pretense at definitiveness, though he comes somewhat near Beardsley's "On the Creation of Art," where Beardsley finds "that the true locus of creativity is not the genetic process prior to the work but the work itself as it lives in the experience of the beholder" (*JAAC*, Spring, 1965, p. 302). Both relate to Ingarden's "fundamental fact of the encounter or communion between the artist or the observer and a certain object . . . which leads in certain cases to the emergence of, on the one hand, the work of art of (*sic*) the aesthetic object, and on the other, to the birth of the creative artist or of the experiencing observer or critic" (see his "Phenomenological Aesthetics: An Attempt at Defining its Range," *JAAC*, Spring, 1975, p. 260).

Robert S. Breen, who originated Chamber Theatre, speaks of his relatively new and radically faithful mode of presenting narrative fiction—as compared with the usual theatrical modes—emphasizing its critical value for exploring the subtleties of writers' narrative methods. I can attest that it compares favorably with other modes—in aesthetic impact as well as faithfulness. I consider it the most innovative mode of oral interpretation developed in America in this century.

Arnold Berleant has kindly and helpfully pointed out a major unclarity in our field (see his "Verbal Presence: An Aesthetic of Literary Performance," *JAAC*, Spring, 1973, pp. 339–346). In his view, oral interpretation is not cognitive, but perceptual. Clearly its first meaning *is* performance of literature—the distinguishing feature of our discipline. It is, in Susanne Langer's terms, "non-discursive." However, since performance, silent or oral, is a necessary precursor to good criticism, perhaps Geiger's "primary criticism" might be an acceptable term. Oral interpretation also labels the field as a whole—within which we hope to turn insights gained through performances into discursive language, and to turn both cognitive and intuitive insights into better performances.

Readers of this journal unfamiliar with the field will be surprised at the range in quality in the essays, and ensuing responses, of this volume—from the naive to the sophisticated, from the insular to the richly informed. Strangely missing is the name of Ingarden, though he is well-known in the field, and several essays by interpreters elsewhere build on him. Hopefully, more will be forthcoming, spurred on by the present spate of translations. I also miss consideration of highly indeterminate works as compared with highly controlling (however schematic) traditional works. Concrete poetry, for example, has been described and performed by interpreters, but theoretical problems of its performance have never been discussed in print. Careful consideration of similarities and contrasts between silent and oral performance is also needed. The editors, Haas and Williams, may be congratulated as pioneers in a field boasting only two essay collections in print. Despite its flaws, stemming partly from its textbook status, it will be useful. Further collections will benefit from stricter editorial control. For example, some of the responses are chatty and too intramural for print. An index, adequate cross-referencing, and less desultory bibliographies would have been enormously helpful.

KATHARINE T. LOESCH
University of Illinois at Chicago Circle

ARNHEIM, RUDOLF. *Art and Visual Perception: The New Version.* University of California Press, 1974, 508 pp., $15.00.

That it is in a second edition shows how widely appreciated Arnheim's book has become since its first publication twenty years ago. In "The New Version" the book has been substantially rewritten, although its fundamental character has not substantially changed. It remains a sound and valuable sourcebook on the psychology of visual perception: the same basic concepts are presented, though the discussions and illustrations have been updated and reworked.

Of course the book is not only about visual perception, it is also about art. The question I would like to raise is, What is its import for art? The ideas Arnheim proffers are unquestionably relevant to certain kinds of visual art, and that relevance is made particularly clear in the book itself. However, one can readily tell that Arnheim believes he is doing more than articulating principles of perception which are simply *relevant* to *some* art; he believes he is investigating a structure which ineluctably governs all artistic creation. This assumption is never stated very explicitly because it is a presupposition of the work (as it is for many theories of art). In his recent book, *Visual Thinking* (1971), Arnheim justifies and develops more fully some of the basic ideas of the earlier work, and he makes it very explicit that he believes "The arts . . . are based on perception" (p. 3). If this is true, then the principles developed in Arnheim's books do possess the import he assigns them. If art is based on perception, then the analysis of the structure of perception will be an analysis of the basis of art.

