

50 PHOTOS

YOU SHOULD KNOW



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Brad Finger

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Front cover: Nelson Mandela at Osaka's Ogishima Park in Western Japan, October 28, 1990, see page 103

Frontispiece: Prince William, Duke of Cambridge and Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge smile following their marriage at Westminster Abbey on April 29, 2011 in London, England.

Pages 10/11: West Berliners crowd in front of the Berlin Wall early November 11, 1989 as they watch East German border guards demolishing a section of the wall in order to open a new crossing point between East and West Berlin.

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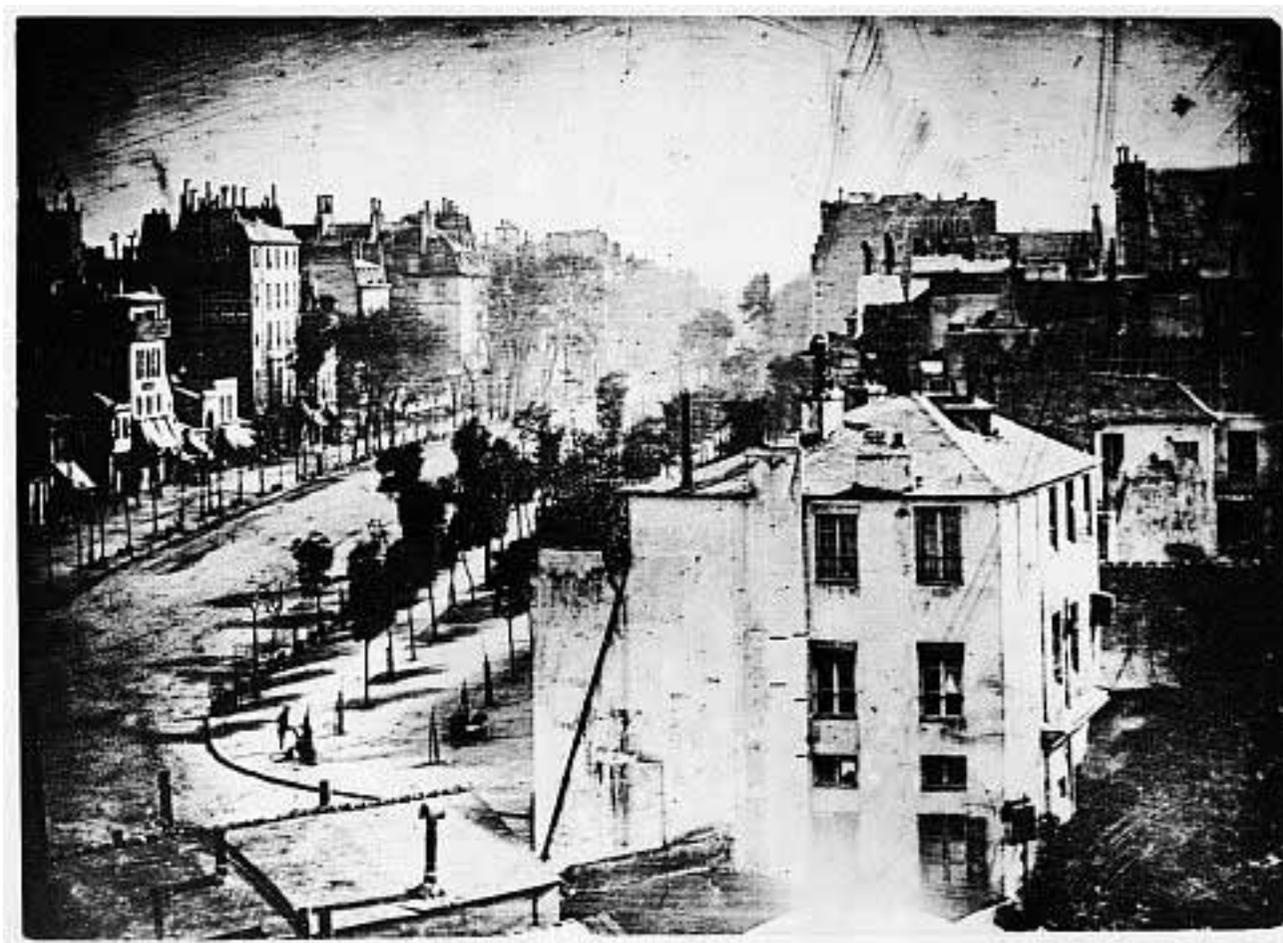


