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Karen Hellman

HIPPOLYTE BAYARD



Inventor

Hippolyte Bayard (1801–1887) occupies a paradoxical place in the history of photography: he is perhaps best known as the least-known inventor of the medium. Though he would ultimately receive France’s highest accolade, the Chevalier of the Legion of Honor, his fame never came close to that of his contemporaries Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre (1787–1851) and William Henry Fox Talbot (1800–1877), whose accomplishments were highly touted and who were much better connected than Bayard. Daguerre was entrenched in Paris’s artistic and scientific milieus and Talbot, a polymath and an aristocrat, was a member of the Royal Society in London. In contrast, Bayard worked as a civil servant and pursued photography in his spare time. He was seen as a reticent perfectionist who refused to share his processes openly with the photographic community. From his first chemical experiments to his early exhibitions, to his later cofounding of photographic societies and a portrait studio, he operated with a “do-it-yourself” mentality, pursuing his photographic investigations in his own way and in his own time.

Bayard’s precise, individual approach is on display in an 1839 “recipe” for one of his photographic processes (fig. 18). Written in brown ink on ordinary writing paper, it begins with the timing, down to the minute, and then carefully documents the chemical steps that led to the manifestation of an image on paper.

Early Years

Bayard was born in Breteuil-sur-Noye, France, in the northern region of Picardie. Surrounded by verdant farmland and situated on major routes between Amiens to the north and Paris to the south, Breteuil was a small provincial town that served as a local seat of government. Both sides of his family had been well established in the area since the 1700s. His mother, Marie-Elizabeth-Adélaïde Vaconsin, came from a family of locksmiths, bootmakers, and profes-

sional gardeners. His father, Emmanuel, grandfather Louis Bayard, and other relatives worked in regional offices of justice and administration.² Bayard had an older brother, Louis-Emmanuel; a sister, Elizabeth-Mélanie; and a paternal uncle, Henry Cyr Charles Aimé Bayard, who lived in the family home. Edmond Geffroy (1804–1895) was Bayard’s closest childhood friend, and the two often explored the countryside together, sometimes hunting with Geffroy’s father. It has been assumed that both boys were drawn to the arts—Bayard practiced drawing and Geffroy was interested in theater and painting.³ The friends would remain close until Bayard’s death.

A frequently recounted anecdote from Bayard’s childhood involves his father, an eminent justice of the peace who liked to grow peaches. Emmanuel Bayard supposedly developed a method of labeling his fruit through

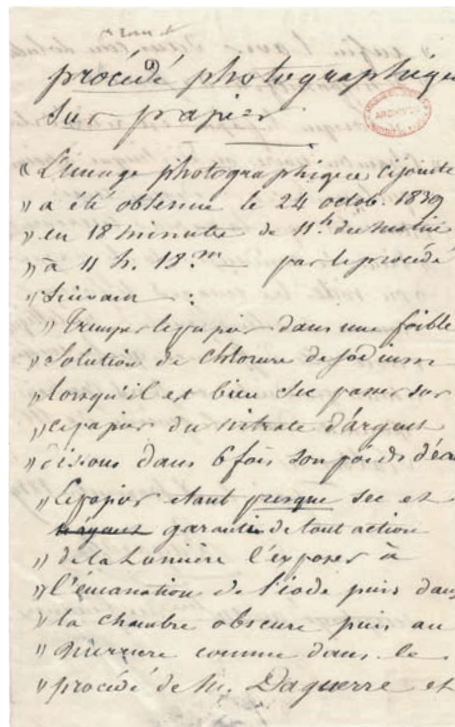


Fig. 18 Hippolyte Bayard (French, 1801–1887), letter to the Académie des sciences, dated November 8, 1839, deposited November 11, 1839, pp. 1–2. Paris, Archives of the Académie des sciences, pli cacheté no. 141

photographic process
on paper

The photographic image
attached was obtained on
the 24th of octob. 1839
in 18 minutes from 11 o'clock
in the morning to 11:18—
by the following process:

Soak the paper in a weak
Solution of sodium chloride[.]
once it is very dry[,] spread
on the paper silver nitrate
dissolved in 6 times
its weight of water...¹

photosynthesis, which involved wrapping each peach in a colored-paper stencil of his initials so that the surrounding skin would darken as the fruit ripened. This use of sunlight to create an indelible mark is often cited as a potential catalyst for Bayard's embrace of photography (fig. 19).⁴

At the age of fourteen, Bayard was admitted as a day student to a minor seminary about eighteen miles from Breteuil, with the goal of becoming a priest; it isn't clear whether he completed his studies there. Later, perhaps inspired by his father's successful government career, Bayard probably trained as a clerk with a local notary.

Bayard and Artists in Paris, 1820s–30s

In 1824 Bayard and Geffroy moved to Paris, joining a mass migration of youths to the

capital. With his clerical training from Breteuil, Bayard found employment as a clerk in the Ministry of Finance; he would work there for more than four decades. The extroverted Geffroy entered the Comédie-Française, where he would become a lifelong actor, inventing characters and designing costumes.⁵ Geffroy took painting lessons with Eugène Emmanuel Amaury-Duval (1808–1885), a student of the Neoclassical painter Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780–1867), who was known for his lifelike, antique-inspired portraits. With his innate interest in art, Bayard probably accompanied Geffroy on visits to Ingres's studio. This friendship with Amaury-Duval expanded Bayard's creative network,⁶ and the latter's vivid renderings of historical as well as present-day sitters informed by his famous teacher likely influenced Bayard's later photographic portraits. A drawing of Bayard by Amaury-Duval, dated 1867, points to their enduring friendship (fig. 20).⁷