Yet it seems to me that this view of art is

inadequate and hence misplaces the significance of *Art and Visual Perception*. I would like to argue that Arnheim describes fundamental characteristics of a realm of articulation (visual articulation) which an artist is free to accept or reject. In other words, the book is primarily about visual perception and incidentally about any art which adopts the general framework delineated in it. Furthermore, I will argue that even within the realm of visual art, the precepts Arnheim endorses are not in the nature of implacable laws establishing what can and cannot be done artistically, but are rather like tools or powers which can be applied variously throughout the diversity of artistic interests.

I should say right away that Arnheim is in good company with his assumptions about art, and I think this is one reason his book has been so well received and so widely used. Any truly "aesthetic" theory of art begins with the assumption that the arts are ineluctably involved with perception because they are engaged in an enterprise whose main goal is the presentation of perceptual displays. But this simply means that Arnheim is accepting and carrying on a long tradition which has recently come into question.

Out of the tradition of visual painting and sculpture has developed a kind of art to which Arnheim's principles are as irrelevant as they are to a mathematical proof. Consider some of the more conspicuous artworks which avowedly eschew perceptual display, the readymades of Marcel Duchamp. When Duchamp exhibited an ordinary snowshovel with the title "In Advance of the Broken Arm," he might have wanted to display its visual form, uninteresting as it is. But that is not primarily what Duchamp wanted to do and that is not the point of his artistic gesture. The visual properties of this work of art are as incidental to it as the color of a dust jacket is to a book of poetry. (Incidentally, Duchamp designed a dust jacket which has a drawing of a dinner jacket from the front on the front and from the back on the back—and here again, the way the thing looks has little to do with the humorous intent.) The visual form of a readymade is minimally related to its artistic expression.

Art is not based upon perception unless it chooses to be, and an increasing number of artists have opted out of the perceptual enterprise since Duchamp took the lead early in the twentieth century by giving up what he termed "retinal" art. (For examples and discussions of this new "conceptual" art, see Ursula Meyer, *Conceptual Art* (1972). Other sources are discussed in my review, *JAAC*, 33 (1974): 109–11.) To the art of this recent tradition, all of Arnheim's concepts and precepts are completely irrelevant, and not simply wrong. One can apply "perceptual concepts" (to use Arnheim's term) to Duchamp's snowshovel but these concepts will not engage its artistic meaning.

Yet perhaps I am making too much haste in criticizing Arnheim's basic assumption about the perceptual nature of art. One of the great values of *Art and Visual Perception*, along with Arnheim's subsequent work, is precisely the extent to which it impresses upon us the conceptual cast of perception itself. Arguing from a Gestalt perspective, Arnheim claims that the dichotomy between perception and conception is ill-founded and that perception is thoroughly conceptual in the sense that when we see even so simple a thing as a shape, that is an achievement requiring employment of a concept, what Arnheim terms a "perceptual concept." The point is that when we look at the moon and see a circle, what we see is not anything like "raw sensations," but rather a highly organized pattern based on the concept of a circle which makes coherent the disorganized flickerings on the retina. Arnheim explains in his collection of essays, *Toward A Psychology of Art* (1972):

> My assertion is that the individual stimulus configuration enters the perceptual process only in that it evokes a specific pattern of general sensory categories, which *stands for* the stimulus in a similar way that a scientific description of a network of general concepts is offered as the equivalent of a phenomenon of reality. . . . Perceiving is abstracting in that it represents individual cases through configurations of general categories. Abstraction, then, starts at the most elementary level of cognition, namely, with the acquisition of the sensory data (p. 33).

This account of perception is insightful and cogent; but once again, it is dubiously applied to art. In the first place, we should notice that although perception is conceptual, this does not mean, as Arnheim argues in *Visual Thinking*, that conception—that all thinking—is perceptual and, in particular, visual. The human mind is capable of very different kinds and combinations of conceptual and perceptual activity. Arnheim himself recognizes the important difference between a circle drawn by a child to represent the human head and a horizontal "8" used as a symbol for infinity in a mathematical formula (see *Toward A Psychology of Art*, p. 28). The difference might roughly be put by saying one occurs in a display designed to be looked at, while the other occurs in an articulation designed to be read and thought about. Not that thinking is irrelevant to the former—it is just that in the first case the thinking (if it

occurs) is channeled through and directed by a visual presentation whose appearance is integral to the activity being engaged in.

