

EDGE OF POSSIBLE

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I'd like to start this with one of my favorite frameworks for thinking about magic, both in its construction and its philosophy. Simply put, theatrical magic doesn't live in the realm of the purely impossible, but rather touches the edge of what is possible and impossible. Too believable, and no magic is required. Too unbelievable, and we find the audience cannot understand our work. Most magic effects touch this edge from the side of the impossible, creating an event or space that is not real, but is imminently imaginable for the audience. A closed fist can be easily imagined empty despite the knowledge of a coin there, for instance. Mentalism is our current culture's iteration of the hybrid, a genre which, through its attachment to something we don't truly understand (the brain) can play between real and impossible at will. I'm sure you'll find examples in your work.

I find the idea of the edge of possible helpful when discussing and creating effects, however I find it most exciting as a framework for communication. If magic can be a vehicle for change and advocacy (which I believe it can, though that's a subject for further writing), we communicate most by touching the edge of what our audiences know. Too far on the side of the status quo, and there is nothing new to be had. Too far away from it and the audience cannot readily imagine its reality. However, here is our opportunity as magicians. For, when an audience comes to see magic, they're expecting their reality to be challenged, their sense of what lies at the edge of possible altered momentarily. If this applies to physical laws we know to be immutable, what can this mean for those laws that can change, that we can alter for more than a moment? What could our magic mean then?

I'll leave you to discover further.