

## Photography Timeline

(Including some important historical events)

We owe the name 'Photography' to Sir John Hershel, who first used the term in 1839, the year the photographic process became public. The word is derived from the Greek words for light and writing.

### Early Days

It may seem strange but cameras existed long before photography. As far back as the 5th Century BC, an image of the outside scene was formed by sunlight through a small hole into a darkened room. This is known as a Camera Obscura which means 'Darkened Room'.

1500-  
1800

The Camera Obscura was improved by utilising a simple lens at one end and a ground-glass screen at the other, upon which an image is projected. This is used as an aid to drawing and painting by artists including Vermeer, Caravaggio and Canaletto.

1666

Isaac Newton demonstrated that light is the source of colour. He used a prism to split sunlight into its constituent colours and another to recombine them to make white light.

1725

The German physicist Johann Heinrich Schulze discovers the basic principle of photography by noting that silver salts darken when exposed to light.

1807-  
1808

Beethoven composes  
his Fifth Symphony.

1802

Humphrey Davy reports to colleagues at a scientific society on the results of Thomas Wedgewood's experiments with silhouettes of leaves and other objects placed on paper sensitized with silver nitrate. Unfortunately, neither Wedgewood nor Davy is able to 'fix' the results permanently.

1812

Napoleon invades  
Russia in June. His  
armies enter Moscow  
but are forced to  
retreat in November  
as winter sets in.

1831-  
1832

Michael Faraday  
conducts a series of  
experiments which  
demonstrate the  
principle of  
electromagnetic  
induction.

1826

Joseph Nicéphore Niépce creates a permanent  
image using a camera obscura and white  
bitumen, it took 8 hours to expose.

1839

Lois Daguerre's invention, which was bought by  
the French government, produced a one-of-a-  
kind picture on metal, the DAGUERREOTYPE.

1839

The term Photography is patented.

1833

The American Anti-Slavery Society is founded in Boston dedicated to abolition throughout the United States. The Slavery Abolition Act is passed in Britain, outlawing slavery throughout the British Colonies.

1841

The name calotype came from the Greek 'kalos', meaning beautiful. Henry Fox Talbot creates permanent (negative) images using paper soaked in silver chloride and fixed with a salt solution, the CALOTYPE. He then creates positive images by contact printing onto another sheet of paper. The process introduced two important advances - the use of the developer and the exploitation of the latent image.

1848

The revolution of February 1848 deposes King Louis-Philippe and establishes the second French Republic, with Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte elected as president.

Karl Marx and Frederich Engels publish the communist manifesto, a critique of the

capitalist system.

1843-  
1848

The painter David Octavius Hill forms a partnership with the photographer Robert Adamson to produce calotype portraits of Edinburgh notables. From their studio they make many of the finest portraits of the 1840s.

1844-  
1846

The Pencil of Nature, the first commercially produced, photographically illustrated book, is published in six parts over two years. Consisting of twenty-four calotypes by Henry Fox Talbot.

1849

Sir David Brewster perfects a stereoscopic viewer. When a matching pair of photographs is placed in the viewer, a three-dimensional effect is produced.

1851

Suggested by Prince Albert and inspired by the French Industrial Exposition of 1844, the Great Exhibition is a celebration of the British Empire and industry held in the 65 030m Crystal Palace.

1851

What is, in effect, the world's first open photographic exhibition is mounted at the Great Exhibition in the Crystal Palace in London's Hyde Park.

The wet-plate system is introduced by Frederick Scott Archer. Using glass as a support medium for photographic chemicals means that the negative to positive process can yield details as fine as those of the Daguerreotype.

1855

Roger Fenton, James Robertson and Jean Charles Langlois independently photographed the Crimean War, the first systematic coverage of a conflict, although technical limitations and political considerations militate against direct scenes of violence.

1853-  
1856

The Crimean War:  
fought between the  
allied forces of Britain  
and France against  
Imperial Russia.  
Casualties: 400,000  
killed, wounded or  
died of disease.

1857

Oscar Rejlander, a Swede living in England, successfully exhibits his image *The Two Ways of Life*, an allegorical composite photograph contrasting virtue and dissolution, made from thirty-two negatives.

1857-  
1858

British India is shaken by the Indian mutiny, which escalates from a protest by Indian soldiers about their new cartridges to a putative war of independence. The revolt is put down savagely, but marks the end of the British East India Company's influence in the territory and the start of direct rule by the Crown.

