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## Obama, in Economic Tour, Criticizes McCain Agenda

By JOHN M. BRODER 31 minutes ago

Senator Barack Obama's attack on Senator John McCain's economic policies was a move to define the general election campaign by focusing on the economy as the central theme.

Text of Speech | Excerpt For Clinton, Millions in Campaign Debt and Limited Options

### Impasse on Spying Could Lead to Tighter Rules

By ERIC LICHTBLAU 9 minutes ago

With Congress deadlocked over the government's spy powers, more restrictive rules may return, leading some officials to worry about gaps in intelligence.

### Apple Unveils a Faster, Cheaper iPhone

By JOHN MARKOFF 5 minutes ago

Steven P. Jobs announced a new version of the iPhone on Monday with a raft of new programs.

Times Topics: iPhone | Apple  
Price Will Move iPhones to Mass Market, AT&T Says

Back Story with John Markoff (mp3)



Brian McClatchy/De Moraes and Mescher Labs

### Loyal to Its Roots

By CAROL KAESUK YOON 7:07 PM ET

Illuminating the social life of plants and confounding scientists, some species show an ability to recognize their own relatives, even exhibiting preference toward them.

### King Coal Country Debates a Sacrilege, Gas Heat

By IAN URBINA 9 minutes ago

Schuylkill County, in the heart of Pennsylvania's coal mining region, may turn to natural gas for its municipal facilities, a move that has sparked outrage from residents.

### GLOBAL MIGRATION

#### Spain, Like U.S., Grapples With Immigration

By JASON DEPARLE 21 minutes ago

With the United States riven by calls to legalize illegal immigrants, Americans might consider looking at southern Europe, where illegal immigration abounds.

Slide Show

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Scorching Heat Blankets East Coast 3:36 PM ET

Kennedy Is Released From Hospital 12:37 PM ET

Giants' Strahan Ends 15-Year Career 4:07 PM ET

Lehman Posts Loss and Plans to Raise Capital

McDonald's Pulls Sliced Tomatoes 28 minutes ago

### Pictures of the Day

Strikes in Spain, France and India over high fuel prices hampered transportation of people and goods.



### TALK TO THE NEWSROOM »

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The Public Editor: Culling the Anonymous Sources

### NEWS FROM REUTERS »

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58 minutes ago

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#### Vision Quest

The brain's ability to see into the near future creates many common illusions.



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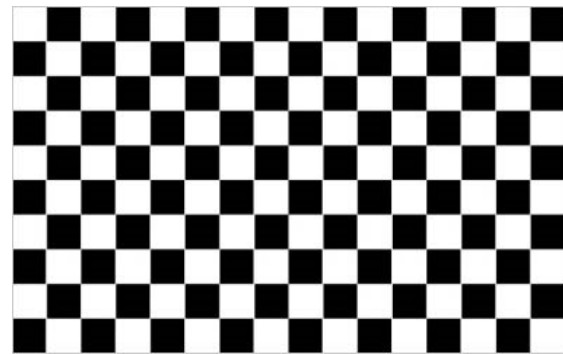
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PERCEPTUAL ILLUSIONS Leaning toward the image makes it appear as if it is bulging. New research suggests that the brain's adaptive ability to see into the near future creates many common optical illusions.

Facing Life Without Children When It Isn't by Choice By KAREN BARROW



MOVING ON Pamela Tsigdinos tried for 11 years to get pregnant. A growing online community helps women cope with the many facets of infertility. Patient Voices: Talking About Infertility Health Guide: Infertility in Women

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PERSONAL HEALTH Disorder Magnifies Blood Clot Risk

By JANE E. BRODY Factor V Leiden (pronounced factor five) is the most common hereditary clotting disorder in the United States. Health Guide: D.V.T



REALLY? The Claim: Ice Is Good for a Skin Burn

By ANAHAD O'CONNOR A batch of ice for a sunburn may seem like the perfect remedy, but is it? Times Health Guide: Sunburn

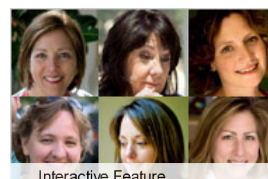


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**Science Times**

**Loyal to Its Roots**

By CAROL KAESUK YOON 7:07 PM ET



Brian McClatchy/De Moraes and Mescher Labs

**TAKING ADVANTAGE** A *Cuscuta pentagona* moving toward a tomato plant. Confounding scientists, some plant species show an ability to recognize (and prefer) their own relatives.

