Psychology Colloquium / Advanced Seminar in Psychology

Why things we see sometimes disappear

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1:30 pm (NSW time), Friday, 4 March 2011
Lecture Hall D350 (Coffs Harbour campus)
Video-linked to Lecture Hall P158 (Lismore campus) and to A223 (Tweed Heads Gold Coast Riverside campus)

All welcome

About the colloquium. Visual phenomena studied by psychologists are often treated as curiosities, unrelated to daily life. An alternative approach is to assume that even seemingly mysterious, laboratory-based, visual phenomena indicate functional adaptations. In this talk I will describe two lines of research guided by this approach. Both address an instance of multi-stable perception, in which the content of conscious visual awareness changes despite constant retinal input. In binocular rivalry, conflicting images are shown to the two eyes. Each is then intermittently suppressed from awareness, leaving the other to exclusively dominate perception. We link this phenomenon to an adaptation that favours the visibility of fixated images over more proximate objects, which can selectively occlude just one eye. In motion-induced blindness, persistent static objects can seem to disappear intermittently when presented on a moving background. We link this phenomenon to an adaptation that allows us to see apparently sharply defined moving objects, despite the considerable retinal image blur associated with movement.

About the speaker. Dr. Arnold studied at Macquarie University in Sydney before taking up research fellowships at the University of Sydney and University College London. He started at the University of Queensland in 2006, where he is currently an Australian Research Fellow / Senior Lecturer.