

TAROSOPHIST INTERNATIONAL

THE MAGAZINE OF TAROSOPHY® & TAROT

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Innovative & inspired tarot for all tarot readers and students

Special Issue Celebrating
40 years of the Aquarian
Deck & 100 years of the
Waite-Smith Tarot!

Featuring exclusive articles from:

Michael Orlando Yaccarino

David Palladini, Sage of Aquarius

Stuart R. Kaplan, The House that Cards Built

Susan Hansson, A Daughter of Heaven & Earth

Holly Voley

The Printing History of the Waite-Smith Tarot

Diana Taylor, Tali Goodwin, Marcus Katz

The SPILL Tarot

The Tarot of the Nine Paths

The Maroon Tarot

The King's Journey Tarot

The Tyldwick Tarot

Tarosophy Conference 2010
with Lon Milo DuQuette!

And our regular articles:

The Common Reader Column

New Tarot Releases & Reviews

News & Views from Tarot Professionals



THE
**HIGH
PRIESTESS**

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Marcus Katz

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Innovative & Inspired tarot for all tarot readers & students

FOREWORD	
by Marcus Katz	2
THE COMMON READER	
Our regular column from	
Michael Orlando Yaccarino	3
SAGE OF AQUARIUS	
by Michael Orlando Yaccarino	5
THE HOUSE THAT CARDS BUILT	
by Michael Orlando Yaccarino	33
A DAUGHTER OF HEAVEN & EARTH	
by Michael Orlando Yaccarino	37
ALIVE WITH BENEVOLENT SPIRIT	
by Craig Junjulas	43
EARLY WAITE-SMITH EDITIONS	
by Holly Voley	45
EVERY CARD IS A STAR - SPILL TAROT	
by Diana Taylor	56
SPILL TAROT REVIEWED	
by Tali Goodwin	61
READING LOW, READING HIGH	
by Marcus Katz	64
DECKS IN DEVELOPMENT	
Tyldwick, King's Journey	67
DECK & BOOK REVIEWS	
Tarot of the Nine Paths, Maroon	70
SOCIAL NETWORKS & CONFERENCE	72

Cover *The High Priestess* from the Aquarian Tarot by David Palladini, 1967 (image © U.S. Games Systems, Inc.)



EDITOR'S FOREWORD

In this special issue we celebrate not only the 100 years since the first publication of the **Waite-Smith** deck but also the 40-year anniversary of the **Aquarian** deck by David Palladini. This iconic deck was my own first Tarot purchase almost 30 years ago, so I am delighted to present Michael Orlando Yaccarino's extensive interview with David and research featuring many previously unseen photographs and illustrations provided by David himself.

Similarly, I am delighted to present in print for the first time the equally exhaustive survey of the early printing history of the Waite-Smith deck, compiled by Holly Voley. These two articles alone represent **years** of research and dedication, and both Holly and Michael Orlando have my sincere gratitude for providing them to our magazine.

Tarot Professionals continues to develop beyond our wildest expectations and our community of artists, readers, academics, enthusiasts and collectors has begun to consolidate into the most innovative, supportive and wonderfully diverse Tarot collective ever assembled. We look forward to announcing more news on our Forum and Website over the coming months, particularly with regard to our global TAROT alliance which will provide cross-cultural opportunities for all members.

Marcus Katz MBA, M.A., PhD Candidate

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TAROSOPHY™

Tarosophy, n. Conflation of **Tarot** (from It., *triumph*?) + **Sophia** (from G. Σοφία, *wisdom*). Meaning lit. 'the wisdom of tarot'. Referred specifically to the living (divine) wisdom of the art and science of Tarot as practised by *Tarosophists*.



MICHAEL ORLANDO YACCARINO

**Practical, ethical, and mystical advice
for the professional Tarot reader**

Embrace

“As the lotus dies without water,
As the night is blind without the moon,
So is my heart without you, Beloved.”

-from "Come, Beloved"
by Meera (Trans. Eknath Eswaran)

Accept the following simply as a meditation upon the intimate, organic, and reciprocal relationship between the reader and one's preferred deck of cards—my own being David Palladini's magnificent Aquarian Tarot.

So many fragrant choices in this garden of paper and ink.
Each bloom vibrating to its own internal rhythms.
Each bearing seventy eight petals awaiting the solar warmth of fingertips
To stroke them into meaning.

And lest we forget the thorn-studded stems
Curving ever upwards through
Bone, tears, desire, and dream.
These thorns awaken, not wound.

Choosing a favorite is an impossible,
delicious agony
Amongst multi-hued skins stained from a palette
Muted, vibrant, catalytic, soothing.
Cherish them all before deciding.

Then surrender.
Most completely and entirely
To a wanderlust leading to
Landscapes and beings familiar and strange.

A scarlet veil of pomegranates is parted.
As you pass through this portal
She whispers:
“Embrace yourself to let go.”

So humbly, allow me to repeat these wise words again—

Embrace yourself to let go.

Let go.



Illus. Two of Cups from the Aquarian Tarot by David Palladini, 1967 (Illustration from the Aquarian Tarot Deck reproduced by permission of U.S. Games Systems, Inc., Stamford, CT 06902 USA. Copyright © 1993 by U.S. Games Systems, Inc. Further reproduction prohibited.)

Author Biography

Michael Orlando Yaccarino is a Professional Tarot Reader and instructor whose practice serves numerous private clients and groups. A bestselling author, Michael's varied work is published internationally. Visit www.orlandotarot.com to learn more.

Michael has written the original core manual material for Tarot Professionals' intermediate course *The Journey Begins*. Among the world's leading Tarot authorities who have offered their praise, Donald Michael Kraig, author of *Tarot & Magic*, describes it as "an informative introduction to the Tarot that is ideal for adult seekers looking for a lucid and complete approach to the subject without being overwhelming or simplistically childish."

Visit www.marchesacasati.com to read about Michael's new book *The Marchesa Casati: Portraits of a Muse*, as well as *Infinite Variety: The Life and Legend of the Marchesa Casati*, *Portrait of a Muse*, and *The Princess of Wax: A Cruel Tale*—all co-written with Scot D. Ryersson.

Illustrator Biography (Common Reader Logo)

Scot D. Ryersson is a renowned illustrator, graphic artist, and bestselling author who has lived and worked in London, Toronto, Sydney, and New York City. He is the recipient of two Art Directors of London Awards and is responsible for acclaimed advertising campaigns for many Academy Award®-winning films. In addition, Ryersson receives many private commissions to create one-of-a-kind, mixed-media art objects. Visit <http://arcanifacts.blogspot.com/> for more details.

Michael Orlando Yaccarino
Transformative Tarot Readings



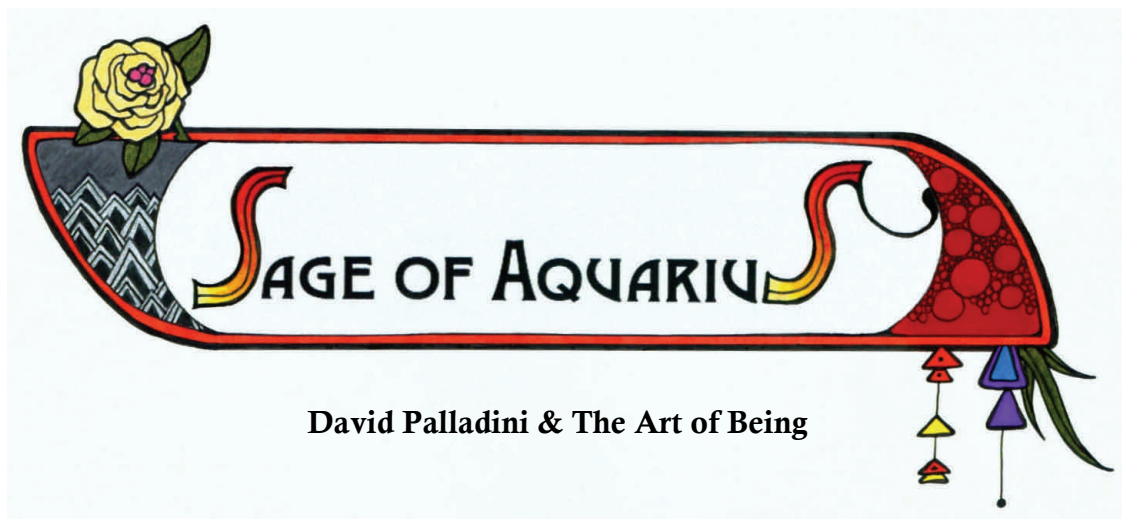
Illus. "O", David Palladini

Michael Orlando Yaccarino invites you to experience an always insightful, sensitive, and confidential Tarot reading: "Life can be an ever-evolving journey toward greater illumination. A transformative Tarot reading is a portal through which you may obtain deeper awareness on many levels. Pause awhile on your mystical voyage for a moment of reassessment and self-discovery. As we explore the cards together, you will receive messages on releasing past issues, while reducing undue concern about future events. Our shared goal is mastery of your optimal self in the present. Let the journey begin." Michael's unique gift combines decades of spiritual exploration, study with internationally renowned Tarot specialists, and intuitive knowing. A founding ACE member of Tarot Professionals, he frequently performs private readings, as well as training workshops for individuals and groups in the art of Tarot reading. *The Common Reader*, Michael's column for *Tarosophist International*, offers practical, ethical, and mystical advice for the professional Tarot reader.

Visit Michael at: <http://www.orlandotarot.com>

"Your reading of my Tarot cards was a magnificent, watershed event in my life. Your insightful, loving, and intellectually deep reading closed the circle for me. I believe you have a gift for Tarot with which you can help people move forward on their journeys."

- **David Palladini, creator of The Aquarian Tarot and The New Palladini Tarot**



Michael Orlando Yaccarino, *Professional Tarot Reader, Instructor & Author* presents this exclusive and comprehensive interview with **David Palladini**, creator of the *Aquarian Tarot* & the *New Palladini Tarot*, fully illustrated with many previously unseen photographs and images.



From thought to thought, from hill to hill,
Love for ever is my guide;
The trodden pathway leadeth still
From haunts of quietude aside;
On solitary shore and by
A fountain or a running stream,
In valleys where the hill-shades lie,
My sorely troubled soul may dream

- from *Canzone II* by Francesco Petrarca
(Trans. Lorna de' Lucchi)

Illus. The Fool from the Aquarian Tarot by David Palladini, 1967 (image © U.S. Games Systems, Inc.)

