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

Few American homes were without a stereoscope in the 1890s. The immersive, three-dimensional experience was among the most popular parlor entertainments of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Melody Davis will analyse the genre of narrative stereoviews and their audiences. Because stereoviews were created for and marketed primarily to middle-class women in domestic settings, she argues that they represent one of the best sources for addressing the flow of historical change in women’s lives. By examining dozens of stereoviews, including depictions of gender stereotypes, power dynamics, comical or sentimental situations, and scenes of both serious and playful innuendo, she spins a broad history of the real social, sexual, and economic changes in the lives of American women.

Melody Davis is the author of The Male Nude in Contemporary Photography and three books of poetry. She has held fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, The Pennsylvania Council of the Arts, The Henry Luce Foundation (ACLS), and the Sage Colleges, and was a finalist in the National Poetry Series.