



RAVEN ON PSYCHOMETRY

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A special lecture for the Psychic
Entertainers Association's 1980
"Meeting of the Minds"
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PSYCHOMETRY - The psychic faculty of being able to perceive events connected with material objects when in close contact with the latter. The material objects are considered to be acting as catalysts for the psi faculty.

IN THE BEGINNING!

It was back in June 1935 that Theo. Annemann first unveiled the effect known as "PSEUDO-PSYCHOMETRY" in issue no. 9 of the "JINX." Since then the principle has been used in many ways by both working mentalists and magicians. When properly handled this can be one of the greatest mind-blowers to the layman....when improperly handled it can become a "bomb."

Over the years mentalists, as well as magicians, have come up with many ways of marking or "keying" the envelopes, cards, or what have you so they would know "who's who."

Therefore, let's first review some of the ways one may "key" to locate the proper spectator.

First it may be appropriate if we take a look at what Annemann said about marking envelopes.

"Open the envelope with flap towards you, and write a figure lightly on inside of side which is nearest you, about an inch from left end. Have these in order from 1 to 10. It is far from difficult to remember who get these envelopes as they are passed out in numerical order from left to right, and by skipping a person between each or through some other system of layout, the envelopes are spread over the crowd but in an order the performer can trace.....In tearing open an envelope have flap side towards you. Tear off a half-inch from left end. Right thumb and fingers are at top and bottom edges with flap now turned towards floor, and contents are tipped into left hand. The number is near edge on inside looking up at you!"

Now there are many who do not card for this method of "keying" the envelopes since, obviously, someone could look into the envelope as they place their object within and see your secret marking.

Another method of using penciled in numbers to "key" the envelopes is by carefully raising up one of the lower corner sections and writing your numbers underneath so the corner will cover it. You must be careful in doing this that you do not tear or damage the envelope in any way that would make your tampering obvious. Now when you are about to tear open the envelope all you have to do is to pull back the corner edge as you tear

and your number will be staring at you. This is what you tear off (and pocket) thus getting rid of the evidence. (see drawing no. 1).

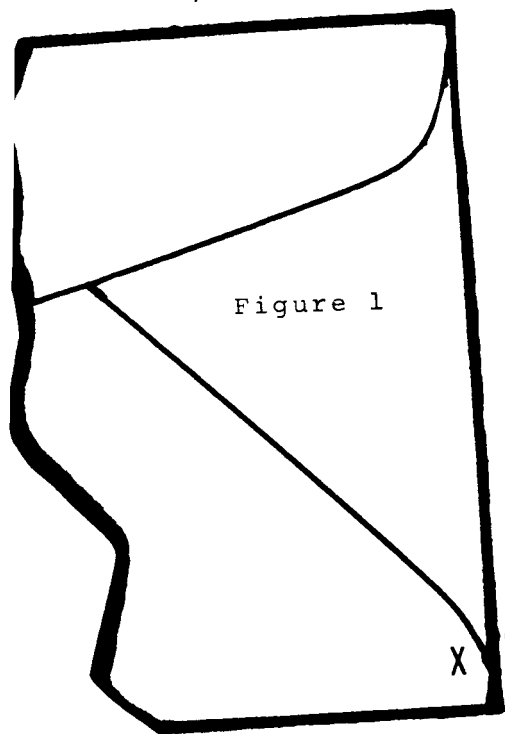


Figure 1



Number is lightly
penciled in under
this corner flap.

