Photographic Art Reproductions, from 1839 to the Present (online, 23 Jul 21)

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The photographic art reproduction came into being simultaneously with the invention of the medium: Joseph-Nicéphore Niépce captured engravings in his earliest heliographs, while William Henry Fox Talbot praised the reproductive capacities of the calotype in The Pencil of Nature (1844). As much as art has influenced photographic reproduction (for instance, Louis Daguerre who arranged sculptural pieces into elaborate still lives recalling those by Dutch Golden Age masters or, perhaps, Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin), the reproduction has influenced art. As Walter Benjamin has influentially argued, it put the 'aura' of the original into question. Together with Paul Valery and Erwin Panofsky, Benjamin sparked a century-long debate on the interrelationship between the original and the copy, which is still far from any decisive conclusion with Peter Walsh, Michelle Henning, Georges Didi-Huberman, and Bruno Latour readdressing the problem in the last decade.

What is more, the other aspects of the photographic reproduction have received much less scholarly attention. Despite the valuable efforts of Dominique de Font-Réaulx, Stephen Bann, and Patrizia Di Bello, there is still much to be discovered with regards to its materiality, function, and reception: What technical challenges has photographic reproduction faced since the appearance of the medium and how has it resolved them? How have new technologies changed the relationship between the original and the copy? What were the multiple uses of photographic reproductions? What do they tell us about the aesthetic taste of their day? What impact has the photographic reproduction had on the fine arts since the nineteenth century? Does it itself have any artistic value?

We invite proposals dealing with these and other aspects of the photographic art reproduction from academics, museum professionals, and postgraduate students that work in any related discipline. Please email a 300-word abstract for an individual paper (20 mins) or an object-in-focus presentation (10 mins) to sofya.k.dmitrieva@gmail.com by 18th June 2021 along with a brief speaker biography (max 50 words).

Held by the University of St Andrews in conjunction with the Centre André Chastel, the conference bridges two major centres of early photography, St Andrews and Paris. It is organised by the members of Refocus!, a cross-disciplinary postgraduate project that aims to explore the history of St Andrews through the research of the town's rich early photographic legacy: facebook.com/RefocusStAndrews

Reference:

CFP: Photographic Art Reproductions, from 1839 to the Present (online, 23 Jul 21). In: ArtHist.net, Apr 27, 2021 (accessed Oct 6, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/33974>.