

艺术与错觉

ART AND ILLUSION

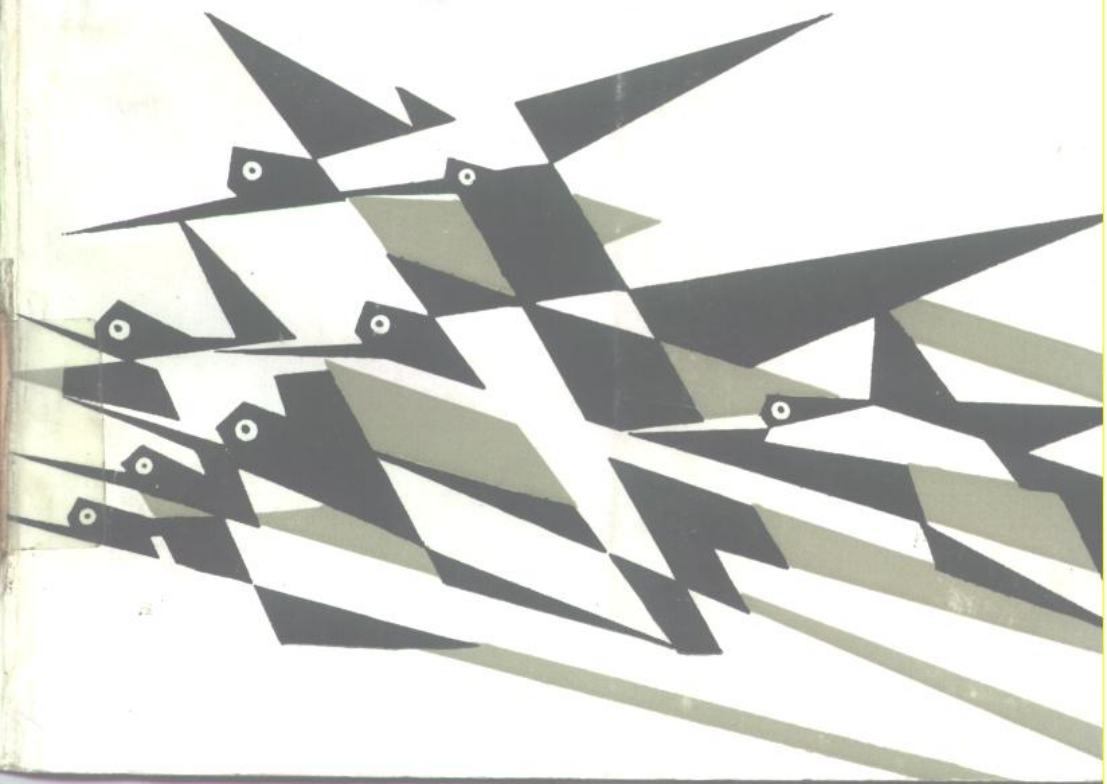
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PRIMA PARS





Et Goin bid

Art as Illusion

Preface to the Chinese Edition

I am happy to accept the invitation by my translator to write a brief introduction for the Chinese reader. A few glances at the pages of the book will tell him that it should not fall into any of the usual categories of books on art and normally illustrate the masterpieces of particular periods or artists.

It is true that there are also illustrations here of great works of sculpture and of paintings from many ages and many parts of the world, but there are even more pictures of more modest images such as comic strips, diagrams, instruction-books, psychological demonstrations, advertisement and photographs. Their presence is explained by the subtitle of the book "a study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation," because the range of representation naturally extends much further than the confines of Paint Art. I would not want the reader to conclude, however, that I consider all these various representations of equal value. They were made to serve different purposes and sometimes have very little to do

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with art and therefore demonstrate different types of image making. In discussing these types as the masters used in their production I did not want to disregard the crucial problem that has concerned many artists in the Western Tradition, the achievement of life-like images and an even occasionally produce the illusion of stability.

