

PANORAMA

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Mechanical Theatres of Travel: Scroll Panoramas, Ribbon Maps, and Handheld Media

Nicholas C. Lowe

The School of the Art Institute of Chicago
Chicago, Illinois, USA
nlowe1@saic.edu

Abstract

Mechanical theatrical presentations of landscape and travel can be traced to precedents in the late 1700s, having grown to a wider popular significance in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Their conceptual and cultural effects can arguably be seen also to have endured up to the present time. From the mid-nineteenth century as these effects were being set in motion, steamboat travel on the Hudson and the Mississippi Rivers was entering the popular imagination. A comparative range of travel and map-related artifacts, from that time and after, will be explored for the relationships they display with each other, and for their strong cultural relations to panorama performances of the mid 1800s. Alongside their practical uses, the artifacts in question additionally offer an opportunity for imagined and vicarious travel. In these respects, the material and cultural lineages of contemporary device-mediated experiences of landscape are also significant in the contemporary context. This reading of pre-digital archival artifacts draws a speculative line between nineteenth century panorama performances and contemporary travel as it appears to be mediated in social media orientated selfie-making.

Keywords

Scroll Panorama, Ribbon Map, Ambulatory Map, Mapping, Performance, Travel, Human Machine Interaction, Digital Humanities.

Setting Out (with All Good Intentions)

The material details of Coloney and Fairchild's *Ribbon Map Of the Father Of Waters* [1] (Fig. 1 and 2) are rich and illuminating. Made in 1866 for steamboat travelers on the increasingly domesticated Mississippi River, it is an object that meets the purposes of its time exceedingly well. It aims and succeeds in simultaneously representing the landscape in its details and its excesses. At only two inches wide, its fully extended length is ten feet nine inches. It depicts a map of the river from the Delta to the sources at Lake Itaskal, a journey of 2,600 miles. This is an artifact of popular travel without compromise, made to be carried as it would fit easily into a pocket or a small handbag. It is both a map and a souvenir, that when held in the palm of the hand, its details yield evidence as a confluence of art, craft, and

technologies. Its existence appears as driven by nation-building aspirations as much as it might also serve an individualized experience of the journey. The experience its encounter produces calls to mind mechanized manufacture, graphic replication, and an implied didactic purpose. Its use produces a performative effect upon the person who holds it. In very practical terms for the traveler, this object produced views that can be possessed in the service of an increasing will to engender conceptual and actual land possession.

The handheld experience places the traveler actively at the center of their experience, in the present, as it is unfolding and literally unrolling. Able to project themselves into the landscape as observer and protagonist, the traveler is simultaneously the impresario and the audience of their own journey. It is arguably also an educational object, producing an 'object lesson' [2] in map reading and navigation, physically demonstrating scale and proximity.



Fig. 1. Coloney & Fairchild's Patent Ribbon Map *Ribbon Map Of the Father Of Waters*, 1866. Gast, Moeller & Co. Lith. Cor. Third and Olive Sts. St. Louis. The Edinburgh Geographical Institute. Courtesy of the MacLean Collection.

