

ImGoth Blogs – Carnival of Illusion

Category: Art and Photography

By: Guillermo Posted on: 18-Dec-2010 01:28 PM

"Which way's the magic show?"

"We don't have a magic show," insisted the concierge. "We have a 'Carnival of Illusion!'"

Leading the way to a nice doorgirl/promoter who pointed out my name on the reservations list ... without any hint of who I was ... even before the show began. (Just psychic? Or secret Italian gypsy strega princess? Hmmmm.)

Once through the curtains, low slung tables and pedestals display trappings of historical magicians, sepia-toned daguerreotypes of serious people, peacock feathers in brass spittoons, and bejeweled boxes with unknown contents from dark corners of Asia. Implications of travel, a thick black and gold ticket, velvet pile and red damask hangings all have a terrific RomantiGoth setpiece feel to them.

Yet for all its Victorian window-dressings, there's something almost postmodern going on under the ruffled hemlines at Sarlot & Eyed's "Carnival of Illusion". You know it's a magic show, they know it's a magic show, and because of this there's a mental combination of shrug and wink which occurs at that cognitive crossroads that are completely acknowledged during the first few conjurings. But in a very quick reversal this matching pair makes you feel like you've taken a mysteriously exciting wrong train a couple stations ago, the compartment door's locked, and it's too late to get off now.

The whole hour-long affair mostly doesn't stray too far from the conventions of clever math, decks of cards, linking rings, folding of money, slights of hand, and bladed objects, but it's not the tricks that are exceptional -- it's Susan & Roland's unique delivery of their material that will charm the socks and garters off anyone who meets them. Using stylized movements, sophisticated and warm patter, sketch character acting, leading questions, and a proper alchemy of grace and humanity, they renew and give personal context to tricks of the trade and illusions you may have seen before, but never with this palpable sense of affection for the art of illusion and matchless savoir faire.

And above this, Roland conjures a couple David Blaine moments, when your suspension of disbelief actually no longer needs suspenders and you slackjawedly wonder how he just managed to pull off that bit of miraculous weirdness. He's arch and has this knowing look about him, but not in a condescending way like some illusionists, more in an intimate here-let-me-share-this-with-you fashion.

Case in point, my personal brush with Roland's phenomena: Being selected from the audience is never something I shoot for, but if you're the Gothic with a top hat in a small parlour audience limited to 35 people, you're unavoidably going to get picked to go up

front. During an illusion called "Postcards Around the World" somehow three cards from a stack of 10 were dematerialized out from under my very-secured-to-its-chair behind, and just as mysteriously rematerialized under a lady's derriere across the room. For my bafflement and cooperation Roland awarded me with a large box of M&Ms.

And as for the very winning Miss Eyed, there's an Uno Attack-like moment as cards aggressively launch themselves from a brazier and she even more aggressively skewers a five of hearts in midair on the tip of her sword -- a card drawn by an audience member only minutes before, and completely uneyed by Miss Eyed. She's lovely, energetic, quite the dancer, and possesses expressive orbs that more than merit her surname. All that, an aisle of chips, and she gives great email.

True magic has been resurrected in the parlour at the DoubleTree in Tucson, and if you want a taste of what might possibly be on the real supernatural wonder, you'll go place yourselves in the deft hands of Sarlot & Eyed's "Carnival of Illusion".



[Miss Eyed & Sir Sarlot. Go get a fancy ticket to see them at www.carnivalofillusion.com or book them for your next fête.]

P.S. No, I'm not being paid to write ad copy, or comped in any way to endorse said performers whom I had never met until tonight. I'm up at 5 am, a whole 9 hours later, writing this and still thinking about how brilliant it was, okay? Okay.