

# HANS P. KRAUS, JR.

All images courtesy Hans P. Kraus, Jr. Fine Photographs

Earlier this year, at the The Photography Show, presented by AIPAD in New York, curious show-goers flocked to the stand of Hans P. Kraus, Jr. The cross-section of visitors varied, as it often does: young curious faces, seasoned collectors stopping by to hone their eye, and those eager to learn firsthand about early processes buzzed around to see the unique photographic treasures that Kraus is known for presenting at international art fairs this year, a trove of early, previously unknown daguerreotypes by British photographer Calvert Richard Jones were presented alongside beautifully preserved works by William Henry Fox Talbot, Gustave Le Gray, and others.

Kraus is one of the few, and usually only, exhibitor at these fairs focusing his entire presentation on early works, and a visit to his stand is an education in the technical and compositional abilities of the early photographic masters. He has been a fixture, not only in the photographic market, but also fields of pioneering research, for some 35 years, and his eponymous New York gallery has been open since 1984. The Classic sat down with Kraus on a video call (where prints by Julia Margaret Cameron and Fox Talbot lined the wall behind his desk) to discuss his long career with early photography, the way he's seen scholarship and the market for early material develop in tandem, and how today's artists engage

Anna Atkins (English, 1799-1871). Aspidium Trifoliatum (Jamaica), circa 1851-1854, cyanotype photogram, 24.9 x 19.5 cm mounted on 48.0 x 37.5 cm paper, handwritten title within the plate. "49" in pencil on mount.



with early techniques and technologies, enriching photography's history even further.

Let's start at the beginning. Can you tell me about your first encounters with photography? How did you start engaging in the field, especially early material?

- My first encounters were through Ansel Adams. I was a keen follower and student of his work, and I took his Yosemite workshop in 1979. Having spent a week with him and the other instructors, I realised that I wasn't as talented a photographer, but I appreciated the work of some of the others. So that was where I made a departure. Before that, I was a yearbook photographer for my high school, and a member of the photography club. Between high school and college, I became enthralled with Ansel's photographs and his books.



William Henry Fox Talbot (English, 1800-1877). Lesser meadow-rue (Thalictrum minus), probably early 1839, photogenic drawing negative. When photography became public in early 1839, it was in the depths of a harsh winter, weak in sunlight — an essential ingredient of early photography. Talbot overcame this by producing mostly photograms through that spring and summer, and specimens from the botanical world remained a favourite (Talbot was a keen botanist), both of his and of the lucky recipients of his early productions. Among the first photograms ever made, Talbot's Lesser meadow-rue in pastel tones anticipates modern abstractions.

## Your father was a renowned book dealer. As you were growing up, the photography and book markets were still quite intertwined. How did this inform your early career?

– Yes, they were, and that was something that had really become apparent around 1939, which was the centennial of the first announcement of photography. A number of booksellers put out catalogues that emphasised photographic incunabula. I worked at John Howell Books in San Francisco for two summers during college. Howell's was an antiquarian bookstore that included photography as part of its stock of Western Americana. I found myself becoming the photography specialist for that bookshop during those summers. After that,

my father took me to visit Harrison Horblit, a book collector, who lived near us in Connecticut. He collected the history of science, and my dad knew that he had some photography. Dad thought this could show me a different side of the book world, to attract my interest in his business. But Harrison drew me into the beginnings of photography, so the plan sort of backfired.

#### What sort of material did he have?

- He had acquired Sir Thomas Phillipps' collection of photography as a category of his history of science - actually, he had bought that the year I was born. This important collection had been sitting in his closet for about 20 years until Sam Wagstaff persuaded him to dig into it more deeply. That's what got Harrison so interested. I was the young kid who he saw getting inspired by this material. Funnily enough, that seemed to have gotten him hooked. I would spend evenings and weekends in his basement, going through his collection of early, mostly British, but some French, photography. He had several copies of Talbot's The Pencil of Nature; he had Sun Pictures in Scotland; he had examples of Hill & Adamson's work, and photographs by Auguste Salzmann, Félix Teynard and Gustave Le Gray. All of that was fascinating to me, because it was the beginning of photography, a new art form that revolutionised how we looked at the world. Of course, my father was still trying to draw me into his book business. But my interest in photography was becoming even stronger, though I recognised that focusing on the pioneers of the field was not dissimilar from my father's specialty within the book world.

