Neon borders

Introduction..... 1
The landscape of grey..... 2
The architecture of the glitch..... 5
The economy of attention..... 8
The glow in the gap..... 11
Tactility in a smooth world..... 14
The soft border..... 16
Final synthesis..... 18
References..... 19

Introduction

My perception was shaped early, not by what I saw, but by how I struggled to see it. Dyslexia was my first teacher. It taught me that the world is not immediately readable, that the letters on a page or the rules of a classroom are not fixed truths but shifting codes. I learned that I must rebuild meaning through my own logic. If the world would not organise itself for me, I had to organise it for myself.

This struggle birthed a specific kind of curiosity. Curiosity became the tool that helped me navigate the chaos, allowing me to understand illusion not as a deception, not as a lie told to the eyes, but as a necessary way of creating space. When reality feels rigid, sharp, and unforgiving, illusion offers a softness. It offers a gap where the mind can rest.

The atmosphere of post-Soviet Latvia added a heavy, concrete layer to this internal state. It left me with certain insecurities, a feeling of being watched by a history I didn't fully understand, but also a strong desire to search for safe, pleasant spaces. That search eventually led me away from the grey concrete of my childhood and toward the glowing, intangible phenomenon of neon colour spreading.

Today, we live inside visual loops designed to capture attention. The modern world is a machine of hyperstimulation. The eye reacts instantly, and the brain completes meaning before we are aware. We are bombarded by high-contrast images, endless feeds, and digital demands that narrow our senses and make simple visual triggers like a red notification badge unusually powerful. Maybe that is why I became so interested in pleasure.

Pleasure is the point where perception becomes physical. It is the moment the eye stops searching and starts feeling. And yet, pleasure can be manipulated so easily. That is what fascinates me and scares me. It is so intimate, felt deep in the nervous system, and at the same time, it is the most public thing in the world. Every advertisement, every Instagram feed, every pixel tries to provoke or redirect it.

The eyes are not neutral observers. They are not passive cameras recording the truth. They are hungry receptors. They are the openings through which desire enters the system.

Neon colour spreading demonstrates this effect perfectly. In this illusion, colour emerges where none exists. The brain, faced with unclear boundaries and partial lines, fills in the emptiness with a glowing wash of colour. Research shows that low contrast, blurred contours, and warm colours evoke pleasure. I recognise the same sensation in nature, in places where edges soften, and the brain begins to generate its own colours.

Working on this thesis reminded me that the eye is both an organ and a metaphor. It filters, distorts, and invents. The brain behind it is not a receiver but a maker of images, deciding meaning before we recognise shapes. The more I learned about sensory pathways, the clearer it became that our shared reality is fragile. Vision begins in the retina and ends in imagination. Nothing we see is fixed, and nothing is ever fully complete.

The landscape of grey

To understand my fascination with neon, with the "glow" that bleeds across boundaries, one must first understand the world of boundaries I came from.

I was born in post-Soviet Latvia. When I say this, I am not referring merely to a date on a calendar or a chapter in a history book. By "post-Soviet Latvia," I mean a feeling. I mean a mood that hung in the air throughout my childhood, as thick and pervasive as fog.

Latvia refers to the period after 1991, when the country regained independence following the collapse of the Soviet Union. The country shifted rapidly from a Soviet-controlled system to a market economy and a democratic state. It was a transition that brought hope, yes, but also a deep, vibrating social uncertainty.

The people of my childhood were loving people. They were willing to share what little they had. But if you looked closely, there was a profound sadness in their eyes. There was a feeling that these people had been betrayed by history, by the system, by the promise of a future that never arrived. They could no longer pursue the dream that, so recently, seemed clear and possible to them. It was a collective grief, masked by the daily necessity of survival. Yet, alongside this sadness, there was also a sense of relief, as if a heavy iron curtain had physically fallen from their shoulders.

The architecture of conformity. In this atmosphere, the education system was a remnant of the old world. It was a system built for the "average." In post-Soviet Latvia, any deviation in the way of learning, any deviation from the established system, was always perceived as a bad thing. It caused persecution.

I did not fit. As a person with dyslexia, I could not process information in the linear, rigid way the system demanded. The response from the world was swift and cruel: "Because you're just stupid".

