

Documentary and Heritage's photography + Reading the collection: a selection

Documentary photography: from a *tool* to an *object* of cultural heritage catalogue



The documentation photography in the specific field of the cataloging of cultural heritage plays a dual role:

TOOL —————→ complement to the catalogue cards

OBJECT —————→ core element of the catalogue cards

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

During the second part of eighteenth century, the debate around the use of photographs in France is based on an idea of **photography as tool**

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1857 - [Gustave Plance, *Le paysage et les paysagistes*](#)

In his writings, Planche made an attempt to reconcile modern and classical art and literature by highlighting their common preoccupation in depicting human passions. Planche liked to formulate his opinions in a sharp and precise manner.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1857 - [Gustave Plance, *Le paysage et les paysagistes*](#)

"We should therefore see in the photograph only a document to be consulted, a very faithful document in the absolute sense of the word, since it does not reveal anything imaginary, but which deceives us by offering us things under an aspect that our eyes can not control."

Gustave Planche, *Le Paysage et les Paysagistes*. — Ruysdael, Claude Lorrain, Nicolas Poussin *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 2e période, tome 9, 1857 (p. 756-787).

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1857 - [Gustave Plance, *Le paysage et les paysagistes*](#)

Photograph just like a document to consult [*document à consulter*]
useful due to his accuracy and exactitude

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1859 - Charles Baudelaire, [Le public moderne et la photographie](#)

tourist's album

naturalist's library

enlarge microscopic animals

corroborate the astronomer's hypotheses

absolute factual exactitude

rescue from oblivion tumbling ruins

rescue from oblivion books, prints and manuscripts

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

[enrich the tourist's album](#)



Collezione Becchetti - *U.S.A., California - Il Parco nazionale di Yosemite - 1850-1890*

