Stereoscopy History Series

Erotica

Atrium



ANDRÉ RUITER

Atrium

Jules Richard revived stereoscopy in the 1890s, but he also created erotic images in the setting of a classical atrium.



The *Stereoscopy History Series* explores the history of stereoscopy in Europe between 1850 and 1930, unveiling the stories of the people, companies and their remarkable instruments and images that captured the imagination of an era.

Early nude photography

Soon after the introduction of the daguerreotype photography process, the first nude photographs emerged. Depicting nude women in paintings as figures from mythology or in religious scenes was generally accepted. However, the realism of photography and capturing nude models in an everyday environment was experienced as shocking. Nude photography was banned during the French Second Empire (1852–1870). Photographers, models and sellers who were involved in nude photography could be prosecuted.

The photographer Félix Moulin (c. 1802–1875) was tried on 23 July 1851 with two others for making nude photographs[1]. It was the first time photographers were tried for making “indecent pictures”. Moulin was imprisoned for one month but after his release he continued with nude photography, although this time he proceeded with more caution. Nude photography was very lucrative, and the risk of criminal prosecution did not stop photographers and models. The models were often assumed to be prostitutes, but this was not always the case. A Paris police register shows that most models did not work as prostitutes. They posed because they simply needed the extra money to survive in a society with social inequality. The models posed naked or half-naked, and these images look innocent by today's standards. However, more explicit pornographic images were also made. The faces in explicit images were often covered to prevent the models from being recognised and the images from serving as evidence in court.

Many hand-coloured stereo daguerreotypes were created from 1850 to 1860. With the introduction of the collodion process, images could be printed from a negative plate on albumen paper. Images could be reproduced cheaply and this boosted the distribution of nude photographs. The realistic three-dimensional rendering and the intimate experience of viewing an image in a closed box stereoscope made stereo photography very suitable for erotic images.

In 1870, France became a republic. During the Third Republic, nude photography was tolerated, leading to a rapid growth in the creation and publication of erotic images. Nude photography would flourish in France until the early 1930s.

Delphine Rosa Herbet

An archived Paris police register with the number BB3 covers the period from November 1855 to June 1868. The register contains prints of models that appeared on nude photographs. These prints were used as evidence in court, and because of this, the names of many models who posed nude during the 1850s and 1860s are known today.

The model in this daguerreotype also appeared in the BB3 register. Her name was Delphine Rosa Herbet, born on 25 October 1839, and she posed for several photographers[2]. Herbet was arrested for the first time in June 1858 for posing nude, and she was sentenced to one month in prison. Two years later, she was arrested twice for the same offence, and she was sentenced to another three months in prison. Nothing is known about her life after her release. The shown image of Herbet is a reproduction on film transparency that was made in the late 1970s of the original daguerreotype.



Jules Richard

Félix Richard established in 1845 a company that was specialised in the manufacturing of barometers. He was married to Françoise Antoinette Froment and they had four sons. Jules Nicolas Richard was the second oldest, and was born in Lyon on 19 December 1848. Jules was trained as an apprentice in his father's workshop. He left in 1866, only to return 10 years later when the company of his late father was in financial trouble. Jules took over the management of the company, and patented in 1880 the first reliable barometer that could permanently record air pressure. With ink, the air pressure values were periodically written on a cylinder. It became very successful, and the company on the Rue Mélingue in Paris started to grow.

From 1887 to 1891, Jules ran the company together with his younger brother Félix-Max as Richard Frères. Due to mutual differences, the collaboration ended at the end of 1891, and the two brothers got involved in a lawsuit. Surprisingly enough, the name Richard Frères and logo remained in use for a long time after the breakup.

Jules Richard introduced the compact 45 x 107 mm glass format and the Vérascope stereo camera in 1893. A product line was created around the new format, with a wide range of cameras, stereoscopes and accessories in different price ranges. Vérascope became the leading brand of stereoscopy products and brought stereo photography within the range of amateurs.

Richard's company became a public company in 1921, and that was the moment he handed over the management of the business. In 1923, he donated five million francs for the creation of the École des Apprentis Mécaniciens Précisionnistes, where students were trained to make precision instruments. The school still exists today and is called now Lycée Technologique Privé Jules Richard.

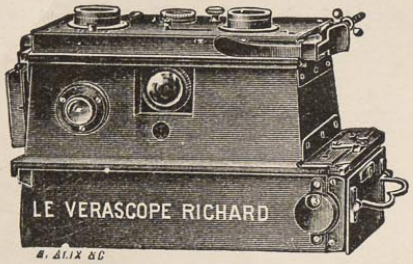
Richard died on 18 June 1930 and was buried in the Père Lachaise cemetery in Paris. The company continued to manufacture stereoscopy equipment until 1957.



