

# The Art of Illusion

## Brownie Try-It



This Brownie Try-It is about illusions, how our eyes can be tricked into seeing something that really isn't there. Brownies will discover and try three areas of illusions, Illusions in Art, Optical Illusions, and Stage Illusions. This try-it will encourage Brownies to develop an appreciation for the extraordinary uniqueness of these art forms.

To fully appreciate the uniqueness of this try-it, do four activities including the two that are starred.

### Illusions In Art

\*1. Define the word "illusion" (1) A misleading image presented to the vision. (2) Something that deceives or misleads intellectually.

What is Trompe L'Oeil (pronounced: tromp loy)? [Fr., that which deceives the eye] *n.* a painting, etc. that creates such a strong illusion of reality that the viewer on first sight is in doubt as to whether the thing depicted is real or a representation, 2. a trompe l'oeil painting or effect.

Look at some art books from the library or use the internet to see some examples of Trompe L'Oeil paintings and drawings.

Websites featuring Trompe L'Oeil paintings or drawings:

Community Bridge, Frederick Maryland – <http://bridge.skyline.net/>

Artist Chalk Drawing - [http://www.coolopticalillusions.com/optical\\_illusions\\_images\\_2/artist\\_optical\\_illusion2.htm](http://www.coolopticalillusions.com/optical_illusions_images_2/artist_optical_illusion2.htm)

Sony Laptop Chalk Drawing - [http://www.coolopticalillusions.com/optical\\_illusions\\_images\\_2/artist\\_optical\\_illusion3.htm](http://www.coolopticalillusions.com/optical_illusions_images_2/artist_optical_illusion3.htm)

Window Murals – <http://www.trompe-l-oeil-art.com/trompe-murals/trompe-l-oeil-windows.html>

Some of the more common Trompe L'Oeil effects are paintings of windows and doors. Can you think of any restaurants or public buildings in your town where you have seen Trompe L'Oeil paintings?

Go see a public Trompe L'Oeil painting in your town either as a troop or visit it on your own with your guardian and take a picture of it. Share the picture with your troop. Tell them where the painting is and how you discovered it.

### **Video suggestion:**

*Reading Rainbow – Opt: An Illusionary Tale*

*This video contains segments on television illusions, optical illusions and trompe l'oeil painting.*

2. Now that you know what Trompe L'Oeil is, it's time to make your own Trompe L'Oeil drawing!

Choose a section of sidewalk to create a Trompe L'Oeil drawing using colored chalk

### **OR**

Create the Trompe L'Oeil drawing on gray paper the size of a section of sidewalk and glue it down to the sidewalk with something easy to remove such as sticky tape or the sticky squares made for hanging posters.

Here are some suggestions of objects you can draw that might have been dropped by other people and remember the idea is to make it look as real as possible:

- Gum
- candy wrappers
- small toys
- bricks
- windows
- Doors
- a key

Were any of your brownie friends fooled by the trompe?

### Optical Illusions

\*3. What is an optical illusion? Something that deceives or misleads intellectually.

An optical illusion is an image that tricks you into thinking it is something completely different from what it really is.

Look at some books, paintings or drawings of optical illusions from the library or use the internet to find some examples.

Websites featuring Optical Illusions:

Optical Illusions & Paradoxes - <http://www.scientificpsychic.com/graphics/>

The Principles of Artistic Illusions - <http://www.lhup.edu/~dsimanek/3d/illus1.htm>

**Video suggestion:**

Reading Rainbow – Opt: An Illusionary Tale  
This video contains segments on television illusions, optical illusions and trompe l'oeil painting.

Now that you have seen some examples of optical illusions, it's your turn to make one. Create an optical illusion artwork piece. Choose the activity below or make up one of your own based on the books, paints or drawings you studied.

**A Butterfly Optical Illusion Activity** - <http://www.smm.org/sln/tf/n/nowyouseeit/nowyouseeit.html>

A monarch butterfly changes several times during its life-cycle. This activity is an optical illusion of a monarch butterfly during two stages of its life-cycle.

To make your own butterfly optical illusion, you'll need these supplies:

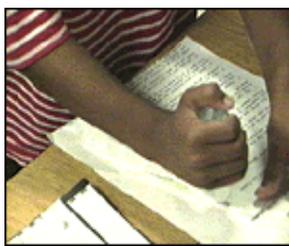
- large black construction paper
- [caterpillar pattern](#) (see attachments)
- [butterfly pattern](#) (see attachments)
- colored pencils



color / cut both patterns



arrange on paper



put glue on strips



glue strips to paper



fold



unfold

Websites featuring Optical Art to make:

Op Art Lesson - <http://www.winchendon.mec.edu/lesson-template10/lesson-template1.htm>

Making Optical Illusion Spinners - <http://www.jclahr.com/science/Illusions/fbkspin.html>

4. Try these optical illusions with your troop. These illusions do not require extensive preparation and can be done using ordinary items which you should be able to find around your house.

**Floating Finger**



**What You'll Need:**

Two hands, two eyes.

