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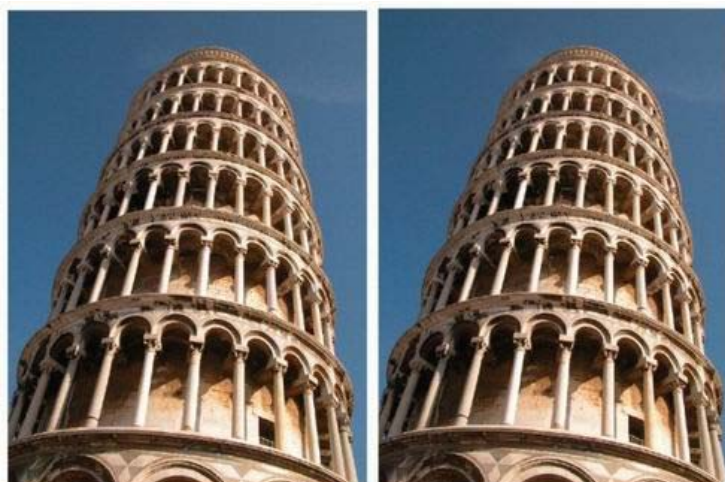
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## Best Visual Illusion of the Year 2007

Category: Art • Brain Toys • Medicine • Neuroart • Popular Culture • Psychology • Research • Technology • Vision

Posted on: May 15, 2007 9:00 AM, by Sandra Kiume

It's official! The best visual illusion, as [voted for 2007](#), is this Leaning Tower Illusion by Kingdom, Yoonessi & Gheorghiu from McGill, 2007.



Here is a novel illusion that is as striking as it is simple. The two images of the Leaning Tower of Pisa are identical, yet one has the impression that the tower on the right leans more, as if photographed from a different angle. The reason for this is because the visual system treats the two images as if part of a single scene. Normally, if two adjacent towers rise at the same angle, their image outlines converge as they recede from view due to perspective, and this is taken into account by the visual system. So when confronted with two towers whose corresponding outlines are parallel, the visual system assumes they must be diverging as they rise from view, and this is what we see. The illusion is not restricted to towers photographed from below, but works well with other scenes, such as railway tracks receding into the distance. What this illusion reveals is less to do with perspective, but how the visual system tends to treat two side-by-side images as if part of the same scene. However hard we try to think of the two photographs of the Leaning Tower as separate, albeit identical images of the same object, our visual system regards them as the 'Twin Towers of Pisa', whose perspective can only be interpreted in terms of one tower leaning more than the other.

Very cool. I also recommend the [Bouncing Brains](#) by Hansen, Hamburger and Gegenfurtner (researcher involved with the [blue banana](#)). Check out all the 2007 winners and finalists, now available online! [The winners are...us.](#)

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- What happens when it's three in a row? #1
- Posted by: derek | [May 15, 2007 01:06 PM](#)
- 
- I don't know, Derek, perhaps that's a question toward the 2008 contest. #2

### Profile



[Snotty Wafflefanny](#) is a psychology graduate student at an online university. He

hopes that the three weeks and \$29.95 that he is spending on his Ph.D. will get him a job at a Tier 1 research university. Do online universities have postdocs? ok...just kidding Snotty is a [real graduate student at a real school.](#)



[Sandra Kiume](#) gets by on her looks.

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**What the Brain is Reading**

[For better or for worse -- Optimists and pessimists are influenced by different ad messages](#)

When it comes to financial matters, people tend to fall into two categories: prevention-focused (risk-averse) or promotion-focused (gain-oriented). A study in the June issue of the Journal of Consumer Research tests comparative ads that are positively fra

[ScienceDaily: High-testosterone People Feel Rewarded By Others' Anger, New Study Finds](#)

Most people don't appreciate an angry look, but a new University of Michigan psychology study found that some people find angry expressions so rewarding that they will readily learn ways to encourage them.

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The researchers found that the magnetic pulses to the left PMd briefly disrupted the subjects' performance on the task, but that performance quickly recovered. The fMRI scans revealed that during this behavioral recovery, the right PMd and other areas inv

[news @ nature.com - Seeing the blues - Having different words for light and dark blue may change how you see them.](#)

The language you speak may influence how you perceive colours, according to new research. Russian speakers, who have separate words for light and dark blue, are better at discriminating between the two, suggesting that they do indeed perceive them as diff

[ScienceDaily: Children Less Prone To False Memories, Implications For Eyewitness Testimony, Study Shows](#)

However, psychologists Charles Brainerd and Valerie Reyna of Cornell University believe that the relationship between age and memory accuracy may not be so simple. Drawing upon fuzzy-trace theory -- the popular psychological

Posted by: [Sandra](#) | [May 15, 2007 01:34 PM](#)

I'm actually pretty sure the picture of the third would just be an empty landscape since the building would be so tilted that it would have fallen over.

#3

Posted by: [Steve](#) | [May 15, 2007 01:50 PM](#)

Here it is with three, if you are curious:  
[3 pisas](#)

#4

Posted by: [gertie](#) | [May 15, 2007 04:21 PM](#)

Thanks, Gertie.

#5

Posted by: [Sandra](#) | [May 15, 2007 06:22 PM](#)

Whoa, that's freaky: B is leaning more than A, and C is leaning more than B by the same amount, and C is leaning more than A *by the same amount*, not twice as much. Intuitive proof that 1+1=1!

#6

Thanks gertie!

Posted by: [derek](#) | [May 16, 2007 06:30 PM](#)

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