

# An Arsenal of Memories or an Intimate Landscape? **Franc Ferjan** and Stereo Photography

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**MG+** Museum of Modern Art, Ljubljana  
Cankarjeva cesta 15, Ljubljana

After 16 years, Moderna galerija is again staging an exhibition of work by Franc Ferjan, an amateur photographer from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Based on the recently discovered body of 1,700 of his black-and-white and color stereo slides and negatives, this show complements the 2006 exhibition entitled *Franc Ferjan (1885–1964). A Photographer of Private and Social Reality*.

As Lara Štrumej, the curator of both Ferjan exhibitions, points out, the recently discovered works provide us with new insights into Ferjan's creative production, particularly in the period between 1918 and 1945, when most of his stereo photographs were taken. Ferjan was particularly drawn to light in its innumerable manifestations, striving to represent it as accurately as possible rather than trying to create atmospheric effects. Numerous images of rivers, lakes, streams, and waterfalls foreground sunlight playing on or bouncing off the water surfaces, pictures of snow-covered trees reproduce the dazzling brilliance of winter light, and nighttime street scenes evidence the photographer's technical skill. His stereo slides of flowers, fruits, and vegetables, mostly dating from the war period (1940–1945), show his interest in the plasticity of objects and his focus on details and colors.

Eszter Polonyi, an expert on the history of perception, media theory, and intermedia, sees Ferjan's shift from black-and-

white to color stereoscopic photography as a qualitative contribution to vision, intensifying the experience of sight. This may well have been his way of trying to expand his sensory perception after he lost his hearing. As Polonyi put it, "Photography promised him sensory fulfilment not so much through the aesthetic discourse (...), but as a medium equally invested in the language and techniques of experimental optics, chemistry, and physics."

The exhibition presents scans of 152 of Ferjan's stereo slides in five videos, according prominence to the subjects he focused on from 1920 to virtually the end of his life, naming them "water" (landscape with water), "winter" (landscape in wintertime), "night" (street scenes at night), "memory" (street scenes), and color still lifes. Also included in the exhibition are three stereoscopes from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, on loan from the Slovenian School Museum, the Slovenian Cinematheque, and the Technical Museum of Slovenia, which allow visitors to experience viewing three of Ferjan's stereo slides as they were originally intended to be viewed.

A catalogue was published to coincide with the exhibition. It includes 17 reproductions of black-and-white and color stereo slides and two texts written by Lara Štrumej and Eszter Polonyi respectively.

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