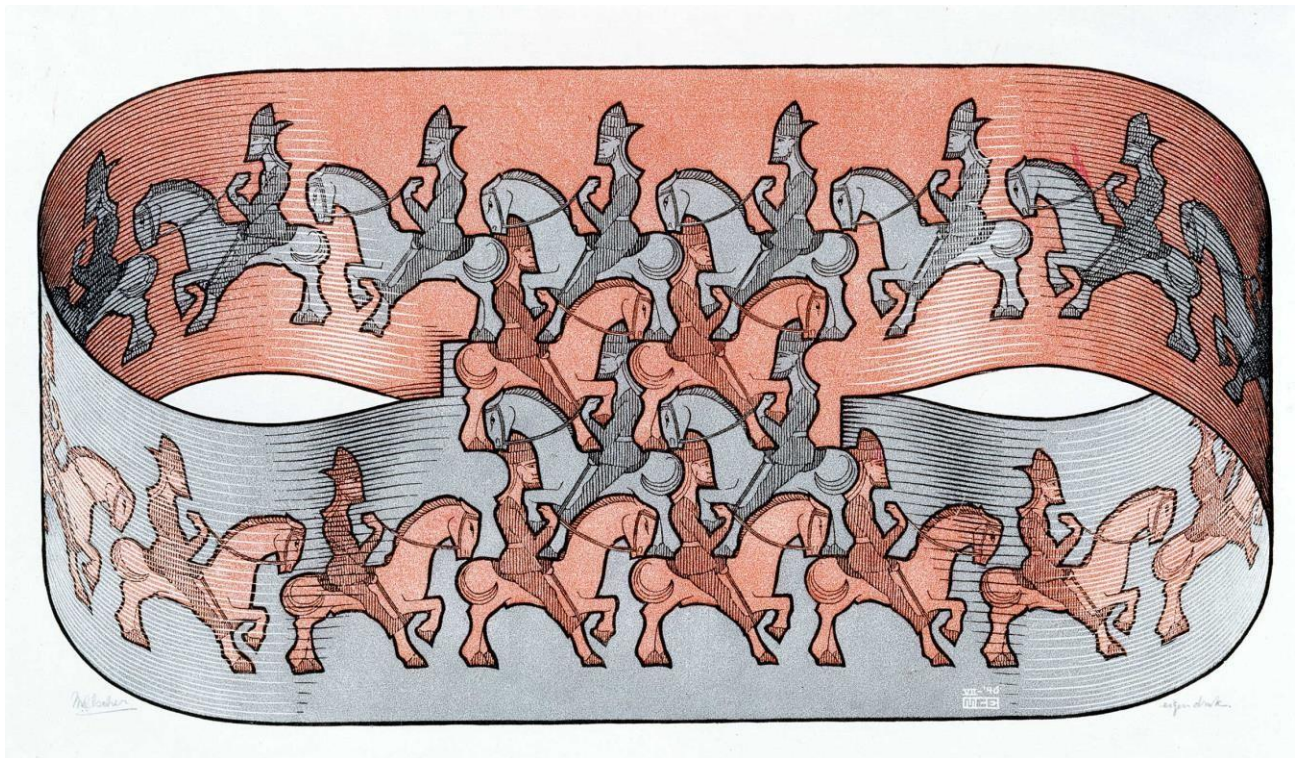


Viewing Guide

Discover the masterful art of

M.C. Escher



Name:

Date:

Secondary education

Level: * Escher for beginners

About this viewing guide

This viewing guide helps you get the most out of your visit to the museum and navigate the world-famous works of art by graphic artist Maurits Cornelis Escher. The questions encourage you to be a more active viewer. The background information provided gives you a more meaningful experience with Escher's bizarre world in which birds become fish and stairs can be ascended and descended endlessly. The questions alternate with drawing assignments.

