

## *inverse perspective landscape*

When I first visited the place in Auvers-sur-Oise where van Gogh painted his famous 'Wheat Field with Crows', I almost collapsed unconscious. It was so bright and vast – too bright and vast, with the ears of wheat near and far so vivid. I felt my sense of place and direction evaporate away – quite smoothly, though, without any sense of confusion. My ability to grasp my surroundings stalled entirely, leaving me unable to rely anymore on what I always think of as 'my own' body – eyes and brain included – when going about my everyday life. It was as if all the names of all the things were gone. Perhaps I'd simply been overwhelmed by the sheer brightness of the light.

This experience is, I think, a 'common experience' of all living organisms, from the first ever to capture light with an eye through to present-day humans. That time in van Gogh's wheat field, I felt my 'self' slipping away and disappearing. Since then, on other occasions in the mountains of the Tohoku region of Japan and the forest of Jukai near Mount Fuji, I have had the same sensation. I have subsequently visited these places again and again, and tried to create paintings out of the experience.

Grasping hold of something by naming it is a very human thing to do. People have always aspired to attain wisdom by doing so, and our cultural activities play a major role in the process. However, by fixing the relationship between a thing and its name, we also suppress our imaginations with regard to the original shape of the thing before it was named.

I imagine the sheer scale and shapelessness of things before they were named would have been extremely unsettling. If, for example, we could not call the sky 'the sky' or the sea 'the sea', these things would regain their atavistic fearfulness for us. This said, in addition to fixing the shape of the world around us, I believe culture ought to play an important role in shifting, twisting, suspending and dissolving it in order that we may reevaluate the nature of reality and face our fears about it.

