

A TABLE IS A TABLE
IS A TABLE

“The way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe. In the Middle Ages when men believed in the physical existence of Hell the sight of fire must have meant something different from what it means today.”

Throughout various periods, the development of science and introduction of philosophical theories have continually shifted people’s perspectives. In the 16th century, objects were symbols of wealth, and individuals showcased their prosperity through items from distant lands or those with exquisite craftsmanship. Images served as a means of recording, striving for authenticity.

By the late 19th century, during the Impressionist era, individuals captured the colors they observed, with shape taking a secondary role. In the Cubist period, the focus shifted to perspective. Meanwhile, as industry rapidly developed, the representation of an object became distinct from the object itself. This is evident in how Andy Warhol’s cans and actual supermarket cans are perceived as entirely different entities.



[1]



[2]



[3]



[4]





[5]

As our understanding evolved to see an image as merely an image, we began manipulating the image itself, reducing its association with real objects.

Concentrating on the image, each element can be interpreted as a shape or symbol. Focusing on the element's relationships, we notice an occlusion relationship, reflecting a physical spatial relationship of distance. When we focus on our relationship with each element, we use perspective to establish this connection. Both the physical relationship between elements and the perspective-established position are attempts to restore physical space, treating the image as a physical world index. However, in the era of AI-generated images and videos, where we spend more time on images than in physical spaces, this approach is no longer viable. We need to reassert that an image is interpreted as an image.

The image is interpreted as a symbol, with no sequential or distance order in symbol reading. For instance, pictographic text like Chinese can be read out of order. So, after extracting the symbols, we can readjust the image order and the perspective relationship. I propose this viewing method, applicable to contemporary, online, quickly browsed information.



"Ways of Seeing" is a two-hour TV program from 1972, which feels almost like a discussion. Even when compared to today's Teams lectures, it exhibits greater interactivity. John proposes an idea or a perspective, then follows up with examples. His face appears intermittently, interspersed among the examples.

The diptych format I ultimately present serves as a form of on-screen reading. The single picture ratio is 2:3, while the overall diptych ratio is 4:3. The single picture fits mobile phone screens, and the diptych suits computer screens. The left side translates the shape and composition of the picture, and the right side shows the object in the photo, or the extracted symbol.

On mobile phones, the portrait screen allows for quick reading by flipping. The single picture on the left and right represent two keywords in a sentence, automatically combined in the viewer's mind. On computer screens, the format serves as an online exhibition, offering a chance for extended scrutiny. Each image attempts to respond to and validate my thought process: viewing elements in the picture as shapes or symbols.



[6]



[1]

Pieter Claesz. (1647). *Still life* [Oil on panel]. https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Pieter_Claesz._-_Still-life_-_WGA4968.jpg

[2]

Francisco de Zurbarán. (1636). *Still life* [Oil on canvas]. National Art Museum of Catalonia, Barcelona. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Still_Life_with_Pots

[3]

Paul Cézanne. (1893). *The Basket of Apples* [Oil on canvas]. Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Basket_of_Apples

[4]

Andy Warhol. (1962). *Campbell's Soup Cans* [Synthetic polymer paint on canvas]. Museum of Modern Art, New York. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Campbell%27s_Soup_Cans

[5]

Le Corbusier (1920). *Still Life* [Oil on canvas]. Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York City, NY, US. <https://www.wikiart.org/en/le-corbusier/still-life-1920>

[6]

Face (2013) [Screenshot]. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0pDE4VX_9Kk (Accessed: 16 May 2024).

This book chronicles the passing of the baton among artists in chronological order. During the Impressionists' clash with the Academy, the quality of an artwork was judged based on color, allusion, lines, and theme. The theme and concept of "Lunch on the Grass," influenced by artists like Titian and Raphael, transformed classical allegories into modern ones.

The transformation of content and form can be challenged separately to an extent. The content was almost swept away by the era, with Paris transitioning into modernity. The medieval maze evolved into a metropolis of glass and metal, and the advent of photography represented that time.

Later, as industrialization further developed, labels and daily consumer goods formed a close relationship. Movements like Dadaism and Spectral Art began to shift the discourse.

