

EN

After Nature Swiss Photography in the 19th Century

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“Never has the art of the greatest masters produced such a drawing. [...] Consider then, that it is the sun itself, as an almighty tool of a new art, that creates this incredible works.”

Jules Janin in *L'Artiste*, gennaio 1839

“At the time, people were definitely not willing to comprehend that such images genuinely reproduced nature, and nothing but nature; that here, the artist was not in a position to flatter or to embellish at will.”

Illustrierter Volks-Novellist, September 1865

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Introduction

Photography was proclaimed a French invention in 1839 in Paris and the new medium quickly conquered all of Europe. Although the race for technical improvements started in the cultural centres, the heavy cameras were soon taken also to the villages and the countryside, into remote valleys and up the mountains. In Switzerland, the emerging tourism industry played a key role in the new photography trade. The medium's boom was determined not only by the interest in spectacular landscapes, but also by the growing demand for portraits and the need to document early industrialisation and major technical projects.

This exhibition presents a first overview of the 19th century Swiss photography and sheds light on photography pioneers' outstanding achievements, as well as on specific, lesser known aspects such as early mugshot photography. It also examines interactions between different visual techniques, including painting and printmaking. Thanks to research in countless archives and collections all over the country, hitherto little-known visual material has been unearthed. The selection shown here takes into account not only photography's aesthetic qualities, but also its specific uses. Over 60 public and private lenders have contributed works from their collections to enable an overview of the first 50 years of photography in Switzerland. Many originals that were stored in scattered locations have been brought together for the first time, in order to define a clearer picture of individual protagonists and important interrelated themes.

The exhibition is divided into seven sections: The first two deal with the emergence of a completely new medium: how was photography able to establish itself in relation to conventional visual techniques? In what period were images fixed on coated sheets of copper? When prints started to be made on paper?

The other five sections explore the influence of tourism, the importance of portrait photography, the burgeoning photographic business, the artistic approach towards the new medium and its use in the representation of progress. Many of the exhibits are extremely fragile objects that can only be displayed in dim light, for preservation reasons.

**Christian Gottlieb Geissler,
*View over Geneva
and its surroundings, 1799***

While members of the upper class play and stroll in the outskirts of Geneva an artist is at work in front of the landscape. He might have used the camera obscura visible in the left of this watercolour. The wooden instrument depicted by the painter and engraver Christian Gottlieb Geissler (1729–1814) was in fact used above all as a drawing aid. That is why the camera obscura is often – and maybe in a too simplified way – seen as a precursor of the photographic camera. The image of objects placed in front of the device is reconstituted inside it on a frosted glass and can easily be copied by the artist. Before the camera obscura was used as an aid to reproducing reality, it served as entertainment or as a didactic tool to explain the principles of vision. In fact, before its miniaturisation as a mobile box the camera obscura was a darkened room, inside which the moving image of external reality is observed. During most of the 19th century, such a room was used to observe the spectacle of the Rhine Falls.

The 'mirror with a memory'

Daguerreotyping was invented by Louis Daguerre (1787-1851) at the end of the 1830's. Unlike photography on paper, which allows several prints to be made from one negative, daguerreotyping is a process that can only produce one image at a time. Whenever a picture is taken, the image forms on light-sensitive sheet of silver-plated copper and cannot be replicated. It can only be seen as a positive on the reflective sheet from a certain angle, but with unique sharpness, clarity and three-dimensionality: qualities that on the one hand earned the daguerreotype the designation 'mirror with a memory' and, on the other hand, the reproach that it only represents a cold mechanical copy of reality.

When itinerant photographers brought the daguerreotype to Switzerland from abroad, it was mainly people from mechanical, optical or pharmaceutical professions who showed interest in the new, technically delicate process. Many such photographers were unsuccessful, but for those who were able to establish themselves, the portrait quickly became the daguerreotype's most popular application. With this new technique, photographic portraits became an attractive alternative to painted ones.

The actual masters of the process were the Genevan banker, diplomat and amateur Jean-Gabriel Eynard (1775-1863), who began to produce a unique and now internationally recognised oeuvre of portraits in the early 1840s, the former optician Emil Wick (1816-1894) in Basel, who claimed to have realised over 30,000 daguerreotypes in about 15 years and apparently earned so much from them that he was able to retire at the age of 45, and the engraver Johann Baptist Isenring (1796-1860), who already presented his pictures to a paying audience in 1840 at an 'art exhibition' in St Gallen. However, despite his sometimes even 'life-sized' daguerreotypes being supremely lauded at the time, none seems to have survived, except perhaps the close-up of his son Karl Johann's head reproduced on a large-format aquatint.

While a large number of mostly anonymous portraits still exist today, there are only a few architectural daguerreotypes, such as the two views of Geneva by Mario Artaria (1796-1874) and Louis Bonijol (1796-1869), which were taken almost simultaneously and can now be seen here side by side for the first time, as well as the group of four recently discovered images of buildings built in

Zurich by architect Gustav Wegmann (1812-1858) from the late 1830s onwards. Realized by an unknown photographer, these works allow a unique view of that era's modern urban development.

Early architectural views

For the daguerreotypists, very few of whom were women, urban architecture was one of the first and most obvious motifs: due to the long exposure times, it was easier to photograph still objects and streets. The heyday of the daguerreotype, which began in the mid-19th century, was also a time of very dynamic urban development. Because of industrialisation, cities were expanding rapidly and their appearances were changing. Thus, an interest in recording these changes also arose. Only a few examples of early architectural photography have survived. Among them are two large-format views of Geneva by Mario Artaria and Louis Bonijol, taken from almost the same position, already in 1840. Only a handful of daguerreotypes from Zurich are known; they include a picture of the new post-office building, attributed to Johann Baptist Isenring. From Bern, just a few small-format daguerreotypes by Friedrich Andreas Gerber (1797-1872) remain. Gerber was undoubtedly one of Swiss photography's pioneers, although he was never able to prove his claim to have invented a paper-based photographic process before Daguerre.

Geneva photographers

The main impetus for the success of photography came from urban centres.

