

Deception, Performance Magic, Hoaxes, Pranks and Tricks

A Study Room Guide



Compiled & written by Tom Cassani

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Live Art
Development
Agency

LADA Study Room Guides

As part of the continuous development of the Study Room we regularly commission artists and thinkers to write personal Study Room Guides on specific themes.

The idea is to help navigate Study Room users through the resource, enable them to experience the materials in a new way and highlight materials that they may not have otherwise come across.

All Study Room Guides are available to view in our Study Room, or can be viewed and/or downloaded directly from their Study Room catalogue entry.

Please note that materials in the Study Room are continually being acquired and updated. For details of related titles acquired since the publication of this Guide search the online Study Room catalogue with relevant keywords and use the advance search function to further search by category and date.

Cover image created by Manuel Vason in collaboration with Tom Cassani.

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LADA Study Room Guide

Tom Cassani's Guide to Deception, Performance Magic, Hoaxes, Pranks and Tricks

Introduction

As a Performance Artist and Liar working with a practice of deception over the past four years (2014-2018) LADA invited me to research and write a Study Room Guide which draws together resources that inform this sometimes disparate and eclectic field of performance. I have collated these resources as a response to my thoughts and reflections on the themes of Deception, Performance Magic, Hoaxes, Pranks and Tricks. You will also find an accompanying essay which aims to expand the discourse around deception and magic in performance with reference to a curated selection of significant works and artists presenting work that explores these themes.

This guide will point out material and resources that LADA currently holds and other useful resources.

I am a Performance Artist and Liar. My practice of deception manifest itself in both text and action-based performance. I am interested in how I can use elements of deception, misdirection and lying in my artistic practice. I explore what happens when this is applied to text and action simultaneously in performance.

I trained in sleight of hand, misdirection and prestidigitation and now use these skills of deceit as an artistic framework to explore truth, honesty, manipulation and fabrication. Often using objects, people and now my own body, I draw on the multiple facets found in Sideshow Stunts. I began to work with my body and how this can be a site of deception through performing stunts an actions derivative of those found in the side show such as putting skewers through my flesh, meat hooks through his skull, and putting my hands in animal traps. As well as these visual and visceral actions my work pays close attention to how deception can operate in a texts form, delivery and structure. I use both instructive, demonstrative and poetic texts to engage with how one's perception can be manipulated.

Please enjoy this Study Room Guide and if you have any comments you can get in touch with me through LADA.

Tom Cassani

Further Biographical information on Tom Cassani

Cassani also works as a consultant magician and dramaturg of deception and maker of impossibilities. He provides insight and development of magical effects, deceptions and devices tailored to the show, performer and act. He has collaborated with artists such as Marisa Carnesky, johnsmith, Tim Spooner, Thom Shaw, David Hoyle on a range of performances and projects, to build bespoke impossible devices, choreograph handlings of material in order to deceive, and develop deceptive staging of the body. For example, with johnsmith, together they developed a method for producing a real-time blossoming flower from the vagina and a method for pulling one's own heart out.

Tom's solo performance work and consultancy collaborations can be found in a range of contexts. Tom has performed at Spill Festival, Forest Fringe, Flare Festival, Latitude Festival, BE Festival, The Lowry, Birmingham Rep, Live Art Bistro and Camden Peoples Theatre. Tom has consulted artists whose work has appeared on large scale theatre stages as well as intimate installations and cabaret club nights.

Through working with an arsenal of actions that appear possible but could simultaneously be an honest act of deception Tom invites you to look into his relationship with a practice founded on bending the truth and being honest about doing just that.

All of Tom Cassani's work and strands of artistic investigations lend themselves to his pursuit of exploring the extremities of the spectrum of deception. Tom believes that deception operates on many different levels, and can be exploited collaborated with, embraced and exposed. Tom's work seeks to find alternative contexts for deceptive acts and to celebrate lies, un-truths and manipulation.

