

DAGUERRETYPE *journal*

Year 2 | Issue N. 2
Spring 2015

Sharing the International Cultural and Visual Heritage of Daguerreotypes



CURRENT RESEARCH

Re-Illuminating the Past

HISTORICAL NOTES

Daguerreotypes in Finland

SCIENCE AND DAGUERREOTYPE

Stašek's Cross-Section of a Plant

THE DAGUERREOTYPE STUDIO

The Recurring Table-cloth

STORIES BEHIND THE IMAGES

A Veterinarian in the Napoleonic Army

HIDDEN TREASURES

Family Memories from Lake Como



..... TABLE OF CONTENTS

Cover Image



Sewing circle, possibly cousins from the Schnelle, Eilertsen and Skram families, 1850-1860. Framed daguerreotype. Bergen City Museum Museum (Old Bergen Museum). Inv. GBB-57518.

See the daguerreotype on [Daguerreobase](#)

4 [EDITORIAL](#)

European Landscape and Cityscape Daguerreotypes

7 [THE BOOKSHELF](#)

The Lost Ruskin Daguerreotypes
by Sandra Maria Petrillo

8 [CURRENT RESEARCH](#)

Daguerreotypes in the Photographic Collection of the Estonian Literary Museum
by Vilve Asmer

14 [Re-illuminating the Past](#)

An Introduction to Reflectance Transformation Imaging
by Archaeovision

22 [Mapping Estonian Daguerreotypes for the Daguerreobase Project](#)
by Kadi Sikka

24 [HISTORICAL NOTES](#)

*A silver Window on History
Daguerreotypes in Finland in the 19th Century*
by Laura Sallas

38 [SCIENCE AND THE DAGUERREOTYPE](#)

“Stašek’s” Cross-Section of a Plant
by Petra Trnkova

48 [THE DAGUERREOTYPE STUDIO](#)

The Recurring Table-cloth
by Marthe T. Fjellestad and Morten Heiselberg

58 [STORIES BEHIND THE IMAGES](#)

A Veterinarian in the Napoleonic Army
by Wouter Lambrechts

68 [HIDDEN TREASURES](#)

Family Memories from Lake Como
by Giovanni Meda Riquier

DAGUERREOTYPE *journal*

QUARTERLY ISSUE N.2



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www.daguerreobase.org



PUBLISHER

European Daguerreotype Association (EDA)
for the *Daguerreobase Project*



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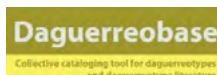
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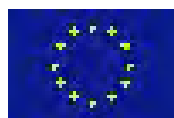
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The DAGUERREOTYPE JOURNAL is produced in the context of the *Daguerreobase Project*



“This project is partially funded under the ICT Policy Support Programme (ICT PSP) as part of the competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme by the European Community”

http://ec.europa.eu/ict_psp



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European Cityscape and Landscape Daguerreotypes

A topic for the first symposium planned by the EDA for autumn 2015

by SANDRA MARIA PETRILLO, [SMP Photoconservation](#), Rome, Italy



Astonishing and enchanting to the nineteenth century public, early daguerreotypes showing landscapes and cityscapes, especially those representing distant and exotic countries, are now considered to be genuine works of art. A less common subject than portraiture, the views of natural and urban environments captured by daguerreotypists *en plein air*, outside their studios, provide us with a fascinating insight into the world of artists, scientists, amateurs and businessmen who adopted this process as an aid in documenting their work, or as a radical new means of creative expression.

The city of Paris, the home of the daguerreotype, was among the first to be portrayed and these urban scenes, showing roofs, boulevards, bridges and the embankment of the Seine, often seen from the windows of the photographer's studio, are now an important part of European visual culture. Nevertheless as early as the end of 1839 a number of skilled daguerreotype practitioners had set out for other destinations on the traditional route of the *Grand Tour*, many of them going beyond Europe to Egypt and the Near East. These adventurous travellers focused on the documentation of archaeological sites, in addition to bringing back accurate photographic studies intended as a visual aid for artists to create their paintings.

The “scenic daguerreotypes” that they created, defined and analyzed by John Wood in his highly influential book of 1995 “The Scenic Daguerreotype: Romanticism and Early Photography”, are particularly significant for the study of the influence of the Romantic movement in the history of the arts and the “picturesque” vision of nature in early photography. Besides the more famous professional photographers, who created some truly outstanding images there were also the “gentlemen amateurs”: aristocrats or intellectuals of the leisured classes who had the resources to travel to remote locations with the necessary equipment for recording the exotic sites they encountered on their journeys.

The European Daguerreotype Association (EDA) is now making plans for its first international symposium, which is due to be held in autumn 2015. Some aspects of these themes will be examined in more depth during the symposium. Please check the website of the [Daguerreobase Project](#) in the coming months for updates and further information regarding the symposium.



III. 1, Joseph-Philibert Girault de Prangey, Detail of a romanic architecture. Cathedral of Basel, 1840-1850, Musée Gruérien, Bulle, inv. GP-DAG-004

III. 2, Jules Savoye, Savoye's propriety in Montabert, Montaulin, France, ca. 1845Y, Fotomuseum WestLicht, inv. PC03227. [See on Daguerreotype](#)

The Lost Ruskin Daguerreotypes

by SANDRA MARIA PETRILLO, [SMP Photoconservation](#), Rome, Italy



John Everett Millais, John Ruskin, 1853-1854, oil on canvas, Ashmolean museum, Oxford, England

In 1840 John Ruskin (London 1819 - Brantwood 1900), the leading Victorian writer on art, architecture and society, encountered the first truly successful photographic process - that of the daguerreotype - and he soon became a devotee, buying and commissioning daguerreotype images in various European cities. During one of his journeys to Switzerland he wrote to his friend W.H. Harrison that he was fascinated with the daguerreotype as it was “certainly the most marvellous invention of the century”. Although he never truly considered photography as a genuine art form, Ruskin was captivated by the almost magical properties of silvered plates that recorded the true appearance of the natural world and by 1849 he had acquired his own daguerreotype equipment and he instructed his valets John Hobbs and Frederick Crawley to become skilled practitioners.

Ruskin’s many journeys in Italy were very important in his life and in moulding his aesthetic attitudes, particularly his second tour of Northern Italy in 1845. This was the first visit to Italy he made alone, without his parents, and it led him to discover

Tuscany and the Italian Gothic. On this journey he travelled to Venice, where he made his most significant acquisition of daguerreotypes, which he mentioned in a letter to his father on October the 8th 1845:

“I have been lucky enough to get from a poor Frenchman here, said to be in distress, some most beautiful, though small Daguerreotypes of the palaces I have been trying to draw, and certainly, Daguerreotypes taken by this vivid sunlight are glorious things. It is very nearly the same thing as carrying off the palace itself; every chip of the stone and stain is there, and of course there is no mistake about proportions.”¹

A skilled draughtsman, Ruskin considered the camera as a basically mechanical drawing aid, due to its ability to precisely record forms and details, such as those that he attempted to emphasise and enhance in the natural landscapes and architecture he saw during his extensive tours on the continent between 1845 and 1858. In addition to his watercolours and sketches, the many daguerreotypes he bought in Venice in 1845 constituted an essential visual support for his books, such as *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849) and the epic three-volume work *Stones of Venice*, published in 1851-1853.

Who would have thought that these long-lost “most beautiful, though small daguerreotypes”, showing well known examples of Venetian architecture, which Ruskin inventoried in his manuscript catalogue of daguerreotypes (the notebook, inv. MS27 in the Ruskin Library in Lancaster) would have come up for auction in early March 2006 as part of a lot of 188 daguerreotypes?

The largest collection of daguerreotypes of Venice ever made, together with a number of landscape views of France and Switzerland, was consigned to the auction house of Penrith, Farmers & Kidd, at Penrith, in the Lake District of England by an elderly man who said the photographs had been in his family for about 50 years. The lucky buyers - the well-known photographic art collectors [Ken and Jenny Jacobson](#) - described this treasure trove as a veritable “Holy Grail of 19th century photography”, in the preface to their long-awaited book on Ruskin: *Carrying Off the Palaces. John Ruskin's Lost Daguerreotypes*, available directly from the publishers since the 19th of March.



John Ruskin and John Hobbs, The Ducal Palace South façade in Venice. ‘Eastern windows’ tracery looking out towards the Lagoon, c.1849-1852

The preface that tells of the thrilling discovery leads to ten chapters throwing new light on the way daguerreotype images such as these deeply influenced the style of Ruskin’s many watercolours and sketches. The hardback text has 432 pages and 601 illustrations. Besides the newly discovered Penrith collection, published here for the first time, the book includes a valuable *catalogue raisonné* of 325 daguerreotype images identified as belonging to Ruskin, which constitutes a major contribution for Ruskin scholars and historians of photography, as well as anyone with an interest in the artistic and cultural expressions of the Victorian era.



CARRYING OFF THE PALACES: JOHN RUSKIN'S
LOST DAGUERREOTYPES

by Ken and Jenny Jacobson
London, Bernard Quaritch, 2015

ISBN 978-0-9563012-7-7

The book is available
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NOTES

1. *Ruskin in Italy. Letters to his Parents, 1845*, Oxford University Press, 1972.

Daguerreotypes in the photographic collection of



ABSTRACT

The Estonian Literary Museum, in the administrative area of the Ministry of Education and Research, was founded in 1940 by merging the Archival Library, the Estonian Bibliographic Foundation, the Estonian Folklore Archive and the Estonian Cultural History Archive, all previously belonging to the Estonian National Museum. The Estonian Cultural History Archive (EKLA), created in 1929 as a result of merging older archival collections, continues to this day to serve its original purpose, including collection, systematization and preservation of cultural history source materials. The versatile photographic archive of EKLA mainly comprises personal collections, to a lesser extent collections of better-known Estonian photographers, as well as collections of various institutions, organizations, associations, historical and cultural events, towns etc. Currently this archive holds more than 300,000 photographs, negatives and digital files.

The collection's rarities include five daguerreotypes, three of which come from the family photo archive of the Seidlitzes, one from that of Fr. R. Kreutzwald and one from the archive of Aino and Oskar Kallas. The one that deserves to be highlighted is the oldest known extant daguerreotype in Estonia. This portrays the children, Marie, Georg Karl Maria and Karl Johann Maria, of the Baltic German physician and naturalist Carl Johann von Seidlitz (1798-1885). Even though the daguerreotype is not precisely dated, it is believed to have been made in Saint Petersburg in 1844 based on a list of names and dates of birth of the children on the back of the photograph. Great attention has been paid to the finish of the photograph: octagonal mount, glazed with strips of patterned gold paper framing the sides. It is clear that preparation work prior to taking the photograph was thorough with attention paid to every single detail. The result is a majestic and dignified photographic memory fitting for a noble family, and one given an important position in the history of photography.

KEY WORDS: History of Estonian Photography, Estonian Literary Museum, Carl Johann von Seidlitz (1798-1885), Robert Borchartd

Ill. 1, Unidentified daguerreotypist, detail of a daguerreotype portrait of Carl Johann von Seidlitz' children Marie, Georg Karl Maria and Karl Johann Maria, ca. 1844. Housing size: 13.3x11.0x0.6 cm, window size: 8.3 x 6.8 cm., inv. EKLA A-37:1254

of the Estonian Literary Museum

by VILVE ASMER, [Estonian Literary Museum](#), Tartu, Estonia



The Estonian Literary Museum, administered by the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research, is a research and development institution that also carries the functions of a central archive of national sciences and of an archival library. The museum was founded in 1940 by merging the Archival Library, the Estonian Bibliographic Foundation, the Estonian Folklore Archive and the Estonian Cultural History Archive, all previously part of the Estonian National Museum.

The Estonian Cultural History Archive (EKLA) was founded in 1929, following the merger of the manuscript collections of the Estonian National Museum, the Estonian Literary Society, the Academic Literary Society and the Academic History Society. This laid the foundation for purposeful collection of cultural history source materials that remains one of the institution's primary tasks to this day, in

addition to their systematization, archiving and preservation.

The versatile photographic archive of EKLA mainly comprises personal collections, to a lesser extent collections of better-known Estonian photographers (R. Sachker, J. and P. Parikas, E. Kald, E. Selleke, K. Suur et al.), as well as collections of various institutions, organizations, associations, historical and cultural events, towns etc. Individual contributions, mainly from voluntary donations, that are assembled in the so-called "mixed collection" are no less significant. The 2001 follow-up project "Kirjanik ja tema keskkond" (The Writer and his Environment) has enhanced the photo collection with new and interesting photographs of writers, poets, translators and scholars of literature. The archive, that will soon celebrate its 86th year, now includes almost 300,000 photographs, negatives and digital files.

The true rarities of the Estonian Cultural History Archive's photo collection are its five daguerreotypes that include the oldest (ca.

THE FIVE DAGUERREOTYPES BELONGING TO THE PHOTOGRAPHIC COLLECTION OF THE ESTONIAN CULTURAL HISTORY ARCHIVE (EKLA)

EKLA A-37:1254 Unidentified daguerreotypist. Portrait of Carl Johann von Seidlitz' children Marie, Georg Karl Maria and Karl Johann Maria, ca. 1844. (Ill. 1)

EKLA B-37:1478 Unidentified daguerreotypist. Portrait of Carl Johann von Seidlitz, n d. (Ill. 2)

EKLA reg. 1940/28 Unidentified daguerreotypist. Portrait of Justine von Seidlitz with daughters Justine and Helene, n d. (Ill. 3)

EKLA A-12:2 Robert Borchardt (attr.). Portrait of Fr. R. Kreutzwald's wife Marie with her daughter Adelheid and her son Aleksis, ca. 1853. (Ill. 4)

EKLA B-85:112 Unidentified daguerreotypist. Portrait of Leopold Krohn, n d. (Ill. 5)



1844) and largest (12.1x16.2 cm) preserved daguerreotype in Estonia.

The arrival of the first three is dated 10. XII 1940 (reg. 1940/28 - *Ill.3*) as part of E. v. Seidlitz's collection (*Ills. 1, 2 and 3*) of letters and photographs, presented by the Tartu apartment committee. It is probable the collection in question was a part of the cultural heritage of the Seidlitz family of Meeri manor in Tartu County and later of the city of Tartu, that was in the possession of the grandson of Carl Johann von Seidlitz, Ernst Carl Maria von Seidlitz (1881-1964).

The daguerreotype of the Kreutzwald family attributed to Robert Borchardt (*Ill. 4*) was presented to the archives after the liquidation of the Society for the Preservation of Kreutzwald's Memory in 17. XII 1940 (reg. 1941/2). Even though it remains questionable, it is the only one of the five daguerreotypes

with a known photographer, Robert Borchardt. Aino and Oskar Kallas' library also brought to the Literary Museum their manuscript collection and family photographs. The materials were presented by the city of Tallinn's financial department of the time. The register book entry of the materials is dated 24. IX 1946; the same registration number (1946/69) includes a daguerreotype of Leopold Krohn. Unfortunately this rarity also lacks information concerning the photographer responsible and the date it was taken.

As mentioned before, the oldest known and preserved daguerreotype in Estonia, *Portrait of Carl Johann von Seidlitz's children*, most probably dates back to 1844 (*Ill.1*). This approximate dating has been provided by photographer, film operator and journalist Peeter Tooming, when mapping Estonia's photographic rarities in the 1980s. The assessment is based on a list of

Ill. 2. Unidentified daguerreotypist. Carl Johann von Seidlitz, not dated. Housing size: 17.8x13.0x0.5 cm, window size: 7.6x10.3 cm. Estonian Literary Museum, inv. EKLA B-37:1478

Ill. 3. Unidentified daguerreotypist. Justine von Seidlitz with daughters Justine and Helene, n d. Housing size: 21.2x16.9x1.0 cm, plate size: 16.2x12.1 cm. Estonian Literary Museum, inv. EKLA reg. 1940/28

children's names and birth dates on the back of the daguerreotype. The children are offspring of the Seidlitz family, the children of Carl Johann von Seidlitz to be precise.

Carl Johann von Seidlitz (1798-1885) was a well-known Baltic German physician and naturalist. He was born in Tallinn, studied medicine at the University of Tartu in 1815-1821 and defended a doctoral thesis on "Eye diseases common among Estonians". He perfected his education in several top European medical facilities and also worked as a military physician. Von Seidlitz served as a professor at the Saint Petersburg Medical-Surgical Academy in 1837-1847 and received the title of a service nobleman from Emperor Nicholas I in 1846.

After his years in Saint Petersburg, C. J. von Seidlitz moved to the Meeri manor near Tartu that he had purchased a few years earlier and became an active contributor in several institutions. He was president of the Estonian

Naturalists Society and the first to introduce Charles Darwin's theory of evolution in Estonia. He was among the pioneers of railroad construction in Estonia and Livonia. The most important work Seidlitz undertook in his later years was the summarizing and publication of the results of a general geometric levelling carried out by the Livonian Utility and Economic Society in volumes I and II of "General-Nivellement von Livland" (Tartu, 1877,1883). This publication laid the foundations for determining the height relationships of the topography of Livonia and found practical use in water management and land improvement work in manors. Elevation maps were included (EKLA f 194 m 59:38).

C. J. von Seidlitz has been described as a very active, energetic and versatile man, and it is probable he was precisely that. He was even referred to as a scholar of literature in Russia after he compiled the biography of his friend and famous poet Vasily Zhukovsky. In addition



Ill. 4, Robert Borchardt (attr). Fr. R. Kreutzwald's wife Marie, daughter Adelheid and son Aleksis, ca. 1853. Housing size: 11.1x9.5x0.6 cm, window size: 6.4x5.6 cm. Estonian Literary Museum, inv. EKLA A-12:2



III. 5, Unidentified daguerreotypist. Leopold Krohn, not dated. Housing size: 15.6x13.1x0.5 cm, window size: 9.8x7.4 cm. Estonian Literary Museum, inv. EKLA B-85:112

to his diverse activities, Seidlitz was also a lord of the manor - he purchased the Meeri, the Unipiha and Väätsa manors in 1841. These manors remained in the family until their nationalization in 1919.