Although there were no large metropolises in Switzerland at the time, a city like Geneva, with its many exchanges with Paris, offered a highly favourable environment. It had an abundance of scientific talent, excellent craftsmen who worked for the watchmaking industry, as well as wealthy citizens. Jean-Gabriel Eynard, a well-known banker and diplomat who had adopted Geneva as his home, devoted himself to the daguerreotype at the late age of 65. His passion made him one of the greatest pioneers of Swiss photography. As of 1840, he began, with his servant and assistant Jean Rion, to make a large number of photographs of his family, friends and acquaintances, as well as of his properties. Eynard's works are of great artistic quality, representing the largest existing collection of a Swiss daguerreotypist with its several hundred photographs. His work is today internationally recognized.

Religion and emigration

The Basel Mission, founded in 1815, has kept a large collection of daguerreotypes in its archives to this day: Just before the 'missionary pupils', trained in Basel, were 'sent out' to the various mission locations, their portraits were produced systematically, first in the form of lithographs, then as daguerreotypes from 1851 to 1861, and later

using the salt-and-albumen paper-based process. On simple passe-partouts, the same personal data was always noted: 'born – joined – sent out – died'. As if in anticipation of the identity card, the Basel Mission created a record of its field staff, which was also kept in the form of a register. The major Basel daguerreotypist Emil Wick may have been behind the extensive portrait series. He retired from professional life in 1861, the year of the last recorded series of prospective missionaries' portraits.

Early portraits

Portraits played an important role in the development of the daguerreotype as they were the main source of income for the first practitioners of this new profession. It is estimated that 90% of all daguerreotypes produced were portraits. However, for a long time, only the wealthy could afford these one-of-a-kind reproductions. While critics of the new art of portraiture initially claimed that it was impossible to make "living" photographs of people with this process, the needs of the clientele were soon satisfied thanks to shorter exposure times, retouching and colorization. For the emerging bourgeoisie, the portrait was a status symbol, an expression of a new self-awareness and a progressive attitude. The portrait of an elegantly dressed unknown young man taken in Lugano in 1842, one of the few known daguerreotype from Ticino, can certainly be read within this context.

Family portraits in Western Switzerland

With the rise of the bourgeoisie in the 19th century, a shift in middle-class family ideals also took place: Family togetherness was celebrated, the emotional relationships between spouses, parents and children were put on display, and bourgeois moral values were conveyed within the family. The daguerreotype helped to perpetuate such values and to present a seemingly perfect facade to the outside world. In the carefully arranged and sometimes stiff compositions, care was taken to maintain 'etiquette'. Photographers from Western Switzerland, such as Antoine Détraz (1821-1900), Auguste Garcin (1816-1895) and the studio Bruder Frères, provided impressive examples of family self-portrayal, whereby the family portrait by Détraz stands out in particular – not only because of its classic composition, but also the decorated passepartout and gold frame.

Professions

The genre painters of the 19th century specialised in depicting scenes from everyday life as realistically as possible. This approach was carried over to the daguerreotype – with small-scale mise en scène in the studio. Many photographic portraits from that time come across like theatrical performances, in which the props, the pose of the sitters and their clothing all carried symbolic meaning. The protagonists' desire to play a certain role is sometimes clearly

visible: The studio was transformed into a stage, on which one could act out one's own (or someone else's) life. Perhaps the portrait of Johann Kürsteiner belongs to this category, for it seems unlikely that he actually was a taxidermist. (Self-)portraits of professionals seem to have been relatively rare in Switzerland. The portraits of the architect at his drawing board, the painter in front of his easel, the captain in a peaked cap and the cloth merchant with fabric are among the few exceptions.

Samuel Heer and Johann Baptist Taeschler

Samuel Heer of Glarus, the son of a pastor, was a tinsmith by trade. He discovered photography in the early 1840s, when supplying the engraver, photographer and inventor Friedrich von Martens (1806-1885), as well as the physicist, mathematician and astronomy professor Marc Secretan (1804-1867), with daguerreotype plates in Lausanne. In 1848, he opened Lausanne's first daguerreotype studio, which remained unrivalled for several years. A great number of his portraits, along with townscapes and reproductions of artworks, have survived. For his often carefully coloured portraits, he liked to use a painted background, showing Chillon Castle, Lake Geneva and the mountains.

Johann Baptist Taeschler (1805-1866), a clockmaker who had been living in St Gallen since 1830, already started to experiment with daguerreotypes in 1840. At that time though, he was

mainly known for unusual clocks and mechanical automatons that imitated trick horseback riders or tightrope walkers, which he demonstrated in public. In 1850, after a few years of travelling through Switzerland as an itinerant photographer, he opened his own photography studio, which was in St Fiden, near St Gallen, and soon attracted a pleasingly large number of customers. Taeschler subsequently worked with both daguerreotypes and salted paper prints, occasionally taking portraits of himself with his family.

John Ruskin and Switzerland

The English writer, painter, art historian and social reformer John Ruskin (1819-1900) became interested in the daguerreotype in the late 1840s. He was fascinated by the precise and true-to-life reproduction of this new image medium. He bought a camera and had his house servant John Hobbs (born around 1821) experiment with it. In early 1849, they took their first pictures in the Alps, including the very first one of the Matterhorn on 8 August. Ruskin had already come to Switzerland with his parents as a child, where he became fascinated by the mountain world. On later journeys he not only drew and painted, but also had his assistant Frederick Crawley take views with the daguerreotype camera according to his instructions. His main focus was on medieval architecture in towns such as Basel, Thun, Fribourg, Lucerne, Sion and Bellinzona. In the summer of 1858, he spent almost a month in Bellinzona,

which he considered the most picturesque town in Switzerland because of its Italian character and the three castles perched on rocks. The daguerreotypes taken by Crawley during this period probably represent the earliest photographic images of Ticino. On an aesthetic level, too, some of Ruskin's daguerreotypes are spectacular and display an extraordinarily modern approach, as is well demonstrated by the diagonal close-up of a rock near Castelgrande in Bellinzona or the bird's-eye view of the Augustinian monastery in the old town of Fribourg.

Architecture and mountains

Very early on, paintings in the veduta tradition and engraved views of landscapes and cities were produced. Moreover, foreigners such as Joseph-Philibert Girault de Prangey (1804-1892), a wealthy traveller and artist from France, played an important role in promoting this trend. His daguerreotypes reflect the vision of an enlightened tourist who was as interested in architectural heritage as in nature. The very first foreign photographers who came to Switzerland out of scientific interest mainly devoted themselves to the spectacular mountain landscapes. This was the case of the Frenchmen Gustave Dardel (1824-1899) and Camille Bernabé (born in 1808) who, as of the end of the 1840s, photographed the Swiss Alps upon the request of the Alsatian industrialist and glaciologist, Daniel Dollfus-Ausset (1797-1870). By means of photographs faithful to nature, their campaign was

commissioned in order to contribute to the heated discussion about the formation of glaciers, whose development at the time was still considered a threat.