Resources in LADA's Study Room

Publications:

The Interventionists
Nato Thompson / Gregory Sholette, 2004
Mass MOCA
P0639

Re Search – Pranks
V. Vale
Re/Search Publications
Vols 1 P2525 (1987) and 2 P2526 (2007)

Abstract Vaudeville – The Work of Rose English
Guy Brett, 2014
Ridinghouse
P2496

'On The Endurance of Theatre'
Lara Shalson, 2012
Contemporary Theatre Review
P1867

Joshua Sofaer- A Biography
Margret Turner, 1997
Outsmart
P0254

Con Art
Carol Maund, Helen Varola, Pier Giorgio Varola, 2002
Site Gallery
P0291

Performing Dark Arts – A Cultural History of Conjuring
Michael Mangan, 2007
Intellect Books
P1066

The Odditorium: The tricksters, eccentrics, deviants & inventors whose obsessions changed the world
David Bramwell, Jo Keeling, 2016
Chambers
P3208

Li Wei
Li Wei, 2005
Grafiche Damiani s.r.l./Marella Galler
P0191

The Yes Men
Andy Bichlbaum and Mike Bonanno, 2004
The Disinformation Company Ltd
P0592

Art, Lies and Videotape: Exposing Performance
Adrian George, 2003
Tate Publishing
P0420

An autobiography of hands: how to train in sleight of hand magic
Augusto Corrieri, 2017
P3418

Bodily Functions In Performance – A LADA Study Room Guide
Lois Keidan, 2013
P2195

A.Bandit: A Secret Has Two Faces, The Collaborative work of Glenn Kaino and DelGaudio
Jane Hyun, 2016
Prestel
P3686

Performing Magic on the Western Stage: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present
Editors Lawrence Hass, Francesca Coppa, James Peck, 2008
Palgrave Macmillian
P3700

The Big Con
David Maurer, 2000
Arrow
P3682

Magic Show
Jonathan Allen and Sally O'Reilly, 2009
Hayward Publishing
P1376

DVDs and Digital Files:

Cards as weapons
Ricky Jay, 1988
Warner Books
EF5289

Ursula Martinez
Hanky Panky
(extract from)
LADA, 2014
EF5217

Marisa Carnesky
Carnesky's Incredible Bleeding Woman –
(part of LADA's Blood Counts screening programme)
EF5288

Marisa Carnesky
Carnesky's Ghost Train
D0637

Joshua Sofaer
What is Live Art
D1536

Forced Entertainment
First Night
D1274

Richard Dedomenici
Normalisation of Deviance
D0803

Yann Marussich
Bleu Provisoire
D0053

Yann Marussich

Traversee
V0747

Tim Bromage, 2014
Jim Dahl Presents
D2198

Yann Marussich
Various
D0385

Andy Kaufman
The Andy Kaufman Show
1983
D2132

Andy Kaufman
The Real Andy Kaufman
2001
D2131

Christopher Maloney
The Death of Andy Kaufman
2011
D2130

Recommended reading and watching:

Learned Pigs and Fireproof Women (1998)

Ricky Jay

Books suggested by Augusto Corrieri:

The Arts of Deception: Playing with Fraud in The Age of Barnum (2001)

James W. Cook

Modern Enchantments: The Cultural Power of Secular Magic (2004)

Simon During

Magic on the Early English Stage (2005)

Philipp Butterworth

Performing Dark Arts: A Cultural History of Conjuring (2007)

Michael Mangan

Particularly on the relation between magic and cinema:

Vanishing Women: Magic, Film and Feminism (2003)

Karen Beckman

Disappearing Tricks: Silent Film, Houdini, and the New Magic of the Twentieth Century (2010).

Matthew Solomon

Hidden In Plain Sight: An Archeology of Magic and the Cinema (2015)

Colin Williamson

Recommended journal articles:

Cabinet magazine Magic

Curated by Jonathan Allen

<http://cabinetmagazine.org/issues/26/>

Magic Research Journal –

Edited and curated by Stuart Nolan

Huddersfield University

<http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/journal/jpm/>

The Dirty Work of A Lie
Hadley, Bree et al.
Performance Research Journal 15.2 (2010): 123-129.

Appearance, Reality and Truth in Magic: A personal memoir
Aladin
Performance Research Journal 13.4 (2008): 75-81

Truthful Trickery: Shamanism, Acting and Reality
Etzel Cardeña & Jane Beard
Performance Research Journal 1.3 (1996): 31-39

Audience Affirmation and the Labour of Professional Wrestling
Broderick Chow & Eero Laine
Performance Research Journal 19.4 (2014): 44-54

Clown Prosthetics and Amputations
Jon Davison
Performance Research Journal 14.4 (2009): 114-118

The following are links to online resources and videos which Tom Cassani thinks are relevant and interesting (most of these are videos that Tom kept coming back to during their research into Deception and time working in Live Art and Magic):

Adam Green: The Spectacular Thefts of Apollo Robbins, Pickpocket.
www.newyorker.com/reporting/2013/01/07/130107fa_fact_green?currentPage=all

A Conjuring Act in the form of an Interview
Augusto Corrieri
<http://www.augustocorrieri.com/A%20Conjuring%20Act%20in%20the%20Form%20of%20an%20Interview.pdf>

Xu Zhen
In Just A Blink Of The Eye, 2007
A Live Installation Using Illusions Suspension And Levitations
<http://zerogravity.empac.rpi.edu/zhen/>

Hand to Mind
Jeff Sheridan
1976 Playing Card Manipulation Video
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rUOROfs_L5U

A Man, A Ball, A Hoop, A Bench (And An Alleged Thread)... Teller!