Today's city also poses its own proposition. The virtual world is thriving, and the separation between images and the objects they represent is intensifying. Almost everyone can recognize that images are no longer a direct reflection of reality. Our theme remains commodities and consumption. However, the form, or our perspective, can deviate slightly from the temporalization process. We still



[1]



[2]



[1] Édouard Manet. (1863). *Luncheon on the Grass* [Oil on canvas]. Musée d'Orsay, Paris. https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:%C3%89douard_Manet_-_Le_D%C3%A9jeuner_sur_l'herbe.jpg

[2] Titian. (1509–1510). *The Pastoral Concert* [Oil on canvas]. Musée du Louvre, Paris. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pastoral_Concert

I stumbled upon this article when I realized that Picasso and Husserl had simultaneously made breakthroughs in understanding and depicting objects, all within the same decade. This excited me because I spent the first week learning about new philosophical perspectives on viewing the world, and used these insights to observe my iterating_0 — an advertising collage.

The article also highlights that during the same period, Einstein revolutionized the mathematical representation of time and space. Concurrently, Picasso was amalgamating various aspects of an object, which could be interpreted as a compression of time.

It's commonly suggested that Picasso's Cubism was inspired by African sculptures. However, the parallel advancements in mathematics, philosophy, and visual representation intrigue me.

We often take for granted that visual art reflects a phenomenon, be it a natural occurrence or an urban landscape, or it communicates an emotion — enticing consumerism or eliciting empathy. But I contemplate the possibility of visual art distinctly reflecting a perspective.

In the second week of practice, I learned from non-visual fields, absorbed concepts, then looked at art and graphic design works, thought about what perspectives they chose, and then learned to represent the same scene with these perspectives.

d'strict (2024). Flow [Digital art]. Available at: <https://www.dstrict.com/ART/?q=YToxOntzOjEyOiJrZXI3b3JkX3R5cGUiO3M6MzoiYWxsljt9&bmode=view&idx=18205197&t=board&category=t3O5qTK5p4> (Accessed: 24 April 2024).

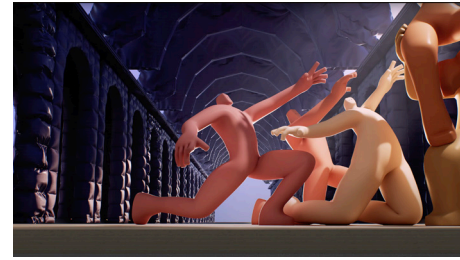
The central theme of this animation is using the same element, but altering its proportion and relationship with other elements, to reflect the stylistic changes of different eras.

This animation emphasizes the use of body language to convey the relationship between individuals and others, as well as between individuals and objects. For instance, during the Renaissance, there were limited character roles, with each character being uniquely beautiful. In the Rococo period, characters formed a line together, while in Realism, each character adopted a different posture. The Post-Impressionist period highlighted the relationship between individuals and their surroundings, with people blending into their environment.

Applying this animation's thought process to the contemporary era would likely result in this: environmental elements and characters would be placed on opposite sides of the screen, rather than having people in the background



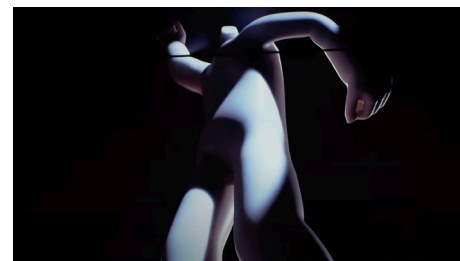
Renaissance



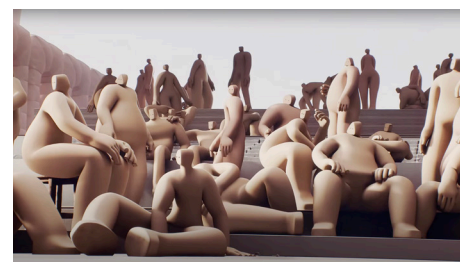
Baroque



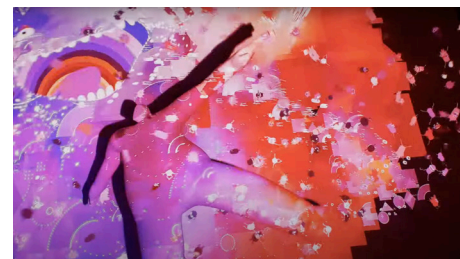
Rococo



Neoclassicism & Romanticism



Realism



Beyond Impressionism

Hiroshi sugimoto. *World Trade Center*. 1997.

Hiroshi sugimoto. *Dini's Surface: a surface of constant negative curvature obtained by twisting a pseudosphere*. 2004.