AUCUNE IMITATION NE PEUT RIVALISER

avec le

VÉRASCOPE RICHARD



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le plus **PARFAIT**,
le plus **ÉLÉGANT**
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donne la **FORME** correcte,
la **GRANDEUR** exacte,
la **PERSPECTIVE** juste,
la **COULEUR** vraie
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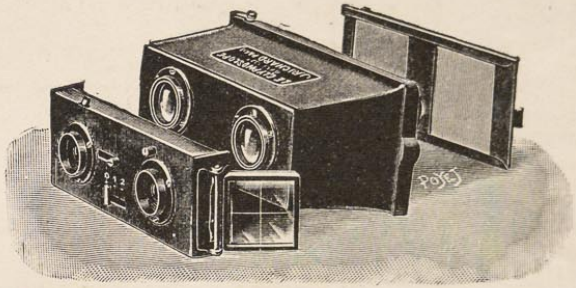

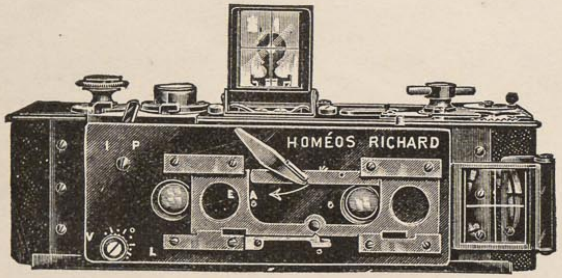

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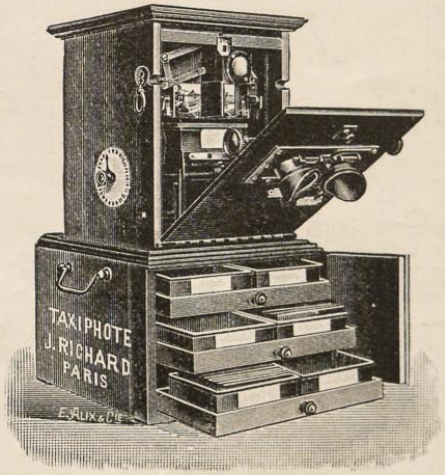

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A la même Maison : Baromètres, Thermomètres, Hygromètres, Anémomètres, Pluviomètres, Manomètres, Cinémomètres, Indicateurs dynamométriques, Indicateurs et transmetteurs de niveau à distance, etc. - Ampèremètres, Voltmètres, Wattmètres, Boîtes de contrôle, Ohmmètres, etc. - Oxygénateur du Dr Bayeux.

Demandez les Catalogues : **Établissements Jules RICHARD, 25, rue Mélingue, PARIS.**



Vérascope No. 6bs camera for 45 x 107 mm glass plate negatives. This model has serial number 40305 and was manufactured in 1921.

In addition to the 45 x 107 mm Vérascope, models for the 6 x 13 cm and the less common 7 x 13 cm format were later introduced. Numerous different glass plate models continued to appear well into the 1920s. The final model was the Vérascope f40 for 35 mm roll film, which remained in production until the 1950s.



La Nature, 17 July 1897



Taxiphote Simplifié, c. 1914



Vérascope-branded 45 x 107 mm hand-held stereoscope.

Atrium

Richard took advantage of the more tolerant attitude towards nude photography during the Third Republic. Soon after the launch of the Vérascope camera, he created the first series of erotic stereoviews that were marketed in the beginning of the 20th century[3]. Early photographs were taken in and around a villa owned by Achille Lemoine in Croissy-sur-Seine. Richard's country residence in Chantemerle near Aix-les-Bains was also occasionally a location for nude photography. In 1909, Richard built an ancient Roman-styled atrium next to his house in Paris, which he used as a photo studio[4]. Inside the atrium, and in the surrounding gardens, erotic photos were taken by him and other photographers. The models posed in a mythological setting from classical antiquity, which was intended to make the erotic photos more acceptable. Genitals were usually covered by clothing or kept out of sight of the lens.

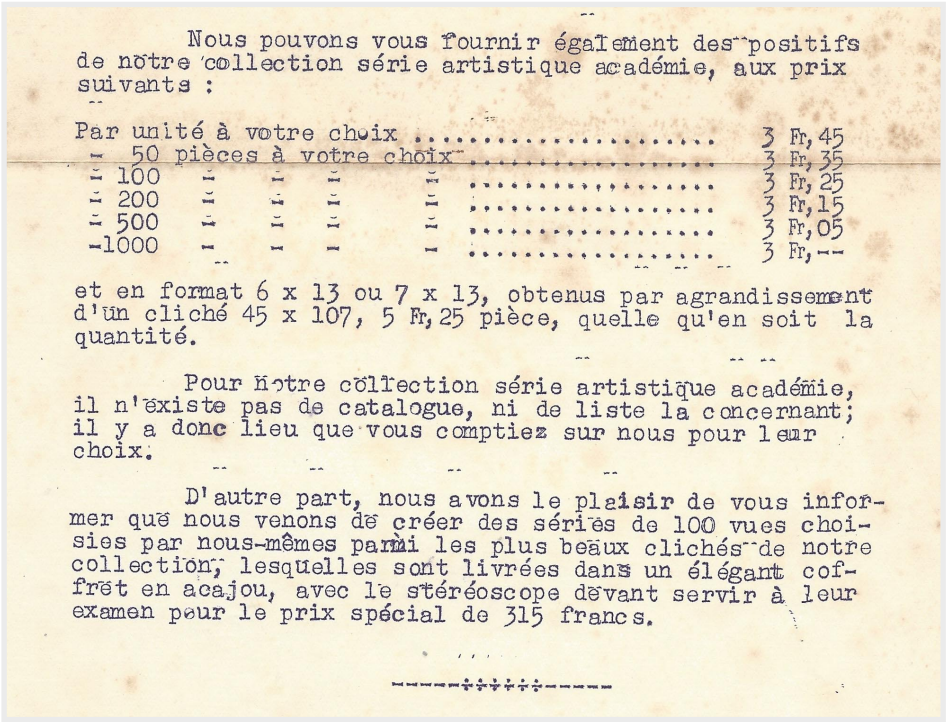
The total range of erotic glass stereoviews in the atrium collection was approximately 7,500, of which about 6,350 were made by Richard himself[5]. The stereoviews were numbered according to an ascending scheme, and notes of the photoshoots have been preserved in four albums[6]. Information about location, year and sometimes even the names of the models is therefore known. The models were professional or amateur models, or artists from the Parisian nightclubs and theatres, such as Le Moulin Rouge and La Cigale. Some images show models being captured from different camera angles simultaneously, indicating that several photographers were active during a session. The early erotic glass stereoviews were numbered 1 to 1175 and were made in 1900[7]. Stereoviews with five or six-digit numbers were made from 1904 to 1929[8].