I heard this, but I did not accept it. Without accepting the phrase "you're just stupid," I realised I simply thought differently. I found it more difficult to follow a system geared toward the average person. But why was "average" the goal?

Being average and ordinary is considered proper in this part of the world. This cultural obsession with sameness has deep roots. The Soviet Union was trying to build a utopian world. To build a Utopia, you cannot have individuals; you must have a collective. To do this, you have to be the same and share the same values, thinking, and lifestyle. You have to be clones of each other. Such a society is easier to control.

I began to understand that Utopia and Dystopia are not opposites. They are the same room, viewed from different corners. Utopia is the idea that everything works well and prospers for everyone. But this efficiency is only achievable if everyone is the same, like parts on a conveyor belt, or units in a factory. A factory produces only one specific unit. Therefore, Utopia cannot exist, because if it does, it becomes a Dystopia of identical clones. Utopia is a complete reflection of dystopia.

In my situation, as a child with dyslexia, I was an "unusual unit." I was a glitch in the factory. I could not fit into the system, and therefore, I was a negative thing for the utopian world concept.

The one grey border. In these settings during childhood, I knew only about one grey-shaped border; I was stuck. The world felt binary: you were either correct (average) or incorrect (different). There was no gradient. There was no neon.

But as I grew and began to explore, I started noticing that the world was not actually made of concrete. I started noticing different shapes and different coloured borders. That acutely made me understand that by combining different borders, they become softer and easier to adjust to find me.

I found a resonance for these thoughts in literature, specifically in Yevgeny Zamyatin's novel We (Zamyatin, 1924). In the book, the characters live in a glass world, completely transparent, without privacy or secrets, functioning as a single "We." It was a critique of that same demand for sameness I felt in school. Reading it, I realised that my inability to be "transparent" and "average" was not a failure. It was a form of resistance.

Curiosity as a survival tool. If the system were a solid wall, curiosity was the water that found the cracks.

Curiosity became my primary tool. It allowed me to explore these new borders, combining them to find new ones or to break them to see the image from another perspective. It is like foam, expanding to fill a void. Or better, it is like lava hot, moving, reshaping the landscape. Or perhaps, it is like a cat trying to get into a space that was deliberately left empty.

When I am curious, I am like that cat. I am trying to fill the gap with my questions or reflections on someone's thoughts.

However, this tool is not without danger. Sometimes I get burned because of my curiosity. I overstep the boundaries of comfort of another person. In a culture that values conformity, asking "why" or looking too closely feels like aggression. It's as if I'm expanding within someone else's rules or views of the world, and this causes a feeling of cloudiness and pressure. It can feel like I'm trying to challenge or overpower another person.

The glass metaphor. I want to explain this phenomenon through a glass metaphor. Glass seems solid. It has a clear body. But at the same time, it creates the feeling of a second shell because of its transparency. It is a barrier you can see through, but

cannot touch through. It fits into a shape, or it can completely deny the boundaries presented to it.

When glass is being made, when it is liquid, it causes discomfort for the blower due to its heat and rebelliousness. It is dangerous. But when it swells, expands, and solidifies, it evokes calmness, acceptance, and admiration for the new facets it has revealed.

To me, glass behaviour resembles feelings of bliss and pleasure. Pleasure is bliss, not obedience. Some people obey the shape of the mould. Other ones, like hot glass, expand until they create their own shape.

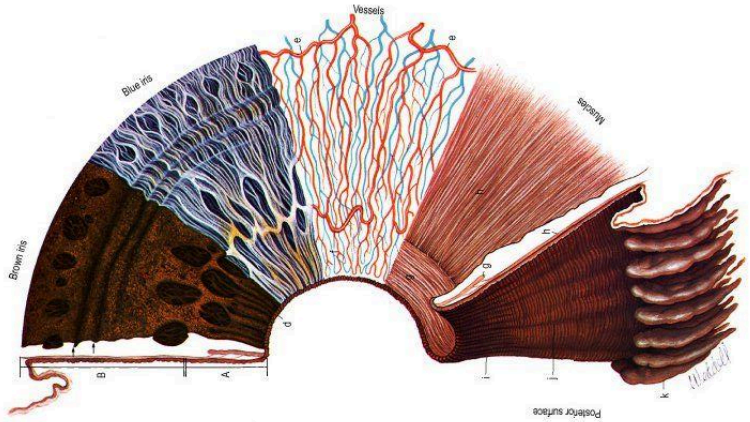
This realisation that I could be the hot glass rather than the cold mould was the first step in my journey toward understanding the neon illusion. I moved from a world of grey borders to a world where boundaries could be melted, shifted, and made to glow.

