

1981. Christmas is a holiday that I bought into when I was young. Completely. I had been flushed through the American media machine and with every movie, television show, stop-motion animation convincing me that such a thing as the Christmas spirit exists and more so, that if we believe, truly good, pure and wonderful things can happen during the month of December. I believed it and it felt so nice to believe this. I was so hopeful and in my brief existence as a human being, it had quickly solidified itself as my favorite time of year. It was magical. Our first Christmas tree was like any other tree here, there or anywhere. But we were in America and this was 1981. We had a real tree. That smelled like a real tree. Was it a pine tree? I believe it was. And that smell was something that had entered our home for the first time. How was this possible? The outside had come inside?

I would spend great amounts of time entranced by the lights on these trees. No different than an insect attracted to certain kinds of light, these shades of blue, red, green, yellow were so captivating. I would be lost while lying beneath the tree. Looking up, there was a world inside the branches. Several years later, an animated movie called The Secret of NIMH would be released. It was about these mice and they lived in this tree that was their kind of fortress/home. And this always felt wonderfully just like that. I felt I was looking into

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some world that was outside our world. Or inside of our world. Or apart from our world. Perhaps this is why I was drawn to the subject of architecture years later. For a brief moment, I stepped outside of one space and into another. I was for minutes, sometimes taken away and transplanted and placed into a miniature world of branches and lights and sometimes decorations that added to the meaning of this place. And I loved it. Such experiences I think were less influenced by the American capitalism machine. Such simple experiences were also perhaps purely visual. The lights. The feeling. The atmosphere. These could have been sold to me separate from the Christmas story and I know I would have loved it. Hook, line and sinker. But why were they there? I think definitely they were part of this story. This Christmas machine was strong and these lights, the warmth in winter. Perhaps that was it. Warmth.

This all took place for many years. I would guess again, puberty. Or the onset of puberty dashed these dreams. I began to become suspicious. Suspicious about the gifts that magically appeared underneath this tree on the 24th of December every year. But looking back, I wish I never became suspicious. I just remember being so mesmerized. Waking up the next morning to discover a whole set of boxes, wrapped, in green and red and white. All sitting there. How did this happen? 2 How could this happen? I just

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could not fathom how such things worked.
How did somebody get into our house.
How did this large, old man get in? It
was just magic. Years later, I do see
the imperfect picture. The machine this
industry has created. The consumption.
The garbage. But despite all this, I still
do cherish those feelings. I would sadly
see that such magic experiences would
altogether disappear sooner than later.
My suspicions became adulthood.