



How to Look at Pictures

Abraham Tamir*

Department of Chemical Engineering, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Israel

*Corresponding author: Abraham Tamir, Department of Chemical Engineering, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Beersheba, Israel

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Abstract

People are used to view pictures while looking at them from center. This article tries to educate people to look at pictures while moving from right to left or the opposite. The interesting fact that is observed is that if a front face is observed from the right side it will be observed while moving to the center and to the left. This phenomenon is generalised by the following principle:

“If you look at any detail in a picture and this detail turns to you from a certain direction, it will turn from each direction you view it: from right, from front, from left, from above and from below. However, if from your looking direction the element does not turn to you, it will never turn to you.”

Introduction

People looking at Mona Lisa believe that she looks at them from every direction they look at her. However in a numerical survey I have conducted, that has never been done before, 500 people were asked to look at her from right, front and left sides. The results were surprising and negate the well-known myth that Mona Lisa looks at the observer from all directions viewed where only 65% confirmed that Mona Lisa was looking to them from all directions. Likewise, 93% confirmed that Mona Lisa was looking at them while viewing at her from right, 72% when viewing at her from the front and 78% when viewing at her from the left. The pictures (1,2,3) below demonstrate what they observed from each direction. Additional pictures (4,5,6) are that of Albert Einstein. A thorough analysis of the subject brought me to extend and formulate a principle that I named “Mona Lisa’s gaze principle” which fits each element in a picture -portrait, wall in a construction, details in a landscape and the like. This principle guides people how to look at pictures.

The Gaze Principle

According to this principle: “if you look at any detail in a picture and this detail turns to you from a certain direction, it will turn from each direction you view it: from right, from front, from left, from

above and from below. However, if from your looking direction the element does not turn to you, it will never turn to you.” Hence, I suggested to an observer of every picture the following: move parallel to the picture from right to left and the opposite, and to your surprise you will start to feel that the elements that turned to you from a certain direction will start to move in your brain to every direction from which you view them. The different artworks below demonstrate the above principle. The artwork of the Holland’s artist Meindert Hobbema indeed testifies that the Trail and trees avenue (pictures 7,8,9) turn to the observer from each direction. However, The Wall in the painting (pictures 10,11,12) of the artist Nofer Keydar never turns to the observer. Twenty-five people who were asked to observe 16 details in the 9 paintings from three directions in which also that at the bottom confirmed the principle in 90% of the details and the directions of observation. And finally it should be noted that we don’t talk here on a scientific principle that exists in all cases, but in a generalisation that depends on the perception process that is different from one to the other.

Artistic Demonstration of the Principle

Pictures 1 to 12 are the demonstration of the principle with the following legend (Figure 1).

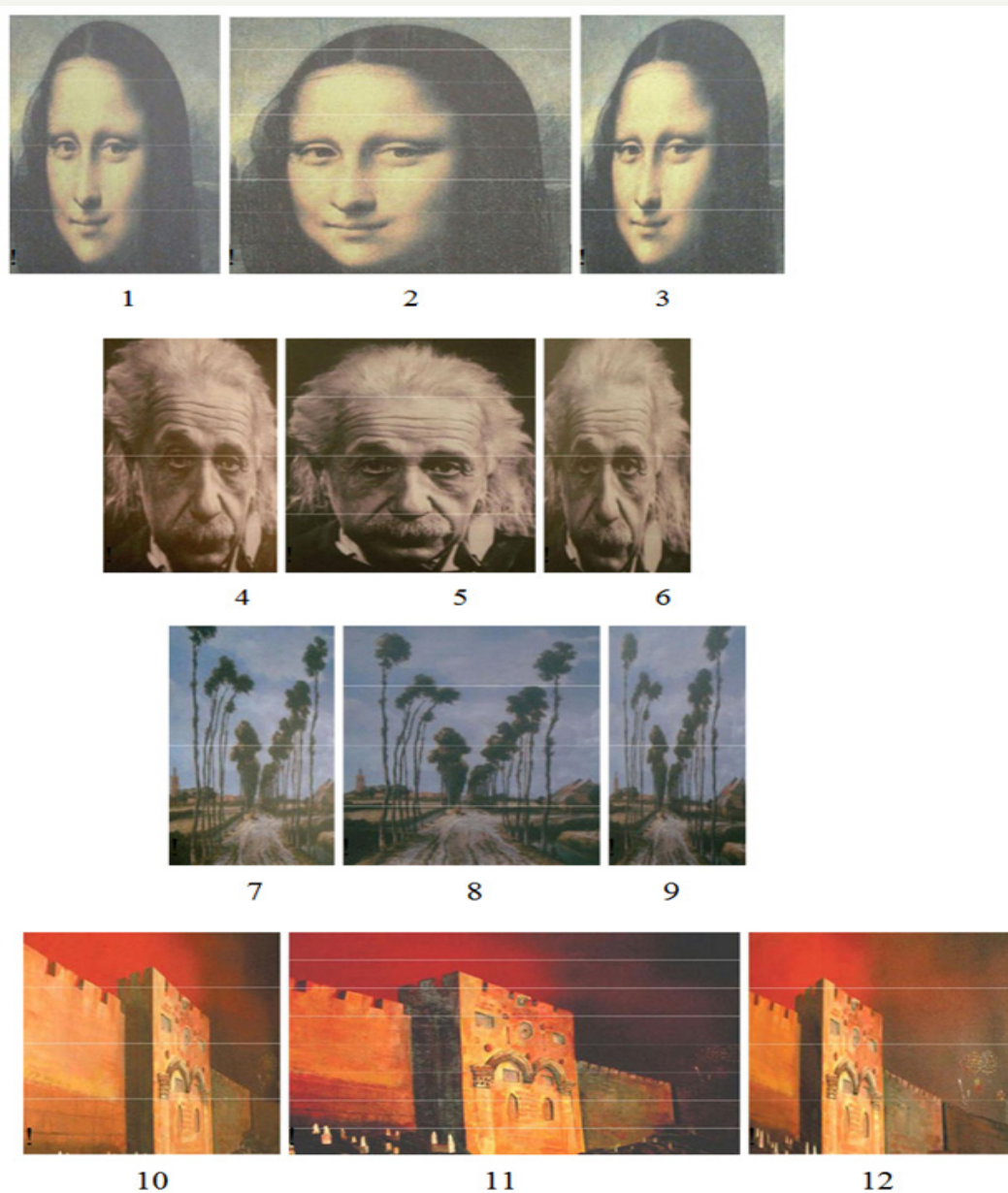


Figure 1: Artistic demonstration of the principle

1. Mona Lisa portrait viewed from left side
2. Mona Lisa original portrait viewed from front side
3. Mona Lisa portrait viewed from right side
4. Einstein portrait viewed from left side
5. Einstein original portrait viewed from front side
6. Einstein portrait viewed from right side
7. Trail and trees viewed from left side
8. Trail and trees viewed from front side
9. Trail and trees viewed from right side
10. Wall viewed from left side
11. Wall viewed from front side
12. Wall viewed from right side.