The portrait of Carl Johann von Seidlitz' children was probably made in Saint Petersburg as Carl Johann von Seidlitz was working for the Academy at the time, as well as the fact the children in the photograph were born in Russia. It captures only three of the five children Seidlitz had had by the time as one of the children had died, while Justine Katharine (1842-1923) was probably too young at two years old for the required patience and ability to stand still. It is clear that preparation work prior to taking the photograph has been thorough with attention paid to every single detail. The result is a majestic and dignified photographic memory fitting for a noble family, and one given an honourable position in the history of photography. The daguerreotype's finish has been paid special attention, sporting an octagonal mount fastened to glass by the strips of patterned gold paper which frame the sides. The leather-covered back includes the following information:

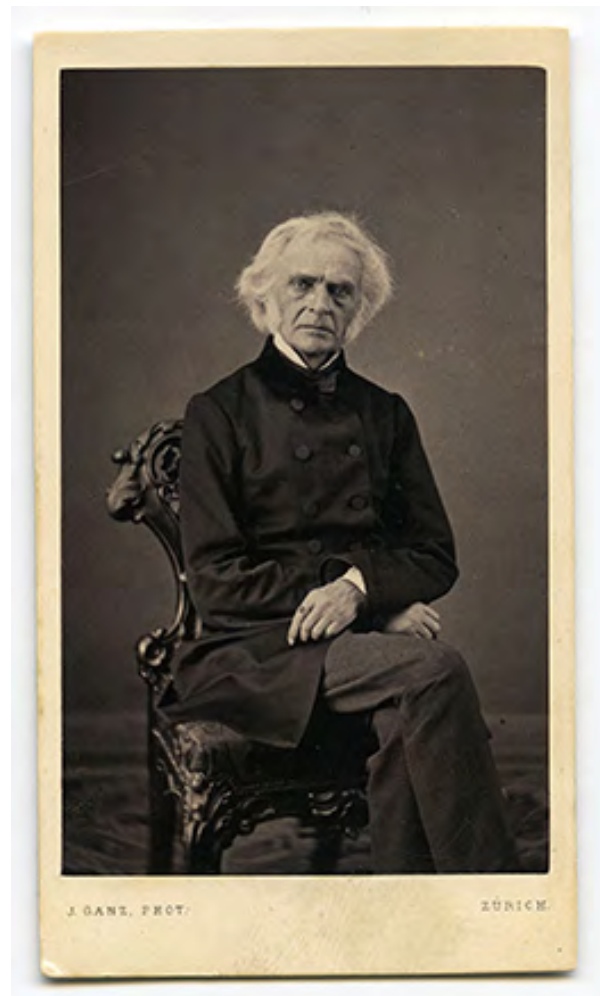
Marie v. Seidlitz 1832.4.11. Petersburg - 1903.11.20. Baden

Georg v. Seidlitz 1840.6.7. Petersburg

Karl Maria v. Seidlitz 1838.7.11. Petersburg - 1897.6.21. Dorpat

These entries reveal that the names of the children and their dates of birth and death along with locations were added at a later time, but not after 1917, as that is the year of Georg Karl Maria von Seidlitz' death. The approximate time the photograph was taken is determined on the latter as the youngest child present who at the time could have been four years old. This determination of age inevitably remains questionable, however, and it cannot be ruled out that the daguerreotype could be from either the year before or after.

The image on the daguerreotype is remarkably well-preserved considering the time it was taken. The composition speaks of careful



consideration and forethought, not only as concerns the placement and arrangement of each piece of furniture but also minor details (curtain and canvas creases, houseplant). The image is given splendour by the dress and carefully arranged hair of the children as well as their postures and expressions - as is fitting for a noble family. This is probably the reason why it has often been mistakenly believed that the picture depicts a mother and her children - Marie, who was 12 years old at the time, really does appear older in the photograph.

Knowing the complexity involved in making daguerreotypes as well as how time-consuming the process was, the photographer's ability to manage the children deserves praise. The result is a wonder of photography that reflects having one's picture taken as a major event at the time, and one that is still able to inspire interest and excitement in viewers no less than 170 years later.

English translation by Marcus Turovski

Re-illuminating the past

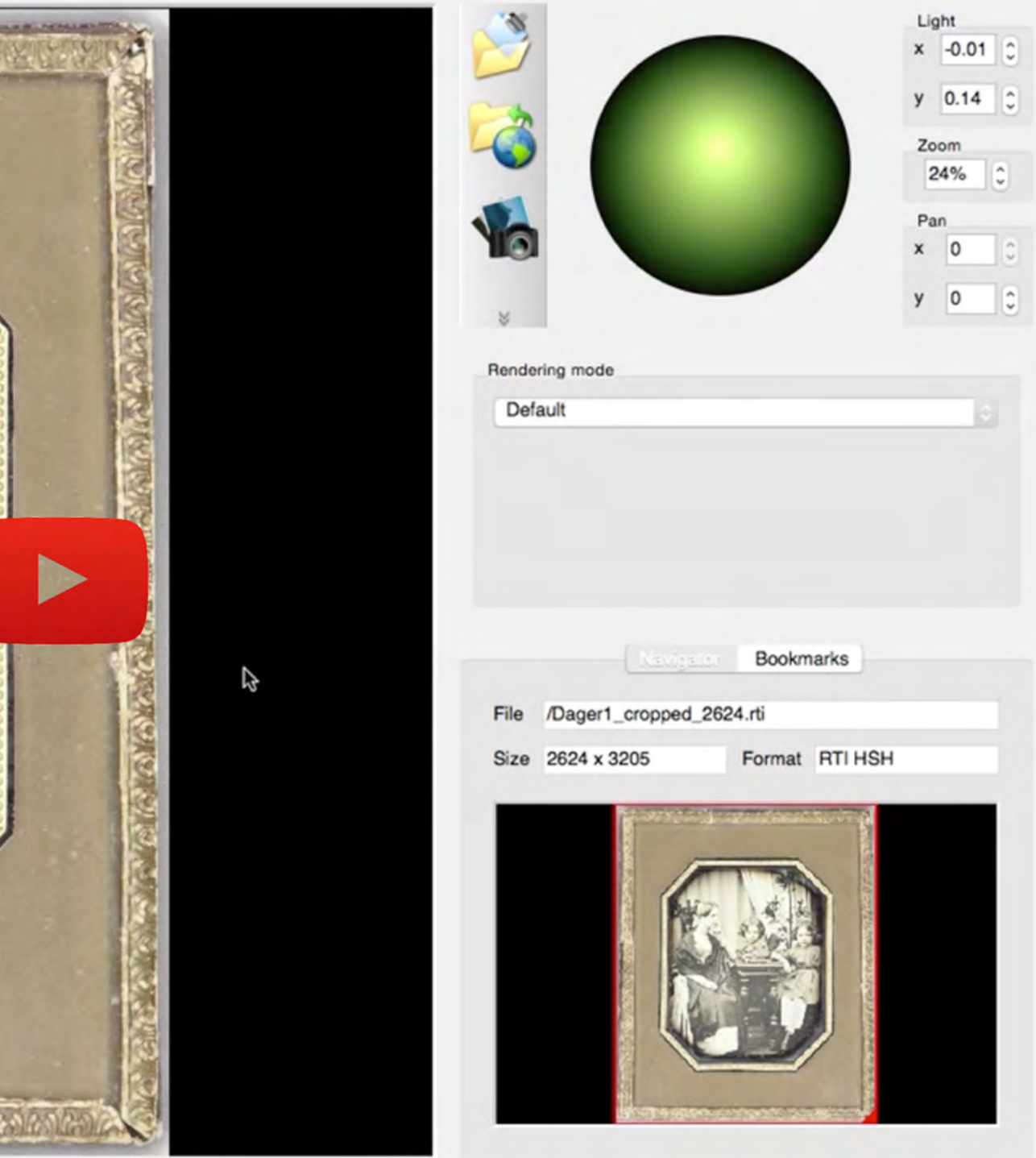
Introduction to Reflectance Transformation Imag



Click on the image to watch the video



ging



III. 1, How to use Reflectance Transformation Imaging to visualize the daguerreotype's surface, by Archaeovision

ABSTRACT

Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI) has been used for cultural heritage documentation after its first publication by Tom Malzbender in 2001. The technique allows us to record 3D surface reflectance properties and visualise them as 2D interactive images. It can be used to investigate the object in various lighting conditions to enhance very small surface changes, to bring out cracks, tool marks, scratches, pencil impressions etc. that are not visible to the naked eye. It is a perfect tool when looking at coins, writing tablets and also daguerreotypes. For example, in the case of daguerreotype plates, it brings out its fine polishing lines, retouching and deteriorations. It makes the condition report more accurate and it helps conservators to make decisions about the conservation needed.

In this paper we will give a brief introduction about the RTI technique to daguerreotype researchers with some practical tips illustrated through a case study that took place at the Estonian Literary museum in Tartu, where five daguerreotypes are kept.

KEY WORDS: Computational photography, Reflectance transformation imaging

by HEMBO PAGI, JAMES MILES, ANDRES UUENI, [Archaeovision](#), *United Kingdom and Estonia*

For decades raking light has been used for inspecting paintings and objects to gather information about their relief and surface topography. Very low angle light illumination, almost parallel to the object surface, creates strong shadows to enhance the visibility of small topographical changes. The same effect is now digitally manipulated and is no longer limited to only one angle and one direction but it covers all the angles and all the directions of the hemispherical space. Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI) introduces us to the possibility to relight the object digitally and enhance the output via filters based on several mathematical algorithms.

RTI was invented by Tom Malzbender from Hewlett Packard Laboratories and published in 2001 (Malzbender 2001). Originally the method was known as Polynomial Texture Mapping (PTM) based on the algorithm created, and it is how it is still known by some who use the technique. In this first paper the method was used on archaeological artefacts such as writing tablets and funerary statuettes. Since then it has been used for a variety of applications, for example in forensics, as seen in Hamiel & Yoshida (2007), classical text research as seen in Earl et al (2011), Egyptology by Piquette (2014), numismatics by Mudge et al (2005),

community driven churchyard documentation projects, investigating rock art engravings as seen in Diaz Guardamino & Wheatley (2013) and statues through the work of Pitts et al (2014) and many more.

WHAT IS RTI?

RTI is a technique that is based on a set of photographs taken of the same object from the same location and with the same camera settings. The only thing that changes in each photograph is the position of the light source (external flash or continuous light which is stronger than ambient light). Distance is of extreme importance when capturing this data with the light source having to be kept at the same distance from the object. This light source is moved around the object of interest, to cover a “dome like” area.

In total, between 40 and 70 images should be captured, each with a different light position. These are then processed and fitted as one interactive image which can then be digitally manipulated. Importantly this image is not a composite image, where the original photographs are stored and displayed, but the result of mathematical calculation, where



the light illuminates the object based on the topographical information extracted from the images, the lighting function created for each pixel and also the colour information for each pixel. (see video by clicking on the *III.1*)

The topographical information expressed is in a form of surface normals which the RTI processing software is able to calculate. Surface normals are vectors (*III. 2*), perpendicular to the surface at any given position. This then gives us three dimensional shape information visualised in a two dimensional space. This type of visualisation is sometimes referred to as “two and a half dimensional”. Within the RTI viewing software, users have the ability to move the virtual light source in any direction, the software then uses the shape information to visualise the light behaviour and reflections

on the surface. In order for the software to work correctly, each image captured needs to be processed to create these surface normals. This is completed in the processing phase within the creation of the RTI file, whereby each light position is calculated for each image. The location and generation of the light source varies depending on the method used and will either be given to processing software via known light position or automatically calculated when unknown positions are used.

TOOLS FOR RTI CAPTURE AND PROCESSING

One of the benefits of the RTI method is its accessibility there is no need for advanced or expensive equipment (assuming that most

III. 2, Normal visualisation. Different colours represent the direction pixel is facing



and processing time but requires the “dome” or other kind of fixed setup.

The second method of capture is called highlight RTI (HRTI). In this method the light positions are unknown. In order to generate surface normals, a spherical shiny ball is used within the capturing process. Using a shiny spherical ball allows a highlight to be captured on the sphere’s surface. The highlight is then extracted in the processing software, which then generates the light source location. As a result, only a single light is needed within this method and it provides flexibility in terms of the sizes of objects that can be recorded.

As the method works via a camera, and with the light source needing to be at a distance of three times the longest length of the object captured, it means that areas as large as rock art panels can be captured as can those under a microscope, with the main difference being the power of the light source used.



The main tools for RTI capture are (Ill. 4):

- SLR camera,
- reflective spheres (snooker ball, ball bearings),
- light source (flash or continuous)
- piece of string (for keeping the distance)

researchers and institutions already own an SLR camera) or for expensive software. Images for RTI can be acquired using for example the following two methods. One is to use a fixed set of lights, known as a “dome setup” (Ill. 3). With this method the lights are in fixed positions and do not change, therefore the calculation of their locations for each capture session is not needed as the same set of location information is used for RTI processing. This method speeds up the capture

The processing of the images is completed within the free software called RTI Builder and the results are viewed in the RTI Viewer. All of the software, user and capture guides are available from Cultural Heritage Imaging website.

RTI FOR DAGUERREOTYPES

RTI images provide information about daguerreotype production, as well as their

Ill. 3, RTI dome. Dome produced during ACRG funded RTISAD project set up at National Archives, London. Photo by Hembo Pagi

Ill. 4, RTI capture in action. External flash is used as light source. Photo by Vahur Puik



Ill. 5, Raking light from the top to bring out polishing lines

Ill. 6, Close up view in "Specular enhancement" mode in RTI Viewer



condition. For example, polishing lines which run parallel across the surface of the plate are visible often only in raking light (*Ill. 5*). With the help of RTI visualisation, the 3D nature of the object is exaggerated (*Ill. 6*) and for that reason, a conservator is able to inspect more closely the surface of the plate. It allows for zoomed in detailed views of tool marks, hand colouring, tarnish, scratches, biological growth, surface dust, accretions etc. It also enables detailed reference images to be saved and therefore makes the condition recording more accurate, and helps prevent damage caused by handling the original object.

There are several problems when photographing daguerreotypes, not only do they contain a reflective surface which picks up ambient light reflections, but the introduction of the protective glass covering, which may bear scratches and dust, make the process much harder. As the surface detail is reflective,

one has to take extra care that no external light source, other than the one intended, is captured within the data. Examples of external light sources that often affect a data capture are ceiling lights and windows. Great care must be taken when setting up the camera as the majority of the ambient light can be removed by changing the aperture of the camera. This is important as the processing software might otherwise include ambient light within the final RTI file and thus may produce erroneous data.

In Webb & Wachowiak (2011) a home-made snoot was added to the lighting source when photographing a daguerreotype to decrease the amount of flare (*Ill. 2*) captured within the photographs. However, this would lead to the covering of surface detail required within the RTI dataset. In order to move away from using added material with an already difficult to capture object, a series of low angled light position photographs were taken. The strongest

Ill. 7, Flash reflection on the glass covering the daguerreotype

shadows, which bring out the most detail, are created when the light is at a low angle. Flare and reflection from the reflective surface is only evident when photographs with higher angled lights are taken. As such the capturing process focused on creating the least amount of flare and reflection as possible with only the best angled photographs used for the generation of the RTI dataset.

CONCLUSION

RTI is a way to interactively visualise the surface of the daguerreotype to bring out even the smallest details such as scratches and polishing lines, which run parallel across the surface. It is very accessible as no special equipment is needed and software for processing the images and viewing the end result is free.

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Mapping Estonian daguerreotypes



: by KADI SIKKA, [Film Archives of the National Archives of Estonia](#), Tallinn, Estonia

News about Daguerre's invention spread widely among the German-speaking people. For this reason, it is believed that those who read German newspapers in Estonia became aware of this photographic process shortly after the first announcement.

The earliest notes about making and selling daguerreotypes, as well as equipment, in Estonia were published in a newspaper in August, 1840¹. The first advertisement by itinerant daguerreotypists was published in June 1843 in a local newspaper "Revalsche wöchentliche Nachrichten", where Benno Lipschütz and Baptista Tensi mentioned that

they are making daguerreotypes every day from 11 am till 6 pm and thanked their customers for the warm reception².

However, the oldest daguerreotype that we know of so far in Estonian photographic collections is dated around 1844, but was taken in Saint Petersburg, Russia³. The oldest daguerreotype which was made in Estonia and is also preserved there in the museum's collection is a daguerreotype portrait taken by Carl Friedrich Wilhelm Borchardt (1816-1899) in Tallinn several years later, around 1850.

Ill. 1, Map of Estonian daguerreotypes collections

During the 1840s, seven itinerant daguerreotypists travelled through Estonia, taking photographs in Tallinn and Tartu. They were either coming from or heading to Finland, Russia, or elsewhere⁴.

Today, only 22 daguerreotypes, including four stereo daguerreotypes, are known to exist in the collections of Estonian museums, archives, and libraries. Most of the photographers are unknown and several of the daguerreotypes were probably not taken in Estonia. Unfortunately, some of them are in poor

condition, the original housing is damaged or missing. As the daguerreotypes held within the private collections have not been examined yet, it is likely that there are more than 22 of them situated in Estonia.

The Estonian Photographic Heritage Society⁵, in cooperation with several curators of photographic collections, is gathering stories about the dawn of photography in Estonia and all daguerreotypes are soon to be published in the Daguerreobase.

