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Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg  
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Universitätsbibliothek Marburg—Dr. Rolf H. Krauss-Forschungsbibliothek /  
Deutsches Dokumentationszentrum für Kunstgeschichte—Bildarchiv  
Foto Marburg  
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Münchner Stadtmuseum, Munich  
Dietmar Siegert Collection  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York  
Beaux-Arts de Paris  
Bibliothèque historique de la Ville de Paris  
Collection Serge Kakou, Paris  
Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris  
Musée d'Orsay, Paris  
Musée d'Orsay, Dépôt de la Fondation Dosne-Thiers, Paris  
Musée d'Orsay, Dépôt du Mobilier National, Paris  
Société française de photographie, Paris  
Mayer Collection, Stuttgart  
Staatsgalerie Stuttgart  
Musée des Beaux-Arts de Troyes  
Albertina, Vienna  
Photoinstitut Bonartes, Vienna  
Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna

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# Foreword

In the West, the nineteenth century marked the beginning of the modern age: rail transport, electrification, and telegraphy had created a dynamic that in turn engendered economic and communicative globalism. The new medium of photography was both linked to the industrial revolution and the increasing dissemination of knowledge, and it was introduced to an international audience at the world's fairs. Photographic exposure and reproduction techniques served the panoramic view specific to the age as well as the encyclopedic desire to document: the possibility of creating collections on any conceivable topic through the medium of photography corresponded to the new need to make knowledge accessible and archivable. Similar to the way that the city centers of Paris, London, Vienna, Budapest, and Munich were transformed by historicizing architecture, the new medium fused tradition and modernity. Museums, libraries, and archives were created. Travelogues, surveys, and maps shaped the era. At the same time as sociology became a subject, social reportage in photography emerged alongside the social novel of literary realism. The rapidly developing natural science reflected the present: what could be more obvious than to put the precision of photography at its service?

Was this a new form of art? Was the new medium, interwoven with the progress of the applied and the useful, to become more than simply an auxiliary science of painting? In 1859 Charles Baudelaire wrote a scathing critique of the first Paris Salon to include photographs. In a fictional argument he had a photographer say, "I want to represent things as they are, or rather as they would be, supposing that I did not exist." Against this, Baudelaire set the answer of a painter from his favored faction of "imaginatives": "I want to illuminate things with my mind, and to project their reflection upon other minds." In this way Baudelaire, a visionary and friend of the Impressionists, established the antagonism between machine and spirit that would continue for decades to come. Even Walter Benjamin's 1936 reflections on the loss of the aura of the work of art in the age of its mechanical reproduction still return to this distinction. And yet the mass reproduction of Impressionist works may very well have been more than welcome to the artists, collectors, and art critics who had been opposed to monopolized exhibitions in the Salon since the 1860s. They had to engage in new distribution channels. Having made their own perception the center of interest, they were closer to the natural sciences and their new publication and information channels than to the academic art establishment.

*Sur place*: at the beginning of modernism in painting was the commitment to geographical references. No one sold more artworks to the United States than Claude Monet, and yet he declined all invitations to study the American landscape. He felt that he had to be intimately familiar with a landscape to paint it. Monet, just like Berthe Morisot, Camille Pissarro, and Pierre-Auguste Renoir, worked *en plein air* in order to broach the issue of the new relationship between humankind and nature. The result was a painting of pure presence that made individual reactions to changing light and weather phenomena its subject. The Impressionists dedicated their painting to the fleeting moment. This made them natural allies of the photographers. They held their first group exhibition in the former studio of the photographer Nadar on boulevard des Capucines in Paris in 1874. Actors, composers, politicians, and writers—including Baudelaire—were already familiar with the venue because they had been photographed there.