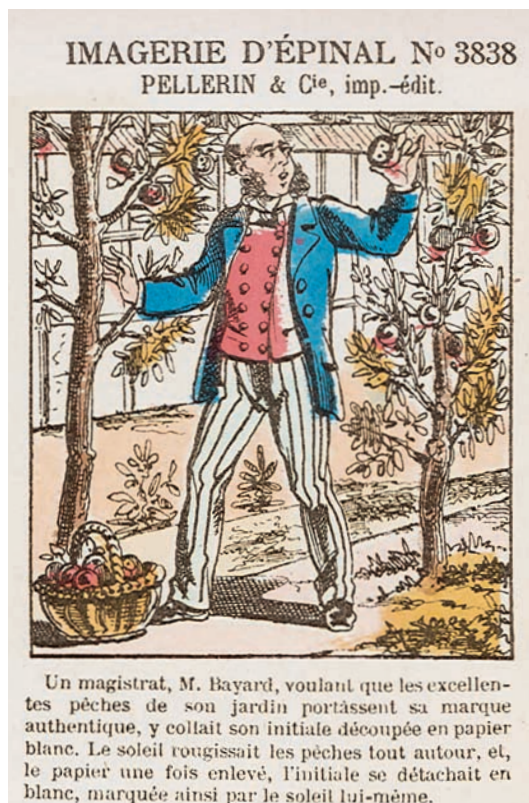


Fig. 19 Glucq (French, active late 19th century to early 20th century), "History of Photography," *Imagerie d'Épinal*, no. 3838 (December 31, 1884)



Fig. 20 Eugène Emmanuel Amaury-Duval (French, 1808–1885), Portrait of Hippolyte Bayard, 1867. Pencil and chalk on paper, 48.3 × 37.5 cm (19 × 14¾ in.). Paris, Société française de photographie, SFP 117 DA 1

Bayard's circle of acquaintances included illustrators and painters of miniatures, crucial members of Paris's artistic scene of the 1830s. Among them: Daniel Saint (1778–1847), one of the most respected miniature painters of his time; Henri Grévedon (1776–1860), a notable lithographer of theater and art personalities; and Paul Gavarni (1804–1866), a caricaturist of contemporary figures. Both Grévedon and Gavarni were also friends of Daguerre, placing Bayard within a social milieu that would overlap with his life in photography. During this time he befriended the painter Jules Claude Ziegler (1804–1856; plate 79), another student of Ingres, whom he would instruct in photography. Bayard would later connect with the younger illustrator Charles Albert d'Arnoux (1820–1882), known as Bertall (plates 184–200), whose unfiltered observations of Parisian society would populate newspapers and satirical journals as well as the novels of realist writer Honoré de Balzac. In the 1860s Bayard and Bertall would open a photography studio together—a testament to their camaraderie and shared interests. Lacking the social and political connections of Daguerre and Talbot, Bayard depended on these relationships to provide the support and stimuli that would sustain his photographic pursuits, which were further buoyed by a steady income and a fascination with and impulse to experiment in the new medium.

First Discoveries

We will never know precisely why Bayard decided to embark on photography, but, given his friendships with artists and lithographers who also knew Daguerre, Bayard had likely heard of Daguerre's photographic attempts as early as 1835, around the time they were first disclosed.⁸

Daguerre had collaborated with an earlier inventor, Joseph Nicéphore Niépce (1765–1833), until the latter's sudden death. By 1835 Daguerre had succeeded in capturing a “latent

image”—an invisible image that could be made visible through chemical development—but the process was still unreliable and the images fairly unstable. Daguerre's eponymous “daguerreotype” process would not be announced until January 1839, and his technique for producing images on silver-plated copper would be made public only in August of that year.

According to Bayard's contemporaries, his own investigations into the light-sensitive properties of silver chloride originated in 1838.⁹ In contrast to Daguerre's use of metal, Bayard chose paper as a support, and his notations in the *Album d'essais* [Album of Experiments], held by the Société française de photographie (SFP), record his initial forays into paper photography on January 20, 1839, his thirty-eighth birthday. From there his experiments progressed rapidly, for only two weeks later, on February 5, he showed some of his first paper negatives to physicist César Despretz (1791–1863).¹⁰ Bayard's entries of March 20 attest to his earliest successes creating direct positives on paper using the camera obscura, an artist's tool made of a wooden box with a lens that casts an image onto a sheet of glass. He did not wait to share this news; on March 22 he showed his first achievements to Grévedon.¹¹

Emboldened by his colleagues' enthusiasm and his many explorations in the ensuing weeks, Bayard approached members of the Académie des sciences: physicist and mathematician Jean-Baptiste Biot (1774–1862) on May 13, followed by a visit with the influential astronomer and politician François Arago (1786–1853) a week later. Permanent secretary of the Académie des sciences and director of the Paris Observatory, Arago was one of the first individuals with whom Daguerre had shared his process in 1838. Enamored of the daguerreotype's precision and its ostensible possibilities for the French government, Arago had thrown his support behind Daguerre in early 1839. He would soon arrange for the French photographer to receive a lifetime pension in return for

