

Perceptual Coherence

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Perceptual Coherence: Hearing and Seeing

STEPHEN HANDEL

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

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There are auditory books and visual books, but neither type of book uses the other sense to illustrate the common issues in perception. This volume's comparison of hearing and seeing, or "listening to" and "looking at" provides the means to isolate what is common to perception and what is specific to each sensory system. There are only 3 or 4 types of visual receptors, each with overlapping but different wavelength sensitivity, but there are about 2,000 auditory receptors, again with overlapping wavelength sensitivity. Through comparisons such as this one, Handel illustrates how the number and sensitivity of the receptors match the properties of the stimuli. "Far from being a dry recitation of the facts of seeing and hearing, Handel's book is a unique attempt to dig out the similarities and interactions between these two modes of perception. While providing a detailed account of many aspects of our perceptual systems, at both a functional and a physiological level, the author always bears in mind what the incoming sensory information is about (a single world containing objects, events, and various sources of light and of acoustic energy). He explains how this fact of a single world shaped the heuristic methods used by these systems - some described by the Gestalt psychologists - to build a coherent perceived world. The focus is always on this coherence and how it emerges from specialised processes at many levels. Full of interesting analogies, the book is very provocative and contains enough challenging ideas for individual readers to be able to find specific ones to puzzle over, whether they be students or professional researchers, and regardless of their theoretical views of perception." - Albert Bregman, PhD, Emeritus Professor of Psychology, McGill University "Stephen Handel's book "Perceptual Coherence: Seeing and Hearing" reframes object and event perception in a coherent theoretical scheme based on the dynamic perceiving of "things" in space and time. The subject of "thing-based" perceptual coherence is timely and of crucial importance with the increasing interest in multisensory integration in the realms of cognitive psychology and neuroscience. The text is written with Handel's habitual crystal clarity, depth of thought and pedagogical talent. It will certainly be a treasure trove of facts, concepts and new directions for researchers and students alike. - Stephen McAdams, PhD, Director, Centre for Interdisciplinary Research in Music, Media & Technology.

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