

# Visibility Constraints in Depiction: Objects Experienced versus Objects Depicted

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## *Abstract*

It is widely accepted that pictures can only depict visible things. The paper criticises this ‘visibility constraint’ on the objects of depiction. The constraint is shown to imply that the range of visibilia is settled prior to an investigation of what can be seen in pictures. By contrast to this, I suggest that settling what can be seen in pictures is *relevant* to settling the range of visibilia. It is what we experience in pictures, and not the objects of depiction, that is subject to a visibility constraint, I propose. After criticising the widely accepted visibility constraint in the first half of the paper, I outline an account of what we experience in pictures in the second half of the paper.

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## **I. Introduction**

It is natural to think that what pictures allow spectators to become aware of is somehow restricted to the visual. Pictures are visible presentations. They constitute a visual

form of art.<sup>1</sup> Analogously, music and speech are audible presentations and seem to somehow be restricted by what is audible. This motivates the idea that pictures are subject to a visibility constraint of some sort or other.

A visibility constraint on depiction has often been placed on *the objects of depiction*. Already the Renaissance author Leon Battista Alberti (1453) held that paintings depict only what can be seen. More recently, Robert Hopkins (1998) has formulated the constraint as follows:

(x<sub>3</sub>) Whatever is depicted can be seen.<sup>2</sup>

This claim *seems* plausible. It can hardly be denied that most pictures depict visible things; e.g. persons, animals, landscapes, buildings, fruits, shapes, and so on. As Hopkins notes, some of these things may be particulars, e.g. Winston Churchill or the Eiffel Tower. However, he also lets x<sub>3</sub> admit of the reading: whatever is depicted is depicted as having visible properties (e.g. as being a building). Thus, the claim is that whatever is depicted is either a visible thing or depicted as having visible properties.

The first half of this paper criticises x<sub>3</sub>. Resistance to x<sub>3</sub> has been voiced by others as well, through the use of counterexamples. For instance, Richard Wollheim (1987: 64-71) explains that a claim like x<sub>3</sub> fails to accommodate pictures of merely general things, e.g. a woman but no particular woman. Such things cannot be seen in face to face encounters.

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<sup>1</sup> But see Lopes (2003) for a critical discussion of this influential idea.

<sup>2</sup> 'x<sub>3</sub>' is Hopkins's (1998, p. 28) label for this claim, which I adopt for present purposes. This claim seems to be widely accepted, but it is seldom made explicit. While several theorists challenge the scope of what is seen in or expressed by pictures (e.g. Brown 2010; Lopes 2005) or the ways in which pictures can depict (e.g. Kulvicki 2010), what is depicted is assumed to be visible objects and events. Thus, x<sub>3</sub> goes mostly unchallenged.

Whenever we see a woman we see a particular woman (although we may not be able to discriminate her features).<sup>3</sup> However, my criticism of  $x_3$  strikes at a more general level than that of producing counterexamples. More specifically, I will challenge  $x_3$  on two counts. In section two, I suggest that  $x_3$  implies a disputable methodology in that it isolates the philosophy of perception from the philosophy of art. In section three, I show that  $x_3$  is harder to justify than what one first might think given its intuitive appeal.

The second half of this paper aims at developing an alternative to  $x_3$ . The alternative reacts to two aspects of  $x_3$ . Firstly, I suggest that there are things we can see in pictures that we cannot see face to face. Pictures expand the range of visibilia. In fact, establishing this suffices for rejecting  $x_3$ . For, as I explain in the next section, defenders of  $x_3$  take it as a claim that whatever is depicted is depictable in virtue of being visible. This means reading  $x_3$  as a claim that whatever is depicted can be seen face to face. Read thus,  $x_3$  is false if the range of visibilia is not settled prior to settling what is depictable and instead expands beyond what can be seen face to face. However, in response to this, one might read  $x_3$  as follows: Whatever is depicted is visible in virtue of being depictable. This makes room for the idea that pictures expand the range of visibilia. But the alternative view I develop rejects also this reading of  $x_3$  by reacting to a second aspect of it. Instead of placing a visibility constraint on depicta, as  $x_3$  does, I suggest we place it on *what we experience* when seeing a picture as a depiction. Thus, I claim that  $x_3$  puts a visibility constraint in the wrong place. On my view, what we experience in pictures is subject to a visibility constraint, although not one that restricts us to face to face seeing. But there is no constraint on depicta.

