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The Politics of Applied Color in Early Photography

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Abstract:

Before autographic color processes lent "unmediated" chromatic realism to photography in the early twentieth century, color photographs most often were sites of mixed media governed by the contrasting discourses of painterly essentialization and photo-indexical reproduction. As we investigate the relationship between these separate and often gendered aesthetics, codified in mid-nineteenth-century photographic manuals and reinforced by labor divisions and distinctions between color and form, we encounter the largely overlooked politics of applied color in early photography, and the missing history of its practitioners.

The Politics of Applied Color in Early Photography by Robert Machado

This is Young America, strong and proud, flexing its muscle, and on the way. It is a vision right out of *Leaves of Grass*. This is Whitman's America—virile and beautiful...Each of us can read what we each see into this image: youth, drive, work, sweat, love, passion... Looking at an image like this, the very metaphor for America, one can only be saddened...that this is not still the face of Young America.—John Wood[1]

Based on available evidence, this mid-nineteenth-century tinted daguerreotype of an apparently young male pugilist (fig. 1) was taken by Jeremiah Gurney, and is now owned by the Getty Museum. Beyond the material clues that are offered by its format and casing; beyond the iconography of its subject's costuming and pose; and beyond what we might infer from its contextualization within Gurney's oeuvre, the image remains remarkably open to interpretation. As we can see in John Wood's description above, the viewer inclined to an idealized and nationalistic appraisal of the portrait can "read into" the image the subject's "drive, work, sweat, love, [and] passion" and then use these terms, as if inscribed into the figure, to metaphorize antebellum America. Despite this rhetorical move, different historical reactions to this image are, of course, endlessly imaginable. Displaced Native Americans, black slaves, Chinese laborers, disenfranchised women, etc., might not have read into this picture of a white man's body, fist clenched above his center, the same benign face of "Young America."

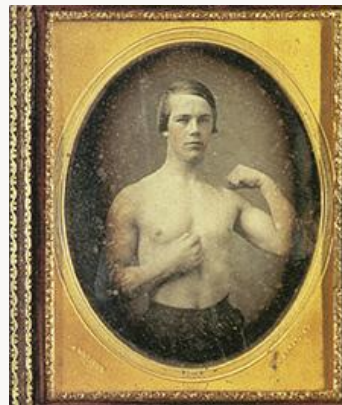


Fig. 1, Jeremiah Gurney, *Untitled*, 1850s. Daguerreotype. J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles. [\[larger image\]](#)

In Wood's seductive conjunction of word and image, we recognize the now familiar susceptibility of photography to the naturalization of symbolism in the production of knowledge—something that Barthes theorized in ethical terms as the medium's faculty to "[render] innocent the semantic artifice of connotation." [2] Photography's indexicality reveals itself as insidiously available both to underwrite the fictions of its subjects and "evidence" the ideological claims of its viewers. [3] Rendering Gurney's tinted image in gray-scale (fig. 2), however, dramatically suggests another set of signs whose complicity in this illusionism often escapes critical attention. [4] Without the application of conspicuous red paint to the subject's

cheeks and lips, does the image as readily convey the notions of "drive, work, love, sweat, [and] passion"? Is beautiful "Young America" as easily derived from this unblemished figure without the artful addition of polished white skin? Who is the colorist responsible for these painterly effects? Are we meant to credit Gurney? The portrait's museum label remains ambiguous, or fails to register the colorist's identity. This apparent oversight is indicative of the larger institutional neglect of these chromatic investments and their artists.

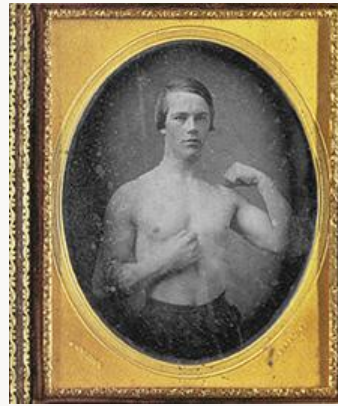


Fig. 2, Jeremiah Gurney, *Untitled*, 1850s. Daguerreotype. J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles. Gray-scale by author. [\[larger image\]](#)

Although authorship of colored daguerreotypes frequently is attributed only to daguerreotypists, coloration was not always performed by them.^[5] In fact, conspicuous painterly artificiality as a separate discourse, often indicative of a division of labor, was used to intervene as a corrective to "unmediated" daguerreotypic representation, and all that "unmediation" represents.^[6] This representational interplay between science and metaphysics, masculine and feminine, technical and vernacular, modern and pre-modern, rural and urban, upper and middle class, etc., constituted desires that met but did not integrate. As we acknowledge in these images the separate discourses that divided daguerreotypy and coloration, we start to expose the power dynamics inherent in these media, and the spheres of influence that fueled debates over their signification and valuation. The missing history of coloration's practitioners, many of whom were likely women; the class and gender issues underpinning the aesthetic negotiation of color's deployment; and the relatively overlooked history of tinting's subordinate, and often contentious semiotic in photographic representation, become critical issues for further investigation in the history of nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century representation.