1762 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Of The Social Contract, Or Principles of Political Right*

1773 Boston Tea Party

1789-99 French Revolution

1750 1755 1760 1765 1770 1775 1780 1785 1790 1795 1800



Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre, View of the Boulevard du Temple, Paris, 1838

1804 Napoleon Bonaparte becomes French emperor

1808 Goethe, *Faust*

1821 Charles Baudelaire is born

1815 Napoleon defeated at Waterloo

1830 Eugène Delacroix, *Liberty Leading the People*

1848 French Revolution (February Revolution)

1855 Courbet's Realism exhibition

1805 1810 1815 1820 1825 1830 1835 1840 1845 1850 1855

VIEW OF THE BOULEVARD DU TEMPLE, PARIS

Louis Daguerre may not have invented the photograph, but his innovations and flair for publicity helped make photography a worldwide phenomenon. Daguerre's lustrous images were the first photos to achieve widespread distribution, and they offered a new way for people to see the world.

Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre (1787–1851) had spent his early life as an artist, showman, and theatrical designer. He helped develop the early nineteenth-century diorama. This traveling theater-in-the-round used highly detailed trompe-l'oeil paintings on linen—as well as clever backlighting—to make the audience believe they were viewing three-dimensional nature. But by the 1820s, Daguerre began experimenting with processes that could “reproduce” nature more quickly and effectively than his labor-intensive paintings.

Daguerre set up a partnership with Joseph Nicéphore Niépce, a wealthy inventor who had developed the technique of heliography, or “sun writing.” It involved coating a pewter plate with a sticky substance called bitumen of Judea. The plate was then placed in a camera obscura, which could project the image of an object or scene onto the plate. After letting the coated plate remain exposed to light for several hours, it was then removed and washed with a mixture involving lavender oil. Over time, the image that the camera obscura had projected onto the plate would appear in permanent, if rather hazy, form. For Daguerre, this must have seemed a magical process. The camera obscura had long been used by artists as a drawing aid. But now it could be harnessed to produce images that made nature and time stand still. Daguerre quickly set out to refine Niépce's sun writing technique. Soon he observed that by using different materials—copper plates coated with iodized silver—he could produce pictures of startling detail and richness. The diorama maker had found a new “canvas” on which his images could be captured.

Daguerre's first experiments with his technique were somewhat tentative. His earliest known photograph, *Still Life in Studio* (1837), has the look of a traditional painting. It

shows a carefully arranged group of plaster casts and other “artistic” objects, a scene reminiscent of seventeenth-century still lifes. But Daguerre would soon explore more extemporaneous shots. In early 1839, he pointed the camera out of his apartment window in Paris, over the busy Boulevard du Temple, and simply let the instrument photograph what it “saw.” The result was a cityscape rendered in unprecedented detail, yet eerily devoid of human activity. The image took several minutes to expose, making it impossible to capture the moving people and objects. But one individual did remain largely motionless during the exposure time, as he was getting his boots polished. His incomplete, shadowy form represents one of the first photographic “portraits.”

The year *View of the Boulevard du Temple, Paris* was created, Daguerre enlisted the help of François Arago to help publicize his invention. Arago was both a scientist and a shrewd politician, and he helped promote the “daguerreotype” process to the Académie des Sciences and the French government. When Daguerre's images were finally revealed to the public on August 16, 1839, they caused an immediate sensation. Almost overnight, daguerreotypists set up shop throughout Europe and North America. Framed daguerreotype family portraits began replacing the work of painters, forcing artists to rethink the purpose of painting itself. The “nonrealistic” experiments of Impressionism and later art movements owed their inspiration, in part, to the invention of Niépce and Daguerre.





1805 Battles of Trafalgar and Austerlitz

1826 First photograph by Joseph Nicéphore Niépce

1830 July Revolution in France

1790 1795 1800 1805 1810 1815 1820 1825 1830 1835 1840



Henry Fox Talbot, The Open Door, April 1844

1845 1850 1855 1860 1865 1870 1875 1880 1885 1890 1895

TALBOT'S OPEN DOOR

*When describing such images as *The Open Door* (1844), Henry Fox Talbot said that he tried to use his painter's eye to find beauty "where ordinary people see nothing remarkable." Talbot's quiet, calmly composed scenes often belie the revolutionary nature of his photographic innovations.*

In January of 1839, English inventor William Henry Fox Talbot (1800–1877) read a translated report from a meeting of the French Académie des Sciences. He was shocked to learn that fellow inventor Louis Daguerre was claiming credit for a process using a camera obscura to capture permanent images of nature. Talbot's surprise arose from the fact that he had already devised a similar process himself. Over the coming years, Talbot would work tirelessly to promote and refine his own contributions to photography.

