

Daguerre, "Daguerréotype: I am announcing to the public. . ." late 1838(?)

(keywords: Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre, Nicephore Niépce, history of the daguerreotype, history of photography.)

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The following is the complete text of a single-sheet, two-column broadside prepared by Daguerre. The broadside was likely prepared late 1838, but certainly prior to 15 January 1839. Original line breaks and general appearance are maintained. Following is an English language translation of the text by Beaumont Newhall. Courtesy of the George Eastman House.

DAGUERRÉOTYPE.

La découverte que j'annonce au public est du petit nombre de celles qui, par leurs principes, leurs résultats, et l'heureuse influence qu'elles doivent exercer sur les arts, se placent naturellement parmi les inventions les plus utiles et les plus extraordinaires.

Elle consiste dans la reproduction spontanée des images de la nature reçues dans la chambre noire, non avec leurs couleurs, mais avec une grande finesse de dégradation de teintes.

M. NICÉPHORE NIEPCE, de Châlons-sur-Saône, déjà connu par son amour pour les arts, par de nombreuses et utiles inventions, et qu'une mort aussi prompte qu'inattendue vint ravir à sa famille et aux sciences le 5 juillet 1833, avait trouvé, après de longues années de recherches et un travail opiniâtre, un principe à cette importante découverte; il était parvenu, par des expériences multipliées et variées à l'infini, à obtenir l'image de la nature à l'aide d'une chambre noire ordinaire; mais son appareil ne présentant pas la netteté nécessaire, et les substances sur lesquelles il opérait n'étant pas assez sensibles à la lumière, son travail, quoique surprenant dans ses résultats, était néanmoins très incomplet.

De mon côté, je m'étais déjà occupé de recherches semblables. Ce fut dans ces circonstances, en 1828, que des relations s'établirent entre M. NIEPCE et moi, à la suite desquelles nous formâmes une société à l'effet de coopérer au perfectionnement de cette découverte.

J'apportai à la société une chambre noire modifiée par moi pour cette application, et qui, répandant sur un plus grand champ de l'image une grande netteté, influa beaucoup sur nos succès ultérieurs. Quelques modifications importantes que je fis subir au procédé, jointes aux recherches continuelles de M. NIEPCE, nous faisaient présager un heureux dénouement, lorsque la mort vint me séparer d'un homme qui, à de vastes et profondes connaissances, unissait toutes les qualités du cœur; qu'il me soit permis de payer ici à sa mémoire, qui me sera toujours chère, un juste tribut d'estime et de regrets.

Sensiblement affecté de cette perte, j'avais momentanément abandonné nos travaux; mais bientôt, les poursuivant avec ardeur, j'atteignis au but que nous nous étions proposé.

Ce résultat, heureux en apparence, ne rendait cependant pas avec assez d'exactitude les effets de la nature, parce que l'opération restait soumise à la lumière pendant plusieurs heures.

Dans cet état, cette découverte était extraordinaire, mais elle ne pouvait pas avoir un but d'utilité.

Je savais que le seul moyen de réussir complètement était d'arriver, à une promptitude telle, qu'elle pût produire ces mêmes effets dans l'espace de quelques minutes, afin que les ombres du soleil dans la nature n'eussent pas le temps de changer, et que l'exécution du procédé fût aussi plus facile.

[second page of text:]

C'est la solution de ce principe que j'annonce aujourd'hui; cet autre procédé, dont la base diffère entièrement et auquel j'ai donné mon nom en l'intitulant DAGUERRÉOTYPE, sous le rapport de la promptitude, de la netteté de l'image, de la dégradation délicate des teintes, et surtout de la perfection des détails, est bien supérieur à celui que M. NIEPCE a inventé, malgré tous les perfectionnements que j'y avais apportés, puisque comparativement la différence de sensibilité à la lumière est comme 1 à 70, et comparativement avec la substance connue sous le nom de chlorure d'argent, elle est comme 1 à 120. Il ne faut pour avoir une image parfaite de la nature, que le court espace de *trois à trente minutes au plus*, selon la saison dans laquelle on opère et le plus ou moins d'intensité de lumière.