Zurich

The manual *Complete Instructions for the Production of Daguerreotype Photographs* was available for purchase in Zurich as early as 1 September 1839. Strangely enough, the city which developed and changed the most during the daguerreotype era, did not witness to the emergence of distinguished photographers such as Carl Durheim (Bern, 1810–1890), Johann Baptist Isenring (St. Gallen) and Emil Wick (Basel). Recently, however, a case shaped as a book resurfaced: it was built to host four photographs by an unknown daguerreotypist. These photographs are of outstanding buildings designed between 1837 and 1847 by the architect Gustav Albert Wegmann in Zurich: Switzerland's first major railway station, the cantonal hospital, the cantonal school, and the *Künstlergut*, the precursor to the present Kunsthaus. Wegmann probably used the daguerreotype as a means of recording and presenting his work. The four daguerreotypes exhibited here for the first time, together with Samuel Heer's (Lausanne, 1811-1889) photograph of the Villa Rosau, taken at about the same time, are among the very few early photographic records of Zurich modern architecture.

Army and politics

The relatively short period ending in 1860, during which the daguerreotype was widely used in Switzerland, corresponded to a phase of social and political unrest. The last war in Switzerland, the Sonderbund War of 1847-48, was a civil conflict between the Catholic and Reformed cantons that led to the creation of the federal state. The significance of these events is reflected in photographs of members of the army and politicians: soldiers and officers had their pictures taken individually or in groups and the first president of the Confederation, Jonas Furrer (1805–1861) was probably photographed in 1848, the year of the foundation of modern Switzerland, alongside his family. A year earlier, General Guillaume Henri Dufour, head of the Swiss army, found himself obligated to have his portrait taken: even before the end of the hostilities, his image was in great demand by the public. Using daguerreotype as a starting point, painters, lithographers and sculptors could now accelerate the production of effigies of the general. The more “this deluge, or rather this hailstorm of portraits, frightened [him], even more than the cannon of Gisikon”, the more he criticized the new process: “I do not know where the vice of the daguerreotype is, but certainly there is a capital one, because I have yet to see a pleasant portrait; it makes the human species look hideous.”

Established in Bern since the early 1840s and still without serious com-

petitors, the Pole Jean de Humnicki (1803–after 1852), received several official portrait commissions at the end of the decade. In addition to the portraits of General Dufour and his commanding officers after their victory over the Sonderbund, Humnicki also photographed the delegates to the last Tag-satzung (council of the Old Swiss Confederacy) of 1847 and 1848. After having daguerreotyped the members of the new Council of States, he made portraits of the members of the young National Council in 1850. These daguerreotypes, none of which seem to have survived, served as models for lithographers, allowing them to produce plates with the images of all the members of these two chambers. However, these prestigious commissions did not ensure Humnicki sufficient commercial success, and he was forced to leave the canton two years later due to insolvency.

Portraits from German-speaking Switzerland

The first daguerreotypists often had a professional background that made it easier to learn the new technique. In order to produce good portraits, it was necessary to set up suitable studio situations that, above all, had to be as bright as possible – but craftsmanship, as well as a solid knowledge of chemistry and printing, were also required. One of the prominent portraitists was Carl Durheim of Bern, who left behind impressive portraits, not only of individuals and families, but also of children

on their deathbeds: so-called 'post-mortem portraits', a genre of photography that was widespread at the time. Successful and technically very adept, Durheim not only used the daguerreotype, but also the ambrotype on glass, another process that produced a single unique original. Capturing images of restless children was a particular challenge – making the resulting portraits all the more fascinating today, due to their liveliness and immediacy. This certainly applies to the realistic portrait daguerreotypes by amateur photographer Friedrich Emanuel Dänzer (1817-1881) of Thun and by Jean de Humnicki of Poland.

brilliance and surreal-looking depiction of people, architecture and landscapes.

Paper negatives

The negative/positive process on paper, introduced by William Henry Fox Talbot (1800-1877) in 1841 as the calotype process, was mainly used by photographers from the western part of Switzerland. As the paper negative exposed and developed in the camera was only the basis for the final positive prints on salted paper, only very few paper negatives have survived. Exceptions include the relatively large number of negatives by Jean Walther (1806-1866) and Édouard Quiquerez (1835-1888), as well as the excellently preserved and partly large-format paper negatives by Auguste Reymond (1825-1913) from the late 1850s. Negatives were already exhibited in the 19th century on various occasions. And to this day, when backlit, these unique originals fascinate with their

Duplicating photographs

In the first years after its arrival had been publicly announced in Paris in 1839 and shortly thereafter in England, photography was by no means the mass medium that it evidently was at the end of the century. On the contrary, despite its rapid spread throughout the world, it long remained reserved for a select audience. A rivalry developed between the daguerreotype on metal, invented by Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre (1787-1851) in France, and the negative/positive process on paper, developed at the same time by England's William Henry Fox Talbot. While the daguerreotype produced extremely sharp images, the so-called 'salted paper print' was characterised by soft, slightly blurred detail and accentuation of the paper's grainy structure. The photograph soon started to compete with the pre-existing image-printing media, but initially could not be printed in large numbers. For that reason, photographs were used as templates for wood engravings and lithographs, which in turn could be printed either as single sheets, or in books and illustrated journals – always with a note explaining that the image was originally photographic and therefore accurate. Paper prints, later mainly albumen prints, were sometimes also pasted directly into publications.

The Swiss photographers disseminating photography via prints included Johann Baptist Isenring, who already produced a series of Zurich cityscapes using his customary aquatint technique around 1840, and the first female photographer, Franziska Möllinger (1817-1880), who started publishing her daguerreotyped views of Switzerland as lithographs in 1844. There was also the famous lithographer Hercule Nicolet (1801-1872) from Neuchâtel, whose *Album neuchâtelois*, published in 1840, contains several views based on daguerreotypes.