Henry Fox Talbot had a keen interest in a variety of scientific topics, including mathematics and physics. In the early 1830s, he began conducting optical experiments with a camera obscura. Talbot later explained that these experiments grew out of his own frustrated efforts at making accurate scientific drawings. "I was amusing myself on the lovely shores of Lake Como in Italy, taking sketches ... or, rather, I should say attempting to take them, but with the smallest possible amount of success ... I then thought of trying again a method I had tried many years before. This method was, to take a camera obscura and to throw the image of the objects on a piece of paper in its focus—fairy pictures, creations of a moment, and destined to fade away. It was during these thoughts that the idea occurred to me—how charming it would be if it were possible to cause these natural images to imprint themselves durably, and remain fixed upon the paper." By 1834, Talbot had devised such a "fixing" method by soaking paper in sodium chloride and silver nitrate. When placed in a camera obscura and exposed to sunlight, his paper would permanently capture Talbot's "natural image" in a surprising way. The dark areas of the image would appear light, and the light areas dark. Talbot would then wash the treated paper in a solution of

salt, which prevented the image from being destroyed by further exposure to light. He further discovered that this "drawing" could "serve as an object, to produce a second drawing, in which the light and shadows would be reversed." Fox Talbot had invented the photographic negative.

For several years, Talbot abandoned his initial research into "photogenic" processes. But the news of Daguerre's discovery in 1839 forced him to hastily present his earlier findings at the Royal Society in London. Talbot then spent the next two years refining his process, which he patented in 1841 as the calotype process. Two years earlier, Daguerre had taken out a British patent for his own invention. Yet Talbot's calotypes never achieved the striking contrasts of dark and light—the visual clarity—of daguerreotypes. Often the pictures had a faded, grainy appearance, especially in earlier images such as *The Open Door*. This drawback initially made Talbot's process less marketable than Daguerre's. Yet over time, the technical innovations of the calotype—its ability to produce multiple copies of images from a single negative—would help spur the development of modern photography. Fittingly, the English term "photography" was coined by British scientist John Herschel, one of Talbot's friends and collaborators.

1812 Napoleon invades Russia

1819 Théodore Géricault, *The Raft of the Medusa*

1837 Louis Daguerre invents the daguerreotype

1855 Courbet's Realism exhibition



Félix Nadar, Portrait of Gioacchino Rossini, 1856

right page
Félix Nadar, Aerial Photograph of Paris, 1858

1870 1875 1880 1885 1890 1895 1900 1905 1910 1915 1920

PORTRAIT OF GIOACHINO ROSSINI

By 1856, the bright-eyed composer Gioachino Rossini was a cultural lion of Paris. No longer writing famous operas, he lived a life in sumptuous semiretirement—a lover of good food and wine and a friend of numerous artists and writers. New advances in photography enabled Felix Nadar to capture Rossini’s casual but magnetic personality with his camera.

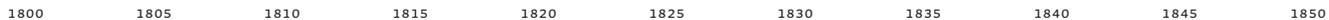
Like Louis Daguerre, Felix Nadar (1820–1910) was a showman. Born Gaspard-Félix Tournachon, he developed a pseudonym that humorously reflected his early career as a caricaturist. “Nadar” is an abbreviation of a phrase meaning “one who stings.” Nadar’s ebullient personality won him many friends among France’s leading cultural figures, such as the artist Honoré Daumier and the actress Sarah Bernhardt. He soon combined his artistic and social talents with an aptitude for photography. By the mid-1850s, Nadar’s studio had become famous for its photographic portraits.

