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What do YOU see in these photos? If it's faces, you suffer from pareidolia... it's not a sign of madness but a well-wired brain

We have all looked up at the sky and seen a little face in the clouds smiling back, but when you glance at these pictures what do you see?

Is this a leaf with caterpillar marks, a pear full of blemishes, the back of an alarm clock, a plug and other household objects - or have you spotted a host of little faces smiling, grimacing and laughing back to you?

If it's the latter, these images are causing you to experience facial pareidolia, the psychological phenomenon of seeing faces in inanimate objects.





We've all looked up at the sky and seen a little face in the clouds smiling back, but when you look at these pictures what do you see? Is it a leaf or a happy little fellow relaxing on the grass?



Tickle tickle: Do you see a potato having a good old giggle or is this just a scratched old spud?

Psychologists say that some of us are more prone to facial pareidolia than others.

But the good news for those who are prone to seeing little people in inanimate objects a sign of madness, it is in fact a sign of a well-wired brain.

Professor Kang Lee, from the University of Toronto who carried out a study on facial pareidolia, explains: 'Most people think you have to be mentally abnormal to see these types of images, so individuals reporting this phenomenon are often

ridiculed.

'But our findings suggest it's common for people to see non-existent features because human brains are uniquely wired to recognize faces, so that even when there's only a slight suggestion of facial features the brain automatically interprets it as a face.'

Lee adds: 'The tendency to detect faces in ambiguous visual information is perhaps highly adaptive given the supreme importance of faces in our social life and the high cost resulting from failure to detect a true face,' explains Lee.

After analyzing the brain's response to seeing faces in inanimate objects the researchers, from the University of Toronto, Beijing Jiaotong University, Xidian University, and the Institute of Automation Chinese Academy of Sciences, discovered that the recognition occurs in the frontal and visual cortex.

The frontal cortex in each participant's brain sent signals to the posterior visual cortex, which then enhanced the recognizable elements to try and interpret the stimulus.