

Now You See It, Now You Dont: how social cues and questions misdirect our attention

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Abstract: Magic tricks offer powerful tools to manipulate people's attention and conscious experience. Using real-world eyetracking we can investigate how different misdirection cues drive people's eye movements. Moreover, by measuring people's susceptibility to the trick, we can evaluate how these cues influence people's conscious experience. We used a magic trick to explore the way in which spoken questions and gaze cues influence eye movements and awareness. The trick involved a fully visible colour change as a probe of whether participants displayed change blindness due to social misdirection. Our results show that the question misdirected attention towards the magician's face and prevented people from perceiving the colour change. In this paper we discuss how linguistic misdirection is modulated by gaze cues. The misdirection of attention by visual and social cues is of interest to understanding visual and social cognition.