

# A PHOTOGRAPHIC REPRODUCTION OF A WORK OF ART

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## INANIMATE NATURE. PONDERING THE REPRODUCTIVE DAGUERREOTYPE

When the daguerreotype was announced in 1839, it was said by commentators that ‘inanimate nature, architecture are the triumphs of the apparatus’.<sup>1</sup> Of these triumphs, one kind of inanimate nature has not attracted much critical attention at all, and that is the genre of daguerreotype in which another picture – a drawing, an engraving, a lithograph, a painting, a printed text – is the sole referent. A selective survey of this genre is enough to reveal its diversity of both purposes and meanings, but also certain formal characteristics common to every example. Most striking is the way such daguerreotypes partake of the logic of reproducibility without necessarily participating in the processes of mass production normally associated with it: as unique copies, they offer replication without multiplicity. In so doing, they complicate the orthodox account of this process promulgated by Walter Benjamin in the 1930s and repeated so many times since. Such daguerreotypes therefore have interesting things to tell us about the moment of their production, but also, perhaps, about certain issues still of pertinence today.

This was, in fact, a very popular form of daguerreotype and, based on the sheer numbers of them that have survived, was obviously a significant source of income for professional studios. Indeed, even before any reproductive daguerreotype had been taken, at least one commentator celebrated that very possibility. As early as October 1839, for example, Jules Janin was praising the daguerreotype’s potential reproductive capacities in extravagant terms.

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<sup>1</sup> H. Gaucheraud, “Fine Arts: The Daguerotype”, *Literary Gazette* (January 12, 1839), as reprinted in S. Siegel, *First Exposures: Writings from the Beginning of Photography*, Los Angeles 2017, p. 44.

It is the faithful memorial of the finest monuments and painting in the universe. The spontaneous, incessant, indefatigable reproducer of those *chefs d'oeuvre* immortalised by genius and by time, The Daguerreotype will be the indispensable companion of the traveller ignorant of the art of painting; of the artist who has not time to paint. It is destined, at a small expense, to circulate in our country the finest works of art, of which we have only had hitherto costly and unfaithful copies. We shall shortly have only to send our boy to the Musée, and bid him in three hours bring back a picture of Raphael and of Murillo...you can take yourself a copy of the portrait by Ingres of the fine head of the noble writer who is an honour to the European press. You cease to regret that there had never been an engraving...<sup>2</sup>

As it happens, the first reproductive daguerreotypes were produced to demonstrate the possibility of turning such plates into matrices from which multiple ink-on-paper prints could be impressed. In April 1840, for example, the Viennese doctor Joseph Berres made a series of prints from daguerreotypes of copper engravings. The engravings so copied included a female figure, a picture titled *The Smuggler's Intrusion*, after a painting by David Wilkie, and another one, titled *Girl with a Butterfly*, after a painting by Karl Agricola. Berres would etch the reproductive daguerreotypes, probably made by his associates, Carl Schuh and Franz Kratochwila, with nitric acid, thereby turning them into serviceable printing plates.<sup>3</sup> Some of the inked impressions were included in a publication he issued on 3 August 1840, titled *Phototyp nach der Erfindung des Prof. Berres in Wien* and consisting of several prints and a text promoting the benefits of his process. The results, according to one commentator, were 'shadowy and very indistinct' but Berres nevertheless arranged for them to be shown at places like the Royal Polytechnic Institution in London (later to be the host of England's first daguerreotype studio) and the Académie des sciences in Paris.<sup>4</sup>

Berres was not the only person attempting to turn daguerreotypy into a mode of print making or to harness this mode to the reproduction of existing pictures. Another example of note was produced in Paris in 1842, the result of a collaboration between Armand-Hippolyte-Louis Fizeau and Noël-Marie-Paymal Lerebours. A daguerreotype was taken of an architect's drawn elevation of the front façade of a building. This plate was then transformed by Fizeau into an engraved matrix, from which multiple ink-on-paper prints could be made for the second volume of Lerebours' ambitious publication,

<sup>2</sup> J. Janin, "The Daguerotype", *L'Artiste* 1839, January 28, *ibidem*, p. 63.

<sup>3</sup> See M. Jürgens, I. Vasallos and L. Fernandes, "Joseph Berres's *Phototyp*: Printing photography in the service of science", *The Rijksmuseum Bulletin* 2018, 66(2), pp. 144–169.

<sup>4</sup> Unknown, "Miscellaneous – Daguerreotype Engraving", *The American Repertory of Arts, Sciences, and Manufacturers* 1840, September, 2, p. 141, as quoted in *ibidem*, p. 152.

*Excursions Daguerriennes: Vues et Monuments Les Plus Remarquables du Globe*. The resulting picture, *Maison Élevée Rue St. Georges par M. Renaud*, is remarkable for the unapologetic flatness of its regard, its refusal to offer a picturesque view of this building matched by the daguerreotype's willingness to be an entirely faithful servant to its subject (ill. 1).<sup>5</sup> The studious flatness of each of these merged pictures – the original drawing, the daguerreotype taken of it, and the print impressed from the etched daguerreotype plate – demonstrates the capacity for an erasure of self on the part of all three of these media of representation.<sup>6</sup> As a result, Fizeau's print is not just a picture of a drawing; it is a photographic image that presents itself *as* a drawing.

The efforts of Berres and Fizeau notwithstanding, most daguerreotypes taken of other pictures were intended as stand-alone objects. Studios advertised their expertise in this field, suggesting that it was a competitive business but also that it required some quite specific equipment and skills. Matthew Brady ran such an advertisement in the *Bulletin of the American Art-Union*, assuring potential customers that 'In the Department arranged for Copying Engravings, Painting, Statuary, etc., the light and instruments have been expressly designed for this purpose'.<sup>7</sup> As we've heard, that purpose entailed entirely subsuming the photograph to the drawing or painting. Accordingly, most of these kinds of daguerreotype avoid showing the frame or edge of the picture they reproduce. They are photographs of things, pretending hard not to be. Indeed, some of them even depict a figure drawing in which the subject is seen against a plain background that extends to infinity, or at least beyond the crop of the daguerreotype's matt. The drawing and the photograph thereby become a single entity, with one absorbed into the surface, and thus into the very being, of the other. In an example by Edward Kilburn, a quarter-plate daguerreotype reproducing an 1853 drawing by James Robertson, the artist's signature and the date appear in the photograph, as if Robertson is responsible for both.<sup>8</sup> The drawn image thereby takes over the daguerreotype like a parasite.

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<sup>5</sup> For the context in which this publication was produced, see G. Batchen, *Apparitions: Photography and Dissemination*, Sydney/Prague 2018, pp. 42–50.

<sup>6</sup> In this respect, such images inaugurate a mode of deadpan photography that eventually will come to dominate the art of the late twentieth century. See C. Cotton, "Deadpan", *The Photograph as Contemporary Art*, Thames & Hudson, 2014, pp. 81–112, and G. Batchen, "Ordering Things", in: *The Order of Things: Photography from the Walther Collection*, ed. B. Wallis, Steidl 2015, pp. 332–339.

