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Pictorial Representations and Their Subjects

In my presentation I will examine how emotion and consciousness make an appearance in pictorial representations and what kind of skills these representations require.

Brain imaging techniques are involved in the study of both consciousness and emotions. In the fine arts, we can encounter only emotions. I will suggest that this asymmetry is rooted in the difference between the two phenomena. In the case of emotion, its expression is spectacular and indispensable in social interaction. Accordingly, a nomenclature evolved for its expression and representation.

The techniques applied in the fine arts are based on embodied experiences, therefore a basic-level understanding of artistic works does not need special expertise. Brain imaging techniques are highly artificial and their understanding requires specialized knowledge. Since consciousness is assumed to play a part in cognitive processes but is inaccessible to the naked eye, we consider it as a theoretical construct which is supposed to be accessible only via artificial means. Accordingly, the understanding of its pictorial representation needs special qualifications. That is, while both emotion and consciousness are regarded as basic capabilities, (but are related to different evolutionary increments), their accessibility, thus their conceptualization and therefore visualization, are different.

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