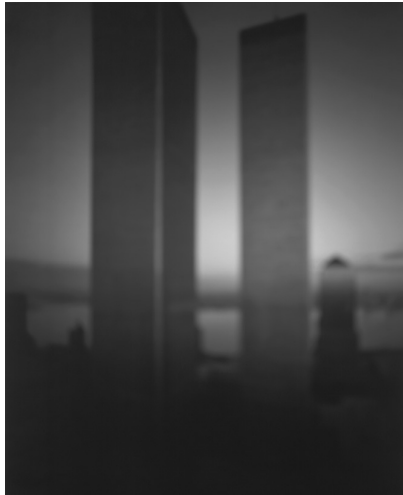
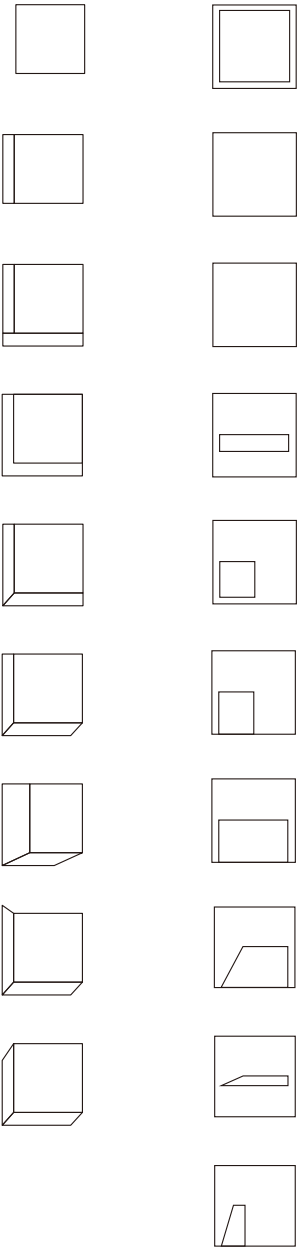
I've selected two series of Hiroshi sugimoto for reference. The first is about famous buildings' contours. He skillfully blurs the details, leaving only the shapes. These shapes effectively trigger associations with specific buildings, much like a red circle might remind one of an apple.

In terms of symbolism, I explored various methods, either through color or lines. I believe Sugimoto, when creating his series, experimented with different approaches to the same building. Some images focus more on specific parts, others on the overall contour. Some are overly clear, while others are too blurry for recognition.

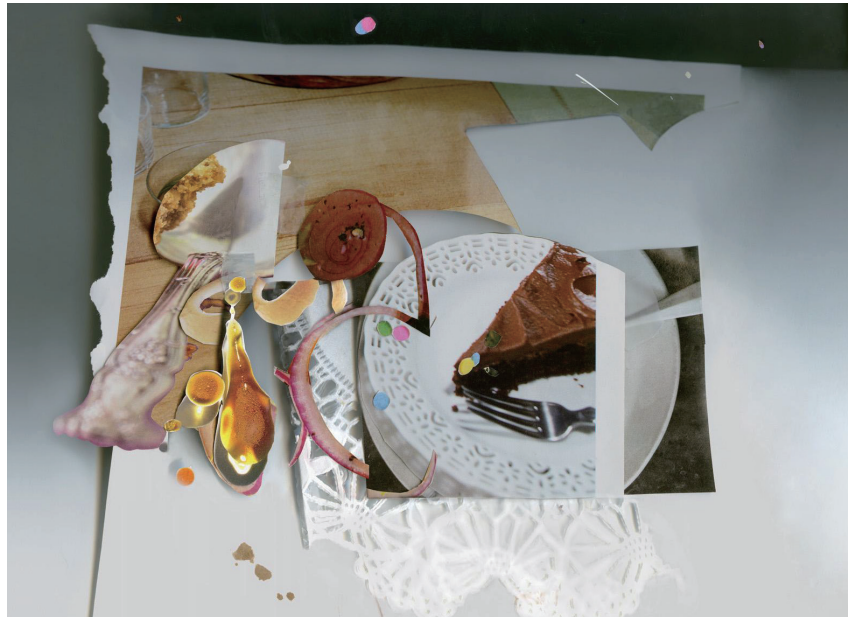
During the practice with lines, a shape can also transform into a symbol at a certain point.

The second series I'm referencing is about mathematical models. If the architectural series emphasizes symbols, this series emphasizes form.

