

Book Review

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The Discoverers' Lens: A Photographic History of the Simple Microscope 1680-1880

Raymond V. Giordano, with an Introduction by Anthony Turner and a Foreword by Bruno Jacomy, head curator of the Museum of Confluence in Lyon English with a French translation

Published by Classical Science Press in 2012 (see <http://classicalsciencepress.com/books/The-Discoverers-Lens-Raymond-Giordano.html>)

Hard cover, 334 pp. Standard Edition Book Size 9" x 13"

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About thirty Years ago when I first encountered the East Coast US Antiquarian Book Dealer Raymond V. Giordano, he informed of his private mission to assemble the best possible collection of Simple and Botanical Microscopes. As a London dealer in such treasures this was a wonderful invitation to locate such masterpieces of optical design in this field that came my way over the next twenty-five years. Naturally simple and botanical "one-offs", sometimes with their original booklets and those rarities known by contemporary engravings were a priority.

Seeing some distinguished old friends so magnificently photographed by Spartan Giordano (Figs 1 and 2) between the 13 x 9-inch covers of this 334-page volume impacts its subjects graphically, with many microscopes given a whole page, three-quarter views and details of engravings and close-ups are just what this field demands: detail, more detail and in forensic detail - all depicted in fine-focus. A total of 127 instruments are illustrated with 185 colour photographs.

For years anyone seriously interested in this subject had to put up with the most indistinct black & white images of Simple and Botanical Microscopes in two well-known reference books. *The History of the Microscope* by Clay and Court (London 1935 and reprint 1972) and the Billings Collection (1972): this is no implied criticism of these two legendary books: just criticism of their illustrations which photographic technology and time has long eroded and superseded.

The history of the Simple Microscope apart from the attention that Anthony van Leeuwenhoek has always attracted, noting he

appears as Item No. 1 in this volume too, is notoriously difficult to assemble through the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries with many single and original references in hard-to-locate books and original period pamphlets. Here all is presented in a historical progression with the Discoverer's names and botanical aims, together with the scientific instrument-makers who made such optical progressions possible, all in one volume!

If you bought the *Singular Beauty* booklet published by Ray Giordano to accompany his MIT Exhibition in 2007 - fine. The Giordano Collection was subsequently sold in 2009 to the new Museum of Confluence in Lyon France, and both Ray Giordano and Museum Head Curator Bruno Jacomy give the background in their Prefaces in this expanded Volume, with parallel texts to each page in English and French. As the Successor to the original Lyon Natural History Museum, the new Museum of Confluence in Lyon France with a floor area of 20,000 square metres is scheduled to open to the public in 2014.

The Discoverer's Lens is the volume that will stand the test of time as a vital reference classic, deserving a place in any science museum or botanical library - both public and private.

The image values alone are worth the price of entry - cheaper than many Simple Microscopes. Such collected wisdom cannot be dismissed by anyone requiring understanding and insights into the world of Simple and Botanical Microscopes.

Interested parties should therefore consider their options (a): Buy it now or, (b): Regret your decision in years to come. You



Fig. 1 Augsburg-type Screw-focus Simple Microscope.



Fig. 2 Joblot Simple Microscope

have been told. The choice is yours

Stuart Talbot. FRAS

Editor's note: See the flyer for this book in this issue for more details.