

ON THE FRINGE OF PRE-CINEMA COLLECTABLES

MIKE SMITH

As pre-cinema rarities become harder to find, the collector's insatiable appetite is increasingly turning towards items which cannot strictly be described as 'pre-cinema', but are collectables in their own right, incorporating a pre-cinema theme. In this category fall ceramic figurines, clocks, paintings, tapestries, fans and the like – ornamental items for the home. The very fact that these items were produced is testimony to the huge influence of the magic lantern, the peepshow and other pre-cinema devices on everyday life in the 18th and 19th centuries. No doubt as the collector's interest extends to new boundaries, other evidence of the social impact of the evolving cinema will come to light. The examples illustrated here come primarily from my own collection and from that of François Binétruy in Paris.

I hope this will encourage other members to allow us to illustrate more pieces in future issues of the journal.

- * Mike Smith collection
- § François Binétruy collection
- † Cor van Mastrigt collection

CERAMIC FIGURINES

1. Meissen figure of an itinerant lanternist with hurdy gurdy, after Huet's *Cris de Paris*, mid 19th century.*
2. Capodimonte figure based on the Meissen example, late 19th century.*
3. Continental figure based on the Meissen example, late 19th century.*
4. Continental figure group of two children with a magic lantern, late 19th century.*
5. Sèvres figure group of a peepshow entertainer and two children. First modelled by Falconet in 1756 after Nicola Cochin's 'Foire de campagne', in turn after Boucher, third quarter of 18th century.*
6. Derby figure group based on the Sèvres example, third quarter of 18th century.*
7. Continental figure of itinerant lanternist.†
8. Continental figure of itinerant lanternist.†
9. Continental figure of itinerant lanternist.†
10. Continental figure group of boy and girl with a magic lantern.†
11. Continental figure of man carrying a magic lantern.†
12. Continental figure group of a peepshow entertainer.†
13. Continental figure group of a peepshow entertainer.†



2, 1, 3.



4.



5, 6.



7.



8.



9.



10.



11.



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14.



15.



16.



17.



18.



19.



20.



21.

CLOCKS

14. French gilt clock, the design broadly based on a French magic lanterns of the 1880s. This example contains a high-quality movement by the French maker S Marti & Cie.; the countwheel movement dates the clock to around 1880.[§]

15. A French Empire ormolu mantel clock, the case surmounted by Cupid with an arrow, who is presumably trying to tell his companion, a scantily dressed matron, that she clearly has no idea how to use her zograscope since she appears to be gazing at the back of the mirror rather than through the lens, circa 1810 (sold at Sotheby's, 7 October 1993; whereabouts now unknown).

16. French gilt clock surmounted with figure of magic lanternist, late 19th century.[†]

17. French gilt clock from late 19th century. It is interesting to note that the three figures are identical to those in illustration 14.[§]

PAINTINGS

18. Monkey with a lantern on his back.[§]

19. Itinerant lanternist.[§]

20. A peepshow.[§]

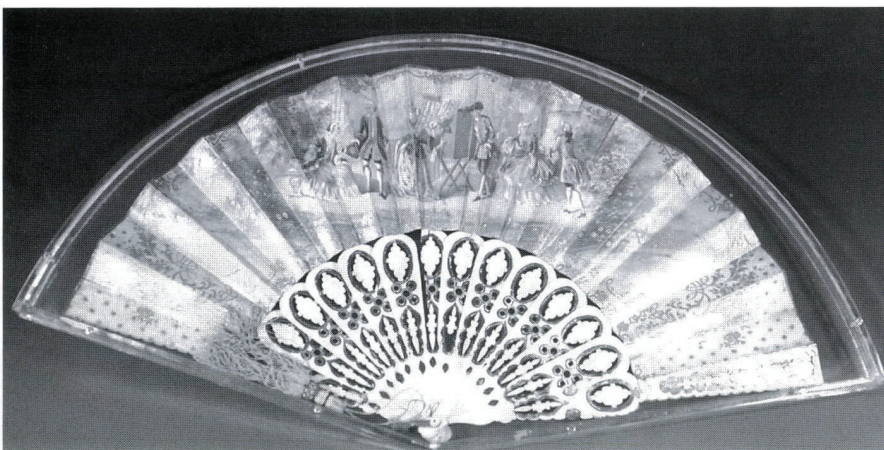
21. A peepshow.[§]

FANS

22. French hand-painted fan decorated with scene incorporating a peepshow.[§]

TAPESTRIES

23. Tapestry cushion embroidered with a picture of a peepshow.[§]



22.



23.