



Science and Spectacle in the European Enlightenment

Edited by Bernadette Bensaude-Vincent, Université Paris X, France and Christine Blondel, CNRS, France

Science, Technology and Culture, 1700-1945

July 2008
176 pages
978-0-7546-6370-6
Includes 20 b&w illustrations

234 x 156 mm
Hardback
£55.00



Air-pumps, electrical machines, colliding ivory balls, coloured sparks, mechanical planetariums, magic mirrors, hot-air balloons - these are just a sample of the devices displayed in public demonstrations of science in the eighteenth century. Public and private demonstrations of natural philosophy in Europe then differed vastly from today's unadorned and anonymous laboratory experiments. Science was cultivated for a variety of purposes in many different places; scientific instruments were built and used for investigative and didactic experiments as well as for entertainment and popular shows. Between the culture of curiosities which characterized the seventeenth century and the distinction between academic and popular science that gradually emerged in the nineteenth, the eighteenth century was a period when scientific activities took place in a variety of sites, ranging from academies, and learned societies to salons and popular fairs, shops and streets.

This collection of case studies describing public demonstrations in Britain, Germany, Italy and France exemplifies the wide variety of settings for scientific activities in the European Enlightenment. Filled with sparks and smells, the essays raise broader issues about the ways in which modern science established its legitimacy and social acceptability. They point to two major features of the cultures of science in the eighteenth-century: entertainment and utility. Experimental demonstrations were attended by apothecaries and craftsmen for vocational purposes. At the same time, they had to fit in with the taste of both polite society and market culture. Public demonstrations were a favourite entertainment for ladies and gentlemen and a profitable activity for instrument makers and booksellers.

Contents

Introduction: a science full of shocks, sparks and smells, Bernadette Bensaude-Vincent and Christine Blondel; The laboratory, the workshop, and the theatre of experiment, Larry Stewart; Technology, curiosity and utility in France and England in the 18th century, Liliane Pérez; Amusing physics, Jessica Riskin; Experimental physics in Enlightenment Paris: the practice of popularization in urban culture, Michael R. Lynn; Domestic spectacles: electrical instruments between business and conversation, Paola Bertucci; The sale of shocks and sparks: itinerant electricians in German Enlightenment, Oliver Hochadel; Between commerce and philanthropy: chemistry courses in 18th-century Paris, Christine Lehman; Joseph Priestley and the chemical sublime in British public science, Jan Golinski; Chemistry on stage: G.F. Rouelle and the theatricality of 18th-century chemistry, Lissa Roberts; Honoré Fragonard, anatomical virtuoso, Jonathan Simon; Index.

About the Editor

Bernadette Bensaude-Vincent is Professor of History and Philosophy of Science at the Université Paris-X Nanterre, France. Christine Blondel is Researcher at CNRS, Paris, France

www.ashgate.com/isbn/9780754663706

ASHGATE

To order this book please visit www.ashgate.com, or email orders@ashgate.com
A 10% discount applies to orders placed through www.ashgate.com