

Rare Nineteenth-Century Salt Prints Will Be On Display at the Yale Center for British Art

Exhibition Features More Than One Hundred Images Created With One of the Earliest Photographic Techniques

NEW HAVEN, CT (August 2, 2017) – Next summer, the Yale Center for British Art will present an exhibition devoted to salted paper prints, one of the earliest forms of photography and a British invention. *Salt and Silver: Early Photography, 1840–1860* will explore the dissemination of the medium across early centers of photographic production in Europe and North America. On view at the Center in New Haven from June 28 to September 9, 2018, the exhibition will feature more than one hundred seldom-displayed salt prints on loan from the Wilson Centre for Photography in London, providing visitors with an opportunity to see some of the rarest photographs in the world.



Pioneered by the English scientist and scholar William Henry Fox Talbot (1800–1877), and unveiled in Britain in 1839, salt prints utilized a technique that was simple and practical. It imbued subjects—including still lifes, portraits, landscapes, architectural views, records of archaeological excavation, and scenes of daily life—with a uniquely subtle and beautiful aesthetic. Salt prints are velvety and soft-textured, and the images are formed by light-sensitive chemicals embedded deep into the fibers of the paper’s surface. These handmade photographs range in colors that include sepia, violet, mulberry, terracotta, silver-gray, and charcoal-black hues. To produce these expressive, jewel-like prints, Talbot used simple compounds of salt and silver. The process was efficient, portable, and versatile, which helped to spread the method around the world, and many photographers adopted the technique from the 1840s onward. In the fast-changing environment of Victorian innovation, salt prints were soon replaced by other photographic techniques (like the albumen print) that were more commercially viable.



“Historical photographs absorb us in many ways. Their imagery has the directness and freshness of something made for the first time, made new,” said the exhibition’s curator Hope Kingsley, Curator of Education and Collections, Wilson Centre for Photography. “They also link us back to the past and its people—photographers, subjects, and viewers.”



This display will survey the first twenty-five years of photography’s evolution through the salted paper process—examining how, for a short but significant time, Talbot’s scientific and artistic breakthrough created a new visual experience and inspired generations of photographers. It will bring together more than forty early practitioners,



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tracing their networks and geographical reach from England into Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, India, and North America.

Exhibition highlights include Talbot's haunting image *The photographer's daughter, Ela Theresa Talbot* (1843–44), which exemplifies the beginnings of photographic portraiture, often featuring celebrities, as well as the faces of beloved children; David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson's swaggering Scottish fishermen (ca. 1845); Roger Fenton's shell-shocked soldier in the Crimean War (1855), which employs photography as a form of social documentary; Talbot's *Scene in a Paris Street* (1843); *Nelson's Column Under Construction, Trafalgar Square* (1844); and Linnaeus Tripe's dark, dramatic view of the Puthu Mandapam in Tamil Nadu, southern India (1858), which showcases the early photographic concern with recording and representing historical monuments both recent and ancient.

"Talbot and his successors directed their photographic investigations to a variety of practical and artistic purposes," said Chitra Ramalingam, Assistant Curator of Photography at the Center. "Their chemical artistry was a means to rework older pictorial genres like portraiture, still life, and landscape with a new aesthetic, but it was also an utterly new way of documenting and memorializing both the past and the present."

CREDITS

Salt and Silver: Early Photography, 1840–1860 is organized by the Yale Center for British Art in partnership with the Wilson Centre for Photography. The lead curator is Hope Kingsley, Curator of Education and Collections, with Polly Fleury, Special Projects, Wilson Centre for Photography; and the organizing curator at the Yale Center for British Art is Chitra Ramalingam, Assistant Curator of Photography, working under the direction of Scott Wilcox, Deputy Director for Collections. This exhibition will be accompanied by a catalogue of the same title, produced by the Wilson Centre for Photography and edited by Marta Braun and Hope Kingsley, with an introduction by Simon Baker, as well as contributions from a number of international scholars. The catalogue was published by MACK Books, London, in 2015.

A reduced version of this exhibition was shown at Tate Britain in 2015, and was curated in collaboration with the Wilson Centre for Photography.



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ABOUT THE YALE CENTER FOR BRITISH ART

The Yale Center for British Art houses the largest collection of British art outside the United Kingdom. Presented to the university by Paul Mellon (Yale College, Class of 1929), the collection reflects the development of British art and culture from the Elizabethan period onward. The Center's collections include more than 2,000 paintings, 250 sculptures, 20,000 drawings and watercolors, 40,000 prints, and 35,000 rare books and manuscripts. More than 40,000 volumes supporting research in British art and related fields are available in the Center's Reference Library. In May 2016, the Center reopened to the public following the completion of a multiyear project to conserve its iconic Louis I. Kahn building.



Visit the Center online at britishart.yale.edu.

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Image credits: (All exhibition images courtesy of the Wilson Centre for Photography) William Henry Fox Talbot, *Nelson's Column Under Construction, Trafalgar Square*, April 1844, salted paper print from paper negative; William Henry Fox Talbot, *Scene in a Paris Street*, 1843, salted paper print from paper negative; Calvert Richard Jones, *House of Rienzi, Rome*, 1846, salted paper print from paper negative; James Robertson, Felice Beato, and Antonio Beato, *Pyramids at Gizeh*, 1857, salted paper print from glass plate negative; William Henry Fox Talbot, *The photographer's daughter, Ela Theresa Talbot*, 1843–44, salted paper print from paper negative; David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson, *Newhaven Fishermen (Alexander Rutherford, William Ramsay & John Liston)*, ca. 1845, salted paper print from paper negative; Linnaeus Tripe, *Puthu Mundapum, View of the Nave. Trimul Naik's choultry*, 1858, salted paper print from glass plate negative; Yale Center for British Art, exterior view, photograph by Richard Caspole