

intervene

Plato distrusted the senses because the evidence they furnished about external objects could change; moreover, the objects themselves could change, as in the process of growth.

Wade, Nicholas, and Michael Swanston. 2001. *Visual Perception: An Introduction*. 2nd ed. Hove: Psychology Press.

>From a world ablaze with sunlight so bright you have to battle the urge to close your eyes, – which, though an act of protection, would entail the risk of missing its glory – falling back into the envelopment of shadow renders you momentarily blind. For a spur of seconds, time flickers and folds in on itself, your perception muted.

The question of perception was one which taunted scientists and philosophers for centuries.¹ It was theorised by Democritus (c. 460-370 B.C.E) that “images were continually emitted from objects” to “carry impressions to the eye,” like auras pulsing through space.² Correspondingly, it was believed for years that light was cast out from the eyes themselves to strike objects and reel back in their facsimiles.³ The space in-between perception and the external world was rife with mystery, the process of sight some slippery trick which called for examination and, occasionally, suspicion.

This interspace, among other things, came to be harnessed for its distortion in the way of optical illusions. A familiar one utilises the effect of physiological afterimages to imprint a shape in your vision: Stare at the three dots for 35-40 seconds. then look at a white wall and start blinking your eyes.....Do you

see
Jesus?⁴

Vision, here, is exposed as a fallible technology. Betrayed by the “intense or repetitive” concentration, photopigments are exhausted, hereby rocking and altering perception.⁵ Like Skye Malu Baker’s ghost prints, time melts as the mechanics of sight falter and meld together visions, dripping echoes on differing points of reality. Now, the schism between perception and the world becomes an opportune space for collage.

Perhaps Plato was right to tilt his head at the senses. From Gestalt laws of seeing, we understand that our vision is already carefully curated before us.⁶ It is noted that for us to perceive a form, “it must belong to a part of the visual field that holds together in itself and is sharply delineated against what is around it.”⁷ That is to say that sight is finicky. “Even the most disorderly human being has at least, without realising it, eyes that love order.”⁸ The interim is a space which reassembles. Not only are the mechanics of perception prone to faltering, but also garnering secrets. The mere act of seeing is a performance.

Skye knows this, her prints amalgamating those straying details, layering histories and projections which can only exist together in the in-between.

The artist Svetlana Boym recounts that technology is “wholly trustworthy, were it not for the human factor... The error is a chance encounter between us and the machines in which we surprise each other.”⁹ Ocular perception becomes this chance encounter manifest. What other fate did our warm, pulsing machinery have? “Art’s new technology is a broken technology,” Boym declares.¹⁰ What if we ourselves are the broken technology? Like crumbling alginate moulds, there are thresholds to what we can cast.

Blinking back the sun’s deep afterimage, this new, dim environment shutters into view. Images grapple with one another here – imprints from another space and time which have been huddled in the shadows for perhaps an eternity. Blotches and nebulous shapes waver before you; hazy figures and displaced architectural details are suspended in this uncharted realm. Plato would shake his head, seeing what you’re seeing: the ceaselessly evolving world, the boundless mind, the glitching techne, all reaching out to brush fingers, assembling for one mystifying, dizzying spell – even if just for an intermission in terra vert.

by Kaijern Koo

1. Wade, Nicholas, and Michael Swanston. 2001. *Visual Perception: An Introduction*. 2nd ed. Hove: Psychology Press.

2. Wade and Swanston, *Visual Perception: An Introduction*.

3. Wade and Swanston, *Visual Perception: An Introduction*.

4. Veni, Sanjeetha. 2011. "Optical Illusion". Whizkid1991.Blogspot.Com. <http://whizkid1991.blogspot.com/2011/05/optical-illusion.html>.

5. "Afterimage". 2020. En.Wikipedia.Org. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afterimage>.

6. Metzger, Wolfgang, translated by Lothar Spillmann. 2006. *Laws of Seeing*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

7. Metzger, *Laws of Seeing*.

8. Metzger, *Laws of Seeing*.

9. Boym, Svetlana. 2006. "Nostalgic Technology: Notes For An Off-Modern Manifesto."

10. Boym, "Nostalgic Technology: Notes For An Off-Modern Manifesto."