

LANTERNS AT THE FAIRGROUND

Two-day event organised by the B-magic Project with the MLS

5 and 6 April, Brussels

Around 100 people from the Magic Lantern Society and the B-magic Project, many from both, gathered at the 'fairground' – the Cinematek in Brussels – for magic lantern shows, updates on research, keynote addresses and shows (see TML 17 and 18). Before the main event started Karin Bienek and Ludwig Vogl-Bienek ran a research seminar based on the art of projection and the vision for eLaterna (see TML 18, p.7). eLaterna will enable in-depth analysis of slide sets and individual slides, including views from every angle to show labelling, mechanisms and different editions. Examples were Bamforth's *Ora Pro Nobis* set and a double panoramic slide with eccentric mechanism from the *Emigrant Ship* set – with the turn of one handle the waves moved and the ship sailed away from the harbour. This mechanism is exposed in a video clip on the website. eLaterna gives a 'narrow but deep' view while Lucerna is 'broad and shallow'. They posed philosophical questions about the nature of

Carolyn and Jeremy Brooker (right), the 'glass harmonica' (below) and one of their projections (below right)



Karin Bienek at the pre-event seminar

performance and validity of studying slides in isolation, as the experience is a combination of the projected image, the performance and context. Their definition of 'experimental media-archaeology'? Digging up slides from Lester Smith's bargain box – with your eyes shut!

In the afternoon Kurt Vanhoutte, Jeremy Brooker and Nele Wynants welcomed participants and set the scene. Originating as trade fairs, by the 1850s entertainment had gradually replaced trade at the local fairs although world trade fairs, starting in London in 1851, did give the concept a boost. Professor Vanessa Toulmin took up the theme, explaining the legal and social origins of fairs and fairgrounds in the UK. Entertainment, such as high-wire acts and peepshows, did not begin until trading stopped. Mechanisation gave fairs a boost in the 19th century enabling steam-powered roundabouts, etc. Vanessa had found little evidence of magic lantern shows in these fairs. Guido Convents expanded the theme to open-air magic lantern projections in fairs and elsewhere, made possible by improved illuminants, and culminating in open-air cinemas. Bernd Scholze then took us to the lantern shows of Friedrich Boettcher in 1870s Berlin, projecting his original large-format hand-painted slides. Boettcher gave performances in the Königliche Schauspielhaus – did the Royal Family go on the same exquisite trip around Egypt Bernd conducted for us?

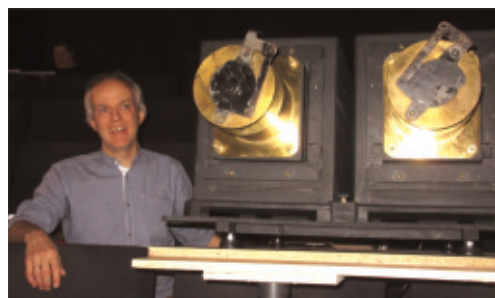
After tea, the B-magic researchers stepped onto a 'carousel' and each gave us a ten-minute preview of their research projects, ranging from creation and volcanoes to 'unacceptable' images. The Cinematek

programme finished for the day with a rare treat from Helmut Wälde (see p.1). For Jeremy and Carolyn Brooker's *Frankenstein Phantasmagoria* show, inspired by Mary Shelley's story, we walked up the Rue Royale to the truly atmospheric venue. This was a somewhat derelict late 19th-century building constructed for the Jesuits, with the chapel providing the perfect Robertson-esque setting for the show. Two musicians – Jules Arthur and Timothy Didymus – provided live music including Timothy's remote-controlled glass harmonica (or 'Kosmische Glass'). No Frankenstein slides are known but the eclectic mix of slides from across the ages, including some of Jeremy's own making and others projected on a skull at the climax of the show, were designed to evoke for contemporary audiences what phantasmagoria meant 200 years ago – a truly extraordinary experience. An exhibition, *Blackout*, using Kodak carousel slide projectors was set up in the cellars of the venue.