The Vietnam War rages on. Both African-American Civil Rights Activist Martin Luther King, Jr. and presidential hopeful Robert F. Kennedy are assassinated. The first heart transplant takes place in Paris, the same city where student revolts nearly wreck the government. The Beatles open Apple Records and set cinematic sail in their *Yellow Submarine*. Richard M. Nixon is elected the thirty-seventh President of the United States. The hippie counter-culture delivers their tuneful protests in the Broadway musical *Hair*. Pope Paul VI condemns birth control. Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* ignites philosophical debates on college campuses everywhere. Manchester United becomes the first English team to win the European Cup Final. Mattel premieres its line of Hot Wheels toy cars. And NASA launches the Apollo program, the first manned space mission.

All of this fruit—bitter, luscious, dangerous, explosive, liberating, mind expanding, and soul altering—ripened during the span of a mere twelve months. But then again, this *was* 1968. And while such pivotal years happen rarely, the aftershocks of this particular one are still experienced today.

Spirituality was an integral link in '68's eclectic/electric daisy chain of cultural, political, and societal upheaval. While the mainstream religious establishment came under attack, any form of exotic mysticism was embraced as a means to attain enlightenment. Occult was "in". The divinatory arts, such as I Ching, Astrology, Numerology, and Tarot, became the focus of serious study in ashrams from Woodstock to Katmandu, and favored forms of after-dinner entertainment among the international social set. Unlike the glut of mystical paraphernalia available today, Tarot decks for the masses were scarce—fewer still with imagery capable of speaking to this tumultuous historical moment.

And then that same year, the Aquarian Tarot appeared for the first time.

With uncommon grace and technical virtuosity, then-fledgling artist David Palladini created an enduring masterpiece. Clearly referencing Pamela Colman Smith's designs for the classic Rider-Waite-Smith deck as departure point only, he then made it entirely his own. And this is where the Aquarian succeeds where the multitude of RWS clones falter. For this deck was fashioned by a solidly trained artist fluent in a variety of styles and techniques. The result is a Tarot of superlative aesthetic beauty upon which an entire generation of readers willingly cut their teeth.

Craig Junjulas is a well-known metaphysical teacher and the author of *Psychic Tarot*, illustrated with the Aquarian. His immediate connection to the deck elucidates its continuing mystical allure for a legion of readers:

The faces of the characters in this deck are windows to the wonderful spirits who help the reader connect to the soul and to the spiritual guides of the client. The first time I saw Palladini's Major Arcana images, I felt that they were looking back at me, understood me on a very deep level, and were talking to me as a friend would.

As a Licensed Clinical Psychologist and author of *Tarot and Psychology: Spectrums of Possibility*, Dr. Arthur Rosengarten further clarifies Palladini's significant achievement:

The Aquarian Tarot was my preferred deck for my first ten years as a reader and teacher, and remains one of my favorite decks some thirty years later. The artwork is soft and exquisite, and carries a “timeless-placeless” quality that for me is the true measure of an effective divination tool. As a therapist, I appreciate the rich feeling-tones and emotional appeal this deck easily imparts to its recipients—it transmits the gentle depth and humanity of Aquarius itself, or so I now imagine it to be, after many hundreds of readings with these sublime images.

Following the Aquarian's release, David Palladini went on to a multi-award-winning career of international renown as illustrator and fine artist. He even designed a completely new Tarot deck more than a quarter century after the Aquarian. An ongoing troubadour's existence has spawned innumerable peripatetic adventures and the shaping of a personal belief system of profound dimensions.

In this rare and intimate interview—the very first in-depth one granted in a more than forty-year career—David Palladini documents a singular artist's life, uncovers the genesis of the Aquarian Tarot, and reveals the very nature of his soul.

The Interview

Can you describe the early life of David Mario Palladini?

I should start with my maternal grandparents—Italian immigrants who had settled in Amana, Iowa. My grandmother died giving birth to my mother there. And since the family could not afford to care for both my mother and her elder sister, she was sent to Italy as an orphan to be raised in a nunnery. In fact, my mother was a novitiate when she first met my father while working in the convent yard. My father, a handsome devil, drove by on a motorcycle wearing his Italian army uniform and shiny riding boots. Two nights later, she jumped the wall, and they rode off together. Later, I was born in the tiny Northern Italian village of Roteglia.

Very cinematic! And where did their dreams take them?

After Italy was shattered by World War II, my family came to America in 1948 when I was two years old. In order to prepare the way, my mother arrived earlier to find work and a house.

So you probably have very little recollection of Italy before your relocation to the States.

Very sketchy at best. But a photo does exist showing my older brother Bill and I there, surrounded by the locals who cared for us in my mother's absence. If you look closely, Bill appears to be pouring me a glass of wine! I am not smiling in the image—instead, looking away from the camera unlike everyone else.



Illus. David Palladini (center) with brother Bill (right) and family friend (left), Italy, 1948 (image © David Palladini)

Do you think this picture may say a thousand words?

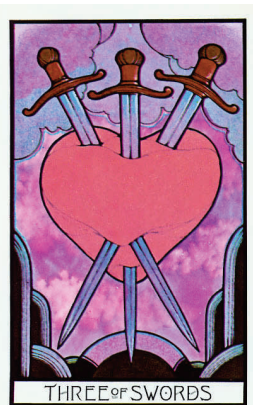
Quite a few less—a phrase I could consider the motto of my life: “When they said sit down, I stood up.”

Bravo! Where did you end up once in the United States?

We settled in Highland Park, Illinois, where I grew up attending weekly mass at the local Catholic Church.

Do you have any outstanding memories from this time?

Surprisingly for a lower middle-class town, the church, St. James in nearby Highwood, had many magnificent stained-glass windows installed in the early 20th century. Each Sunday morning, I was lost in reverie gazing at the beautiful designs and colors, surrounded by the black lines of the lead borders. My earliest drawings used this style.



Illus. Stained-glass windows (details), St. James Church, Highwood, Illinois, installed ca. 1912 (image © St. James Parish)

Illus. Three of Swords from the Aquarian Tarot by David Palladini, 1967 (image © U.S. Games Systems, Inc.)

Such early awareness and concentration are hallmarks of a budding artistic sensibility—as is the desire to be alone without experiencing loneliness.

True—I was never like other little boys. Rather than playing games or sports, I was always down in our dark basement, drawing or reading. Everyday, I walked to the local library to select my two books for the day. Then I headed out behind the imposing, Gothic stone building to a wooded glade with a small brook.

There I would sit for hours reading, the silence punctuated only by the wind and the birds. That is where I first discovered the power and beauty of nature, which has been the guiding light of my life and my art.



Illus. Gothic façade of Highland Park Public Library, Highland Park, Illinois, erected 1931 (image © Highland Park Public Library)

Did the Catholic milieu in which you were raised affect you as artist?

I think my mother always felt a bit guilty about her flight from the convent with my father. Perhaps as a result, she wanted me to become a priest. A holy missal she bought me became my greatest treasure. I poured over its illustrations of famous religious paintings by the great masters.

Once again, the child out of time...

I never felt comfortable in the 20th century, never fitted into niches or fully related to others. As you've said, I was and continue to be just out of synch with time and place. In my childhood, I always retreated to ancient times. There, I felt like myself.

You never did take the cloth?

No - *thankfully!* But my connection to a greater power had been forged, and since then, in my rather turbulent life, that spiritual force has intervened at critical moments, to protect and guide me toward another direction. I continue to feel that power most strongly when I am deep in nature.

So the natural world frequently plays an inspirational role in your work?

Inspiration is the essence of art. It consists of several meanings—*spiritus*, Latin for spirit or soul; and *inspirare*, to breathe in. To breathe in nature and beauty until the spirit fills you up. Just as air is necessary for life, inspiration is necessary for the artist to live.

Was your family supportive of your artistic pursuits?

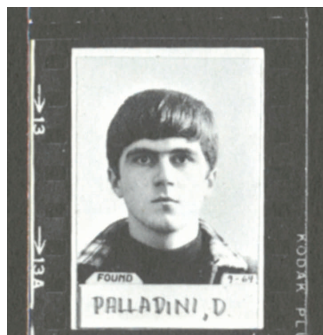
As a child, my art was private. For me, it was a way of blocking out reality—a way to protect myself from a world I could not understand, and did not like. In my art of knights in armor and trees in bloom, I felt safe and at home. My mother did hang my drawings on the walls of the house, and I began to understand that aspect of sharing one's work with the world. However, thoughts of becoming a professional artist were quickly dismissed by such warning advice of: "Artists don't make money. Do you want to starve?"

Was there any early recognition outside the household of the direction you were taking?

Yes. I did have several grade school successes, like winning the "Help Prevent Fires" poster contest. But art was still only a personal matter. My first art-related, high school assignment was rudimentary—to arrange black and white shapes. When the instructor saw my design, she ran to share it with her fellow teacher. They were both amazed. I only wish I still had that simple black and white design today.

A lost treasure!

Maybe now, after a lifetime of art, I could understand what they saw in it! In my senior year of high school around 1963, I needed one more credit for graduation. Art seemed the obvious choice. Several months later, I was in class working on a painting when a visitor walked in. He was an Assistant Dean from Pratt Institute, arguably the best art school in the country. He was travelling throughout the U.S. in search of potential students and immediately offered me a four-year full scholarship. Now when my parents heard that it was all-expenses paid, they suddenly agreed that, yes, being an artist was indeed a wonderful idea! So I was on my way to Brooklyn, New York, where the campus was located.



