

Landesmuseum Zürich.

Zauber Berge

Switzerland as energy centre and sanatorium

26 March – 15 August 2010

Temporary exhibition at the National Museum in Zurich

Stereo technology

A 3D show with historical stereo pictures introduces the main themes of the exhibition. In contrast to the current cinema hit 'Avatar', it doesn't play in the future, but rather brings the period around 1900 literally within our reach: The double-frame images once shot with special cameras are projected onto a large screen and create their three-dimensional spatial effect, thanks to 3D glasses.

The Zurich National Museum had already presented stereo shows to visitor groups several years ago – the first museum in Switzerland to do so. The digitised version developed for 'Magic Mountains' processes the historical subjects with the help of anaglyph glasses for 3D viewing. A large proportion of the pictures comes from our own collection of historical 3D images. Added to this are numerous stereo subjects from private collections on the theme of 'Switzerland as energy centre'. They depict sanatorium patients from the time of Thomas Mann's 'Magic Mountain' on their balconies, sun worshippers from the pioneering nudist period, nude circle dancing from the period of the Monte Verità movement, and power showers from one of the numerous popular hydropathic establishments. Snapshots never hitherto published!

Stereo technology, which was developed around the mid-19th century, has remained a neglected aspect of the history of photography. This is particularly so because its images can only be shown to their best advantage with the use of a special viewing device. During the Belle Epoque, communal stereo viewing was one of the most popular leisure activities in bourgeois salons. Numerous publishers offered series of photo-cards showing exotic people and picturesque landscapes. Alongside this, amateur photographers captured everyday life in their surroundings in spontaneous shots. Digitally processed for the large screen, these snapshots create a powerful spatial effect that feels like travelling back in time.