

# **V**isual **M**emory **D**istortion



**By**  
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# Visual Memory Distortion

First Published in Great Britain in 2009

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**Two people look at the same image and both see something totally different!**

**Cause the memories  
of your volunteers  
to wildly distort...**

The first volunteer actually hands the picture they are looking at to the second person without any involvement from the magician. Yet when asked, they both describe completely opposite images!

## **The Details**

The first volunteer is given a picture to look at; the magician starts to talk about perception; for example two people can see the same film, one will think it a great film while the other may think it awful, it is not the film that is awful or amazing it is the individual viewer's subjective opinion of the film.

The first volunteer actually hands the picture they are looking at to the second person without any involvement from the magician, and remains untouched by him; the second person looks at the image while the magician talks. Yet when asked, they both describe completely opposite images!

All this is attributed to your abilities to perform Word Magic. Then everyone discovers that the image both participants were looking at was completely different from either description, this again will be attributed to your weaving a spell over the two.

## The Explanation

This effect can be performed close-up as I do sometimes during drinks receptions, also it maybe performed in the parlour or stage magic setting.

### **The requirements**

You will need a gimmick card\* and a blank faced card or Joker. Also you will need the right environment to perform and the help of two volunteers, facing each other standing in such a way that any onlookers cannot see the card they are looking at.

\*more about this later

Close-up during drinks receptions I generally perform this with couples. On stage or in parlour settings the positioning of the volunteers makes this easy. Performing close-up for a group I simply position the two volunteers so that the other audience members cannot see the card, this is easily done because when they hold the card as you instruct them with their left hand it covers most angles and you are pointing to the card, so unless the other members of the group sit behind the person they will not be able to see the image.

I tend to perform this effect without asking my volunteers to close their eyes and without performing any rapid or pseudo hypnotic induction (That said if it fits your style

you can and indeed should ask the volunteers to close their eyes before and after viewing the card, so as to *enter the right state of mind* and be able to visualise the image they have seen. On stage this more dramatic approach I have found is a good idea). Instead I talk about perceptions, the way people will describe similar events in an enormously different way and the way that people perceive things like art differently. What follows is part of my patter, feel free to use it word for word or adapt it, the idea is to convey the message that one person will describe things differently from the next person. It is necessary to set this frame before performing VMD.

**words I use that fit my style**

*“This isn't really a trick... this is more about perception. You know how you can go to the cinema and see a film, you can think it was the best film you have ever seen yet the person sitting right next to you could think it was an utter waste of their time. I could cook a meal, I did the other night a dessert, banana, chillies and rum, I could think it was delicious yet the next person may think it was inedible. It's not the film or the food that is delicious or inedible, a waste of time or amazing it's the perceptions you have of it... it's what you bring to it. It is the way that people choose to experience things that is different and not the object or event. I would like to demonstrate how it is that people can see things differently, how it is that two people can see the same thing but have the complete opposite opinion.”*

Remove the gimmick card from its wallet with the back facing the audience and the volunteers, hold it in the right hand so that the forefingers are on the front and the thumb is on the face of the card. See picture:



Then hold this parallel with the table or ground so nobody has, as yet, seen the card. I instruct the first volunteer to hold this card in the exact same way in their *left* hand so saying I reach my hand across and allow them to take hold of the card. Once they are holding the card as well, and before I remove my hand, I say:

*“Keep it facedown for just a moment.”*

Then I say to the first volunteer (*who we will imagine from here on in is called Ms Hazel Nutt*) that in just a moment I'm going to ask them to look at the card and all they have to do is remember what they see. I instruct Hazel Nutt in the following fashion:

*“Lift the card up, and look at the image. Notice the expression on the person's face...”*

So saying I point to the card.