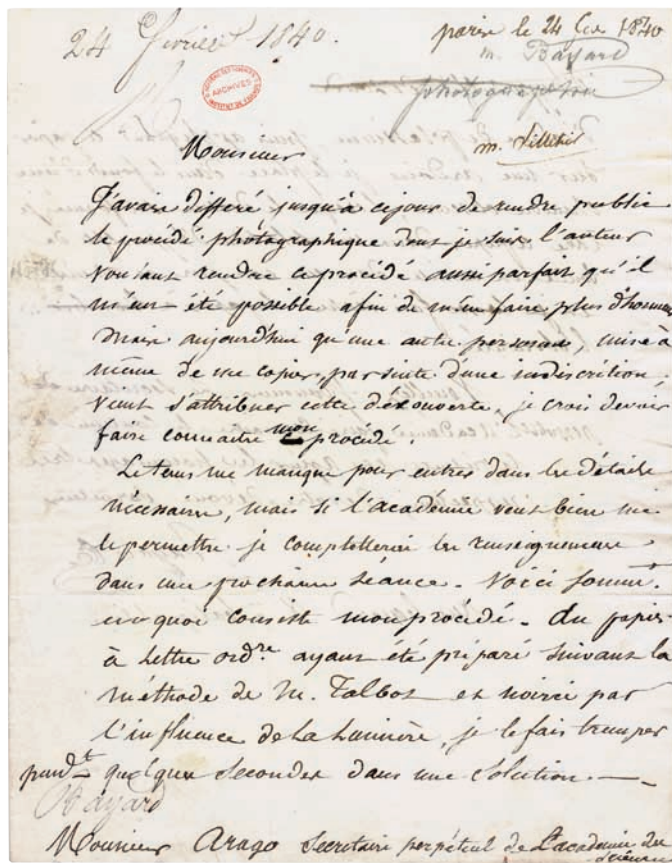


Fig. 21 Hippolyte Bayard (French, 1801–1887), letter to François Arago dated February 24, 1840, p. 1. Paris, Archives of the Académie des sciences, Poquette de la séance 24 février 1840 (see “Recipes,” Set 2, Letter A)

the rights to his method. Possibly biased by his support of Daguerre, Arago dissuaded Bayard from publicly announcing his discoveries.¹²

In July 1839 Bayard presented examples of his direct positive prints (his “second process,” described below) in what is now recognized as the world’s first display of photography in an art exhibition. Held to benefit the victims of an earthquake in Martinique, the exhibition also included paintings by contemporary artists as well as celebrated figures such as Nicolas Poussin (1594–1665) and Rembrandt van Rijn (1606–1669). To make this leap within months of his earliest experiments was extraordinary, as was Bayard’s recognition that the future of photography as an art lay in exhibitions. This

one—covered in French newspapers such as *Le Moniteur Universel*, the official journal of the French government—brought Bayard widespread publicity.¹³

Nonetheless, his photographs would be outshone and outpublicized amid Arago and Daguerre’s August revelation of the daguerreotype process to members of the Académie des sciences and the Académie des beaux-arts.¹⁴ Seeking to build institutional support for his own discoveries, in September Bayard wrote to the Académie des beaux-arts asking to submit some of his direct positives for study, and in October he demonstrated his process to a group of academicians. Having agreed with Arago not to further publicize his invention, on November 8, 1839, Bayard forwarded documentation on his latent image process (his first process) to the Académie des sciences in a *pli cacheté* (sealed letter), perhaps thinking that at least in the future he could claim his invention’s precedence. That future moment came sooner than he anticipated. After learning in February 1840 of another paper process possibly similar to his direct positive, Bayard sent a letter to Arago, describing his process (fig. 21). He explained that he lacked the time to enumerate every detail of his method and promised to submit a fuller description to a future meeting. In February 1841 he sent a letter to the Académie requesting that they open the November 1839 *pli cacheté* (see “Recipes,” Set 1, Letter B).

Bayard’s direct positive process on paper is the method most unique to Bayard and the one with which he is frequently credited in histories of photography.¹⁵ Prompted by the success of Daguerre’s positive images on copper, Bayard turned to the creation of positives on paper. He employed silver chloride to blacken the paper in the sun and then dipped the sheet in potassium iodide before exposing it in the camera obscura. The result: the image’s highlights were rendered as light, and the darks appeared dark in the final print—a direct positive (fig. 22).¹⁶ Although his images were less impressive than those on the polished, mirror-like surfaces of

daguerreotypes, Bayard's process was highly innovative, especially given his lack of knowledge of Daguerre's method. The attempt to use paper rather than metal was prescient, as within a few decades paper would become the dominant support for photographic positives. (It should be noted that Bayard was aware of the parallel experiments of Talbot,¹⁷ who in 1834 had obtained photogenic drawings on paper—made by placing an object onto a sensitized piece of paper and exposing it to sunlight—but he arrived at his own method of paper photography independently.)

The events of 1839, whereby Bayard found himself overshadowed by his more illustrious contemporaries, compose the best-known period in his career. Deepened by continued frustrations, in October 1840 Bayard created

his most famous image using the direct positive process: *Le Noyé* [The Drowned Man] (plates 8–11). Among the earliest examples of staged photography, *Le Noyé* depicts the photographer as a suicide victim: half-nude, leaning in repose as if on display in the Paris morgue, and surrounded by props familiar from his early images (a porcelain vase, a hat, drapery). The self-portrait, which exists in three variants in the SFP collection, was accompanied by a dramatic note bemoaning his lack of recognition as an inventor of photography.¹⁸

Recurrent Themes

Prior to *Le Noyé*, Bayard had toyed with multiple scenarios using his large collection of plaster statuettes (plates 4–7), likely acquired through



Fig. 22 Hippolyte Bayard (French, 1801–1887), *Self-Portrait, Cupid and Psyche by Francesco Maximilien Laboureur, and Mask*, ca. 1839–40. Direct positive print, 15 × 14 cm (5²⁹/₃₂ × 5¹/₂ in.). Paris, Société française de photographie, SFP 24 POD 268



Fig. 23 Hippolyte Bayard (French, 1801–1887), *Near the Batignolles Market*, 1839–40. Direct positive print, 18.5 × 19.7 cm (7¼ × 7¾ in.). Paris, Société française de photographie, SFP 24 POD 45

his creative network. The white sculptures were useful for early photographs in various ways: they reflected light; they could withstand the long exposures; and they provided an apt vehicle for repeated preparatory drawings, even three-dimensional studies, of a single subject. Over two hundred direct positives in the SFP holdings depicting statuettes in diverse configurations attest to Bayard's continual exploration of their visual possibilities.

Bayard often placed himself alongside his plaster casts, lending a sense of scale while adopting the stillness and posture of his plaster companions (plate 27). These sculptures include a statuette of Cupid and Psyche embracing,

featured in an image accompanying Bayard's *pli cacheté* of November 8, 1839 (plates 2, 6);¹⁹ Étienne-Maurice Falconet's (1716–1791) *Bather* (plates 5, 26a–c); and *Young Slave and Venus, Surprised* (plate 25), photographed from the rooftop of the Ministry of Finance, his place of employment.