Escher in The Palace is a place to be amazed and see art that gets you thinking because nothing is what it appears to be! We hope you'll feel at home in the museum and that this viewing guide will serve as an eye-opener.

How to use the viewing guide:

- You borrow a clipboard from one of the attendants in the room.
- You may only use a pencil in the museum.
- The room numbers are shown on the doorframes.
- If a question is about a work of art, there will be a picture of it in the viewing guide.
- You are required to follow the museum rules at all times.

Have fun!



Room 1 – ANIMALS AND NATURE



This is a portrait of the artist Maurits Cornelis Escher, who was born in 1898 in the Dutch city of Leeuwarden.

1 Escher is a world-famous Dutch artist. He was born in Leeuwarden in 1898. He did not make paintings but prints, mostly woodcuts and lithographs.

Why do you think Escher made prints instead of paintings?

1. Printing makes it possible to create a production run (edition) with several prints. This results in a larger audience. More people in different places can see and own his works of art as a result.
2. Graphic art has its own unique visual language.

How do you make a woodcut/linoleum cut?

You take a piece of wood/linoleum and use a gouge, which is a sort of knife, to cut away everything that should stay white. You then roll printing ink across the wood/linoleum with a roller and print the woodcut on a sheet of paper. The result is a print of the picture that you cut out in the wood, only as a mirror image! The technique is similar to a stamp.

Escher loved both animals and nature. Salamanders, birds, fish, ants, horses and frogs repeatedly show up in his prints. Sometimes they are the main theme, other times part of a tessellation, metamorphosis or never-ending cycle. (You'll learn what these are in this viewing guide.)

- 2** Find the **Parrot** print in this room. Escher made this linoleum cut when he was young. He cut the picture of the parrot out of a piece of linoleum and made a print of it. On which side of the linoleum block did Escher cut out the beak?

Circle the correct answer:

Left

- 3** Choose a print in this room. Write down the details about this print.

Personal choice. All answers are correct.

Artist: M.C. Escher

Title:

Year:

What kind of print is it? A linoleum cut/woodcut/wood engraving/lithograph. **Circle the correct answer.**



Room 2 – PERSPECTIVE

Escher often travelled with his parents to France and Italy. When he became an adult, he travelled more often, either alone, with friends or with his wife Jetta. He was very adventurous and hiked along rugged mountain trails and sailed on cargo boats. He was especially fascinated by beautiful mountains and the endless sea. Along the way, he sketched the mountains and rocks and found inspiration for his prints. After he returned home, he developed the drawings into woodcuts, wood engravings and lithographs.

4 Escher thought it was very interesting to draw from a very high or very low position. The mountains in Italy made this even easier.

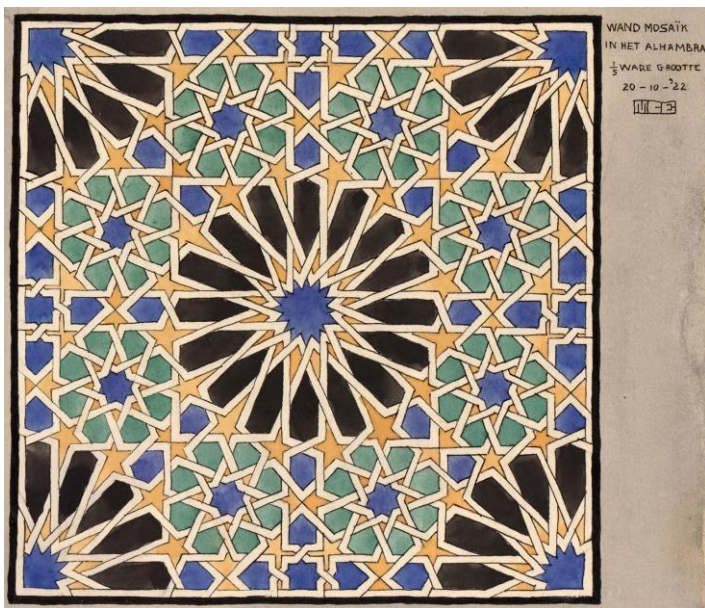
Find a print in this room that is made from a high position.