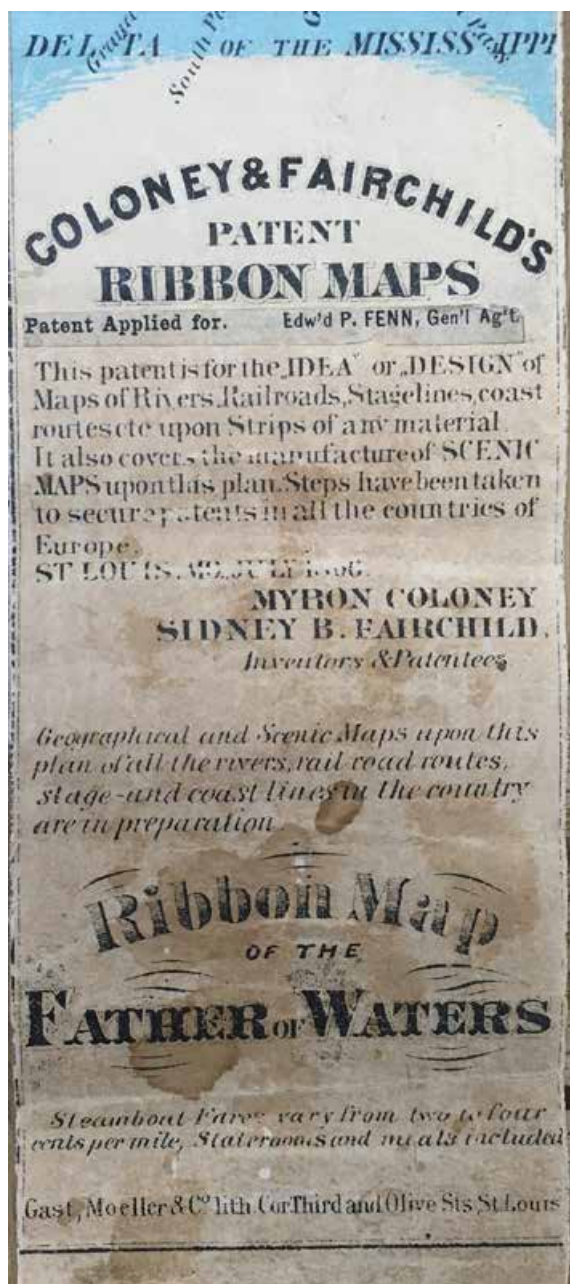


Fig. 2. Cartouche detail. *Coloney & Fairchild's Patent Ribbon Map Ribbon Map Of the Father Of Waters*. 1866. Gast, Moeller & Co. Lith. Cor. Third and Olive Sts. St. Louis. The Edinburgh Geographical Institute. Courtesy of the MacLean Collection.

For their effect and projected intent in relation to landscape, it is easy to connect the experience of taking a steamboat along the river with viewing scroll panorama performances. Imagine a traveler catching an evening panorama performance in St. Louis prior to their departure on the next leg of their journey up river to the homestead. The growth of nineteenth century travel and tourism bears a number of evident and related precedents, amongst which

steamboat travel and scroll panorama performances are prominent. William Wade's 1845 publication, the *Panorama of the Hudson River*, (Figs. 3, 4, 5, and 6) is acknowledged for these connections, and in many ways bucks the trend. John F. Sears writes, "While the steamboat transformed the Hudson and other scenic waterways into living panoramas, the panoramas themselves provided the illusion of travel. Panoramas also conveyed information about strange and distant places." [3] And, he adds, "Panoramas were democratic in their easily understood format and cosmic in scope." [4]

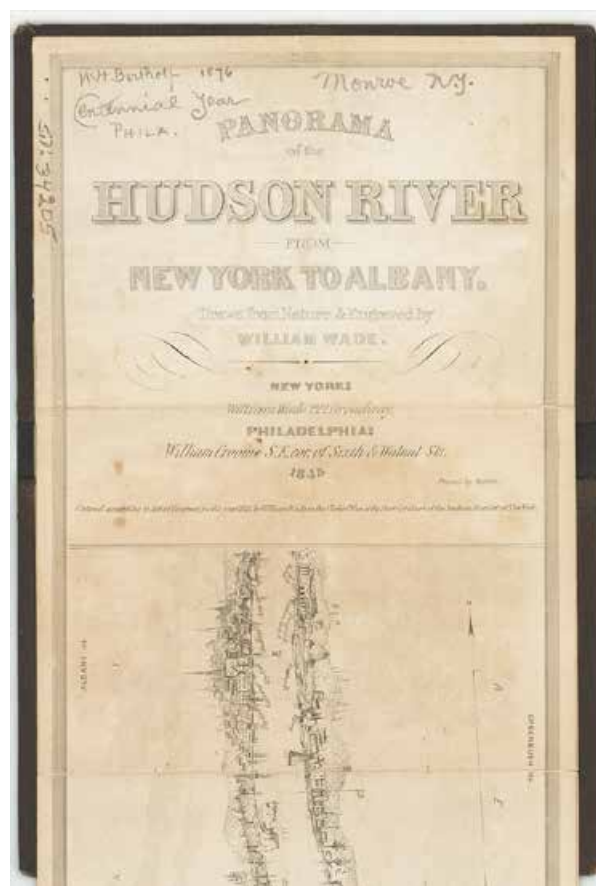


Fig. 3. Cartouche detail. *Panorama of The Hudson River From New York To Albany*, 1845. William Wade, Etching. William Croome, Philadelphia. Courtesy of the MacLean Collection.

