



THE MAGIC LANTERN SOCIETY & THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER

present

PROFESSOR PEPPER'S GHOST

SIX MORE EVENINGS OF VISUAL MAGIC
AT THE OLD POLYTECHNIC

On Thursdays

12 November, 26 November, 10 December 2009

and

28 January, 11 February, 25 February 2010

at The Old Cinema, University of Westminster,
309 Regent Street, London W1B 2UW

Admission free

Commencing 7pm sharp

**As this series of talks is entirely free it is advisable to come early.
Tickets will be issued from 6pm**

INTRODUCTION

For over forty years (1838–81) the Royal Polytechnic was London's best known institution dedicated to the popularisation of science.

Its most popular attraction was the optical theatre where audiences were introduced to the latest breakthroughs in visual technology, artistry and performance – the wonders of the magic lantern, panorama, diorama, stereoscope and the popular stage illusion, 'Pepper's Ghost', named after the institution's avuncular director Professor Pepper.

These one-hour talks and events aim to celebrate the spirit of the old Polytechnic featuring rarely-seen London-based historical material, physical demonstrations of 'lost media' and surprising new applications of ancient optical techniques.

THE PROGRAMME

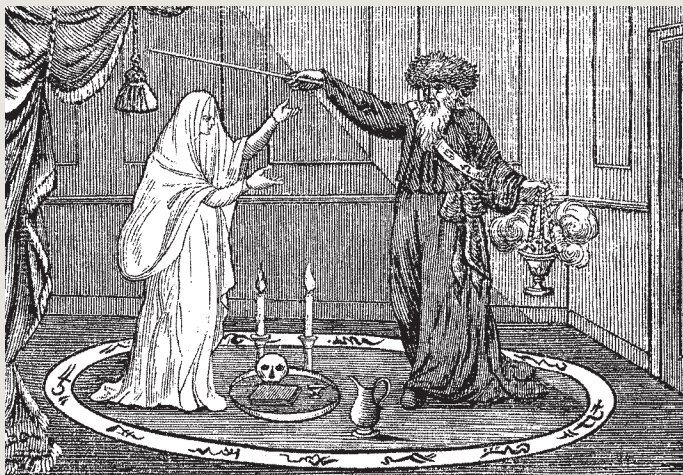
Thursday 12 November, 7pm

Phantasmagoria-mania

'Professor' Mervyn Heard

In 1801 the mysterious foreign magician Paul de Philipsthal materialised on the London theatre scene with his extraordinary Gothic ghost show entertainment, the *Phantasmagoria*. This is a full-blooded and often bizarre illustrated account of the show's success in London and the provinces, traced through the surviving posters and advertisements of the period.

Mervyn Heard creates magic lantern entertainments using original lantern slide material and by drawing on original research. He has devised projects and performances for venues worldwide and in 2007 designed a phantasmagoria instillation for the *Gothic Nightmares* exhibition at the Tate. He is also the author of *Phantasmagoria: The Secret Life of the Magic Lantern* and currently Chairman of the Magic Lantern Society. www.heard.supanet.com





Thursday 26 November, 7pm
Lavater: the Shadow of History
Simon Warner

The noted physiognomist Johann Caspar Lavater (1741–1801) returns for one night only to reclaim his place at the centre of European culture, armed with magic lantern, silhouette apparatus and a curious tale of photographic experimentation in his Zürich cellar. Lavater's influential *Essays on Physiognomy* created a fashion for silhouette portraiture in the early 1800s that outlasted his arcane theories and establish him as a prototype photographer.

Simon Warner is a photographer, video artist and researcher with interests in the history of photography and visual media. With a NESTA Fellowship he has created a series of impersonations of key figures in European culture: Goethe, Daguerre, Lavater and Herschel, and took part in the Arts Council England touring exhibition *Alchemy* (2006–7). Recent projects include Victorian photography workshops for the Brontë Parsonage and Florence Nightingale Museums, and silhouette drawing installations for The Last Tuesday Society and The House of Fairy Tales.

www.simonwarner.co.uk

Thursday 10 December, 7pm

Grappling with Ghosts: Staging Ghost Effects in the Modern Theatre
Paul Kieve

Since a very young age, Paul Kieve has been fascinated by Pepper's Ghost and, as a leading designer of theatre effects, he has now had several opportunities to dabble with the infamous apparition. His personal journey has led to hours in dark theatres, expensive quotes from Pilkington's glass, ill-tempered opera singers in Hamburg and perhaps the world's first ghost doves. This talk explores the fascinating tale of how the original impractical Dircksian Phantasmagoria of the 1850s came into its own in the 1860s and how, even with huge advancement in stage engineering and lighting, it is still spookily difficult to stage.

