

Release Date: August 13, 2004

## MAJOR EXHIBITION OF VICTORIAN PHOTOGRAPHER ROGER FENTON OPENS NEW GALLERIES FOR PHOTOGRAPHS AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, WASHINGTON



Roger Fenton

*Self Portrait, ca. 1854*

albumen silver print,

19.5 x 14.7 cm (7 11/16 x 5 13/16)

Private collection, London

Washington, DC-- **All the Mighty World: The Photographs of Roger Fenton, 1852-1860**, presenting 91 works by the groundbreaking 19th-century photographer, will be the first exhibition of Fenton's work in this country in more than 15 years. On view from October 17, 2004 through January 2, 2005, it will also be the first exhibition in the National Gallery of Art's newly renovated and dedicated galleries for photographs,

located on the ground floor of the West Building.

**All the Mighty World: The Photographs of Roger Fenton, 1852-1860** will be on view at the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, February 1 through April 24, 2005, and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, May 24 through August 21, 2005. The exhibition will also travel to Tate Britain, London, where it will be on view from September 21, 2005 through January 2, 2006. The exhibition was organized by the National Gallery of Art, Washington, The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

"While Fenton's photography career lasted little more than a decade, he produced a body of work that represents some of the greatest accomplishments in the history of the medium, reflected by the breadth of his work and scope of his influence," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art, Washington. "We are grateful to the many lenders who have made this exhibition possible, and to the funders for their invaluable support."

## **EXHIBITION SUPPORT**

The exhibition at the National Gallery of Art is made possible through the generous support of the Trellis Fund and The Ryna and Melvin Cohen Family Foundation.

The exhibition is supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.

## **THE EXHIBITION**

One of the most important 19th-century photographers, Roger Fenton exerted a profound influence on the medium despite the fact that his career lasted only eleven years. **All the Mighty World**, the exhibition title, is a phrase from Wordsworth's poem about Tintern Abbey, where Fenton frequently photographed, and where the poet declared himself a lover "of all that we behold/from this green earth; of all the mighty world/or eye and ear, both what they half-create,/and what they perceive." These lines echo the reverence for nature evident in Fenton's photographs and also reveal his great ambition for both his own photographs and the medium itself.

Born in 1819, the grandson of a wealthy industrialist, Fenton set aside his law studies in the early 1840s to become a painter. After studying with Michel-Martin Drölling in Paris, he returned to London and worked with Charles Lucy, a member of the Royal Academy. By 1852, however, he had made his first photographs and become an important force in English photography.

In the first few years of his career he helped to found the Photographic Society (which later became the Royal Photographic Society) and made landscape and architectural views that evidenced such great technical ability and aesthetic refinement that his work came to the attention of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert.

Commissioned by Thomas Agnew and with letters of introduction from Prince Albert, Fenton traveled to Balaclava (in present-day southern Ukraine) to document the Crimean War. Because his project was a commercial venture, one designed to produce a portfolio of photographs of heroes of the war, his photographs generally present a positive view of the campaign. The exhibition includes portraits of generals who led the armies, such as *General Bosquet* (1855), as well as the picturesque and exotic individuals who populated the region, as in *Group of Croat Chiefs* (1855). But he also photographed the soldiers who bore the brunt of the fighting, and their ravaged faces demonstrate the war's true toll.

On his return to England, Fenton made ambitious studies of the English countryside, its cathedrals, country houses, and landscape. Traveling throughout England, Scotland, and Wales, he photographed historic sites such as Lindisfarne Priory, Holy Isle, as well as numerous cathedrals, such as Ely, Salisbury, and Lichfield, and country houses such as Harewood House. While several of Fenton's photographs on display are distinguished by their evocative depictions of light, atmosphere, and place, others demonstrate his deep appreciation of the solidity, permanence, and integrity of English architecture. The exhibition also includes his portraits of the royal family, a series of still lifes, and studies of figures in Oriental costume, such as *Reclining Odalisque* (1858) and *Pasha and Bayadere* (1858).

As his career progressed, Fenton pushed himself to tackle ever greater challenges, for example, striving to photograph clouds and the landscape using only one negative or

interiors of darkly-lit cathedrals, difficult technical problems at the time. Some of his last compositions, as demonstrated by *The Queen's Target, No. 56* (1860) and *The Long Walk, Windsor* (1860) are radically simplified and daringly bold.

For reasons still unknown, Fenton sold all of his equipment and negatives at an auction in November 1862 and resigned from the Royal Photographic Society. He died seven years later at the age of 50.

Lenders to the exhibition include: the National Museum of Photography, Film and Television, Bradford, England; the Royal Library, Windsor Castle; the Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal; the Gilman Paper Company Collection, New York; The J. Paul Getty Museum; the Victoria and Albert Museum and The British Museum, London; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the National Gallery of Art, Washington, and private collections in the United States and Europe.

## **CURATORS AND CATALOGUE**

The curators of the exhibition are Sarah Greenough, curator and head of the department of photographs, National Gallery of Art, Washington; Malcolm Daniel, curator in charge, department of photographs, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; and Gordon Baldwin, associate curator at The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a major catalogue with essays by the three organizing curators, as well as other leading Fenton scholars. **All the Mighty World: The Photographs of Roger Fenton, 1852-1860** will be published by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, the National Gallery of Art, and The J. Paul Getty Museum, in association with Yale University Press (320 pp., 85 tritone and 50 duotone illustrations). The catalogue will be available in early October for \$65 hardcover/\$45 softcover, and can be ordered by calling (800)-697-9350, (202) 842-6002, or by emailing [mailorder@nga.gov](mailto:mailorder@nga.gov).

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## General Information

The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden are at all times free to the public. They are located on the National Mall between 3rd and 9th Streets along Constitution Avenue NW and are open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Gallery is closed on December 25 and January 1. With the exception of the atrium and library, the galleries in the East Building will be closing gradually beginning in July 2013 and will remain closed for approximately three years for Master Facilities Plan and renovations. For specific updates on gallery closings, visit [www.nga.gov/renovation](http://www.nga.gov/renovation) (<http://www.nga.gov/renovation>) .

For information call (202) 737-4215 or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176, or visit the Gallery's website at [www.nga.gov](http://www.nga.gov). Follow the Gallery on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt](http://www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt) and on Twitter at [twitter.com/ngadc](http://twitter.com/ngadc).

Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering. Checkrooms are free of charge and located at each entrance. Luggage and other oversized bags must be presented at the 4th Street entrances to the East or West Building to permit x-ray screening and must be deposited in the checkrooms at those entrances. For the safety of visitors and the works of art, nothing may be carried into the Gallery on a visitor's back. Any bag or other items that cannot be carried reasonably and safely in some other manner must be left in the checkrooms. Items larger than 17 by 26 inches cannot be accepted by the Gallery or its checkrooms.

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