From its early days photography was associated with artistic education. Landscape photographs took the place of drawn *aides-mémoires*. The early photographers had often studied art. The 1981 exhibition *Before Photography: Painting and the Invention of Photography* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York made it clear that instead of emerging from a scientific context, photography was derived from the landscape painting of artists such as John Constable and Camille Corot. The exploration of the medium's perspectival and subjective nature has been the focus ever since, making possible pivotal exhibitions such as *Gustave Caillebotte: An Impressionist and Photography* (Frankfurt am Main and The Hague, 2012–13) and *The Impressionists and Photography* (Madrid, 2019). Nevertheless, the interplay between photography and Impressionism deserves to be explored in more depth.

Similar to cast iron as a new material within the field of architecture, the new medium was versatile. Beyond that, it also offered freedoms that led to its emancipation as an artistic medium in competition with painting. Photographers chose the same motifs as the Impressionists: the forest of Fontainebleau, the cliffs of Étretat, and the modern metropolis of Paris. They too studied the changing light situations, seasons, and meteorological conditions. From the beginning they pursued their artistic ambitions by experimenting with composition and perspective, using different techniques and materials, and employing blurring, dramatization, and montage. Even those who were rooted in local culture were able to capture fleeting moments of universal validity in photographs. Light—the basis of photography—was, like vision itself, a shared theme of painting and photography. The exhibition *A New Art: Photography and Impressionism* at the Museum Barberini and the Von der Heydt-Museum illuminates the artistic emancipation of the new medium from the 1850s through to around 1900, when it became an autonomous art form.

This is the first photography exhibition to be presented at the Museum Barberini since it opened in 2017. The point of departure is the collection of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist paintings by museum founder Hasso Plattner—including works by Gustave Caillebotte, Claude Monet, and Berthe Morisot—which has been on permanent display since September 2020. The Von der Heydt-Museum is one of the few institutions that began to collect Impressionist art early on, setting an example in both Germany and Europe overall. It houses a civic collection in the classical sense. Many top-tier paintings by artists such as Gustave Courbet, Edgar Degas, Édouard Manet, Claude Monet, and Alfred Sisley had already entered its holdings before World War I or were owned by citizens of Wuppertal. We thank our guest curator Ulrich Pohlmann for his dialogical concept tailored to our collections. Our heartfelt thanks go to cocurator Helene von Saldern as well. At the Von der Heydt-Museum the exhibition was curated by Anna Baumberger.

An international symposium held at the Museum Barberini on September 1, 2021, set the stage for this exhibition catalog. In addition to Michael Philipp and Daniel Zamani, the catalog's coeditors, we would like to thank Ulrich Pohlmann, Monika Faber, Dominique de Font-Réaulx, Matthias Krüger, Esther Ruelfs, and Bernd Stiegler for their research, which is now available in printed form in this catalog. We would also like to thank Miriam Leimer for compiling the biographies, Christine Rottmeier-Keß for the glossary entries, and Helene von Saldern and Marie-Louise Monrad Møller for their careful editing.

We would especially like to extend our thanks to those who lent us works for the exhibition. Three institutions were particularly engaged: the Münchner Stadtmuseum in Munich, the Société française de photographie in Paris, and the Photoinstitut Bonartes in Vienna. We are grateful to Ulrich Pohlmann, Vincent Guyot, and Monika Faber for their belief in our project. For their generous loans of iconic photographs, we would also like to thank private collectors Céline, Heiner, and Aeneas Bastian; Serge Kakou; Rolf Mayer; and Dietmar Siegert. We are indebted to numerous other lenders from Austria, France, Germany, Switzerland, and the United States. The exhibition *A New Art: Photography and Impressionism* was made possible at the Von der Heydt-Museum by the support of the Dr. Werner Jackstädt Foundation, Wuppertal. We would like to express our sincere thanks to the foundation board for the benevolence with which it continuously accompanies the museum's development and its program.

We wish our visitors many surprising impressions and insights as they discover a new facet of nineteenth-century art.

