

Professionally Speaking...

# The Photographer

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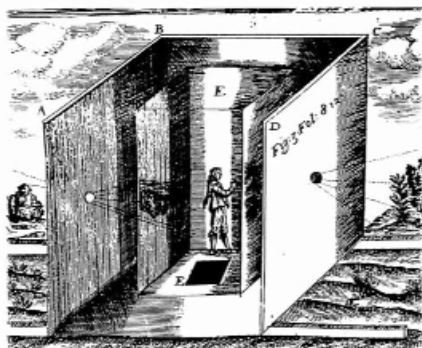


This article describes the developments in photography through the centuries, from the ancient camera obscura to the rise of color photography in the 1930s. And then over to Richard Schuster, a photo journalist who wants to share with you an odd experience...

## The ~~EARLY~~ Days of Photography - 16th to 19th Century

The first “camera” was first described by Abu Ali Al-Hasan Ibn al-Haitham (also known as Al-Hazen) in the 9th Century AD as a “dark room”. Leonardo da Vinci drew and recorded the so-called camera obscura. This was merely a darkened box or room with a tiny hole in the middle of one wall or side. The camera obscura made use of basic optical laws: any object reflects light. Beams of light enter the camera obscura and are projected onto the opposite wall, where they form an image of the original object (e.g. a candle flame), but inverted, standing on its head.

The first camerae obscurae to be constructed were built as real dark rooms in which the audience could sit to watch the miracle, only in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries did smaller versions appear that fitted on a table.



Sketch of a camera obscura – 16<sup>th</sup> century

More than two centuries went by until 1727 when the German J.H. Schulze from the town of Halle discovered the photo sensitivity of silver salts – an important chemical process that turned out to be the basis of the development of photography. Silver salts, when exposed to light, react and turn black. When the remaining non-oxidized salts are fixated with a liquid, the result is a black and white negative of the photographed object. But it took another hundred years, until 1839, that William Henry Talbot (1800-1877) managed to produce the first photo-negative, thus paving the way for the reproduction of photographs.

But perhaps da Vinci himself already made use of silver salts to create one of the most controversial pictures of all times: the Turin Shroud. The shroud allegedly preserves a negative image of the face of Jesus Christ! Its creation into being is veiled in myths: some say it was just painted, others claim acid vapors left their trace on the shroud, and still others think it might be a photo-negative taken by a camera obscura and preserved by means of silver salts. Opinions on the latter hypothesis are divided, for both the remains of silver salts and huge quantities of iron oxide have allegedly been found on the shroud. Anyway, should the camera obscura hypothesis prove true, it would make for two sensations: the Turin Shroud would be a hoax, but nevertheless the oldest photograph in the world!



The Turin Shroud – relic, photograph or hoax?

In 1840, the American John William Draper took the first picture of the moon, and by 1848 first photos from exotic countries appeared, like the hand-colored photograph of Ramas IV, King of Siam, which was given to Queen Victoria as a present. However the long exposure times of early photography made the depiction of moving objects impossible.

About 1858 Nadar (the pseudonym of Frenchman Gaspard-Félix Tournachon) made the first aerial photograph, taken from a balloon, and by 1860 photography which until then had been quite expensive, had become affordable enough for the middle classes who wanted a family portrait or liked pictures of celebrities.

Due to two further innovations, photography would become popular worldwide in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century: the first was R. L. Maddox’s discovery of the dry plate negative in 1871; the second was George Eastman’s development of the Kodak Box Camera in the USA in 1888. Eastman (1854-1932) had built a handy camera with a celluloid roll film. At first roll films could only be changed in darkrooms. Each film had a hundred pictures in a round format. When the film was full, you sent the Kodak Box Camera back to the manufacturer and shortly after the developed photos and the camera with a new roll film inserted were sent back to you: “You press the button, we do the rest!” claimed Kodak.

By 1895 the Kodak Pocket Camera was released. It had an improved roll film in cartridge form, which amateurs were able to change themselves, in daylight. You could take 12 pictures with it.

Finally the work of Louis Ducos du Hauron in the 1860s and 1870s and his creation of additive and subtractive methods of color