Another recurrent motif is Bayard's garden in Batignolles,²⁰ on the outskirts of Paris.²¹ Along with personal significance—there were gardeners on both sides of his family—the garden was a fruitful outdoor studio as well as a backdrop for various portraits. The trellis garden gate, composed of wooden pickets with slanting latticework, was a motif that held

special fascination for Bayard.²² In two different staged scenes, a trio of figures, including a young girl identified as Georgina Benoist,²³ appear by the gate (plates 53, 54). The garden also figures in a print of four women gathered around a small table (plate 51). In front of the table rests a watering can—an object that perhaps acts as a stand-in for the photographer and that appears often in Bayard's oeuvre, including in still-life arrangements with other gardening tools. Also set in Bayard's garden is *Two Women Embroidering Outdoors* (plate 52), in which the light falling on the pair enhances their quiet attention to their work.

Bayard was also drawn to the backyards and streets beyond his garden, the focus of several photographs from the 1840s. Two images angled down a street picturing the rue de la Condamine, one a salted paper print (plate 142) and the other using the daguerreotype process (plate 141), catch the reflection of water and the slant of sunlight between rooftops. These visions of urban passages are remarkably early treatments of these spaces—spaces that became favored photographic subjects decades later in the work of Eugène Atget (1857–1927) and Paul Strand (1890–1976), among others.

As in these two images, Bayard often photographed backyards of neighboring buildings from high-up vantage points. Direct positives taken from or featuring rooftops—often that of the Ministry of Finance—figure in some of his earliest photographs of Batignolles, such as *Near the Batignolles Market* (fig. 23). *Interior Courtyard and Rooftops near rue Boursault and Batignolles Market* (plate 139) reveals careful attention to the diagonals and verticals of the rooftops and the garden walls. Some photographs, among them *Corner of an Empty Lot, Batignolles* (plate 146) and its negative (plate 145), convey a sense of the emptiness surrounding the buildings, while others, like *Rooftops and Houses near the Batignolles Market* (plate 150), emphasize the condensed layering of buildings, chimneys, and signage. Bayard also observed human touches. A photograph of the

shuttered *Marché Batignolles*, for example, includes a line of carefully tended potted plants along a ledge (fig. 24).

Bayard also pictured scenes of Montmartre, an area to the east of Batignolles he frequently visited.²⁴ *Ancient Reservoir, Place Jean-Baptiste Clément, Montmartre* (plate 152) includes a sun-hatted figure peering through the iron gate that surrounds the reservoir, a stand-in of sorts for the photographer and the viewer alike. Several images picture the windmills of Montmartre (plate 157)—a motif emblematic of old Paris that would disappear amid Haussmannization²⁵ in the coming decades. Situated on a bluff possibly near Montmartre, *Dilapidated Shack* (plate 159) focuses on the seemingly abandoned barn, with the sunlight filtered through the spaces between the wooden boards. A figure in white reclines on a hillside next

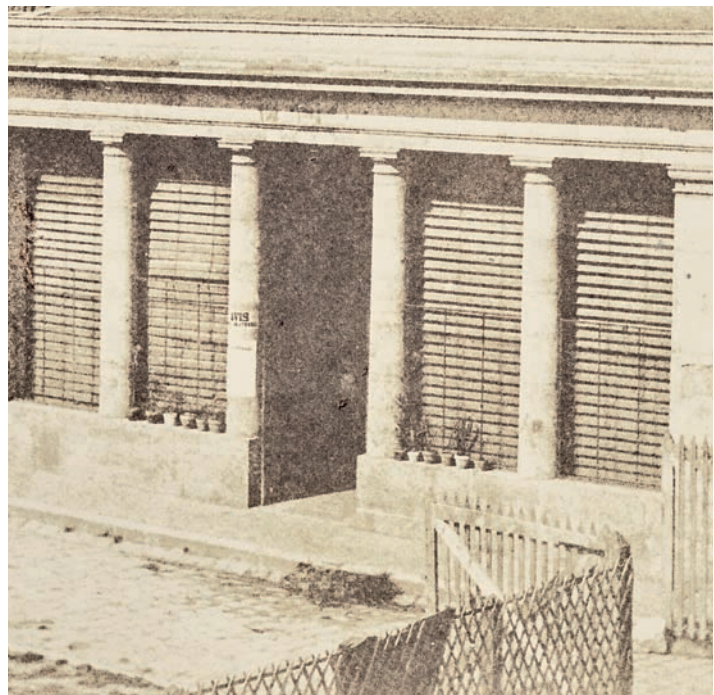


Fig. 24 Hippolyte Bayard (French, 1801–1887), Detail of plate 143, Batignolles Market, ca. 1845–49

to a wooden structure with a stone column for support (fig. 25).

Perhaps because he himself grew up in a region that was rural and bureaucratic, Bayard was drawn to the edges of Paris, to areas that composed a liminal space between the city and the provinces. These areas were just outside the import-tax offices and were filled with merchants, and eventually artists, benefiting from low rents and customers attracted by untaxed goods. Bayard photographed empty buildings in disrepair, including Country House in Ruins (plates 158, 160) which appears twice in the Getty album and in two different hues, suggesting that Bayard liked the image and experimented with different recipes for its rendition.