To me, a form devoid of content, akin to a mathematical expression's translation, holds immense power and beauty.



Laura Letinsky. *Untitled #7, Albeit series*. [Chromogenic print]. 2010.
Photograph: 211.7" x 8.5" .



"Ways of Seeing" examines the perception of paintings in museums and advertisements or posters in newspapers. It discusses the perspectives of those who create these images and the viewpoints we, as viewers, can cultivate.

However, with the advent of mobile phones, image production has become straightforward. As viewers, the images we encounter daily are countless. Consider that before photography, viewers would stand before a painting for an extended period, with every color and light choice being the result of careful consideration. Now, the images we see are often merely symbolic, leaving us with a hazy impression.

Living in 2024, we can't ignore a significant revolution in image production: AI-generated images and videos. The generation method involves converting keyword text into images. For instance, if 'table' is a keyword, a table



feman/ couple
space



still life in the
tabel
space



symbol
shape/ color

will appear in the picture, but the table's specifics are relatively uncontrollable. We can refine our description, but it lacks the total control and expression of the painting era. The images we create and view are now symbols themselves.

Graphic designers and photographers are considering what to focus on when creating new images amidst today's abundance. They are questioning how to establish viewing methods and how images can break free from being physical world reproductions to establish and read their spatial relationships.

Laura Letinsky's work, which I'm referencing here, exemplifies this thought process and series of practices. She initially focused on family members, then shifted to the recombination of two spaces reflected in a mirror. She began to notice dining table items, adjusting their position to reflect spatial tension and instability. Gradually, she viewed these items by their shape and color, for instance, a pink irregularity instead of an orange net bag. Eventually, she used the images of the items as shooting objects, viewing the image as an image itself, a perspective reflected in the image creation process.

[1]
Laura Letinsky. *Untitled (Laura and Eric — mermaid)*. [Archival Ink Print]. 1996. Photograph: 20"x 24", Ed. 9 / 30"x 40", Ed. 5.
[2]
Laura Letinsky. *Untitled #1*. *Hardly More Than Ever* series [Archival Ink Print]. 1998. Photograph: colour, 15" x 24.75".
[3]
Laura Letinsky. *Untitled #9*. *Fall* series [Archival Ink Print]. 2009. Photograph: colour, 31.25" x 40".

The table is an object in the middle of the picture, the middle of the picture is a green square, the table is a green square.
The table is four legs and a plane, the elephant has four legs and a plane, the table is an elephant.
The table has 4 support points and 4 nodes, the table is 8 points.
The table is a parallelogram and 4 straight lines.
The table is an English word with five letters.
The table is a bunch of colors.

Rose is a rose is a rose.

I know this sentence looks very abstract, but I also think it's beautiful.
Gertrude Stein once said, "The whole field of the canvas is important." In my perspective, the first rose in a painting is an object, the second rose represents the concept of a rose, and the third rose, embodying the phrase 'a rose is a rose', diverges from the painting. It does not focus on the content within the painting, but shifts its focus from the painting to the real world, to the image, to the symbol, and finally to the concept.

This poem brings to mind the *Albeit* series, which transitions from focusing on people, to the spaces they occupy, and finally to the colors and shapes that constitute those spaces. The content is not the focus in poetry and photography; instead, the emphasis is on the picture or text itself.

Argonauts.
That is plenty.
Cunning saxon symbol.
Symbol of beauty.
Thimble of everything.
Cunning clover thimble.
Cunning of everything.
Cunning of thimble.
Cunning cunning.
Place in pets.
Night town.
Night town a glass.
Color mahogany.
Color mahogany center.
Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose.
Loveliness extreme.
Extra gaiters.
Loveliness extreme.
Sweetest ice-cream.
Page ages page ages page ages.
Wiped Wiped wire wire.
Sweeter than peaches and pears and cream.
Wiped wire wiped wire
Extra extreme.
Put measure treasure.
Measure treasure.
Tables track.
Nursed.
Dough.
That will do.
Cup or cup or.
Excessively illigitimate.
Pussy pussy pussy what what.
Current secret sneezers.
Ever.
Mercy for a dog.
Medal make medal.
Able able able.
A go to green and a letter spoke a go to green or praise or
Worships worships worships.
Door.
Do or.
Table linen.
Wet spoil.
Wet spoil gaiters and knees and little spools little spools or ready silk lining.
Suppose misses misses.
Curls to butter.
Curls.
Curls.

