Rectangles in Nature

It's a portrait of a goat, and as we are when we look at the Mona Lisa, or at any portrait done right, we are drawn to the subject's eyes. And if you know anything about goats, you know that their pupils are rectangles. If not, well, you see that now.

He's staring at you, the goat is, you think. But you can't be sure; you've never focused on a goat's eyes for so long. In fact, they've already stopped looking like eyes to you, the way your nose will stop looking like a natural part of your face if you stare at it long enough in a mirror. With those rectangular eyes, and the ability to horizontally scan its surroundings without the slightest turn of the head, this goat you're staring at could be looking seemingly anywhere. It's disconcerting. You look away.

But there's not much else to look at. Behind the goat, there are a few background details, a meadow and a barn, and a few more goats in the meadow, mouths full of grass, and some trees, clouds in the sky, but you're not ready to turn your attention to them just yet. You think of the painting's title, *Rectangles in Nature,* and you find yourself dwelling on the eyes you're staring at more so than you would in another portrait. For the goat is not the subject; the rectangular eyes are. The rectangles in nature. And in the painting, the *only* rectangles in nature; the barn is man-made, its door and windows are man-made, its chimney is man-made, the trees are cylindrical, its branches cylindrical, its leaves round and flat with tips at acute angles, the clouds appear round, and the sky is the inside of a sphere. There are no other rectangles in nature, in this painting, other than the pupils of the goat.

And from this, we wonder what if any other natural rectangles exist, not just within the frame of this painting, but in all of nature, all the

universe. If we can think of any at all, we will find that there are very few examples: certain volcanic rock formations, under special conditions; plant cell walls, if we ignore the rounded corners; the head of a hammerhead shark, if we detach it from its body. Long story short, not too many. And this makes the eyes of the goat truly unique.

Oh, and lastly, though it almost goes without saying: the painting, and the frame of the painting, are both rectangles.