



Conducted by Sandra Šabotić- Josephine

In number 32 we wrote about Joshua Madara, an influential technomancer, robomancer, and explorer residing in Seattle, USA. In the meantime, I have joyously been playing with his Thebanet and ZenerTest, among other things. It is my greatest pleasure to find out more about him and his work in this issue, but before we continue, I was corrected that Kymera wand is not his invention actually. He did make program machines to respond to the wand, but the wand itself is made by The Wand Company.

1. Do you remember the time you first became interested in magic? What were the first steps like?

I have always been interested in paranormal and occult subjects but I did not really get into magic per se until I encountered Hermeticism (by way of a dream) in my early 20s, and even then it remained a largely intellectual activity until I met Peter Carroll in 2005. My first steps into chaos magic were quite literally life-changing in multiple ways, and when I met with members of the North American IOT later that year, magic became my vocation: I thought, this is what I want to do with my life. 15 years on, I still feel the same.

2. And the time you first realized the connection between magic and technology? How did your train of thought on the topic changed over time, if it did?

As a young man I sometimes wondered about things such as how does the Ghostbusters' trap attract and contain ghosts, and how does Hell-raiser's puzzle box open a door to Hell? What is the interface between these material objects -- and specifically these machines (vis-à-vis other,

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non-mechanical artifacts) -- and the spiritual entities they interact with?

In the mid-1990s, my interests in cybernetics, computers, and hacker culture, and my interests in spirituality, religion, and the occult, accelerated concurrently. Looking back, there was a lot of interaction between those things going on culturally at that time, but I was unaware of most of it while it was happening.

A similar thing occurred, but amplified, when I found chaos magic in the mid-2000s. As soon as I started regularly practicing and experimenting with magic, I was wondering about the technology of it and how to combine it with electronic and computational media. Arduino came out the same year I met Peter, and the makerspace movement -- which grew out of the mid-90s hacker-



Joshua Madara

spaces -- began the same year I joined the IOT. These things happened so fast, and SO MUCH happened so fast, it all feels like the Same Thing to me.

I suspect it was important that chaos magic permitted me to experiment with magic and technology. Until then, although magic appealed to me in some ways, it also felt unnecessarily anachronistic in others. And hacker/maker culture -- with its emphasis on science and engineering, even, often, above art -- usually side-eyed my preternatural interests. Finding a community that not only embraced my idiosyncratic weirdness, but encouraged it, is one of the best things that has ever happened to me.

The pedagogy of Processing and Arduino was also very transformative. I had been program-

ming computers since I was a kid, and got my first paid gig doing so when I was 14 years old, but the idea of "sketching" with code, making little programs that did interesting things that were not necessarily practical, and without having to develop a fully featured application, facilitated experimentation in a way I had not previously realized, although in retrospect that was pretty much how I had taught myself BASIC and HyperCard and other programming languages I had literally PLAYED with in my youth. It was like doing improvisational theatre games with computers, and it jibed well with chaos magic philosophy. That more than anything pushed me over the edge from conjecturing about technomancy or whatever as an intellectual exercise, into actually making things and DOING technomancy regularly.

I suppose there is some consistency in my general direction over time, but my ideas have evolved as I have studied the philosophies I find compelling and worked through my experiments. In particular, my work has become more animistic and oriented toward interaction with nonhuman entities, and the transhuman characteristics of my work are giving way to increasing posthumanism.

3. What happened to the Jigsaw Renaissance?

I am not sure. I think they disbanded sometime after I had ceased my involvement with them -- not to suggest any causal connection between those events.

4. I love the simplicity (and your sense of humor, too!) of our explanations on Technomancy101. It really shows that you are a hoopy frood. How satisfied are you with it and what are experiences of the people using those projects, both novices and more experienced?

Aw, thank you very much. I have not received a lot of feedback about Technomancy 101, but what I have has been positive. What I do is extremely niche, and I neither put forth much effort



➡ to promote it nor to seek others' opinions of it; but I am always glad to hear from someone who is delighted or inspired by something I've made. I tend to move rapidly from one project to another because I am continually inspired by new technologies I encounter; which are sometimes old technologies that I am encountering for the first time or in a new way

5. *I've read somewhere on your site that much of the information is probably already outdated, and you advised users on that possibility because of its fast-changing nature. How hard for you is to keep up-to-date, or, do you see it as a constant challenge?*

It is tricky with respect to publishing tutorials, because you want students to be able to follow along with your instructions. With Technomancy 101 for example, I designed several projects to use the PicoBoard but then the new version of Scratch that was released just as I was wrapping up Technomancy 101 no longer supported it. It is not as important for the stuff I exhibit or make use of in actual practice (usually ritual), and indeed I often use outdated tech for that, either because it remains functional in the context for which I require it, or to deliberately evoke a sense of nostalgia or "low-tech" aesthetic. I am especially fond of tech from the



late-70s through the mid-90s, probably because it is nostalgic for me, and I can do things with it now that I didn't know how to back then. On the other hand, it is exciting to continually encounter new tech as it becomes available, and imagine new occult applications for it. Always having to learn new things is a good problem to have.

6. How is going with “Robomancy in Theory and Practice” and your work with robots in general?

Very well, although it is taking much longer to produce something publishable than I had an-

anticipated when I embarked on this journey. Some of that is due to events that have transpired in my personal life, but much of it is because the work itself has metamorphosed as I have been doing it. There is so much to explore here; each project or essay could be a book unto itself. I feel satisfied with the framework that has developed, but it is quite different from what I had envisioned several years ago.

7. Are there any other projects that occupy your mind lately?

I am mostly committed to the robomancy stuff currently, although I have been dabbling in VR with some colleagues. I have always had some interest in virtual and augmented realities, but I tend to remain focused on physical computing. There are a couple of exhibitions I would like to squeeze in over the next few years, too.

Dear Joshua, thank you very much for your time and I wish you all the best with your future work and projects.