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NOTES

1. *Revalsche wöchentliche Nachrichten*, 05.08.1840, p. 876.
2. *Revalsche wöchentliche Nachrichten*, No. 25, 21.06.1843, p. 746.
3. Estonian Literary Museum, EKLA, A-37:1254, see article by Asmer, Vilve ibd pp. 8-13
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A silver window on history

Daguerreotypes in Finland in the 19th century





Ill. 1, Fredrik Rehnström, The Frenckell Paper Mill in Tampere. Christer Petterson Collection, inv. D2014:143/1. Photo by Virve Laustela. [See on Daguerreobase](#)

ABSTRACT

Information about the daguerreotype came early to Finland, as early as the beginning of 1839. The first daguerreotype was seen in Finland in Turku around the beginning of 1840 and the first daguerreotype was taken in Finland in 1842. A few hundred daguerreotypes have survived in Finnish collections. There is very little information on Finnish daguerreotypes and their origin. Approximately half of the pictures are of individuals known by name, the photographer is known only in about seven per cent of the daguerreotypes. Some of the Finnish collections are of foreign origin; people typically had portrait photographs taken in St. Petersburg or in a Central European studio. There were around ten itinerant daguerreotypists in Finland, working in the largest towns.

Only one of them was Finnish-born, Fredrik Rehnström. Other photographers were from Sweden, Russia, Austria, Germany, France and Denmark. The Danish daguerreotypist Carl Neupert probably represented the highest level of international professional skill of itinerant daguerreotypists in Finland, another well-known daguerreotypist was Pehr Lindhberg from Sweden. Some of the daguerreotypists visited Finland regularly, others only once. The work of the daguerreotypists concentrated in the spring, summer and autumn seasons, because the dark winter conditions may have been too demanding for taking daguerreotypes.

KEY WORDS: History of Photography in Finland, Carl Neupert (1803-1857), Fredrik Rehnström (1819-1857), A.J. Desarnod (1812-1849), Carl Dauthenday (1819-1896), itinerant daguerreotypists

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THE NEW INVENTION IS PRESENTED - ASTONISHED REACTIONS IN THE PRESS



Information about this new invention, the Daguerreotype, came early to Finland, as early as the beginning of 1839. The daguerreotype process developed by Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre was officially presented to the public in August 1839 in France. An exhibition of 40 daguerreotypes was opened in Paris. The Finnish newspapers *Helsingfors Morgonbladet*, *Åbo Tidningar* and *Borgå Tidning* first published brief news items about the invention, followed by short articles after it had been officially presented.¹ It astounded contemporaries and aroused interest. *Borgå Tidning* noted that one daguerreotype had been taken of the Church of St Isaac in St. Petersburg which reproduced all its details.² A successful daguerreotype of the moon was reported in 1851. Improvements to the daguerreotype process were also mentioned, as well as the introduction of competing processes.³ In principle, daguerreotypes could

be made by anyone. In December 1839, the Swedish publisher Adolf Bonnier issued in Stockholm an illustrated guidebook for making daguerreotypes,⁴ which was also sold in several bookstores in Finland. The instructions could also be found in newspapers, being published for example in October 1840 in *Åbo Tidningar*.⁵

It is not quite sure when, how and by whom the first daguerreotype was brought to Finland, but it has been assumed that this was done by Professor Alexander von Nordman, who had the opportunity to visit an exhibition of daguerreotypes in Paris in 1839. The distinct details of the images impressed von Nordman, who prepared a report about the exhibition for the Imperial Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg.⁶ The first daguerreotype was seen in Finland in Turku around the beginning of 1840. It showed the *Quai de la Grève* and the Church of St Gervais in Paris, and measured 6 x 8 inches, approximately 15 x 20 cm. The display in Turku lasted three weeks, after which it went on to Helsinki. This event aroused a great deal of attention in the press. The picture astounded viewers with its precise details.⁷



ART AND ITINERANT PHOTOGRAPHERS

The first daguerreotype taken in Finland, on 3 November 1842, shows the Nobel House in Turku (Ill. 2). It was taken by Henrik Cajander, a doctor and amateur photographer of Turku. He had visited Paris in the autumn of 1842 and had learned to photograph there. He most likely acquired all the necessary equipment, such as the camera, while abroad. In addition to the photograph of the Nobel House, two other pictures taken by Cajander have survived, a view of Vartiovuorenmäki Hill in Turku from 1844 and a self-portrait.⁸ Cajander was maybe the only Finnish daguerreotypist who freely chose his subjects. The others mainly took portrait photographs for commercial purposes.

There were around ten itinerant daguerreotypists in Finland, working in the

largest towns. The first to come here, in 1842, were Benno Lipschütz from Bavaria and Baptist Tensi of Sardinia. They came to Helsinki from Tallinn and visited at least Turku and Viipuri.⁹ In July 1843, the newspaper *Helsingfors Tidningar* mentioned that Daguerre's invention had now come to Finland for the first time. Lipschütz and Tensi of Vienna intended to apply Daguerre's method to make daguerreotype photographs, which were promised to be distinct and clear, to be made quickly and even reasonably priced.¹⁰ Soon after this news item, Lipschütz and Tensi began to actively advertise their work in local newspapers, first in Helsinki and later in Turku.¹¹ The last mention of them was from October in Viipuri, where they advertised their services by referring to their reputation in Helsinki and Turku and stating that they were briefly passing through the city.¹² They most likely continued east to St. Petersburg.

Ill. 2, Henrik Cajander, The Nobel House. The Museum Centre of Turku/City of Turku, inv. VA9903:1. Photo by Riitta Koskivirta. [See on Daguerreobase](#)



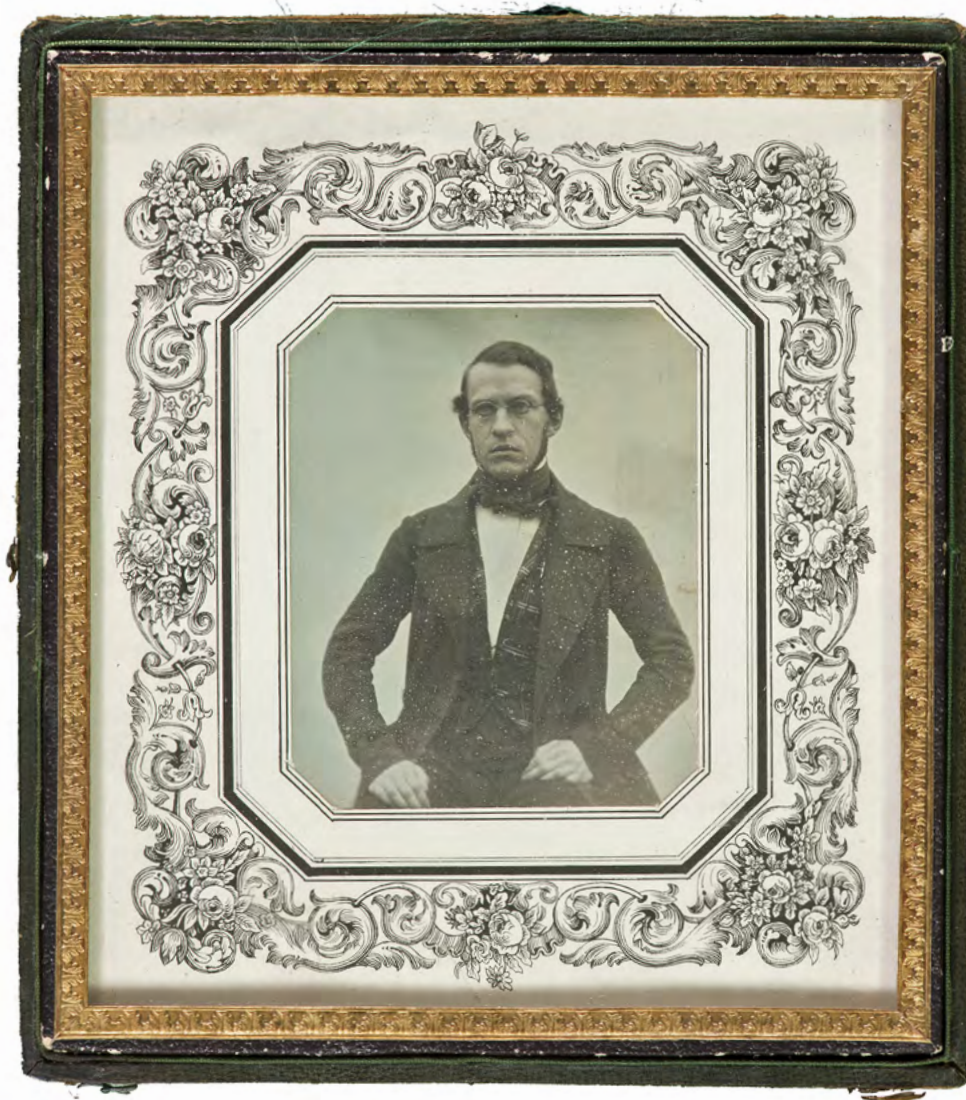
A photographer who was different from the itinerant daguerreotypists was Auguste Joseph Desarnod (*Ill. 3*) of Russian-French background who worked in Porvoo in South Finland. Desarnod was a trained lithographer, portrait and landscape painter and photographer. Having already gained a professional reputation in St. Petersburg, Desarnod moved to Porvoo in the autumn of 1843.¹³ He began to photograph in the following summer, continuing until the spring of 1849, when he returned to St. Petersburg. Many commendable examples of Desarnod's work have survived. Owing to the long exposure required by the method, the pictures were mostly taken outdoors and elements of the townscape or the branches of trees can be seen in the background. The persons in the photographs are townspeople of Porvoo, Desarnod's acquaintances and members of the upper classes of the town.¹⁴ The work of this talented photographer suffered from his restless desire for experimentation; he carried out many experiments with

daguerreotypes that did not always succeed as wished for.¹⁵ For example, he tried to transfer a photograph directly onto a lithographic block to print it, which was done successfully in Finland only decades later. From time to time, he travelled to St. Petersburg and he even tried to succeed professionally in Helsinki, which ultimately did not benefit his business.¹⁶

The only Finnish-born daguerreotypist was Fredrik Rehnström (*Ill. 4*), who came from a small village in eastern Finland, Mäntyharju. He began his training as a book-binder in Helsinki, moving in 1839 to St. Petersburg as a journeyman.¹⁷ He studied the making of daguerreotypes in St. Petersburg in the early 1840s.¹⁸ He spent the summers photographing in Finland and he toured Finland's main towns between 1844 and 1851. Rehnström was definitely a professional in his field. Several examples of Rehnström's work have survived and their identification is aided by their plain and uniform appearance. The simple frames

Ill. 3, A.J. Desarnod, The twins Bruno and Hugo Sirén with their nurse Anna Cassius known as "Dadda". There is a portrait of the mother of the boys in the background. Porvoo Museum, inv. 57-15.3 . Photo by Laura Sallas. [See on Daguerreobase](#)

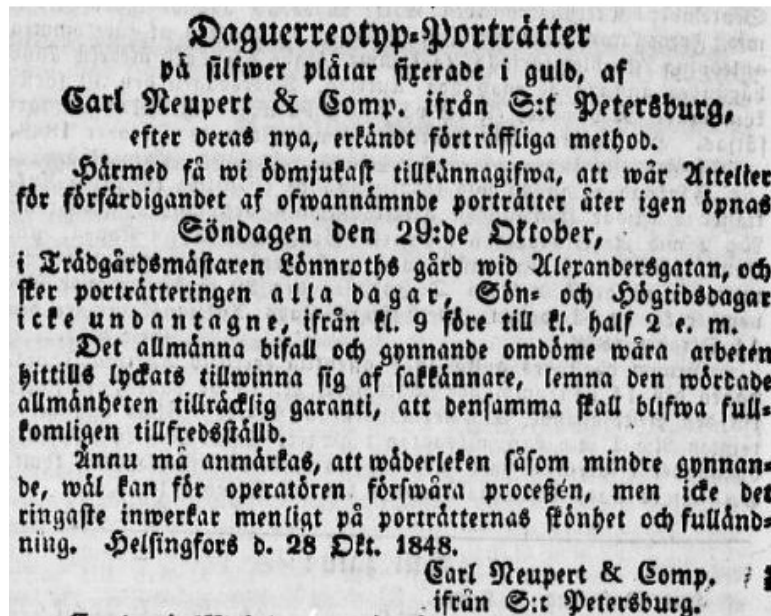
Ill. 4, F. Rehnström, August Almqvist. Collection of Photographs of the National Board of Antiquities of Finland. inv. HK 19671129:90. Photo by Aukusti Heinonen. [See on Daguerreobase](#)



of the photographs are lined with strips of metal foil. The backing of the photograph is of dark, marble-veined paper and the mount is of light-coloured cardboard or paper with a dark ornamental line surrounding the opening.¹⁹ The subjects are seated in a calm and dignified manner. The pictures are often half-length portraits with few or no props.²⁰ The background is often a light-coloured thin cloth with its folds visible in the pictures. Rehnström also coloured portraits skilfully, using bright and natural hues.²¹ The simple and unassuming style was no doubt due to demanding and changing conditions that were completely different from professional photographers' studios.²² Rehnström was already respected by his contemporaries. When he arrived in Vaasa, in West Finland in

the summer of 1848, the newspaper *Ilmarinen* reported his arrival and urged readers with eloquent phrasing to use the services of this talented fellow countryman.²³ A special, treasured example of Rehnström's work is a scene from the shore of the Tammerkoski Rapids in Tampere with the Frenckell Paper Mill appearing to be its main subject (Ill. 1).

The Danish daguerreotypist Carl Neupert (Ill. 5), who was active in Finland in 1848-1849, represented the highest level of international professional skill in his field. Having trained in Germany under the renowned Carl Ferdinand Stelzner,²⁴ he was known in the Nordic countries and St. Petersburg and he travelled in the Baltic countries during his career.²⁵ Neupert signed his photographs, occasionally



even on the plate, which means that they can be reliably identified. Neupert liked to use a mount with decorative patterns around the opening.²⁶

The Swedish daguerreotype photographer Pehr Lindhberg, “an artist from Stockholm”, visited Finland on several occasions, in 1851, 1856 and 1857. He had originally trained as a portrait painter at the Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen and had worked for Swedish royalty. Lindhberg photographed actively in both Finland and Sweden,²⁷ and he is also known to have visited Estonia.²⁸ He had studied daguerreotype photography under the famous Austrian photographer Josef Weninger²⁹ and he worked in all the larger towns of Finland. Lindhberg’s last visit to Finland was at a time when other methods of photography had begun to replace the daguerreotype. He was quite old at the time, around 70, and began to be known as “the last daguerreotypist”.³⁰ No definitely attributable examples of his work have survived in Finnish collections.³¹

PHOTOGRAPHERS, LOCATIONS AND THE ORIGINS OF IMAGES

The National Library of Finland has digitized Finnish newspapers from the years 1771-1910

Ill. 6, Advertisement by Carl Neupert, 1 November 1848, *Helsingfors Tidningar*.

and has posted these materials on the Internet. They are freely available and easily accessed by all Nordic readers, because they are mostly in Swedish. The importance of press materials for studying daguerreotypists was already understood in the 1970s, when Sven Hirn published his book *Kameran edestä ja takaa, valokuvaus ja valokuvaajat Suomessa 1839-1870* on photography in Finland covering the period from 1839 to 1870. The book contains a study on daguerreotypists in which Hirn refers to articles and announcements published in newspapers. Press materials from the mid-19th century make it possible to trace the progress of the invention in Finland and the movements of individual daguerreotypists.

Many of the photographers worked in the same way that Lipschütz and Tensi did when they came to Finland. A local newspaper first announced in a positive tone that a daguerreotypist had arrived to provide his services. The photographers then went on to advertise their work. The newspaper advertisements give the basic information of who will photograph, where, when and at what price. Shown in Ill. 6 is Carl Neupert’s advertisement from 1848: “Daguerreotype portraits on gilt silver plates, Carl Neupert & Co. from St. Petersburg, with a new and recognized method...” .



Ill. 7, Unknown photographer, Sea captain C. J. Lönnqvist, brooch, size 4.5 x 4.5 cm. Collection of Photographs of the Helsinki City Museum, inv. XXVIII-163 . Photo by Juho Nurmi. [See on Daguerreobase](#)

Ill. 8, Carl Dauthenday, portrait of Ernst Selim Wasastjerna from Loppi. Hand coloured. Separate red leather case and ring of nobility. and a gold signet ring. Ostrobothnian Museum, inv. PM-82-745. Photo by Laura Sallas. [See on Daguerreobase](#)



Tables 1 and 2 (pp. 34-35) list daguerreotypists and their professional visits to Finland. Given in Table 1 are all the daguerreotypists known to have worked in Finland. This international group consists of photographers from Sweden, Russia, Austria, Germany, France and Denmark. Table 2 shows the periods during which they worked in Finland. The numbers below the dates in the upper row tell how many times the photographers published advertisements in newspapers during the year in question. The year 1848 stands out as a particularly active period for advertising. The name of one photographer is not known, because the advertisements were published anonymously in newspapers in Turku, which the advertisements suggest was the most popular locality for the services of daguerreotypists.

A closer look at the dates when the advertisements were published also shows that the work of the daguerreotypists concentrated in the spring, summer and autumn seasons. A

few advertisements still appeared in November, while they are complete missing in December and January, because the dark winter conditions may have been too demanding for taking daguerreotypes.

Table 3 (pp. 34-35) lists the towns where the photographers were most active. Helsinki and Turku, the largest towns, had the greatest appeal.

DAGUERREOTYPES IN FINNISH COLLECTIONS

A few hundred daguerreotypes have survived in Finnish collections. Most of them are in the possession of museums and archives (*Ills. 9, 10 and 11*), but there are also some that are privately owned. Although daguerreotypes are collected internationally, there are only a few collectors of them in Finland. The Finnish collections are mainly in the locations where

Ill. 9, Unknown photographer, portrait of unknown woman. The Museum Centre of Turku/ City of Turku, inv. VA2014_8_3. Photo by Riitta Koskivirta. [See on Daguerreobase](#)

Ill. 10, Unknown photographer, portrait of unknown woman. The Museum Centre of Turku/ City of Turku, inv. VA2014_8_2. Photo by Riitta Koskivirta. [See on Daguerreobase](#)



daguerreotypists were active, in the coastal regions and large towns.

