

**19th-century Photography
Acquisitions Proposal Project
Modernism and Mass Culture
Fall 2012**

Assignment

Locate a 19th-century photograph for sale (preferably French) for under \$600 USD, research it, and then propose it as a new acquisition for Wheaton's permanent collection.

Criteria

- The photograph must be original, and produced in the 19th-century (be careful! sellers' dates may not always be accurate or honest).
- The image must be relevant to the themes of this course since it will be used by future students who take it.
- You may propose that Wheaton purchases more than one photograph (for example, an album with several photographs mounted into it) but the entire price of purchase should not exceed \$600.
- Your job will be to locate and research a photograph. After the most promising proposal is selected, the purchase will be handled by Wheaton. *Please do not reserve or send a deposit on anything you find online.*

Research

Your written proposal will summarize your substantial research about the photograph, which should aim to answer many of the following questions:

Is the photographer known, and if so, who was he/she?

When and where was the photograph taken? For whom?

How do you think this photograph was used by its original owners?

What was the photographic process used to make this photograph? How does that process (albumen, for example) determine the way it looks?

What is its condition?

Who/What does it depict? In other words, what is its content (precisely)? This may involve fashion research, identifying landmarks, etc.

What is the meaning or significance of that content?

Context and Related Works:

Are there other photographs by this same photographer? Other images of the same or similar content? What similar photographs, or other works of art, would help a future student know more about this one? For example, could your photograph have been inspired by a painting or sculpture? Is it related to other images from the same period (posters, advertising)?

What does your photograph tell us about the historical period or culture in which it was produced?

Rationale for acquisition

In your presentation and final paper, you will summarize your research findings, but you will also have to argue a rationale for why Wheaton should purchase your photograph for the permanent collection. Your rationale should answer the following question:

What is the educational value of this photograph? In other words, what makes it an effective teaching tool?

How does this photograph relate to the themes of this course? In other words, what specifically does it tell us about the relationship between modernism and mass culture in the 19th century?

How would you propose using this particular photograph in this course (writing assignment, classroom workshop, lecture)?

Bibliographic References

In your written paper, you should provide a bibliography of sources that are specific to your photograph. In other words, do not just list general photography literature.

Dealer and Auction Sites Where You Can Start Looking for 19th-century Photographs

Note: This list is not exhaustive; you should do your own searches as well.

<http://art.shop.ebay.com/>
Buyer beware!

This site is a clearing house of several different auctioneers:
<http://www.liveauctioneers.com/>

Drouot is a Paris-based auction house, but it has an English version of its site. It is also possible to bid remotely. Check out the catalog for the “nineteenth century books, photographs, postcards” for Sept 19:
<http://www.drouot.com/?bpage=Sales&date=upcoming.days&lang=en>

Kaminsky Auction House in Beverly, MA (there is a photography auction on Oct 3-4):
<http://www.kaminskiauctions.com/>

Greg French Early Photography (Jamaica Plain, MA):
<http://www.gregfrenchearlyphotography.com/>

Lee Gallery in Winchester, MA:
<http://www.leegallery.com/>

Hans P. Kraus, New York Photography Dealer:
<http://www.sunpictures.com/www/>

Charles Isaacs Photographs Inc. in New York:
<http://www.charlesisaacs.com/>

Vintage Works, Ltd. in Chalfont, PA:
<http://www.vintageworks.net/>

Dennis Waters Fine Daguerrotypes in Exeter, NH:

<http://www.finedags.com/index.shtm>

Michael Lehr specializing in daguerrotypes (Rockaway, NJ):
<http://www.michaellehr.com/photography/index.htm>

Swann Auction Galleries Photography Department (New York):
http://www.swanngalleries.com/photo_graphs.cgi

Research Resources to help you get started:

Union List of Artist's Names (ULAN):
<http://www.getty.edu/research/tools/vocabularies/index.html>

George Eastman House Research Database:
<http://www.geh.org/gehdata.html>

George Eastman Videos about various photographic processes:
<http://bit.ly/Oe8ONt>

George Eastman Digital Image Sampler of their collections (for comparative research):
<http://www.geh.org/>

The following photography books have been placed on library reserve for this course:

Ian Jeffrey, *Photography: A Concise History*, revised edition. London, Thames and Hudson, 1996.

Marien, Mary Warner. *Photography: A Cultural History*. Second Edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2006.

Therese Mulligan and David Wooters, eds. *Photography from 1838 to Today*. George Eastman House. Cologne: Taschen, 1999.

Naomi Rosenblum, *A World History of Photography*. Third Edition. New York: Abbeville Press, 1997.

Michel Frizot, ed. *A New History of Photography*. Cologne: Könemann, 1998.

