

PHOTOGRAPHS FOR ARTISTS

THE COLLECTION OF ILLUSTRATOR JOSEP LLUÍS PELLICER



Portrait of Josep Lluís Pellicer, c. 1870. Unknown authorship / Albumen print

The emergence of photography was a transcendental event for nineteenth-century society: it changed both the way of perceiving the world and the way of representing it. The desire to explore previously difficult-to-visit territories and the aesthetic changes that led to naturalist painting and the use of human models to study the body sparked the emergence of innovative work in the field of photography. This new artistic speciality provided artists with images and models they could draw inspiration from for their work in the studio.

The artist Josep Lluís Pellicer (1842-1901), an illustrator and reporter with various period journals, collected a large number of photographs depicting his world. He made use of this on various occasions and even for the creation of his own works. Urban and rural landscapes, ethnographic and military elements, studies of the human body, plant and animal models... He brought together images on a wide range of

subjects. Today, these images present to us the work of photographers who specialise in what is known as 'life photography' or 'photographs for artists'. They were marketed by publishers, and artists acquired them from bookshops or print shops as a source of inspiration or as a model.

Pellicer brought a collection of more than a thousand photographs that provide a unique view of his time. This was a time when the development of the wet collodion negative process allowed for the widespread distribution of photographic images. Research on vintage copies has made it possible to discover the work of often-overlooked photographers, whose task it was to photograph 'from life'.

The collection was acquired by the Archive through the collection of the versatile Apel·les Mestres, a friend of the artist. After Pellicer's death, Mestres collected many of his photographs, and these were later donated. The rest were also donated to the Archive, in this case by the family of Anna Martí (Pellicer's wife). The preservation and research work associated with these period photographs has allowed us to broaden our knowledge of the way many artists worked and has contributed to the history of photography with a wealth of varied and interesting information.

Illustrator and collector

Josep Lluís Pellicer i Fenyé (1842-1901) was a painter and illustrator. He received awards at various Fine Arts exhibitions and was particularly notable as an illustrator and reporter for the Madrid magazine *La Ilustración Española y Americana*, first during the Third Carlist War (1872-1876) and then during the Russo-Turkish War (1877-1878).

A Catalan nationalist and innovator, he took part in many cultural initiatives, including the First Catalan Nationalist Congress (1880), the project for the monument to Pau Claris and the parade in honour of Columbus (1888). He also chaired the Centre d'Aquarel·listes [Watercolourists' Centre] (1885), founded the Institut Català de les Arts del Llibre [Catalan Institute of Book Arts] (1898) and was director of the Museu de Reproduccions [Museum of Reproductions] (1891).

The photographic collection he assembled serves as an excellent example of the work of professionals who, during the second half of the 19th century, devoted their work to fine arts through the production of images known as *études d'après nature* (studies from nature). As an illustrator, Pellicer took advantage of this new photographic technique to acquire these studies according to nature, which he used on several occasions to create his drawings and reports.



Josep Lluís Pellicer as a war correspondent, 1877.
Unknown authorship / Albumen print

An approach to reality

In the 19th century, the city was the focal point of life, the place where great edifices of power and knowledge were erected where a boom of new construction converged with the historic neighbourhoods. This environment paved the way for portrait photography studios while at the same time allowing newer models of cameras to be taken out onto the streets; photographers captured the splendour of the city, but they also wanted to capture the lives of its citizens.

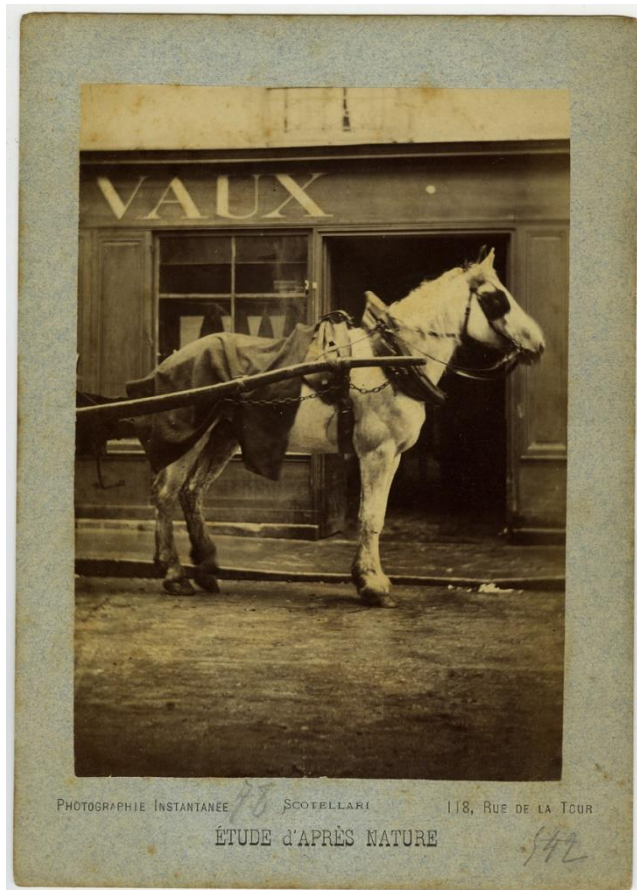
On their journey towards instant photography, photographers moved ever closer to anecdotal facts and created never-before-seen collections of images: faithful photography stops time and allows us to recreate the details. The way the artist captures these images, their atmosphere, and the arrangement of objects and figures surpasses the rules of pictorial composition. Moreover, this new approach introduces random elements that give the photographs a greater sense of realism. The fact that they were obtained by means of a mechanical device —which was therefore objective, as was believed at the time— further reinforces this feeling.