Sears describes the development of tourism as an American cultural habit in connection with the wide distribution and increased availability of developing technologies, particularly in photography and printing but principally in literature. "These works both informed Americans of the

nature of these places and encouraged the touristic habit of consuming scenery as a series of views, a habit which would be reinforced later on by the stereoscope and the Kodak,” notes Sears. [5]



Fig. 4. *Panorama of The Hudson River From New York To Albany*, 1845. William Wade, Etching. William Croome, Philadelphia. Courtesy of the MacLean Collection.



Fig. 5. *Panorama of The Hudson River From New York To Albany*, 1845. William Wade, Etching. William Croome, Philadelphia. This detail depicts Albany in the upper portion opposite Greenbush in the lower. Courtesy of the MacLean Collection.



Fig. 6. *Panorama of The Hudson River From New York To Albany*, 1845. William Wade, Etching. William Croome, Philadelphia. Courtesy of the MacLean Collection.

Sears also articulates another important change in perceptions of landscape produced as an effect of steamboat travel. To see the Hudson River, “most tourists who set out to see its scenery did so by steamboat,” experiencing the landscape as a moving panorama. They might also have bought a copy of Wade’s panoramic print or on the Mississippi, Coloney and Fairchild’s *Ribbon Map*. The use of these objects beyond the journey itself was to additionally relive the journey countless times in its retelling, as a personal reminiscence and as a home-based, shared story-telling performance. Wade’s panorama was produced as a concertina book showing the river from Albany to Governors Island, with an accompanying guidebook text that describes locations and details along the way, providing a vicarious experience of the journey as vividly now as it might have for any reader in the 1840s.

It consists of numerous sheets of paper joined together to create the full image. The images are presented to replicate the relative proximity of each riverbank as they might appear facing each other. (Fig. 5) Viewing the book implicates a certain performance of activity in its handling. Traveling or viewing in one direction, say from Greenbush to the tip of Manhattan, the concertina is opened like a book, turning the pages from right to left. Traveling in reverse of

the rivers' flow, the book should be reoriented so that its top is now at the bottom. Beginning at Jersey City with the west bank of the Hudson in view, it follows along to Albany, again proceeding page by page by turning from left to right. The intention in its form is to view the journey a section at a time, in relation to the passing landscape, but it would also be possible to extend the concertina to its full length of twelve feet.

While it precedes the Coloney and Fairchild ribbon map by twenty years, Wade's panoramic print of the Hudson River also predates Henry Lewis's 'great national work' of the Mississippi River by three years. [6] Louis's first trips along the Mississippi River were in 1846 and 1847, [7] with a subsequent shorter journey by steamer in June 1848. Though no record or account of a direct influence exists, it is interesting to speculate if Wade's work inspired Lewis. In all accounts there are evident conceptual, material, and cultural connections between them.



Fig. 7. *The Hudson By Daylight, From New York To Kingston, 1876.* Thursty McQuill. Published by Frank Anderson. Courtesy of the MacLean Collection.

The enduring popularity of publications depicting the Hudson River in particular is accounted for by the subsequent iterations of its representation. There are a number of printed map books, pamphlets advertising the merits of particular steamboat lines, and collections of postcard-like 'views,' all of which were intended for popular consumption. The first photographic image set came into print in 1888. Called the *Panorama of The Hudson. Showing Both Sides Of The River from New York To Albany*, it declares itself to be the "First Photo-Panorama of Any River Ever Published." Produced as a reference book and tourist guide, and compiled from over 800 photographs, this photo-engraving utilizes the same organizational image orientation as Wade's 1845 etching.