How A Small But Beautiful Trick Illuminates The Mind Of A Master Magician

<https://lasvegasweekly.com/news/2008/nov/20/man-ball-hoop-bench-and-alleged-thread-teller/#/3>

Nasan Tur

<https://vimeo.com/88711612>

The Right Way to Do Wrong – Harry Houdini

A book documenting different criminals and their techniques written by conjuror and scephitic Harry Houdini.

<https://archive.org/stream/rightwaytodowro00conggoog#page/n13/mode/2up>

Misdirection and Turkish Ice Cream

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v2f09JgbZW4>

Pickpockets Police and Magicians

https://www.buzzfeed.com/davidmack/police-are-using-magicians-to-teach-people-about-pickpockets?utm_term=.ggPv2JV8A9#.pj8w6e5Op9

Neuroscience Of Magic

<https://www.wired.com/2009/04/ff-neuroscienceofmagic/>

Deception, Performance Magic, Hoaxes, Pranks and Tricks

Through my research and time in LADA I have identified works that use deception, pranks tricks and hoaxes in a range of different ways. This collection of works allows us to see how deception and its allied mechanisms are employed to varying extents.

In order to begin this investigation I was confronted by my initial understanding of what I deemed to be 'real' or 'authentic' in relation to Performance and Live Art. By gathering multiple works in one document that deal with notions of authenticity either directly or indirectly I hope to problematise the notion of what it means to be 'real' in the context of Live Art today. Throughout my research some works approach this discourse more pointedly and some simply nod towards it if sometimes even by accident.

I discovered the importance of in-authenticity in performance when attempting to make work that included magic but was not a magic performance. One of the reasons for collecting these works in one study guide is foreground this importance, and to highlight how deception can be useful for the development of a practice, individual, a piece or artist. I hope that this collection also brings attention to how often deception is used without acknowledgement. This essay is intended to appreciate, highlight and foreground tricks, pranks, interventions, lies and deception through a few selected works.

The first is...

[Tim Bromage H.O.R.S.E \(2015\). Risk, Failure and Bodily harm](#)

Deceptive operations can be found in Bromage's performance 'H.O.R.S.E' (2015). Bromage performs a classic mentalist stunt called 'Smash and Stab'. Four coasters placed on a table, one with a solid metal spike pointing upwards from it. Each coaster has an opaque polystyrene cup placed over it. Traditionally the performer would smash their hand down on the 'safe' cups one by one, somehow avoiding the spike. Bromage is blindfolded with duct tape and tin foil. The cups and coasters are moved around by an audience member. Bromage then proceeds to smash his face and hands down onto three of the coasters in one action, crushing the cups. Somehow he avoids impaling himself on the spike.

The stunt itself is a deception. In the conventional magic show this may be enough, but in the context of Live Art we are equally concerned with the potential for failure that Bromage confronts us with. The straightforwardness of the action that Bromage must perform correctly, allows us all to understand what is at stake, and invites us to imagine the outcome of failure in this instance. Bromage manages to harness something deceptive and mold it into something that indicates the authentic. By employing risk and potential for failure in conjunction with a deceptive 'magic trick' this work exposes the mechanisms of deception.

With failure at stake truth is brought about. This authenticity is found in the unknown, (the unthought of), and in the aftermath of failure. The unknown is authentic as we do not know what it holds, it is untouched. The potentiality of failure indicates the authentic, the

real, the true. (Werry and O’Gorman 2012: 106)¹. We presume magicians are virtuosic. Failure 'rebels against expertise, virtuosity, competence' (2012: 106). By setting up and then undermining these presumptions of virtuosity Bromage creates a situation where we believe without doubt that there is actual risk of bodily harm.

By blindfolding himself Bromage removes any possibility for 'expertise, virtuosity, competence' (2012: 106). Although he knows what is happening and is in control of everything, there still remains a tension between the authentic and the deceptive. This is caused by the perceived heightened potential to fail. This stunt is dangerous, there are numerous accounts of magicians impaling their hands. Although, if performed under strict parameters and with rigorous rehearsal there is actually very little chance of actual physical harm.

