

The things which I have seen I now can see no more.
The Rainbow comes and goes,
And lovely is the Rose,
The Moon doth with delight
Look round her when the heavens are bare,
Waters on a starry night
Are beautiful and fair;
The sunshine is a glorious birth;
But yet I know, where'er I go,
That there hath past away a glory from the earth.

(William Wordsworth)

An introduction to Blue World Gallery
By Kaja Silverman and company

Classical Metaphysics: The Great Chain of Being

As we can see from the chain running down the center of this drawing, the world of classical metaphysics was vertical, hierarchical and unchanging. Everything came from and returned to the same source, and it existed for one and only one purpose: to honor its otherworldly creator. It was at best a pale copy of this other world, and at worst a perversion of it. One should avoid looking at it with one's physical eyes, and focus instead, on the higher, truer world, which could only be glimpsed with one's inner eyes.



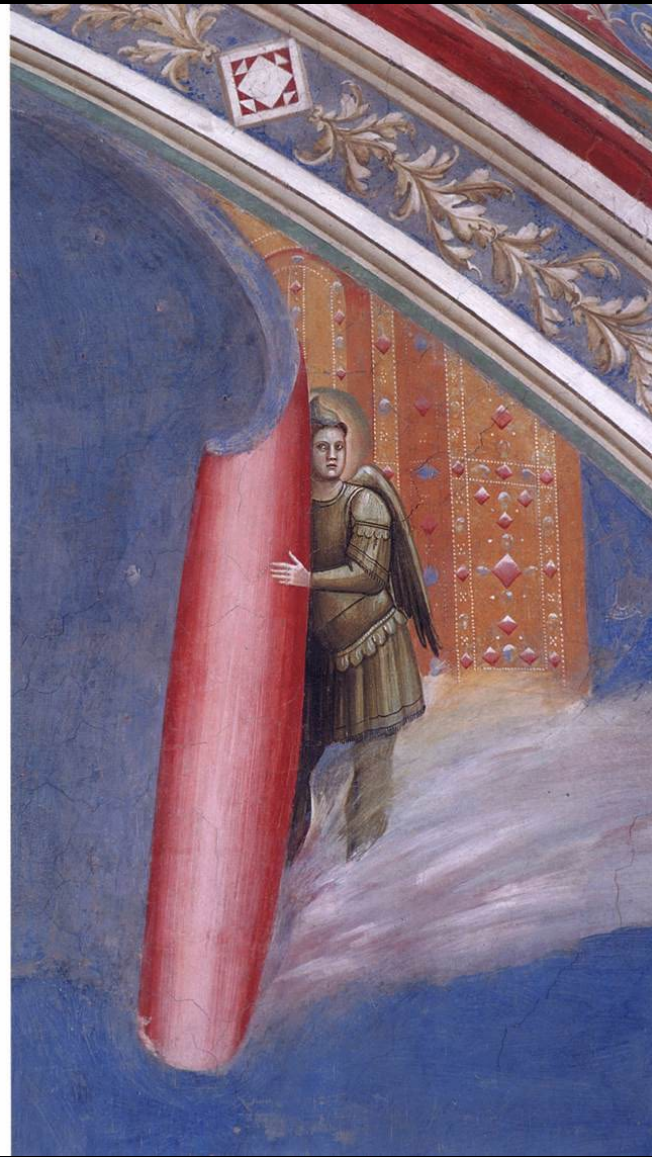
But that was a hard “sell,”
because seeing is believing...
so gold entered the picture, as a
signifier of the divine, just as it
does in the Old Testament story
about the golden calf.



Scrovegni Chapel, Fresco cycle by Giotto, 1305

But then one day the sky
turned blue and Heaven was
rolled up...





...and the sky rolled down.



Terra became "firma".....



And bodies assumed volume and weight....

Modern Metaphysics, Chapter 1: The Theological Author

"First of all, on the surface on which I am going to paint, I draw a rectangle of whatever size I want, which I regard as an open window through which the subject to be painted is seen; and I decide how large I wish the human figures in the painting to be... Then I determine the distance I want between the eye of the spectator and the painting...." (Alberti)



