

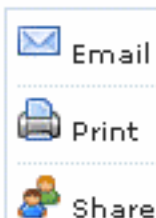
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## Gravity-defying ramps win Best Illusion of the Year award

ANI

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**London:** A mathematician at Meiji Institute in Kawasaki, Japan, has won the world's best visual illusion award for making downward-sloping ramps appear to run uphill.



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Kokichi Sugihara won the title at the sixth competition to find the Best Illusion of the Year, a satellite event of the Vision Sciences Society's annual meeting in Naples, Florida.

In his exhibit, Sugihara claimed to have discovered a new super-magnet.

Then a screen behind him began playing a video.

A cardboard structure appeared, consisting of four ramps ascending to a raised platform.

A hand placed a wooden ball at the base of a ramp, and it rolled uphill, before stopping on the 'super-magnetized' platform.

And when the same trick was repeated for the other three ramps, the crowd let out an "ooh".

Sugihara's gravity-defying marbles beat nine other finalists, chosen from 84 entries.

The science behind Sugihara's illusion was revealed as the camera angle changed to show that what looked like four ordinary ramps leading up to a platform was really an intricate set-up of sheared support columns, skewed slide angles and ramps of different lengths, all of which were above the platform all along.

From every viewpoint but one the contraption looks like what it really is— a mess of ramps and columns at different angles and eccentricities.

But from one spot, the three-dimensional solid becomes ambiguous, and our brains favour the solution that puts the columns at neat right angles, making the ramps seem to be below the platform.

"Humans prefer rectangular solids over stranger shapes," Nature quoted Sugihara as saying.

He said this is because our visual systems are used to carpentered environments.

Children of kindergarten age, whose perceptual systems have not been so shaped by experience, are seldom fooled by the illusion.

Sugihara's illusion was inspired by a computer program he wrote, which turns two-dimensional line drawings into renderings of three-dimensional solids.

The competition, hosted by the Neural Correlate Society, is the "Oscars of perception," said society president Susana Martinez-Conde.

The trophies are themselves visual illusions — wooden sculptures that look vastly different depending on the observer's point of view.

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