In order to develop this alternative to  $x_3$ , I start by discussing the experience of ‘cross-modal depiction’ in section four. What is experienced in such pictures has two characteristics

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<sup>3</sup> See Hopkins (1998: 28, n. 4) for a brief response to Wollheim’s criticism.

– indeterminacy and generality, as I call it – and these characteristics, I suggest in section five, also apply to what is experienced in depiction generally. My suggestion is that these characteristics pinpoint the type of visibilia that pictures allow us to see.

## II. The methodology implied by $x_3$

It can readily be observed that  $x_3$  implies a certain priority of the philosophy of perception over the philosophy of art. To repeat,  $x_3$  says that whatever is depicted can be seen. Note that this claim would be rather uninformative if we did not already have a grip on what can be seen. If we did not have a grip on this, the claim would merely be that objects that fall under a certain category, i.e. the category of depicta, also fall under another category, i.e. the category of visibilia. The claim would not say anything about *which* objects fall under any of these categories. But this is not how  $x_3$  seems to be understood by Hopkins and others who defend the same idea. In Hopkins's discussion at least, the assumption seems to be that, if it turns out that an entity can be depicted although it is unclear whether it can be seen (a borderline case), then this would *not* constitute a reason for including the entity under the category of visibilia. Rather, it would constitute a counterexample to the claim that whatever is depicted can be seen.<sup>4</sup> Thus, it is assumed not just that the category of depicta is contained within the category of visibilia; it is in addition assumed that the latter has priority over the former with regard to which objects fall under them both.

In this way,  $x_3$  seems to imply that when considering what can be depicted, we rely on already having answered the question as to what can be seen. The methodology implied seems to be to first figure out what can be seen and then, in turn, to use this to determine the range of depicta. This is a methodology that isolates the philosophy of perception from the philosophy

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<sup>4</sup> See his discussion of the magnetic field as an object of depiction (Hopkins 1998: 29-30, 135-136).

of art. The assumption is that the philosophy of perception and the determination of what is visible can be done without taking pictures into account.

There is an alternative to this methodology. One may regard pictures as constituting a particularly complicated type of object of sight for philosophers of perception to come to terms with. What is complicated about pictures as objects of sight is that we do not merely see the physical object that is the picture – a relatively flat, coloured surface – but we also experience the picture as a depiction, i.e. we *see something in* the picture. The alternative methodology I envisage takes seriously the idea that seeing something in a picture really is to *see* something in the picture (and not just to undergo some related but characteristically different experience from seeing). So, rather than taking what is visible as given on beforehand, one is on the alternative methodology taking the experience of pictures as depictions as relevant to settling what is visible.

This methodology invites the following question: What do we see, i.e. what is the object of sight, when we see a picture as a depiction? There can be at least two answers.

(1) One answer is that we see the depicted object. If so, then pictures function as a visual aid for seeing objects that may be spatially and temporally distant, since the depicted object typically is spatially and temporally distant. This answer is in effect an extension of Walton's photographic realism to non-photographic pictures.<sup>5</sup>

(2) I will focus on a second answer: What we see when seeing a picture as a depiction is a *different* visible object than the depicted object. This second answer involves distinguishing between the depicted object and what is seen in pictures (rather than equating the two, as in the first answer). Note that what is seen in pictures need not be visible face to

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<sup>5</sup> Photographic realism is the view that what is photographed is literally seen in a photograph of it (see Walton 1984).

face, even if the depicted object is. Thus, the second answer opens the possibility that pictures may enable us to see things that are not visible face to face. (More details of the second answer will be discussed in section five.)

So far, I have shown that  $x_3$  implies a specific methodology, and that there is an alternative to this methodology. Is there reason to prefer the former methodology to the latter? Not independently of an acceptance of  $x_3$ , I think. Nevertheless, one may prefer the methodology implied in  $x_3$  because one thinks  $x_3$  *itself* holds true. This prompts us to consider what justification there may be for accepting  $x_3$ .

