

# A Million Pictures



## *Magic Lantern Slide Heritage as Artefacts in the Common European History of Learning*

**Newsletter # 10 | June 2017**

**The slight delay** of this newsletter indicates that we are busy, and that time for writing up newsletter articles is scarce: at Girona, the last preparations are underway for the exhibition opening of *Light! Magic Lantern and the Digital Image* at Museu del Cinema are (see our last newsletter), the team Salamanca is finalizing the App “Linternauta” for exploring magic lantern slide collections (more in the next newsletter), the team Utrecht organised a number of public activities while the conference organisation enters the hot phase, the team Antwerp introduced lantern slides to a newly funded astronomical research organisation and just published a special journal issue on the topic and at Exeter, project members are working hard on assuring the continuation of this project. On top of that, all research

teams are finalizing the documentation of the creative re-use projects for the DVD and diverse lectures, papers and articles are in the making (see our website). This might not sound like vacation, but this is the last newsletter before the summer break and the conference!

We wish you an enjoyable summer and looking forward to seeing you at the *Million Pictures* conference!



Slide “Summer Holiday” taken from Lucerna  
<https://slides.uni-trier.de/slide/index.php?id=5108954>

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## From the Project Coordination

This is the last newsletter before the summer break. We will send out a conference special in mid-August with the latest news.

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Several members of the *A Million Pictures* are currently engaged in writing grant applications for follow-up projects. Keep your fingers crossed for a continuation of cooperative lantern and slide research after *A Million Pictures* will have ended next year!

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Short notes, images, articles, questions, requests, and more are highly welcomed! Please send them per e-mail to Sarah Dellmann: s.dellmann [at] uu.nl  
Items for the next newsletter ( # 11 - October 2017) should be submitted by



*This slide shows our busy reference writer*  
[www.slides.uni.trier.de/slide/index.php?id=5020685](http://www.slides.uni.trier.de/slide/index.php?id=5020685)

**25 September 2017**

## Conference Updates

This is a kind reminder that all participants, speakers, presenters and guests who have not registered yet, to **please register via the conference registration** page! Your registration via the system makes the organisation much easier, so please register there even if you already confirmed personally that you will attend. <http://a-million-pictures.wp.hum.uu.nl/conference/registration/>

If you do not have institutional funding, you can **apply for a fee waiver** by mailing an informal message to Sarah Dellmann ([s.dellmann@uu.nl](mailto:s.dellmann@uu.nl)).

The **updated programme** will be uploaded on Friday, 16 June. Check the website for some minor changes in the programme! <http://a-million-pictures.wp.hum.uu.nl/conference/programme/>

Our keynote speaker, Prof. Erkki Huhtamo, just uploaded the first video of a series called “**Professor Huhtamo’s Cabinet of Media Archaeology.**” Part 1 is

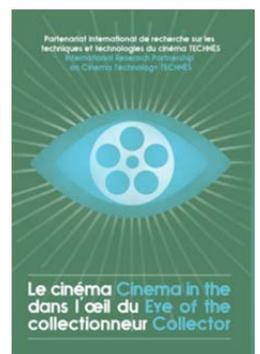


dedicated to the magic lantern. In 17 minutes, Erkki Huhtamo explains the technology of various types of lanterns and illuminants (in English). Watch the video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V37S95AE3Pc>

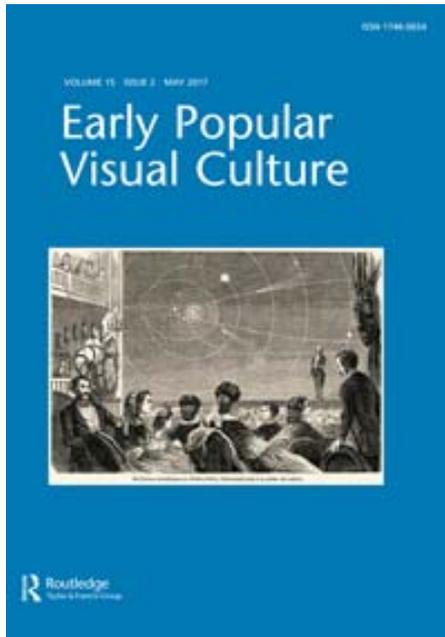
## Project News

More Videos: The lantern performance group illuminago launched a new trailer on their work and shows. Watch it at <https://vimeo.com/user67112401/illuminago-shows>

