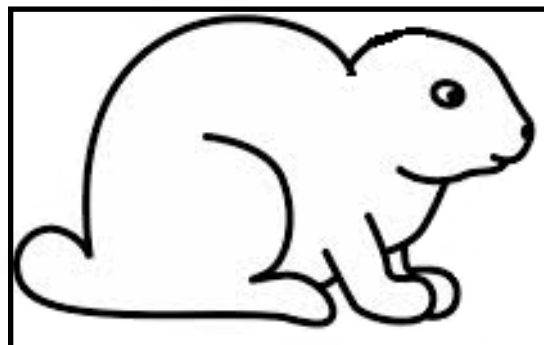
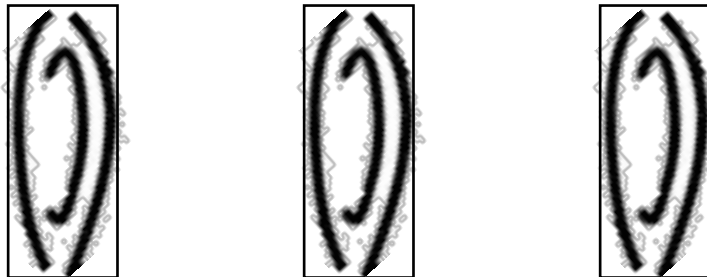
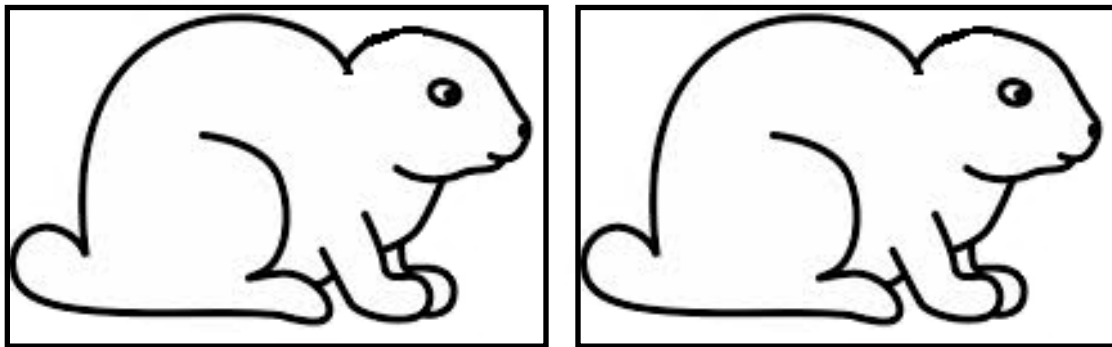


The Three Hares



Cut out the 3 rabbit cards and the three rabbit ear cards. Arrange the 6 cards in such a way that every rabbit has exactly two ears.

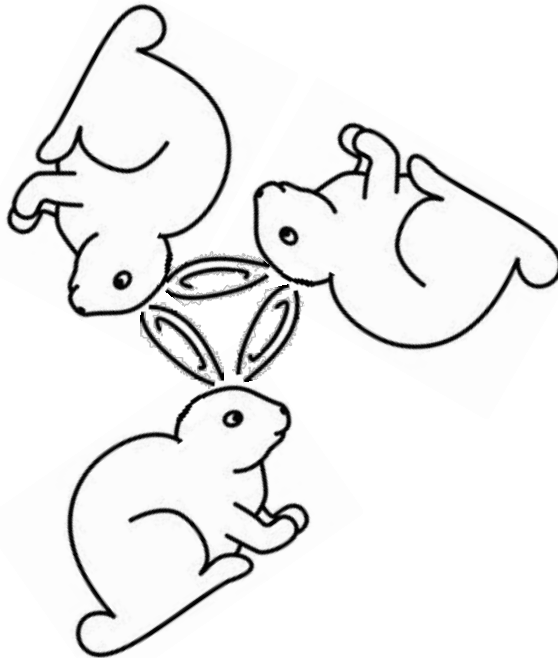


Solution:

The normal way we think of 3 rabbits. There are 3 rabbits and 6 ears. The parts of our puzzle may look like the picture below if we had 6 ears.



You could also have 3 rabbits each with 2 ears using only 3 rabbits and 3 ears as shown below.



The secret is not great when one knows it.
But it is something to one who does it.
Turn and turn again and we will also turn,
So that we give pleasure to each of you.
And when we have turned, count our ears,
It is there, without any disguise, you will find a marvel

The Three Hares

The three hares diagram is a display of three rabbits chasing each other in a circular form in such a way that each of the ears is shared by two rabbit so that only three ears are used. The diagram has three fold symmetry. It has been used as a religious symbol, an architectural embellishment and in many works of art. The origin of the picture and the significance are unknown and no reason can be established as to why it appears in such diverse locations over such a long period of time.