We see in this example deception operating on a spectrum. There is risk, but it is not actually where the audience perceive it, but Bromage’s intentions still remain authentic. He is still not entirely in control of the situation. As explained by Werry and O’Gorman 'Failure imperils a subject’s claim to authority; it exposes the flimsiness of power' (2012: 107). But Bromage is in more control than his audience thinks. The potential for failure here reduces him down to being the performer of one action and just getting it right. He is no longer the magician creating a magical effect. He is a performer negotiating the truth and he is the manipulator of our questioning faculties.

Yann Marussich 'Bain Brise' (2010). Vulnerability and Stillness

Much of Yann Marussich’s work is concerned with stillness and making visible the activity of the motionless body. This often culminates in Marussich placing his still or slowly moving body in vulnerable scenarios. It is important to consider how deceptive vulnerability in performance can take us through a much different process than that found in the common form of the magic trick or theatrical stunt deployed. Yann Marussich's work tends to signpost the body’s vulnerability but it still upholds elements of trickery.

In his performance 'Bain Brise' (2010) the audience watch him emerge slowly, over the course of two hours, from a bath filled with broken glass. In his performance 'Clous' (2015/2011) Marussich’s body is lowered onto an armchair of nails. Both these actions are simple in that they are singular and slow. To be safe Marussich must either move very slowly or not at all. His work encompasses duration, vulnerability and trickery. It is not usually performed in theatre spaces. With the absence of the conventions of the theatrical context, spoken text, or traditional magic his work arguably achieves what Lehmann calls an 'un mediated experience of the real' (2006: 134)². Yet whilst we experience 'the real' a form of magic is still present and both 'the real' and 'magic' in this instance are intertwined. As explained by Daniel Ploeger here:

¹ Margaret Werry and Róisín O’Gorman, *The Anatomy of a Failure, An Inventory*, Performance Research, A Journal of the Performing Arts, Volume 17, 2012 - Issue 1: On Failure

² Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Post Dramatic Theatre* (Routledge, 2006)

That Yann has shown this work on several occasions without anything ever going seriously wrong, may suggest that it is a bit of a mysterious trick... But the work has another aspect, which takes it beyond straightforward magicanship... The initial sense of danger is interfered by the astonishing aesthetic realm of the work... Whilst evoking a sense of danger, the work simultaneously makes one forget the mundane environment of the dirty recycling bin where the waste glass originates. And the everyday person connected to the body we see in the bathtub.³

The trickery in 'Bain Brise' is in the fact that the danger is not where we perceive it to be. If Marussich moves slowly there is very little risk of him being cut, the most dangerous part of the action is the possibility of him being crushed under the weight. The presence of Marussich's body in front of us proves that he is doing the action for real. He therefore causes a tension between what we are experiencing visually, what we perceive to be going on (i.e., the risk of being cut) and the actual risk constructed by the overall aesthetic structure. Our perception is being manipulated. Through slowness, simple action and a controlled environment we can see here that deception can be manifested and interrogated without prestidigitation or a magic trick. The sense of presence found in Marussich's performance contributes to the tension between deception and authenticity in his work. Presence in performance, discussed by many artists, has an implicit dialogue with the authentic. Marussich doesn't just 'signal the real'⁴, he confronts us with it. But this with such visual force, his threatened body, blinds us from the nature of this realness. We are deceived through a confrontation with realness.

Although Marussich's performance is in a non-theatrical context I would say it is important to consider how an audience responds to 'real' pain, especially when this pain may not actually be present where we perceive it to be. Lehmann says 'when people really fall or really get hit on stage, the spectators start to fear for the players. The novelty resides in the fact that there is a transition from represented pain to pain experienced in representation.' (Lehmann, 2006:166).

Walking on glass and eating glass are old sideshow stunts. Techniques, tricks of the trade and large amounts of practice are needed to perform these safely, although almost anyone could perform these stunts if trained and rehearsed. By framing these actions within Live Art they are no longer sideshow, street performer or Fakir stunts, rather they become a means with which to achieve an intimate experience of the body existing before us. This is arguably what much of body based Live Art work strives to do. Yet with Marussich we find the means to achieve this derive from the trickery of side-show stunts.

