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William Henry Fox Talbot, Nelson's Column under Construction, Trafalgar Square, London, first week of April 1844, printed later. Salted paper print. Courtesy of the Wilson Centre for Photography.

Salt & Silver: Early Photography, 1840–1860

Santa Barbara Museum of Art is Final Venue for Rare Presentation
On View September 8 – December 8, 2019

July 3, 2019 — Featuring more than 100 seldom-displayed salt prints from the Wilson Centre for Photography, London, this extraordinary exhibition provides a rare chance to experience some of the earliest photographs ever made, by many of the most important and groundbreaking figures in the history of the photographic medium.

Salt & Silver surveys the first two decades of photography's evolution through the salted paper print process, unveiled in 1839 by the English scientist and scholar William Henry Fox Talbot (1800–1877). Talbot's invention was a scientific and artistic breakthrough that created an entirely new visual experience. Salt prints are velvety and soft-textured, with images formed by light-sensitive chemicals embedded in 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. The salted paper technique was efficient, portable, and versatile, traits that allowed the practice of photography to spread across the globe from the early 1840s onward. Featuring the work of more than 40 practitioners, Salt & Silver traces their networks and geographical reach from England into Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, India, China, Mexico and the United States.



Exhibition highlights include Talbot's Nelson's Column Under Construction, Trafalgar Square (1844), which shows how photography was used from the start to document both modernity and national patrimony. One of early photography's best known images, David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson's study of jaunty Scottish fishermen (ca. 1845) exemplifies the beginnings of photographic portraiture. Photography presents a new form of reportage in Roger Fenton's stalwart Crimean War captain (1855) and the matter-of-fact, unheroic vision of Union camp life photographed by Mathew Brady's studio during the American Civil War (1864). Linnaeus Tripe's dark, dramatic view of Trimul Naik's Choultry in Tamil Nadu, southern India (1858) showcases photography's early concern with recording and representing historical monuments, while John Wheeley Gough Gutch's evocative view of Tintern Abbey demonstrates photography's ability to create mood and mystery via shadow and form.

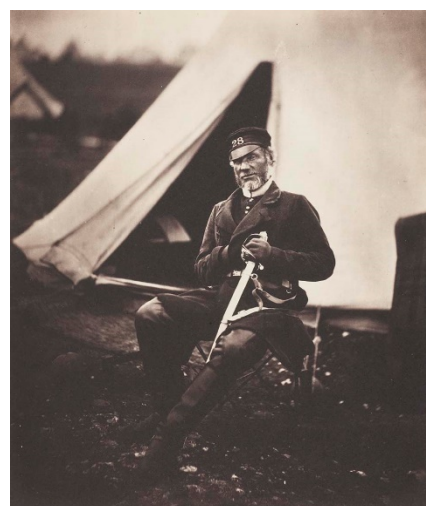
Studio of Mathew Brady, Sixth Corps Staff Officers, Winter of 1864, 1864. Salted paper print. Courtesy of the Wilson Centre for Photography.



The Santa Barbara Museum of Art is Salt & Silver's final stop of a three-venue tour after the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, CT, and the Ruth Chandler Williamson Gallery at Scripps College, Claremont, CA. (A selection of these same works was on view at Tate, London in 2015.) Endlessly fascinating for its many artistic, historical and scientific facets, Salt & Silver: Early Photography, 1840–1860 reveals the excitement and innovation of the medium's first years. Early photography's radically new ways of viewing the world remain important to this very day.

Salt & Silver: Early Photography, 1840–1860 has been organized by the Wilson Centre for Photography with the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, CT.

Linnaeus Tripe, Puthu Mundapam, View of the Nave, Trimul Naik's Choultry, January–February 1858. Albumenized salted paper print. Courtesy of the Wilson Centre for Photography.



Left: David Octavius Hill, Robert Adamson, Three Newhaven Fishermen (John Liston, Alexander Rutherford and William Ramsay), 1844–5. Salted paper print. Courtesy of the Wilson Centre for Photography. Center: John Wheeley Gough Gutch, Abbey Ruins (Tintern Abbey), 1858. Salted paper print. Courtesy of the Wilson Centre for Photography. Right: Roger Fenton, Captain Mottram Andrews, 28th Regiment (1st Staffordshire) Regiment of Foot, 1855. Salted paper print. Courtesy of the Wilson Centre for Photography.

The Santa Barbara Museum of Art is one of the finest museums on the West Coast and is celebrated for the superb quality of its permanent collection. Its mission is to integrate art into the lives of people through internationally recognized exhibitions and special programs, as well as the thoughtful presentation of its permanent collection.

Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 1130 State Street, Santa Barbara, CA.
Open Tuesday – Sunday 11 am to 5 pm, Free Thursday Evenings 5 – 8 pm
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