**BASICS**

**Tallying the Toll on an Elder of the Sea**

By NATALIE ANGIER

The loss of the horseshoe crab would be tragic, researchers say, because so many contemporary life forms depend on them.

**Brainpower May Lie in Complexity of Synapses**

By NICHOLAS WADE

A whole new dimension of evolutionary complexity for the brain has now emerged from a cross-species study.

**Among Scientific Treasures, a Gem**

By DENNIS OVERBYE

A collection of scientific writings to be auctioned off next week constitutes pretty much a history of science and Western thought.

 Slide Show: Science History for Sale

**MIND**

**Anticipating the Future to 'See' the Present**

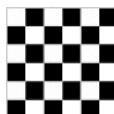
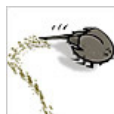
By BENEDICT CAREY

New research suggests that the brain's adaptive ability to see into the near future creates many common optical illusions.

**Hair Analysis Deflates Napoleon Poisoning Theories**

By WILLIAM J. BROAD

A detailed analysis of hairs taken from Napoleon's head at four times in his life casts doubt on the theory that he died from arsenic poisoning.



**OBSERVATORY Activity in Saturn Ring May Provide Clues to Birth of Solar System**  
By HENRY FOUNTAIN



A new study of Cassini images shows there is a lot going on within Saturn's F ring.  
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[Link Between Signaling and Physiology in Birds May Be Two-Way Street](#)  
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**Q & A**

**The Summer Wind**

By C. CLAIBORNE RAY

Does it get windier the higher up you go? Or does it depend on the wind conditions in general and the arrangement of surrounding buildings?



**A New Climate Deal?**

June 9, 2008 9:18am

**Expense-Account Science**

June 6, 2008 8:26am

**Why Not Perpetual Progress?**

June 5, 2008 1:42pm

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**How Much Nature is Enough? Leatherbacks Linger; Caribbean Monk Seal Gone**

June 9, 2008, 11:45 AM

**Next Steps on Climate and Energy**

June 7, 2008

**Hansen on Next Climate Steps: Charge Polluters; Pay People**

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**PODCAST: SCIENCE UPDATE**

David Corcoran, a science editor,



### A Fierce Predator Makes a Home in the Suburbs

By KATIE ZEZIMA

The fisher's ability to adapt quickly astounds biologists, who see it as a conservation success, but it has also cultivated a reputation as a killer of small pets.



explores some of the topics addressed in this week's Science Times.



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### Physicists in Congress Calculate Their Influence

By CORNELIA DEAN

There are only about 30 scientists among the 535 senators and representatives in the 110th Congress, but physics is on a roll.

### Coal Country Looks to Natural Gas

By IAN URBINA 9 minutes ago

Schuylkill County, in the heart of Pennsylvania's coal mining region, may turn to natural gas for its municipal facilities, a move that has sparked outrage from residents.

### Facing Life Without Children When It Isn't by Choice

By KAREN BARROW

A growing online community helps women cope with the many facets of infertility.

Patient Voices: Talking About Infertility



### CASES

### Showing the Patient the Door, Permanently

By RAHUL K. PARIKH, M.D.

The physician-patient contract gives a doctor the right to dismiss a patient, but could I fire a patient because I didn't like his mother?



### PERSONAL HEALTH Disorder Magnifies Blood Clot Risk

By JANE E. BRODY

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Health Guide: D.V.T »



### REALLY?

### The Claim: Ice Is Good for a Skin Burn

By ANAHAD O'CONNOR

A batch of ice for a sunburn may seem like the perfect remedy for a sunburn, but is it?

Times Health Guide: Sun Burn »



### WELL

### Gay Unions Shed Light on Gender in Marriage

By TARA PARKER-POPE

A growing body of evidence shows that same-sex couples have a great deal to teach everyone else about marriage and relationships

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Soda and Stomachaches (1 Letter)

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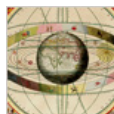
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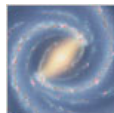
### SLIDE SHOW: Science History for Sale

An auction next week at Christie's in New York will offer pieces of science history, including writings from Einstein and Copernicus.



### SLIDE SHOW: The Milky Way's Missing Arms and a Cell in 3D

More science in pictures: Weighing failed stars, tiny bacteria and another locale to explore on Mars.



