



## Paper Peepshows: The Jacqueline and Jonathan Gestetner Collection

By Ralph Hyde

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Peepshows were introduced in the mid-eighteenth century by Martin Engelbrecht in Augsburg. They called for a long wooden cabinet designed for purpose incorporating a viewing lens and sometimes a mirror. In the 1820s peepshows made entirely of paper appeared on the scene more or less at the same moment in Vienna, London and Paris. The clumsy cabinet was no longer called for. The new peepshow was equipped with paper bellows so it could be expanded or contracted in a trice. Paper peepshows were light; they were comparatively cheap. They fitted neatly into the pocket. Viewing a Paper Peepshow is an intimate, individual experience that, in the age of television and hand-held computers, gives a real sense of personal discovery. The viewer engages by peeping through a tiny hole and thereby discovers inside layers of images, like a pocket-sized stage set. The format lent itself to a wide variety of subjects: to coronations and to state visits and funerals, to pleasure gardens,...



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