Fig. 25 Hippolyte Bayard (French, 1801–1887), Detail of plate 159, Dilapidated Shack, ca. 1840–49

While photographing his immediate residential surroundings and the outskirts outside of work hours, Bayard also documented the monuments of central Paris within walking distance of his day job. His focus on the changing urban landscape constitutes the largest group of photographs in the Getty album, including views of the building projects underway during the July Monarchy (1830–48): the place de la Concorde (plates 85, 86), the Arc de Triomphe (plates 107–10), and the fountain of the Church of Saint-Sulpice (plates 103–6), as well as sites under construction. At Notre-Dame Cathedral, he kept within the frame the piles of stone under the Saint-Étienne portal (plate 98) along with the scaffolding as it was being renovated in 1847 (plate 100). Scaffolding appears in several images, including some devoted to the Galerie de la Madeleine (plates 90, 91). One photograph, taken from the steps of the Church of the Madeleine and facing the place de la Concorde (plate 94), captures the barricades on the rue Royale erected amid the revolution of February 1848. The composition centers the lamppost, beyond which the barricades, the obelisk of the place de la Concorde, and the Dôme des Invalides align: a powerful record of recent political events.²⁶ This print's significance and rarity in Bayard's oeuvre cannot be overstated (the Getty collection includes one hand-colored print of the image [plate 95], and the SFP holdings include another print from a nearby vantage).²⁷ From here on, he focused on documenting Second Republic (1848–52) construction built in response to the 1848 uprising and increasingly worked with albumen on glass negatives.

Renovation and New Photographic Societies

Bayard's interest in renovation resonated more broadly with the activities of the Commission des monuments historiques, founded in 1837 to document and restore structures significant to France's cultural heritage. In 1843 the archi-

tect Félix Duban (1798–1870), in charge of restoring the Château de Blois in the Loire Valley, hired Bayard to document the château in a series of daguerreotypes. The fine lines of the daguerreotype—the process that eclipsed Bayard’s own in 1839—deemed it the most suitable photographic method for capturing architectural details. Several of Bayard’s daguerreotypes are monumental in themselves for their exquisite rendering. In *Château de Blois, François I Staircase* (plate 165), one can discern two figures standing on the edge of the crumbling stonework; the detail conveys the scale and grandeur of the structure as well as its need for restoration.

The Commission was instrumental in establishing the Mission héliographique, the first publicly funded undertaking devoted to photographing France’s ancient and medieval monuments. Bayard was among five photographers selected; the others were Édouard Baldus (1813–1882), Gustave Le Gray (1820–1884), Henri Le Secq (1818–1882), and Auguste Mestral (1812–1884). Bayard’s work with Duban, along with his submission of prints from albumen on glass negatives to the *Exposition nationale des produits de l’industrie agricole et manufacturière* of 1849, recommended him for the project.²⁸ As he had a job in the capital, Bayard was assigned to areas that were accessible by day trips to the north and west of Paris. In October 1851 critic Francis Wey (1812–1882) reviewed some of Bayard’s images for the Mission, commenting on his photographs of Rouen Cathedral taken from different vantage points.²⁹ Following this article, however, no further notice was made of Bayard’s photographs. Unlike the other photographers who used paper negatives, Bayard employed glass negatives, which may explain why none survived and why no prints remain in the Mission archive.³⁰ While Bayard’s works for the project were never published or exhibited, those of Le Gray and Baldus became iconic images of 1850s French photography.³¹ The sharpness of Le Gray’s and Baldus’s prints — the former using waxed paper negatives and

the latter a layer of gelatin—garnered considerable praise.

Debates and Collaborations

Criticism of Bayard often points to the fact that his inventions were never implemented, whereas those of his contemporaries—the daguerreotype, the calotype, the waxed paper negative—were all published, taught, and practiced by photographers until the more commercially oriented processes using premade albumen paper were adopted starting in the 1850s.³² But this did not deter Bayard. In January 1851 he became a founding member of one of the first photographic associations, the Société héliographique, formed by a small but enthusiastic cohort of photographers, writers, and scientists to focus on improvements to the medium.

Bayard was placed on a committee to research French photographic papers, for which he was well suited, having explored this question in his earlier processes.³³ A note included with his third recipe, deposited at the Académie des sciences in October 1845, states that he had been working to develop a suitable French paper so that he would not need to continue using English papers. “French paper . . . cannot be employed for the process that I have the honor to communicate at the Academy. I’ve had . . . to make use of English papers made by Watman [*sic*], but the manufacturing tests that I am having done right now will probably make me able to free myself of this obligation.”³⁴ *View of a Building under Construction* (plate 137) includes an inscription written by Bayard on the negative: “First type of a new process on French paper, May 26, 1847.”

A leitmotif in Bayard’s life and work is that he often claimed precedent for something after the fact, having delayed his announcement at the time. For example, he credited his interest in finding a French paper for his photographs as his reason for postponing the announcement of his third process, revealing the latent image (the image created in the camera obscura that

was not visible on the paper until manifested via chemistry), which he submitted to the Académie in October 1845.³⁵ He was prompted to make this claim in *La Lumière* in 1851 upon the publication of a letter from Louis-Désiré Blanquart-Evrard (1802–1872), a Lille-based cloth merchant and later publisher, relaying his discoveries regarding the latent image from 1847.³⁶ Similarly, in the next issue of the journal, Bayard announced that his fourth process—using paper after it had dried and adding hydrochloric acid to accelerate the positive print—had been developed in 1845 and deposited in a *pli cacheté* on December 14, 1846. In that missive he had included “36 drawings” (none have survived) along with a description of the process: an “original type” that can produce “40,000 examples.”³⁷ In 1849, after his prints made from albumen on glass negatives were exhibited at the *Exposition nationale des produits de l’industrie agricole et manufacturière*, Bayard also claimed that he had worked with albumen on glass prior to Abel Niépce de St. Victor (1805–1870), who had presented his method to the Académie in 1847.³⁸

Bayard’s intuitive style derived from his do-it-yourself approach to photography. Not easily described through written instructions, Bayard’s methods were akin to verbal recipes through demonstration and conversation. In an 1852 letter to the artist Vicomte de Dax (1816–1872), he explained that he had endeavored on numerous occasions to write a practical manual of photography but questioned whether such a publication would in fact be useful. As he explained, there is certain information, particularly regarding glass, that could only be written very incompletely, and that one experience does not suffice to “fully understand.”³⁹

