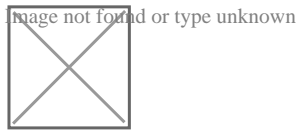


# The New Criterion

Letters To The Editor February 2013

## Hogwash, abstract & the rest: a reply

by James Panero



*Armory Show poster, 1913*

*James Panero replies:*

Dr. Rappaport, Ph.D., is entitled not to like “twentieth-century abstract art and the rest,” just as an admirer of Mozart may find distasteful the innovations of Beethoven. This is true even as some of us believe, as I do, that modern forms of aesthetic experience, rather than contributing to the “decline and fall of culture,” can in fact offer comfort, reflection, and beauty that mitigate against this decline.

Dr. Rappaport is not entitled to insinuate, however, that his particular taste should dictate ours, or, worse, that a reductive reading of history should dictate to us all. *The New Criterion* is a magazine about critical distinctions. This is why we can identify differences among “Mondrian, Kandinsky, Brancusi, and Duchamp . . . through Pollock, Moore, and Warhol” in a way that Dr. Rappaport seems unable to do. We will furthermore defend these critical distinctions from the mindsets that see artistic achievement only in black and white.

On the subject of the 1913 Armory Show: It says something about this particular achievement that the discussion of modern art it inspired continues today. We may come down on different sides of the conversation, but I hope we can agree with the Armory’s mission statement: “We do not believe that any artist has discovered or ever will discover the only way to create beauty.” For this reason we should consider art broadly and find the joys in its contemplation.

*To read the original letter, please click [here](#).*

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**James Panero** is the Executive Editor of *The New Criterion*.

This article originally appeared in The New Criterion, Volume 31 Number 6 , on page 81

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