<sup>7</sup> S. Kate Gillespie, *The Early American Daguerreotype: Cross-Currents in Art and Technology*, Cambridge, MA 2016, p. 76.

<sup>8</sup> See <<https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/750834569112185458/>> [accessed: June 22, 2020].



1. Armand-Hippolyte-Louis Fizeau (France), *France: Maison élevée rue St. Georges par M. Renaud*, c. 1843 ink-on-paper print from engraved and etched daguerreotype of a drawing, from Noël-Marie Paymal Lerebours (France), *Excursions daguerriennes, vues et monuments les plus remarquables du globe*, vol. 2, Rittner & Goupil, Paris, 1843, 26.0 × 38.0 cm (sheet), Collection of Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Of course, photographers have always longed to achieve just such a relationship. Many of the first photographs were contact prints in which an existing picture was placed directly onto a light-sensitive surface, thus facilitating an automatic image transfer from one to the other.<sup>9</sup> In order for daguerreotypy to achieve this same result, the perspectival space promised by its camera must be denied, so that the plane of the picture and that of the photograph can appear to have been similarly coincident. To create this fiction, lighting must be organised to avoid glare or shadow and the camera must be kept exactly parallel to the picture being depicted during the (often lengthy) time of

<sup>9</sup> For a history of this impulse, which begins with Tom Wedgwood, Humphry Davy, Hercule Florence and Nicéphore Niépce, see G. Batchen, *Emanations: The Art of the Cameraless Photograph*, New York 2016.

exposure. By this means, the subject of the daguerreotype is allowed to entirely determine that daguerreotype's appearance, with the photographer taking their instructions from what is before their camera and acting without further creative thought. William Henry Fox Talbot had said of his own house that 'this building I believe to be the first that was ever yet known to have drawn its own picture', but daguerreotypes of paintings, prints and drawings are the truest example of this phenomenon.<sup>10</sup> Reduced to a technical exercise, photography is turned here into a mechanical form of representation. It becomes precisely that unthinking machine many critics have claimed disqualifies the medium from being accorded the status of an art form in its own right.<sup>11</sup> Later in the nineteenth century, this kind of affectless picture-taking was equated with working-class values and was denigrated accordingly.<sup>12</sup> That denigration is affirmed by the current silence about the reproductive daguerreotype in histories of photography.

The shifting of creativity, and therefore of authority (of the author function), from the photographer to the referent is another reason why these kinds of photograph have attracted little scholarly interest. Although requiring skill to be made, in such photographs the subjectivity of the photographer has been taken out of the equation. And without subjectivity, biography – that convenient crutch of the historian – becomes irrelevant as a mode of interpretation, or is at least significantly downgraded. In a reproductive daguerreotype, there is no residual trace of the photographer's intellect or imagination, except in the act of choosing which picture to reproduce. But even this decision is usually determined by the marketplace, or by an individual client. Daguerreotypes of pictures therefore make the economics of photography an overt part of one's viewing experience. They reject any lingering Romantic assumptions about the photographer as artist and the photograph as artwork and leave only the *work*, the actual labour, and the political economy that determines it, to be discussed.

Photographs are usually somewhat lazily described as indexical signs, as signs physically caused by the thing to which they refer. And it's true that

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<sup>10</sup> W. Henry Fox Talbot, "Some Account of the Art of Photogenic Drawing, or, The Process by Which Natural Objects May Be Made to Delineate Themselves Without the Aid of the Artist's Pencil" (1839), in: *Photography: Essays & Images*, ed. B. Newhall, New York 1980, p. 28.

<sup>11</sup> The most famous of these critics has been Charles Baudelaire. See C. Baudelaire, extract from "The Salon of 1859: The Modern Public and Photography" (1859), in: *Photography: Essays & Images*, pp. 112–113.

<sup>12</sup> See S. Edwards, *The Making of English Photography: Allegories*, University Park 2006, pp. 243–245.

a daguerreotype of a painting or drawing is produced indexically, by a point-to-point chemical reaction of the activated metal plate to the light reflected from its subject. Unlike with most photographs, no reversed-tone negative (an intermediate stage conveniently forgotten by the vast majority of photography's semioticians) comes between the referent and its copy.<sup>13</sup> In a daguerreotype, the reflection and reaction involved in the production of a photographic image is directly connected and unadulterated. It's a very physical kind of relationship. However, Charles Sanders Peirce, from whose work such a description is derived, also identifies a type of sign which resembles its referent: so-called icons.<sup>14</sup> Being two-dimensional, like their photographic doppelgänger, paintings and drawings semiotically resemble any daguerreotype taken of them. In such a daguerreotype, then, indexicality and iconicity are layered over each other, becoming a single signifying system. Indeed, one might well say that, in this genre of picture, resemblance is the dominant signifying factor, the one that determines the meaning and value of the photograph to its observer. Once again, reproductive daguerreotypes complicate the usual photographic discourse.

The conflation of medium and message in these objects, this flatness of regard that I have already mentioned, is unusual for the daguerreotype process, which did not partake of the tradition of contact printing enjoyed by makers of paper photographs. Nevertheless, one does find a similar aesthetic contrivance in a few daguerreotypes of arrayed objects or relief carvings, such as the early view of fossilised shells attributed to Daguerre, the 1845 documentation of plaster casts of sculptures from the Parthenon attributed to Charles Nègre, or the miniature copy of the Rosetta Stone made by John Mayall (ill. 2). But each of these is a photographic depiction of a three-dimensional object or objects. The imposition on these objects of a rigorously frontal view is already a strategic one on the part of the photographer; an effort, perhaps, to align these daguerreotypes with the taxonomic ideology of science. Nevertheless, these are still photographs of things. The reproductive daguerreotypes I am speaking about seek to eschew aesthetic strategy altogether in favour of a complete subservience of its own two-dimensional picture plane to the two-dimensional thing being depicted. They are copies that aim to resemble the original in both appearance and morphology.

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<sup>13</sup> On this issue, see G. Batchen, *Negative/Positive: A History of Photography*, Routledge 2020, pp. 3–4.

<sup>14</sup> C. Sanders Peirce, "Logic as Semiotic: The Theory of Signs", in: *Philosophical Writings of Peirce*, ed. J. Buchler, New York 1955, pp. 107–108.