The architecture of the glitch

If curiosity is the tool I use to navigate the world, the eye is the vessel through which the world enters me. But for a long time, I misunderstood what this vessel was.

We are often taught to think of the eye as a camera, a neutral, high-fidelity machine that captures photons and transmits them to the brain as an objective truth. If two people stand in the same room, they see the same room. But as I delved deeper into the mechanics of vision, looking for the roots of the neon illusion, I realised this is a lie. The eye is not a camera. It is a prism. And like any prism, it bends, filters, and distorts everything that passes through it.

The structure of the eye is a collection of biological layers. This complex system together creates an amazing filter that transmits information about the outside world to our internal world of concepts and beliefs. However, it is not a perfect transmission. It is full of static, gaps, and interpretations.



The imperfect lens. Cornea and Astigmatism. It begins with the cornea, the transparent front part of the eye. Its job is to refract light, to bend it so it can land on the retina. It is the first distortion. In a "perfect" eye, this curve is smooth. But nature rarely deals in perfection.

Many of us have a cornea that is flatter or uneven, a condition called astigmatism. To compensate for this physical deviation, the eye muscles must be constantly tense. I find this fascinating: before we even process an image, there is physical tension involved in just trying to see "correctly." I think this is already a deviation that will slightly distort the projection of the visual world for the person with this condition. The effort to see clearly is not free; it costs energy. It adds a layer of strain to reality.

The filter of colour: The Iris. Then there is the iris, the coloured muscle that controls the pupil and regulates the amount of light entering the system. We often think of eye colour as merely aesthetic, a detail for passports or poetry. But biologically, it changes how we experience the world.

Research shows that light-coloured eyes, like blue or grey, are physically more sensitive to light than brown eyes. A person with brown eyes has more melanin, acting as built-in sunglasses. A person with grey eyes, like me, lacks this shield.

This leads to a behavioural ripple effect. People with brown eyes squint less. People with grey eyes squint more. Can such a minor physical reflex cause a

distortion in reality? I believe it can. When I squint to protect myself from the sun, my field of vision narrows. I physically block out parts of the world. I might miss a movement, a shadow, or a signal that a person with brown eyes would notice.

For me, missing visual information is like losing a piece of the story. It reminds me of reading a book where lines disappear after a few seconds. If I close my eyes against the glare, I will never know what was written there. Another person, with darker irises, has access to a reality I do not.

However, there is a flip side. People with light-coloured eyes often see better in the dark. So, if I think about it, it turns out that a person with grey eyes might notice danger in the dark earlier than a person with dark eyes. This small biological difference could theoretically change the course of a life. It is dramatic, but it gives me goosebumps to realise that my biology dictates not just what I look like, but what I see.

The chemical canvas: The Retina. The light, having passed through the cornea and the pupil, finally hits the retina. This is the inner light-sensitive layer, the screen where the movie of reality plays. It is covered in photoreceptors: rods and cones.

- Rods are responsible for light and shadow; they are the night-vision goggles of the body.
- Cones distinguish colour and provide sharpness in daylight.

The ratio of these cells directly affects how bright or dull the world appears to us. But this canvas is not permanent. Just like everything else in our body, our eyes wear out. We have a saying: "The grass used to be greener." In my country, it means things were better in the past. But biologically, it might be literally true.

A doctor once told me that colour sensitivity drops with age. The lens yellows; the cones fire less rapidly. The world physically becomes less vibrant. But I suspect it is not just age. I trust that our mental health influences how we see, influencing the colourfulness of the world. I remember clearly when I suffered from depression. I had "tunnel vision." The world constantly looked greyish to me, like the weather in the Netherlands during the winter.

