

Café del Nightmare

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Attention and awareness in stage magic: turning tricks into research

Just as vision scientists study visual art and illusions to elucidate the workings of the visual system, so too can cognitive scientists study cognitive illusions to elucidate the underpinnings of cognition. Magic shows are a manifestation of accomplished magic performers' deep intuition for and understanding of human attention and awareness. By studying magicians and their techniques, neuroscientists can learn powerful methods to manipulate attention and awareness in the laboratory. Such methods could be exploited to directly study the behavioural and neural basis of consciousness itself, for instance through the use of brain imaging and other neural recording techniques. Magic is one of the oldest and most widespread forms of performance art. It is also a discipline with a long legacy of informal experimentation. This informal research by magicians aims to determine what conditions allow for the maximum manipulation of human attention and perception. Much as early filmmakers experimented with editing techniques to determine which technique would communicate their intent most effectively, magicians have explored the techniques that most effectively divert attention or exploit the shortcomings of human vision and awareness. As such, magic is a rich and largely untapped source of insight into perception and awareness. Insofar as the understanding of behaviour and perception goes, there are specific cases in which the magician's intuitive knowledge is superior to that of the neuroscientist. In this Perspective, we underline potential areas in which neuroscientists stand to reap great benefits from collaboration with the magic community. Article by Stephen L. Macknik, Mac King, James Randi, Apollo Robbins, Teller, John Thompson & Susana Martinez-Conde [here](#).



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About Me



Café del Nightmare

I am a film director/editor with a musical ear and two left feet. Which I frequently open to change mouths. I specialise in music videos, documentaries and concerts. I also design websites, take photos, write music and think in other people's lyrics all the time. I am part Maguffin and a third Chainsaw. I love mix tapes, sushi, sunshine and hammocks. Preferably at the same time. I think in cartoons, polyrhythms and dyslexic subtitles. I'm usually in London or New York, somewhere. I love Paris too. I spend a lot of time flying while I'm asleep. I write an occasional blog called Café del Nightmare.

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