2. John Jabez Edwin Mayall (England), *Untitled*, [Copy of the Rosetta Stone], 1846-52, daguerreotype (in embossed leather case), 9.0 x 7.6 cm (plate), Collection of Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Of course, resembling something is not the same as being identical to it. Most, but not all, reproductive daguerreotypes offer a mirror image of the original picture, an inversion that can only be counteracted by the addition of yet another mirror to the camera during the exposure (or by re-photographing the daguerreotype and thus re-reversing the image).<sup>15</sup> Some examples of this

<sup>15</sup> On page 73 of his 1839 publication, *Historique et Description des procédés du Daguerreotype et du Diorama*, Louis Daguerre refers to the problem of the lateral reversal of daguerreotype images. 'This camera obscura has the defect of transposing objects from right to left, which is of little or no consequence, with a great number of objects; but if the operator is desirous of obtaining a view according to nature, a parallel glass should be added in front of the diaphragm.... But as this reflection occasions a loss of light, one-third more time should be reckoned upon to make the drawings'. The diagram that accompanies this suggestion shows such a 'parallel glass' in place. On November 11, 1839 a Parisian optician named Cauche exhibited a prism lens capable of producing an image that was not laterally reversed, thereby doing away with the need for an added parallel glass or re-reversing mirror. Théodore Maurisset's lithograph, derisively titled *Daguerreotypomania* and published

genre offer quite small versions of much larger art works, making details of these works hard to make out in the daguerreotype copy (ill. 3). However, the tonal subtleties, general massing of form and compositional innovations



3. Baron Jean Baptiste Louis Gros (France), *Untitled*, [*Copy Daguerreotype of a Gravure of the Painting by Papety entitled "A Dream of Joy" or "Dream of Happiness"*], 1852-53, daguerreotype in paper mat and wood frame, 14.8 × 20 cm, Collection of J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles

in December 1839, features a crowd trying to get into the studio of Susse Frères. Over the entrance is a large sign proclaiming that 'non-inverted pictures can be taken in 13 minutes without sunshine'. Despite the handicap of longer exposure times, in July 1841 Charles Chevalier introduced a version of his portable 'Photographe' camera that included a mirror prism fixed in front of the lens. After Daguerre moved to Bry-sur-Marne in January 1841, he took to using the superior Chevalier camera rather than the one marketed by himself and Giroux. For a brief discussion of French daguerreotype cameras and their evolution, see H. and A. Gernsheim, *L. J. M. Daguerre: The history of the Diorama and the Daguerreotype*, New York 1968, pp. 103, 110, 120.



(none of which is affected by reversal) are accentuated in the copy, allowing us to appreciate these qualities all the more. Nevertheless, we do appreciate such pictures differently. Daguerreotyping them turns large art works into intimate experiences, and into mobile ones, too. As Janin had already imagined, reproductive daguerreotypes allow for the possibility of a museum without walls.<sup>16</sup>

It's interesting to note that many examples are photographs of reproductive engravings, rather than of the original paintings. One presumes that this was a matter of convenience and scale, a print being much easier to photograph than a large canvas. But it also meant that the picture to be copied had already been translated into clearly articulated arrangements of line and tone and this suited the chromatic limitations of the daguerreotype medium. For this is the other striking attribute of all these reproductive daguerreotypes: they are monochrome. Every picture, no matter what its original colour or medium, is reduced to a grisaille sketch, to a study in shades of silver and grey (ill. 4). Interestingly, I have come across very few reproductive daguerreotypes that have had their surfaces hand-painted, a common attribute of studio portraits made with the same medium.<sup>17</sup> Instead, what we mostly see in a reproductive daguerreotype is but a ghost of the original picture, an image stripped of its substance. Solid colours are rendered pale, as are solid bodies, and bravura flourishes become impotent shadows of themselves. Line and composition, and the subject of the picture, are favoured over colour, texture, and surface affectation.

One exception to this rule are daguerreotypes of silhouettes. These are strange pictures indeed, with the matt, painted surface of the profile replaced by a sheet of shiny metal. This profile appears as a blank, and therefore black, shape in a silver rectangle, giving the impression one can see through the sheet of metal into nothingness (a gestalt effect that invites us to look through and at the photograph simultaneously). This contradiction is constantly flashed before our eyes by the daguerreotype's back and forth between negative and positive states of being, as we move either it or ourselves. The image

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<sup>16</sup> Janin's vision of daguerreotypy as a medium offering a 'faithful memorial of the finest monuments and painting in the universe' has its later manifestation in André Malreaux's 1947 claim that colour reproduction allows a 'Museum without Walls' to come into being. See A. Malreaux, *Museum without Walls*, London 1967, p. 16.

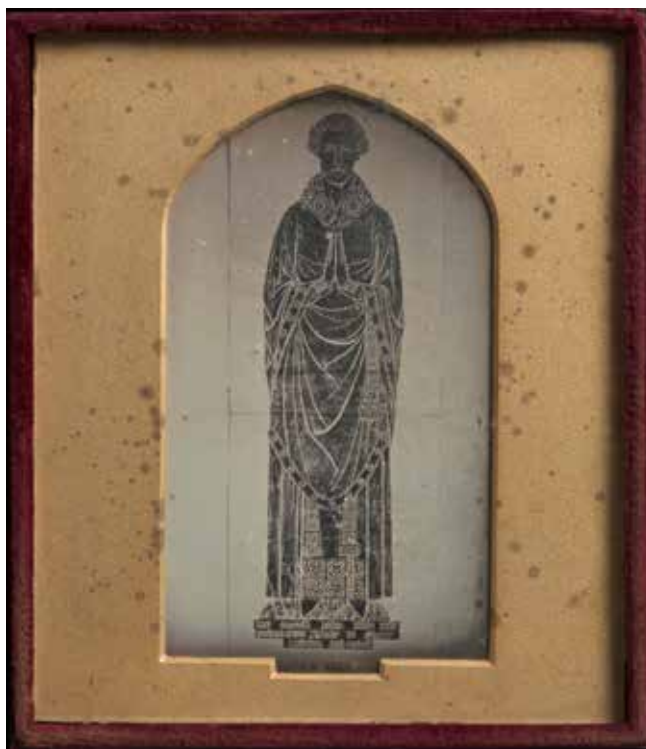
<sup>17</sup> Exceptions are some daguerreotypes made in about 1851 by Thomas Bock in Hobart, Australia. These daguerreotypes reproduced his own sketches in charcoal, china white and watercolour of the sons of Richard and Isabella Lewis. According to the scholar Elisa Decourcy, 'Bock colour tinted the Lewis's monochrome daguerreotypes to replicate the colour accenting he had originally applied to the sketches, leaving the backgrounds and negative space of the original intact in its photographic copy'. I thank her for sharing her research.



4. Photographer unknown (USA?), *Untitled*, [*Daguerreotype of a Painting of a Standing Boy in a Hat*], c. 1855, daguerreotype in gold-coloured mat and wood frame, 9.8 x 8.6 cm, Collection of Geoffrey Batchen, Oxford

is thereby reanimated, and given a new interactive life. In similar fashion, a daguerreotype now titled *Copy of a Brass Rubbing from the Tomb of Peter de Lacy, Rector of Northfleet and Prebendary of Swerdes, Dublin Cathedral, Ireland* offers a chromatically faithful, if miniature, version of the original picture (which is itself an inked impression of a brass tomb relief). The religious value of this impression is reiterated by the exact symmetry of the placement of the image in its brass mat, a mat given an ecclesiastical three-pointed arch at the top and a rectangular notch cut out of its foot to match the shape of the tomb (ill. 5). As a total object, this daguerreotype reproduces not just the image of the tomb but its whole setting. To open its protective leather case is to enter the tomb and enjoy a quasi-sacred experience. It is to enact a resurrection.

