



The Magic Mirror of M.C. Escher

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Mathematical problems and visual illusions in the enigmatic work of M.C. Escher

"A woman once rang me up and said, 'Mr. Escher, I am absolutely crazy about your work. In your print *Reptiles* you have given such a striking illustration of reincarnation.' I replied, 'Madame, if that's the way you see it, so be it.'" An engagingly sly comment by the renowned Dutch graphic artist **Maurits Cornelis Escher** (1898–1972)—the complex ambiguities of whose work leave hasty or single-minded interpretations far behind. Long before the first computer-generated 3-D images were thrilling the public, Escher was a master of the third dimension. His lithograph "Magic Mirror" dates as far back as 1946. In taking that title for this book, mathematician **Bruno Ernst** is stressing the magic spell Escher's work invariably casts on those who see it. Ernst visited Escher every week for a year, systematically talking through his entire oeuvre with him. Their discussions resulted in a friendship that gave Ernst intimate access to the life and conceptual world of Escher. Ernst's account was meticulously scrutinized and made accurate by the artist himself.

Escher's work refuses to be pigeonholed. Scientific, psychological, or aesthetic criteria alone cannot do it justice. The questions remain. Why did he create the pictures? How did he construct them? What preliminary studies were necessary before he could arrive at the final version? And how are the various images Escher created interrelated? This book, complete with biographical data, 250 illustrations, and explications of mathematical problems, offers answers to these and many other questions, and is an authentic source text of the first order.

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