L'empreinte de la nature se reproduirait beaucoup plus promptement encore dans les pays où la lumière est plus intense qu'à Paris, comme l'Espagne, l'Italie, l'Afrique, etc., etc.

Avec ce procédé, sans aucune notion de dessin, sans aucune connaissance en chimie et en physique, on pourra en quelques minutes prendre les points de vue les plus détaillés, les sites les plus pittoresques, car les moyens d'exécution sont simples, ils n'exigent aucune connaissance spéciale pour être pratiqués, il ne faut que du soin et un peu d'habitude pour réussir parfaitement.

Chacun, à l'aide du DAGUERRÉOTYPE, fera la vue de son château ou de sa maison de campagne: on se formera des collections en tous genres d'autant plus précieuses que l'art ne peut les imiter sous le rapport de l'exactitude et de la perfection des détails, et qu'elles sont rendues inaltérables à la lumière; ou pourra même faire le portrait: la mobilité du modèle présente, il est vrai, quelques difficultés pour réussir complètement.

Cette importante découverte, susceptible de toutes les applications, sera non seulement d'un grand intérêt pour la science, mais elle donnera aussi une nouvelle impulsion aux arts, et loin de nuire à ceux qui les pratiquent, elle leur sera d'une grande utilité. Les gens du monde y trouveront l'occupation la plus attrayante; et quoique le résultat s'obtienne à l'aide de moyens chimiques, ce petit travail pourra plaire beaucoup aux dames.

Enfin le DAGUERRÉOTYPE n'est pas un instrument qui sert à dessiner la nature, mais un procédé chimique et physique qui lui donne la facilité de se reproduire d'elle-même.

DAGUERRE,
PEINTRE, INVENTEUR ET DIRECTEUR DU DIORAMA.

Nota. Le 15 Janvier 1839, une Exposition composée d'une quarantaine d'épreuves constatant les résultats du DAGUERRÉOTYPE, sera ouverte en même temps qu'une souscription dont les conditions seront annoncées à cette époque.

Imprimerie de Pollet, Soupe et Guillois, rue Saint-Denis, 380.

The following is a translation of the text by Beaumont Newhall. Courtesy of the George Eastman House.

DAGUERRÉOTYPE

The discovery that I am announcing to the public is of that small number which, in their principle, results, and potential influence on the arts, naturally take their place with the most useful and extraordinary inventions.

It consists in the spontaneous reproduction of the images of nature received in the camera obscura—not with their colors, but with great delicacy of tonal gradations.

M. NICÉPHORE NIÉPCE of Châlons-sur-Saône, already known for his love of the arts and for his numerous useful inventions at the time of his sudden and unexpected death, which snatched him from his family and from science on July 5, 1833, had found after long years of research and determined work one principle of this important discovery. He succeeded through many ever-varied experiments in obtaining nature's image with an ordinary camera obscura; but his apparatus not offering the necessary sharpness and the material which he used not being sufficiently light-sensitive, his work, however surprising in its results, was nevertheless very incomplete.

For my part, I had already busied myself with similar research. It was under these circumstances that relations were established between M. NIÉPCE and myself in 1828, following which we formed a partnership for the purpose of working together in perfecting this discovery.

I contributed to the partnership a camera which I had modified for this use and which, by extending great sharpness over a larger field of the image, had much to do with our later success. Certain important modification which I had applied to the process, joined to the continued research of M. NIÉPCE, led us to predict a happy conclusion, when death separated me from a man who united all the qualities of the heart to vast and profound knowledge. May I be permitted here to pay a fitting tribute of esteem and sorrow to his memory, which will ever be dear to me.

Greatly affected by this loss, I gave up for the time being our work; but soon, following it up with zeal, I attained the goal we had intended.

Still the result, although apparently successful, did not record with enough exactness the effects of nature because the operation was left subjected to light for several hours.