As a genre, these kinds of daguerreotype automatically claimed *entré* for themselves into the established market for copies of art works, which reproductive engravings then dominated. Stephen Bann has outlined some of the



5. Photographer unknown (England?), *Untitled*, [Copy of Brass Rubbing from the Tomb of Peter de Lacy, Rector of Northfleet and Prebendary of Swerdes, Dublin Cathedral, Ireland], c. 1850, daguerreotype in shaped gold-coloured mat and leather case, 8.9 x 7.6 cm (plate), Collection of Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

parameters of this trade in France in the mid-nineteenth century, in the process reminding us of the distinctions then made between copies and replicas, *repetitions* and translations, reductions and *reprises*. Such distinctions complicate the modernist binary opposition of original and reproduction that still pertains even today.<sup>18</sup> And they remind us of the many possible differentiations that can animate the act of reproduction. Daguerreotypes of paintings and prints are certainly ‘translations’ and (almost always) ‘reductions’ of the original, but they are also unique objects, and so constitute a very limited form of reproductive technology. The medium can be used to make a single accurate copy in miniature, and even to make a number of such copies, when,

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<sup>18</sup> See S. Bann, *Parallel Lines: Printmakers, Painters, and Photographers in Nineteenth-Century France*, New Haven 2001, and A. Solomon-Godeau, “Review Article: *Parallel Lines*”, *Visual Resources* 2002, XVIII, pp. 219–227.

for example, the process is repeated more than once. But those copies will always be relatively few, unlike a steel engraving, from which multiple ink-on-paper positive prints can be generated. Despite daguerreotypy's encroachment on their territory, therefore, engravers were safe from mortal competition, at least for the moment. On the other hand, a reproductive engraving was a highly skilled and often very slow endeavour, taking months or even years to complete, whereas a daguerreotype of a painting or print could be made in an hour. That daguerreotype may be monochrome, small and often a reflective mirror-image of the original, but it was also rapidly produced, accurate, transportable, convenient and relatively inexpensive.

One suspects many of these reproductive daguerreotypes were made for individual clients with particular, and possibly quite personal, needs. They may have been used as keepsakes, or as records, or for consultation as needed, or all three at different times. In other words, they fulfilled a range of possible functions. Fortunately, some come with a back story that helps to flesh out this suspicion. In 1852, for example, the French artist Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres commissioned the taking of at least four daguerreotypes of his paintings by Désiré-François Millet, an accomplished Parisian photographer.<sup>19</sup> One of these shows a cropped view of a horizontal painting of a reclining nude woman, resting on an easel. A second painting, a vertical portrait of another, clothed, woman is partially visible behind it. Strange that this photograph should have been so poorly composed. One gets the impression that Millet had set up his camera to take a vertical shot of the famous portrait of Mme Ines Moitessier (seen in the background) and was then, at the last minute, asked to take a picture of this horizontal canvas on its painter's easel. The indolently nude woman in the featured painting was in fact modelled by Ingres's first wife, Madeleine Chapel, who had died in 1849. After his second marriage in 1852, Ingres agreed to destroy the painting. But he kept this cherished photographic portrayal of it, and therefore of Madeleine, in a drawer of his desk for the rest of his life.

Ingres opposed the acceptance of photography as a fine art but obviously recognised its capacities as both documentary record and poignant private memorial. Given that it is being looked at by a grieving husband, in his eyes this daguerreotype surely becomes a photograph of Madeleine, rather than just of a painting of her. It becomes a portrait of a person, not just a documentation of a thing. The daguerreotype's usual indexical certification of the pres-

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<sup>19</sup> See M. Daniel, Q. Bajac and D. Planchon-de Font-Réaulx, *Le Daguerreotype Français: Un Objet Photographique*, Paris 2003, pp. 288–289. But see also S. Bann, "Ingres in Reproduction", *Art History* 2000, December, 23:5, pp. 706–725, and A. de Mondenard, "Du bon usage de la photographie", *Ingres 1780–1867*, Paris 2006, pp. 44–53.

ence of its subject in some former conjunction of time and space is retrospectively transferred to the woman herself. Ingres's daguerreotype says to him, 'she was here', just as if she had indeed been there for a moment before the camera, chemically imprinting herself onto a metal plate, instead of lying for several days before Ingres's easel to be interpreted in paint. In a photograph of a painted portrait, instantaneity and duration are made simultaneous perceptual experiences, as are, in some circumstances, subject and object.

We have another photograph of a painting by Ingres, a quarter-plate daguerreotype said by some to have been taken in late 1841, when the painting was only recently finished (ill. 6).<sup>20</sup> That date would make it a remarkably successful photograph, given how primitive the medium still was at the time.



6. Photographer unknown (France), *Untitled*, [Daguerreotype Copy of Ingres Painting of *Maria Luigi Carlo Zenobio Salvatore Cherubini and his Muse*], c. 1843, daguerreotype, 10.1 x 7.6 cm, Collection of J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles

<sup>20</sup> B. Lowry and I. Barrett Lowry, *The Silver Canvas: Daguerreotype Masterpieces from the J. Paul Getty Museum*, Los Angeles 1998, pp. 122–123. The daguerreotype is also reproduced in: M. Warner Marien, *Photography: A Cultural History*, London 2002, p. 77.

The painting, *Maria Luigi Carlo Zenobio Salvatore Cherubini and his muse*, depicts the Italian composer, director of the Conservatoire in Paris from 1822, in mid-thought, accompanied by a metaphoric personification of his poetic muse, Terpsichore. This statuesque woman clutches a lyre in her left hand and holds the other in inspirational fashion over Cherubini's head. It's an odd composition, combining a realist portrait of Cherubini with an idealised figure who, despite being imaginary, shares his painted corporeality. This disjunction is enhanced by the fact that the painted Cherubini looks toward us but also inward, and is thus shown as unseeing and slightly withdrawn, whereas Terpsichore looks directly out of the canvas and into our eyes. She seems very present, and in the moment, whereas he does not. In fact, to make this composition, which he began in 1840, Ingres glued an 1834 painting of the composer onto a larger piece of canvas, thus allowing the addition of the fanciful female figure. An accomplished violinist himself, Ingres owned two daguerreotype portraits of Cherubini, a close friend, and these may well have informed any modifications he made to his earlier portrayal. If so, it means daguerreotypy came both before and after the final painting, a testament to photography's omnipresence in European culture from its inception.

