

MAGISCHER RING AUSTRIA

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In Loving Memory



Ken Klosterman



1933-2020



Dear readers,

Ken Klostermann, was an amazing magic person.

Beside of his successful career as a businessman, he loved magic and housed one of the best collection of magic.

In march 2020 we published in the 92-page original issue a report about the incredible collection of Ken Klostermann from Cincinatti. Since this collection is private, only a few magic friends have been able to see it in person. Therefore we have written a special report about it. It is not a scientific work, but a very personal travel report of mine, which was written during two visits.

Magic lives from personalities like Ken Klostermann, who pursue their passion for magic with dedication and energy, but most of all with a lot of love, to preserve the history of magic.

As a small thank you to Ken Klostermann we have published this translation in English language and send it to him just a few days before his dead.

In honour of Ken, we publish now this article about his magical life as a pdf, free to the magic community.

Our condolences go to his family and friends.

With kind regards

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'Hanno Rhomberg'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Hanno Rhomberg
Magischer Ring Austria

In the Realm of Ken Klosterman

Text and photos by Hanno Rhomberg



The home of Ken Klostermann...



...and its garden front

I'm standing at the entrance of an old mine in Loveland, near Cincinnati, in which collector Ken Klosterman has stored his legendary collection of magic art artifacts. Together with **John Gaughan**, **Mike Caveney** and **Ken Klosterman** I enter the old elevator bringing us further and further down into the depth of the mine. We rattle down, passing rock face, lights are flickering, the elevator waggles and groans. As musty air fills our lungs, the elevator stops and we find ourselves in a tunnel of the mine. Ken leads the way, opening a heavy, metal door. Unexpectedly, we find ourselves in a labyrinth of 8 very special rooms. We've reached the heart of Ken Klosterman's collection, the "Salon de Magie".

But let us start from the beginning: The history of the art of magic began 5000 years ago. Since then, how many creative minds have occupied themselves with the art of magic? How many have developed it further? Much is forgotten, but some things survived and were preserved for posterity. The circumstance, that testimony of that knowledge is preserved and available for us until today is not least the merit of people who devote themselves to the past. People that collect artifacts from the past and document a variety of knowledge. The Myth, that only people with considerable means can collect things is plainly wrong. There are many ways to establish collections without spending inconsiderably. One should think of posters, books, old props or magic kits. But at the latest since the advent of the internet, the times in which one could easily find such artifacts are gone... Nowadays, even the most remote junk dealer knows how to make money from such things.

But there are other areas in which we can collect things: techniques for different tricks, photographs, autographs, bizarre artifacts, tickets, brochures, press footage of different artist or even stories about and documents once belonging to a certain magician.

One notable example here would be **Magic Christian**, who, for example, gathered everything there was to find about **Hofzinsler** - to process it into a three-part opus. Without this kind of passion and obsession, many things about this artist would have remained in the dark.

But collecting things also, always has something to do with greed and obsession as well. So it should not come as a surprise that once, collecting things had a negative connotation. It was not until a later point, when people realized that a benefit for the community can be drawn from such collections, that such activities became popular. One can say without hesitation, that such collections were the predecessors of our modern day museums, who wouldn't exist without collectors. There are countless collectors in the field of the art of magic. Sadly, most of their collections are private and nearly impossible to access. Two of the most famous examples of such collections are certainly those of **David Copperfield** in his Secret Warehouse in Las Vegas and the legendary collection of Ken Klosterman in an abandoned mine in Cincinnati. It has been a dream of mine ever since, to one day being able to visit Klosterman's collection. It was through the late **Rüdiger Deutsch** that, in 2014, I spontaneously had the chance to get an invitation to Klosterman's Salon de Magie. It didn't take me long to decide. One week later I arrived in Cincinnati.

Ken is the descendant of a baker's family, who seized his opportunity to expand the family business and made it into a business empire. Mainly supplying large customers such as McDonalds, he became a multi-millionaire. Still, his roots and passion lie in the art of magic. Before entering the family business, he frequently performed locally with his wife on a professional level. As him entering the family business didn't leave much time for performing, he began to collect.



Top left: Hanno Rhomberg together with Ken Klostermann.

Bottom left: Props of famous magicians with dedications: Billy McCombs vanishing cage, Ken's early used set of cups and balls; Marvyn Roy's (Mr. Electric) light bulb.

On the right: Richard Hughes in front of a showcase in Ken's collection.

But his main focus has not always been on expensive original props but also props of magicians who didn't perform anymore. Such artifacts are often charged with emotions: **Dan Alan's** original Chop-Cup, **Billy McComb's** vanishing Bird Cage or handcuffs used by **Harry Houdini** in one of his shows, just to name a few examples. Sometimes, all it took him to get such things was a polite letter asking for them. Naturally, as he became a well-known member of the community, it even got easier. Some artists even considered it to be a special honour to be represented in his collection.