An inlay in the Jules Richard 1929 product catalogue provides insight in the sales process. The stereoviews were sold individually or per 50, 100, 200, 500 and 1,000 slides. A portfolio with the highlights contained 100 slides and a stereoscope. This portfolio was sold in a wooden case. An individual 45 x 107 mm stereoview was 17% more expensive than the non-erotic stereoviews that Richard sold. When purchasing collections, the price per slide was lower.

The slides were also available in the 6 x 13 cm and 7 x 13 cm formats, but these were enlargements of 45 x 107 mm negatives. There were no catalogues available, and the buyer had to rely on the image selections that were made by the publisher.

Other photographers were also shooting in the atrium, such as Jean Agélou, photographer and publisher of erotic postcards and paper stereoviews. The interior of the building can be seen in images from different photographers. In particular, the decorations that are repeatedly visible on the walls, floors and curtains form a good guideline. These decorations can be seen in glass stereoviews, without numbers or with different numbering schemes, that were likely sold by another publisher. The decorations also appeared in postcards, paper stereoviews and colour photographs.

The photo sessions continued until 1929. The atrium was demolished in 1937[9], to allow for the expansion of the stereoscopy manufacturing facilities.



Nous pouvons vous fournir également des positifs de notre collection série artistique académie, aux prix suivants :

Par unité à votre choix	3 Fr,45
" 50 pièces à votre choix	3 Fr,35
" 100 " " " "	3 Fr,25
" 200 " " " "	3 Fr,15
" 500 " " " "	3 Fr,05
"1000 " " " "	3 Fr,--

et en format 6 x 13 ou 7 x 13, obtenus par agrandissement d'un cliché 45 x 107, 5 Fr,25 pièce, quelle qu'en soit la quantité.

Pour notre collection série artistique académie, il n'existe pas de catalogue, ni de liste la concernant; il y a donc lieu que vous comptiez sur nous pour leur choix.

D'autre part, nous avons le plaisir de vous informer que nous venons de créer des séries de 100 vues choisies par nous-mêmes parmi les plus beaux clichés de notre collection, lesquelles sont livrées dans un élégant coffret en acajou, avec le stéréoscope devant servir à leur examen pour le prix spécial de 315 francs.

An inlay in the 1929 catalogue with sales information about the erotic stereoviews. The collection is referred to as "artistique académie", intended as artistic study material for artists.

© Collection Martiné



No. 682
Croissy-sur-Seine, 1900
45 x 107 mm glass stereoview
Vérascope Richard

Many, if not all, early slides feature "N" after the number. This suffix probably refers to "Nus" (nudes).