After its purchase by King Louis-Phillipe, a number of reproductive prints of *Maria Luigi Carlo Zenobio Salvatore Cherubini and his muse* were circulated. An authorised wood-engraved version, drawn by M. Desperet, Ingres's son, and engraved by Louis-Henri Brevière, was published on the cover of *Le Magasin Pittoresque* in 1843, the year after Cherubini died. It was accompanied by a detailed account of the composer's illustrious career. A lithograph of this wood engraving, credited to Gaetano Riccio, appeared in Italy in the pages of *Poliorama Pittoresco* on January 13, 1844. The following year, a lithograph of the painting itself, drawn by Jean-Baptiste-François Lévillé and printed by Jules Alfred Vincent Rigo, was published in *Moniteur des Arts* in Paris.<sup>21</sup> This plethora of reproductions, circulating in multiple copies and in the public realm, offers a salutary comparison with the solitary and unique daguerreotype of the same image. The wood engraving reduces Ingres's painting to a linear outline of its main features set against a white paper substrate, and thus gives both its figures equal pictorial weight. The lithograph of the painting, on the other hand, translates Ingres's colour scheme into subtle shades of black, white and grey, allowing it to more clearly distinguish the pale female figure from the dark physicality of Cherubini's body. The daguerreotype ap-

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<sup>21</sup> For more on caricatures of this work by Ingres, see S. Betzer, "Marie d'Agoult : une critique d'art 'ingriste'", Publications de l'Institut national d'histoire de l'art, 2012, available online: <<https://books.openedition.org/inha/4067>> [accessed: June 22, 2020].

pears to be of the painting itself, but it is a reversed view, a mirror image of what is seen by the human eye. In this photographic rendition, for example, it is Terpsichore's left hand that reaches out to crown the musician's head, making this copy entirely accurate but also completely wrong. It assumes, in other words, that any viewer both knows the original painting and is familiar with the peculiarities of the daguerreotype medium.

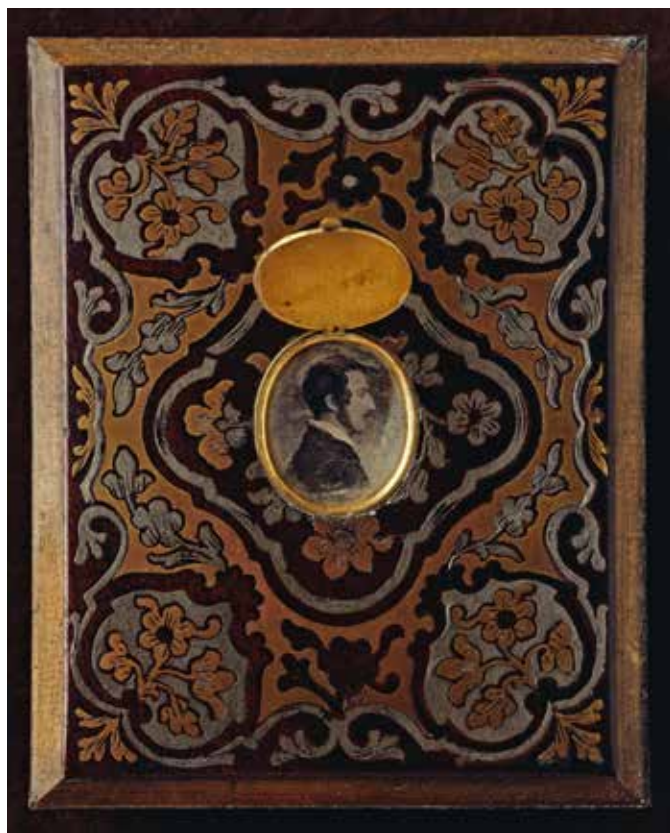
Darker, and offering less visible detail than either of the prints, the photograph joins these other reproductions in turning a painted collage into a seamless monochrome montage, flattening the awkward conjunction of the two figures into one continuous plane. At the same time, this daguerreotype's small size, its leather case big enough to hold in a single hand, turns looking at this work into a private experience, quite different from that provided by the painting or by public copies, where the image is invariably framed by captions and texts. The daguerreotype reproduces the painting but refuses to enter into a general economy of reproducibility or contribute to its consequences. It is a copy, but a unique one. It is a copy, in other words, that is also an original. In this aspect, it shares the painting's rarity, and, in its miniaturisation of that referent, also its preciousness, providing a convenient condensation of the painting's essence as a work of art. We don't know who made this daguerreotype or for what purpose. However, Brévière, a printer for the *Imprimerie royale*, worked with Fizeau in his efforts in 1842–43 to turn daguerreotype plates into printable matrices. Perhaps this particular daguerreotype should therefore be associated with these two figures and this later date?<sup>22</sup> Or perhaps it was made even later, as a step towards the production of the similarly tonal lithograph of the painting? This assumes, of course, that this was a working daguerreotype, a 'reduction' as it were, rather than a personal keepsake or studio record. If so, it functioned quite differently than the one of the painting of Madeleine kept by Ingres in his drawer.

Different again is an elaborate wooden box associated with Queen Victoria. The box incorporates a number of daguerreotypes of painted portraits to constitute an object that is both a keepsake and a dynastic record (ill. 7).<sup>23</sup> The box, which is designed to hold a watch as well as these daguerreotypes, is decorated on its outside surfaces with two-metal inlays of garlands of flowers. In the centre of the lid is an oval locket, engraved with a crown. When its hinged lid is lifted, a profile portrait of a casually dressed Prince Albert is revealed. It is a laterally reversed daguerreotype copy of a portion of a miniature

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<sup>22</sup> Lowry, *The Silver Canvas*, pp. 122–123.

<sup>23</sup> See <<https://www.rct.uk/collection/52507/four-daguerreotype-portraits-of-queen-victoria-prince-albert-ernest-i-duke-of-saxe>> [accessed: June 20, 2020].



7. Photographer unknown (England), *Four Daguerreotype Portraits – of Queen Victoria; Prince Albert; Ernest I, Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha; Albert Edward, and Prince of Wales – Set in a Wood Box*, c.1850, daguerreotypes in wood box with a metal inlay, 3.9 x 7.5 x 11.7 cm (whole object), Royal Collection, London

painting commissioned from William Ross by Victoria in 1840 and said to be one of her favourites (she kept it on her writing table). Inside the lid of the box itself is a design showing the Rosenau palace at Coburg (Albert's boyhood home), along with the initials 'E', 'VA', and 'AE' (referring to Ernest I, Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, and Albert's father; Queen Victoria and Prince Albert; and Albert Edward, Prince of Wales).

In the main part of the box is a hinged shelf with a circular aperture (lined with orange silk cord) in which is set a daguerreotype after a painting of Duke Ernest. This painting is a copy by William Corden of the portrait of Ernest I originally painted by John Lucas in 1838. The daguerreotype crops the painting so we just see a bust of the Duke, wearing military uniform with the ribbon and star of the Garter and the stars of the Orders of Saxe-Ernest and of



St Stephen of Austria. On his death in 1844, the Queen wrote of 'our present overwhelming grief...our Dearly beloved Father, was the kindest & best of Parents, – of Relations & of Princes....'<sup>24</sup> Perhaps this box was made at about this same time, as a memorial to a beloved father, father-in-law and grandfather? This would explain the gathering of these daguerreotypes of paintings, all of them already in the Royal collections and thus available for copying.

