

THE 3-D OSCILLOSCOPE:

A Practical Manual and Guide

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The author's work in 3-D CRT displays began in 1949 with the independent conception, design, and construction of an oscilloscope to generate stereo images on a pair of type 3JP1 CRTs. The early success served as an impetus to continue this work, first reported in the literature in 1966.¹

A monocular 3-D display developed by the author was marketed by Optical Electronics, Inc., beginning in 1965. This is

¹Tilton, H. B., "3-D Display," *Instruments and Control Systems*, Aug. 1966, pp. 83-85.

the scenoscope—so-called because it produces scenographic (perspective) projections as do today's computer-generated 3-D displays. The scenoscope uses all-analog circuitry as opposed to the mostly digital circuitry used with the bulk of today's computer-generated displays. The scenoscope is noteworthy for that reason; for its early appearance on the scene; and because it implements a large number of depth cues—typically four or more depending on the model.

In one scenoscope model, the observer is tracked and the resulting position information is used to modify the CRT image so that he can “look around” displayed 3-D visual objects.

From 1968, the parallactiscope 3-D oscilloscope became the focus of the author's 3-D CRT work. Descriptions of the design, construction, and use of a practical laboratory parallactiscope form the subject matter of the bulk of this volume.

This author has also written a book *WAVEFORMS: A Modern Guide to Nonsinusoidal Waves and Nonlinear Processes* for Prentice-Hall published in 1986.

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Also acknowledged for stimulating conversations on 3-D and related subjects are James Butterfield (in memoriam), John Caulfield, Robert Collender, David Goodman, Bruce Lane, Lowell Noble, and especially Bill Greenwood.

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to all those pioneers of the past, present, and future engaged in the pursuit of the third dimension.

WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF 3-D OSCILLOGRAPHY!

This book is a practical guide that takes you into another dimension of oscillography. It chronicles the path of researchers' efforts that led to the present state of oscillography. It then shows you how to adapt your own standard oscilloscope to produce three-dimensional *holoform* (hologram-like) images, and how to use 3-D oscillography in solving a wide range of problems, in Chapters 13 and 14. These "problems" come in basically two categories: displays that allow you to analyze the operation of a device or system, and displays that synthesize a particular desired space curve or surface for study or educational purposes.

Examples of the first category are:

- Three-dimensional “waveforms” that show the current and voltage characteristics of a diode or other device versus time;
- Surfaces which are characteristic of devices requiring three variables to characterize them—an example is the saddle-shaped surface characteristic of analog-multiplier operation;
- Medical uses such as the display of vectorcardiograms (VCGs).

Examples of the second category include classic surfaces of solid geometry such as:

- Helixes, including the double helix of DNA
- Cones of two nappes
- Spheres, spheroids, and ellipsoids
- Conoids—a surprising surface “discovered” by use of a 3-D oscilloscope
- Hyperbolic paraboloids, and more

However, the “problem” that may be most exciting to solve could well be one of those discussed in Chapter 16:

- All-electronic real-time holoform displays
- Holoform TV, movies
- Computer-generated holoform 3-D, and so on

As one anonymous reviewer eloquently put it, “Fame and fortune await the one who finds out how to apply this (holoform) principle to consumer electronics.” The book is designed to set you on a course in hot pursuit of these goals.

The book pinpoints key factors leading to the development of practical 3-D displays on cathode-ray tube screens. It begins with the invention of the cathode-ray tube screens and ends with a list of challenges for you.

The central focus is the detailing of steps by which you can build your own 3-D oscilloscopes; starting with a stereoscopic oscilloscope (stereo oscilloscope) and culminating with a parallax oscilloscope called “parallactiscope.” The parallactiscope produces real-time holoform images having the dramatic depth cues of stereo and movement parallax; the latter allows you to “see around” displayed images simply by moving to one side as you would with a hologram or a real object.

The parallactiscope differs from moving-mirror displays in that it produces a controlled parallax by “reconstructing” light-ray directions as does a hologram. Holograms use wavefront interference to that end; parallactiscopes use a direction-sensitive “spatial” filter. Thus, parallactiscope images are holoform whereas moving-mirror images are not. The differences have a practical significance, which is explained in Chapters 2 and 5.