There is very little surviving information on Finnish daguerreotypes and their origin. With a few exceptions, they are portraits. Approximately half of the pictures are of individuals known by name. To have oneself or one's close circle photographed was possible only for the more affluent part of the population. That is why the pictures usually feature local dignitaries, members of well-known families, military officers, sea captains, factory owners, merchants, and members of their families. Information on the photographers is often lacking, and the photographer is known in only about seven

per cent of the daguerreotypes. Some of the Finnish collections are of foreign origin; people typically had portrait photographs taken in St. Petersburg or in a Central European studio. Portraits by photographers Joseph Weninger, Wilhelm Carl ja Friedrich Zwerner, Karl Ludwig Kulisch and Martin D'Osonnen Abadie, who had studios in St. Petersburg or in Moscow, can be found from the Finnish collections.³²

Ill. 11, Unknown photographer, Amalia Candelin née Elfsberg with her children John and Leonard. Collection of Photographs of the National Board of Antiquities, inv. HK19601223:741. Photo by Markku Haverinen. [See on Daguerreobase](#)

Table 1. DAGUERREOTYPISTS WHO VISITED FINLAND

DAGUERREOTYPIST	COUNTRY
Auguste Joseph Desarnod (1812-1849)	France, Russia
A. Hviid	Denmark
Pehr Lindhberg (1785-1868)	Sweden
Benno Lipschütz	Germany (Bavaria)
Carl Neupert	Denmark, Russia
Fredrik Rehnström (1819-1857)	Finland (Russia)
Friedrich August Reinhold (1807-)	Germany
Isak Robert Rossander	Sweden
Baptist Tensi	France (Sardinia)
Johann Siegl	Austria

Table 2. DAGUERREOTYPISTS WHO VISITED FINLAND

DAGUERREOTYPIST	NUMBER OF VISITS
Desarnod	1
Hviid	1
Lindhberg	1
Lipschütz & Tensi	7
Neupert	1
Rehnström	1
Reinhold	1
Rossander	1
Siegl	1
Anonymous	1

Table 3. DAGUERREOTYPISTS IN FINLAND BY LOCALITY

DAGUERREOTYPIST	Helsinki	Hämeenlinna	Kuopio	Oulu	Pori	Porvoo
Desarnod						X
Hviid						
Lindhberg	X			X	X	X
Lipschütz & Tensi	X					
Neupert	X	X				
Rehnström	X		X			
Reinhold						
Rossander						
Siegl	X					
Anonymous						

ADVERTISERS' ADVERTISEMENTS IN FINLAND BY YEAR (1800)

'44	'45	'46	'47	'48	'49	'50	'51	'52	'53	'54	'55	'56	'57
3	6			1									
													1
							12					8	3
				14	5								
1	2	3	10	7	3	11	1						
		1											
						5							
				3									
	5												

Porvoo	Tampere	Turku	Vaasa	Viipuri
X				
			X	
X		X	X	
		X		X
		X		
	X	X	X	X
			X	
		X		
		X		

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2. Borgå Tidning 8/1839, 3
3. Åbo Tidningar 62/1851, 2-4.
4. Daguerre, 1839.
5. Åbo Tidningar no 80/1840, 1-3.
6. avolainen 1992, 10-11.
7. Andersson 1993, 12-14.
8. Savolainen 1992, 11.
9. Hirn 1972, 16.
10. Helsingfors Tidningar 55/1843, 1.
11. Finlands Allmänna Tidning 62/1843, 178-179/1843, 181/1843, 4; Åbo Underrättelser 67/1843, 4.
12. Wiborgs Annonce Blad 40/1843, 1.
13. Herranen 1992, 13.
14. Herranen 1992, 20.
15. Hirn 1972, 17.
16. Herranen 1992, 16, 24.
17. Andersson 1993, 18.
18. [Kuka Kuvasi](#).
19. Savolainen 1992, 15.
20. Hirn 1972, 18.
21. Savolainen 1992, 15.
22. Hirn 1972, 18.
23. Ilmarinen no 53/1848, 1.
24. [Kuka Kuvasi](#)
25. [Media Technology in Norway](#).
26. Hirn 1972, 18.
27. Andersson 1992, 22
28. [Eesti Fotograafid](#).
29. [Kuka Kuvasi](#)
30. Andersson 1992, 22
31. Hirn 1972, 18.
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“Stašek’s” *Cross-Section of*

Another daguerreotype photomicrograph



a Plant



III. 1, Florus I. Stašek [attr.], Cross section of a plant, early 1840s, daguerreotype, National Technical Museum, Prague, inv. NTM-11801d. [See on Daguerreobase](#)

ABSTRACT

The National Technical Museum's collection in Prague contains a most remarkable daguerreotype, whose importance extends beyond the borders of Central Europe. It is a daguerreotype photomicrograph of a section of a plant, which has been dated to 1840 and attributed to Florus I. Stašek (1782-1862), a physics teacher and headmaster at the Piarist Gymnasium in Litomyšl in eastern Bohemia. The dating and attribution which we have today were passed down orally from the 1930s, when the daguerreotype was transferred to Prague from the Regional Museum in Litomyšl. It is not Stašek's own discoveries or inventions which can be viewed as his main contribution to science, but rather the gymnasium's superbly equipped physics laboratory, part of which is housed in Litomyšl museum, and the ability to convey the newest scientific and technical discoveries to students. Only relatively recently has doubt been cast upon Stašek's sole authorship of the daguerreotype, and a possible link suggested to his colleague, the Viennese teacher of physics and mathematics Andreas von Ettingshausen (1796-1878). This hypothesis, along with recently uncovered archival material, forms the basis of the following study.

KEY WORDS: Florus I. Stašek (1782-1862), Andreas von Ettingshausen (1796-1878), Carl Schuh (1806-1863), Daguerreotype photomicrograph, Hydro-Oxygen-Gas-Microscope, Drummond's light, science

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THE FIRST PHOTOMICROGRAPHS

One necessary precondition for the invention of the daguerreotype photomicrograph were the fundamental advances in microscopy in the 1820s and 1830s, particularly after the discovery of the achromatic microscope in 1823 and that of alternative light sources. The idea of combining both technologies, the microscope and photography, emerged almost immediately, and it was only a matter of time before satisfactory results would be attained. Photography would eliminate the errors and deformations that appeared when the image viewed in the microscope was copied onto paper by hand.

The first real successes were recorded as early as 1839 and 1840. Alongside older works by Daguerre and Talbot, we also encounter others such as Bayard, Hogg, Dancer, Hodgson, Reade and Chevalier. However, one name which often crops up is that of physician Alfred Donné, who in October 1839 reportedly presented the first samples of his photomicrographic

experiments to the members of the French Academy of Science, including an enlargement of a fly's eye.¹ Then, in 1845, in collaboration with his pupil Léon Foucault, later a successful physicist, he published the famous illustrated Atlas to accompany his main work, *Cours de microscopie complémentaire des études médicales*, which made an indelible mark on the history of photography. (III. 2) As is well known, the illustrations were prepared using daguerreotypes as templates.²

However, it was not until the 1850s that a real boom was witnessed in photomicrography and its application in the natural sciences, due to the development of the collodion negative and the production of higher quality photomicrographic reproductions.

“NICHT ALEIN EINE KOLOSSALE LATERNA MAGICA!”

By the 1830s, however, an instrument had been invented which - albeit temporarily, though

Fig. 5.

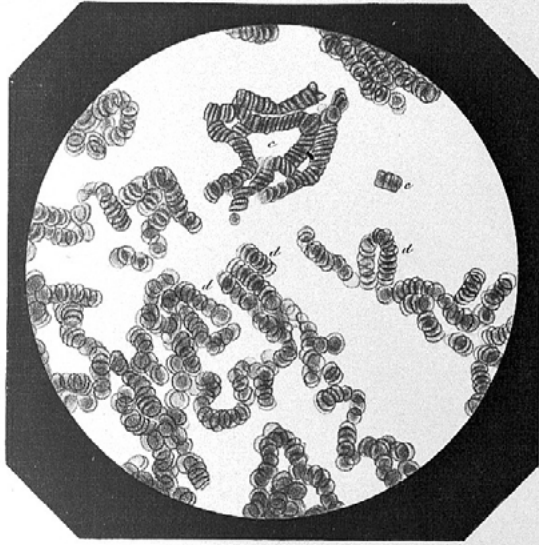


Fig. 6.

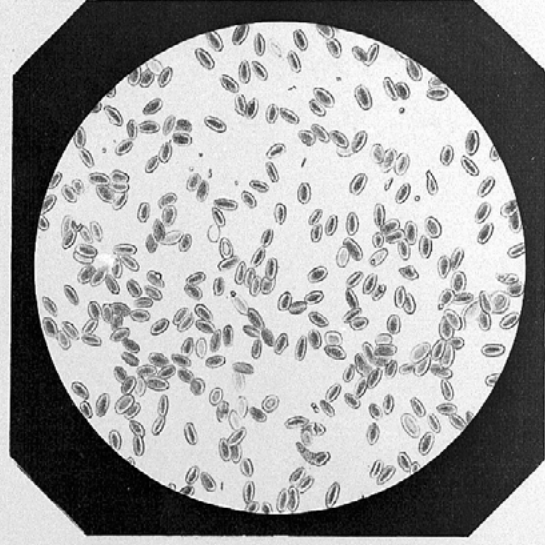


Fig. 7.

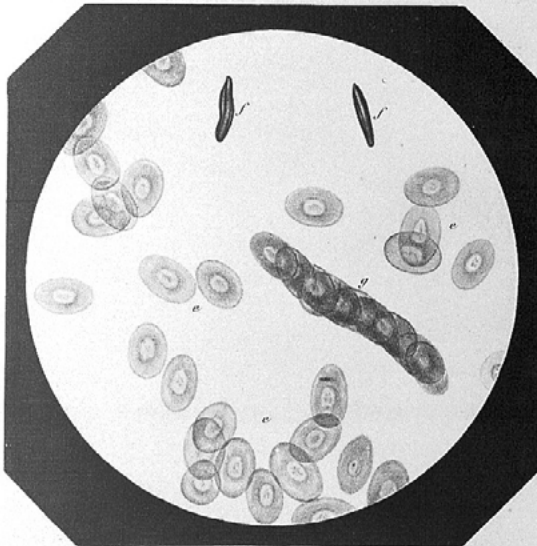
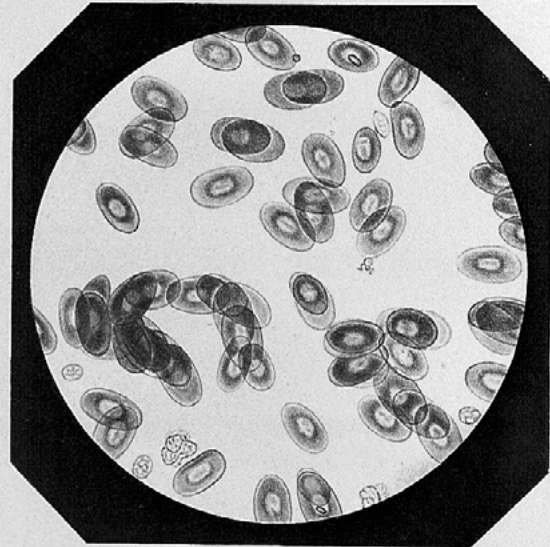


Fig. 8.



Pris au Microscope Polygraphique par L. Foucault.

Gravé par Dufet.

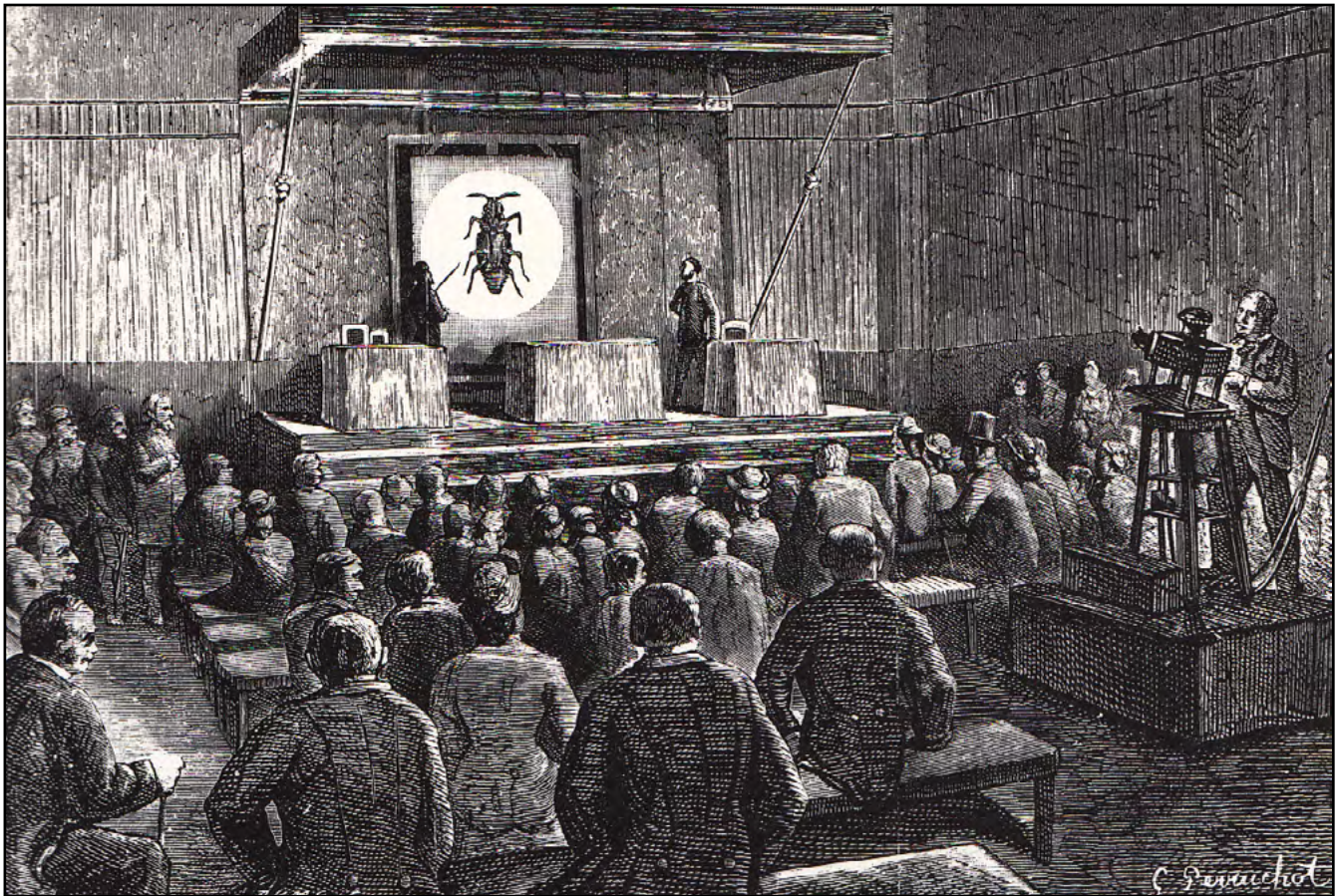
Fig. 5. Globules de sang humain réunis en chapelets.

Fig. 6. Globules de sang de Cheval.

Fig. 7. Globules de sang de Grenouille à l'état normal
vus de face, de champ et en chapelets.

Fig. 8. Globules de sang de Grenouille avec leurs noyaux très apparents.

Publié par J. B. Baillière, Paris.



very effectively - affected the development of microscopy and photomicrography. This was a new type of projection microscope - the so-called Hydro-Oxygen-Gas-Microscope (HOG) - which was illuminated by Drummond's light (limelight). This only differed from the older solar or lamp projection microscopes in that it had a stronger and better regulated light source, but the quality of the projected microscopic image and the overall effect far surpassed expectations.³ This was not only reflected in the level of natural-science research, which was built on observation and systematization, but also became the basis of modern learning and education.

The experience gained from the new HOG microscope was subsequently transferred into visual culture. Microscope projections aimed at the general public became an important part of the *salon culture* of the 1830s - an

unmissable form of both entertainment and education. These were "visual adventures" - a pleasant way to learn about the mysteries of natural science, which would otherwise have been largely inaccessible to the public. People could feel that they were part of the process of "discovery". The experience was enhanced by the fact that it was not an individual one, but was directly shared with other viewers. Unlike the classic magic lanterns, what the viewer now saw were real objects. He could now observe magnified details of flies, plants or cell structures, all of them in "true colour". Suddenly, the layman could easily recognise objects which until recently he had no idea existed.⁴ (Ill. 3)

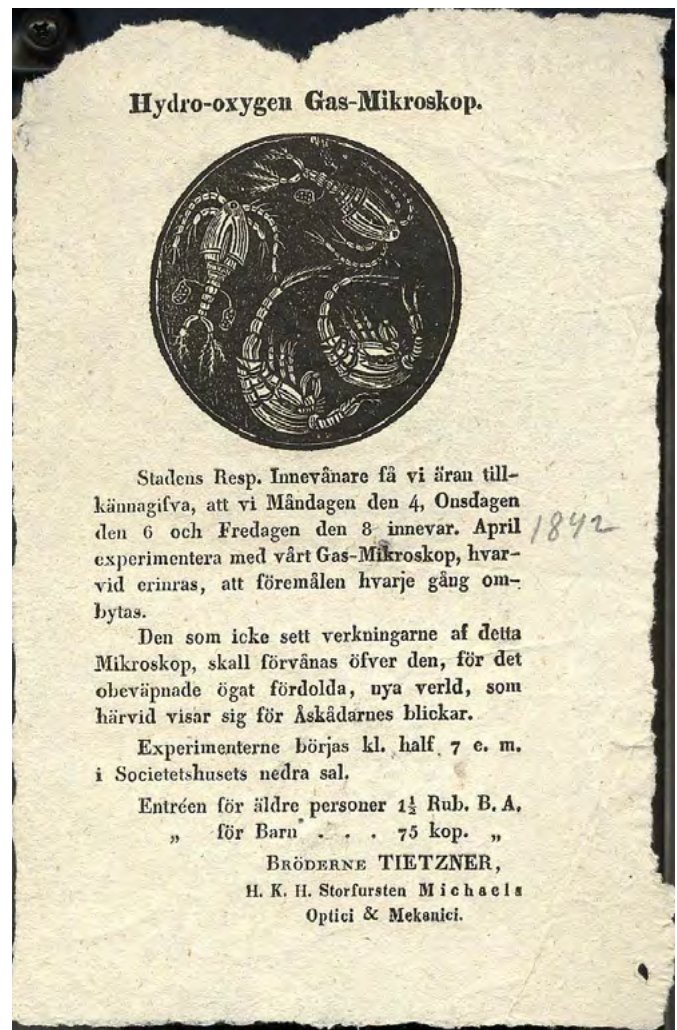
It is little wonder that these projections soon made their way out of the salons of high society and became accessible - usually thanks to travelling "magicians" - to the general

Ill. 3, Projection of a photomicrograph during a public science lecture, *L'illustration* 76, 1880, nr. 1958. Image taken from Corey Keller (ed.), *Brought to Light. Photography and the invisible 1840-1900*, San Francisco, CA: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art 2008, p. 45

public. The appeal of these attractions, which reached a climax at the turn of the 1830s, was documented in the local press and in popular publications such as Jurende's almanac *Mährischer Wanderer*.⁵ By way of example, we can mention the Tietzner brothers, who had great success with the HOG microscope in the Baltic states and in Scandinavia, while Ludwig Döbler was very prominent in the Austrian monarchy. (Ill. 4)

However, one individual who was particularly important in popularising the HOG microscope in Central Europe, especially the projection of biological slides, was the scientist Carl Schuh (1806-1863), who was also one of the main figures in the pioneering era of photography in the Habsburg monarchy.⁶ From spring 1839 until autumn 1840 he organised dozens of presentations in and around Vienna, and later also in Moravia and Bohemia, all of which were very well received, as can be seen from the newspaper reports which abounded with superlatives.⁷ Schuh supposedly used 1,500 slides⁸ from the realms of animate and inanimate nature - ranging from insects to plants, human tissue to crystallization samples, as well as substances which might be said to have been beyond the pale of conventional salon conversation (e.g. human urine).⁹ In this way, he opened entirely new horizons to the general public, particularly in relation to the inner structure of organisms.

