



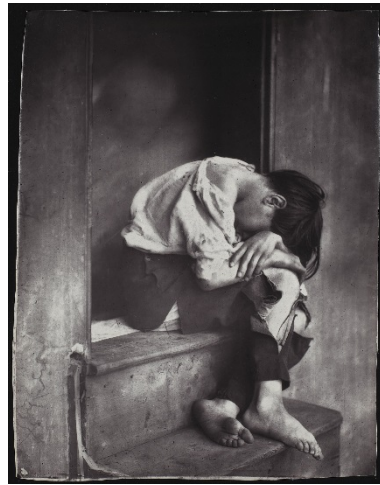
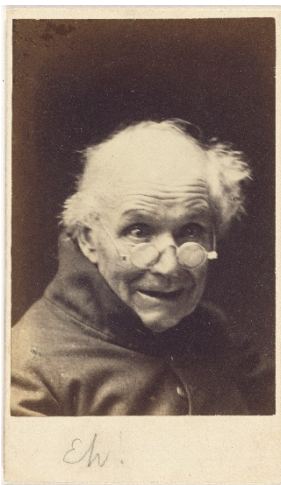
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**GETTY MUSEUM PRESENTS FIRST MAJOR EXHIBITION OF THE WORK OF
OSCAR G. REJLANDER**

Oscar Rejlander: Artist Photographer explores the life and work of one of the most influential photographers of the 19th century

At the J. Paul Getty Museum, Getty Center
March 12–June 9, 2019



LEFT: *Eh!*, negative about 1854 - 1855; print about 1865, Oscar Gustave Rejlander (British, born Sweden, 1813 - 1875). Albumen silver print. Image: 8.9 x 5.9 cm (3 1/2 x 2 5/16 in.). 84.XM.845.14. The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles **CENTER:** *Poor Jo*, negative before 1862; print after 1879, Oscar Gustave Rejlander (British, born Sweden, 1813 - 1875). Carbon print. Image: 20.3 x 15.7 cm (8 x 6 3/16 in.). EX.2019.5.5. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Purchased 1993 (37076). National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. Photo: NGC. **RIGHT:** *Enchanted by a Parrot*, about 1860, Oscar Gustave Rejlander (British, born Sweden, 1813 - 1875). Albumen silver print. Image (approx.): 50 x 30 cm (19 11/16 x 11 13/16 in.). William T. Hillman Collection, New York. Photo: Hans P. Kraus, Jr., New York

LOS ANGELES – Oscar G. Rejlander (British, born Sweden, 1813-1875) was one of the 19th century's greatest innovators in the medium of photography, counting Queen Victoria, Prince Albert, Charles Darwin, Lewis Carroll and Julia Margaret Cameron among his devotees. Nevertheless, the extent of Rejlander's work and career has often been overlooked. *Oscar Rejlander: Artist Photographer*, on view March 12–June 9, 2019 at the J. Paul Getty Museum, Getty Center, Los Angeles, is the first exhibition to explore the prolific career of the artist who became known as "the father of art photography," and whose bold experimentation with

photographic techniques early in the medium's development and keen understanding of human emotion were ahead of their time.

The exhibition features 150 photographs that demonstrate Rejlander's remarkable range, from landscapes and portraits to allegories and witty commentaries on contemporary society, alongside a selection of his early paintings, drawings, and prints.

"Rejlander tells us in his writings that 'It is the mind of the artist, and not the nature of his materials, which makes his production a work of art,'" says Timothy Potts, director of the J. Paul Getty Museum. "While technologies have dramatically changed, some of the fundamental issues that Rejlander grappled with in his photographs still resonate with photographic practice today. His photographs, though made a century and a half ago, are both meticulously of their time and timeless, foreshadowing many later achievements of the medium through to the digital age."

Oscar G. Rejlander was born in Sweden and moved to England in 1839, working first as a painter before turning to photography in 1852. He made a living as a portrait photographer while experimenting with photographic techniques, most notably combination printing, in which parts of multiple negatives were exposed separately and then printed to form a single picture. Rejlander moved to London in 1862, where his business continued to grow and where his wife, Mary Bull, worked alongside him in his photography studios.

Portraits and Images of Everyday Life

Portraiture, particularly of members of the higher ranks of London society, was Rejlander's main professional activity and supported his livelihood. Art critics and clients alike admired his skill with lighting as well as the natural and seemingly spontaneous expressions he was able to capture. Rejlander photographed some of the most important figures of the day, including the English scientist Charles Darwin, known for his theory of evolution, and poets Alfred Lord Tennyson and Henry Taylor. He also guided the first photographic efforts of the writer and mathematician Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (known as Lewis Carroll), the creator of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, as well as photographer Julia Margaret Cameron.

From the beginning of his career as a photographer, Rejlander was keenly interested in depicting the activities of ordinary people, particularly the middle and lower classes of society. It was through his staged domestic images that he illustrated familial relationships with tenderness and humor, often using models and props to re-create in his studio the scenes he

had witnessed in the streets, from young boys who swept up dirt and debris in exchange for tips, to street vendors such as “flower girls” who offered bouquets for sale to passersby. Like a modern street photographer, Rejlander chose his compositions and subjects based on what he saw and heard, realizing the final images in the studio.