### III. Attempts at justification of $x_3$

By its defenders,  $x_3$  is taken to be a natural insight about depiction. Hence, no justification is usually presented in its favour. But we may legitimately ask for justification of the claim, especially in light of the fact that it implies the disputable methodology identified in the previous section. Let me present two attempts at what I think would constitute natural justifications of  $x_3$  on behalf of those who defend it.

(1) One reason for asserting  $x_3$  may be a conviction that pictures display only certain properties. For instance, they display colour, outline shape<sup>6</sup>, relative size, texture, and spatial relations on the canvas. Admittedly, some of these properties (e.g. texture and size) can also be detected by the sense of touch. But at least colour is a property that can only be seen. This observation can serve to justify  $x_3$  on the following grounds. One might think that the visible properties displayed are had by the depicted object. For instance, the picture displays the

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<sup>6</sup> ‘Outline shape’ is Hopkins’s term for the two-dimensional shape we may trace on a window pane of a three-dimensional object residing behind the window (1998: 53). Hyman uses the similar notion ‘occlusion shape’ for the shape one would need to occlude on a window pane in order to occlude, relative to one’s line of sight, an object behind the window (2006: 75-76).

colour green, and the depicted object is green.<sup>7</sup> Then the depicted object has properties that can only be seen. Hence, it must be a visible object.

Even if we accept that pictures display properties that are only visible, however, why think that they are had by the depicted object? In many cases this does not seem right. For instance, think of the colours in Warhol's paintings of Marilyn Monroe, or the shapes in Picasso's portraits of Dora Maar. Perhaps it will be objected that such discrepancy between the properties of the picture surface and the properties of the depicted object is not a discrepancy at all once we take into account the artistic style of the picture. The visible properties on the canvas need not match those of the depicted object, one may concede; they may rather be "translated" into the depicted object's properties in accordance with the artistic style. But if making this concession, there is little reason to think that the depicted object must have visible properties and hence be a visible object. For there is little reason to think that the "translation" must go from visible properties to visible properties. It could go from visible properties to *audible* properties, for instance. Or, the visible properties on the canvas could belong to something seen in the picture (as per (2) in the previous section), which, in turn, "translates into" a depicted object.<sup>8</sup> Thus, the first attempt at justification of  $x_3$  fails.

(2) A second attempt at justification of  $x_3$  starts from the following two observations.

(O<sub>1</sub>) We have a visual experience when seeing a picture as a depiction.

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<sup>7</sup> This claim may seem wedded to a resemblance theory of depiction. But Newall (2006) argues that it is compatible with a recognition-based theory of depiction, according to which what matters for successful depiction is that the colour and hue of the canvas are visually recognised as (rather than resembling) those of the depicted object.

<sup>8</sup> For various ways in which what we see in the picture may "translate into" the depicted object, see Aasen (forthcoming).

(O<sub>2</sub>) Experiencing a picture as a depiction is to experience something other than just the physical picture-object.

O<sub>1</sub> is uncontroversial. Controversy only enters if we specify the kind of visual experience involved, i.e. whether it is a perception, an illusion, or something else. Also O<sub>2</sub> is fairly uncontroversial. For it is central to our understanding of depiction as a form of representation that the experience of it in some way directs us to something other than itself, namely what is represented.

Now, x<sub>3</sub> may be sought justified by coupling these two observations to produce the following two conclusions:

(C<sub>1</sub>) When experiencing a picture as a depiction we have a visual experience of the depicted object.

(C<sub>2</sub>) Therefore, the depicted object is an object of sight, i.e. something that can be seen.

One gets C<sub>1</sub> by coupling O<sub>1</sub>'s claim about the *nature* of picture-experiences with O<sub>2</sub>'s claim about the *object* of this experience: What is visually experienced is the depicted object. In moving to C<sub>2</sub>, one takes C<sub>1</sub>'s claim about *visual experience* as a claim about a specific kind of visual experience, namely *seeing*: The object visually experienced is an object of sight. This gives us x<sub>3</sub>; what is depicted can be seen.

