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Masters of Deception: Escher, Dali & the Artists of Optical Illusion

Al Seckel

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Astonishing creations by masters of the art, such as Escher, Dali, and Archimbolo; amazing visual trickery; and an illuminating foreword by the Pulitzer Prize--winning author Douglas R. Hofstadter make this 320-page, breathtaking collection the definitive book of optical illusions.

Rings of seahorses that seem to rotate on the page. Butterflies that transform right before your eyes into two warriors with their horses. A mosaic portrait of oceanographer Jacques Cousteau made from seashells. These dazzling and often playful artistic creations manipulate perspective so cleverly that they simply outwit our brains: we can’t just take a quick glance and turn away. They compel us to look once, twice, and over and over again, as we try to figure out exactly how the delightful trickery manages to fool our perceptions so completely. Of course, first and foremost, every piece is beautiful on the surface, but each one offers us so much more. Some, including Sandro del Prete’s charming “Window Gazing,” construct illusionary worlds where normal conceptions of up, down, forward, and back simply have no meaning anymore. Others, such as Jos De Mey’s sly “Ceci n’est pas un Magritte,” create visual puns on earlier work. From Escher’s famous and elaborate “Waterfall” to Shigeo Fukuda’s “Mary Poppins,” where a heap of bottles, glasses, shakers, and openers somehow turn into the image of a Belle Epoque woman when the spotlight hits them, these works of genius will provide endless enjoyment and food for thought.

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