Photography on paper, which quickly found a loyal following among artists in France, was mainly practised by photographers from Western Switzerland, like Auguste Reymond, who in 1858 captured the consequences of a catastrophic fire in Le Lieu with large-format images. At that time though, woodcuts based on "reportage drawings" were still more effective than photography when it came to recording dramatic events. The prominent photographers in French-

speaking Switzerland who preferred the negative/positive process on paper included the experimental Adrien Constant Delessert (1806-1876) from Lausanne, who created a unique body of prints in albums, and Jean Walther in Vevey, as well as Geneva's Jean-Louis Populus (1807-1859) and Sébastien Straub (1806-1874), who primarily devoted themselves to documenting their home city in transformation.

**Johann Baptist Isenring,
*Isenring, The Grossmünster
in Zurich, c. 1840***

Already in 1839, Johann Baptist Isenring, a painter and copperplate engraver educated at the Munich Academy of Fine Arts and famous for his views of Switzerland (some of which were created with the aid of a *camera obscura*) became one of the first Swiss individuals to take an interest in the new medium of photography. He immediately began to experiment with Talbot's paper-based process and "Daguerre's machine". He quickly mastered the new technique and was able to exhibit almost 50 of his daguerreotypes as early as the summer of the following year, in an "art exhibition containing a collection of photographs, mostly portraits after nature" in St Gallen. Most of all, the "almost life-sized" and coloured portraits displayed on this occasion, caused a great stir among the public. However, none of these much-praised portraits seem to have survived – except perhaps the close-up of his son Carl Johann's head, reworked as a large-format aquatint. Also in 1840, Isenring produced large-format daguerreotypes in Zurich, which he issued as aquatints that were

marked as follows: 'Photographed by the publisher J. B. Isenring in St Gallen'. The five known sheets constitute the earliest photographic Zurich cityscapes. Their original daguerreotype plates have been lost, unlike those pertaining to two similarly large-format views of Geneva by Mario Artaria and Louis Bonijol), taken in the same year. Originally, Isenring's aquatints were probably intended for a portfolio or album, but this was never released.

**Franziska Möllinger, *Thun. View
from the churchyard, 1844-1845***

Franziska Möllinger, an immigrant from Germany who was the first female photographer to work in Switzerland, also had difficulty finding an audience for her daguerreotypes depicting the main cities and the most picturesque landscapes of Switzerland, which were published as lithographs from 1844 onwards. This project was planned as 30 instalments of four lithographs each, but only 16 views and one panorama, lithographed by Johann Friedrich Wagner (1801–1850) in Bern and J. Bachmann in Zurich, have survived. In the case of virtually all daguerreotypists who published their photographs as prints, including those

who worked for the famous *Excursions daguerriennes* (1840–1843) released in Paris, the original daguerreotype plates are lost. Perhaps they were destroyed in the process of conversion to a printed medium, or maybe given the large numbers of printed sheets no special attention was paid to the fragile unique originals. There are no surviving originals by Möllinger either, except for a view of Thun Castle, although this was never published as a lithograph.

Jean Walther, *The Parthenon, Athens, 1851*

The pictures taken by two early Swiss photographers have been passed down to us thanks to French publications. Of the hundred or so daguerreotypes that Pierre Gustave Joly de Lotbinière (1798-1865) brought back from a trip to the Mediterranean, five were published between 1840 and 1843 in the form of aquatints in *Excursions daguerriennes* by Noël Marie Paymal Lerebours (1807-1873). Whereas the photographs of Athens, Valletta and Venice, taken by the cloth merchant Jean Walther, appeared in the first two albums published in 1851 by the French chemist and industrialist, Louis Désiré Blanquart-Évrard (1802-1872), inventor of the first commercially viable process for making positive photographic prints on paper from a negative.

Walther's photographic work both in Switzerland and abroad was mainly focused on architectural subjects. He

took his photographs between Geneva and Villeneuve, with a predilection for the area around Vevey. It is estimated that he took several hundred medium-format photographs, which he then bound into albums of about 30 images each.

Bisson Frères, *Earthquake, Valais, 1855*

The Alsatian industrialist Daniel Dollfus-Ausset, an avid glacier researcher who inspired and commissioned the daguerreian campaigns in the Alps in 1849 and 1850, commissioned the Bisson brothers in August 1855 to document the consequences of an earthquake in the Visp Valley. This quickly organized expedition was one of the first undertaken by the two photographers in the Alps. After having taken a dozen photographs of buildings and general views of the localities damaged by the earthquake, they continued their journey to the Aare Glacier Pavilion in the Bernese Oberland. Here they took the most remarkable photographs of the expedition: three images were joined together to form a panorama almost two-meters long, causing a huge stir when it was presented to the Academy of Sciences in Paris where it was praised both for its scientific value and for its artistic merits.

The photographic campaign of 1855 seems to have convinced Dollfus-Ausset: in December 1855, he teamed up with the Bisson brothers to form the Société Bisson Frères et Compagnie. The Bisson brothers brought back views of waterfalls (Staubbach, Giess-

bach, the lower Reichenbach Falls) and tourist attractions such as hotels from their other purely photographic venture with Dollfus-Ausset in the summer of 1856. The scientific approach appeared to give way to more commercially-oriented ventures.

Adrien Constant Delessert, *Farm in Mézery, 1850-1865*

Adrien Constant de Rebecque (1806-1876), an officer serving in the French Army and a prominent citizen of Lausanne who worked as a photographer under the name of Constant Delessert, used both the daguerreotype, until the mid-1850s, and the paper process, which he discovered in Paris in 1848. Like most amateurs in French-speaking Switzerland, such as Jean Walther and Louis Alexandre de Dardel (1821-1901), he initially focused his lens on his immediate environment. At first, he reserved copper plates for portraits and salt paper for urban and rural views, which he assembled according to various themes in several albums, the prints of which were sometimes embellished with watercolours. Later, he gathered a remarkable series of portraits in his two Albums of Contemporaries and dedicated a large collection to his property in Allaman, Savoie, which presents finely composed images on salted paper.

Constant Delessert also cultivated a vast network that allowed him to share ideas, experiences with processes and specimens. His correspondence reveals exchanges with colleagues in Europe

and the United States, whereas his links with Swiss photographers extended from Geneva, with Eynard, to Basel and St. Gallen, with the Taeschler family. His links to the French-speaking world included Jean Walther, Paul Vionnet, Édouard Quiquerez and Ludovico de Courten. The innumerable samples contained in his personal albums, received from colleagues or the fruits of his own research, testify to his unflagging efforts to improve existing processes such as collodion and phototyping.