Cologne, c. 1870. Unknown authorship / Albumen print

The horse

An essential figure in the growth of societies in the mid-19th century, the horse is amply represented in the illustrator's collection. The horse is depicted with various civilians and military figures riding it, towing opulent carriages or working carts, working in fields or being shod by the blacksmith... The horse becomes a prominent figure in studies of nature, and the camera captures it from all possible perspectives (though in almost static postures given the slow photographic processes of the time).



“Étude d’après nature”, c. 1870. Scottellari (n.d.)/ Albumen print

There is an express desire to show the horse in movement, as seen in the photo where a man places a log beneath its hoof to show the articulation of its leg. It was not actually until the chronophotography designed by Eadweard Muybridge in the years 1872-73 that the horse’s true figure in motion was revealed.

Publishers such as Calavas Frères produced extensive series on horses that would offer an accurate anatomical study. Similarly, the photographer Charles Reid, a renowned Scottish professional in the Pellicer collection, included the horse in his albums *Animal Studies (Photographs from life)* in 1902.

Rural life

The rural world gained prominence in the new photographic image, when professionals finally dared to venture out with their studio cameras and photograph natural landscapes and what went on there.

These types of natural studies ranged from panoramic views of glaciers to farmhouse façades, village streets and waterfalls. Artists could use all of these motifs regardless of the geographical origin of the landscape, adopting photos of small villages in one place to depict village streets anywhere.



Study from nature, c. 1870. Unknown authorship / Albumen print

Yet these photos were not always taken in their natural setting. Sometimes, certain tasks were simulated in the photography studio itself, as with some of the figures of peasant women working by A. Giraudon. Meanwhile, other professionals created pictorial scenes by working with models in the countryside setting itself.

It is worth noting, however, the anticipation that the presence of the camera still generated among the inhabitants of these rural villages: people would often remain standing in the middle of the street or in front of their houses, as if they knew that any movement would make them disappear from the image.

Orientalism

The emergence of the wet collodion negative process made it easier to obtain multiple copies. Against this background, European photographic professionals endeavoured to reproduce scenes and racial types from other locations. Despite the persistent technical difficulties, many photographers became travellers, seeking exoticism and picturesque in foreign societies, with a result that often reflected the European and colonialist gaze. Over time, workshops supplanted travel, and photographic evolution moved from paper negatives to wet colloid negatives. This technique favoured the constant flow of clichés into Europe, with images that could be the fruit of simple curiosity or based on anthropology, archaeology or art but which imposed a typically European framework. The anthropological point of view was now combined with phrenology and anthropometry, placing the images closer to photography with a 'scientific' aim than to studies for artists.



Souhadj. El Arif Mosque and tomb of Muad-Bey, 1849-1850 / Salted paper from wax paper negative

Studio portraits also followed the European studio models: *costumbrismo* (the literary or pictorial interpretation of local everyday life, mannerisms, and customs, primarily in the Hispanic scene, and particularly in the 19th century) and a fascination with differences marked the view of people and the way they lived.

Shaping the body

Photography freezes movement and restores stillness. Artists need human models for their works, and this involves posing sessions that can be long and costly. With the emergence of a natural studies of the human body, visual artists obtained a wide



Study from nature, c. 1870. Unknown authorship / Albumen print

catalogue of postures. Many followed the paradigmatic figures of Western art, while others gained expressivity through the model's movement in front of the camera. Studies of parts of the human body, such as hands, arms or heads, were created as well, which allows us a closer look.

The shops that sold these studies as 'photography for artists' were located near institutions such as universities and fine arts schools. Paris became one of the main production centres for

these photographs, and this production spread throughout the world. Many of the photographers who produced this material were, therefore, French (Louis Igout, Eugène Durieu, Auguste Belloc). But foreigners also found marketing channels (Herman Heid with Giraudon) or established their brand through studio photography (Josep Maria Cañellas contributed a great deal, for example).

Nude photography straddles two worlds: it adopts the educational role needed by artists while at the same time seeking to please a wider public. We thus witness an evolution from classic poses to images that play with more provocative poses. In Catalonia, the female nudes photographed by Antoni Esplugas are very well-known. His production shuns the excuse of models for artists and focuses more on eroticism, a type of language that would later be persecuted by the censors.