Yet, in his own way, Bayard reinforced his legacy as a persistent inventor in the early development of photography through his mentorship of fellow and future practitioners. Despite his reputation for rarely sharing or publishing his experiments, Bayard has been acknowledged as a teacher whose students

included the chemist and physicist Victor Regnault (1810–1878) and photographer Louis-Adolphe Humbert de Molard (1800–1874). His collaborators returned the favor with recognition and praise. Jules Claude Ziegler, whom Bayard likely instructed in photography in the 1840s, consulted with him on questions concerning the properties of different colors during exposure on the sensitized plate and published Bayard’s findings in his *Traité de la couleur et de la lumière* (1852).⁴⁰ Ziegler defended his friend’s delay in sharing his research on collodion, explaining that he was “too timid to publish his discoveries.”⁴¹ In his review of the Exposition Universelle of 1855, where Bayard won a first-class medal for his reproductions of works of art, Ziegler asserted Bayard’s place as “the earliest French photographer,” claiming that his discoveries predated Daguerre’s publication of his process.⁴² Another student was the architect François-Auguste Renard (1806–1890), who pronounced his teacher’s submission to the Great Exhibition in London in 1851 (seventeen prints) “the most beautiful of this genre.”⁴³

By 1852 Bayard and Renard had formed a partnership, producing prints for Blanquart-Evrard’s photographic printing company, Imprimerie Photographique de Lille (plates 177, 180–83), among the first of its kind.⁴⁴ Though Bayard had been claiming priority over Blanquart-Evrard of certain processes, perhaps his curiosity regarding all aspects of photography—in this case, using the medium for art reproduction—surpassed his need to claim precedent. The collaboration with Renard was successful but short-lived, as Bayard was involved with other projects and still working full-time at his administrative job. An article appearing in *La Lumière* in 1853 mentions that because Bayard was busy at the Ministry of Finance, Renard would undertake a large portion of the work for the Lille publisher.⁴⁵ Bayard and Renard’s collaboration disbanded in late 1854, when Renard left Paris.

Further Experimentation

On March 31, 1853, the Société héliographique was dissolved. The following year many of its members, Bayard included, founded the Société française de photographie (SFP), a larger, more diverse group of practitioners that looked to the future of the medium. Bayard served on the board and appeared regularly in *La Lumière*⁴⁶ as well as in the SFP journal, *Bulletin de la Société française de photographie (BSFP)*, both through his own writing and through texts by others reporting on his experiments.

During and after his life, Bayard was described as a “tireless searcher.”⁴⁷ This is evident in his persistent exploration of a range of processes then being addressed in photographic journals. In a July 1854 issue of *La Lumière*, Bayard published his findings on albumen prints.⁴⁸ The following year he reviewed a treatise on collodion photography by Désiré van Monckhoven (1834–1884). The review offers a critique and recommendations, evincing Bayard’s knowledge of different chemical processes.⁴⁹ In an 1857 issue of *BSFP*, he contributed a note regarding a paper-photography process using silver chloride developed in gallic acid as well as a method for lifting a collodion image off glass to transfer to paper.⁵⁰ In 1858 Bayard published his findings on collodion albumen and gold chloride.⁵¹ The following year he collaborated with Olympe Aguado (1827–1894) on experiments, inspired by Auguste-Adolphe Bertsch (1813–1871), into enlarging photographs;⁵² the study continued until 1864, when he participated in an examination of the enlargement process developed by Alphonse Liebert (1826–1914).⁵³ In 1865 Bayard joined a commission studying the use of aniline-fabric hues to color positive prints.⁵⁴ Bayard also served on juries of SFP exhibitions from 1855 until 1876 and acted as secretary general of the association from 1866 until 1881, when he was named honorary secretary general. Also in the 1850s Bayard served on the committee deciding the parameters of the 1856 contest,

proposed and funded by the nobleman and scholar Honoré d’Albert, duc de Luynes (1802–1867), to determine the best method for transferring photographs in printers’ ink.⁵⁵

A Photographic Portrait Studio

Another aspect of Bayard’s pioneering role in photography is his portraiture. The Getty album includes remarkably early paper portraits of individuals and couples posed in front of a sheet in Bayard’s garden in Batignolles,⁵⁶ in which the subjects are often seated in a chair or leaning against a table. As in his depictions of the young girl believed to be Georgina Benoist (plates 55–57) and his portrayals of several as yet unidentified sitters, both male and female (plates 58–78), Bayard captured his subjects’ expressions and gestures so vividly that they almost seem to be seated before us. Since the only portrait studios in Paris at that time produced daguerreotypes, Bayard was perhaps countering these with his own paper portraits.⁵⁷ The advent of collodion on glass negatives and albumen paper in the early 1850s led to important developments in portraiture.

This early experience with portraiture reemerged in Bayard’s oeuvre in 1860 when he opened a commercial portrait studio with Bertall. Acknowledged as one of the greatest caricaturists of his time, his work appearing in humor periodicals of the 1840s including *La revue comique*, *Journal amusant*, and *Journal pour rire*, Bertall undoubtedly proved a beneficial partner in soliciting clientele and perhaps putting them at ease. Bayard, by contrast, would have been the more reserved, technically proficient member of the duo, with the known name in photography. “Bayard et Bertall” was situated at 15 boulevard de la Madeleine, a quiet street close to the Ministry of Finance.⁵⁸ The studio occupied three stories that housed salons, a waiting room, posing studios, and darkrooms, as well as a room for gravure.⁵⁹

Bayard et Bertall specialized in carte-de-visite portraits, a format that enabled them to

quickly render their subjects in multiple poses and costumes. The Getty collection holds more than twenty individual cartes de visite by the pair, two in albums of the Champagny/Duchanoy families (plates 185, 186) and two in the *Second Empire Court Album of Napoléon III* (ca. 1862–72). Compared to portraits by their contemporaries such as André Adolphe-Eugène Disdéri (1819–1889), the studio employed minimal props. The subjects generally stand or lean calmly at a table before a plain backdrop. In one image, a woman in a white dress stands and stares back without expression, one hand resting on a table holding books and a small box (plate 190). In another, a gentleman leans on the same table, his jacket pulled back to reveal his watch chain and buttoned waistcoat (plate

194). “Bayard & Bertall, Phot.” typically appears at the lower left edge of the pair’s portraits. Their insignia on the verso is simple as well, a ring on which “Bayard” at the top and “& Bertall” at the lower edge are suspended over rays of sunlight (plate 184).

