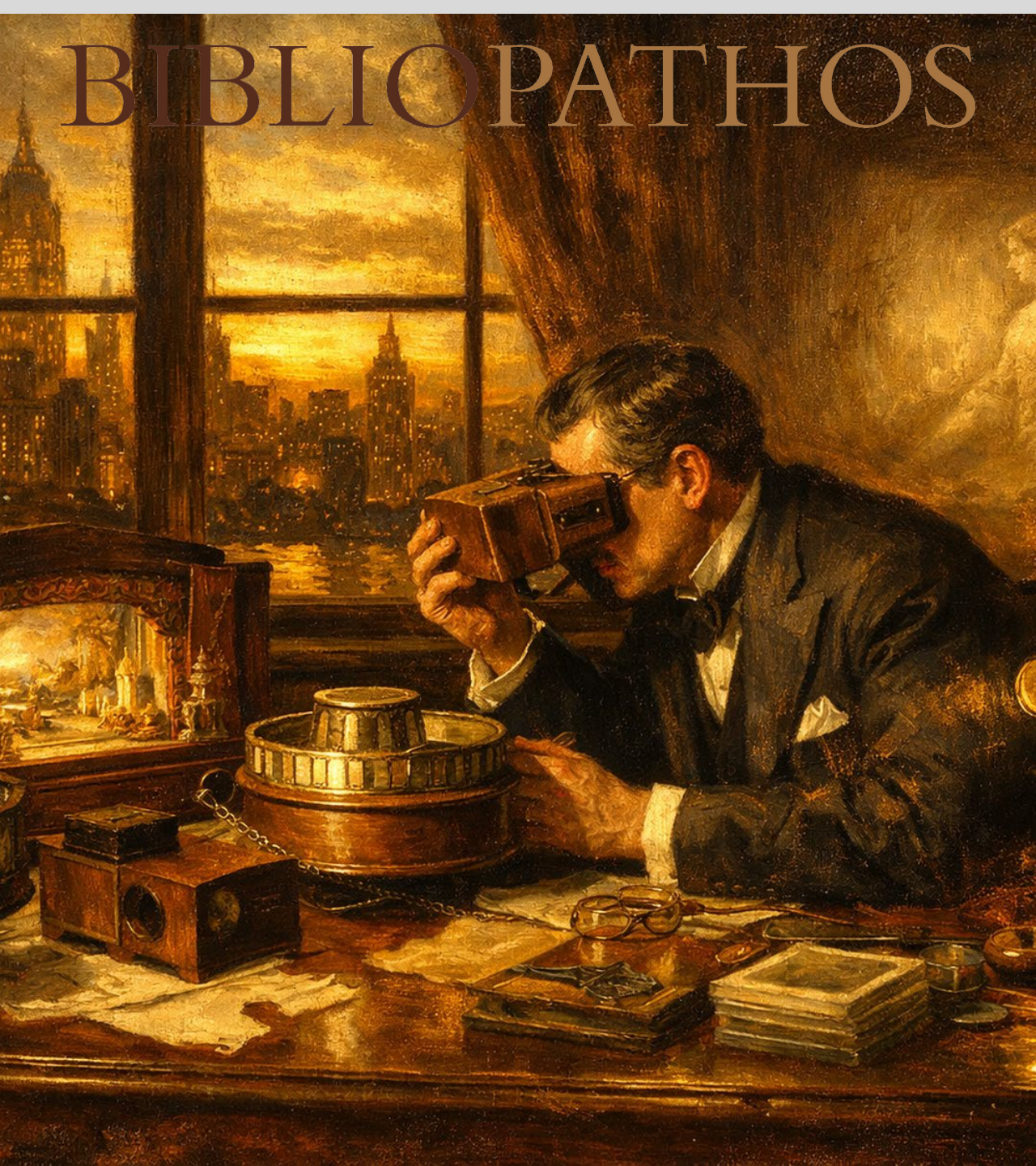


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Optical Entertainments and Transforming Images 1700–1900

A curated selection of rare optical entertainments
and pre-cinema devices



«POLYORAMAS» lots 27–30

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OPTICAL ENTERTAINMENTS AND TRANSFORMING IMAGES

The evolution of optical instruments from the seventeenth century to the early decades of the twentieth represents one of the most compelling trajectories in the history of Western visual culture. Across this long span, scientific experimentation, philosophical inquiry into perception, technical innovation, serial artistic production, and new forms of domestic entertainment converged to redefine the relationship between image, light, and the act of seeing. What had long been a stable, immobile representation became, through these developments, dynamic, reversible, interactive, and at times performative. The objects assembled here bear witness to this complex transformation and allow us to follow, step by step, the emergence of modern vision.

In the seventeenth century, fascination with the geometry of vision, combined with a taste for perspectival illusion, gave rise to refined forms of anamorphosis. These intentionally distorted images, resolved only by means of a cylindrical mirror or a precise viewing angle, were not mere technical curiosities but intellectual exercises probing the status of the image, the nature of perception, and the tension between reality and representation. Works such as *The Beggar*, attributed to Musschenbroek (lot 1), and Burucker's *The Gardener Couple* from the late eighteenth century (lot 4), belong to this lineage in which mathematics, Cartesian philosophy, and visual theatre converge. At the same time, the camera obscura and studies in refraction provided new tools for observation, helping to shape a culture of vision that would underpin later optical innovations.

By the eighteenth century, with the rise of the urban bourgeoisie and an increasingly visually literate public, optical instruments moved out of scientific cabinets and into markets, fairs, and drawing rooms. It was in this context that the widespread trade in *vues d'optique* emerged, standardized engravings designed for the zograscope, a diagonal-lens viewer that enhanced depth and corrected architectural convergence. The zograscope itself (lot 7) became a familiar domestic instrument. The accompanying engraved views, produced in Paris, London, Augsburg, or Venice, and sometimes pierced to create nocturnal illuminations when backlit (lots 5–9), offered virtual travel through distant cities, ceremonies, harbours, palaces, and exotic setting. At the same time, the multi-layered dioramas of Engelbrecht (lots 8–24), built from successive planes to create miniature architectures of depth, reveal an early interest in spatial staging that would influence nineteenth-century optical spectacles. Within this same lineage of popular yet technically sophisticated entertainments belongs the concertina peepshow, a format that multiplied depth through a sequence of cut-out panels, (lots 25–26, 47).

The Industrial Revolution and the nineteenth century ushered in an unprecedented modernity of vision. Cultural, scientific, and technological developments produced a proliferation of optical instruments that made the image transformable, reversible, and mutable.

The principle of dual illumination, used in the *Polyorama Panoptique* (lots 27–29), allowed a single print to shift from day to night or interior to exterior simply by altering the light source. The existence of a portable, pocket-sized variant, the *Polyorama Lorgnette*, with interchangeable circular views (lot 30), signals a shift toward refined private entertainment.

Around the mid-nineteenth century, scientific research into retinal persistence opened the way for devices of sequential motion. Phenomena we now recognize as proto-cinematic arose directly from the study of how the eye retains an image for a fraction of a second after its disappearance. The discs of the *phenakistoscope* (lot 34), the rotating drums of the *zoetrope* (lot 38), and the prismatic mirror system of Ernst Plank's *praxinoscope* (lot 39) all exploited this principle. The *Pantinoscope* published by the Journal des Demoiselles (lot 34), although structurally different, also relied on retinal persistence to simulate moving imagery, showing how mechanical rotation and perceptual retention were explored in playful domestic forms. At this same turning point in the culture of motion, a further refinement appeared in the form of the cinematographic *folioscope*, a handheld flip-book designed to generate fluid animation through rapid manual paging (lot 40), and subsequently the more sophisticated *Kinora* (lot 45), which automated what had previously been a manual viewing process.

Photography introduced new paradigms of vision, and stereoscopic viewers, (lots 37, 43) trained the observer to interpret depth through binocular fusion. At the same time, Victorian optical culture cultivated a taste for miniaturized curiosities, such as the alabaster *peep-egg* with views of New Brighton (lot 36), which condensed the logic of optical transformation into a pocket-sized object.

Linear scenic narration found expression in scrolling panoramas, notably the Milton Bradley *Historiscope* (lot 35), which relates historical episodes through a continuous strip running between two rollers. The fusion of lantern projection with mechanical motion produced the first cinematographic projection devices, including the late nineteenth-century French cinématographe-lantern (lot 44), equipped with films, reels, and a wooden housing.

From the anamorphic distortions of the seventeenth century to the praxinoscopic discs of the early twentieth, these instruments record not only four centuries of technical progress but also a profound cultural and cognitive evolution. The Western image gradually becomes mobile, reversible, participatory. Each object in the collection, from the simplest peepshow to the most refined praxinoscope, embodies a distinct way of interrogating the relations between light and surface, time and image, observer and representation. Reconstructing this genealogy means understanding how the visual sensibility that still shapes our interaction with photographs, projections, and screens came into being.

1720

CATOPTRIC PROJECTION AND MORAL VISION IN AN EARLY DUTCH ANAMORPHISM

1. *The Beggar, cylindrical catoptric anamorphisms*. Leiden: Jan van Musschenbroek, ca. 1720.

Oblong 4to sheet (375 × 240 mm), hand-coloured etching with engraved details on laid paper, mounted on an early stiff board support; edges trimmed, the corners of the mount folded in the manner characteristic of eighteenth or early nineteenth century backing sheets. One plate only, without accompanying text. The composition consists of a large semicircular anamorphic projection occupying the lower portion of the sheet, structured around a pencilled circular guide intended to receive the cylindrical mirror. Above the arc appear two heavily distorted figures, a gentleman and a beggar, arranged along the curved projection line. Contemporary colours bright and probably original, in red, yellow, turquoise and black.

SOLD

The sheet presents a semicircular anamorphic projection built around a blank circular field reserved for the cylindrical mirror, along whose upper arc run the violently stretched figures of a fashionably dressed gentleman and a staff-supported beggar, their elongated limbs and broken contours legible only through reflection. This carefully calculated distortion, derived from a mathematically organized grid, turns apparent chaos into a coherent genre scene once the mirror is applied. Issued as plate “4” of a larger series, the print exemplifies Leiden cylindrical anamorphisms at the intersection of experimental physics and optical entertainment, likely linked to the pedagogical milieu of the Musschenbroek workshop. Combining geometric precision, striking colours and the moral contrast between wealth and poverty, it functioned both as a didactic illustration of catoptric laws and as a sophisticated object of visual amusement for educated audiences, anticipating later pre-cinematic devices based on controlled image deformation.

CONDITIONS: Slight soiling and minor surface abrasions.

PROVENANCE: 1. Handwritten monogrammed *AVM*, an early reference to the Musschenbroek workshop. 2. Handwritten note *93* in the lower right corner of the mount, likely an inventory number from a later owner or from an unidentified European collection.

REFERENCES: R. BALZER, *Optical Amusements*, Boston: 1987; G. FÜSSLIN and E. HENTZE, *Anamorphosen, geheime Bilderwelten*, Stuttgart: Füsslin Verlag, 1999; G. FÜSSLIN, *Der Guckkasten, Einblick Durchblick Ausblick*, Stuttgart: Füsslin Verlag, 1995; J. BALTRUŠAITIS, *Anamorphoses ou magie artificielle des effets merveilleux*, Paris: Flammarion, 1984; W. NEKES, *Film Before Film, A Visual History of the Moving Image*, New York: 1989.

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1750-1780

SCIENTIFIC AND RECREATIONAL IMAGERY IN ENLIGHTENMENT VISUAL CULTURE

2. *A Street Peddler at his Stall, cylindrical anamorphosis*. Probably France: 1750-1780.

Hand-coloured copper engraving on laid paper (340 × 260 mm), mounted on thin cardboard. The sheet bears a deliberately distorted anamorphic image occupying the lower portion, depicting an elongated male figure in colorful attire with plumed hat beside a curved stall displaying small objects, possibly pigments, medals, or trinkets. A pencil line indicates the position for the cylindrical mirror which, when placed upright, reconstructs the distorted composition into a coherent scene. The example is accompanied by a modern cylindrical mirror demonstrating the optical effect; signature “Laperatoux” on the *verso*.

SOLD

This engraved sheet belongs to the tradition of cylindrical catoptric anamorphosis, a specialized branch of perspectival experimentation widely appreciated in Enlightenment visual culture. When viewed directly the composition appears fragmented and unreadable, but the placement of a cylindrical mirror at the centre restores the image to its correct proportions, revealing the figure of a travelling street vendor beside a small display of goods. Such prints combined artistic ingenuity with geometrical optics and circulated as scientific amusements for cabinets of physics, educational demonstrations, and cultivated domestic entertainment. The sheet illustrates the principle of catoptric projection, whereby a conventional image is mathematically distorted according to the curvature of a reflective cylinder. The viewer therefore encounters two visual states: an apparently chaotic arrangement of coloured fragments and, through the mirror, a coherent narrative scene. This optical transformation made anamorphic prints both instructive and entertaining, inviting spectators to participate in the reconstruction of the image. From the seventeenth through the eighteenth century such devices formed part of a wider culture of optical curiosities that included perspective theatres, peepshows, and magic lantern images. Cylindrical anamorphoses thus stand at the intersection of artistic experimentation, mathematical demonstration, and domestic amusement, illustrating the laws of reflection while functioning as refined visual puzzles for an educated audience.

CONDITIONS: Slight soiling and minor surface abrasions consistent with use as an optical demonstration sheet. The sheet lacks the original cylindrical mirror.

PROVENANCE: From the collection of Jean-Pierre Seguin (1920–2014).

REFERENCES: R. BALZER, *Optical Amusements, Magic Lanterns and Other Transforming Images*, Boston: 1987; G. FÜSSLIN and E. HENTZE, *Anamorphosen, geheime Bilderwelten*, Stuttgart: Füsslin, 1999.

1750-1780

OPTICAL AMUSEMENT AND PLAYING-CARD ICONOGRAPHY
CYLINDRICAL CATOPTRIC ANAMORPHOSIS REPRESENTING THE JACK OF CLUBS

3. *Playing Cards – the Jack of Clubs, cylindrical catoptric anamorphosis*. France: 1750-1780.

Large anamorphic drawing in watercolor and ink on paper (370 × 300 mm), laid down on a secondary support, depicting a distorted image intended for viewing with a cylindrical mirror. The composition forms a wide semicircular band around a central circular area marking the position of the mirror. Outlined in red ink and coloured with washes of black, blue, red, brown and ochre, the elongated fragments recombine in reflection to reveal the Jack of Clubs, identifiable by the club emblem, repeated club motifs on the garment and the halberd held by the figure. The example is illustrated with a modern cylindrical mirror reconstruction on a wooden stand; the original mirror is lacking.

SOLD

Cylindrical mirror anamorphosis belong to the most sophisticated forms of early modern perspectival experimentation, transforming a distorted image into a legible scene through the geometry of reflection. In the present sheet the fragmented forms arranged around the central mirror position recombine to reveal the standing figure of the Jack of Clubs, an image drawn from the widely recognized iconography of French playing cards. Such sheets functioned simultaneously as optical demonstrations and refined visual amusements, inviting viewers to observe the transformation of apparent visual disorder into coherent representation. By the eighteenth-century anamorphic prints had moved from scholarly investigations of catoptric perspective to the sphere of cultivated domestic entertainment, where they illustrated the laws of reflection while engaging audiences through familiar imagery and playful intellectual discovery. Within the broader culture of Enlightenment visual recreations, alongside perspective theatres, optical boxes and later animation devices, these objects exemplify the intersection of scientific curiosity, mathematical ingenuity and popular visual culture.

CONDITIONS: Slight soiling and minor surface abrasions consistent with use as an optical demonstration sheet. The sheet lacks the original cylindrical mirror.

PROVENANCE: From the collection of Jean-Pierre Seguin (1920–2014).

REFERENCES: R. BALZER, *Optical Amusements, Magic Lanterns and Other Transforming Images*, Boston: 1987; G. FÜSSLIN and E. HENTZE, *Anamorphosen, geheime Bilderwelten*, Stuttgart: Füsslin Verlag, 1999.



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1790-1800

FROM DISTORTION TO GRACE: AN OPTICAL GARDEN REIMAGINED
CYLINDRICAL REFLECTIONS IN LATE-ENLIGHTENMENT NUREMBERG

4. BURUCKER, JOHANN MICHAEL, *Gärtnerpaar* ("The Gardener Couple"). Cylindrical anamorphosis from a series of six plates, Nuremberg: Johann Michael Burucker, ca. 1790–1800.

Oblong square sheet (185 × 180 mm), laid paper, now mounted on an old blue paper support visible on the verso. Copperplate engraving, probably etching with burin interventions, printed in black and delicately coloured by hand in watercolour and bodycolour. The composition is arranged as a circular band around a central blank reserve intended for a small cylindrical mirror, with an additional narrow concentric ring marking the correct placement of the device. Lower left border with engraved inscription "I. M. Burucker del. sc. et exc." identifying the artist as designer, engraver and publisher. Lower right corner with small plate number "No. 2", indicating the position within a numbered series of six cylindrical anamorphosis (Füsslin and Hentze). Verso uniformly blue, with scattered foxing and handling marks suggesting an early mounting sheet or backing card.

SOLD

This cylindrical anamorphosis, one of Burucker's scarce late eighteenth-century optical prints, exemplifies the refined interplay between recreational science and domestic visual culture in Enlightenment Nuremberg. The distorted circular band, unreadable to the naked eye, resolves through a polished metal cylinder into a graceful garden tableau of a seated lady and a gentleman in polite conversation, demonstrating Burucker's precise command of catoptric geometry. Part of a documented series of six plates featuring secular genre subjects rather than moralising or religious imagery, the set reflects the period's shift toward polite amusement, sentimental themes and the intellectual pleasures of visual transformation. Produced within a city renowned for scientific instruments, perspective toys and optical novelties, Burucker's work occupies a significant place in the pre-cinematic history of image manipulation, aligning with the broader trade in magic lanterns, peepshows and early perspectival games that catered to an educated bourgeois audience eager for both instruction and delight.

CONDITIONS: Light foxing and surface soiling, with the colours fresh and well preserved; overall a very good, crisp impression of this fragile entertaining print.

