

“The Daguerreotype Process,” 23 May 1844

(keywords: Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre, history of the daguerreotype, history of photography.)

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THE DAGUERREOTYPE PROCESS.

At the sitting of the Paris Academy of sciences on the 22d ultimo an interesting communication was made by M. DAGUERRE, relative to some improvements in the Daguerreotype process; chiefly for the purpose of taking portraits, the ordinary mode of preparing the plates not being found sufficient to enable to operator to obtain good impressions. The innovation made by M. Daguerre requires a rather complicated process, but it is very regular one, and has one decided advantage of the former process, for the artist is now enabled to have a good stock of plates on hand, as the new preparation will remain for a very long time in a perfectly fit state for use. The new substances of which M. Daguerre makes use are an aqueous solution of bi-chlorure of mercury, an aqueous solution of cyanure of mercury, oil of white petroleum acidulated with nitric acid, and a solution of platina and chlorure of gold. The process is as follows: The plate is just polished with sublimate and Tripoli, and then red oxyde of iron, until a fine black be attained; the plate is now placed in the horizontal plane, and the solution of cyanure, previously made hot by the lamp, is poured over it. The mercury deposits itself, and forms a white coating. The plate is allowed to cool a little, and after having poured off the liquid, it is dried by the usual process of cotton and rouge. The white coating deposited y the mercury is now to be polished. With a ball (tampon) of cotton saturated with oil and rouge, this coating is rubbed just sufficiently for the plate to be a fine black. This being done, the plate is again placed upon the horizontal plane, and the solution of gold and platina is poured over it. The plate is to be heated, and then left to cool, and the liquid having been poured off, the plate is dried by means of cotton and rouge. In doing this, care must be had that the plate be merely dried, not polished. On this metallic varnish, M. Daguerre has succeeded in taking some very fine impressions of the human figure, which were exhibited to those present at the meeting.

[End of text.]

EDITOR'S NOTES:

The writer's comment about Daguerre's "improvement" being a "rather complicated process" seems to have been shared by daguerreotypists of 1844. This process seems to have received little notice or incorporation into practical use.

A full translation of Daguerre's instructions regarding this process is found in Louis J. M. Daguerre, "On a New Mode of Preparing Plates Destined to Receive Photographic Images," *Chemist* (London) 2:18 (June 1844): 260–63.¹

1. http://www.daguerreotypearchive.org/texts/P8440002_DAG-PROCESS_CHEMIST_1844-06.pdf

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