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SCIENCE IN THE NEWS

Shifty Eye Movements Behind Famous Optical Illusion

from *New Scientist*

The cause of an optical illusion, made famous by a 1981 painting, has finally been solved. Neuroscientists have shown that the way our eyes constantly make tiny movements is responsible for the way concentric circles in Isia Leviant's painting 'Enigma' seem to flow before onlookers' eyes.

Susana Martinez-Conde and her team from the Barrow Neurological Institute in Phoenix, Arizona, tested whether the effect was down to tiny, involuntary jerks of the eyes, known as microsaccades. Their purpose is not fully understood, but the rate of these movements is known to vary naturally.

In the team's experiment, while three subjects viewed Enigma, cameras recorded their eye movements 500 times every second. The subjects were asked to press a button when the speed of the optical "trickle" of the illusion appeared to slow down or stop, and release it when the trickle seemed faster.

Read more...

You can find this online at <http://www.americanscientist.org/science/pub/shifty-eye-movements-behind-famous-optical-illusion>

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