#### Where did you go next?

– After college, I took a job at Christie's South Kensington, in London. That's where I really got my feet wet. Photographic albums and daguerreotypes were coming out of attics of British country houses and were being unloaded onto the market. I was amazed by the quantity and quality of early material that appeared. After about a year in London, I moved back to New York and worked at Christie's East. In London, I had the good fortune of working with David Allison and Terry Binns at Christie's South Ken and in New York, with Dale Stulz.

## Having worked in auctions on both sides of the Atlantic in the early '80s, how did the landscapes differ?

– In London, there was much more emphasis on the 19th century, primarily British, but also French, and travel photographs. There seemed to be more of an international market in London than in Paris, which was much more insular at that time. Paris auction catalogues had the distinction of arriving in the mail the day after their auctions! I always found that comical, and at that time, rather infuriating,



William Henry Fox Talbot (English, 1800-1877). Stable roofline, northeast courtyard, Lacock Abbey, likely September 1840, salt print from a photogenic drawing or calotype negative. A fine early salt print made at the transitional moment when Talbot first observed the latent image and discovered the calotype negative. Set in Lacock's northeast courtyard, this spectral image taken from a facing second floor window shows Talbot's innate compositional talent emphasizing the geometric proportions of his home.

but today it's even more interesting to think of how French specialists managed for so long to keep the market to themselves. (Now, the French art market has opened much more—since the arrival in Paris of foreign auctioneers.) But in London, the emphasis was on the 19th century, both Daguerrean and paper images. All the serious photography dealers and collectors from America and Europe were present at the Sotheby's and Christie's sales. There were three a year, and each had more than 300 lots. There was energy and enthusiasm surrounding these London auctions. British-based collectors and dealers fuelled this interest. It was very hard to resist. I was hooked. Back in New York, there was some 19th-century, but most was 20th-century photography: Pictorialism, Bauhaus, F64 School, Modernism, photojournalism, fashion, etc.

### Who were some of the early figures that you were learning from? Academics, other dealers?

– Scholars and curators included Mark Haworth-Booth, Valerie Lloyd, John Ward and Bob Lassam. The dealers I encountered right away were Bob Hershkowitz, Ken and Jenny Jacobson, Willie

Schaeffer, Chuck Isaacs and Daniel Wolf- these dealers were involved in the field from the beginning. I regard them as great colleagues, and I've learned and collaborated with them. Eventually I got to know other dealers like Harry Lunn and Howard Ricketts who were very deeply involved. I also worked with Sean Thackrey, Maggi Weston and Keith de Lellis. And then there were collectors: Sam Wagstaff, who attended every sale; Richard Pare, curator for Phyllis Lambert; Pierre Apraxine of the Gilman Paper Company, who sadly just passed away; Michael Wilson, connoisseur and voracious collector who, along with his wife, Jane, generously hosted the photography world for dinner after the last auction of the week; Bokelberg, daguerreotype collector who was starting to buy other historical photographs; Jay McDonald who is very keenly interested in early salt prints and paper negatives. We would spend hours looking at pictures, discussing their merits and also dining together and catching up on the latest news.

Eventually, I began meeting the French dealers. André Jammes was not a photography dealer. He



**Rev. Calvert Richard Jones** (Welsh, 1802-1877). *Three sailors, Malta,* mid 1840s, sixth plate daguerreotype.



Rev. Calvert Richard Jones (Welsh, 1802-1877). "Rape of the Sabines (2nd view) Florence" by Giambologna, Spring 1846, salt print from a partially varnished calotype negative. Directly behind the Sabines in Jones's photograph, is Giambologna's sculpture of Hercules and Nessus. The main statue and plinth in the negative were varnished before the print was made, leaving surrounding areas unvarnished, and causing the main statue and plinth to appear darker than the background in the print.

was a book dealer and was a colleague of my dad's. But he and his wife Marie Thérèse had a personal interest in collecting photography and we developed a friendship. Alain Paviot, Marc Pagneux, Pierre Marc Richard, Gerard Levy, Texbraun and a few others visited Hôtel Drouot every morning hunting for fresh material when I first encountered them. The Hôtel Drouot was a fertile if contentious meeting ground at that time.