Tour de Suisse: waterfalls and glaciers

The Swiss transport infrastructure, long considered rudimentary by European standards, began to develop towards the middle of the century. At the same time the photographic process was also improved with the employment of glass negatives and albumen prints. It then became obvious that photography was particularly suited to advertise touristic locations. This was primarily done by foreign photographers like Francis Frith (1822-1898) from England and Adolphe Braun (1812-1877) from Dornach in France, who offered large quantities of their pictures at Swiss tourist destinations or distributed them internationally through booksellers and publishers. The first package tour to Switzerland organised by tourism pioneer Thomas Cook in 1863, with a young woman called Jemima Morrell among its participants, marked the start of real mass tourism – aided to no small extent by photographs that were soon circulating worldwide.

Alongside quasi-obligatory sights like the Mer de Glace near Mont Blanc, the Alps in the Bernese Oberland, the Rigi and the city of Lucerne, waterfalls held an incredible fascination, especially Staubbach Falls in Lauterbrunnen Valley. Miss Morrell was overwhelmed by this 'queen of waterfalls' and described it in her travel journal using the words of English poet William Wordsworth: "this bold, this bright, this sky-born waterfall".

From the very beginning, pictures played an important role in popularising Staubbach Falls and other waterfalls, such as the Rhine Falls near Schaffhausen, Giessbach Falls and Reichenbach Falls in the Bernese Oberland, or Pissevache in Lower Valais. Images of these places were produced *en masse* by the Swiss *Kleinmeister* (engravers specialised in views and genre scenes) as outline etchings and appeared in cheap publications like the popular *Saturday Magazine* long before Swiss photographers started recording them. In fact, they entered the market of Swiss tourism business only later on, and gradually overtook it from foreign competitors. Among the first to do so were photographers from Geneva, where a large number of professionals, such as Auguste Garcin and Florentin Charnaux (1819-1883), were already active. They were later joined by Adam Gabler (1833-1888) and Jean Moeglé (1853-1938) in the Bernese Oberland, and the resourceful Romedo Guler (1836-1909)

from the canton Graubünden. They all focused less on spectacular individual images and more on collection of views of places such as the Engadine or cityscapes from all over Switzerland, which they offered in mostly small-format albums.

**Friedrich von Martens,
*The Rosenlauri glacier, c. 1857***

During the 1850s, the Alps became a major theme in travel photography, along with seascapes and photographs of the Orient. The engraver and photographer Friedrich von Martens, a Parisian by adoption, spent his summers in Lausanne with his friend and colleague Samuel Heer. As of 1852, his focus turned to the high mountains. Exhibited in England with other pictures of Switzerland, these photographs were put on sale by Adolphe Goupil in 1854. The enterprise did not seem to be profitable since the publishing house decided several years later to market his pictures in the form of lithographs drawn from photographs by Eugène Cicéri (1813-1890) in a series entitled *La Suisse et la Savoie* (1859-1864). The images presented by Martens were of sites that embodied the codes of the picturesque, as well as wild glacial sites that were topical in the scientific research of the day.

Identity and control

In 1854, Parisian photographer André Eugène Disdéri patented a process that initially enabled eight pictures, and later as many as twelve, to be taken on a single glass plate and copied. This allowed productivity to be increased enormously and the price to be reduced. From the 1860s onwards, a veritable ‘cartomania’ arose throughout Europe. Pictures became affordable for the general public as small-format ‘cartes de visite’ or ‘cartes de cabinet’ – also in Ticino, where Carlo Salvioni (1826-1902) and Carlo Sasaki (1817-1872) produced the first photographic ‘carte de visite’, followed by Angelo Monotti (1835-1915), who returned to Cavigliano after training as a photographer in Italy.

Some portraits are set against invented settings, far removed from actual reality. For example, groups of peasants or girls in traditional costumes are staged with the aim of creating an ideal image of ‘Swissness’ that was meant to set itself apart from the ‘foreign’. Traugott Richard was a master of this genre. He sold vast quantities of his series *Costumes Suisses* in a wide variety of versions. This also brought him considerable success at international exhibitions. Likewise, photographs of men dressed up as prehistoric pile house dwellers or warlords also helped to form the new Swiss state’s identity, long before the Rütli myth took over this role.

In Switzerland, earlier than elsewhere, photography was used to identify foreigners and outcasts within the country’s borders. Their portraits were taken according to the standards of bourgeois portrait photography and sometimes their appearance was retouched or modified in order to offer an idealised image of a possible role that they could take within society.

The photograph thus became an instrument of state control. In 1852 and 1853, this was the case with Carl Durheim’s portraits of homeless and vagrant people who, after the founding of the state in 1848, had been shunted from canton to canton without being accepted. This unique group of portraits on salted paper marks the start of so-called ‘mugshot photography’. From the 1860s onwards, this type of images were produced in the new format “carte de visite” came into use and were combined with written personal descriptions. Later they were collected in actual “albums of criminals”, carefully numbered and labelled. Such albums were kept in practically all cantons; two particularly impressive and extensive ones are those from the canton of Neuchâtel.

Traugott Richard, *Costumes suisses*, c. 1875

To date, there has been little research into the practice of photographing traditional costumes in Switzerland. What is certain, is that depiction of traditional costumes was already very popular among the artists referred to as the 'minor Swiss masters', and that photographer Adolphe Braun of Alsace was indeed making money from his 'Costume de Suisse' in the late 1860s – not only in Switzerland, but also abroad. Although practically nothing is known about Traugott Richard, except that he founded a studio in Männedorf in 1865 and was later active in Wädenswil, it can be assumed that he was inspired by Braun when he launched his own 'Costumes suisses' around 1875. He must have had enormous success with his series of black-and-white and hand-coloured traditional costume pictures in various formats, featuring almost exclusively female models, as they won awards at the 1875 Photographic Exhibition in Vienna and the 1883 Swiss National Exhibition in Zurich. Already in 1880 though, he had to file for bankruptcy in Wädenswil. According to a newspaper report, his stock at that time comprised 11,600 landscape photographs, about 500 pictures of Swiss traditional costumes, around 1,500 genre pictures and about 47,000 blank cardboard cards in the established "carte de visite", "cabinet" and "stereo" formats.

