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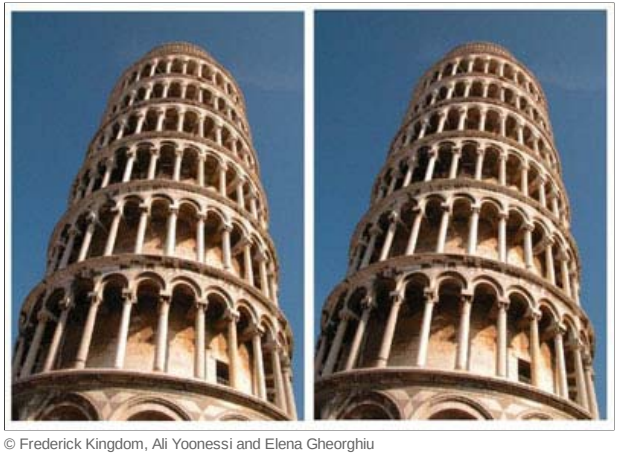

© Frederick Kingdom, Ali Yoonessi and Elena Gheorghiu

1. Which tower is leaning more?

Can you tell which tower is leaning more?

The answer is neither: These two pictures are identical.

If you don't believe us, print them out and cut the two apart. It looks like the tower on the right leans more because our brains expect, when looking up at parallel structures like this, that the outlines will converge as they recede. The brain corrects for this, moving the images apart. In this case our brains overcorrect, moving the images apart unnecessarily.

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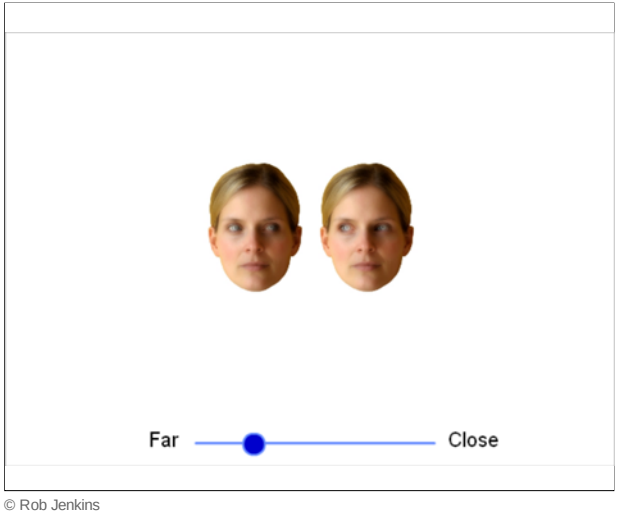

© Rob Jenkins

2. Who's looking at whom?

Far away, these faces appear to be looking at each other. But if you move closer you can see they are looking at you. This is your brain picking up different light cues that help you detect the direction of someone's gaze. Sometimes the brain uses dark areas near the eye to place the iris, but it will alternately use other clues too, like the outline of the iris.

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© Alan Stubbs

3. Can a still picture move?

Move toward and then away from this image and it appears to change.

What's going on? Even the illusion's creator, Alan Stubbs, isn't sure. He thinks it has to do with a phenomenon called the "dynamic luminance gradient effect," caused by the change in activating the retina's rods (which see black and white) to cones (which see color).

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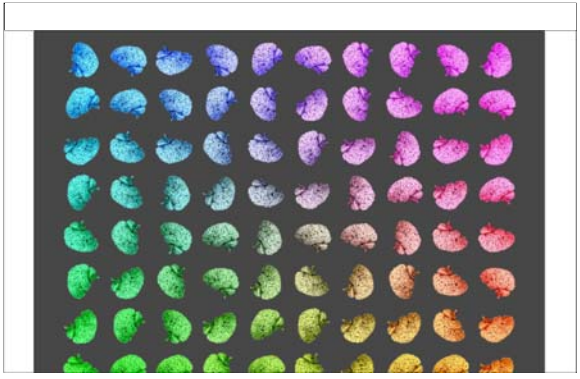

4. Can a brain bounce?

Sure, but these aren't really bouncing at all. The image's creators have colored and arranged these brains in order to confuse yours. They've made some regions of the brains darker than the background, some lighter and they've rotated them. So when the background changes from dark to light, the brains appear to be jiggling back and forth.

