

What Constitutes “Exposure”?

Scope

This document provides a detailed definition of the act of “exposure” within the domain of mystery entertainment. By “mystery entertainment” is meant any form of entertainment that is dependent upon the workings of one or more of its functional elements being kept secret from its audience. The term “magic” is employed herein in its broadest sense, in order to represent the experience of same, rather than to denote elements of the various branches of mystery entertainment (e.g., conjuring, mentalism, hypnotism, bizarre, reading, etc.).

Preamble

WE THE BOARD RECOGNIZE that any member of our organization now has the unprecedented ability to expose widely the tools of our livelihood, and thereby cause significant harm to its pursuit and lower its value in the eyes of the public. We also acknowledge that any policy founded on an unclear understanding of the elements and issues being addressed can lead to the unjust treatment of individual members. At the same time, we must weigh the above against our duty to provide protection to those for whom we are responsible, who might fall prey to those who would employ our tools to defraud rather than entertain. It is for these reasons we have carefully formulated these definitions.

Positions

- 1. CONTEXT: An exposure policy is created in order to protect the experience of magic by uninitiated participants in response to the performance of illusions reliant on the secret application of methods to provide the impression that known laws of the physical world are being subverted or expanded.**

To clarify:

- a. Distinguish between uninitiated participant and initiated participant:**

An uninitiated participant is one who has not taken significant initiative to learn how to perform illusions and create magic. Venues with so low a bar of admission as to provide access to their content by participants without sufficient demonstration of initiative—who might even encounter their content by accident—may include but are not limited to:

1. Public broadcasts (TV, radio, podcasts)

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2. Unprotected websites (i.e., those not requiring a password, private link, or fee payment for admission)
3. Theatre performances for the public
4. In-person environments not specifically intended for the teaching of illusion

An initiated participant has demonstrated significant initiative to learn how to perform illusions and create magic. Venues whose bar of admission provides access to their content only to participants with sufficient demonstration of initiative may include but are not limited to:

1. Magical societies
2. Magic sections of libraries
3. Magic shops
4. Websites protected by password, private link, or fee payment for admission
5. In-person environments specifically intended for the teaching of illusion

b. Distinguish between secret and method:

Though these two words are often used interchangeably, for our purposes a method is the general principle, which is often solely not the domain of illusion (e.g., thread). A secret is the covert application of the method to achieve a specific illusion (e.g., thread's use in The Deck That Cuts Itself). Mention of a method is not in and of itself exposure; mention of how a method is secretly applied to achieve an illusion may be, if all other conditions are met.

c. Distinguish between illusion and magic:

Though these words are often used interchangeably, for our purposes an illusion is the apparent subversion or expansion of known laws of the physical world created by the secret application of methods (e.g., a deck of cards balanced on the back of the performer's hand cuts itself at a selected card in a ghostly fashion). Magic is the response by the uninitiated participant upon witnessing or otherwise experiencing an illusion (aka that temporary, transcendent disconnection from reality described by Paul Harris as the "state of astonishment").

Note that these rules do not aim to weigh the value of the illusion, whether it is of professional quality or "kid stuff." What is being protected is not primarily the trick but the experience of magic, and that can be attained even by using so-called rudimentary illusions.

Nor do these rules take into consideration whether the member can claim ownership of the illusion's secretly applied method. From the uninitiated participant's viewpoint, this is irrelevant; their experience of magic is elevated or destroyed irrespective of provenance.

2. **CLASSIFICATION:** We classify as exposure any form of expression that aims to destroy the experience of magic (as considered above) by providing the uninitiated participant with a plausible explanation, correct or not, of a method's secret application to achieve an illusion within a theatrical context.

To clarify:

a. Distinguish a form of expression that aims to destroy the experience of magic from one that does not:

1. Intentional versus unintentional

While we can never know a performer's intent, there are indicators one can consider when assessing whether a form of expression aims to destroy the experience of magic (such as its use as a running gag, or its repeated use by the performer in multiple shows), or is simply a matter of the performer suffering an accidental mishap. If the latter, it might not be judged as an offence. *However, the frequency of occurrence may be considered:* if the performer has a record of preventable accidents or unknowingly reveals the workings of illusions in performance, it may be time for experienced performers to intercede and provide guidance.

2. Aiming to destroy the experience of magic versus teaching

It can be argued (and often is) that one cannot aim to destroy the experience of magic if they believe they are teaching. However, that distinction hinges on 1.a above, "Distinguish between uninitiated participant and initiated participant."

3. Aiming to destroy the experience of magic versus protecting the public from fraud

See 2.c below, "Distinguish between theatrical and non-theatrical contexts."

b. Distinguish between a plausible explanation, correct or incorrect, that aims to destroy the experience of magic versus an implausible one:

When an uninitiated participant is provided an explanation that plausibly explains the secret application of a method to accomplish an illusion, the participant's experience of magic is destroyed. Whether the explanation is correct or incorrect is immaterial — the participant lacks the ability to discern its accuracy.

However, an explanation that is implausible on its face (e.g., "The Deck That Cuts Itself" relies on the synchronized action of millions of trained fleas"), implausible in practice (such as a theatrical fiction that would be impractical to apply, like NLP or body language), or is presented such that no reasonable audience member may interpret it as plausible, may not be exposure. In the latter case, if the explanation appears implausible but is (unknown to the audience) an actual secret application of

method, a case could be made that this serves to further protect rather than destroy the experience of magic.

c. Distinguish between theatrical and non-theatrical contexts:

A theatrical context is one in which the performer and audience have a mutual understanding that the performer is operating with the intention to entertain. A non-theatrical context is one in which the operator and audience do not share this mutual understanding so that the operator may fraudulently benefit; e.g., when the operator is acting as a spirit medium capitalizing on the grief stricken, or as a card cheat preying on gamblers in a purportedly fair game.

If a performer mentions a method used by an operator outside a theatrical context for the purpose of protecting an uninitiated participant from injury of fraud, that could fall outside the bounds of exposure—*provided there is no overlap with material performed within a theatrical context.*

If there is overlap, that may constitute exposure; *and both the intensity of the disclosure and the personal obligation of the performer to the uninitiated participant must be considered.* Regarding intensity of disclosure: caution must be exercised to reveal only what is necessary to protect the uninitiated participant from harm without doing damage to performers' repertoire (e.g., saying in a general fashion that a fraudulent medium is secretly acquiring written information versus explicitly detailing the workings of an impression device used by mentalists). Additionally, the obligation of the performer to protect a specific uninitiated participant due to close personal relationship or fiduciary responsibility must also be weighed. Broadcasting to a large audience the secret application of a method used to create an illusion—a practice whose efficacy at protecting the public from harm by fraud is of dubious merit—would fall outside such a relationship and may be judged more critically.