

To Sebastian and Juliana



TUNNEL VISION

THE GREAT ESCAPE
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Silke Vry

Trick of the Eye

Art and Illusion



Prestel

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*Follow these
clues.*

Renè Magritte,
The Human Condition, 1933.
National Gallery of Art,
Washington





Handwritten text in a cursive script, likely a letter or document, partially visible in the upper right corner.

Dorothea
Trennung

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Don't be afraid of tricksters



Can you believe your eyes? Can you tell the difference between a painted object and a real one? Do you see a green field as green and a red wall as red?



Are you sure?

What you probably don't suspect is that our eyes—and we, too—are fooled all the time by the most incredible tricks. And we often don't even notice. It happens to us in nature (see page 13) and also, more than anywhere else, in art—not only in painting, but also in architecture!

Many artists are great masters of the art of deception. There's almost no one better at playing fantastic tricks on our powers of perception.

And there's no reason to worry. Unlike real con artists, artist tricksters can be fun!

So, open your eyes and experience the pleasures of deception ...

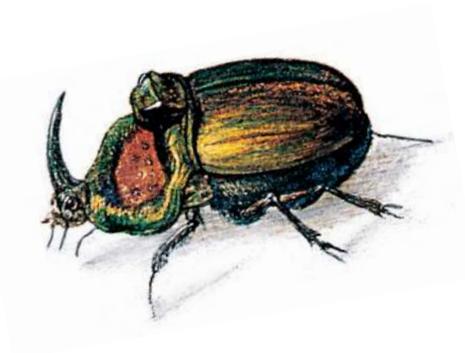




Domenico Remps (?), *Art Cabinet*, second half of the seventeenth century. Opificio delle Pietre Dure, Florence

Painters are liars!

And the best painters are the biggest liars...



This was the judgment made by an Italian sculptor more than 400 years ago about his painter colleagues. Why did he believe this?

Painters do nothing other than paint canvases with colors. In doing so, they create beautiful landscapes, pictures of people who seem full of life, and many other things that look amazing and real.

But if you run your hand over the flat canvas, you'll soon discover that it's all only an illusion! A picture is always a picture, no more and no less.



René Magritte,
The Treachery of Images, 1929.
Los Angeles County Museum
of Art

A painted pipe is not really a pipe, but only a picture of one.

So the artist of this picture has written "This is not a pipe" underneath the pipe in his picture.

Sounds confusing ... but it actually makes perfect sense, doesn't it?



Real or painted?

The history of art is the history of illusion.

For hundreds of years, artists often tried to achieve one thing: they wanted their pictures to reproduce reality as exactly as possible.

More than 2,000 years ago, two famous Greek painters—Zeuxis and Parrhasius—argued about which of them was the greatest artist, which one could paint nature more accurately. They agreed to a contest to decide the matter once and for all. The next time they met, they showed each other the pictures they had painted. Zeuxis unveiled his painting first. As soon as he did so, doves flew to his painting to peck at the grapes he had painted. The delighted Zeuxis was sure he had already won the contest. But then they had to take a look at Parrhasius' painting. Zeuxis asked his colleague if he might be allowed to open the curtain covering the painting. He reached out to touch it and, instead of feeling a curtain, his hand felt ... the picture. The curtain was only painted!

So who do you think was the greater artist: Zeuxis or Parrhasius?



*Read about it
on page
76.*



Adriaen van der Spelt and Frans von Mieris, *Trompe-l'Oeil with Garland of Flowers and a Curtain*, 1658. The Art Institute, Chicago

Eye test for beginners

1



2



3



4



5



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9



10



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Original and deception ...
An exact copy of nature—is there really any such thing?
Some photographs of real objects have been hidden among
these pictures of painted artworks. Can you find them?



Read about it
on page
76.