



## Shapiro finalist in international visual illusion contest

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LEWISBURG, Pa. - A visual illusion design by Bucknell Associate Professor of Psychology Arthur Shapiro has been selected as one of 10 finalists in an international competition that will be judged this summer at the European Conference for Visual Perception in Spain. The conference ends Aug. 26.

Shapiro's visual illusion design, developed with student researcher Justin Charles, was one of 74 submitted to the contest organizers. The selection of the top 10 illusions was conducted by an international panel of eight judges from institutions such as Harvard University and the California Institute of Technology, and was based on factors that include significance to the understanding of the visual system, beauty, simplicity of description, and spectacularity.

The creators of the 10 illusions will present their entries to an audience of about 900 conference participants in August. The conference participants will vote for the best illusions. Awards will be given to the top three. The first place award will be given the title "Best Visual Illusion of the Year" and will be made part of the exhibition of the Science Museum of A Coruna in Spain.

The Shapiro-Charles design is called Motion-Illusion Building Blocks.

Shapiro, who has been creating visual illusions since 1992, said the contest entry consists of a series of straight lines placed next to lights that change from light to dark. "The lines are physically stationary, but appear to move and distort in different directions. The illusion is compelling because we are able to fool the brain into acting as if motion was actually present," he said.

He said the illusions helps researchers to understand how motion is seen..

"When a ball flies through the air, we can talk about the ball's motion by saying it started at one point and ended at another. But in order to perceive the ball as moving, the brain's visual system must solve a series of questions: How do we know what object is moving? Can we separate the object from the background? How fast are your eyes moving in relation to the object? We often take such perceptions for granted," he said, "but the brain is really performing a collection of very intricate tasks."

Shapiro said part of what the field of visual science explores is how visual systems go about solving these problems.

A sampling of Shapiro's visual illusion creations can be seen at his website at <http://www.shapirolab.net/>. He suggested Lucy in the Sky and House of Cards as particularly interesting illusions for first-time visitors.

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