

1. Record Nr.	UNISA996248330003316
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Titolo	Looking askance : skepticism and American art from Eakins to Duchamp // Michael Leja
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Berkeley, : University of California Press, 2006
ISBN	0-520-94033-4
Edizione	[1st pbk. print.]
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (xiii, 300 p. ) : ill. (some color) ;
Collana	Ahmanson Murphy fine arts imprint
Soggetti	Optical illusions in art Visual perception - Psychological aspects Art and society - United States Art, American - 19th century Art, American - 20th century
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Note generali	Originally published: 2004.
Nota di bibliografia	Includes bibliographical references (p. 249-287) and index.
Nota di contenuto	Frontmatter -- Contents -- Acknowledgments -- List of Illustrations -- INTRODUCTION • LOOKING ASKANCE -- 1 MUMLER'S FRAUDULENT PHOTOGRAPHS -- 2 EAKINS'S REALITY EFFECTS -- 3 IMPRESSIONISM AND NATURE'S DECEPTIONS -- 4 TOUCHING PICTURES BY WILLIAM HARNETT -- 5 BUFFALO'S ILLUSIONS -- 6 THE SELF'S DECEPTIONS -- 7 HUMBUGS FOR HIGHBROWS: Duchamps Readymades in New York -- Notes -- Index
Sommario/riassunto	If seeing ever really was a reason for believing, it surely was not in New York around 1900. The rift between appearances and truth was widening: deceptive images flourished in advertising and mass media; science contradicted unaided vision; the spirit world gained credibility; and hucksters, frauds, and hoaxes proliferated. In Looking Askance, Michael Leja conducts a dazzling tour from fine art to mass culture and back again to chart the emergence of a new skepticism about seeing and to assess the roles played by the visual arts, both fine and commercial, in this cultural transformation. A lively exploration of the relationship between modern art, truth, and deception, Looking Askance offers a new paradigm for understanding American visual culture, from the art of Thomas Eakins, William Harnett, and Marcel

Duchamp to such fascinating historical episodes as the trial of spirit photographer William Mumler, scientist Helen Abbott's interpretation of Monet's Impressionism, the myriad illusions featured at the Buffalo World's Fair of 1901, and William James's analysis of automatic drawing. Leja traces the roots of skeptical seeing in the culture of modernity and in national values of entrepreneurship, invention, competition, and unregulated marketing. This brilliantly pluralistic study will resonate with a broad spectrum of multidisciplinary interests. Tracking the way questions about the nature of seeing inform self-constructions of the modern subject, Leja moves flexibly through a wide range of surprisingly diverse materials, linking spirit photography, world fairs, circuses, automatic drawing, realist painting, and Marcel Duchamp. In true skeptical fashion, Leja trains his eye on the ambiguities of his materials, refusing to let them settle into either a celebratory or a cynical narrative. Opposites are revealed as similar (P. T. Barnum's humbug and George Washington's truth-telling both play on the motif of deception), while humbugs manifest difference (a radical fear of dishonesty versus a source of delight). The final illuminating shift in this complex study is thus from the modern need to negotiate multiple and layered realities to the manifold optical lenses of Leja's own kaleidoscopic approach.

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