The picture of the three hares can be found in India, China, Europe and England. The earliest known examples of the three hares motif are to be found painted on the ceilings of Buddhist cave temples in China dating from the Sui Dynasty (581-618 CE). A copper coin, minted in Urumchi, Iran, in 1281/1282 CE, bears the three hares on its reverse. The image is thought to reinforce the heavenly mandate of the Mongol rulers. A slightly earlier example of the motif is found on an Iranian brass tray, inlaid with copper, dating from the late 12th or early 13th century.



Chinese Pottery



Iranian Tray.

The path of the three hares from Asia to England



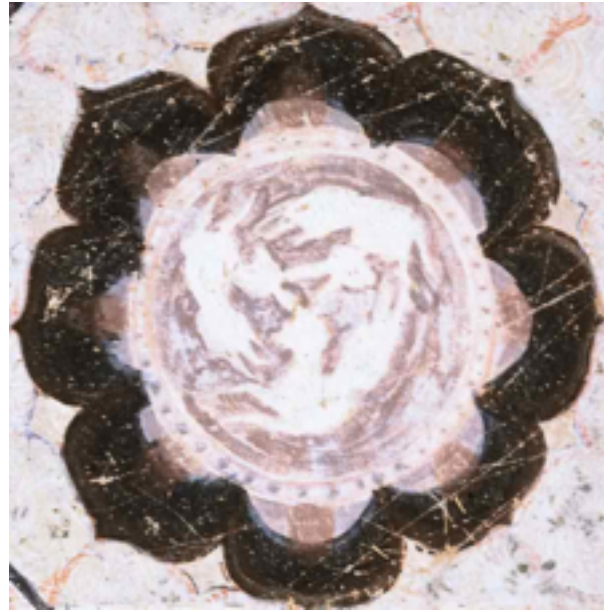
The map above shows sites associated with the three hares across Eurasia. The easternmost marker is Dunhuang in China and the clusters in Western Europe and in Britain can be seen.

The three hares motif may have travelled from east to west along the **Silk Road** and through the medium of textile. The capture of Constantinople by crusaders in 1204 also released a wealth of oriental artistry into the West. Whatever the mode of transmission, the journey of the three hares is remarkable indeed.

In the medieval period, precious silks from the Orient, many woven with gold thread, were used in western churches for wrapping holy relics, for vestments, as altar cloths, palls for shrines and as linings in holy books. It is known that designs from these silks influenced medieval artists and church craftsmen. In Exeter Cathedral, the tomb of Bishop Walter Bronescombe, who died in 1280, is painted with a representation of an oriental textile.



This motif is prominently displayed at the Dunhuang Museum in China



The is one of over 30 drawings in one of the 17 Mongo Caves located close to Dunhuang



a 12th century version from Syria / Egypt



A copper tray from Iran in 1281 CE,



Mid 1600 image from a Buddhist Temple in Kashmir



A petroglyph from the Lyon Notre Dame Cathedral in France

A web search will turn up hundreds of links to site devoted to this picture.

The Three Hares Project

The Three Hares Project is researching and documenting an ancient symbol of three hares or rabbits running in a circle and joined by their ears which form a triangle at the centre of the design. The symbol is a puzzle for each creature appears to have two ears yet, between them, they share only three ears.

The Project has revealed the motif to be an extraordinary and ancient archetype, stretching across diverse religions and cultures, many centuries and many thousands of miles. It is part of the shared medieval heritage of Europe and Asia (Buddhism, Islam, Christianity and Judaism) yet still inspires creative work among contemporary artists.

The Three Hares in Devon, England

There are at least seventeen parish churches in Devon which contain at least one roof boss depicting the three hares. The bosses are crafted to cover the intersection of interior roof timbers. The bosses are widely spread throughout the county, from Ashreigney in the north to Paignton in the south, and from Broadclyst in the east to Kelly in the west. The north-eastern and eastern fringe of Dartmoor has a notable concentration.

Twenty-nine bosses from Devon are known in total, of which nineteen are medieval and of wood. East Devon has nine but, with the possible exception of a painted example in the nave roof, which may be medieval, the others are all copies of the early 19th century. Kelly has two bosses, but one is a modern copy.





Ciorfe Dorset England



Dorset England



Dorset England



St. Davids Pembrokeshire Wales



Baseplate detail, Trier Germany