The discovery of the army of clay-figures around the Tomb of the Emperor Qin Shihuangdi has reminded us of the extent to which Chinese masters of the past have also excelled in the creation of strikingly life-like images. Unless I am much mistaken, however, this aim never dominated the great Tradition of Chinese Painting. Maybe the link between Calligraphy - painting was too strong in China to favour a painting style that aimed simply at representing reality in all its aspects. It is for this very reason that I found the study of this tradition so important for the understanding of what I call the Psychology of pictorial representation, because

the painter, like the calligrapher must first master the formulas for mountains, trees or clouds, before he can modify them for his purpose. In the book I refer to the formulas as shemata as I have discussed their role in Chinese painting in Chapter II Section II. But the real point of the book is that all styles of representation operate with shemata - that the need to learn the formulas for rendering visual reality explains the relative uniformity of painting styles in various periods.

Even so I argue in the Fourth Chapter of the book that the Western Tradition of painting responded to a special demand. It followed the drama on the stage in turning the beholder into an imaginary eye-witness of the events told in myths and legends. To fulfill this purpose the artist had to explore visual reality like a scientist, studying the anatomy of the human body, the laws of perspective and the effects of light & reflection all of which were incorporated in the shemata the apprentice had to learn.

Many of the most famous works of art of the West represent scenes from Greek mythology or from the life of Christ - or of the Christian Saints - the reader may here think of the ancient Laocoon Group of Leonardo's Last Supper.

I believe that it was in enjoying & admiring these creations that contemporary observers felt the styles of representation had made enormous progress towards realism over the centuries.

The first writings on the history of art owe their origin to this awareness. This applies no less to the Greek critics whose observations have been preserved in the Latin Encyclopaedia by Pliny the Elder than to the voluminous work of the 16th century Italian painter Vasari. Both the history of art as a history of progress in the imitation of reality.

It is easy to see that this interpretation was very one-sided, for we all know that earlier works of art whose style is sometimes described as "primitive" can be much superior in aesthetic quality to more skilful portrayals such as have been produced commercially in our century. I hope readers of this book will not accuse me of committing

the elementary error of confusing degrees of
realism with artistic excellence. But neither
shows we fall into the opposite error of
assuming that the progress in the methods of
representation was entirely unimportant to
the great masters of the past. It is
sufficient to read the opinions of Leonardo
da Vinci or of the great English landscape-
painter John Constable I have quoted in
the book to see how much these masters
were concerned with exploring the visible
world - an exploration continued into
the time of the French 19th century Impressionists,
but that it was only in our own century that
these questions were dismissed by critics as
trivial. One of the reasons for this change
of outlook is obvious: The invention of
photography has given every body an instrument
in his hand which permits him to reproduce
any aspect of visual reality. True, the
invention has also posed the problem of why
the human eye and hand had encountered
such difficulty in achieving what a lens
and a sensitive film achieve with such ease.

It is with the explanation of this problem that this book is mainly concerned. In writing it I had to abandon the facile explanation which I found in some discussions of art history, for instance the idea that the changing styles of art replicate the change in use the world was actually seen. Even less could I accept the view that there really is no such thing as virtual reality as that we therefore have no justification in calling any representation more or less realistic than another. Since a superficial reading of this book has suggested to some readers that I advocate such philosophical relativism I should like to draw attention right away to the last of Chapter II - where I have defined my position in this important matter.

No doubt, I have discussed in this book in how many ways our eyes can deceive us as we can produce virtual illusions of many kinds. But if we had no standard of truth, no conception of an unchanging reality, we would also be unable to speak of a departure from the Truth.

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It was in this sense that I have spoken in the book of the process of "Selection and Correction" - the word correction implies a greater approximation to the truth, or at least an elimination of falsehood.

In my earlier book The Story of Art I made a distinction between what we really see and what we merely think we see. I suggested, as others had done before me, that our knowledge often dominates our perception and therefore also distorts the way in which we construct images. I do not think that this position is altogether wrong, but it presents an oversimplification, as I have tried to explain in Chapter IX section 5 of the book.

