Snapshots from our symposium in Bry-sur-Marne

by the EUROPEAN DAGUERREOTYPE ASSOCIATION

The Daguerreotype Symposium 2015 (October 8th - 9th) brought together members of the international community of photographic historians, conservators, daguerreotypists and enthusiasts of early photography from all over the world. The participants travelled to Bry-sur-Marne from England, Germany, Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Italy, Spain, US, Czech Republic and even from Argentina. Over the two days of the Symposium the idea of combining historical themes with other issues relevant to the physical conservation of daguerreotypes proved to be a winning formula.

We had the privilege of seeing some unpublished or little-known daguerreotypes, in addition to hearing the truly fascinating accounts, by Ken Jacobson and Christophe Mauron respectively, of the discovery of the extraordinary daguerreotype collections of Ruskin and J.P.G. de Prangey. They made us realise that perhaps there are more daguerreotypes in the world than we think, waiting to be uncovered. As these two interventions clearly showed, these objects can still be found in some of the most unexpected places! So let’s not forget to check our attics...

Steffen Siegel helped us to reflect on the modernity of the particular communication strategy adopted by Daguerre in the diffusion and publication of his new invention, and Jeremy Rowe got us closely involved in his interesting intervention concerning the compositional and technical similarities and differences between American and European daguerreotypes. The interview with the contemporary Daguerreotypist Beniamino Terraneo then created some moments of jovial exchange and sharing between the daguerreotypists present at the conference.

During the second day of the symposium a number of professionals active in the field of conservation and restoration, in various European centres specializing in photography, presented some case studies to illustrate the different strategies that they use in order to stabilize daguerreotypes chemically and physically.

The specific conservation issues involved when one is dealing with large institutional daguerreotype collections were clearly explained by M. Juergens, K. Pollmeier, and S. Ledamoisel, who referred to the prestigious photographic archives of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, the Deutsches Museum in Munich and the Roger-Viollet Press Agency respectively. Caroline Barcella and Jens Gold then described the various different ingenious methods they have developed in order to reconstruct broken glass covers of daguerreotypes.

Some smaller conservation projects for private clients were elucidated by Sandra M. Petrillo and Jérôme Monnier, who illustrated the challenges involved in finding solutions to satisfy a wide range of particular requests, while always ensuring the optimum conservation of daguerreotypes. Clara M. Prieto explained a new method for storing and protecting these unique historical objects, specially conceived to avoid the risk of physical damage when consulting and manipulating them.

This first major event presented by Daguerreobase and the EDA was made possible thanks to the hospitality of the city of Bry-sur-Marne, its mayor Jean-Pierre Spilbauer and Margaret Calvarin, the curator of the Adrienne Mentienne Museum. She welcomed us to the Maison Daguerre with enthusiasm and passion, where she guided us around the intriguing exhibition Les Dags sortent de leur reserve (“Daguerreotypes emerge from storage”) as well as the last existing diorama created by Daguerre, which is conserved in the adjoining church of St-Gervais-et-St-Protais.

We also wish to thank each one of you for having written, read and shared the five issues of the Daguerreotype Journal, which has been produced within the context of the Daguerreobase Project. This project is due to come to an end in late November, but our enthusiasm for the fascinating world of daguerreotypes will keep on going strong, thanks to all the new cultural initiatives that the European Daguerreotype Association is organizing for 2016. Keep in touch with us by following our Facebook page and by becoming a member of our association! It’s easy, just click here!

Ills, Photos by Carlos Vertanessian, Davide Cassinari, Sandra M. Petrillo