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# Occupy Art

By

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In the art world, [the courtiers are revolting:](#)

Markopolos eyes a fortune from BNY whistleblowing

Dave Hickey, a curator, professor and author known for a passionate defence of beauty in his collection of essays *The Invisible Dragon* and his wide-ranging cultural criticism, is walking away from a world he says is calcified, self-reverential and a hostage to rich collectors who have no respect for what they are doing.

“They’re in the hedge fund business, so they drop their windfall profits into art. It’s just not serious,” he told the Observer. “Art editors and critics – people like me – have become a courtier class. All we do is wander around the palace and advise very rich people. It’s not worth my time.” ...

Hickey is adamant he wants out of the business. “What can I tell you? It’s nasty and it’s stupid. I’m an intellectual and I don’t care if I’m not invited to the party. I quit.”

Hickey is only the highest-profile member of a pretty large group: people who are sick of playing bit parts in a game which has become entirely about money and ego, with the beauty and power of art having become just another commodity to be bought and sold. Art critic [Jerry Saltz](#) is another:

I still can’t stand it. How a handful of very very rich people with penises likes buying the work of a handful of artists with penises for very very high prices in public, in front of other people with penises and some very tall thin blond people with great shoes and no penises. Really.

count on the fact that you will report record prices without being able to reveal the collusion behind how they were achieved”, and that “it implies that money is the most important thing about art.”

Charlie Finch, too, smells the irrelevance of a world which has become irredeemably decadent in all the worst meanings of the word — to the point, this summer, at which he [convinced himself](#) that even the plutocrats would notice, and that the art market would be crashing hard, right about now. Obviously, that didn't happen: it's almost impossible to underestimate the obliviousness of the art-collecting elite, who are of course constantly surrounded by precisely the kind of courtiers — consultants, gallerists, even artists — who constantly tell them how perspicacious and important they are. Look no further than former commodity broker Jeff Koons, whose *Tulips* just sold for \$33,682,500 at Christie's: the last time I saw him he was [in Davos](#), palling around with a Ukrainian oligarch, and generally solidifying his reputation among the people who really matter. Insofar, of course, that the people who really matter are the people you want to continue to funnel millions of dollars in your direction.

No, Charlie, the [art market oligopoly system](#) isn't going anywhere: if anything, it's more entrenched than ever. But the people without millions of dollars, the people who try to talk about art but find all conversations ultimately being about money — those people are, finally, getting fed up.