



Harasym Zenon, Stare fotografie. Poradnik kolekcjonera. [Old photographs. Guide for collectors]. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Arkady, 2012, 280 p.

The author of this book not only works as a researcher at the scientific institute in Wrocław, but is also active as photographer, and since 1978 belongs to the Union of Polish Artists Photographers. He is an author of many photographs presented in 56 individual exhibitions and over 300 joint exhibitions. However, most important for the value of the book's contents is his passion for collecting, thanks to which he gathered a significant number of old photographs, including some daguerreotypes, that serve as an illustration in the album in addition to the collections from public institutions.

The main aim of this book is to support collectors of old photographs and broaden their knowledge of the history of photography. Therefore, the author also describes techniques for taking photographs, and presents information on how this new medium was received by the public. To make the contents even more interesting, the author also includes information that one would probably never link to photography. An example is the description and picture of an especially constructed support for a chair backrest to help keep the heads of clients from moving during the long session necessary for taking pictures in the early stages of photography,

when modelling could take as much as several minutes.

Among the chapters of this book we can find: First photographs; Daguerreotypes; Calotypes; Collodion process; Salt, albumin, collodion and gelatine papers; Special photographic techniques; Reversal film; Photographs on different materials like porcelain, glass, porcelain enamel, semiemalia, ivory type photography, crys-toleum, photography on textile, cliché verre; Selected techniques of print; Stereoscopic photography. Apart from an explanation of techniques used throughout the history of photography, there are also parts describing the development of photographic graphical design and format, as well as its types, such as portrait, landscape, documentary, and artistic. A special paragraph is devoted to photography on post-cards.

An important part of the book planned as a guidance for collectors is devoted to identification and dating of old photographs, and includes instructions for the conservation of old photographs, including their storage.

The book is beautifully designed, not only thanks to the carefully selected old photographs but also its graphic design. Apart from well-presented photographs, we can see their backs and adverts, as the photograph's value lies also in their reverse sides, which are not only well designed but also help in dating the photograph. Also described and presented are attractive frames, cases, and albums, including jewellery with small photographs inserted.

Its annexes include the most important dates in the history of photography, listing names of the first nomadic daguerreotypists on Polish soil (both Poles and foreigners), and giving a list of the first photographic ateliers. It also includes addresses of the most important institutions collecting photographs both in Poland and abroad, and addresses of galleries and auction houses as well as selected clubs of photography collectors and photographic journals. A bibliography and index of names complete this volume.

This is an interesting book that definitely fulfils its mission.

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