In addition to David Allison and Terry Binns, I befriended Lindsey Stewart who was also at Christie's South Kensington. Philippe Garner was at Sotheby's Belgravia, since the earliest days, and someone I got to know well after I departed Christie's.

### Did you meet photography historian Larry Schaaf around this time?

– I first met him in London, while I was working there. He came through Christie's at one point to see material we had questions about. But it really wasn't until a bit later when I was back in New York, after I had left Christie's and began my own business, that we started to work together. I found myself with a pile of Anna Atkins cyanotypes. These had been removed from a now famous album of 160 vivid blue prints by Anna Atkins titled "Cyanotypes of British and Foreign Flowering Plants and Ferns" Atkins had given to her friend Anne Dixon in 1854. This album had sold in 1984 to three dealers who took it apart. Choices were offered to the most active buyers at the time: the V&A, Sam Wagstaff, Paul Walter and others.

Eventually I went to visit each of those three dealers, and they were motivated to sell me what they had left. So, I ended up gathering more than 100 plates and proceeded to start learning about them.

Larry had done all of the primary research on Anna Atkins; he'd written an article in *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* and one in *History of Photography* journal. He was the scholar to speak to, so I contacted him. We met again and discussed the possibility of doing a catalogue or a book together. And that's how the first edition of *Sun Gardens* was initiated. Larry wrote the text, which at that time involved him doing some further research to identify where the additional copies of *British Algae* were, and other various components of her work, which ended up as the census that's included. Aperture publish it in 1985.

That book did well, and I proceeded to have a show in New York. Then Jeffrey Fraenkel took an interest in having an exhibition of her work in his San Francisco gallery. He did very well with them too. Anna Atkins' cyanotypes – photograms

or cameraless images created by the pioneering woman photographer – were finally gaining recognition as the innovative and timeless works that they are.

In 2018, the New York Public Library published a new edition of *Sun Gardens*. The 1985 edition was long out of print, but very much in demand. Larry updated his text and Joshua Chuang edited and contributed to it. This new edition of *Sun Gardens* was also a success and sold out within months.

#### Asking a question about Larry Schaaf, I thought we may discuss Talbot first, so it's great to hear how the work of Atkins had such an impact on your early career.

- Talbot's The Pencil of Nature had traditionally been recognised as the first photographically illustrated book - not taking into account Anna Atkins, who had hardly been recognised at that time. But still, in terms of priority, William Henry Fox Talbot's work has had the greatest influence, since its day. With The Pencil, which began in 1844, Talbot understood the opportunity of using this publication to celebrate his invention and promote every aspect of photography. I knew that was a subject which interested Larry, so we decided to collaborate on that as well. Eventually, in 1989, we published the Anniversary Facsimile edition of The Pencil of Nature, which involved Larry's tremendous scholarship and a census of copies known at that time. I had it printed in Verona at the Stamperia Valdonega, copying the finest examples of plates that we could find. At that time, we borrowed from various institutions and the collection at Lacock in order to create a sort of ideal copy of *The Pencil*, which of course today doesn't exist. Some of the original salt prints faded substantially, while others faded less, but still, overall, we wanted to show The Pencil of Nature the way Talbot had intended it to be seen, and we did. Each of the plates is a 300-line tri-tone offset lithograph on uncoated paper -not a salt print, but the plates were trimmed and pasted to the mounts in the manner of the Reading Establishment. That gave us the opportunity of fulfilling a dream that we shared.

#### What drew you to Talbot's work initially?

– The originality! It was unlike anything else. Talbot never claimed to be an artist. In fact, he was incapable of drawing, in spite of being keen to do so. In order to record the world around him, he ended up inventing photography on paper. But if you look at the breadth of his oeuvre, whether it's botanical specimens, photogenic drawings or calotypes, you see beautiful pictures.