Although tinting in daguerreotypic portraiture reached its apogee in the 1850s and 1860s, the year of Daguerre's famous announcement of photography (1839) also marked Johann Baptist Isenring's successful introduction of applied color to the genre.^[7] Isenring formulated his use of color in daguerreotypy as

an additional invention [that] contributed significantly to the solution of that difficult problem, namely whether and how the (through necessity) cold, dead, and stiff

photographic imprint can, through the intervention of free-hand art, and by its help, be somehow transformed into a beautiful artistic entity.[8]

In his critique of photography's absent vitality, Isenring was not alone.

Steve Edwards perhaps exaggerates in suggesting that "Whatever else they might have disagreed about, most nineteenth-century commentators on photography conceded that it had at least one significant drawback: It lacked colour." [9] Remarks on daguerreotypy's inability to register color were, however, common. In fact, as Beaumont Newhall reminds us, "When Daguerre first showed his daguerreotypes in 1839, the public regretted that the colors of nature were not recorded in the wonderfully autographic manner that light and shade was reproduced." [10] Many viewers saw death, cold science, or the body stripped of its essence in daguerreotypy's reproductions. The restricted postures and impassive expressions that flickered uncannily from the medium's metal surface made the first daguerreotypes, in Emerson's words, "grim things." [11]

Antoine François Claudet, the first photographer to purchase a license from Daguerre, immediately recognized the need to supplement these images with color. To accomplish this, he enlisted the art of miniature painting. [12] Carl Ferdinand Stelzer, Claudet's German contemporary, and another pioneer of coloration, also turned to this earlier medium. As Henisch briefly mentions, Stelzer "enjoyed the advantage of being actually married to a painter of miniatures;...[and] once it had taken root, the coloring business proved to be encouragingly lucrative." [13] Stelzer's colorist, and her lucrative practice, however, are not discussed further in this history of the painted photograph. [14] Notwithstanding the economic profits and symbolic values associated with applied coloration, and the technical difficulty of the work, attention to this field remains curiously ancillary and cursory. We often learn of the daguerreotypists, but rarely of "their" tinters.

Though insufficient research leaves us uncertain as to the actual number of female colorists employed during the rise of coloration in daguerreotypy, historically common references to female tinters, and tinting as gendered work, suggest that the figure was meaningful. As Elizabeth Eastlake argued, by 1857 it was standard for photographic establishments to staff artists to finish pictures. [15] Many of these artists were former painters of miniatures adapting their skills to meet new employment opportunities offered by photography's rising popularity. [16] Miniature painting, considered a lesser genre of painting, had been a field in art especially open to women. In fact, *L'Artiste*, the principle art journal in France in the 1830s, argued that women so excelled at miniature painting that it "should be reserved for they alone." [17] Stanley Burns's book on painting in American tintype portraiture (a photographic process that displaced the daguerreotype) also suggests that "women, in particular, found easy employment as colorists. The new industry had not yet established conventions excluding [them]...It is likely that a significant portion of colored photographs were painted by women." [18] Also, in France, between the years of 1855–68, women are believed to have colored the bulk of illegal erotic images. [19] In fact, it seems that our most intact record of colorists satisfying the widespread desire for the coloration of photography was not first amassed by art history, but logged as evidence by the State. [20]

Despite the common appeal and economic value of applied color in photography, not everyone supported its painterly mediation. For many theorists persuaded by the long-perceived provenance of drawing as a masculine mode of expression dominant over coloration's "innate" femininity, photography suggested a medium that could be restricted according to essentialist notions of work. Either as distinct masculine and feminine energies channeled by artists, or as actual men and women laboring at different tasks, the history of line and color as separate discourses, each with their own epistemologies and metanarratives, informed debates over early photography's conception of itself as a medium.

