

Mirror illusion

(Switzerland)

Background

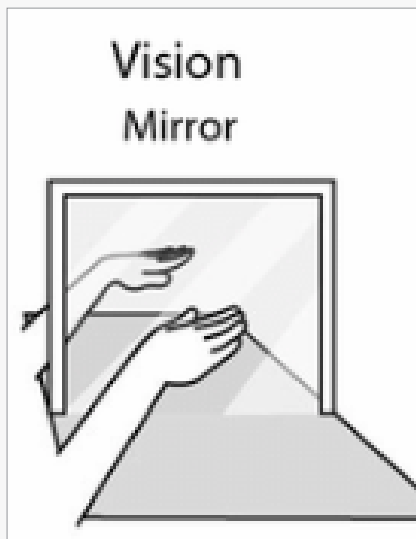
A mirror can be used to give the illusion that our hands are not behaving as they should.

You will need:

- ✓ A free standing mirror
- ✓ paintbrush
- ✓ partner

Follow these steps:

1. Place the mirror on a table with the reflective surface facing to the right
2. Place your left hand to the left side of the mirror (it is hidden by the mirror)
3. The right hand is placed to the right side of the mirror in an exact imitation of the position of the left hand
4. Move both hands slowly in the same way (e.g. parallel lifting, form a fist etc.) for a few minutes
5. Stop the movement with your left hand while continuing to move your right hand
6. Try changing the “roles” of the hands: the left hand moves, the right one remains still.



So what happened?

You can see how the “left hand” (actually the mirror image of the right hand) moves, but you can’t feel it. Describe your perceptions.

Our brains can’t deal properly with such contradictions.

What next?

Repeat the investigation, but this time your partner touches your right hand (the hand behind the mirror) with a paintbrush. You can see how the “left hand” in the mirror is touched, but you can’t feel it (with the real left hand), giving the impression that the left hand is numb.