It wasn't a metaphor. It was a sensory reality. My emotional state hijacked my visual cortex, turning down the saturation of the world. This made me realise that reality

is a feedback loop: my emotions change what I see, and what I see reinforces my emotions.

The blind spot: The Brain as a Prankster. Finally, the information travels down the optic nerve. This is the main wire connecting the eye to the brain, the central computer. It transmits over a million signals at once. But even this magnificent cable has a fatal flaw.

At the exact point where the optic nerve exits the eye, there are no photoreceptors. No rods, no cones. Nothing. This creates a blind spot in our vision. Technically, we should all see two black holes in our vision at all times, floating in front of us. But we don't. Why?

Because the brain likes to mess around. It creates something opposite to complement the emptiness. The brain "fills in" the missing information based on the surrounding pattern. It guesses. It looks at the texture to the left and right of the hole and says, "Probably more of the same," and paints over the gap.

The brain constantly cuts its nose out of its worldview. We are physically looking at our own noses all day long, but the brain erases them from the image to avoid distraction. It creates a seamless illusion of a complete world.

This is the most important realisation of my research: The brain is not a receiver of reality; it is a generator of reality. It constantly patches, edits, and autofills the world. This anatomical fact that we rely on "filling in" gaps is the biological basis for the Neon Colour Spreading illusion. We are hardwired to invent colours where they do not exist, simply because our brain cannot tolerate a void.

The economy of attention

If the eye is a flawed lens, what happens when that lens is exposed to a world designed to exploit its flaws? We have moved from the grey, static borders of the Soviet era to a world of hyperstimulation.

The supernormal stimulus. To understand what is happening to our eyes today, we have to look at seagulls. There is a famous experiment by the Dutch ethologist Nikolaas Tinbergen regarding the "supernormal stimulus". Tinbergen observed that

seagull chicks instinctively peck at the bright red spot on their parents' beaks to beg for food. The red spot is the trigger.

Tinbergen wondered: Is it the parent they love, or just the red spot? He created a fake beak, a wooden block with a red dot. The chicks pecked at it. Then, he created a "super" beak, a plastic rod with an even larger, brighter, more contrasting red mark. The result was shocking. The chicks ignored their real parents and pecked frantically at the artificial model. They preferred the fake, exaggerated signal to the real, natural one.

I realised that we are those chicks. Hyperstimulation is a stimulus that is stronger than those to which the brain has evolved to become accustomed. Evolutionarily useful signals (like the colour red, which signifies ripe fruit or blood/danger) can be "tricked" by modern, artificial variants. Fast-paced video editing, neon signs, and notification badges are our "giant red dots." They create a reaction of attention and excitement that is disproportionate to their actual value.

The bliss point. I noticed that superstimuli are now used by all industries to increase consumption. This is most obvious in the food industry, where creators use a concept called the "Bliss Point."

The Bliss Point is the optimal amount of sugar, salt, and fat at which a product gives the consumer the most pleasure. The term was introduced by Howard Moskowitz, a scientist who engineered flavours for giants like Pepsi and Heinz. The goal is specific: to maximise the stimulation of the dopamine pathways (the reward system) without reaching the point where the taste becomes "too much". It keeps the consumer in a state of suspended desire. You don't stop eating because your body never gets the signal that it is satisfied. The product is designed to be "hard to stop".

The infinite scroll. I realised that technology companies have copied the recipe of the food giants. They have created a "Bliss Point" for the eyes.

Consider the design of the infinite scroll on platforms like Instagram or TikTok. In the past, you would turn a page or click "next." There was a natural stopping point at the border. The infinite scroll removes this border. New content loads automatically. The brain never receives the "end" signal. This technique was inspired by a psychological experiment by Brian Wansink at Cornell University in 2005. He created a "bottomless soup bowl", a bowl that slowly refilled itself from a

hidden tube under the table. People eating from the endless bowl ate 73% more soup than those with normal bowls. Crucially, they did not feel fuller. They were guided not by their internal stomach (satiety) but by the visual cue of the empty bowl. When the bowl never emptied, they never stopped eating.