Dürer's
Lucinda

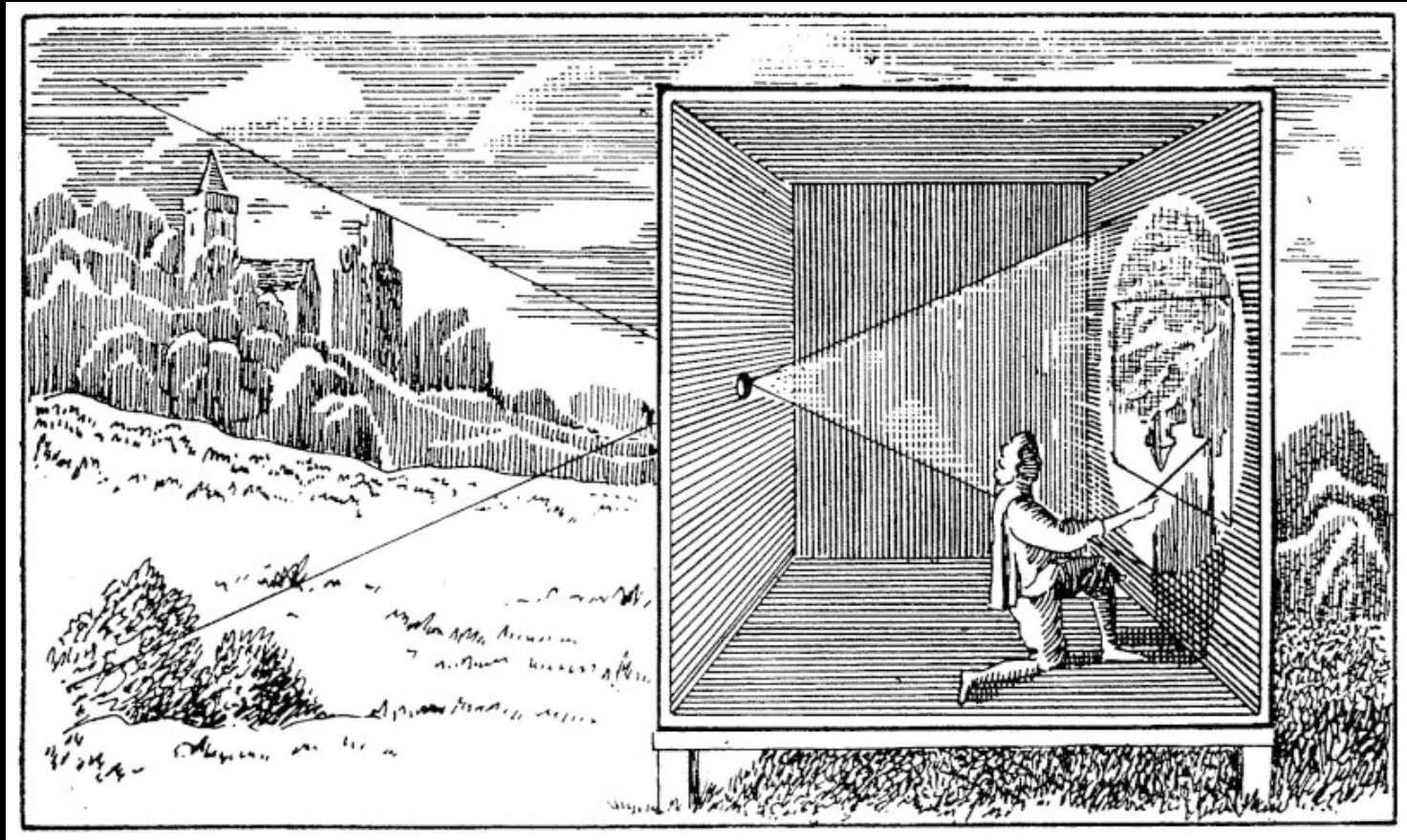
Man arrogated to himself the qualities that he had previously imputed to an otherworldly demiurge--originality, a sovereign intentionality, and self-referentiality--by assuming the persona of the theological author, and of substituting perspectival painting for the world that was revealed when the sky was rolled down. But it was still possible from time to time to glimpse that world.



The theological author tried to overcome these challenges by serving as the author, beholder and sitter, but he could not squeeze everything in. One hand escaped—the one holding his paintbrush.

Albrecht Durer, 1500

But the world, as Leonardo was soon to discover, already had a pictorial face.