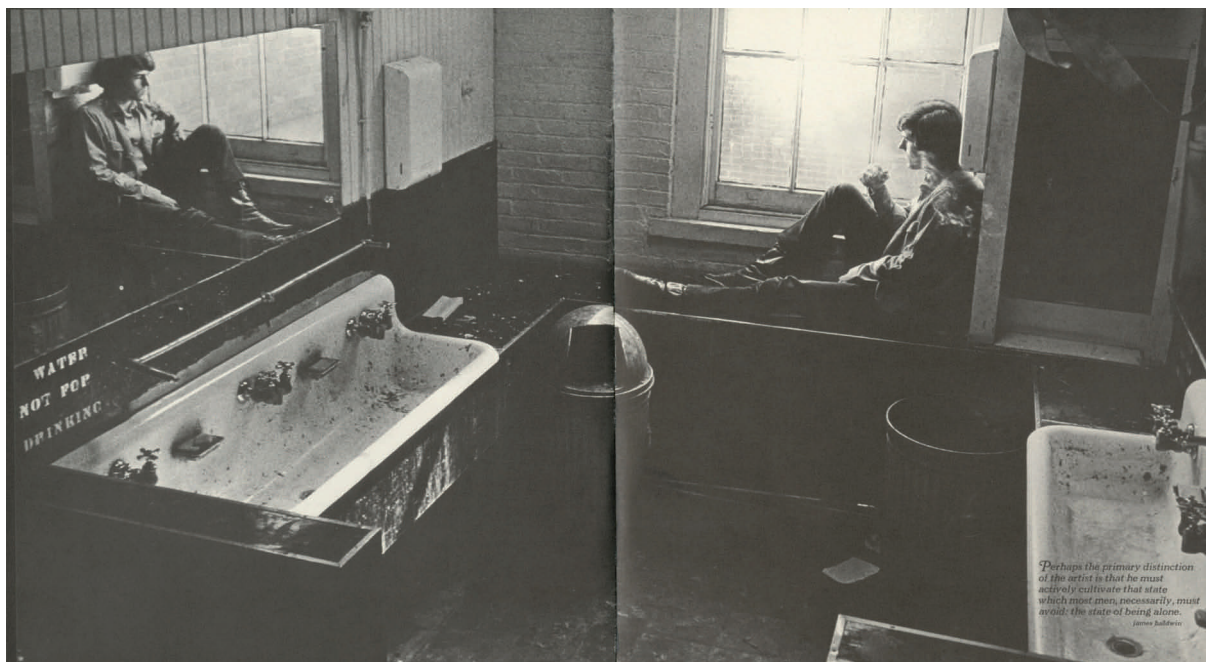
Illus. David Palladini's Pratt Institute freshman yearbook photo, 1964-65 (Courtesy of Pratt Institute)

Do you recall coming to the "Big Apple" for the first time?

I was sent on a train with a bag of grapes, seated in a car full of nuns! New York City was, of course, amazing.

What was your experience like at Pratt in the mid-1960s?

Thinking back, I amazed my instructors. I was not aware of myself, and only doing what came naturally. My art was exploding. Several of my professors even purchased my work, which was flattering—even though for a pittance. During summer recess, an instructor of mine arranged a job for me at an advertising agency in Chicago.



Illus. David Palladini in his sophomore year at Pratt Institute, 1965-1966 (Courtesy of Pratt Institute)

How did you “fit in” such a setting?

I was the handsome, young hippie-freak. I had let my hair grow down to my waist, wore tie-dyed t-shirts, and elephant bell-bottom jeans. The ladies loved it! The Chicago gig was only a “bullpen” job. But as fate would have it, my boss, an art director, had a client named Brown Company, papermakers back in New York City. Along with three other artists, I was brought in on a project for them—the creation of an untraditional Tarot deck as a way to expand sales of their range of art papers. The result was the Linweave Tarot Pack.

Named after the line of papers used?

That’s correct. They were beautiful, spectacularly-coloured papers to work with. I completed a dozen of the forty-two cards comprising that deck. And these became my first published artworks when the Linweave appeared in 1967. The other artists involved were Ron Rae, Hy Roth, and Nicolas Sidjakov.

L.D. Burke, who designed the deck’s packaging, recalled how you were included with those other, more seasoned artists specifically because of the impressive talent you were displaying then so early in your career.



Illus. Box-cover for the Linweave Tarot Pack with illustration by Don Wilson, 1967 (image © L.D. Burke)

Well, thank you, L.D.!

How did you develop the card designs?

When I got the Linweave project, I had never seen a Tarot deck before—and even had to look up the word!

Really?

Yes. I knew nothing about the cards, but into my mind came images. I did not understand them, but drew them out of my imagination. I completed those designs almost entirely on auto-pilot. I must admit, I was pretty spacey in my early adult life...things just seemed to happen to me.

How do you account for that?

I am sure I was being guided by the unseen hand. I was achieving things at a very early age which shot me forward in my career.

In addition to several Major Arcana cards, you rendered a selection from the Minor Arcana Swords, too.

I chose that suit because of its direct link to my heritage. My surname is derived from the French “paladin”, indicating a heroic knight or defender of the king. And my first name is Hebrew for “Beloved by God”. So then when combined, I am a knight of the king who is beloved by God. In fact, I believe to be descended from King Charlemagne who ruled over France as well as Italy. The town where I was born still speaks a French-Italian dialect.

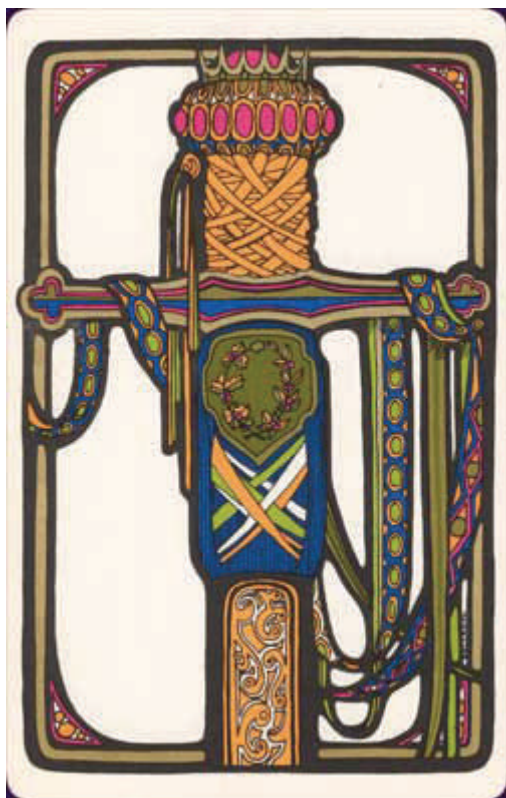
An enlightened monarch if there ever was one.

And despite later creating covers for *Time* and *New York Magazine*; *New York Times Op-Ed* drawings; illustrations for numerous children’s books, as well the cover and interior illustrations for Stephen King’s *The Eyes of the Dragon* and others; countless illustrations published worldwide...



Illus. Le Mat & L'Impératrice from the Linweave Tarot Pack by David Palladini, 1967





Illus. L'As d'Épée from the Linweave Tarot Pack by David Palladini, 1967

And let's not forget the brilliant poster design for Werner Herzog's 1979 film Nosferatu!

One of the few commissions that turned out precisely as I had envisioned! I am particularly proud of the hand-drawn typography I created for it. But as I was saying, in the scope of my entire career, the Linweave Tarot remains the mother, the genesis, the queen of my work.

Was there a connection between the Linweave Tarot and your next deck?

Absolutely! After returning to New York City, a man walked into my painting class one day. He proposed that I create a completely new deck—the Aquarian Tarot.

Who was that mystery man?

The publisher Lloyd Morgan, who ran the Morgan Press and Morgan & Morgan. At just the right moment, he had seen the Linweave deck which led him to me.

The unseen hand again!

Without question. And so the future was forged.

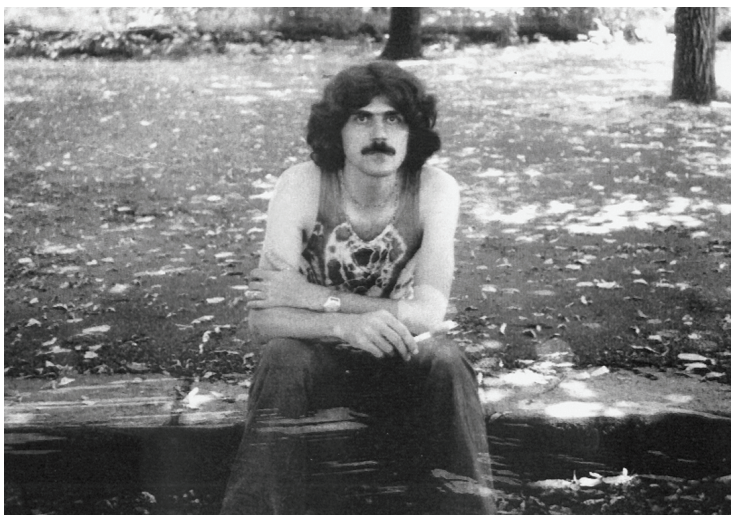


Illus. Alternate poster design for the 1979 film Nosferatu by David Palladini (image © Werner Herzog Film)

How did you approach the Aquarian project?

With reluctance, at first—and a copy of A.E. Waite’s *The Pictorial Key to the Tarot* for guidance. As already said, I really knew very little about the Tarot, and now I was to create seventy-eight pieces of full-colour art.

A major project for a student!



Illus. David Palladini during the creation period of the Aquarian Tarot, 1967 (image © David Palladini)

A daunting task, considering my school-work at the time—not to mention a commission for a theatre poster as part of a special graphics project through Pratt. That was to be used for the 1968 production of *Cyrano de Bergerac* by the Repertory Theater of Lincoln Center at the Vivian Beaumont Theater. The show became a sensation, my poster adorning bus shelters and, of course, Lincoln Center itself, as well as being published internationally.

*You would later illustrate several children’s books by author Jane Yolen, including the National Book Award-nominated *The Girl Who Cried Flowers*. She commented recently: “David’s pictures were mind-boggling, even more so when I found out they were done with magic markers. ‘More magic than any markers I have ever had,’ I remarked to my editor at the time, and she agreed.” In what medium were the Aquarian images created?*

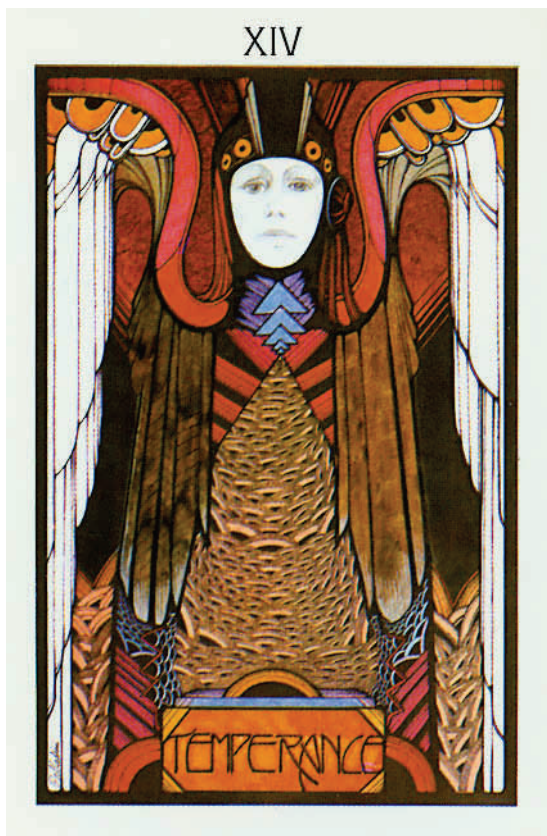


The images were created with protoplasm, grey matter and pieces of my soul.