In part for this reason, throughout the nineteenth century we see photography formulated as an unmediated process of "natural" graphic inscription, or so-called light-writing. This designation, following in the tradition of earlier drawing technologies such as the camera lucida, provided for its practitioners and their emerging field an aesthetic link to the historical privilege of graphic art's masculinist domain. The title of William Henry Fox Talbot's *The Pencil of Nature* (1844–1846), one of the first commercially published books to feature photographs (as calotype prints), as well as M. A. Root's *The Camera and the Pencil: Or, the Heliographic Art*, published two decades later, reinforced this attempt to discursively identify photography with line and drawing. This implicit conceptualization of technology and aesthetic, according to a historically gendered sphere of power, offered patriarchy new claim to form and truth, and enhanced its theoretical control over other discourses dependent on these concepts.

As we know, the gendered division between color and form, which photography inflects, extends well beyond the limits of our discussion of daguerreotypy. The privileging of form over color goes back at least to Aristotle, as does form's alignment with rationality, empiricism, and other prevalent discourses imputed to traditional masculinity. As such, color has long functioned as a feminine domain of signification, a medium (and sometimes ghetto) often shared by subjectivities and rival discourses marginalized by dominant power structures. Renowned nineteenth-century French critic Charles Blanc makes the terms of this dialectic especially clear: "the role [of color] is to tell us what agitates the heart, while drawing shows us what passes in the mind...Color is a mobile, vague, intangible element, while form, on the contrary, is precise, limited, palpable, and constant." He continues, "drawing is [thus] the masculine side of art, color the feminine."[\[21\]](#)

According to this doctrine of separate spheres and the related aesthetics upheld by medium specificity, any application of color might interfere with, or corrupt, daguerreotypy's celebrated empirical objectivity (and its masculinity). Also problematic for its detractors, tinting could allow folk painting miniaturists to make truth claims, often in an expressive vernacular, within a field previously restricted for a privileged, male, scientific discourse. Although there were a variety of attempts to find photo-chemical or electric means to generate autographic (unmediated) color, and thus expel painting's mediation and its practitioners from the sphere of the empirical, none of them really proved viable until the Lumières' development of Autochrome in 1903.[\[22\]](#) Still, the critics of applied coloration eagerly anticipated chromatic advancements to the photographic process that would both enhance its realism and allow photography to maintain its discursive privileges. After all, as Samuel Morse Levi Hill explains in his *Treatise on Daguerreotype* (1850), no matter which color process is employed, "entitled to the credit is the *person* who heightens the effect, *improves* the tone, and

adds to the life-likeness of his pictures by the skilful combination and use of colors."[\[23\]](#) Photography's reliance on applied coloration risked ceding this credit, and perhaps photography's ontology, to women, "lesser" artists, and their rival discourses by association.

Though many technical purists impugned applied coloration for its garishness or compromise of indexical guarantee, these critiques often read as fraught with opposition to the relative democratization of gender and class that widespread tinting seemed at times able to embody. As we saw in the picture of Gurney's boxer above, applied color within the sphere of photography can interject itself between form and the viewer.[\[24\]](#) In a sense, it can wrest authority from the "colorless" plate, and in doing so, disrespect media hierarchies and spheres of power which those boundaries represented. In Wood's reading, we experienced the extent to which color's pictorial tropes can be appropriated metaphorically as positivistic indicators. Looked at from another perspective, tinting's illusions were capable of displacing the priority of photography's physiognomic determinants (its own source of illusions) and their claim to measurements of form as a scientific way to bridge the gap between the exterior and the interior.[\[25\]](#)

As the popularity of colored photographs rose in the 1850s along with the purchasing power of the burgeoning middle classes, books and manuals on photography and tinting became more substantial.[\[26\]](#) Their enhanced detail reflected, of course, the desire to capitalize on a growing consumer niche and a maturing technology. It also suggested the desire to codify and thus control emerging color practices that interfered with daguerreotypy's authority and the academicism associated with its aesthetics. Books such as Henry Hunt Snelling's, *The History and Practice of the Art of Photography; or the Production of Pictures, Through the Agency of Light. Containing All the Instructions Necessary for the Complete Practice of the Daguerrean and Photogenic Art, Both on Metallic Plates and on Paper* were, in part, a reaction to the challenge mounted by "incompetent" or "excessive" colorists.[\[27\]](#)

Snelling's disparagement of the typical tinter's insufficiencies was not in defense of medium specificity. Rather, his perception of a lack of "talent for *drawing*—taste—due discriminations of effect—strict observance of the characteristic points in the features of the subject—quick perception of the beautiful, and a knowledge of the art of mixing colors and blending tints"[\[28\]](#) responded to the increasing acceptance and popularity of tinters' "coarsely" painted products.[\[29\]](#) His attack reflected his academic taste and apparent disdain for certain elements of popular culture, prefiguring, to some extent, Baudelaire's famous critique a decade later.[\[30\]](#) But of course neither Baudelaire nor Snelling likely would have bothered with such commentary and prescriptions had they not sensed the rise of the middle class and its attendant threats to enshrined taste, culture, values, and privileges. It is thus, in part, to the growing power of the colorist's interjection that both men object. From this perspective, the often absent signature of the colorist's popular (and populist) interjection bore a shadowy, synecdochical warning. The absence of attribution, in a growing body of colored pictures, suggested the rising "faceless" middle class feared by Baudelaire and others.

