

History repeats itself...the following excerpt from Herbert C. McKay's book, *Three-Dimensional Photography: Principles of Stereoscopy*, describes the state of 3D photography in the 1950s and the rapid acceleration of its popularity at that time. We have inserted a few words in parenthesis that could make this statement apply to our current times, in the 21st century:

During the two years since the first edition of this book appeared, there has been a profound change in the status of stereo in the United States. Then, it was confined to a relatively small number of specialists, today it promises to become the number one medium for amateur photography. The change has been aided by the introduction of small, convenient cameras using 35mm film (digital); it has been given great impetus by the introduction of color (high resolution monitors); it has been made easier by the simplification of mounting and introduction of commercial mounting services (digital processing). However, the greatest force of all has been an aggressive publicity campaign sponsored by the maker of the equipment used (cinematographers – 3D movies).

This does not mean that the popularity is artificial- Not at all! A brief wave of success could be produced by such means, but the campaign has served only to introduce stereo to the public. Once that introduction has been made, stereo continues to advance by its own merit.

Owners of stereo cameras are familiar with one expression which, although it varies widely in actual wording, always remains the same in meaning. It is heard from those who have been familiar with photography all their lives in the way that every American is familiar with it; printed reproductions, casual use of an inexpensive camera, collections of family snapshots. When such people see their first modern stereo [photo] they almost always say, (1) "I never saw anything like it!" (2) "That's the only kind of photography I'd be interested in." (3) "Where can I get a camera to do that kind of work?"

I am not a sales person, and do not even try to interest people in the purchase of equipment, yet I have "sold" over 100 stereo cameras and almost half that many projectors of which I have definite record (although on dealer or another made the profit incident to these sales!). The fact is mentioned only to show that interest aroused is so deep that those interested are not satisfied until they, too, are making stereos.

It is sometimes difficult for an old-timer, steeped in the tradition of the older stereo, to keep up with the modern pace. The old rules and laws, except the few which are sound, have been thrown overboard- and stereo does not seem to have been harmed by the fact. Stereo used to be reserved for very carefully made exposures of subject selected with equal care, the new stereographer blithely shoots 30 or 60 shots (300 or 600) in an afternoon.

Stereography is the automatic photography that produces the kind of pictures you have always dreamed of but never really expected to see.

The word stereoscopy is compounded from the Greek *stereos* (solid or firm) and *skipos* (the act of vision). Thus stereoscopy means the act of seeing “solid,” or actually, seeing in all three dimensions.

Stereoscopic photography is the only medium known by which the appearance of an object or scene may be reproduced in every detail so that the image appears to the eyes exactly as did the original object...the ordinary or planar photograph does not reproduce definite size or distance, it does not distinctly separate every plan, it does not definitely exhibit the depth contour of an object. In short, it does not reproduce more than a fraction of the essential visual detail of any object...

Stereography is now undergoing a revival of popularity, and we are convinced that once the amateur has experienced the deep pleasure of seeing his photographs in the incredible realism of three dimensions, he will thereafter give to stereography his full enthusiasm.

Reference:

McKay, Frances A (1951). *Three-Dimensional Photography, Principles of Stereoscopy*. Jones Press Inc., Minneapolis, MN, 1-2.