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Sculpting Impossible Figures

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“Impossible figures” are visual illusions that take advantage of the brain’s perceptual reasoning skills in order to form geometrical relationships that can’t actually exist in nature.

As Stephen L. Macknik and Susana Martinez-Conde explain in this [article in Scientific American](#),

“ The artist [M.C. Escher](#), for instance, depicted reversible staircases and perpetually flowing streams, whereas mathematical physicist Roger Penrose drew his famously impossible triangle and visual scientist Dejan Todorović created an Elusive Arch that won him Third Prize of the [2005 Best Visual Illusion of the Year Contest](#)... Several contemporary sculptors recently have taken up the challenge of creating impossible art. That is, they are interested in shaping real-world 3-D objects that nevertheless appear to be impossible. Unlike classic monuments – think of the Lincoln monument – which can be perceived by either sight or touch, impossible sculptures can only be interpreted (or *misinterpreted*, as the case may be) by the visual mind.

There’s a very cool [slideshow](#) that goes along with this article which explains how vantage point is exploited by sculptors in order to trick the brain into perceiving impossible figures in three dimensions.

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