We are eating "visual soup" every day. The feed never empties. The brain, lacking a stop signal, enters a flow state that is not true engagement, but a trance of consumption.

Variable rewards and the dopamine trap. To keep us in this trance, the system uses one more trick: variable reward. When I scroll, my brain does not know what is coming next. Will it be a boring photo? An advertisement? Or something exciting, a beautiful image, a message from a lover, a shock? This unpredictability is key. It causes a dopamine rush of anticipation. This is the same psychological mechanism behind slot machines and gambling. It is called intermittent reinforcement, discovered by B.F. Skinner.

If every post were amazing, we would get bored. If every post were boring, we would quit. But by mixing them by keeping us in a state of uncertainty, the algorithm keeps us hunting. The dopamine holds the intention. I am like a runner who sees candy in front of me. I keep running because I like sweets. I am chasing a pleasure that is always just one scroll away.

Faked reality and VR. This manipulation extends beyond flat screens into the realm of created worlds. Virtual Reality (VR) takes the principle of the "supernormal stimulus" and applies it to our entire environment.

Video games create illusions that do not exist in the physical world, but they make the gamer act as if they are real. Take the concept of sexual pleasure. Real intimacy involves two people, touch, smell, and a deep emotional connection. It is complex and often "messy" or "imperfect" like the real parent's beak. VR sex games challenge this. They strip away the complexity and provide the raw visual trigger. In Asia, there are now marriages between humans and video game characters. This suggests that VR has already tricked our emotional centres. It can artificially trick our pleasure by straining the necessary emotions.

It creates a philosophical crisis: If the illusion is powerful enough to trick the brain's reward system, does it matter that it isn't real? If we create a fake reality that feels

better than the real one, it will eventually become the new reality. The creator's brain projects onto the real world, causing society to adapt to new conditions.

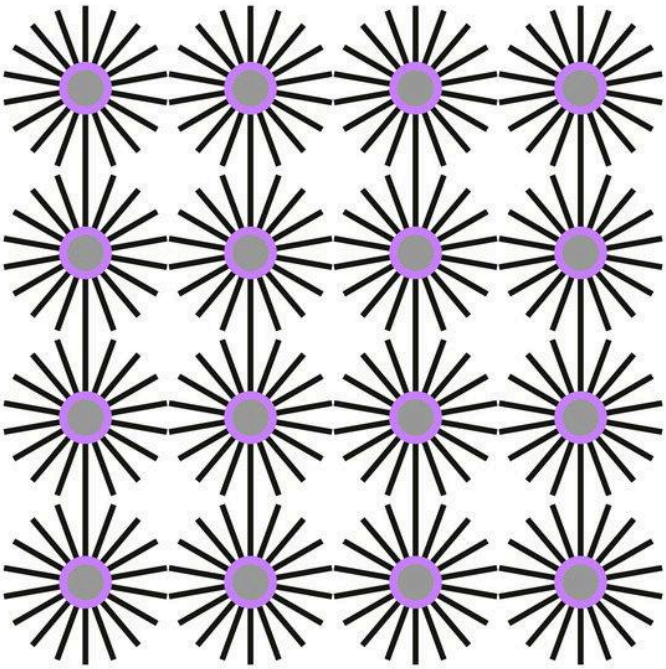
This creates a loop. We build illusions to satisfy our hunger for pleasure. The illusions (superstimuli) change our brains, making us crave even stronger illusions. The world becomes brighter, louder, and faster. And in this noise, the delicate, imperfect human eye, the eye that needs soft borders and shadows to rest, begins to panic. It stops looking at the world and starts staring into the flow.

The glow in the gap

If the modern world is a machine of hyperstimulation that forces our eyes into a state of panic, scanning for the next hit of dopamine, where can we find rest? If the "infinite scroll" creates a flow without an end, is there a different kind of flow, one that does not drain us, but heals us?

I found the answer to these questions not in a screen, but in a glitch of perception. I found it in the phenomenon of Neon Colour Spreading.