REFERENCES: R. BALZER, *Optical Amusements*, Boston: 1987; G. FÜSSLIN and E. HENTZE, *Anamorphosen*, Stuttgart: Füsslin Verlag, 1999; G. FÜSSLIN, *Der Guckkasten, Einblick Durchblick Ausblick*, Stuttgart: Füsslin Verlag, 1995; J. BALTRUŠAITIS, *Anamorphoses ou magie artificielle des effets merveilleux*, Paris: Flammarion, 1984; W. NEKES, *Film Before Film, a Visual History of the Moving Image*, New York: 1989.



Backlit

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1750

HET PLEIN, THE HAGUE: A DAY AND NIGHT VISION IN AN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY «VUE D'OPTIQUE»

5. VUE D'OPTIQUE. *Het Plein in The Hague*. Netherlands: ca. 1750–1780.

Copperplate engraving (410 × 250 mm) in a black cardboard frame (440 x 310 mm), stencil colouring. Manuscript title on verso: *Het Plein in S' Hage*. The sheet is perforated along numerous windows and architectural apertures, designed to create suggestive nocturnal illuminations by backlighting with candle or lantern (the so-called “day-and-night prints”). Colours remain vivid and fresh, with the perforations complete and intact.

€ 350

This print belongs to the genre of *vues d'optique*, designed to be viewed through a zograscope (an optical device with a convex lens and an inclined mirror). Printed in reverse to restore correct perspective when seen through the instrument, these views emphasised the three-dimensional effect, with accentuated vanishing lines and captions often rendered in multiple languages to ensure international appeal.

The vivid stencil colouring was carefully devised to appear even more brilliant through the lens. An additional and particularly striking feature of this specimen is the perforation of the sheet, a rarer but highly desirable practice enhancing the illusion by simulating lit candles, moonlight, illuminated windows, and nocturnal reflections. When observed with backlighting, the scene transformed into a veritable spectacle of lights.

The engraving depicts the celebrated square *Het Plein*, at the heart of The Hague and adjoining the *Binnenhof*, seat of the Dutch government. Created in 1632 on the site of the former garden of the Counts of Holland, *Het Plein* became an emblematic urban space, surrounded by patrician palaces and administrative buildings.

The view presents the tree-lined square animated with figures and soldiers in parade, with the façades of the buildings carefully perforated to reproduce luminous effects.

A crucial element for dating the print is the absence of the equestrian monument to William the Silent, which was erected at the centre of the square only in 1848.

CONDITIONS: Perfectly preserved.

REFERENCES: M. PRÉAUD, *Les estampes populaires françaises au XVIIIe siècle*, Paris: 1980 ; R. BALZER, *Optical Amusements: Magic Lanterns and Other Transforming Images*, New York: 1987; G. FÜSSLIN, *Der Guckkasten*, Verlag, 1995.



Frontlit



Backlit

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1750

DAY AND NIGHT AT THE ROMAN FORUM: A PERFORATED «VUE D'OPTIQUE»

6. VUE D'OPTIQUE. *Vue perspective de l'Arc de Triomphe, ou se passa la Furieuse Proscription sous le Triumvirat d'Antoine, d'Octave et de Lepidus à Rome.* Paris or Rome: ca. 1750–1780.

Copperplate engraving printed in reverse (430 × 300 mm), hand-coloured, perforated for illumination.

€ 400

This remarkable *vue d'optique* depicts a Roman square framed by monumental arcades, leading to a triumphal arch surmounted by a quadriga. The scene, enriched with statues, obelisks, and fountains, refers to the violent proscriptions of Antony, Octavian, and Lepidus, but is rendered through the lens of eighteenth-century fantasy architecture. The foreground is animated with elegantly dressed figures, blurring antiquity with the contemporary civic life familiar to the Enlightenment viewer.

Designed for the zograscope, the print was engraved in reverse to restore correct perspective and to heighten the sense of spatial depth. Its stencil colouring remains vivid and was carefully chosen to intensify when seen through the optical lens. A rarer and striking feature of this specimen is the perforation of façades, windows, and architectural details, intended for illumination with candle or lantern. When backlit, the view transforms into a nocturnal spectacle of flickering lights, simulating moonlit skies and glowing interiors, a prized effect in salons and optical cabinets.

Produced between 1750 and 1780, such perforated day-and-night views were issued by leading Parisian publishers like Chéreau and Basset, though Italian and Roman ateliers also catered to the same market. They reveal the Enlightenment's fascination with Rome as a symbol of imperial grandeur and moral exempla, while uniting entertainment, artistry, and the science of optics.

CONDITIONS: Perfectly preserved.

REFERENCES: M. PRÉAUD, *Les estampes populaires françaises au XVIIIe siècle*, Paris: 1980; R. BALZER, *Optical Amusements: Magic Lanterns and Other Transforming Images*, New York: 1987; G. FÜSSLIN, *Der Guckkasten*, Verlag, 1995.



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1750-1850

THE GRAND TOUR IN THE DRAWING ROOM
A ZOGRASCOPE WITH SIX HAND-COLOURED OPTICAL VIEWS

7. *Zograscope*, optical diagonal magnifying viewer for engraved perspective views, Paris: ca. 1850.

[TOGETHER WITH]

Six hand-coloured engraved optical views (*vues d'optique*), Paris: various publishers, ca. 1750.

Pedestal-mounted zograscope in turned hardwood (height approx. 620 mm), with adjustable column and pivoting viewing head fitted with a large convex lens and diagonal reflective element. Accompanied by six hand-coloured engraved optical views on laid paper (ca. 1750), published in Paris by Daumont, Basset, and Huquier fils, depicting views of Venice, Rome, and Spain, (430 × 330 mm).

€ 1.900

This ensemble brings together a complete zograscopic viewing apparatus and a coherent group of mid-eighteenth-century Parisian optical views, forming a refined example of domestic visual culture at the intersection of science and spectacle. The zograscope operates through the combined action of a convex magnifying lens and a diagonal reflective plane, enlarging the engraved image while correcting its orientation and intensifying the perception of depth. This configuration explains the distinctive visual language of the accompanying prints, characterized by exaggerated perspective, strong orthogonals, and reversed inscriptions, all calibrated for optimal viewing. The six views, issued by leading Parisian publishers including Daumont, Basset, and Huquier fils, depict emblematic sites of Venice, Rome, and Spain, translating the experience of the Grand Tour into a controlled domestic setting. Monumental architecture, formal gardens, and animated staffage figures are orchestrated to produce theatrical compositions that achieve their full effect under magnification. The ensemble encapsulates a broader cultural phenomenon in which printmaking, optical science, and the desire for mediated travel converged, allowing cultivated audiences to explore distant places without leaving the drawing room.

CONDITIONS: The zograscope is structurally complete and fully functional, with minor wear to the wooden surfaces. The original mirror is preserved but replaced with a modern element for optimal viewing. The six optical views show light toning and handling marks, with fresh and well-preserved colours suitable for optical use.

REFERENCES: G. FÜSSLIN, *Der Guckkasten: Einblick, Durchblick, Ausblick*, Zurich: Füsslin Verlag, 1995; R. BALZER, *Optical Amusements and Other Transforming Images*, New York: 1987; H. HECHT, *Pre-Cinema History*, London: Bowker-Saur, 1993; R. HYDE, *Panoramania*, London: Trefoil Publications, 1988.

MARTIN ENGELBRECHT'S DIORAMAS

Martin Engelbrecht (1684–1756) occupies a central and formative position in the history of eighteenth-century optical entertainment and printed illusion, standing at the intersection of engraving, perspectival science, domestic spectacle, and the emergence of serial visual culture. Active in Augsburg, one of the most important centers of printmaking and graphic innovation in Europe, Engelbrecht developed a body of work that transformed the long tradition of architectural perspective and theatrical scenography into portable, interactive objects conceived for private and semi-public viewing. His production reflects both the technical excellence of German engraving and the Enlightenment fascination with controlled illusion, spatial manipulation, and the cognitive mechanisms governing visual perception.

Engelbrecht's dioramas, commonly referred to as *Guckkastenbilder* or perspective peepshow views, represent one of the earliest systematic and sustained attempts to construct spatial depth through successive printed planes rather than through linear perspective alone. These works are composed of multiple engraved and hand-coloured layers, carefully cut and mounted at measured intervals, so that architectural space unfolds progressively as the viewer's eye penetrates the image.

This stratified construction produces a calibrated illusion of recession, light modulation, and volumetric coherence. Unlike flat *vues d'optique*, which rely primarily on optical correction through viewing devices, Engelbrecht's dioramas embed illusion within the object itself. The image thus becomes a spatial apparatus, transforming the act of looking into a performative and participatory experience in which the viewer does not merely observe, but visually inhabits the scene. Engelbrecht organised his dioramas into clearly defined series according to format, each governed by precise conventions of scale, numbering, and intended mode of use. The largest and most ambitious format, in quarto, comprises sixty-seven known dioramas, numbered sequentially from 1 to 67. These works typically present expansive architectural vistas, ceremonial spaces, or theatrical interiors, conceived as miniature stage architectures and demanding a controlled viewing distance. The octavo format, the most extensive and structurally systematic of Engelbrecht's productions, consists of one hundred and fifty-five known dioramas, identified through a complex alphanumeric sequence running from "A" to "7L".

This series constitutes the core of his dioramic output and demonstrates a fully mature logic of seriality, modular construction, and thematic variation, revealing an early industrial conception of image production grounded in repeatability and visual coherence. The smallest format, in duodecimo, includes eighty-nine known dioramas and was designed for more intimate, cabinet-scale viewing.

These compact constructions often focus on condensed urban scenes, interiors, or architectural fragments, distilling the principles of depth and staging into a reduced format without sacrificing optical effectiveness.

The present collection of seventeen dioramas assumes great importance within this framework. Numerically significant in relation to the overall surviving corpus, it also represents a carefully structured ensemble spanning multiple formats and thematic types. Of particular importance is the presence of several examples belonging to the earliest phase of Engelbrecht's activity in this field. These early dioramas document the formative moment in which engraved architecture, theatrical illusion, and optical curiosity coalesce into a coherent and recognisable visual language. Their close examination allows us to trace Engelbrecht's progressive refinement of spatial layering, proportional calibration, chromatic modulation, and cutting techniques, as well as his increasing sophistication in directing the viewer's perceptual expectations and visual trajectory through the image.

Within the broader history of optical entertainments, Engelbrecht's dioramas occupy a pivotal and transitional position. They stand chronologically and conceptually between the perspectival experiments of the seventeenth century and the fully immersive optical spectacles of the nineteenth, such as the panorama and the theatrical diorama. At the same time, they exemplify the domestication of illusion, translating complex spatial and theatrical effects into objects intended for repeated private contemplation. This group of works therefore constitutes not merely a remarkable ensemble of rare survivals, but a coherent visual laboratory in which the foundations of serial imagery, interactive viewing, and modern spatial perception were first articulated with clarity, consistency, and enduring influence.



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1750
FROM QUAY TO OPEN SEA
IN MID-EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY AUGSBURG
MARTIN ENGELBRECHT DIORAMA #56 IN 12MO

8. *Einschiffung* ("The Embarkation"). Augsburg: Martin Engelbrecht, ca. 1750.

Small-format perspective theatre in 12mo (110 × 80 mm), composed of a complete and homogeneous set of six hand-coloured engraved panels on fine paper, precisely die-cut and intended for assembly as a miniature theatrical diorama. Each panel is carefully trimmed to articulate architectural elements, trees, vessels, figures, and rigging, creating successive scenic planes that recede into depth when mounted. The panels are conceived to be viewed frontally through the aperture of the foremost frame, producing a convincing illusion of spatial recession through the progressive narrowing of the visual field. The paper retains its original flexibility and tone, and the chromatic palette, dominated by green-blue waters, muted skies, warm masonry, and vivid accents of costume and flags, remains exceptionally well preserved.

SOLD

This rare small-format perspective theatre belongs to the celebrated Augsburg production of Martin Engelbrecht and is classified as no. 56 within the 12mo series, the most intimate and least frequently encountered format issued by the workshop. The highest known number for this series is no. 89, suggesting a limited total production, while the scarcity of surviving examples reflects the fragility and domestic use of these miniature optical theatres. Across six carefully articulated scenic planes, *Einschiffung* presents an idealized harbor scene structured around the act of departure.

The viewer's gaze is guided from a fortified quay animated by figures and small boats toward progressively wider waters, culminating in an open seascape populated by distant vessels and fluttering flags. This controlled transition from architectural enclosure to maritime expanse exemplifies Engelbrecht's mastery of layered perspective and optical illusion. Devoted to a secular maritime subject rather than biblical or allegorical narrative, the diorama evokes themes of movement, transition, and voyage that resonated strongly in mid-eighteenth-century Europe, an era shaped by expanding trade networks and seafaring ambition. Its refined execution and excellent state of preservation make it a representative and highly desirable example of Engelbrecht's small-format perspective theatres.

CONDITIONS: Perfectly preserved, with fresh hand colouring and clean cut-out apertures.

REFERENCES: A. MILANO, *Martin Engelbrecht Perspektivtheater Dioramen*, Stuttgart: Verlag, 2016, p. 302, no. 56; P. GRANDI, *I Diorami teatrali di Martin Engelbrecht*, 2021.

1750

THEATRICAL SPACE AND SOCIAL CEREMONY: «THE BALLROOM»
MARTIN ENGELBRECHT DIORAMA #D-4 IN 8VO

9. *Perspectivische Vorstellung "Eines schönen Saala"* ("Ballroom"). Augsburg: Martin Engelbrecht, ca. 1750.

8vo diorama (140 x 90 mm), complete set of six hand-coloured engraved panels, carefully cut and intended for sequential assembly within a perspective viewing box. Classified within the Engelbrecht corpus as P. V., catalogue letter D. The panels were conceived to be mounted in succession within a peep theatre, producing a continuous illusionistic recession in depth. The colour palette is dominated by warm ochres, reds, blues, and greens, while architectural elements are rendered through a rigorous linear perspective and the figures articulated by subtle modulation of tone and contour.

SOLD

This medium-format perspective theatre belongs to Martin Engelbrecht's most refined and technically ambitious productions, created in Augsburg during the second quarter of the eighteenth century. Within the Engelbrecht corpus, such dioramas represent the apex of optical complexity, combining architectural rigor with theatrical staging. Surviving evidence suggests a total production of approximately 155 titles in this format, of which a significant number remain unidentified or incompletely recorded, underscoring the relative scarcity of fully preserved examples.

Eines schönen Saala presents an idealized aristocratic ballroom conceived as a sequence of receding architectural planes. From a sculptural and draped proscenium, the scene unfolds into a grand colonnaded hall animated by elegantly dressed figures engaged in courtly interaction, before opening toward a formal garden vista. The composition does not narrate a specific event but evokes ceremonial sociability and refined leisure, translating court culture into a spatial and optical experience. The gradual transition from enclosed interior to open exterior exemplifies Engelbrecht's mastery of perspectival illusion and situates the diorama within the broader pre-cinematographic history of immersive visual entertainment.

CONDITIONS: Perfectly preserved.

REFERENCES: A. MILANO, *Martin Engelbrecht Perspektivtheater Dioramen*, Stuttgart: Verklag, 2016, pp. 116, 123; no. D; P. GRANDI, *I Diorami teatrali di Martin Engelbrecht*, 2021.



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1750

THE GARDEN AS THEATRE: «A GARDEN VIEW»
MARTIN ENGELBRECHT DIORAMA #F-6 IN 8VO

10. *Perspectivische Vorstellung Des Frühlings* ("A Garden View"). Augsburg: Martin Engelbrecht, ca. 1750.

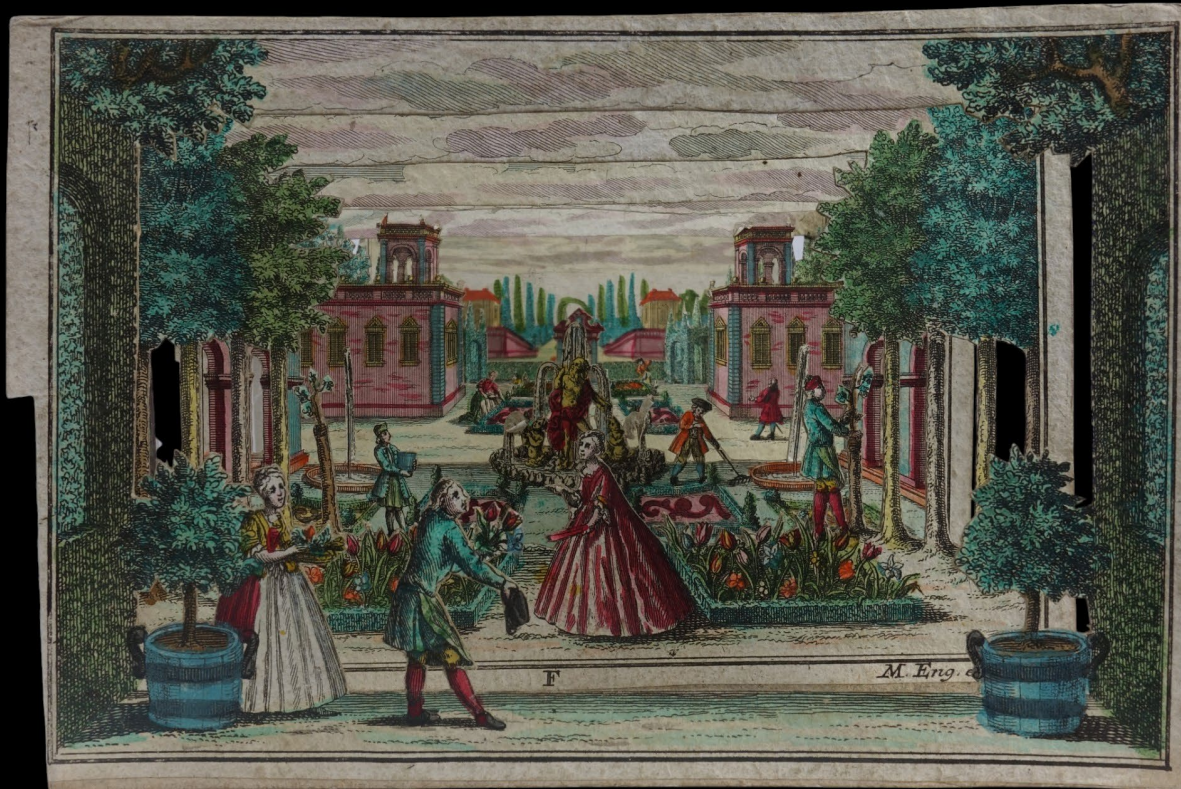
8vo diorama (140 x 90 mm), complete set of six hand-coloured engraved panels. The second and fourth panels bear the engraved inscriptions "C. P. Maj." and "M. Eng. exc. A. V." respectively. Classified as P. V. V (#F) within the Engelbrecht corpus. The panels were conceived to be mounted in succession within a peep theatre, producing a continuous illusionistic recession in depth. The colour palette is dominated by warm ochres, reds, blues, and greens, while architectural elements are rendered through a rigorous linear perspective and the figures articulated by subtle modulation of tone and contour. The cumulative effect is that of a theatrical interior extending perceptually far beyond the physical confines of the viewing box.