A handbill advertisement for the steamship *Mary Powell* from 1876 (Fig. 7) includes a river view illustration that is reminiscent of a moving panorama appearing inside a prosc-



Fig. 8. *Troy Line, The Popular Hudson River Route Between New York, Troy, Saratoga And The North, 1905.* Courtesy of the MacLean Collection.

enium-like frame. Another handbill for the Troy Line, a pleasure and business route, from 1905 (Fig. 8) shows an extended dimensional vista of the entire Hudson Valley from a high vantage point. This is a depiction that applies significant imaginary license and is suggestive of a view from an aircraft or perhaps a hot air balloon.

Pandæmonium, Home of All the Demons

The panoramic form entered popular culture concurrently with the unprecedented growth of mechanical reproduction of all kinds. In a bold and highly effective endeavor to explore the exponential effects of the industrial revolution, Humphrey Jennings's book *Pandæmonium* [8] presents readings on "the coming of the machine" on their own terms. Through the accounts of contemporary written observations between 1660 and 1866, Jennings lays a trail of breadcrumbs leading toward developing not only an understanding of massive cultural change but also an intuitive methodological approach. The period of time in question can be seen to have supported the development of so many technologies with lasting influence up to the present time. This is concurrent with a not-exclusive list of innovations including scroll panorama, cyclorama, immersive taxidermy and museum diorama displays, stereoscopic and two dimensional photography, still and moving film images, and theatrical Panorama performances.

For Jennings, the most applicable method for making sense of such diverse expansions in material applications is to read it as the traces of human imagination. His introduction asserts that, "Imagination is a function of man whose traces are more delicate to handle than the facts and events and ideas of which history is usually constructed." [9] Like Jennings, borrowing from his terms, my intention here is to 'present' rather than 'analyse' objects and artifacts as if they are indeed delicate, and like a trail of breadcrumbs on a path between the scroll panorama and handheld 'ambulatory' [10] digital technology.

Before following this trail of 'things,' I wish to offer a couple of additional lenses through which to look, and in doing so to hopefully avoid the 'methodological fetishism' of sociology, against which Arjun Appadurai cautions in his book *The Social Life of Things*. [11] Reframed by Martin Brückner, Appadurai's questions can be applied for use here as follows: What are panoramic images as things? [and,] What kind of work do they produce? [12]

There is an acknowledged relationship between the rise in popularity of scroll panorama performances in the 1840s and '50s, the growth of emigration and travel from Europe to the American continent, and the subsequent trans-continental flow from east to west. [13] To a large degree these relationships are well explored. Following up on Martin Brückner's suggested reading of mapmaking, as an almost wholly "Eurocentric pattern of knowledge production," [14] it might be added that panoramic modes of representation appear as articulations of power in human relationships with landscape. This idea is perhaps as applicable to moving panoramas, as it is to the equally popular immersive rotunda cycloramas and the concurrent array of museum display dioramas, miniature landscapes

and related museum display prosthetics. [15] These media follow in a longer tradition of mapmaking which Brückner describes as "science in action" because of the way they "mobilize locally collected data," by presenting it "as universal knowledge." [16]

The panoramic form entered popular culture as an array of inventions ready for work, and at this precise time in the nineteenth century, as part of the consolidation of a powerfully mobile Eurocentric cultural imagination, namely the ideological frameworks that became called manifest destiny. [17] Expressed in terms that are directly relatable to a handheld scroll panorama like the *Ribbon Map Of the Father Of Waters*, these are technologies for new ways of looking at, experiencing, performing, and above all possessing representations of space.

Scroll: Noun into Verb

These culturally entrenched practices relate to a range of object-based performances of travel and tourism. The following etymological excursion unpacks these expectations and cultural habits. Delving into Jennings's characterization of industrialization as Pandæmonium, the cultural precedents of panorama making might also be illuminated by examining etymological trails. In a parlance relative to the use of handheld device navigation and app-based experience sharing on social media today, the equivalents are seen in a range of terms and their corresponding physical actions that echo with terminology from mapmaking and of the panoramic too. [18] Visually advancing through a data source is understood as scrolling. As a verb (and an adverb) derived from the noun 'scroll', a precise physical and material origin is visible. What has historically been a tool for the demonstration of knowledge as fact has become part of a range of personal vernacular experiences. The scroll as muscle memory is embedded as a basic ubiquitous human function, as a series of minute performative finger-swipe actions on a touch screen.