The Illusion of Spilling Colour: Neon colour spreading is a visual illusion in which a part of space that is not physically coloured is perceived by the brain as being filled with a glowing, transparent wash of colour. Imagine a pattern of black lines in a cross. If you replace the inner segments of these black lines with coloured lines (say, bright red), something magical happens. The eye does not just see red lines. It sees a red *disk* hovering in the centre of the cross. The colour seems to spill out of the lines and fill the empty white space between them.



The brain creates a ghost. There is no red ink in that centre space. If you measured it with a photometer, it would register as pure white. Yet, I see it. You see it. We see a glowing, neon atmosphere that connects the disparate parts.

The Neuroscience of Blurred Borders: Why does the brain do this? Why does it lie to us? Research by Pinna and Grossberg offers a model called FACADE, which explains how neural layers process contours. They found that this effect is caused by "contour weakening".

The brain is constantly fighting a battle between "filling in" surfaces and defining boundaries.

- Strong, sharp contrasts act as dams; they block the flow of colour. They say: "This object ends here."
- Weak, blurred, or low-contrast boundaries act as open gates. They say: "We are not sure where this ends," and the brain, seizing the opportunity, allows the colour to spill through.

Where contours are bright and pronounced, they block the spreading. Where they are weak, they let it through. This confirms a suspicion I have held since childhood: The brain loves a blurred border. When boundaries are rigid (like the concrete walls of my childhood, or the sharp pixels of a screen), the brain is tense. It must constantly calculate edges. But when colour or light moves freely, spilling over the lines, the brain enters a state of relaxation. It enters a state of bliss.

The Meaning of "Neon" It is no coincidence that this illusion is named after Neon. Interestingly, "neon" is not just an artistic style; it is the name of a chemical element, a gas (Ne). When an electric current is passed through this gas, its atoms are excited and emit light. The wavelength of this light is approximately 640-700 nanometers, which we perceive as a bright red-orange.

This specific wavelength is significant. Our retina contains three types of cones (photoreceptors): S (short-wave/blue), M (medium-wave/green), and L (long-wave/red). The number of L-cones (red-sensitive) in the human retina is approximately twice as high as the other two combined. We are biologically hardwired to notice red.

But it goes deeper than just noticing. Red and orange spectra activate the sympathetic nervous system. This is the system responsible for excitement, anxiety, and attention. It increases the pulse. It raises body temperature. It activates the amygdala, the emotional centre of the brain . In psychophysiology, this is called the "arousal colour effect". Warm colours physically wake up the brain.

So, when we look at a neon illusion, specifically a red or warm-coloured one, we are experiencing a double-effect:

1. Neural Bliss: The "spilling" of the colour relaxes the brain's need for sharp boundaries.
2. Physiological Arousal: The "warmth" of the colour stimulates the emotional centre, creating a feeling of liveliness.

It turns out that blurred boundaries of light draw a clearer outline of the world than sharp lines ever could. They draw it with emotion.

The Weeping Willow: A Natural Laboratory. I did not want to limit this research to diagrams in a textbook. I wanted to see if this "neon effect" existed in the wild. Walking along a canal, observing nature after learning about the neon spreading effect, I found it in a tree: the weeping willow.

The weeping willow is a chaotic structure. Its branches hang down, overlapping, moving in the wind. When the sunlight hits the leaves and the wind moves them, the individual outlines of the leaves disappear. They merge. Because the eye cannot track the sharp edge of every single leaf in motion, the "contour weakening" effect

occurs. The green colour of the leaves seems to spill into the air around them. The tree becomes a cloud of colour rather than a collection of branches.

This brought me a profound sense of bliss. It was the same feeling as the optical illusion. The sharp, demanding edges of reality had been erased, and a "blurred bliss" remained. It was as if nature itself was trying to soften the world for me, using the physics of light to create a safe space.

Tactility in a smooth world

If the visual world is a place where I can find bliss in blurred lines, why do I still feel a sense of unease in the digital age? The answer lies in what is missing. The visual dominates, but the tactile is dying.

The Missing Piece of the Puzzle. My world is built on visual projections, but it is anchored by touch. In many of my previous projects, I explored the role of tactility in society. The skin is not just a wrapper for the body. It is a sensory organ with millions of nerve endings sending signals to the brain every millisecond. Touch is an unconscious language. If the wind blows, I feel it on my skin. My skin tells my brain, "It is cold," "it is windy." It translates the invisible atmosphere into a physical reality.

