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HISTORY OF TAROT CARD DESIGN

Initially, Tarot cards played the role of a recreational game, but over time, people began to see them as a mystical and otherworldly force through which they could control their lives and fate. The desire to have the power to control one's life and know what the future holds became prominent. The design of Tarot cards was based on playing cards. The classification of suits was as follows: spades represented warriors, clubs symbolized the peasantry (derived from the French word for clover), diamonds represented the national coat of arms or flag, and hearts symbolized the shield. Although many may interpret these suits differently, as the symbolism of the cards varies in different countries.

The structure of a Tarot deck is similar to traditional playing cards: it is divided into the Minor and Major Arcana, with the Minor Arcana containing four suits (wands, swords, cups, pentacles) that correspond to the traditional spades, clubs, hearts, and diamonds. In this system, wands are associated with power, swords symbolize conflict, destruction, ambition, and authority. These cards help unlock inner potential and success in work. Cups represent the spiritual-psychological aspect of life, the deeper knowledge of oneself, while pentacles denote the material world, resources, and money, symbolizing security and stability in life. Depending on the card's orientation (upright or reversed), its meaning changes, and when combined with other cards in a reading, it can completely alter the context and answer to the question posed. In the Middle Ages, only people from privileged social classes, such as the nobility or royal families, had the knowledge and ability to use Tarot cards or even access them. They often used them when making decisions about issues they were unsure about or when questions required multiple perspectives.

One of the oldest Tarot decks is the Visconti-Sforza Tarot, commissioned by the noble Italian Visconti family. They were created from the finest materials, with gold framing and handmade by the best artisans of the Renaissance. It is based on these cards that the design of modern Tarot cards and their main symbols were created. However, over time, the meanings of these symbols, which were understood in the Middle Ages, have transformed and become more ambiguous and multifaceted in the modern world. Esoteric culture evolved into various areas of activity, mixing with different life spheres, and cultural aspects changed both the design and the psychological and social concepts. Interpretations, once intuitive, have now become more difficult to perceive for those who do not understand the concept.

Moreover, specialized Tarot decks have been created focusing on specific areas such as work, relationships, and the future. These decks provide more accurate and precise answers to questions and can give clear responses.

The most recognizable and widely used Tarot design today is the one developed by British occultist Arthur Edward Waite, in collaboration with illustrator Pamela Colman Smith. Waite created the structure of the deck with 78 cards and defined their hierarchy, making it more systematic and understandable.

The Major Arcana cards represent the core of a reading, and their order and position are considered more important in prophecy, while the Minor Arcana, divided into four suits (wands, swords, cups, pentacles), reflect everyday situations and events. Over time, Tarot decks have become more diverse and now differ from one another in themes and illustrative designs. Color symbolism is one of the key elements in choosing Tarot cards and their thematic characteristics, which can help in understanding their interpretation on an intuitive level. The main colors in the traditional palette and their meanings are red, blue, and yellow. Red represents energy, passion, and blood. Blue symbolizes spirituality, prudence, and life wisdom. Yellow typically represents intellect and enlightenment, but in various interpretations, it can also symbolize jealousy and misunderstandings in relationships. However, it's important to understand the meanings and features of a specific deck and how each artist's work has its own uniqueness and symbolism, which may not be found in other decks.

National traditions have also become popular in Tarot illustrations, with inspiration drawn from epic tales, local mythology, and cultural symbolism. This cultural aspect has made it easier to learn about different mythological phenomena and has facilitated the globalization of cultural context. Popular ethnic Tarot decks today include Egyptian Tarot, Japanese Tarot, and Indian Tarot. There are also several Tarot decks inspired by Ukrainian culture, mythology, and symbolism, such as "Tarot of Ukrainian Myth" and "Ukrainian Tarot by Alyona Rayda." The illustrations use images from Ukrainian folk tales, legends, embroidery, Easter eggs, and more. National Tarot decks serve as a powerful tool for self-discovery, intuition, and personal growth. Their simplicity of use, combined with deep symbolism that is easily understood by people from that culture, makes them a popular choice for both beginners and experienced practitioners. Each card carries a multitude of meanings, allowing for a deeper understanding of oneself and one's surroundings. In conclusion, Tarot cards still captivate people with their mystery and mysticism. Over time and with the development of societal structures, Tarot became more specialized and influential due to simpler production methods.

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