



Update: November 21, 2019 (Original release date: June 21, 2019)

## Exhibition on First 50 Years of Photography Celebrates Anniversary of its Invention and Recent Acquisitions



John Dillwyn Llewelyn, *A Summer's Evening, Penllergare*, August 25, 1854, albumen print, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Purchased as a Gift of Diana and Mallory Walker

Washington, DC—When photography was introduced to the world in 1839, society and culture were poised to undergo profound change. In the 180 years since the French invention of the daguerreotype and the rival British photogenic drawing, the medium has undoubtedly created new ways of seeing, experiencing, and understanding the world. ***The Eye of the Sun: Nineteenth-Century Photographs from the National Gallery of Art*** explores the range of subjects that photographers embraced during the medium's first 50 years through a selection of some 140 photographs from the Gallery's rich holdings of 19th-century photographs, one of the finest collections in America. On view in the West Building of the National Gallery of Art from September 8 through December 8, 2019, the

exhibition presents more than 80 recent acquisitions, many not previously on view, including a large group acquired from the collection of Charles Isaacs and Carol Nigro and other recent acquisitions made possible by generous gifts of funds from Diana and Mallory Walker and the Richard King Mellon Foundation.

The exhibition begins with the earliest examples of photography—daguerreotypes and photogenic drawings and salted paper prints by William Henry Fox Talbot—and continues with thematic sections ranging from portraiture to landscape. Featured photographers include Anna Atkins, Édouard Baldus, Lewis Carroll, Gustave Le Gray, Charles Marville, George Barnard, Roger Fenton, Francis Frith, Amélie Guillot-Saguez, Hill and Adamson, Viscountess Jocelyn, John Moran, Eadweard Muybridge, Charles Nègre, Andrew Russell, Augustus Washington, and Carleton Watkins.

"Today photography is so omnipresent in our lives that it can be hard to imagine a world without it. This exhibition takes us back to the exciting nascent years following the birth of the medium, and the many ways that early practitioners explored its possibilities," said Kaywin Feldman, director, National Gallery of Art, Washington. "***The Eye of the Sun*** is possible due to a series of recent strategic acquisitions of 19th-century photography, allowing us now to offer a deep view of work from this period."

### **Exhibition Support**

The exhibition is made possible through the generous support of the Trellis Fund.

### **Exhibition Organization and Curators**

The exhibition is organized by the National Gallery of Art, Washington.

The exhibition is curated by Diane Waggoner, curator of 19th-century photographs, with Kara Fiedorek Felt, Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Curatorial Fellow, both National Gallery of Art, Washington.

### **Exhibition Highlights**

Photography's early use for portraiture and self-presentation is the focus of the first gallery of the exhibition, which opens with William Edward Kilburn's *Queen Victoria and Children* (1852). The daguerreotype is the second of two that Kilburn took of the Queen and family in the garden of Buckingham Palace in January 1852. Unhappy with her appearance in the first, she chose to pose in profile with a bonnet obscuring her face when she was photographed two days later. This section also presents a group of four photographs by Talbot, including the recently acquired *Winter Trees, Reflected in a Pond* (1841-1842) as well as a large selection of daguerreotypes by both French and

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American photographers such as Augustus Washington, one of the few known African American daguerreotypists.

A section on landscape photography includes three cloud studies—*Cloud Study over the Pantheon, Paris* (1856) by Charles Marville; *Brig on the Water* (1856) by Gustave Le Gray; and *Sunset at Sea* (1860s) by Colonel Henry Stuart Wortley—which illustrate early experiments in photography's ability to capture light and reflections. The section on the urban environment and industrialization examines the use of photography to document architectural and industrial innovations such as Hyacinthe César Delmaet and Louis-Émile Durandelle's *Workers on Girders of Auditorium, New Paris Opera* (c. 1867) and Philip Henry Delamotte's *Steam Engine near the Grand Transept, Crystal Palace* (1851).

Cameras enabled photographers to share the world with an accuracy of detail that had not previously been possible. A section on travel abroad includes photographs of extraordinary places, from John Murray's *Taj Mahal from the East* (c. 1858–1862) to Dunmore and Critcherson's *The Arctic Regions: No. 36* (1869). Other photographs like Carleton Watkins's *Piwyac, Vernal Fall, 300 Feet, Yosemite* (1861) revealed the wonders of western America. Photographers also documented the realities and horrors of war. In addition to portraits of soldiers, such as Gayford & Speidel's image of an African American soldier, *Christopher Anderson* (1860s), the exhibition includes images of the war's aftermath: Alexander Gardner's *A Sharpshooter's Last Sleep, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, July 1863* (1863) and Andrew Joseph Russell's *Stone Wall, Rear of Fredericksburg, with Rebel Dead* (May 3, 1863).

***The Eye of the Sun*** closes with examples by photographers who explored the artistic potential of the medium. Still-lives like Roger Fenton's *Fruit and Flowers* (1860) and Henri-Victor Regnault's *Nature Morte* (c. 1852) are joined by nude studies such as Frank Chauvassaigne's *Nude* (c. 1856) and Guglielmo Marconi's *Nude Study* (1870s), and works by Victorian art photographers Julia Margaret Cameron, Oscar Gustaf Rejlander, Lewis Carroll, and Henry Peach Robinson. The exhibition concludes with an 1888 photograph of a fishbowl taken with the Kodak, the first snapshot camera, which brought photography to the masses.

## Related Programs

### Concert

*Heartstrings*

Victory Hall Opera

Brenda Patterson, mezzo-soprano; Will Ferguson, tenor; Carlton Ford, baritone

September 29, 3:30 p.m.

West Building, West Garden Court

From the cozy hearth to the chair left vacant by the slain Civil War soldier, the Victorian parlor resounded with songs that pull at the heartstrings. Victory Hall Opera's extraordinary troupe gathers

'round the piano to transport you back to mid-19th-century life with tunes of domestic tranquility, Wagnerian heroics, church hymns and spirituals, and of course some songs about proper Victorian etiquette. Program includes works by Amy Beach, Brahms, Chopin, Stephen Foster, Carrie Jacobs-Bond, George F. Root, and Schumann.

## Lectures

*Photography and Nation Building in the Nineteenth Century*

October 6, 2:00 p.m.

East Building Auditorium

Makeda Best, Richard L. Menschel Curator of Photography, Harvard Art Museums

*Before the Kodak Girl: Women in Nineteenth-Century Photography*

November 24, 2:00 p.m.

West Building Lecture Hall

Kara Fiedorek Felt, Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Curatorial Fellow, department of photographs, National Gallery of Art

## Film

*Ruskin*

October 19, 2:30 p.m.

West Building Lecture Hall

Inspired by art critic John Ruskin's *The Stones of Venice* (1853), this film by the American experimental filmmaker Robert Beavers follows Ruskin's footsteps, visiting London, the Alps, and Venice, focusing on the architecture and facades of each city. Rebekah Rutkoff, editor of *Robert Beavers* (2017), will introduce the film. (Robert Beavers, 1974/1997, 45 minutes)

**Update:** November 21, 2019

*Updated with the new closing date of December 8, 2019 (extended from December 1, 2019).*

## Press Contact:

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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 at 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. For information call (202) 737-4215 or visit the

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Gallery's Web site at [www.nga.gov](http://www.nga.gov). Follow the Gallery on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt](http://www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt), Twitter at [www.twitter.com/ngadc](http://www.twitter.com/ngadc), and Instagram at <http://instagram.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.

For additional press information please call or send inquiries to:

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The public may call (202) 737-4215 or visit [www.nga.gov](http://www.nga.gov) for more information about the **National Gallery of Art**.

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