



# Holograms: A Cultural History

*Sean F. Johnston*

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Holograms have been in the public eye for over a half-century, but their influences have deeper cultural roots. No other visual experience is quite like interacting with holograms; no other cultural product melds the technological sublime with magic and optimism in quite the same way. As holograms have evolved, they have left their audiences alternately fascinated, bemused, inspired or indifferent. From expressions of high science to countercultural art to consumer security, holograms have represented modernity, magic and materialism. Their most pervasive impact has been to galvanise hopeful technological dreams.

Engineers, artists, hippies and hobbyists have played with, and dreamed about, holograms. This book explores how holograms found a place in distinct cultural settings. It is aimed at readers attracted to pop culture, visual studies and cultural history, scholars concerned with media history, fine art and material studies and, most of all, cross-disciplinary audiences intrigued about how this ubiquitous but still-mysterious visual medium grew up in our midst and became entangled in our culture.

This book explores the technical attractions and cultural uses of the hologram, how they were shaped by what came before them, and how they have matured to shape our notional futures. Today, holograms are in our pockets (as identity documents) and in our minds (as gaming fantasies and 'faux hologram' performers). Why aren't they more often in front of our eyes?

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