That is not a surprise in the least...

Okay, okay...ink, pencil and magic markers. Since the latter are permanent, transparent, and dry instantly, color after color could be overlaid—each one showing through beneath the next. I worked on Bainbridge board #80 with a slightly toothy surface—one that is particularly strong, brilliantly white and very receptive.

Illus. The High Priestess from the Aquarian Tarot by David Palladini, 1967 (image © U.S. Games Systems, Inc.)



Illus. Temperance & The World from the Aquarian Tarot by David Palladini, 1967 (images © U.S. Games Systems, Inc.)



Was the Aquarian a lucrative commission for you?

The sum I then-considered grand quickly convinced me. For a nineteen-year-old art student, it seemed like a fortune! With revisions, the drawings took about eight months to complete.

Do you recall seeing the Aquarian when it was first published in 1968?

Certainly—I walked into Serendipity, a shop in Manhattan's Upper East Side, and saw it there. Glowing with pride, I bought one, which I carry to this day. I hope that shop still exists.

Indeed, it does.

Fantastic! When I first held the Aquarian Tarot I felt knowledge in it. It taught me...about myself, about my spirit, and my place in the universe. One day in my Manhattan apartment, I was standing with the deck in my hand as I closely examined the roses woven into a prayer rug. It had been given to me by a neighborhood Armenian rug-seller who, I must say, looked very much like a classic gypsy woman. Suddenly, I had the experience of being pulled directly into the center of this rug, a powerful force holding me there.

Something similar to meditating upon a mandala?

Yes! Exactly! But this was almost instantaneous. In my mind's eye, I could see deep into space, with stars and galaxies all around me. I attribute that profound experience to the power of the deck.

And isn't there a darker side to the deck's publication?

Yes. Unfortunately, I was not paid the total promised by Morgan & Morgan.

That is quite sad.

I agree. And then when I was to receive a genuinely large sum in royalties, the company declared bankruptcy.

And what did you end up with?

Nothing.

For one of the most influential and admired Tarot decks of all time?

Thanks for that. But, no, nothing. *Ah...* youthful innocence. Pay attention, you artists out there! Don't make a deal with a handshake alone. Get it in writing! Far too often, the powers that be *know* we artists are vulnerable and sensitive, so they use that against us. We are usually not astute in business, need money, desperate for confirmation of our worth, and easily convinced that a man's word is his bond. We tend to believe others are as honest as we are, and that they see the world in the same way as we do. As a teacher, I have told my students that most often, your artwork will go to someone else, and by the time you are paid, the money is already spent to keep body and soul together.

A cold, but realistic dose of reality!

The only things left to us are the hours, days, and years actually lived while creating. *Nobody* can take away my memories of those times spent in forests and mountains and flowering orchards, watching art flowing from the end of my brush and learning from nature about who I truly am. I have spent many happy days sitting with my easel beneath flaming red and gold maples as they dropped their leaves upon my head. I often have marveled at the moments I sat amongst trees, holding a piece of charcoal—*the burnt branch of a tree*—with a piece of paper—*made from the body of a tree*—upon which I was finishing *a drawing of a tree*.

Not to stress the negative, but what did follow that unpleasant experience with the deck's original publisher?

Luckily, Stuart Kaplan eventually bought the rights to it for his company U.S. Games Systems, Inc. And God bless him for continuing to publish the Aquarian—even in multiple languages—since that time. And so I have been able to eat ever since! Seriously though, I do offer my genuine appreciation to Stuart.

Were you exploring any other artistic outlets at this time?

Having also discovered film and photography, I walked around with my Bolex 8mm movie camera and Nikon, shooting footage and photos of everything. Earlier, I had spent the summer between junior and senior years in Europe. Part of the plan was to shoot my senior photography thesis there—black and white photographs of working people. So I went and took thousands of photos—a violin maker in the backstreets of Venice; a German man by the side of the road in lederhosen, with his bundle of firewood on his back and a pipe stuck into his smile; an old Italian woman behind her two-mule plow; and a street-sweeper in Paris with a broom made of twigs and a dreamy look in his eyes.



*Illus. David Palladini's pinball mechanical engineering design from his Pratt Institute senior yearbook, 1967-68
(Courtesy of Pratt Institute)*

That must have been a mind-expanding experience.

Completely! And when back in New York City once more, a man walked into my photography class and asked to speak to me. Here was *yet another* unexpected classroom visitor resulting in a new artistic challenge! This gentleman offered me a job as an official photographer for the Cultural Olympiad held prior to, but as part of the XIX Olympic Games in Mexico City during October of 1968. This would mean leaving Pratt early without graduating and living south of the border for nearly twelve months. So I quit school and packed up my cameras. Mexico seemed like such an exotic place at the time. Now that I live in California, it doesn't seem so anymore!

You were there during one of Mexico's most turbulent periods in modern times.

Now *that's* an understatement—student demonstrations, massacres, a lot of chaos. I recall being in a classroom once where a tank plowed right through the wall! And when the Cultural Olympiad's poster designer quit, I volunteered for the position and created a dozen very strong images.



*Illus. "El Cine Japonés", XIX Olympiad Cultural Program, Mexico City, by David Palladini, 1968
(Courtesy of Lance Wyman)*

Just as the Tarot teaches us, both positive and negative opportunities exist in every situation.

So true.

Lance Wyman was the Director of Graphic Design for the Mexican Olympic Organizing Committee for the '68 Games. Recently, he noted how pleased he was with the beautiful posters you designed for the various cultural programs held.

That's very kind of him. You know, Lance had studied at Pratt before my time there. I should note how, photographically-speaking, it was in Mexico that I learned to shoot everything—including six-thousand varieties of plants and flowers that appeared in the new guidebook for the city's botanical gardens. And then later, I became the personal photographer to the world-renowned, American pianist Van Cliburn for a concert tour he gave in small opera houses throughout Northern Mexico.



*Illus. Detail from "Medusa", XIX Olympiad Cultural Program, Mexico City, by David Palladini, 1968
(Courtesy of Lance Wyman)*

You were always on the move. Did you ever have a stay-in-one-place job?

When I finally did return to Manhattan, I showed my portfolio to Push Pin Studios, the premier illustration house in the world. This included the color photo-covers I shot for the official Olympic Games programs for such events as track and field, basketball, and equitation. When they hired me, suddenly, surprisingly, I realized I had become an illustrator.



Illus. Virgo by David Palladini, 1969

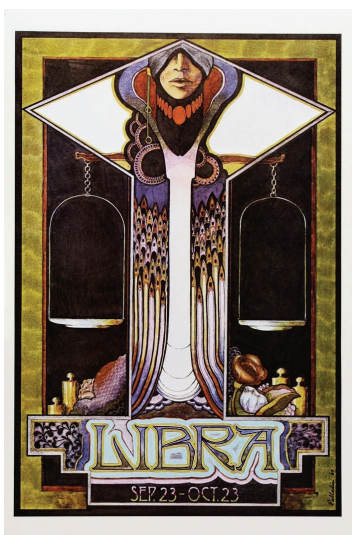
One of your dust-jacket biographies noted: “Presently a full-time free-lance artist, Mr. Palladini lives aboard The Merry Sea in New York City’s Hudson Harbor Boat Basin.” How accurate was this statement?

Very, actually. Life in Manhattan was and, I imagine, still is expensive. In the early 1970s, the Westside was the last resort for artists, dancers, and poets. I was living in a tiny apartment on West 96th Street, which at that time was a dark, dirty, and dangerous part of town. My former roommate at Pratt Institute invited me to dine with him and his wife aboard their home—a fifty-foot sailboat berthed at Hudson Harbor on the river. By the end of dinner on the aft deck, with the moon overhead, I was hooked. I spent the next month scouring the opposite shore of New Jersey for a boat to live on. Amazingly, I found my new home in a slip just across from my friend’s sailboat. It was a classic, twin-engine Consolidated, forty-two-footer built in 1939. She was a beauty of solid mahogany with an oak hull, big steering wheel, and polished brass binnacle in the pilot house. I was in love!

A polished what?

Binnacle—the case that holds the ship’s compass. Her name, *The Merry Sea*, was proudly painted in gold on her stern. She was registered since 1939 in Hastings-on-Hudson, New York. Oddly enough, Hastings was the home of the Morgan Press, which had commissioned the Aquarian Tarot. Synchronicity!

Did living aboard a boat present unique challenges?