[Kraus gets up from his desk to take down some framed and mounted examples of Talbot's work]



**David Octavius Hill & Robert Adamson** (Scottish, 1802-1870 & 1821-1848). Jeanie Wilson and Annie Linton, Newhaven, "They were twa bonnie lasses", circa 1845, salt print from a calotype negative.

I can show you – here's a photogenic drawing from about spring of 1839. And then here's a negative of the dormer window at Lacock, and this is a print of a similar view at Lacock. Now, these three are facsimiles, and they're hanging in the light, in custom designed frames with the originals safely behind them, shielded from light. This system allows us the special experience of living with Talbot's earliest and most light sensitive work.

As a pioneer, Talbot was not alone. Fellow inventors were Niépce, Daguerre and Bayard, but so little of their work survives that it hardly ever appears on the market. Talbot's achievement was introducing the photographic negative, that permitted multiple prints to be made, and he immediately recognised this advantage.



**Julia Margaret Cameron** (English, born in India, 1815-1879). "Circe" Kate Keown, 1865, albumen print. Cameron used a long exposure and shallow depth of field to give that slight sense of animation which merges the young girl, Kate Keown, with the mythic character Circe, seemingly bringing her into the viewer's presence in this fine print.

Talbot, an antiquarian and scientist, insisted to his family at a precociously early age that all his letters and work be preserved. Luckily for us, they followed his instructions, and we are blessed with a voluminous archive from which to discriminate and consider his most successful photographs.

### I'd like to hear about your first visit to Lacock Abbey, and what that was like.

– It was sometime in the early '80s when I went along with a Royal Photographic Society visit and met the family members there. I was in awe. To be able to see the bust of Patroclus, the oriel window, the parts of the cloisters that Talbot photographed, the facade of Lacock Abbey. We were steeped in the history of Talbot and the history of these photographs. I went back numerous times, and the family invited me to

spend the night. Encouraging my enthusiasm, they eventually allowed me to acquire some of Talbot's prints. That was a tremendous opportunity to be able to obtain things right from the source. I had a few years of really thrilling acquisitions, and a great occasion to study the work and to learn to discriminate among quantities of Talbotypes that they still had at his home where these had been created.

#### It seems as though you were initially drawn to early British photography, and later began working with early French material. It would be interesting to hear your thoughts on the differences in the work from both sides of the channel.

- I began to realise that there was something about the earliest French photographs which was equally as captivating. I guess that would have been in the mid-'80s when I was introduced to the French scene. André Jammes was very much an influence. He helped open my eyes, using images in his collection (and he had amazing British photographs too), and in public collections, which were unparalleled. But in France there was a different approach. I realised that many of the French were much more protective of their own work than the British. The British wanted their work to get out into the world. In both countries, we had to deal with export license requirements, when acquiring photographs for which dates and values exceeded export limits. But I eventually realised that was not an insurmountable hurdle. We just had to be patient. I understood that we had to conform with these regulations, right from the start, to make sure that there were no repercussions later on. American museums want to see every document of export and import before they'll even consider an acquisition. It's a bit of a burden, but we know it and I'm glad that we are prepared.

In 1989, I was fortunate to be able to acquire Calvert Jones' Album, which was part of the first Calvert Jones sale at Sotheby's in London. This was assembled by Jones, integrating work by three pioneers of British and French photography, 1839-1844. It comprises a group of photogenic drawings and salt prints from calotype negatives by Talbot; portraits from paper negatives by Antoine Claudet, which were particularly rare because most of his photographs on paper had burned in his studio fire; and finally, a couple of Hippolyte Bayard direct positives, the rarest of all! One depicts the rooftops of Paris with Montmartre in the distance, and the other depicts statuary on his roof. So, two classic subjects of Bayard, and I had never owned any of his work before. It was a tremendous revelation. Having these three key figures represented in a single album was phenomenal. The album is a codex of cross-fertilisation between the earliest British and French masters of photography on paper.

In fact, it's an album that I still possess. It's a touchstone of the relationship between the British and the French innovators, which is a rare thing to be able to document.

