

## Abstraction, Imagery, and Thought

by Estefan Gargost, [www.gargost.com](http://www.gargost.com)

Prior to the arrival of the impressionist movement, art was, most often, a realistic representation of the world surrounding the artist- whether in legend or actuality. In his book **Visual Thinking** Rudolf Arnheim says:

*"This sort of incompleteness is typical of mental imagery. It is the product of a selectively discerning mind, which can do better than consider faithful recordings of fragments.*

*"The paradox of seeing a thing as complete, but incompletely, is familiar from daily life. Even in direct perception, an observer glancing at a lawyer... might catch little but the salient feature of an arm carrying a briefcase. However, since direct perception always takes place against the foil of the complete visual world, its selective character is not evident. The memory image, on the other hand, does not possess this stimulus background. Therefore it is more evidently limited to a few salient features, which correspond perhaps to everything the original visual experience amounted to in the first place or which are the partial components the observer drew from a more complete trace... It is as though... a person can call on memory traces the way he calls on stimulus material in direct perception. But since mental images can be restricted to what the mind summons actively and selectively, their complements are often 'amodal,' that is, perceived as present but not visible...*

*"... The realization that the image differs in principle from the physical object lays the ground work for the doctrine of modern art."*

Whether the "partial component" is a color, a line, a symbol, a shape, one thing is true: that component was the main inspiration for these abstract paintings, and all other details were either omitted, placed in a background, or blurred. Only the forms and colors that impact me the most make it to the canvas.