At the conference "The Cinema in the Eye of the Collector", held at the Cinémathèque Québécoise in Montreal from June 4-8, several contributions concerned the Magic Lantern. Sabine Lenk (team Antwerp) gave a presentation on the Robert Vrielynck collection at the Antwerp Museum of Contemporary Art (MHKA). Frank Kessler (team Utrecht) discussed the collection of the late Werner Nekes. A highlight of the conference was the show given by Deborah and Terry Borton’s American Magic Lantern Theatre.



## Project News



Kurt Vanhoutte and Nele Wynants from the research team Antwerp published the joint article “**On the passage of a man of the theatre through a rather brief moment in time: Henri Robin, performing astronomy in nineteenth century Paris**” in *Early Popular Visual Culture* 15, 2 (2017), 152-174.

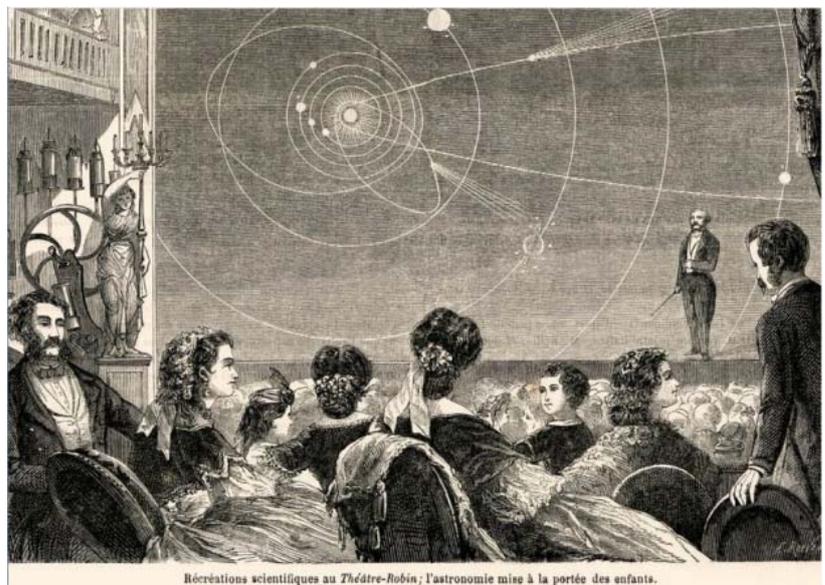
This issue of EPVC is entirely dedicated to Spectacular Astronomy and was edited by Charlotte Bigg and Kurt Vanhoutte. Artemis Willis’ article in this issue also considers lantern slides (“What the Moon is Like’: technology, modernity, and experience in a late-nineteenth-century astronomical entertainment”). <http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/repv20/current>

More Astronomy: **PARS - Performing Astronomy Research Society** - will be introduced by Kurt Vanhoutte and Nele Wynants at the Performance Studies

International Conference #23 in Hamburg, Germany.

PARS is an international, interdisciplinary group of researchers from the human, social, and exact sciences, including also artists, visual technicians and planetarium professionals to investigate the history, present state and future of popular astronomical spectacles. As

part of historical forms of astronomic spectacle, lantern slide shows are a research topic in this network.



