

BELIEVING IS NOT SEEING

Freud said that if you name a terrible thing, it begins to lose its power over you (and for our purposes, the audience).

We spend so much of our lives pretending things don't happen, just to survive. But in the theatre (or the page) everything must be acknowledged, or else the ritual is betrayed. The actor mustn't pretend the vase did not fall off the coffee table even though that was not blocked or scripted; the writer mustn't ignore that thought they know they shouldn't be thinking--that's exactly the thought we need.

Nothing was more freeing to me than being told that acting is a way of seeing. And that one does not have to be or even to believe. One can wipe one's feet at the door. One can leave the pretensions of polite society and political correctness when they enter a space where all that matters is the truth--and of course, the ability to wipe one's feet of what occurred in the space in order to reenter society as whole as they left it (which is what we really mean when we say *safety*).

It's just as important to look at writing this way. It can be difficult (although very fun) to dissociate oneself from the terrible truths one puts to paper. Just because you can (and must) be held accountable for what you write (and believe me you will) does not mean it is a reflection of who you are or what you actually believe about how things should be (who really knows, in the end?).

The stories you tell--if you tell them honestly--are not a reflection of your beliefs. They are a reflection of what you see. What you see is rarely so correct and fully formed. You control your beliefs. You don't control what you see. You only allow yourself *to* see. Or you don't. But having been granted the physical and mental privileges to do so, why deny yourself the thrill of seeing?

It is the audience's prerogative to make judgements. Not your own. Judgement is a kind of cowardice for the artist. It is safe. It shields you and the audience from discoveries that might elicit an honest response. And a growth of understanding in who we are.

It is still a kind of vain glory to present the world or people or outcomes of circumstance as they ought to be. It is an invented task. It is waste.

More difficult and more simple and more generous to present things as they are.

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