Johan Lorbeer's series 'Still Life' (1987 – 2010). Durational Deception

In artist Johan Lorbeer's work we see how presence and deception collide with very little physical action. His series of 'Still Life' (1987 – 2010) performance's find him suspended in an impossible position, as if time had stopped or slowed down. In each performance,

³ Dani Ploeger, *"So is he a magician?" – the beauty of Yann Marussich's threatened body*, 2013. <https://www.daniploeger.org/marussich>

⁴ Lara Shalson, *On the Endurance of Theatre*, Contemporary Theatre Review, Volume 22, 2012 - Issue 1: Live Art in the UK

casually dressed, he is positioned, seemingly floating, several meters off the ground his only contact with solid matter being his outstretched hand lightly touching a wall. This performance has taken place in several countries, always in public spaces, train stations, the exterior of public buildings for hours at a time. When we first encounter his work, we are immediately aware that something is being hidden from us, as any mechanism used to suspend his body is not visible.

Lorbeer's work is concerned with the 'real human activity'⁵. Sergay Kovalesvsky goes on to draw a parallel between Lorbeers stillness and still life as used in fine art practices;

'The author creates a still-life performance, appealing, not to the French term *natur mort*, but rather to the English language transcription of 'still', but nevertheless 'live', nature. Unlike a painter, which animates the static world of things, he focuses on the slowing down of real human activity, as though it has singled out a specific unit of time. This constitutes an act of resistance to the speed of the present, making the natural living world level. The freezing of the moment has become the current way to draw closer to the beautiful.'⁶

As a viewer seeing someone seemingly defying gravity, our perception of how the world works is questioned. Our understanding of how the physical world works is challenged for a sustained length of time. The deceptive nature of Lorbeer's performance gives the audience agency to engage with him as a as a living being trapped in space and time. We do not view the work as passive observers of something we do not understand. The impossibility of what we witness forces us to investigate every minute detail of Lorbeer, the location, his position, his clothing, his expression and we are given the time to do this. The audience is live in the same way that Lorbeer is. In Matthew Reason's *Documentation, Disappearance and the Representation of Live Performance*, Reason cites Josette Feral who says that 'Performance escapes all illusion and representation. With neither past nor future, performance takes place'⁷. Lorbeer's performance is both illusory and real in that the audience apprehend something that is impossible and yet it is physically present and demands disbelief. This complex of non-representational presence of the impossible is a durational deception.

Lorbeer's presence and presentation of 'real human activity' becomes what Langer calls 'unalterable fact'⁸. With a performance in which there is one action or arguably no action, Lorbeer 'escapes all illusion' through the use of illusion itself. Lorbeer foregrounds deception by sustaining it therefore allowing us to engage with the deception, even though we do not know the method of his 'illusion'. Kovalevsky says that Lorbeer draws 'our gaze towards a single live action of standing in time.' He says that Lorbeer's performance

⁵ Sergey Kovalevsky, *Distentio Animi*.

<http://johanlorbeer.com/texts/>

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Josette Feral in *Documentation, Disappearance and the Representation of Live Performance*, ed. Matthew Reason, 2006. P11.

⁸ Langer in Reason. P.11.

‘combines the conditions of maximum concentration and discipline with the visible relaxation of poses. Still-life performance is a sculptural expression of the act of creation.’⁹

Marussich and Lorbeer both endure deception in different ways. Marussich endures the weight of the glass but also the weight of maintaining the correct environment for his work to be seen. Lorbeer endures deception by being physically strapped to a wall, he endures a deceptive stillness.

During my research it came to my attention that the television magician Dynamo used an almost identical illusion to Lorbeer to promote Pepsi. Dynamo is seen in an identical position suspended from the side of a London bus by his outstretched arm. Here we can see how the same physical mechanism of an illusion can be used for extremely different means. It is worth noting that Lorbeer does not hide the set up to his illusion. The footage of Dynamo however infers that he has levitated up to this position, the bus is also full of supposed members of the public. The bus he is suspended from is also on a route that doesn’t exist. We see here multiple strategies being put in place to enforce a deception. To secure the illusion. But in fact, if we compare the two vastly different approaches to the same trick I would argue that Lorbeer’s carries more weight. Lorbeer also did it first.

What distinguishes the artists discussed so far from leaning towards the theatrical, is the precise and strategic use of their performance actions, and the foregrounding of their deceptiveness. These are identifiable devices and we see their considered choices to use these actions in this way.

