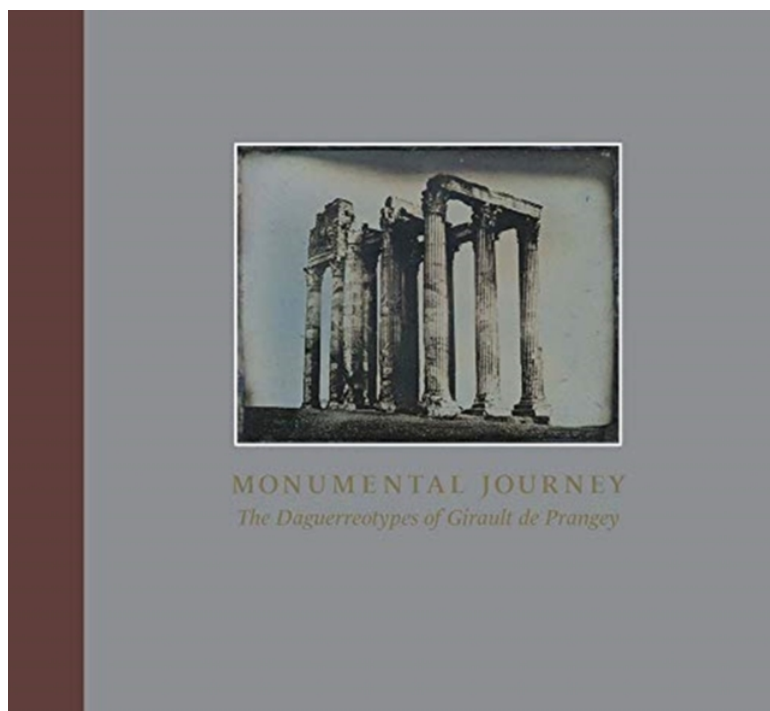


## Monumental Journey. The Daguerreotypes of Girault de Prangey

by Stephen C. Pinson, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, February 2019. 252 p. ill. ISBN 9781588396631 (h/c), \$50.00.

Reviewed January 2020 Susan Garrett, Image Collection Specialist, Art, Architecture & Engineering Library, University of Michigan, sgarrett@umich.edu



Simply as the creator of the earliest photographic documents of many sites in the Eastern Mediterranean, Joseph Girault de Prangey (1804–1892) would merit scholarly attention. Yet as illuminated in this sumptuous monograph accompanying the eponymous exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (January 30–May 12, 2019), a deeper examination reveals the artist to have been integrally involved in the nascent fields of archaeology, art history, and photography. Scholars involved in Monumental Journey include specialists in photography, Islamic art, classical studies, and

19th century photographic methods and technology. Seven essays, a compendium and map of sites depicted in the daguerreotypes, a chronology, and color plates reproducing the daguerreotypes exhibited, as well as numerous illustrations, convincingly portray the contexts, both individual and cultural, of these works' production.

In his essay "Splendour in the Dust" Stephen Pinson, Curator in the Met's Department of Photographs, notes that "For Girault... the daguerreotype was not only a means of representation but also an artifact similar to a sherd" (11). Recognizing this materiality of the plates, throughout the monograph the authors attend to the unique qualities of the

daguerreotype and Girault's constant and innovative manipulation of the plates, camera, and processing of the image.

Still, for Girault (and us) the daguerreotype functioned as a documentary representation of a monument; he used them as models for the lithographs illustrating two volumes on monuments in the eastern Mediterranean. This intriguing process, originally involving drawing and the camera lucida before his use of the daguerreotype, is clearly explained and illustrated in the essay "From Drawing to Photography". The monuments themselves, from classical to medieval, ranging from Spain to Egypt, are described in "Key Sites and Subjects" and with a map of Girault's travels. Their meanings for a 19th-century European are explicitly elucidated in the essays "Framing an Islamic Art" and "The Pleasure of Ruins".

Monumental Journey serves as an excellent case study in art historical methodology. The authors cover a range of scholarly inquiry motivated by the works, address the rather contingent history of the collection, and attend to the drawings, documents, and books complementing the daguerreotypes. While scholarly and sometimes technical in tone, the writing is accessible. Most fortunately, we are afforded an approximation of the beauty of the daguerreotypes in their excellent reproductions. The 172 color plates present the daguerreotypes as close to their original size as possible, retaining the laterally reversed presentation of the subject. The subject matter could appeal to students and scholars beyond the history of art, to practitioners, historians, and cultural studies. The volume itself is a jewel; not overly large and of high-quality construction.