Schuh not only had a thorough operational knowledge of the HOG microscope and even made technical improvements to it,¹⁰ but he also systematically promoted it, both among members of the academic community within scientific and educational institutes, as well as in private salons and in front of interested members of the general public who were willing to pay an entry fee. One eyewitness even wrote that "Herr Schuh hängt mit inniger Liebe an seinem Instrumente, er hat gleichsam sein Leben dessen Vervollkommnung gewidmet".¹¹



Schuh's first stop in the Czech lands was Brno, in September 1840. This visit, which lasted for several weeks, had been announced in the press several months in advance and had been eagerly anticipated.¹² The first projection was on 11 September 1840 in the hall of the local Reduta theatre, and there, just as in Vienna, it met with an overwhelmingly positive response.¹³

The choice of Brno was a deliberate one as the Association of German Farmers and Foresters held their annual meeting there from 20 to 27 September 1840 (*Versammlung Deutscher Land-und Forstwirhte*). It was attended by hundreds of natural-science experts from Prussia, Austria, Bohemia and other countries.¹⁴ Therefore, Schuh was afforded a unique opportunity to present his new invention not

Ill. 4, Flyer inviting to the presentation of the Hydro-Oxygen-Gas microscope by the Tietzner brothers, 1842. Image taken from hereditas.abo.fi.

only to the general public of Brno, but also to a large number of prospective users.

THE HYDRO-OXYGEN-GAS-MICROSCOPE AND THE DAGUERREOTYPE

Since their discovery had been made public, scientists had seen the great potential of combining high-quality microscopes and daguerreotypes, the main advantages of which were the sharpness and the precision of the images. There was the promise of faithfully capturing a microscopic image without the necessity of observing a “live” section. For some scientists daguerreotyping “only thus became really useful, and not only in the natural sciences, but also in practical life [sic]”.¹⁵ Despite the fact that these hopes invested in daguerreotyping soon proved to be false, interest in the development of such technology was considerable, particularly in 1839 and 1840.

The oldest records documenting the successful application of the method combining the HOG and the daguerreotype mention two members of the *Schlesische Gesellschaft für Vaterländische Kultur* in Wroclaw: Johann Heinrich Robert Göppert (1800-1884), a botanist and professor at Wroclaw University, and Johann Gebauer, the secretary of the Silesian Society.¹⁶ It was through the application of the HOG microscope that the men came into contact with Carl Schuh, probably at the start of 1838 in Wroclaw itself.¹⁷ Almost immediately afterwards the use of the HOG microscope became an essential part of the work of the natural-science section of the Silesian Society as well as of teaching at the local university. It is also clear that one of Göppert’s close colleagues - the leading European physiologist and co-creator of cellular theory, Jan Evangelista Purkyně - often used them in his lectures.

On 29 November 1839, at a session of the Silesian Society, Göppert and Gebauer presented the first “successful samples” from their collaborative efforts at creating a daguerreotype photomicrograph and approximately one month later they were able

to give away some of the examples as gifts. Among the recipients was the former minister of the Prussian government Karl vom Stein zum Altenstein, who received an image of the stem section of an *Aristolochia Sipho*.¹⁸

However, despite their success, Göppert and Gebauer stopped experimenting with daguerreotype photomicrographs relatively quickly and with undisguised disappointment: “it has to be noted that, with regard to the duration [the exposure alone took 15-20 minutes] and the expense of the necessary equipment, these experiments now appear to be - despite satisfactory results - far more interesting from a scientific perspective than they would be practical for the production of microscopic images; as many of us had certainly hoped at the start.”¹⁹

DAGUERREOTYPE PHOTOMICROGRAPHS IN VIENNA

Only a few months later, the first daguerreotypes were also developed in Vienna using a HOG microscope. These resulted from the collaboration of four pioneers of photography who were leading members of the *Fürstenhofrunde*. Alongside the aforementioned Carl Schuh, who was at that time already permanently settled in the Austrian capital, there was, of course, also Andreas von Ettingshausen (1796-1878). The third man was a professor of anatomy, Joseph Berres, who is better known today for the successful development of a method of mechanically reproducing daguerreotype plates through etching. The optician Simon Plössl also contributed to the development of the first daguerreotype photomicrographs in Vienna.²⁰

On 29 February 1840, Josef Berres presented the first successful results of their combined efforts in the field of daguerreotype photomicrographs at a meeting of the *Gesellschaft der Ärzte* in Vienna. According to him, he had produced an image of a section of a plant stem using Drummond’s light on 25 February 1840 in collaboration with Ettingshausen and Schuh;



perhaps it was not by chance that this was a photograph of *Aristolochia*, a plant from the same family (birthwort) as that which had been chosen by Göppert and Gebauer.²¹ Just a few days later, on 5 March 1840 at another meeting of the society, both members and “distinguished guests”, including the archduke Stephen, were able to watch with their own eyes the development of another daguerreotype photomicrograph, this time under the guidance of Ettingshausen.²²

Of all the daguerreotype photomicrographs which were produced in Vienna at that time, only one has been demonstrably preserved. It is even more valuable due to the inscription on the frame and other written documentation available. From this we know that it was signed by Ettingshausen, and also that it shows a section of a *Clematis* magnified twenty times and that it was created on 4 March 1840

using a HOG microscope with a five-minute exposure.²³ (III. 5) Alongside the fact that it is evidently the oldest surviving daguerreotype photomicrograph created using Drummond’s light, its provenance is also worthy of mention. For several decades it was part of a famous cabinet of curiosities - the Pretiosen Kabinet - of Prince Metternich at Kynžvart Chateau in Western Bohemia, along with the famous Still Life in an Artist’s Studio by Daguerre, today on display at the National Technical Museum in Prague.²⁴

BACK TO LITOMYŠL

Viewed in this light, Stašek’s authorship of the daguerreotype photomicrograph *Cross Section of a plant* (III. 1) at the NTM would seem to be rather less likely, particularly when linked to the dating of 1840.²⁵ As was mentioned

III. 5, Andreas Ritter Von Ettingshausen, Cross-section of the stem of a *clematis*, 4th of March 1840, Albertina, Wien, inv. Foto2004/63. [See on Daguerreobase](#)

in the introduction, Stašek's "inspiration" as well as co-author is thought to have been Ettingshausen,²⁶ who visited Litomyšl during his journey to Western Europe in June 1840 - in other words, several months after he and his Viennese colleagues had had their first successes with daguerreotype photomicrography.²⁷ However, this hypothesis is refuted by a letter from 29 September 1840 which was recently found in the Stašek estate. The author of the letter, again Carl Schuh, proposed that he would come to Litomyšl to instruct Stašek in the operation and service of the HOG microscope. From the letter it emerges that Schuh acted on the recommendation of Ettingshausen, who wrote a letter to him in June of that year from Litomyšl [sic].²⁸ Stašek's reply was undoubtedly favourable as only a few weeks later Schuh did, indeed, visit Litomyšl. According to the school chronicle, during his two-week stay he presented several projections which "were a refreshing spectacle for the students" and thanks to which they were able to see, for example, "insect larvae, crustaceans, worms, protozoa, plant cells and human tissue that had been magnified many times."²⁹

in similar detail from the technical perspective, which at first glance displays some remarkable features.³⁰

This new information shows "Stašek's" daguerreotype photomicrograph in a rather different light, but none of this, of course, casts doubt over its importance. Within the context of the history of photography it will remain an exceptional work, which far exceeds its importance as a local object, and which has also been preserved in exceptionally good condition.

CONCLUSION

Therefore, it was clearly Schuh and not Ettingshausen who personally demonstrated the function and service of the HOG microscope and, as an experienced daguerreotypist, most probably also the new method of daguerreotype photomicrography. However, the school chronicle makes no mention of the latter. When we take this and other factors into consideration, including the necessary equipment, it would appear to be more probable that Stašek received the daguerreotype as a gift, whether from Ettingshausen, Schuh or someone else. Added to this is the fact that there is no evidence that a HOG microscope was ever part of Stašek's physics cabinet, though Schuh, Ettingshausen and certainly Stašek himself realised that it was indeed an exceptional educational tool. However, an unambiguous conclusion cannot be reached as it is not possible to research the daguerreotype

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work was supported by the Czech Republic Grant Agency under Grant P409/11/P834.

NOTES

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10. Carl Schuh, *Ueber das Hydro-Oxygen-Gas-Mikroskop in Bezug zur Landwirtschaft*, in Johann K. Nestler (ed.), *Amts-Bericht des Vorstandes  ber die vierte Versammlung der deutschen Land- und Forstwirthe*, Olm tz 1841, pp. 182-185.
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12. Cf. R-i [Ernst Rincolini], [w/o title], *Moravia* 28.5.1840, no. 43, p. 172.
13. E.g. Jan Oh ral, *Herrn Schuh's Hydro-Oxygengas-Mikroskop*, *Moravia* 14.9.1840, no. 74, pp. 303-304.
14. Nestler, *Amts-Bericht*, *op. cit.*
15. L. M., *Wiener Briefe*, Ost und West 1.4.1840, no. 27, p. 127.
16. Wolfgang Baier, *Quellendarstellungen zur Geschichte der Fotografie*, Halle: Fotokinoverlag 1964, pp. 391, 237-238.
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22. *Ibid.*, p. 50. - Cf. (Beobachter), [w/o title], *Br nner Zeitung* 15.3.1840, nr. 75, p. 314.
23. Cf. the original daguerreotype at the Albertina collection, Vienna, and the written records preserved at the Kyn vart chateau library: Paul Rath, *Museums Katalog der technischen Section, 1852-1853*, fol. 1032, sg. 24-C-8b/IV: „[...] Clematis-Querschnitt. 20 Mal. lin. [linear] vergr ssert. Mit dem Oxy-Hydrogen-Kalklichte in f nf Minuten. Wien, 4. M rz 1840. Av. Ettingshausen“.
24. Cf. *Ibid.*, fol. 1030-1032.
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28. *Ibid.*, folder 18/4, nr. 2910. - *Ibid.*, book 627, fol. 195.
29. *Ibid.*, book 6, fol. 50.
30. Older records at the NTM show the plate has a circular shape, a diameter of 162 mm and it is convex. Unfortunately, it was not possible to verify this data. Frame size is 19.3 × 19.3 cm, window size   14.8 cm.

The Recurring Table-cloth

Attributing Daguerreotype Portraits from Bergen



to Photographer Marcus Selmer



Ill. 1, Detail of Sewing circle, possibly cousins from the Schnelle, Eilertsen and Skram families, 1850-1860. Framed daguerreotype. Bergen City Museum Museum (Old Bergen Museum), inv. GBB-57518. [See on Daguerreobase](#)

ABSTRACT

Danish pharmacist Marcus Selmer (1818-1900) arrived in Bergen, Norway in 1852 and became the town's first resident daguerreotypist. Although Selmer worked in Bergen for 48 years, his extant photographs number only in the hundreds, and only 14 Norwegian daguerreotypes are decisively attributed to him. It has long been suggested, by museum staff, archivists and researchers, that a significantly higher number of daguerreotypes extant today must be by Marcus Selmer. The Daguerreobase Project offered a rare opportunity to collect information on and digital images of daguerreotypes from different collections, and to systematically consider all the known daguerreotypes in Bergen simultaneously.

Here, we take one daguerreotype that has been positively attributed to Marcus Selmer as our starting point. We compare this image visually to other, unidentified plates in several museum collections. Through this investigation, we make the case that a considerable number of daguerreotypes in Bergen collections are by Selmer, and that they can be successfully identified by various objects belonging to the photographer and visible in the images. Marcus Selmer was a noted Bergen photographer, and the attribution of hitherto anonymous daguerreotypes to Selmer is thus of great value for Bergen's photographic history.

KEY WORDS: History of Photography, Marcus Selmer (1818-1900), daguerreotype portraiture, Norwegian daguerreotypes, attributing daguerreotypes

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INTRODUCTION

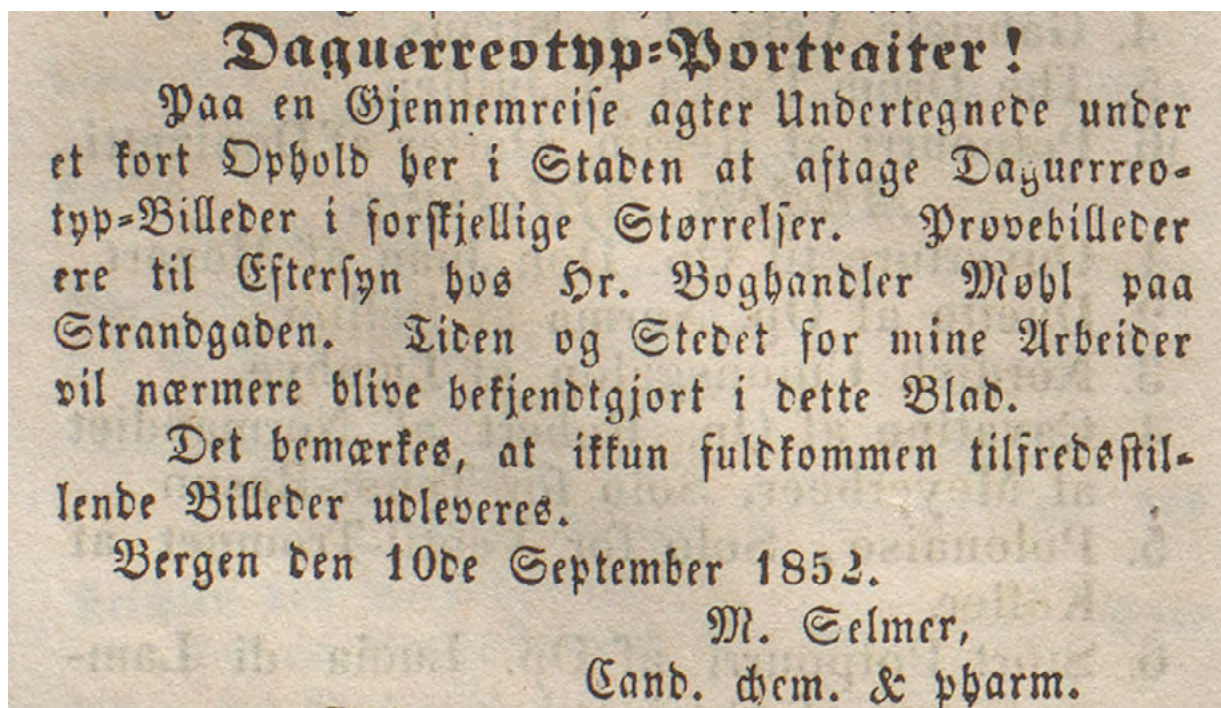
Marcus Selmer was the first permanent photographer in Bergen, Norway, starting out as a daguerreotypist in 1852. Although he worked in Bergen for 48 years, his extant photographs number only in the hundreds, and only 14 Norwegian daguerreotypes are decisively attributed to him. Here, we make the case that a much larger number of extant daguerreotypes in Bergen collections are by Selmer, and that they can be successfully identified by a number of objects belonging to the photographer and visible in the images. The paper starts with a short introduction to Selmer.

THE ARRIVAL OF THE PHOTOGRAPHING PHARMACIST

Marcus Selmer (1818-1900) was born in Randers, Denmark, on October 6th 1818. He received the degree of *candidatus pharmacia*

in 1838, and from 1842 managed his uncle's chemist's shop in Randers. This was only a temporary arrangement however, as the pharmacist position was ultimately intended for his cousin. Alongside his day job, Selmer started experimenting with the new invention of Daguerreotype and entering pictures in local exhibitions. A label on the back of a daguerreotype dating from 1850 and belonging to Randers Museum announces: "Selmer" Founder of the Daguerreotype in Randers alongside Master Painter Ludvig Us[s]ing."¹

In 1852, Marcus Selmer decided to visit his uncle's relatives in Bergen, Norway. He brought a camera along, perhaps hoping to earn some money on his journey north. After a brief stop in Stavanger he arrived in Bergen in early September. On September 11th 1852, Selmer took out his first advertisement in a Bergen newspaper for his services as a photographer (III. 2). His "short stay" was to last for 48 years and was the start of a long career as a photographer.² It is not known why Selmer



decided to stay in Bergen, though the large Danish colony in town may have helped him establish valuable connections. His outgoing personality and good contacts in the town's society soon brought him to fame. The citizens flocked to his studio and within a few years he was an established and prosperous photographer.

