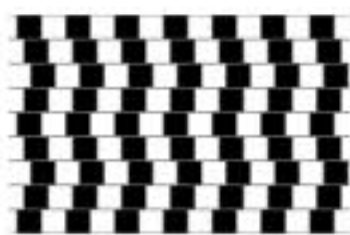


« [Mathematician of the Week: Pierre Wantzel](#)

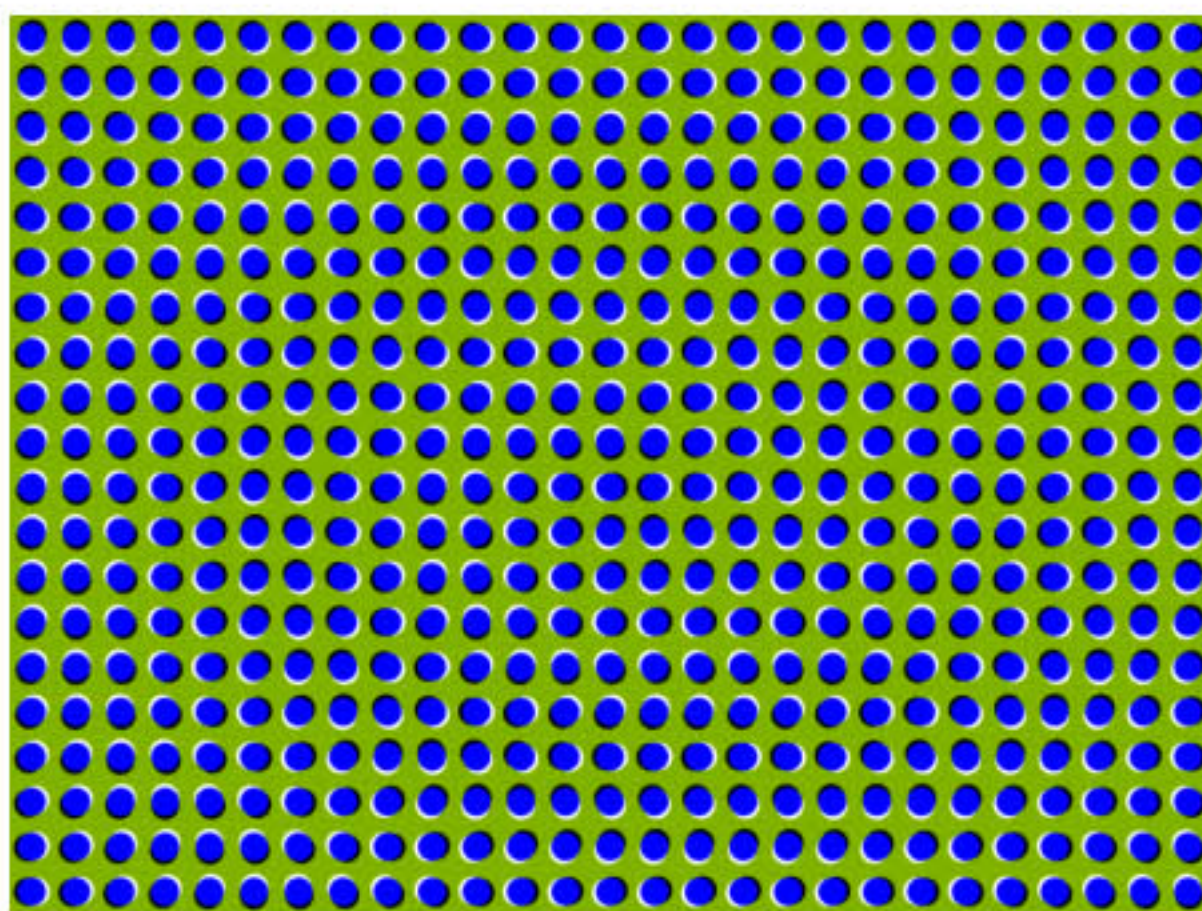
[Bacteria, Pancakes, and David X. Cohen](#) »

The 2008 Masters of Illusion!



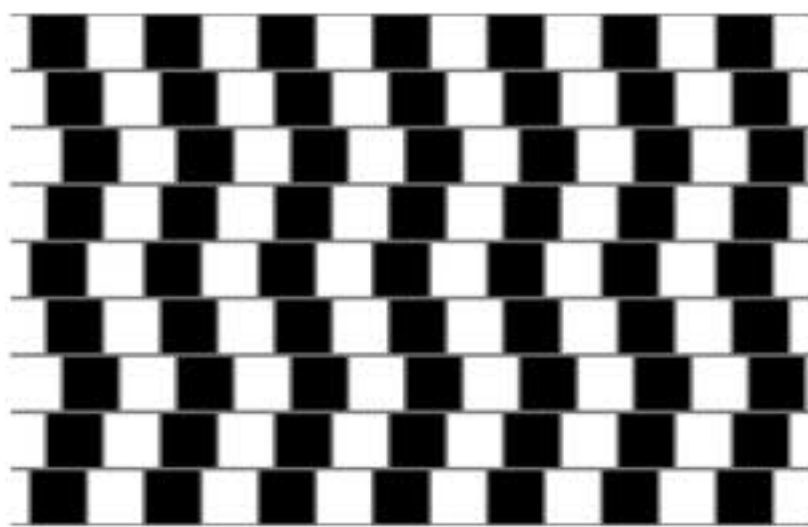
The results of the **2008 Best Visual Illusion of the Year** have been announced! You can see the winners [here](#), but it's hard to tell in the thumbnails why each one is an illusion: click on the picture for more detail. (As opposed to staring at the thumbnails for five minutes and thinking "I don't get it." I'll plead the fifth on whether or not that actually happened to me.)

To celebrate this contest, *Scientific American* published the article "[The Neuroscience of Illusion](#)" by Susana Martinez-Conde and Stephen L. Macknik in which they explain "the scientific value of visual illusions" (apparently the first of a series of such articles). The article has a [slideshow](#) with more illusions, like a motion illusion. Theirs is by Akiyoshi Kitaoka and is even cooler than the one below:



Although [the wiki page](#) for the illusion above also contains a vector field for the illusory motion, and that's pretty cool itself. Thanks Paul Nasca! (Who created it and put it in the public domain.) [Ack -- I can't seem to upload it! Well, you can find the vector field [here](#).]

Another neat illusion is the Café Wall illusion, in which the lines look tilted even though they are all parallel.



What's really cool is that the Port 1010 building (in the Docklands region of Melbourne, Australia) decorated their building in this design. (Or is that just going to cause ships to crash because they get so confused? Maybe this is a bad thing!)



And one final treat — if you haven't seen it yet, go check out the [spinning woman](#) on Wild About Math! (and elsewhere). Counterclockwise or clockwise: you be the judge.

Tags: [optical illusion](#), [visual illusion](#)