‘Diableries, Stereoscopic Adventures in Hell’
By Denis Pellerin, Brian May, Paula Fleming

500 screenless photographs in full colour
‘Diableries, Stereoscopic Adventures in Hell’.

In 2014 the world will celebrate the 175 anniversary of photography. Obviously, the starting date of 1839 is disputable and other possible dates to situate the dawn of photography even increases the age of this highly popular visual medium.

At the end of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century this originally chemical photo process changed into a digital medium. Today the digital rebirth of a technique to reproduce the world helps us to revive the 19\textsuperscript{th} century analogue chemical past for writing with light.

Very few (photo) books show us the best of both equally interesting methods, using the ‘digital’ new to revalue the ‘analogue’ old. ‘Diableries, Stereoscopic Adventures in Hell’ (2013) by Denis Pellerin, Brian May and Paula Fleming is such a book. This publication offers 500 screenless full color reproductions bringing them close to authentic photographs.

Not only the technical qualities of the reproductions in this book are exceptional and precious (no visible halftone dots), the same is true for the many years of thorough research by photo historian Denis Pellerin and his two other co-authors. For the first time, modern readers can learn about the hidden meanings of these 19\textsuperscript{th} century satirical images and truly ‘taste’ their critical ambition and goal.

But “What The Hell” are stereo Diableries?

**Stereo-Diableries** are an intriguing set of 19\textsuperscript{th} century humorous, satirical and political inspired 3-D photographs. These albumin stereo prints depict daily life in hell, a world inhabited by male skeletons and demons, often in contrast with provocative and surprisingly realistic women, all modeled in clay. Many of the images show political critique and satire on the Napoleonic regime. A hazardous intent during the period these images where made.

When it comes to originals, for collectors the most attractive version of the Diableries are the so-called ‘stereo tissues’, back-colored albumin photographs showing ‘day & night’ effects similar to the techniques used in diorama paintings, peepshow views, the Polyorama Panoptique and various other early immersive analogue media devices and images.

Original 19\textsuperscript{th} century tissue Diableries in mint condition are rare to find but thanks to modern digital techniques this book opens a new world for the 21\textsuperscript{th} century onlooker and reader. For the very first time the diableries are illustrated, both in stereo and their colorful details, all in unprecedented printing quality even when viewed through a stereoscope or magnifying glass. The main A (Block) series is illustrated both with front light and light-shining-true.

In addition to the so-called original series of 72 devilish scenes (named the Block or A series) ‘Diableries, Stereoscopic Adventures in Hell’ also illustrates 6 more Diablerie series; B, C, D, E, EH & F. By this as it may, this hard cover volume is the only complete survey on the subject to date!

Judging more than 180 diableries (created between 1860-1890), in most views, life in Hell looks quite enjoyable and similar too daily life on earth. These scenes are tabletop miniature dioramas modeled in clay, subsequently photographed with a stereo camera to create a
three dimensional experience when viewing the images through a stereoscope, forerunner of the well-known View-Master.

Recently, (to late to include in the book), a set of original Diablerie negatives (glass plates) were discovered in a French museum. Hopefully, one day, the same will happen with the original ‘lost’ sculpted dioramas. If still in existence, perhaps this book will help to unearth the clay models from oblivion.

The sculptors of these detailed works of arts in are known, Pierre Adolphe Hennetier (1828 - 1888), Louis Alfred Habert (1824 - 1893) & Edmond Cougny (1831 - 1900). All these main characters and other key players have an interesting biography in the book.

The photo on the cover of the slip-case shows a 12-layer lenticular of ‘La guerre, départ de l'Enfer’. Included in the slipcase of this high quality hardcover edition you find ‘The Owl’, a foldable high quality book-stereoscope designed by Brian May enabling us to enjoy the stereo effect in spectacular 3-D, conjuring-up the experience as if we are looking at the original Diableries.

Regarding the images this is a photo book of great fun, but also of great historical value offering the reader a myriad of interesting historical information, anecdotes and details about a period, ‘the Second Empire Era’ in France (1852-1870) often ignored by (even French) historians. "Subtle messages, critique, satire and comment relating to the political and social events of a less known part in French history”.

Parallel to the book ‘Diableries Stereoscopic Adventures in Hell’, Brian May launched a detailed website on the diablerie subject, hosted on the server of the ‘London Stereoscopic Company’. The LSC website demonstrates in an interactive dissolving manner the day & night effects of these curious eerie scenes from Hell.

On Halloween 2013 this book with his skeletons, devils and scantily dressed women was unleashed into public in the British Library, London.

Anyone with an interest in early photography and/or French history should add this to his bookshelves. Obviously, after reading and becoming paralyzed by the extreme beauty of these infernal images. Halloween was never before accompanied by such an important publication.

What a wonderful book also to celebrate the continuously evolving medium of photography.

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Illustrations: 500 photographs all in full colour
Text: approx. 70,000 words
Binding: Hardback
Also available is a limited deluxe edition
Slip-case: with 3D lenticular applied, including OWL stereo viewer in envelope

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