SOLD

This diorama belongs to the celebrated series of perspective theatres produced in Augsburg by Martin Engelbrecht during the second quarter of the eighteenth century, representing the medium-format productions, the most complex and visually refined examples issued by the workshop. This format comprised approximately 155 titles, of which a significant number remain unidentified, making fully documented and complete examples such as the present one of particular importance to collectors. *Des Frühlings* presents an idealized formal garden conceived along a rigorous perspectival axis, animated by elegantly dressed figures engaged in polite social interaction and seasonal garden activity. Through a carefully calibrated progression of six scenic planes, the composition guides the viewer from an intimate foreground framed by trees and figures into an expansive architectural landscape articulated by fountains, parterres, avenues, and distant garden structures. The restrained yet harmonious palette, together with the precise cut-out work, reinforces the illusion of depth and spatial continuity. Unlike Engelbrecht's biblical or allegorical scenes, this diorama is devoted to a secular and seasonal subject, celebrating aristocratic leisure, order, and the cultivated relationship between nature and architecture. Its absence of narrative climax places emphasis on spatial construction itself, exemplifying Engelbrecht's mature mastery of perspective theatre as both optical entertainment and refined visual pedagogy within the broader pre-cinematographic tradition of image transformation.

CONDITIONS: Perfectly preserved.

REFERENCES: A. MILANO, *Martin Engelbrecht Perspektivtheater Dioramen*, Stuttgart: Verklag, 2016, pp. 116; no. F; P. GRANDI, *I Diorami teatrali di Martin Engelbrecht*, 2021.



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1750

MARTIN ENGELBRECHT DIORAMA #G-7 IN 8VO
«THE SUMMER»

11. V. *Dess Sommers* (“The Summer”). Augsburg: Martin Engelbrecht, ca. 1750.

8vo diorama (140 x 90 mm), complete set of six hand-coloured engraved plates, handwritten numeration 1 to 6 on the versos. Medium format, corresponding to the Engelbrecht P. V. series. Each plate bears, at the lower margin, the engraver’s signature “C. P. Maj.” and the publisher’s imprint “M. Engelbr. exc. A. V.”. The panels were designed to be assembled sequentially within a viewing box or peep theatre, creating a continuous illusionistic recession in depth. The present example corresponds to catalogue letter G, as recorded in the Engelbrecht corpus, and represents a structurally complete and fully identifiable configuration of the subject *Dess Sommers* (“The Summer”).

SOLD

This diorama forms part of the celebrated series of perspective theatres produced in Augsburg by Martin Engelbrecht in the second quarter of the eighteenth century, belonging to the medium-format group, the most complex and visually refined within the workshop’s production. Within a corpus estimated at approximately 155 titles, the present example represents a fully identified and complete configuration of the subject *Dess Sommers*. The composition presents an idealized rural vision of summer, conceived as a theatrical synthesis of agrarian labor, village life, and seasonal abundance. Across six successive scenic planes, the viewer is guided from an animated foreground of harvest activity, with laborers, tools, hay mounds, and rural enclosures, through progressively widening agricultural landscapes marked by carts, livestock, cultivated fields, and social contrasts between workers and elegantly dressed figures. As the scene recedes, human presence diminishes in favor of open terrain, wooded clearings, and distant pathways, culminating in a final view of a riverside village set against softly contoured hills and mountains. The gradual transition from near labor to distant settlement exemplifies Engelbrecht’s mastery of illusionistic depth and scenic orchestration, transforming everyday rural motifs into a refined optical experience. Devoted entirely to a secular and seasonal subject, P. V. *Dess Sommers* stands apart from Engelbrecht’s biblical or allegorical theatres. Rather than narrating a specific event, it offers an idealized vision of summer as a cyclical moment of productivity, social interaction, and harmony between human activity and the natural world.

CONDITIONS: Overall condition good, with minor age-related patina and excellent preservation of the hand colouring.

REFERENCES: A. MILANO, *Martin Engelbrecht Perspektivtheater Dioramen*, Stuttgart: Verklag, 2016, pp. 116, 126; no. G; P. GRANDI, *I Diorami teatrali di Martin Engelbrecht*, 2021.



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1750

MARTIN ENGELBRECHT DIORAMA #I-9 IN 8VO

«THE WINTER»

12. *Perspectivische Vorstellung dess Winters* ("The Winter"). Augsburg: Martin Engelbrecht, ca. 1750.

8vo perspective diorama (140 × 90 mm), complete set of six hand-coloured engraved panels, the sixth serving as the terminal background, forming a six-layer scenic construction. Copperplate engravings on thin laid paper, delicately hand-coloured in the characteristic Augsburg workshop style of the second quarter of the eighteenth century. Designed for sequential assembly in a perspective viewing box or peep theatre. The second and fourth panels bear the signature "C. P. Maj." and the imprint "M. Engelbr. exc. A. V." Series designation I at the lower margin of several plates.

SOLD

This diorama belongs to Martin Engelbrecht's celebrated medium-format perspective theatres produced in Augsburg during the second quarter of the eighteenth century, catalogued within the P. V. V. series as number I. The medium format represents the most complex and visually refined category within Engelbrecht's production, combining technical precision with sophisticated scenic illusion. Surviving evidence suggests a total output of approximately 155 titles in this format, making fully identified and structurally complete examples such as the present one increasingly scarce.

The Winter presents an idealized seasonal landscape conceived as a theatrical synthesis rather than a specific topographical view. Across six successive layers, the scene progresses from an enclosed village foreground to an open, frozen horizon, constructing a controlled illusion of depth through cut silhouettes, calibrated spacing, and progressively cooled coloration. Human presence diminishes as the eye recedes into the scene, reinforcing the visual and thematic dominance of the winter landscape.

Distinctive within Engelbrecht's seasonal subjects is the discreet narrative tension introduced by the depiction of a figure fallen on the ice, an implicit reminder of the dangers inherent in winter life. This moment of understated drama sets the composition apart from more static or purely decorative scenes, transforming everyday rural motifs into a nuanced meditation on labor, vulnerability and social interdependence.

CONDITIONS: Overall condition good, with minor age-related patina and excellent preservation of the hand colouring.

REFERENCES: A. MILANO, *Martin Enghebrecht Perspektivtheater Dioramen*, Stuttgart: Verlag, 2016, pp. 116, 126; no. I; P. GRANDI, *I Diorami teatrali di Martin Engelbrecht*, 2021.

1750

MARTIN ENGELBRECHT DIORAMA IN 8VO # K-10
DEPICTING A TYPICAL GERMAN «CAVE-PARLOUR»

13. *Perspectivische Vorstellung: einer Cave-Stuben* ("the Cave-Parlor"). Augsburg: Martin Engelbrecht, ca. 1750.

8vo diorama (140 x 90 mm), complete set of six hand-coloured engraved plates, handwritten numeration 1 to 6 on the verso of each plate.

SOLD

This early medium-format perspective theatre by Martin Engelbrecht, classified as P.V. K-10, belongs to the rare and systematically numbered corpus of his Augsburg dioramas, a production whose full extent is still only partially reconstructed. The scene presents an idealized German parlor, conceived as a sequence of six progressively receding planes that guide the viewer from the threshold of a sociable interior to its most exclusive inner space.

The subject celebrates Rococo sociability through a carefully staged narrative of leisure: card playing, conversation, smoking, and finally billiards, each activity assigned to a distinct spatial layer. Engelbrecht's mastery lies not in anecdotal detail but in the orchestration of depth, achieved through the rhythmic alternation of warm and cool colours, repeated furniture motifs, and architectural frames that draw the eye inexorably toward the vanishing point. The empty chair and the advancing servant subtly implicate the viewer, transforming observation into imagined participation.

Produced within the unique context of the Engelbrecht workshop, the only eighteenth-century enterprise specializing exclusively in such optical theatres, this diorama exemplifies the fusion of engraved art, hand colouring, and scientific perspective. It stands as a key precursor to later paper theatres and nineteenth-century domestic optical entertainments, offering collectors a rare, intact survival of German Rococo interior culture rendered through illusionistic printmaking.

CONDITIONS: Perfectly preserved.

REFERENCES: A. MILANO, *Martin Engelbrecht Perspektivtheater Dioramen*, Stuttgart: Verlag, 2016, pp. 116, 129; no. K; P. GRANDI, *I Diorami teatrali di Martin Engelbrecht*, 2021.

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1750

RARE MARTIN ENGELBRECHT DIORAMA IN 8VO # N-13
DEPICTING THE BIBLICAL EPISODE OF «DANIEL IN THE LIONS' DEN»

14. *Perspectivische Vorstellung: Daniel und die Löwen* ("Daniel in the Lions' Den"). Augsburg: Martin Engelbrecht, ca. 1750.

8vo diorama (140 x 90 mm), complete set of six hand-coloured engraved plates, handwritten numeration 1 to 6 on back of plates.

SOLD

This rare medium-format Engelbrecht perspective theatre illustrates the biblical episode of Daniel in the lions' den through a carefully staged sequence of six engraved planes, conceived to generate a striking illusion of depth when assembled. The composition focuses on a moment of suspended tension and quiet faith: Daniel stands serenely in prayer at the centre of the pit, while the lions, rendered calm and submissive, surround him without menace. Above, architectural structures and Roman soldiers frame the scene, reinforcing the dramatic contrast between earthly power and divine protection.

The choice to isolate this precise instant, rather than the narrative resolution, reflects Engelbrecht's sophisticated theatrical sensibility, transforming scripture into a contemplative visual drama. The diorama format functions not merely as illustration but as immersive narrative device, inviting the viewer to experience the miracle spatially rather than sequentially. Produced within the highly specialised Augsburg workshop that, between 1719 and 1770, held an effective monopoly on this form of optical entertainment, the present example belongs to the numbered series of medium-format perspective theatres and is classified as "P.V. N" (no. 13), within a corpus of exceptional rarity.

Engelbrecht's perspective theatres occupy a pivotal position in the pre-cinematographic history of visual culture, situated between devotional imagery, domestic spectacle, and early optical experimentation. This diorama exemplifies the workshop's technical refinement, iconographic ambition, and ability to merge religious narrative with illusionistic space, qualities that continue to make such works highly sought after by advanced collectors of optical and theatrical art.

CONDITIONS: Perfectly preserved.

REFERENCES: A. MILANO, *Martin Engelbrecht Perspektivtheater Dioramen*, Stuttgart: Verklag, 2016, pp. 116, 132; no. N; P. GRANDI, *I Diorami teatrali di Martin Engelbrecht*, 2021.



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1750

MARTIN ENGELBRECHT DIORAMA IN 8VO # P-15

DEPICTING THE BIBLICAL EPISODE OF «JESUS CHRIST IN THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE»

15. *Perspectivische Vorstellung: des Oelbergs* ("Garden of Gethsemane"). Augsburg: Martin Engelbrecht, ca. 1750.

8vo diorama (150 x 90 mm), complete set of six hand-coloured engraved plates, handwritten numeration 1 to 6 on the verso of each plate.

SOLD

This medium-format perspectival diorama belongs to the early phase of Martin Engelbrecht's production and illustrates one of the most emotionally charged episodes of the Passion, Christ's agony in the Garden of Gethsemane. Composed of six finely cut and hand-coloured panels, the scene unfolds as a theatrical progression culminating in a fully reconstructed tableau when viewed in depth, combining devotional subject matter with sophisticated optical illusion.

Each successive layer advances the narrative from human frailty to divine resignation: the sleeping disciples, Christ in solitary prayer attended by the angel bearing the chalice, and the ominous approach of Judas and the armed guards. The perspectival layering, dense vegetation and distant city of Jerusalem create a carefully staged spatial depth that transforms biblical meditation into an immersive visual experience. The fusion of sacred iconography with theatrical scenography exemplifies Engelbrecht's distinctive ability to adapt complex religious narratives to domestic optical entertainments.

Produced in Augsburg under imperial privilege, Engelbrecht's perspectival theatres occupy a central place in the history of pre-cinematographic visual culture. The present example is classified as *P.V. P* (#15) within the known corpus of medium-format dioramas, a group of which only a limited number of titles has survived.

CONDITIONS: Few marks of use in the last panel; overall perfectly preserved.

REFERENCES: A. MILANO, *Martin Engelbrecht Perspektivtheater Dioramen*, Stuttgart: Verklag, 2016, pp. 116, 134; no. P; P. GRANDI, *I Diorami teatrali di Martin Engelbrecht*, 2021.



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1750

A BIBLICAL VISION IN PERSPECTIVE
MARTIN ENGELBRECHT'S «ADORATION OF THE MAGI»
DIORAMA #R 17 IN 8VO

16. *Perspectivische vorstellung der Heyligen 3 Könige* ("The Three Wise Men"). Augsburg: Martin Engelbrecht, ca. 1750.

8vo diorama (140 x 90 mm), complete set of six hand-coloured engraved plates, precisely cut, with handwritten numeration 1 to 6 on the versos.

SOLD

This diorama belongs to the celebrated series of perspective theatres produced in Augsburg by Martin Engelbrecht in the second quarter of the eighteenth century and is classified as P. V. R. no. 17 within the Engelbrecht corpus. It forms part of the medium-format productions, regarded as the most complex and visually refined of the three sizes issued by the workshop. Within the surviving corpus, it represents a fully identified, iconographically coherent, and structurally complete example of Engelbrecht's biblical perspective theatres.

Devoted to the Adoration of the Magi, the scene is conceived not as a single static image but as a processional narrative unfolding through successive spatial layers. Architecture, figures, and landscape are arranged to guide the viewer gradually from an enclosed monumental proscenium toward an open and distant horizon. The six hand-coloured panels, printed on fine Augsburg paper and cut with exceptional precision, assemble into a deeply receding vista that transforms flat engravings into a convincing theatrical illusion.

The chromatic range is restrained yet luminous, with careful hand colouring applied consistently across all planes to reinforce spatial continuity and narrative clarity. Architectural apertures, arcades, and figures are articulated with particular refinement, enhancing the illusion of depth and movement. The gradual transition from monumental architecture to open landscape mirrors both the physical journey of the Magi and the didactic aims of eighteenth-century optical entertainments, in which sacred history, visual pleasure, and perspectival pedagogy converge. Within Engelbrecht's production, this diorama stands as a mature and exemplary synthesis of theatrical invention, technical mastery, and devotional imagery.

CONDITIONS: Perfectly preserved.

REFERENCES: A. MILANO, *Martin Engelbrecht Perspektivtheater Dioramen*, Stuttgart: Verklag, 2016, pp. 116, 136, no. R; P. GRANDI, *I Diorami teatrali di Martin Engelbrecht*, 2021.



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1750

MARTIN ENGELBRECHT DIORAMA # V-20 IN 8VO

«A MARITIME SCENE»

17. *Perspectivische Vorstellung: einer Schiffarth* ("A maritime scene"). Augsburg: Martin Engelbrecht, ca. 1750.

8vo diorama (140 x 90 mm), complete set of six hand-coloured engraved plates, handwritten numeration 1 to 6 on back of plates.

SOLD

This diorama belongs to the celebrated series of perspective theatres produced in Augsburg by Martin Engelbrecht in the second quarter of the eighteenth century, and it forms part of the medium-format productions, the most complex and visually accomplished of the three sizes issued by the workshop. On the basis of surviving numbering, the medium series is believed to have comprised approximately 155 titles, of which several remain unidentified or incomplete, a context that enhances the documentary and collecting importance of the present, fully identified and structurally complete example.

Composed of six precisely cut and hand-coloured engraved panels, the work constructs a deeply receding maritime vista that transforms flat engravings into a convincing three-dimensional theatrical illusion. The restrained yet luminous palette, dominated by green-blue seas, atmospheric clouds and carefully accented sails, flags and architectural details, reinforces the sense of depth and movement. The progressive spatial articulation leads the viewer from a fortified harbour entrance, animated by figures and commercial activity, through increasingly open waters populated by ships of varying scale, culminating in a distant fleet against a low coastal horizon. Unlike Engelbrecht's biblical or allegorical perspective theatres, this diorama is devoted entirely to a secular maritime subject. It offers an idealized vision of naval power, trade and seafaring spectacle rather than a specific historical event. The absence of narrative climax shifts attention to the mastery of perspective, scenic layering and optical illusion, underscoring the dual function of these works as refined domestic entertainments and demonstrations of spatial construction. Produced under imperial privilege, the Engelbrecht workshop was the sole European centre capable of achieving this level of technical and illusionistic sophistication.

CONDITIONS: Perfectly preserved.

REFERENCES: A. MILANO, *Martin Engelbrecht Perspektivtheater Dioramen*, Stuttgart: Verlag, 2016, pp. 139; no. V; GRANDI, *I Diorami teatrali di Martin Engelbrecht*, 2021.



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1750

A SECULAR MARITIME SCENE IN PERSPECTIVE
MARTIN ENGELBRECHT'S «THE FISHERY»
DIORAMA #WW 35 IN 8VO

18. *Perspectivische vorstellung einen Fischerey* ("The Fishery"). Augsburg: Martin Engelbrecht, ca. 1750.

8vo diorama (140 x 90 mm), complete set of six hand-coloured engraved plates, precisely cut, with handwritten numeration 1 to 6 on the versos.

SOLD

This medium-format perspective theatre belongs to the celebrated Augsburg production of Martin Engelbrecht and is classified as P. V. WW (no. 35) within his corpus. The medium-format series represents the most complex and visually refined of the three sizes issued by the workshop, with an estimated total production of approximately 155 titles, many of which are now lost or remain unidentified.