When one lifts this shelf and look at the underside, one finds yet another daguerreotype after a painting, this time a reproduction of an 1841 profile view of the Queen produced by Ross for Albert in 1841. Finally, in the floor of this box, and therefore permanently facing his mother, is set a daguerreotype of an 1843 painting by Franz Winterhalter of the Prince of Wales. As the Queen recorded in her *Journal* on 24 August 1843, 'Winterhalter has made, in only 2 sittings, the most spirited & beautiful likeness of the Boy, imaginable'.<sup>25</sup> That likeness, in which the two-year-old Albert Edward is shown in a dress, standing by a table on which rests a large and exotic feather, could now always be at hand, even if reversed and in silvery monochrome. A personal object, this box linked each of these portraits to the others but also to the passing of time, making all of them available to the touch and to the sad pleasures of reminiscence.

Photographs of paintings can, it seems, perform various kinds of work. In about 1850, the studio of London-based photographer Edward Kilburn, renowned for his delicately hand-coloured portraits, was commissioned to make a daguerreotype of a painting then thought to be by Raphael (ill. 8). The client was the British art dealer Morris Moore, who had acquired the painting in that same year. As Francis Haskell has outlined, Moore engaged in a decades-long struggle to have this painting, now titled *Apollo and Marsyas* and attributed to Perugino, accepted as an early work by Raphael.<sup>26</sup> To that end, he arranged to have various reproductions made of it, and also of related drawings. These included an albumen photograph of the painting taken in the 1850s by Robert Bingham, an English photographer working in Paris, and a carbon print made a little later by Adolphe Braun, but also wood and steel engravings. We know one of these photographs, presumably the one taken by Bingham, was shown by Moore to the French artist Eugène Delacroix, as he noted his impressions

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>25</sup> <<http://www.daguerreobase.org/en/type/4f354200-d37d-81ef-5bf7-05b617a5a2f6>> [accessed: June 21, 2020].

<sup>26</sup> See F. Haskell, "A Martyr of Attributionism: Morris Moore and the Louvre *Apollo and Marsyas*", in: *Past and Present in Art and Taste: Selected Essays*, New Haven 1987, pp. 154–174, 242–246. I thank Anthony Hamber for generously supplying me with a copy of this essay.



8. Edward Kilburn studio (England), *Copy of a Painting of "Apollo and Marsyas" by Perugino*, c. 1850s, daguerreotype, 13.0 x 10.0 cm, Collection of Ken and Jenny Jacobson

of it in a diary entry dated 23 February 1858. In other words, here we have one of the earliest instances of a determined campaign of attribution and promotion in which photographs played a central role. The daguerreotype by the Kilburn studio, re-reversed and framed in a suitably gold rectangular matt, no doubt played a part in that campaign. It offered a miniature version of the painting in silvery tones, thereby emphasising its value. And it facilitated the circulation of the image of the painting. Moore displayed this daguerreotype, for example, in Berlin in 1856.<sup>27</sup> But Kilburn's daguerreotype was taken on the cusp of a decade in which the process was superseded by modes of photography capable of producing multiple copies of just such paintings. In that sense, it represents both the potential and the historical limits of the reproductive daguerreotype.

<sup>27</sup> For a more detailed discussion of Moore's use of photography in the promotion of his painting, see A. Hamber, "Morris Moore, the *Apollo and Marsyas* and Photography" (unpublished essay, 2020). I thank him for sharing this essay with me.

As we've seen with Ingres's daguerreotype of his painting of his deceased wife, a photograph of a drawing or painting can act as a substitute for the person so depicted. Ada Lovelace, the English mathematician and computing pioneer, had a number of daguerreotype portraits made of herself. The last of these, taken by an unknown photographer, is a photograph of a small portrait of Lovelace, frail and thin but sitting at her piano, a portrait painted by Henry Wyndham Phillips in August 1852. The painting was produced in the last months of her life, when Lovelace was in great pain from uterine cancer. The Bodleian Library in Oxford contains a note written in her last days, in which she leaves 'a daguerreotype from Phillips's picture of me' to her mother's friend, a Miss Montgomery.<sup>28</sup> I think we can assume that Montgomery was being invited to look through both daguerreotype and painting to the person they each represent. As with so many photographs, we are induced to suspend disbelief and 'not see' what we don't want to see; if so inclined, we treat the photograph as a transparent membrane and turn the painting of the person depicted into an indexical trace of that person. We see her, not it.

This last example is a reminder that the vast majority of reproductive daguerreotypes feature rather ordinary pictures, and even examples that we might today classify as folk art. In other words, this was often a business driven by sentiment and genealogy rather than art appreciation, multiple reproduction or mass circulation. It was to appeal to this market that Brady would include a large and bold-faced addition to an 1849 advertisement for his Broadway studio, promising his customers 'Family Portraits, Miniatures copied with great fidelity'.<sup>29</sup> The practice allowed families to add members from before the photographic era to their dynastic array of portraits (a middle-class imitation of an aristocratic tradition). And it enabled people to take a unique painted portrait and at least double its manifestations. Once again, it turned an otherwise static depiction of a someone held dear into a small

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<sup>28</sup> See <<https://blogs.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/adalovelace/2015/10/14/only-known-photographs-of-ada-lovelace-in-bodleian-display/>> [accessed: May 10, 2020]. In similar fashion, Karl Marx kept a daguerreotype copy of a portrait of his father in his breast pocket. When Karl died in 1883, the daguerreotype was placed by his colleague Friedrich Engels in his coffin before it was interred in Highgate Cemetery. See S.-E. Liedman, *A World to Win: The Life and Works of Karl Marx*, London–New York 2018, p. 44. Thanks to Anthony Hamber for drawing this example to my attention.

<sup>29</sup> See J. Brown, *Brady's Gallery of Daguerreotype Portrait and Family Groups*, 1849, a wood engraving, in: C. McRee, "Matthew Brady and the Daguerreotype Portrait", *Visualizing 19th Century New York Digital Publication*, available online: <<https://visualizingnyc.org/essays/mathew-brady-and-the-daguerreotype-portrait/>> [accessed: June 20, 2020].

and mobile object that could travel or be exchanged as needed. As you might expect, these daguerreotype copies of portraits are as varied as their referents. Filling the frame of the photograph, their subjects look away from the camera or into our eyes with the same insouciance or candour that marked their painted selves. Held in the hand, adding weight, warmth and texture to their visual experience, we forget they are daguerreotypes of a painting of someone; as already noted, they *become* that someone. Unlike a reproduction of a famous painting, these examples are both personal keepsakes and emotive amulets and their owners would have responded accordingly. Like all photographic portraits of loved ones, they function as fetish objects designed to bridge the psychological gap between then and now, between our own inevitable mortality and the possibility of a life everlasting.