FROM: Tourist's album of Grazioli Lante della Rovere - FB004829_033 - ICCD

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

naturalist's library



Fondo Chigi - Uccello impagliato [Stuffed bird] - 1900/1920 - FC002806 - ICCD

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

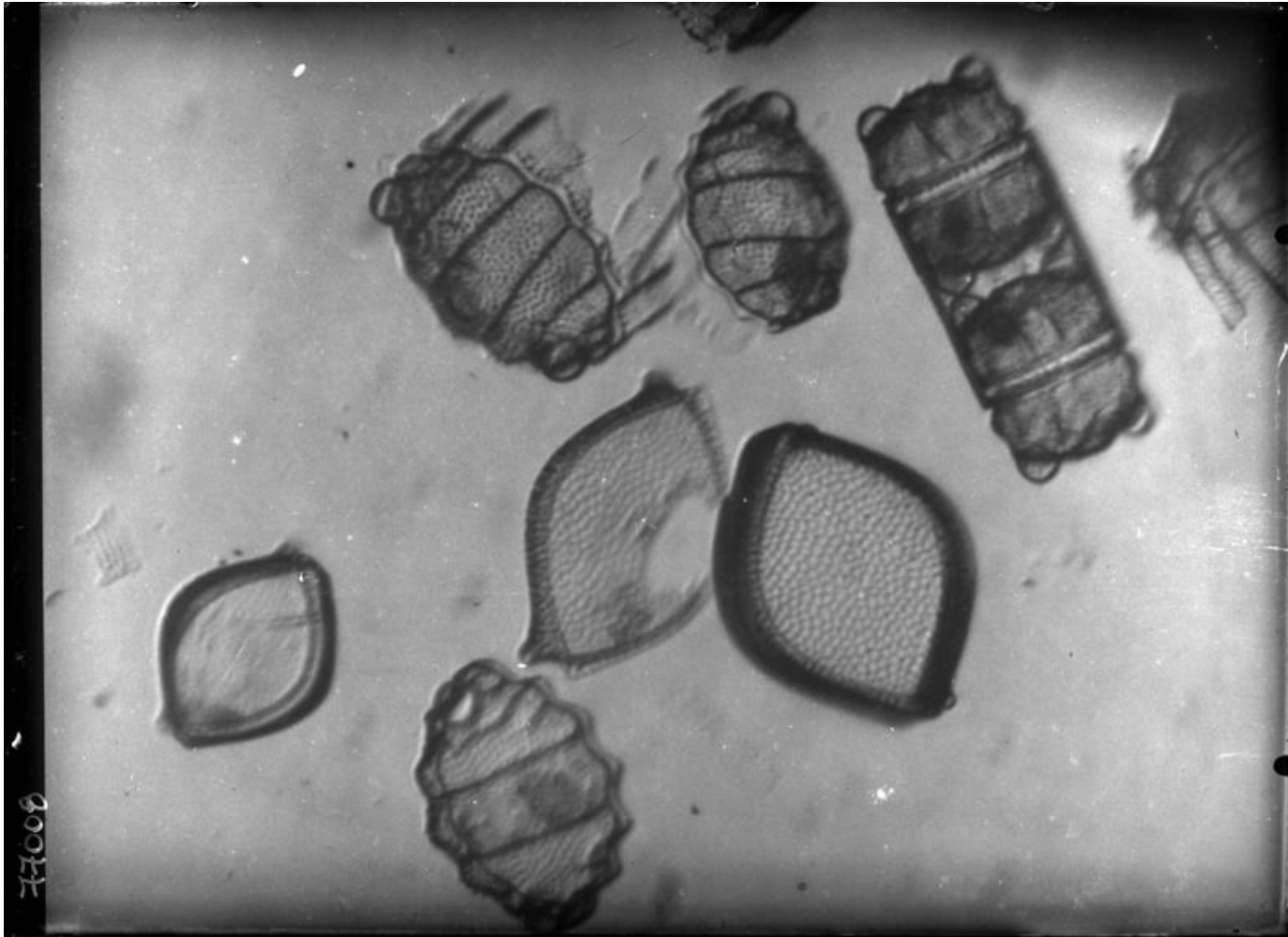
corroborate the astronomer's hypotheses



Fondo Chigi, Moon, telephoto lens test, ICCD-GFN

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

enlarge microscopic animals



Fondo Chigi - *Microfotografia* - 1900/1920 - F077008 - ICCD

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

absolute factual exactitude



Gabinetto Fotografico Nazionale - Roma - Mura Serviane, piazza dei Cinquecento, 1913 - B000020 - ICCD

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

rescue from oblivion those tumbling ruins



Collezione Becchetti - *Ferento, oggetti di scavo* - 1901 - FB005657_02 - ICCD

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

[rescue from oblivion books, prints and manuscripts](#)



Gabinetto Fotografico Nazionale - Roma, Bibbia Carolingia, pagine miniate, 1901-10, A000011 - ICCD

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

EARLY ATTEMPTS TO USE PHOTOGRAPHY AS A CATALOGING TOOL : PRIVATE BUSINESS

1851 - Francis Wey, member of the Société héliographique, urges the Louvre Museum to open a gallery of photographic reproductions of his works

1852 - The British Museum began its association with Roger Fenton. He was initially engaged to photograph cuneiform tablets, but that soon developed into taking pictures of other antiquities

1852 - Leopoldo Alinari founded a photographic studio and his brothers Giuseppe and Romualdo joined him two years later to establish Fratelli Alinari Fotografi Editori, a photographic workshop dedicated initially to the documentation of notable Italian paintings, sculptures, and architecture

1869 - Adolphe Braun photographs the Sistine Chapel becoming a worldwide leader in the reproduction of works of art

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1852 - Fenton works at British Museum



Roger Fenton, A stereoscopic image inside the Museum, 1850s, British Museum

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1852 - L. Alinari founds the Alinari photographic studio

Fratelli Alinari is one of the world's oldest photographic firms, founded in Florence, Italy in 1852. Its archives contains 5.5 million photographs, ranging from daguerreotypes to modern digital photos from around the world.

Photographic archives

**3.500.000 historical pictures vitages prints, negatives and color photos
social conventions \ art \ economy**

It all began with caesless activity of the famous Alinari portrait studio of the nineteenth century and the far-flung photographic campaigns carried out everywhere to document the history of Italy and Europe and to satisfy the requests of scholars and others

Gabinetto Fotografico Nazionale - Roma, Bibbia Carolingia, pagine miniate, 1901-10, A000011 - ICCD

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1852 - Leopoldo Alinari founds the Alinari photographic studio



The Alinari firm: the portrait studio, c. 1900, Alinari Archives, Florence

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1852 - Leopoldo Alinari founds the Alinari photographic studio



The terrace of the Alinari firm with frames set in the sun for contact printing, c. 1900, Alinari Archives, Florence

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1852 - Leopoldo Alinari founds the Alinari photographic studio



The Alinari firm: phases in printing, c. 1900, Alinari Archives, Florence

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HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1852 - Leopoldo Alinari founds the Alinari photographic studio



The Alinari firm: washing the print, c. 1900, Alinari Archives, Florence

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1852 - Leopoldo Alinari founds the Alinari photographic studio



The Alinari firm: glass plate archive, c. 1900, Alinari Archives, Florence

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1852 - Leopoldo Alinari founds the Alinari photographic studio



(Ed. Alinari) P. I. N. 6802. ROMA - Villa Borghese. Prima sala della Galleria.

Collezione Beccarini, Alinari, Roma - Galleria Borghese - Interno, 1890s, CB00023_086 - ICCD

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1869 - Braun photographs the Sistine Chapel



Adolphe Braun, Rome - Palais du Vatican, Chapelle Sixtine - Michel-Ange, about 1869, The J. Paul Getty Museum

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

CATALOGING OF CULTURAL HERITAGE : PUBLIC PROJECTS

1851 - Missions Héliographiques

1875 - Direzione Centrale Scavi e Musei

1895 - Gabinetto Fotografico Nazionale

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1851 - Missions Héliographiques

The Heliographic Mission was created by the French Administration for Fine Arts in 1851

The idea was to send photographers into various parts of France to photograph historic buildings

The Mission established the importance of photography as a medium for representing architecture and automatically recording the "state" of an historic building

For Francis Wey, "a mediocre heliograph is always preferable, both in its finish and its detail, to the most accomplished engraving" (La Lumiere, February 9, 1851).