Devoted to a secular fishing scene, *The Fishery* unfolds as a carefully structured sequence of riverine and maritime views articulated across six scenic planes. The imagery progresses from figures engaged in preparatory activity along wooded banks, through scenes of coordinated net fishing within confined waterways, toward increasingly open river landscapes and, in the final plate, a broad seascape animated by a fleet of sailing vessels. This gradual spatial expansion, achieved through controlled recession, reduction of scale, and calibrated cut apertures, exemplifies Engelbrecht's mastery of optical depth and theatrical illusion.

Unlike the artist's biblical perspective theatres, this diorama presents no narrative climax. Instead, it emphasizes continuity of labor, spatial rhythm, and visual coherence, aligning the work with the didactic and recreational aims of eighteenth-century optical entertainments intended for domestic viewing.

CONDITIONS: Perfectly preserved.

REFERENCES: A. MILANO, *Martin Engelbrecht Perspektivtheater Dioramen*, Stuttgart: Verklag, 2016, pp. 117,164, no. WW; P. GRANDI, *I Diorami teatrali di Martin Engelbrecht*, 2021.



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1750

RARE MARTIN ENGELBRECHT DIORAMA IN 4TO #11
REPRESENTING A TEMPEST AT SEA AND A SHIPWRECK SCENE

19. *Präsentation eines gefährlichen Schiffbruchs* ("Presentation of a Perilous Shipwreck"), Martin Engelbrecht, ca. 1750.

4to diorama (205 x 175 mm), complete set of seven hand-coloured engraved plates, numbered 71 (Proscenium) – 72 – 73 – 74 – 75 – 76 – 77 (final background scene).

SOLD

This large-format Engelbrecht perspective theatre belongs to the rarest category of the Augsburg master's production. While Engelbrecht's dioramas were predominantly issued in octavo, quarto examples are exceptionally scarce. Scholarly consensus identifies only sixty-seven large-format dioramas across the entire corpus, with the present work recorded as number 11, placing it among the earliest and most sought-after survivals of this ambitious scale.

The scene depicts a violent tempest at sea culminating in a dramatic shipwreck. In the foreground, castaways struggle amid floating debris, while successive planes lead the eye toward a dismasted vessel in extremis. Two intact ships appear to advance from the distance, introducing a narrative tension between imminent catastrophe and possible rescue. The carefully graduated planes intensify the illusion of depth and heighten the emotional impact, transforming the diorama into a theatrical tableau of peril and human vulnerability.

Produced in Augsburg between 1719 and 1770, Engelbrecht's perspective theatres represent a singular convergence of printmaking, scenography and optical illusion. The workshop, operating under imperial privilege and unrivalled technical expertise, developed sophisticated methods of copperplate engraving, hand colouring, die-cutting and layered assembly. These works were conceived both as refined domestic entertainments and as demonstrations of perspectival ingenuity, anticipating later pre-cinematographic visual culture. In this context, the shipwreck subject aligns with eighteenth-century tastes for dramatic natural forces, moral reflection and the spectacle of catastrophe, making this diorama a compelling example of Enlightenment-era visual imagination rendered in three-dimensional print.

CONDITIONS: Perfectly preserved.

REFERENCES: A. MILANO, *Martin Engelbrecht Perspektivtheater Dioramen*, Stuttgart: Verlag, 2016, pp. 30, 44; no. 11; P. GRANDI, *I Diorami teatrali di Martin Engelbrecht*, 2021.

1750

MARTIN ENGELBRECHT DIORAMA IN 4TO #15

«A FAIRGROUND SCENE»

20. *Presentation eines Jahrmarkt* ("A Fairground Scene"). Augsburg: Martin Engelbrecht, ca. 1750.

4to diorama (190 x 170 mm), composed of five individually etched and hand-coloured copper-engraved sheets, cut and intended to be assembled into a layered theatrical construction. The plates are numbered consecutively from 96 to 100, with plate 98 lacking. The sheets are printed on thin laid paper suitable for precise die-cutting and are hand-coloured in transparent washes typical of Engelbrecht's Augsburg workshop, with a palette dominated by reds, greens, yellows, and blues. Architectural elements are defined by fine linear engraving, while the figures are rendered with greater chromatic emphasis to enhance legibility and depth once assembled.

SOLD

This quarto perspective theatre presents a vividly animated urban fair unfolding along a narrow street framed by tall bourgeois façades, whose windows are enlivened by spectators observing the scene below. Conceived as a carefully graduated sequence of visual planes, the composition guides the viewer from the densely populated foreground toward a distant theatrical climax, creating a striking illusion of depth and narrative continuity.

In the foreground, townspeople of varying ages and social roles animate the street through conversation, trade, and casual movement, immediately immersing the viewer in the fair's atmosphere. Subsequent planes introduce stalls and merchants, their measured perspectival recession reinforcing the sensation of spatial expansion. Although one intermediate plate is lacking, the intended progression remains legible through comparison with documented Engelbrecht examples. The background culminates in a raised stage hosting a performance, transforming everyday urban life into a fully theatrical spectacle and deliberately blurring the boundary between public entertainment and staged illusion.

Produced within the highly restricted corpus of large-format Engelbrecht dioramas, this work belongs to the exceptionally rare quarto series, long regarded as the most ambitious and sophisticated expression of the Augsburg workshop's optical and theatrical experimentation. Its format, subject matter, and preserved colouring place it among the most desirable manifestations of early eighteenth-century domestic visual culture.

CONDITIONS: Light browning; overall a good copy, despite the absence of one plate.

REFERENCES: A. MILANO, *Martin Engelbrecht Perspektivtheater Dioramen*, Stuttgart: Verlag, 2016, pp. 30, 48; no. 15; P. GRANDI, *I Diorami teatrali di Martin Engelbrecht*, 2021.

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1750

RARE MARTIN ENGELBRECHT DIORAMA IN 4TO #20
REPRESENTING A GROUP OF PANDOUR SOLDIERS TRAINING IN THE FIELD

21. *Panduren-Exercitien in ihrem Lager* ("Pandurer training in the fields"). Augsburg: Martin Engelbrecht, ca. 1750.

4to diorama (210 x 160 mm), complete set of seven hand-coloured engraved plates, numbered 125 (Proscenium) – 126 – 127 – 128 – 129 – 130 (final background scene). On the verso of each sheet, a small modern adhesive label indicates the provenance, recorded as the Hanau collection.

SOLD

This exceptionally rare quarto perspective theatre, number 20 within the limited large-format series recorded for Engelbrecht, exemplifies the most ambitious scale of his optical productions. While Engelbrecht's dioramas were predominantly issued in octavo, the quarto format represents a small, elite group of works intended to maximize theatrical depth and visual impact. Scholarly consensus accepts a total of sixty-seven quarto dioramas, underscoring the scarcity of the present example. The scene depicts a Pandour encampment rendered not as a battlefield but as a disciplined spectacle of controlled movement and bodily skill. Across seven successive planes, the viewer encounters acrobatic exercises, coordinated drills, and communal camp activity, all framed by a formal proscenium that transforms military life into staged performance. The progressive recession from animated foreground figures to a calm, idealized landscape background creates a carefully calibrated illusion of depth, characteristic of Engelbrecht's mature workshop practice. Produced within the unique context of Augsburg's Enlightenment culture of optical amusement, the diorama reflects contemporary fascination with irregular troops, perceived as exotic and formidable, yet here subtly domesticated for educated, bourgeois audiences. Combining martial imagery with theatrical artifice, the work occupies a liminal space between military representation, popular spectacle, and scientific curiosity, positioning it firmly within the pre-cinematic history of immersive visual entertainment.

CONDITIONS: Light browning; overall, a very good copy.

PROVENANCE: Formerly in the collection of Dietger Dröse (1939–2021), distinguished German collector and scholar of paper theatre in Hanau, co-founder of the Hanau Paper Theatre Museum at Schloss Philippsruhe.

REFERENCES: A. MILANO, *Martin Engelbrecht Perspektivtheater Dioramen*, Stuttgart: Verklag, 2016, pp. 30, 54–55; no. 20; P. GRANDI, *I Diorami teatrali di Martin Engelbrecht*, 2021.



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1750

MARTIN ENGELBRECHT DIORAMA IN 4TO #36
«PRESENTATION OF A SWABIAN PEASANT WEDDING»
EXTREMELY RARE, FULL-MARGINED EXAMPLE

22. *Praesentation eines Dorf-Festes - Präsentation einer Schwäbischen Bauern Hochzeit* ("Presentation of a Village Festival - Presentation of a Swabian Peasant Wedding"). Augsburg: Martin Engelbrecht, ca. 1750.

4to diorama (250 x 200 mm), complete set of six hand-coloured engraved plates, in full margins, numbered 233–238 (final background scene). On the verso of each sheet, a small modern adhesive label records the provenance as the Hanau collection.

SOLD

Engelbrecht's perspective theatres were predominantly issued in 8vo format, while quarto examples are exceedingly rare, particularly when complete and well preserved. Of the 67 large-format dioramas currently known, the present work corresponds to number 36, a figure generally accepted by scholarship despite the absence of definitive archival confirmation. The composition unfolds through six superimposed scenic planes, conceived to be arranged from foreground to background in order to generate a striking illusion of depth. Finely engraved and delicately hand-coloured, each plate is carefully cut with extensive openwork, allowing the successive layers to interact visually and guide the eye toward a coherent vanishing point.

The narrative progresses from the animated village street in the foreground, populated by onlookers, animals, and humorous rustic details, through increasingly ordered groups of dancers and celebrants, culminating in the wedding feast beneath a central pavilion, before dissolving into a calm pastoral landscape in the final background. Scenes of rural festivity belong to Engelbrecht's most engaging genre subjects. They combine theatrical spectacle with ethnographic curiosity, offering an idealized yet lively vision of provincial customs and communal rituals. The balance between humor, compositional rigor, and animated detail exemplifies the maturity of Engelbrecht's diorama production and situates the work at the intersection of printmaking, optical illusion, and domestic entertainment in the mid-eighteenth century.

CONDITIONS: An exceptionally rare example, full-margined and very well preserved.

PROVENANCE: Formerly in the collection of Dietger Dröse (1939–2021), distinguished German collector and scholar of paper theatre in Hanau, co-founder of the Hanau Paper Theatre Museum at Schloss Philippsruhe.

REFERENCES: A MILANO, *Martin Enghelbrecht Perspektivtheater Dioramen*, Stuttgart: Verklag, 2016, pp. 31, 74–75; no. 36; P GRANDI, *I Diorami teatrali di Martin Engelbrecht*, 2021.



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1750

RARE MARTIN ENGELBRECHT DIORAMA IN 4TO #49
REPRESENTING A «GALLANT PASTORAL COMPANY» DANCING SCENE

23. *Praesentation einer galanten Schäffer Compagnie* ("Presentation of a Gallant pastoral company"), Martin Engelbrecht, ca. 1750.

4to diorama (205 × 175 mm), complete set of seven hand-coloured engraved plates, numbered 323–329 (proscenium to final background), cut and assembled with small cardboard braces into an accordion-style optical peepshow.

SOLD

This large-format Engelbrecht perspective theatre represents one of the rarest and most desirable expressions of eighteenth-century domestic optical entertainment. While Engelbrecht's dioramas were predominantly issued in 8vo, quarto examples are exceptionally scarce, with only sixty-seven titles recorded in this format, the present work being number 49 within that corpus. Its survival in complete and pristine condition markedly enhances its collecting significance.

The scene stages an idealized Rococo pastoral fête, where aristocratic figures, elegantly costumed as shepherds and shepherdesses, enact a gallant dance within a carefully constructed garden setting. The succession of cut-out planes, from the ornate Rococo proscenium to the distant Italianate garden backdrop, creates a refined illusion of theatrical depth, transforming the viewer into a privileged spectator of an intimate courtly performance. Such imagery reflects the eighteenth-century fascination with pastoral masquerade, in which rural simplicity is reimagined through aristocratic taste and artifice.

Produced in Augsburg under imperial privilege, Engelbrecht's dioramas occupy a central position in the pre-cinematographic history of image-making. They combine technical virtuosity in copperplate engraving and die-cutting with sophisticated scenographic design, anticipating later developments in optical toys and visual illusion. This example stands as a mature and highly accomplished work within Engelbrecht's oeuvre, embodying the convergence of decorative printmaking, theatrical culture and Enlightenment-era visual amusement.

CONDITIONS: Perfectly preserved.

REFERENCES: A. MILANO, *Martin Enghelbrecht Persperktivtheater Dioramen*, Stuttgart: Verklag, 2016, pp. 32, 92; no. 49; P. GRANDI, *I Diorami teatrali di Martin Engelbrecht*, 2021.



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1760

DAILY LIFE IN THE CITY OF AUGSBURG

24. *Scène de ville Augsbourg*. Augsburg: after Martin Engelbrecht, ca. 1760.

8vo diorama (110 x 60 mm), complete set of 6 hand-coloured engraved plates, *verso* with handwritten scene number and *No. 665*. The diorama is preserved and displayed in a tailor-made wood, paper, and glass box, that allows it to be displayed in the proper way, as it was originally intended.

SOLD

The diorama depicts scenes of daily life in the city of Augsburg, where Engelbrecht lived, showing figures surrounded by three-dimensional city architecture, engaged in walking and social life, carriages, gentlemen on horseback, and related urban activities. The work consists of six finely hand-coloured copper engravings, assembled in sequence to create three-dimensional effects of depth and perspective, anticipating the modern concept of miniature theatre and stereoscopic vision.

Between 1719 and 1770, the Engelbrecht family's print workshop in Augsburg, Germany, was the only one to produce this type of art object designed to astonish the eye. Martin Engelbrecht, an innovator and master printmaker in the field of illustrated and decorative arts, established his own publishing house together with his brother Christian. They were assisted by artists Jeremias Wachsmuth and Johan David Messenthaler in the production of the designs. Their print shop, granted an imperial privilege, was the only one with the technical and iconographic resources to carry out this imaginative project of exclusively producing lacquered and cut-out images.

The diorama print sheets were created using etched copper plates on thin paper suitable for cutting. The engraver typically started with a two-dimensional optical view and built the same scene on multiple layers to create three dimensions. Three different diorama formats were produced, small, medium, and large, ranging from four to eight scenic elements with interchangeable backgrounds. Each sheet was cut and glued onto various overlapping sheets of paper, often repurposed materials such as letter paper, inventory sheets, sheet music, or pages from used books, and more rarely on cardboard to provide rigidity to the panels. Each element was meticulously cut out, especially the inner parts, and the buyer could purchase them either already cut and painted, or loose and uncut but colored, to be cut out later.



Click for wider description
and HD images

Engelbrecht's dioramas captured a variety of scenes, from everyday life in bustling cities to elaborate biblical stories and fantastical landscapes. Each diorama consisted of several cut-out panels that, when viewed through a peephole, created a sense of depth and realism, making the scenes come alive. These works were highly prized for their artistic beauty and the skill required to produce them. Engelbrecht's ability to transform flat engravings into layered, immersive experiences marked a significant innovation in the art of printmaking and set a standard for future artists in this medium.

Throughout his career, Martin Engelbrecht produced a vast number of these three-dimensional dioramas, each showcasing his meticulous attention to detail and creative vision.

CONDITIONS: The lower margin, which originally had the inscriptions *Cum Priv. S.C. Maj. - Mart. Engelbrecht excud. A. V.*, has been trimmed; a good copy.

REFERENCES: P. GRANDI, *I Diorami teatrali di Martin Engelbrecht*, 2021.



1828

A RARE LONDON PEEPSHOW ANTICIPATING
THE THAMES TUNNEL FIFTEEN YEARS BEFORE ITS COMPLETION

25. *A View of the Tunnel under the Thames, as it will appear when completed.* London: S. F. Gouyn, 7 Fish Street Hill, 1828.

Oblong format (115 × 140 mm when closed, 600 mm when fully extended). Optical paper peepshow composed of a front card panel with printed title and oval viewing aperture, followed by a sequence of progressively cut engraved sheets forming receding architectural arches. The panels are connected by paper accordion bellows along the upper and lower margins, creating a telescopic perspective when viewed through the peephole. Copperplate engravings, probably combining line engraving and aquatint, finished with contemporary hand colouring. Decorative border to the front panel with explanatory printed text concerning the engineering work. Preserved in the original publisher's paper wallet sleeve with printed label indicating title, publication information, and pricing for different editions.

SOLD

First engraved state of the Thames Tunnel peepshow, published Feb. 1, 1828 by S. F. Gouyn and preserved in the original Dec. 1828 publisher's wallet. This rare optical toy belongs to the early nineteenth-century tradition of paper peepshows or telescopic views, a form of printed amusement that combined popular optics, theatrical illusion, and contemporary spectacle. Through a carefully constructed sequence of engraved panels, the viewer perceives a deep architectural perspective representing the projected interior of Brunel's Thames Tunnel, one of the most celebrated engineering enterprises of the Industrial Revolution. The explanatory text on the front panel refers to the flooding disaster of May 1827 and outlines the planned dimensions of the tunnel, transforming the object into a compact vehicle of technical popularisation. Issued while the tunnel was still under construction, the peepshow offered the public a visual anticipation of a monumental work that would not open until 1843. Such objects illustrate how early nineteenth-century print culture translated industrial innovation into domestic visual entertainment, circulating images of technological progress through inexpensive yet sophisticated optical devices.

CONDITIONS: Light overall browning and minor handling marks. The explanatory sheet shows small tears from paper acidity; the original wallet sleeve presents moderate wear and rubbing.

REFERENCES: J. CRARY, *Techniques of the Observer*, Cambridge: 1990; E. MARTIN and A. AUSTIN, *Book Theater: The History of the Tunnel Book, Suave Mechanicals*, 2010; B. M. STAFFORD and F. TERPAK, *Devices of Wonder*, Los Angeles: 2001; *A View of the Tunnel under the Thames*, Museum of London, Docklands Collection, no. 29.116a.



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and HD images](#)



1835

«BAYRAM», END OF THE RAMADAN FAST, IN CONSTANTINOPLE:
A CONCERTINA PEEPSHOW OF FESTIVAL LIFE

26. *La fête du Bairam à Constantinople. Das Bairams-Fest in Constantinopel. The Bairam at Konstantinopel.* Probably France or the German lands: ca. 1835.

