

The University of Hong Kong
Department of Psychology

Departmental Seminar

*Ignoring the elephant in the room:
Functional and neural bases of active visual ignoring*

Date: January 7, 2013 (Monday)

Time: 11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Venue: Social Sciences Chamber, 11/F, The Jockey Club Tower,
Centennial Campus, HKU

Speaker: Professor Glyn W. Humphreys

Department of Experimental Psychology, University of Oxford,
Oxford, UK

*(In collaboration with: Dr. Carmel Mevorach, School of
Psychology, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK)*

The ability to ignore salient distraction is necessary for our successful survival in a complex and dynamically changing world. We have examined the functional and neural bases of this ability. We had participants either select high saliency targets or detect low saliency targets presented with high saliency distractors. Using converging evidence from functional imaging and TMS we demonstrate that the ability to ignore salient distractors is contingent on activity in the left posterior parietal cortex (LPCC), which acts to down-regulate early visual areas responding to distractors. In addition, activity in the LPCC is modulated by the saliency of the stimuli computed in the early visual regions. The results points to an interactive set of processes supporting top-down attentional selection through selective suppression of distraction.