

Eng

The Captive Gaze

The Collection of Daguerreotypes
at the Centre de Recerca i Difusió
de la Imatge (CRDI) — Girona

**From February 26th
to May 23rd 2021**





Unknown Maker, *Portrait of Three Men*, c. 1850-1855 Daguerreotype, 1/4 plate. CRDI. Àngel Fuentes de Cía Collection Fundació

“We have much pleasure in announcing an important discovery made by M. Daguerre, the celebrated painter of the Diorama. This discovery seems like a prodigy. It disconcerts all the theories of science in light and optics, and, if borne out, promises to make a revolution in the arts of design.”

These words, published in the January 6th 1839 edition of the periodical *Gazette de France*, publicly announced the advent of the daguerreotype: the first material object to be widely disseminated and commercialized in the history of photography, a “physical-chemical wonder” that initiated the modern age of image reproduction. Taking this invention as its central nucleus, Fundació MAPFRE presents the first of a series of collaborations with Catalan institutions to showcase their collections of photographic heritage at KBr Photography Center in Barcelona.

Following the work of Joseph-Nicéphore Niépce (died 1833) on the sensitivity to light of silver salts, the daguerreotype was disseminated by Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre, who in 1836 obtained for the first time an image on a plate soaked in silver salts; a process he



Unknown Maker, *Family Portrait*, 1850-1854 Daguerreotype, 1/6 plate.
CRDI. Joan Basseda Casas Collection

would continue to improve until its official presentation on January 7th 1839. The daguerreotype revolution extended throughout Europe, including Spain, where it had immediate repercussions. Nineteen days after the procedure had been presented at the Academy of Sciences in Paris, the *Diario de Barcelona* got word of the new invention. The role of the press was vital in establishing the importance of an invention such as Daguerre's – an invention that was able to make “fleeting” images of visible reality permanent. Newspapers in Spain, and around the world, would publish the news arriving from Paris on the advances of the daguerreotype from its beginnings in early 1839, to the actual presentation of the photographic procedure on August 19th of that same year, and the subsequent public demonstrations performed by Daguerre in September. Meanwhile, its dissemination across Europe was made possible thanks to daguerreotypists offering their product in the great urban areas. In Spain, however, it was young science students who first became interested in the invention. But it was not until 1842 that a work was published in Spain which included 21 etchings taken from daguerreotypes. Entitled *España. Obra pintoresca*,



Unknown Maker, *Portrait of a Woman*, c. 1848-1860 Daguerreotype, 1/2 plate.
CRDI. Joan Basseda Casas Collection

this publication included text by the young Francisco Pi y Margall. From that moment, successive illustrated books were published and for the first time photography was introduced into print, achieving in turn widespread dissemination.

Stemming from the collections at the Centre de Recerca i Difusió de la Imatge (CRDI) [Center for Image Research and Dissemination] of Girona City Hall and other institutions such as the Museu del Cinema, also in Girona, this exhibition narrates the history behind the birth of photography through a selection of daguerreotypes, dating back to the decades of the 1840 and 1860s with formats ranging from half plates to 1/9 plates. In addition, several types of image encasings are also on display, including wooden cases covered in leather, thermoplastic cases, common in the United States, and European system encasings similar to open frames like those used for paintings. The images were mainly studio portraits: individuals, couples, groups, and post-mortem portraits, while two stereoscopic images reproduce sculptures. Authorship has been identified for some of these pieces thanks to the inscriptions inside the frames, but the names



Unknown Maker, *Portrait of a Man*, c. 1840-1860 Daguerreotype (Jewelry), 4x5 cm CRDI. Ángel Fuentes de Cía Collection

of those portrayed are mostly unknown, except when the images have accompanying annotations.

The Museu del Cinema de Girona has also loaned objects and mechanisms to the exhibition. They are linked to this photographic technique and include such items as a daguerreotype laboratory box, photographic laboratory lamps and pigments for coloring the daguerreotypes. These materials help us to understand not only the technical process and the development of the daguerreotype, but also the historical context and the visual culture of an era that came to know photography through this “invention”.

The exhibition continues with two audiovisuals describing the procedure by which a daguerreotype is made and detailing the restoration process undergone by a group of works included in the show. This restoration has been funded by Fundació MAPFRE as part of the institution's commitment towards heritage preservation. In the final section, photogrammetric analysis will produce a three-dimensional view of four daguerreotypes from the collection.

This project has been developed within the research framework of the CIFO G Cicles Formatius Girona [CIFO G Formative Cycles Girona].

KBr Fundación MAPFRE

Av. del Litoral, 30
08005 Barcelona
Tel. (+34) 932 723 180
infokbr@fundacionmapfre.org

Dates

February 26 – May 23, 2021

Curatorship

Joan Boadas Raset
David Iglésias Franch

Opening hours

Mondays: Closed
Tuesdays – Sundays
(and public holidays): 11am-7pm
Last entry: 6:30pm

From April 1

Tuesdays – Sundays
(and public holidays): 11am-8pm
Last entry: 19:30 h
Visitors must leave the galleries
10 minutes before closing time

Admissions

Standard ticket: 5 €
Ticket with reduction: 3 €
Free standard ticket: Tuesdays
(except public holidays)
Groups: 3 € / per person

Audio guide services

Available in English, Catalan
and Spanish

Guided tour (cultural mediation service)

Wednesdays & Thursdays:
4-7pm
Fridays & Saturdays:
12-2pm, 5-7pm
Sundays & public holidays: 12-2pm

From April 1

Wednesdays & Thursdays: 5-8pm
Fridays & Saturdays:
12-2pm, 5-8pm
Sundays & public holidays: 12-2pm
(Information at the reception)

Bookshop

Libreria KBr by Juan Naranjo
Tel. (+34) 933 568 021
libreria@juannaranjo.eu

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Cover: Unknown Maker, *Portrait of a Woman*, c. 1848-1855
Daguerreotype, 1/6 plate. CRDI. Joan Basseda Casas Collection

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Barcelona Photo Center

Ajuntament  de Girona