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**About Photography**

**Photography** is the art, application and practice of creating durable [images](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image) by recording light, either electronically by means of an [image sensor](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image_sensor), or chemically by means of a light-sensitive material such as [photographic film](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Photographic_film). It is employed in many fields of science, manufacturing (e.g., [photolithography](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Photolithography)), and business, as well as its more direct uses for art, film and video production, recreational purposes, hobby, and mass communication.[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Photography#cite_note-1)

Typically, a [lens](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lens_(optics)) is used to [focus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Focus_(optics)) the light reflected or emitted from objects into a [real image](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Real_image) on the light-sensitive surface inside a camera during a timed [exposure](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Exposure_(photography)). With an electronic image sensor, this produces an [electrical charge](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charge-coupled_device) at each [pixel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pixel), which is [electronically processed](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image_processing) and stored in a [digital image file](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image_file_formats) for subsequent display or processing. The result with [photographic emulsion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Photographic_emulsion) is an invisible [latent image](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latent_image), which is later chemically ["developed"](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Photographic_developer) into a visible image, either [negative](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Negative_(photography)) or [positive](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Positive_(photography)) depending on the purpose of the photographic material and the method of [processing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Photographic_processing). A negative image on film is traditionally used to photographically create a positive image on a paper base, known as a [print](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Photographic_print), either by using an [enlarger](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enlarger) or by [contact printing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Contact_print).

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**The Evolution of Photography**

It started with a box untilabout 190 years ago when Joseph Nicephore Niepce produced what is believed to be the oldest surviving photograph from a window of his estate in Le Gras in the Burgundy region of France. We’ll talk more about Joe in just a little bit. However, the beginnings of photography reach back further than that… much, much, much further back. We’re talking about an entirely different millennium.

Let’s stop here for just a moment in order to admit that as with many monumental discoveries and inventions there are protestations and controversies surrounding some of the events that will be recounted here. Still, I will always do everything I can to at least mention all involved parties in order to give credit where it is most certainly due.

It all most likely began in China with an alarmingly simple apparatus called the “*camera obscura*”. It’s name is derived from Latin which means “*dark chamber*” (how great is that?) and we can trace back references to this device as as the fourth century BCE. A camera obscura is a box of virtually any size which has a hole of small diameter in one side which allows light to pass. The light then casts itself on the inside of the box thus making an inverted image.

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**The History of Photography**

Fast forward about 2,200 years. It is around 1826 and we find ourselves back with [Joseph Nicephore Niepce](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nic%C3%A9phore_Ni%C3%A9pce). He is looking out his window and he is about to make a photograph… well, a heliograph, to be exact.

This was around the time Niepce produced what is believed to be the oldest surviving photograph from a window of his estate located in Le Gras in the Burgundy region of France. What Mr. Niepce concocted was a small piece of polished pewter which he then coated with a solution of bitumen and lavender oil. Bitumen is a naturally occurring asphalt and is sometimes referred to as [Bitumen of Judea](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bitumen_of_Judea). The most interesting property of bitumen is that it is light sensitive.

So, for what has been speculated from anywhere between eight hours to several days, the piece of polished pewter with bitumen emulsion remained in Joe’s camera obscura. What resulted was this:

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**Daguerre’s Contribution**

Shortly thereafter, Niepce partnered with a Parisian artist named [Louis Daguerre](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_Daguerre) and began further investigations and refinements into Niepce’s process. Sadly, Niepce passed away in 1833 but luckily left his notes entirely to Daguerre who continued working. Louis favored a silver-based processes and used plates with silver coatings which were exposed to iodine fumes. The iodine reacted with the silver and produced a coating of photosensitive silver iodide on the plates.

The major innovation of Daguerre’s process was the discovery that by applying mercury fumes to the exposed silver plate he could actually make the “*latent*” image visible on the plate thus reducing the lengthy exposure times of previous methods. Now, exposures could be measured in minutes instead of days. Daguerre’s method of silver iodide emulsed plates developed with mercury vapor was called… you guessed it… the [Daguerreotype](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daguerreotype). These instructions were then published as a free gift to the world on August 19th, 1839.

