

A round-up of the eye-related hot topics that have been trending on social media over the last few weeks.

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### #eyepatch #memes

German chancellor Olaf Scholz shared a photo of himself on X (formerly Twitter) sporting a black eye patch after injuring himself from a fall when jogging in his hometown [1]. The image has almost 10 million views and, well aware of what was in store by posting the picture, he said that he was "excited to see the memes" and the users of X did not disappoint. From Captain Jack Sparrow to SpongeBob SquarePants, from Nick Fury to Captain Phillips, the chancellor's image was manipulated and photoshopped into all manner of hilarity. And in all fairness, he did ask for it.

### #wedding #blindfolded

A bride in London has taken a personal approach to her walk down the aisle, by blindfolding all the guests, including her waiting groom [2]. Lucy Edwards, blind due to incontinentia pigmenti, married her sighted partner Ollie Cave in London and was thinking about this moment in her wedding planning. She lost her sight after she had first met her now husband, and had never imagined she would be blind for this moment. Using blindfolds allowed everyone in the room to live the moment together, with many guests expressing their praise after the ceremony. Upon Lucy's arrival to him, Ollie, with tears in his eyes, felt her wedding dress, to experience it in the same way Lucy did when she first tried it on. The video of the moment can be seen on TikTok and has been viewed more than six million times. It's beautiful. It's emotional. It's everything you would want for a wedding video.

### #gaming #tadpoles #artists

It seems that eyes are everywhere in the world of gaming at the moment – as an avid gamer myself it's a headline that always catches my attention. In the immensely popular *Baldur's Gate 3* (2023), articles have been popping up regarding a number of carefully crafted sequences around eyes, stemming from a tadpole-like parasite being inserted into the player's character's eye [3]. Depending on choices made, this may even take the player to an eye removal scene with less-than-optimal equipment – I don't think I'd be able to get away with an enucleation via an ice pick pulled out of my pocket; nor would I want to, of course! On the more artful side of gaming, the visually stunning new release *The Master's Pupil* (2023) takes players into the literal eye of Claude Monet [4]. Journeying across his iris to complete puzzles, players help the master impressionist complete his most famous works, while combating the impact developing cataracts are having on his sight. Australian artist Pat Naoum, the independent developer behind the project, invested seven years and over 2000 hours to hand-paint his game with acrylics on paper. These were scanned into the virtual world and stitched together into a game that takes the player through the story of Monet's life. It is truly beautiful, allowing a focus on eye health and art that I would highly recommend giving a go.

### #movies #jigsaw #trap

Perhaps not a film for the faint-hearted, it has been difficult to miss the widespread advertising campaign for *Saw X* (2023). Plastered across buses and billboards throughout the country, the image of a screaming man with tubes affixed to his eyes paints a startling picture of what's to come [5]. A teaser clip released online showed the trap in more detail, with the threat of sucking out the victim's eyeballs unless he submits to an alternative brutal punishment. The response online veered towards "disturbing",

"losing it" and "gonna be sick". But I must admit, I couldn't help but laugh out loud when I saw the scene. With the absurd imagery and juicy sound effects being balanced with a realistic understanding of eye anatomy and enucleations, the scene lost its horror element on me, though I am sure it would have been nauseating to the general public.

### #artificialeye #prosthetics

Given that I have now mentioned two instances of trending fictional enucleations, it is only fair to shine a light on a more positive real-life tale that has gained traction online. Sunshine Jones is a special educational needs teacher based in Los Angeles who lost her left eye from a penetrating trauma in childhood [6]. Now, she has a collection of artificial eyes worth over £140,000. Having struggled with bullies growing up and online trolls in adulthood, Sunshine wants to teach others the importance of disability and acceptance. By choosing her fun, brightly-coloured prosthetics, she wants to dispel any need to hide, striving to be a positive impact to those around her.

### #visionhealing #dubiousclaims

Popular YouTuber Kurtis Connor's 40-minute deep-dive into the claims of an 'anti-glasses influencer' drew much attention, with over three million views [7]. For a monthly subscription, this 'vision healing masterclass' can, apparently, improve your vision regardless of the underlying issues, and even change the colour of your iris through a detox. With claims such as glaucoma and macular degeneration being a diagnosis and not a 'root-cause' of poor vision and that sun-gazing can help improve eyesight (readers, please don't look into the sun), it is unsurprising that Kurtis managed such a comprehensive debunking of these claims. I watched the whole video and was infuriated by the end – I could fill this entire page with my assessment on the claims of vision healing, but Kurtis has done it well himself. After being so riled up by the video perhaps I need a nice cup of tea and some time playing *The Master's Pupil* to calm down...

#### References

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[all links last accessed November 2023]

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