SELMER'S SUCCESS IN BERGEN

By all accounts, Marcus Selmer was the most prolific daguerreotypist in Bergen in the early to mid-1850s. From 1843 onwards, a number of photographers periodically visited the growing city,³ most often arriving by ship during the summer and leaving again before sea traffic ceased for the winter season. The winter exodus was mainly due to the city's adverse weather

conditions. Dark and wet, photographers struggled with a lack of light indoors and with rainy and cold conditions outside. Perhaps anticipating the summer competition, Selmer sought to turn the disadvantageous climate to his advantage when he bought a property and built and furnished a photographic atelier in 1854. Selmer constructed his studio predominantly of glass, which allowed him to take portraits throughout the year. Selmer thus became Bergen's first permanent resident daguerreotypist.

It is clear that Selmer did very well as a photographer, and tax records from 1865 indicate that he was one of Bergen's highest-earning men.⁴ To maintain this position, Selmer had to keep up with the rapidly developing field, and from 1857 he stopped Daguerreotyping and took up paper

III. 2, Ad taken out on September 11th, 1852, in *Bergen Adressecontours Efterretninger*, the newspaper that until 1868 had the advertising monopoly in Bergen. (Carl Geelmuyden and Haakon Schetelig (eds.). *Bergen 1814-1914*. Vol. 2. Bergen: Bergens kommune, 1915, pp. 771-773). The translation reads: "Daguerreotype-Portraits! On a journey Passing Through, the Undersigned will, during a Short Stay here in the Town, capture Daguerreotype-Pictures in various Sizes. Sample Pictures can be inspected with Mr. Book-trader Møhl in Strandgaten. Nearer the Time the Place for my Work will be made known in this Journal. Note that only completely satisfying images will be made available. Bergen, September 10th 1852. M. Selmer, Cand. chem & pharm."



photography. Largely a portrait photographer, he also travelled regionally and produced a large number of city views, notably the earliest known view from Bergen, a Daguerreotype dated 1854. Today, Selmer is best known for his series of photographs documenting folk costumes from different regions, produced in various formats and sizes from daguerreotypes to stereo views and cabinet cards (Ill. 3 a-b).⁵

SELMER'S DAGUERREOTYPE PORTRAIT PLATES

Despite Selmer's unquestionable presence in Bergen during the Daguerreotype era, only a very small number of extant plates are attributed to him today. Of the 234 plates found in various Bergen collections, only 12 are definitely Selmer's, while a further five are

presumed his. Additionally, two daguerreotypes at the National Library in Oslo are known to be by Selmer.⁶ More than a reflection of the actual number of extant Selmer daguerreotypes, these numbers are the probable results of previous careful, maybe even restrictive, attribution routines and museum practices. Indeed, Roger Erlandsen's extensive 1982 account of early photographers in Bergen attributed several other daguerreotypes to Selmer: of the ten plates he mentions specifically, only three correspond with the 14 decisively attributed daguerreotypes. Erlandsen suggested that around twenty daguerreotypes should be attributed to Selmer or his studio due to similar elements visible in these images.⁷ Similarly, a number of archivists and historians have repeatedly commented on the distinct qualities inherent in portraits they believe to be by Selmer, such as the sitters' relaxed poses and

Ill. 3a, Collodion glass plate negative, ca. 24cm x 30cm, ca. 1855

Ill. 3b, Bride from Bjerkeland Bergens Stift, *carte de visite*, from an album. These images demonstrate how Selmer reused motifs in different formats, including stereo views, cabinet cards or *carte de visite*. Here, Selmer has combined the woman from the glass plate studio portrait with a drawing depicting a traditional Norwegian cottage to create one of his well-known folk-costume images. Selmer utilized some daguerreotype images in a similar fashion. Both images: The Photography Archive, University Museum of Bergen, University of Bergen.



facial expressions or the physical closeness and affection displayed by many sitters in group portraits. Another clue is the very high quality of the plates presumed to be Selmer's, with extreme image sharpness and few polishing marks. Despite such informal intuitions and much scholarly interest in Selmer, the relevant images have so far escaped positive identification as Selmer's work.

VISUALLY IDENTIFYING SELMER'S PORTRAITS

Bergen's collection of daguerreotypes exists across several different museum institutions and locations, as well as in private collections. The Europe-wide Daguerreobase Project offered a rare opportunity to systematically collect information on the extant daguerreotypes in Bergen, and to present information on and digital copies of

the images.⁸ This systematization of data has enabled us to for the first time consider all the known daguerreotypes in Bergen simultaneously. Scrolling down the list of images reveals differences and similarities in casings, poses, props and photographic quality. In the following, we will briefly investigate a number of daguerreotypes and make the case that the data now available in Daguerreobase can allow us to attribute, with a high degree of certainty, a large number of known daguerreotypes to Marcus Selmer.⁹

THE RECURRING TABLE-CLOTH

Ill. 4a is one of nine known daguerreotypes in Marcus Selmer's extensive folk costume series. It is a portrait of a woman seated in front of a curtain or a studio backdrop, wearing a traditional bridal outfit. The image has hand-colored details, specifically on the woman's skirt, bodice insert and belt decorations. She

Ill. 4a, Marcus Selmer, Bride from Birkeland, 1855. Daguerreotype in frame. The Photography Archive, University Museum of Bergen, University of Bergen. Inv. UBM-BY-05778d. Note the similarities with *Ill. 3a-b*; though a different model, several of the costume elements and the geographical attribution are the same. [See on Daguerreobase](#)

Ill. 4b, Detail of *Ill. 4a*.

THE DAGUERRETYPE STUDIO



cloth visible in a large number of unidentified daguerreotypes from Bergen.

One particularly interesting example comes from the Bergen City Museum. *Ill. 5* depicts Fredrik Meltzer (1779-1855), a signatory to the Norwegian Constitution of 1814 and designer of the Norwegian flag. Meltzer was one of Bergen's elite, and it is hardly a stretch to presume that Selmer, as Bergen's foremost photographer, both knew Meltzer and would have celebrated the opportunity to take his photograph. When he had this portrait taken, Meltzer was an elderly man, noticeable in the image by the blur caused by his shaking hand. Dressed in a top hat and holding a walking stick, he sits in a studio environment, leaning the elbow of his shaking arm on a small table covered with a Table-cloth. A large area of the table-cloth is visible, more than enough to confirm that its pattern is compatible with the cloth featured in the previous image.

wears an ornate golden crown and multiple golden brooches, also hand-colored. A piece of patterned fabric drapes innocuously over one of her arms and she holds something - a handkerchief? - in one hand. This is one of the twelve daguerreotypes positively attributed to Marcus Selmer in Bergen. Several factors aid this attribution; the plate is signed "Selmer 1855 Bergen" in the bottom left, the motif corresponds with Selmer's project of photographing regional costumes, and the plate was a personal gift from Selmer to the *Vestlandske Kunstindustrimuseum* before his death.¹⁰

Much could be said about this image - about the sitter's pose and expression, the details of her costume, or about Selmer's contribution to the wider project of documenting and distributing traditional Norwegian customs and costumes at home and abroad. In the context of visual identification however, the most interesting detail in this portrait is the fabric draped over the woman's arm and across her lap (*Ill. 4b*). Its pattern is identical to that of a table-

The fabric or table-cloth is more likely than not one of Selmer's studio props, and one of several items that can help us identify his images. Although one should be careful not to make rash, and potentially false, conclusions, the recurrence of this table-cloth in a large number of otherwise very visually similar daguerreotypes strongly points towards the same photographer or studio.¹¹

Once we attribute a daguerreotype to Selmer, other connections can be made with yet other daguerreotypes. We will follow the table-cloth to one last image, this time in a portrait of Mrs. Laura Hagelsteen (1814-1889) (*Ill. 6*). Like Meltzer, she leans an elbow on a table with the now familiar table-cloth, helping stabilize her body for the time it took to take the photograph. Pictured aged around 40, Hagelsteen's upright posture and solemn yet calm expression testifies to the special occasion it still was to have one's portrait taken. However, we find evidence in the Daguerreobase that visiting the photographer's

Ill. 5, Fredrik Meltzer, 1850-1855. Daguerreotype in frame. Bergen City Museum (Old Bergen Museum), inv. GBB-54627. [See on Daguerreobase](#)



Ill. 6, Laura Hagelsteen b. Thrap, c. 1855. Daguerreotype in frame. The Picture Collection, University of Bergen Library, inv. UBB-BS-OK-11662. [See on Daguerreobase](#)



studio was becoming more common. The Hagelsteen family had portraits and group portraits made on a number of occasions, and at least some of them still exist. In *Ill. 7*, Laura Hagelsteen is surrounded by family members, including her husband, two sons and a sister. It is very possible that the family came back to Selmer on several occasions, and that at least some of the unidentified images of this family were made by him. Similar connections can be made between Selmer and a number of prominent Bergen families all of whom at one point had a portrait taken featuring Selmer's table-cloth.

or more chairs and at least one patterned carpet. Some of these objects appear both in Selmer's daguerreotypes and in his later paper photographs, enabling us to connect newer photographic prints with the relatively small number of extant daguerreotypes.

Despite Marcus Selmer's position as a noted Bergen photographer, few of his images are known today. The attribution of anonymous daguerreotypes to Selmer opens up further avenues for research and scholarship based on his work, and is in itself of great value for Bergen's photographic history.

CONCLUSION

As the above examples testify, it is possible to identify and likely attribute daguerreotypes made by specific photographers or photographic studios based on objects that make repeated appearances in daguerreotype images. In the case of Marcus Selmer, such objects include the table-cloth discussed here, as well as one

Ill. 7, The Hagelsteen Family, c. 1857. Daguerreotype in frame. The Picture Collection, University of Bergen Library, inv. UBB-BS-OK-11674. [See on Daguerreobase](#)



BERGEN INSTITUTIONS PARTICIPATING IN THE DAGUERREOBASE PROJECT INCLUDE:

- *Bergen City Museum (Old Bergen Museum and Alvøen Manor)*
- *The Picture Collection, University of Bergen Library, University of Bergen*
- *The Photography Archive at the University Museum, University of Bergen*

Credit image: [Erik Veland on Flickr](#)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to Marianne Paasche, UiB

NOTES

1. Bjørn Ochsner. *Fotografer i og fra Danmark indtil år 1900*. 2nd ed. København: Det Kongelige Bibliotek, 1969, p. 482.
2. Marcus Selmer. *Daguerreotyp-Portraiter!* in *Bergen Adressecontoir*, September 11th, 1852. See Ill. 2.
3. Roger Seeman Erlandsen. *Frå kunstnar til handverkar. Fotografene i Bergen 1840-65. Part I: Text*. Hovedfagsoppgave i historie, Bergen: UiB, 1982, p. 53.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 166.
5. These images form part of a larger nation-building project that from the mid-1800s saw traditional Norwegian customs, costumes, fairy-tales and dialects enter the national consciousness through paintings, poetry and, like here, through photography.
6. Of 14 known Selmer daguerreotypes, 13 are currently registered in Daguerreobase.
7. Erlandsen, *Frå kunstnar til handverkar*, p. 98.
8. Digitization of the daguerreotypes as well as project management and administration took place at the Picture Collection at the University of Bergen Library on behalf of the participating institutions in the region.
9. The authors would like to stress that a more thorough investigation involving the various museum's records and databases, as well as the daguerreotypes themselves, will have to be conducted in order to verify the results described in this paper.
10. Private communication with Collection Manager Laila Lundberg Søreide at KODE Art Museums of Bergen, January 2015.
11. It is not known whether Selmer employed other daguerreotypists in his studio in the mid-1850s, however the stiff competition of these years suggests he had to concentrate on establishing a market. In later years he employed photographers and apprentices.

A veterinarian in the Napoleonic army

ABSTRACT

Because much information is lost in history, there are a lot of ‘anonymous’ portraits. We do not know the sitter anymore and even the photographer is almost always unknown.

This article focuses on the rare opportunity of identifying a Napoleonic veteran in a daguerreotype and telling the stories behind this portrait. Finding his relatives and his records in the archive of the *Grande armée* made it possible to reconstruct a part of his professional and private life.

As a Frenchman born in 1793 and living near Paris he grew up in a very tempestuous era. After his studies he served as a veterinarian in the army of Napoleon.

KEY WORDS: History of Photography, daguerreotype portrait, veterinarian, *école vétérinaire d’Alfort*, Napoleonic army veteran, First Empire, France

by WOUTER LAMBRECHTS, *teacher at [Karel de Grote University College and Encora](#), Antwerp, Belgium*

The occasion of writing this article was the rare presence of a number of private annotations to a notably early daguerreotype portrait. Pictures need a story in order to stay alive. In most cases the picture alone is not enough to tell it. Unlike many portraits that have become anonymous, or even storyless, over the years, these annotations enable us to give back a story to this picture, and the man, his name was *Jean Borgnon*, that is in it (III.1). The annotations even may reveal something about how photography was experienced in its early days.

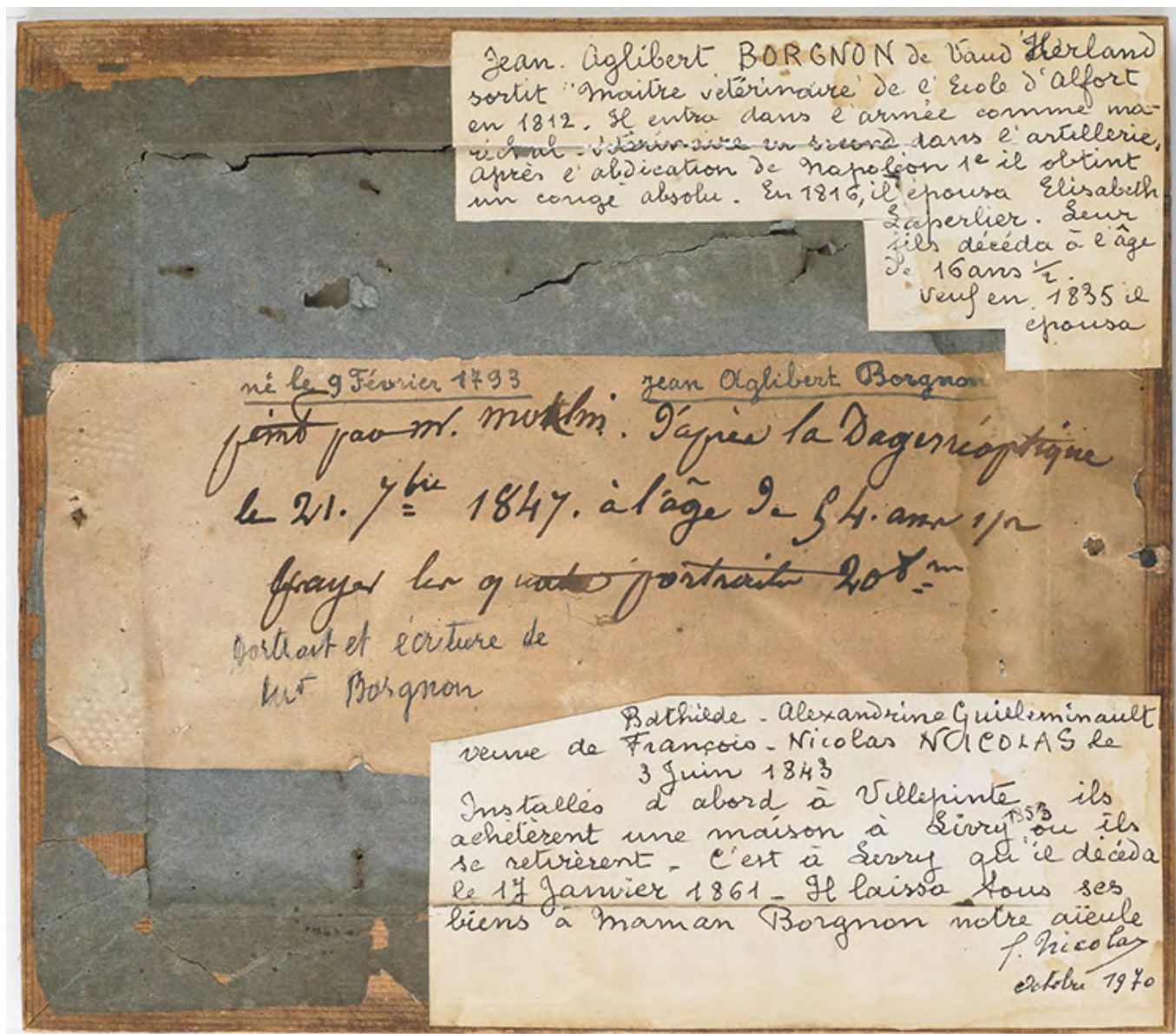
A considerable share of the surviving daguerreotype portraits were made for private purposes. As such, they rarely bear any captions because the audience knew the people who were in them. Exceptionally, a date of when the picture was taken or received may be found.

