

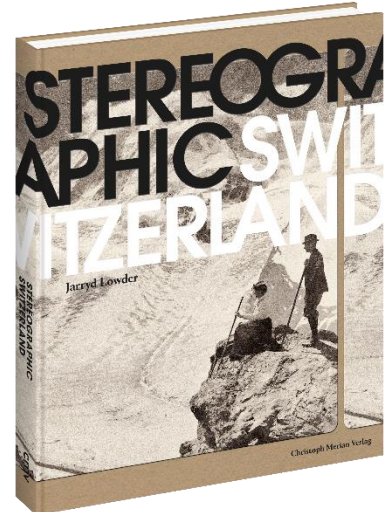
Switzerland in Stereophotographic Images – 19th Century «Virtual Reality»

Stereo photography, invented around 1850, must have generated great interest in salons and living-rooms, given that it enabled distant places to be discovered on a three-dimensional scale. *Stereographic Switzerland* (Christoph Merian Verlag), edited by Jarryd Lowder, presents this fascinating 19th century technology with about 200 photographs from Switzerland. The pictorial documents are from the collection of the Swiss-American Donald Tritt and have never been shown to date. Today they are part of the holdings of the Swiss National Museum. Despite the arranged motifs so typical of the time, the historically informative and partly coloured images exude a nostalgic charm and enable us to look back at a Switzerland that has long since ceased to exist.

Massive glaciers, striking mountain panoramas, rural scenes and classy venues in Switzerland became known all around the globe as of the second half of the 19th century thanks to stereo photography. Printed by international publishers, those photographs contributed towards developing the image of Switzerland as a picturesque destination. The three-dimensional experience provided by stereography gave rise to a veritable boom, above all in the Anglo-American region, so much so that the term «stereomania» even made the rounds at the time. Touristic views of landscapes, cities and the local population enjoyed the greatest popularity. Which is hardly surprising at a time when only privileged people were able to explore foreign countries; these «virtual trips» permitted at least the illusion of travelling oneself. Stereography thus served both as a substitute and as a stimulating advertisement for physical travel. In addition to its entertainment value, the technology laid claim to having an educational mission.

The authors Jarryd Lowder and Aaron Estermann have complemented the impressive photographs with extensive background information on the stereoscopic industry in Europe and America. Individual chapters are devoted to explaining the technical processes and variants, as well as the methods of hand-colouring and lithography. There are also specific texts on the restoration of the photographs and on the Swiss-American stereophotograph collector Donald Tritt.

**Exhibition *Stereomania* at the Landesmuseum Zürich:
July 23rd until October 17th 2021**



Jarryd Lowder (ed.)

Stereographic Switzerland

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