Gabinetto Fotografico Nazionale - Roma, Bibbia Carolingia, pagine miniate, 1901-10, A000011 - ICCD

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1851 - Missions Héliographiques

The selected photographers were all members of the **Société Héliographique**:

- **Édouard Baldus** [1813-1889]
- **Hippolyte Bayard** [1807-1887]
- **Gustave Le Gray** [1820-1882]
- **Henri Le Secq** [1818-1882]
- **Auguste Mestral** [1812-1884]

Gabinetto Fotografico Nazionale - Roma, Bibbia Carolingia, pagine miniate, 1901-10, A000011 - ICCD

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1851 - Missions Héliographiques

Édouard Baldus → south and east

- **Palace of Fontainebleau**
- **Medieval churches of Lyon**
- **Rhône valley, and the Roman monuments of Provence,**
 - **Pont du Gard**
 - **Triumphal arch at Orange**
 - **The Maison Carrée in Nîmes**
 - **The amphitheater at Arles.**

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1851 - Baldus in the south and east of France



Édouard Baldus, Roman Arch at Orange, 1851 [l] and 1853 [r] - MET

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1851 - Baldus in the south and east of France



Édouard Baldus, Nîmes, Tour Magne, 1853, Gilman Collection, MET

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1851 - Baldus in the south and east of France



Édouard Baldus, Arles, Arcades des arènes d'Arles, 1859, Charenton-le-Pont, Médiathèque de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1851 - Missions Héliographiques

Hippolyte Bayard → west and north west

- **Brittany**
- **Normandy**
 - **Caen**
 - **Bayeux**
 - **Rouen**

Gabinetto Fotografico Nazionale - Roma, Bibbia Carolingia, pagine miniate, 1901-10, A000011 - ICCD

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1851 - Bayard in West an NW France



Bayard, Louviers, Eglise Notre-Dame, 1851, Cité de la céramique, Sèvres

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1851 - Bayard in West an NW France



Bayard, Lisieux, Eglise Saint-Pierre, 1851, Cité de la céramique, Sèvres

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1851 - Bayard in West an NW France



Bayard, Caen, Abbaye, 1851, Cité de la céramique, Sèvres

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1851 - Missions Héliographiques

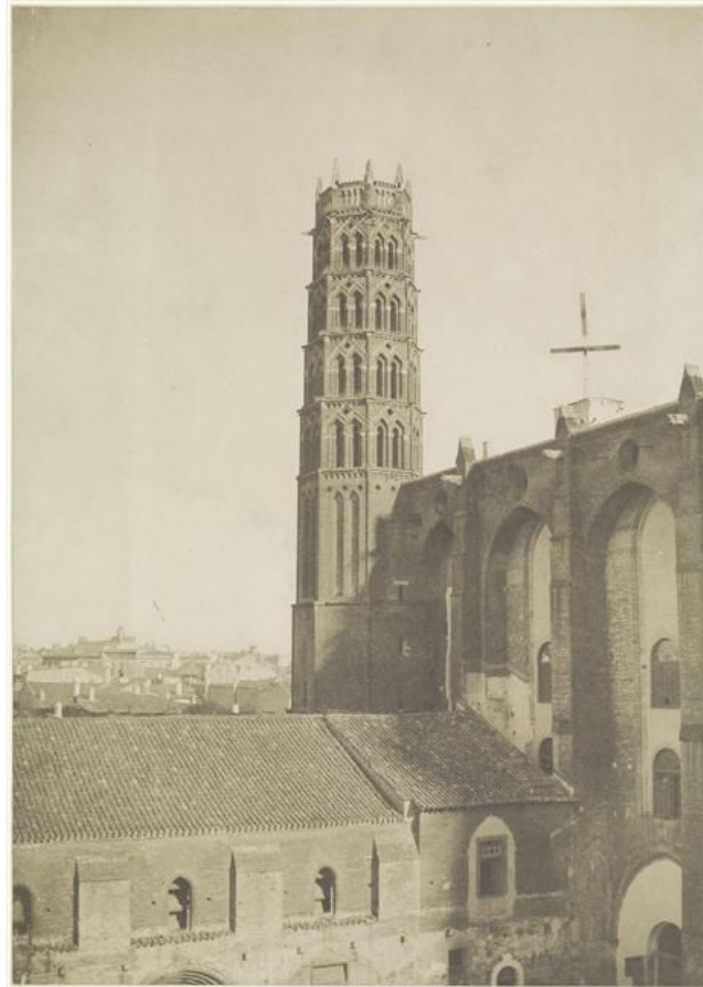
Gustave Le Gray → southwest, south-central and central

- **Carcassonne , Albi, Perpignan, Le Puy, Clermont-Ferrand**
- **Romanesque churches along the pilgrimage routes to Santiago de Compostela**
- **Châteaux of the Loire Valley**
 - **Blois, Chambord**
 - **Amboise**
 - **Chenonceaux**

Gabinetto Fotografico Nazionale - Roma, Bibbia Carolingia, pagine miniate, 1901-10, A000011 - ICCD

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1851 - Le Gray in SW, SC and central France



Le Gray, Toulouse, Clocher de l'église des Jacobins, 1851, Charenton-le-Pont, Médiathèque de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