Oblong 8vo concertina-folding hand-coloured lithographed peepshow (box 175 × 230 mm, extending ca. 860 mm), with six cut-out panels and a back scene, viewed through five apertures in the pictorial lid. Polychrome hand-colour throughout; stage-like layered construction designed for parallax depth when viewed through the apertures.

SOLD

This refined optical theatre presents one of the most vivid portable interpretations of the *Sheker-Bayram* festivities, converting a small domestic object into a persuasive illusion of a crowded Constantinopolitan thoroughfare animated by acrobats, performers and spectators converging toward the port. The carefully calibrated cut-out planes, arranged along the concertina structure, collaborate with the five distinct apertures to orchestrate a shifting sequence of viewpoints that invites the observer to move laterally across the lid. This subtle choreography of looking, characteristic of the most accomplished nineteenth century peepshows, heightens depth perception and reveals the designer's sophisticated command of parallax, occlusion and controlled visual narrative.

The device exemplifies the mature telescopic view, a format that thrived in the second quarter of the century and translated baroque scenic principles into affordable domestic entertainment. Within this lineage, the present example stands out for the precision of its lithography, the clarity of its silhouettes and the rich hand-applied colours that reinforce spatial recession. Its trilingual titling bears witness to the brisk transnational circulation of Ottoman themes, aligning the peepshow with a broader European appetite for images of festival life in Constantinople, frequently amplified by travel literature, illustrated journalism and commercial Orientalist imagery. The object offers a concise didactic demonstration of the mechanics of vision, allowing several observers simultaneously to compare viewpoints and discuss the representation of unfamiliar customs. As such, it straddles multiple domains, serving as an accessible instrument of optical education, a vehicle for cross-cultural curiosity and a portable fragment of theatrical scenography adapted for the parlour.

CONDITIONS: A very good copy.

REFERENCES: R. HYDE, *Paper Peepshows: The Jacqueline and Jonathan Gestetner Collection*, London: 1997, no. 103; VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, *Paper Peepshows and the Baroque Stage*: [Paper peepshows · V&A](#).

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and HD images

«POLYORAMAS», LIGHT, AND THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY IMAGINATION

In the nineteenth century, long before photography and cinema reshaped the experience of images, visual wonder was already understood as a process rather than a static result. Seeing meant discovering, revealing, and transforming. The *polyorama* belongs to this cultural moment, when light itself became the active agent of illusion and the viewer was invited to participate in the act of vision.

The four objects presented in this section form a unified narrative of this ambition. Together, they trace the development of one of the most subtle and intellectually engaging optical entertainments of the period, in which architecture, landscape, and daily life were animated through the simple yet ingenious alternation of illumination. What appears at first as a peaceful daytime scene could, with a change of light, become a nocturnal vision filled with glowing windows, moonlit streets, or theatrical illumination. The image did not change, yet perception did. At the heart of this experience lies the *polyorama panoptique*, conceived as a domestic apparatus that condensed the spectacular effects of the diorama into a manageable, interior scale. Using specially prepared images printed on paper and carefully treated to respond differently to frontal or rear illumination, the *polyorama panoptique* transformed looking into a temporal experience. Day gave way to night, calm to animation, and architecture itself seemed to awaken. These instruments were produced in three different sizes, each corresponding to a different degree of visual immersion and domestic presence, and the three *polyorama panoptiques* presented here, each in a distinct format, allow this graduated conception to be fully appreciated. Yet the *polyorama*'s story does not end with the box-form instrument.

Its most refined and demanding expression is found in the *polyorama lorgnette*, a hand-held device that translates the same principle into an intimate and portable format. Reduced in scale but increased in optical ambition, the *lorgnette* required greater precision, greater luminosity, and a more active involvement of the viewer. The act of viewing became tactile: images were inserted one by one, shutters were opened and closed, and light was consciously directed. Vision was no longer passive; it was performed. This reduction in scale came at a cost. Portability meant vulnerability. Image sets were easily dispersed, instruments were more prone to wear, and completeness became rare. For this reason, the survival of a *polyorama lorgnette* together with an extensive and coherent group of original transforming views is exceptional. When such a lorgnette is further equipped with a high-performance optical system designed to maximise clarity and brightness, it stands not merely as a curiosity but as a culmination of the *polyorama* tradition.

Seen as a group, the four lots presented here articulate a continuous progression: from the architectural presence of the *polyorama panoptique*, through its variations in scale, to the concentrated sophistication of the *lorgnette*. They document a way of thinking about images in which light, time, and perception are inseparable, and in which the viewer is invited to discover that what is seen depends as much on how one looks as on what is shown.



INTERACTIVE VIEWER SIMULATING THE TRANSITION BETWEEN STANDARD AND
BACK-LIT ILLUMINATION, AS ORIGINALLY EXPERIENCED THROUGH THE POLYORAMA

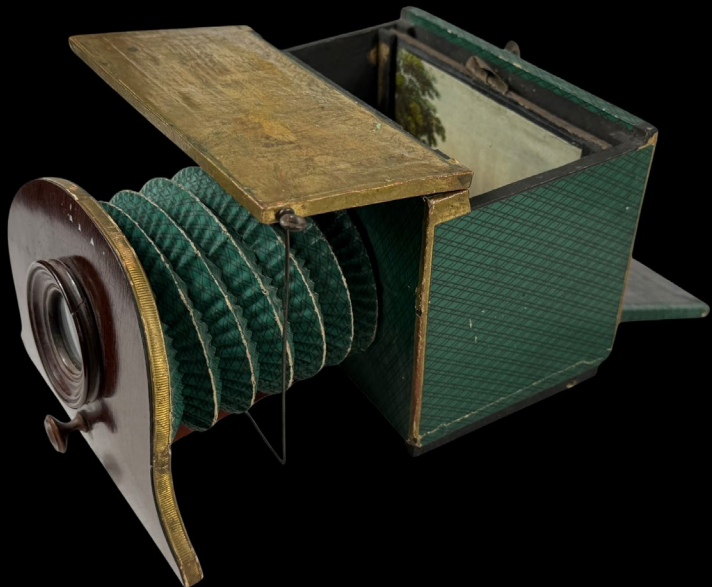


Day view



Night view

[Click to Explore the Day/Night Effect](#)



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1850

DOMESTIC OPTICAL ENTERTAINMENT IN MID-NINETEENTH-CENTURY PARIS:
THE SMALL-SIZE «POLYORAMA PANOPTIQUE» AND ITS TRANSFORMING VIEWS

27. LEFORT, PIERRE-HENRI AMAND (INVENTOR). *Polyorama Panoptique*. Paris: Lemaire, opticien, ca. 1850.

Small-format Polyorama Panoptique, rectangular wooden viewing box (160 × 250 × 130 mm), covered with green patterned paper, with gilt-edged paper label on the hinged upper lid. Mahogany front panel with moulded ocular surround and single circular lens (31 mm diameter), fitted with collapsible green paper bellows for focus adjustment. Hinged lid and rear aperture for light modulation, allowing alternation between reflected and transmitted illumination. Interior vertical slot for image panels. Lid label bearing the designation “Brevet d’Invention S.G. du Gouv.” Accompanied by ten original transforming picture panels, each on its original wooden mount, image area approx. 144 × 97 mm, hand-coloured, with perforations and translucent passages for day-and-night effects.

€ 2.000

The Polyorama Panoptique stands among the most sophisticated forms of nineteenth-century domestic optical entertainment, translating the visual spectacle of public dioramas into an intimate apparatus intended for private use. Through the controlled alternation of front and back illumination, each panel undergoes a carefully orchestrated transformation, most often from daylight to nocturnal scene, activating windows, architectural interiors, ceremonial lighting, and urban atmospheres. This small-format example belongs to the most compact of the three standard sizes produced, yet fully embodies the mature technical principles of the type. Its reduced scale enhances the immediacy of viewing, reinforcing the Polyorama’s role as a personal theatre of light rather than a collective spectacle. Preserved with a complete and thematically coherent set of ten original panels, the present example is particularly notable for its integrity and visual balance. The subjects form a deliberate itinerary of power, modernity, and spectacle, juxtaposing Parisian monuments, emblematic European capitals, imperial Saint Petersburg, an orientalist interior from Algiers, and the strategic naval arsenal of Toulon. From a technical standpoint, the panels demonstrate a refined integration of hand colouring, selective opacity, and perforation, with nocturnal effects structurally embedded within the compositions rather than applied decoratively.

CONDITIONS: Light wear to paper covering; the ten panels generally well preserved, with minor edge wear, small losses, and light surface abrasions; colours vivid; bellows intact.

REFERENCES: R. BALZER, *Optical Amusements*, New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1987; B. VERREYCKEN, *Der Guckkasten*, Marburg: Jonas Verlag, 2015; L. MANNONI, *The Great Art of Light and Shadow: Archaeology of the Cinema*, Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000.

INTERACTIVE VIEWER SIMULATING THE TRANSITION BETWEEN STANDARD AND
BACK-LIT ILLUMINATION, AS ORIGINALLY EXPERIENCED THROUGH THE POLYORAMA



Day view



Night view

[Click to Explore the Day/Night Effect](#)



[Click for wider description
and HD images](#)

1850

A THEATRE OF LIGHT IN A BOX

MEDIUM-SIZE «POLYORAMA PANOPTIQUE» BY LEMAIRE, WITH SIX ORIGINAL SLIDES

28. LEFORT, PIERRE-HENRI AMAND (INVENTOR). *Polyorama Panoptique*. Paris: Lemaire, opticien, ca. 1850.

Wooden box optical viewer, (220 × 150 × 140 mm when closed, extending to approximately 300 mm with bellows), covered in green and black patterned paper with gilt-stamped label. Front panel in polished mahogany with round ocular lens and focusing bellows of blackened paper. Hinged upper lid and rear trapdoor for light modulation. Lid label reading “Brevet d’Invention S.G^{te} du Gouv¹” (Sans Garantie du Gouvernement). With six original hand-coloured lithographic paper slides mounted in thin wooden frames, each approximately 170 × 220 mm, with selective perforations and reverse painting to produce a dual day-and-night effect under alternated reflected and transmitted light.

€ 2.500

The *Polyorama Panoptique* represents one of the most refined expressions of nineteenth-century domestic optical entertainment, translating the monumental visual transformations of Daguerre’s Diorama into an intimate, portable format intended for private viewing. Patented in Paris in 1849 by Pierre-Henri Amand Lefort and commercially produced by the optician Lemaire, the device embodies the period’s fascination with images in metamorphosis, where scientific principles of light and optics were harnessed to create poetic and theatrical effects within the bourgeois interior. Through a simple yet ingenious system of shutters, bellows and rear illumination, each view reveals two distinct visual states. In reflected light the image appears as a conventional daytime scene, while backlighting activates a nocturnal transformation in which windows, lanterns, fires or celestial elements glow with striking realism. The six surviving slides preserved with this example demonstrate both technical sophistication and aesthetic ambition, combining meticulous hand-colouring, reverse painting and perforation to achieve convincing effects of depth, atmosphere and temporal change.

The surviving slides reflect the visual culture of mid-nineteenth-century Europe, privileging urban spectacle, architectural display, and the theatrical transformation of light.

CONDITIONS: Light wear to the paper covering, minor defects and small restorations to some slides, still enjoyable. Overall, well preserved, colours vivid, bellows intact.

REFERENCES: R. BALZER, *Optical Amusements: Magic Lanterns and Other Transforming Images. A Catalog of Popular Entertainments*, New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1987; B. VERREYCKEN, *Der Guckkasten*, Marburg: Jonas Verlag, 2015; L. MANNONI, *The Great Art of Light and Shadow: Archaeology of the Cinema*, Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000.

INTERACTIVE VIEWER SIMULATING THE TRANSITION BETWEEN STANDARD AND
BACK-LIT ILLUMINATION, AS ORIGINALLY EXPERIENCED THROUGH THE POLYORAMA



Day view



Night view

[Click to Explore the Day/Night Effect](#)



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and HD images](#)

1850

A THEATRE OF LIGHT IN A BOX

LARGE-SIZE «POLYORAMA PANOPTIQUE» WITH SEVEN ORIGINAL TRANSFORMING VIEWS

29. LEFORT, PIERRE-HENRI AMAND (INVENTOR). *Polyorama Panoptique*. Paris: Lemaire, opticien, ca. 1850.

Wooden box viewer (210 × 380 × 140 mm closed, extending to 210 × 380 × 360 mm with bellows), with front ocular panel in stained hardwood, shaped at the base and fitted with a circular viewing lens (84 mm diameter), retained within a concentric wooden mount, with a small pull beneath the lens. Extending green paper bellows, intact. Hinged upper lid for reflected light and rear opening for transmitted illumination. Interior darkened to enhance contrast. Seven original hand-coloured lithographic paper slides mounted in thin wooden frames (each approx. 250 × 190 mm), with selective perforations and reverse painting to create a dual day-and-night effect under alternated reflected and transmitted light.

€ 4.000

The *Polyorama Panoptique* is among the most accomplished forms of nineteenth-century domestic optical entertainment, translating the spectacle of the public diorama into a portable device for private interiors. Its visual transformation is achieved through the controlled alternation of reflected and transmitted light, whereby daylight scenes shift into nocturnal effects by means of perforation, masking and reverse painting. In this large-format variant, the impact is notably enhanced. The framed transparencies approach the scale of cabinet pictures, reinforcing both visual presence and collecting importance. The seven views form a coherent programme centred on modern urban spectacle and illumination. Subjects such as *La Tamise – Le Tunnel (Londres)* highlight contemporary fascination with engineering and metropolitan experience, while Temple Bar, the Café des Ambassadeurs and the Parc de St. Cloud evoke the choreography of illuminated public space. The *Canal de Canton, Fête des Lanternes* extends this interest to the imagined “exotic night”, making light itself the central theme.

CONDITIONS: The viewer is overall in good, honest condition, with expected wear to the green paper covering at edges and corners. The green bellows are intact and structurally sound. The wooden ocular panel shows surface wear consistent with handling. Lid and rear illumination elements are present and functional. One view, *La Tamise – Le Tunnel (Londres)*, is in very good condition. Three framed plates show glued joints. Three further plates exhibit unrestored cuts.

REFERENCES: R. BALZER, *Optical Amusements: Magic Lanterns and Other Transforming Images. A Catalog of Popular Entertainments*, New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1987; B. VERREYCKEN, *Der Guckkasten*, Marburg: Jonas Verlag, 2015; L. MANNONI, *The Great Art of Light and Shadow: Archaeology of the Cinema*, Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000.



Day view



Same image in night view
when backlit



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1850

RARE «POLYORAMA LORGNETTE» WITH ADVANCED «APLANATIC» OPTICS:
NINETEENTH CENTURY TRANSFORMING IMAGERY IN AN INTIMATE FORMAT

30. *Polyorama Lorgnette*, or *Lorgnette pittoresque*. France (probably Paris): ca. 1850.

Hand-held optical viewing instrument (overall length 170 mm, maximum bell diameter 90 mm, objective diameter 40 mm), with turned black-lacquered metal body, brass optical mount and focusing ring engraved *Extra Rapid Aplanat No. 2*. Hinged primary shutter and secondary reflective baffle, externally blackened and internally gilt, designed to regulate and redirect light for transforming visual effects.

[TOGETHER WITH:]

Thirty circular optical views on card (diameter 80 mm), each with insertion tab, hand-coloured and constructed for day-and-night transformation through calibrated translucency and opacity. The views are distributed as follows: two complete boxed series of six views each, a third series of seven views recorded by a contemporary handwritten index, and eleven additional loose plates. Two complete boxed series retain their original printed index labels, six views each. A third unnumbered series of seven views is documented by an original handwritten index.

SOLD

This *Polyorama Lorgnette* represents an exceptionally rare and technically refined form of nineteenth-century transforming-image apparatus. While the *Polyorama Panoptique* already survives in limited numbers, the *lorgnette* format is distinctly scarcer, owing to its portable nature and consequent vulnerability to loss. The present example is remarkable not only for the survival of the instrument itself, but for its association with an unusually coherent corpus of thirty original transforming views, including two complete boxed series with printed indices and a third complete series documented by a contemporary manuscript index.

The instrument operates through the controlled alternation of reflected and transmitted light, allowing a single image to assume two distinct visual states.

Under frontal illumination, opaque pigments and surface colouring produce a daylight scene. When back-lit, transparent and semi-transparent areas activate secondary pictorial elements, transforming the image into its nocturnal or illuminated state, with effects such as lit windows, moonlight, and artificial illumination. This refined optical choreography lies at the core of the polyorama tradition.



Click to Explore the Day/Night Effect
First Series (#1)



Click to Explore the Day/Night Effect
Second Series (#8)



Click to Explore the Day/Night Effect
Third Series



Click to Explore the Day/Night Effect
11 loose views

The engraved designation *Extra Rapid Aplanat* is of particular significance. Aplanatic objectives, corrected for spherical aberration, were uncommon in popular optical amusements and required superior optical glass and precision manufacture. The qualifier *Rapid* indicates a lens configuration optimised for luminosity, a decisive factor in transforming imagery, where the effectiveness of the night view depends on the intensity and uniformity of transmitted light. Inferior optics typically yield muted or indistinct nocturnal effects, whereas the present objective ensures clarity, contrast, and convincing illumination. The presence of such an advanced objective in a compact, hand-held lorgnette is therefore both noteworthy and comparatively rare. The accompanying views form a carefully structured visual corpus. The Paris-focused series juxtaposes monuments of institutional and infrastructural modernity with images of historic architecture, articulating a central theme of mid-nineteenth-century visual culture, namely the tension between historical continuity and urban transformation. The second boxed series expands this scope into an international panorama of landscapes, monuments, interiors, and leisure scenes, reflecting the cosmopolitan ambitions of optical amusements as condensed vehicles of travel, spectacle, and instruction. The third series, preserved outside its original container but documented by a handwritten index, is predominantly architectural and particularly suited to nocturnal effects.

Situated within the broader European tradition of optical mediation, from eighteenth-century peepshows to increasingly sophisticated transforming imagery, the Polyorama Lorgnette embodies a crucial shift from static representation toward simulated temporal experience. By introducing sequential perception and controlled visual change within a single artefact, it anticipates later pre-cinematographic media. Within this tradition, the lorgnette translates the immersive principles of the Polyorama Panoptique into an intimate format, without technical simplification, but rather through heightened optical precision.