Day Two began with David Jones tracing the story of erotic slides and images – from the boudoir to the street (and fairground) and back again via mass photography and cinema. The erotic theme could be found in the 18th-century slides made by Musschenbroek, and the Duc d'Orléans' 1720 orgy included a magic lantern show with erotic slides. With images becoming more widely accessible the sexual messages were often portrayed in complex visual codes to evade censorship and disapproval. Ine van Dooren then donned a number of hats (both literally and metaphorically – "when in doubt wear a hat") to bring us some fairground atmosphere and spectacle using images from Lucerna. The final magic lantern show was given by Ludwig Vogl-Bienek and Karin Bienek using a beautiful biunial and projecting a selection of colourful characters from stage, history and hell, including William Tell, Napoleon Bonaparte and Fuseli's *Nightmare*. These were all from their *illuminago* collection, hand-painted and dating from the first half of the 19th century.

A second trip on the research carousel, with subjects ranging from mapping the locations of fairs and shows to luminous fountains and the changing story of Damon and Pythias, and a showing of Sarah Vanagt's magic-lantern inspired film *Divinations*, closed the event. Participants then exchanged reflections and browsed through the market stalls. (See page 3 for more photos)

Mary Ann Auckland and Sylvia Alting van Geusau



One of Bernd Scholze's slides and Bernd with his projectors, specially commissioned to show the slides



6. Death pointing at the Ten Commandments

On 17 April 1807 Franz Anton Lorgie put an announcement in the *Dresdener Anzeigen* about a series of shows he was about to present, mainly focussing on his mechanical figures. Lorgie (1765-1853) was a member of a famous dynasty of showmen specialising in puppet theatre and mechanical figures. The interesting part of the announcement for us is the following:



10. The skeleton that "appears as natural size and then returns to its former nothing"

(from page 1)

This had the advantage of saving weight for travelling. These paper frames measure about 21 cm by 17 cm. The glass slides themselves measure only about 8 cm by 6 cm. There are two separate groups of slides – one group of 10 slides is framed with red paper (Figs 3–6 are examples) and the other group of 17 slides is framed with black paper (Figs 7–10 are examples). The slides with the black paper were probably the earlier group, produced for the lantern from the Rose workshop. Both groups were clearly painted by different artists. The slides are not numbered. The figures of both sets are painted with a black background which was typical for use as ghost apparitions.

I am indebted to Bernd Scholze for finding an important reference in relation to ghost apparitions.



7. Leopold II (1747-1792), Holy Roman Emperor (top right); 8. Louis XV (1710-1774), King of France (above left); 9. Frederick the Great (1712-1786), King of Prussia (above right)

"... The show ends with a Ghost Apparition in which I show: 1. Frederick the Great [King of Prussia], 2. William, King of Prussia, 3. General Zythen. The last apparition is a skeleton that appears as its natural size and then returns to its former nothing. Further dates with a Ghost Apparition are on Wednesday: 1. Louis Seize [XVI of France], 2. Marie Antoinette, his wife, 3. the little Dauphin. On Friday the Ghost Apparition will show: 1. Maria Theresa, Holy Roman Empress, 2. Joseph II, Holy Roman Emperor, 3. Leopold II, successor of Joseph, also Holy Roman Emperor." Franz Lorgie ends his announcement as follows: "The show begins at 6pm every night. Entry is at 5 pm." Some of the subjects exactly match the images in my slides, including Frederick the Great, Leopold II and the skeleton that disappears to nothing – all from the black paper group of slides.

I am proud of the fact that a lantern of this age can still project so effectively and its custom-made ghostly images continue to delight an audience today.

MORE IMAGES FROM THE BRUSSELS EVENT (see also page 14)



Helmut Wälde showing a 'red group' slide (far left)
Ludwig Vogl-Bienek and Jeremy Brooker with biunial (left)
Ine van Dooren wearing one of her hats – with a fairground theme (right) (photos here and p. 14 by Lester Smith, Gwen Sebus, George and Mary Ann Auckland)

