

Tekst 8

Eyes for art

From Valerio Cugia

- 1 As a painter, I was interested to read Jessica Griggs’s article on optical tricks used by artists (18 September, p34). However, I was surprised to learn that a study of 90,000 people in the UK found that they preferred impressionist paintings over some other forms of art.
- 2 The explanation reported in the article – that the ambiguity of the images allows the amygdala, the part of the brain that links sensory information to emotions, to interpret the pictures in a more personal way – may only be part of the story. The preference could also be a product of contemporary cultural tastes.
- 3 When the impressionists first showed their paintings, most Parisians found them absolutely

horrible, as their taste was formed by other images and different values and subject matter. They, like the 90,000 UK subjects, had an amygdala region of the brain. 32 the effect on that area is the sole cause of people’s appreciation of impressionist art, they too should have responded enthusiastically to those paintings, but they did not.

- 4 For my own part, although I find Renaissance painting magnificent, it is culturally and visually so distant that I feel closer to Monet and fellow painters than to Raphael or Dürer. In the same way, people living in the 1500s would probably have preferred their artists to the impressionists we love so much today.
- Groningen, The Netherlands*

New Scientist, 2010

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- “they preferred impressionist paintings” (paragraph 1)
- 1p 31 What does Valerio Cugia offer as an explanation for this preference?
- A A person’s state of mind at a given point in time.
 - B The impact of the cultural environment.
 - C The impression of these paintings on the brain.
 - D The fact that these blurry images leave room for more than one interpretation.
- 1p 32 Which of the following fits the gap in paragraph 3?
- A As
 - B If
 - C Unless