Eighty daguerreotype images, with related themes, guide the visitor through a virtual exhibition of daguerreotypes in various prestigious European public and private collections. The exhibition “Photography on a Silver Plate”, curated by Sandra M. Petrillo and Francesca Bonetti for the Daguerreobase Project will be launching on the website “Europeana”, which deals with the shared European cultural heritage.

THE EXHIBITION

Silver, mercury and gold were the elements involved in the first truly successful photographic process: the daguerreotype. This technological miracle of the 19th century is increasingly being recognized as a unique and irreplaceable asset of our international cultural heritage. In 1839 the public revelation of the invention of the daguerreotype, in the midst of an increasingly industrialized civilization, introduced a universal and continually evolving medium, through which our view of the world was definitely changed.

The illustrations presented here have been selected from the hundreds of European daguerreotypes that can be accessed and consulted publicly on the websites www.daguerreobase.org and www.europeana.eu. They show the faces, places and histories of the nineteenth century and testify to the conceptual breakthrough initiated by photography in the field of visual mass communication: that of satisfying, yesterday as in today’s digital age, our desire to permanently record the fleeting and unrepeatable moments of our lives.

III, L. J. M. Daguerre, The Royal Palace, 1840, National Technical Museum of Prague. See it on Daguerreobase