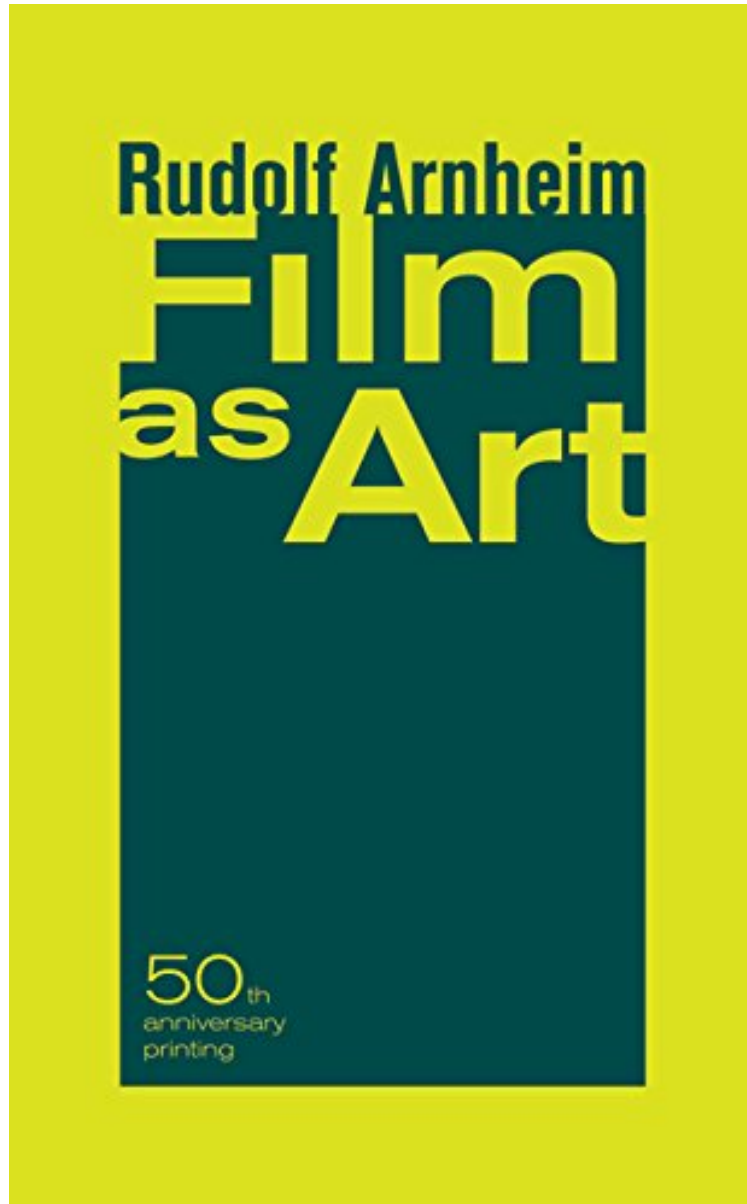


[Mobile pdf] Film as Art

Film as Art

Rudolf Arnheim

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Rudolf Arnheim : Film as Art before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Film as Art:

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy anonymousArnheim is a definitive expert on film for me. Hope you also find that to be true.0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Four StarsBy adrienne rozziA