In the 1920s and 1930s, Julie Heierli (1859-1938) added Richard's traditional

costume pictures to her collection and revealed many to be merely popular mass products that had little in common with the traditional costumes typical of the region.

Carl Taeschler Signer, *Sinhalese in a human zoo*, Basel, 1885

Human zoos were staged commercial presentations of people from Africa, Asia, America, Australia or Oceania, or ethnic minorities from Europe's peripheral regions. They attracted large audiences in Europe from the second half of the 19th century to the Second World War. Behind a fence, or later in specially built villages, they enabled close-up inspection of what the onlookers considered strange and exotic. Artisanal activities, dances, religious rituals and the breeding of animals were also put on show. This was not so much about presenting actual cultural practices, but more about reinforcing and reproducing stereotypical and racist images of foreigners for a paying European audience.

Basel Zoo regularly hosted human zoo exhibitions between 1879 and 1935. The "anthropological zoological exhibition *The Sinhalese*", organised by Hamburg-based animal merchant Carl Hagenbeck and displayed on the zoo grounds for ten days in 1885, presented not only 12 elephants and 8 zebus, but also 51 men, women and children from what is now Sri Lanka. Such spectacles naturally attracted photographers, such as Carl Taeschler-Signer (1835–1917) from St Gallen, who ran

his own studio in Basel. The Foto-stiftung Schweiz collection contains 16 photographs of the aforementioned human zoo exhibition. These bear witness to Switzerland's colonial entanglement in a global socioeconomic history and demonstrate the closely associated hierarchical categorisation of 'others' based on race theories.

Carl Durheim, *Portraits of homeless people, 1852–1853*

Carl Durheim of Bern worked as a lithographer before he was introduced to the daguerreotype technique by an itinerant photographer in 1845. Without giving up lithography, he concentrated on photography from then on and established himself with a studio that he ran very successfully until the end of the 1860s. His clientele included not only members of the Bernese elite, whom he provided with flattering and often elaborately coloured portraits, but also, in at least one case, people on the fringes of society.

After the founding of the Swiss federal state in 1848, the long-simmering so-called 'question of the homeless' became a hotly debated topic. In this context, the idea arose that non-sedentary persons should be systematically photographed in order to better identify them and, if need be, arrest them for unauthorised border crossings or other offences. Thus, in 1852 and 1853, on behalf of Attorney General Jakob Amiet (1817-1883) and the head of the Federal Department of Justice and Police, Jonas Furrer, Carl

Durheim took portraits of over 200 men and women imprisoned in Bern. Rather than doing so with daguerreotypes as intended, he used the negative/positive process, because salted paper prints were more suitable for conversion into lithographs. All the portraits were transferred, six at a time, to lithographed mugshot sheets, which included information about the depicted persons and were printed in large numbers, then distributed to cantonal police stations. Today, these haunting, unvarnished portraits are stored in the Swiss Federal Archives together with a comprehensive stock of files. It must be noted that, beside their identification purposes, these early mugshots significantly contributed to the stereotyping and stigmatisation of entire minority groups, creating prejudices many of which sadly still subsist today.

Portrait photography: a lucrative business?

During the 1850s, the emergence of local portrait studios and the introduction of the glass negative process, allowed portraits to be produced and distributed relatively cheaply and in large numbers. This commercialisation led to a standardisation of images, which were copiously retouched when required.

The Taeschler brothers in St Gallen profited from this trend and at the same time, they tried to give space to their artistic aspirations. They produced portrait studies of women, for example, which were carefully arranged, lavishly lit and reproduced as premium carbon pigment prints destined to a privileged clientele. The Taeschler brothers earned international recognition with these studies, especially thanks to their distinctive habit of drawing backgrounds directly on the negative, a feature they practised from the mid-1870s onwards, to the great astonishment of the public.

Johannes Ganz (1821--1886) opened a studio in Zurich in 1867 and it quickly became a meeting place for the bourgeoisie and celebrities. Alongside his portraits, he made a name for himself with group shots, realised as photomontages on carefully painted backgrounds. Atelier Gysi in Aarau was not only active as a portrait studio for several generations, but also attended to art reproduction and practised almost modern-looking 'still-life photography'. In French-speaking Switzerland, the studio run by André Schmid (1836-1914) is worthy of note: alongside exterior shots, it produced portraits of criminals. The large studios run by Émile Pricam (1844-1919) and Henri Boissonnas (1833-1889) in Geneva also acquired an excellent reputation.

At the first Swiss National Exhibition in Zurich in 1883, the full breadth of the new photography profession was presented for the first time in a pavilion of its own. Henri Boissonnas wrote an official report about it, stating that at the time there were already around 200 companies working in the field of photography. Together, they achieved an annual turnover of about 3 million francs, which was not insignificant.

Carl Taeschler-Signer, *Interned French soldiers in St. Mangen church, St. Gallen, 1871*

At the beginning of February 1871, 87,000 French soldiers and officers of General Bourbaki's army crossed the Swiss border, sick and exhausted. Distributed over 190 different localities, they were housed in barracks, churches, riding arenas and schools, where they were given food and medical care. They received help from the authorities as well as from the population. Some pictures taken by the Taeschler brothers in their home in St. Fiden, show their laundry room transformed into a kitchen for the survivors, where the latter spent most of their time. This proximity undoubtedly contributed to the success of a series of portraits that the Taeschler took of these North African soldiers. In contrast to the sophisticated compositions of their photographs of women, the photographs of the refugees were taken at mid-body level in front of a neutral background in a very minimal setting granting them an uncommon impression of immediacy. Their half-brother Carl (1835-1917) also captured a surprising scene of soldiers housed in a church in St. Gallen. This snapshot-like image is one of the most direct testimonies of this historical event, which otherwise has left only scattered traces in photographic collections.

While the Pricams in Geneva and the Gysis in Aarau photographed these soldiers as groups in their studios, Jakob Höflinger (1819-1892) in Basel

and Auguste Bauernheinz (1838-1919) in Lausanne immortalized respectively the Appenzell officers sent to the front and the interned soldiers with photographic montages that allowed them to assemble numerous figures in a single image. Finally, the ruins of the Morges arsenal, which exploded in March 1871 during the destruction of the French army's munitions, were the subject of several photographs by Bauernheinz and Paul Vionnet, while Emil Nicola documented the barracks that housed the refugees on the outskirts of Bern.