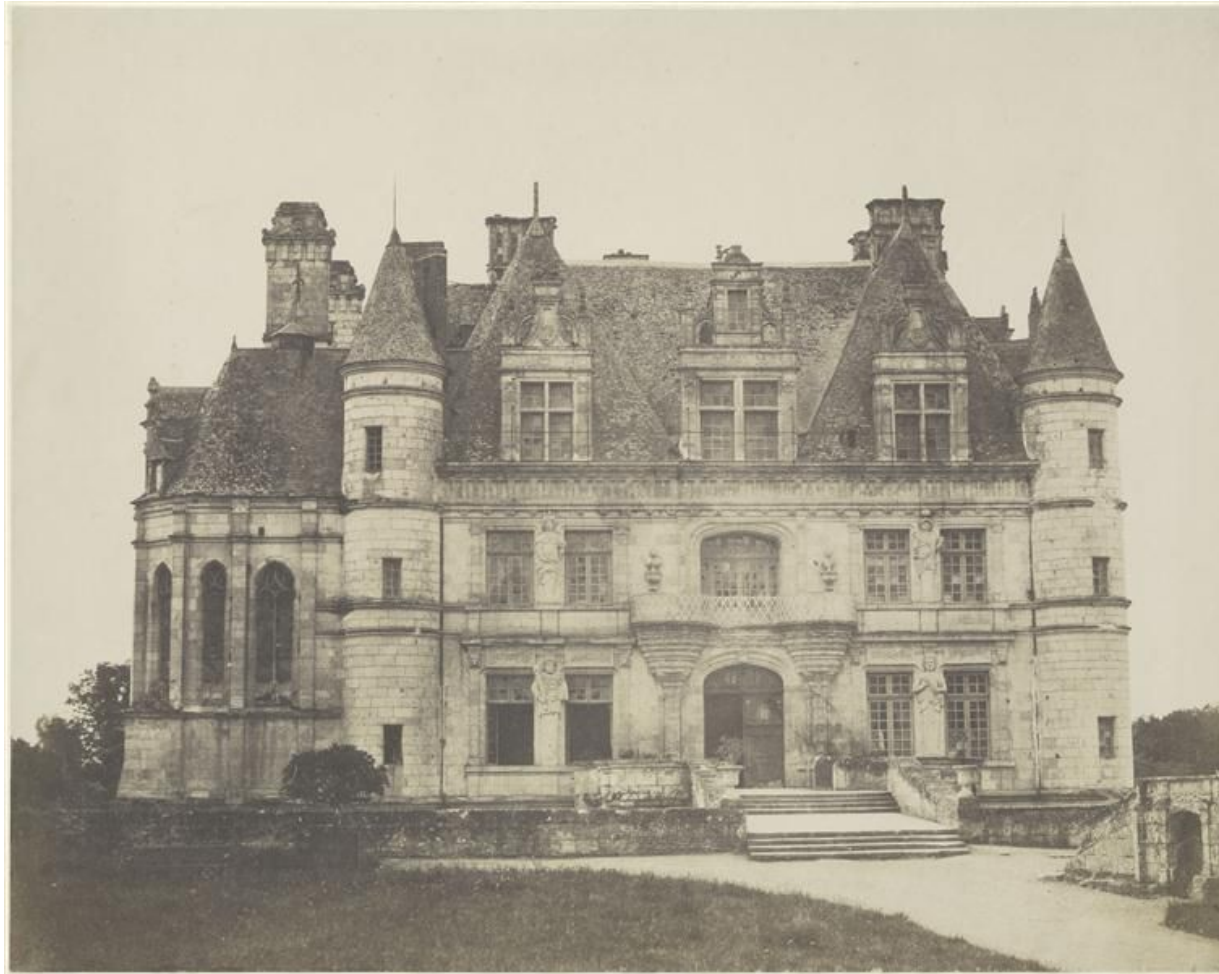
1851 - Le Gray in SW, SC and central France



Le Gray, Cahors, Vue en perspective du pont Valentré, 1851, Charenton-le-Pont, Médiathèque de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