CONDITIONS: The lorgnette shows wear consistent with nineteenth-century use, including surface abrasion to the black lacquer and oxidation of the brass components. The optic is in excellent condition, with no defects observed. The optical mount and engraved inscriptions remain clear and fully legible. The hinged shutter and reflective baffle display expected wear but retain full structural integrity. The views preserve strong hand-colouring and clear transformation effects. Minor edge wear at the insertion tabs and light surface abrasions are present. Overall, the condition is notably good for an object of this type, complexity, and intended use.

REFERENCES: R. BALZER, *Optical Amusements: Magic Lanterns and Other Transforming Images*, Balzer, 1987; G. FÜSSLIN, *Der Guckkasten: Einblick, Durchblick, Ausblick*, Füsslin Verlag, 1995; B. VERWIEBE, *Vom Guckkasten zum Transparentbild*, in *Der Guckkasten*, Füsslin Verlag, 1995; B. VERWIEBE, *Faltperspektiven: Die Illusion in der Tasche*, in *Der Guckkasten*, Füsslin Verlag, 1995; G. FÜSSLIN, *Die Guckkastenblätter*, in *Der Guckkasten*, Füsslin Verlag, 1995.

1850

CONCEALED DESIRES REVEALED BY CANDLELIGHT:
EROTICISM HIDDEN IN A PLAY OF TRANSPARENCIES

RARE FRENCH TRANSLUCENT EROTIC DECK OF CARDS

31. *The Forbidden Translucent Deck*. [s.l. but France, plausibly Paris]: [s.n.], [s.d. but ca. 1850]

52/52 cards (90 × 58 mm), engraved and hand-coloured; French-suited pack (Spades, Hearts, Clubs, Diamonds), with round corners. The surface design conforms to the conventional structure of a nineteenth-century French pack, with pips on the numeral cards and costumed court figures of historicising character. The distinctive technical feature consists in the presence, on each card, of a concealed image that becomes legible when the card is held against a strong light source, thereby revealing an erotic scene integrated into, and visually activated by, the ostensibly conventional composition.

€ 4.200

This remarkable deck belongs to the small and historically significant corpus of so-called translucent playing cards, objects conceived around the deliberate coexistence of two visual registers. In ordinary light the pack appears entirely conventional, presenting the familiar structure of a French-suited deck with orderly pip arrangements and court figures rendered in the historicising idiom typical of mid-nineteenth-century card design. Only when the cards are held against a strong light does their concealed programme emerge, revealing that each card has been carefully constructed to contain a second image integrated within the material structure of the pasteboard.

In the present example the erotic imagery constitutes not a secondary embellishment but the conceptual foundation of the entire pack. The suit cards function as compositional frameworks in which the pip arrangements subtly organise the hidden scenes. When illuminated from behind, the colours intensify and disclose a sequence of erotic vignettes concealed beneath the apparently innocent design. The court cards display an even more elaborate conception. Their gestures, posture, and distribution of empty space have been calculated so that, under backlighting, the figures interact directly with the concealed imagery. Kings, queens, and knaves appear to participate in or become implicated within the revealed scenes, producing a striking transformation between the decorous surface and the explicit image disclosed by light. The deck therefore demonstrates a refined synthesis of graphic planning, colour application, and technical control over the translucency of the paper support.



[Click to see the erotic image](#)

(Disclaimer: Some of the following images depict erotic scenes, presented with artistic intent. They may offend the sensibilities of some viewers and should only be viewed by informed and consenting adults)

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[Click to see the erotic image](#)

(Disclaimer: Some of the following images depict erotic scenes, presented with artistic intent. They may offend the sensibilities of some viewers and should only be viewed by informed and consenting adults)

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and HD images](#)

Translucent erotic decks occupy a distinctive position within the wider nineteenth-century tradition of transformation imagery. Whereas most transformation packs rely on graphic wit or the playful reinterpretation of suit signs, these examples achieve their effect through the physical properties of their construction. By exploiting layered paper and controlled translucency, the designer created an image that exists in latent form until activated by transmitted light. The viewer's act of holding the card before a candle or lamp becomes an essential part of the visual experience, transforming the deck from a simple gaming implement into a small instrument of optical performance.

This mechanism situates such objects within the broader culture of nineteenth-century visual experimentation, a milieu fascinated by illusions, optical devices, and image transformations that anticipated later pre-cinematographic entertainments. At the same time, translucent erotic packs are recognisably French in character and are closely associated with the discreet Parisian environment in which refined erotic novelties were conceived and privately circulated. Their distribution was likely limited to specialised urban contexts connected with the commerce of sophisticated erotic objects, notably districts such as Montmartre.

The disparity between their probable original diffusion and the relatively small number of surviving examples is therefore unsurprising. The intimate mode of use, the necessity of exposing the cards to candlelight to activate the hidden scenes, and the moral vulnerability of erotic material frequently led to damage, destruction, or deliberate suppression. Complete surviving packs are consequently rare. The present example thus possesses a dual significance for collectors: it represents both a technically accomplished artefact of mid-nineteenth-century popular print culture and a rare material witness to the discreet and ephemeral urban market for erotic imagery in France during the period of the July Monarchy and the early Second Empire.

CONDITIONS: Some marks of use on few cards; overall, well preserved.

REFERENCES: T. DENNING, *Translucent Playing-cards*. Birmingham: Denning, 1976; K. WOWK, *Playing Cards of the World*, Lutterworth press, 1983, pp. 66–67; D. HOFFMANN and M. DIETRICH, *Pikante Blätter*, Dortmund: Harenberg, 1982; K. F. JENSEN, *Eroticism on Playing Cards, 1940–1990*, Roskilde: Ouroboros, 1990; S. WINTLE, *Translucent Playing Cards, The World of Playing Cards*: [Translucent Playing Cards — The World of Playing Cards](#).



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1860

“HOLD TO THE LIGHT”: A COMPLETE GILT-EDGED AMERICAN TRANSLUCENT PACK,
REVEALING HIDDEN COMIC VIGNETTES AND ENGLISH PROVERBS

A RARE SURVIVAL AT THE INTERSECTION OF GAMING AND OPTICAL AMUSEMENT

32. *The Forbidden Translucent Deck*. [s.l. but France, plausibly Paris]: [s.n.], [s.d. but ca. 1850]

52/52 cards (83 × 51 mm), printed in colour (red and blue) on translucent paper pasteboard engineered to permit transmission of light, gilt edges. French suits (hearts, diamonds, clubs, spades), without indices. Courts full-length and single-ended. Backs plain white. The Ace of Spades bears an ornamental typographic composition consisting of a decorative central spade device framed by a symmetrical arabesque cartouche printed in blue line within a rectangular border. Suits rendered in highly stylised ornamental form: clubs and spades in blue, hearts and diamonds in red, all designed with a distinctive fleur-de-lis-derived graphic structure. Courts printed in two colours, showing standing figures in contemporary romanticised costume. Original box present.

The deck possesses the distinctive structural feature of translucent construction: when held to a strong light the transparent cards reveal concealed comic illustrations accompanied by captions or wordplay. Several of these captions may contain offensive imagery or language reflective of the attitudes of their time.

€ 3.500

This rare American pack belongs to the small and technically remarkable class of nineteenth-century translucent playing cards, conceived as hybrid objects combining the practical function of a gaming deck with the optical surprise of hidden imagery revealed through transmitted light. Under normal viewing conditions the cards appear entirely conventional, but when placed against a strong light source each card reveals a concealed vignette accompanied by a short English caption or proverb. The linguistic and proverbial character of these texts situates the deck firmly within an Anglophone cultural context and accords with the attribution to New York recorded in the Hochman classification.

Such translucent packs occupy a distinctive niche within the history of playing-card manufacture. Their fascination lies not only in novelty but in the technical ingenuity required to embed a second pictorial layer within the structure of the card while preserving its ordinary appearance during play. Surviving complete examples are uncommon, owing both to the fragility of the materials and to the repeated handling encouraged by their curiosity value.



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The deck follows the standard structure of the fifty-two-card pack in French suits, yet its design shows a distinctive decorative coherence. The pip cards employ stylised suit symbols derived from the fleur-de-lis motif, lending the pack a refined ornamental character. The black suits are printed in blue rather than black, while the red suits appear in a warm red tone, producing the typical bichromatic palette associated with mid-nineteenth-century printing economies. The courts appear as single full-length figures rendered in romanticized historical costume, aligned with the continental iconographic tradition rather than the later Anglo-American double-ended format. Jacks carry halberds or staffs, Kings display regal insignia, and Queens appear in elaborately stylised dress.

The Ace of Spades serves as the principal decorative card of the pack. Instead of bearing a maker's imprint it presents a symmetrical typographic ornament centered on a large spade device enclosed within an arabesque cartouche, a form typical of decorative mid-nineteenth-century card design.

The most remarkable feature lies in the concealed pictorial layer embedded within each card. When held before a strong light source the transmitted illumination reveals finely printed interior scenes accompanied by short captions or proverbial sayings. The images appear reversed or partially mirrored depending on the orientation of the card, indicating that the illustrations were specifically designed to be viewed through the translucent paper.

The hidden vignettes illustrate familiar English aphorisms and moral observations, transforming the deck into a miniature anthology of visualized proverbs. Scenes corresponding to sayings such as "Forbidden fruit is always the best" or "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush" combine humorous narrative imagery with moral commentary, a formula widely encountered in nineteenth-century popular print culture.

Transparent playing cards such as this belong to the broader nineteenth-century culture of optical amusements. During this period a widespread fascination developed for images that changed or revealed themselves under particular lighting conditions, including transparency prints, dissolving views and shadow pictures. Within this context the present deck represents an ingenious application of optical surprise to the familiar structure of the playing card pack, placing it at the intersection of gaming, popular printing and early forms of interactive visual entertainment.

CONDITIONS: A few cards with spotting or damp-soiling at the corners; otherwise in very good condition.

REFERENCES: T. DENNING, *Translucent Playing-cards*, Birmingham: Denning, 1976; T. DAWSON and J. DAWSON, *The Hochman Encyclopedia of American Playing Cards*, Stamford: U.S. Games Systems, 2000, no. O20c; C. HARGRAVE, *A History of Playing Cards and a Bibliography of Cards and Gaming*, New York: Dover, 1966; W. GURNEY BENHAM, *Playing Cards: History of the Pack and Explanations of Its Many Secrets*, London: Spring Books, 1931.



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1860-1890

LIGHT, IMAGE, AND DOMESTIC PERFORMANCE

A LAPIERRE «LANTERNE CARRÉE» WITH PANORAMIC NARRATIVE SLIDES

33. *Magic Lantern with Panoramic Narrative Slides - Lanterne Carrée*. Auguste Lapierre and Édouard Virgile Lapierre, Paris: ca. 1860–1890.

Large domestic magic lantern in stamped tinplate (*fer blanc*) (150 × 150 × 380 mm), square-section body with embossed star and concentric circle motifs. Pierced gallery (*galerie ajourée*) with gadrooned chimney and suspension ring. Sliding cylindrical objective tube (*objectif coulissant*), lens cap lacking; hinged rear door for oil or paraffin light source. Four conical feet, one restored. With seven panoramic glass slides, *vues sur verre en bande* (330 × 90 mm), hand-painted on single glass sheets without cover glass, bordered in green paper, with sequential scenes and handwritten French captions.

€ 900

This ensemble preserves a complete domestic projection apparatus from the mature phase of nineteenth-century French optical culture, combining mechanical device and narrative imagery. The association of a large-format *lanterne carrée* with a coherent group of hand-painted panoramic slides is of particular collecting interest, as such sets were often dispersed or incompletely preserved. The slides, conceived as continuous visual sequences, were designed to be translated laterally through the light beam, producing a controlled unfolding of narrative episodes. Combined with handwritten captions intended for oral accompaniment, this system transforms the lantern into a performative instrument uniting projection, movement, and storytelling. The identified series, including *Barbe Bleue*, *Touche-à-tout*, and *La Chasse*, reflect the dual function of such material as entertainment and instruction, integrating literary and social themes within a domestic context. Their horizontal structure and sequential logic anticipate later visual narration, while remaining dependent on manual operation and spoken interpretation. Within the broader history of visual media, the Lapierre *lanterne carrée* occupies a central position in the industrialization of optical entertainments. Its stamped metal construction, associated with the 1860 patent, enabled standardization and wide diffusion among the bourgeois public. The present ensemble exemplifies the convergence of industrial production and artisanal image-making, representing a characteristic form of pre-cinematic narrative projection in a domestic setting.

CONDITIONS: Structurally stable, with oxidation and surface wear consistent with age. Rear door hinge detached but functional; one foot restored. Slides with strong colour and legible captions, minor wear and abrasions; green paper borders worn. Overall good condition.

REFERENCES: L. MANNONI, *Le Grand art de la lumière et de l'ombre: archéologie du cinéma*, Paris: Nathan, 1995.



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1860

A PARISIAN MAGAZINE AND THE CULTURE OF EARLY MOVING IMAGES:
A DOMESTIC OPTICAL APPARATUS FOR STROBOSCOPIC ANIMATION

34. *Pantinoscope with six double-sided animation discs*. Paris: *Journal des Demoiselles*, ca. 1860.

[TOGETHER WITH:]

A group of four Phenakistoscope animation discs and a later slotted viewing disc. France: ca. 1840.

Large circular stroboscopic shutter disc in blackened card (diameter 330 mm) with ten radial viewing slits and a central polychrome printed label reading *Pantinoscope – Journal des Demoiselles – 1 Boulevard des Italiens*. Mounted on a turned wooden handle with bent metal rod allowing manual rotation. Accompanied by six interchangeable lithographed animation discs in stiff card (diameter 230 mm), printed recto-verso in two colours, providing twelve animated sequences, each with central square mounting aperture. Also included are four larger phenakistoscope animation discs (diameter 330 mm), printed on one side, together with a later slotted viewing disc in black card.

€ 2.200

Issued in Paris by the influential *Journal des Demoiselles*, this Pantinoscope represents a refined mid-nineteenth-century adaptation of the Phenakistoscope, one of the earliest devices capable of producing convincing illusions of motion from sequential images. Mounted on a hand-held rotating handle and viewed through radial slits in front of a mirror, the apparatus transforms successive drawings into a continuous animated sequence through the stroboscopic interruption of vision. The survival of six double-sided discs producing twelve distinct animations offers an unusually rich repertory of scenes typical of early optical entertainments, including musicians, acrobats, jugglers, and mechanical movements designed for seamless cyclical motion. The association with the *Journal des Demoiselles*, a Parisian periodical devoted to the cultural education of young bourgeois women, situates the device within the cultivated sphere of domestic optical amusements that flourished during the formative decades of pre-cinematic visual culture.

CONDITIONS: Pantinoscope in very good overall condition; the six double-sided animation discs show moderate wear with scattered spotting, light staining, and minor creasing, chiefly at the edges and around the central mounting apertures.

REFERENCES: L. MANNONI, *Le Grand art de la lumière et de l'ombre: Archéologie du cinéma*, 1994.



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1870

PAPER THEATRE OF THE AMERICAN NATION

FROM COLUMBUS TO CORNWALLIS IN A CRANK-TURN:
AN EDUCATIONAL MOVING PANORAMA FOR THE PARLOUR

35. MILTON BRADLEY & CO. *The Historiscope: A Panorama & History of America*. Springfield, Massachusetts: Milton Bradley & Co., ca. 1868–1875.

Small model theatre toy, card covered with coloured lithographed paper (205 × 130 × 50 mm). The façade, richly printed in polychrome, presents a theatrical proscenium with boxes, draperies and footlights, echoed by the lid label bearing the title. Within the box, two horizontally mounted wooden rollers with simple cranks support a continuous translucent paper strip, approximately 140 mm in height and 2200 mm in total length, composed of conjoined lithographed segments hand finished in watercolour and bodycolour. Twenty-four framed vignettes appear on the strip, separated by narrow blank interstices, viewed through the aperture in the proscenium when backlit. Original ancillary materials, including the booklet “The Historiscope Lecture”, a broadside poster and mock admission tickets, are not present.

€ 1.800

Conceived as a domestic counterpart to the monumental moving panoramas of the nineteenth century, the *Historiscope* transforms a theatrical spectacle into an intimate parlour device that allows its operator to control the unfolding of national history.

Its twenty-four scenes form a canonical sequence from discovery to Revolutionary triumph, distilling complex narratives into emblematic tableaux that reflect the moral didacticism of late Victorian educational play. Bradley’s design, with its decorated proscenium and mirrored spectators, frames the panorama as both performance and lesson, situating the child simultaneously as audience and interpreter.

Within this miniature theatre, historical episodes are rendered as vivid, self-contained images whose succession invites reflection on the construction of American identity. The selection of subjects privileges European exploration and Anglo-American heroism, while presenting Indigenous peoples as picturesque figures rather than historical agents, thereby revealing the ideological filters through which nineteenth-century America visualized its past. Such narrative simplification, though typical of didactic toys of the era, provides valuable insight into the cultural anxieties and aspirations shaping national memory in the post Civil War decades.



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The toy embodies a confluence of technological innovation, chromolithographic refinement and pedagogical theory. By reducing public panoramas to a crank-driven strip for domestic use, Bradley captured the era's fascination with sequential imagery, anticipating later pre-cinematic devices. The translucent paper, episodic joins and bright hand colouring underscore the hybrid character of the Historiscope as both manufactured object and visual narrative, while its mechanisms exemplify the period's broader interest in interactive learning.

The conception of the toy aligns with the educational ideals of Pestalozzi and Fröbel, whose emphasis on sensory engagement and structured play informed Bradley's work within the emerging kindergarten movement. Marketed as a tool for shared storytelling in the lamplit parlour, the Historiscope offered families a means of reinforcing civic virtue, perseverance and patriotic sentiment. Its omissions and emphases reveal the selective processes by which historical consciousness was shaped for young audiences, making the toy not merely an entertainment but a cultural document that encapsulates nineteenth-century intersections of pedagogy, nationalism and visual culture.