As the collection began to prevail over every other aspect of his life, at a moment when his house was crowded with props and books, Ken Klostermann decided to buy a farm – also convenient for his wife, a breeder of race horses. There he built a log house, deemed to be their new home. While digging the foundation for their new home, they discovered a cave, which turned out to be the entrance to an abandoned mine. Mrs. Klostermann supposedly said she was relieved to finally have found a place to dispose all of that "magic plunder". She didn't realize back then, that this was the starting point for one of the world's greatest collections: Subsequently, they created what today is known as "Salon de Magie", consisting of eight rooms which today are affectionately crowded with Ken's wonderful exhibition.

Richard Hughes well known producer of silks and feather flower effects (<http://www.hughesmagic.com>), is also archivist and custodian to the collection and it's also due to his efforts that it became one of the world's leading collection of magical apparatus and artifacts. When talking to him about the organized database of the collection in June 2020 he said: "I hope that one day we will be able to open up the collection to all interested magicians and historians. I believe it could be a great resource for the subject of the art of magic and could make it possible to identify props and mecha-

nisms and to document the relevant resources. I would hate to see the knowledge being lost, especially as we documented and preserved it so meticulously. At the moment we have around 1.7 tons of material, consisting of around 9,000 books (all of them also digitalized), 1,800 posters, as well as over 33,000 pieces of memorabilia, such as programmes, letters and other documents concerning the subject matter. It truly is an enormous archive."

Keep in mind that these are provisional figures, as Ken is still collecting and attends every major auction.

The rooms in the Salon de Magie are connected through secret doors. You truly are under the impression of being in a magical realm. Every room has air conditioning. The inventory is meticulously archived and catalogued. Every piece is measured, described, photographed as well as filmed during presentation. It is this kind of systematic cataloguing that makes such a collection so valuable. Major researchers and magicians come to Ken Klostermann on a regular basis, to research in his vast archives. And Ken is a wonderful host as well. While guiding us through his collections, he repeatedly resurrects old artifacts, demonstrates how they work and by doing so brings history back to life. I would never have dreamt of one day holding **Robert-Houdin's** original "Heavy and Light Box" in my own hands. But Ken simply hands this singular prop over to me. He even lets me try it out and it truly is fantastic, how impeccable it still works today.

Whilst being guided through the collection, I'm in good company: Next to **Rüdiger Deutsch**, **Volker Huber** and his wife I also meet **John Gaughan**, **Teller**, **Gay Blackstone**, **Mike Caveney**, **Stan Allen** and **Jim Steinmeier**. All major players in the art of magic are Ken's guests on a regular basis. Even David Copperfield becomes a child again when

visiting Ken's magical realm, just sitting on the floor, playing with the props of days gone by. I had the great honour of being guest in Ken's realm twice within two years. Experiences I wouldn't want to miss. I have taken the eccentric man into my heart. Despite his considerable wealth and his age, he still remains young at heart. Next to the wonderful exhibition in the Salon de Magie, Ken owns two additional venues where parts of his exhibition can be seen. Whitehall, one hour from Cincinnati by car, is one of those venues where a major part of his collection is presented in the most wonderful way. A grand white building on a hill with an almost imperial aura surrounding it. The focus of this part of the exhibitions lies on gambling and original props, once used by famous magicians. In addition, an old restored buckwheat flour mill on the property is home to his 3 story museum of illusions. In this mill you can find approximately 80 original illusions of famous artists, including props used in Copperfield's TV-show, as well as illusions by **Houdini**, **Dante** and **Blackstone**. On large screens you can see videos of the illusion "in action". You easily fall under the impression to be in a modern museum, yet still you are in a private collection, which only a few chosen people get to visit from time to time. Truly incredible!

It's rather hard to visit the collection as a private individual, as everything is located on Ken's private property and also because of Ken's fragile health. However there is the possibility of buying a book about the exhibition (sold-out at the moment) or to do a virtual tour of the rooms on the internet (further information at the end of the article).

Ken Klosterman is a wonderfully humble and friendly human being. As a stranger, I felt at home instantly. When he talks about the art of magic, you can see a child-like glow in his eyes. He still practices magic from time to time and animates others to do so as well. One of the main reasons, that makes his collections so vibrant, is that you can see, that he cares deeply about the artifacts and wants to touch and test them himself. Much to the dismay of his curators, he brings ancient clockworks back to life, just to demonstrate magical automatons.

It was a lucky coincidence that made Ken such a vivid collector. He once visited a nearby magic shop during a time when a collector's convention was held there. He bought the first props which would be the foundation for his "rabbit hutch". "Why rabbit hutch?" might one ask? Well, the collection multiplies itself uncontrolled. "I feel like Christmas, every time a parcel from a successful auction arrives", Ken says with a mischievous look on his face.

