

# The Significance of "View Box" to Intuitive Aesthetics

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**Abstract:** *As an art form, "view box" is the communication channel between the viewer and the picture, and the key of the gestalt intuitive aesthetic space. Meanwhile, the duality of its relationship with the viewer is the foundation of constructing aesthetic "field". As a concept, "visual frame" has more methodological and ontological significance in the current cultural background, and its logical relationship with viewers helps people cultivate a more poetic way of life. This paper mainly discusses the deeper cultural connotation of "visual frame" from the perspective of system theory and cybernetics by taking the specific characteristics of "visual frame" in intuitive aesthetics as the breakthrough point.*

**Keywords:** *"View box"; Intuitive Aesthetics; Communication Channels; Barrier Meaning; Poetic*

## 1. Introduction

"Every great artist creates a new world, in which everything previously familiar takes on an appearance that has never been seen before. This novel appearance does not distort or betray the essence of these things, but reinterprets those old truths in a way that is tantalizingly novel and enlightening."<sup>[1]</sup>Focusing too much on Rudolf Arnheim's "new world", we tend to think that all the meaning of visual aesthetics comes from this other world. Our aesthetic experience is not only given by aesthetic objects, but also the result of aesthetic relations in essence. From the perspective of genesis, the occurrence of aesthetic phenomena requires certain conditions. Only in the "field" created by many conditions can viewing have aesthetic significance and the experience process belong to the aesthetic process. These conditions reflect the viewer's relationship with the "new world". In these conditions, we often ignore the value of "view box", and simply define it as the boundary of visual field, but ignore its significance in the intuitive aesthetic way.

As an aesthetic way, "intuition" is different from the completely participatory aesthetic way (such as music). The occurrence of intuitive aesthetics requires the establishment of a fuzzy distance between aesthetic subject and aesthetic object, so that the aesthetic subject can maintain the reality of "absence" to a certain extent. This reality defines the logic between us and the object.<sup>[2]</sup> Only through this logic can viewing be introduced into the aesthetic field, and we can truly realize the intuitive aesthetic experience.

"View box" is the channel between aesthetic subject and object, and also becomes the insurmountable boundary between the real world and aesthetic world. In painting, "view box" is the boundary of picture space, which is not necessarily the existence of physical factors, but the existence of frame always reminds people of the two-dimensional realistic limitations of easel painting, and always keeps the distance between the audience and the "other world" during viewing. The stipulation of painting frame for painting space is the basis and key to realize "static and intuitive" aesthetic, which separates the real world from the aesthetic world and enables aesthetic subjects to participate in the aesthetic construction of "other shore world" in different meanings.

## 2. "View box" as communication channel

In the beginning, the painting on the plane cannot be regarded as the existence of image in the aesthetic sense. The key is the absence of "visual frame" to construct the aesthetic field. The Lascaux Cave paintings are painted on the dark depths of the cave and depict many animals from ancient times. In the absence of artificial light, it is impossible to see the picture on the wall, so in this environment it is only used as a decoration of the rock wall or as an independent aesthetic requirement. "The Lascaux rock paintings of the Paleolithic period have no edges, and a large number of figures and animal images extend along the trend of the cave. At that time, there was no distinction between drawing figures and

drawing ground. It was only in a certain period that people began to recognize the difference between painting and wall, and began to distinguish between painting areas and non-painting (natural) areas on the wall."<sup>[3]</sup> The animal images painted by people in ancient times mainly existed as a form of religion. They were painted in the depths of caves, not for viewing, but perhaps as a kind of stored consciousness. Due to the lack of food sources, people drew animal images to represent the acquisition of animals. In this sense, rock painting is identical with reality, and painting may be the power and ability only possessed by wizards. The reality that the image world is equal to the real world cannot construct a pure aesthetic intuition. When people watch images, they are the same as when they watch reality. Images have more realistic value, just as hungry people see a sheep is like seeing a roast leg of lamb. When we look at ancient cave paintings, we are moved by the vivid images, because we see buffalo not steak, but the beauty of power. This is because there is a barrier between us and the rock painting. We do not regard the world of the picture as the present world (at least a past world), and this barrier destroys our attention to the realistic value of the image of the picture. Because our concept of painting is different from that of people in ancient times, this barrier is not tangible barrier, but let us on the ancient rock painting invisible "view box". It is precisely because of the existence of "visual frame" in the sense of no barrier that the identity of image and reality was realized under the concept of the ancients.