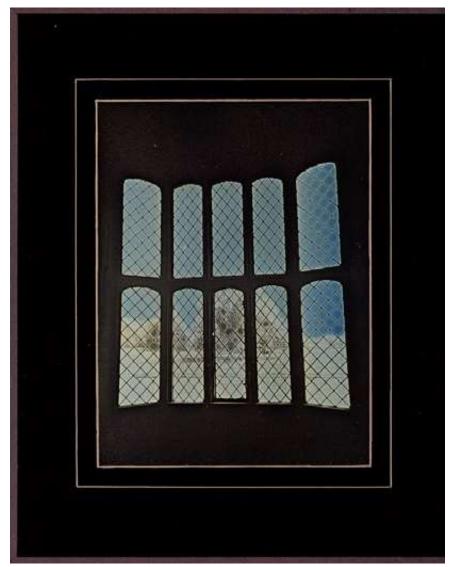
## How have you seen the collectors of 19th-century photography evolve during your time as a dealer? How have tastes changed?

- This has more to do with what becomes available at any point in time. Around 1980, there was a tendency for collectors to buy anything that tantalised them. In the art market, this was a newly collectible field. Since then, they have become more focussed. Some collectors seek the most beautiful images having "wall power", like Gustave Le Gray seascapes or Carleton Watkins views of Yosemite. Others collect self-portraits. Some seek "firsts", for example, images made in the year 1839, or the earliest examples of a subject, such as the first view of the Great Pyramid, Notre Dame or Central Park, the earliest botanical studies or photomicrographs. Recently we had a show of Édouard Baldus, featuring a group of top-quality albumen prints, 1855 to 1861, hand-picked by the connoisseur François Lepage who spent a lifetime of specialising in early French photographs. I think this was the first Baldus exhibition in more than 20 years. We were able to price them attractively and made some good sales to museums and private collectors, experienced and new. Our prior exhibition was the work of Calvert Jones (Talbot's most successful pupil), featuring his pre-photographic marine drawings, calotype negatives, salt prints and even some daguerreotypes. Most of these works were new to the market and interest was buoyant. Some were sold right away and others continue to sell.

Now I'm finding that certain collectors whom I've known for many years are starting to think about their exit strategy. We're in conversation with a number of them, and also with the estates of some who unfortunately have passed away and whose families need advice on how to deal with their collections. At the same time, there are keen new collectors showing up, and I'm very pleased to say there are young ones among them. Much of 19th-century photography is surprisingly undervalued, and that is inspiring collectors to look at things more carefully, whether they're buying at auction, at art fairs, or privately from dealers. There are new opportunities. I can't emphasise this more strongly.

## How do you find people who are newer to the field of early photography begin to engage?

- They are not shy about asking questions. We're getting requests from people who just want to learn, or people who send random inquiries based on works they've seen at art fairs, on our website, or Instagram. Some of these are very stimulating

