



Search  Go

Home > Nation/World

Text size: ▲ ▼

▶ HOME DELIVERY

▶ ADVERTISE WITH US



▶ CHICAGO WEATHER

▶ TRAFFIC/COMMUTE

▶ BREAKING NEWS

▶ LOCAL NEWS

▶ NATION/WORLD

▶ SPORTS

▶ BUSINESS

▶ POLITICS/ELECTIONS

▶ REPORTS & DATA

▶ DEATHS

▶ OPINIONS

▶ COLUMNISTS

▶ BLOGS

▶ ENTERTAINMENT

▶ TRAVEL

▶ RECESSION GUIDE

▶ LIVING

▶ LIGHTER SIDE

▶ VIDEO/PHOTOS

▶ SHOPPING

▶ CARS

▶ JOBS

▶ REAL ESTATE

▶ APARTMENTS

▶ MORE CLASSIFIEDS

▶ TV LISTINGS

▶ MOVIE TIMES

▶ NEWSLETTER/ALERTS

▶ NEWS TOOLS

▶ CONTACT US

▶ ABOUT US

# Brain scientists turn to magic to learn about perceptions and how mind works

—Robert Mitchum  
March 10, 2009

As Apollo Robbins moved quickly through the crowd at the Chicago Cultural Center, he shook hands, complimented jewelry and patted backs.

When he got back to the stage, he displayed the rewards of his brief pickpocketing expedition: watches, keys and one BlackBerry.

"We often look, but we do not see," said Robbins' unusual accomplice Monday evening, neuroscientist Susana Martinez-Conde.

The demonstration, called "The Magic of Perception," wasn't about petty street crime but magic and its potential to aid the study of the human mind.

Ads by Google

**Amazing Magic for Kids**  
#1 in Arizona--30 years experience Comedy-Fun-Balloons-Live Rabbit  
[www.ChristopherTheMagician.com](http://www.ChristopherTheMagician.com)

**Need birthday ideas?**  
Robert Ray Magician of Arizona Magician for hire  
[robertraymagicdex.com](http://robertraymagicdex.com)

**Boost Your Brain Power**  
Free Report: Repair Your Aging Brain in Just 15 Minutes a Day  
[www.primalforce.net](http://www.primalforce.net)

**Brain Rules - Brain Rules**  
Read the new book that will change your brain (literally)  
[www.brainrules.net](http://www.brainrules.net)

**Ken caryl magic tricks**  
Looking for a local magician? Be amazed by some creative magic!  
[Magicbylawrence2.com](http://Magicbylawrence2.com)

Illusionists and scientists might seem an unlikely coalition, but Martinez-Conde said magicians have spent centuries exploiting some of the brain's most important processes. Only recently has the science of how humans think caught up, she said.

"It's my feeling that cognitive neuroscientists have been reinventing the wheel," she said. "We have come up with principles that magicians have already been using for a long time."

In perceiving the world, the brain uses certain shortcuts to make predictions and focus attention on what appears to be the most important information. Magicians take advantage of those shortcuts, distracting the brain with a flourish of the left hand while planting a coin in a pocket with their right.

Integrated into the laboratory, such methods could help scientists understand the brain's perceptions and may even lead to treatments for conditions such as attention deficit disorder.

"Neuroscience research might have been faster if the field had paid attention to magicians earlier," Martinez-Conde said. "They have a few tricks up their sleeve they can teach us."

**BREAKING NEWS**



10:13 am

**Amber Alert for Downstate boys; may be headed here**

Digg

submit

Optimum online Optimum voice

**Business INTERNET and PHONE**

Each just **\$29.95** PER MONTH

your first year when combined

Switch now and save Call 1-866-218-1854

▶ CLICK TO TALK ◀

Popular stories

- MOST VIEWED MOST E-MAILED HOT TOPICS
1. Highway robbery? Texas police seize black motorists' cash, cars
  2. How to manage your finances if you get laid off
  3. Large law firms cutting pay for first-year attorneys
  4. Father mourns slaying of 2nd son on South Side
  5. Cubs' Luis Vizcaino in jeopardy of losing his spot in bullpen
- [more most viewed](#)

Search now.

Confidence Comes Standard.®