Only after the appearance of "view box" did the insurmountable barrier realize the difference between the painting world and the real world. Later, after the invisible view box was discovered, the visible "visual frame" became the channel for people to communicate with the "other world", and tried to transcend the barrier of the invisible "view box". Attempts to transcend the invisible view box are inspired by the reality of doors and Windows. "A window is an opening, is a hole that provides light and ventilation. It can be opened and closed; It divides space into sides and sides, inside and outside, front and back. Windows open to another three-dimensional world; It's a membrane between surface and depth... The window is also a frame, a stage foreground: its edges hold the view in place." In many paintings, the painter opens the passage by depicting virtual doors and Windows, such as Dali's "Girl At the Window" (figure 1). In this work, there are double "view box". The first frame is the frame of the painting, and the picture shows a scene of a woman overlooking from the window. In this sense, the frame is more of a separation between the real world and the picture world of the viewer. This barrier is an absolute existence, so that we can only observe, but not enter. To break the status quo, the painter in the picture opened another "frame" (an open window), compared with the indoor outside the window is a different story, we neglected at this time we are in the world, as if place oneself in the girl's interior, as the picture in the girl's dynamic guidance, follower seascape painting figures looked out the window together. This emphasis frame depicts the outdoor seascape. This emphasis frame depicts the outdoor seascape. Because the characters in the picture can be passed through the window, we ignore the existence of the first emphasis frame to a certain extent. With the help of this technique, many painters often open a door or window in the indoor scene to show the double space to close the distance between the viewer and the picture. The frame becomes a channel that we can "cross". As the barrier meaning of painting frame has been put on hold, the painter makes the audience unconsciously cross the frame of painting by turning their attention, surpassing the barrier of the first attention frame.



Figure 1: Girl at the Window.

However, no matter how the painter tries to divert people's attention, the frame of the painting always exists, and the two-dimensional plane of the picture is always impenetrable. Finally, when the audience's point of view is free to the border of the picture, the frame will enter the field of vision, and the sense of barrier will appear. For this reason, many painters tried another way to go beyond the frame, painting a

frame at the edge of the picture, the figure is not framed in the picture, but beyond the "boundary" of the picture. This approach is extremely subtle, because it is easy to see a frame depicting reality as the actual boundary of the picture, which is part of the picture. Mantania's "Virgin Offering Jesus to the Temple" (figure 2) directly depicts a real physical frame, which like a well-framed work. Since we attribute the frame of the picture to the space in which we live in reality, part of the body of the figure in the picture extends out of the frame, creating an illusion for the viewer: the picture space and the viewer space are interlinked, and the frame seems to become a window, a channel of communication between the two worlds. There are relatively many works using this technique in religious paintings, because the main purpose of religious paintings is not to let the audience outside the religious scenes depicted, but to let the audience directly participate in the scene of religious stories as much as possible. Shaping this sense of presence is the need of religious enlightenment believers. In this sense, religious paintings try to make watching achieve the effect of listening, just as the aesthetic key of music lies in the audience's "presence", immersive to achieve the realm of ecstasy. In this way, religious paintings attempt to make the audience as "present" as possible, and to enter the tactile scene through intuition. To this end, the first thing the artist needs to do is to break through the barrier of the canvas and make the border become a channel connecting the two worlds.