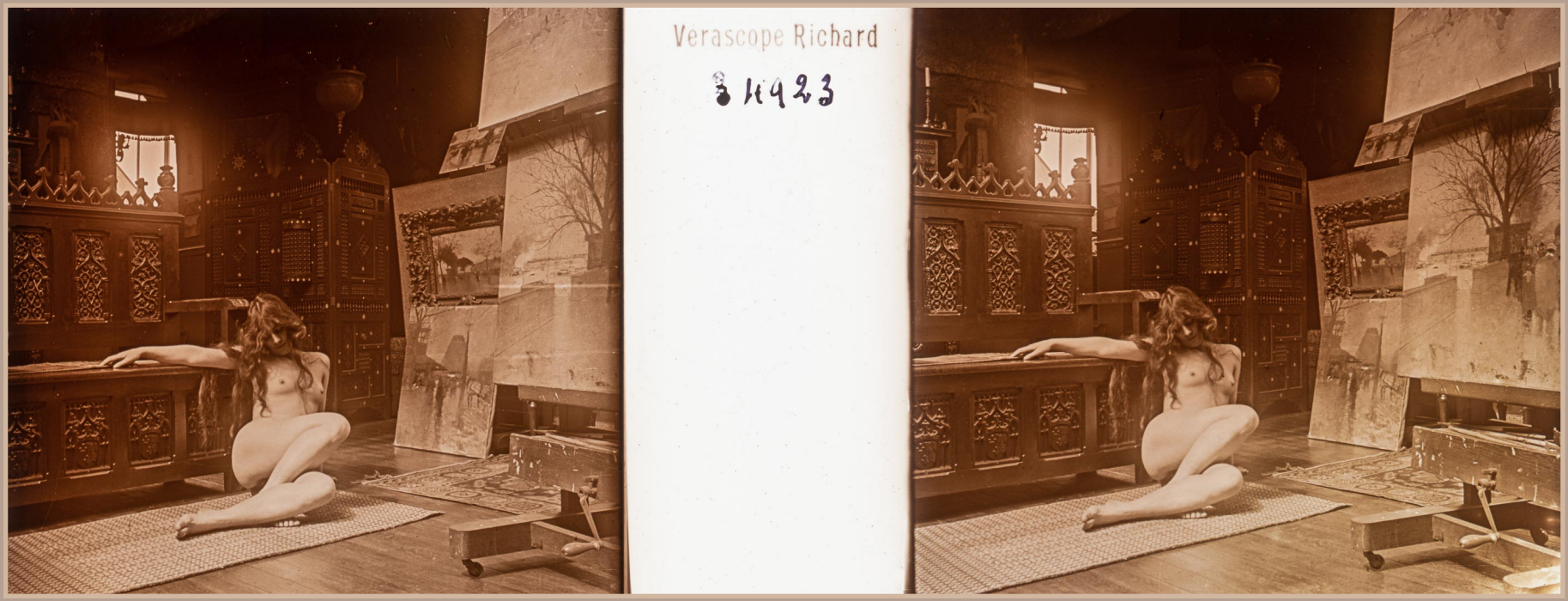


No. 34711

c.1900

45 x 107 mm glass stereoview

Vérascope Richard



No. 34923

c.1906

45 x 107 mm glass stereoview

Vérascope Richard



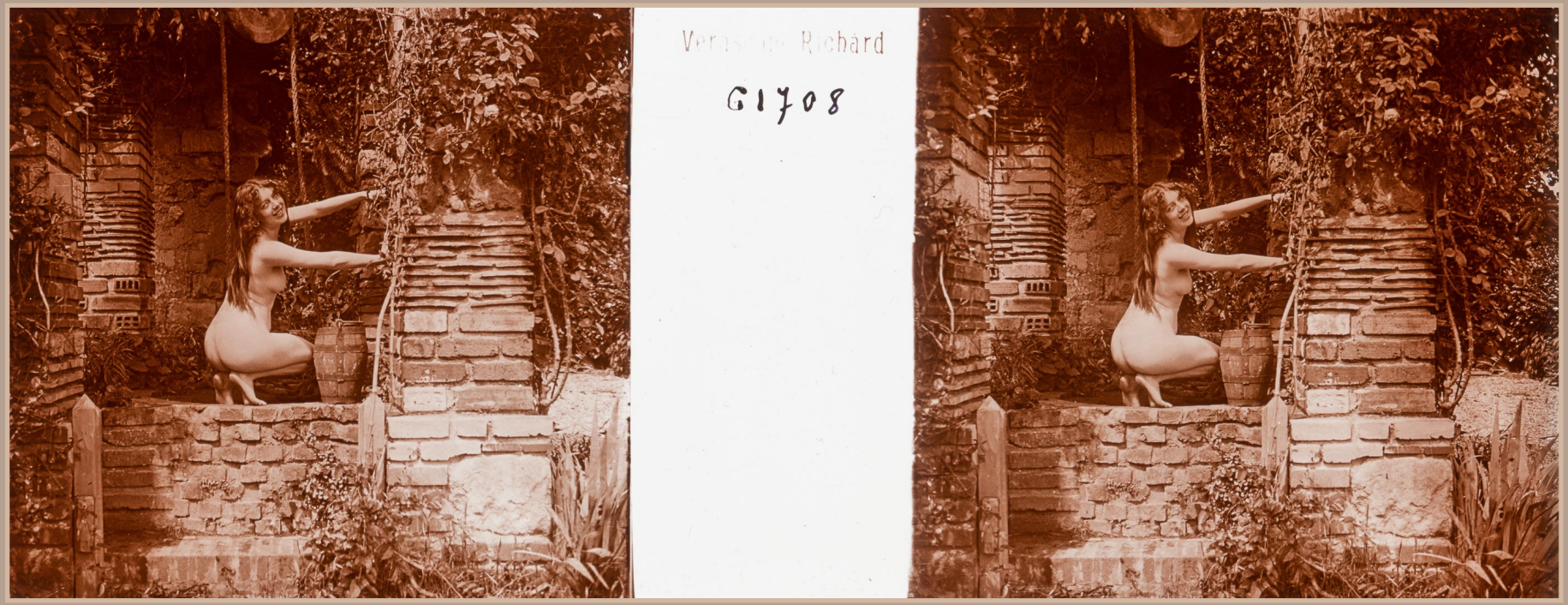


No. 35099 - *Melle Danglas - Nu en plein aire*

Croissy-sur-Seine, 1906

45 x 107 mm glass stereoview

Vérascope Richard

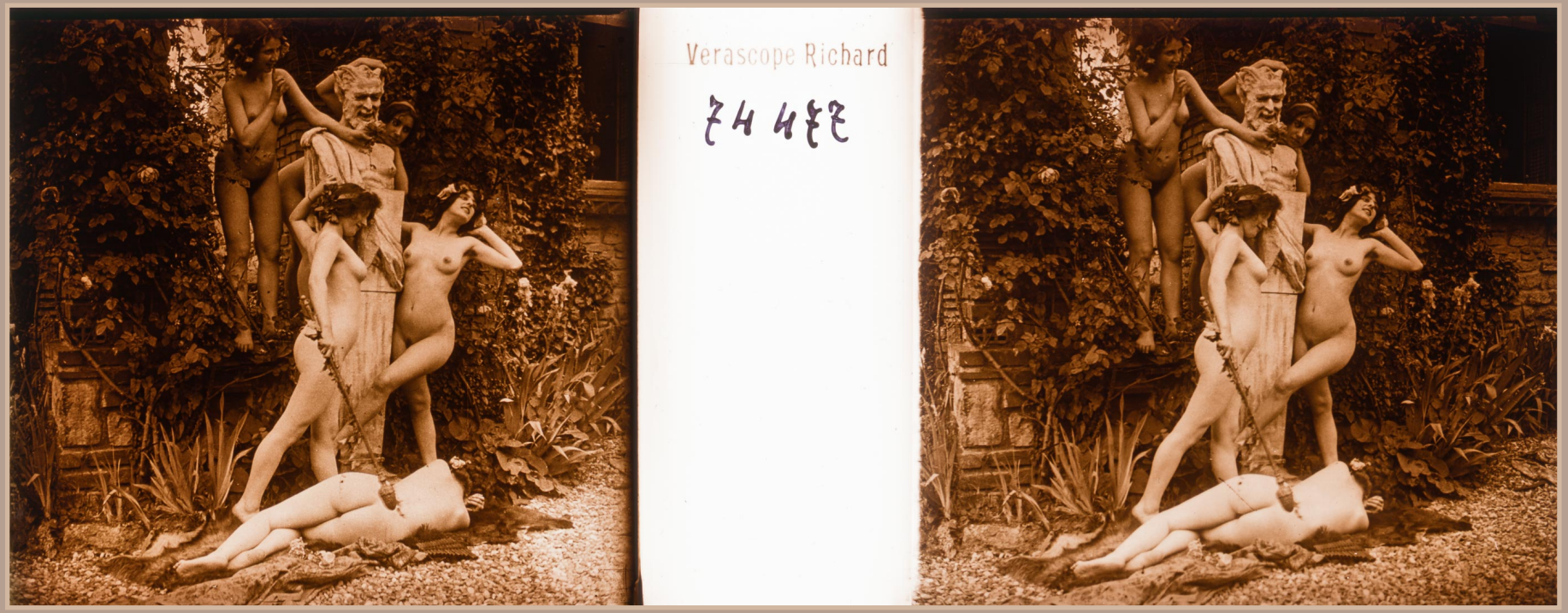


No. 61708 - *Nus à Croissy*

Croissy-sur-Seine, 1908

45 x 107 mm glass stereoview

Vérascope Richard



No. 74477 - *Artistes à la Cigale*
Croissy-sur-Seine, 1908
45 x 107 mm glass stereoview
Vérascope Richard

The image shows performers from La Cigale. La Cigale is a theatre with a rich history, founded in 1887 and located in the Montmartre district of Paris. In its early years, it became closely associated with Montmartre's bohemian lifestyle, hosting many of the era's most celebrated artists and performers.



No. 87688 - *Atrium Nus*
Atrium, Paris, 1910
45 x 107 mm glass stereoview
Vérascope Richard

The woman on the left is Fernande, the favourite model of Jean Agélou, photographer and publisher of erotic postcards and paper stereoviews in the 1910s.



