

BETWEEN THE COVERS RARE BOOKS

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[Glass Lantern Slide]: "White-Washing the Negro"

Philadelphia: (C. T. Milligan, Magic Lantern Manuf'r.) [circa 1890s]

\$650



Magic lantern slide with black and gilt paper mat. 3¼" x 4". Near fine. A magic lantern slide focused on the racial divide over skin color. "White-washing the Negro" depicts a black servant having her face washed by an angelic little white child. This is a play on the stereotype of black Americans being "dirty," in need of a "cleaning" by whites.



C. T. Milligan was active in Philadelphia in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Milligan published “The Exhibitor”, a quarterly magazine devoted to magic lanterns and exhibitions. The technology behind the popular magic lantern show entertainments was fairly straight forward: “Basically, a photographic lantern slide is a positive print of a photograph on a glass slide. Often times the photographic negatives were painstakingly hand-colored to make them even more visually enticing. Many photographic lantern slides were also “matted” by a piece of opaque paper laid on the slide, which both masked out edges or parts of the image not wanted in the frame, and created the desirable aesthetic appearance of a mounted photograph. Finally, a second slide of glass was laid atop the glass slide with the positive print and these two pieces of glass were bound firmly together by pasting a strip of paper around the edges. The sandwiched glass plates held the matte or mask in place and also protected the positive photographic print from dust, scratches, and the like. The final slide was then ready to be viewed in a lantern slide projector.”

For “White-Washing the Negro” there was no need for hand coloring. In this instance, the contrast between black and white—and the appeal to Milligan’s audience embracing back American stereotypes is enhanced, by not being colored. An interesting artifact displaying the appropriation of art for ideologically-biased social, cultural, and political viewpoints. [BTC#403650]

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C. T. MILLIGAN, Magic Lantern Manuf'r