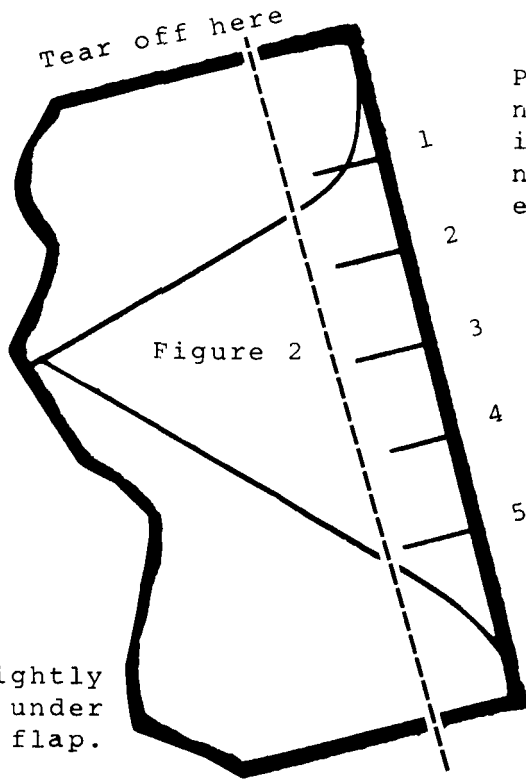


Figure 2

Position of
nail nicks
indicate
number of
envelope.

In "One Man Mental Magic" Milbourne Christopher came up with another method of "keying" the envelopes in an effect called "Super Psychometry". In this method the performer is blindfolded which means there is no way to visually pick up a clue. The method here is "touch reading". The envelopes are nail nicked so the performer may identify them by touch! All you have to do is to pick up an envelope - run your thumb over the right edge of the flap side and you'll know which one it is. (See drawing no. 2). Christopher was very careful in relaying the instructions on the proper way to make the nail nicks....."Hold the envelope, flap side down, between your thumb and first finger. Press your thumb nail down as the first finger presses upwards. A raised surface on the flap side results. This is how you mark the envelopes." It should be pointed out that in this routine there are only 6 envelopes used.....5 are nail nicked (no. 1 through 5) the 6th is not... which means if the envelope you are holding has no tell tale bump it has to be number 6.

An important point in using this method....do not use the cheap five and dime store envelopes and under no circumstances nail nick them way in advance. A good quality envelope will take a nail nick and retain it. However, the cheap ones take a nail nick but if there's any humidity in the air the nail nick will disappear! And...that my friend can be damn embarrassing!

Needless to say one could use this "nail nick" method with business cards rather than envelopes. In this instance you would hold the card with the printed side up, between your thumb and first finger. The thumb nail is pressed down as the first finger presses upwards. A raised surface on the back (blank) side of the card results. There are many who use their business cards for Pseudo-Psychometry, having the spectator write information on the blank side of the card.

Another manner of marking business card is with light penciled in marks such as shown in drawing 3. Note the light pencil marks under the first letter of the five words along the top edge of the business card. Obviously you would put one mark on each card "keying" them as one through five. No mark would be number six.

You can also mark business cards by creating what a printer would call "broken type." This is where one letter is broken. Under normal circumstances the type would be reset before the job is run. You create the "broken type" by scraping a bit of the ink off, let's say one of the five numbers in the zip code, to "key" the number of the card. In drawing no. 4 the "key" is the third number in the zip code (the six) telling you that this is the third card. (Note: in this drawing we have a normal card laid over the one with the "broken type" so you can see for comparison how the six is distorted.)

The problem with this type of marking is that you must have good eyes.....which I do not have! If you are in a bad lighting situation, even with good vision, the pencil marks or the "broken type" is hard, if not impossible, to see.

Another interesting, and I may add useful, means of "keying" envelopes was published some years ago in Bascom Jones' "Magick". It was pointed out that you can write your "key" numbers on brown kraft or manila envelopes using a YELLOW felt tip pen and it will not be visible unless you know what to look for. On first reading one has a tendency to doubt the truth of this....but some experimentation will show that it is practical.