In this state, the discovery was extraordinary, but it could not serve a useful end.

I knew that the only means of complete success was to attain a speed such that it could produce the same effect in the space of a few minutes, so that the sun's rays would not have time to move, and also so that the mechanics of the process would be simpler.

It is the solution of this problem I am announcing today. This other process, which is basically quite different and to which I have given my name by titling it DAGUERREOTYPE, is greatly superior in speed, in sharpness of image, in the delicate gradation of tones, and in the perfection of detail to that which M. NIÉPCE invented, in spite of all the improvements that I made to it. The difference of light sensitivity is as 1 to 70, and compared with the substance known as silver chloride it is as 1 is to 120. To have a perfect image of nature there is needed only the short time of three to thirty minutes at the most, according to the season in which one works and the greater or lesser intensity of the light.

Nature's image will reproduce itself still more quickly in countries where the light is more intense than in Paris, as Spain, Italy, Africa, etc., etc.

By this process, without any notion of drawing, without any knowledge of chemistry or physics, it will be possible to take in a few minutes the most detailed views, and the most picturesque sites, for the technical means are simple, and require no special knowledge to be used. Only care and a little practice is needed to succeed perfectly.

Everyone, with the help of the DAGUERREOTYPE, will make a view of his chateau or his country house: collections of all kinds will be formed of great value, for art can imitate neither the exactness of the pictures nor their perfect detail, and they are rendered unalterable to further effect of light. It will even be possible to make portraits: the movement of the model presents, it is true, some difficulties for complete success.

This important discovery, applicable to all purposes, will not only be of great interest to science, but it will also give a new stimulus to art and far from harming those who practise it, will be of great use to them. Gentlemen of the world will find it a most entertaining occupation, and although the results are obtained by chemical means, this little work will please the ladies.

Finally: The DAGUERREOTYPE is not an instrument to be used to draw nature, but a chemical and physical process which gives her the ability to reproduce herself.

DAGUERRE,
PAINTER, INVENTOR AND DIRECTOR OF THE DIORAMA.

Note: On January 15, 1839, an exhibition made up of forty pictures showing the results of the DAGUERREOTYPE will be opened with a subscription, the conditions of which will be announced at that time.

Printed by Pollet, Soupe and Guillois, rue St-Denis, 380.

[End of text.]

EDITOR'S NOTES:

This text is known by a single copy once part of the Gabriel Cromer collection. A photographic reproduction of the sheet was included in the Cromer collection purchased by the Eastman Kodak Company in 1939. In 1948, the photographic reproduction of the sheet became a holding of the George Eastman House. The photographic reproduction was later accidentally destroyed while on loan. (See Larry J. Schaaf, *Out of the Shadows: Herschel, Talbot, & the Invention of Photography* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992): 177, footnote 9.)

The announcement was evidently printed prior to Daguerre's meeting with Arago, Biot, and Humboldt, after which Daguerre sought a pension from the French government in exchange for the disclosure of his invention. It is likely that the sheet was never distributed; this editor is unaware of any contemporary reference to this broadside.

Daguerre's consideration of a subscription, however, was mentioned in the press. See "Le Daguerrotypage," *Le Drapeau Tricolore* (Chalon-sur-Saône) (2 January 1839): [page information not recorded].¹

Newhall's translation of the announcement first appears in Helmut and Alison Gernsheim, *L. J. M. Daguerre (1787–1851)* (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company,

1956): 76–78. A reproduction of the sheet, with Newhall's translation and additional notes, appears in "An Announcement by Daguerre," *Image: Journal of Photography of the George Eastman House* 8:1 (March 1959): 32–36.² The translation also is provided in Beaumont Newhall, *The History of Photography from 1839 to the Present*, rev. and enl. ed. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1982): 18.

1. http://www.daguerreotypearchive.org/texts/N8390018_LETELLIER_DRAP-TRI_1839-01-02.pdf
2. <http://image.eastmanhouse.org/node/64>

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