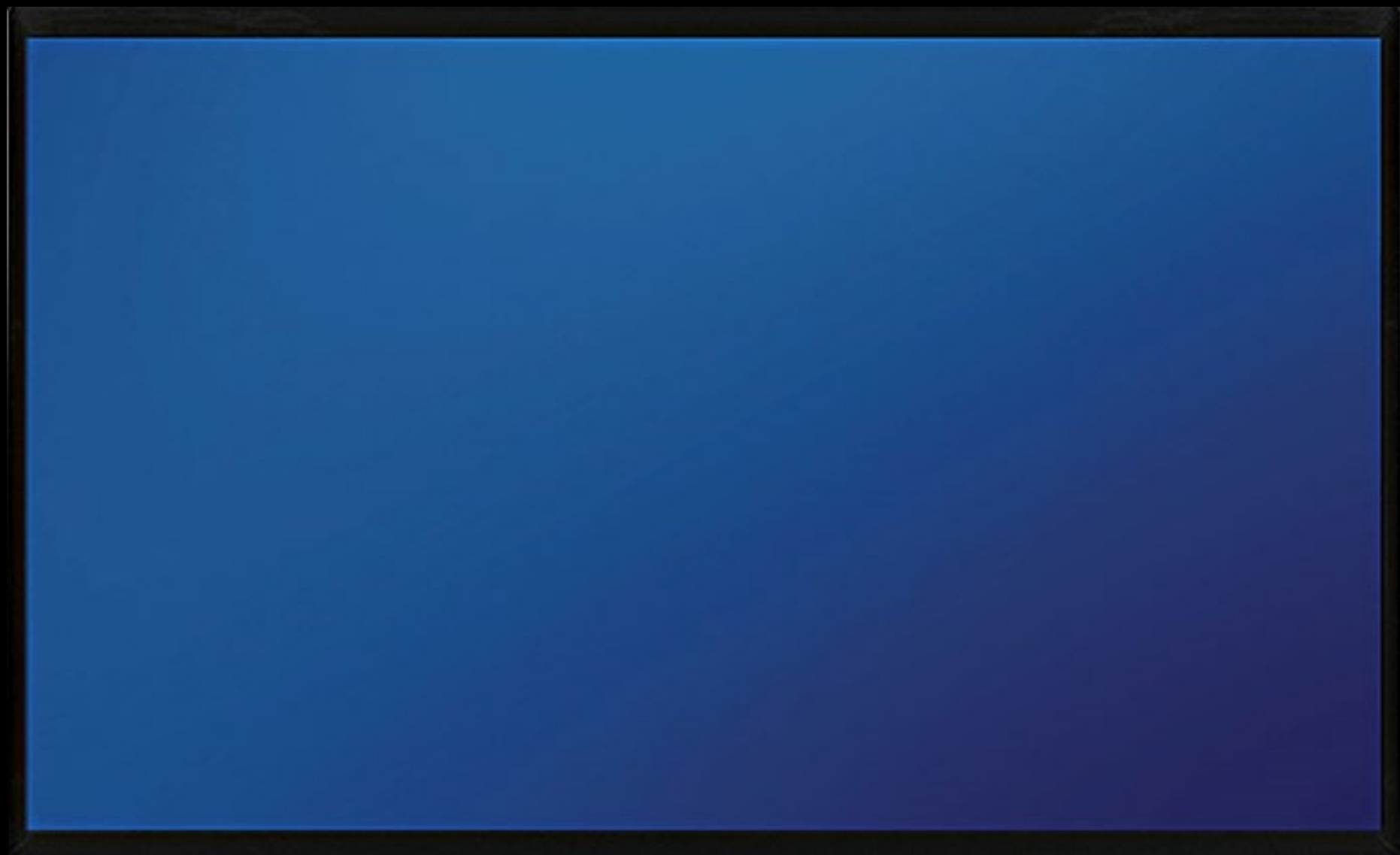


And an authorial signature wasn't enough to make a painting a picture. The painting also had to free itself from the church wall and become a thing in the world. As man began his imaginary ascent, painting descended to the floor, then onto an easel, and finally onto a very different kind of wall: one in a gallery or museum. Its destiny was henceforth to be seen. This meant that it could not be itself without a beholder.

Modern Metaphysics, Chapter 2: “I think, therefore I am.”

There was only one way forward: abandon the visible world.

“I shall close my eyes, I shall shut my ears, I will turn away my senses from their objects, I will even efface from my consciousness all the images of corporeal things; or at least, because this can hardly be accomplished, I will consider them as empty and false, and thus, holding converse only with myself, and closely examining my nature, I will endeavor to obtain by degrees a more intimate and familiar knowledge of myself.”(Descartes)