*“...see the look in their eyes the headgear the hair and remember this now hold it face down above the table again wonderful.”*

Turning my head towards and making eye contact for the briefest of moments with the second volunteer who will imagine called Mr Hugh Jass. I start talking as I turn my attention back to Hazel Nutt. This eye contact alerts Mr Hugh Jass that it will soon be his turn to participate, I continue:

*“What I would like you to do is to pass this to Hugh, and Hugh I want you to hold this in your left hand in the exact same way Hazel is, that’s right and keep it face down just for a moment.”*

I turn back to Hazel Nutt and say:

*“Now Hazel I want you to remember what you saw, the picture you looked at was in black and white I want you to imagine it in full colour... that’s right, picture it bright and bold, make the colours vivid and real, and imagine it in three-dimensions... that’s it, pop it out in into 3-D in your mind... and just imagine how that person would stand... imagine the tone of their voice... the way they would move, get a feeling for the kind of person that they are. Hold that.”*

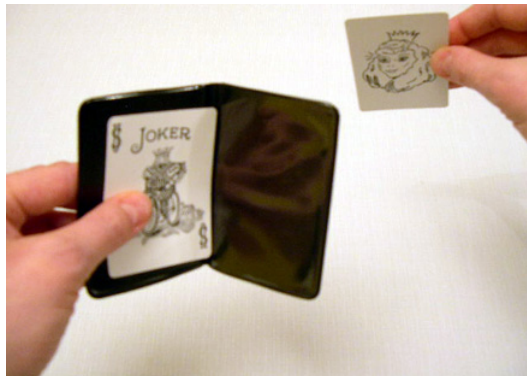
Then I turn to Hugh Jass and say:

*“What I would like you to do is gently lift the picture up and look at it, again I want you to look at the expression on the face of the person look at their eyes, the headgear and hair, hold the card facedown. You took the card from Hazel, you have both seen the same image, but you both have very different perceptual filters... Hugh I want you to do the same. Make the image big bright and bold in your mind’s eye make it colour, pop it out into 3-D... really imagine the way this person would look the way they would talk the way they would act... that’s it get a sense for this kind of person. Wonderful.”*

So saying I would gesture toward the card still in Hugh’s hand, griped unnecessarily tightly and take it back from his fingers. This is the same kind of non-verbal suggestion that you use to have someone pass you the TV remote control, or magazine. This is a non-verbal suggestion that clearly requests the card to be returned to you whilst you continue talking to both volunteers. Hugh, who is relieved to no longer have to hold his hand out, passes you back the card as you continue:

*“Hazel in a moment I am going to ask you to give me two adjectives that describe the person...”*

Here is where the only ‘move’ of the whole effect is and, let’s face it, by now all the heat is off the card. Once I have retrieved that card from Hugh and as I am talking about Hazel Nutt supplying me with *describing words* for the memory of the image that she has just seen, I hold the card so that the back still faces the audience, Hazel Nutt and Hugh Jass, I gently passes it behind the back of the wallet and swap it. When asking most people to think of describing words for the images they have just seen they have to remember what they looked at, and will for a brief time glance away, you have all the time in the world to make this ‘move’. It is similar to a ‘top change’ done behind a small card wallet you have been causally holding. See pictures:









*“Hugh, I am going to ask you to describe the kind of person you saw also, ok. Now you both looked at this image...”*

At this point you casually drop the card facedown onto the table between both Hazel Nutt and Hugh Jass. Next you turn to Hazel and say:

*“Okay Hazel give me two words that describe the person you saw.”*

*“Young, Princess.”*

Hazel Nutt replies. It is at this point in the effect that you may have to explain what the word adjective means, also you may have to prompt your volunteers to supply information. For example:

*“Okay Hazel give me two words that describe the kind of person you saw.”*

*“I don't know, I'm not sure.”*

*“Was the person male or female?”*

*“Female.”*

*“Young or old?”*

*“Young.”*

*“Did they look happy or sad?”*

*“Happy.”*

Here the idea would be if your volunteer does not supply you with the useful words to prompt them to give you a few words like: young, happy, female, attractive, pretty, Princess, youthful etc. Of course with the second volunteer they now understand and are ready to say, when you ask, single word answers like: old, grumpy, miserable, sad etc. these truly are the opposites and this is what you are attempting to achieve, the purpose of the effect; two people witnessing the same thing but having totally opposite opinions of the picture they have seen.

