

« [Awkward acronyms in cognitive science winners](#) | [Main](#) | [US psychologists snub CIA but scrap total ban](#) »

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The cognitive science of magic:



The *Association for the Scientific Study of Consciousness* invited some of the world's best stage magicians along to their June conference to demonstrate how the conscious mind can be manipulated. *The New York Times* has just published a fantastic [article](#) on the conference and the cognitive science of magic.

The [symposium](#) was entitled 'The Magic of Consciousness' and was deliberately more than just light entertainment. The magicians were specifically chosen for the interest in the cognitive aspects on illusion and talked on how they take advantage our of brain's quirks.

"This wasn't just a group of world-class performers," said [Susana Martinez-Conde](#), a scientist at the Barrow Neurological Institute in Phoenix who studies optical illusions and what they say about the brain. "They were hand-picked because of their specific interest in the cognitive principles underlying the magic."

She and [Stephen Macknik](#), another Barrow researcher, organized the symposium, appropriately called the Magic of Consciousness.

[Apollo](#), with the pull of his eyes and the arc of his hand, swung around my attention like a gooseneck lamp, so that it always pointed in the wrong direction. When he appeared to be reaching for my left pocket he was swiping something from the right. At the end of the act the audience applauded as he handed me my pen, some crumpled receipts and dollar bills, and my digital audio recorder, which had been running all the while. I hadn't noticed that my watch was gone until he unstrapped it from his own wrist.

[Link](#) to *NYT* article 'Sleights of Mind'.

[Link](#) to list of symposium speakers and talks.

—[Vaughan](#).

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Comments