

Erotic Photography

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ISBN: 978-1-78160-863-0

“Eroticism lies in the possibility of a movement. It belongs to the realm of the dream.”

Jean-François Somain

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No 51

c. 1925

A. Noyer Editions

Gelatin silver print, 24 x 18 cm

History of Erotic Photography

1850-1860

The daguerreotypes available were intended for a wealthy clientele. Afterwards, different photographic procedures, especially on paper, enabled the duplication of images.

1861-1913

Imperial and republican censorship obliged photographers to work in an academic atmosphere, hypocritically aimed at helping the traditional fine arts of painting and sculpture, or in total anonymity, indulging in sheer abandon when intended for lovers of pornography. This anonymity was unavoidable in order to escape the wrath of justice and the discomfort of prisons, but was profitable when it came to illustrating the most shocking subjects.

1914-1918

With postcards, nude photography became a common sight. Hundreds of thousands of these little cards depicted the comforting image of a desirable woman on the front with the tacit approval of the authorities.

1919-1939

With the war over, women, having suffered a number of difficulties and sorrows in remaining at home by themselves, became emancipated. They discovered, among other things, that they were fully capable of doing a man's job. Their attitudes changed. For the photographer, they no longer posed in an academic manner in order to serve as models for hypothetical artists. They were free and this feeling showed in their images.

A. Best

Ureław

W

C. R.

M. Boulanôer

M. F.



Introduction

The aim of this History of Erotic Photography is to present previously unpublished images, taking care to avoid those well known images taken by famous photographers which have already been the subject of monographs or numerous publications. The selection made here has no encyclopaedic value, and is based on entirely suggestive criteria.



Untitled

c. 1855

Auguste Belloc

Hand-painted albumen print
mounted on canvas,
Stereoscopic View,
8.5 x 16.5 cm





It is neither about presenting an exhaustive inventory, nor a specific objective. Choosing images is, above all, an expression of one's own personal tastes - one's infatuation for those women of old-fashioned charms, who, thanks to the wonder of the photographic miracle, have been preserved from the ravages of age and time.



It should be pointed out that the first decades of erotic photography were essentially French.