Snelling's reference to "incapable" drawing also tacitly registered a gendered critique of women's presence as colorists in this profession. His book sought to contain color practices whose eccentricities or clumsiness jeopardized the aesthetics and empiricism of photography.

It also aspired to reassert normalized codes of representation that reinforced gendered stereotypes which modernity's social transitions threatened to destabilize:

in coloring the heads of men it will be necessary to use the darker tints with more freedom...For women, the warmer tints should predominate, and in order to give that transparency so universal with the softer sex—and which gives so much loveliness and beauty to the face—a little white may be judiciously intermingled with the red tints about the lighter portions of the face...The female chin is the same color as the cheeks in most glowing parts.[31]

Without addressing all of the obvious implications of this manual's gendered color coding, we might note its use of female transparency as an especially problematic argument. The passive "glow" of the "softer sex," opposite the dark pigments that substantialized masculinity and suggested the integrity of its agency and intellect, was meant to recognize women's functions and limits within a hierarchy.

Not surprisingly, many who celebrated applied color in daguerreotypy advanced this position by recognizing the phallogentricity of photography, and formulating coloration as a gendered complement. Borrowing metaphors from biology, the masculine domain of light-writing could be argued to achieve a productive wholeness given the right feminine touch. Alfred H. Wall's theorization of the painted photograph in 1859 exemplifies such an attempt to incorporate tinting into daguerreotypy by drawing on popular aesthetic divisions that reinforced and perpetuated notions of patriarchy:

The painted photograph combines the best and highest qualities of both photography and art: the camera providing *truthfulness* of light, shade, and resemblance; the painter adding those *beauties* and *effects* from which all pictures derive their greatest value. Let the *scientific man* of the camera and the studious *son* of the palette...combine their effort for the production of works valuable both for fidelity to nature and artistic merit. "Unity is strength," and the truthful can have no better *mate* than the beautiful.[32]

Though Wall's idealized division of aesthetics and epistemology feels very much of its time, such formulations continue to make their way into contemporary commentary. Matthew Isenberg's description of mid-nineteenth-century photography in "The Wonder of the American Daguerreotype" (1989) performs a remarkably similar theoretical procedure:

A good operator was not merely an artisan going about his craft, but rather an artist [whose domain was composition]..., a scientist who constantly worked to improve and perfect his process, and often a miniaturist who could breath life into his sitters through the skill of his tinting.[33]

As we can see, it is the scientist (or scientific side of an operator) that "works" to "improve and perfect" his "process." The miniaturist, on the other hand, somehow "breathes life" into images using a skill that is neither work, nor a process, nor a practice that is perfected. This magical, "feminine," "transparent" operation is couched in supra-rational, emotional, and maternal terms. And, as in our previous discussion of color's treatment in studies of daguerreotypy, sufficient historical information about colorists is not provided.[34]

In this anonymous stereoscopic daguerreotype produced in France in the early 1850s (fig. 3), we can again read the social and discursive transactions that typify essence, enact power, and shape knowledge across the binary of coloration and photo-indexicality.[35] Like Gurney's boxer, the subject in this composition is posed and revealed to convince viewers of her visual appeal. Also like the boxer, her cheeks might be interpreted as flush with youth and passion (or have they been rouged for us? Privately in both images we get to decide). Her hair and pose, like his, reflect a formality (stylized for us), and her body is whitened and reddened in an effort to guide attention and reading.



Fig. 3, Anonymous (French). *Untitled*, c. 1852. Stereoscopic daguerreotype. Private collection. [\[larger image\]](#)

In this stereoscopic image, however, tinting has rendered the subject's skin suggestively "pink" all over. Instead of following selective endowments of red and white pigment, viewers are encouraged to select for themselves how they wish to trace and read and, thus, use this woman's body; the evenness of her "cooked" pink flesh is displayed for consumption. The effects of stereoscopy also work toward this effect. The illusions of the stereoscopic apparatus interact with her playful yet "direct" visual address in the mirror to underscore her permission to enter her room (her "space") and fetishize her body according to our preferences.