CONDITIONS: The box is structurally sound, with expected rubbing and small abrasions to edges and corners consistent with use as a children's toy. A small loss to the upper margin of the second scene; the final scene is partly pasted to the roller with a resulting small loss; a long horizontal tear, now discreetly repaired, runs through approximately five scenes; and one of the joins between strips has been carefully reinforced.

REFERENCES: J. L. PETERSON, *The Art and Commerce of Nineteenth Century Visual Education: The Historiscope and the Milton Bradley Company*, Getty Research Journal 6, 2014, pp. 175–184; American Revolution Institute Of The Society Of The Cincinnati, *The Historiscope by Milton Bradley & Co.*, 2025; Princeton University Library, Cotsen Children's Library, *The Historiscope*, *Graphic Arts*, Graphic Arts Collection Blog, 2 Mar. 2018, *Graphic Arts*; O. HUMMER, *Look>>> A Historiscope*, The Huntington Library, 2 Oct. 2015; D. STREET, *The Historiscope*, Streets of Salem website, 9 Apr. 2015.



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1870

AN ENGLISH «PEEP EGG» WITH NEW BRIGHTON VIEWS
A ROTATING ALABASTER OPTICAL SOUVENIR DEPICTING
THE MERSEY RESORT AND ITS CELEBRATED PIER

36. *New Brighton Pier – New Brighton Battery – Rock Garden*. Optical souvenir in the form of a rotating alabaster peep egg. North-West England: ca. 1870.

Optical viewing device in the form of a turned translucent alabaster egg (130 × 100 mm), composed of two lathe-turned halves joined at the equator and raised on an integral circular pedestal. The top is fitted with a recessed magnifying lens. A lateral metal spindle with two external alabaster knobs allows the internal mechanism to rotate. The exterior is decorated with simple hand-painted floral ornament in polychrome pigments. Inside are three rotating scenes: two circular printed topographical views mounted on card and a miniature grotto composition made of small stones, coloured mineral fragments, granules, and dried vegetal material. The thin alabaster body admits ambient light, softly illuminating the internal scenes when viewed through the lens.

€ 900

Peep eggs constitute a rare and distinctive form of nineteenth-century optical novelty. Designed as miniature viewing devices, they allowed the observer to peer through a magnifying lens into a concealed interior containing small scenic tableaux that could be revealed sequentially by rotating an internal spindle. The present example preserves three rotating scenes: two printed topographical views of New Brighton on the River Mersey and a miniature mineral grotto composition reflecting the Victorian fascination with natural curiosities. The printed views depict two recognizable landmarks of the resort. One represents *New Brighton Battery* [sic], identifiable with Fort Perch Rock guarding the entrance to the Mersey. The second shows *New Brighton Pier* [sic], designed by the engineer Eugenius Birch and opened in 1867, soon becoming a central attraction of the developing seaside resort. Within the broader tradition of optical entertainments, peep eggs represent a domestic counterpart to perspective boxes and peepshow theatres. Their translucent alabaster shells admit diffused light that softly illuminates the interior scenes. At the same time the imagery reveals their function as travel souvenirs associated with the rapid expansion of Victorian seaside tourism. The depiction of New Brighton Pier provides a secure terminus post quem after 1867 and suggests a production date around 1870.

CONDITIONS: Overall, well preserved for a fragile Victorian optical novelty.

REFERENCES: J. L. MELLBY, *Peep Egg*, Princeton University Library Graphic Arts Collection blog, 2008; *Peepshow – Alabaster Egg with Views of Clifton*, Museums Victoria Collection catalogue, Melbourne: 1870; *Peep Egg Optical Toy*, Science Museum Group Collection catalogue, London.



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1870-1900

A PARISIAN OPTICAL INSTRUMENT OF DUAL FUNCTION:
SCIENTIFIC VISION AND DOMESTIC IMAGE CULTURE IN THE LATE 19TH CENTURY

37. *Stereo-Graphoscope*. Paris: Ancienne Maison Martinet – A. Hauteœur, 172 Rue de Rivoli, ca. 1870–1900.

Table-top stereo-graphoscope in polished hardwood, likely walnut or mahogany veneer over a secondary structure, comprising a rectangular base with moulded edges and a sliding internal carriage for focusing. The upper section consists of a vertical panel housing a large circular convex lens (approx. 6 cm in diameter), set within a turned wooden frame and flanked by two small brass finials. Below, two blackened ocular tubes contain paired stereoscopic lenses, mounted symmetrically at a standard interocular distance (c. 60–63 mm). The rear portion is fitted with a hinged rectangular card-holder frame designed to accommodate stereoscopic cards or, in some instances, glass plates. The sliding mechanism permits adjustment of the focal distance between image and lenses. A mother-of-pearl trade label affixed to the front reads: “Anc(ne) Mon Martinet – A. Hauteœur – 172, Rue de Rivoli”. Accompanied by a fitted red cloth-covered cardboard box containing stereoscopic cards (“The World’s Views”), comprising albumen prints mounted on card.

€ 500

A refined example of late nineteenth-century Parisian optical manufacture, this stereo-graphoscope embodies the convergence of scientific optics and domestic visual culture at a moment of intense expansion in photographic consumption. Combining stereoscopic and magnifying functions within a single apparatus, it reflects the adaptation of optical technologies to the demands of a cultivated bourgeois audience. In stereoscopic use, the instrument transforms paired photographic views into a unified image endowed with depth, offering an immersive visual experience that functioned as a form of virtual travel. Its adjustable sliding mechanism ensures precise focus and accommodates a range of formats, from standard albumen prints to more specialised supports. In graphoscope mode, the upper convex lens allows the close examination of single images, situating the device within a broader tradition of optical aids designed for both study and leisure. Particularly characteristic is its compatibility with “tissue” stereographs, whose translucent surfaces produce luminous effects when backlit, enhancing the illusionistic qualities of the image. Produced under the Ancienne Maison Martinet, a Parisian firm active in the dissemination of prints and stereoscopic views, the present example illustrates the commercial and cultural networks through which such instruments circulated.

CONDITIONS: The instrument is perfectly preserved; the stereoscopic cards exhibit light toning but remain structurally sound.

REFERENCES: R. ZONE, *Stereoscopic Cinema & the Origins of 3-D Film, 1838–1952*, University Press of Kentucky, 2007; B. MAY and E. VIDAL, *A Village Lost and Found*, 2009.



1880

A DOMESTIC OPTICAL DEVICE
ILLUSTRATING THE MECHANICS OF MOTION PERCEPTION

38. *Zoetrope with Twelve Animated Paper Strips*. [Germany]: ca. 1880.

Small tabletop zoetrope consisting of a cylindrical drum mounted on a turned wooden spindle and circular base (height 170 mm, diameter 130 mm). The drum, constructed of stiff card covered externally with black paper, is pierced with twelve evenly spaced vertical viewing slits along the upper circumference; the interior is lined with light-coloured paper forming the surface against which the animation strips are placed. The rotating mechanism comprises a turned wooden spindle passing through the centre of the base and attached to a circular wooden top plate supporting the drum, allowing manual rotation during viewing. Accompanied by six printed paper strips, each printed in black silhouette on both sides, providing twelve animated sequences. The narrow bands, designed to fit the inner circumference of the drum, depict simple black silhouette figures on off-white paper, characteristic of animation strips produced for domestic optical toys in the late nineteenth century.

€ 800

This late nineteenth-century zoetrope exemplifies the domestic optical devices that transformed sequential drawings into the illusion of continuous movement through the principle of persistence of vision. When the drum is rotated and the observer looks through the narrow slits, the successive images merge into animated action, demonstrating in mechanical form the perceptual foundations that would later underpin cinematography. The twelve animated scenes, printed as silhouette figures on interchangeable strips, depict acrobats, dancers, comic characters and everyday gestures designed as cyclic visual narratives. Such imagery corresponds closely to the repertory widely distributed with German zoetropes produced in Nürnberg during the final decades of the nineteenth century, particularly by manufacturers such as Ernst Plank and Gebrüder Bing. Objects of this type occupied an important place in the culture of scientific toys and optical entertainments, bridging early nineteenth-century experiments in visual perception with the technological and cultural developments that ultimately led to motion pictures.

CONDITIONS: The animation strips show fold marks, minor creases, and light discoloration; the zoetrope remains in good working condition.

REFERENCES: L. MANNONI, *The Great Art of Light and Shadow: Archaeology of the Cinema*, 2000; A. ALTICK, *The Shows of London*, 1978; J. CRARY, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*, 1990; D. ROBINSON, *From Peep Show to Palace: The Birth of American Film*, 1996; D. ROSSELL, *Living Pictures: The Origins of the Movies*, 1998.



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1880

OPTICAL ANIMATION DEVICE OF THE PRE-CINEMA ERA
A PRAXINOSCOPE WITH TEN ORIGINAL ANIMATION STRIPS

39. ÉMILE REYNAUD. *Praxinoscope with Ten Original Animation Strips*. Paris: ca. 1880.

Circular turned brass basin (height 120 mm; diameter 120 mm), designed to receive an illustrated animation strip. At the centre of the basin is mounted a polygonal mirror drum forming the optical viewing mechanism. The drum is composed of a series of thin vertical glass mirrors, silvered on the reverse and mounted within a light structural framework. These elements are secured by adhesive and retained by upper and lower black paper bands, a construction technique characteristic of early praxinoscope manufacture. The instrument stands on a turned wooden pedestal base. Affixed to the top of the mirror drum is the original circular chromolithographic Reynaud label identifying the device. The instrument is accompanied by ten original animated paper strips printed in colour lithography on thin cream-toned paper, each bearing the blue “ER” monogram on the dark margin.

€ 2.500

Invented in 1877 by Émile Reynaud, the praxinoscope represents one of the decisive technological refinements in the evolution of optical animation devices preceding cinema. By replacing the slotted viewing system of the zoetrope with a central drum of mirrors, Reynaud achieved a brighter and more stable animated image, greatly improving the visual clarity of sequential imagery. The present example is particularly significant for preserving both the original Reynaud label and a coherent group of ten original “ER” animation strips. Such instruments frequently survive with only one or two strips, many having been separated from the device over time. The preserved sequences, depicting playful animal scenes, children’s games, and acrobatic performances, belong to the characteristic repertoire of Reynaud’s early production and function as cyclical visual narratives designed for continuous movement. Together they illustrate the transformation of optical toys into increasingly sophisticated devices of animated imagery, situating the praxinoscope within the broader lineage of nineteenth-century visual entertainments that ultimately culminated in the emergence of projected moving pictures.

CONDITIONS: The reflective surfaces display minor oxidation of the silvering, typical of nineteenth-century silvered glass; overall very good condition.

REFERENCES: L. MANNONI, *The Great Art of Light and Shadow: Archaeology of the Cinema*, 2000.

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1896–1898

A PHOTOGRAPHIC FLIP-BOOK FROM THE DAWN OF MOVING IMAGES
THE BALLET SEQUENCE OF LÉON BEAULIEU
PARISIAN OPTICAL ENTERTAINMENT OF THE PRE-CINEMA PERIOD

40. LÉON BEAULIEU. *Leçons de danse*. Photographic folioscope sequence for the “Petit Biograph Parisien”. Paris: Léon Beaulieu, fabricant, 253 rue Saint-Jacques, ca. 1896–1898.

Oblong photographic *folioscope* (each plate approx. 45–60 mm), consisting of 121 numbered black-and-white photographic leaves forming an animated sequence when rapidly flipped. Original construction with purple cloth spine along the lower edge for manual animation, light card publisher’s wrapper. Printed label reading “LÉON BEAULIEU / FABRICANT / 253 RUE SAINT-JACQUES / PARIS”.

€ 1.400

Composed of 121 sequential photographs depicting a ballerina in motion, the present *folioscope* recreates through simple manual flipping the illusion of animated movement, a perceptual principle that would soon define cinematographic projection. Such photographic flip-books occupy a distinctive place in the transition from scientific chronophotography to popular moving images. Emerging in the final decades of the nineteenth century, they translated the experimental studies of motion undertaken by figures such as Muybridge and Marey into portable visual entertainments accessible to a broad public. The miniature photographic sequence captures successive instants of a staged ballet movement, transforming a series of still images into a fluid choreography perceptible only through rapid sequential viewing. Produced in Paris, one of the principal centres of optical experimentation during the period, the object illustrates the diffusion of animated imagery before the widespread adoption of projected cinema. Surviving examples with intact numbering and original construction are comparatively uncommon, as such devices were inexpensive, fragile, and frequently manipulated. As both a technological curiosity and a document of visual culture, the folioscope embodies a moment when photography, scientific inquiry, and popular entertainment converged at the threshold of cinema.

CONDITIONS: Very good overall condition for an object intended for repeated manual manipulation.

REFERENCES: L. MANNONI, *Le Grand Art de la Lumière et de l’Ombre: Archéologie du cinéma*, 1994; L. MANNONI, *Early Cinema: From Peep Show to Projection*, 2000; D. ROSSELL, *Living Pictures: The Origins of the Movies*, 1998; C. MUSSER, *The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907*, 1994; D. ROBINSON, *From Peep Show to Palace: The Birth of American Film*, 1996.

1889

THE «BLOW BOOK»: A RARE REMARKABLE TOOL FOR MAGICIANS AND CONJURERS

DO NOT FOOL WITH THE MAGICIAN ...
OR THE IMAGES IN YOUR BOOK WILL VANISH BY MAGIC!!

41. HENRIOT [HENRI MAIGROT]. *Album magique à surprises et changements à vue*. Paris: Marpon et Flammarion, s.d. [but 1889].

Oblong 16mo (145 x 200 mm), printer's richly decorated embossed paper binding with gilt decorative images on boards, unpaginated. ILLUSTRATED WITH 70 ORIGINAL DRAWINGS BY HENRIOT. THE IMAGES ARE GROUPED INTO 10 SETS: 5 ACCESSIBLE BY FLIPPING THROUGH THE BOOK FROM LEFT TO RIGHT, AND THE OTHER 5 FROM RIGHT TO LEFT.

€ 3.800

This ingenious *livre à surprises* represents a notably refined stage in the long evolution of the blow book or *gauckel-tasche*, transforming what was once a conjurer's secret prop into a sophisticated interactive object at the intersection of bookmaking, spectacle and mechanical illusion.

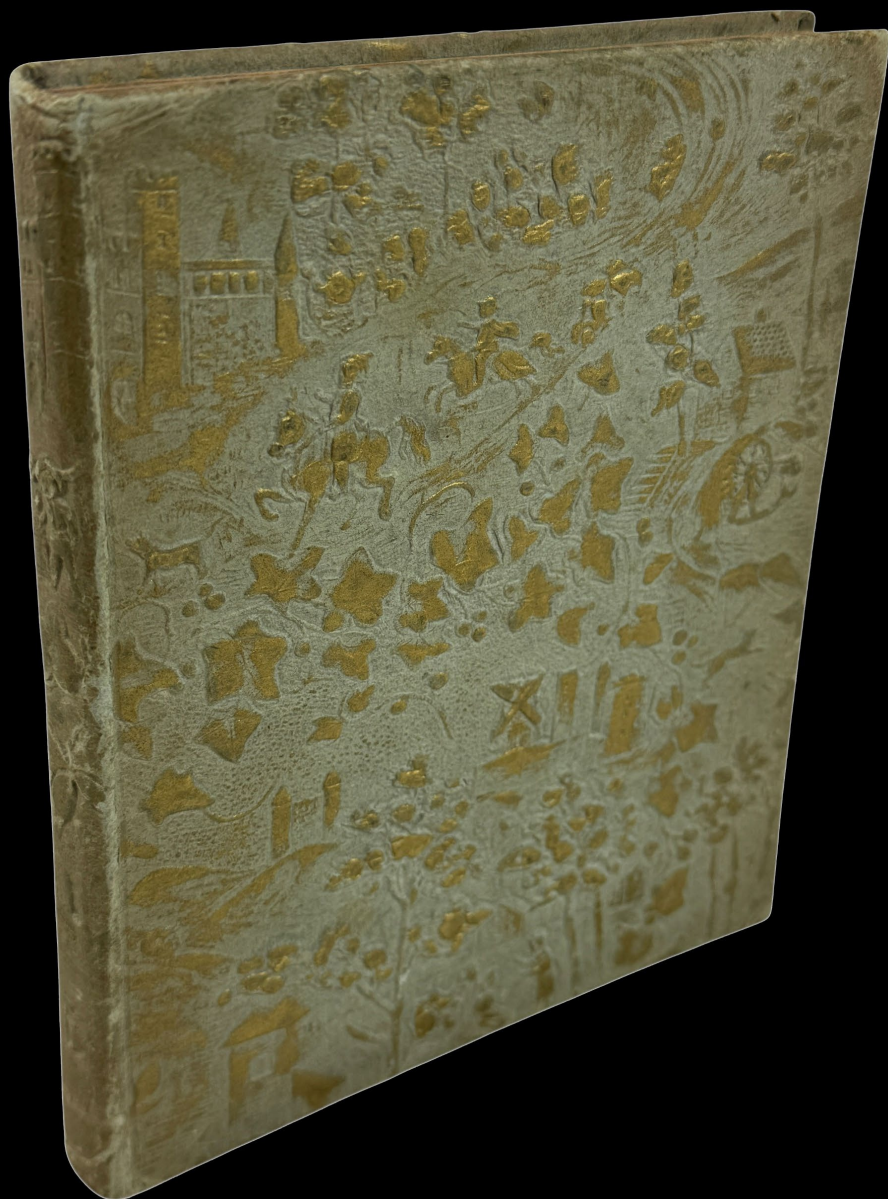
Henriot's seventy colour lithographs were conceived not as static illustrations but as elements of a controlled visual sequence, activated by the performer's precise manipulation of thumb-notched page edges. Through this mechanism, the reader elicits sudden metamorphoses that shift from costumed figures to devils, shadow plays, military types and humorous vignettes, revealing the artist's flair for caricature and theatricality.

The *Album magique* responds directly to the fin-de-siècle fascination with visual trickery, animated imagery and domestic entertainment. Its seamless functioning without visible mechanical parts underscores its conceptual elegance, allowing the structure of alternating page widths to generate transformations with surprising fluidity.

By engaging the reader as an operator, the work dissolves the boundary between viewer and performer, anticipating later optical entertainments where interactivity becomes central. In this sense, Henriot's book participates in a broader cultural trend that celebrated illusion as a form of cultivated amusement and positioned the printed object as an active rather than passive medium.