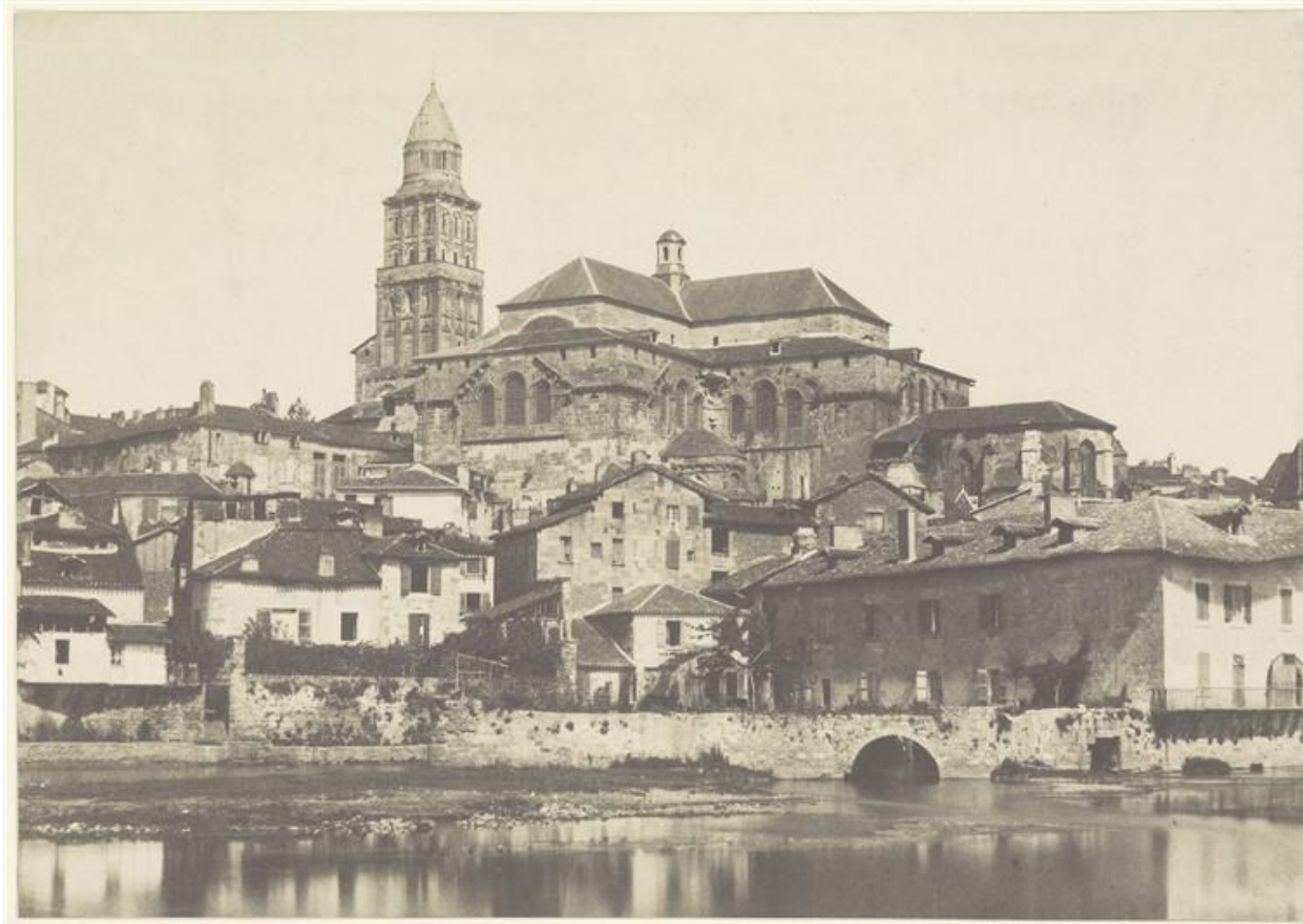
1851 - Le Gray in SW, SC and central France



Le Gray, Cahors, Chenonceaux Façade sur la cour d'honneur du château, 1851, Charenton-le-Pont, Médiathèque de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

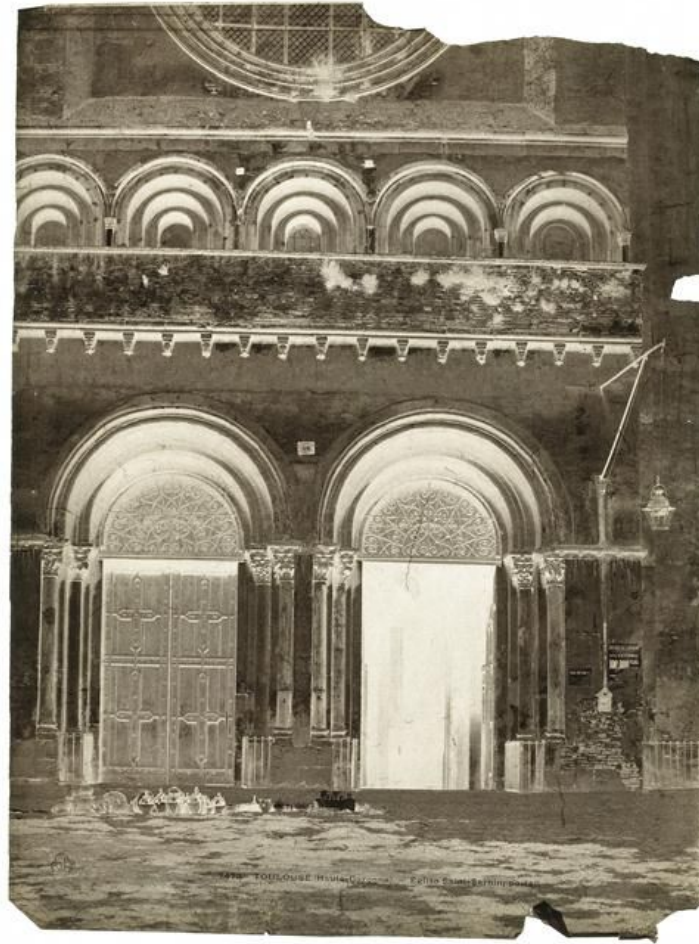
1851 - Le Gray in SW, SC and central France



Le Gray, Cahors, Périgueux, Ensemble sud de la cathédrale Saint-Front, 1851, Charenton-le-Pont, Médiathèque de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1851 - Le Gray in SW, SC and central France



Le Gray, Toulouse, Eglise Saint Sernin, portails façade ouest, négatif sur papier ciré sec, 1851, Musée d'Orsay, Paris

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1851 - Le Gray in SW, SC and central France



Le Gray, Cahors, Bagneux (Maine-et-Loire) - Dolmen dit "Petite pierre couverte", negative [L], positive [R], 1851, Musée d'Orsay, Paris

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1851 - Le Gray in SW, SC and central France



Le Gray, Tour Saint-Jacques, Paris vers 1859, BnF
[GALLICA LINK](#)



Le Gray, The Tour St. Jacques BnF



HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1851 - Missions Héliographiques

