

EXHIBITION AT THE CINEMA MUSEUM IN GIRONA

Jordi Pons

On 28 June 2017, an exhibition called 'Light. The magic lantern and digital imaging. Similarities between the nineteenth and twenty-first centuries' opened at the Cinema Museum in Girona. The exhibition is located in a room of about 120m² on the ground floor of the Museum and admission is free of charge. This exhibition has three very distinct aims – to raise awareness of the magic lantern, to display the Museum's collection and to put the magic lantern in the context of twenty-first-century visual culture.

The first is to create awareness of the magic lantern among the general public who do not usually know what it is, nor what the experience of a performance was like, nor what images were projected. For this reason, the exhibition begins with an introductory section on the magic lantern itself. There are then four main sections on display. Each section is a space, a context, where the nineteenth-century magic lantern projections are performed – the theatre (including a sub-section devoted to phantasmagoria shows), the school or athenaeum (including a sub-section devoted to the Royal Polytechnic Institution), the home and the street.

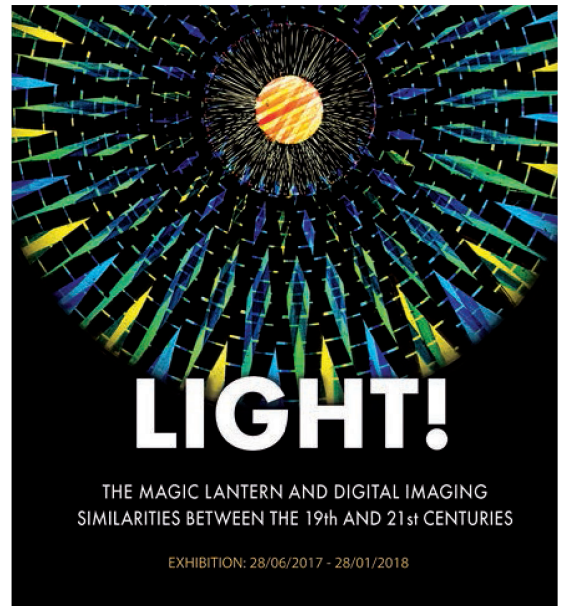
Visitors will then find a final section devoted to the lanternist's tools. This section includes an interactive game with a touchscreen and projector, created by the CIFOG (the Girona training centre specialising in 3D animation, video games and interactive environments). This game enables visitors to enjoy the experience of handling, as a lanternist would have done, the fifty magic lantern glass slides on display in the room. These slides have been digitally recreated with great authenticity and realism and can be viewed on a touchscreen. Visitors can use this screen by touch to move pulleys and flaps as well as the handles of each of the slides, making the images they contain move in the same way as if people had the originals in their hands. This brand-new game has been specially created for the exhibition and, when it ends, will be added to the Museum's permanent exhibition.

The second aim of the exhibition is to display magic lantern slides from the Museum's collections which have never been shown before as they have been packed away in its storerooms. Around seventy-five per cent of the 275 magic lantern slides on display are being shown to the public for the very first time. In total, this exhibition contains 320 original objects. All of them, except for two, come from the Cinema Museum's own collections.

The third aim of the exhibition is the most adventurous, ambitious and original – to search for analogies and similarities between magic lantern projection and images in the nineteenth-century and twenty-first-century visual culture. These are two realities far apart in time and in terms of the technology used, but much more closely related than we might imagine. Certain analogies can be established between some nineteenth-century uses of magic lantern images and those of the new digital image technologies of the twenty-first century. We can thus establish a link, a common thread, between the visual culture of our forebears and our own, in which the technology has changed enormously, but less so the intentions and aims and, ultimately, our fascination for images.

Some of the suggested analogies are, for example:

- between lantern slides with dissolving views, enabling the lanternist to transform the image of a daytime landscape into a night-time one, and vice versa, and current time-lapse techniques
- between comic slides with repetitive movements, such as slipper slides, and the digital image format known as animated GIF
- between slides with views of cities around the world, and Google Street View
- between chromatropes and video art
- between rackwork astronomical slides and certain apps which show the movement of the planets of the solar system
- between magic lantern street projections and the giant advertising video screens in Times Square in New York
- between the Lapierre slides which tell children's stories and different apps which recount the same stories interactively ... and so on.



Searching for these similarities between the uses of nineteenth-century and twenty-first-century images has another, perhaps less evident, goal. Using these images and practices of twenty-first-century visual culture, the objective is to attract a younger audience to the exhibition and to spark their interest in the magic lantern, thereby increasing awareness of the history and art of the magic lantern.

This exhibition, which can be seen until 28 January 2018, is jointly produced by the Cinema Museum, the University of Girona and the European 'A Million Pictures' project. The Cinema Museum participates in the project through the University of Girona, one of its partners. The exhibition's committee members are Daniel Pitarch (University of Girona), Ariadna Lorenzo (University of Girona), Montse Puigdevall (Curator of the Cinema Museum) and Jordi Pons (Director of the Cinema Museum).

Find out more about this exhibition on the Cinema Museum website (www.museudelcinema.cat) (see also the main article on the fantascopie that is in the permanent exhibition there).

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