Some of these daguerreotypes reproduce a painted profile portrait. One shows a young woman steadfastly looking up and to the right, her body cropped just below the shoulders in a curving line that follows the contours of her body. She therefore floats somewhat incongruously in a sea of blankness, as if she has been dismembered by the very act of being represented. Her pose recalls that imposed upon clients of the physionotrace, a French apparatus invented in about 1784 to facilitate the rapid and relatively cheap production of portraits. The device is often said to have been a precursor to the invention of photography, manifesting a desire for machinic exactitude combined with a capacity for multiple reproduction. Linear, flat and formulaic, the resulting profile portraits display little sense of individuality beyond a static view of the side of a face. Our daguerreotype captures a similarly restrained likeness, but the painter has enlivened the woman's profile with a profusion of curling hair, adding a sense of individuality and three-dimensionality to an otherwise undistinguished portrait. The large circular earring she wears adds to that sense (ill. 9). Nevertheless, this woman remains someone I look at without empathy (my gaze hits the side of her face, without any chance of exchange), and the photograph proffers itself as a faithful record of the painting and little more.

Another example, however, provides a different kind of viewing experience. It consists of a rectangular daguerreotype in a small wooden frame of a horizontal drawing of three people, a woman and two children, standing one behind the other (ill. 10).<sup>30</sup> Each of them has been portrayed in a slightly different way, so that we are confronted in a single picture with profile, three-quarter and face-on styles of portrait. This demonstrates the artist's

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<sup>30</sup> See N. Caldwell, "Haunted and Haunting", *Apparitions: The Photograph and Its Image*, Wellington 2017, pp. 34–37.



9. Photographer unknown (USA), *Daguerreotype of Painted Profile Portrait of a Woman in Circular Earrings*, c. 1855, daguerreotype in leather case, 9.3 x 16.2 cm, Collection of Geoffrey Batchen, Oxford

skill as a sketcher while also providing a holistically dimensional facial physiognomy for what we take to be a family group. Most striking is the boy at the back of the composition; he is made to break the fourth wall and look out and directly into the eyes of the viewer. The result is a drawing that provides, in its sense of immediacy and spatial recession, a very 'photographic' experience, an impression reinforced by its transference here to the daguerreotype medium. In this case, the melding of drawing and photograph appears to be seamless, involving both spatial and temporal contiguity. These people look as if they had been caught in an instant before a camera, even though they haven't. It's a masterful illusion.

Portraits are common subjects for reproductive daguerreotypes. Another notable genre entailed the daguerreotyping of prints that depict sporting events, especially horse racing and nautical scenes. This choice of subject allows a medium confined to long exposure times to nevertheless capture movement, and especially chaotic movement: massed spectators, horses running, billowing sails, choppy waves, even clouds scudding across the sky. In other words, it allowed the representation in daguerreotypy of a kind of picture that could not otherwise be achieved. A sailing boat heels over in a stiff breeze,



10. Photographer unknown (USA), *Daguerreotype of a Pencil Drawing of a Mother with Two Children*, c. 1855, daguerreotype in gilt wood frame, 10.4 x 12.9 x 1.5 cm, Collection of Geoffrey Batchen, Oxford

seen from behind as if from another boat (ill. 11). We feel as if we are there. In another daguerreotype, two sulkies charge in from the left of the frame, their large wheels spinning as their horses strain to cross the finish line. In the background is a crowd of people much like us, cheering them on. These two examples are typical in their ordinarieness. The originals were not great prints. They were rudimentary as pictures, popular, cheap. But their repetition as daguerreotypes displaces this question of quality. They are now solid, stolid metal rather than ephemeral paper, and this transformation allows the excitement of the scene they depict to trump their means of depiction. In any case, someone obviously felt these prints were sufficiently engaging to warrant the cost of duplication. This has ensured their survival to the present. And, it has to be said, as reproductive daguerreotypes, they are far more interesting today than the prints they replicate. The copy has turned out to be superior to the original.

Perhaps the most puzzling examples of reproductive daguerreotypes feature pictures of printed texts. One small cased American daguerreotype offers a poster framed on either side by unnaturally tall stands of trees, between which float the words of the Lord's Prayer, re-reversed so that they can be read



11. Photographer unknown (USA), *Daguerreotype of an Engraving of a Sailing Ship*, c. 1855, daguerreotype in leather case 8.0 x 9.5 cm, Collection of Geoffrey Batchen, Oxford

(ill. 12). Beneath these words is a scene showing Jesus teaching an attentive crowd these same words. It's a reminder that they come straight from God (he's saying 'This, then, is how you should pray'). Actually, the particular words reproduced in the daguerreotype were taken from Matthew 6.9–13, and therefore ask God to 'forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors'. It's a version that perhaps appealed to an American sensibility keenly attuned to the moral dilemmas of mercantile life. This was a modern version of the prayer, complete with the doxology, the final sentence giving glory to God, which does not appear in the Bible but was added by early Christian communities. Like a medieval book of hours, this daguerreotype packaged the Lord's Prayer in a leather case capable of being carried around and opened and read whenever necessary. Most Christian adults are made to memorize this prayer, so perhaps this miniature reproduction was meant for children, to encourage that process? Or perhaps this is a modern version of a reliquary, carried as a profession of one's faith rather than as something to be read on a regular basis?

That makes sense. But what is one to make of a larger daguerreotype that reproduces, in reverse, a printed certificate featuring a florid heraldic design topped by a winged eagle and an arc of words that, when looked at



12. Photographer unknown (USA), *Daguerreotype of an Engraving of the Lord's Prayer*, c. 1855, daguerreotype in leather case, 9.0 x 8.0 cm, Collection of Geoffrey Batchen, Oxford

in a mirror, spell out 'in the name of Hoyt'? (ill. 13). What an odd kind of object! It seems to undermine the very fidelity to appearance for which photography is so valued. As we've seen, paintings can still be appreciated, even when reversed. But a certificate bearing words becomes illegible when daguerreotyped in this way. Perhaps then, the exact meaning of the words did not matter? Could this have been a convenient form of advertisement, used by a travelling salesperson to show potential clients a desirable certificate onto which their own family name could be inscribed after orders had been placed? Or is this a family record of an important document, a certification of an inherited status for which complete legibility is unnecessary? It is likely that we will never know.

What we do know is that a study of reproductive daguerreotypes offers an opportunity to reflect on the place of such pictures in the larger story concerning the photographic reproduction of art works. This is a story whose telling is dominated by the commentary offered in the 1930s by Walter Benjamin, and his proposal that what 'witheres in the age of mechanical





13. Photographer unknown (USA), *Daguerreotype of a Certificate with Heraldic Emblem [Bearing the Inverted Words "In the Name of Hoyt"]*, c. 1855, daguerreotype in half leather case, 12.1 x 9.6 cm, Collection of Geoffrey Batchen, Oxford

reproduction is the aura of the work of art'.<sup>31</sup> The meaning of this aphorism is a matter of debate. But let's agree that his concern is with a transformation of our relationship to a work of art when its image is circulated in a multitude of reproductions. That concern is fraught with contradictions. Taking aura to be a synonym for authenticity, Amy Powell summarises one of those contradictions as follows: 'Reproduction, then, does double duty: it strikes a blow against authenticity at the same time that, in tandem with the passage of time, it brings that authenticity into being'.<sup>32</sup> What happens to the authenticity of a work of art, then, when that reproduction happens to be

<sup>31</sup> See W. Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility" (1935–36), in: *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technical Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media*, eds. M.W. Jennings, B. Doherty and T.Y. Levin, Cambridge, MA 2008, pp. 19–55.