*Figure 2: The Holy Mother consecrated Jesus to the temple.*

### 3. "View box" as barrier meaning

The establishment of static and intuitive aesthetic "field" not only requires the viewer's consciousness to intervene in the picture space, but also needs a possible role of "spectator" blocking the meaning of the viewer. Static and intuitive aesthetics is just like you stand on a glass window to appreciate the scenery outside. Your eyes and consciousness can wander in the world outside the window, but you can't walk into it realistically. Transparent glass isolates the viewer's body and mind, restricting him to intervene in the experience of the opposite world from the perspective of a calm onlooker. This double stipulation of "view box" constructs the static and intuitive aesthetic "field" very well. As a communication channel, the view box gives the viewer the possibility to experience the world in consciousness, while the view box in the sense of barrier excludes this kind of experience from the possibility of realistic physical experience, and is only the simulation of realistic physical experience in consciousness. Aesthetic first removes the reality of practical value, aesthetic experience first removes the perspective of real life experience. This in itself is not a restriction on experience, but to a great extent liberates the confinement of the body on consciousness and pushes the possibilities of experience to infinity. Without such liberation, it would be difficult for the audience to participate in the re-creation of the work when facing the work, and there would be no possibility of "one audience has a thousand Hamlets". It is precisely because of the "ambiguity" of the aesthetic "field" that watching becomes a process with infinite charm.

From the historical point of view, the "presence" in the complete sense of subject consciousness does not completely constitute the "field" in the pure sense of static and intuitive aesthetics. In ancient times, people's viewing of rock paintings has the meaning of witchcraft. The watch is belong to the viewer completely present to see it. They have a strong consciousness, which can regard any experience and reality has a similar object refers to the real object. Just like the children's game, a strange puppet is a concrete who in the children's eyes, and they can talk to the puppet seriously, as if their real friends are around. These behaviors may seem strange, because we are standing in an absent reality watching their "absurd" behavior. The instinct consciousness of animism enables ancient people and children to intervene in the "other world" without barrier. Just because there is no distinction between "this world" and "the other side of the world", no distinction between "figure" and "ground", the original watching and listening are all present, such experience has sorcery direction, bearing more realistic appeals and

identification, can not be equal to the pure sense of aesthetic.

The "view box" is not simply a boundary to the image, but opens up a "whole new world". "As a dividing line, the frame not only distinguishes the two worlds inside and outside the work, but also supports the center, supports the interior and makes the center become the content. From this point of view, without accessories, the work would be impossible."<sup>[5]</sup> The frame is not only the boundary between the inside and outside of the work, but it brings the work into a larger context and determines the work. Many of the cave paintings we see have almost no boundaries, with each image referring to a specific object and situation. In order to expand the capacity of images, it is necessary to increase the number of images. No matter how many images there are, the reference is limited. Each picture cannot refer to an infinite possible world, but can only focus all the points of consciousness on specific objects. After an image has a boundary, the image will shelter in the world defined by the border and become a part of it. This world is an independent and complete whole, and only then can the field of view appear the center. Instead of reducing and limiting the image, boundaries extend the world of the object to infinity.

In the double stipulation of "view box", the painting art in the classical period more emphasizes the "presence" of consciousness, while the modern painting art is more inclined to "look on". Before modern times, the paintings tried to create a world in which the audience could intervene as much as possible and participate in the artistic conception of literary narration, so as to better integrate the consciousness of the group and play a better role of enlightenment. This intuitive aesthetic was in line with the needs of the society at that time. Artistic change is not only a superficial change of form, but also a change of social needs. Since modern times, the tide of social democratization has been advancing, democracy and individuality have become the mainstream consciousness of society, and independent thinking and viewing of the world have become the instinctive pursuit of individuals. People calmly stay in the collective ideology, open their eyes and view the world from an independent perspective, hoping to establish a world belonging to their own. Modern painting no longer emphasizes the imitation of reality, but tries to create a "new world", which points to the real form of heart rather than the real form of experience. Realistic aesthetics requires viewers to observe reality from a more individual and spectator perspective, therefore, modern art constantly restores the picture space to the form of two-dimensional ontology, and the world that the viewer sees is the form that our real experience field can hardly hide. "View box" blocks the viewer from the real world and intervenes in the picture world with a more calm and rational criticism. In Picasso's work "The Weeping Woman" (Figure 3), the picture shows the form of a weeping woman from multiple perspectives. The painter splices the dynamic perspective of the image into a two-dimensional plane space, forcing the viewer to carry out the flow of consciousness under the fragmented figure. As viewers are accustomed to view from a single and static point, this flat and unfamiliar visual space highlights the existence of "visual frame", which separates the real world from the picture world and forces us to examine the form presented by the picture as "spectators". Following the hints of the picture and constantly searching for the information contained therein, this visual way which cannot truly fit the human viewing experience can make us pay more attention to the painful state and feelings of the characters in the picture than the real description of a crying woman. The main picture is not a woman crying, but the real state of a woman crying. This gives each viewer a more independent view and intervention in the picture. Looking on does not limit the wandering of the subject consciousness. On the contrary, it is the observation of the spectator that stimulates the wandering of consciousness in the "other world" to the greatest extent.

