ACADEMY OF FINLAND

Research project of the Human Mind Research Programme

MIND, IMAGE, PICTURE (MIPI)

MIELI MIND

Principal Investigators: Janne Seppänen (consortium leader)
Göte Nyman
Kari-Jouko Räihä

The main objective of the Mind, Image, Picture (MIPI) project is to answer the question "how do we look at pictures and what is their role in the constitution of the human mind." In short, we ask: how do pictures become meaningful for the observer?

Visual culture scholar John Berger famously states that 'seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognizes before it can speak.' Indeed, the development of personality and the ability to use language depends on visual perception. Visual communication based on the gaze and looking develops as an essential part of everyday social life. Today, we live in a 'pictorial era', where human experience, interaction and identity are mediated by visual images, such as mobile phone pictures, digital and print advertising, 3D media and movies.

Yet, even though the human visual system is the best known of all human sensory systems, and visual perception has been a subject of much scholarship, we still know very little about the formation of meaning in visual perception. How do cultural meanings and signification emerge in the process of visual perception?

Answering this question is not an easy task. Interpreting human visual perception must take into consideration the manner by which visual experience results from the multifaceted and cultural nature of vision, as well as how such experience is essentially created by the observer and born out of her/his interests, viewing behaviour, motivation, intentions, and a need for sense-making. It is through this complex process that human beings see and experience the world, pictures and even themselves.

MIPI stands at the crossroads of different disciplines and draws on visual culture studies, cognitive vision studies and computer science. By using psychophysical methods, qualitative data collection on line, computational data analysis, and eye-tracking technologies we will gather experimental data on how people actually view different pictures. This empirical data will be interpreted from many different theoretical viewpoints in order to shed light on how pictures come meaningful for people.

Photo: Jenni Radun, Helsingin yliopisto

How do we actually look at pictures and our visual environment? Eye trackers are used to measure movements of the eye.

CONTACT:

Janne Seppänen: janne.seppanen@uta.fi
+358 50 4201493

Göte Nyman: gote.nyman@helsinki.fi
+358 50 5216578

Kari-Jouko Räihä: kari-jouko.raiha@uta.fi
+358 40 5489700