No. 110266 - *Atrium Nus*

Atrium, Paris, 1913

45 x 107 mm glass stereoview

Vérascope Richard



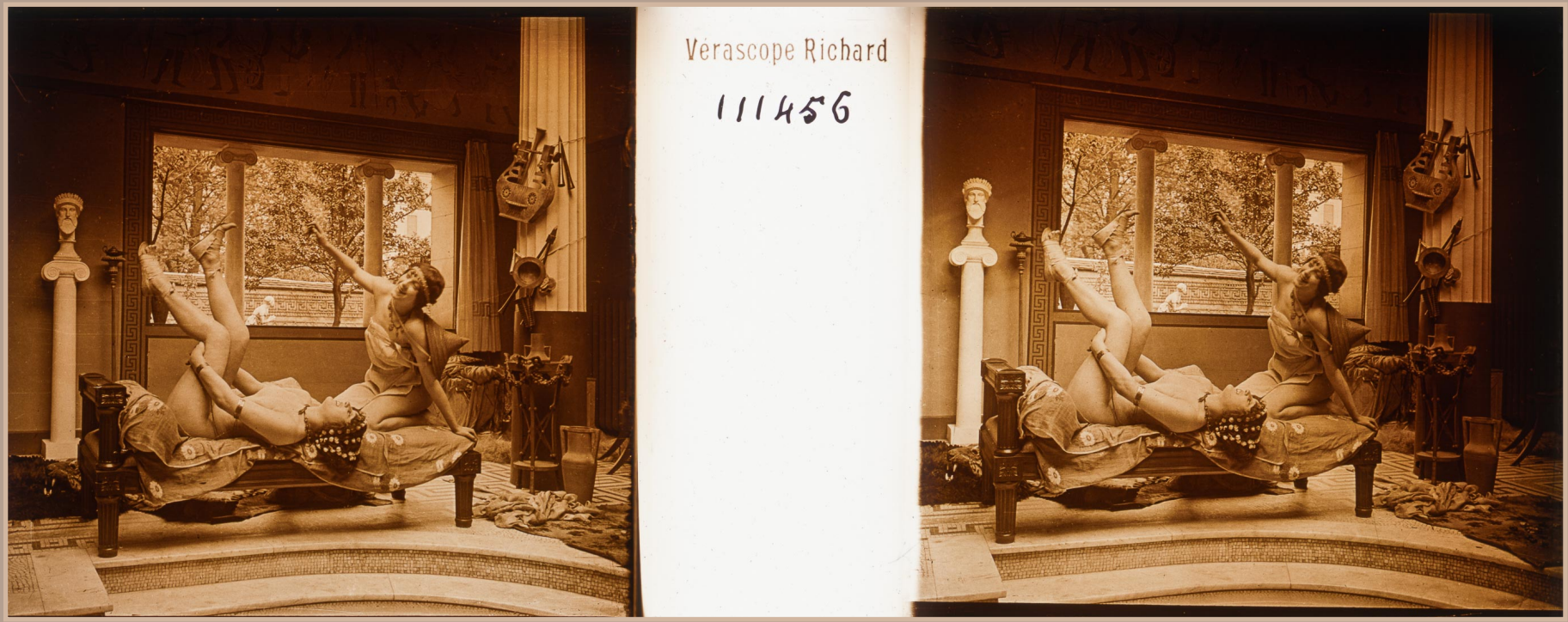


No. 110292 - *Atrium Nus*

Atrium, Paris, 1913

45 x 107 mm glass stereoview

Vérascope Richard



No. 111456 - *Atrium Nus*

Atrium, Paris, 1913

45 x 107 mm glass stereoview

Vérascope Richard

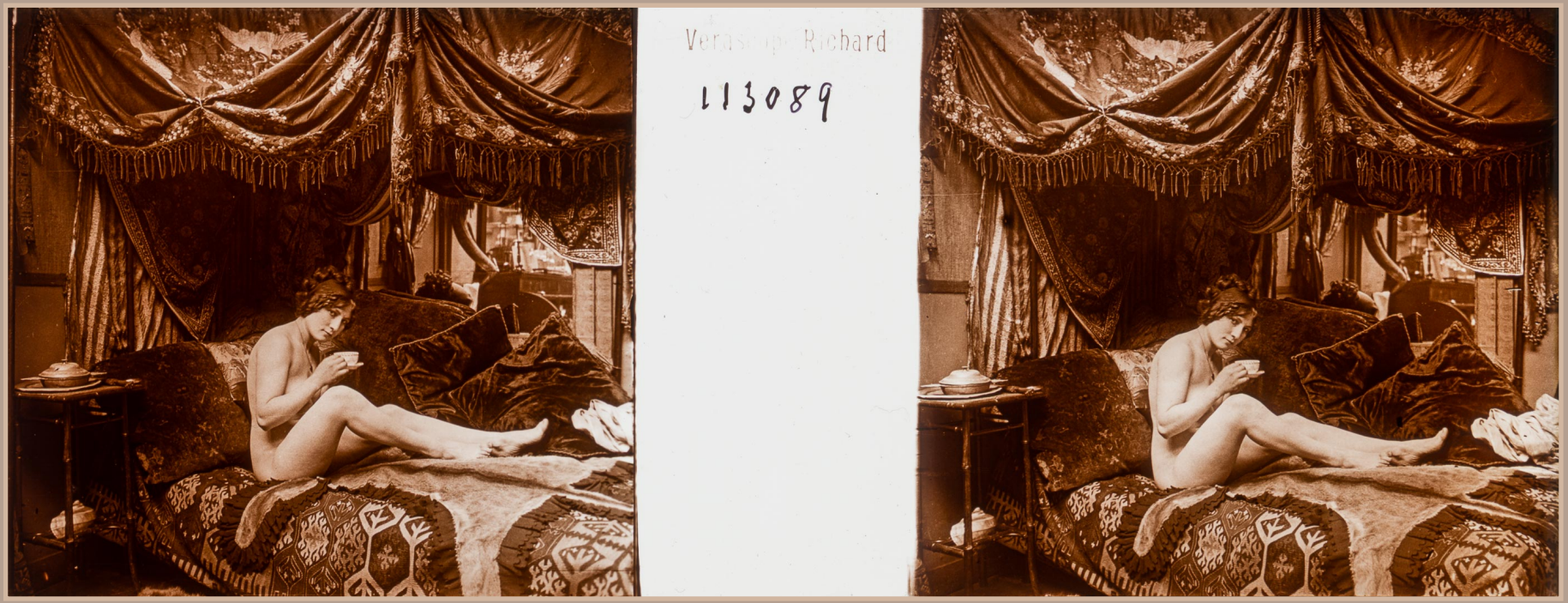


No. 111486 - *Atrium Nus*

Atrium, Paris, 1913

45 x 107 mm glass stereoview

Vérascope Richard



No. 113089
c.1913
45 x 107 mm glass stereoview
Vérascope Richard

This photo might have been taken in Richard's country residence in Chantemerle near Aix-les-Bains.