Another exception are *post mortem* portraits. The reason for possessing a portrait was (and still is) first and foremost to bring to mind a memory, a sentiment, of the person depicted. Since it was obvious to the contemporary environment, family and friends whose portrait it was, any addenda are usually of a later date. When the person in the picture has already passed away (long ago), and is unknown to the generations to come, some elucidation is needed to situate this particular portrait in its family context. This way, the portrait can regain some of its sentimental value. Whether these later annotations are completely reliable is anyone’s guess. While they mostly are the only clue to more information, some misgivings will inevitably arise. Obviously, anybody could add just about any kind of annotation to a photograph.

onic



Ill. 1, M. Moulin, Portrait of Jean Aglibert Borgnon. One quarter plate mounted with a paper window mat and a wooden frame, collection Wouter Lambrechts. [See on Daguerreobase](#)



Jean Aglibert BORGNON de Vaud'Hèrland
 sortit "Maitre vétérinaire" de l'Ecole d'Alfort
 en 1812. Il entra dans l'armée comme ma-
 réchal vétérinaire en second dans l'artillerie.
 Après l'abdication de Napoléon 1^e il obtint
 un congé absolu. En 1816, il épousa Elisabeth
 Laperlier. Leur
 fils décéda à l'âge
 de 16 ans 1/2.
 Veuf en 1835 il
 épousa

né le 9 Février 1793 Jean Aglibert Borgnon
 joint par M. MULLER. J'ai pris la Daguerreotypie
 le 21. / = 1847. à l'âge de 54. ans 1/2
 J'ay pris les quatre portraits 208.
 Portrait et écriture de
 M^r Borgnon

Bathilde - Alexandrine Guilleminault
 veuve de François - Nicolas NICOLAS le
 3 Juin 1843
 Installés d'abord à Villepinte, ils
 achetèrent une maison à Livry¹⁸⁵³ ou ils
 se retirèrent - C'est à Livry qu'il décéda
 le 17 Janvier 1861 - Il laissa tous ses
 biens à Maman Borgnon notre aieule
 f. Nicolas
 octobre 1970

Despite these misgivings, it is precisely two of such (partly later) annotations to the daguerreotype (III. 2) which were the beginning of a search that led to the person depicted in this portrait.

Specifically, the back of the framed daguerreotype portrait contains three annotations. The most elaborate one, dated October 1970, is a piece of family history that was carefully added in black ballpoint pen, but was originally composed in 1963 by Germaine Nicolas, a distant relative. Here is a transcription and translation:

Jean Aglibert BORGNON de Vaud'Hèrland sortit

"Maitre vétérinaire" de l'Ecole d'Alfort en 1812. Il entra dans l'armée comme maréchal vétérinaire en second dans l'artillerie. Après l'abdication de Napoléon 1^e il obtint un congé absolu. En 1816, il épousa Elisabeth Laperlier. Leur fils décéda à l'âge de 16 ans 1/2. Veuf en 1835 il épousa Bathilde - Alexandrine Guilleminault veuve de François - Nicolas NICOLAS le 3 juin 1843[.] Installés d'abord à Villepinte ils achetèrent une maison à Livry 1853 ou ils se retirèrent - C'est à Livry qu'il décéda le 17 Janvier 1861 - Il laissa tous ses biens à Maman Borgnon notre aieule G. Nicolas Octobre 1970

III. 2, Verso of the framed portrait of Jean Aglibert Borgnon with the annotations private collection Wouter Lambrechts

[Jean Aglibert BORGNON from Vaud'Hèrland graduated "Veterinary master" from the college of Alfort in 1812. He entered the army as veterinary *maréchal en second* in the artillery. After the abdication of Napoleon 1st he was given an absolute discharge. In 1816, he married Elisabeth Laperlier. Their son died aged 16.5 years. Widowed in 1835, he married Bathilde-Alexandrine Guilleminault widow of François - Nicolas NICOLAS the 3^d of June 1843. Settled at first in Villepinte they bought a house in Livry in 1853 where they retired. It was in Livry that he died the 17th of January 1861. He left all his belongings to Mother Borgnon, our grandmother.
G. Nicolas, October 1970]

A second, undated annotation in blue fountain pen (possibly written over an earlier identical annotation in pencil) reads that Jean Aglibert Borgnon was *né 9 Février 1793* "born 9 February 1793" and that it was the *Portrait et écriture de Mr Borgnon "Portrait and writing of Mr Borgnon"*.

This writing that is here claimed to stem from the person in the picture himself, in brown fountain pen, reads:

*peint par m. mo[?u]¹ lin d'après la Dagerréoptique [sic!]
le 21. 7^{bre} 1847. à l'âge de 54. ans ½
[?p]² [ayé] les quatre portraits 20 F^{rs}*

[Painted by M. Moulin. After the Dagerréoptique [sic!] technique.

21 September 1847. At the age of 54.5 years
Paid the four portraits 20 Francs]

While I will come back to the more interesting bits of content in this note, it may already be pointed out that the date mentioned in this note receives independent support from the picture's frame. The European case of this daguerreotype can be safely assigned to "Group 1"³. It contains a simple paper window mat with an octagonal window and simple hand-drawn decorative lining. The daguerreotype plate is only separated from the protective glass plate by this paper. The format of the daguerreotype may be defined as European

quarter-plate. Finally, the glazed package is enclosed in a simple veneered wooden frame with two dark inlaid ornamental lines. This frame and the case are kept together by means of a piece of blue paper. This kind of European presentation is typical of the 1840s. Because the case has not yet been opened for restoration, it is not possible to say whether a plate maker's mark is present.

Turning from the actual portrait to the quest for the man behind it, we find that Jean Borgnon's parents lived in a hamlet called Vaudherland not far from Paris in Val d'Oise, where his father was a municipal deputy. The family also ran an inn. According to the new republican calendar Jean Aglibert Borgnon, son of Jean Baptiste Borgnon and Marguerite Vaillant, is born on *21 Pluviôse an I*, nineteen days after the execution of Louis XVI. This was during the upheaval of the start of the French First Republic. Robespierre's reign of terror was on the verge of bursting out.

The inn's son spends his youth in his small birthplace. When sixteen years old, Jean-albert *Borgnon de Vauderhand* [sic]⁴ officially started in November (1^{er} 9^{bre} 1809) his veterinary studies at the *École Impériale Vétérinaire* in Alfort. He studied in the military department of the veterinarian college (III.3). It was also this *Départemens* [sic] *Corps Militaires* that paid for his enrolment fee (*E. civil grat.*)⁵ After three years of study, Jean Borgnon was graduated by the jury in October 1812 as *Maitre Vétérinaire*. At the age of 19, November 1812, he finally left the school. In this year 23 students in total graduated from Alfort, three of them, including Jean Borgnon,⁶ with a military degree.⁷

The French Revolution introduced sovereignty of the people as a foundational quality of the state. As a result, the defense of the republic became the responsibility of the people and no longer of mercenaries. Citizen Jean Borgnon fulfilled this duty as a conscript in the Napoleonic army. In 1813, 1611 conscripts were called up from his department, *Seine-et-Oise*.⁸ This new batch of conscripts was

ÉCOLE D'ÉCONOMIE RURALE VÉTÉRINAIRE D'ALFORT.											
NOMS, PAYS ou ÂGES.	ENTRÉE à L'ÉCOLE.	DÉPARTEMENTS ou CORPS MILITAIRES.	ANATOMIE DES ANIMAUX HISTOLOGIE VÉTÉRINAIRE.	BOTANIQUE PHARMACIE.	NATUREL MÉTÉOROLOGIE JURISPRUDENCE.	EXTÉRIEUR ou DÉMONSTRATION.	FORGE, PÉTIQUE ou DE PASTIQUE FERRURE.	MALADIES ou MÉTÉOROLOGIE MÉTÉOROLOGIE.	BANDAGES ou OPÉRATIONS.	SORTIE de L'ÉCOLE.	OBSERVATIONS.
<i>De...</i>	8 sept 1812	<i>Orléans</i>	nat.	bot.	nat.	ext.	E d'ex.	mal. int.	ban.		<i>Sortie par...</i>
<i>De...</i>	13 oct 12	<i>Orléans</i>	nat.	phar.	ext.	ext.	E de p.	mal. ep.	mal. ext.	ope.	
<i>De...</i>	10 oct 12	<i>Orléans</i>	nat.	bot.	nat.	ext.	E d'ex.	mal. int.	ban.		<i>Sortie le...</i>
<i>De...</i>	21 oct 12	<i>Orléans</i>	nat.	phar.	ext.	ext.	E de p.	mal. ep.	mal. ext.	ope.	
<i>De...</i>	10 oct 12	<i>Orléans</i>	nat.	bot.	nat.	ext.	E d'ex.	mal. int.	ban.		<i>Sortie le...</i>
<i>De...</i>	10 oct 12	<i>Orléans</i>	nat.	phar.	ext.	ext.	E de p.	mal. ep.	mal. ext.	ope.	
<i>De...</i>	10 oct 12	<i>Orléans</i>	nat.	bot.	nat.	ext.	E d'ex.	mal. int.	ban.		<i>Sortie le...</i>
<i>De...</i>	10 oct 12	<i>Orléans</i>	nat.	phar.	ext.	ext.	E de p.	mal. ep.	mal. ext.	ope.	
<i>De...</i>	10 oct 12	<i>Orléans</i>	nat.	bot.	nat.	ext.	E d'ex.	mal. int.	ban.		<i>Sortie le...</i>
<i>De...</i>	10 oct 12	<i>Orléans</i>	nat.	phar.	ext.	ext.	E de p.	mal. ep.	mal. ext.	ope.	
<i>De...</i>	10 oct 12	<i>Orléans</i>	nat.	bot.	nat.	ext.	E d'ex.	mal. int.	ban.		<i>Sortie le...</i>
<i>De...</i>	10 oct 12	<i>Orléans</i>	nat.	phar.	ext.	ext.	E de p.	mal. ep.	mal. ext.	ope.	
<i>De...</i>	10 oct 12	<i>Orléans</i>	nat.	bot.	nat.	ext.	E d'ex.	mal. int.	ban.		<i>Sortie le...</i>
<i>De...</i>	10 oct 12	<i>Orléans</i>	nat.	phar.	ext.	ext.	E de p.	mal. ep.	mal. ext.	ope.	
<i>De...</i>	10 oct 12	<i>Orléans</i>	nat.	bot.	nat.	ext.	E d'ex.	mal. int.	ban.		<i>Sortie le...</i>
<i>De...</i>	10 oct 12	<i>Orléans</i>	nat.	phar.	ext.	ext.	E de p.	mal. ep.	mal. ext.	ope.	
<i>De...</i>	10 oct 12	<i>Orléans</i>	nat.	bot.	nat.	ext.	E d'ex.	mal. int.	ban.		<i>Sortie le...</i>
<i>De...</i>	10 oct 12	<i>Orléans</i>	nat.	phar.	ext.	ext.	E de p.	mal. ep.	mal. ext.	ope.	
<i>De...</i>	10 oct 12	<i>Orléans</i>	nat.	bot.	nat.	ext.	E d'ex.	mal. int.	ban.		<i>Sortie le...</i>
<i>De...</i>	10 oct 12	<i>Orléans</i>	nat.	phar.	ext.	ext.	E de p.	mal. ep.	mal. ext.	ope.	
<i>De...</i>	10 oct 12	<i>Orléans</i>	nat.	bot.	nat.	ext.	E d'ex.	mal. int.	ban.		<i>Sortie le...</i>
<i>De...</i>	10 oct 12	<i>Orléans</i>	nat.	phar.	ext.	ext.	E de p.	mal. ep.	mal. ext.	ope.	
<i>De...</i>	10 oct 12	<i>Orléans</i>	nat.	bot.	nat.	ext.	E d'ex.	mal. int.	ban.		<i>Sortie le...</i>
<i>De...</i>	10 oct 12	<i>Orléans</i>	nat.	phar.	ext.	ext.	E de p.	mal. ep.	mal. ext.	ope.	
<i>De...</i>	10 oct 12	<i>Orléans</i>	nat.	bot.	nat.	ext.	E d'ex.	mal. int.	ban.		<i>Sortie le...</i>
<i>De...</i>	10 oct 12	<i>Orléans</i>	nat.	phar.	ext.	ext.	E de p.	mal. ep.	mal. ext.	ope.	

needed to reinforce Napoleon's decimated *Grande armée* after the utter defeat following the Russian campaign.

In 1800, the French Consular army's artillery was thoroughly reorganized to make it more flexible. During the French Revolution, transport of supplies for artillery was still carried out by civilians. This hampered the quick deployment of these units. By means of a reorganization that was fixed on January 3rd, 1800, the First Consul intended to integrate the artillery's logistics into the army's activities. This led to the creation of the *Bataillons du train d'artillerie*, which were responsible for the supply of cannon balls and gunpowder. The same year, on the 17th of March, it was decreed that each battalion had to have an *artiste vétérinaire*.⁹

This structure was novel in European warfare, and was maintained during Napoleon's entire reign and further extended to create a formidable weapon.

According to the decree of 15th January 1813 every battalion of the *train d'artillerie* had to have two veterinaries. One *maréchal-vétérinaire en premier* and one *maréchal-vétérinaire en second*.¹⁰

About a year after graduating, Jean was appointed *maréchal-vétérinaire en second du Bataillon*. According to his files he resided at that time in Pontoise. The decision (N°743) of his appointment was taken on 13th June 1813.¹¹ The title meant that Borgnon now mostly worked as a blacksmith rather than as a medical veterinary (III.6). On 22nd June 1813 he was incorporated in the 9^e *Bataillon bis du train d'artillerie*.¹² The *décret de Moscou* of 1813 ordained the division of labour between the various ranks, also specifying that the *maréchal-vétérinaire en second* had to remain in the barracks during campaigning. The horses of the spare troops also had to be taken care of. The *maréchal-vétérinaire en premier* accompanied the squadrons that fought.¹³ Borgnon, then, after having received this

III. 3, Excerpt from the pupils register, Jean-Albert [sic.] Borgnon is mentioned in the last line. Collection Archives départementales du Val-de-Marne



Ills 4, 5, 6 The uniforms of the *train d'artillerie*, gouache of the brothers Suhr (1806 -1814). Private collection

order from the administrative head (*Conseil d'administration*) of his army unit, swiftly had to report back to the barracks (*dépôt*) of his unit.

The monthly pay Borgnon received for his commission was calculated on his rank and seniority. Until the end of his active service, less than 10 years after he entered the army, he earned 30 francs a month. Senior members with more than 20 years of service could earn up to 66 francs.¹⁴

The artillery regiments on foot and the battalions were rarely used as units. Instead, a smaller company was added to a larger army unit. This led to a very diverse deployment of these *train d'artillerie* battalions. Since we do not know which company Jean Borgnon belonged to, it is almost impossible to find out if his company actually participated in actions during the period 1813-1814. Unfortunately for him, even though this battalion had been established since 1805,¹⁵ it never became eligible for the *Armes d'Honneur*.¹⁶

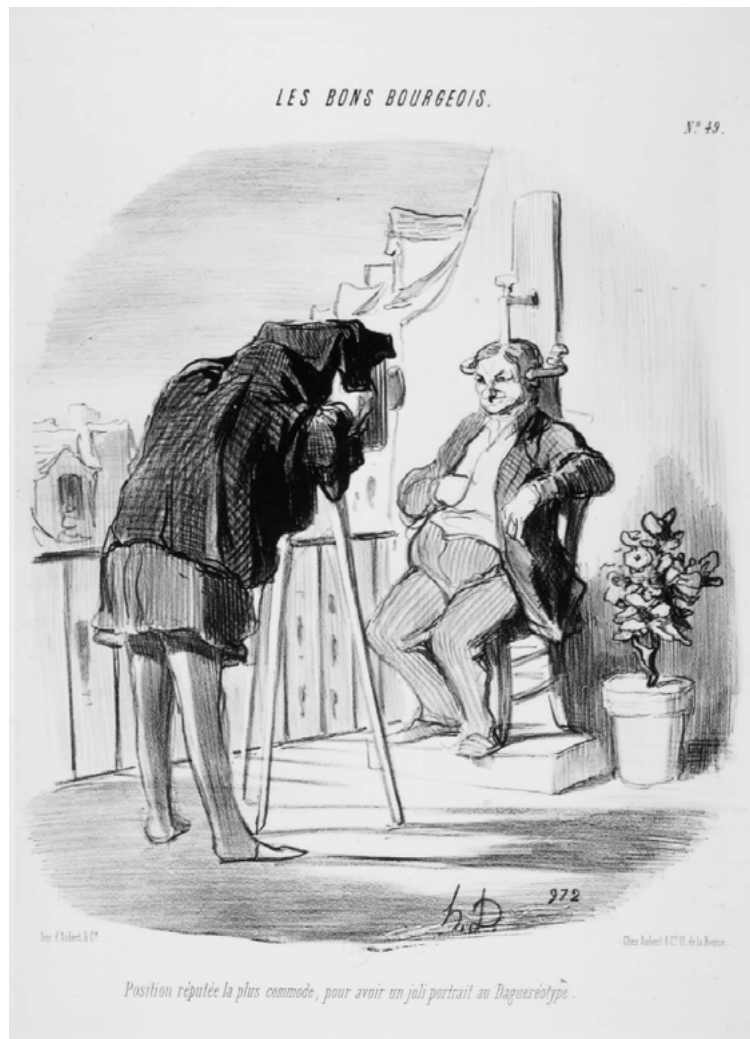
During the Consulate and at the beginning of the first Empire, veterinarians did not have specific uniforms. This changed with the *décret d'Anvers* (30th September 1811). Their uniform now had to conform to the "Bardin" directive (1812) and had a lighter shade of blue than the common "imperial blue". The embroidered emblem on the turnbacks of their coats for this group of army officers was a silver grenade. They also wore a black leather shoulder belt pouch (*giberne*) with a silver horse head to a white lanyard, also in leather. Their swords were the same as those of the regiment to which they were assigned. For the *train d'artillerie* this was the sabre-briquet (a short infantry sword) or the sword of the light cavalry.¹⁷ (*Ills. 4, 5*)

Jean Borgnon stayed in the emperor's army until after the first abdication of Napoleon I. During the early days of the Restoration, a little more than a month after the official coronation of Louis XVIII, he was given an absolute discharge from military service (*congé absolu*), only to briefly re-enter service after Napoleon escaped

from Elba, during the "Hundred Days". After this brief comeback, Jean Borgnon settled in his birth village, Vaudherland, to practice once again his vocation as a veterinary. Two years later, on the 3rd of June 1816, he married Marguerite Elisabeth Laperlier in Gonesse. From this marriage comes a single son, Jacques Alexandre, who unfortunately died in 1833 at the premature age of 16. Furthermore on March 13th, 1835, fate met Borgnon again and he became a widower. Eight years after, on June 3rd, 1843, he remarried to *Bathilde Alexandrine Guilleminault*,¹⁸ the 50-year-old widow of the late François Nicolas Nicolas,¹⁹ a butcher. The newly wed couple first settled in Villepinte, but after some years bought a house in Livry to enjoy their retirement. Villepinte is also the village where Jean Borgnon died on January 17th, 1861, at the age of 68. Childless, he bequeathed his entire estate to his second wife, known as "*Maman Borgnon*" and to the offspring of her first marriage. Bathilde Guilleminault lived on to the age of 85 and died April 18th, 1878 while in Paris.