Arnheim fails to appreciate this difference adequately when he formulates his theory of perception and applies it to art. In *Visual Thinking* he makes a rather striking statement:

> Beauty, perfection, harmony, order do serve to give a sense of well-being by presenting a world congenial to human needs; but they are also indispensable conditions for making a cognitive statement clear, coherent, comprehensible. Aesthetic beauty is the isomorphic correspondence between what is said and how it is said (pp. 254–55).

It is probably this commitment which hinders Arnheim's doubts about the perceptual/conceptual dichotomy from developing into the realization that art, along with other salient cultural activities, is not ineluctably bound to perceptual appearances. In any event, the claim he is making here seems rather simply false. The most refined mathematical ideas can be conveyed very clearly with ugly words and phrases written in a sloppy hand; the most exquisite poem can be penned in such haste as to be nearly illegible. So the import of beauty, perfection, harmony, order, will vary greatly depending upon the needs and goals of the particular human endeavor. In a poem, the beauty of the language, but not the handwriting, might be important; in a mathematical proof, neither is of consequence. The artistic significance of this realization lies in the discovery that visual form is not an essential ingredient in making and appreciating art. Not only the concern for visual beauty, but also the concern for visual form itself, is optional. The relationship between perception and ideas *can* be in art what it is in mathematics, i.e., the artist may use visual presentations to articulate ideas directly without concern for the look, the appearance, of whatever is displayed.

Even how something looks is a complex function of how it is looked at, as Arnheim himself emphasizes. Human culture is a panoply of interrelated ideas, and not simply the accumulation of objects and appearances. Some ideas may be heavily oriented toward perceptual appearances, as Arnheim claims, but even in art which heeds perceptual constraints, ideas can be developed which are not subordinate to the visual form. In the chapter on form in *Art and Visual Perception*, Arnheim offers a revealing example of how his principles are applied to particular works of art. In discussing Ingres's *La Source*, he considers "the theme of withheld but promised femininity":

> Both aspects of this theme are developed in further formal inventions. The virginal refusal in the compression of the knees, the tight adherence of the arm to the head, and the grip of the hands are counteracted by the full exposure of the body (p. 154).

It is important to recognize that here, as in most of Arnheim's "examples from art," the visual form is shown to serve the artistic expression, but not to determine it. The meaning of the compression of the knees cannot be understood unless we see the visual compression as a compression of the *knees*, and know what that means. To the child unfamiliar with sex, the compression may be evident in the visual form, but not the theme of "withheld femininity." The point is that a great deal can be expressed in a painting which is not strictly *based on* its visual form. Visually similar forms can express ecstasy or anguish, depending upon the context in which they occur. A network of interests and constraints informs artistic activity, and no single part of that network can justly be used to order the whole array hierarchically. Arnheim's views are skewed too heavily toward perceptual form. Even in traditional "visual" art, we find stylistic features which, although they may be *supported* by visual form, cannot be *borne* by it. Subject matter is often a significant feature of style, as it is in David's neoclassical paintings; yet subject matter is never strictly determined by visual form. Even that most magnificent achievement of visual art, perspective, holds a considerable appeal to the intellect, and does not simply speak to the eye through percepts and "perceptual concepts" (see John White, *The Birth and Rebirth of Pictorial Space* (1972)). Alberti's "focussed system" for creating pictorial space required the conception of a new *method* of representing whose results can be appreciated visually, but whose conception is not based upon visual form. Renaissance perspective is an intellectual construct which cannot be arrived at simply by manipulating appearances. The reason Giotto never discovered perspective is not that he lacked an adequate grasp of visual form (a preposterous suggestion), but rather that he lacked the *concept* of projecting an image onto a plane through the point from which it is seen. Moreover, even the ability to *see* a smaller patch of paint as a figure farther away instead of a smaller figure (or something else altogether) requires an implicit understanding of the idea of representing something according to the system of focussed perspective.