There is a problem with this justification. Even if one accepts C<sub>1</sub> one need not accept C<sub>2</sub>. We may have a *visual experience* of the depicted object, as C<sub>1</sub> says, without *seeing* the depicted object, as C<sub>2</sub> says. For instance, we may have visual experiences of things detectable only by means of other senses than sight, i.e. things that can only be heard, smelled, tasted or touched (this would be a 'cross-modal experience'; more on that below). So, contrary to what

is assumed in moving from  $C_1$  to  $C_2$ , the depicted object need not be an object of sight; it could in principle be, say, an object of audition. So, the second attempt at justification of  $x_3$  fails.

This rejection of the second attempt gives rise to a question: In what sense *is* the experience of a picture as a depiction a *visual* experience? All we can take for granted at the outset is that it involves visual stimulation (light rays hitting the retina) and the use of the eyes. Following Fiona Macpherson (2011a, 2011b), who draws on Grice (1962), we may distinguish four criteria for individuation of the senses. The senses may be individuated in terms of:

- (i) the type of objects and properties the experience represents (e.g. colour and shape),
- (ii) the phenomenal character of the experience, (e.g. what it is like to see something)
- (iii) the physical, proximal stimuli for the experience (e.g. light), and
- (iv) the sense organs and their connection to the brain (e.g. the eyes).

One might think that we need to choose one of these criteria for individuation, as Grice presupposes. But Macpherson helpfully suggests that we may use all four of them, and thereby identify different features of the sensory modality of an experience. If we go for this strategy, it is clear that the experience of a picture as a depiction qualifies as visual according to criteria (iii) and (iv). But it is not evident that it so qualifies with regard to criteria (i) and (ii). Hence, nothing in principle excludes that our experience of pictures as depictions is cross-modal, in the sense that it qualifies as a visual experience according to some of criteria (i)-(iv), but as belonging to a different sensory modality according to other of criteria (i)-(iv).

The idea that our experience of pictures as depictions is cross-modal is baffling, and it is not one I endorse. In section five, I will suggest that the experience is visual by all of

criteria (i)-(iv), provided that we admit, *pace* the methodology implied by  $x_3$ , that the range of visibilia includes things that are only seen in pictures. However, before that it is instructive to consider a case where our experience of pictures as depictions may more plausibly be regarded as cross-modal, namely cases of ‘cross-modal depiction’. In doing so, I leave aside this section’s and the previous section’s criticisms of  $x_3$ . In what follows, I aim at developing the alternative to  $x_3$  that I sketched under (b) in the previous section.

#### IV. Cross-modal depiction

By ‘cross-modal depiction’, I mean depiction of something that can only be perceived by means of senses other than vision. An example is Edvard Munch’s *The Scream*.<sup>9</sup> The picture displays a figure, of which the Norwegian National Museum’s website provides the following description: ‘Its hands are held to its head and its mouth is wide open in a silent scream, which is amplified by the undulating movement running through the surrounding landscape’.<sup>10</sup> One may argue that this picture depicts a scream, i.e. something that is an object of audition rather than vision.<sup>11</sup> My suggestion concerning cross-modal depictions like this

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<sup>9</sup> Edvard Munch, *The Scream*, 1893. The National Museum, Norway.

<sup>10</sup>See: [http://www.nasjonalmuseet.no/en/collections\\_and\\_research/our\\_collections/edvard\\_munch\\_in\\_the\\_national\\_museum/The+Scream,+1893.b7C\\_wjU1a.ips](http://www.nasjonalmuseet.no/en/collections_and_research/our_collections/edvard_munch_in_the_national_museum/The+Scream,+1893.b7C_wjU1a.ips).

<sup>11</sup> This can be denied. Analogously to how e.g. Wollheim (1973: 308-310) explains that a picture may represent Christ in a non-depictive way by depicting a sheaf of corn, one might think *The Scream* represents a scream in a non-depictive way by depicting a face. However, Wollheim’s reason for holding that a Christ-as-a-sheaf-of-corn picture does not depict Christ is that, while we see a sheaf of corn in the picture, we do not see Christ in it. Why think the analogous claim holds for *The Scream*, i.e. that we do not see the scream in the picture? In the context of the present paper, this claim requires further justification, since one overall question is whether there may be things that are seen in pictures, but not seen face to face. A scream could be such a thing. I cannot at the moment think of any justification for denying this possibility.

one will be as follows. When experiencing *The Scream*, we experience an auditory object that is detected, not by using the ears, but rather by using the eyes and relying on visual stimuli. This auditory object stands in a characteristic relationship to the depicted scream.