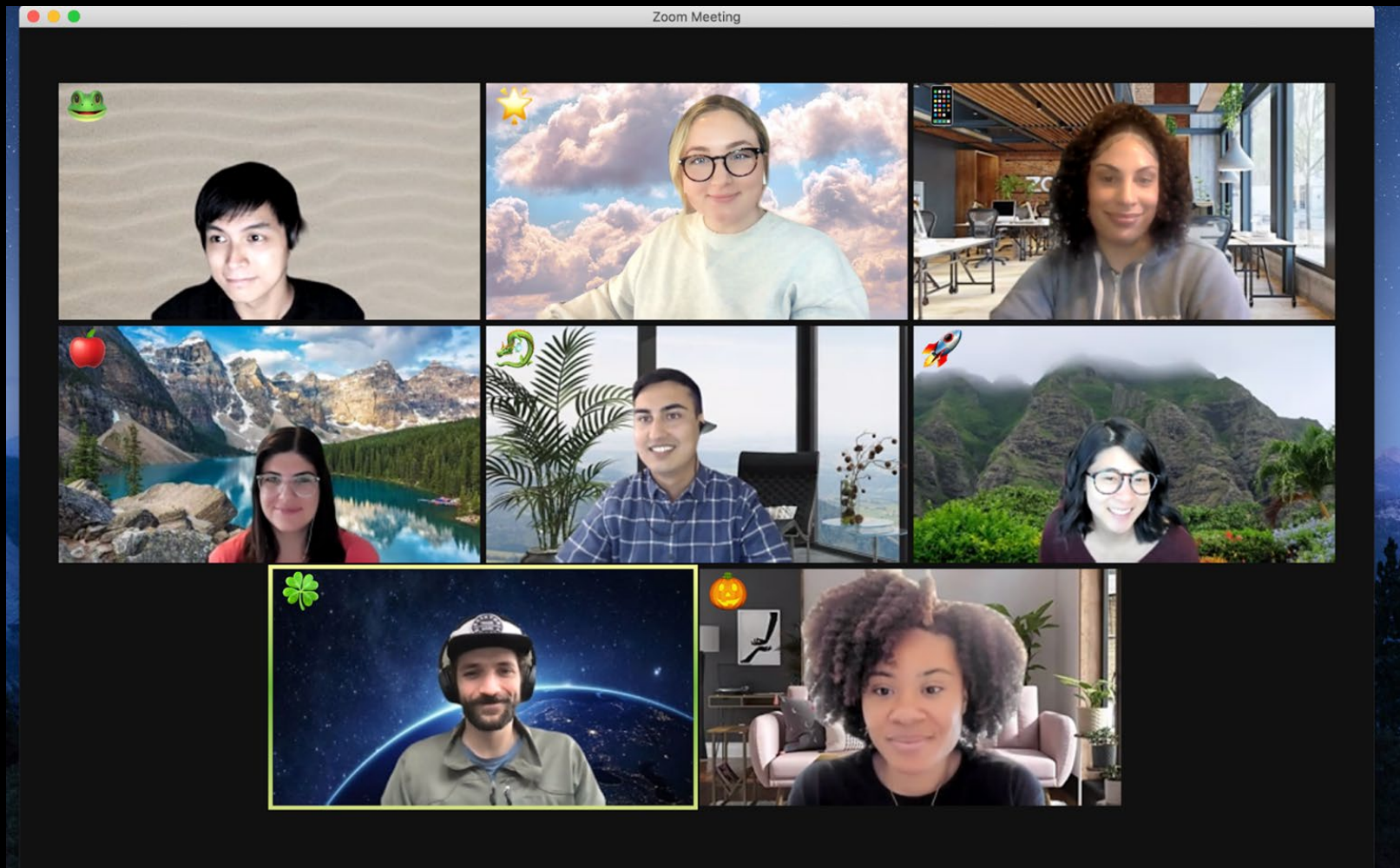


Modern Metaphysics, Chapter 3: Eyes Wide Shut

Then the sky was rolled up, and the computer screen rolled down.

Most of us have been staring at devices of this sort for years now, without giving them much thought. We relate to them the way a medieval church-goer related to the wall on which a religious scene had been painted, or as the camera obscura's user related to the images through which he viewed an eclipse of the sun: as the surface on which other things are displayed. We look through them, not at them.





We are also now spending much of our lives *inside* this space, much as our medieval predecessors spent theirs inside the Great Chain of Being. However, we never feel as if we are together there. How could we, since there is no “there”—no *place*, just *amorphous space*.



Andreas Gursky, Ocean II

What is that? Nothing
Who's Looking at it? No one
Where am I? Nowhere
It's all just representation

With my digital gallery, I want to return
to the moment in which the sky became blue...

and the world was seen in the way that it wanted to be seen:
as a picture, rather than a representation.



Anna Atkins, botanical
Cyanotypes, 1840's

Some of the pictures that I will
hang on the walls of this
gallery will have been drawn
with the pencil of nature,

Robert Rauschenberg and Susan Weil,
Sue (1950)

Others will be co-created—
collaborations between the
world and us.





Helen Chadwick, *The Oval Court*, 1984-86
Installation with photocopies and assorted media

But in both cases, they will "welcome difference not as damage, but potential" --model what Helen Chadwick called a "vigorous plurality of interactions."



Helen Chadwick, *The Oval Court*, 1984-86.
Installation with photocopies and assorted media

Design of the Blue World Gallery and Archive

The gallery will be located inside an architectural detail from one of Giotto's frescos.

The gallery will have three rooms: one whose walls are the blue of a computer screen, one whose walls are the color of the ceiling of the Scrovegni Chapel, and one whose walls will be the color of the gold in the background of a medieval religious painting. The one with the Giotto blue will be precariously perched between the other two.

A detail from Giotto's *Last Judgement* will provide the door to these three rooms, and Piero della Francesca's *Madonna of the Partition* will serve as the door to an archive.