

Nanopublication – Fried's 'Lies!' against beholder-completion draws the edge of the diffraction-as-creation premise

by Arnaud Quercy

The line is between description and valuation: the framework's reception-as-creation model grips cleanly onto Fried's account of what literalism **does**, but Fried's own critical hierarchy – absorption over theatricality – is a value judgment the framework's propositions (stated as near-universal laws of what reception produces) neither anticipate nor can adjudicate without collapsing into either endorsing or ignoring an aesthetic argument that was never theirs to referee.

WHAT THE SOURCE SAYS [1]

Reviewing Michael Fried's Collected Writings, the article argues Fried's decades-long attack on Minimalist 'literalism' and 'theatricality' is not conservative fuddy-duddyism but a coherent aesthetic conviction: great art ('absorption') is self-sufficient, closed, 'its own harmonizing, mystical thing, separate from you,' whereas literalist/theatrical art depends on the beholder's bodily presence to be completed – 'finish the artwork by moving through it yourself.' Fried is quoted rejecting the idea that 'art doesn't exist until YOU... walk up and start making it exist' as a lie, preferring art that draws the viewer toward it rather than art built around the viewer's participation.

WHERE THE LENS GRIPS

The lens finds real descriptive purchase in Fried's own account of Minimalism: literalist art requiring the viewer's bodily transit to be finished is exactly the dynamic P17 names ('a single emission does not produce one creation... each reception is a unique creative event') and P28 ('the receiver is the player... the game succeeds if they create'). The article's summary of what Fried is attacking reads, almost verbatim, as a description of reception-as-creation.

WHERE IT BREAKS

Fried does not treat that dynamic as one mode among others to be engineered for (as P26/P28 do); he calls it a lie and ranks absorption above it as the higher value, insisting the

work can and should remain 'separate from you.' This slips IF one reads P17 as a claim about which art is GOOD or which artistic intent is preferable – Fried's polemic then stands as a direct counter-value the framework has no vocabulary to adjudicate. It holds, however, if one reads P17 as a purely descriptive law about what reception structurally does regardless of the artist's aesthetic aim – in which case Fried's absorptive works still generate N receptions, he merely re-labels the phenomenon 'recognition' or refuses to court it; the article gives no receiver testimony to settle which reading is correct.

PROPOSITIONAL GRID [2]

Read this grid. “Not evaluated” does **not** mean the source has nothing to say about that proposition. It means **the reading did not instruct it**. That is not a result, and it counts in no denominator. A silence, by contrast, is a finding: the reading touched the proposition without concluding, or noted its absence itself.

Evaluated

proposi-tion		audit status	relational verdict
P17	Multiplication of Creation	not audited	pressure-against
P28	The Game Principle	not audited	evidence-for

Not evaluated (35) – P1, P2, P3, P3a, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, P14a, P14b, P15, P16, P16a, P18, P18a, P19, P19a, P20, P21, P22, P23, P24, P25, P26, P27, P29, P30, P31

Overall verdict: Bounded – taxonomy of the August 2026 pass, predating the move to relational verdicts. Kept as metadata: the gap between the two forms is data, not residue. This reading’s judgement is in the grid above.

Reading of 2026-08-14 · model claude-sonnet-5 · source 12,361 chars · 3 attempt(s)

REFERENCES

[1] Fried at Last: Why Michael Fried's Attacks on Literalism Matter As Never Before. ARTnews.com, 2026-08-14. <https://www.artnews.com/art-in-america/aia->

reviews/michael-fried-literalism-collected-writings-bloomsbury-1234794840/

[2] Quercy, A. (2026). The 31 Propositions of Ideamorphism.
<https://ideamorphism.org/en/publications/2026/03/the-31-propositions-of-ideamorphism.html>

EPISTEMIC PROFILE

Claim type	boundary reading
Voice	third person analysis
Epistemic status	bounded grip
Methodology	Boundary-finding lens applied to one source, model claude-sonnet-5, 3 attempt(s), traceability check passed.

CHECKSUM (SHA-256)

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Author Arnaud Quercy
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