Settle stretches.
See at till.
Louise.
Sunny.
Sail or.
Sail or rustle.
Mourn in morning.
The way to say.
Patter.
Deal own a.
Robber.
A high b and a perfect sight.
Little things singer.
Jane.
Aiming.
Not in description.
Day way.
A blow is delighted.

Daniel Rubinstein and Katrina Sluis. (2013). *The Digital Image in Photographic Culture; Algorithmic Photography and the Crisis of Representation*. (2th ed.). Routledge.

First, we should define what is meant by the image of a thing. If an image is not represented as a photograph, where should our attention be directed? A photo is merely a translation result of a code or formula. For instance, if an apple represents real space, and a photo is the English version of an apple, how would we describe the Chinese version?

An image is not a direct reflection of the real world. Beyond the binary opposition of the real world and the image, there exists something that is neither an image nor a symbol. We might call it a sense of space, which is what I aim to capture.

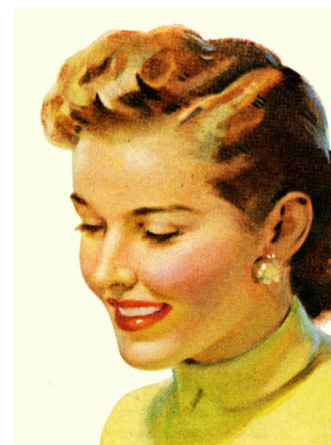
Symbols in paintings existed even before the invention of perspective. The ideal image of a mother in Coca-Cola advertising is no different from that of Jesus. However, in medieval painting, the rule that objects closer are larger and clearer, and those farther away are smaller and vaguer, was not yet universally accepted. The technique of making distant scenery clear conveys a different type of spatial feeling and information. It does not fix the viewer to a specific physical position through precise perspective.



[1]



[2]



[1] Piero della Francesca . (1470 - 1475). *Piero della Francesca* [oil on poplar wood]. National Gallery, UK. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Piero_della_Francesca_-_Nativity_\(detail\)_-_WGA17622.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Piero_della_Francesca_-_Nativity_(detail)_-_WGA17622.jpg)

[2] Duccio. (1307). *The Healing of the Man born Blind* [Egg tempera on wood]. National Gallery, UK. <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/duccio-the-healing-of-the-man-born-blind>

Jacques Tati. (Director). (1967). Playtime [Film; DVD Director's commentary]. Universal Pictures.

The city is a vast playground, and the protagonist, a stranger to this city, leads us to reassess our own cities from a somewhat detached perspective, instilling a sense of absurdity yet familiarity.

We scrutinize our surroundings as if viewing a landscape, maintaining a considerable distance from the objects being observed. We then start posing questions. Observing a collage of 1960s Coca-Cola advertisements, we are neither the consumers nor the creators. We simply observe, zooming in and out and surveying the surroundings, discovering more peculiar or intriguing facets.

The city in the film is filled with glass, enabling us to juxtapose various elements for observation, like office buildings and the Eiffel Tower, or living rooms from different apartments, turning them into components of the larger picture.

Many spaces and visuals are geometric, imbued with certain characteristics: corporate cubicles are square, representing a unit of space; roundabouts on highways are circular, symbolizing redistribution.

The scene before us reveals a characteristic behind each element, a mechanism. Different elements are juxtaposed for observation. I also examine my iterative objects in this manner, re-evaluating them through a stranger's eyes, considering the elements and the associations they create when placed side by side.

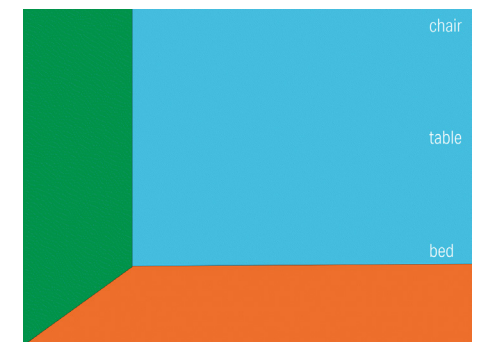
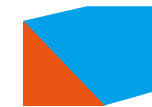
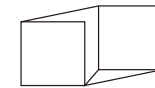
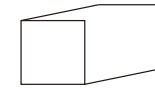
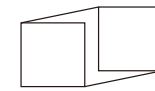
The city that Marco Polo describes is a rendition of an unseen metropolis, an original city so vast and intricate. He untangles a single thread from a complex knot of cotton and presents it to the emperor. The true city remains unseen, and the city that Marco Polo describes does not actually exist. This parallels photographs, graphics, and real space. The real space is invisible, and in the corner of my room, I am the Marco Polo, and you are my emperor. I extract a thin cotton thread from my city and present it to you. But remember, my city remains unseen.

