

## Daguerreotype, No. 3 (27) / 2020: Photography and the Museum

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Malgorzata Grabczewska, National Library of Poland

We invite you to participate in a 3 issue of european magazine "Daguerreotype. Studies in the History and Theory of Photography". The theme is "Photography and the Museum"

Daguerreotype: Studies in the History and Theory of Photography

No. 3: Photography and the Museum

It should be stated here at the outset, with the arguments of authors such as Urs Stahel and Elizabeth Edwards in mind, that the relationship between photography and the institutions appointed to collect it, i.e. primarily museums and archives, has from the very beginning been ambiguous and difficult to define. In searching for reasons for this state of affairs, we propose considering to what extent they are inherent to the nature of the photographic medium, which continuously reduces or amplifies meanings embedded in the reality which surrounds us; and to what extent they result from inconsistencies in contemporary definitions of the museum in relation to a medium of such singular and ever-shifting status. In both museum theory and practice, there persist doubts about the prevailing criteria guiding the classification and valuation of photographic works. Systems for formulating collecting strategies and structuring research fields, based as they are on historical and aesthetic traditions, appear to be insufficient and in need of verification. Above all, we wish to invite you to reflect on the concept of the photographic as a museal object, within the wider context of changes the field is undergoing; the degree of photography's impact on social and political realities; and the medium's undetermined potential. It is not without significance that contemporary museums, aspiring to play the role of active participants in ongoing cultural discourses, repeatedly find themselves confronting challenges presented by the tension triggered by the functioning of images in the social sphere.

We might also suggest revisiting the underlying guiding mission of museums as institutions that both acquire and present collections. The elevation, in the 1940s, of photography to the rank of museum object (the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York began collecting photographs as early as 1928, and the Museum of Modern Art established an independent Department of Photography in 1940) delegated to institutions a multitude of responsibilities pertaining to issues ranging from acquisition strategies (with corollary effects on the photography market) to inventorying, academic analysis, conservation challenges, and legal issues related to acquiring, and providing access to, objects. A special case is museums primarily dedicated to collecting photography and artifacts related to the medium. Their efforts require a negotiation of the historical and aesthetic criteria by which works created in this medium have been assessed, as well as social expecta-

tions regarding the accessibility of the presentation of reality.

Another compelling area of interest is how museums operate in the face of pressure to create and expand new iconospheres, which necessitates a radical reassessment of the function and meaning of photography. It seems relevant, too, to inquire into novel curatorial strategies that can be implemented with the use of images for the simulation, dissemination, or generation of realities within a sort of “play” space, with images traced through methods adopted from video games, literature, and movies. In each case, we can identify a paradox of the present-day: the simultaneous rendering and leveling of distance in order to catalyze a new potential for visibility. This applies, above all, to multimedia or virtual graphics with no material implementation. Regarding this realm, significant doubts have been raised about current approaches toward visual contemporaneity, as well as our understanding of concepts such as style and authorship.

Papers that examine the issues and concepts described above, that delve into other questions pertaining to the relationship between photography and the museum, and that offer theoretical reflections on specific museum collections assessed either in their entirety or in part, may be e-mailed, by June 30, 2020, to the following address: [dagerotyp@shf.com](mailto:dagerotyp@shf.com)

Please visit the Instructions for Authors page before submitting a manuscript. Submitted papers should be well formatted and use good English. Authors may use MDPI's English editing service prior to publication or during author revisions.

Further information: <https://dagerotyp.com/about-eng/>

On behalf of the Editorial Team,

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