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Abstract to poster:

Making objects float: How the perceptual space surrounding objects structures the perception of levitation

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An object seemingly levitating against gravity can be a fascinating sight. However, it can be a challenging task to depict levitation in art convincingly. To create an impression of levitation, the space surrounding the object seems to be particularly important. It seems that this space must be perceived as being empty, even behind the object, where a support structure holding up the object could be hidden. Here, we discuss tools that artists can use to create a compelling perception of levitation by showing how the perception of empty occluded space can be evoked. In particular, binocular viewing strengthened the impression of levitation in a real-life setup, suggesting that depth cues play an important role in enhancing the perception of levitation. These findings are directly relevant to eliciting the perception of levitation in visual art, be it paintings, photography or stage magic. Supported by the Research Council of Norway, project number 334817.