Figure 3

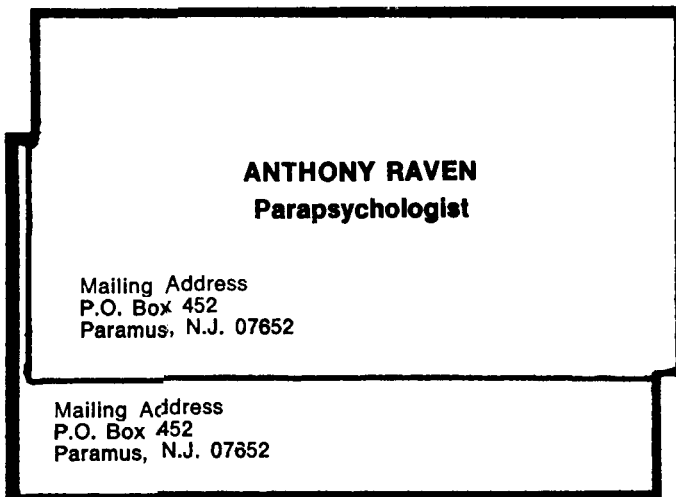


Figure 4

A couple of very clever ways of numbering envelopes have come up in recent years. One was Steve Minch's idea of "keying" the envelopes on a typewriter. First either remove the ribbon or set the machine on "stencil". Then be sure that the keys you are about to use (let's say numbers 1 through 6) are complete clear of any carbon from the ribbon. You now "type" the numbers in a specific position on each envelope. In effect you are embossing the numbers into the paper. (Printers would term this "blind embossing"). A slight tilt so the light hits the paper correctly and the number is visible to you. I may add that this works just as well on business card stock. I prefer putting the numbers on the blank side of the card in diagonal corners so no matter how they write on the card the number will be visible to you and right side up.

The other modern day method was again using a typewriter but this time also using a piece of "Ko-Rec-Type" typewriter correction paper. This time you're typing the numbers in WHITE on white paper or business card stock. Again the slight tilt for the light to pick up the white-on-white number is all that's needed. Who says that "nothing new has come up in the past twenty years." Hogwash!

Finally we come to what may be called the changing Zip Code concept. This is where the last digit of the zip code, printed on envelopes or business cards, "keys" the number to you.

for example:

61201 61202 61203 61204 61205

The one drawback (to many) is the fact that you have to have five batchs of business card or envelopes printed up....and this does cost money. But if you're working all the time the cost is nothing compared with the ease in working. (drawing no. 5 will show the corner tags I've been using on my envelopes for over five years). This particular concept has been written up in various forms by Joe White, Dave Ward, Dave Robbins, Larry Becker and who knows how many more have stumbled upon the best damn "key" for this effect. Regardless of lighting conditions (unless you're working in the dark!) and the condition of individual vision it is easy to read!