The alternating coloration of the boxer's portrait encourages an alternating focus on color's symbolism. Through contrast, our attention, for example, might easily pass from his white chest, or his heart framed by his fists, to his red cheeks angled toward infinity (in three-quarter's address). The uniformity of pink applied to the female subject does not encourage this balanced or rhythmic alternation (between "passion" and "intellect," for example). As Geoffrey Batchen explains, the stiffness of early photographs "was not softened by the addition of paint." [36] Likewise, here, applied color does not serve primarily to soften, but to argue. Her unnatural, uniform color helps to transform her body into a flat character, or artificial object. Her shameless return glance accentuates her complicity in this exhibition, and suggests her acceptance of coloration's rhetoric.

Reading this picture without its tint, of course, renders it less life-like (fig. 4). More importantly, however, it reveals a different discourse. The untinted daguerreotypic portrait suggests the unidirectional power relation of science, which controls and studies subjects beyond their will. The gray-scaled image switches the erotic play to domination, and reveals that with applied color this domination is made to appear more complicit (a move that

reassures and naturalizes an existing hierarchy). The oppressiveness of science entails the possibility of revolt; complicit subjects harbor no such threat.



Fig. 4, Anonymous (French). *Untitled*, c. 1852. Stereoscopic daguerreotype. Private collection. Gray-scale by author. [\[larger image\]](#)

As we imagine a woman, empowered by employment, tinting an image in which a female uses a mirror not to see, and thus define herself, but to consent to the "masculine" subject position of a gaze,^[37] we experience another method by which power and knowledge can be harnessed to perpetuate an existing order. Color applied to a daguerreotypic portrait not only vivifies an image, it can naturalize (endorse by hand) the social and discursive codes enacted by a subject's pose, form, address, accoutrements, or other representative elements used to convey meaning and status within pictures.^[38] Insofar as many colorists were likely women, who were largely unable to be photographers, the discursive role of coloration and the gender-specific connotations of this labor could be used to reinforce women's sphere of power. Coloration's supportive role in photography, which was a form of knowledge and knowledge-forming technology initiated and controlled by men, rehearsed femininity's familiar role in patriarchy.

In the context of modernity's rising industrial revolution which distanced men from households—endangering patriarchy's capacity to surveil women—self-regulating codes for women gained increased significance throughout the nineteenth century. By 1820, notions about "true" womanhood and "the cult of domesticity" found in popular literature, such as *Godey's Lady's Book*, served to define women's spheres of influence and delimit their power. Submissiveness, piety, and purity performed through the duties restricted to the home were not only dictated by men, they were reinforced by women who were "empowered" to teach other women. Contemporary with Snelling's codification of a proper technique for colorists, the arguments of Catherine Esther Beecher aimed to systematize the occupation of domestic service for American wives, "empowering" the separate sphere assigned to women. In the framework of our discussion of the supplemental role of coloration, and of female colorists to the patriarchal discourse that underpinned daguerreotypy, a quote from Beecher's *Domestic Receipt* is worth reading in full. To women in 1846 she explained:

You are training young minds whose plastic texture will receive and retain every impression you make, who will imitate your feelings, tastes, habits, and opinions, and who will transmit what they receive from you to the next generation, and then to the next, until a whole nation will have received its character and destiny from your hands! No imperial queen ever stood in a more sublime and responsible position than you now

occupy...Remember, then, you have a Father in heaven, who sympathizes in all your cares, pities your griefs, makes allowances for your defects, and is endeavoring by trials, as well as by blessings, to fit you for the right fulfillment of your high and holy calling.
[39]

The scientist, the Father, the photographer, the manual writer, and form itself all line up in an attempt to impose knowledge and enact power by defining, reinforcing, and perpetuating systems whose boundaries not only maintain hierarchies, but also provide spaces that foster hegemonic complicity and reinforcement.

As we begin to historicize the functions of coloration in daguerreotypy, especially during the period of the 1850s and 1860s in America when color in portraits appears to be at its brightest, we begin to understand better its relationship to class aspirations embodied in conspicuous consumption (or simply its depiction). We also begin to gain fuller insight into the concomitant rise of the Arts & Crafts movement that popularized the notion of "home" as expressive of individuality. As applied color was used to "naturalize" the unforgiving empiricism of daguerreotypy by "feminizing" it, coloration functioned to normalize further the very process of feminization in the service of patriarchy. It also helped to lay the foundation for what William Leach explains as modernity's transformation to a "commercial aesthetic" in which "color...and light" served as the fundamental "visual materials of desire." [40]

With wide-reaching implications, applied color in photography also established the gendered "harmony" between symbolic (spiritual) essentialism and photographic (material) iconicity that was to be further developed in the late-nineteenth century by applied coloration in cinema, in which women assumed a central role. [41] With this in mind, we are left to further investigate color's use by "Young America" to "naturalize" or reify other "objects" and discursive systems by burying them within and under, in J. Figuier's words, an "absurd impasto of pigments." [42] Charles Martell's notion of color as "disposable," and Sir Joshua Reynolds' conception of color as a mere sensuous luxury hint at work left to be done.