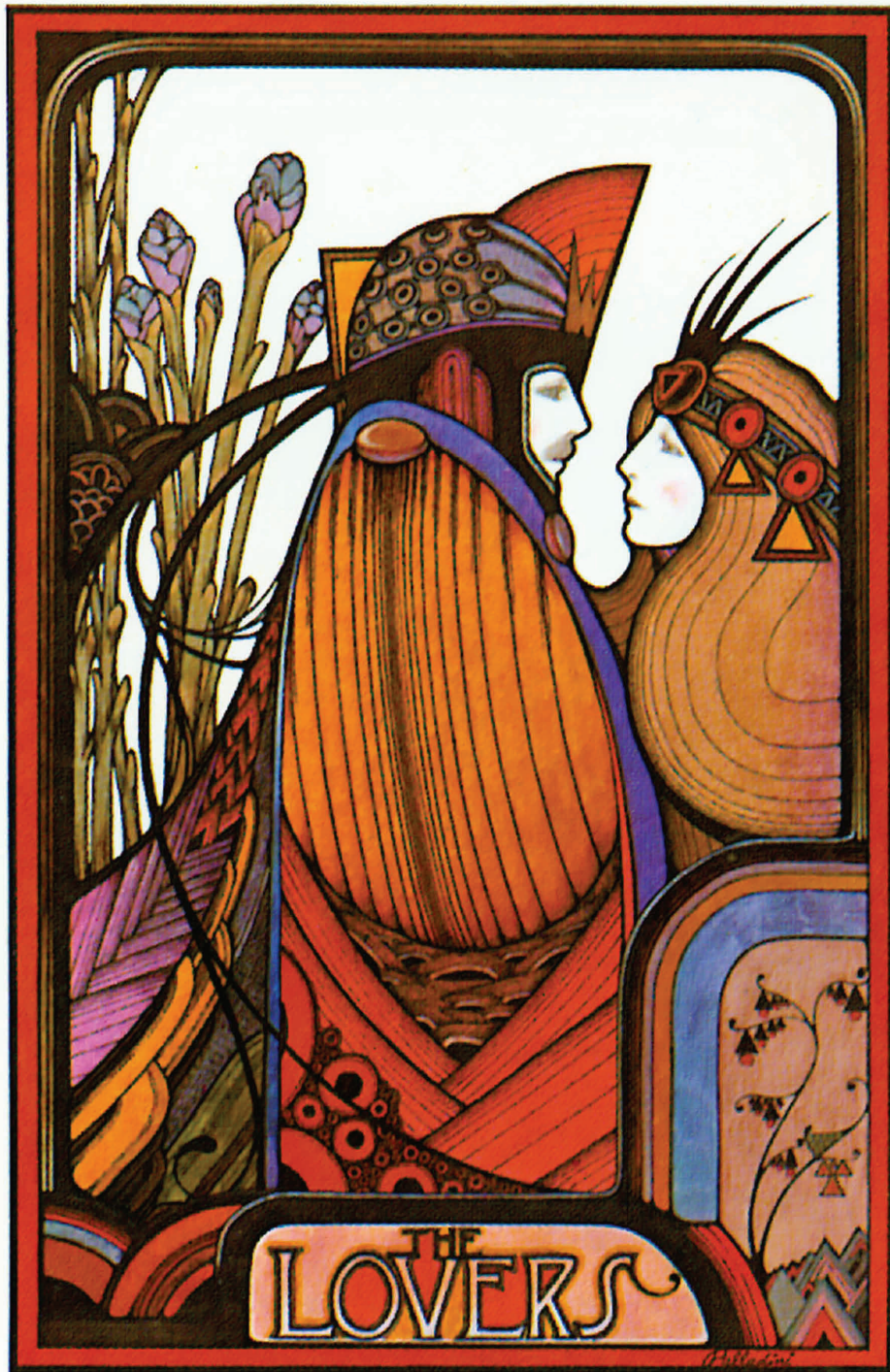
Illus. Libra by David Palladini, 1969

The obvious problem is that a boat floats! After hours of daily, concentrated work at my drawing table onboard, it was difficult to walk on the docks. Everything seemed to be moving! Sailors call it “land-sickness”. As long as you are on the boat, everything is fine. Your body understands the constant rocking. But once ashore, buildings sway and a cab ride to see a client was rock and roll on the edge of nausea.

Career-wise, what challenges did you encounter as a New York City illustrator?

The difficulties I had were all those of the artist’s life. I waited for days for the phone to ring, rejoiced at getting a job—*Hey, I can eat again!*—worked for months translating an author’s words into images, and then had to beg for my pay, always long overdue.

VI



Illus. The Lovers from the Aquarian Tarot by David Palladini, 1967 (image © U.S. Games Systems, Inc.)

Have any artists influenced you especially?

Naturally, I begin with Michelangelo, meaning Michael the Angel. He was a great and lonely genius with a broken nose and a superb soul. His contemporary rival, Leonardo da Vinci, was the one and only true Renaissance man. Unfortunately, he used his genius for war and weapons of destruction. I once had a show of my art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Tiring of all the people, I wandered up the grand marble staircase to the second floor. There, in a quiet side room, were the magnificent drawings of Leonardo—deep meditations on a flowing stream. He had noted and captured the swirling movements of the water in simple strokes of his pen. To think, he and I had a show at the Met on the same night!

Of the two, you seem to really empathize with Michelangelo.

Once while living in Lahaska, Pennsylvania, I was painting on a high cliff overlooking the Delaware River. All was going extremely well when I stood from my chair to admire the work-in-progress on what was a windless, sunny day. Quite pleased, I said to myself: “*You are an excellent artist!*” Just then, some bolt of energy hit me from behind, sending my easel, chair, painting, paints, and brushes—not to mention me—over the cliff!

So what happened?

As I was falling, I was able to grab a thick vine growing from the cliff wall and held on tight. Far beneath me, I saw the canvas and all of my supplies floating down the river.

Lucky you!

Alas, the vine that had saved my life was poison oak.

Oh...

So pride does indeed cometh before a fall! I spent the next three miserable weeks in bed. But during that time, I realized so clearly how art is about humility, and fragility, and being human. And I do believe Michelangelo understood this.

What is your reaction to the following statement appearing in one of your Pratt yearbooks: “The language of vision, like any language, can be lied in.”

I disagree completely. Each artist uses his own unique visual language, which often is impossible for anyone else to understand, particularly those artists who create a totally new kind of art. Yes, there are those who claim to be artists, but aren't. And there are those art critics who heap praise on junk art, but it is usually for personal agenda reasons.

An unfortunate fact about some critics.

Let me tell you a story. Once in France, I had just finished a long day of working with my pastels. Returning to the local café, I ordered a *pastis*—a lovely, licorice-based drink—for myself and a friend who had joined me there, having just leaned my drawing against a nearby wall. It was of beautiful, flowering almond trees. Just then, I noticed a small dog walking down the lane. He stopped and sniffed my drawing—the dog, not my friend—looked at me, and took a good, long piss on the artwork. I shouted “*Critique!*” Here was yet another critic! The café’s other clients laughed and applauded as I crouched down to inspect the dripping canvas—seeing how the canine’s contribution transformed my pastel into a watercolor. Sitting back down in the café, my friend leaned over and whispered into my ear: “It’s better now.”

So ultimately, what lesson did that teach you?

All real art is honest and truthful, regardless of whether it is your taste or not. The process of creation is in itself truth.

Why is it that in comparison to the “fine artist” who creates with oils, marble, or clay, the illustrator is traditionally viewed as producing work of lesser value?

The Sistine Chapel ceiling is a *book illustration*. Fine art and illustration *are* the same things. Michelangelo illustrated the entire Bible—from the Latin *biblia* for “book”—on that ceiling! And what a commission that was—hired by a client, in this case Pope Julius II, to lie on his back for *seven years* to complete the job, his sad face covered in paint and plaster. Let’s remember how the original purpose of illustration was actually “illumination,” which in that context meant “casting light” for those who could not read—which was mostly everyone, in those days. So the original purpose of illustration was as a way of teaching through images. After all, many of the surviving vestiges of long-buried civilizations are paintings, vases, mosaics, and sculptures.

And how did that purpose illuminate your intentions with the Aquarian?

In precisely the same way, I wanted to produce a Tarot deck to be used as a visual tool—that was completely my intention. As people learned early in history, visual images have great power. Prehistoric men in the caves of France drew images of the hunt to help feed their people, and signed them with their handprints. Their beautiful drawings helped the hunters to bring home meat. Later, Egyptian paintings and tomb wall carvings helped carry the souls of the pharaohs to their destiny. Beautiful illuminations in religious texts transported the readers into another, higher place. I wanted my Tarot to carry on that tradition. I hoped my images might help the readers of the cards to go beyond just their meanings into a deeper and more spiritual place. I so much wanted the shapes and colours to enhance the heart and mind of the user.

And you certainly succeeded. Do you have any other artistic heroes?

I greatly admire Degas and Toulouse-Lautrec who taught me that pastels are the equal of oil paint. But my very favorite artist was someone I met in Jamaica, a wood sculptor by the name of Stanley. He was a lovely, old Rasta-man whose twisted locks of hair had never been cut from birth. They flowed down almost to the ground. He would walk out every morning searching for a dead root or a piece of abandoned branch.

And then he'd carry his precious findings to his workplace on the beach. There, smoking his spliff of ganja, Stanley would start carving with a broken penknife. After awhile, he'd stop one of his passing brethren to ask: "What dis wood lookalike?" The other man might say: "Lookalike a foot, *mon.*" And so Stanley would carve it into a foot! In fact, I still have Stanley's "foot" in my home in Southern California. Carved from ironwood, it is powerful, majestic—so *real* I can see it walking.

Amazing.

Think of it, a half-starved man in Jamaica, with faith in his god, carving a living foot from a root—the end result being, in my opinion, the equal of Rodin. Now *that* is the magic and mystery of art.

Wasn't the New Palladini Tarot born in Jamaica?

Absolutely right! For about eight years in the late 1980s and into the early 1990s, I lived in Jamaica where I built a house on Mt. Boon, high above Discovery Bay. This is where Columbus had anchored his ships for wood and water. As Jamaicans say, life on that island can be "rough". And mine was no different. One lovely day sometime around 1993, when I was out of money, surviving on rice and beans, I got a call from Stuart Kaplan. I asked: "How did you find me?" And he answered: "It was not easy!" He proposed a new Tarot deck and I accepted the challenge.



Illus. The Fool from the New Palladini Tarot by David Palladini, 1993 (image © U.S. Games Systems, Inc.)

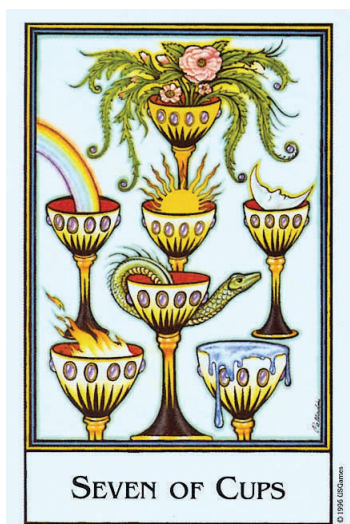


So all of the artwork for that deck was created on Jamaica?

In ninety-degree heat and one-hundred percent humidity, I drew seventy-eight new images, not to mention additional back-up pieces. I literally dripped sweat onto the drawings. I finished the project and could eat for a little while longer.