There is one final question I would like to raise about the normative cast of the investigation carried out in *Art and Visual Perception*. Early in the book, Arnheim makes it clear that he is going to talk about right and wrong: "For

any spatial relation between objects there is a 'correct' distance, established by the eye intuitively" (p. 12). Later on he formulates a basic Gestalt law of perception which aids him in making the normative judgments he proffers throughout the book: "Any stimulus pattern tends to be seen in such a way that the resulting structure is as simple as the given conditions permit" (p. 53). One of the values of this book is that it describes accurately and insightfully many significant features of the structure of visual perception. But I doubt that these insights can be used to derive norms for making art, even visual art. The structure Arnheim describes for articulating in a visual medium offers the potential of a box of tools; although these "tools" place some limits on what can be done, they do not prescribe a set of rules for artistic creation. It is true that anything visible will obey the Gestalt laws of perception, but how the artist uses these laws—how and whether he chooses to take them into account—is entirely up to him. What can be done with visual appearances, like what can be done with a box of tools, is up to the human imagination to discover. Thus I find rather short-sighted such claims as this:

> An unbalanced composition looks accidental, transitory, and therefore invalid. Its elements show a tendency to change place or shape in order to reach a state that better accords with the total structure.
>
> Under conditions of imbalance, the artistic statement becomes incomprehensible. The ambiguous pattern allows no decision on which of the possible configurations is meant (p. 20).

The question should always be, Does the artist want the composition to look accidental and transitory? If he does, and if he achieves a meaningful expression thereby, who are we to say his composition is invalid? Judging by the way Arnheim's norms have to be tailored to fit the artistic examples, I would guess that *they* are invalid, not artistic expressions which "violate" them. Arnheim appeals to the aforementioned Gestalt law of simplicity to claim that ambiguity should be avoided:

> Why should artists strive for balance? Our answer thus far has been that by stabilizing the interrelations between the various forces in a visual system, the artist makes his statement unambiguous. Going a step further, we realize that man strives for equilibrium in all phases of his physical and mental existence, and that this same tendency can be observed not only in all organic life, but also in physical systems (p. 36).

Yet I should also think that amusement parks and art galleries prove that man strives as well for imbalance, variety, and challenge, and sometimes he shamelessly seeks out ambiguity for any number of reasons. The fact that a work of art is ambiguous is not, by itself, good or bad—it all depends on what the artist is up to. Although Arnheim does recognize the need for "activating forces" (see, e.g., p. 37), I feel he gives far too much weight to the balancing forces he describes at length in the book. In any event, visual forces, whatever they are, are materials in the hands of artists. These "materials" have powers and structures, but it is the artist's imagination which determines the character of the work and the limits of expression.

And so I return to my first point, which is that *Art and Visual Perception* is a useful and important book about principles of visual perception which happen to be relevant to some art.

TIMOTHY BINKLEY
School of Visual Arts, New York

DENITTO, DENNIS AND WILLIAM HERMAN. *Film and the Critical Eye*. N. Y.: Macmillan, 1975, xii + 543 pp., $6.95 (paperbound).

This book is addressed to the serious beginning student of film, not to the buff, and it is clearly intended for use in a course on film where circumstances permit the students several viewings of the films under study. Wisely, with this intention in mind, the authors have restricted their detailed analyses to fourteen "fictive narrative" films available from a single distributor (Janus): *The Last Laugh*, *The Gold Rush*, *M*, *Grand Illusion*, *The Rules of the Game*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Rashomon*, *La Ronde*, *The Seventh Seal*, *Wild Strawberries*, *Ashes and Diamonds*, *L'Avventura*, *Il Posto*, *Jules et Jim*. Six additional films are discussed more briefly: *Forbidden Games*, *Shoot the Piano Player*, *Knife in the Water*, *The Servant*, *The Caretaker*, and *Le Bonheur*.

Parts I and II of the book are discursive and, in the authors' terms, "theoretical": viewing a film, interpreting a film, the technical language of film-making (a glossary), the rhetorical devices of film. The entire "theoretical" discussion occupies fewer than fifty pages, and may be useful to spur discussion. As theory, it leaves much to be desired; distinctions are suggested and then hedged so thoroughly that they disappear; psychological and sociological terms are brought up without any attempt to apply them seriously; important names are dropped. The authors attempt to follow John Simon's élitist lead in distinguishing the "movie" from the "film" on the basis that one is mere entertainment while the other is art, and then promptly disavow the distinction.