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Notes

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- [1] John Wood, ed., *America and the Daguerreotype* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1991), 241.
- [2] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 45.
- [3] As Michel Frizot reminds us, the earliest photographs of landscape were "amenable to calculations and to domination...arranged and delineated" by the photographer's mediation. So too, of course, were portraits' new narrative spaces for encoding desire and projecting power. See Michel Frizot, *A New History of Photography* (Cologne: Könemann, 1998), 33. For more on the social and discursive practice of constructing essences within photography, see, for example, Douglas R. Nickel, "History of Photography: The State of Research," *Art Bulletin* 83, no. 3 (Sept. 2001): 548-558; and Geoffrey Batchen, *Burning with Desire: The Conception of Photography* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997).
- [4] While gray-scaling here preserves the added emphasis of coloration, which is especially visible, for example, on the subject's darkened cheeks, this process at least provides us with a monochromatic image for comparison. It should be noted, of course, that any reproduction of a daguerreotype—a one-of-a-kind image whose almost holographic effects are difficult to represent—entails compromises.
- [5] "Coloration" here and throughout this essay loosely applies to a variety of manual coloration techniques, including retouching. Our primary interest within this essay, however, centers on the hand-painted daguerreotype.
- [6] We must also remember that academic art theory at this time was opposed to literalism in painting. Many colorists, who were often trained miniaturists, likely would have been aware of conventions that favored idealization.
- [7] Heinz K. Henisch and Bridget A. Henisch, *The Painted Photograph, 1839-1914: Origins, Techniques, Aspirations* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 21.
- [8] Quoted *ibid.*, 22.
- [9] Steve Edwards, "A Pariah in the World of Art': Richter in Reverse Gear," in *Where is the Photograph?*, ed. David Green (Brighton: Photoforum, 2003), 33.
- [10] Beaumont Newhall, *The Daguerreotype in America*, 3rd ed. (New York: Dover, 1961), 96.
- [11] Quoted in Alan Trachtenberg, "Likeness as Identity: Reflections on the Daguerrean Mystique," in *The Portrait in Photography*, ed. Graham Clarke (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1992), 184.
- [12] Henisch and Henisch, *Painted Photograph*, 20.
- [13] *Ibid.*, 21.
- [14] To get a sense of just how valuable tinting at this time could be, according to N. P. Lerebours, in London the extra charge for tinting a daguerreotype amounted to "about the daily wage of a semi-skilled laborer." Quoted *ibid.*
- [15] "Retouching," in *Encyclopedia of Nineteenth Century Photography*, ed. John Hannavy (New York: Routledge), 1:1189.
- [16] *Ibid.*
- [17] Anonymous, "Les Dames Artistes," *L'Artiste* 10 (1836): 15-16, trans. by Jonathan Murphy in *Art in Theory 1815-1900*, ed. Charles Harrison, Paul Wood, and Jason Gaiger (Malden, MA: Blackwell), 275.
- [18] Stanley B. Burns and National Arts Club, *Forgotten Marriage: The Painted Tintype and the Decorative Frame, 1860-1910: A Lost Chapter in American Portraiture* (New York: Burns Collection, 1995), 49.
- [19] Denis Pellerin, "File BB3 and the Erotic Image in the Second Empire," in *Paris in 3D: From Stereoscopy to Virtual Reality 1850-2000*, ed. Françoise Reynaud, Catherine Tambrun, and Kim Timby (London: Booth-Clibborn, 2000), 91.
- [20] For more on this record, see Pellerin, "File BB3."
- [21] Charles Blanc, *Grammar of Painting and Engraving*, trans. Kate Newell Doggett (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1874), 145-146. For more on the historical divide between design and color, see David Batchelor, *Chromophobia* (London: Reaktion, 2000).
- [22] Refer to chapter one of Henisch and Henisch, *Painted Photograph*, for a brief introduction to various early attempts to render daguerreotypes in color.
- [23] Quoted in Henisch and Henisch, *Painted Photograph*, 27, italics mine.
- [24] By disrupting the symbolic order of photographic denotation—by occupying, with paint, territory reserved for indexicality—applied coloration can be seen on one level as attacking the

"rational order" of the photographic, an order likely tied to what Julia Kristeva (drawing on Eisenstein) theorizes in "Revolution in Poetic Language," in *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 109, as the order from which the power of patriarchy, the state, property, and god derive. As Sergei Eisenstein's "Cinematographic Principle and the Ideogram," trans. Richard Taylor, in *Film Theory and Criticism*, ed. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen, 5th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), explains,

the representation of an object in the actual (absolute) proportions proper to it is, of course, merely a tribute to orthodox formal logic, a subordination to the inviolable order of things...Positivist realism...is simply a function of a particular form of social structure, following on from an autocratic state that has propagated a state uniformity of thought.