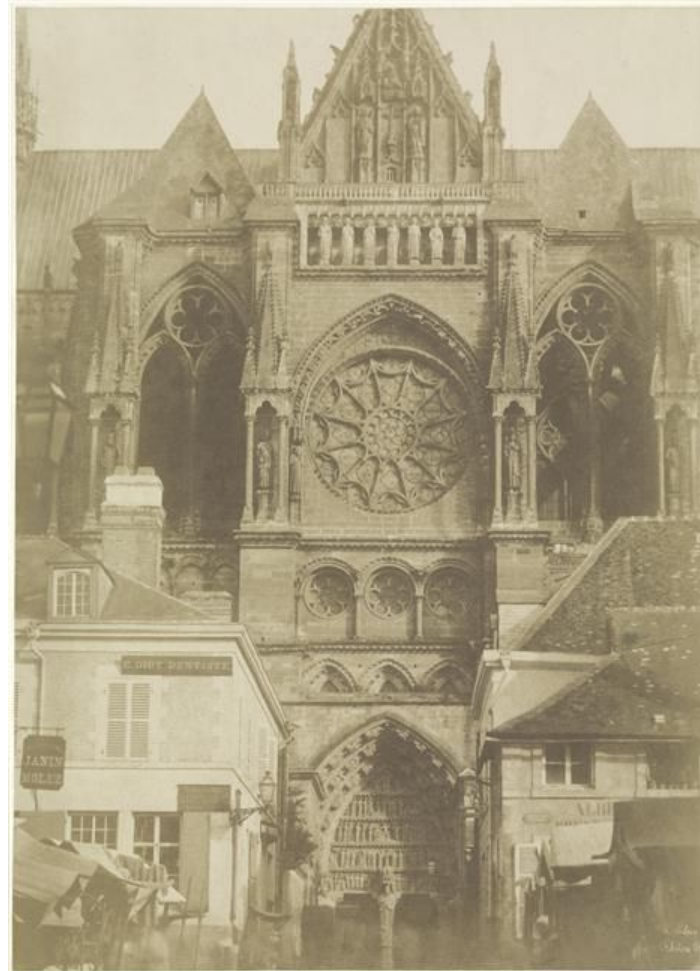
Henri Le Secq → north and east

- Reims, the great Gothic cathedrals
- Laon, Troyes, and Strasbourg

Gabinetto Fotografico Nazionale - Roma, Bibbia Carolingia, pagine miniate, 1901-10, A000011 - ICCD

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

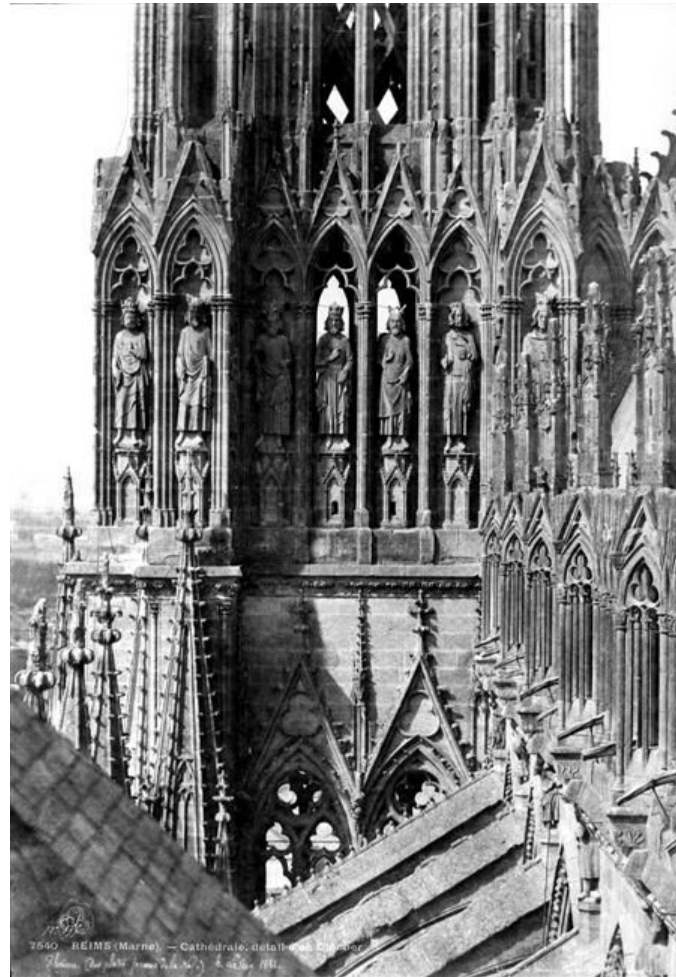
1851 - Le Secq north and east



Le Secq , Reims, Transept nord de la cathédrale Notre-Dame de Reims, 1851 Charenton-le-Pont, Médiathèque de l'Arc. Patr.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

