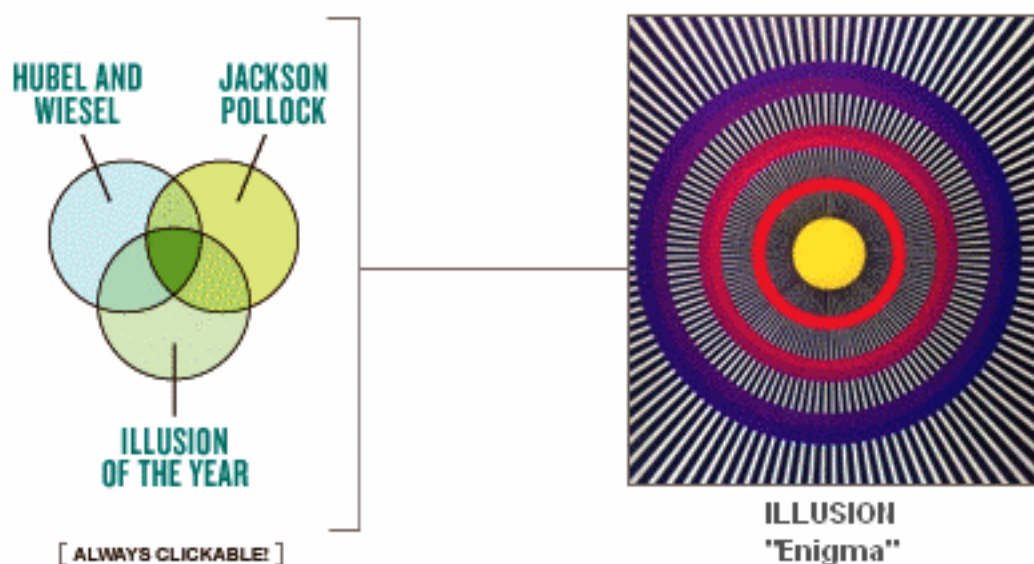


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## Look again!



Look once, and you'll see what appears to be a run-of-the-mill psychedelic painting — straight lines and concentric circles radiating, garishly, from the same, fixed focal point. Look more closely, and you'll see that the lines and circles seem to move. **What looks like an artwork is really an optical illusion** — its creator, Isia Levant, calls it the “Enigma” — and for 30 years now, it's been at the center of an ongoing scientific controversy. Thanks to a research group at the Barrow Neurological Institute in Arizona, the matter is now settled.

Why does the painting appear to move at all? The phenomenon is known as illusory motion, and most scientists attribute it to a flaw in our visual cortex. But according to the Arizona researchers' new study, the motion is actually a result of microsaccades — unconscious eye movements that occur spontaneously whenever we focus our eyes. The researchers arrived at their conclusion after mounting tiny infrared cameras on a helmet and tracking the eyeballs of people confronted with “Enigma.” Oddly, microsaccade rates increased right before the motion began and all but disappeared before the painting went still. The illusion's real, it seems, but in a twist that **Alan Watts** and **Carlos Castaneda** anticipated, it's an illusion that lies within us all.