Deeper considerations of the etymology of the noun 'scroll' come with distinct material implications. Again, a number of implied and embodied human relationships to material are invoked. In his *Dictionary of Etymology* [19] Walter W. Skeat allies the origin of the word 'scroll' to the word 'shroud'. As a noun it denotes a strip of cloth, "a 'shred' of stuff a piece cut or torn off." [20] And a shroud is also sometimes called as a winding cloth. Skeat offers a subsequent definition of the word scroll simply as 'a roll of paper.' Derived from French and Teutonic roots, and related to the Middle English, [21] 'scrowe' means literally a scroll. This group of words can also be traced into Old French [22] as 'escroue,' and in English as 'a scrowel.' And, "Old Dutch, 'schroode', meaning a shred, strip, slip of paper: allied to shroud (above)." [23] Cloth and winding are distinct material images that carry a number of functions in

this word picture. The winding cloth or shroud bring a conflated image of finality, totality, and lengthiness—a strip (of life) from its beginning to its end. Relatable in addition is the idea of cloth, a woven ‘fabric,’ as a metaphor for a life, simultaneously a single life and that of all human society.

It seems relevant here also to briefly ponder the linguistic origins of the word ‘map’, again as an image of entirety. The ‘Mappa Mundi’ is a cloth map of the world, at once a woven object that is a warp and weft grid and an image of the world. Mappa is the Latin word for ‘napkin’, and Mundi the ‘of the world’. A painted cloth and as another image of the known world in its entirety. Scroll panoramas, like maps, imply a similar excess in their attempt to represent vast space. No human mind is capable of holding such detail, and part of the experience of both maps and panoramas is the importance of the viewpoint and experiential location of the viewer. The work of mapping, and arguably likewise of panoramas, is to facilitate a series of imaginative leaps. Requiring the placing of oneself in the space that is depicted as an active agent, as a performer. There are plenty of precedents for this in landscape painting traditions, but what panoramas do most effectively because of their immersive quality, possibly more so than landscape paintings and conventional maps which project their meaning *authoritatively*, is allow a viewer to project themselves *imaginatively*, with agency and heightened physical sensations, into what is depicted.

Once in the landscape, a performance of an imaginary self can commence, conjuring a sense of dominion over not only the space but over the everyday self. Roland Barthes points to just such self-deception when discussing the birth and popularization of photography. The will to “see oneself (differently from in the mirror): on the scale of History, this action is recent, the painted, drawn, or miniaturized portrait having been, until the spread of photography, a limited possession, intended moreover to advertise a social and financial status.” [24] To apprehend an image of the self in such a self-determined manner, like the self-portrait photograph is the “advent of myself as other: a cunning dissociation of consciousness from identity.” The possession and manipulation of handheld panoramic representations and devices then becomes a totally self-oriented and self-driven experience. The fantasy of dominion that is implied in manifest destiny is placed within imaginable reach.

Going with the Flow

The material, physical, and temporal distances from Henry Lewis’s *Mississippi River Panorama* to the current iPhone generation are vast, but not an inconceivable leap. They both represent human will and demonstrate the capacity for

self-representation. Henry Lewis’s sense of dominion produced a traveling landscape performance innovation, or more directly, his boat trip might now be recognized as prophetic or at the very least an anticipation of, the handheld contemporary vernacular swiping and selfie-making performances of tourists. It is beyond the capacity of this paper to fully map an exhaustive lineage via a range of mechanical media between these two places; exhaustive mapping is perhaps best left to the Victorians. Rather, in following a trail of artifacts in Maclean Collection, a range of mechanical devices have readily presented themselves. Requests to see scrolled, rolled, and rolling maps, artifacts that relate to panoramic landscape representations even obliquely, have produced things that have a utility for illustrating or mediating experiences of landscape and that represent just such individualized progression through space as has been explored above.

