

# **Optical illusions**

## **Sense Making Faith p 26**

**What do you think you see in the world around you?**

**Optical illusions teach us not only that the human eye is an amazing organ, but that our brains are even more extraordinary in making sense of what we see. We are continually searching for information about our world and finding ways to interpret it. Optical illusions show us our brains at work, filling in gaps, seeing things in more than one way, recognizing people and situations from the smallest cues.**

**Newspapers sometimes report people who see or recognise Jesus or the Virgin Mary in stains or unusual marks on walls, in a pattern of mould on bread or in other strange configurations of surfaces or textures. Sometimes these things even then become understood to be signs, or become objects of veneration.**

**We might be cynical if someone claims to see Jesus in a mouldy sandwich, but then where might we expect to see things of spiritual significance? What would they look like and where might they be found?**

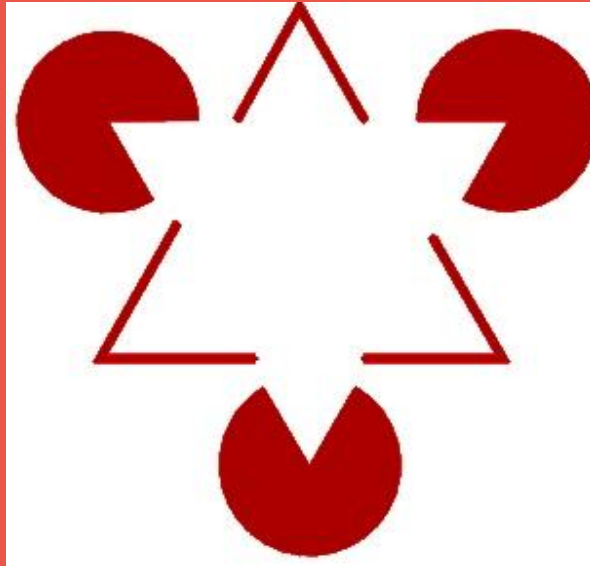
**What sort of things would make you stop and stare, or reckon there was more to it than met the eye?**

**Below are some more illusions to help you reflect on the power of eye and brain.**

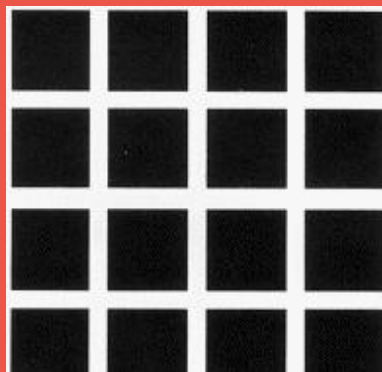
**Floor tiles in the church of St John Lateran in Rome**



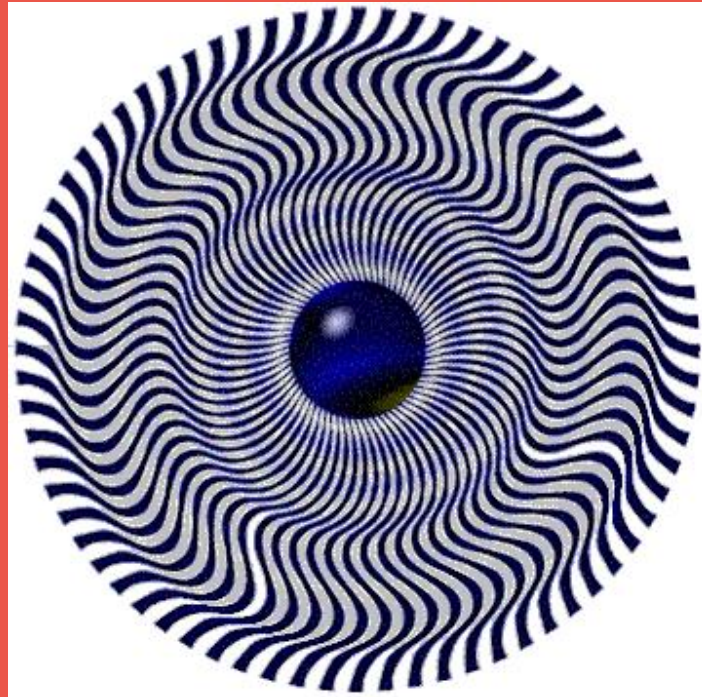
**The floor is flat, but the illusion is of a three dimensional structure.**



**This illusion makes your brain 'fill in the gaps' and recognise two overlapping triangles.**



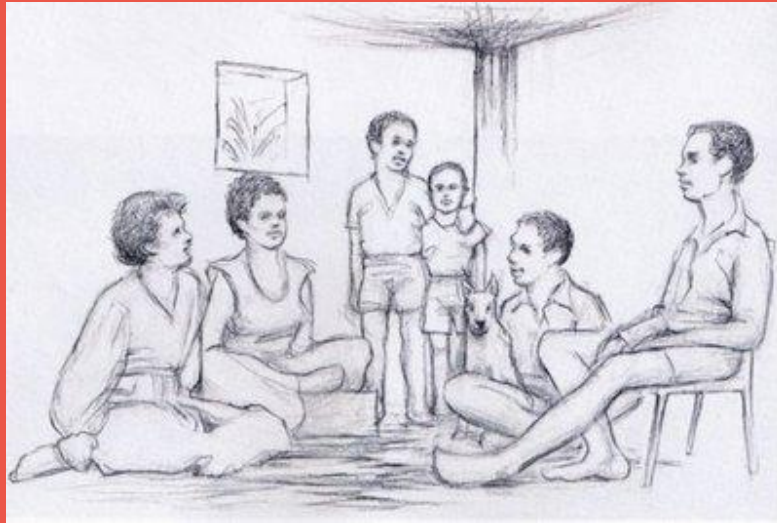
**This familiar illusion makes you see grey squares which are not actually present.**



**This illusion produces the sense of motion in a still image**



**Stare at this image for about half a minute then look at a light coloured surface. What (or who) do you see?**



**This image is interesting because what you see depends what your cultural references are. Western people usually see this family as indoors with a window in the wall. People from eg East Africa typically see this family sitting outdoors under a tree with the woman balancing a box on her head. The difference is that some people are culturally more used to straight lines and angles than others.**

[www.kcl.ac.uk/.../OpticalIllusions/optical.htm](http://www.kcl.ac.uk/.../OpticalIllusions/optical.htm)  
<http://www.vision3d.com/sghidden.html>  
<http://www.moillusions.com/>  
<http://www.colorcube.com/illusions/illusion.htm>