



Cover
Richard Deacon's 2003 *Out of Order* was triggered by discussions about a major piece to celebrate 50 years of DNA; see page 308. (Courtesy of Lisson Gallery and Richard Deacon; photograph by D. Morgan.)

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We cannot entirely divide our perceptual senses from our sense of reason. But in the past century in particular, the schism between art and science has been forced upon us by specialization. Science has stopped being the preserve of gentleman hobbyists or polymath intellectuals who could straddle this divide. It is hard to find today a true artist–scientist like Leonardo da Vinci, as noted for his science and engineering skills as his *Mona Lisa* and *Last Supper*. There is just too much to know.

This culture gap has, perhaps, never been so extreme. But in the past decade there has been an increasing awareness on the part of some artists of the heritage of scientists and vice versa. This supplement is intended to reflect, and place in context, some of this awareness. Many research funding agencies now provide for ‘sci–art’ projects or artists-in-residence programmes. The Institute of Contemporary Art in London has even taken a unique stance by having a scientist-in-residence. But some artists and scientists have found each other outside these formal channels, and our contributors fall within this category.

Most are from the world of arts — writers, visual artists, a composer. They describe their very individual brushes with science and explain how these encounters are reflected in some of their works.

Two are scientists who have tried to approach the question of how, neuroscientifically speaking, we perceive beauty. The science of aesthetic perception is at its very beginning and we are light years away from being able to analyse the basic unknowns of why we respond to beauty, and why we are compelled towards its creation. But it seems that we are starting to have a better idea of how to frame relevant questions.

We would like to thank the authors for their contributions to this supplement, which we hope will stimulate discussions about creativity in arts and sciences, and their possible shared roots of intuition. We are pleased to acknowledge the financial support of the SigmaTau Foundation, which contributed towards the distribution of this supplement. As always, *Nature* carries sole responsibility for editorial content. The full content, as well as other related material is available online at www.nature.com/nature/focus/arts.

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