Let me provide some examples of other experiences that I think have similar auditory objects. One example is the experience one has if engaging in subvocal speech when reading, or if a song is involuntarily repeated in one's head. Another example is the effect produced when the sound track goes mute at a dramatic point of a movie, for instance when there is a car crash. Strangely, this seems to make spectators experience the auditory aspect of the car crash more intensely. A final example is the following thought experiment, which I will examine in detail:

Suppose that we are situated in a sound-proof room, and that we through the window of that room look onto a scene where a person comes up and makes a scream towards us. Afterwards, we move to a recording room where we listen to sound samples of various recorded scream sounds. Here we are asked: Which sample is a recording of the scream experienced in the sound-proof room?

I wish to make a couple of points about this thought experiment. Firstly, reflection on my own experience in similar situations suggests that one has *some* basis for answering the question asked in the recording room. It seems that when one sees the person screaming through the window of the sound-proof room, one 'hears the scream before one's inner ear'. Or, as I henceforth put it, one 'experiences the scream\*', where the asterisk indicates that the

nature of what is experienced is related to, but somewhat different from, what is customarily auditorily experienced.<sup>12</sup>

Secondly, I conjecture the following two characteristics of the relationship between what is experienced, i.e. the auditory object I call the scream\*, and the sound produced at the other side of the window, i.e. the scream.

(1) *Indeterminacy*. One negative characteristic is that given a large range of recorded sound samples to choose among in the recording room, it seems we would be unable to pick out any one of them as the scream\*. It seems that while listening through the sound samples in the recording room, we will not suddenly recognise what we hear in one of the samples as matching *precisely* what we heard before our inner ear in the sound-proof room. I suggest that this is so because the scream\* has a certain *indeterminacy* to it. While recorded samples are determinate with respect to pitch, rhythm, fuzz, and other qualities of the sound, the scream\* is *not* determinate in these ways.

(2) *Generality*. A second positive characteristic is that while we are unable to pick out any one sample, it seems we would be *able* to pick out a selection of samples. For instance, we could rule out recordings of baby screams, insofar as it was evidently not a baby that screamed towards us. We may also rule out scream-sounds lasting for too long or too short a period of time compared to the duration of the experiential episode. We may even have a rough idea of the pitch of the scream\*. Note that none of these features need match those of the audible scream produced. I am *not* claiming that our selection of samples will be on the right track regarding the actual qualities of the scream. My claim is just that when we examine

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<sup>12</sup> The experience of the scream\* may involve imagination. Perhaps one imagines hearing what one is in fact seeing. On the other hand, experiencing a sound\* may have a psychological basis in brain processing. Perhaps the visual stimuli is auditorily encoded; see e.g. Guttman et al. (2005) for a similar set up where this happens. I cannot adjudicate between these alternatives here.

the memory of what we heard before our inner ear, i.e. the scream\*, we will be able to rule out some recorded screams and include others as equally possible candidates for what the scream\* would sound like if heard by using the ears. I think we are able to do this because the scream\* has a certain *generality* to it. The qualitative features of the scream\*, like its pitch, rhythm, and so on, fall within a range. They are not experienced discretely, as when hearing sounds.

The reason for going through this example in such detail is that I want to make the following proposal: The same relata and the same characteristics can be identified in cross-modal depiction. Consider again *The Scream* by Munch. My proposal is that we also here can distinguish between what is experienced, i.e. the scream\*, and what the scream\* would be like if instead experienced auditorily by using the ears to detect sound waves. Moreover, I think the scream\* is indeterminate and general, in the ways just explained. If listening through various recordings of scream sounds, I think we would be unable to pick out one that matches the scream\* that we experience in Munch's picture, for what we experience is simply not of the same kind as what we hear by using the ears. In other words, the scream\* is indeterminate compared to screams heard by using the ears. Now, it *could* have been the case that this negative claim captured all we could say about the relationship between the scream\* and customary screams heard by using the ears. For it could have been the case that no comparison of the quality of the scream\* and customary screams is possible. However, I think we can also make the positive claim that the scream\* is general, in the sense that several recordings of scream sounds are plausible candidates for what the scream\* would be like if instead experienced by using the ears. One sign that there is a basis for comparison here is

that one may be reminded of one's experience of Munch's picture when hearing a certain ghostly, echoing scream sound.<sup>13</sup>

