

Apparent Continuity

Who

Arturo de Ascanio
(1929-1997)

When

Circular de la EMM
“Charlan Arturo y Juan”
FEB 1979

What

Pretending that something is, can induce the performer to overact, which in itself bears the danger of appearing artificial. So, at all times “be natural”.

With

- Be Natural
- Be Yourself
- Gestalt
- Invisibility
- Memory
- Midwife Theory
- Punctuation

Where

Etcheverry, *The Magic of Ascanio 1*, p. 229

Ascanio called an action, which extends a false reality in time, an *Action of Apparent Continuity*.

Take Belgian master magician Servais Le Roy’s “Asrah”, where the assistant levitates and then vanishes in mid-air. The assistant is surreptitiously replaced by a wire structure simulating her body, thereby *extending the reality* in the mind of the audience that it *apparently* is the assisting lady who is floating. When the cover is then suddenly pulled off, the lady has vanished (as the black wire blends in with the black background).

The right hand drops a coin several times on the wooden table, the thuds proving it is a solid coin (*Action of Explicit Conviction*). The right hand then apparently picks up the coin, by sliding it over the edge of the table, really lapping it. Abracadabra, the hand is opened, and the coin has vanished. Any beginner can do that.

Let’s examine what happens in the audience’s mind and how we could dramatically enhance the illusion by adding *Actions of Apparent Continuity*. As we’ll see in the article about *Simplicity* (p. 100), nature prefers simplicity to complexity. So does the human mind, being a product of nature, when trying to understand the incomprehensible. Like a stream seeking the path of least resistance, the mind tries to connect the final, unexplainable situation (no coin in the hand) by going back on the timeline to the initial situation (the hand picking up the coin). If it finds no cause, the mind will be deceived, and the emotion of astonishment sets in, the goal of all artistic magic. However, an intelligent mind might remember that the right hand swept over the edge of the table, and it just might reach the correct solution...

Enter the *Action of Apparent Continuity*: As soon as the right hand has lapped the coin, it closes into a fist and makes a light up and down movement, “weighing” the (nonexistent) coin, a first *Action of Apparent Continuity*, then makes a kneading action, another *Action of Apparent Continuity*. If the hand is opened now, it will be a better illusion than before.

But let’s go a step further. The right hand *apparently* tosses its (nonexistent) coin into the left hand, an *AAC*, in order to pick up the magic wand (or a “magic pencil”) from the table, and makes a few passes over the left hand, which weighs and kneads the coin, two *Actions of Apparent Continuity*. Finally, the left hand opens to show the coin has gone.

As you can prove to yourself by trying, the simple addition of the “fake” transfer from the right to the left hand will suffice to throw off even sophisticated minds, because the *Action of Apparent Continuity* has effectively separated the cause from the effect.

Actions of Apparent Continuity...Continued

Let's look at how *Actions of Apparent Continuity* are used in magic to enhance the effect in the mind of the spectators.

Rattle Box: The performer places a borrowed ring or a marked coin into a small box, but immediately palms it out to load it into an impossible location, from where it will later appear. However, whenever the box is shaken, the distinctive rattle heard “proves” the ring’s presence. Again, something, which is not, is created in the audience’s mind, as if it was. An example par excellence of an *Action of Apparent Continuity*.

Shells & Co.: Any type of shell, which contains the “real object”, be it a coin, a die or whatever, is a *Prop of Apparent Continuity*, if you will. Once the “real object” has been stolen (coin), or dropped in a hat (die for Die Box), the shell makes the audience believe the object is still there, while in reality it is awaiting its mission at the end of the effect.

Apparent Continuity Coin Vanish: Dai Vernon used this ploy to dramatize the vanish of a coin from his hand in his famous “Five Coins and a Glass” routine.⁸ It is an excellent example how even a seemingly simple move, such as a coin vanish, can greatly be enhanced if some thought is applied to it. Follow along with a coin at hand. Do any false transfer that makes the audience believe you are holding a coin in your left hand,⁹ which is held closed into a fist (fig. 1). Apparently weigh the (nonexistent) coin, an *Action of Apparent Continuity*, and knead the fingers lightly, another *Action of Apparent Continuity*. Snap the fingers of your other hand, pronounce a magic formula or sprinkle some “foo foo dust” over your left fist, and then slowly open the hand, but do it thusly: slide the finger tips from the lower heel of the palm (fig. 1), across the palm (fig. 2) to the base of the fingers (fig. 3), and then pause for a beat. Do the sliding of the fingers slowly, which forces the audience to imagine the (nonexistent) coin, this being the *Action of Apparent Continuity*. Finally, open the fingers to celebrate the vanish (fig. 4). Hold the hand at least three seconds in the same space (*Space-Information-Continuum*, p. 102).

