

Daguerre, "The new discovery," (manuscript letter) 10 May 1841

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

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Manuscript letter:

Louis J. M. Daguerre to an unknown recipient, dated 10 May 1841.

Dear Sir,

The letter which you have been so kind as to write to me shows that you still take interest in my scientific labours & I am highly sensitive to your flattering remembrance.

Mr. Arago [h]as announced at the Academy the new discovery I have made merely to note the date; for though the principle of it is found, I must still study the application of it before I can give it to the public.

You will easily conceive that a graphics that will give the means of affixing the image of a mobile object, that of a running horse for instance, will not allow me to expose more or less time the sensitive plate to the action of light according to the intensity of it, but that on the contrary the action will be produced in a very short time, in a small fraction of a second. Consequently such a process must be studied in all it's details before it will give a result that will satisfy me in point of art.

I regret that my occupations have not yet allowed me to complete this improvement which, I am certain, by means of a simple modification be as well applicable to the process on paper.

I am very sorry not to be able to give you more information about this for the present; as soon as the thing will be complete I will very readily let you know all about it.

Believe me, Dear Sir,
Your Obedient

10th May
1841

Daguerre

[End of text.]

EDITOR'S NOTES:

A similar letter addressed to Robert Hunt is dated 19 February 1841.¹

Daguerre did eventually publish his "improvements." See Louis Daguerre, *Nouveau Moyen de Préparer la Couche Sensible des Plaques Destinées à recevoir les Images Photographes, par M. Daguerre. Lettre à M. Arago* (Paris: Bachelier, Imprimeur-Libraire, 1844).² See also Louis Daguerre, "On a New Mode of Preparing Plates Destined to

Receive Photographic Images," *Chemist; or, Reporter of Chemical Discoveries and Improvements* (London) 2:18 (June 1844): 260–63.³

Daguerre's admitted his "improved" process as being "rather complicated," The process received scant notice nor incorporation into practical use.

1. http://www.daguerreotypearchive.org/texts/S8410002_DAGUERRE_HUNT_LETTER_1841-02-19.pdf
2. Available from the website of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, *BnF/Gallica*: www.gallica2.bnf.fr. Text version also available from Project Gutenberg: <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/16260>.
3. http://www.daguerreotypearchive.org/texts/P8440002_DAG-PROCESS_CHEMIST_1844-06.pdf

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Original spelling/punctuation/grammar generally maintained without correction. Any in-text corrections are bracketed.

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