Marisa Carnesky’s ‘Carnesky’s Incredible Bleeding Woman’ (2017). Tropes of Magic as Live Art

The overall ‘Carnesky’s Incredible Bleeding Woman’ show is the outcome of an ongoing research project and Carnesky’s PHD findings. The premise of the show is a presentation of ‘Menstrual Rituals’ developed by Carnesky and her entourage of female performers. In the finale of the show we see a sawing in half illusion performed in reverse. With all the flare and choreography of an end of the pier magician Carnesky puts two halves of a box with performer and writer Rhiannon Styles inside back together. When the box is opened blood pours from inside and an intact Rhiannon emerges. Although this illusions presentation is in many ways traditional the fact that it is preceded by a series of very personal performance rituals changes the way we view the routine. The sawing in half trick now becomes a potent ritual of a split body becoming whole. We see here how positioning a magic illusion with a traditional presentation within a ‘Live Art Show’ shifts our understanding of what that illusion can mean.

⁹ Sergey Kovalevsky, *Distentio Animi*.

<http://johanlorbeer.com/texts/>

Augusto Corrieri 'This is not a Magic Show' (2015). Sleight of Hand and Compositional Strategies

Using deception as a strategic device is at the core of Magic and sleight of hand. Performance artist Augusto Corrieri is a highly skilled sleight of hand artist. His performance 'This is not a Magic Show' (2015) deconstructs the mechanism of constructing wonder within a theatrical scenario. In Corrieri's use of magic we do not just find a simple form of deception through trickery. Careful structuring and reconstructing of magical effects allows his audience to peer inside and see the mechanics of deception found in classic card tricks. Corrieri challenges his audience's approach to how we arrive at a magical moment by manipulating the form and structure of classical magic routines. Within his performance we see Corrieri stepping in and out of the role of the magician. His audience see him as choreographer, director, victim and performer of deception. Augusto exposes to his viewers the layers of action, choreography, text and theatrical devices used in a card routine. His intention is to allow his audience to witness and interrogate theatre through the form of a magic trick. He achieves this through a careful dismantling of what we understand to be a 'magic show'.

Corrieri states his uncertainty over what trick to begin the show with. Simultaneously he performs an incrementally impossible routine, interrupting himself to dismiss the part he has just performed as if it were not good enough to start his show with. The conceptual notion of constructing the beginning of the show, as part of the show allows us insight into how a magician might construct an opening routine. Corrieri therefore capitalises on our instilled understanding of the theatrical formula of magic tricks. By deconstructing and reconstructing them as a performance form we witness the narrative of a deception being built in front of us.

Corrieri continues by citing a fictional study into the human response to a magic trick. The study quoted asks an audience member to describe what they see as a card routine is performed. Corrieri goes on to perform a card routine replacing the patter with the description given by the audience member in the study. He distances himself from the actions he is performing by taking on the voice of a spectator. Through this substitution his audience are pushed into considering their presence as witnesses to the impossible and are made aware of their complicit engagement in the performance of a magic trick. For example, Corrieri slides one card over another and magically makes the card appear blank as he says 'ok so...he's painting...and...What?...its gone...but how?' (Corrieri, 'This is Not a Magic Show' 2015) He undermines our understanding of a magic trick so that we look at deception in a new way. We still experience the trick and are entertained by it but our investigative faculties not only question the method of deception but it's structure too.

Corrieri disrupts the recognisable narrative arc of a magic trick. He also applies this technique to the overall show whilst still maintaining a fluid performance that sits well in a classical parlour magic show structure. This re-constructing of recognizable theatrical tropes can act as a deception too. By aligning actions that we understand to be deceptions with those which we presume to be true, deception can be exposed. This is evident again in Bromage's careful structuring. Although both artists use performance magic they both approach its vast possibilities in performance from very different points of view.

Tim Bromage H.O.R.S.E (2015). Structure, Objects and Materials

Bromage uses a framework of overlapping narratives within this show. He uses spoken word, a series of magic effects, demonstrations and a fictional autobiographical narrative. These multiple forms intersect each other, subtly reference each other but are distinctly different in form and presentation. With these multiple narratives running throughout Bromage plays with fiction and truth. He carefully navigates a spectrum of forms that stretch from being inherently fictional and theatrical to what appears to be a very real and true story of something that has happened to Bromage himself recently. By aligning an autobiographical narrative with a series of magic tricks our sense of fiction becomes skewed.

Bromage presents a 'remote viewing' demonstration in which, whilst blindfolded, he identifies objects on a tray in front of him selected at random by an audience member. Bromage achieves deception not through just simply succeeding in being able to tell us, for example, what object someone has placed on a tray whilst blindfolded, but through aligning such a stunt within a story about himself. We begin to find it hard to distinguish what is true and what is fiction. We know he cannot really be using so called remote viewing but we treat these actions and demonstrations as authentic in one way or another. Fiction becomes malleable and we are deceived from the moment the performance begins, we know it and we accept it.