Ortrud Westheider  
*Director,*  
*Museum Barberini, Potsdam*

Roland Mönig  
*Director,*  
*Von der Heydt-Museum, Wuppertal*

# Rivalry and Emancipation Photography and the Traditional Fine Arts in the Nineteenth Century

Photography and the fine arts were engaged in productive competition in the nineteenth century. The history of their intertwined development could also be described as a mutual process of emancipation in which photography was to gain temporary acceptance as an artistic form of representation while painting was pushed to redefine its forms of expression.

Although photography had artistic ambitions from the very beginning, nineteenth-century viewers regarded it as a hybrid of science, technology, industry, and art. In addition to painters, scientists were involved in the invention and development of photographic processes. Photographs were also used in various fields such as astronomy, medicine, botany, zoology, archaeology, and criminology. The question of the extent to which photography is an art form has been debated since the mid-nineteenth century. This essay examines the quest to establish photography as an art form on par with painting.

### *A Powerful Rival*

As soon as the invention of the daguerreotype was announced at the Institut de France in Paris on August 19, 1839, the new medium of photography entered into competition with existing image forms. The economic and aesthetic rivalry between the traditional arts and photography is exemplified by Théodore Maurisset's caricature *Daguerreotypomania* (fig. 1). Published in *La Caricature* in December 1839, the drawing reflects the impact of the new invention on the established system of the arts. In this caricature, photography, a symbol of technical progress and modern civilization par excellence, is associated with steam power, railroads, and aeronautics, and situated between fairground amusement and prosperous industry. The consequences for the arts are indicated in a scene depicting engravers hanging from gallows that are for rent and a protester bearing a banner that reads "Down with aquatint." The existential hardships of etchers, lithographers, engravers, and painters of portraits and miniatures that the spread of photographic art reproduction and portraiture had triggered are indicative of the profound changes in existing hierarchies within the visual arts.<sup>1</sup> The profession of painting, as later caricatures also conveyed, was engaged in a grave crisis and cast in the shadow of its powerful new rival: photography. Competition between portrait painters and photographers seemed to escalate around 1860 with the mass distribution of cartes de visite. In Carl Tetzl's 1865 wood engraving *Photography and Portrait Painting*, wealthy portrait photographers are contrasted with an impoverished, neglected painter-proletariat (fig. 3). While successful photographers resided in spacious attic studios, many painters had to live in gloomy garrets similar to the one in Carl Spitzweg's painting *The Poor Poet* (1839, Neue Pinakothek, Munich).

### *A Recognized Aid*

Over the course of the advancing industrialization of portrait production in the 1860s, two photography-based image processes became popular that competed with painting and sculpture. Both *photosculpture* and *photopeinture* enjoyed a vogue beginning in 1865. The latter was based on the enlargement of a negative or slide that was projected onto photographic paper or onto a canvas prepared with light-sensitive emulsion using a solar camera.<sup>2</sup> In France the photographer André Adolphe Eugène Disdéri acquired the patent for the process. Painters employed by Disdéri traced the contours of the projected image on the screen and copied them with "mathematical precision," as a report in *Le Figaro* put it. Their work apparently turned out so convincingly that Disdéri was soon successfully marketing portraits of celebrities such as Prince Jérôme Napoléon, a nephew of Emperor Napoléon, or the composer Gioachino Rossini. The technique of *photopeinture* was considered inexpensive and efficient, as it significantly reduced the duration of portrait sessions. This practice is evidenced by a caricature by Cham (Amédée de Noé) that shows Disdéri at work in his Paris studio on boulevard des Italiens (fig. 2).<sup>3</sup> In addition to portraits, the process was used for replicas of paintings<sup>4</sup> and depictions of genre scenes, and later for landscapes and other motifs as well.<sup>5</sup> Examples were on display at the Paris world's fairs of 1867 and 1878. *Photopeinture* was apparently a common practice in many painters' studios at the time. In 1884 the journal *La Nature* reported that "in this way photography will still render considerable service to the painter but will leave him the freest latitude as regards the free development of his, as it were, poetic ideas."<sup>6</sup>





1



2

1 Théodore Maurisset,  
*Daguerreotypomania*, Paris 1839,  
in *La Caricature* (December 8, 1839)

2 Cham [Amédée de Noé],  
*Caricature of the Portrait "Grandeur Nature"*  
by Disdéri, 1861,  
in Cham, *Choses et autres*, Paris 1861, n.p.