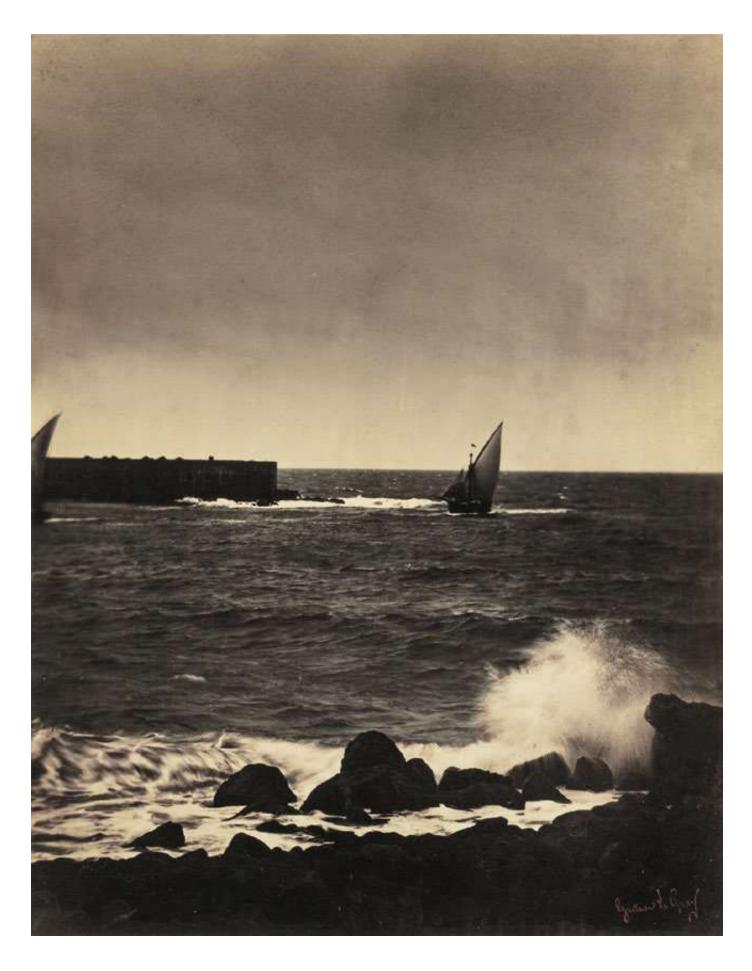


Mike Robinson (Canadian, b. 1961). "Latticed Window" Lacock Abbey, 2018, half plate daguerreotype.

questions that involve not just a description and a price, but demonstrate their desire to learn more. And we're very happy to engage in these kinds of conversations. These are the collectors of the future, after all. There was a time when I was hearing that no young person wanted to be burdened with objects. Lately, I have been hearing far less of this, especially regarding this field. Everyone is making photographs, so there can be an associated fascination with the past to which any of us can relate.

## How have you witnessed institutional collections' appetite for 19th-century pictures change over time?

 Relatively few museums collected photographs until 1989, the sesquicentennial of the birth of the medium. That was a momentous year when most major museums mounted exhibitions and, shortly thereafter, established endowed departments for



collecting 19th and 20th century photography. Some of these institutions specialise in categories or subjects and others are generalist in their approach.

## You've also been been showing contemporary photography (Adam Fuss, Abelardo Morell, etc.) alongside 19th-century work in recent years.

- In 2018, Photo London kindly invited us to participate and do a public exhibition. I called it *Talbot* and His Legacy Today, and it was a very rewarding experience for me. We were able to show a large number of our Talbot photographs, from photogenic drawings to calotypes and mounted prints from *The* Pencil of Nature, and also some photoglyphic engravings, his early photogravure examples. We displayed these together with the work of contemporary artists who were inspired by Talbot -Hiroshi Sugimoto, Adam Fuss, Vera Lutter, Abelardo Morell. Cornelia Parker made lovely gravures of the glassware that Talbot had used for his "Articles of Glass", which is now at the Bodleian Library. We also included Mike Robinson, a talented daguerreotypist who recently had the audacity of taking a daguerreotype apparatus to Lacock Abbey, birthplace of the calotype, to make daguerreotypes there!

That show got quite some traction, and I still hear from people who saw it. Now I'm meeting more and more contemporary photographers who are embracing the early processes and using them. Some of our clients are the photographers themselves. Sugimoto, who I met years ago, contacted me because he wanted to see examples of Talbot's work and examine his negatives. He visited me several times, and he ended up buying a number of them. He then proceeded to use these negatives, many of which Talbot never printed, to make his own prints, but Sugimoto's were much larger. He used internegatives, or transparencies of the originals, some of which were quite light sensitive, to make toned gelatin silver print enlargements, approximating the colours of Talbot's photogenic drawings and prints.

**Gustave Le Gray** (French, 1820-1884). *La Vague Brisée, Mer Mediterranée No*. 15 (The Breaking Wave), 1857, albumen print from a collodion negative. Le Gray took a number of renowned seascapes beginning in 1855. Of this series of Normandy and Mediterranean views, the dramatic and dynamic La Vague Brisée is Le Gray's only vertical composition.



Édouard Baldus (French, 1813-1889). The Eagle's Beak, La Ciotat, c.1860, albumen print from a paper negative. This is one of three majestic landscapes along the Côte d'Azur from the album Chemin de Fer de Paris à Lyon et à la Méditerranée.

They are startling to see. We had a few of them in our show at the Photo London venue, and I continue to see them in exhibitions and museums. For Sugimoto, Talbot's negatives were the benchmarks he needed to be able to reach deeper into his own practice.

