François Gouraud, “Invitation to exhibition in New York,” 29 November 1839
(keywords: François Gouraud, François Fauvel-Gouraud, Francois Gouraud, Francis Fauvel-Gouraud, William Sidney Mount, history of the daguerreotype, history of photography.)

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Manuscript letter:
Invitation by François Gouraud dated 29 November 1839.
(Original line breaks preserved.) Use of material courtesy of The New-York Historical Society.

Dear Sir

As the friend and pupil of Mr. Daguerre, I came from Paris by the British Queen, with the charge of introducing to the new world, the perfect knowledge of the marvellous process of drawing, which fame has already made known to you under the name of the Daguerreotype. Having the good fortune to possess a collection of the finest proofs which have yet been made either by the most talented pupils of Mr. Daguerre, by the great artist himself, I have thought it my duty, before showing them to the public to give the most eminent men and distinguished artists of this City, the satisfaction of having the first views of perhaps the most interesting object which has ever been exposed to the curiosity of a man of taste, and therefore if agreeable to you, I shall have the honor of receiving you on Wednesday next the 4 Dec. from the hour of 11 to one o’clock inclusive at the Hotel Français No 57 Broadway, where this invitation will admit you.

I remain Sir
You mo. obedt servant,
Francois Gouraud
New York 29th Nov 1839

[End of text.]

EDITOR’S NOTES:
Recipients of this letter include William Sidney Mount, Thomas Seir Cummings¹, Philip Hone², and Dr. J. S. Bartlett (editor of the newspaper, the Albion). Another likely individual was Lewis Gaylord Clark (editor of the periodical, the Knickerbocker). Additional information regarding individuals who received Gouraud’s invitation would be welcome. Efforts by this editor to locate other copies of the invitation have been unsuccessful.

The invitation issued by Gouraud when in Boston (February 1840) was mechanically produced.³ Although appearing as handwritten, the editor has had opportunity to examine various copies and it is evident that the letters are mechanically reproduced (with the
exception of some hand-corrections to the date. It may be that the New York invitations are similarly produced, but examination of other copies are needed to confirm.


1. See Thomas S. Cummings, Historic Annals of the National Academy of Design (Philadelphia: George W. Childs, 1865): 158. Cummings provides a transcript of his invitation which is essentially the same as the above. Strangely, however, Cummings’ incorrectly transcribes Gouraud’s last name as “Pamsel.” Interestingly, in Cummings’ obituary, it was written (of Cummings), “He made portraits in miniature of many distinguished persons, attaining all the celebrity that he desired until Daguerre’s invention made his skill unfashionable.” (“The Obituary Record: Thomas Seir Cummings,” New-York Times 44:13,446 (26 September 1894): 4.


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Document author by: Gary W. Ewer
Creation date: 2008-10-09/ Last revision: 2010-06-09
Citation information: manuscript invitation by François Gouraud dated 29 November 1839. William Sidney Mount papers, 1833–1868; courtesy of The New-York Historical Society.
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