3 Carl Tetzl,  
*Photography and Portrait Painting*, 1865,  
Münchner Stadtmuseum, Munich,  
Sammlung Fotografie



3

The French writer and caricaturist Albert Robida, author of several science fiction novels in which he imagined the effects of scientific and technological progress on everyday life in a dystopian vision, saw the coming development of modern painting as dependent on the latest photographic processes. In his futuristic novel of 1883, *Le Vingtième Siècle*, he described a visit to the Musée du Louvre. Along with painters, *photopeintres* were on hand to create perfect copies of the paintings with their cameras (fig. 5). As the culmination of mechanistic image production, a mechanical rendering of photography serviceable for the artistic work process, *photopeinture* produced hardly any innovative results and by no means created a new form of painting. Its acceptance, however, was an indication of the legitimacy of an artistic practice in which the medium of photography was taken for granted in terms of its use as an aid. Many painters and sculptors had followed the recommendation of French history painter Paul Delaroche in 1839 that they should create archives of photographic originals. This found resonance both in the studios of independent artists and in the European training centers for the arts and crafts.

The extensive photographic holdings of the École des beaux-arts in Paris and of the art academies in Berlin, Frankfurt am Main, Vienna, Budapest, and Saint Petersburg, where thousands and thousands of photographs were used in teaching, bear witness to this today. The medium was used in history painting classes as well as in portraits, landscapes, animal portraits, nude studies, and architectural drawings. The *études d'après nature* (studies from nature) were particularly valued as models. They were “taken from life,” as was often indicated on the mount, and provided an “incalculable advantage . . . to the painter and sculptor, where it is necessary to make time-consuming studies from nature!”<sup>7</sup> Compositions in the style of *paysage intime* or a Romantic *Erdlebenbild* (earth-life painting) were among them, as were tree and plant studies, all patterns that served painters as inspiration and corrective. According to prevailing opinion, these photographs represented an authentic rendition of nature due to their attention to detail. Nevertheless, the photographs were rarely perceived as works of art in and of themselves. This was also evident in contemporary inventories of artist estate auctions, in which photographs are listed without detailed descriptions and declared to be of little value.

### *Inspirational Rivalry*

In view of the public status and disposition of photographers in the nineteenth century, it should be noted that those who had an artistic education represented a small minority. Only about twenty percent had a corresponding record to show for it.<sup>8</sup> The situation was different for the leading photographers in France and the United Kingdom, where the public perception of photography as an art was more pronounced than on the rest of the continent. Analogous to the *artiste peintre*, there was talk of the *artiste photographe*, the *photographe amateur*, and even the *peintre photographe* in the 1850s. The latter designation referred to both artistic training and the simultaneous practice of both painting and photography.<sup>9</sup>

Among the most successful photographers whose works were discussed in the context of art in the French daily and weekly press were contrasting personalities such as Gustave Le Gray and André Eugène Adolphe Disdéri. Their studios were considered tourist attractions and were meeting places for a wealthy clientele of bourgeoisie and high nobility who, as the social elite of the Second Empire, could feel at home in such spaces. Views of their establishments circulated in the picture press. A comparison with Parisian artist studios, which were also published as wood engravings in *L'Illustration*, reveals considerable differences. In addition to their function as production facilities, the studios of famous artists functioned as publicly accessible showrooms that, at certain times, were open to visitors. In the case of Eugène Delacroix's Paris studio, the artist is visible in the foreground while visitors or assistants pursue various activities in the spacious artist's workshop. The room, filled with plaster casts, paintings, and drawings, is presented as a place of creative production and erudition. Various paintings on easels—Delacroix was busy at the time producing paintings for the Palais Bourbon, the seat of the French parliament—emphasize busy activity (fig. 4). A similar situation reigned in Rosa Bonheur's studio, which notoriously featured the painter's live animal model at home among her props. The photo salons of Le Gray and Disdéri on the other hand, were markedly different. Instead of a productive workshop atmosphere, the interiors reflected the social advancement and social status of their owners, legitimized by attributes of art. The laboratory had “succeeded the workshop,” as the art critic Paulin wrote in 1856; the studio had become a salon “and even, as in the case of M. Legray, a highly curious cabinet, of which the anteroom already gives a foretaste.”<sup>10</sup>





