



The Painted Photograph, 1839-1914: Origins, Techniques, Aspirations

Heinz K. Henisch, Bridget Ann Henisch

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As photography grew more popular following its invention in 1839, its admirers did not understand how a medium that rendered shapes and textures in exquisite detail could fail to render them in realistic color. Also disappointing was the tendency of the captured images to fade over time. Photographers, ever eager to please their public, began "painting" their photographs with substances ranging from water colors and oil to chalk and crayon. Images were enlarged, enhanced, and framed, to simulate the splendors of the traditional portrait.

With its rich variety of illustrations in color and duotone, *The Painted Photograph* is the first comprehensive history of overpainting, from its origins to World War I. The 131 illustrations featured draw upon original nineteenth- and early twentieth-century sources, most from America and Britain, but also representing Japan, Turkey, Austria, Germany, Poland, Canada, Bohemia, India, Australia, Norway, Holland, and Russia.

In describing a multitude of early techniques, the authors survey overpainting on various types of photographs, including daguerreotypes, tintypes, and imprinted porcelain, milk glass, enamel, magic lantern slides, and textiles. Particularly fascinating are discussions of overpainted death portraits, most commonly those of children, and the origins of popular "picture postcards" featuring overpainted landscape scenes. The Henisches address also the eager acceptance of the painted photograph throughout the world, despite the hostility of the art-critical establishment.

The Painted Photograph will appeal to a wide public interested in photography, history, sociology, social anthropology, folk art, popular fashion, and antiques.

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