Title: [Inside St. Peter's](#), as well as [the Tower of Babel](#) and [the Cargo Ship](#).

Walk through rooms 3 and 4 to room 5.

Room 5 – TESSELLATION

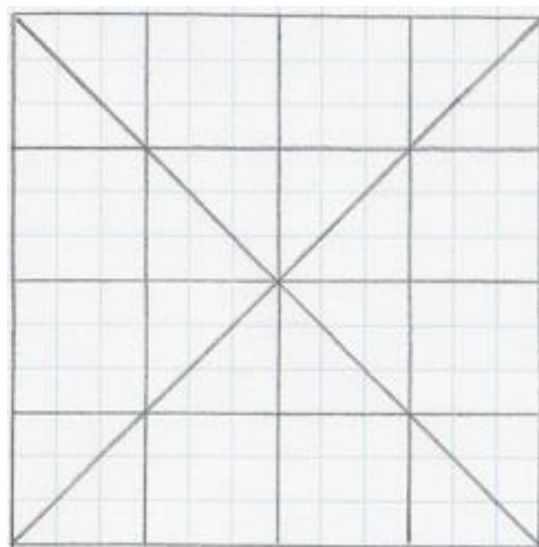
During his travels, Escher saw beautiful tiles on the walls and floors of the Moorish palace Alhambra in Southern Spain. Here you can see a wall tile from the Alhambra.



Wall mosaic in the Alhambra, 1/5 the actual size, watercolour and ink on paper, 20 October 1922

For days, he sat and drew exact copies of the tile patterns. One of Escher's studies is hanging next to the door.

5 Can you also draw a pattern with, for example, lines or rectangles and squares? **All attempts are correct.**



What makes Escher's designs so unique is that he uses the same patterns, but instead of abstract shapes (like squares or triangles), he makes frogs, birds, horses and other figures.

You can see various studies by Escher on the wall on the right. They all show repetitive tessellations. The figures are repeated again and again mirrored, shifting or twisting.

6 a On the wall, find the tessellation with green and light brown animals that are twisting. What kinds of animals are these? [Lizards](#).