A helpful distinction in thinking about map types has been drawn by Martin Brückner, between maps as static artifacts and what he calls “ambulatory maps”; and between items that are made specifically for travel and sources of centralized knowledge. In his own words, Brückner “pursues an interpretive model that, in-stead of approaching maps and cartography as in-stances of science in action, considers them as things in action.” Again, the analogy appears to be appropriate when applied to panoramas. How the scroll panorama made its way from a stage performance into a handheld device might be understood on the one hand as a logical outgrowth of nineteenth century exuberant manufacturing and the ensuing pandæmonium it has produced. But on the other hand, as ‘things in action,’ there is a clear cultural narrative function that relates to self-actualization and popular perceptions of truth.

Panoramas, like maps, are usually accompanied by an implied or actual linear narrative. The aim in both of these forms of landscape representation aligns with an asserted sense of ownership and dominion. Recording, expressing, and possessing knowledge of spatial relationships has a long historically strategic function in mapping. And while in the nineteenth century, for panoramas at least, something very different was at stake, a series of relatable outcomes are in play. When Henry Lewis undertook to record the Mississippi River by ‘floating’ upon it, from the head waters to the Gulf Coast, he had knowingly or otherwise anticipated another category of vernacular traditions in tourism. In very straightforward terms, the ‘River floats’ and ‘Wet-Jet’ experiences are an established part of river vacations. The performative episodic reportage of landscape, with its origins in Europe, through depicting or otherwise describing a sequence of locations, or an alignment of places on a track, has both produced and satisfied the popular imagination. A seemingly insatiable hunger for travel and of gaining experiences in the world aligns perfectly with the aspirations of Philip James de

Loutherberg's 1799 performances of the Eidophusikon, an early example of an immersive landscape experience, self-described as "Representing Nature Under Her Most Captivating Forms, in a succession of moving pictures." First-hand accounts of the Eidophusikon describe the encounter with an array of 'moving pictures representing nature, though without a blink of irony the closing scene grandiosely represents a work of fiction in a depiction of Milton's Pandæmonium. [25] The fluid representational tone in both De Loutherbourg's announcements and in contemporary accounts of its performances perhaps anticipates our own culture of travel and its attendant culture of mass-produced souvenir objects. [26] A will to take possession of the experience of travel has spawned a series of distinct performances of landscape, mediated at great risk sometimes to the personal safety of the protagonist. [27]

Are the *Ribbon Map Of the Father Of Waters* and the iPhone alike? They can both be understood as devices for witnessing the self as other. In relation to mapping history they also produce something that is akin to the possession of the world, through representations of it, alongside collecting curiosities and curios in an enlightenment cabinet of wonder. The contemporary habit of collecting portable images of the self—in the world—and of holding them enduringly in the palm of the hand does suggest a direct relationship between the object-ness of older forms of collecting, and mapping. Panoramic performance forms too seem to relate very strongly to the mass availability of media and technologies that continue to produce landscape representations currently in the popular domain.

Notes

1. Coloney & Fairchild's Patent Ribbon Map. Ribbon Map Of the Father Of Waters. Steamboat Fares Vary from two to four cents per mile. Staterooms and meals included. Gast, Moeller & Co. Lith. Cor. Third and Olive Sts. St. Louis. John George Bartholomew & Son, 1866.
2. See, Sarah Anne Carter, *Object Lessons: How Nineteenth Century Americans Learned to Make Sense of the Material World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).
3. John F. Sears, *Sacred Places: American Tourist Attractions in the Nineteenth Century* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1989), 51.
4. Sears, 51.
5. Sears, 51.
6. William J. Petersen, *Mississippi River Panorama: Henry Lewis Great National Work* (Iowa City, Iowa: Clio Press, 1979). Lewis began work on his painting on September 20, 1848, and exhibited its first section in May 1849.
7. John Francis McDermott, *The Lost Panoramas of the Mississippi* (University of Chicago Press, 1958). Lewis's initial journeys were with surveying and geologic expeditions.

8. Humphrey Jennings, *Pandæmonium 1660 – 1886: The Coming of the Machine as Seen by Contemporary Observers*, ed. Mary-Lou Jennings, (London: Andre Deutsch, 1985). Humphrey Jennings was born in 1907 and died in 1950. This collection of 'accounts', published posthumously, represents for Jennings a thirteen year project. Jennings was a film maker, painter, and poet who saw his compilation as akin to a film, presenting a sequence of images that are temporally and culturally connected.