**91** Robert Collett  
*Water Lilies in the Rain*, from the  
album *Norwegian Motifs*, 1897

92 Dwight A. Davis  
*A Still Pond*, 1912 or earlier



**93** Anonymous  
*Water Irises*, ca. 1890







# Painterly Photographs Pictorialism

Daniel Zamani







Pierre-Auguste Renoir  
*Shaded Path*, 1872  
Oil on canvas  
Hasso Plattner Collection

**94** Hugo Henneberg  
*Beech Forest in Autumn*, 1898



In the late nineteenth century, the artistic value of photography remained a controversial subject. Many critics adopted a polemical position similar to that of the writer Charles Baudelaire, who had denounced the new medium as the antithesis of art and its “most mortal enemy.”<sup>1</sup> While painting as a true art—as the common topos would have it—sought not only to imitate reality but also to convey expression, feeling, and individual temperament, the mechanical nature of photography allegedly made it nothing more than a purely material, lifeless reproduction.

The elevation of photography to a form of aesthetic expression equal to painting was the concern of Pictorialism, an international current of art photography that flourished from the latter decades of the nineteenth century to World War I.<sup>2</sup> The British photographer Henry Peach Robinson played a key role in this movement: in his book *Pictorial Effect in Photography*, published in 1869, Robinson presented photography as an extension of the fine arts and recommended eighteenth- and nineteenth-century paintings in particular as a source of inspiration for photographic compositions. Furthermore, he encouraged the artful placement of figures within landscape photographs—a theatrical component that also manifested itself in his own work (cf. cat. 78). Another important benchmark was Peter Henry Emerson’s 1889 handbook *Naturalistic Photography for Students of the Art*, which addressed questions of light dispersion and the sharpness of contours. According to Emerson, photographs were of equal value with painting, and his work, like that of many of his contemporaries, drew particular inspiration from the model of Impressionism (cf. cat. 90).

Many Pictorialists were passionate amateur photographers who worked together to strategically develop an apparatus of institutional structures comparable to those of painting. In addition to the practice of photography itself, they achieved prominence through exhibitions, critical reviews, and art theoretical publications—or by intentionally seeking opportunities to show their works on equal footing alongside examples of contemporary painting. A number of new photography societies emerged in Europe and the United States, often formed by breaking away from previously established organizations; as the artistic avant-garde, they sought to distance themselves from the latter’s concentration on technical and commercial questions. Such associations included the Photo-Club de Paris (founded in 1888), the Brotherhood of the Linked Ring in London (founded in 1892), the Vienna Camera-Club (founded in 1887), and the Photo-Secession in New York, founded in 1902 by Alfred Stieglitz, Frank Eugene, and Edward Steichen.

The Kodak camera, marketed from 1888 on under the fitting slogan “You press the button, we do the rest,” made photography affordable and accessible almost overnight to the broad mass of consumers. The Pictorialists distanced themselves from the new phenomenon of mass photography in a variety of ways. For their works, they preferred technically demanding fine-art printing processes, and often manipulated their prints in elaborate ways. For many art photographers, the negative was not the result, but only the starting point of the artistic process, and the modification of the print served to guarantee the artistic value of the photograph as a unique, non-reproducible entity. The often large formats, handmade materials, and expensive supports were likewise intended to elevate the new medium, and many Pictorialists also preferred artfully fashioned frames for the presentation of their works.