The “little white book” you wrote for the deck is especially astute and perceptive. As for the artwork, how do you compare this relatively more recent deck with the Aquarian?

Personally, of the two, I believe the artwork for the New Palladini Tarot as more precise, finer, and higher in content. I hoped for it to become a bridge between all worlds—ancient, modern, and perhaps even our future. So among others, it unites Egyptian, Medieval, and contemporary design elements. During its creation process, my earlier mystical experiences through the Aquarian and my acquired knowledge filled me. I just got out of the way, and the images flowed out.



The New Palladini Tarot is remarkable for its vibrant colour palette and abundant inclusion of flora and fauna. Were these influenced by your experience of living on the island?

Who could live in the Tropics and *not* be influenced by the light, color, flora, and fauna—those incredible sunsets and jewel-toned sea? Every morning, I would clean out the pool, where I rescued huge insects, mice, and mongooses. Both my palette and my soul were affected by Jamaica. It was colorful, filled with so much joy...not to mention really hot and sweaty!



During this time, you also wrote the book A Year (More or Less) in Jamaica, chronicling your life there. What an evocative, sensory delight! And now that you explained the meaning behind your surname earlier, the fact that the book was published by the Paladin Press makes perfect sense!

You guessed it correctly! I did publish it myself. Each copy was printed by an islander friend and his son on an ancient, hand-cranked press. And even though their duties were completed with much dedication, accuracy was not their forte. So I was required to carefully inspect each book before personally delivering them to local bookshops.

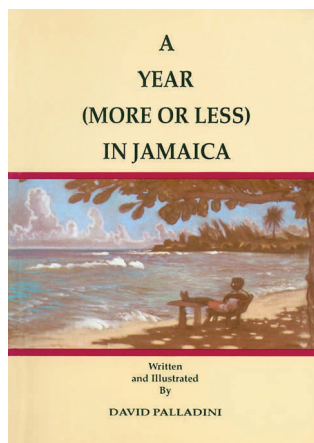
Illus. Queen of Rods, Seven of Cups & King of Pentacles from the New Palladini Tarot by David Palladini, 1993 (image © U.S. Games Systems, Inc.)

My copy is adorned with inky fingerprints. How many were produced?

Thirty-thousand.

Excuse me?

Yes, you heard me correctly. Suffice it to say, enough of them still exist that it is now used by Jamaican schoolchildren in need of brushing up on Standard English. That book led to a second one titled *Jamaica Nice, You Know*. Through them both, I attempted



to communicate the wonders and hardships of island life to the Jamaicans themselves from the fresh perspective of an outsider. You know, speaking of all of this has brought a flood of memories from the past. Once, I was painting in a sugar-cane field down the road from my house. It was harvest time, and gangs of cane-cutters were slashing and trimming endless miles of cane. It was a very hot day, “sun-a-blowin,” as the Jamaicans say, as the cane crackled in the heat. A man emerged from the cane rows carrying a machete—the Jamaicans call it a “cutlass,” a verbal artifact from the island’s pirate past. He was sweating profusely and ceased in his labors to look at my canvas for a moment. He stared intensely, smiled, and said: “You got it, *mon*.”

Illus. Book-cover for A Year (More or Less) in Jamaica by David Palladini, illustration by the author/artist, 1992 (image © David Palladini)

And you know, despite over one-hundred-and-fifty exhibitions of my work worldwide, reviews in the *New York Times*, countless awards and accolades, that simple cane-cutter gave me the greatest artistic compliment of my life.

What happened to your house when you finally left Jamaica?

I sold it to Sade.

The singer?

Yes.

And from there you re-located to the South of France.

More specifically, I went to live in Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, where Nostradamus was born and Vincent Van Gogh, another artistic hero, was confined in an insane asylum. When I arrived there, I went to the asylum and touched one of its walls in tribute. A voice spoke loudly inside of me: “Stay here. It is your destiny.” I got back into my car, crying and trembling.

Did you heed this message?

I did. And so I stayed. And it was my destiny.

Yet another extended stay on your globetrotting journey?

And what a glorious one it was! For three years, I lived in Oppède le Vieux, a 10th-century village about thirty kilometers east of Saint-Rémy. Only the community's twenty-eight residents were allowed in Oppède. So they dubbed me "*Monsieur Vingt-Neuf*" or, "Mr. Twenty-Nine". I loved it! The village is unique in many ways with its atmospheric battlements; ruined castle; and winding streets of ancient paving-stones, cut and laid by the Roman legions who conquered and settled the area—the whole scene topped by the remains of the old church of Notre-Dame-d'Alydon. I fondly recall my tiny rented room there above an establishment called Le Petit Café with a splendid view of it all.



Illus. David Palladini's 1971 Alfa Romeo G.T. 1300 Giulia in the village square at Oppède le Vieux, France, ca. 1999 (image © David Palladini)

There was a potter doing fine work, and a weaver as well. The problem with the place was that the road up the mountain is one way the *wrong way*! Only local residents know to ignore the "Interdit" sign, so tourists never get up to the village—except for the bold or those hikers and religious pilgrims on foot. As a result, there is no realistic chance for any artist to make a living there. I recall how the potter sold his wares in the nearest large town, and the weaver sent her cloth to Nice. But still, it was the village's absolute seclusion that appealed to me most. No cars, no noise, and at night, only one small lamp lighting the beautiful, iron crucifix in the square. Day after day, the only sound was the wind whistling through the narrow, cobblestone streets and rattling the clay roof tiles. My kind of place!

Did you travel around on horseback like one of your Tarot knights?

At the risk of disappointing you, I roared around the countryside in my classic 1971 Alfa Romeo G.T. 1300 Giulia.

I stand corrected!

I also could be frequently seen in a French fighter pilot's jumpsuit, with many zippered pockets—perfect for charcoal, pastels, pens, and half a baguette.

It is ironic how your family left Italy following World War II which is the same time Oppède grew as a sort of artistic commune. Did any remnants of that exist during your time there?



Illus. David Palladini at work in Oppède le Vieux, France, 2001 (image © David Palladini)

Was life as “rough” as it was sometimes on Jamaica?

France is glorious, except for the mistral—a fierce, icy-cold, and very violent wind. It comes from the center of the country and can, as the people of Provence say, “Blow the ears off a donkey.” Many times, I chased my canvases across fields, the mistral rolling my art ahead of me, just out of reach.

A classic image of the artist alone, struggling with nature.

Yet I never battled the elements alone. I was always accompanied by my easel. It traversed the world with me—from Mexico to New York’s Central Park; to Buck’s County, Pennsylvania; Long Island’s Hamptons; Jamaica, West Indies; and then on to France. I counted it as my best friend.



Illus. Mussel Beds, Arcachon, France, pastel on Canson paper, by David Palladini, ca. 1998 (image © David Palladini)

How would you describe the quality of life in France?

Second to none. After a day of painting, I would change into my Hugo Boss silk jacket and shirt, walk down the stone stairs from my room to the café where joy and champagne awaited. Music, laughter, and drink. Overall, I lived in France for fourteen years, and that country is the best on earth—human conversations without time constraints; shopping with local merchants; a *boulangier* or bread-maker who arises at 3:00 AM, and kneads his dough to create beautiful baguettes so his neighbors can eat.

And spiritually speaking?

An important concept to the French is what they call *l'âme*—the soul, the spirit, something that does not die at death. It has existed before us, and lives after us. It is the true expression of the creator. In America, we call ourselves “human beings”. Instead, the French say: “*être humain*”, or “being human”. A very important difference. We Americans say: “We are alive,” while the French say: “We live.” Once again, a very important difference.

In your first Jamaican book, you share a friend's following words of wisdom: “A man can never know his true abilities in his own country.” What truth have you found in this statement in relation to your own nomadic existence?

Those were the words of Rocky, a very wise man, indeed! When I was living in France, a reporter from the region's most important newspaper came to interview me. And while he praised my work in the article, he called my life a “*vie vagabonde*”, or a “vagabond life”. At first, I was offended. But later, I realized he was correct. Rocky had said the truth. You must see and feel the world, to know how really insignificant you are. We are all one. *All one...*

There are several fascinating connections between yourself and artist Pamela Colman Smith. Her illustrations for the classic Rider-Waite-Smith Tarot deck formed the starting point for those of the Aquarian. Were you aware that, like you, she studied at Pratt Institute and lived for a time in Jamaica.

Yes, indeed. The connections are eerie, and definitely not accidental. In fact, who knows, I may *be* her, just in a different body through some twist of reincarnation! You must admit, Pratt, Jamaica, and the Tarot is a highly-unlikely combination at best.

Do you have any thoughts on the lasting power of Colman Smith's artistry?

Her work is long-lasting because it is simple, understated, and clear in its meaning. And thank you for referring to her deck as the Rider-Waite-Smith Tarot since it is not often called such. I can only hope she received royalties for her work.

Alas, far from it.

You see, yet another link between us two!

Did you ever encounter the Tarot in Italy, the birthplace you share with the cards?

On a trip to Italy, I saw men in a bar playing card games with the Tarot. There they were—rods, cups, coins, and swords, being used by drunks for betting. So, similar to much ancient wisdom, the Tarot has been deeply corrupted and misunderstood.

You state in the insightful “little white book” you wrote for the New Palladini Tarot: “The cards can only be a tool of introspection, a mirror for one's own development...[My decks are not] a substitute for spirituality, but as an enhancement of belief and faith.”

And I continue to stand by those statements today. In the hands of an intelligent, professional Tarot reader, the cards can open doors into a profound understanding of one's life, emotions, and needs. They are not for "fortune-telling". They are for soul-searching and self-realization.

How do you believe both the Aquarian Tarot and the New Palladini Tarot fit into this objective?

My goal with both decks was to provide visual richness and beauty during a reading—to create images which would lead to further examination, thought, and the discovery of one's true self.

Does your current existence express your own true self?

If you mean whether I am still an artist—yes. Still drawing...still dreaming. In the last few years, I have even picked up my camera again resulting in a project documenting Orange County, California, in 15,000 photographs shot over a six month period. Nowadays, I use my art to save local nature under siege by "developers". What an ironic term! They have succeeded in replacing miles of wild, flower-covered land rolling down to the ocean with parking lots—or worse still, badly designed, multi-million dollar homes that end up in foreclosure. A small, community group fighting the onslaught are finding a way to use a parcel I did of the remaining, untouched land to assist the cause.