## Project News (continued)

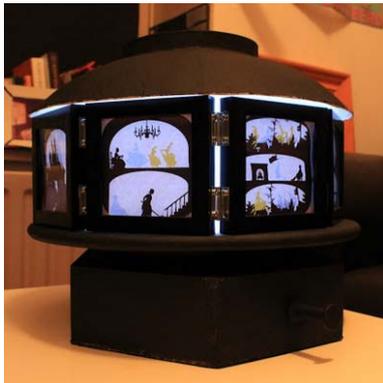
In a 20-minute **video documentary**, historian Leen Breure and Sarah Dellmann from the research team Utrecht explain where today's clichés of the



Netherlands originate from. “Molens Tulpen Klompen en Klaas - ruim 100 jaar clichés van Nederland” (in Dutch language) investigates the history of Dutch cultural icons and their function in commerce, tourism, fine arts and media. Among the image material are lantern slides that were digitised in the course of the *A Million Pictures Project* from the collection of EYE Film

Institute Netherlands. The video is licensed under a CC-BY license and can be watched and downloaded at <https://sciemedias.wistia.com/medias/v3oeq5s1v8>

Two groups of **students from University of the Arts Utrecht (HKU)** used lantern



material in a project seminar. One group developed an installation, inspired by the magic lantern and its ability to tell stories with light. This resulted in the installation “Assepoester – twee kanten van een verhaal” (“Cinderella – two sides of a story”), which will also be on display during the *A Million Pictures Conference*. Depending on the light, the viewer gets either the “blue” or the “red” version of the story.

Watch the documentary (Dutch with English subtitles) at <https://vimeo.com/219517030> .

The second group created an animation film based on digitized lantern slides in the collection of EYE Film Institute Netherlands and Utrecht University Museum.

You can see their work on Instagram

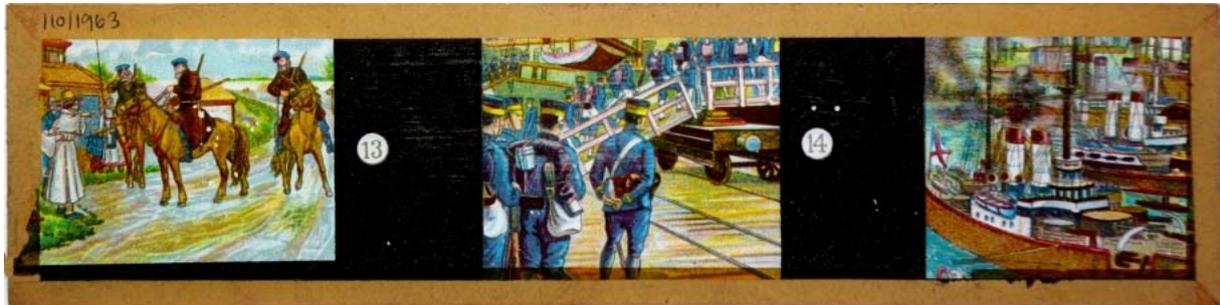
[https://www.instagram.com/slide\\_of\\_life/](https://www.instagram.com/slide_of_life/) . In the example on the right, the originally motionless bird beats the drums.



Both groups contribute a video for the DVD with examples for Creative Re-Use.

## Series: Favourite Slide

by Rick Lawrence, Digital Media Officer, Royal Albert Memorial Museum (UK)



<http://rammcollections.org.uk/object/glass-plate-slide-10/>  
<http://slides.uni-trier.de/set/index.php?id=3007991>

“Working on the *A Million Pictures* project at RAMM in Exeter I am still amazed by the variety of subjects covered in the collection here. My favourite slide comes from a series depicting the Russo-Japanese War 1904-05 in RAMM's collection. Being interested in military history and dress 1850-1918, I'm used to studying prints of uniforms. These are generally very formal posed depictions of soldiers and sailors. The slides are closer to paintings in their depiction of action and vignettes. Slides go a step further than the rather formal art works by capturing a real diversity of scenes, perhaps more like newspaper illustrations of the time.

The slide I've chosen reflects this, I hope. It depicts three subjects. Russian cavalry scouts talking to Korean peasants and the depiction of civilians interests me here. Then we see Japanese troops embarking for the war zone and can imagine their emotions. Finally, some of Russia's Black Sea Fleet are shown and with both sides having modern warships both took pride in their navies. This fleet didn't take part in the war, but it shows Russian sea power, which was humbled at the sea battle of Tsushima when the Baltic Fleet was heavily defeated in 1905.