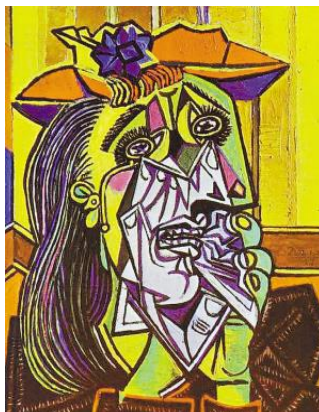


Figure 3: *The Weeping Woman*.

#### 4. Poetic Intervention in the "view box" of life

Intuitive aesthetics is not only applicable to painting and other art fields, in the broader reality of life, intuitive aesthetics is happening at any time. After modernism, painting moved from shelf to shelf, pop art, performance art, installation art, multimedia art and so on entered the public's vision, and art's involvement in life became a new trend of thought. Since the creation of Duchamp's "Spring", art no longer strives to create a "new world", but regards the reality of life itself as the "other shore world", and the real life products are promoted to the throne of lofty art, which can also be said to pull art directly into the secular world. Art tends to be life oriented, life pursues art oriented, this world for the first time overlapped with the other world. In this context, art rushed out of the mysterious fortress, art permeates into every corner of life, everyone is an artist, art can be anything. This does not violate the logic of aesthetics. It is not only appreciating excellent works of art that is aesthetic, nor is it only the works created by artists that can be works of art. Art intervention in life is the need of the development of our times, and life art is the result of social progress. Whether ready-made products can become works of art, whether life process can become aesthetic process, the key point lies in whether life field can become aesthetic "field".

The key to the formation of aesthetic "field" lies in the establishment of "view box". In many cases, "view box" needs the help of tangible objects to transform the visual space. For example, screens were often used for representation in ancient China (Figure 4). Through the screen, we can see the scenes unfolding in different periods of time. The communicative body language of the characters beside the screen implies the "passage" between spaces, The screen here is not completely a barrier to different time and space, but has the possibility of access. With the help of a concrete object, the painter has realized the dual meaning of "visual frame". It is the duality of visual frame that gives the viewer a sense of consciousness and freedom, as if we live in it and are at the same time a spectator. If there is no screen intervention, the picture is difficult to achieve this kind of poetic blurred sense of time and space staggered. In the aesthetic "field" constructed by "view box", the viewer and the world are not the existence between subject and object, but the existence of intersubjectivity. It does not engulf the existence as an independent individual, but realizes the co-construction between the viewer subject and the other side of the world subject through mutual communication. The world after co-construction is not a secular value world, but a clear world after the secular opposition is covered by the "view box".



Figure 4: *The Night Revels of Han Xizai.*

#### 5. Conclusions

From the perspective of system theory, "view box" is not only methodology, but also ontological significance. Is it possible to realize the art of life under the current social background? Or can people really live aesthetically? The key lies in whether the current social culture has the possibility to support people to find the invisible "view box" when facing real life, and people can enter the static and intuitive aesthetic "field" whenever and wherever. Only in this sense can we realize the cultural ideal of "art replaces religion" envisioned by Mr. Cai Yuanpei. Why do we need to emphasize static and intuitive aesthetic approaches now? From the perspective of history, human society has never experienced a real era of aesthetic viewing. The long history equates "static intuition" with watching, and pursues the realm of musical ecstasy in a visual way, resulting in individual frustration and rejection of their own world. Since modern times, in order to fight against classical culture, people chose confrontation with the world first, and tried to emphasize individual independence and conquest of the world, which eventually led to the disorder of social collective culture, which is also the crazy "Dionysian state". We need to build a new relationship with the world through postmodern reflection, not confrontation and obsession, but contemplation and communication. The system and intersubjectivity emphasized in philosophy are

reflections on the modern society. We should build a harmonious society of our own to reflect in the aesthetic field, which is to emphasize the poetry and communication given to the world by intuitive aesthetics.

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