Touch allows us to see the world not only as a whole image but with a "grain" of humaneness. It validates what the eye sees. If I see a wall, I know it is hard. If I see water, I know it is wet. Touch adds the third dimension. It is the missing piece of the puzzle that makes reality feel *real*.

A World as Smooth as Water. However, the modern world is waging a war on texture. As our lives migrate into the digital realm, the physical objects we interact with are becoming smoother. The smartphone screen. The laptop trackpad. The tablet. We spend our days stroking smooth, cold glass.

This guides our nerve endings to lower their sensitivity. We are starving for texture. Sight has come to dominate hearing, physicality, and touch. But this dominance makes the world flat. It makes sensations two-dimensional. It turns out that it is easier to manipulate the reality of a person when only one sense is pushed forward. If I can only *see* the world, I can be tricked by an illusion (like the neon spreading). But if I could *touch* the neon illusion, I would feel that the paper is flat. My finger would tell me: "There is no glowing disk here. It is a lie."

Touch is the truth-teller. That is why the digital industry removes it. The industry, driven by profit and the need for constant engagement, floods the visual sense while starving the tactile sense. They are creating a world "as smooth as water."

I do not trust a world as smooth as water. A mirror is smooth. Water is smooth. Screens are smooth. In this absolute smoothness, there is no friction. And without friction, there is no grip. I slide over the surface of information without ever truly holding it. It becomes boring. When there is only the absolute, polished perfection, the brain eventually goes numb. I need the unevenness. I need the roughness. I need the "glitch" of texture to feel alive.

The Salience Network: The Decision Maker. To understand why we are so easily trapped by the visual despite this need for touch, we must look at one final mechanism in the brain: the Salience Network (SN).

The Salience Network is a group of brain areas that constantly scans everything that you see, hear, and feel. It is the gatekeeper. It decides: "What is worth paying attention to right now?" The brain receives billions of signals. It cannot process them all. The SN filters them.

- The sound of your name in a noisy room? The SN wakes up.
- A sudden movement in the corner of your eye? The SN wakes up.
- A new notification on your phone screen? The SN wakes up.

Once activated, the Salience Network acts as a switch. It switches the brain from the "Default Mode Network" (internal thinking, daydreaming, nostalgia) to the "Central Executive Network" (action, problem-solving).

This explains the constant conflict I feel. I want to indulge in nostalgia (Default Mode), but the bright lights of the phone screen trigger my Salience Network, forcing me into a state of external alertness (Executive Mode). We are constantly being switched on and are never allowed to power down.

The Neon Trap. This brings me back to the idea of the "Neon Cube." If I were to create an art installation, a white cube in a dark space, surrounded by spotlights, creating a glowing, neon entrance, it would act as a giant Salience trigger. Like a moth, our desire for pleasure is attracted to bright lights. The Salience Network would scream: "Look at this! This is important!"

But inside the cube? I would make it empty. Just white walls. "Nothing." This creates the ultimate paradox. The visual system is excited by the neon glow (Arousal). The Salience Network is triggered by the brightness (Attention). But the tactile system finds nothing to hold onto. It is a trap. But perhaps, inside that trap, there is a lesson. By surrounding "nothing" with a beautiful glow, we can see how easily our brain constructs meaning out of emptiness. We can see how the "neon signs" of our world, whether they are advertisements or social media feeds, are stimulating our cortex with brightness, exciting us with pleasure, while offering us no tactile reality.

We are left standing in a glowing room, holding nothing but light.

The soft border

Looking back at the landscape I have traversed from the concrete greyness of post-Soviet Latvia to the microscopic trembling of the retina, from the rigid rules of a school system that labelled me "stupid" to the glowing, impossible colours of the neon spreading illusion, I realise that my entire life has been a negotiation with borders.

My dyslexia was never just a difficulty with reading. It was a sensitivity to the gaps in the code. It taught me early on that the world is not a solid, readable text. It is a collection of fragments that must be assembled. The post-Soviet atmosphere added a layer of fear to this assembly. It taught me that borders could be dangerous, that an "Iron Curtain" could fall, or that a deviation from the "average" could result in persecution. I spent my childhood navigating a world of hard edges, seeking a place where I could fit.