The Man Ken Klosterman

It is quite interesting to get to know Ken Klosterman on a personal level. To get to know the man who meticulously attends and adds to his collection every day. When talking to friends about his collections, I often hear things such as:



"Well, it seems rather easy establishing such a vast collection being a Millionaire. If money is no object..." But as a matter of fact, many collections seem "dead" and impersonal, if you don't know the man (or woman) behind them. The person behind the collection brings it to life, gives it its lifeblood and love – things that are a necessity to inspire and delight others.

Ken, who is of German descent with his ancestors baking bread even when they still lived in Germany, is a "third-generation" Klosterman. His father owned a small bakery that unfortunately was too small to support two families. So Ken and his wife **Judy** began to appear professionally as magicians in local venues. It was an uncle that first introduced Ken to the art of magic, by giving him a sealable brass tube, in which one could make a dollar-bill appear (Brema Bill Tube). You can still gaze at that artifact in his collection today. This uncle showed Ken also another trick. When asking, how exactly the trick works, his uncle just told him that he will find the answer in a book, which he later presented to Ken. Ken read through the book but couldn't find the explanation he was looking for. His uncle just meant, he "accidentally" must have given him the wrong book and gave him another. It was this cunning strategy that finally led to Ken's fascination with magic. It only took Ken a short time after that, to read all volumes of the Tarbell. For Ken, magic mainly lies in the books. According to him, except Medicine, there is no other subject with more publications than the art of magic. This shows us, how creative magicians are, a fact you can also see in their "civil lives". And Ken has met many impressive people so far.

But back to Ken's youth: When his father suddenly died, Ken was forced to take over the family bakery. Ken had one credo: "The consumer is the boss". That's one fact, everyone would agree upon. But only a few truly live up to this basic attitude. It was following that credo that led him to enter into business with partners, other bakeries deemed unprofitable. A business conduct that gave him excellent reputation. Ken's bakery was also the first to produce for private label bread – back in the days it was taboo. Shortly after that, he landed a major deal with McDonalds, producing their burger buns for many US states up until today. That he always stayed a cre-



Whitehall



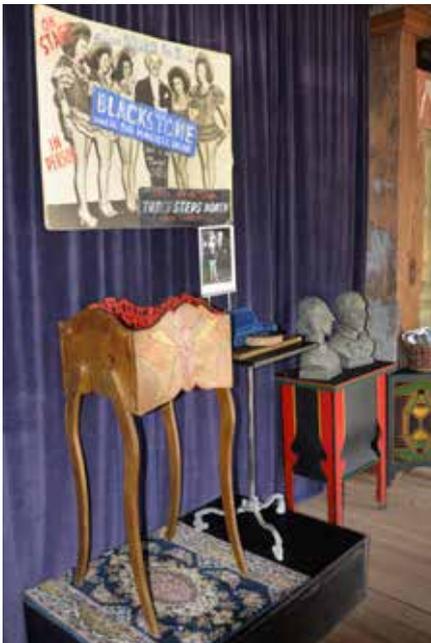
A part of Whitehall's vast library



A part of Ken's collection is located in an old buckwheat flour mill



16 sheet poster by George and illusion of Houdini



One of Harry Blackstone's props



Traveling case with costume of Virgil



Vanishing Television Camera by Copperfield



Tiffany made Houdini's sword (for sword cabinet illusion)



Robert-Houdin's Heavy and Light Box



In the Library of Whitehall



Some of Donald Holme's clocks



John Brown Library in the Salon de Magie



Mechanical bird cage (Reuge)



Card holdout table used to add cards to a hand (when sweeping over the table, a card appears)



Original poster of Raymond only known copy



Dr. Jaks Books containing all original items



In the gambling room with a variety of crooked devices



Ken Klostermann brings old things back to life

ative magician as well is also shown in the many innovations developed by him, which put his company ahead of the competition. One of Ken's major quality lies in recognizing talent in people and to win such talented people for managing positions within his company. He gave his employees enough breathing space to motivate them. One of his management-credos is: *"As an executive, you are solely responsible for a defeat; Success however, you have to share with your employees and celebrate with them"*. He always saw his company as a sort of extended family and always was thankful for what his employees did for him and the company.