It is not essential for my purposes that the sketched account of our experience of cross-modal depiction is correct. My reason for presenting it is that it provides a useful introduction to the account of our experience of depiction *generally* that I advance and defend in the next section. However, to the extent that the former account is a specialised version of the latter and cross-modal depiction does not require special treatment (which is a question I leave open here), the defence to be presented below also supports the account of cross-modal depiction.

### **V. Outline of an alternative to $x_3$**

In the first section, I explained that on the face of it nothing excludes our experience of pictures as depictions from being a variety of cross-modal experience. The experience is decidedly visual only with regard to two of the four criteria for individuation of the senses, namely the proximal stimulus (criterion iii) and the sense organ used (criterion iv). In the previous section, we saw that for cross-modal depictions the experience may qualify as, for instance, auditory with regard to the two remaining criteria. I proposed that the type of auditory object we experience would then be indeterminate and general compared to customary auditory objects. For depiction generally, however, what we experience seems more likely to be something visual than something auditory. Nevertheless, I think the sketched account of our experience of cross-modal depiction can be modified to suit depiction generally. How? By taking the two characteristics of what is experienced in cross-modal

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<sup>13</sup> In Macpherson's (2011b) terminology, I think these features of the scream\* suggest that the experience of it carries 'novel' information. The novelty consists in the fact the experience has a phenomenology or a representational content (or both) that could not be produced by any of the five sensory modalities and that neither is the mere summation of two or more sensory modalities.

depiction – indeterminacy and generality – to also characterise the object of experience in depiction generally. This facilitates explaining how the representational content (criterion i) and the phenomenal character (criterion ii) of the experience constitute an *expansion* of the representational content and phenomenal character of vision. For we can explain that what we experience when seeing a picture as a depiction is indeterminate and general compared to what we typically see, and hence different from it. But it is nevertheless visual.

Observe that if we modify the account the way just proposed, we are endorsing the alternative methodology I mentioned at the outset. We treat the experience of pictures as depictions as relevant to settling what the objects of sight are. We open for that there may be objects seen in pictures that are not seen face to face. This observation, in addition to being important in its own right, indicates how we should modify the characteristics, indeterminacy and generality, to acquire an account of depiction generally. In the cross-modal version of the account, I contrasted what we experience in pictures with the objects of customary auditory experience, since the former was considered a type of auditory object (albeit an unusual one). But now, in accounting for depiction generally, we should instead contrast what we experience in pictures with the objects of face to face vision, since, on the present view, these objects, together with what we experience in pictures, constitute the range of visibilia.

Let us look at how the two characteristics play out when we make this comparison to face to face vision.

(1) *Indeterminacy*. The first negative characteristic is that we are unable to pick out as what is experienced any particular entity that can be seen face to face. For instance, suppose we have before us one of Van Gogh's sunflower paintings. We will be unable to pick out any particular sunflower seen face to face as the very one experienced in the painting. This is so, I conjecture, because what we experience is indeterminate compared to objects seen face to face. While the canvas has, say, a certain shade of yellow on it, what we experience – *a*

sunflower – has no particular shade of yellow, I suggest. Neither does it have a determinate size or shape (although the marks on the canvas do). Hence, it does not match any particular sunflower seen face to face.

(2) *Generality*. The second positive characteristic is that there could be a range of entities that can be seen face to face which constitute equally plausible candidates for what the object of experience would be like if instead experienced face to face. For instance, there are several particular sunflowers such that, if what we experience in Van Gogh's sunflower paintings was instead experienced face to face, it could plausibly be an experience of this particular sunflower.<sup>14</sup> This is so, I suggest, because what is experienced is general compared to objects seen face to face. Although what is experienced has no particular shade of yellow, it is in some sense yellow. It is yellow in the sense that the determinate colours it would have if instead experienced face to face fall within a range of different shades of yellow.