So finally we have also arrived at 1847, the year in which Borgnon had his portrait made. By now, we know a bit more about him. He is a retired veteran, happily remarried but sadly childless, a proud house owner. This is the man that paid a photographer to take his picture. Now, unlike today, having your picture taken was not an ordinary thing to do back in 1847. Not only did it take longer, it was also still fairly expensive.

An important goal of having a lasting portrait was of course to have a striking, clear, and therefore sharp resemblance. Yet despite the enormous progress, the portraitee still had to sit dead-still for several seconds. Only then was it possible to avoid motion blur. To this purpose, photographers used a variety of aids such as special comfortable chairs and less comfortable head-clamps. These attributes inspired cartoonists and critics to the clever description of studios as "torture chambers". This photographic work environment surely will have contributed to the event of having one's picture taken. The caricature by Honoré



Daumier, from the same year when Borgnon's portrait was made, wittily depicts this situation.

High prices meant that daguerreotypes were a luxury for most people. In the early years (around 1842), prices for a single photograph ranged between 10 and 50 francs. By 1846 this had decreased to 2 to 20 francs.²⁰ These more democratic prices meant that more people could afford it. Yet times had been rough first with the *Monarchie de Juillet* and also because of the agricultural crisis. Basic products such as bread became considerably more expensive.²¹

Luxuries such as photography were among the first things many people could drop. Another reason why photographs were still fairly exclusive items was the simple fact that there

were not too many active photographers in these early days. According to the *Chambre de Commerce*, the whole of Paris only boasted 56 active photographic entrepreneurs in 1847-1848, on a population of around a million Parisians.²² The success of this new medium, though, would lead to a great increase in this number during the more stable regime of the Second Republic and after the invention of the wet collodion process, with no less than 365 registered *artistes photographes* in Paris by 1868.²³

These possible concerns of being 'tortured' and even having to pay for it did not frighten Jean Borgnon. Usually people went to a photographer for a special family occasion. Memorable events in one's life could take many shapes, including birth, decease, a wedding or simply the sealing off of friendships

III. 7, Daumier Honoré, *Les Bons Bourgeois: Position réputée la plus commode, pour avoir un joli portrait au Dagueréotype* [sic.] from *Le Charivari* 24 July 1847



or family relations. What about Jean Borgnon? Many veterans from the Napoleonic war appear in portraits with the so-called *Sainte-Hélène medal*, known for its chocolate hue. (See *Ill. 6*) This medal was instituted in 1857 by the emperor Napoleon III, to celebrate all living veterans of the campaigns between 1792 and 1815.

In principle, as Mr Borgnon had died after 1857, and his military career officially lasted from 20th July 1813 until 25th July 1814, he was entitled to receive it as living veteran.²⁴ However, Borgnon's daguerreotype had already been made in 1847, before the medal could have been presented. As it is, portraits with such medals postdate the heydays of the daguerreotype. In the absence of any military insignia, it is thus unlikely that Borgnon wanted to be identified as a war veteran in his portrait. The only clue we get from the portrait are the (official?) documents Borgnon is holding. While they do not reveal anything at all about their nature, they must have been important enough for Borgnon to clearly display them.

A further indication of the importance attached by the 54-year old Borgnon to the portrait is the

Ill. 6, Médaille de Sainte-Hélène

fairly extensive personal note attached at the back. Not only does the note give the precise date, it also strikingly narrows down Borgnon's age to a half-year window. He also mentions that four portraits were made, and that he paid 20 francs in total for them, or 5 francs each. Both the presentation with frame and the formal mention of the number and price of the portraits bought makes it unlikely that the photographer, M. Moulin, was an amateur from Borgnon's inner circle. More likely, Moulin was an itinerant daguerreotypist. The neatly dressed Jean Borgnon poses in front of a white cloth, which serves as a clear background. This rudimentary studio set-up and the fairly flat light could indicate that the picture was taken in open air.²⁵ As for the other portraits, we can only guess who figures in those. It seems likely they include a photograph of his second wife. Did he do multiple portraits of his and, possibly, his wife, to present as a gift?

While the occasion will inevitably remain mysterious to us, the first sentence of the note is a notable witness to the way photography, which was not yet an ubiquitous mass medium, was perceived at the time. It reads *peint par m. moulin d'après la Dagerréoptique* [sic!], or "painted by M. Moulin after the Dagerréoptics (technique)". It was not unusual to link photography to the more familiar technique of painting, in order to comprehend and describe this unfamiliar form of depiction. Apparently the name this new discovery received from Daguerre caused some confusion with Borgnon, who renders it as *dagerréoptique* instead of *daguerreotype*. It was, and still is, quite common to spell this difficult term in various odd ways. What is striking here is how Borgnon, in an intelligent attempt of making sense of the term, has blended Daguerre with optics.

Certain questions inevitably remained unanswered. Yet it has been possible to make use of this typical daguerreotype to reconstruct a 'petite histoire' of Jean Borgnon. By furnishing an anonymous portrait with a story, the image regains contextual meaning beyond the visuals captured by the photographer on his ground

glass. Conversely, the portrait of this man lent a face to an otherwise matter of fact-like mention in a long family tree. Contact with his relatives revealed that the three other daguerreotypes had stayed in the family for some generations. Afterwards they gradually spread when inheritances were divided,

and eventually were sold; a common and understandable practice which, unfortunately, leads to the loss of much original context and history.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks to Joost Welten for tracing the dossier on Jean Aglibert Borgnon. Without his prompting and motivation this article would never have seen the light. I would also like to thank Marie José Stutz for providing information about her family history. Many thanks also go to Peter Petré for his feedback on a Dutch draft version and for translating the final text into English.

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Family Memories from Lake



ABSTRACT

The Villa Vigoni German-Italian Centre for European Excellence preserves the historical family collection of the German banker and art patron Enrico Mylius (1769-1854). This consists of paintings, sculptures, furniture, books, engravings and photographs, also including 8 daguerreotypes which testify to the interest that this new technique enjoyed ever since it was first announced. This paper presents some historical, artistic and iconographic annotations, assisted by a comparison with paintings and sculptures dating to the same period and with the same subject matter, in order to show how, at the time these daguerreotypes were made, the first timid and in many ways contradictory signs were emerging of a process that was still barely discernible but that would eventually lead photography to create its own representational modalities independent from the other arts.

KEY WORDS: Villa Mylius-Vigoni, Villas on Lake Como, Enrico Mylius (1769-1854), Antonio de Kramer (1806-1853), Philibert Perraud (1815-après 1863), Luigia Vitali Vigoni (1809-1884), Francesco Hayez (1791-1882), Abresch

Como

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The Villa Vigoni cultural centre was created in 1986 by the governments of Italy and Germany after Ignazio Vigoni Medici di Marignano bequeathed two beautiful old villas in Loveno di Menaggio on Lake Como (Villa Mylius-Vigoni and Villa Garovaglio Ricci), to the Federal Republic of Germany. With this generous action, the Lombard aristocrat wished to celebrate the Italian-German past of a branch of his family and to make a valuable contribution to the already significant tradition of humanistic and scientific exchanges between the two countries. One of the two villas was particularly important as it contained the collection of Enrico Mylius (1769-1854) in addition to those of his indirect descendants, belonging to the Vigoni family.

Enrico Mylius moved to Milan from his native Frankfurt in the late eighties of the eighteenth century in order to deal with his family's business interests and he soon became well established, successfully expanding his commercial operations to include silk production and banking. At the same time as his extraordinary economic rise Mylius also funded a number of philanthropic initiatives, the most important of which was undoubtedly the foundation in 1841 of the Society for the Encouragement of Arts and Crafts (*Società d'Incoraggiamento di Arti e Mestieri*) in Milan, which was the first school to be set up in Italy for the training of specialized technicians, and which still exists today. A lover of literature and art, he was friends with both Goethe and Alessandro Manzoni and it was thanks to him that they got in contact and established a relationship that culminated in the translation and publication of the Milanese writer's work in German.

Mylius was also a patron of many painters and sculptors including Bertel Thorvaldsen

and Francesco Hayez. As an art collector he paid particular attention to the social relevance and allegorical meaning of the works he commissioned and acquired, and in his residence in Milan as well as in his villas at Sesto San Giovanni and Loveno di Menaggio he assembled not only paintings and sculpture but also, in accordance with the tastes and inclinations typical of his century, various curious artefacts, books and engravings. A large part of his collection is still conserved at Villa Mylius-Vigoni (Ill. 1) that now belongs to the Villa Vigoni German-Italian Centre. The many objects present here include eight daguerreotypes dating to the time of Enrico Mylius, consisting of seven portraits and the reproduction of a painting with a historical theme.

The popularity of daguerreotype portraits in upper-bourgeois and aristocratic families in the mid 19th century clearly shows how open they were to technical progress and novelties, such as that of photography. However, it should also be emphasized that the innovative medium, albeit with the many limitations of those years when the technology of photography was just beginning, still closely adhered to the aesthetic and iconographic canons of a long and well-established artistic tradition.

In addition to their indisputable historical and documentary value, the daguerreotypes of the Villa Mylius-Vigoni collection lend themselves very well to a comparison with the visual arts of painting and sculpture. The *Portrait of Luigia Vitali Vigoni with her little daughter Teresa* (Ill. 2) is striking for its dramatic atmosphere of sad and poignant resignation. In the way Luigia tenderly holds her seriously ill child, we are reminded of the Christian iconography traditionally employed for the representation of the Virgin and the Christ child with a red



Ill. 2, Three-quarter length daguerreotype portrait of Luigia Vitali Vigoni (1809-1884) with her little daughter Teresa Vigoni (1844-1848) on her lap. The image dated 1847-48 is attributed to the chemist Antonio de Kramer (1806-1853). Inv. F137, Photographic collection, Historical Archive of Villa Vigoni. Curiously the plate bears the stamped name of ABRESCH, who was a German daguerreotypist. Maybe the chemist de Kramer might have bought his plates? Unfortunately, we do not know much about the activity of Abresch with the exception of a documented trip he did in Italy and Turkey in 1845. [See on Daguerreobase](#)

Ill. 3, Unidentified daguerreotypist, Luigia Vigoni portrayed in profile while reading a book, 1848, inv. F130, Photographic collection, Historical Archive of Villa Vigoni. [See on Daguerreobase](#)

Ill. 4, Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *La Liseuse*, oil painting, 1770 ca., National Gallery of Art, Washington

Ill. 5, Pietro Magni, *La leggitrice*, detail of marble sculpture 1856 ca. Civica Galleria di Arte Moderna, Milan



Portrait of Luigia Vitali Vigoni (Ill. 3), it is not to be confused with Renaissance portraits of a lady holding a book. In this case a comparison with Jean-Honoré Fragonard's famous painting *La Liseuse* (c. 1770) (Ill. 4) suggests a French origin for this theme that was very popular during the Romantic period in Italy, and that occurs many times around the middle of the nineteenth century in works such as the beautiful marble sculpture by Pietro Magni, *La leggitrice* (The Reader) (Ill. 5), which dates to 1856, a few years later than our daguerreotype.

The *Portrait of Enrico Mylius (Ill. 6)* is the first known photographic image of the German banker, datable to the mid-forties. A comparison with two previous portraits of him (Ills. 7 and 8) shows how, thanks to the emergence of photography, a well-established tradition of portraiture by means of paintings or engravings was both continued and renewed. While in the painting and the etching Mylius is depicted with all the official trappings that were typical of middle-class iconography, which can be seen in his pose, his clothes, the reading glasses and the letter in his hands, in the daguerreotype made by Philibert Perraud the austere and self-possessed atmosphere is softened by the sitter's ironically amused smile. This introduces us to a more private and domestic dimension in which even a hairpiece can be worn with ease. Thus, in contrast to the first two pictures, this marvellous image reveals to us some unsuspected character traits of Enrico and it invites us to share in the cheerful bonhomie and sympathy that the

coral necklace. In this type of sacred painting the coral, a symbol of protection from disease, also foreshadows Christ's Passion and death, due to its similarity to the colour of blood, just as in the daguerreotype the necklace worn by the young Teresa suggests a similar interpretation of the scene and reminds us of the sad fate of the child, who would soon die of her illness.

The typically 19th century reference to the theme of reading, as can be seen in the





German banker seems to express. Unlike these portraits the last daguerreotype I will consider here is the record of a painting with a historical subject, which is rather difficult to identify (Ill. 9). It is an eighteenth century scene in which some churchmen are addressing a group of soldiers and civilians in front of a rustic landscape in the background that is dominated by a large windmill. A comparison with some figure studies in a sketchbook preserved in the collections of Villa Mylius-Vigoni (inv. G-45) tells us that the painter was certainly the Venetian artist Giovanni Servi (1799/1800 - 1885). The daguerreotype was made by the photographers Heyland and son, who had a studio in the central *Piazza Duomo* of Milan. In this case the date could be subsequent to that of the previous daguerreotypes, which

were created between 1845 and 1850, since this technique for the reproduction of paintings was still used throughout the 1860s, due to its superior reproduction of details compared to photography on paper.



Ill. 6, Three quarter length portrait of Herinrich Mylius (1769-1854) seated in armchair with one arm resting on the right. He wears a wig. The plate bears the stamped name of Abresch on the lower left corner, nevertheless the daguerreotype is signed "Perraud" on the lower right corner of the paper mat. Philibert Perraud (attr.), 1844-1845, inv. F131, Photographic collection, Historcal Archive of Villa Vigoni. [See on Daguerreobase](#)

Ill. 7, Carlo Raimondi, Ritratto di Enrico Mylius, etching 1850-5, Historcal Archive of Villa Vigoni

Ill. 8, Pelagio Pelagi, portrait of Enrico Mylius, oil painting, 1831, Historcal Archive of Villa Vigoni



III. 9, Francesco Heyland ,reproduction of an historical painting by Giovanni Servi (1800-1885), 1799/1800 , inv. F134, Photographic collection, Historical Archive of Villa Vigoni. [See on Daguerreobase](#)

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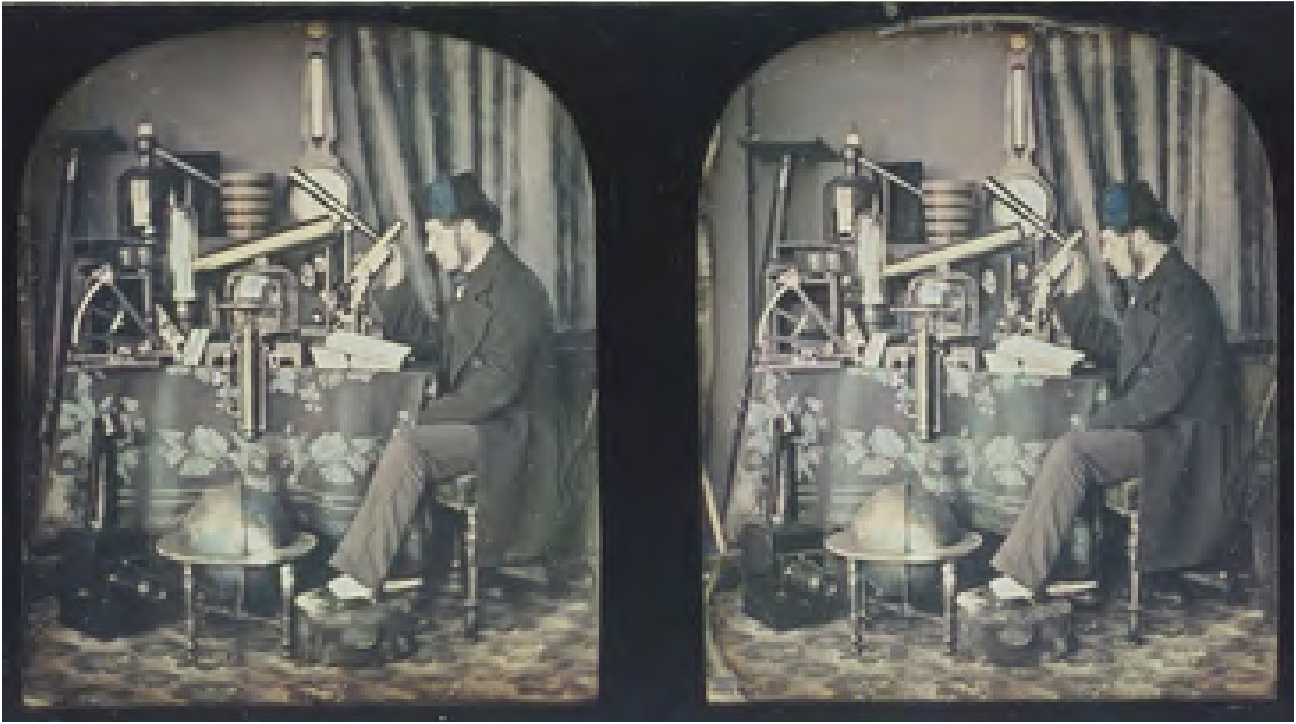
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Unidentified daguerreotypist, Study of a man with an assemblage of scientific equipment, stereo daguerreotype, National Media Museum, inv. 1951-323_8. [See on Daguerreobase](#)