In 1863 Rejlander constructed a unique iron, wood, and glass “tunnel studio,” where the sitter, positioned in the open, light-filled part of the studio, would look into the darker part of the room where the camera and operator were situated, nearly invisible. The pupils of the sitters' eyes expanded, allowing for “more depth and expression,” as a writer observed in *Photographic News*. In addition to this technique, Rejlander often exploited his own unique ability to enact exaggerated emotions to assist his subjects. Charles Darwin illustrated many of Rejlander's expressive photographs in *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, published in 1872.



Lewis Carroll, 1863, Oscar Gustave Rejlander (British, born Sweden, 1813 - 1875). Medium: Albumen silver print. Image: 8.9 × 5.9 cm (3 1/2 × 2 5/16 in.) Image: 8.9 × 5.9 cm (3 1/2 × 2 5/16 in.). EX.2019.5.146. Image: www.metmuseum.org

Combination Printing and *Two Ways of Life*

Rejlander holds an important place in the history of photography primarily because of the groundbreaking way he applied the technique of combination printing. On view in the exhibition is the most ambitious example of the artist's pioneering experimentation, the epic photograph, or *Hope in Repentance* (1857). It attracted immediate attention upon its exhibition both for its large size and the ambition of its production, which included the combination printing of over 30 separate wet collodion on glass negatives, a process that took more than three days.

The work represents an intricate allegory of two opposing philosophies of life: Vice and Virtue. In the center of the picture, a wise man guides a younger man to the right, toward a life of virtue—work, study, and religion. To the left, a second young man is tempted by the call of desire, gambling, idleness, and vice. Prince Albert may have worked with Rejlander on

the overall conception of the picture, and he and Queen Victoria purchased three versions for their art collection.

Despite this support from the Royal Family, *Two Ways of Life* divided the photographic community, with professional photographers considering it a technical tour de force, and amateurs seeing it as not only artificial in production but also immoral in its subject. However, it remains one of finest examples of combination printing to come from this period.



Two Ways of Life, 1857, Oscar Gustave Rejlander (British, born Sweden, 1813 - 1875). Albumen silver print. Image: 21.8 × 40.8 cm (8 9/16 × 16 1/16 in.). EX.2019.5.36. Moderna Museet, Stockholm

Art and Photography

Today, the debate about photography's status as an art may be obsolete, but the arts community in 19th-century Britain was passionately divided over Rejlander's chosen medium. Rejlander strongly advocated the view that photography was an independent art, while he was also convinced that a photograph could help artists by providing an effective substitute for working from live models. He was possibly the first to provide artists with visual references for their work in photographs, creating figure studies in a range of poses and costumes, including close-ups of hands, feet, drapery, and even fleeting facial expressions. Although many painters were reluctant to disclose their reliance on photography, several collected Rejlander's photographs, including George Frederic Watts (English, 1817–1904) and Henri Fantin-Latour (French, 1836–1904).

Paintings also strongly influenced Rejlander's choice of subjects, leading him not only to imitate the styles of artists but also to re-create the figures found in their compositions. He frequently photographed actors or models posing as a "Madonna," a "Devotee," a "Disciple," or specific Christian figures such as John



Madonna and Child with St. John the Baptist, about 1860, Oscar Gustave Rejlander (British, born Sweden, 1813 - 1875). Albumen silver print. Image (arched): 17.8 × 12.4 cm (7 × 4 7/8 in.). 84.XM.845.1. The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles

the Baptist. He may have intended these studies, as well as others showing figures in classical robes, for artists to consult as well.

"What we hope comes through in the exhibition is Rejlander's humanity and humor, as well as his humble nature, particularly evident in the fact that he often sent his work to exhibitions under the name 'amateur,'" says Karen Hellman, assistant curator of photographs at the Getty Museum. "His explanation: 'When I compare what I have done with what I think I ought to do, and some day hope I shall do, I think of myself as only an amateur, after all—that is to say, a beginner.'"

Oscar Rejlander: Artist Photographer, is on view March 12–June 9, 2019 at J. Paul Getty Museum, Getty Center. The exhibition is curated by Lori Pauli, curator of photographs at the National Gallery of Canada, and Karen Hellman, assistant curator of photographs at the J. Paul Getty Museum.

Organized by the Canadian Photography Institute of the National Gallery of Canada



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The J. Paul Getty Trust is an international cultural and philanthropic institution devoted to the visual arts that includes the J. Paul Getty Museum, the Getty Research Institute, the Getty Conservation Institute, and the Getty Foundation. The J. Paul Getty Trust and Getty programs serve a varied audience from two locations: the Getty Center in Los Angeles and the Getty Villa in Pacific Palisades.

The J. Paul Getty Museum collects Greek and Roman antiquities, European paintings, drawings, manuscripts, sculpture and decorative arts to 1900, as well as photographs from around the world to the present day. The Museum's mission is to display and interpret its collections, and present important loan exhibitions and publications for the enjoyment and education of visitors locally and internationally. This is supported by an active program of research, conservation, and public programs that seek to deepen our knowledge of and connection to works of art.

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