This slick spider web of fiction and referentiality ties together his whole show and keeps the viewers in a constant state of intrigue, paying attention to every word and every action, drawing connections (or trying to) at every moment, even though arguably the different narratives arcs are loosely connected or not at all. In one way Bromage's use of performance magic is the most authentic part of the performance. The magic sections become moments of relief. They have direct address, casual patter and audience interaction. They become the most authentic and least theatrical. The lighting is stripped back and the props are often normal household objects. In some ways his approach is symbolic of the statement made by the late influential American magician Karl Germain, 'Conjuring is the only absolutely honest profession - the conjuror promises to deceive, and does.'¹⁰

Within the magic routine Bromage addresses the audience members, he speaks calmly and naturally, there is nothing theatrical about the way he conducts these routines. This is immediately juxtaposed by the actions he does or things he achieves, for example supposedly seeing with a blindfold on, making things move in a curtained cabinet whilst tied to a chair. The premise of the magical effects he does are intended to deceive us. We know they are tricks and understand that we are being fooled. It could be said that the deception found in the magic sections rubs off on the rest of the performance.

Bromage's work is presented in a theatre space, but also often in performance art festivals. Bromage makes a point of not performing his work as a magic show or in a context

¹⁰ Jamy Ian Swiss, *The Meaning of Honest Lying*, 2013.
<http://archive.randi.org/site/index.php/swift-blog/2055-the-meaning-of-honest-lying-.html>

that is strongly connected to a traditional presentation of magic. In addition to this he uses 'props' like foil, duct tape, sand and rope. His clothing is simple his stage is stripped back. The visual and material aesthetic of the objects he uses to bind, blind, tie down his body throughout the performance are those that would be more commonly found within performance art practices than in the magicians close up repertoire. It could be argued that his specific choice of materials makes us question at times whether what we are seeing him do is a magic effect or a 'real' action.

Here we can see that Bromage is toying with the authenticity and reaching for the realness found in performance art by aligning it with an inherently deceptive practice of magic. Bromage manipulates our preconceptions of the context in which we find his work. We know magic isn't real although it is the only visceral action we see in this performance. He sets up his own new parameters. He rebuilds borders of where fiction ends and reality begins within the show.

Ursula Martinez 'Hanky Panky' (2000). Perfect Trick

Ursula Martinez's cabaret routine entitled 'Hanky Panky' uses a simple performative proposition repeated. Martinez makes a red hanky disappear in her bare hands. It then reappears inside an item of clothing she is wearing. She then removes this item and does the trick again. This is repeated until she is naked. The handkerchief then finally appears inside her vagina.

Martinez capitalises on the audiences understanding of how magic tricks are often repeated and build in impossibility. She simultaneously capitalises on the audiences understanding of the progression of the strip tease. Both magic and the strip tease inherently build suspense but have built in to them an expectation that will be fulfilled. In this instance these expectations are fulfilled and in some ways surpassed.

This routine does more than simply demonstrate her skill in sleight of hand. By combining the repetitious (and often tedious) nature of a hanky trick with a strip tease Martinez transforms the mundane into something very original. As each piece of clothing is discarded we understand that the possibility of hiding the handkerchief somewhere about her person becomes less and less. The tension doubles each time. As the routine continues the possible methods for vanishing the handkerchief are gradually eliminated.

The final vanish therefore becomes totally impossible. A handkerchief vanish performed completely surrounded without the use of clothing or any other props is something very few master magicians could achieve. The strip itself does way more in this instance that titillate, it lends itself to further anchor the impossibility of the trick.

By combining these two practices she not only as we know subverts the reception of the striptease but also the reception of magic within a cabaret context. In classical magic presentations magician strive to hide or divert from form and method through pretence. Magicians will create a narrative to justify their actions and often incorporate patter that states the underlying 'meaning' of the trick. In the case of 'Hanky Panky' there is no need for

pretence the form and method cancel each other out. It becomes a perfect magic trick and a perfect strip and one cannot exist without the other.

