

Ozu in 2.5D

Ho Tzu Nyen & Clélia Zernik – March 23, 2023

• animation • cinema • japan • perception • philosophy • psychology of perception • visual art

“Ozu’s films are comparable to deep, clear water, perfectly still.” (Maurice Pinguet). The simplicity of Ozu’s images is perfectly apparent. It is in the transparency of these lines that the true depth of his films is played out: Everything happens as if we were dealing with the most natural, most common world, and yet from the outset we notice a lapse—the characters move in an artificial way, their expression is always missing, they seem to float, between presence and absence.

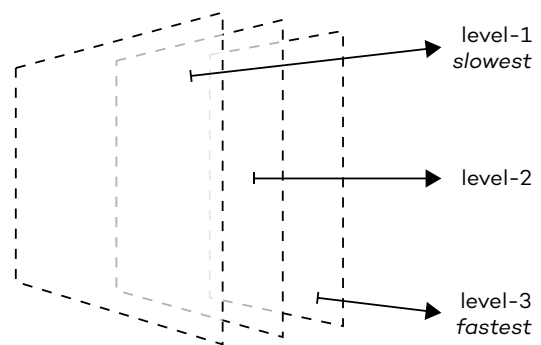
This pan.able is an invitation to meditate at the borders between visual arts and the psychology of perception. To think this in-between, between the 2D of the image and the 3D of reality, the 2.5D can be understood both as a new approach to perspective construction and as a specific relationship to the world. In the sense of perspective, the Ozuian image does not seem to be constructed linearly according to the rules of the vanishing point that unify a homogeneous and structured space. Rather, it is constructed according to a principle of superimposed layers, like cartoons.

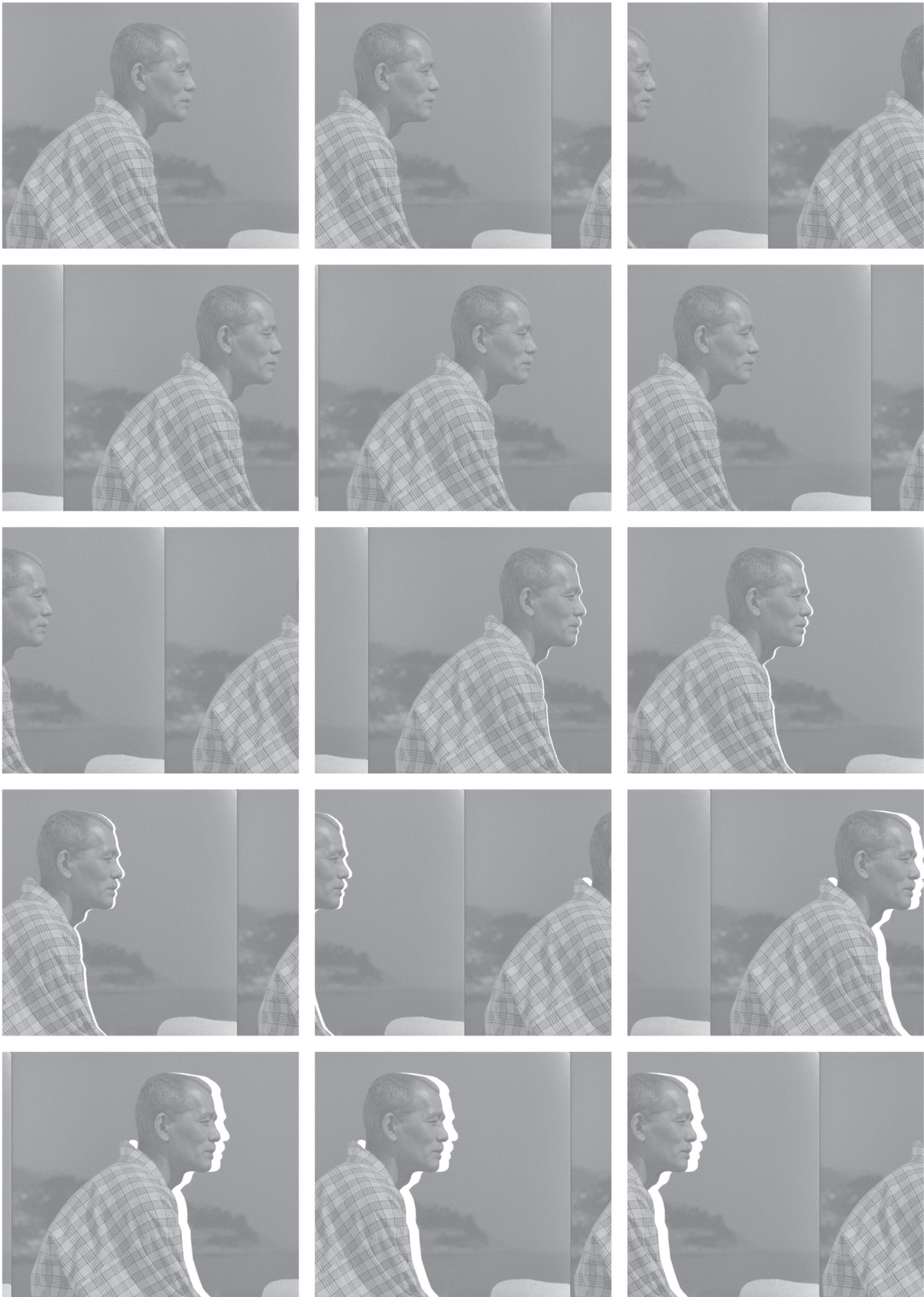
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When the user scrolls, each image layer moves from left to right at different speeds giving an impression of depth in the page.