Memories, symbols, and desires coalesce with lines, colors, and shapes. The city is not simply the sum of memory, symbol, and desire; that's just one way to describe it.

Lines, which represent memories, speak of perspective and depict your position.

Colors, symbolizing the foreground and background relationships, change the theme of the shape through their transitions.

Shapes, embodying desires, discuss the sense of space, a type of movement, a swaying, endless feeling.

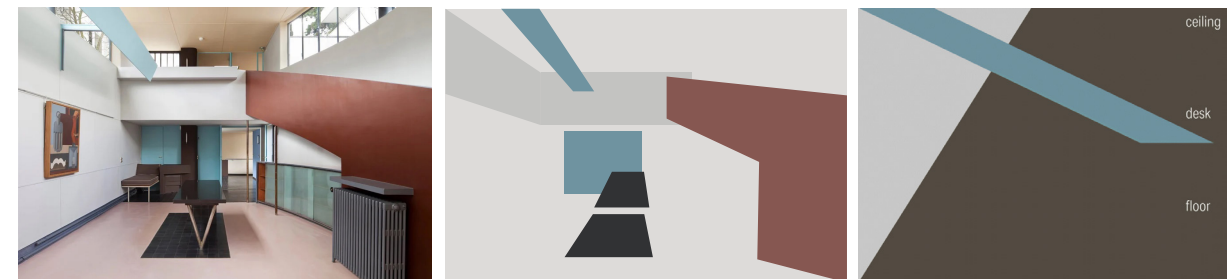


In this brief, I aim to reevaluate the concept of space within an existing scene. Le Corbusier contemplates the spatial relationship between color and shape in his approach to space creation.

"House is a machine to live in."

In many of Le Corbusier's works, he emphasizes that space is a container for human activity. However, in his paintings and in the Maison La Roche-Jeanneret building, I observe that space itself is the content. The architectural entity is not strictly a load-bearing structure from bottom to top, but rather a means of occupying space.

In this scene, heavier elements like floors and stairs, and lighter items such as tables and lamps, are visually represented on the same plane. This is achieved by using similar colors and simple shapes. Physical space exists first, transforming into a cohesive cave-like structure, which is then adorned with movable furniture.



Rafaël Rozendaal. A life without objects. Available at: <https://www.newrafael.com/a-life-without-objects/> (Accessed: May.17 2024).

I cannot explain why, but one of my favorite activities in the world is throwing stuff away. After graduating, I started moving to different countries, so I had to. I could only take so much with me. Possessions restrict movement. I don't need much.

I love the idea of empty spaces. I love visualizing an empty home with big windows in an empty landscape. I imagine windows opened on either side of the house, the wind blowing from miles away entering the house and leaving quickly, hardly obstructed.

Emptiness is very elegant. It is luxurious.

The reality is that I am never in an empty house in an empty landscape. I am always in very crowded places. I live in Chinatown New York which is dense with tourists and garbage. I travel in crowded airplanes and eat while my elbows touch the passenger next to me. I sleep in hotels packed with people and their luggage. I swim at crowded beaches and walk through crowded museums and sit in crowded subways.

Emptiness seems beautiful yet I hardly ever go there. I hardly make an effort. I could take a bus to the countryside and sit in an empty field for a few hours. I could but I don't.

I like the idea of emptiness more than the reality of it.

In pursuit of emptiness, I stripped away all details, leaving only the sky, the earth, walls, pillars, trees, and grasslands. The tree is devoid of leaves, trunk, shape, or color. Even though you can discern a shape and color, you'll understand that these aren't the tree's true attributes, even if I label it as 'TREE'.

What remains is a singular feeling, not tied to the visual representation of objects but to their essence.

An abundance of details compares to a crowd of people, noise, dust, and garbage. I spent an hour under a tree, observing another tree across from me and the triangular lawn beneath it. Sometimes reclining, sometimes sitting upright, the tree and grassland seemed to rotate in the air. I spent that hour not caring about the tree's color, just being with the tree and the grassland.