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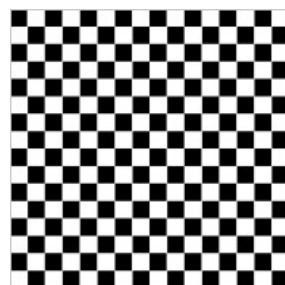
By BENEDICT CAREY Published: June 10, 2008

Staring at a pattern meant to evoke an optical illusion is usually an act of idle curiosity, akin to palm reading or astrology. The dot disappears, or it doesn't. The silhouette of the dancer spins clockwise or counterclockwise. The three-dimensional face materializes or not, and the explanation always seems to have something to do with the eye or creativity or even personality.

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PERCEPTUAL ILLUSIONS Leaning toward the image makes it appear as if it is bulging.

That's the usual cue to nod and feign renewed absorption in the pattern.

In fact, scientists have investigated such illusions for hundreds of years, looking for clues to how the brain constructs a seamless whole from the bouncing kaleidoscope of light coming through the eyes. Brain researchers today call the illusions perceptual, not optical, because the entire visual system is involved, and their theories about what is occurring can sound as exotic as anyone's.

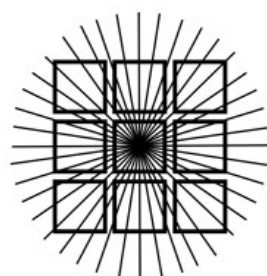
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Changizi et al., 2008

The radiating lines trick the brain into perceiving motion forward, so the center appears to bulge.

In the current issue of the journal Cognitive Science, researchers at the California Institute of Technology and the University of Sussex argue that the brain's adaptive ability to see into the near future creates many common illusions.

"It takes time for the brain to process visual information, so it has to anticipate the future to perceive the present," said Mark Changizi, the lead author of the paper, who is now at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. "One common functional mechanism can explain many of these seemingly unrelated illusions." His co-authors were Andrew Hsieh, Romi Nijhawan, Ryota Kanai and Shinsuke Shimojo.

One fundamental debate in visual research is whether the brain uses a bag of ad hoc tricks to build a streaming model of the world, or a general principle, like filling in disjointed images based on inference from new evidence and past experience. The answer may be both. But perceptual

illusions provide a keyhole to glimpse the system.

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When shown two images in quick succession, one of a dot on the left of a screen and one with the dot on the right, the brain sees motion from left to right, even though there was none. The visual system has apparently constructed the scenario after it has been perceived, reconciling the jagged images by imputing motion.

In an experiment originated by Dr. Nijhawan, people watch an object pass a flashbulb. The timing is exact: the bulb flashes precisely as the object passes. But people perceive that the object has moved past the bulb before it flashes. Scientists argue that the brain has evolved to see a split second into the future when it perceives motion. Because it takes the brain at least a tenth of a second to model visual information, it is working with old information. By modeling the future during movement, it is "seeing" the present.

Dr. Changizi and his colleagues hold that it is a general principle the brain applies to a wide variety of illusions that trick the brain into sensing motion.

"It's likely that there are many different neural mechanisms involved in perceptual illusions," said Jacob Feldman, a Rutgers psychologist. "But the idea that there may be some overarching explanation that accounts for these separate mechanisms is compelling and satisfying to some scientists."

Timothy Hubbard, a psychologist at [Texas Christian University](#), said the principle of perceiving the present was sound, adding, "If a person's response to an object, to catch, hit, block, whatever, is to be optimal, that response should be calibrated to where the object would be"— not a split second earlier, when the perception occurred.

This is why identical squares arranged around the center of a spoked-wheel image appear misshapen, said Dr. Changizi, who writes about it in a book due in 2009, "The Vision Revolution." The sides of squares closer to the center appear to bulge. The sides farther out appear shorter. The radiating lines in the pattern trick the brain into perceiving motion forward, so it projects objects forward, making those nearer the center appear closer to the eye.

The same effect can be seen by leaning forward toward a precise checkerboard. The image seems to bulge forward, this time because the eyes are moving.

Dr. Changizi says such illusions can also occur in real life. When a golf ball or baseball rolls through the grass and suddenly drops into a hole, the brain sometimes perceives a trace of the ball on the other side of the hole.

"But these are things that we don't experience very often," he said, "because the brain is so good at covering up its mistakes."

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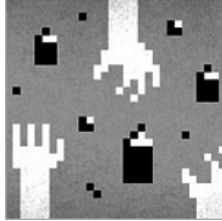
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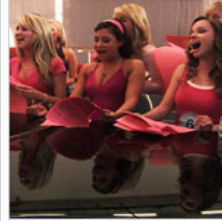
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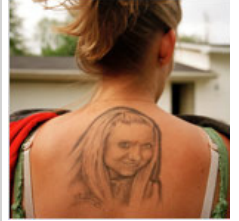
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