<sup>32</sup> A. Powell, "The Errant Image: Rogier van der Weyden's *Deposition from the Cross* and its copies", *Art History* 2006, September, 29(4), p. 542.

a daguerreotype? What happens, as we've seen, is that we get reproduction without multiplicity. We get the original plus one. Although a mechanical and industrial process of representation, daguerreotypy is not capable of the mass production of its source image. It merely doubles it. It creates no more than a non-identical twin, and therefore makes a relatively minimal contribution to the dissemination of that image.

But still, it is a reproduction. Whatever the number, Benjamin worries that reproduction brings us closer to an artwork, both spatially and temporally, but at the cost of distancing us from that same work in social, and therefore political, terms. Reproduction can democratise our access to art works, he suggests, by making them more available to more people. But it can also commodify our relationship to those same art works, enhancing their cult value and thereby alienating us from having an authentic relationship with our own culture. Seeing a reproduction rather than the original alters our mode of perception of a work of art, and thus our experience of that work, and of work in general.<sup>33</sup>

Reproductive daguerreotypes are distinctive in that they copy an artwork exactly but unfaithfully: they often laterally reverse the image even while rendering it small, monochrome, precious, shiny, evanescent, mobile. They condense that image, synthesising its essential elements into a silver-toned distillation of the original. One is reminded of Benjamin's commentary on the earliest photographic portraits in his 1931 essay, 'Little History of Photography', in which he claims that 'during the considerable period of the exposure, the subject (as it were) grew into the picture'. Such photographs, he implies, are able to capture the 'uniqueness and duration', the 'strange weave of space and time', that he argues is lacking in both later portraits and the multiple reproductions of an artwork.<sup>34</sup> The same could be argued for at least some of the daguerreotypes discussed here. If, as I have suggested elsewhere, we shift the emphasis of Benjamin's essay from the 'authenticity of the thing' to the authenticity of our *experience* of the thing, then certain of these reproductive daguerreotypes might be said to offer just such an experience.<sup>35</sup> In line with Benjamin's constantly shifting conception of aura, they make possible what Carolin Duttlinger calls 'a transhistorical model for interpersonal encounter'.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup> For more on this reading of Benjamin's essay, see Batchen, *Apparitions*, pp. 7–9, 174.

<sup>34</sup> W. Benjamin, "Little History of Photography" (1931) in: *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, Volume 2, Part 2, 1931–1934, eds. M.W. Jennings, H. Eiland, and G. Smith, Cambridge, MA 1999, pp. 514, 518.

<sup>35</sup> Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility", p. 22.

<sup>36</sup> C. Duttlinger, "Imaginary Encounters: Walter Benjamin and the Aura of Photography", *Poetics Today*, Spring 2008, 29(1), p. 96. Duttlinger's essay helpfully traces Benja-

Artworks, and even engraved copies of artworks, are meant for a public and therefore collective reception, whereas reproductive daguerreotypes tend to be private and personal keepsakes. It is true that some of them were presented in frames and so presumably were meant for display on a wall and for a shared gaze. However, the vast majority were packaged in cases and thus designed to be seen, in the hand, by one individual at a time. Similarly, while some reproduce famous art works, many of these daguerreotypes are copies of relatively ordinary images, such as vernacular paintings of people who are presumably known to the viewer. In these situations, the daguerreotype is a copy that doesn't enhance the status of the original image or accentuate its cult value. The copy would instead have been regarded as the *equivalent* of the original, in the sense that both function equally well as a stand-in, not for an artwork, but for an absent person or people. As a unique copy, the daguerreotype becomes a substitute original rather than a second-order imitation. Daguerreotypes of this kind therefore reproduce an existing image without contributing to an alienating commodity fetishism of the sort described by Benjamin.

In being simultaneously the same and other, these daguerreotypes enact a logic of supplementarity that disrupts any easy distinctions between original and copy, before and after, presence and absence.<sup>37</sup> They demonstrate that, with this kind of photography, the original already contains within it the elements of its own reproduction, a unique non-identical reproduction that substitutes for its source. Such daguerreotypes therefore embody a contradiction at the heart of the activity of reproduction that is equally apparent in Benjamin's own commentary on this process, a commentary that cannot decide what it is for and what it is against.<sup>38</sup> Disrupting this binary, along

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min's shifting conception of aura. As she argues, 'It alludes to a ground-breaking cultural shift from authenticity to replication, from uniqueness to seriality, and from the original artwork to its "soulless" mechanical copy. At the same time, however, its inherent liminality, both historically speaking and within the corpus of Benjamin's writings, escapes any stable, clear-cut categorization. Rather than providing a neat shorthand for the transition from traditional to modern culture, Benjamin's aura provokes, in its very ambiguity and multivalence, supplementary elaboration and analysis' (p. 80).

<sup>37</sup> See J. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. G. Chakravorty Spivak, Baltimore 1976, pp. 144–145.

<sup>38</sup> Benjamin establishes the contradictory logic of his argument in his first paragraph: 'Going back to the basic conditions of capitalist production, ...what could be expected, it emerged, was not only an increasingly harsh exploitation of the proletariat but, ultimately, the creation of conditions which would make it possible for capitalism to abolish itself'. See Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility", p. 19.

with all the others, these particular reproductive daguerreotypes introduce an economy of difference and deferral into any future discussion of this issue. It's the production of that difference – the difference between a copy and a supplement – which deserves further study, and which, I believe, justifies the inclusion of these fascinating objects in any comprehensive history of photography.

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## INANIMATE NATURE. PONDERING THE REPRODUCTIVE DAGUERREOTYPE

### Summary

Little has been published about reproductive daguerreotypes, a genre of photographic still life in which another picture – a drawing, an engraving, a lithograph, a painting, a printed text – is the sole referent. However, as this essay demonstrates, a study of reproductive daguerreotypes is a study of daguerreotypy itself – of its capacities and limitations as a medium, of its major figures and its diversity of commercial applications, of its many possible meanings, functions and related viewing practices. But it is also an opportunity to reflect on the place of such daguerreotypes in the larger story concerning the photographic reproduction of artworks. Reproductive daguerreotypes are distinctive in that they copy an artwork exactly but unfaithfully: they often laterally reverse the image even while rendering it small, monochrome, precious, shiny, evanescent, mobile. Most striking is the way such daguerreotypes partake of the logic of reproducibility without necessarily participating in the processes of mass

production normally associated with it: as unique copies, they offer replication without multiplicity. In so doing, they complicate the orthodox account of this process promulgated by Walter Benjamin in the 1930s and repeated so many times since.

Keywords:

reproductive daguerreotype, reproduction, copies, Walter Benjamin, supplement