The slide also has a social history aspect in making these international and distant events accessible to domestic audiences. Imagining people at the time viewing these and their reactions, especially after news of the defeat at Tsushima, intrigues me.”

## News from Other Projects

### Call for Papers: Provenance and Early Cinema. 15th international Domitor

**Conference.** The 2018 conference of the International Society for the Study of Early Cinema will be held in Rochester, New York, from 13-16



June 2018. The call explicitly invites contributions that address the intermedial relations of early cinema. See for more information

<http://domitor.org/conference/2018-rochester-conference/>

### Call for Papers: The Moving Form of Film. Exploring the Intermedial as a

**Historiographic Method.** This international conference will take place from 6-8 November 2017 at the University of Reading, UK. It seeks to invite discussion of



intermediality as a historiographic method. For more information and the

complete Call for papers, visit <http://www.reading.ac.uk/intermedia/>

**Help wanted! Magical Motion Museum** aims to catalog as many early animations and (pre-)cinema highlights as possible with high quality videos on a planned website as well as on the current YouTube-channel

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL9C4F8E6F3E04BDE1> .

We're now looking for high quality video documentation of mechanical slides, chromatropes and dissolving views. Other material like hi-res images of zoetropes, phenakisticopes, praxinoscopes and other media that are still missing in our collection are also very welcome. Magical Motion Museum would also like to collaborate with any person or organization to further catalog, document, research and present the history of the moving image. If you have any material or would like to contribute as a videographer, animator, web developer, researcher, manager or otherwise, or would like to use our animations: please contact



[magicalmotionmuseum@gmail.com](mailto:magicalmotionmuseum@gmail.com)

Ludwig Vogl-Bienek's monograph *Lichtspiele im Schatten der Armut* is **reviewed** in the *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 37, 1, 2017.

Read it online at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01439685.2016.1273324>

## News from Other Projects (continued)

The 2018 theme for the Australian National University Humanities Research Centre is **'Imagining Science and Technology 200 Years after Frankenstein'**. Applications for 2018 Fellows close on the 23 June 2017. Any "hard scientists, as well as humanists, social scientists, writers and artists" can apply. More information at <http://hrc.anu.edu.au/2018-annual-theme>



Also at ANU, the **conference Imagineers in Circus and Science: Scientific knowledge and creative imagination** will be held in April 2018. Due date for abstracts is 31 July. <http://hrc.anu.edu.au/events/imagineers-conference>

The Department of Art History and Theory at the University of Canterbury (Christchurch, New Zealand) has embarked on a project to make its lantern slides more accessible to researchers by focusing on a hundred **slides relating to the construction of five New Zealand First World War battlefield monuments**. The slides were produced by Christchurch architect Samuel Hurst Seager, who designed the monuments and was the key founder of the Department's lantern slide collection in 1894. A significant number of the collection's c.4000 lantern slides came from Seager's diligent interest in documenting architecture throughout his travels for use in his classes at the School of Art, public evening lectures, various entertainments and fundraisers.



This set of WWI slides has been re-housed into preservation-standard storage and is currently being digitised for a website attached to the Department's new Material Culture Research Centre. The project acts as the pilot project for future digitising of the entire collection as well as a chance to recognise Seager's role in the commemoration of New Zealand's efforts in five key WWI battles.

