

TOPICA PICTUS

Kenjirō Okazaki
TOPICA PICTUS /
La Cienega

July 17 – August 14, 2021
Blum & Poe, Los Angeles

岡崎乾二郎
TOPICA PICTUS
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Standing on the four corners /
地にも海にも木にも風は吹かない

There is a tendency to imagine that people in the Middle Ages lived in a world that was flat. Perhaps I should say that many associate the era of having the flat Earth view with the Middle Ages. In any case, there were four corners in the world at that time. That being said, others also held the view of having four corners in the world besides those from the Middle Ages in Europe (especially from the 6th century to the 10th century). It was possible that those in India, China, and Japan also held a similar worldview. We may also enter an era of having such a worldview in the coming years.

I have rarely heard sculptors say that they notice the four corners. Needless to say, there are four corners in a painting; therefore, it is more likely to come across painters who are concerned with them (however, there aren't many who are). There have been occasions where the viewers of paintings point out the "four corners."

The association between the number 4 and corners corresponds to the fact that the front and back and left and right axes that cross it at a perpendicular angle create four ends. All action in two dimensions could be positioned by the composition of these two axes; therefore, the outer limits of the two-dimensional plane would dissolve in all four directions and converge at four infinitely distant points.

Even so, those conversion points do not seem to establish "corners." The "corners" emerge only when

there is an assumption that these four points are connected by a line to form an enclosure on all four sides. (Or you could connect them using a compass to create a circle.) Further exploration would make it seem impossible to connect four points that are infinitely apart. However, when we assume it is possible, this world could be understood as being two-dimensional. This is a human fantasy rather than a mathematical assumption.

The idea that the world has an end emerges from trying to grasp the world as an object or an entity. Since all objects are entities and considered to have contours and limits, the process is based on the expectation that the contour of an object can be traced by connecting the most distant points of the object. This must be how a worldview with four corners was created. It could be considered a rudimentary manipulation of a notion.

In other words, the whole world (where people are active and speculating) could be considered as one object, and the concept of being able to grasp it becomes clear as a parallel process to creating a map of the whole world. And if the world can be identified as an object called a map, a flat entity, then the person who is looking at it as an object would exist outside of that world. And at the same time, the curiosity for the corners of the world emerges. If it wasn't for the creation of world maps as an object, no one might have cared about the corners.



Kenjiro Okazaki

岡崎乾二郎

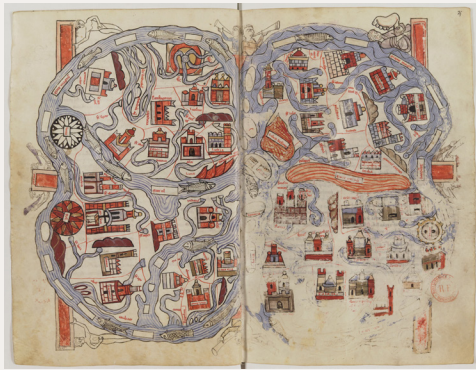
Standing on the four corners /

地にも海にも木にも風は吹かない

2020

Acrylic on canvas

7 1/4 x 10 x 1 3/8 inches



Beatus of Liébana

The Navarra or Paris II Beatus mappa mundi

12th century

Illuminated manuscript

Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris

MS na Lat.1366, ff. 24v-25r



John Gower

Vox Clamantis

ca. 1400

Manuscript

University of Glasgow,

Archives & Special

Collections,

MS Hunter 59



Beatus of Liébana

The Vision of the Lamb from
Commentary on the Apocalypse

ca. 945

Illuminated manuscript

The Morgan Library & Museum. MS M.644., fol. 87r

Purchased by J.P. Morgan (1867-1943) in 1919

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Actually, people would have realized the possibility of going beyond the world (while looking at the map, one should have felt that way); however, more jarring would have been the notion that the world could possibly cease to exist, that the world is finite. Just as the painter who does not notice the four corners, the world is expansive beyond one's sight. Even if one had an awareness of their own mortality, they might not have thought of the end of the world's existence.

As long as the world is two-dimensional, the edge of the existing world is limited to two dimensions and does not extend into three dimensions (therefore, people can see the map from the three-dimensional space). If the whole world were a two-dimensional sheet, even if a child wetted it, the map could not be dried, and the flood would end the world. Where would the wind come from, and where would the light shine from? When I am poking at the four corners of the world, that type of wind blows from somewhere. If it is two-dimensional, the wind blows from beyond the height of three dimensions, and if it is three-dimensional, then it comes from the height of four dimensions (from the past or the future). Even in the Middle Ages, this type of wind was blowing. The painter who is in the midst of painting always feels the wind.

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Text Kenjiro Okazaki

Translation Koto Kishida

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