In addition to technically ambitious and time-consuming processes of production, the approach to lighting and the handling of contours also played a role. Many art photographers attributed special significance to the “artistic blurring” propounded by Emerson—an effect that bears witness to the influence of the Impressionist aesthetic. While documentary photography was associated with clear contours and sharp detail, the Pictorialists preferred diffused light and a blurred rendering of forms. Accordingly, they chose motifs well-suited to such visual effects: bodies of water veiled in mist or fog, billowing clouds of steam, or colored shadows on snow-covered forest floors—subjects closely associated with the plein-air painting of the Impressionists (cats. 97–99, 122, 123). Photographic still lifes frequently included arrangements of glass objects, which refracted the light and produced a complex play of reflections as well as finely nuanced chiaroscuro effects (cats. 124–26).

One of the most influential spokesmen of Pictorialism was the French photographer Constant Puyo.<sup>3</sup> He contributed regularly to the journal of the Photo-Club de Paris, and in 1896 he published the book *Notes sur la photographie artistique*, devoted to the recognition of photography as an autonomous art form. For many of his photographs, Puyo used special soft-focus lenses to achieve a blurred, “impressionistic” effect. In his work *Two Women in a Field* (cat. 67), a group of trees in the shadows to the right serves as a repoussoir, while the strolling figures of two elegantly dressed women animate the landscape. With its formal integration of human figures into nature, the photograph recalls Monet’s paintings of fields and meadows from Argenteuil and Giverny (cf. ill., p. 146). The diffused lighting lends the composition a dreamy mood that shows certain affinities to the pictorial inventions of Symbolism. Puyo’s works were published by Alfred Stieglitz in the American photography magazine *Camera Work*, and in 1906 selected photographs were exhibited in Stieglitz’s gallery 291 in New York, which he had founded the previous year together with Edward Steichen.

The gum bichromate process often used in Pictorialism lent the works a decidedly “painterly” effect, sheerly by virtue of their coloration. While the autochrome process involved the mechanical reproduction of natural colors, the tinting of gum bichromate prints was determined by the choice of pigments, which were added to an emulsion of gum arabic and chromate salts and hardened in the areas exposed to light. Heinrich Kühn, one of the most prominent members of the Vienna Camera-Club, often created extensive series of works based on a single motif in which he experimentally varied the tints. Viewed as an ensemble, the photographs evoke the impression of landscapes captured under differing conditions of light and weather, thus recalling the painted series of Claude Monet (cats. 111, 112, 116–19).<sup>4</sup> Like his fellow photographers Hugo Henneberg and Hans Watzek, Kühn often worked with gum bichromate in multiple layers, making possible the interplay of a wide range of tonal values (cf. cats. 94, 103, 110, 126). Although the free handling of color had long been considered the privilege of painters, the Pictorialists likewise sought to employ this expressive means in the service of the aesthetic goals of art photography.

*Translated from German by Melissa M. Thorson*

<sup>1</sup> For Baudelaire’s attack on photography, see Raser 2015.

<sup>3</sup> On Puyo, see Brest 2008.

<sup>2</sup> The word *pictorial* carries the connotation of “picturesque,” “painterly,” or “resembling a painting.”