It was to clarify these questions that I turned to the study of writings of psychologists who investigate the process of visual perception by means of experiments carried out in the laboratory. What I learned in this context with contemporary science was that the human eye and the human brain are organs of amazing complexity - that scientists are

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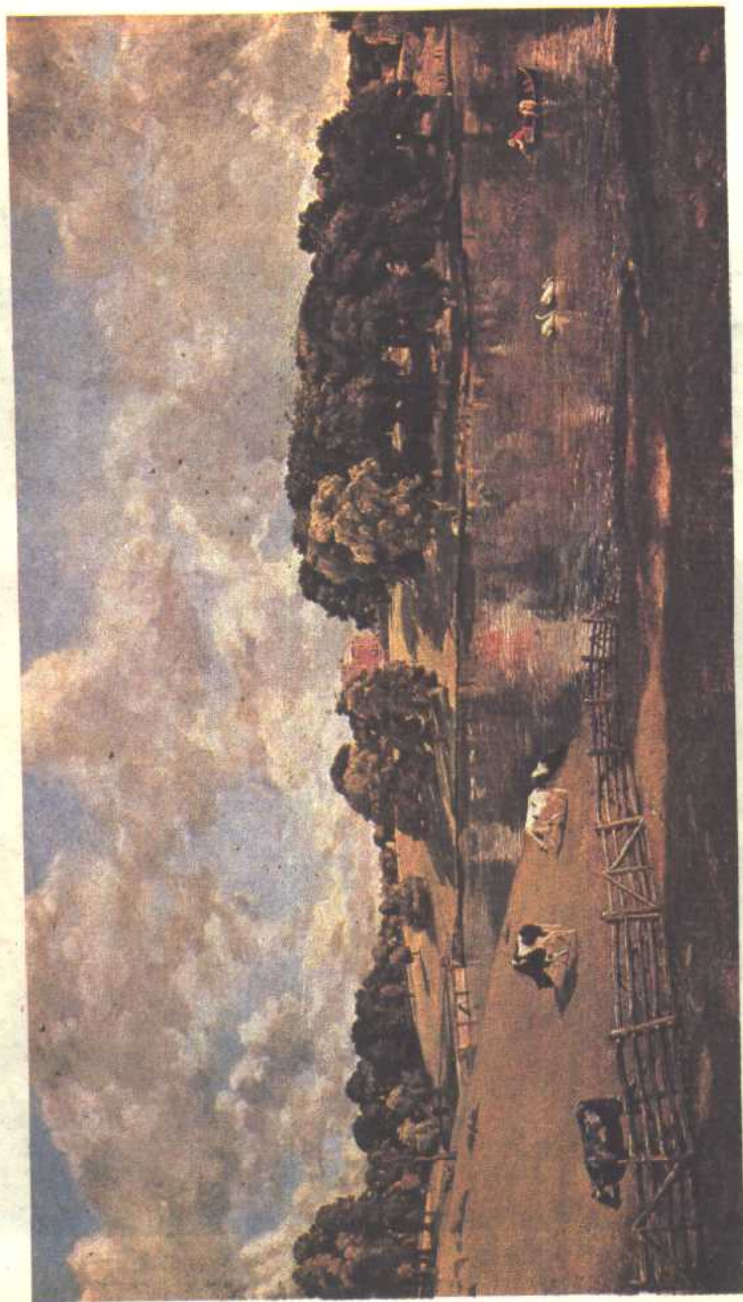
are now far from claiming that they completely
understand how we see the world.

This book will have served its purpose if it
conveys to the reader something of the fascination
and instead of the mystery of the questions I
have attempted to discuss in its chapters

London, 17th May 1987

S. J. Gould

贡布里希爵士为中文版写的序言手迹 (8)



I 康斯特布尔：威文荷公园，埃塞克斯。1816年



II 康斯特布尔：达德姆溪谷。1812年，油画速写



III 克劳德·洛兰：牧人。约1655/1660年



IV 芳丁-拉图尔：静物。1866年



V 儿童模仿的康斯特布尔的《威文荷公园》

VI 打撒效应



VII 蒙德里安：百老汇的布吉-乌吉。1942/1943年