In 1863 Bayard received the prestigious Chevalier of the Legion of Honor, having been nominated by French diplomat and amateur daguerreotypist Baron Jean-Baptiste Gros (1793–1870) and banker and art historian Benjamin Delessert (1817–1868) following the 1862 International Exhibition in London, where Bayard and Bertall had received a medal.⁶⁰ An albumen self-portrait, made in his studio with Bertall, pictures him proudly displaying the Legion of Honor (plate 204). A series of photographs made in their studio (plates 201–3) attests that Bayard continued to create inventive photographs, playful images that combine two different exposures of Bayard enacting a staged conversation between the photographer and himself. In 1866 he left the partnership, and Bertall went on to found a new studio known as “Bertall d’Arnoux et Cie.”⁶¹ Although it is not known why the partnership disbanded, Bayard, having received the Legion of Honor, was likely looking ahead to retirement.⁶²

Beyond Photography

Bayard retired from the Ministry of Finance in 1863 and began visiting his childhood friend Geffroy in Saint-Pierre-lès-Nemours, located about ninety kilometers south of Paris, for two or three months at a time. There, he returned to painting, continuing at least into the 1870s (fig. 27).⁶³ His life took a turn when his sister died in Breteuil in 1878. After visiting his hometown and attending to his family’s affairs (he was now the sole survivor, as neither he nor his brother or sister had partners or children), Bayard stayed in Paris for two more years. A letter from Geffroy to Amaury-Duval in 1878 comments on Bayard’s failing health but does not provide further details. When, in 1881, Louis-Alphonse



Fig. 26 Bayard and Bertall (est. 1860), Interior view of the Bayard and Bertall studio. Albumen silver print, 8.5 × 7.5 cm (3³/₁₆ × 2¹⁵/₁₆ in.). France, Private collection



Fig. 27 Hippolyte Bayard (French, 1801–1887), *Clearing in the Saint-Pierre-lès-Nemours Forest*, 1872. Oil on canvas, 40.5 × 53 cm (15¹⁵/₁₆ × 20⁷/₈ in.). France, Private collection

Davanne (1824–1912), one of the founding members of the SFP, proposed that Bayard be named honorary secretary general, he also remarked on the poor state of Bayard’s health.⁶⁴ Bayard had moved to Nemours by 1880, renting an apartment not far from Geffroy. After several years of retirement there, during which he visited often with Geffroy and perhaps also painted, Bayard died on May 14, 1887.

Although known for undertaking many experiments and counterexperiments prior to sharing his discoveries and for adopting a reticent posture in contrast to the louder experimenters around him, Bayard was also recognized for his tenacity. “Bayard robbed in his modesty, a discovery that he didn’t expect to be genius . . . he will at least leave to photography his experience and improvements . . . His inven-

tive and patient spirit seeks without stopping.”⁶⁵ Some histories of photography focus on the artistic versus the scientific aspects of the medium’s inventors, although more recent accounts have expanded their purview, departing from this strict dichotomy.⁶⁶ Bayard, who had a natural facility for photography and lacked a science or advanced art background, inspires us to look beyond either context. He was a pioneer who worked intuitively and who perhaps found photography the best vehicle for this kind of invention. If his paradoxical place in the history of photography matters, perhaps it is to illustrate the precariousness of the medium’s beginnings. Bayard created much out of little, and in that sense his story could represent what could be achieved by any person, anywhere: *anyone* is capable of invention.

