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Andrea Chahin

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TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2010

February 12, 2009

Optical Illusions and the Illusion of Love

How do we fool thee? Let us count the ways--that illusions play with our hearts and minds

By Susana Martinez-Conde and Stephen L. Macknik

It's Valentine's season, which means that everywhere you look there are heart-shaped balloons, pink greeting cards and candy boxes filled with chocolate. But what is true love? Does it exist? Or is it simply a cognitive illusion, a trick of the mind? Let us count the ways. Contrary to the anatomy referenced in all of our favorite love songs, love (as with every other emotion we feel) is not rooted in the heart, but in the brain. (Unfortunately, Hallmark has no plans to mass-produce chocolate-covered arrow-pierced brains in the near future.) By better understanding how the brain falls in love, we can learn about why the brain can get so obsessed with this powerful emotion. In fact, some scientists even see love as a sort of addiction. For instance, neuroscientist Thomas Insel and colleagues at Emory University in Atlanta discovered that monogamous pair bonding has its basis in the same brain reward circuits that are responsible for addiction to drugs such as cocaine and heroin. Their study was conducted in the prairie vole, a small rodent that mates for life. But the conclusions are probably true for humans, too, which may explain why it is so hard to break up a long-term romantic relationship. Losing someone you love is like going through withdrawal.

Posted by Andrea Chahin at 7:32 AM

1 comments:



Andrea Chahin said...

I chose this article because I was interested to know if love is experienced in the brain or in your heart. I learnt that love is actually a cognitive illusion that happens in the brain. Some scientist think that love is an addiction like the one you have to drugs. This article was very interesting but I wish there was more information. Even though it says that love happens in the brain, I can't help but wonder what makes you feel pain in your chest when you feel love...

[February 16, 2010 7:40 AM](#)