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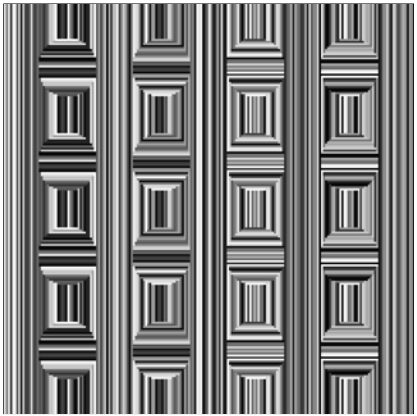

© Anthony Norcia

5. Do you see circles or squares?

How many circles do you see? Don't see any? Keep looking. What shapes make up the image: circles or squares?

The answer is both; your brain just can't see both at the same time.

"After a while looking at the image, the brain comes up with a second possible interpretation: the circles," writes Anthony Norcia, the illusion's creator in an e-mail. "The two interpretations 'compete' with each other in the brain for access to conscious perception."

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© Michael Pickard

6. Can a magnolia move?

The plant's leaves are stationary--but it looks like they are moving.

The leaves' edges, and the leaves themselves, change color and luminance in a way that confuse you as your visual system tries to resolve the constantly changing difference between the leaves and the background.

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7. Will you play as white or black?

It appears that there is one set of black figures and one set of white figures. In fact, the two sets of figures are identical. Your brain reads contrasts between colors, not absolute color values.

"Our brain uses tricks to decompose the image into the likely things that caused them," says the image's creator, Bart Anderson. "In one, the light stuff in the textures within the chess pieces are the fog, and in the other they are the chess pieces."

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© Akiyoshi Kitaoka

8. Can letters wave over a page?

By staring hard at this image, you can get the letters to stop.

Otherwise, the natural motion of your eyes makes the letters (which stand for "European Conference on Visual Perception") appear to move.

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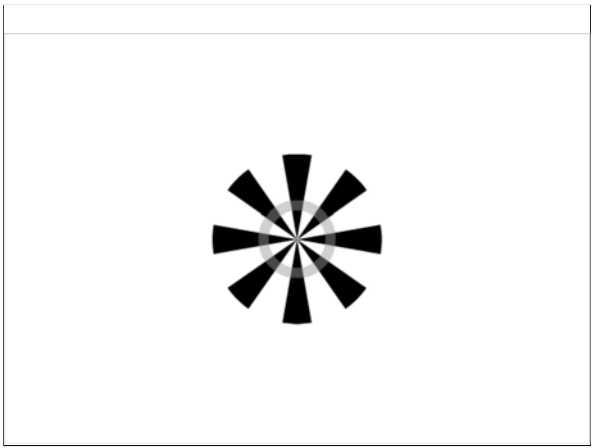

9. Which way is the wind blowing?

In this image the contrast and intensity of the gray ring trick the neurons into thinking they detect motion. The motion can be seen to go clockwise or counterclockwise.

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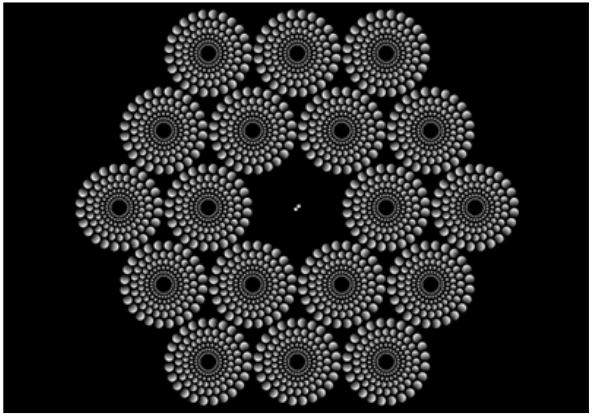

10. Will the disks move right or left?

Neither. And both. They aren't moving, but your brain thinks they are. This is a result both of natural eye movements, those that cause the "ECVP waves" illusion to move, and changes the image's background, like that in the "Bouncing Brains" illusion.

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