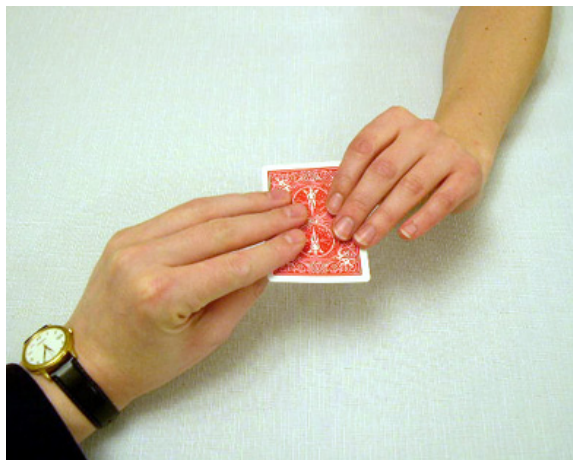
There are many ways for you to end it from here; you can leave it as an unsettling, unsure piece of strange. You can play up the fact that one person thought she was attractive whilst the other thought she was ugly and play up the comedy moment. You can casually reveal the card on the table to be blank or containing some hypnotic swirl. Or you can make this a larger feature of the presentation. I prefer to just casually allow everyone to see that the image on the cards is indeed different from anything either of the two volunteers have previously described and play it down. (I perform card tricks where the images on the card changes I do not want to mix it with that).

### **A Note here on the method**

If you look at the gimmick card I am using (*available from [www.cards4magic.co.uk](http://www.cards4magic.co.uk) who also sell plastic and leather card wallets*), you will notice that when viewed one way, the image is of a young woman or Princess with a crown upon her head. When viewed from the other way it is of an old and grumpy looking person.



The beauty of this is that, it is your volunteers that turn the image over themselves. You instruct the first volunteer to grasp the card in their left hand, see picture:



And ask them to pass it to the other volunteer so that they are also holding it in their left hand.

Thus when Hugh Jass looks at the image it is now the other way round. This goes unnoticed because when you direct Hugh Jass to hold on to the card that has been passed to him directly from the Nutt woman, you turn straight back and address Ms Nutt and ask her to remember the image in her mind, big and bold etc so when you turn back to Hugh Jass enough time has passed. Also you are a Magician, are you

not? You are adept at misdirecting people's attention away from things, are you not? The more energy and time you invest in having your first spectator remember the image on the card the bigger the interruption you cause and so it slips by unnoticed.

The main 'move' (the turning round of the card) is done by your two volunteers and the switching out of the gimmick is done when all the heat is off the card. Also supplied with this (mind's) eye opening effect is a blank backed card. You can use it as a black card that you show to the audience and volunteers after they have both given you their answers. Also you can draw a hypnotic spiral, a simple smiley face or as I do sometimes I write the words 'picture of a face' in a way that the vaguely resembles a face. This kicker ending can add to the mystery depending upon your style.

You can if you wish, and sometimes I do, have a prediction with the words 'old' and 'grumpy' or 'Queen', 'Princess' and 'happy'. I prefer to write 'Queen' rather than Princess as it is close to Princess but just a little bit different, different enough to give the impression that out of all the possible ways of imagining and describing the person you were very close.

You can display the prediction you had inside the pocket of the wallet that has been in your hand, in full view the whole time. Sometimes I say to people as I remove the prediction:

*"I wrote a few words here, I couldn't possibly have known how diverse and how different the images you would think of, however I wrote down grumpy very much what you said right? And I also wrote down 'the Queen' I was going to write Princess..."*

To which the spectators almost invariably interrupt you and say "yes" if it was not one of the words they used originally. Sometimes people do and neglect to mention Princess

## **Opposites attract**

The closing remark that I like to make after performing this effect for a couple is to make a mention of the fact that the two images were very different that their perceptions were both very different from each other the complete opposite you might say and just as men are opposite from women, well they do say that opposites attract; gesturing at both of them to look at each other.

## **Make this your own**

You can of course create your own or indeed find a similar picture that looks different when viewed upside down if you wish to move away from the association of magicians and playing cards.

Make this effect yours and perform it your way, with your personality, just as a good ambitious card routine is performed very differently by two different magicians almost to the point of being a different trick my intention is for you to find your own presentation style and take on my effect, Visual Memory Distortion.