<http://www.eyetricks.com/athome2.htm>

**Effect:** Hold your two hands in front of you at eye level. Point your index fingers towards each other, as illustrated in the picture above. Leave a little space (an inch or so) between your two index fingers. With your fingers at eye level, stare at and focus on a wall or an object in the distance (a few feet away).

**What You'll See:** You should see a finger with two ends floating in between your two index fingers. If you are having problems seeing it, try moving your fingers toward your eyes (keeping them at eye level). Try this illusion with your two index fingers actually touching each other as well.

**Hole in Hand**



**What You'll Need:** One tube, two hands, two eyes.

<http://www.eyetricks.com/athome1.htm>

**Effect:** For this illusion, you'll first need to find a small tube. A cardboard paper towel tube works great for this illusion, although if you can't find one, you can always roll up a sheet of paper into the same shape or find something else that is similar.

First, you want to hold the tube in front of one eye and with both eyes look at something in the distance (10 to 15 feet away). Next, your free hand (the one not holding the tube) up in front of the eye that is not looking through the tube so that your hands and eyes should now be positioned similar to the illustration above.

**What You'll See:** You should see a round hole in the palm of your hand. The object that you were looking at in the distance should be perfectly visible through this hole.

## Stage Illusions

5. What is “sleight of hand”? **1 a** : a conjuring trick requiring manual dexterity **b** : a cleverly executed trick or deception

What is prestidigitation? Fr. *Preste* meaning nimble, quick (from Italian *presto*) + Latin *digitus* meaning finger – the literal translation is nimble, quick fingers.

What is a magic trick? A “magic trick” is an illusory feat using props and sleight of hand (prestidigitation).

What is a “stage illusion”? A “stage illusion” is any large-scale effect that involves a human assistant or a large animal like a tiger or elephant. David Copperfield, Lance Burton, Siegfried & Roy are among the magicians who can clearly be classified as illusionists.

Grand stage illusions generally require a great deal of money, an in-depth knowledge of illusionary principles, at least one assistant, a thorough understanding of theatrical techniques, staggering talent, imposing stage-presence, prodigious theatrical training, specific venues and great connections. Many illusions actually require the magician and all of his or her assistants to be in top physical health.

Learn the “Magician’s Rules”:

- **Keep the Secret a Secret** The fun of magic is mystifying your audience. If you tell how a trick is done, the mystery and excitement will be gone.
- **Do the Trick Only Once** The first time you show an audience a trick they will be surprised at what happens. If you show it a second time they will know what to expect and be more likely to figure out how you did the trick.

**Practice Before You Perform** Make sure you are comfortable with the trick before you perform it for an audience. Spend time practicing each part of the trick. When you practice it is important to say what you are doing, just like when you perform the trick. Remember to be dramatic and excited. You are putting on a show!

Invite a magician to your troop meeting to teach a few basic and simple sleight of hand tricks.

OR

Watch a video about magical illusions that will teach you how to perform a few simple magic tricks.

### **Video suggestion:**

*Mister Rogers Neighborhood – Episode 1717 Magician David Copperfield*

*This video contains a grand illusion performance and interview with David Copperfield. Copperfield also*

*demonstrates a simple trick that the Brownies can try.*

THEN

Have the girls learn and practice the illusions that were demonstrated to them. Invite each girl to perform a trick, either one that was demonstrated to them or perhaps another one that they already know. Encourage them to perform them for friends and family.

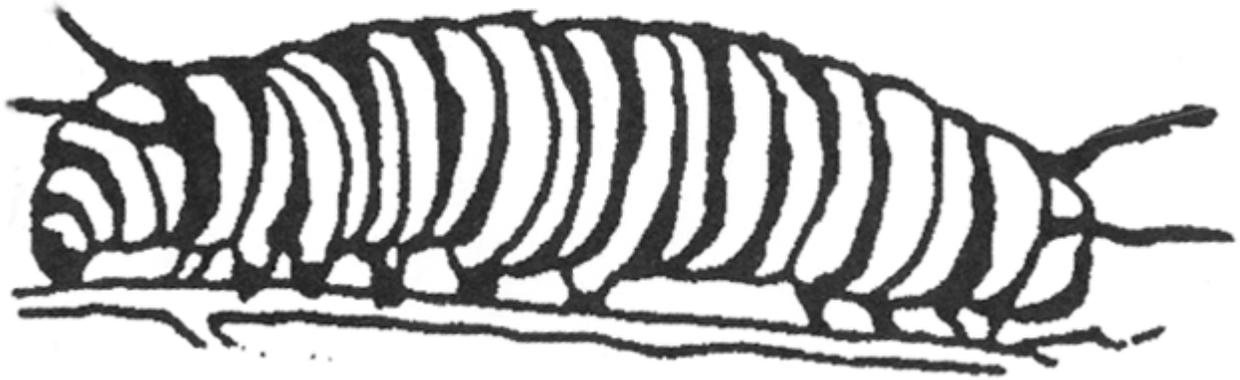
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