

# Influences

There are influences, don't you know, influences in our lives that shape us and help shape our work. They nudge us, coax us or sometimes just shove us headlong down a path whose beginning we never chose and whose end is obscure, inevitable and terrifying. Along the way we gather things about us, acquiring friends, attitudes, beliefs, memories, things and the catalogue of our work.

The gentle trap is seduction of technology. Digital bits and bytes that make communication and research so fast that we don't have enough time to view everything. On the Internet we can find many answers, either in text or moving images.

Ephemeral as it is, paper is the vehicle of our immortality. A substance of infinite resolution, requiring no additional power to unlock its contents. Paper has the ability to transfix a moment in time, to take it out of time. We assemble our pasts out of the shards of truth, fragmented memories and half-truths, which conspire to defeat time and lead us to immortality.

“In order to become famous, one must either do something worth writing about, or write about something worth doing.”

*Benjamin Franklin*

I always thought that Magic was a tool I might use to control life. Did we all? The books clearly defined the extreme technicality of the craft, but I waited for those Johnson Smith & Company packages eagerly, thinking that somehow I could do something that would hurry their transport, expedite their arrival.

“...Human beings are storytellers, spinners of tales.

We gather the complexities of our world into stories... by constructing narratives that imbue the totality with meaning.”

*Stephen Jay Gould (Natural History Magazine, May 1995)*

Meaning and control; Physics and Art; vision and the technique to realize it. The creation of Magic has its roots in our lives beyond Magic. The movement of smoke as it pours from a glass or the picture my mind creates when I close my eyes to a piece of music. It is the shape of language and the remembered smells of childhood; the shattering of a broken heart and the laughter of discovery. It is illumination that comes from insight.

“A pun is two strings of thought, tied together by a purely acoustic knot.”

*Arthur Koestler The Act of Creation*

And thus we tell stories. The truth of the tales is ultimately not subject of an empirical test. It reverberates in the response to the work. I can't do magic, no matter how much I would wish it. I can only help it to exist. It exists only in the mind of the audience, in that moment of deceit; in the ultimate contradiction.

“Conjuring is the most honest of all professions, for the conjuror promises to deceive and then does so.”

Karl Germain

Magic has an essence, a core of imagery. From it we can extract a meaning; from it our audiences do extract a meaning, consciously or not. What informs that central core is the marrow of our cultural iconography. The imagery of a magic effect is the message.

“What we are called upon to make is not the thing itself but the semblance of the thing; moreover it is for the mind and not the eye that we must produce our effect.”

Eugene Delacroix – quote on illusion/art:

If not cautious, we may fall into a cultural ravine that traps us into an isolation of absolutist values, a myopia of insight. It is the intersection of ideas that produces the footbridge to creativity, not a concrete pathway of fixed ideologies. Humor often emerges from this meeting of disparate ideas. Let it.