

Fossaluzza, C. M. & Verstegen, I. (a cura di) (2014). *Ragionamenti percettivi. Saggi in onore di Alberto Argenton, Mimesis, Milano - Udine*

ABSTRACTS

Ugo Savardi e Ivana Bianchi
Ragionate percezioni allo specchio

The purpose of this paper is to suggest some points of entry for an analysis of the complex experience that takes place when an observer stands in front of a mirror. Since time immemorial, people have been fascinated with mirrors and a field of studies to understand the laws which govern the formation of mirror images was developed, known variously as the study of optics, catoptrics or perspective. Mirrors have always been a source of inspiration in art and now they are also studied by researchers in the psychology of perception due to the cognitive implications embedded in experiences with mirrors. In this paper we will also show how Euclid's geometrical optics can be referred to within the confines of "perceptual reasoning".

Daniele Zavagno, Natale Stucchi e Olga Daneyko
Quando la psicologia della percezione incontra la storia dell'arte: il caso San Lorenzo

Following in Arnheim's footsteps, a perceptual approach to psychology of art aims at studying and evaluating the structural aspects of artworks. In this work we pose the question whether psychology of perception can actually contribute to the understanding of sensory-cognitive phenomena that by tradition is the research grounds of the history of art. By presenting two case studies that start from the same assumption – the hypothesis that the artist was influenced by the visual distortion known as "the Poggendorff illusion" while creating his masterpiece – we try to underline the relevance of experimental investigations in understanding perceptual and cognitive process related to both creation and enjoyment of works of art. The psychology of perception can indeed offer rigorous and original contributions to the study of art phenomena, yet to do so it must go beyond the mere practice of observation (an essential starting point for uncovering issues and topics worthy of being investigated, but which alone, in fact, is likely to lead to anecdotal, if not to rushed conclusions) by employing its own methods: the experimental approach.

Caterina Malisano e Tiziano Agostini
Usi e abusi della prospettiva: Osservazioni sperimentali sulle reverspective di Patrick Hughes

Patrick Hughes' paintings, called "reverspectives", consist of tridimensional structures (pyramids or prisms) painted in such a way to elicit an illusory depth percept that is the reverse of the physical depth arrangement. It has been shown that reverspectives having a simple grid of lines are more effective compared to those with a more naturalistic representation (Rogers & Gyani, 2010). To investigate which kind of geometrical texture is more effective in eliciting the perspective reversal, twenty-eight observers were tested. Three independent variables were manipulated: 1) 3D structure (one or two pyramids); 2) geometrical texture (9 different textures); and 3) light direction (3 different directions). The dependent variable was the distance (observer-stimulus) in which the "switch-off" takes place. The results shows that: a) our visual system prefers an "incorrect" construction that aims to rotate the foreshortened surfaces to the front parallel plane; b) the grid elicits a stronger illusion than the textures with oblique or orthogonal lines; c) the grids drawn with the "incorrect" Hughes' logic are more coercive; and d) the light direction play a significant role in producing the illusion.

Wiesława Limont
Conceptual metaphor in visual art

In this chapter I discuss selected questions on conceptual metaphor in art. I focus on three theories: Arnheim's visual thinking, Argenton's aesthetic cognition, and Lakoff's conceptual metaphor. A common feature of these ideas is the significance of experience and image schemas for creating and understanding metaphors. According to Lakoff, Arnheim had understood conceptual metaphor in visual art earlier than he started to think about it.

Ian Verstegen
Arnheim on artistic symbolization (with some help from Argenton)

This essay is based on the surprising fact that Arnheim never considers artistic symbolization to be a stage of intellectual achievement. After reviewing how Arnheim presents his theory of artistic symbolization, it next passes to the classic stage theories of Heinz Werner and Jean Piaget. Then it turns to Arnheim's reviews of the works of especially Jean Piaget for clues as to his aversion to stage theories, aligning it to the Gestalt approach to the relation of perception to thinking. This Arnheim-Gestalt theory is finally aligned to the writing of Alberto Argenton, particularly in his important *Arte e cognizione*, where a framework is presented that accommodates stages but on Gestalt terms.

Laura Messina
Comics & closure

This essay deals with the study of comics, and its aim is to encourage the interaction of two different fields of study – the psychology of art and the humanities and social sciences – for further investigation into the topic. After a brief neo-Arnheimian analysis of the main features of comics, the essay addresses a specific aspect, namely *closure*. This process, which allows users to connect the panels by means of the gutters and to understand the whole text, is examined mainly in the light of semiotical, narratological and pedagogical theoretical approaches. The example of closure is particularly helpful to highlight a set of problems inherent in the separation between the two fields of study, identifiable – to put it briefly – in the difference between “perceiving and thinking”, but also to propose lines of research from which, thanks to the convergence of these two different fields, important results could emerge.

