build the repressive structure that keeps us down, maaan. He also argues that art is horrid when lost in the clutches of the market, frivolously gambling on pictures *as if they were money*, instead of as a replacement for money, which robs art of the obsession and love that gives art its power to fuck with society and cross blood/sex/money.

That, to Dave, is most of the point. Art, when it's good, creates new worlds and new regimes. It creates cults of desire that flow around the beloved art like strange attractors. Of course, it's way more than that, and Dave lets his arguments bubble out of smart, sharp and funny essays (with too many titties, as I said). So the argument is not concerted but subdued, which is the type of art Dave likes.

I also need to add that there's a beautiful aside about the non-primacy of consciousness (which I totally agree with) and how art, when it's good, breaks the primacy of consciousness by utilizing the (rare) ability to see how others perceive you, which often is a way to snap the structures (or stratification, if you will) of the realms and regimes that surround you. Last, there's some great stuff about music, which is probably my favorite since I often have little idea what Dave's talking about, but love it anyway.

Anyway, a 5-star book, except for the Great Man slattering away at endless titties.

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## **Jeff Jackson says**

These essays about taste are a worthy follow-up to the excellent "Air Guitar." Hickey writes with a swaggering bravado, coupled with precise observations and extremely erudite and nuanced arguments. It's a bracing combo you rarely encounter. He takes pleasure eviscerating various art world structures including biennials, grants, MFA programs, and art magazines - offering insider straight talk you won't read elsewhere. But the real action is how he teases out the differences between taste and desire, looking at Renaissance nudes and Playboy playmates, the "cool" California artists of the '60s, the formalism of Chinese opera, Jack Kerouac's prose, painted movie posters from Ghana, Beethoven's 9th symphony played for Nashville session pros, and more. He effectively critiques the ingrained and often unexamined Puritanism and prudery that lurks throughout U.S. arts and culture. Some reviewers have found his personality to be a stumbling block, but the examples he cites from his own colorful life are strategically part of his larger (and subtle) arguments about how we choose to view the wider world around us.

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## **Tosh says**

For many art is a messy and dangerous landscape to travel on, but with Dave Hickey as your driver or guide, it can be a total joy. "Pirates and Farmers" is a collection of essays about aesthetics and how one perceives a work of art when it is in front of your eyes, ears, and brain. The beauty of Hickey's essays is that he places himself as the narrator (of course) so he's very much a character in his own stories. But every essay here is about confronting one's taste and how you develop that taste into a fine tool of expression or appreciation.

He writes about his home (or it was his home) Las Vegas in a very compelling light. There is nothing ironic about his taste for that town. He loves the bars, the gambling, the architecture, the weather, and everything else except for the traffic. He even likes the airport there. He doesn't even know why anyone needs to defend or condemn the place. Las Vegas is it, and that is pretty much how he looks at art as well.

What surprises me as a bookseller one time, that he never went to a bigger press for his collection of essays. Which is wonderful, because one small presses rule, and two, his books are nicely designed, including this one. So the book itself is an object of beauty or aesthetic to the very core of one's thoughts on that subject matter. Hickey is an interesting guy who writes about and thinks about 'taste.' He's probably one of the great (and popular) thinkers regarding the fine art planet. This book may not be the easiest to find, but worth the journey to find it. Distributed by Ram, if your favorite store doesn't have it, they can order it through that distributor. But do get it.

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