

EURO-MAGIC

A million pictures: Magic Lantern Slide Heritage as Artefacts in the Common European History of Learning

DURATION
01/06/2015 - 31/05/2018

BUDGET
100.000 €

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

A Million Pictures: Magic Lantern Slide Heritage as Artefacts in the Common European History of Learning is a Joint Programming Initiative on Cultural Heritage – Heritage Plus project which is funded by NWO, Belspo, AHRC and MINECO and Co-Funded by the European Commission. *A Million Pictures* is a collaborative research project between researchers from Utrecht University (NL), University of Exeter (UK), University of Antwerp (BE), University of Girona (ES), University of Salamanca (ES) as well as twenty Associated Partners.

General objectives and underlying research questions

- (i) The project will enable research on lantern slides sets that were used for educative purposes in Europe: it will examine the slides and their use as visual didactic tools in different European societies between the 17th and the 20th centuries, with a focus on the nineteenth century.
- (ii) *A Million Pictures* will develop a standard for documentation and conservation of magic lantern slides that will serve the needs of various stakeholders, in the form of guidelines / best practices. Associated partners in this research project represent the various institutions, e.g. museums, archives, libraries, private collections etc. Many libraries and museums have thousands of magic lantern slides in their collections, the lack of standard procedures limits the accessibility of the objects for researchers and other interested parties. A sample of the magic lantern slides from the partners' collections will be digitized and the metadata will be made accessible for further research.
- (iii) *A Million Pictures* will develop ideas and initiatives on how to re-use magic lantern slides today, this in collaboration with contemporary artists, curators and other stakeholders in order to better understand the use of magic lantern as a predecessor of teaching tools such as video projections or power point presentations.

The University of Antwerp research team will concentrate on the **educational use of magic lantern slides in a performative context**. First of all the research will explore new source material from the 19th century. It will systematically explore historical documents such as newspapers, professional journals and books by specialists. These sources will be interpreted as historical, pedagogical, medial, theatrical testimonies.

Secondly, the research team will concentrate on **the analysis of preserved objects in the Vrielynck collection** related to the magic lantern, hold by the Antwerp Museum for Contemporary Art (M HKA). The hands-on work will be used as correlative and allow to countercheck the historical understanding and theoretical conception of magic lantern used for educational purposes.

Furthermore, we will develop strategies for the **creative re-use** of magic lantern slides, as ways to open up these important artefacts of European cultural heritage. By developing a test-case in collaboration with a contemporary artist (Sarah Vanagt), that will be exhibited at the Antwerp Museum for Contemporary Art, we will reach out to a broader audience.

A Million Pictures will bring together different groups and stakeholders: cultural heritage institutions, academic research institutions, private collection holders and the non-academic public. The integral approach will maximize the relevance of the academic research projects, facilitate knowledge exchange and benefit cultural heritage institutions on a transnational and cross-interest level.



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With the development of digital tools for creative re-use, the project aims to introduce the cultural heritage of the magic lantern in both popular and didactic contexts (schools, universities, museums), and on a theoretical and a practical level. The growing mediatization of society asks to inform especially young people how early popular media such as the magic lantern have shaped our contemporary mediatized world.

The integral approach means that all workshops have a slot reserved for a dissemination activity that will be open to the general public, that conferences will provide a forum for the presentation of creative re-uses, academic and non-academic applications of the project results, that a bimonthly newsletter edited by the partners and the project website developed in transnational cooperation will inform interested communities about the research results and upcoming events.

All the participants (partners and associates) of *A Million Pictures* will disseminate the results in their international networks, reaching academics from various disciplines, digital and media artists, producers, science museums, film museums and archives, local history museums, university collections, libraries, and the various publics and communities that these institutions reach.

A Million Pictures promotes sustainable use and management of lantern slides by:

- (i) Creating Knowledge about lantern slides through researching the contexts in which they were used.
- (ii) Exploring the needs of stakeholders for access and re-use.
- (iii) Providing innovative examples for creative re-use.
- (iv) Examining ways for people to enhance their knowledge about lantern slides and so connect to their shared European history of learning.
- (v) Develop and implement standard working procedures on a European level for documentation, preservation and digitization

Description of finished products of research at short and medium term:

- (i) Production of standardized vocabulary and working procedures across national and disciplinary research traditions.
- (ii) Generation of sustainable documentation and access to digital copies of lantern slides and research results via virtual documentation centre (LUCERNA database (SQL, non-proprietary software) developed by the University of Trier, an associate partner institute).
- (iii) Creation of protection-through-use projects (Apps, Animations, Re-enactments, Exhibitions) to transfer outcomes to individuals and organizations outside the immediate research community (creative industry, journalism, art).
- (iv) Strategies for creative re-use of the magic lantern as cultural heritage (for museums, educational purposes, etc.)
- (v) Scientific and vulgarizing publications aimed at a wide audience; exhibition and performance in the Antwerp museum for contemporary art (M HKA) on creative re-use of the magic lantern

CONTACT INFORMATION

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LINKS

Project website:
<http://a-million-pictures.wp.hum.uu.nl/>

Project page on Visual Poetics website:
<http://visualpoetics.be/?action=project&id=40>

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