Art and artistic ambitions

Ever since its invention, photography always gravitated towards art, and that is the case also in Switzerland. Some artists, for example, worked as photographic portrait colourists, making the monochrome images look like watercolours. Among them was William Moritz (1816-1860), who worked with the Bruder Frères photographers from Neuchâtel on various occasions. Sometimes artists produced photographic templates for their own works, either as aide-mémoire or to save themselves the trouble of sketching after nature. Photographs of models by the Swiss painter and etcher Karl Stauffer-Bern (1857-1892) are among the rare to have survived. It is not clear whether he always took them himself or commissioned a photographer to do so. However, it seems quite possible that the photograph of a model on a cross served as a template for his 1887 painting *Crucified Christ*. Other artists, such as Barthélemy Menn (1815-1893) and Robert Zünd (1827-1909), may also have used photography for study purposes.

Already in the late 1840s, daguerreotypist Samuel Heer was taking photographs in the Bernese Oberland to supply painters with pictures of "beautiful mountain regions". Later, photographers stemming from so-called 'académies' produced templates en masse for artists. Among them was Gaudenzio Marconi (1842-1885) of Ticino who, as 'Photographe de l'Ecole des Beaux-Arts de Paris', mainly had nude (male and female) models on offer. Amateur photographer Louis Alexandre de Dardel, who came from a noble Neuchâtel family and kept company with Albert Anker (1831-1910), Auguste Bachelin (1830-1890) and Jules Jacot-Guillarmod (1828-1889), worked in a rather different manner: in an improvised garden studio, he took portraits of his family, guests and artist friends. He also playfully staged templates for Bachelin's battle paintings and Jacot-Guillarmod's history paintings in front of the veranda at his stately vineyard in Saint-Blaise. One painter who worked intensively with photography was Albert Lugardon (1827-1909) of Geneva: his images, in particular those of horses, won him international awards.

Alongside the output of the few artists who actively engaged in photography, reproductions of artworks also played an important role in Switzerland. One special case in this context is that of painter Otto Frölicher (1840-1890) of

Solothurn, who reduced the colour palette in some paintings to a few shades of grey for the purposes of photographic reproduction, creating so-called 'grisailles'. These were reproduced and appeared as pasted albumen prints in the book *Rhododendron* (1873). The reproductions were still monochrome, but at least they now correctly replicated the brightness of the natural tones.

**Friedrich von Martens,
*Reproduction of the painting
'Romans Passing under the Yoke'
(1858) by Charles Gleyre, 1858***

From the mid-1850s onwards, photography made a significant contribution to the popularization of art with richly detailed reproductions, such as those sold by the Alinari brothers in Florence. Later, the French companies, Braun and Goupil, also conquered this market and made the photographic reproductions of works of art a means of spreading artistic and cultural knowledge.

An interesting example is Charles Gleyre's painting *Romans Passing Under the Yoke* (1858), commissioned by the canton of Vaud. This historical painting, which depicts the defeat of the Roman armies by the Helvetians and symbolically evokes the liberation of the inhabitants of the canton of Vaud from Bernese rule (1798), aroused unprecedented enthusiasm among connoisseurs and the general public alike. The Lausanne photographer Samuel Heer reproduced, perhaps on commission from the government, the immense painting on a full-size daguerreian plate, a technique that had become somewhat obsolete, on this occasion he also produced one of the

rare photographic portraits of the painter. For his part, his colleague and friend Friedrich von Martens used the negative-positive process that he had been practising since 1849 to reproduce the work and to promote its distribution by means of prints glued onto pre-printed cardboard. Finally, whereas the French weekly "L'illustration" published a woodcut of the work on its front page in its edition of the 16th October 1858, the painter and engraver Édouard Girardet (1819-1880) made a canvas copy of Gleyre's painting ten years later, commissioned by the Goupil company.

Unknown photographer, *Plaster of "Princess Suzanne Czartoryska" in the studio of the artist Marcello, Rome, 1869*

The Fribourg aristocrat Adèle d'Affry (1836-1879), who exhibited her sculpted and painted work under the pseudonym Marcello as of 1863, often used photography. She explored her identity as a woman of the nobility and as an artist by means of staged portraits. Often looking away from the lens, she is sometimes shown as a scholar concentrating on a book, sometimes as a vivacious woman enjoying the social events of the Second Empire, or as a bohemian character, immersed in the

contemplation of a painting. Very early on, she worked on the promotion and documentation of her works through photography, in particular, with Nadar, and then with Goupil.

Like Karl Stauffer-Bern in the early 1880s, she seemed to perceive increased expectations of verisimilitude on the part of the public. In 1869, at the height of her career, she wrote to her mother: "I only want to let go of things that are done, and done well. No more 'approximations', especially with the photographic means that are available to us today." That same year, she had her *Plâtre de la Princesse Suzanne Czartoryska* photographed in her Roman studio from several different angles, a practice perhaps borrowed from her mentor, the sculptor Auguste Clésinger, who sent such series of images of his own work to potential Parisian patrons.

Whereas Marcello used photography to question her own identity, to develop and control her image, the woman of letters Valérie de Gasparin (1813-1894), also working under a male pseudonym, participated in photographic stagings by various Geneva photographers. In an album dedicated to her husband and entitled *Les Femmes de Monsieur le Comte Agénor de Gasparin. Offert par elles-mêmes* she presented a collection of the multiple and fictitious identities of the wife in a playful and self-mocking manner.

Science and progress

It was not until the end of the 1860s that photography began to play a role in documenting science, medicine, technical revolutions, urban development, hydraulic engineering, the process of making the Alps accessible, and the construction of railway lines and roads.

Photography accompanied the progress that had already started to radically change Switzerland with the onset of steamboat traffic in the 1820s and the opening of the Swiss Northern Railway (nicknamed the 'Spanish Bun Railway') in 1847. However, comprehensive documentation campaigns are only rarely carried out before 1890.

A few exceptions can be found in the field of medicine, such as Émile Pricam (1844-1919) photographs showing patients before and after operations, and the systematic documentation of malformed ears by Robert Schucht.