Illus. From O.C.: The Photographs of David Palladini, by David Palladini, 2003 (image © David Palladini)

In your second book on Jamaica, you speak of the concept of "devolution" coined by a Rastaman you knew there.

That man was a prophet. The constant destruction he foresaw is happening all around us, right now.

How do you apply this awareness to the precious value we need to place on our resources to the visual arts as well?

As it so happens, I am in the process of articulating those ideas in a manifesto I am composing titled “Artists-Awaken”.

Can you share a statement from it?

Yes, it would be an honor. Here goes: “Art has always been in advance of the culture within which it was created. A mirror of today and tomorrow, and a beacon on the present and future.”

And this is exactly what you achieved with the Aquarian Tarot. How does it make you feel that the deck celebrated its fortieth anniversary in 2008?

It is hard for me to believe that so many decades have passed. But then again, time is a human invention. Yesterday, today, and tomorrow are the same thing! As a nineteen-year-old student, my art was still immature. When I look at the cards now, I see the stylistic influences of Art Nouveau, Art Deco, and of course, those stained glass church windows of my childhood. Oddly enough, I really knew nothing about these art movements. The images came naturally, as though from a former lifetime.

To what do you attribute both the lasting power of the Tarot and your connection to it through the Aquarian?

Most importantly, I believe the deck contains a kind of magic which has carried through all these years—helping people world-wide to better understand themselves and guiding them through this tangled and often gruesome world. In my darkest hours, I was saved by such knowledge that life is only an illusion, and how we are being judged by our actions and morality in the face of tribulation. The magic that helped me create that deck came through me from another, distant place. It was a gift to me from the creator. I was only the eyes and hands. I was the instrument.

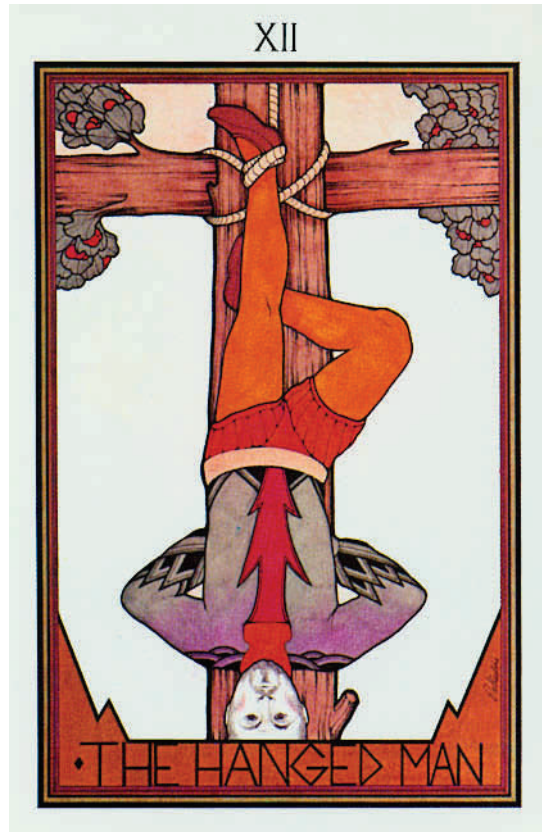
A photo-portrait of yourself alone appears in one of your Pratt yearbooks which is captioned with the following quote by American author James Baldwin: “Perhaps the primary distinction of the artist is that he must actively cultivate that state which most men, necessarily, must avoid: the state of being alone.” This seems to describe perfectly the Tarot’s Hanged Man—a figure who observes the world from which he is separated through a combination of fate and deliberate choice.

And this is precisely why I always refer to him as The Hanging Man instead—very much alert, very much aware, and very much on his own journey.

Have Baldwin’s words proved prophetic in any way?

Most certainly—I very well remember that quote, and it set the pattern for my artistic journey. Despite having lived in society, I always felt I was playing a role, being sensible, congenial, mannerly, and stable. But out in nature, just me and my easel and canvas, the *real* me emerged...unstable, mercurial, perhaps anti-social, forever in conflict when encountering shallow falseness in others.

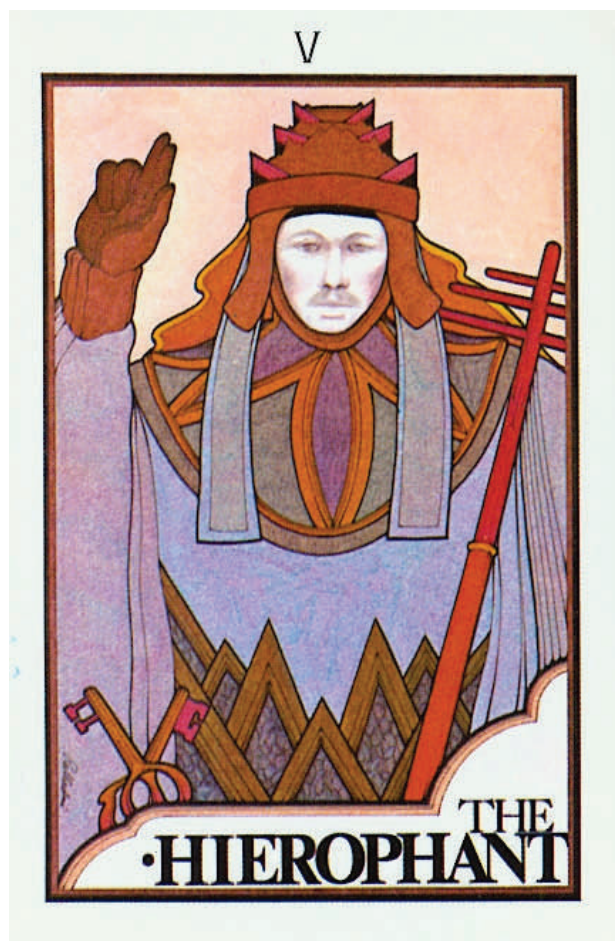
Being alone allowed me to talk to the birds and flowers without shame, to shout at gathering storm clouds, telling them to hold off until I finished. The happiest times of my life are when I am alone, watching my hand do amazing things—when my mind blends with nature until I no longer exist. At these moments, I am finally complete.



Illus. The Hanged Man from the Aquarian Tarot by David Palladini, 1967 (image © U.S. Games Systems, Inc.)

THE HOUSE THAT CARDS BUILT

Michael Orlando Yaccarino, *Professional Tarot Reader, Instructor & Author* presents this exclusive interview with Stuart R. Kaplan, founder of U.S. Games Systems, Inc.



Illus. The Hierophant from the Aquarian Tarot by David Palladini, 1967 (image © U.S. Games Systems, Inc.)

Stuart R. Kaplan is the legendary founder of U.S. Games Systems, Inc. Based in Stamford, Connecticut, the company was founded in 1968 and publishes more than four hundred products encompassing the world of Tarot in deck and book form, specialty playing cards, informational card decks, and educational games—including the Aquarian Tarot and the New Palladini Tarot. Kaplan is the author of *The Encyclopedia of Tarot*, the renowned, multi-volume study of every aspect of the cards. Most recently, his eagerly-anticipated book *The Artwork & Times of Pamela Colman Smith* was released as part of a special set to commemorate the centenary of the Rider-Waite-Smith Tarot. Entrepreneur, historian, and passionate expert, Kaplan elucidates his significant connection to David Palladini's Tarot decks.

When and how did you first become aware of Tarot cards?

In 1968, while working on Wall Street, I traveled overseas to visit the Nürnberg Toy Fair with the idea of starting a new company to import toys and games. A total departure from the mining and manufacturing companies I was involved with in New York City's financial world. At the trade show, I came across a small booth of a local Swiss printer, AGMüller & Cie. They showed me a Tarot deck, the 1JJ Swiss pack, and I was intrigued by the medieval designs. I took a sample and brought it back to Henry Levy, the buyer at Brentano's, the famous booksellers, and he purchased one hundred decks. The first year, we sold almost two hundred thousand.

Incredible!

I knew that I had found a unique opportunity to develop a business in combination with my interests in research and writing. Years earlier, after graduating from high school, I moved to Paris for a year and attended the Sorbonne. It was my ambition at the time to live on the Left Bank and become a writer, but after a year I decided to return to the States and enrolled in the Wharton School of Business and Finance at the University of Pennsylvania.

How did Tarot cards figure into the creation of U.S. Games Systems, Inc?

After that successful situation concerning AGMüller and Brentano's, I decided to import Tarot decks, to write a book about Tarot, and to start publishing different Tarot packs to meet the increasing demand. At that point, in 1968, I formed U. S. Games Systems.

Please explain your first encounter with the Aquarian Tarot, originally released by Morgan & Morgan?

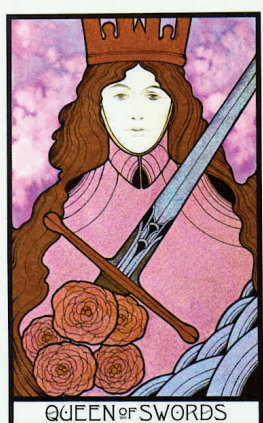
In 1974, I wrote to Lloyd Morgan of Morgan Press asking if they would be interested in allowing U. S. Games Systems to distribute the Aquarian Tarot deck by David Palladini. Lloyd agreed and for the following eighteen years we purchased the Aquarian Tarot, and the Morgan-Greer Tarot, from Morgan Press. In 1992, we decided to purchase the publication rights to both decks and in the same year we started to produce our own version under U. S. Games Systems.

Do you recall your first meeting with David Palladini?

Unless my memory fails me, I do not believe David and I ever met in person. All our dealings were done by letter and telephone. David was very helpful and responsive. After purchasing the rights to the Aquarian Tarot, I tracked down David so we could start paying him royalties on sales of his wonderful deck.

What aspects of David's art appealed to you then?

The artwork was clean, linear, and striking, with brilliant color tones and very appealing imagery.

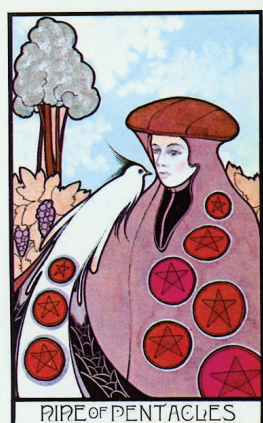


What need did the Aquarian Tarot fill at that time that made it unique?