A selection of slides will be displayed in an exhibition at the University about Seager's war memorial work in August this year. For more information, contact Laura Dunham at [laura.dunham@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:laura.dunham@canterbury.ac.nz)

## Talking about the Lantern

by Sabine Lenk, Research Team Antwerp

Talking about the lantern today is not easy, especially not in a classroom. Before one can give a talk about the *dispositif* of a lantern performance, one has to explain first what a magic / optical lantern is and how it functions. If you are lucky, *one* student has already heard about such a projection or seen the device in a film or on TV. But it is extremely rare that one comes across a young person who has experienced a live show. But it is not only the young, who have never seen a magical lantern and do not know what it can do. The example given by the makers of the film *Breve ma veridica storia della pittura italiana di Roberto Longhi*, directed by Maria Bosio and released in 2007 on a DVD produced by Istituto Luce in Rome, is a good example. The film is based on the script of a series of classes taught by the Italian art historian Roberto Longhi. The film demonstrates the principles of teaching art history in 1914, when Longhi lectured at the liceo Visconti in Rome. In class Longhi used an optical lantern to show the artworks he commented upon to his pupils. During the second lecture on the DVD, the Italian author and actor Sandro Lombardi (who is himself an art historian and wrote a thesis on “Storia dell'arte medievale e moderna” in 1977) mentions that Longhi used slides and a lantern in his class.



Frame grabs taken from the film *BREVE MA VERIDICA STORIA DELLA PITTURA ITALIANA DI ROBERTO LONGHI*, copyright: Maria Bosio, Istituto Luce.

1<sup>st</sup> shot: The teacher (Sandro Lombardi) takes a slide out of a wooden box and holds it in his hand: “And now, let us take a look at the slides used by Longhi in his lectures.”

2<sup>nd</sup> shot: A student asks him: “Excuse me, Professor, how do you use it?”

3<sup>rd</sup> shot: The teacher approaches the lantern and explains: “With a device, the ‘Magic Lantern’, a model like this one.”

4<sup>th</sup> shot: The teacher demonstrates how to project a slide with a magic lantern. He opens the door to the lamp house and puts his hand with the slide inside it. He comments: “Ok, not as old as this one.”

It is obvious that the film-crew had not studied this subject, probable not even asked the curator of the museum that borrowed them the lantern how the



device works. With his authority of a teacher in class, Sandro Lombardi give the impression he knows precisely what he is doing. And a spectator, who has never see a lantern before will totally believe him. There is another aspect in the film that gives a misleading idea of the possibilities Longhi had in 1914. In the film, Lombardi projects a slide presenting a detail from the fresco “Incostanza” in Chiesa di Santa Croce,

Firenze, painted by Giotto in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. It shows a characteristics of teaching art history in the times of Longhi: the reproductions by photography were in black and white (sometimes colour was added afterwards), while the original artwork was in colour. But as Longhi talked not only about the depicted forms or the composition of the image, but also about colour, the film-team decided to then switch immediately to a reproduction of the fresco in colour. Thus the spectator who is not familiar with slides from this period will not understand that the text of the lectures that the film presents are indeed based on Longhi's ideas, but that what s/he sees as illustrations are modern *film* pictures in colour taken by the film-crew and not the black and white material that Longhi used.

So spreading information about the lantern, about the way it works and about the images it projected – as the members of “A Million Pictures” continuously do – is indeed necessary to avoid such misunderstandings.

## About & Editorial

This newsletter informs about the activities of the project A Million Pictures: Magic Lantern Slide Heritage as Artefact in the Common European History of Learning.

The magic lantern was the most important visual entertainment and means of instruction across nineteenth-century Europe. However, despite its pervasiveness across multiple scientific, educational and popular contexts, magic lantern slides remain under-researched. Although many libraries and museums across Europe hold tens of thousands of lantern slides in their collections, a lack of standards for documentation and preservation limits the impact of existing initiatives, hinders the recognition of the object's heritage value and potential exploitation. *A Million Pictures* addresses the sustainable preservation of this massive, untapped heritage resource.

*A Million Pictures* is a collaborative research project between researchers from Utrecht University (NL), University of Exeter (UK), University of Antwerp (BE), University of Girona (ES), University of Salamanca (ES) as well as twenty Associated Partners.

*A Million Pictures* runs from June 2015 until May 2018.

More information about past and present activities are available on our project website: [www.uu.nl/a-million-pictures](http://www.uu.nl/a-million-pictures)



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This newsletter is edited by Sarah Dellmann, additional contributions are written by Rick Lawrence and Sabine Lenk.