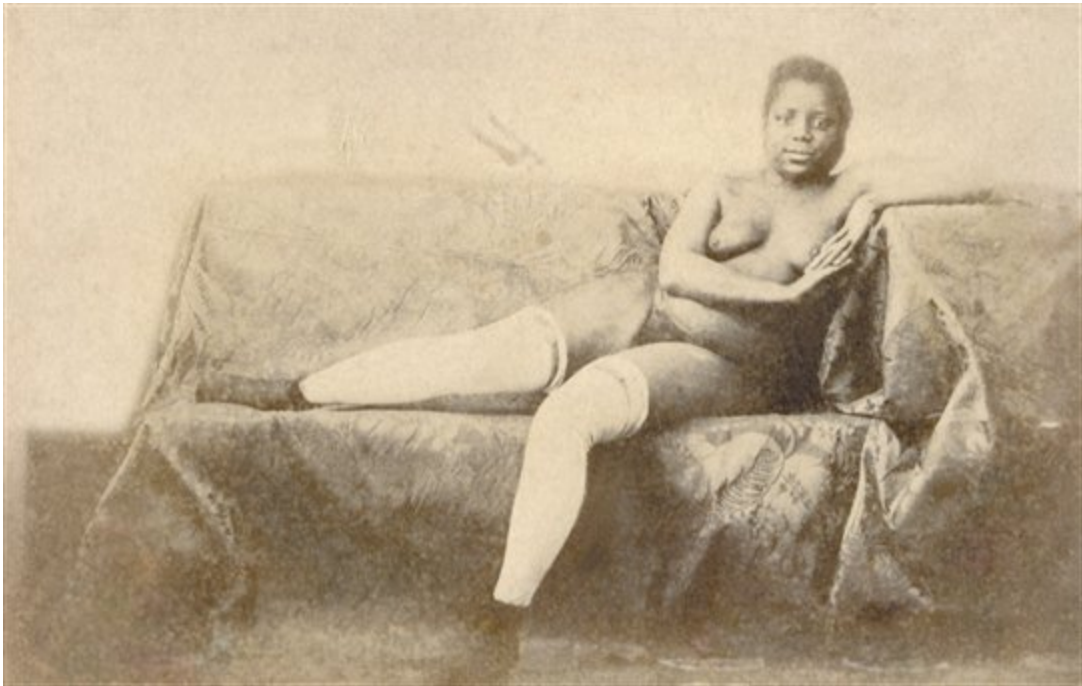


Visiting Card

c. 1855

Anonymous

Print on salted paper mounted
on board,
6.5 x 10.3 cm





The main reason for this is that photography was first developed in France, where research into new procedures of iconographic reproduction began in the 18th century. In the 19th century, liberalism was more widespread in France than elsewhere. Licentious French images were imported into Italy, Spain, the United States, Germany and Great Britain, as production in these countries was limited, due to the fact that these works were more severely repressed.

Untitled

c. 1855

Auguste Belloc

Print on salted paper from
collodion humid negative,
20.7 x 15.5 cm





As far as the first century of the history of photography is concerned (1839-1939), all the international collections - both old and contemporary - comprise mainly French images. When the English authors Graham Ovenden and Peter Mendes entitled their work *Victorian Erotic Photography*, it was, in fact, largely made up of works of Parisian origin from Belloc, Braquehais, Durieu, Vallou and Villeneuve.



Annex 652, Visiting Card

c. 1860

André Disdéri

Albumen print mounted on
board, 10.3 x 6.5 cm

DISDÉRI, PHOTO.





When the American Richard Merkin, professor at the Rhode Island School of Design, presented his collection in the work entitled *Velvet Eden*, the majority of the images were French. The first American images that he selected date from 1920, the first German ones from 1930, and together they only represent a tiny fraction of the total number.



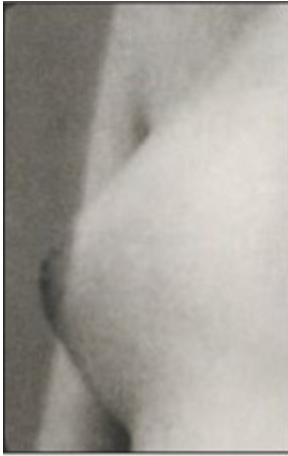
Bacchante

c. 1860

Ch. Naudet

Print on salted paper toned
with gold,
21.5 x 10 cm





One of the leading reference works in the field of erotic photography *Die Erotik in der Photographie* (three volumes published by half a dozen eminent doctors in Vienna in 1931) brings together the best of the German collections of the period and includes several hundred reproductions, the minority being German and Austrian, whereas the French production accounts for the majority of the period preceding the First World War.



Sarah Bernhardt

c. 1868

Anonymous

Only known portrait of Sarah Bernhardt with nude torso,
14.5 x 10.5 cm





However, this French particularity and specificity lessened throughout the 20th century and has now completely disappeared. The same goes for all themes covered by photography. Whatever the reason, the history of this French specificity could not have been told without the protection of this heritage by a number of passionate collectors. It may be a lewd and playful heritage, but it is representative of the morals and mentality of each period.



N° K 65

c. 1870

Anonymous

Albumen print, 26.6 x 19.5 cm





Photography Conquering Nudity

Whether it be painting, sculpture, engraving or lithography, all forms of art have been at the service of eroticism from the beginning. Photography is no exception to this rule. The first photographic processes, the daguerreotypes, were enriched from conception by nudes, which offered an imagery reminiscent of the painting of the time, albeit in a more realistic, though simultaneously cruder, manner.



N° 563

c. 1870

Gaudenzio Marconi

Albumen print, 21.8 x 16 cm





On 19th of August 1839, Louis-Jacques Mandé Daguerre, having given up his activities as a painter and set decorator, presented his invention during a public meeting of the Science Academy. It was a huge success and he was granted a pension, which he shared with Isidore Niepce, the son of his partner Nicéphore, who died in 1833.



In exchange, in a display of generosity never to be seen again, the French State acquired the rights of the process and placed them graciously at the disposal of apprentice photographers the world over.



Nº 33

c. 1870

Anonymous

Albumen print, 21 x 27 cm

