The illusion of *The Future*

Fred Halper
Department of Psychology, Essex County College, Newark, NJ, USA; e-mail: fhalper@email.njcc.net
Received 20 February 1997, in revised form 1 July 1997

A common feature of modern urban residential architectural design throughout the world is the balcony. It blurs the experiential border between the secure private inside and public outside vista. We usually perceive the orientation and shape of these structures veridically. A Manhattan building (3rd Avenue and 32nd Street), designed by architect Costas Kondyllos and called *The Future* (figure 1) is an exception. In viewing *The Future* we are struck by the tilted orientation of its balconies.

![Figure 1.](image-url)
In one view of *The Future* (shown in figures 2 and 3), we perceive rectangular balconies tilted upwards, when in fact the balconies are parallelograms vertically perpendicular to the face of the building (figure 5). In the view (figure 4) in which the leading point of the parallelogram is more distant, we continue to misperceive the shape as rectangular, but now misperceive the balconies as tilted downward. The incorrect experience of right angles where they do not exist may be due to our preference for right angles, whether the result of past experience or built-in mechanisms. We have difficulty flattening out parallelograms. Although a complete understanding is not yet available, *The Future* is a delightful example of a real-world perceptual illusion.