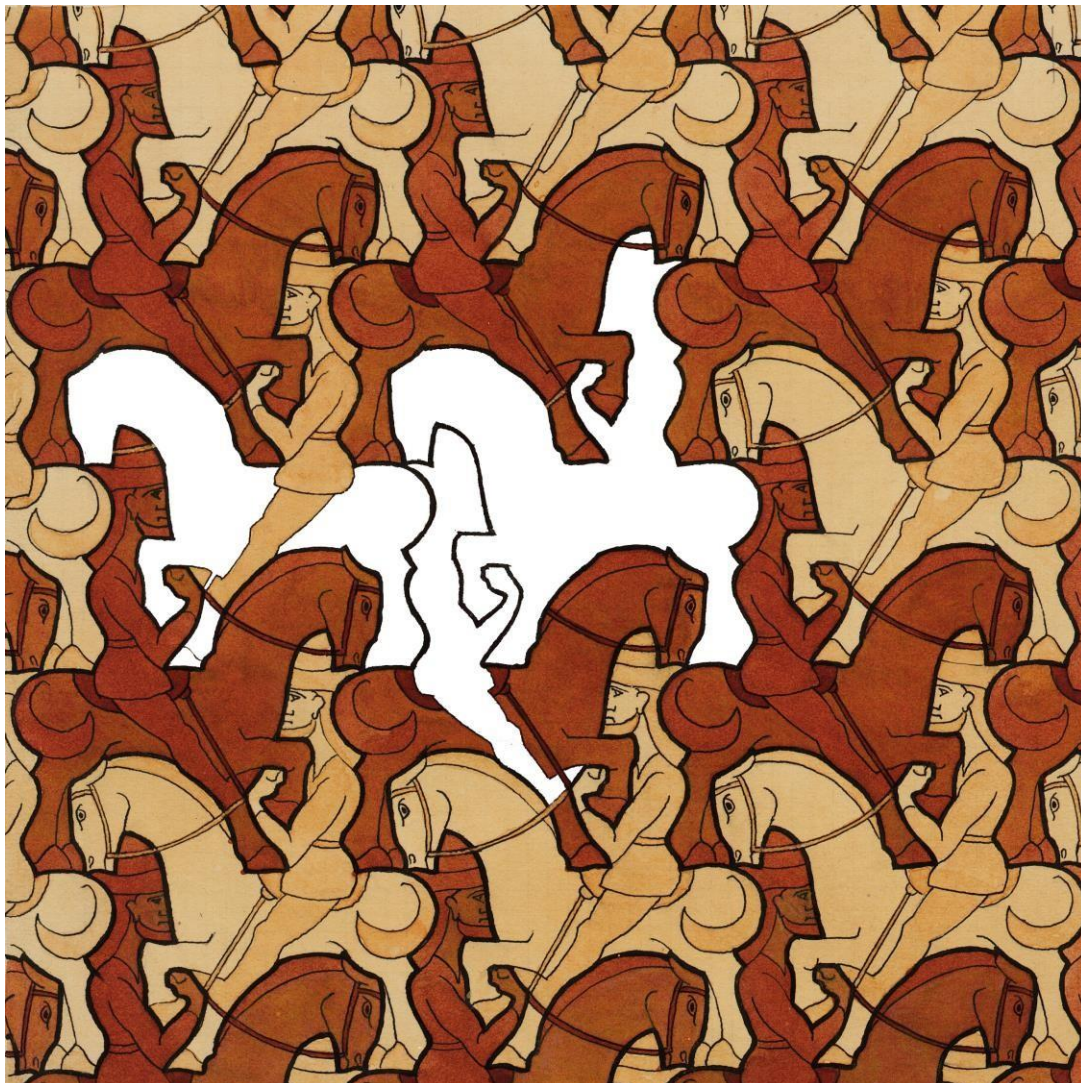
6 b Find another tessellation in which the figures are twisting. What three colours are these figures? [Blue, light brown and white](#).

Did you know...

A tessellation is a repetitive pattern that continues endlessly?

An example of a repetitive pattern is the square paving stones on the street. But 3D games (like Super Mario and Fortnite) also have tessellations in them. In fact, the entire 3D world consists of structures of stone, grass and walls. All of these elements are programmed to fit together perfectly, yet never look the same.

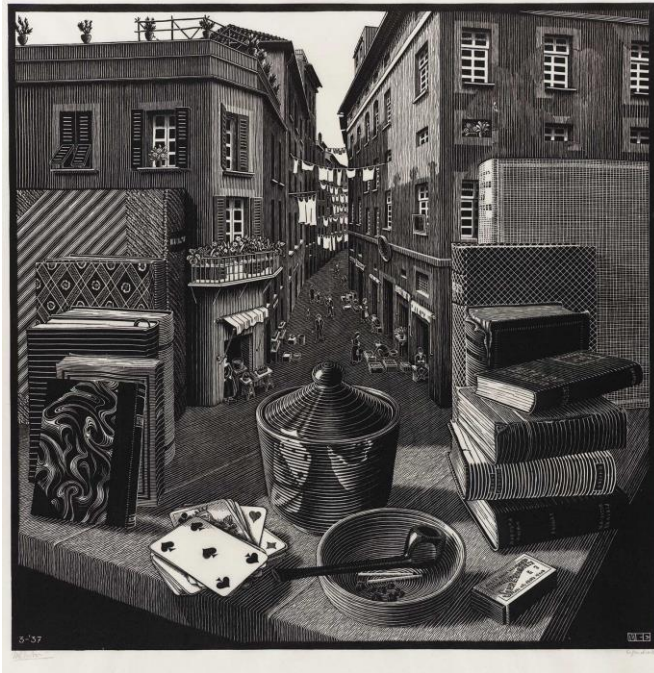
7 Here a section of an Escher tessellation has been erased. Can you draw in the missing lines?



