



*Jiarong Chen, Reality with no bounds,
oil on canvas, wood, leather, mirror, 190cm X 90cm, 2023*

Jiarong Chen

Reality with no bounds

This work is influenced by Plato's Allegory of the Cave, but it steps into the digital age. And I call it digital "cave" - because the "screen." the concept of the "digital cave" represents the differences in our perceptual experience. In this digital age, we are constantly surrounded by images, a shift that influences our understanding of the world. Every text and sound can be coded into images or videos, and vice versa, turning our world into a landscape dominated by images. It's not merely a replication of reality but a digital reconstruction of it.

I've used the one-point perspective to symbolize the formality of Western painting in my work. Juxtaposing this with this mountain-a typical Chinese landscape painting. I've attempted to challenge the formalized image expression and highlight the shift in our visual perception.

The adoption of a one-point perspective in the painting introduces a shift in our visual perception. I replace poetic or spiritual visual imagery with a more geometric, mathematical representation of seeing on purpose. This transition, in essence, objectifies subjectivity into the physical eye, which is then further abstracted into a focal point. This transformation is a metaphor of scientism and capitalism, the human experience is often reduced to quantifiable entities.

Martin Heidegger in his book "Being and Time", proposed the concept of "instrumentality". He mentioned that tools are not only objects used to meet specific needs but more importantly, they play an intermediary role in our lives, shaping our understanding and experience of the world. From this perspective, ancient leather can be seen as a tool that not only provided a material function but also had an impact on a cultural and social level. In this context, I chose leather. Leather serves as a symbol of humanity's early attempts to control nature, turning animal skins into useful items, thereby initiating trade and early capital accumulation.

From the theory by Descartes' perspective and scientism, representing rationality and logic. I use linear perspective in this painting, a typical product of scientific rationality. This embodies a rational, unified space, reflecting the subject's paradigmatic understanding of the world.

I've considered the question of vision from several angles.

The first layer is intuitive perception. If we delve into optics, the image that an object casts on the retina should be inverted. When light enters the eye, the retinal image is upside down, which implies that the world should also appear upside down under normal circumstances. Why then do we not see objects as inverted? Our brain has the ability to generate correct recognition and correct erroneous visual information. For instance, in my painting, although only a few corners are marked in the rectangle on the left, our brain will still create a stereoscopic image under the deception of these incomplete pieces of information. It will supplement it into a full cube.

The second layer is about shape. The composition form of this artwork was inspired by the earliest models of stereoscopes. The left and right eyes see different images that then converge into three-dimensional figure. I used a flat image to represent this, as I believe it better conveys the concept of illusion. An image is able to provide depth due to the effect of perspective, creating an illusion - a depth illusion.

The third layer connects perspective and capitalism. Ideally, the easel painting is framed. The picture frame emphasizes this point: within its four edges, the painting establishes a closed, cohesive, and absolutely rigorous system. The frame marks the boundaries of a certain autonomous order or kingdom. The requirements of composition and the illusory yet ubiquitous three-dimensional space of the painting construct these strict rules of order. The representation of real figures and objects are placed within this order. All traditional imitation skills focus on making these representations as tangibly real as possible. Of course, nowadays, visual images no longer serve private pleasures, nor exist only to satisfy the upper class. As suggested by the title of "On Artificial Perspective", a book on perspective published by Viator in 1505, the perspective is a set of man-made rules. During a demonstration of perspective, drilling a small peephole in the center of the panel defines the condition of viewing with a single eye. Clearly, this method of perspective is based on a strict set of predetermined rules, implying a clearly defined viewer's perspective. During the rationalization of vision, perspective operates in a manner very similar to the order of space and new scientism. Such space is stripped of its visual meaning, turning into a unified visual system of abstract coordinates - a homage to an objective process.

In my practices, I've connected my exploration of visual perception to societal constructs of capitalism. The laws of perspective drawing create an artificial order, much like the rules and structures established by capitalism. By confronting viewers with the geometric space generated by perspective, I challenge viewers to reconsider their relationship with their own perception and their engagement with the world. This idea provides a reflection of the relationship between visual perception, societal constructs, and individual subjectivity.