

In Light of Rome: Early Photography in the Capital of the Art World, 1842–1871

Bowdoin College Museum of Art | Brunswick, Maine

December 8, 2022– June 4, 2023

Wall labels

and introduced it to the *pensionnaires* (or government-funded students) at the French Academy in Rome, then under the directorship of the painter Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres. Girault's work with his camera privileged many of the same motifs as his resident compatriots, such as

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engraving, and architecture. This photographic souvenir memorialized the artistic camaraderie and the sophisticated structures of sociability that were a defining characteristic of cosmopolitan Rome.

PHOTOGRAPHER UNIDENTIFIED

A Roman Model in Profile with Bare Shoulders and Gold Earring, ca. 1846
sixth-plate daguerreotype

The French photographer Edgar Adolphe and the Italian Lorenzo Suscipj are the only two practitioners known to have dealt in images of professional models at this early date, with the former man frequently advertising: “He sells portraits of models to artists and amateurs.” This exquisite example of the genre may be by Adolphe. The seated woman is captured in profile to accentuate the contours of her face and neck and her baroque-styled dangling earring. She cradles her chin in her left hand, while, with her right, she clutches some drapery to her bust, a convention deployed to keep sitters still for the camera, while also lending texture and a graceful naturalism to her appearance.

THE CALOTYPE

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Bernardino Montañés, it is the earliest photographic record documenting the presence of Spanish artists in Italy.

GIACOMO CANEVA

Italian, 1813–1865

Standing Female Model in Costume with Tambour Facing Left, ca. 1855

salted paper print from a paper negative

Costume Study with Six Models Posed as a Family, ca. 1855

albumen print from a glass negative

Bust Length Portrait of a Young Woman in Costume Clutching Her Necklace, ca. 1855

salted paper print from a glass negative

Genre Scene of a Young Shepherdess with Kid Goat, ca. 1855

salted paper print from a paper negative

Trained as a perspective painter at the Accademia di Belle Arti in Venice, Caneva moved to Rome in 1838, and by 1847 was well-versed in all forms of photography. Considered the driving force behind the Roman School of Photography, he specialized in photographs for use by artists and was among the first to satisfy the demand for photographs of both costumed and nude

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of Photography. The prestigious *London Art-Journal* praised this print in 1853 for its skilled employment of a waxed paper negative and concluded that “the results obtained speak greatly in favour of it in practised hands.”

EUGÈNE PIOT

French, 1812–1890

The Colosseum, ca. 1850

salted paper print from a paper negative

In 1838 Piot abandoned a successful law practice to become a publisher and archaeologist, and he took up photography to document his obsession with ancient architecture. In 1839–1840 he mastered daguerreotypy and, in 1849, learned firsthand Gustave Le Gray’s new waxed paper process. Arriving in Rome later that year, Piot collected images for his ambitious but short-lived serial publication entitled *L’Italie monumentale* (1851–1853), one of the rare commercial endeavors undertaken by a dilettante to show that photography could rival traditional printmaking in illustrating books.

FRÉDÉRIC FLACHÉRON

French, 1813–1883

The Forum with the Column of Phocas, the Arch of Septimius Severus, and the Church of Saints Luke and Martina, 1849

salted paper print from a paper negative

Flachéron won second place in the Prix de Rome competition in 1839 and moved to Rome soon thereafter where he studied painting and sculpture and eventually opened an artists’ supply store in the Piazza di Spagna. Considered a founding member of the Roman School of Photography, he took up paper photography around 1847 and sold his work directly to an international clientele through his own establishment. The forty-four-foot-tall Column of Phocas was dedicated in 608 CE—the last monument erected in the Roman Forum. It honors the Eastern Roman emperor who gave the Pantheon to Pope Boniface IV, thus saving it from destruction as a pagan temple. Note the row of hanging laundry, a quaint reminder that modern Romans actually lived amid these monumental ruins.

PHOTOGRAPHER UNIDENTIFIED

Panorama from Piazza Trinità dei Monti, ca. 1850

salted paper print from a paper negative

Taken atop the Spanish Steps, this image portrays a hazy panorama of the urban skyline with the domes of the basilicas of San Carlo al Corso and St. Peter’s in the distance. Although this scene would have been populated by dozens of Romans and tourists busily going about their daily activities, only one gentleman in a top hat is visible due to his deliberate stillness during the long exposure time necessary to capture the scene, thus lending an eerie calm to what otherwise would have been a bustling scene. At this stage in the development of photography, unless people stood perfectly still for an extended period, they appeared blurry, ghost-like, or failed to leave any impression whatsoever.