- 1 See “Recipes,” Set 1, Letter A.
- 2 Keeler 1991, 20–21. For a history of the Bayard family and its roots in Picardie, see Capronnier 2005a.
- 3 See Capronnier 2005a. For the early lives of Bayard and Geffroy in Breteuil, see Bourgeois 2005.
- 4 Boulongne 1854, 19–20.
- 5 Geffroy signed a contract with the famous theater company in July 1829.
- 6 See Keeler 1991, 24–25, who indicates that a precise date of Geffroy’s, and possibly Bayard’s, lessons with Amaury-Duval is not known, although they likely occurred prior to 1834 and possibly by 1829.
- 7 See Keeler 1991, 26.
- 8 Houssaye 1835.
- 9 See “Chronology” in this volume.
- 10 See Roubert’s essay in this volume.
- 11 See Keeler 1991, p. 28; and Roubert’s essay in this volume.
- 12 Lacan 1854, 140. “At *the express request* of M. Arago, M. Bayard consented to delay his communication to the Academy, until the reward was granted.”
- 13 See Roubert’s essay in this volume.
- 14 Roubert 2005a. Even Désiré Raoul-Rochette’s (1790–1854) report from the Académie des beaux-arts in November 1839 did not remedy his lack of acknowledgment.
- 15 See Newhall 1939, 1949; also Marien 2002, among others.
- 16 “Recipes,” Set 2, Letter A.
- 17 See Peter’s and Roubert’s essays in this volume.
- 18 See Lerner 2014. Different writers have variously interpreted this image; see Lerner, “Le Noyé [The Drowned Man],” and “Paul Mpagi Sepuya and Hippolyte Bayard,” both in this volume.
- 19 See Kaplan and Passafiume’s text in this volume.
- 20 When Bayard first moved to Batignolles-Monceaux, it was a small village outside of the city that was slowly evolving, as Paris expanded to the north and west. Near his house at 8 rue de Bénard (today rue Bour-sault) ran a new railroad line from Saint-Germain-en-Laye to Paris, constructed in 1837. Keeler 1987, 12n42; according to Keeler 1987, he lived at that address in 1839.
- 21 See Frizot 1986, 2018.
- 22 See Ganz’s and Keeler’s texts in this volume.
- 23 Attribution suggested by Denis Canguilhem.
- 24 Batignolles-Monceaux and Montmartre, along with nine other communes, lost independence from Paris on January 1, 1860, by imperial decree. Keeler 1987, 11.
- 25 Georges-Eugène Haussmann (1809–1891), prefect of the Seine under Napoléon III, was in charge of the urban renewal project—known as Haussmannization (1853–70)—that transformed the medieval city of Paris into a modern capital.
- 26 For further context on Bayard’s photographs of this area, see Denton 2022.
- 27 There are also three paper negatives related to this view in the SFP collection.
- 28 *Catalogue officiel: Exposition nationale des produits de l’industrie agricole et manufacturière* 1849, 311; see also de Mondenard 2002, 185.
- 29 Wey 1851e.
- 30 Six proofs are extant. Two—a print of Notre-Dame de Mantes and one of Notre-Dame de Louviers—remain in the Paul Jeffrain album in the SFP collection. A print of the exterior of the Château de Falaise (plate 173) is in the Brebisson album in the collection of the Musée d’Orsay, Paris.
- 31 de Mondenard 2002, 194–95, relates this to Bayard in general and how he rarely communicated the status of his work.
- 32 de Mondenard 2002, 195. Le Gray notes, “It is to be regretted that M. Bayard never published or could assign a certain date to his processes.”
- 33 Bayard 1851a.
- 34 See “Recipes,” Set 3, Letter A.
- 35 Martin 1851. “If I delayed publishing my process, it was because I was having difficulties obtaining good prints on *French* paper. However, for some time I have been experimenting with *Canson* paper, and I don’t doubt, that, with the help of a couple of modifications, we won’t be able to employ a better alternative to English paper.”
- 36 Blanquart-Evrard 1851. Bayard explains his process and its similarities to what Blanquart-Evrard published, but claims that he presented his process to the Académie in 1845 (see “Recipes,” Set 3, Letter A). “I presented mine to the Académie in 1845; it is therefore prior to that of which M. Gaudin speaks [of Blanquart-Evrard’s process].” He also explains that at the home of SFP member Benjamin Delessert, he had organized a demonstration of a positive proof and of a negative portrait on paper. “Last Sunday, we did some experiments at M. Delessert’s house. In less than a second, we had satisfying positives, and a negative portrait on paper that, once obtained, could be immediately reproduced.”
- 37 Bayard 1851b, 41–42 mentions that this was an improvement on a process submitted in September 1846, although no record of this submission has been found (see “Recipes,” Set 4, Letter B).
- 38 This was reported in Laborde 1851, 538. “He presented proofs on glass by means of a process that he admits are analogous to that published by M. Niépce de Saint-Victor, but that he claims to have implemented

- prior to the communication to the Académie des sciences.” See also Roubert’s essay in this volume.
- 39 Bayard 1852.
- 40 Ziegler 1852b; see also Werren 2002.
- 41 Ziegler 1852a.
- 42 Ziegler 1855.
- 43 Renard 1851. He later honored Bayard as his teacher: “I am honored to call myself the student of M. Bayard, and I am proud to be his associate” (Renard 1853).
- 44 See also Lacoste’s text in this volume.
- 45 L. 1853.
- 46 It was initially founded as the journal of the Société héliographique.
- 47 See Wey 1851a; Chardon 1887, 168.
- 48 Bayard 1854b.
- 49 Bayard 1855.
- 50 Bayard 1857a, 1857b.
- 51 *BSFP* 1858a, *BSFP* 1858b.
- 52 *BSFP* 1860.
- 53 *BSFP* 1864.
- 54 *BSFP* 1865. “M. Mathieu Plessy asks the President to appoint a Commission to produce a Report on the use of aniline colors manufactured by M. Javal for the coloring of positive prints.” “MM. Bayard, Davanne et Fortier” were designated to form this Commission.
- 55 Davanne published a report outlining the various phases of the competition, which finally concluded in 1867. Davanne 1867.
- 56 This predated by several years the opening of Gustave Le Gray’s studio and school in 1849.
- 57 An image reproduced in Poivert and Lavin 2001, 63, an albumen from a glass negative dated 1860, depicts Bayard’s house, with one door open where one could see that the sheet might have been propped.
- 58 Keeler 1991, 341–51. Paul Périer (1812–1897), art collector and critic and founding member of the SFP, was a silent partner. The document of Bayard and Bertall’s disbanding of their partnership, February 24, 1866, is held in the Archives de Paris D31 U3, carton 255, no. 223. Keeler 1991, 351n478, notes that the documents pertaining to the establishment of the partnership have not been located.
- 59 Keeler 1991, 353.
- 60 Keeler 1991, 360.
- 61 The street address changed in 1865 to rue Boissy d’Anglas. Bertall opened a new studio, listed as “industrie de la photographie,” under Bertall d’Arnoux et Cie. See Keeler 1991, 358–59.
- 62 Keeler 1991, 358–60. Keeler notes that Bayard was probably unable to contribute the funds required to sustain the partnership.
- 63 Capronnier 2005b.
- 64 Keeler 1991, 366–68; see also *BSFP* 1881. In his proposal, Davanne explained that Bayard’s “poor health has kept him away from the Society’s meetings in recent years and now obliges him to leave Paris.” He further wrote, “It will be a testimony of sympathy and recognition for the serious services he has rendered to the Society in particular and to Photography in general through his interesting works.”
- 65 Lacretelle 1852.
- 66 Pinson 2012; Brusius et al. 2013.