Wertheimer's fascination with the Gestalt structure of music and art was shared by several prominent artists. During the 1920s and 1930s, artists Paul Klee, Vasily Kandinsky, and Josef Albers explicitly drew upon Gestalt theory for inspiration in their writings, paintings, and lectures at the German Bauhaus school. [fn 9] The Dutch graphic artist M. C. Escher was also demonstrably influenced by some of the work on figure-ground relationships in the Gestalt literature on perception. [fn 10] Wertheimer's interest in this area continued after he immigrated to America, as shown by his course on "The Psychology of Music and Art" at the New School. Koffka too was interested in the area and devoted several publications to the contributions of Gestalt theory to the analysis of art. [fn 11]

It was Rudolf Arnheim (who took over the New School course on the psychology of art when Wertheimer died) who developed in greatest detail the implications of Gestalt theory for the understanding of architecture, music, painting, poetry, sculpture, radio, cinema, and theater. His books have been used extensively in courses on art history, art appreciation, the performance arts, and communication. [fn 12] A successful artist organizes sensory facts according to such fundamental Gestalt principles as unity, balance, Prägnanz, and segregation. Like Wertheimer, Arnheim saw the principles of Gestalt theory as ubiquitously evident in the natural world and the domain of the arts, not only in the rigorous constraints of the laboratory. [fn 13]. Mandler and Mandler have expressed the widely-shared judgment that Arnheim's work "has been central and seminal and is certainly one of the milestones in the contribution of Gestalt psychology to American culture." [fn 14]

Although not as systematic, exhaustive, or visible as Arnheim, other scholars too have examined the psychology of art and music from a Gestalt perspective. Gestalt theory was used by critic Max Kobbert to interpret and analyze modern informal art, in particular the work of Jackson Pollock. [fn 15] One scholar analyzed Gestalt patterns in classical art as well as in wallpaper in trying to understand the "unconscious appeal" of much modern art. [fn 16] A book by H. E. Rees employed the Gestalt principles of Prägnanz, integration, adjustment, and purposive differentiation in describing the creative processes various artists have used in architecture, dance, literature, music, painting, and sculpture. [fn 17] Others such as Adelbert Ames at Dartmouth College and Hoyt Sherman at Ohio State University argued that the Gestalt principles of perceptual organization can be used constructively for art education, [fn 18] and Gestalt theory has been advocated as an effective tool in music instruction as well. [fn 19] Raymond Holder Wheeler at the University of Kansas and a colleague even analyzed the epochs in the history of music by contrasting what they called cold, atomistic periods (for example, program music and lyrics) with warm, Gestalt periods in music (for example, serious operas, tragedies, and institutionalized music). [fn 20] Gestalt principles have also been used in the literary analysis of poetry, and specifically in efforts to understand how people comprehend metaphors. [fn 21]
Footnotes


