

2023/6/30

TOP Collection: A Genealogy of “Peep Media” and the Gaze Jul. 19, 2023 – Oct. 15, 2023



Negretti & Zambra, Crystal Palace, c.1854, Collection of Tokyo Photographic Art Museum

At the Tokyo Photographic Art Museum, we present collection exhibitions based on a variety of themes, and examine the works in our holdings from a diverse range of perspectives. This event in that series focuses on our collection’s rich body of works and reference materials on the history of imaging and photography. It introduces the devices that made peeping possible, the images produced with them, and the great variety of styles that artists, their imaginations expanded by the act of peeping, created.

The camera was invented as a device for photographing still and moving images; cameras can thus be called peep media. The camera obscura, ancestor of the camera as we know it, is an utterly dark box (or room) with a pinhole in one of its walls, to cast an image of the outside scene on the opposite wall. Later, the pinhole was replaced by a lens, and the box became more compact, reaching a size that made it portable. Another visual device with a structure that reversed the camera obscura was used for viewing pictures through a lens: the peep box or peepshow. Many formats for peepshows were devised, and they became a popular form of entertainment.

Variations on peep media include optical devices such as the microscope and telescope, equipment such as the stereoscope for three-dimensional viewing of pictures, and the Kinetoscope and other equipment for creating motion pictures. The invention and widespread adoption of these devices

supported the birth of new pictures, images never seen before, and gave rise to countless styles.

Peep media have formed not just the media environment around us today but also the formal conditions for photography and video imaging. With this exhibition, we explore the genealogy of peep media and the gaze, as it is carried on today.

Exhibition Summary

1. The Delights of Peeping

An early-period example of peep media is the contrivance called the peepshow. These shows took various forms, but they generally utilized a device that consisted of an entirely or partially closed box with at least one peephole, through which the viewer could see a scene. Its structure was the reverse of the device known as the camera obscura. Indeed, some examples actually repurposed a camera obscura to produce a peepshow. There are many stories of the peepshow's origins, but it is known to have been popular in Europe and also in Japan in the eighteenth and nineteenth century.

Their boxes contained a variety of clever contrivances. They showed not just single images with visual effects caused by single-point perspective but also pictures with compositions to emphasize the sense of depth, as in the portable paintings used as backdrops in Kabuki performances, and pictures crafted to let light through.

In Japan, optical equipment using lenses arrived from abroad during the Edo period (1600- 1868). The nozoki megane, a device with a lens mounted on a stand or in a box to view enlarged pictures, was usually enjoyed in the homes of daimyo and other affluent families. What the common people had fun with was the larger, outdoor spectacle, the nozoki karakuri or Japanese peepshow.



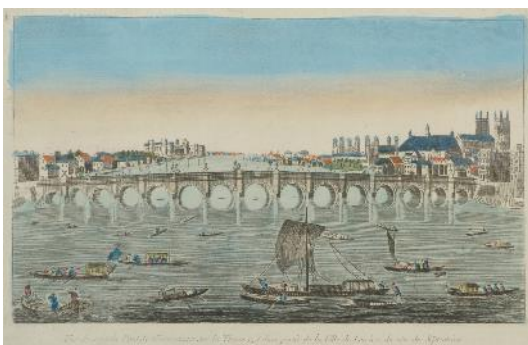
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1 Unknown, *Camera obscura (La chambre noire)*, made in France, 19th century, Wood

2 Unknown, *Book-shaped optical box (Boîte d'optique)*, made in France, 19th century, Wood

3 Unknown, *Paper peepshow (An Authentic View of Great Industrial Exhibition Palace of 1851)*, made in Germany, 1851, Hand-colored lithograph

4 Unknown, *Perspective View (View of the superb Westminster Bridge over the Thames and part of the city of London from the North side)*, c.1850, Hand-colored engraving

2. The Eye That Observes

The microscope and telescope, invented near the end of the sixteenth and start of the seventeenth centuries, are devices with functionality that dramatically expands, by peeping through them, human vision.

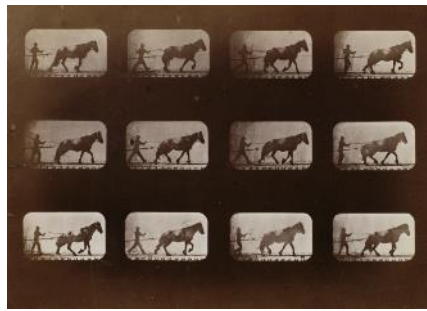
The camera's eye, gazing objectively at the subject being observed, made it possible to capture brief movements that the human eye cannot. The photographer Eadweard Muybridge, who had been absorbed in experiments with instantaneous photographs since early in the 1870s, published his photographs of a galloping horse in 1878. Inspired by Muybridge's display of instantaneous photographs, the physiologist Etienne-Jules Marey met him and went on to invent the chronophotographic gun and chronophotography (a set of photographs of a moving object, to record and exhibit successive phases of motion).

This section introduces images that the camera, as an extension of our eyes, captures, images of distant scenes we could not see, the microscopic world, and fleeting images.