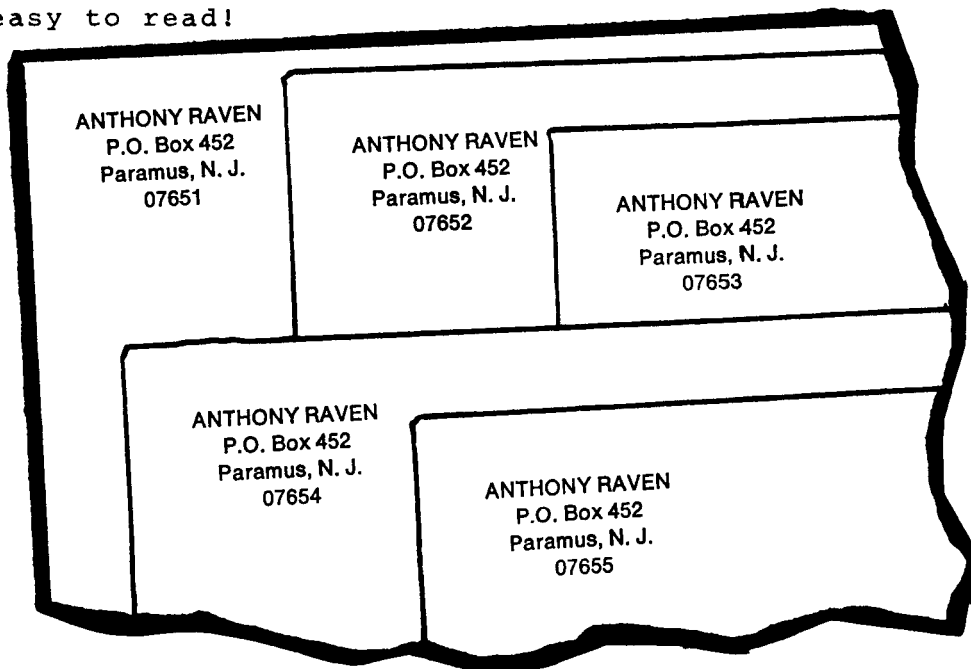


Figure 5

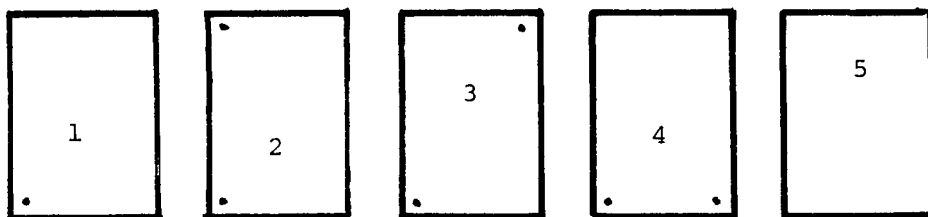
NOW FOR SOME PRESENTATIONS!

As mentioned earlier Milbourne Christopher, in his "One Man Mental Magic," gives a presentation in which the performer is blindfolded. Thanks to touch reading he is able to discern which envelope belongs to which member of his audience.

In this presentation it is necessary when passing out the envelopes to memorize a few characteristics of each person receiving one (unless you are using a gaffed blindfold with straight ahead vision so you can "look 'em over" as you come to them). With a "straight" or normal blindfold you can, after removing the object from the envelope, lower your hand enough so you can get a "down the nose peek" at the object....just enough to be able to glimpse the important points (such as a name on a business card or credit card) and then later give out this information in your reading. The best presentation in any version of "Pseudo-Psychometry" is not to give a detailed description of the object within the envelope but rather details about the person who placed it within the envelope. In other words a "cold reading". This type of "passing of information" is much stronger and will be remembered by your audience longer as it is more personal.

Some years ago (good grief - it's been five years!) we were planning an issue of INVOCATION which was to be devoted to the subject of "Pseudo-Psychometry". Needless to say it never got off the ground. But one of the effects sent in by Max Maven, who in those days was commonly known as Phil Goldstein, was too good never to see print. So here it is and one of these days it will go into my book on "Pseudo-Psychometry", which I may add, this lecture is a part of. Phil has his own method of marking the envelopes....but I'm sure any method you might prefer will work as well for you. (see drawing 6 for Phil's marking method.)

Flap ends here



#5 - without
marks - is
picked up
third.

Marks are either
pencil dots or by
using yellow marker
on brown kraft.

Figure 6

The important part of this Goldstein routine is his presentation....which, needless to say, has been well thought out for greatest audience impact. Here's what Phil wrote:

My method is such that I can't (or actually, won't) give out all that specific a description. Let me explain - I give out five or six envelopes to the spectators (and I leave them sitting in the audience, rather than bringing them up on the stage.) The objects are place in the envelopes, sealed, and then collected by someone and brought up to me. I rip open the envelope, take out the object, and "Feel" the thing, and then go into a cold reading, without looking at the person I'm describing, until I'm moving

to a closing line, when I walk over to the individual and give back the item. (Oh yes, I specifically ask for 'an object that has been in your possession for at least twenty-four hours'). I draw out the reading as long as I can milk them, expect for the third spectator. Here I use a variation on the Annemann gag - I pick up the envelope (Here is where I pick up envelope no. 5 - the one that is unmarked) as if to rip it open, but before I do, I exclaim, 'Wow! I feel such a strong sense of _____ with this one, I know it has to be yours!' And return it to the correct spectator. The blank is filled in depending on the situation and the audience - try reading the above sentence with the word 'Lust' and you'll see how it can play. There are a lot of possibilities.