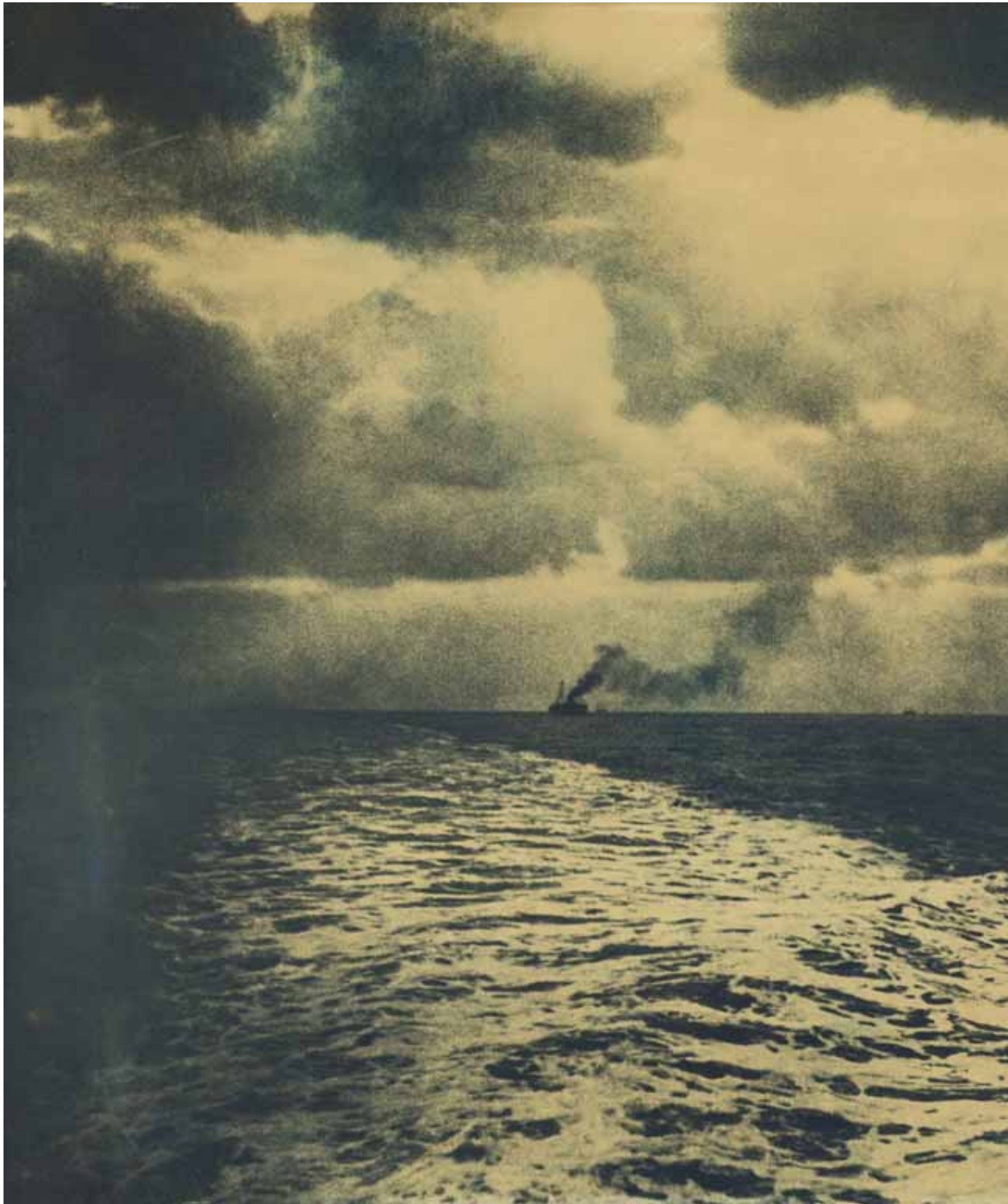
<sup>4</sup> On Kühn, see Vienna 2010.

On Pictorialism, see Rennes 2005, Berlin 2008, Vancouver 2008, Constance 2011, and Chalon-sur-Saône 2018.









**97** Heinrich Beck  
*Wake*, 1903







**98** Constant Puyo  
*Waves and Sailboats  
 on the Horizon at Penmarc'h in  
 Brittany, ca. 1902–14*

**99** Constant Puyo  
*Paddle Steamer in the Gulf of  
 Naples, ca. 1903*





**101** Viktor Knollmüller  
*Landscape with Pond*, ca. 1904

**102** Edward Steichen  
*The Pool—Evening*,  
*Milwaukee*, 1902