Room 6 is the museum shop and there are no questions for this part of the museum. Take the stairs up to the first floor and continue in room 7.

Room 7 – PLAYING WITH SPACE

Escher liked to play with reality in his prints in such a way that you don't even notice! He enjoyed misleading and confusing.



M.C. Escher, Still Life and Street, woodcut, March 1937

Find the woodcut **Still Life and Street**.

8 Can you describe what Escher has done?

He has connected the front and back so that the table overflows into the street without it being obvious. He is playing with the perspective. The books are two-storey structures and the tobacco jar becomes an enormous statue.

Tip: Have a look at the books leaning against the house.

Walk through room 8 to room 9.

Room 9 – IMPOSSIBLE BUILDINGS

Escher said: "I can't keep from fooling around with our irrefutable certainties."

He is referring here to gravity and perspective, among other things.

In this room, you can see amazing prints in which people can walk up stairs upside-down and everyone has his or her own perspective.

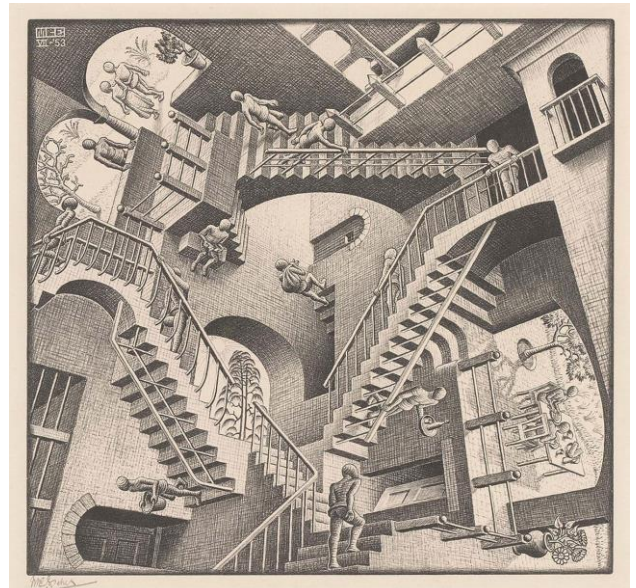
9 Find the print entitled **Relativity**.

Not all of the little men have the same perspective, yet none of them seem to mind. The print is called Relativity.

10 a Why do you think? Describe your explanation here:

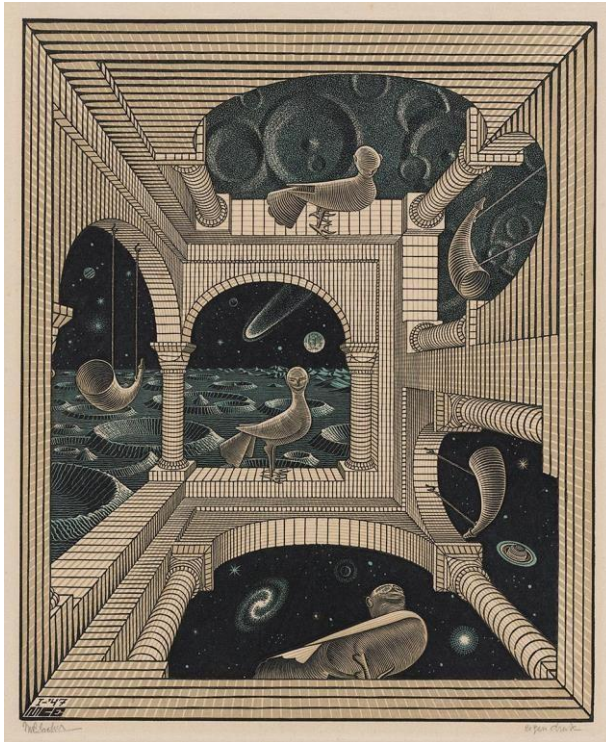
All answers are correct.

