Art Illusions

Learning Objective:

To explore how artists use trompe l'oeil to create illusions.

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What do you think of this photo as a work of art?

Is it art? Why or why not?

What if this “photo” wasn’t a photo at all but an oil painting?

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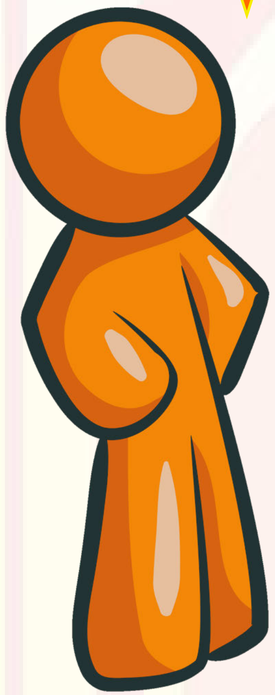
Would that change your opinion of it?

This is, in fact, a painting and not a photograph! Were you fooled?



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Artists have been trying to fool people with their artwork for hundreds of years. It's all part of the fun of art!

"Escaping Criticism" Borrell de Caso, 1874

This boy is escaping from the painting! How can this be?

This painting is an example of a technique called trompe l'oeil, which means 'to deceive the eye'. This painting doesn't make sense until you realise that the frame has been painted too. The artist has used clever shading to make it look as though the boy is climbing straight out of the frame.

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"Treasurers' papers and documents" Cornelis Brizé, 1656

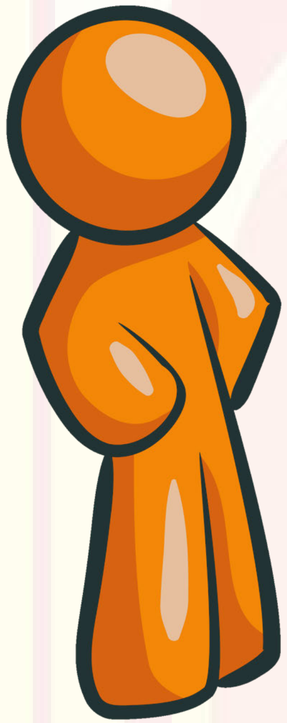
This is another example of trompe l'oeil. Here, the artist has used shading to make it look like the pieces of paper are real papers that have been pinned to a board.

What do you think of this painting?

Artists do not only use trompe l'oeil in paintings. Have a look at the building on the next slide. Can you spot anything out of the ordinary?

Some of these windows aren't windows at all! They have been painted on to look like windows. Which do you think are painted and which are real?

Street artists also use trompe l'oil to fool people. How has this artist created an illusion?



Today, one of the most popular ways of fooling viewers is for artists to use photorealism (also called hyperrealism) to make people believe that paintings or drawings are photographs, like the painting of the Scrabble board we saw earlier.

Have a look at the paintings on the next slides. They are all by an photorealist artist called Steve Mills. What do you think of them?

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