These two characteristics constitute the core of my account. I envisage that the account applies to the experience of all pictures, because I think it is something about the form of presentation common to all pictures that is responsible for the indeterminacy and generality of what we experience in them. If one, alternatively, took the account to apply to only *some* pictures, one would instead need a piecemeal explanation as to why what is experienced possesses these characteristics in the relevant cases. By contrast, my account allows no exceptions. Is this plausible? That is, do the general characteristics, indeterminacy and generality, seem right when we reflect on our various experiences of pictures?

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<sup>14</sup> This is not to say that these particular sunflowers could each equally plausibly *be* the sunflowers Van Gogh in fact looked upon when painting. As mentioned in the previous section, the actual scream-sound produced need not be included among the candidate samples; similarly for the actual sunflower used as a model. The list of candidates tunes in on what is experienced, not on the model.

At least for some pictures they do. For pictures of merely general things, such as a picture of a sunflower but no particular sunflower, it seems right, as indeterminacy tells us, that we are unable to pick out as what is experienced any particular sunflower seen face to face. And, as generality tells us, it seems right that there could be many such sunflowers (for instance many similarly looking ones) that constitute equally plausible candidates for what what is experienced would be like if experienced face to face.

The characteristics also seem plausible for pictures of mythical or non-existing objects. Clearly, as indeterminacy tells us, we are unable to pick out any such entity seen face to face, since there actually are none. But, as generality says, there *could* be a range of equally plausible candidate objects seen face to face, in the sense that the world could well have been different and contained, say, unicorns or Santa Claus. In this sense, unicorns and Santa Claus are things we *could* see face to face, although we in fact do not.

However, problems for my account seem to arise for pictures of particulars, such as a portrait of the Norwegian Queen, Sonja.<sup>15</sup> How can one defend the claim that there are many candidates among the things that can be seen face to face, but no one in particular, that can be picked out as what is experienced in such pictures? Is it not obvious that the thing we should pick out is the Queen?

I think not. What *is* obvious is that we pick out the Queen as what the picture depicts, or, alternatively, as what the picture refers to. When asking about what is experienced when seeing the picture as a depiction, however, it does not do justice to the richness of our experience simply to say that we experience the Queen. I think that when seeing a picture of the Queen we are able to pick up on features of her personality; we may for instance experience her warmth through paying attention to the wrinkles around her eyes. Similarly, in

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<sup>15</sup> I have in mind Håkon Gullvåg's *Queen Sonja* (2002), exhibited at Oslo Town Hall, Norway.

Van Gogh's sunflower paintings, which often depict sunflowers at various stages of development, we may experience the spectrum of life of sunflowers, or indeed the life cycle of living things generally. Personalities or life cycles may perhaps be seen face to face.<sup>16</sup> Typically, however, I think they are not. We may on occasion be able to see the Queen as an artwork, by entering a particular contemplative stance. Perhaps we then can see, e.g., her warmth by paying attention to the wrinkles around her eyes, just like we can when seeing her picture. But *typically* it seems that we see the Queen, or, if we do not know who she is, perhaps just a particular woman, when we see her face to face. Hence, I think that what we experience when seeing a picture as a depiction are things we either are unable to or typically do not pick up on when seeing something face to face.

What is the difference, then, between what we (typically) see in pictures of particulars and what we see face to face? This question is what the two characteristics, indeterminacy and generality, are supposed to help answer. With regard to the picture of Queen Sonja, I think the two characteristics can be worked out as follows.

(1) *Indeterminacy*. We may see the Queen on various occasions, but on no occasion is what we experience the same as when seeing the Queen in a picture. When seeing the picture, we experience her grace and wit, let us say, but on no occasion (except perhaps if we see the Queen as an artwork) do we see face to face these aspects of her personality. Hence, we are unable to pick out as what is experienced anything that (typically) can be seen face to face. This is so, I think, because what is experienced when seeing the picture has the negative characteristic that it is indeterminate compared to the determinate appearances (e.g. facial expressions, postures, etc.) we see face to face. Although there may be a determinate

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<sup>16</sup> See Prinz (2006) for a defence of the view that abstract entities, of which I take personalities and life cycles to be examples, are visible.

appearance on the canvas (like there is a determinate colour on it), what we experience is not any determinate appearance.