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EUGÈNE CONSTANT

French, dates unknown

The Arch of Titus, ca. 1850

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ALFRED NICOLAS NORMAND

French 1822–1909

Three French Academicians in the Gardens of the Villa Medici, 1851

salted paper print from a paper negative

Normand entered the *École des Beaux-Arts* in 1842 and won the coveted *Prix de Rome* for architecture in 1846. He arrived at the French Academy in Rome in early 1847 and focused his studies on the monuments in the Roman Forum, making detailed drawings and watercolors and taking measurements in situ. He incorporated photography to supplement these activities in early 1851. While many of his images depict ancient monuments, his most innovative work consists of intimate views of the façade and grounds of the Villa Medici, the home of the French Academy since 1803. In this large photograph, casually posed in front of the colossal antique statue of the *Dea Roma* (the goddess Rome), two of the men bear a striking resemblance to Normand himself and the academic painter William-Adolphe Bouguereau, a fellow *pensionnaire*.

ROME UNDER THE PONTIFICATE OF PIUS IX

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association with the Roman School of Photography. The compositional complexity of his cloister view, with its strong interplay of horizontal and vertical lines is reminiscent of Caneva's framing, while the tonal range and strong contrasts achieved through the albumen glass negative align him more with Constant's style.

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Le Dien, the most accomplished of Le Gray's students, was the son of a landowner from northern France who served as a magistrate after law school. In company with the painters Léon Gérard and Alexandre de Vonne, Le Dien arrived in Rome in 1852 and remained eight months. He ventured throughout the city and the outlying ring of towns known as the Castelli Romani producing views bathed in atmospheric light. Upon his return to Paris, Le Dien collaborated with Le Gray to print, and perhaps distribute, his negatives, issuing a series of more than 200 numbered salted paper prints, including the three exhibited here. "Poussin's Walk" at Acqua Acetosa was a site beloved by French artists for its association with their great seventeenth-century compatriot who drew inspiration for his arcadian landscape paintings from his walks in the Roman Campagna.

COLLODION

The invention o

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J. M. Taupenot, achieving dark tones, deep shadows, and emphatic chiaroscuro that characterize his painterly style of photography. While the views of the Arch of Titus and the Acqua Claudia aqueduct look very much the same today to the modern visitor to Rome, the Palazzo Altoviti was

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albumen silver prints from glass negatives

Altadonna studied at the Accademia di Belle Arti in Venice and ran a successful photographic portrait studio in Trento, in the northern region of Trentino-Alto Adige, from 1859 until the mid-1870s. Before this time, he appears to have been active in Rome between 1853 and 1856. The small oval photograph of a courtyard shows two developed glass negatives drying in the sun against the ancient columns, a vignette that suggests the precariousness of early fieldwork, where blowing dust or debris could stick to the still-tacky surface and ruin the image. His view of the Appian Way, the ancient road that once linked Rome with the port of Brindisi on the Adriatic Sea, depicts a peasant family standing within the foundations of one of the many ruined tombs that recede majestically into the distance.

ROME UNDER THE PONTIFICATE OF GREGORY XVI

In 1839, the year of photography's introduction, Rome was the capital of the Papal States, the sovereign domain of the Catholic Church that included the regions of Lazio, the Marches, Romagna, Umbria, and parts of Emilia. Its 160,000 full-time residents hosted a diverse and transitory international array of creative talents attracted by the city's cultural heritage, the generosity afforded to foreign artists, and the patronage that could be found there. The city was a dynamic and influential commercial marketplace for contemporary art, with a sophisticated network of studios, workshops, and academies for its production; dealers, promoters, and exhibition spaces for its distribution; and packers, shippers, and agents for its global exportation and consumption. As one of the world's epicenters for the transmission of art, Rome's authority as a leading European entrepôt, or crossroads, of cultural exchange was challenged only by an emerging rival in Paris.

After GIOVANNI BATTISTA NOLLI

Italian, 1692–1756

Nuova Pianta di Roma Moderna [The New Plan of Modern Rome], 1843

engraving

In 1734, Giovanni Battista Nolli published the first modern map of Rome. It served as the basis of most subsequent maps of Rome until the city became the capitol of Italy in 1870 and new maps were introduced. This version of Nolli's map was updated and published by Venanzio Monaldini in 1843, a year after the French daguerreotypist Joseph-Philibert Girault de Prangey arrived in Rome to begin his photographic documentation of the city. It depicts all the major ancient sites in the city, as well as a small insert map at lower left that shows the vicinity around Rome.

GIOACCHINO ALTOBELLI

Italian, 1814–after 1878

Easter Mass in the Piazza of St. Peter's Basilica, ca. 1866

albumen print from glass negative

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PHOTOGRAPHER UNIDENTIFIED

The American Sculptor Harriet Hosmer with Her Studio Assistants, Via Margutta, 1861

FRATELLI D'ALESSANDRI (firm)

ANTONIO D'ALESSANDRI

Italian, 1818–1893

PAOLO FRANCESCO D'ALESSANDRI

Italian, 1824–1889

Pope Pius IX and Members of His Papal Court, 1868

albumen prints from glass negatives

Hosmer was an especially astute early adaptor of photography as attendant to her sculpture practice. To this end, she often sent prints to critics and patrons for input early in the creative process, such as this picture of her original plaster model of the third-century CE queen of Palmyra. She also commissioned a photograph of herself standing confidently amid twenty-three of her male employees, posed in front of her studio in the via Margutta. Despite her diminutive stature, Hosmer's central position, direct gaze, and crossed arms leave no doubt as to her rank and authority. The iconographic similarities between the Hosmer portrait and the group portrait of Pope Pius IX and his retinue are apparent, as is their shared propagandistic intent.