Hayley Newman Connotations Performance Images 1994-98. Documentation as Lie

Of course, not all artists I have come across fall into the same grouping as the ones already discussed in relation to ritual. Some artists deploy deception in a more covert manner or use it in a practice that is not usually encountered live. For example, Hayley Newman's 'Lockjaw Lecture Series' in 'Connotations' is in fact a still image intended for display in a gallery. Accompanying these images is a description of an event in which Newman is described to have delivered a lecture after being given anaesthetic in her mouth. This description accompanies an image of her with a syringe being inserted into her mouth. This lecture and event never happened. The image was created as documentation of an event that didn't occur. However, ambiguity is created around its authenticity when the text is displayed alongside the image. Even though the exhibition copy when presented explicitly states that all images seen are documentation of performances that didn't happen or that the scenario was manufactured, many viewers left with the impression that they had taken place. So much so, that a friend of mine found himself retelling a vague memory that he had of seeing Newman delivering one of her 'Lockjaw Lectures' which is simply impossible. Here we find through deception, not only in performance, but through careful framing of text and image that one can create memories of events that never happened. Perhaps something real out of something that never existed.

The following is a list of images that describe the parallels and sometimes striking similarities between magicians or feats of performance magic and Live Art/Performance Art events.

David Blain vs Chris Burden



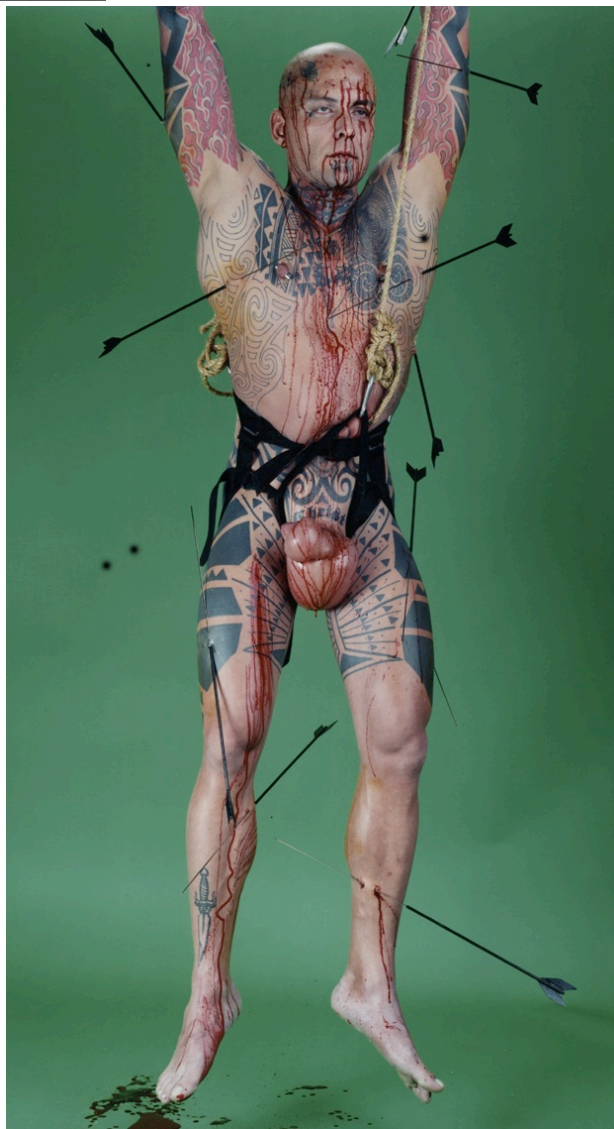
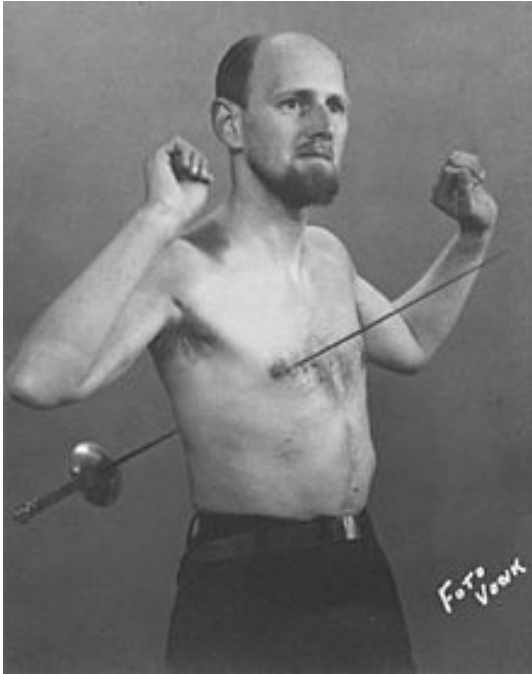
Dynamo vs Trisha Brown vs Yves Klein



Johan Lorbeer V Dynamo



Mirin Dajo vs Ron Athey vs Tim Cridland



Jesus vs Houdini

