

Addressing the Monoliths: Art, Music, and the Training of Perception

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Abstract

Human understanding advances not only through accumulation of knowledge but through encounters with perceptual thresholds that exceed existing frameworks. This paper introduces the concept of the monolith as an informational discontinuity that forces reorganization of perception rather than simple learning. It argues that art and music function as necessary perceptual training systems, enabling interpretation of previously inaccessible structures of reality. Without these tools, encounters with perceptual excess remain opaque or destabilizing rather than transformative.

I. Perception as Compression

Perception operates as a lossy compression system. In order to function, it must discard information while preserving relational structure. Higher-dimensional or more complex realities therefore cannot be directly perceived without symbolic reduction. Understanding requires flattening—analogous to projecting three-dimensional forms into two dimensions—resulting in paradox and loss. These limitations are not failures but prerequisites for cognition.

II. Monoliths as Informational Discontinuities

A monolith is defined here as a structure or experience that exceeds the interpretive capacity of an observer's current perceptual framework. Such encounters cannot be resolved through explanation alone. Instead, they expose the insufficiency of existing models, demanding a reconfiguration of perception itself. The monolith does not provide answers; it reveals limits.

III. Art as Structured Ambiguity

Art functions as a training ground for perception by maintaining ambiguity without collapse. Through abstraction, symbolism, and form, art resists premature interpretation. This resistance conditions observers to tolerate uncertainty, recognize patterns without explicit definition, and remain open to multiple simultaneous meanings. Art therefore trains the perceptual flexibility required to approach monolithic structures.

IV. Music and Temporal Reconfiguration

Music operates primarily through time rather than object representation. Rhythm, harmony, and dissonance train perception to anticipate, adapt, and resolve patterns dynamically. Music teaches listeners how to inhabit change itself, cultivating sensitivity to temporal structure. This capacity is essential for interpreting processes and systems rather than static forms.

V. The Limits of Language

Language excels at categorization and explanation but collapses ambiguity rapidly. When applied prematurely to experiences beyond its scope, it produces false clarity. Linguistic explanation without perceptual readiness can obscure rather than illuminate. Art and music delay closure, allowing

perception to reorganize before interpretation solidifies.

VI. Transcendence as Skill Acquisition

Transcendence is not revelation but skill. It represents the acquisition of new perceptual capacities rather than access to hidden truths. Individuals differ in their ability to engage monolithic experiences because perceptual training differs. Historically, art and music precede philosophy and science precisely because they prepare perception for abstraction.

Conclusion

Art and music are not ornamental byproducts of culture but foundational technologies of perception. They enable humans to encounter, survive, and integrate informational excess. Monoliths will always exist wherever understanding advances; without perceptual training, they remain invisible or destabilizing. Transcendence, therefore, is not granted—it is learned.