TOMMASO CUCCIONI

Italian, 1790–1864

The Inauguration of the Column of the Immaculate Conception in Piazza Mignanelli on December 8, 1857, 1857

albumen print from glass negative

JAMES ANDERSON

English, 1813–1877

Harriet Hosmer's "Zenobia in Chains," ca. 1857

ROBERT MACPHERSON

Scottish, 1814–1872

The Apollo Belvedere, ca. 1853

JAMES ANDERSON

English, 1813–1877

Laocoön and His Sons, in the Vatican Museums, ca. 1858

albumen prints from glass negatives

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collodion-albumen process and long exposure times. As he explained, “in some of the sculpture galleries, where the light was deficient, two hours were often required; and in one or two cases, even an exposure of two days was necessary to produce a good negative.” Anderson’s

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importance or ancient pedigrees—such as the Ponte Salaro—creating, in essence, modern-day ruins.

FRANCESCO ADRIANO DE BONIS (attributed to)

Italian, 1820–1884

The Arch of Titus with the Colosseum, ca. 1860s

albumen print from glass negative

An iconic painting commemorative of the American Grand Tour experience, George P. A. Healy's 1871 *The Arch of Titus* depicts the distinguished poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and his daughter Edith bathed in late afternoon light as they walk beneath the first-century CE arch in the Roman Forum toward a trio of American painters (Frederic Edwin Church, Jervis McEntee, and Healy) in the right foreground. Healy based his composition upon this photograph taken by de Bonis—not upon sketches made on the spot, as the grouping of plein-air sketchers would seem to suggest. The photograph and the painting correlate in every aspect, such as the perspective and the distribution of light and shadow. This image exemplifies how photography became an important instrument in the studio practice of many painters during this period.

FRATELLI D'ALESSANDRI (firm)

ANTONIO D'ALESSANDRI

Italian, 1818–1893

PAOLO FRANCESCO D'ALESSANDRI

Italian, 1824–1889

After the Battle of Mentana, November 3, 1867, with the Bodies of the Dead Scattered Among Haystacks, 1867

View of Mentana After the Battle of November 3, 1867, with the Corpses of Soldiers Lying Along the Road, 1867

albumen prints from glass negatives

Two powerful images by Antonio D'Alessandri, taken in the immediate aftermath of the Battle of Mentana, were meant to commemorate the significant victory over Garibaldi and his forces, thus reinforcing papal authority. Some historians have speculated that these compositions were reenactments, with live soldiers merely posing as dead figures for the photographer. While this may be plausible in the first image, where the bodies do look staged, it seems less likely in the

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on the eastern shore of the Tiber River, encompassing many of the towers and domes of the urban skyline and the Ponte Rotto in the dappled light.

ENRICO VERZASCHI

Italian, dates unknown

A Flooded Interior Chamber of the Colosseum, ca. 1860s

The Palazzo Doria Pamphili and the Corso from the South, ca. 1860s

Via dei Due Macelli Looking Toward Via del Babuino and Piazza del Popolo, ca. 1860s

albumen prints from glass negatives

Verzaschi, unlike most of his peers, came from neither the graphic arts nor a scientific background. As a young man he played the double bass in the orchestra of the prestigious Roman Philharmonic Academy. Finding himself unemployed after Pius IX disbanded the musical company owing to their liberal proclivities, Verzaschi opened an eponymous photographic studio in the early 1860s. In 1873 he published a catalogue with thousands of

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works, such as the archaeological dig of an ancient wharf on the Tiber when it was temporarily

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Born in Washington, DC, Chapman moved to Rome as a young boy in 1850 with his family, headed by the Virginia-born painter and engraver John Gadsby Chapman. In 1852 they rented apartments from the photographer Pietro Dovizielli where Chapman continued to live for the next twenty-six years. He apprenticed as a painter under his father, specializing in pastoral views of the Roman Campagna and the ancient via Appia for a clientele of mostly American and British tourists. His earliest datable photograph depicts his father at work in his studio and suggests that he took up the practice around 1859, perhaps under the influence or tutelage of either his landlord, Dovizielli, or Robert Macpherson, a close family friend.

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presents himself as a country goatherd, a picturesque costume favored by many artists working in Rome, clad in kid leggings and seated on a goatskin pelt, pensively smoking a pipe. Tragically, Braun died from malaria two years later.