As we recall from Kristeva, when poetic language meaningfully "transgresses grammatical rules" it subverts the order that supposedly controls meaning. As unschooled, "irrational," and transcendent coloration complicates, and in a sense, interferes with the transmission of pure photographic rationality, we see attempts made to rationalize and systematize it, or remove it from the photographic process by relegating its discourse to an inferior position. By encroaching on the patriarchic underpinnings of photography's scientificity, coloration threatened to undermine photography's autonomy and its authority to keep other discourses at bay.

[25] Here we are reminded of color's historical function as deceptive "temptress" (vis-à-vis line, a discourse more often associated with the masculine and intellect).

[26] "Books and Manuals about Photography: 1850s," in *Encyclopedia of Nineteenth Century Photography*, 1:178-179.

[27] Henry Hunt Snelling, *The History and Practice of the Art of Photography; or, the Production of Pictures, Through the Agency of Light. Containing All the Instructions Necessary for the Complete practice of the Daguerrean and Photogenic Art, Both on Metallic Plates and on Paper*, 1849, 4th ed. (New York: G.P. Putnam, 1853). See also Snelling's *A Dictionary of the Photographic Art* (New York: H. H. Snelling, 1854), v-vi, which sought to address photography's insufficient appreciation in the art world by educating or attacking "most" daguerreotypists who suffered from "incompetence...bad taste, ignorance, and egotism."

[28] Snelling, *History and Practice of the Art of Photography*, 76.

[29] Another contemporary, Thomas Delf (who wrote under the pseudonym "Martell") also objected to the "bad" (untrained) taste of operators. See his twelve-part essay "Colour in Relation to Photography," *The Photographic News* (June 1–August 17, 1860). See also Steve Edwards's discussion of Martell's relationship to color in "Pariah in the World of Art."

[30] Refer to his review of the Salon of 1859, in Alan Trachtenberg, ed., *Classic Essays on Photography* (New Haven: Leete's Island, 1980), 83-89.

[31] Snelling, *History and Practice of the Art of Photography*, 137-138.

[32] Alfred H. Wall, *A Manual of Artistic Colouring, As Applied to Photographs* (London: Thomas Piper, 1861), quoted in Henisch and Henisch, *Painted Photograph*, 29, italics mine.

[33] Matthew Isenburg, "The Wonder of the American Daguerreotype," in *American Daguerreotypes: From the Matthew R. Isenburg Collection*, ed. Richard S. Field (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1989), 13.

[34] Isenburg's reference here to the colorist's ability to breath life into "his" sitters suggests either historical neglect of female colorists, or an attempt to use "his" as a gender neutral possessive.

[35] This particular stereoscopic image apparently has yet to make its way into any exhibition or study. The reproduction included here is courtesy of an auction on May 13, 2007 through Ebay. The object was sold by a vendor in Germany to an undisclosed recipient for \$7,095.00. Attempts are still being made to secure other reproductions of the image.

[36] Geoffrey Batchen *Forget Me Not: Photography & Remembrance* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2004), 17.

[37] Among the many important elaborations and critiques of Mulvey's famous "Visual Pleasure in Narrative Cinema" (1975) that have sought to redress its transhistoricity and gender essentialisms, Abigail Solomon-Godeau usefully posits male/female subject positions as constructs of psychic and social "determinants of sexual difference" rather than biological expressions of gender. According to Solomon-Godeau,

the feminine—differently conceived as Other to the masculine norm—takes *its* place in visual representation as object-of-the-gaze, while the position of the active subject-of-the-gaze is generally the masculine prerogative...A woman can thus look from a

masculine subject position...Images do not causally produce a world of female objects and male subjects; rather, they may articulate, naturalize, and confirm an oppressive order whose roots are elsewhere.