After I'm finished with the first four items, I hold up the fifth envelope, and as I'm ripping it open I talk directly to the fifth spectator - 'Well, there's really no mystery as to who this belongs to. Obviously it is yours. But let's see if we can get anything else out of this....' I take the object, 'feel' it, and do another cold reading, but this one I make sure has a very strong pronouncement at the end of it."

You'll note with Max's presentation that you've solved the problem of handling the last item (which can be anto-climatic) and the identification of ownership of the objects is almost incidental - the pseudo-psychometry routine is really a framework for the cold readings.

About the same time that Max sent in the above effect we also received an idea from the legendary John Snider using an item I marketed at the time. In this presentation the center tear sheets known as the "Magic Circle of Dr. Faustus" were used. As mentioned before the weak point in any routine of "Pseudo-Psychometry" is the last item to be returned has obvious ownership. If you use five spectators...the fifth person is known to everyone. Here we have a combination of "Pseudo-Psychometry" and the center tear to eliminate this weakness.

The Faustus slips are marked with a waterproof black ink. You can mark the first, second, third, etc., symbol from the line that crosses the circle. (see drawing 7)

Note change of second symbol - "keying" 2nd spectator.

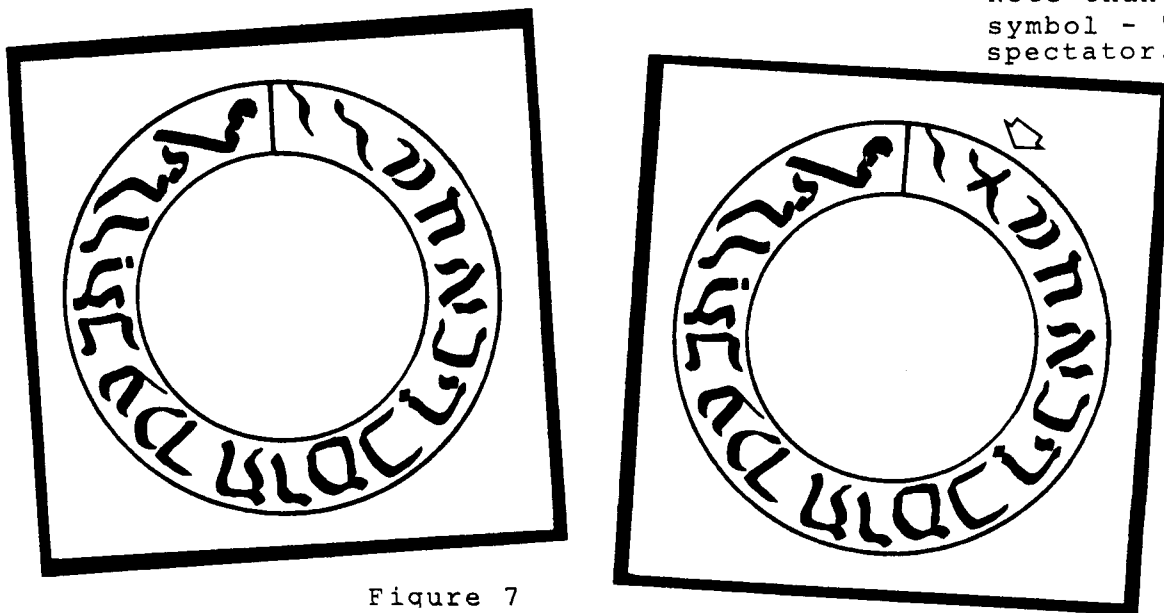


Figure 7

The slips are passed out to five "random" spectators. You can use a system such as people with red in their clothingpeople wearing glasses.....etc., so you know who is getting the slips. They now are instructed to print their birthdates on the slips. They are folded as in the usual center tear and collected on a brass oriental tray. You now pick up a slip.... open it up and read the birth date....as you do you note the "key" mark which tells you who belongs to that slip. You can then go into a cold reading giving them "personal" details. The slip is discarded and you move on to the next one.

