



THE MLS AWARDS 2025

Jeremy Brooker

In a break with tradition, we decided to announce the winners of our annual Magic Lantern Society Awards at the AGM in January rather than through the December issue of *The Magic Lantern*. This allowed entrants a little more time to make their submissions; and was in part responsible for us receiving more entries than in any previous year. These came from a wide range of applicants including artists, poets, storytellers, filmmakers and distinguished magic lantern researchers. The standard was exceptionally high, and along with my fellow judges **Ine van Dooren** and **Frog Morris** I have enjoyed the challenging task of whittling the list down to find our worthy winners. We are grateful to everyone who participated and look forward to seeing even more creative contributions in the future.

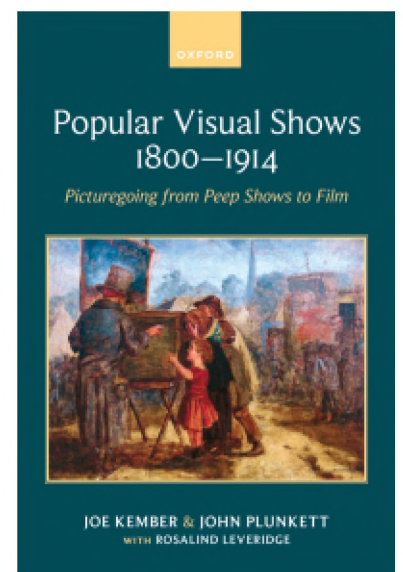
We have slightly changed the format this year. The Dick Balzer Awards now recognise work completed during the year, while the Mervyn Heard Awards are to encourage the development of new ideas and approaches or for projects still in progress. The Society makes two cash awards, each of £300, to support this work.



Karrie Fransman: *The Tale Spinner* – an 'un-Al-able' immersive peepshow that revolves around the viewer's head

The two winners of the Dick Balzer Awards could scarcely be more different. *Popular Visual Shows 1800-1914: Picturegoing from Peep Shows to Film* is a scholarly book co-authored by Professors Joe Kember and John Plunkett published by Oxford University Press in May 2025. On a far more intimate scale, **Edward Murray's** beautiful poem *Chapter 1 in love* (see page 10) combines lantern slides, text and music in a highly personal and original way. In addition to these prize winners, the judges also wanted to acknowledge two other outstanding entries with Special Commendations to filmmaker **Celina Liu** and to eminent magic lanternist and researcher **Terry Borton** for his latest book on the American slide artist Joseph Boggs Beale.

The Mervyn Heard Award winners were equally diverse. **Dong An**, an early-career researcher from the School of Arts, Southeast University, China, looks at representations of China and the Chinese in the magic lantern. Many of you will have met **Karrie Fransman** at the AGM (see p. 16). She is a recent member of the MLS; a visual storyteller and graphic novelist currently Artist in Residence at the Royal Society of Literature. The judges also recognised the work of **Phil Dunn**, and the creative magic lantern workshops run by **Gilly King**, both receiving Special Commendations. We look forward to seeing how all these exciting projects progress and perhaps reading about them in future editions of *TML*!



Joe Kember and John Plunkett: Book cover