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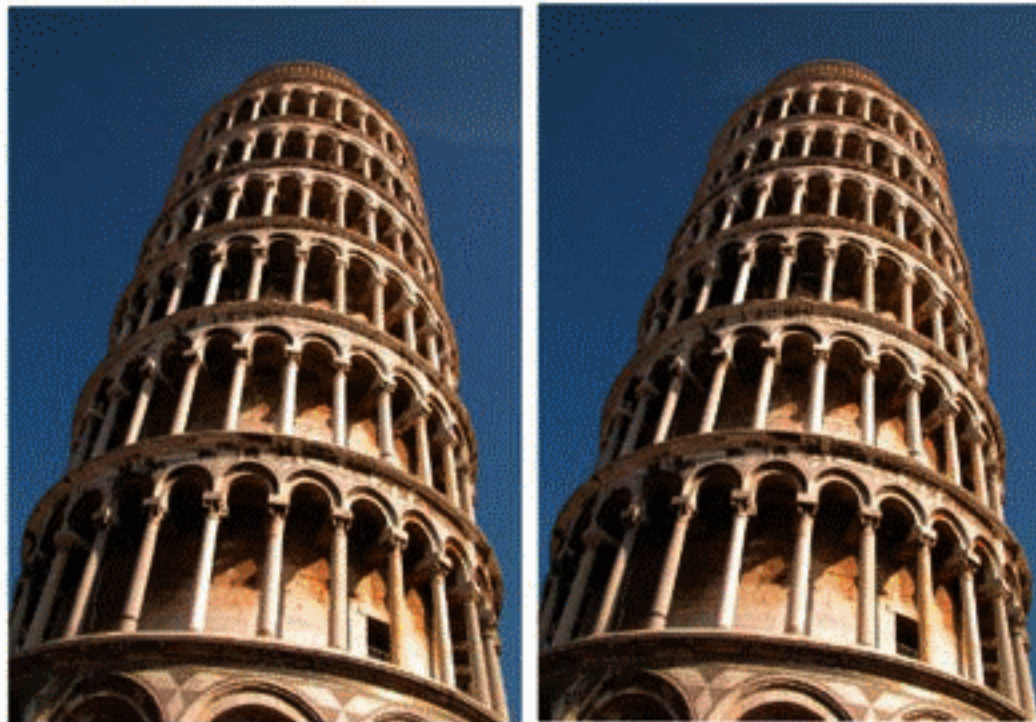
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FEBRUARY 23, 2009

optical illusions and consciousness



[A series of optical illusions](#) (apparently the towers are leaning at the same angle), and [an article on optical illusions and consciousness](#).

By studying what happens when the brain looks at an illusion—or is tricked by a magician—the researchers can separate what the eye itself picks up from the brain’s interpretation of what is going on.

“When perception doesn’t match physical reality, it allows you to isolate and understand the actual brain process,” says Macknik, who directs the Laboratory of Behavioral Neurophysiology at Barrow.

Macknik believes that these brain processes reveal nothing less than clues to human consciousness. “Those circuits [that interpret visual stimuli] include the neurons that comprise consciousness,” says Mackink. “If we understand these circuits and understand their neural underpinnings, we will learn the circuits that make consciousness.”