9. Jennings, xxxv.

10. See below. Martin Brückner. "The Ambulatory Map: Commodity, Mobility, and Visualcy in Eighteenth-Century Colonial America," *Winterthur Portfolio* (2011): 141-160.

11. Arjun Appadurai (Ed.), *The social life of things. Commodities in cultural perspective*. Cambridge University Press. 1986.

12. Brückner, 147.

13. See for example, though not to the exclusion of the work of numerous others; Erkki Huhtamo, *Illusions in Motion: A Media Archaeology of the Moving Panorama and Related Spectacles* (MIT Press, 2013). Katie Trumpener and Tim Barringer, eds, *On the Viewing Platform: The Panorama between Canvas and Screen*. (Yale University Press, 2020).; Martin Brückner, "The Ambulatory Map: Commodity, Mobility, and Visualcy in Eighteenth-Century Colonial America," *Winterthur Portfolio* (2011), and previous contributions to the *International Panorama Council Journal*, 2017 to the present.

14. Brückner, 141-160.

15. Exhibition prosthetics: An idea borrowed from Joseph Grigely whose discussions of curatorial approaches includes questioning the boundaries between an artwork and the elements in an exhibition/museum display. His main thesis centers on understanding the nature of that which supports, contributes, and extends the meaning and material consequences of an artwork. See Joseph Grigely, *Exhibition Prosthetics* (London: The Bedford Press, 2011).

16. Brückner, 2011. Martin Brückner supports his discussion by citing Bruno Latour's *Science in Action* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 215–24.

17. See my previous discussion of manifest destiny and panorama heritage: Lowe, N. "Remote Viewing: Panorama narrative, Landscape Experience and Heritage," *International Panorama Council Journal* 4: 98-105.

18. Referring here to the performances of tableaux vivant and other related theatrical interludes from the mid 1700s onwards and specifically to Philipp Jakob De Loutherbourg's Eidophusikon whose performances of the 1780s and after are acknowledged as being amongst the fore-runners of the moving panorama. These theatrical landscape representations align with the date range identified by Humphrey Jennings (1660-1886), above. Also see Erkki Hauhtamo, *Illusions in Motion* (MIT Press, 2013), 93-137.

19. Skeat's *Dictionary of English Etymology*, received its initial publication in various forms between 1879 and 1882.

It has been in print in a range of editions up to the present time.

20. Skeat, 434.

21. English from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century. Walter W. Skeat, *The Concise Dictionary of English Etymology* (Wordsworth Reference, Wordsworth Editions). (1995), xi.

22. From before 1660. Skeat, xi.

23. Skeat, 434. The punctuation and italicization are retained from the 1995 edition.

24. Roland Barthes. *Camera Lucida: Reflections On Photography* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), 12.

25. Pandæmonium is the invented citadel and capital of hell in book one of John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. 1667. Huhtamo, 98-99.

26. Huhtamo, 93-137.

27. "Selfie Deaths: 259 People Reported Dead Seeking the Perfect Picture." *BBC News*, October 4, 2018. <https://www.bbc.com/news/newsbeat-45745982>.

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Maps and artifacts

Coloney & Fairchild's Patent Ribbon Map Ribbon Map Of the Father Of Waters, 1866. Gast, Moeller & Co. Lith. Cor. Third and Olive Sts. St. Louis. The Edinburgh Geographical Institute. Courtesy of the MacLean Collection. (SiD19265)

Hudson River By Daylight 1886 Courtesy of the MacLean Collection. (SiD34388)

Troy Line – Citizens Steamboat Co. 1905. Courtesy of the MacLean Collection. (SiD34389)

William Wade. *Panorama of the Hudson River*. 1845 Courtesy of the MacLean Collection. (SiD34385)

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Author Biography

Nicholas Lowe is an interdisciplinary visual artist, writer, educator and curator whose work is known for its contextual and documentary approaches. His visual and performance works forefront material research, interpretation and public engagement. Lowe is a Professor at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago and is the John H Bryan Chair of Historic Preservation.

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