(2) *Generality*. There can be several sightings of the Queen seen face to face that constitute equally plausible candidates for what what is experienced would be like if instead experienced face to face. We never recognise the Queen seen face to face on one particular occasion as *precisely* what we experienced when seeing her picture. Having had the picture-experience, however, we may be able to recognise aspects of what we experienced in the picture, e.g. the Queen's grace and wit, when seeing her face to face on some occasions. I think we are able to do this because what is experienced is general compared to what can be seen face to face. We experience a personality, not a determinate appearance. But we nevertheless have a rough idea of what appearances (e.g. facial expression) a person with that personality would have if seen face to face, similarly to how we have a rough idea of what audible qualities (e.g. pitch) a sound\* would have if heard by using the ears.

By framing indeterminacy and generality this way, my account of depiction is workable also for pictures of particular persons and things. In fact, I think this elaboration of my account is advantageous in that it can explain why we take pleasure in seeing pictures of familiar particulars, although the same pleasure is not had when seeing the particular face to face.<sup>17</sup> The reason is that we experience something about the particular that is (typically) not experienced when encountering the particular face to face. Moreover, the account can explain why picture-experiences can be significant with regard to our later encounters with the depicted particular. This is so because aspects of what we experience in seeing the picture as a depiction can be recognised in later perceptions of the depicted particular.

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<sup>17</sup> This 'puzzle of mimesis' is discussed at length by Lopes (2005).

It may be objected that in applying my account to pictures of particulars, I have introduced a qualification absent from my general account, namely the qualification that what we experience in pictures of particulars is something we do not *typically* see face to face. This, one might think, makes my treatment of pictures of particulars diverge importantly from my general account. But, in fact, there is no important divergence. It is possible that also general things, like a sunflower but no sunflower in particular, can be seen face to face on some occasions. For instance, I am inclined to think that we may see nonparticular persons when we see strangers float by us on the street, insofar as they are registered merely as persons of a certain type, e.g. as a banker or as a radical left-wing student, and as no more than that. So, also for pictures of general things, what we experience in the picture is *typically* (but not necessarily) something we do not see face to face.

The same point can be made by appealing to the methodology my suggestion employs. As abovementioned, this methodology treats the experience of pictures as depictions as relevant to settling the range of visibilia. But although it is a consequence of the methodology that we may see things in pictures that we do not see face to face, the methodology does *not* involve that we never see the same things in pictures as we do face to face. On the contrary, it has as a consequence that we need not distinguish sharply between what can be seen in pictures and what can be seen face to face. Neither is methodologically prior to the other with regard to settling the range of visibilia. Given this, nothing excludes that, also for pictures of general things, what we experience in the picture can on some occasions be seen face to face.

As a final remark, I would like to repeat what I consider the main advantage of my account of depiction as here outlined. The main advantage is that it can explain the experience of pictures as visual in character with respect to all of Macpherson's criteria (i)-(iv). It does this by acknowledging the experience of pictures as relevant to determining the range of visibilia. This means that pictures can extend the range of visibilia and of visual

phenomenology. The extension, I have suggested, consists in that what we experience in pictures is indeterminate and general compared to the customary objects of face to face sight.

## VI. Conclusion

Where does my account leave us with respect to the claim in  $x_3$ , i.e. the claim that whatever is depicted can be seen? It leaves in a less dogmatic position. On my account, it is not clear whether the depicted object should be identified with what is experienced or with what what is experienced would be like if instead seen face to face, or neither. This issue needs to be settled differently in different cases. For instance, in *The Scream* by Munch, I think the depicted object is a scream but no scream in particular, and I think this is also what we experience. In Gullvåg's *Queen Sonja*, by contrast, I think the depicted object is the Queen, while her personality is what we experience, and her appearance on selected occasions is what her personality would be like if instead experienced face to face. Particular examples aside, however, this means that, contrary to what  $x_3$  asserts, there is on my account no *universal* visibility constraint on the objects of depiction. There is only a visibility constraint on what is experienced in depiction. This visibility constraint is, by contrast to  $x_3$ , *not* dictated by the limits of face to face vision. So, while what we experience in the picture is visible (although not typically face to face), the depicted object need not be.

*University of Oslo, Norway.*

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