You will not be building an oscilloscope, nor will you be modifying one. You will simply be constructing subassemblies that will enable your oscilloscope to produce three-dimensional spatial images. Only hand tools are required, and no exotic parts or materials are needed. Photographs and diagrams guide you through the construction process.

“Multiscopic” photo sequences of 3-D displays are given (primarily in Chapters 13 and 14). These are static representations of the dynamic patterns you will see when you build and operate your own parallactiscope. The book tells you how those displays were generated, so you can produce them for “live” viewing on your own 3-D oscilloscope. To see stereo in the photos in this book you may need a stereoscope; but to experience hologram-like sensations with live parallactiscope displays, all you need are two eyes. Even if you close one eye, you can still “see around behind” the live parallactiscope images simply by moving left or right.

Applications for the parallactiscope certainly exist not only in the engineering fields, but also in the optical, biological, medical, and even the psychological sciences—as well as in pictorial art.

In summary, this book is concerned with the developing science and art of spatial imaging as it pertains to real-time CRT displays. The book is designed to set you on a course in the

direction of accomplishment of one or more of the “blue-sky” projects described in the final chapter.

Set your sights high; for time and again, it has been found that the limits we encounter are limits that we, ourselves, have set!

CONTENTS

About the Author *iii*

Welcome to the World of 3-D Oscillography! *ix*

PART I The How and Why of 3-D Oscillography 1

Chapter 1 2-D: Just an Appetizer 3

1.1 Birth of the CRT: Crookes' Tube and Braun's
Bottle 3

	1.2 The Course of CRT and Oscilloscope Development	5
	1.3 Today's Oscilloscopes	9
	1.4 Trends in Oscilloscopes	10
	1.5 Non-oscilloscope Uses for CRTs	12
	1.6 Lissajous: 3-D in Disguise	12
Chapter 2	3-D: The Main Course	15
	2.1 The 3-D Display Spectrum	15
	2.2 How 3-D Began	19
	2.3 The Early Battle between "Synthetic" and "Real" 3-D	27
	2.4 Elation, Then Disillusionment: The "Solid" Display Hangover	29
	2.5 Current Trends: Monocular 3-D	30
Chapter 3	How and Why You See Real Objects in 3-D	33
	3.1 Understanding the Visual Properties of Physical Space	33
	3.2 The "Wiring" of the Eye-Brain System	34
	3.3 Collecting 3-D Information on 2-D Retinas	35
	3.4 Perception: How Does It Occur in Your Centers of Cognition?	36
Chapter 4	Why You Can See Artificially-Generated Images in 3-D	37
	4.1 Depth Information Is a Set of "Cues"	37
	4.2 How Stereo and Related Cues Work	38
	4.3 How Other Depth Cues Work	41
	4.4 Producing Synthetic Retinal Images: How They Relate to Real Ones	43
Chapter 5	The What and Why of Holography and Holoform Images	49
	5.1 What Holography Is and Does	49
	5.2 Holoform Images: Their Properties and Formation	50
	5.3 Producing Holoform Images without Relying on Wave Interference	52

- 5.4 The Promise of Synthetic Holoform Images 53
- 5.5 Generating Holoform Images in Real Time 54

Chapter 6 The Parallactiscope: A Practical 3-D Oscilloscope that You Can Build 57

- 6.1 Understanding the Principle of Parallactiscope Operation 57
- 6.2 The Parallactiscope's First Baby Steps 61
- 6.3 The 5-inch Parallactiscope of Today 66
- 6.4 What You Need to Know to Design a Large-Screen Parallactiscope 68

PART II How to Build Your Own Parallactiscope 73

Chapter 7 Take a Look at What You Will Be Building 75

- 7.1 A Decision Must Be Made: The From-Scratch Approach versus the Adapter Approach 75
- 7.2 An Overview of Electronic and Mechanical Requirements 76
- 7.3 How a Moving Slit Is Used To Perform Light-Ray Reconstruction 77
- 7.4 Obtaining an Accurate Moving Slit with Garden-Variety Hardware 78
- 7.5 The Subsystems: Parallax Adapter and Parallax Processor 79