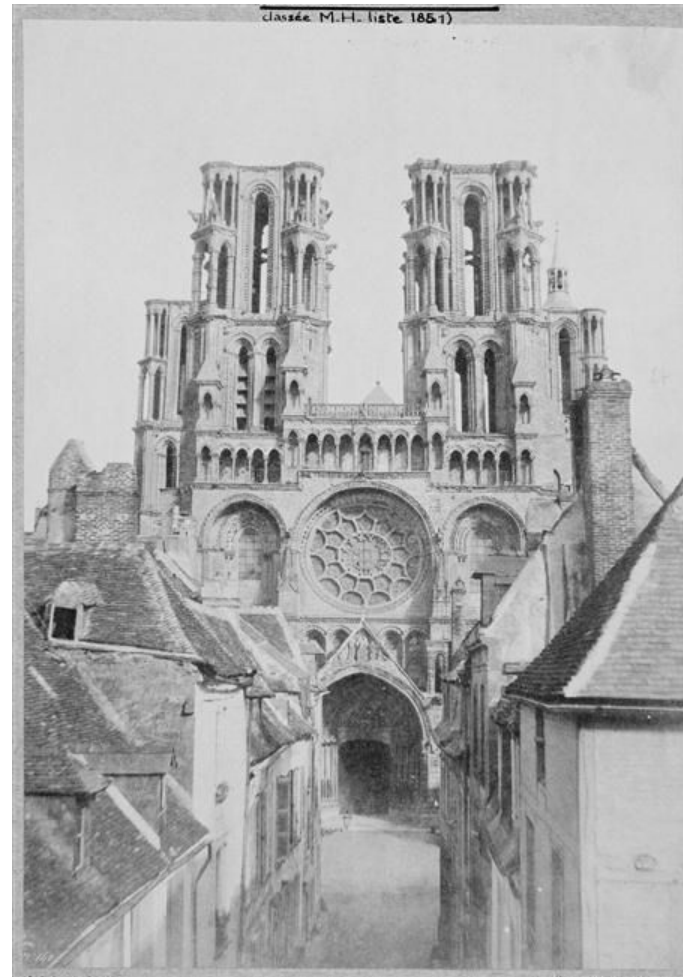
1851 - Le Secq north and east



Le Secq , Reims, Partie haute de la tour sud d ela cathédrale Notre-Dame, 1851Charenton-le-Pont, Médiathèque de l'Arc. Patr.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1851 - Le Secq north and east



Le Secq , Strasbourg (Bas-Rhin), pilier des Anges, cathédrale Notre-Dame, 1851, Musée d'Orsay, Paris

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1851 - Le Secq north and east



Le Secq , Strasbourg (Bas-Rhin), pilier des Anges, cathédrale Notre-Dame, 1851, Musée d'Orsay, Paris

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1895 - Gabinetto Fotografico Nazionale

1895: Giovanni Gargioli and the birth of the Photographic Department

The birth of the GFN is linked to the figure of Giovanni Gargioli (Fivizzano 1839 - Rome 1913), a convinced promoter of its establishment as well as its first director.

Engineer, architect, photographer and inventor of photographic equipment, in 1888 he founded, together with other aristocrats, the Association of Amateurs of Photography, the first of its kind in Italy.

Therefore, the protagonist of the cultural circle that moved around photography, in 1890 Gargioli hypothesized the creation of a laboratory dedicated to photographic documentation of the national artistic heritage.

The proposal was part of the broader debate that saw politicians and intellectuals, in the aftermath of the Unification of Italy (1870), discussing the elements to be privileged to give cohesion to a country that was anything but homogeneous. In this sense, the cultural heritage, spread throughout the territory, was immediately recognized as a strongly identifying factor, capable of cementing the sense of belonging and cultural connection. The documentation of artistic assets was therefore configured not only as a preventive action for protection but as a politically strategic requirement.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1895 - Gabinetto Fotografico Nazionale

In 1893 Gargioli obtained the direction of the photoengraving laboratory set up at the Regia Calcografia in Rome, but his coexistence with "burin-armed" chalcographers, linked to the old reproduction techniques, proved problematic and, when the laboratory was closed, in Gargioli he was entrusted with the task of taking photographs for the Technical Office of the Monuments of Rome.

It is 1895: it is the birth certificate of the Photographic Cabinet (which, however, was given legal form only in 1913 with the Royal Decree 1139 of August 15) established in Via in Miranda n. 5, where it will remain until 1990.

The photographic campaigns and the first acquisitions

The activity of the Cabinet was immediately intense: under the Directorate General of Antiquities and Fine Arts (led by illustrious scholars such as Corrado Ricci and Giacomo Boni) and in collaboration with renowned scholars such as Pietro Toesca and Adolfo Venturi, the office created photographic campaigns throughout Italy, also providing, according to a practice that has remained unchanged until today, for the marketing of the images (the first catalog is from 1903-1904).

In addition to the production inside the laboratory, in 1906 Gargioli initiated a far-sighted purchasing policy that led to the acquisition of highly prestigious funds and collections, such as the Tuminello calotypes and the Cugnoli fund.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1895 - Gabinetto Fotografico Nazionale

The years of Carboni and the interference of the Regime

In 1913, on the death of its founder, the Photographic Department had about 20,000 photographic plates in its catalog.

Gargioli's closest collaborator, Carlo Carboni, replaced him as director, continuing his activity for about 20 years and equipping the laboratory with a greater number of photographers. During his direction, Carboni found himself facing one of the most critical phases in the history of the Photographic Cabinet (which had assumed the name of "Nazionale" from 1923): in the Fascist era it suffered, like any other cultural institution, the interference of the Regime who glimpsed an extraordinary potential in that remarkable patrimony of images: in 1928 the collections passed under the management of the LUCE institute (the regime's propaganda organ) which appropriated them for its own purposes. The grievances of Carboni were of little value, who, ousted in 1932, was replaced by Luigi Serra.