Paul Kieve is one of the UK's most prolific designers of theatrical illusions (*The Lord of the Rings*, *Zorro*, *The Invisible Man*). He is the only magician to appear in and consult on the Harry Potter movies and is the author of the internationally published book *Hocus Pocus*. His current projects include *Zorro* at The Folies Bergere in Paris and the forthcoming musical *Ghost*.
www.stageillusion.com

CHRISTMAS BREAK

Thursday 28th January, 7pm

Visualising the Marvellous: G.A.Smith and his film *Santa Claus* (1898)
Dr Frank Gray

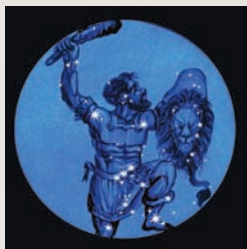
G.A.Smith (1864–59) was one of the great early film pioneers. A stage mesmerist and an associate of the Society for Psychical Research, his six 'spooky' films of 1898 represent his fascination with the 'other side' and his close association with late-Victorian paranormal culture. The series featured ghosts, telepathy, fairies, the devil, transformations and visions. Its only survivor is *Santa Claus*. In it, Santa fills the children's stockings with presents and then ... vanishes. This was a simple and effective demonstration of the new medium's ability to create an image of wonder.

Dr Frank Gray is the Director of Screen Archive South East at the University of Brighton and a specialist in late-Victorian cinema. He has written and lectured widely on the two key members of the 'Brighton School': the film-makers George Albert Smith and James Williamson.
www.brighton.ac.uk/screenarchive

Thursday 11 February, 7pm

Geared to the Stars: Victorian Astronomy through the Magic Lantern

Mark Butterworth



Lectures on astronomy were a common form of popular entertainment in the 19th century. With an original Victorian magic lantern projector and delicate, hand-painted glass slides from the 1840s, Mark Butterworth recreates one of these illustrated lectures.

Using complex and intricate mechanical 'rackwork' slides to illustrate astronomical concepts,

it gives an introduction to mid-19th century astronomy. The lecture summarises the knowledge of the time and presents an entertaining guide to the most interesting phenomena in the night sky.

Mark Butterworth researches astronomical history and specialises in understanding how popular astronomy was presented to the general public in the 18th and 19th century. He is a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society. www.markbutterworth.co.uk

Thursday 25 February, 7pm

**From Anorthoscope to Zoopraxiscope:
an A-Z of Victorian Animated Cartoons**

Stephen Herbert

Moving image 19th-century 'toys' – philosophical instruments for the drawing room, intended to promote intellectual discussion and provide amusement for adults as least as much as for children – come to life with this illustrated talk. Zoetropes, praxinoscopes, phenakistoscopes ... they didn't believe in easy names in those days. Why was computer pioneer Charles Babbage furious about a simple cardboard toy? Why do 13 monkeys need only 12 hats? Who was making cartoon movies before the first 'live-action' films?

In the 1860s–70s, a generation before 'cinema', Professor Pepper delighted audiences at the Royal Polytechnic with demonstrations of these new Victorian motion-picture marvels. With this talk, Stephen Herbert, who has had a life-long fascination with the subject, explores its social, political, economic, aesthetic and perceptual aspects, demonstrating the effects and revealing new research.

Stephen Herbert is a Visiting Research Fellow, Faculty of Art, Design & Architecture, Kingston University London. www.stephenherbert.co.uk



The Magic Lantern Society has a world-wide membership of collectors, enthusiasts, students of film and visual media and popular culture, magicians, art historians, performers, scientists and archival organisations from over 30 different countries – all sharing the same interest in the magic lantern and its history. The Society is not only interested in the lantern, or in the past. Member interests are broad, covering other ‘lost’ forms of visual media and optical diversions, as well as their 21st-century counterparts.

The Society runs a lively programme of lectures and shows in Britain and an international convention every four years as well as visits to major exhibitions and archive collections. It publishes quarterly newsletters outlining member activities and journals of recent research and issues tapes and DVDs of meetings. It offers special deals on a wide range of Society books, such as the prize-winning *Encyclopaedia of the Magic Lantern*.

In 1996 members of the Magic Lantern Society were instrumental in staging lantern performances and early cinema events at the University of Westminster for the Century of Cinema celebrations in London.

For further information about the Magic Lantern Society and membership visit: www.magiclantern.org.uk

The University of Westminster is a teaching and research institution with more than 22,000 students learning across its sites in Central and North London. Throughout its long history, the University has been closely involved in the business, professional, academic and cultural life of London. The Magic Lantern Society Lectures are co-organised by Dr Sas Mays as part of the AHRC-funded project ‘Archives, Haunting, Culture’, and come within the remit of the University’s inter-disciplinary research unit, the Institute for Modern and Contemporary Culture. For further details, please see www.beyondtext.ac.uk (> projects: ‘Spiritualism and Technology’) and www.westminster.ac.uk/imcc.

The Polytechnic Institution, the University’s earliest predecessor, which opened at 309 Regent Street in August 1838, included a gallery of practical science committed to demonstrating new technology to a popular audience. It aimed both to educate and to entertain. The Polytechnic rapidly became a well-known London landmark. It took the name of the Royal Polytechnic Institution after Prince Albert became patron in 1841. In 1848 a new theatre was added to the building to accommodate the growing audiences for the Polytechnic’s famous optical shows.

The theatre survived the rebuilding of 1910–12, and provides the setting for this series of lectures. The University is pleased to collaborate with the Magic Lantern Society to celebrate this intriguing aspect of its heritage.

For further information on the history of the Polytechnic visit: www.wmin.ac.uk/uowhistory.