The pan.able shows the passage from an image as a section of the real to an image as a recomposition of the real, from a conception of unified space to a conception of stratified space. Metaphorically, this in-between time of 2.5D reveals that behind the purity and serenity of Ozu’s images a form of drama is at play: the character haunts the world more than he inhabits it. He is in the lining. He is no longer a singular character in a fiction, but a prototype, an *idea*: *There Was a Father*, in reference to the title of another Ozu film. The procedure of the pan.able enables us to appreciate this disconnect of the real space and its substitution by an artificial and stratified image. It gives the impression of both looking at a fun flip book and facing a ghost, escaped from its body, lost in its own reverie. Between an amused tenderness and a sensory reflexivity, this is precisely where Ozu’s films take place, between the surface and the depth, between presence and absence, between the singular and the typical—in this in-between space of the 2.5D.

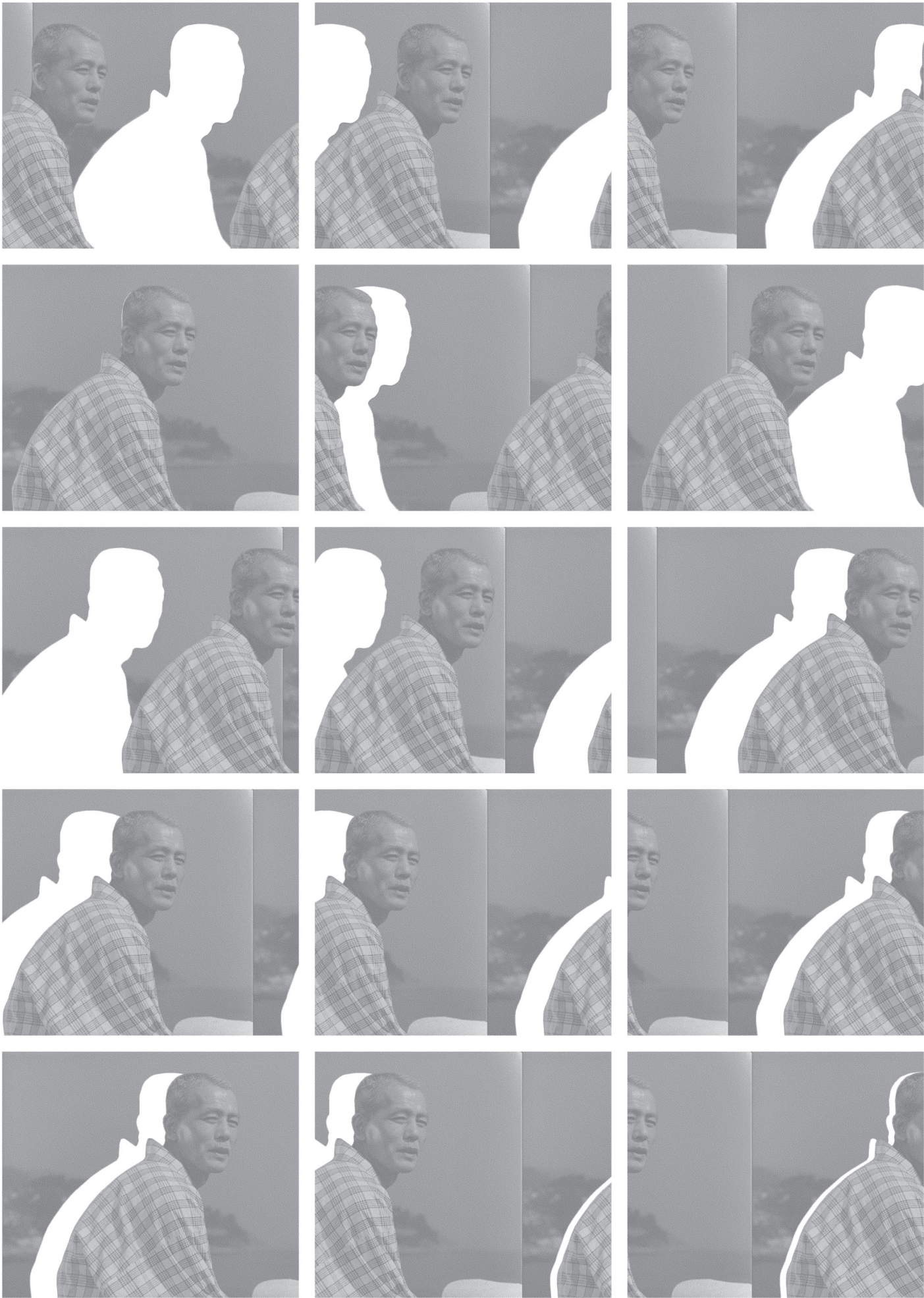




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credits

authors:

Ho Tzu Nyen, artist and independent film maker
Clélia Zernik, Beaux-arts de Paris, Université PSL

editorial mediation: Clélia Zernik

graphic designer: Arp is Arp studio (Dimitri Charrel, with Lorène Gaydon) and Joséphine Mas

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about the authors

Ho Tzu Nyen makes videos, installations, and performances that often begin as engagements with historical and theoretical texts. Recent exhibitions of his work have been held at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2022), Toyota Municipal Museum of Art (2021), and the Yamaguchi Center for Arts and Media [YCAM] (2021). From 2015 to 2016, he was a DAAD resident in Berlin.

<https://cdosea.org>

Clélia Zernik is a professor of the philosophy of art at the Beaux-Arts de Paris and the director of the Beautés - PSL Chair. Holding a doctorate in aesthetics, her early research focused on the relationship between art and science, as it is elaborated by art psychologists and by phenomenologists, then focused on Japanese cinema and contemporary art. She is currently working on the subject of the lining of images.

<https://psl.eu/presentation>

<https://beauxartsparis.fr/en/professeur/zernik-0>

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Ozu, Yasujiro, Director. *Tokyo Story* (*Tokyo Monogatari*). Shōchiku, 1953. 136 min. In the public domain. Digitally modified images.

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