Ken Klosterman has many stories to tell. Such as the legendary story of how in his first years, he managed to appear far more successful than he actually was. His first delivery truck was painted red on one side and blue on the other. Many people believed he already owned two delivery trucks, depending from which side they saw the truck. Or one of his famous sales gimmicks: He had coins produced, which showed the same side on both sides. So when fighting for an order, he suggested flipping a coin: *"Heads and I supply bread to you for one week. Tails and I give you a year's supply of bread free of charge."* Obviously Ken always won. As Ken always has been an honest business man, he naturally clarified the trick and gifted the fake coin to his business partner. *"Have fun with the coin and think about if you'd probably like to give our business a chance and deposit a trial order!"* In many cases this strategy was successful and Ken had his feet in the door. It's one of Ken's credo, that a common promotional article is never enough: You always have to present them to business partners in a way they'll keep in personal memory. (There are many examples of

how Ken successfully used such tricks). Another one of his tricks was to bring a bag full of deliciously smelling, freshly baked bread to business meetings with potential clients. He deliberately left the bread in his business partner's office and when being reminded not to forget his bread he just told the potential business partner to *"bring the bread home and give it to his wife. And – as in so many cases – If the wife liked the bread, the deal was as good as wrapped up"*. When Ken talks about this early years his starts to romanticize. He impressively expanded his father's humble business and made it to one of the leading privately owned bakeries in the United States. Over 400 employees generate a revenue of more than 200 million dollars annually. Today his children are managing the company as the 4th generation of Klostermans. The Klostermans are a reliable partner in good times as well as in crisis and are well known for their extraordinary social commitment. *"Our employees always have been a part of our family"* isn't just an empty word, but a firm conviction in regard to Ken and his wife Judy. Judy was a generally acknowledged horse breeder. As early as 1950, the 10 year old Judy was gifted with her first breeding mare by her father. Breeding horses was something that came naturally to her. Haveaheavenlytime, one of her mares, was sold for 1,150,000.- \$, the highest ever price for a mare paid in the US at that time.

While raising her children, she successfully switched from breeding collies to breeding horses. But when she and Ken bought the 95 acre Lansgem-Farm in Loveland, OH, she returned to breeding her beloved thoroughbreds. Sadly, Judy died in 2018 as a result of her suffering from Parkinson disease. She left behind three children: Kimberly, who specializes in the trade of antique jewellery (www.kklostermanjewelry.com), as well as **Jayme** and **Kenneth "Chip" Klosterman**, who successfully carry on the family business. Why would I tell you about this "business side" of Ken? It's simple: It shows that creativity not only benefits people in regard to the art of magic but also in their private lives. And more importantly, it shows us the man behind the "millionaire": A man who, through talent, tireless determination and honest work truly embodies the spirit of success and can be seen as textbook example of how to succeed in reaching the "American dream".



The „donut street“ in the bakery



The article's author next to a magical automaton



Metal cups and balls belonged to Dr. Milton Henderson, a New York "society" magician. He performed on the ironclad Union gunboat Monitor during the Civil War.



Get to know Ken Klosterman

This are the most important links. To click them comfortably please visit: <http://www.aladin.blog/links-aladin-2020-h2-3/>

YouTube-about Klosterman Empire:

Collection (**Salon de Magie**):

Collection (**Mill of Illusions**):

Tour 1:

Tour 2:

Tour 3:

Guide Klosterman:

Magic Man:

Bakery Klosterman:

Website Klosterman:

Salon de Magie:

Interview:

Podcast interview:

www.soundcloud.com/podcastdetroit/innoveights-ep6-ken-klosterman-world-renowned-magic-collector-baking-hall-of-famer

„Staunen“ report (german):

staunen.wordpress.com/2018/06/22das-wunderreich-von-ken-klosterman/

www.youtube.com/watch?v=GymWCGPUHjU

www.youtube.com/watch?v=yw8CrEb6t6w

www.youtube.com/watch?v=2oEZAdZOpKk

www.youtube.com/watch?v=BZ0b873SfIA

www.youtube.com/watch?v=OsCmUKYvWZI

www.youtube.com/watch?v=NE5lpAfqGpQ

www.youtube.com/watch?v=OporCqLV3Mk

www.youtube.com/watch?v=zIMEPOPfvdQ

www.youtube.com/watch?v=oEAREjJ5v00

www.klostermanbakery.com/index.php

asbe.org/bhof-2011-kklosterman/

salondemagie.com/klosterman.html

www.youtube.com/watch?v=C14nMLK9XbU

www.magicmode.com/tag/ken-klosterman/





Houdini's handcuffs, used at his 1906 Detroit River Jump



Robert-Houdin's Crystal Casket



Antique magic kit (French 1880 ca.)



Part of Ken Klosterman's archives



Archive of original posters



Collection of magic wands



Egyptian Room



Donald Holme's Clocks



Cup game automaton (Decamps 1890 ca.)



Amongst other things: Kellar's Satyr's head, produced by Hamley's, around 1835; Clock by Voisin electrical/mechanical after Rober-Houdin, around 1872



Karl Germain's spiritualist arm



Hofzinsler's ink goblet



Hofzinsler's original rose mirror



Houdini's magical peacock



Famous Book and original wooden close-up case by Dr. Jak