That search led me, inevitably, to the Neon Colour Spreading phenomenon. It is no accident that I found comfort in this illusion. The neon spreading effect is the antithesis of the Soviet concrete. It is the antithesis of the sharp pixel. It is a place where the border, that rigid line that defines where one thing ends and another begins, dissolves. In that dissolution, in that "contour weakening," the brain stops fighting. It allows the colour to spill. It creates a space that is not defined by rules, but by a glowing, shared atmosphere.

The Eye as a Metaphor for Existence. Throughout this research, the eye has served as my primary guide. But I no longer see it merely as an organ. It has become a metaphor for human existence.

We tend to trust our eyes implicitly. We say, "I saw it with my own eyes," as if that settles the argument. But as we have seen through the anatomy of the cornea, the blind spot of the optic nerve, and the trickery of the Salience Network, the eye is an unreliable narrator. It filters. It distorts. It invents. The lens bends the light. The iris blocks it. The retina fades with age and emotion. The brain paints over the blind spots. But these distortions are not mistakes. They are the raw material of perception. They are the proof that we are not machines. A machine records exactly what is there. A human records what they *feel* is there.

The Maker of Images is not the camera lens; it is the brain behind it. The brain is an artist that is constantly interpreting the noise of the world, trying to find a pattern that makes sense. In the case of the neon illusion, the brain invents colour to bridge a gap. It creates beauty out of emptiness. This is a profound realisation for me. If the brain can invent colour where there is none, simply to create a cohesive image, then perception is an act of creation. Reality is not something that happens *to* us. It is something we assemble.

Curiosity. Curiosity that keeps borders flexible instead of rigid.

- Fear makes borders hard ("Don't look there").
- Habit makes borders invisible (The infinite scroll).
- Curiosity softens borders. It asks: "What happens if I look closer? What happens if I touch this? What happens if I combine these two things?"

Curiosity is the "Cat" trying to enter the empty space. It is the "Lava" reshaping the landscape. In my thesis, I have argued that curiosity is not just an intellectual trait; it is a survival mechanism. It is the tool that prevents illusion from becoming manipulation. When I am curious about the neon illusion, I am active. I am studying it. I am playing with it. I am the "blower" of the glass, expanding the material. But when I am mindlessly scrolling, I am passive. I am the "mould." I am being shaped.

To stay awake, I must remain curious about our own perception. I must constantly ask: "Am I seeing this because it is real, or because my Salience Network was triggered? Am I feeling this pleasure because of a connection, or because of a Bliss Point?"

The Need for the Tactile Glitch. Finally, this research has led me to a desperate plea for the return of the tactile. We cannot live by eyes alone. The visual world is seductive, glowing, and beautiful, but without touch, it is a ghost. The "smooth world" of digital perfection is a trap. It offers no friction, and therefore no grip. I need the unevenness. I need the roughness of a stone, the coldness of the wind, the texture of a weeping willow's branch. I need the "grain" of reality to anchor us. Tactility is the check-and-balance system for the visual. It reminds me that I have a body. It reminds me that I am here, in this physical space, not just in the flow of images.

Final synthesis

I began this journey thinking I was researching a visual trick, a way to make lines glow. I ended it, realising that I was researching myself. The neon colour spreading illusion became a metaphor for how meaning enters my life: quietly, through gaps, through unstable lines, through places where the world forgets to finish itself.

In those unfinished spaces, in those "soft borders," I found a home. I found that my dyslexia was not a failure to read the world, but a different way of writing it. I found that the distortions of my eye were not flaws, but the signature of my humanity. I found that pleasure, that fragile, easily stolen feeling, is the most revealing signal of all. It shows us what we value. It shows us where we feel safe.

The world is not fixed. It leaks. It melts. It spills colour where there is none. And because of this fragility, it can be manipulated, beautified, distorted, or healed. Everything depends on the borders we draw and the borders we soften. I choose to soften them. I choose to let the colour spill. In the softest borders, in the places where the concrete ends and the glow begins, I finally see myself.

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