**contemporary.html**

**Today’s Photography**

Give the digital camera revolution about ten or fifteen years to stew and now we find ourselves landed here in the present. We trudge knee-deep through swamps of the newest cameras and lenses and any other piece of gear we can dream into reality. Imagine the reaction of Niepce if he saw the ease by which photographs are now taken instantly on the street. No more bulky camera obscuras. Without plates or film or chemicals. Just press the button..

**The Digital Age**

Does this ease of production outway the quality of production? Without a doubt, the majority of those *800+ trillion photos we made last year* will not be pieces of treasured art or make their way onto the walls of the finest cafe in Paris. At the same time, however, they do fulfill the most basic and primordial purpose of photography. Those pictures preserve a memory. It might not be a far-reaching preservation, but it is preservation nonetheless. This fixing of memory has the potential to give us a measure of happiness within ourselves that is no less satisfying than that felt by the first picture takers over two centuries ago. The difference between us and them, is that we have perhaps become numbed by the very magic they helped to create.

**The Next Evolutionary Phase**

The next evolutionary phase of photography might not be a progression in the way we make images. Instead, it’s quite possible the next unseen horizon will come from the way we share those images with the world or how we store them for ourselves. If a photograph indeed captures a memory, what use is that memory unless it can more tangibly recalled. Looking back in the history of photography has each subsequent advancement not strived to make the photo more qualitative, more lasting, and more real?

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**Robert Frank**

There was never a more prolific photographer than Robert Frank. From 1941, he worked as a commercial photographer in Zurich, Basel and Geneva.

In 1947, he found a job as a fashion photographer in the US. He used his 35mm Leica, unconventional at the time. Between 1950 and ’59 he turned his attention to street photography and photojournalism.

This is where he became most famous. The Guggenheim Fellowship allowed him to travel the country, resulting in his most famous work: The Americans.

He worked closely to Walker Evans and became one of the world’s most famous street photographers. He completed his visuals with text, written straight onto the negatives and prints.

[**Graciela**](https://www.artsy.net/artist/sebastiao-salgado/works?page=1&sort=-partner_updated_at) **Iturbide**

Born in Mexico City, Graciela Iturbide studied filmmaking at the Centro Universitario de Estudios Cinematográficos between 1969 and 1972, and worked as an assistant to photographer Manuel Alvarez Bravo, who stimulated her interest in photography. She met to Henri Cartier-Bresson while traveling in Europe, and in 1978, was one of the founding members of the Mexican Council of Photography. Besides Cartier-Bresson and Alvarez Bravo, Tina Modotti was in important influence on Iturbide. A major exhibition of her work, "External Encounters, Internal Imaginings: Photographs of Graciela Iturbide," was presented at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, in addition to retrospectives at the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Monterrey in Mexico, and at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. A monograph on her work, Graciela Iturbide: Images of the Spirit (1996), accompanied her Philadelphia show.

Iturbide's exquisite high-contrast black-and-white prints convey the starkness of life for many of her subjects. Traveling through Mexico, Ecuador, Venezuela, Panama, and the Mexican community of East Los Angeles, Iturbide documents the uneasy cohabitation of ancient cultural rituals and contemporary adaptations and interpretations. One of her particular interests has been the role of women, and since 1979 she has photographed the Zapotec Indians of Juchitán, Oaxaca, among whom women are commonly accorded places of power, and stereotypical gender roles are frequently subverted. Iturbide uses photography to try to understand Mexico in its totality, as a combination of indigenous practices, and imported and assimilated Catholic religious practices, and foreign economic trade.  
Meredith Fisher  
Handy et al. Reflections in a Glass Eye: Works from the International Center of Photography Collection, New York: Bulfinch Press in association with the International Center of Photography, 1999, p. 219.

**The Cemetary**

This image is part of Graciela Iturbide’s series on the Juchitan indigenous culture, a major focus of her work from 1979 to 1988. Located in the state of Oaxaca, Mexico, the Juchitan is a matriarchal society in which women are in charge of everything from commerce to religious ceremonies. In The Cemetery, taken in 1988, Iturbide depicts a woman carrying firewood through a cemetery made up of modest adobe tombs. Swallows circle around, filling the frame of the image. The scene is beautifully surreal, but also foreboding. The photographer creates her own reality, moving past Mexico’s Catholic traditions into Indian mysticism.

https://www.icp.org/browse/archive/constituents/graciela-iturbide?all/all/all/all/0