Escher enjoyed fooling around with the laws of nature, such as gravity and perspective. Escher explains this as a study into the "relativity of the function of the (flat) surface."



M.C. Escher, Relativity, lithograph, July 1953

10 b What would you call this print? Come up with a different title. [Personal choice/All answers are correct.](#)



M.C. Escher, *Another World*, woodcut and wood engraving in black, russet and green, printed with three blocks, January 1947

11 a Find the print called **Another World**.

Do you see the bird with a human head? That's a Simurgh, an ancient Persian mythological creature that can think and talk. There is something odd here, as you can see him from three angles at the same time. Do you know which ones?

1. [Head-on](#)
2. [From below](#)
3. [From above](#)

11 b What kind of landscape does the Simurgh see when looking outside?

[Moon landscape/craters/planets/space](#)

12 In this room, choose a work of art that appeals to you and explain why. It may be because of the subject, the technique used, that it reminds you of something or other reason.

Title [Personal choice/All answers are correct](#)

Description [Personal choice/All answers are correct](#)

Room 10 – INFINITY



M.C. Escher. *Circle Limit IV (Heaven and Hell)*, woodcut in ochre and black, printed with two blocks, July 1960

Find **Circle Limit IV (Heaven and Hell)**. Notice that the print is round. Circle limits are round prints in which the figures become smaller and smaller towards the edge. In many of his artworks, Escher tried to find a form of infinity. (Just like in the tessellations.)

13 Can you name an example of two prints in this room that also show infinity?

[For example:](#)

- 'Waterfall': [The water flows in an endless circle.](#)
- 'Möbius Strip II' (Red ants): [The ants continue walking around endlessly.](#)
- [All Circle Limits](#)
- ['Knots'](#)

Room 11 – METAMORPHOSIS

In room 5, you saw Escher's tessellations. The figures are repeated again and again mirrored, shifting or twisting. In these tessellations, Escher had the figures cleverly transform into something else. That is called a metamorphosis. For example, birds become fish and fish become boats. In the middle of the room is a very long print: **Metamorphosis III**.

It is in a round frame so that you can walk around it. The print itself continues endlessly as a never-ending cycle. It is one of Escher's masterpieces!

14 What kinds of animals can you find in this long print?

Bees, fish, horses, lizards, birds

15 Which of Escher's artworks did you like the most?

Title [All answers are correct](#)

Why? [All answers are correct](#)

Did you know.... A never-ending cycle is a process in which several stages follow one another, but ultimately start all over again at the same place. An example are the different seasons of the year.

You can now walk to room 12. Here you can find information on the time when Queen Mother Emma lived here from 1901-1934.

You have now reached the end of the viewing guide. But there is lots more to see and do in the museum! You can take the stairs to the interactive exhibition on the second floor.

2nd floor – Interactive exhibition 'Through Escher's Eyes'

Here you can see and experience everything related to Escher's work. The innovative attractions let you become a part of Escher's way of looking at the world. Together with a classmate, you can play with perspective just like Escher did and become larger or smaller in the 'Escher Room'. There is a film in which it appears as if you're in Escher's world and there are games and a touchscreen where you can draw your own pattern.

One of the most unique exhibits is the Op Art room. In this 20th century art movement, the reliability of the viewer's vision is challenged by optical illusions. You see movement where there is none. Optical art – like Escher's work – is all about optical illusions.

In the Langenfelder Light Wall, 2012 by German Zero artist Otto Piene, moving lights give the viewer the sensation of being part of the artwork. It is as if you are walking among stars. Piene conjures up a magical world by simple means.