Chapter 8 Here Are the Plans—the Block Diagrams and Schematics 81

- 8.1 What the Parallax Adapter Is and Does: Block Diagram 81
- 8.2 Simplified Schematic of the Parallax Adapter 85
- 8.3 What the Parallax Processor Is and Does: Block Diagram 88
- 8.4 Simplified Schematic of the Parallax Processor 89

Chapter 9 Parallax Adapter Construction Details 93

- 9.1 How the Parallax Adapter Works 93

	9.2 Parts You Will Need to Build One	94
	9.3 Mechanical Construction Details	94
	Saddle Subassembly	94
	Scanner Pendulum	100
	Speaker and Drive Yoke Subassembly	101
	Panoply	103
	9.4 Electrical Construction Details	108
	9.5 Completing the Assembly	116
	9.6 Time for a Test Trial!	120
Chapter 10	Now, the Parallax Processor Construction Details	127
	10.1 The Parallax Processor: Simple as an Audio Amplifier	127
	10.2 Parts You Will Need and Where To Get Them	131
	10.3 Wiring and Assembling the Parallax Processor	133
Chapter 11	Your First Test Run!	137
	11.1 It's Final Assembly Time	137
	11.2 Cranking Up and Adjustment Instructions	139
	11.3 Fine Tuning the Operation	140
	11.4 If It's "Broke," Fix It!	142
	Scanner Pendulum Oscillation	142
	Scanner Signal (S-Signal)	143
	Measuring Scanner Pendulum Frequency	144
	11.5 Next Stop: How to Use What You Just Built	144
 PART III Sights You've Never Seen!		145
Chapter 12	What You Can Look at with your Parallactiscope Today	147
	12.1 Two Basic Categories of Images You Can Show	147

- 12.2 Analyzing Signals with Your Parallactiscope 148
- 12.3 Generating Images You Would Like to See 149
- 12.4 Comment 150

Chapter 13 How to See Signal Patterns in 3-D for Analysis 153

- 13.1 Sinusoidal Waveforms Seen End-On! 153
- 13.2 Displaying the Abstract Surfaces Characteristic of Electronic Devices 154
- 13.3 Seeing the Characteristic Saddle-Shaped Surface of an Analog Multiplier 154
- 13.4 A Medical Application: The Vectorcardiogram 160

Chapter 14 Synthesizing Particular 3-D Spaceforms 163

- 14.1 Progressing from Sinewave to Helix 163
- 14.2 Seeing the Double Helix of DNA 165
- 14.3 Seeing “Dense” Helixes and Cylinders 168
- 14.4 Generating Spheres, Ellipsoids, and Cones 168
- 14.5 Conoids: A Cross between Spheres and Cones 173
- 14.6 Inventing and Generating Your Own 3-D Curves and Surfaces for Live Viewing on the Parallactiscope 177

Chapter 15 Superparallactiscope! Designing a Manually Controlled Image Rotator for Your Parallactiscope 179

- 15.1 Introduction 179
- 15.2 Rotating 3-D Images 180
- 15.3 Rotation about More Than One Axis 183
- 15.4 Designing an Opto-Electronic Rotator 185
- 15.5 Perfecting the Opto-Electronic Rotator 189

Chapter 16 Blue-Sky Projects for You to Do 193

- 16.1 A Next Step: All-Electronic Parallactiscopes for Aiding Space-shuttle Rendezvous and Docking Maneuvers 193

- 16.2 Raster Displays for TV and Movies: How to Proceed 194
- 16.3 Computer-generated Real 3-D with the Parallaxiscope: A Sure Bet 195
- 16.4 Adding Color and High-Definition 3-D 196
- 16.5 A Variety of Things to Invent: Flat-Panel 3-D Large Screen and Really Large Screen 3-D, Double Parallaxic 3-D and So On 196
- 16.6 4-D for Dessert? 197

APPENDICES

- Appendix A** Viewing the Stereo Pairs Appearing in This Book 199
- Appendix B** Printed-circuit Board Construction 201
- Appendix C** Adding the Slit to the Scanning Pendulum 203
- Appendix D** A Static-Safe Work Station 207
- Appendix E** Photographing Parallaxiscope Displays 209
- Appendix F** A Seven-hertz Frequency Meter 213
- Appendix G** Suppliers' Names and Addresses 219
- Appendix H** Bibliography 221
- Index** 227