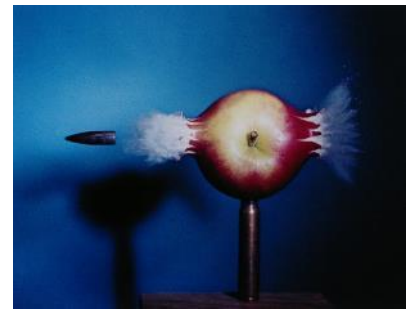
Artist: William Benjamin Carpenter, Laure Albin-Guillot, Eadweard Muybridge, Etienne-Jules Marey, Harold Eugene Edgerton,



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5 William Benjamin Carpenter, *The Cross Section of a Spine of a Sea Urchin*, 1848–1849, Daguerreotype

6 Eadweard Muybridge, *Horse and Man* from the series *The Attitudes of Animals in Motion*, 1878–1879, Albumen print

7 Harold Eugene Edgerton, *30 Bullet Piercing an Apple*, from the series *Ten Dye Transfer Photographs*, 1964, Dye transfer print
©2010MIT. Courtesy of MIT Museum

8 NASA, *SHADOW ON THE MOON Photographs from the Surveyor Missions 1966–68*, 1966–1968, Gelatin silver print

3. Seeing in Three Dimensions

The first paper about the principle of the stereoscope and stereoscopic equipment was published by Sir Charles Wheatstone, a physicist, in 1838.

What later became explosively popular was the small viewer with a lens (the lenticular stereoscope) developed by the scientist Sir David Brewster in 1849. The Brewster stereoscopic viewer was produced by Jules Duboscq, an optical instrument maker, and shown with stereograph cards at the Great Exhibition of 1851 in London, to great acclaim.

Then Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr., developed a simple portable viewer, and the stereoscope became

hugely popular. People were fascinated by seeing the world recorded, realistically yet three dimensionally, in a photograph.

The stereoviewer, with its accentuation of the three-dimensional feeling and depth and its powerful sense of immersion, overlaps with the peepshow, which, a century earlier, had fascinated people in a similar way. Today we can experience virtual reality by putting on a head-mounted display; in doing so, we are part of that ongoing history.



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9 Negretti & Zambra, *Stereo graphoscope*, c.1854, Wood
 10 Shimooka Renjo, *Children playing Baby-house. 5501*, c.1866–1876, Albumen print
 11 Unknown, *Lecteur Stereo*, 19th century, Hand-colored engraving

4. Motion Pictures

The ancestral form of today’s movies is thought to be the early motion-picture camera and projector called the Cinématographe, which the Lumière brothers made public in 1895. Many others were also passionately working on achieving motion pictures. In the nineteenth century, the phenomena of persistence of vision and illusion had been used in a variety of devices invented to turn still into moving images.

Through the invention of the phenakistiscope, the zoetrop, and the praxinoscope, Thomas Alva Edison developed the Kinetograph, a motion-picture camera, and the Kinetoscope, a motion picture exhibition device, for which he applied for a patent in 1891. In 1894, viewing by the general public began in the Kinetoscope Parlor in New York. The Kinetoscope was, however, a device that permitted viewing moving images while looking through a peephole viewer into a box. Thus, only one person could watch it at a time.

The Kinetoscope’s limitation on the number of people who could enjoy it at a time made it inefficient; in that respect, the Cinématographe topped it as a format for enjoying motion pictures. Today, however, people are each watching separate videos on their cellphones and other devices. The age of the Kinetoscope has returned.



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12 Charles-Émile Reynaud, *Praxinoscope theatre*, made in France, 19th century, Metal
 13 Unknown, *Phenakistiscope with a box*, made in France, 19th century, Paper
 14 Kinetoscope (replica)

5. Beyond Peep Media and the Gaze

The camera obscura, a device that projected the sight outside it onto one of its walls, developed into the camera, a device that lets us view a subject, press the shutter, record the image, and retain it. The camera can connect the agent doing the peeping and the object in an intimate relationship. It can also direct a cruel and even violent gaze at the object.

The act of peeping can generate inequalities in the gaze and bring danger to pleasurable activities. With each of us carrying a camera-equipped cellphone, addressing our daily lives with the camera, we can, without realizing it, be captured as the subjects of photographs. How do we face the peeping gaze that fills our daily lives and how to respond, to return the gaze, and capture the world: is it possible to reorganize those actions? Narahara Ikko, Onodera Yuki, Idemitsu Mako, and Ito Ryusuke, four artists, through their explorations, consider the possibilities of peeping and what the nature of the gaze ahead of us might be.



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15 Idemitsu Mako, *Another Day of a Housewife*, 1977, Single-channel video
 16 Onodera Yuki, *No.1* from the series *Camera*, 1997, Gelatin silver print
 17 Ito Ryusuke, *Odessa's Steps*, 2006, Single-channel video installation
 18 Narahara Ikko, *Inner Flower: Rose, Tineke*, 1991, Gelatin silver print

Outline of exhibition |

Dates: Jul. 19, 2023 – Oct. 15, 2023

Closed: Monday (except when Monday falls on a holiday, in which case the museum is open and closed the following day)

Venue: 3F Exhibition Gallery, Tokyo Photographic Art Museum
〒153-0062 Yebisu Garden Place, 1-13-3 Mita Meguro-ku Tokyo 153-0062

Open Hours: 10:00–18:00 (Thu./Fri. 10:00–20:00, however, from July 20 (Thu.) to August 31 (Thu.) it will remain open until 21:00 every Thursday and Friday)

*Final admission 30 minutes before closing.

Admission : Adults ¥ 700/ College Students ¥ 560 / High School and Junior High School Students, Over 65 ¥ 350

*Admission is free for children in elementary school or younger; junior high school students living or attending schools in the Tokyo metropolitan area; holders of Japanese disability identification cards (shogaisha techo), along with up to two caregivers; and holders of the museum's annual passport.

Organized by: Tokyo Metropolitan Government, Tokyo Photographic Art Museum operated by Tokyo Metropolitan Foundation for History and Culture

For Press |

If you have any press enquiries about this Exhibition, please contact our Department of Public Relations.

High-resolution images for publication are also available by e-mail.

press-info@topmuseum.jp

<https://topmuseum.jp/e/contents/index.html>