In Solomon-Godeau's theorization, the pornographic constitutes a way of looking, rather than exclusively denoting a class of objects bearing inherent meaning. While problematic in strictly gendering the gaze according to a monolithic conception of hegemony as patriarchal, Solomon-Godeau's model enables us to reconsider disparate objects and rhetorics of the pornographic (including the rhetoric of applied coloration). It also prompts investigation of the shared visual rhetorics that mobilize the pornographic gaze in disparate contexts, and the ideological implications of this sharing. See Abigail Solomon-Godeau, *Photography at the Dock: Essays on Photographic History, Institutions, and Practices* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 220-221; and Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," in *Film and Theory: An Anthology*, ed. Toby Miller and Robert Stam (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000), 483-494.

[38] This adds expanded relevance to Geoffrey Batchen's observation that "tinted photographs... invite us to imagine the touch of the brush that animated that surface." Batchen, *Forget Me Not*, 31.

[39] Catharine Esther Beecher, "Words of Comfort for a Discouraged Housekeeper," in *Domestic Receipt Book*, quoted in *The Female Experience: An American Dictionary*, ed. Gerda Lerner (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1977), 124.

[40] William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Pantheon, 1993), 9.

[41] Cinema's earliest productions, such as Edison's *Annabelle Serpentine Dance* (1895), used hand-tinting to confer essence, drama, spectacle, fantasy, wealth, etc. By 1903, as Richard Abel explains, hand-tinted and stencil-color versions of films produced largely by Méliès and the French film company Pathé heightened the popularity of colored films in America, which prompted American manufacturers and sales agents to seize upon the idea as a promotional device. Exemplifying a broader labor structure, Abel notes that by 1906 "in one of the initial issues of *Views and Films Index*, J. A. Berst claimed that his company not only 'had made a specialty of color films' (employing at least three hundred women to produce stencil-color prints in Paris) but also 'had made a great success of it.'" Richard Abel, *The Red Rooster Scare* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 43-45. Since the collection of essays "il colore nel cinema," *Fotogenia* 1 (1994), new theoretical and historical ideas have emerged regarding the ontology and signification of color in cinema. More remains to be done, however, especially on applied color's rhetorics of accommodation and dislocation within the photo-cinematographic hybrid, and the influence of traditional, gendered conceptions of line and form versus color, explained above, on gendered labor and signification perpetuated and inflected by cinema's new painterly-indexical composite. See *Film History* 12, no. 4 (2000) and *Living Pictures* 2, no. 2 (2003), issues devoted to color in film and early media; and Wendy Everett, ed., *Questions of Colour in Cinema* (Peter Lang: New York, 2007).

[42] Quoted in Henisch and Henisch, *Painted Photograph*, 23.

Illustrations

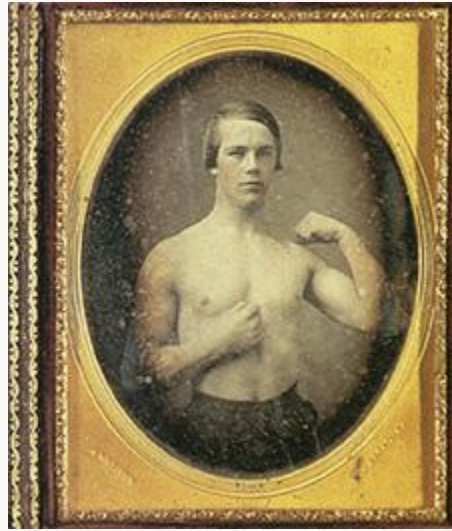


Fig. 1, Jeremiah Gurney, *Untitled*, 1850s. Daguerreotype. J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles.
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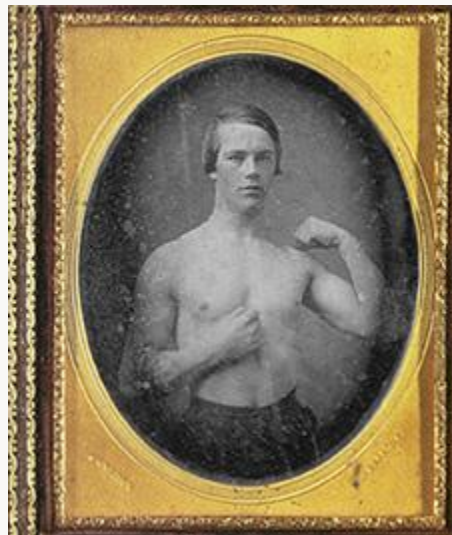


Fig. 2, Jeremiah Gurney, *Untitled*, 1850s. Daguerreotype. J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles. Gray-scale
by author. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 3, Anonymous (French). *Untitled*, c. 1852. Stereoscopic daguerreotype. Private collection.
[\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 4, Anonymous (French). *Untitled*, c. 1852. Stereoscopic daguerreotype. Private collection. Gray-scale
by author. [\[return to text\]](#)