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Aesthetics Is Ethics

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Ethics, a concept that was strongly impressed on me throughout my life, seems to be lost in today's market-driven art scene, specifically when it comes to giving credit to one's influences. As a practitioner in the art of magic for decades, I can tell you that when magicians write about magic and their routines, as a preamble and in discussing all aspects of magic, they acknowledge the masters who influenced them. Harry Lorayne, Dai Vernon, Ken Krenzel, to name a few master magicians, have followed this custom. And a magician writing about an effect, for example, would credit his predecessors: "The

effect I write about was first described in an

article by Harry Lorayne,

which appeared in the March 1948 issue of the magazine *Genie*. Later Frank Garcia modified it, while Ken Krenzel and I brought it together with the Harry Houdini effect." I find it unfortunate that so many contemporary artists don't adhere to the same standard when they claim to "come out of themselves," as if unaided by any artists who preceded them.

The greatest artists of the twentieth century gave a nod to their predecessors. Willem de Kooning wrote about the influence of Arshile Gorky, Matta,

and Matisse on his own work. Picasso said, "Cézanne is my father." "If Cézanne is right," Henri Matisse said, "I am right." I know dozens of artists who claim to be divinely inspired or "self-taught." I cannot protest loudly enough how disingenuous and gauche such a position is, whether claimed consciously or not.

In this dying post-modernist ploy, the influencer has to be denigrated, made unimportant, and killed. Now the minnow says "I come strictly out of myself, I discovered this and that, this is my cognition, this me is myself,

my own true self, and I will not be out-created by the likes of you. I am triumphant. I'm the only

"Will we vanish if we pay homage to our past?"

one. This is my very own opinion." What are we afraid of? Why must we perpetuate these facades? Will we vanish if we pay homage to our past?

It's time to let go of the lie of "self-taught." This entity, me, is influenced by mankind, parents, country, planet earth, teachers, family, philosophers, scientists, astronomers, poets, artists, actors, magicians, composers, and many others. And that is not an opinion, my point of view, or any point of view. It's the truth. ●