

The Phenakistoscope

(fen-a-kist-o-scope)

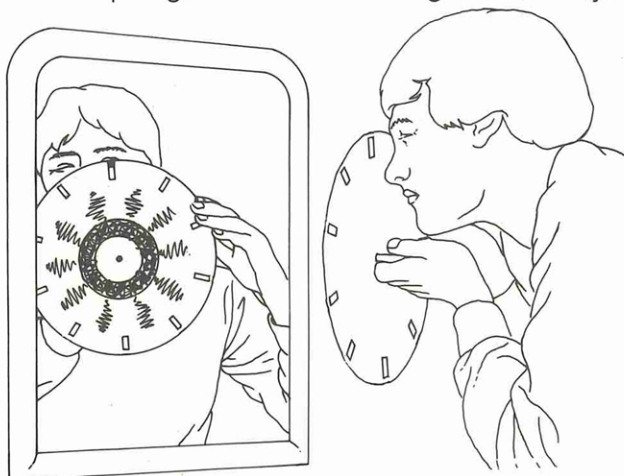
The Phenakistoscope was created by Joseph Plateau in 1833 and was a fore-runner of the Zoetrope. The name comes from the Greek *phenax* (deceiver) and *scopein* (to see).

Plateau observed that, if a series of perpendicular pegs were equally spaced around the circumference of a wheel, when the wheel was rotated rapidly and viewed through the pegs the wheel appeared to be stationary. He developed this into a cardboard disc with slots cut into the edge. On one side were equally spaced figures, representing phases of a movement, each differing slightly from the next. When the disc was rotated quickly on a spindle and held before a mirror, the figures appeared to move.

Many imitations were produced and the novelty was greeted with enthusiasm, but after a few years demand for the toy dropped as more and more refinements were made. Eventually it was overtaken by the Zoetrope which, in turn, led to the development of the cinema.

How to make your Phenakistoscope

- 1 Cut out the paper discs and cut slots in the edges where indicated.
- 2 Lightly glue one paper disc onto the black plastic disc enclosed. Push a knitting needle through the centre from the side with the image on, and hold it in your hand in front of a mirror.
- 3 To see the pictures move, hold the disc up to eye level and spin it quickly, looking through the slots at the reflection in the mirror.
Shine a spotlight onto the disc for greater clarity.



- 4 Colour in the discs to make them more realistic.