It seems that the group portrait with a skeleton and a lying corpse, taken in the dissecting room at the University of Bern probably had humorous undertones. Already in the 1850s, Pierre Lackerbauer (1823-1870), who had emigrated to Paris, served science in a much more serious way: in cooperation with researchers, such as Louis Pasteur (1822-1895), he supplemented the micrographic scientific drawing with highly aesthetic photomicrographs.

Industrial development was also well documented: Jacques Brunner (1846-1927) photographed the textile factory of Neu-Pfungen for instance, and Johann Linck (1831-1900) immortalized the Sulzer brothers' machines in Winterthur. A large-format photograph by Scherer & Nabholz from around 1890, showing the inauguration of a Sulzer pump station in Moscow can be seen as glorification of industry. It shows an Orthodox mass being celebrated in a machine hall, with large bright windows, reminiscent of a cathedral.

The Gotthard Railway, a prime example of Switzerland's century-defining progressive construction projects, was built between 1872 and 1882, as largely documented by Adolphe Braun of Alsace. Although Braun was officially commissioned by those overseeing the construction, Swiss photographers like Johann Linck, Adam Gabler (1833-1888) and Florentin Charnaux (1819-1883), as well as Antonio Nessi (1834-1907) from Northern Italy, were

ultimately also involved in comprehensive visual documentation of this huge construction project that was to permanently change Switzerland's position in the heart of Europe.

Adam Várady, *Der Birsig in Basel vor der Correction*, March 1886

Pollution of the river Birsig, which meandered through the densely constructed Basel urban area before flowing into the Rhine at Schifflände, had long been a major problem. The often shallow Birsig had to absorb rubbish, slaughterhouse waste and excrements, which only washed away when the flow of the water augmented. For a long time, the only hygienic measure consisted in digging two deep channels into the riverbed along the banks, beneath the suspended latrines built onto the residential buildings. The little river had thus become a stinking and extremely unhealthy sewer.

The unhygienic conditions facilitated the spread of cholera (1855) and typhus (1865). Only after these epidemics, the situation was reassessed. In 1886, the decision to carry out comprehensive sanitation was finally made. Shortly before the construction work began, Adam Várady (1816-1889) photographed the Birsig in various crucial locations. It is not known whether he was working on behalf of the city administration: his name is not mentioned in the album *Der Birsig in Basel vor der Correction*, published in 1886 with 12 gilt-edged collotype prints showing the correction of the river. This impressive documentation of an intolerable, unhygienic state of affairs

in a Swiss city is reminiscent of the book *Photographs of the Old Closes and Streets of Glasgow* by Scottish photographer Thomas Annan (1829-1887), which was published a few years earlier and denounced the slum-like conditions in parts of Glasgow.

Paul Vionnet, *Les monuments préhistoriques de la Suisse occidentale et de la Savoie*, 1872

In the first half of the 19th century, the origin of erratic blocks was the subject of a controversy. After the confirmation of their glacial origin around 1840, the debate turned on how to protect them.

These blocks were usually blown up with explosives to clear the fields and the scattered remains were used as building stones. Following an appeal to the Swiss population presented by the geologists Alphonse Favre and Bernhard Studer to the assembly of the Swiss Society of Natural Sciences in 1867, several cantons and municipalities took steps to establish a map listing these blocks. Investigators, often pastors, doctors, teachers or forest rangers, were thus put in charge of documenting them.

The album by the pastor and amateur photographer Paul Vionnet (1830-1914) includes more than 30 photographs of erratic blocks and prehistoric megaliths. This publication is one of the

most interesting and richest accounts of the time and is one of the first initiatives aimed at the protection of nature in Switzerland. It is also one of the first books illustrated with photographic prints published in Switzerland.

Photographs from E. Nicola-Karlen Berne Switzerland, 1876

Emil Nicola-Karlen (1840-1898), originally a pharmacist, ran a successful photography studio in Bern from 1870 onwards. He was perhaps the photographer who most intensively addressed the changes in the Swiss landscape during the final third of the 19th century. He began by photographing the correction of the river Gürbe (1873), where structural interventions were intended to control the course of this tributary of the river Aare. Two years later, he was awarded a bronze medal for this work at the Photographic Exhibition in Vienna. The jury wrote: "Nicola-Karlen's splendid photographs of the rectification of the Gürbe in Switzerland were taken under difficult conditions in the mountains and are eloquent witnesses of Swiss engineers' work in the interests of the culture of this alpine country".

Nicola-Karlen then documented the construction of the railway line from Biel to Moutier and, in 1874, the Federal Staff Office commissioned him a scientific survey of the Rhone Glacier. While the photographs of the river correction and railway construction focus on massive interventions in the previously picturesque Swiss landscape,

the spectacular large-format photographs of the Rhone Glacier show an unspoilt alpine landscape. The tiny scientists we can spot busy at work on these images do not seem to constitute a danger. Nicola-Karlen presented all three projects in a large-format exhibition album at the 1876 World's Fair in Philadelphia. Although the album mentions Nicola-Karlen as its author, the section on the glacier survey, at the very least, is certainly the work of his business partner J. Birfelder. Later on, Nicola-Karlen eventually stopped taking photographs and became an insurance agent.

C. Heinrich Baer, *Photographien Schweizerischer Rindviehrassen*, 1881

On the occasion of the Swiss Agricultural Exhibition held in Lucerne in October 1881, a decision was made to "have a number of the most beautiful animals photographed" and to publish the images as collotype plates in an album. All necessary preparations were made, the well-known printing company Obernetter in Munich was notified and local photographer C. Heinrich Baer (1836-1906) was awarded the contract, so it seemed there was nothing standing in the way. However, as the final exhibition report noted: "the production of a collection of animal pictures would have been accomplished easily – if the evil spirit that plagued all aspects of the exhibition had not also haunted it here." What happened? The dark, foggy and wet

weather that had prevailed for almost the entire year not only had a severe impact on the exhibition itself, but also meant that a number of Baer's photographs proved unfit for conversion into collotype prints. They had to be taken again, so that the initial idea of presenting exclusively first-prize-winning animals had to be abandoned. Despite these shortcomings, the album published that year (*Photographien Schweizerischer Rindviehrassen*) with 20 cows and bulls photographed in front of painted landscapes, constitutes an almost conceptual documentary photographic project.

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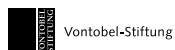
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