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The blow book belongs to a tradition documented from the sixteenth century onward, when scholars such as Cardano marvelled at its ability to reveal “diverse images from a single book,” and practitioners like Prévost, Scot and Schwenter codified its secrets for a growing circle of European conjurers. Over the following centuries, this simple yet ingenious device circulated widely in both artisanal and popular contexts, its alternating-width pages enabling itinerant magicians to present successive image cycles with seemingly effortless legerdemain. Within this lineage, Henriot’s interpretation is distinguished by its artistic sophistication and its integration of humour, caricature and narrative suggestion.

Produced at a time when industrial lithography enabled brighter colours and greater precision than earlier hand-coloured models, the *Album magique* represents a decisive point of convergence between pre-modern conjuring traditions and the emerging culture of printed visual entertainment. The finely coordinated interplay between structure and imagery suggests an awareness of contemporary optical devices, from shadow theatres to early motion experiments, situating the work as a precursor to animated books and proto-cinematic forms.

Viewed within this broader context, Henriot’s contribution is more than a clever reprise of an old magician’s trick. It highlights the persistence of performative reading practices into the modern era and demonstrates how late nineteenth-century artists and publishers revived early illusionistic techniques to satisfy a public increasingly attuned to novelty, humour and mechanical ingenuity. The *Album magique* thus emerges as a rare and culturally resonant example of how the history of magic, caricature and optical science could be synthesized within the humble but dazzling format of an interactive book.

CONDITIONS: A very good and clean copy.

REFERENCES: R. JAY, *The Magic Book: An Inquiry into the Venerable History & Operation of the Oldest Trick Conjuring Volumes, Designated “Blow Books”*, Whitney Museum of American Art, 1994; B. M. STAFFORD and F. TERPAK, *Devices of Wonder: From the World in a Box to Images on a Screen*, Getty Publications, 2001; T. DUSSERT and M. WALBECQ, *Les 1001 vies des livres*, 2014; T. DUSSERT and M. WALBECQ, *Livres à transformations*. Paris: Librairie Blaziot, 2012; M. TOMATIS, *La Magia dei Libri*, Editrice Bibliografica, 2015.



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1890-1910

THE «BLOW BOOK»: A RARE REMARKABLE TOOL FOR MAGICIANS AND CONJURERS

42.[ANONYMOUS]. *Magic-Book — Zauberbuch – Livre de la magie*. S.l. [but Germany or Austro-German area]: s.n., s.d. [ca. 1890–1910].

Small 8vo (110 × 75 mm), original chromolithographed printed wrappers, stitched, ff [24], mechanically cut at the fore edge with five thumb-notches forming five distinct flipping divisions. Printed throughout in colour lithography, without hand-colouring.

€ 900

This refined miniature example represents the late industrial phase of the *gauckel-tasche* or “blow book,” one of the earliest interactive printed devices in European conjuring culture. The trilingual title signals international circulation, while the chromolithographed wrapper, depicting an oriental magician surrounded by theatrical attributes, situates the object within the visual rhetoric of fin-de-siècle illusionism. The fore edge is engineered into five alternating thumb-notched divisions which, when manipulated, generate ten possible outcomes: eight illustrated sequences and two blank ones. The blank divisions are structurally essential, allowing the performer to display the volume as empty before inviting spectators to “blow” upon it, after which different pictorial cycles mysteriously appear. The illusion depends not on hidden apparatus but on precision cutting and controlled manual dexterity, embodying a tradition documented since Cardano in the mid-sixteenth century and systematised across France, England and Germany in the late Renaissance. By the nineteenth century, such books formed part of itinerant conjurers’ repertoires, bridging printed matter and theatrical instrument. This example, compact yet mechanically complete, represents the mature industrial culmination of a device rooted in early modern natural philosophy and the culture of staged deception.

CONDITION: Original printed wrappers slightly worn, with a small loss at the lower margin of the front wrapper and minor weakness along the fold. A persistent stain is visible along the lower margins of the leaves. In several instances, minor losses occur at the extreme lower edge, apparently resulting from ink acidity that has caused small areas of paper fragmentation. Overall, in good general condition, retaining complete operational performance.

REFERENCES: R. JAY, *The Magic Book: An Inquiry into the Venerable History & Operation of the Oldest Trick Conjuring Volumes, Designated “Blow Books”*, Whitney Museum of American Art, 1994; B. M. STAFFORD and F. TERPAK, *Devices of Wonder: From the World in a Box to Images on a Screen*, Getty Publications, 2001; T. DUSSERT and M. WALBECQ, *Les 1001 vies des livres*, 2014; T. DUSSERT and M. WALBECQ, *Livres à transformations*. Paris: Librairie Blaziot, 2012; M. TOMATIS, *La Magia dei Libri*, Editrice Bibliografica, 2015.



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1900

FRENCH TABLE STEREOSCOPE WITH TWENTY-ONE GLASS STEREOGRAPHS

43. *Wooden Stereoscope*. France: ca. 1900.

Wooden visor with unfolding lens board (130 x 70 x 70 mm), a dial on the side for adjusting the image focus, and a side slot for inserting glass-mounted images, accompanied by 21 stereoscopic images on glass plates. The three-dimensional images depict convivial and familial moments during mountain excursions, in wooded and glacial settings, probably in the French Alps, dating to the early 1900s.

€ 900



The stereoscope, also known as a stereoscopic viewer or stereo visor, is an optical device, in the form of a mask or binocular equipped with lenses, for viewing stereoscopic images.

Developed for the first time in 1832 by Sir Charles Wheatstone using pairs of similar designs and nascent photography, the mirror stereoscope then evolved into the simpler, lighter, and more practical lens stereoscope by Sir David Brewster, subsequently perfected over time by other scientists, opticians, and inventors.

Throughout the 19th century, the stereoscope was used for viewing stereograms on paper or glass.

CONDITIONS: Perfectly preserved.

REFERENCES: R. ZONE, *Stereoscopic Cinema & the Origins of 3-D Film, 1838–1952*, University Press of Kentucky, 2007; B. MAY and E. VIDAL, *A Village Lost and Found*, 2009.



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1900

A PIVOTAL STEP IN CINEMATIC EVOLUTION

44. *Magic Lantern/Cinématographe*. France: ca. 1900.

Magic lantern (400 × 200 × 350 mm), with iron and brass body on a wooden base; main body with chimney, reels, reel-holder, and six original films.

€ 550

Elegant and rare example of a magic lantern combined with a cinematograph, made in France around 1900. The main structure consists of a large black metal box, mounted on a sturdy lacquered wooden base.

The lantern is fitted with a vertical chimney for expelling heat generated by the light source, a typical feature of professional and semi-professional models of the era. The front section contains a brass lens, adjustable for focusing, with a well-preserved precision mechanism. This model is equipped with a metal reel-holder and two integrated reels for the projection of moving pictures, making it a hybrid device between a magic lantern and a primitive cinematographic projector. Included are 6 original compatible films, which attest to the historical use of the apparatus.

The metal box displays engraved details and decorative perforations that permitted ventilation of the light source. The mechanism is well-preserved, showing signs of use appropriate for its age, and the wooden base is solid and stable, retaining traces of the original lacquer.

The magic lantern is an optical device used to project images onto a surface by means of a light source and a series of lenses. Invented in the 17th century, the magic lantern evolved over time, from projecting simple painted drawings on glass slides to photographic images, and by the late 19th century, to moving pictures.

CONDITIONS: Marks of use; overall, in good condition.

REFERENCES: L. MANNONI, *The Great Art of Light and Shadow: Archaeology of the Cinema*, University of Exeter Press, 2000; M. CRUPI, *La lanterna magica dal 1646 al 1940, Storia della Fotografia*, 2012.



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1910

“HOME CINEMA” OF THE EDWARDIAN ERA:
A REFINED TABLETOP APPARATUS PATENTED BY THE LUMIÈRE BROTHERS
TRANSLATING SEQUENTIAL PHOTOGRAPHS
INTO ANIMATED SPECTACLE WITHIN THE DOMESTIC INTERIOR

45. *Kinora, table-top cinematographic picture viewer*. Bond's Ltd., 138 New Bond Street, London: ca. 1910.

[TOGETHER WITH]

6 reels by Kinora Co. Ltd., London: ca. 1910-1914

Oak base platform with moulded edge (120 × 310 × 130 mm), supporting a hinged upright and integrated geared mechanism with hand-crank and turned wooden handle, black-painted steel viewing hood embossed “The Kinora”; circular metal retailer plaque inset into the base reading “Patented throughout the world” and “Bond's Ltd., 138 New Bond St., W.”; steel arm and spindle for reel mounting. Together with six Kinora picture reels, each approximately 125 mm in diameter, composed of sequential photographic cards mounted radially around a central metal hub stamped “Kinora Co. Ltd., London,” and numbered: 435, 526, 547, 4396, 4413, 4419.

€ 3.800

The Kinora represents one of the most refined and conceptually sophisticated domestic embodiments of early moving-image technology prior to the general diffusion of projection apparatus in private interiors. Invented and patented by Auguste and Louis Lumière in February 1896, the system translated the experimental logic underlying the *Cinématographe* into a compact mechanism designed for individual viewing rather than public exhibition. Instead of employing celluloid film and projected light, it relied upon radially mounted photographic cards whose rapid mechanical succession generated the illusion of motion through the physiological principle of persistence of vision.

Marketed in London by Bond's of New Bond Street, a prominent photographic retailer serving an affluent clientele, the present example belongs to the mature pre-war phase of Kinora production. Its integrated gearing, embossed hood, and retailer's plaque attest to a fully standardised commercial model rather than to an early or transitional prototype. The survival of six numbered reels further situates the apparatus within a coherent distribution network, reflecting a structured catalogue of subjects intended for cultivated domestic consumption.



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The six reels offer a representative cross-section of Kinora imagery: staged illusion (Magician swallowing sword), maritime ceremony (Launch of a boat), zoological display (Elephants in water), domestic vignette (Gardener with hose), wartime mobilization (World War I soldiers marching to war), and early aviation (Biplane taking off and landing). Collectively, these subjects articulate the device's dual identity as refined parlour entertainment and medium of topical visual culture. They reflect Edwardian fascination with spectacle, empire, mechanized warfare, and technological progress, while preserving ephemeral moments of everyday life within a mechanically repeatable visual format.

In operation, the user mounts a reel upon the horizontal spindle and actuates the hand-crank, which engages an internal geared mechanism. This system advances each photographic card in rapid succession behind the viewing aperture, while the black-painted hood shields ambient light and directs the observer's gaze. The controlled progression of sequential images, governed by precise mechanical calibration, produces the illusion of continuous movement through the principle of persistence of vision. The experience is intimate and individual, requiring no projection, combustible film stock, or theatrical infrastructure.

Positioned historically between nineteenth-century optical amusements and fully developed cinematic projection systems, the Kinora occupies a distinctive transitional locus in the genealogy of visual media. It represents a domesticated adaptation of chronophotographic principles originally explored by the Lumière brothers, transforming scientific experimentation into a reproducible object for cultivated interiors. In this respect, it belongs to the broader phenomenon of the domestication of spectacle, analogous to stereoscopy and other optical devices that translated optical science into refined domestic entertainment.

The destruction of the Kinora factory by fire in 1914, followed by the rapid ascent of amateur cine cameras and projection systems, effectively curtailed production and concluded a brief yet conceptually significant chapter in pre-cinematic technology. The present ensemble, complete with six thematically varied reels preserved within their original retail framework, constitutes a coherent and representative example of this Lumière-derived domestic apparatus at the height of its commercial and cultural development.

CONDITIONS: The apparatus is structurally complete and in perfect working order; the six reels remain structurally coherent, with stamped metal hubs intact.

REFERENCES: B. ANTHONY, *The Kinora: Motion Pictures for the Home, 1896–1914*; H. V. HOPWOOD, *Living Pictures: Their History, Photoproduction and Practical Working*, 1899; F. A. TALBOT, *Moving Pictures: How They Are Made and Worked*. 1914; D. A. MADSEN and D. P. MADSEN, *Replicating the Kinora: 3D Modelling and Printing as Heuristics in Digital Media History*, *Journal of Digital History*, 2022; AA.VV, *Exposing the Film Apparatus: The Film Archive as a Research Laboratory*, Amsterdam University Press, 2021.



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1921

A PORTABLE CINEMATOGRAPH TO ENTERTAIN WITH MUSIC AND MOVING ACTIONS

46. LÉON SAUSSINE. *Ombro-Cinema*. Paris: Saussine, 1921.

Wood and paper box with metal insert (450 x 320 x 110 mm) and a central opening resembling a stage, containing all the components to perform an innovative moving shadow theatre, better seen when lighted from the background. Inside the box are four rolls for staging the moving-shadow spectacle.

€ 2.900

THE MECHANISM BEHIND THE OMBRO-CINEMA, DESIGNED TO GIVE THE ILLUSION OF CONTINUOUS MOTION, WAS PATENTED BY SAUSSINE IN 1921.

The animated theatre, operated by two cranks, is powered by a hand-wound spring mechanism with a music box for sound effects. The mechanism is designed to hold two vertical rollers that wind a strip of paper featuring anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figures. The words of the story are printed at the very bottom of the back of the scroll so that it can be read by the person cranking the box. Over time, Saussine produced 10 different rollers to be used in the Ombro-Cinema. Looking from the front of the theatre, as the paper strip moves, the screen's grid successively masks each figure, showing one position after another and creating the illusion of movement, which is characteristic of this type of optical toy, in this case enhanced by the music from the music box.

The box retains four original scrolls:

- No 1 - *Scènes de rues*
- No 2 - *Aventures de Marius*
- No 6 - *Nice Carnival*
- No 7 - *Au cirque*

THE IMAGE ROLLS ARE VERY DELICATE AND PRONE TO BREAKING AND WEAR; THEREFORE, IT IS VERY RARE TO FIND A THEATRE WITH SO MANY SCROLLS STILL INTACT.

CONDITIONS: Perfectly preserved, with 4 original scrolls.

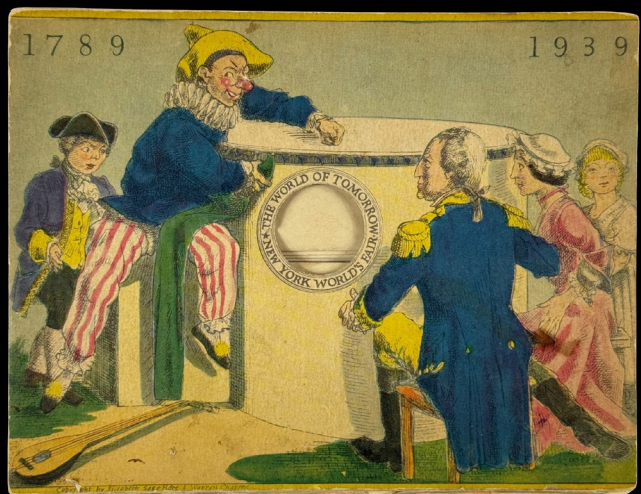
REFERENCES: MJP, Musée du Jouet, Poissy: ref. 78.45.5.1; MUCEM, Musée des Civilisation de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée, Marseille: ref. 2000.4.2; G. BEUCHET. *L'aventure des jeux Saussine de l'Uzège à Paris*. Uzès: Musée Georges Borias, 2018, p. 47.



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1939

A THREE-DIMENSIONAL SOUVENIR OF THE 1939 NEW YORK WORLD'S FAIR
AN OPTICAL CELEBRATION OF THE "WORLD OF TOMORROW"

47. HARE, ELIZABETH SAGE & CHAPPELL, WARREN, *The World of Tomorrow. The New York World's Fair, 1789–1939*, New York: [privately published; possibly issued for the Firestone Factory and Exhibition Building at the New York World's Fair], 1939.

Oblong 12mo (165 × 130 mm; extending to 600 mm when fully opened), original pictorial printed cardboard boards forming the structural covers of a tunnel book with circular peephole on the front board; internally composed of five colour-printed cardboard scenic panels connected by tissue-paper accordion folds. The front board depicts George and Martha Washington with a jester figure and the dates 1789 and 1939, the peephole frame bearing the legend *The World of Tomorrow – New York World's Fair*. Rear board with the final scenic layer showing the Trylon and Perisphere. Copyright notice at lower margin: *Copyright by Elizabeth Sage Hare & Warren Chappell*.

SOLD

Produced as a promotional souvenir for the 1939 New York World's Fair, this finely constructed paper peepshow presents a perspectival view through the fairgrounds toward the monumental Trylon and Perisphere, the architectural symbols of the exposition. Viewed through a circular aperture in the front board, a sequence of colour-printed cut-away panels unfolds in receding layers, creating a theatrical illusion of spatial depth characteristic of the traditional tunnel-book format. The iconography deliberately juxtaposes eighteenth-century figures of George and Martha Washington with the modernist architecture of the fair, linking the 150th anniversary of Washington's inauguration with the technological optimism embodied in the theme "The World of Tomorrow." Within the broader tradition of optical entertainments, such devices transformed complex exhibition spaces into portable visual experiences. This example condenses the symbolic axis of the exposition into a miniature architectural panorama, guiding the viewer's gaze from the historical origins of the American republic toward an imagined technological future. As both commemorative object and optical curiosity, it stands among the most evocative forms of World's Fair ephemera, preserving in miniature the visual rhetoric of progress that defined the interwar exposition.

CONDITIONS: Good overall condition.

REFERENCES: A. F. OGATA, *Viewing Souvenirs: Peepshows and the Commodification of Looking*, *Journal of Design History*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2002, pp. 69–82; *Paper Peepshows*, collection overview, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

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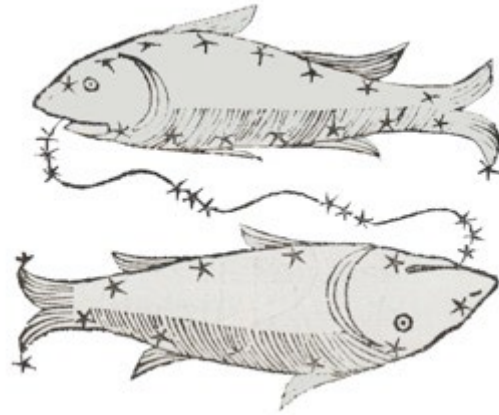
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