No. 134281 - *Atrium Nus*

Atrium, Paris, 13 May 1914

45 x 107 mm glass stereoview

Vérascope Richard



No. 134266 - *Atrium Nus*

Atrium, Paris, 13 May 1914

45 x 107 mm glass stereoview

Vérascope Richard





No. 135423

Atrium, Paris, c. 1914

45 x 107 mm glass stereoview

Vérascope Richard

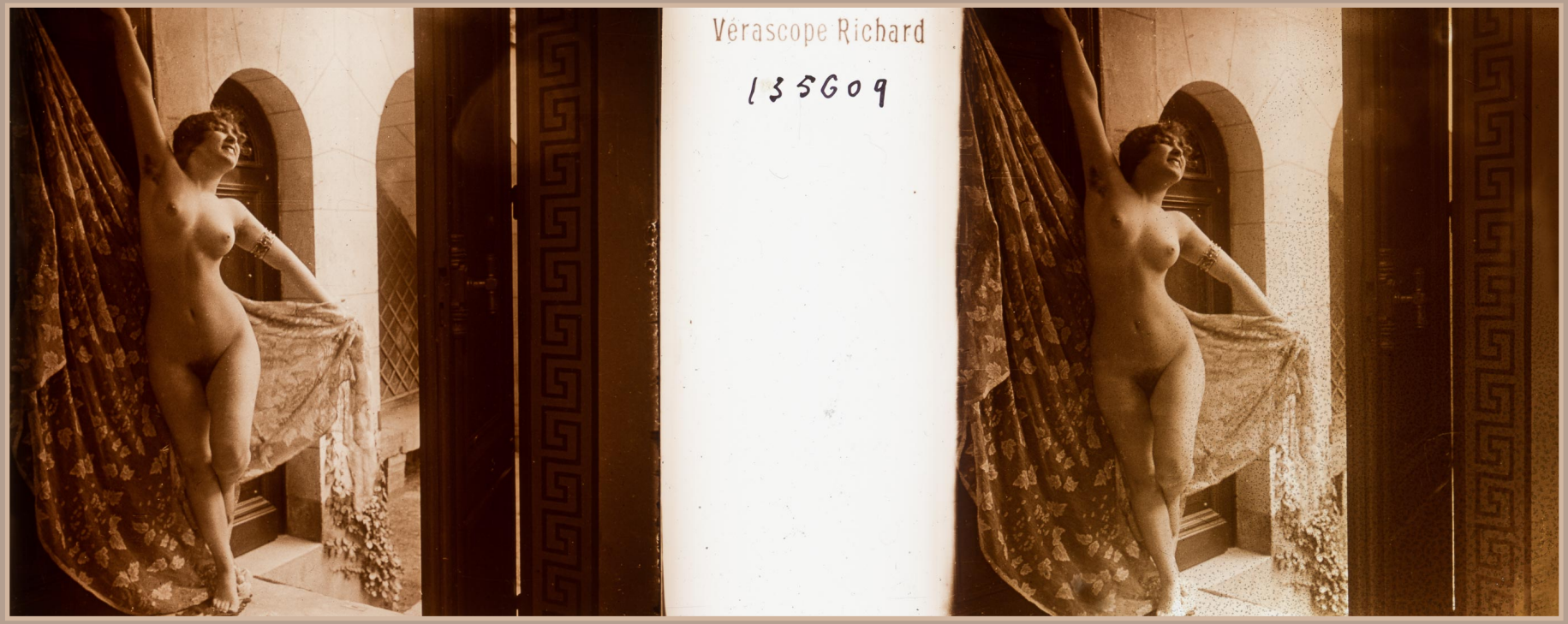


No. 135579

Atrium, Paris c. 1914

45 x 107 mm glass stereoview

Vérascope Richard

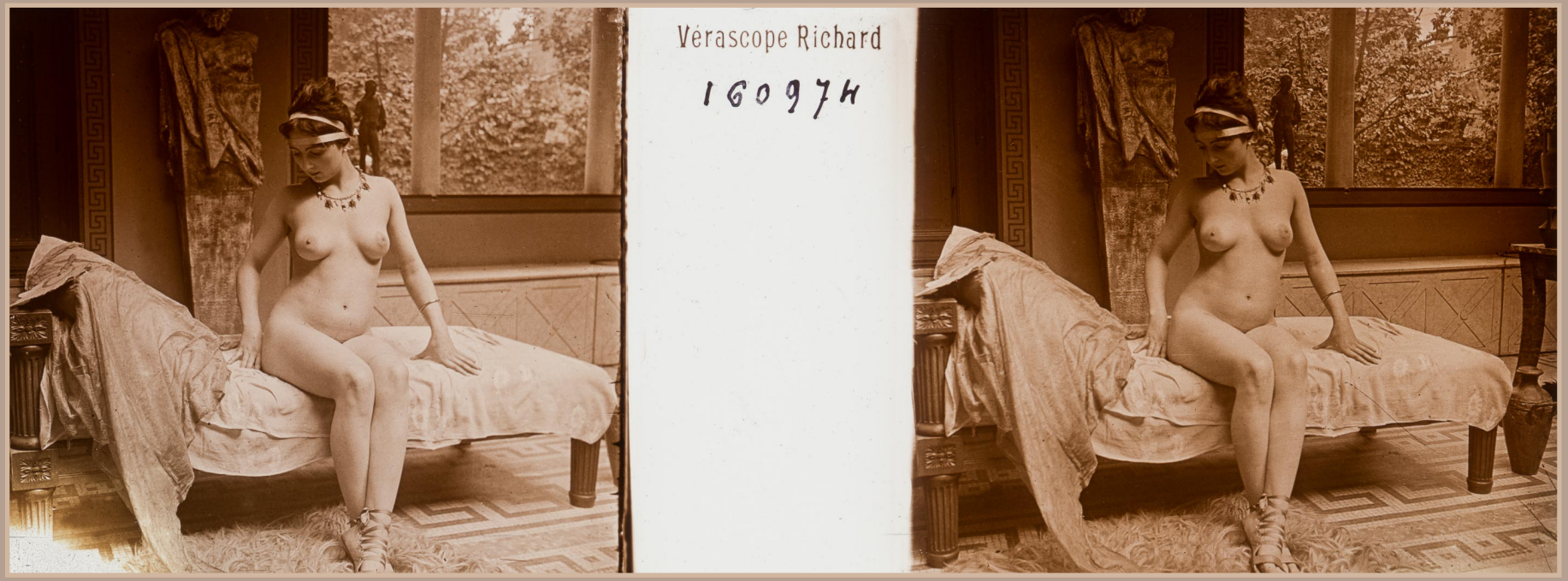


No. 135609

Atrium, Paris, c. 1914

45 x 107 mm glass stereoview

Vérascope Richard

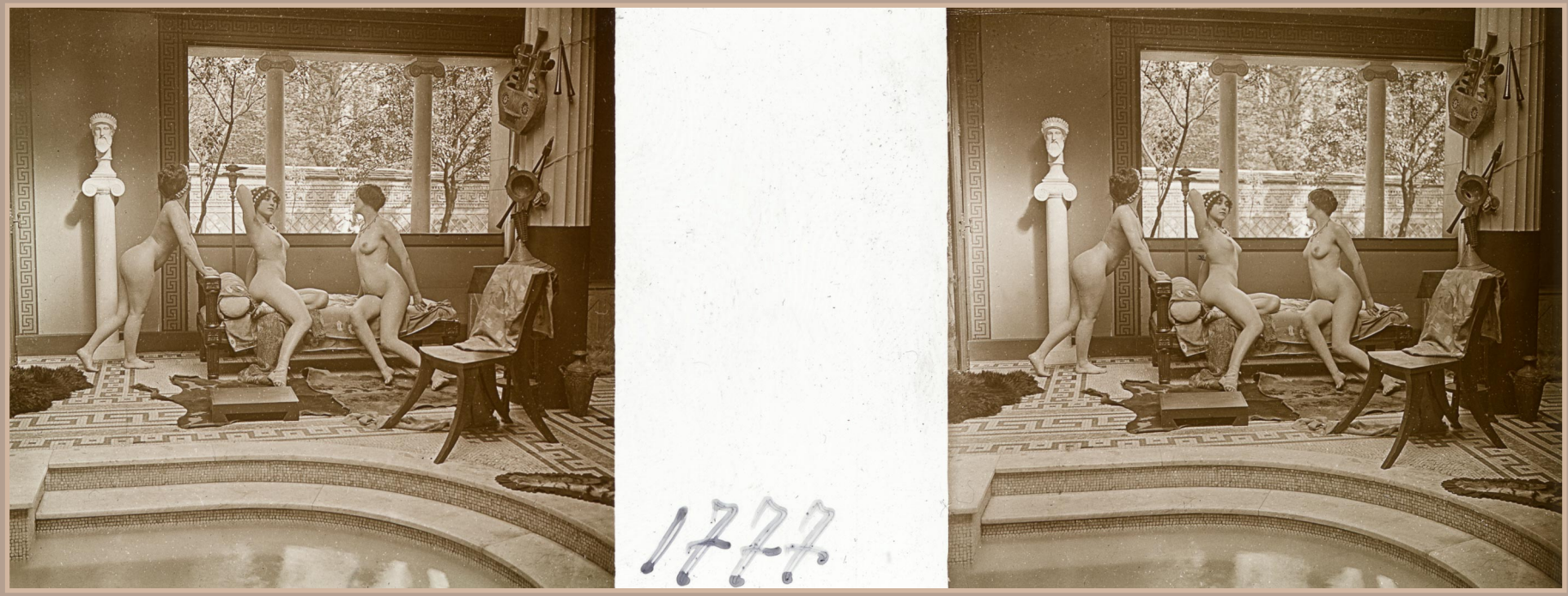


No. 160974 - *Hélène Atrium Nus*

Atrium, Paris, 1918

45 x 107 mm glass stereoview

Vérascope Richard



No. 1777
Atrium, Paris
45 x 107 mm glass stereoview

Richards' low-numbered images predate 1904, when the Atrium did not yet exist. This number, and the different image tone, indicates that this slide was published by another publisher. Similar images are seen with numbers in the 15XX to 17XX range.



No. 2017

Atrium, Paris

6 x 13 cm glass stereoview

This slide has a number that is not listed in the atrium albums. It was probably published by another publisher.



Atrium, Paris
6 x 13 cm glass stereoview

The glass plate with the image is covered with a protective glass plate. Both layers are tied together with tape. Glass stereoviews consisting of two layers were common in the 19th century, but were rare for commercially published slides in the 20th century. The photographer probably made this image for his own private collection.



Atrium, Paris
8.5 x 17 cm paper stereoview
Jean Agélou

