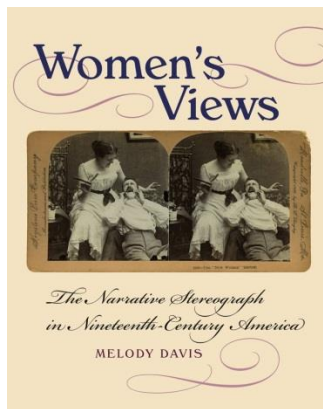


# Women's Views: The Narrative Stereograph in Nineteenth-Century America

by Melody Davis. University of New Hampshire Press, December 2015. 264 p. ill. ISBN 9781611688382 (pbk.), \$40.00.

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*Women's Views* gives scholarly study to a typically neglected topic within the history of photography: narrative and comic stereographs. The book is divided into two parts; the first sets up the methodological framework by which Davis discusses stereographs, including how the viewer read the image, who these images were made for, and how the images were distributed. In this section, Davis posits that this genre of stereographs was made for a female audience. The second part focuses on four broad thematic topics within narrative stereographs: children, marriage, eroticism, and changing views of gender. The chapter topics weave together fluidly. Courtship and young adulthood are discussed in the chapter on children,

drawing a direct contrast to the realities of marriage depicted in stereographs. Erotic views are tame to twenty-first century eyes, but Davis carefully plumbs the meanings of these images within the cultural mores of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The final chapter addresses issues of manhood and womanhood in views that poke fun at bachelorhood and the empowered suffragette.

Davis' book is an engrossing read. Her research is grounded not only in art history, but also women's studies, and she has carefully considered the images and the shifting role of women at the dawn of the twentieth century. She is writing on a topic that is almost completely untouched in scholarship. Her book joins the resurgent interest in stereographs reflected in publications such as Brian May's *A Village Lost and Found* (London, 2009) and *Poor Man's Picture Gallery* (London, 2014) and Denis Pellerin's recent work on the London Stereoscopic Company, *Diableries* (London, 2013).

The book is amply illustrated, with at least one view representing each specific trope described. Hand-colored images and albumen prints with subtle tonality are printed on full-color plates that more clearly orient the reader to the views. A Loreo Lite paper stereoscope is included, in a bag affixed to the inside of the back cover. This is a wonderful touch, and allows the viewer to have the experience of seeing the views in three dimensions, as they were intended. In her introduction, Davis gives some pointers to using this viewer in conjunction with the book, and the results are quite good. It should be noted, however, that while the paper viewer is durable enough for a single owner in a personal library (and perhaps a non-circulating collection), it is less likely to hold up to repeated handling within a collection that gets heavy

usage or circulates.

This book is highly recommended for art libraries that are interested in photographic history, stereoscopy, or the intersection of photography and cultural or women's studies.