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Specialisation within, and anisotropies between upper and lower visual space revealed through judgements of orientation

Although our conscious perception of visual space is one of uniformity, its representation both retinally, and in visual cortex, show a number of inconsistencies - especially in the periphery. These inconsistencies become particularly apparent when we probe such conceptual phenomena as the visual 'vertical' and 'horizontal'.

Over a series of five experiments we have found a consistent over-representation of 'vertical' space, as well as evidence that upper visual space is more context sensitive than is the case for those areas below the perceived horizontal. These findings provide some support for previous proposals that there may be a specialisation for perceptual processing of the global scene within upper visual space, with the representation of lower visual areas being more tuned for visuo-motor acts performed in peripersonal space.

Richard Dyde  
CVR