

# The New Criterion

## Art

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### **“The realest thing I had ever done”: Andrew Forge in New Haven**

by [Karen Wilkin](#)

On a retrospective of the artist's work at the Yale Center for British Art

At a recent dinner, the conversation— fueled, I admit, by liberal amounts of very good red wine—became a kind of Socratic dialogue about the practice of art criticism. Is it more difficult to write about art you admire or art you detest? (Those abused terms “good” and “bad” were employed.) Which is harder to deal with, figurative or abstract art? Art of the past or of the present? Does intention matter? No consensus was reached about the relative problems posed by historical versus contemporary art, since we veered off into an extended argument about the obligation to understand context and “decode,” as they say, narrative. There was, however, general agreement that it’s easier to find the rapier phrase to puncture inadequate or pretentious work than to come up with a verbal equivalent for the wordless experience of being deeply moved by something you believe to be first rate. There was agree ...

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