1858

Henry Peach Robinson follows Rejlander with his *Fading Away*, a composite genre picture made from five negatives. He becomes a prominent advocate for a rule-based photographic 'art' aesthetic.

The French commercial portrait photographer Nadar makes the first successful aerial photograph, from a balloon.

1860s/70s

The 'golden age' of 19th-century travel photography, as photographers record the world on behalf of the colonial powers. Ethnographic and topographical photographs are published as documents in scientific volumes, and sold as 'views' to tourists for incorporation into albums.

1861-  
1865

The American Civil War: the southern states of the American Union secede to form the Confederate States of America, precipitating war with the rest of the Union. The cost: 970,000 casualties, including 620,000 military deaths.

1861

James Clerk-Maxwell demonstrates a projected colour photographic image, using three different colour filters. This is the 'colour separation' method.

1861-  
1862

Nadar uses artificial light 'flash' to photograph the Paris catacombs and sewers.

1877

American Eadweard Muybridge develops a fast shutter that aids him in making photographs of objects in motion. He publishes Animal Locomotion in 1887.

1870-  
1871

The Franco-Prussian war: after a four-month siege, Prussian forces enter Paris in early 1871. Napoleon III is deposed and retreats into exile at



Chichester.

1880

On 4 March, the first newspaper photograph is reproduced in the New York Daily Graphic. The introduction of the photographic halftone plate has made photographic reproduction in books and newspapers both easier and cheaper.

1886

Gottlieb Daimler  
builds and tests the  
first four-wheeled  
vehicle powered by a  
gas-cylinder engine.

1887-  
1889

The 300m high Eiffel Tower is constructed to form the entrance arch of the 1889 Universal Exhibition in Paris.

1888

George Eastman brought out the first box camera 'Kodak No.1'. Containing the new recently invented film-roll. His famous slogan is 'You press the button, we do the rest.'

1890s

'Snapshot' photography, as it is called, makes photography one of the fastest-growing pastimes for amateurs and hobbyists. The decade sees the first photographically illustrated magazines and the birth of 'photojournalism' - the result of smaller faster cameras and halftone printing.

1899-  
1901

The Boxer Rebellion: troops from eight nations under British command crush fierce Chinese protests at European encroachment after the Sino-Japanese war of 1894-95.

1893

Thomas Edison invents 35mm film.

1895

Wilhelm Roentgen invents the x-ray photograph.

1903

On 17th Dec, in Kitty Hawk, the brothers Orville and Wilbur Wright make the first powered flight in a heavier-than-air machine.

1902

Alfred Steiglitz, Alvin Langdon Coburn and Edward Steichen founded the 'Photo Seccession' and the influential journal 'Camera Work'. Determined to promote the aesthetic, artistic ability of Photography.

1907

Pablo Picasso paints Les Demoiselles d'Avignon, the painting heralds the 'birth' of modern art.

1907

First commercial colour film, the Autochrome plates, manufactured by the Lumiere brothers in France.

1920s

The Decade of modernism.

1914-  
1918

The First World War,  
kills 15 million people

1921

Man Ray begins making photograms  
(`rayographs') by placing objects on  
photographic paper and exposing the shadow  
cast by a distant light bulb.

1922

Two of the most  
important literary  
works of the 20th  
century are  
published: James  
Joyce's Ulysses and  
T.S. Eliot's The Waste  
Land.

1924

The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, is given a

group of photographs by Alfred Steiglitz, the first photographs to enter an American museum collection as works of art.

1929

On 29 October, the  
New York Stock  
Exchange crashes,  
beginning a  
worldwide economic  
downturn- the great  
depression- that lasts  
for most of the  
1930s.

1925

The Leica camera is introduced. Using 35mm  
film, it enables photographers to work fast and  
in available light, transforming both  
photojournalism and social-documentary  
photography

1932

Inception of Technicolour for movies, where  
three black and white negatives were made in  
the same camera under different filters.

Ansel Adams, Imogen Cunningham, Willard Van  
Dyke, Edward Weston, et al, form Group f/64  
dedicated to "straight photographic thought and  
production".

1936-  
1939

The Spanish Civil War, won by the right-wing nationalists of General Franco, is seen as the first battle between democracy and fascism.

1936

Development of Kodachrome, the first colour multi-layered colour film.

Development of Exakta, pioneering 35mm single-lens reflex (SLR) camera.

