How do paintings position their viewers? How do they act as traps for our gaze, as Jacques Lacan puts it, and, once they have caught it, how do they manipulate it to situate our (real or imagined) bodies in relation to their fictional world? How do we record and transmit our experience of the encounter with the image? We will try to answer these questions in all their complexity. Particular emphasis will be placed on the tradition of pastoral painting from the Renaissance to the nineteenth century, but we will look at a wide range of work from medieval Chinese painting and Japanese Ukiyo-e prints to abstract painting and video art. Readings will come from a wide variety of sources, including critical and theoretical texts as well as fictional tales and ekphrastic poems that stage the encounter between the viewer and the work of art.