A stereoview from the series of photographer and publisher Jean Agélou. The wall decorations reveal that this image was made in Richard's atrium.



This little historical book with the title *De la manière d'enseigner et d'étudier les belles-lettres* was not meant to be read. The book turns out to be a secret hiding place for 6 x 13 cm erotic stereoviews. The book was part of an acquisition of a revolving stereoscope with a small collection of erotic stereoviews. It seems clear that the owner of the stereoscope did not want his erotic collection to fall into the wrong hands and cause any trouble.



This 13 x 18 cm glass plate contains the negatives of three 6 x 13 stereoviews with erotic images from the atrium. It is unlikely that these negatives were used by a publisher. The shown images contain different numbers and one image is printed upside down. It seems more likely that the owner of the stereoviews made contact prints of the images on a negative glass plate with the intention to clandestinely copy and sell the images.

Notes and references

1. Pellerin, D. (2020) *History of Nudes in Stereo Daguerreotypes*, pp. 194-197.
2. Ibid, pp. 44-46.
3. Perin, J. (1993) Jules Richard et la magie du relief (part 3), p. 131.
4. Ibid, p. 145.
5. Ibid, p. 131.
6. Ibid, p. 133.
7. Ibid, p. 138
8. Ibid, pp. 138-144.
9. Perin, J. (1993) Jules Richard et la magie du relief (part 1), p. 25.

Revisions

1.0	20-08-2025	First edition

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Special thanks to Pascal Martiné, who shared his knowledge and images from his collection.

Website: stereoscopyhistory.net