little esoteric but a good read. 19 of 19 people found the following review helpful. A major contribution to film studies, remains essential for its insights into the nature of cinema. By Nate Read as an essentialist treatise on the nature of film as art, Rudolf Arnheim's "Film as Art" may feel like something of a dead end or a historical curiosity -- there was a period during which some of the major questions for cultural and art critics interested in film were: is film a new art form or does it draw its artistic potential from other more traditional art forms that can be said to be integrated into film? If it is a new form of art what is new about it? how should art critics approach this new medium? To these questions, Arnheim offers a powerful and convincing defense of the idea that film is its own art form, with its own distinctive artistic potential. Now that "we" no longer need to be convinced that film is an art form, or is at least capable of rivalling any other art forms on occasion, his detailed and meticulous argument that draws upon a broad familiarity both with the history and techniques of film to his day may appear dated and reactionary. I think this need to prove that film is an art against a number of prominent art theorists is really what one of the other reviewers ("vampyroboy," in an otherwise quite interesting review) is detecting when he describes the book as characterized by "self-hatred." On the other hand, Arnheim's book is not merely a reactionary treatise intended to prove that film really is a unique art form. Moreover, the book does more than merely defend one of the classical positions in the "realist" versus "formalist" debate -- Arnheim's position in this debate is much more nuanced than the standard histories of film and film criticism tend to attribute to "formalist film theorists." According to "formalism," the essence of film art lies in the formalist techniques available to the filmmaker, and that allow her to manipulate and transform film from a merely mechanical reproduction of reality into something genuinely creative and meaningful. This is supposed to be in contrast with "realism," according to which the essence of film art (and what makes good film art good) is its capacity to capture reality directly in its raw form. But Arnheim's position is much more interesting than either opposed position seems to allow. First, he argues that the apparent limitations of film -- the fact that it is two dimensional, that it was originally lacking sound (and later that sound had to be captured with great difficulty and lacking in the multidimensions that our experience of sound possesses), and that film is always a selection from what is visible within a frame, etc. -- these apparent limitations are precisely what open the space for and require creativity and manipulation on the part of the film artist. Because the filmmaker can't show all of reality or even a strict simulacrum of experience she needs to be creative in deciding which aspects of reality to select in order to capture the essence of a reality, and in order to convey the precise meaning that she intends from each shot. On the other hand -- and here is where the division between Arnheim's "formalism" and the so-called "realism" of Kracauer and Bazin begins to break down -- Arnheim insists that the very best filmmakers use the formal techniques of editing and selecting available to them in the service of reality. The very best filmmakers don't simply use their creative freedom to break free from the constraints of reality but employ that freedom in order to reveal something important about the reality they film. This is true even of experimental filmmakers who seem to break beyond representation completely -- there is something missing if their work does not in some way teach us to see the world anew and more clearly. This critical perspective on film remains valid -- and explains, for me at least, what I find unsettling about some of the virtuosic CGI effects in film that ought to impress me, and the difference between films that use their effects selectively to convey a genuine experience that would be otherwise difficult to imagine (e.g. Memento) and films that use their effects as mere dazzling artifice (the examples are too numerous to mention). Arnheim's Film as Art remains important and engaging reading for anyone interested in the nature and potential of film.

In the fall of 1957 the University of California Press expanded Arnheim's 1933 book Film by four essays and brought that landmark work back into print as Film as Art. Now nearly fifty years after that re-edition, the book continues to occupy an important place in the literature of film. Arnheim's method, provocative in this age of technological wizardry, was to focus on the way art in film was derived from that medium's early limitations: no sound, no color, no three-dimensional depth.

"More than half a century since its initial publication, this deceptively compact book remains among the most incisive analyses of the formal and perceptual dynamics of cinema. No one who cares about film can afford to remain ignorant of its insights and wisdom. As digital technology fundamentally alters motion pictures, the lessons of Film as Art commend themselves as excellent insurance against reinventing the wheel in the new media landscape and hailing it as progress." - Edward Dimendberg author of Film Noir and the Spaces of Modernity "After more than eight decades, Rudolph Arnheim's small book of film theory remains one of the essential works in defining film art, understanding film less as reproducing the world than as opening up new possibilities for formal play and unexpected imagery. Anyone serious about film, whether scholar, filmmaker or simply a lover of cinema, must take Arnheim seriously." - Tom Gunning, author of The Films of Fritz Lang (2000) and D.W. Griffith and the Origins of American Narrative Film (1994) "From the Inside Flap More than half a century since its initial publication, this deceptively compact book remains among the most incisive analyses of the formal and perceptual dynamics of cinema. No one who cares about film can afford to remain ignorant of its insights and wisdom. As digital technology fundamentally alters motion pictures, the lessons of Film as Art commend themselves as excellent insurance against reinventing the wheel in the

new media landscape and hailing it as progress. Edward Dimendberg author of *Film Noir and the Spaces of Modernity* After more than eight decades, Rudolph Arnheim's small book of film theory remains one of the essential works in defining film art, understanding film less as reproducing the world than as opening up new possibilities for formal play and unexpected imagery. Anyone serious about film, whether scholar, filmmaker or simply a lover of cinema, must take Arnheim seriously. Tom Gunning, author of *The Films of Fritz Lang and D.W. Griffith and the Origins of American Narrative Film* An aesthetic theory based on the formal limitations of the medium, Arnheim's *Film as Art* always provokes students in an age of few limits and less formality, and they argue and engage this classic text with unparalleled passion. Written in the wake of sound's transformation of the cinema, Arnheim's essays are not only central to understanding a major historical moment in theoretical debates about what constitutes the essence of film, but also are a must read for anyone seeking a lucid, detailed, and rigorous argument about how works of art emerge from expressive constraint as much as expressive freedom. Vivian Sobchack, author of *Carnal Thoughts*