Gabriella Gilli e Francesca Maria Rozzi
La fruizione di opere d'arte al museo

A key challenge that faces any museum is to attract, retain and satisfy its visitors. The contribution of psychology deals with various theoretical and applied aspects: the relationship between the viewer and the artwork and the context, the many aspects of the design of exhibition spaces that can serve as active mediators between visitors and artworks. In order to support a cultural change through which art museums become more and more emotionally “close”, socially desirable and cognitively challenging, we propose a model of smart museums: conceived as an intelligent mediator between work, artist and audience; able to make the visitor an active creator of his/her learning process; and focused on psychological strategies favoring the visitors experience of flow.

Mario Zanforlin

I fenomeni stereocinetici tra arte e scienza

In the 1920s an artist and a scientist, independently of each other, discovered that figures on a plane, when set in motion, produced a much stronger impression of three-dimensionality than that produced by pictorial perspective, and indistinguishable from that produced by real objects. The two authors were the French artist Marcel Duchamp and the Italian scientist Vittorio Benussi. Duchamp called the phenomenon "*rotorelief*" and Benussi "*stereocinesis*". While no other artists, apart from Duchamp, appear to have used this phenomenon for artistic purposes, researchers in perception, on the other hand, starting with Musatti, have considered the phenomenon of very great interest and have devoted various studies to it and proposed new configurations, eventually reaching a theoretical explanation of the quantitative aspects of the phenomenon.

Michele Sinico

Gestaltismi e fenomenologie nella Bauhaus

This paper examines the theoretical relationships between the German art school *Staatliches Bauhaus* and the most important psychological phenomenological theories in the first half of the 20th century. After showing the relationships between the Gestalt psychology and the main teachers of the school (Johannes Itten, Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, László Moholy-Nagy, Josef Albers) the epistemology of Walter Gropius is presented. I examine the phenomenological attitude, the theory of perception, the pedagogical perspective, the experimental verification, and the expressive qualities. In conclusion, I claim that Gropius was influenced by two opposed theories: the Gestalt psychology by Wertheimer, Köhler and Koffka and the *Ganzheitspsychologie* by Krueger.

Tamara Prest

Design e espressione: Donald Norman e Rudolf Arnheim

In this paper I have tried to highlight the "principles" – among them *affordance* – that Donald Norman holds to be basic in the design field in order to create products that can communicate, through the form, what their functions are and can be easily understandable and usable. These principles are also read into the frame of psychology of art, in its Gestalt matrix, proposing in particular a comparison of the works of Norman and those of Arnheim and identifying between the two scholars both tangencies and differences regarding the design field.

Luca Farulli

La distanza dalla felicità. Note in margine al rapporto arte-felicità

With modernity, the relationship between art and happiness became problematic. The investigation of this relation today means questioning the possibilities of an *avant garde* art: an art that, going *beyond* what exists, dares to call into question time, the history as a construction in which the present has legitimacy simply for being the consequence of what came before. In this sense, Th. W. Adorno's critic-messianic thoughts, on the relation art to happiness that we find in *Aesthetic Theory*, have a crucial role: they stand at the meeting point of *avant garde* theory, the critical theory of society and the reflection upon modernity. Adorno's thought, even if unavoidable, nevertheless rests in the safe castle of tragic art; it stops before completing the fundamental problem of a necessarily critical art, "irrevocably" reflexive and self-conscious, that indicates a necessary exchange of roles between aesthetics and ethics, but, *beyond* it, is able to accept the demands of time. It is precisely this deficiency in Adorno's thought and theoretical reflection that returns it to relevance, in the moment in which the distance between art and history, art and society, takes place in spite of the distinctive labels art and *visual culture*. In this sense, the line of reflection proposed here, goes backwards against

recent modernity, so to speak: from freedom to happiness, to verify the meaning of this exchange of needs and values. Happiness is, in fact, a feeling that, in its being antiquated, answers to a question of community, of shared horizon, of thinking on the present.

Carlo Maria Fossaluzza

Proposta per un approccio etico alla lettura dell'arte: il caso di Franz Xaver Messerschmidt

This essay takes into consideration the German sculptor Franz Xaver Messerschmidt, the author of the well-known "character heads," and the studies of these works from art criticism and psychoanalysis by Ernst Kris, based on Friedrich Nicolai's report. An analysis of these interpretive attempts allows us to reflect not only on the distinction between personality and *artistic personality*, but also to broaden the view of *attitude* that should lead the psychologist, like any other scholar, in the investigation of artistic production.

Giovanni Bruno Vicario

Qualche testimonianza di immagini

The contribution presents short notes on the following representations: eternity (bas-relief); cyclic eternity (gold-coin, mosaic); flowing time, as past, present and future (mosaic); *kairós*, that is the convenient instant (bas-relief); the diversity between the terms *Krónos* (an old God) and *chrónos* (the physical time) (bas-reliefs); both a present event and a future one (Flemish painting - XVI century); a popular, recent and strange mix (mosaic); lastly two works of Gaetano Kanizsa (paintings).