1937

Chester Carlson invents 'electron photography', which later comes to be known as xerography, or simply photocopying.

Beaumont Newhall curates a centenary overview exhibition of photography at New York's Museum of Modern Art, Photography 1839-1937. The exhibition's catalogue becomes a standard history of photography.

1939-  
1945

The Second World War: the 20th century's deadliest and most widespread conflict. 62 million people were killed

1947

Henri Cartier-Bresson, Robert Capa and David Seymour start the photographer owned Magnum picture agency.

Dr. Edwin Land invented an 'instant' picture process, first called Polaroid Land. Later known simply as Polaroid.

1947

On 15th August, India becomes independent, but is split into two nations, Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan. Riots cause many deaths.

1949

The International Museum of Photography is established at George Eastman House in Rochester, New York.

1948

On 14th May, the state of Israel is declared.



1952

Minor White, Ansel Adams, Dorothea Lange and  
Beaumont Newhall found the photographic  
journal Aperture. Edited by White it becomes  
one of the most influential magazines of the  
1960's and 70's.

1956

Elvis Presley, the  
'king of rock 'n' roll',  
releases his first  
number one single  
Heartbreak Hotel.

1960s

Increasing attention is paid to photography in  
American colleges and museums. Advanced  
photographic courses are offered, and the  
medium is more widely recognized as an

artform. The extensive photographic coverage of the Vietnam war is a powerful factor in turning the American public against the conflict.

1961

East German forces  
build a wall between  
East and West Berlin

In May, John F.  
Kennedy sends 400  
troops to advise  
South Vietnam in its  
civil war with  
communist North  
Vietnam. Effectively  
this is the start of the  
Vietnam war, which  
did not end until  
1975.

1962

John Szarkowski succeeds Edward Steichen as  
Director of the Department of Photography at  
MoMa. He will become one of the most  
influential curators and writers on photography  
of the late 20th century.

1966

John Szarkowski's exhibition and book *The  
Photographer's Eye* sets the tone for his  
directorship at MoMA and a photographic  
aesthetic that encompasses art, commercial  
work and the snapshot.

1963

On 22nd November,  
Kennedy is  
assassinated while  
riding with his wife in  
a presidential  
motorcade in Dallas.

1970s

Photography becomes firmly established in the  
art museum and academy, and many critics  
begin to question its 'aestheticization'. Despite  
this, galleries open to sell photographs as works  
of art. Encouraged by photography's new-found  
respectability, more and more photographers  
are making photographs for themselves and the  
gallery wall rather than commercial clients.

1969

On 20th July, Neil  
Armstrong, the  
commander of the US  
Apollo 11 moonflight,  
steps from the craft  
on to the surface of  
the moon.

Woodstock music  
festival-'three days of  
peace and love'-is  
held.

1976

William Eggleston has a controversial one-man  
exhibition at MoMA, effectively sanctioning  
colour photography as a 'serious' medium for  
art photographers.

1977

Susan Sontag publishes her book *On Photography*, a collection of essays that challenges the modernist view which reduces the medium to an artform, rather than the broad and tricky cultural phenomenon it is.

1980

Former Beatle John Lennon is shot dead.

1980s

The precepts of modernism are criticized by artists in the postmodernist movement. Many artists are making photographic works, although there is a considered distinction between photographers-who make photographs- and artists-who make 'pieces'.

1989

On 9th November, the border between East and West Berlin is opened. The Berlin wall is dismantled soon after, and in 1990 Germany is reunited after 45years.

1984

Canon demonstrated the first digital still camera.

1988

The introduction of digital photography; the first electronic scanners and digital cameras are launched.

1990s The computer begins to take over photography, especially at the printing stage. Many artists and photographers still use traditional cameras and film but scan the negatives into a computer and produce inkjet prints rather than traditional chemical based prints.

1998 The first consumer mega pixel digital cameras were introduced.

2000s Digital photography reaches critical mass in the market place. Many companies announce the cessation or scaling down of film and film-camera production.

2002 The first consumer camera phones were introduced.

2003 Cruel and Tender, is the first major photographic exhibition to be held at Tate Modern in London.

1990-  
1991

2001

The Gulf War: Iraq invades Kuwait. A coalition force led by the US defeats Iraqi forces in Operation Desert Storm.

On 11 September, terrorists under the direction of al-Qaeda make a co-ordinated attack on the United States. The Bush administration declares a 'war on terror'.