For the entire twenty years of Fascism the archive was therefore managed by the Istituto LUCE but on 8 August 1943, after the collapse of the regime, the new director Bito Coppola managed to bring the collections back to its headquarters, including the printed photographs. from the LUCE institute from unpublished negatives.

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HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1895 - Gabinetto Fotografico Nazionale

Research and study after the war

After the war, the GFN resumed its activity under the direction of illustrious art historians such as Carlo Bertelli who, from 1962 to 1973, carried out the extensive documentation of the heritage also providing for the acquisition of archives of photographers such as Francesco Chigi, Mario Nunes Vais and Luciano Morpurgo.

Bertelli's direction marked a moment of strong impetus for the study of photography, which was finally recognized for its autonomous cultural value. Those were years of in-depth study and research, which saw many scholars (Federico Zeri, Marina Miraglia and others) devote themselves to the analysis of the Institute's funds.

In 1958, the National Aerofototeca was founded as a detached section of the GFN, based in Eur.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1895 - Gabinetto Fotografico Nazionale

The establishment of the ICCD

The 1970s marked a period of change in the organizational structure of the institute: in 1973 the GFN was unified with the Central Catalog Office and the Photographic Archive of the Directorate General for Antiquities and Fine Arts; Oreste Ferrari is appointed as the director of the new body. In 1975, following the establishment of the Ministry for Cultural and Environmental Heritage, the current Central Institute for Catalog and Documentation (ICCD) was born: the GFN loses its individuality and the historical denomination disappears: a structure is thus lost. , specific and national, dedicated to photography. The various services, laboratories and archives of the newborn ICCD come together in the new headquarters of the Monumental Complex of San Michele, on the Lungo Tevere: the Photographic Laboratory leaves the historic headquarters in via in Miranda in 1990, the Aerophototeca leaves that of Eur in 2000 .

The new institution, however, did not interrupt the activity of the GFN and inherited from it, among other things, administrative and accounting autonomy, a fundamental skill and then very rare among ministerial structures. Precisely this autonomy allows the acquisition of important collections, such as that of Piero Becchetti or the funds of Le Lieure, Beccarini and Lattanzi.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1895 - Gabinetto Fotografico Nazionale

Photography as a Cultural Asset

At the end of the 90s, the study for the development of the cataloging legislation for photographic assets carried out by the ICCD in collaboration with the most accredited Italian scholars assumes great importance. The result, "Form F", is a refined investigation tool, which allows scientific cataloging, and finally sanctions the recognition of the value of photography as a "Cultural Asset" (reaffirmed by the most recent legislation and the "Code of cultural heritage and of the landscape "of 2004).

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1895 - Gabinetto Fotografico Nazionale

The current structure

The increased awareness of the historical and cultural relevance of the GFN heritage has given rise to a radical reorganization that has reunified the materials stored in the Photo Library with those preserved in the Museum / Archive of historical photography, established in 1997. Consequently, it was decided to summarize the historical denomination of National Photographic Cabinet, thus recognizing the historical and cultural value of the photographic archives of the Institute.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1875 - Direzione Centrale Scavi e Musei

- The **Direzione Generale** was founded in 1875 to manage the cultural heritage of the new Italian state.
- The photographic archive is considered an instrument of fundamental knowledge to check the conservation status of cultural heritage throughout the country
- During its 100 years of activity, the general management has collected more than two hundred thousand photographs
- The photographs were produced by professional photographers, photographers of the public administration, art historians, amateurs, etc.
- The **Direzione Generale** was a collection center more than a planning office.
- Usually the photographers responded to request of local institution that used to send a copy of images.
- One of the most important contributors to the archive of **Direzione Generale** was the **Gabinetto Fotografico Nazionale**

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1895 - Gabinetto Fotografico Nazionale

The National Photographic Cabinet

- The GFN was founded in 1895 in order to produce a regularly photographic documentation of cultural heritage over all the Italian country.
- The GFN is still on and till today it produced more than one million photographs.
- For each photo is available the original negative

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1895 - Gabinetto Fotografico Nazionale

- The object of protection and conservation for many years were the negatives rather than the prints
- In recent years, gfn has committed itself to safeguarding its print collections.
- The most significant initiative was the restoration of the original prints (vintage prints) made between 1895 and 1913.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1895 - Gabinetto Fotografico Nazionale

- In November 2014 took place the exhibition of the first period of activity of the GFN and its founder, Giovanni Gargioli
- Every photographic survey is the resulting work of specialized team, usually two photographers and one art historian.
- The GFN is incrementing his own digital collection with a regular commitment to digitalization and description in order to publish the collections on line

Design a Photographic survey

Gabinetto Fotografico Nazionale

GALLERIES

[National Photographic Cabinet - a selection of photograhs](#)

[National Photographic Cabinet - a selection of archaeological photography](#)

[Archive of the Ministry of Education \(MPI\) - a selection of archaeological photography](#)

Design a Photographic survey

Gabinetto Fotografico Nazionale

PUBLICATION SYSTEMS

[Photographic Gallery](#)

[Photographic gallery \[BETA VERSION\]](#)

[Photographic IIF platform \[BETA VERSION\]](#)