Searching for archetypes

The anthropological point of view was now combined with phrenology and anthropometry, with images now becoming more of a 'scientific' form of photography rather than as studies for artists. In the search for the archetype, there is an abundance of photographic tests which seek an authentic representation of ethnic types: in these cases, the degree of reality is offered by the objectivity of the camera lens. Jean Laurent, for instance, produced a large number of photographs with a romantic and stereotypical vision of Spanish types, while Jacques-Philippe Potteau applied a scientific approach to his portraits.

The resulting images depersonalise the portraits and turn them into generic types that transfer the viewer to specific cultural and ethnic realities. Yet at the same time, these are fragmented images of the reality they seek to show.



Study from nature. Types from Sudan.
Beja Warriors, c. 1870. Unknown
authorship / Albumen print

Towards a new forest world

The new artistic currents of the mid-19th century encouraged an appreciation for nature. Many photographers follow the approach of the painters and focus their lenses on forests, landscapes and even on singular elements such as trees and water lilies. At this time, France shaped many Western artistic trends: the discovery of nature in the forests of Boulogne and Fontainebleau, on the outskirts of Paris, led many photographers to create naturalistic visions that served as a model for the visual arts.



“Bois de Boulogne”, c. 1875. Unknown authorship / Albumen print

The process used to obtain an image influences its content and meaning. The appearance of the glass negative, which was widely used in mid-19th century photographic production, gave the final result a high degree of precision in the case of immobile objects and an elusive sensation when depicting them in movement (such as

branches and leaves of trees swaying in the wind). By the 1860s, the photographic exposure time had increased to 1". This meant that the effects of light and the apparently instantaneous nature of the photographic record combined to create the impression of a palpable, constant and still reality.

Soldiers and weapons



"Rumanos", c. 1877. Unknown authorship / Albumen print

As a result of his participation as a chronicler in the Carline Wars and the Eastern War, Pellicer's artistic career was closely linked to the war conflicts.

Otherwise, the military world was quite present in the European society of the 19th century, where the carrying out of military maneuvers in the territory was a reason for monitoring by the newspapers. The uniform as a symbol of power plays an important role in the photographic portrait, so members of the military wore their best finery when posing in the photographer's studio. But it is in the exercise of the activity that the cartoonist looks for many of his photographs: military doctors in an operating theater and army maneuvers coexist with natural studies of soldiers on horseback or nurses. They are photographic images that provided him with resources on clothing and movements.

Of particular note is the series of four photographs taken to statically show the play between the rider and his horse.

A three-dimensional window

Stereoscopic imaging allows you to hold a small window in your hands (or in front of your eyes) in order to closely observe scenes in three dimensions and focus on the details. It creates a world of isolated contemplation, devoid of the interference of other gazes, which allows us to enjoy the journey, the indiscreet curiosity.



Peasant scenes, c. 1860. Victor Franck (n.d.) / Albumen print

A distinctive feature of the second half of the 19th century was a taste for discovery, particularly of people, industries, technical innovations and landscapes. The lure of the exotic, the appeal of the picturesque, colonial expansion and tourism reinforced this thirst for knowledge. As a result, many stereoscopic photography series appeared that allow us to travel the world without leaving home: *Journey to the Pyrenees*, *Views of Egypt*, *Journey to Normandy*, *Views, museums and customs of Spain and Portugal*, *French Marines...* Theatricalisation was also used, creating the first photonovels or simply showing everyday scenes of work, agricultural labour, and scenes of the animal world.

Artists also use stereoscopic photography as a model, and they use both the previously mentioned techniques and those created for more specific purposes: in their cabinets are collections of *Tree Studies*, *Art Studies* and simply *Stereoscopic Studies*.

Josep Maria Cañellas (1856-1902)

The work of Josep Maria Cañellas —a Catalan from Reus who worked mainly in Paris taking *photographs for artists*, as he himself stated— is accompanied by the signature JMC, followed by a number.

In 1888, he began a photo documentation project under the direction of Josep Rubaudonadeu, a native of Figueres, during which he captured 555 photographic images of the villages of the Empordà. The collection, known as the *Rubaudonadeu Album*, now serves as a magnificent recompilation of the photographer's work, as well as an example of his use of the new gelatin dry plate negatives, which provided more stable conditions for taking and developing photographs.



Paris. Study from nature, 1880-1890. Josep Maria Cañellas / Albumen print

Cañellas was around the same age as Pellicer. They crossed paths in Paris, where they struck up a friendship. His photographic production was dedicated to the creation of models for artists. In addition to the portraits of children and women that followed the stylistic trends of the studios at the time, his work is distinguished by the capturing of street scenes in a form much like a snapshot, with a fresh look at city life: from people with no support to sellers of old books, to lawyers going to court, his camera caught novel images of residents and their relationship with the metropolis.