Nadar profited from significant technical advances in photography since the days of Daguerre and Fox Talbot. Beginning in 1851, photographers had been using a “wet plate” process, which involved glass plates treated with a quick-drying substance called collodion. This procedure reduced exposure times considerably and produced high-quality negatives. Daguerreotype portraitists required their subjects to sit motionless for several minutes, preventing them from capturing anything like a “natural” expression on the face. But now sitters only had to remain motionless for a few seconds, enabling them to relax in front of the camera. Nadar’s clients had the added benefit of posing for an artist with a keen understanding of composition and lighting. His photographic portraits often have the same vitality and character of the best portrait paintings. Not surprisingly, many of Nadar’s most famous works depict his own artist friends. His Gioachino Rossini portrait of 1856, for example, is especially effective at capturing the Italian composer’s jovial character. We see a man who spent much of his later life enjoying the fruits of his early operatic successes. Like many Nadar images, the sitter seems to be communicating with the viewer, establishing a strong emotional

connection. Such images became the genesis of modern-day political and celebrity culture.

Nadar also explored other ways of using the camera to publicize aspects of city life. In 1858, he produced the world’s first aerial photographs, taking snapshots of Paris from a hot-air balloon. These images showed an urban center being transformed by the grand avenues and public squares of Baron Haussmann. Nadar also photographed his city from below, producing remarkable images of Paris’s underground sewer system. Using a novel method involving electric lights, Nadar exposed a subterranean, cave-like world of arched tunnels and tracks—a world that supported, yet stood in stark contrast to, the glittering cultural life of Rossini’s Paris.





1851 First World's Fair in London

1857 Gustave Flaubert,
Madame Bovary

1873 Claude Monet, *Impression, Sunrise*

1874 First Impressionist
exhibition in Paris

1894 Tower Bridge in London
opened for traffic

1887–89 Construction of
the Eiffel Tower

1900 Boxer Rebellion
in China

1855 1860 1865 1870 1875 1880 1885 1890 1895 1900 1905

THE CRYSTAL PALACE

The Crystal Palace was a perfect subject for early photography. Cameramen delighted in capturing the building's massive steel and glass walls and expansive, maze-like interiors. Such images seemed to embody the spirit of the industrial age. They also inspired new movements in modern architecture.

The Great Exhibition of 1851 was the first truly international showcase for the industrial revolution. Officially known as the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations, it was held in Hyde Park, London. The exhibit presented all the wonders of modern technology and the fruits of British colonialism. For the price of a shilling, one could see microscopes, steel-making machines, public toilets, the latest kitchen appliances, and a mechanical reaper for harvesting crops. Even the world's largest diamond, the Koh-i-noor, made an appearance. Only one year earlier, the diamond had been presented to Queen Victoria as a highly publicized trophy from the First Anglo-Sikh War—part of Britain's decades-long conquest of India in the nineteenth century. Victoria's husband and consort, Prince Albert, was an avid promoter of the exhibition. So it was not surprising to find the Koh-i-noor in Hyde Park during the summer of 1851.

All of these marvels thrilled the millions of visitors who flocked to the exhibit. But the event's most remarkable feature may have been its principal building, the Crystal Palace. Designed by Joseph Paxton, this giant steel-and-glass edifice resembled the greenhouses for which its architect was famous. But the size and scale of the building, the meandering quality of its interior spaces, and the engineering innovations required for its construction would make the palace one of the first seminal works of modern architecture. According to American art historian Vincent Scully, the palace offered something very different from the orderly, sheltering buildings of traditional European cities. Its "skeleton structure of thin iron members," Skully wrote, "was seen by ... contemporaries as a delightful maze. It was a place to wander in, endlessly continuous, with

only glassy boundaries and with the solids fragmented into complicated webs."

The Crystal Palace was also one of the first buildings to be captured extensively in photographs. This new pictorial medium perfectly revealed the "endless continuity" of the building's interiors. After the fair ended, the palace was removed from Hyde Park and reconstructed (in expanded form) in South London's Sydenham. Most surviving photos show this version of the building. Some even capture the reconstruction process itself, which lasted from 1852 to 1854. Images of the half-finished nave have an expressive, almost musical quality—a symphony of light, shade, and steel. Other reconstruction photos show visitors as well-dressed toy figures exploring an alien world of giant arches and open space. These images would influence the planners of numerous world's fairs and high-tech Olympic villages. They would also foreshadow the steel-and-glass urban landscapes of the twentieth century and beyond.





1805 1810 1815 1820 1825 1830 1835 1840 1845 1850 1855



James Robertson, View of the ruined interior of the Great Redan, 1855-56