## Tell me about the Talbot Archive at the Bodleian Library.

– About 20 years ago, after Anthony Burnett-Brown (Talbot's great-great-grandson) had passed away, his family asked me to find a home for the Talbot-related archival material, which they still privately owned at Lacock Abbey. With the assistance of Larry Schaaf and Roger Taylor, I spent quite a bit of time going through the family estate at Lacock Abbey. We were identifying the artifacts and documents that were clearly related to Talbot and his family, his wife, his mother, his half-sisters, and his children, and those that pertained to photography. This archive is a major collection that paints a fuller picture of Talbot and his world. Eventually, we were able to export this entire archive to New York for further study, and I displayed some of the things here at the gallery.

Sugimoto came over to see the items on view. He was visibly impressed. One of the items was Talbot's electrostatic discharge wand, which is a very exciting little scientific instrument. It has a glass handle and a brass rod and ball at the end of it. He realised that this is the kind of conducting tool that Michael Faraday and Talbot were using for their electrical experiments. He asked to borrow it, brought it to his studio and used it to make some of his own spark photograms, which are now well known.



John Beasley Greene (American, born in France, 1832-1856). Venus de Milo on rooftop in Paris, 1852-1853, waxed paper negative. Greene's rooftop images of vegetables and the plaster cast of the Venus de Milo were made during his formative period as a student of Gustave Le Gray in Paris. Greene, perhaps in collaboration with Le Gray, carried his statuette of Venus to the roof in order to sharpen his skills in lighting and composition.

Eventually, when the Bodleian Library acquired this archive, I mentioned that there was one thing missing: the electrostatic discharge wand. Richard Ovenden, who was leading the charge to acquire the collection, agreed that Sugimoto should continue to work with it. The Bodleian received a few of Sugimoto's prints from this series in gratitude when the wand was returned to the archive.

## Oftentimes, you are one of only a few, or the only, gallery at a photography fair exclusively exhibiting 19th-century material. Why do you think that is?

Others include 19th-century work among their offerings. That is important to me. The main reason I stopped participating in art fairs like TEFAF and The Winter Show, is that I often ended up being the only exhibitor showing any photographs and that rarely makes for a successful fair.



**Hippolyte Bayard** (French, 1801-1887). *Plaster casts in the artist's studio*, 1839-1840, direct positive on paper. This is mounted in Calvert Jones' album, along with early work by Talbot and Claudet.



Henri Le Secq (French, 1818-1882). Le chêne dénudé, photolithograph, 1870s, from a waxed paper negative, 1850s. It is likely that this example was printed using the "encre grasse" method of Thiel Ainé et Cie, a firm that developed a photolithographic technique and collaborated several times with Le Secq, each time using his old paper negatives from the early 1850s.



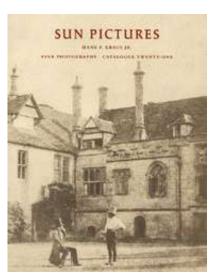
Félix Teynard (French, 1817-1892). "Égypte / Djïzeh (Necropole de Memphis) / Pyramide de Chéops (Grande Pyramide) / salt print, 1853-1854, from a paper negative.

## Your *Sun Pictures* catalogues are now collectible items for many connoisseurs. What was the motivation to begin publishing these?

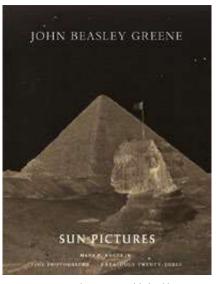
– Catalogues have traditionally been published by book dealers. My father influenced me in that regard. These may have helped him to better understand what I was doing. I was fortunate to have a serious scholar like Larry Schaaf available to work on most of them.

# At the most recent edition of AIPAD, you showcased a selection of Calvert Jones daguerreotypes – a new discovery. How rare are these types of 'finds' these days? Is it harder to find material overall?

- Other than one view of Margam Castle, these are the only Jones daguerreotypes ever to have been on the market. Good early material is always hard to find, but surprises keep us alert!



Sun Pictures, Catalogue 21, published by Hans P. Kraus, Jr. Fine Photographs.



*Sun Pictures*, Catalogue 23, published by Hans P. Kraus, Jr. Fine Photographs.