There was nothing else like it in the marketplace. The artwork was powerful and allowed for a pleasant departure from the traditional Rider-Waite Tarot Deck.

What was the genesis of the idea behind the creation of the New Palladini Tarot?

David's talent as an artist seemed to cry out for another Tarot pack that his many followers could enjoy. We approached him with the idea and he agreed to paint the New Palladini Tarot.



What aspects of David's art appeal to you now with the passing of time?

The appeal to me of the deck has always been the strength and character of many of the costumed figures. The High Priestess, The Empress, The Hierophant, the Queen and Page of Swords, and the Nine of Pentacles are examples. It would be fascinating to actually meet these people if they came to life.

What aspects of the Palladini decks give them their timeless quality—capturing and then transcending the zeitgeist of the times when they were created—especially the Aquarian?



The figures in David's decks are majestic, and the colors vibrant. For the Aquarian Tarot, it was the time of Aquarius. The Lovers are in their own world. The Hermit figure possesses secret knowledge. The court figures all seem appropriate to the naïve age of the time. Just choosing an example from the New Palladini pack, I am drawn into the Four of Cups. I wish that I was sitting on the grass with the forlorn figure who appears lost in thought. Many of the cards evoke a story beyond traditional Tarot interpretation.

In what way do you feel a worthwhile Tarot reading can be a catalyst toward positive transformation?

The cards in a Tarot pack are like the pages in a book, except the unbound cards can change with each shuffle into a different story. We all seek guidance in what we do in life, some people more than others. The cards can act as a catalyst to motivate us to attempt new things, to recognize opportunities we may not have realized exist, and to move on with our lives that may otherwise be uncertain or floundering.

Illus. Queen of Swords & Nine of Pentacles from the Aquarian Tarot by David Palladini, 1967. Four of Cups from the New Palladini Tarot by David Palladini, 1993 (images © U.S. Games Systems, Inc.)

What is your opinion of David's work today since first encountering it more than forty years ago?

David remains one of my favorite artists.

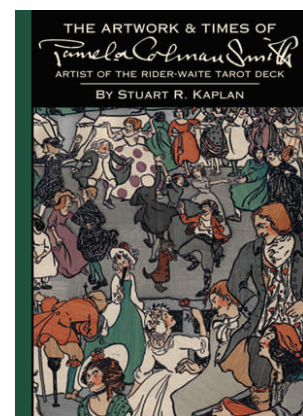
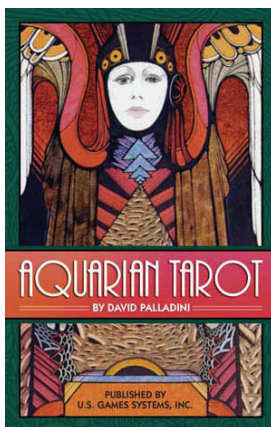
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Aquarian Tarot, New Palladini Tarot, Pamela-Colman Smith Commemorative Boxed Set

A DAUGHTER OF HEAVEN & EARTH

Michael Orlando Yaccarino, *Professional Tarot Reader, Instructor & Author* presents this exclusive interview with Susan Hansson, author of *Reading Tarot Cards: A Guide to the New Palladini Tarot*



Illus. The Empress from the New Palladini Tarot by David Palladini, 1993 (image © U.S. Games Systems, Inc.)

Susan Hansson is the author of *Reading Tarot Cards: A Guide to the New Palladini Tarot*, the full-length manual published by Stuart Kaplan to accompany the deck. In addition, she has written *The Book of Tarot*, on the Morgan-Greer Tarot, penned under her maiden name Susan Gerulskis-Estes; and *The Hanson-Roberts Tarot Companion*.

How did you first become attracted to the Tarot?

Quite a bit in secret! When my mom thought I was bicycling off to high school, I was going to spiritual bookstores in Cambridge, Massachusetts, instead. I was attempting to find out why we are here.

Quite a noble ambition!

And I did not even have a driver's license yet! This passionate pursuit drew me to an interest in symbolism, which in turn led to the Tarot. I began to find clues to life in this mysterious deck of cards my grandmother had told me about and felt I was onto something really important. Once, I returned from an outing with a backpack full of books to discover school had called.

And then...

I was grounded for a week.

Such are the hazards of the mystical quest!

True! But the pursuit kept growing—each book leading to another, each symbol connecting to so many meanings in so many countries over so many centuries, yet they all had an underlying connection. It was in a Cambridge spiritual bookstore in the 1970s that I first found David Palladini's Aquarian Tarot. I have been an avid devotee ever since. Eventually, I taught Tarot on both coasts of the United States and in England as well. Once on a beach in Brazil, I was reading my own cards when a crowd gathered. Soon, I was doing the same for others with an interpreter! This shows what a powerful communication tool the Tarot truly is.

How did you come to write the book on the New Palladini Tarot?



Illus. The High Priestess from the New Palladini Tarot by David Palladini, 1993 (image © U.S. Games Systems, Inc.)

Morgan & Morgan first published *The Book of Tarot* in 1981 before its later re-release by U.S. Games Systems in the mid-1990s. When I wrote to Stuart Kaplan introducing myself at the time, I inquired about writing another book on Tarot. He sent along a catalog to see which deck attracted me most. I was so excited to see a beautiful reproduction of the High Priestess from the New Palladini Tarot. I called Mr. Kaplan at once to ask if I could write a guide to the deck and he agreed.

How do the Aquarian and the New Palladini Tarot differ visually for you?

While the Aquarian Tarot has a soft, whispery, mysterious feel to it, the New Palladini Tarot is beautiful in a quite different way. Its vibrant images dance off each card. They mesmerized me.

What do you recall about the book's writing process?

When I delve into writing a book on the subject, I create a storyboard of all the cards. This allows me to examine them in an overall sequence and individually.

Are you familiar with how Japanese painters study a mountain scene for hours and even days, contemplating the image before rendering it? They are awaiting that "Aha! Got it!" moment, when the urge to paint is so unstoppable, the artistry just flows. I did the same here. Also, many years had passed since my first, major work on the Tarot. Since then, my life had evolved to provide me with actual experience. So now I could relate to the lessons of the Tarot in an entirely new way. Nevertheless, my prior insights into the cards were still important. Youth provides an open slate, unquenchable thirst, time to pursue thoughts, and the freedom of expression. I expanded upon these earlier ideas with all that I learned by watching, listening, and studying. For example, when I first wrote about the Empress in *The Book of Tarot*...

"A daughter of heaven and earth," as Arthur Edward Waite described her.

Yes! That's perfect. My conception of motherhood was quite different than before—that is, after actually experiencing pregnancy, birth, and *being* a mother. Some of the understanding is the same, but the levels of passion and empathy are very different. Between my first Tarot book and the one I wrote for the New Palladini deck, I had lived through more than a dozen years of love, sorrow, gain, and loss, the seeking of different spiritual paths, along with extensive travel, learning, and teaching.

Do you know if David was pleased with the finished book?

Upon receiving it, David sent me a handwritten letter from France, his first word in it being "BRAVO!"—all in capitals. I was thrilled since I had poured my heart and concentration into that book. By the time I was finished with it, I felt I *knew* this artist! David was kind enough to confirm how I had picked up what he was saying through his work. It was with much excitement that we later spoke together about our individual, yet connected creative projects. There was no need to say the obvious—we both had a deep affinity and love of the Tarot. He was living in Jamaica at the time he created the art for the deck. David told me of how black the night skies were when he drew them, and of the tall grasses leading from his house to the ocean.

All of those details can be seen in the cards themselves.

Absolutely! Now here's something truly fascinating. Before knowing that the singer Sade had purchased David's home in Jamaica, I had seen a music video of her shot in a gorgeous house with long white curtains being gently blown by ocean breezes. I loved that place with such immediate intensity, I experienced a memory burn about it, a feeling I had been there before. I hadn't, of course. Then David told me how he had built that same house where he had lived while creating the New Palladini Tarot. You can imagine my thoughts. I had to sit down. All things, thoughts, and ideas happen for a reason. Everything makes sense in its end.

What attributes does the New Palladini Tarot possess that have endured since its publication?

Dare I say that maybe a part of David's soul is in that deck—his spirit? I think so. I believe it has lasted because it holds the very essence of the man himself—timeless, intuitive, and perceptive. Like the Magician, David seems to have channeled a higher energy and devoted soul in making this Tarot. Energy resonates from every image.

As an artist, he applied a scholarly knowledge—yet one innate and emotional—into the symbolism that makes this deck eternal. Beginning readers are able to decipher David's artwork instinctively, while at the same time, it assists devoted Tarotists to keep growing. For all enthusiasts, his artwork prompts development, growth, and inspiration.

Can you offer a specific example?

When writing my book on the New Palladini Tarot, I realized how David's images are in actuality verbs—living, reaching out, and capable of delivering their messages with spiritual eloquence.



Illus. Strength from the New Palladini Tarot by David Palladini, 1993 (image © U.S. Games Systems, Inc.)

Notes

For the Linweave Tarot Pack (1967), David Palladini designed the following dozen French-titled cards: Le Mat, L'Impératrice, L'Empereur, L'Hermite, La Roue de Fortune, Le Pendu, Le Diable, Le Roi d'Épée, La Reine d'Épée, Le Chevalier d'Épée, La Valet d'Épée, and L'As d'Épée

Special Thanks

The outer purpose of this work is to recognize David Palladini's significant artistic accomplishments, especially concerning the Tarot, while celebrating their deeply mystical splendor. On a personal note, it is an expression of my most profound gratitude to David for creating the Aquarian Tarot—although with courtly modesty, he would claim the role of conduit only.

I made my first step through this glimmering portal as a child. And I continue the spiritual journey started then today—so much more enriched than I would have been without its guidance. Furthermore, this article would have remained a sadly unrealized fantasy were it not for David's unwavering trust in me and for the blessed gift of his enduring friendship.

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I express my gratitude to Stuart R. Kaplan for his kindness in answering my many questions; permitting reproduction of the Aquarian Tarot and the New Palladini Tarot; and for bringing so many important and artistically beautiful decks into the world. I convey my appreciation to Susan Hansson for sharing her enthusiasm and insight into the New Palladini Tarot. I offer praise to Scot D. Ryersson whose exquisite title-art and digital miracle-working elevated this article to an aesthetic realm worthy of its subject.

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