You now end up with the final slip.....do not open it. You point out that not only you but everyone in the audience knows to whom this belongs. Since that is the case, you suggest that you try something different. You then proceed to do the center tear (the Eddie Joseph "Mind Mirror" handling works well here). The slip is torn, the tray is turned over and the pieces are dumped on it. There is a small daub of magician's wax in the center of the bottom of the tray. By pressing down, the center section it will stay as you dump the pieces into an ashtray and consign the pieces to the flames of purification. (A little lighter fluid in the ashtray helps the paper burn faster and burn completely.)

Moving away from the ashtray, you hold up the brass tray so that the spectator can gaze into it and use it as a "mind mirror", imagining that they are writing the information they previously printed on the slip of paper itself. As you tell them what to do, your thumbs are busy opening the slip which is temporarily attached to the bottom of the tray facing you. As they gaze "into" the brass tray mirror, you are gazing right back at them. But you can see everything they wrote as it's right before your eyes on the bottom side of the tray. After your cold reading is finished just set the tray down on the table with the slip still concealed under the tray.

Since the "Magic Circle of Dr. Faustus" is presently unavailable (note I said presently as we plan on releasing them later this year) we came up with a variation of using the symbols as a "keying" device for a bizarre presentation of "Pseudo-Psychometry". In this version I had the circle printed (now enlarged to 3½" in diameter) on tan astro-parch envelopes, 4-5/8" by 5-3/4" in size. You can either mark them as described for the last routine or do what I've been doing. Rather than changing or altering the symbols I use a Sanford Pen Co. #29800 Calligraphic Pen. This is nothing more than a felt tip pen, designed for the use of a Calligrapher. You then just draw over the appropriate "key" symbol....drawing over the printed ink....which makes that particular symbol darker than the others and you will be able to pick this up quite simply, as you know what to look for. It's a subtle difference and most people would just assume it's something from the printing process that caused it. As I said....it's not that obvious.

You can do this routine blindfolded....using a "cast-iron blindfold" and taking advantage of the "down the nose" peek. The routine would be similar to any other presentation of the effect. The envelopes with the magic circles give an occult flavor to the

whole affair allowing the bizarrist to work up an appropriate presentation.

One of the most fascinating presentations of the effect appeared many years ago and for the life of me I can't recall who wrote up the presentation. Not only that but in going through my library I can't even find it. Could it be that it never appeared in print? Could it be only a dream? I don't think so....It smacks of something that came from the innovative mind of Dr. Ray Hyman... but I can't be sure. Here the premise is not psychometry or ESP of any type but rather a psychological study. The idea is that when someone does random drawing....commonly known as "doodles" that they reflect their innermost thoughts, the personality, etc. Cards or slips of paper are passed out with instructions that in a few moments I want each of you to just do any kind of doodle you wish....you don't have to concentrate or select anything...just let you subconscious mind take over. After they have completed their doodles the slips are collected and mixed and you then proceed to "analyze" each one...where in effect you're really back to the cold reading. To my way of thinking this is an excellent means of presenting the effect....I've even gone to the extent of having special "memo" pads printed up carrying the name and address of "Parapsychology Studies" which is "keyed" with the changing zip code concept. When I have them do their "doodles" they are told to "fold the paper in half, with the doodles inside, and then fold in half again". After they are collected and mixed you go into your analysis of the doodle....giving you ample time to check the "key" in the zip code.

And with that we bring this short discourse to an end, hoping that somewhere along the way we gave you a method of "keying" or a presentation that would be of use to you in your performances.

So with that we close with best wished for Peace Profound,

Raven

Note: If you have any special methods of "keying" or an unusual presentation send it along to Frater Raven at P.O. Box 452, Paramus, NJ 07652 for inclusion in the complete book "Raven on Psychometry". Full credit will be given for all contributions.

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