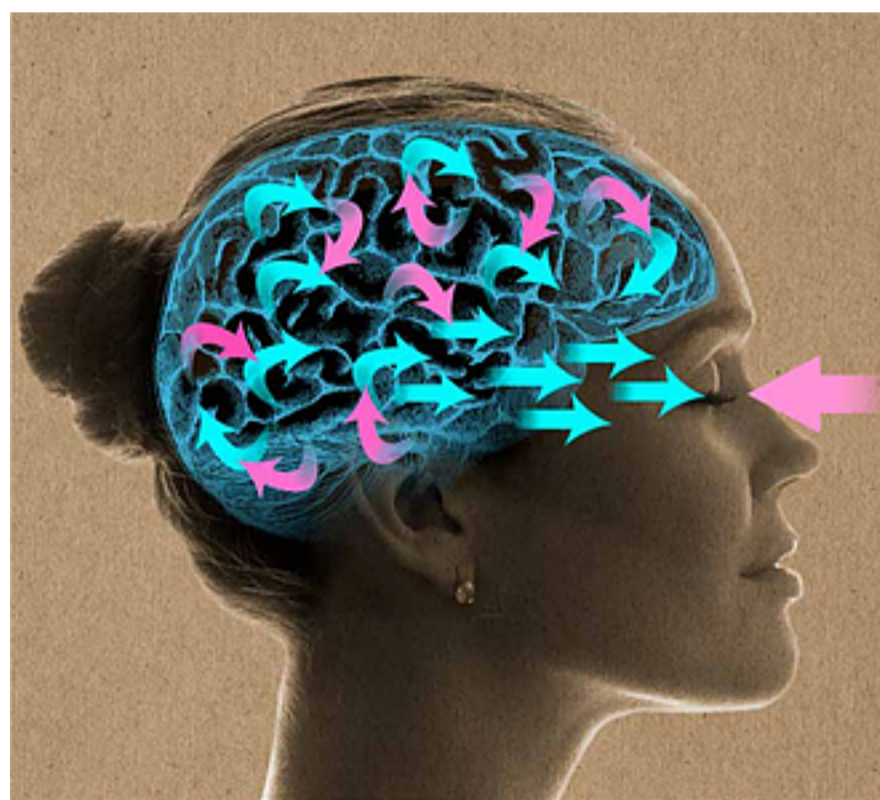


## Helmholtz, Gombrich, and the Beholder's Share

June 9, 2015



I'm delighted to be returning to The Courtauld Institute this evening, [to give a second talk](#) in the seminar series *Art and Vision Science*, organized jointly between the Sackler Centre and the Courtauld. My talk today continues theme of showing how both science and art work have tried to reveal deep truths about human experience. This is very different from the stated aim of the much maligned 'neuroaesthetics', which is about finding the brain basis of specifically aesthetic responses. The talk description is below:

"Science and art have long realized that experience depends on the involvement of the experiencer. In art history this is Gombrich's "beholder's share", and in science this traces to Helmholtz's concept of perception as inference. The shared idea is that our perceptual experience – whether of the world, of ourselves, or of an artwork – depends on the active interpretation of sensory input. Perception becomes a generative act, one in which biological and sociocultural influences conspire to shape the brain's 'best guess' of the causes of its sensory signals. In the third of three seminars for 2014-15 led by the Sackler Centre for Consciousness Science, Professor Anil Seth will trace the links between these ideas, calling informally on distinct artistic styles (such as Impressionism, Expressionism, and Cubism) and (in a more informed way) on recent developments in the cognitive neuroscience of predictive perception, emotion, and embodied selfhood. This is not neuroaesthetics – the attempt to reveal the brain basis of aesthetic responses. Instead, Anil Seth will hope to show how art and brain science can be equal partners in revealing deep truths about human experience."

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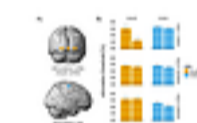
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June 2016 (1)

May 2016 (1)

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July 2015 (2)

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