



L-Università ta' Malta

Faculty of Media & Knowledge Sciences

MAKS RESEARCH WEBINAR
WEDNESDAY, 23 FEBRUARY 2022
COMMENCING AT 12:15 HOURS CET
VIA [ZOOM](#)

PROGRAMME:

12:15 **What can vision science tell us about art?**

Speaker:

Prof. George Mather
School of Psychology, University of Lincoln, UK

Hosted by:

Department of Cognitive Sciences
Faculty of Media and Knowledge Sciences, UM

13:15 **Q & A session/informal discussion**

Admission is free, but kindly reserve a place by sending an email to: maks@um.edu.mt

What can vision science tell us about art?

Abstract

Although images depicting the natural world appear hugely diverse, they are surprisingly regular or predictable. The brain exploits this statistical regularity to optimise its processing so that it matches the expected properties of natural scenes. When artists create paintings, they may regularise the statistics of their paintings so that they conform to these expectations and therefore resonate with the brain's neural responses. This talk will review some of Prof. Mather's research to investigate the image statistics of visual art. One study involved comparisons between artworks and corresponding photographs of the same scenes. Another study measured the visual statistics of over 500 artworks created during the last 700 years, to track changes in the statistics over a time period that spans multiple artistic periods and styles. We can see the signature of natural image statistics in the characteristics of art, and even use these statistics to identify a significant turning point in the history of art.

Speaker's Profile

After completing an undergraduate degree in psychology at the University of Sheffield in the mid-1970s, PROF. GEORGE MATHER moved to the University of Reading to complete a PhD in human visual perception. After that he held post-doctoral positions in Canada (York University) and London (UCL). In the mid-1980s, he began lecturing in psychology at the University of Sussex, where he became Professor of Experimental Psychology in 2000. In 2011, he moved to the University of Lincoln as Professor of Vision Science.

Mather has been interested in visual perception since his undergraduate days in Sheffield. His UG tutors inspired a particular interest in the perception of visual movement. Over the last fifteen years a lifelong interest in visual art has led him to conduct research in this area too. He also has a side interest in applying vision science to judgements in sport - an expression of another lifelong fascination, this time with football.

Prof. Mather has published about 80 research papers and five books on these fairly diverse topics.

<http://www.georgemather.com>
