

The magic lantern in pride of place for ACMI's 2020 Reopening



Martyn Jolly and Chelsey O'Brien with ACMI's new biennial magic lantern

In September 2019, Chief Investigator Martyn Jolly visited the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI) to continue an ongoing collaboration between Heritage in the Limelight and its curators and staff. ACMI are currently busy developing their new permanent exhibition which, when they reopen in early May 2020, will replace their well-known and much loved 'Screen Worlds' display. As contemporary media forms continue to expand beyond the previously all-dominating categories of 'the movies' or 'television', ACMI's commitment to broader optical technologies has also expanded. The new 'exhibition spaces, immersive experiences and interactive moments' will feature an enlarged interest in 'pre-cinema' optical devices and, in particular the magic lantern which was particularly important to Melbourne's visual culture from the latter half of the nineteenth century through to the twentieth century. Some of the Heritage in the Limelight collection will be used in the display.

Following on from its successful *Wonderland* exhibition of 2018, ACMI will be at the forefront of museological practice in Australia by not just 'passively' displaying media apparatuses as inert 'dead' objects in a case, and not just 'documenting' old media by transferring it into new digital formats, thereby severing any affective connection for visitors between current media forms and the media of the past. Rather, they are attempting to bring the experience of magic lantern projection and other early optical technologies directly into the exhibition space. For this reason ACMI has



The window of Alex Gunn, Manufacturer and Importer of Limelight Apparatus, at 242 Little Collins Street, Melbourne, c1901

some of his original dissolving views including favourites such as the shade of Washington appearing outside of his tomb, and a ship in a storm with a lightning bolt. Using these slides the team were able to explore the lantern in more depth: its focusing distance from the screen, the brass parallax adjustments for the two lenses, the sliding shutter, and the adjustments for the width of the stage to take different sized slides. The engineers of the nineteenth century had thought of everything a travelling lanternist would need to do, and had crafted a brass screw, brass hinge, or brass lever to do it. And they all still worked!

Heritage in the Limelight and ACMI will continue to work together towards its re-opening, and if goes well, for the first time museum visitors will be able to directly experience something of the 'magic' of the technology.

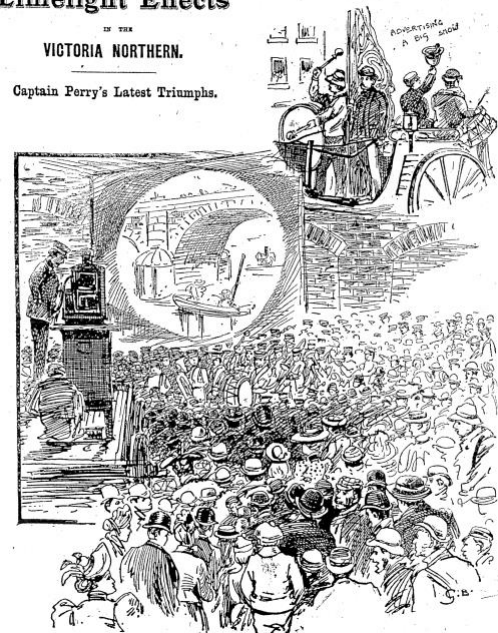
been acquiring examples of the kinds of slides shown in Australia. They have recently made a new investment: a magnificent mahogany biennial magic lantern. Although sourced from overseas this lantern is very similar to, for example, the lanterns which can be seen in the front window of Melbourne's Gunn's emporium at 242 Little Collins Street, or which can be seen the Melbourne Salvation Army's *War Cry* being proudly displayed by the Salvation Army's Limelight Brigade.

Martyn met with curator, Chelsey O'Brien, exhibitions project coordinator Lucy Willett, Registrar Cameron Wood, AV technician Simon Dargaville, and cinema technical officer Phillip Grace to explore the potential of the lantern to be re-activated in 2020. The team plan to replace the original limelight gas jets with cooler UV free LED technology, and to perhaps produce dissolving view effects with replica slides. Martyn brought down

Limelight Effects

IN THE
VICTORIA NORTHERN.

Captain Perry's Latest Triumphs.



Limelight Effects in the Victoria Northern, Captain Perry's Latest Triumphs, Melbourne War Cry, 28 April 1894.