

Is It Really Bixby? *Authenticity, Digital Simulation, and the Ontological Trompe-l'Œil*

by Arslougho



Arslougho, "Is It Really Bixby?", Digital composition, 4961 × 3508 pixels, CMYK color space, 300 DPI.

Arslougho's work "Is it really Bixby?" stages a fascinating collision between authenticity and digital simulation, a conceptual tension announced in the title itself. The piece presents a male figure wearing sunglasses and a hat in a summery, tourist-like pose against an East Asian karst landscape—scenery unmistakably reminiscent of Guilin's iconic mountains in China or Vietnam's Halong Bay.

Hybrid Visual Language: Engraving Meets Landscape

What makes this composition remarkable is its hybrid visual language. The figure displays a striking graphic treatment, with digital hatching and vector-like line work creating an almost engraving-like appearance. This technique recalls early digital image filters or line drawings, causing the figure to oscillate between photographic reference and illustrative abstraction. The suit, sunglasses, and hat give the figure something timeless—it could belong to the 1950s as easily as to the present day.

In contrast stands the naturalistically rendered background landscape, whose rich green tones and atmospheric depth suggest conventional realism. This discrepancy between the stylized figure and realistic environment creates a visual dissonance that is central to the work's meaning. The viewer is prompted to question: what here is “real”? Was the figure inserted into the landscape after the fact? Is this an AI-generated composition? Or was a real person digitally altered?

Bixby, Identity, and the Concealed Gaze

The title “Is it really Bixby?” adds another layer of meaning. Bixby is the name of Samsung's digital assistant—a reference that situates the work within the context of contemporary human-machine interaction and questions of digital identity. The figure's sunglasses function as a visual symbol of concealment: we cannot see the eyes, traditionally the “windows to the soul.” Identity remains opaque, further intensifying questions about authenticity.

Post-Digital Image Space

Arsloho operates here in a post-digital image space where boundaries between photography, digital manipulation, and artificial generation are deliberately blurred. The work reflects our current visual culture, in which we are increasingly unable to distinguish “authentic” from “synthetic” images. The figure's tourist pose—seemingly a selfie-like moment—becomes a commentary on the superficiality of digital self-presentation in the age of social media and AI filters.

Chromatic Separation and Ontological Planes

The color palette reinforces this ambivalence: while the landscape is rendered in vibrant, almost hyperrealistic greens and blues, the figure appears in reduced grayscale, as if belonging to a different ontological plane. This chromatic separation underscores the strangeness of the presence—the figure reads as an intruder in an alien reality or as a digital avatar in a photographic environment.

A contemporary trompe-l'œil that no longer deceives the eye about space, but about being itself. The sunglasses hide the eyes; the title withholds the name; the landscape is real and the figure is not—or perhaps the reverse. In a world of ubiquitous digital mediation, Arslohgo compresses the question into a single tourist snapshot: is it really?

Medium: Digital Composition