

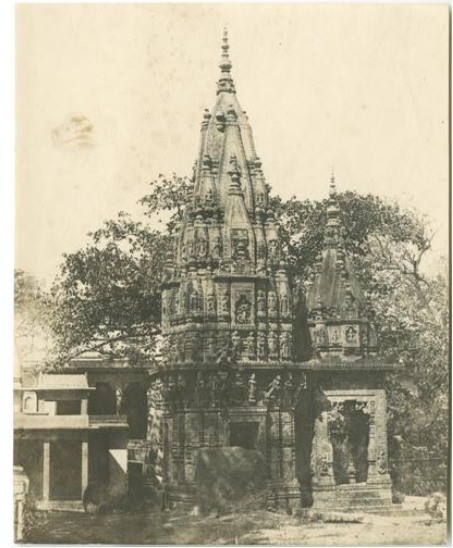
Timeless India: 19th c photography in India

Aicon Exhibition: December 6th – January 12th, 2019

Press Preview & V.I.P. Reception: Thursday, December 6th, 6:00pm – 8:00pm

35 Great Jones Street, New York, NY 10012

Aicon Gallery is pleased to present ***Timeless India | 19th century photography of India***, the first ever 19th century photography exhibition at Aicon Gallery. The period between 1840-1911, was considered the “golden age” of photography of India, where the “professional” reigned supreme, and the field was dominated by a few individual masters such as Captain Linnaeus Tripe. These early photographers focused on documenting and archiving everyday imageries of the natives’, the landmarks and monuments, and many scenic pastoral landscapes and heritage sites that quickly became the immediate subjects for such photographers and explorers. This exhibition features early documentations by photographers Captain Linnaeus Tripe, Baron Alexis De La Grange, Dr. John Murray and two unknown photographers.



Baron Alexis De La Grange, “Temple hindou moderne- mirzapour sur le gange – pres Benares, Early 1850s, 8.4 x 6.7 in.

After the 1857 uprising, photography was used to represent the victory of the Raj. Through the lens of these explorers who were mostly recruited by the East India Company, this exhibit emulates the magnificence of the monuments and encompasses the derelict ruins of the ancient times. The products of “the colonizing camera” must therefore be read in terms of “conventions and institutions”, of disciplines and practices: photographs are ideological texts, to be unraveled and exposed. As a gallery we have managed to secure these very rare gems to represent “Timeless India”—making this exhibit a historical attempt to turn the pages of history presenting these glimpses of the past from this turn of the century.

One of the central pieces of the exhibit is by Baron Alexis De La Grange, an image of a temple which has now become a generic postcard composition for capturing heritage sites. The straightforward centered composition of his photographs produce an overall impression of grandeur and stability. Heritage sites were studied in detail by photographers like him, we can observe both close-up photographs and distant objective view of the heritage sites in the same album. This exhibition is eclectic even though it bears simple subject matters due to the varying techniques used in composing and producing the photographs. Baron Alexis De La Grange (1825-1917) was born into nobility in Douai on 4th April 1825. In 1849, equipped with a camera, he left for a two year trip to India, Sri Lanka (Cylon), Indonesia (Java), Malaysia and Singapore with his older cousin, the statesman Felix Lambrecht. He compiled two photographic albums on monuments and Indian architecture. As the colonial enterprise was turning the officers into scholars to study and rule the population. Apart

from a brief political career in 1870s, he devoted himself in managing his fortune. He died in his chateau at Sebourg on February 11, 1917.

Captain Linnaeus Tripe (1822–1902) occupies a special place in the history of 19th-century photography for the outstanding body of work he produced in India and Burma (now the republic of Myanmar) in the 1850s. Although he learned photography in Great Britain from amateurs who considered it a pastime, he recognized that it could be an effective tool for conveying information about unknown cultures and regions. With few models to follow, Tripe developed a professional practice under the auspices of the large bureaucracy of the British East India Company. Reflecting his military discipline as an officer in the British army, he achieved remarkably consistent results, despite the Indian heat and humidity, which posed constant challenges to photographic chemistry. In addition, Tripe's schooling as a surveyor, where the choice of viewpoint and careful attention to visual details were essential, gave his photographs their distinctive aesthetic rigor. He started with Talbot's calotype negative process, but eventually moved on to the waxed paper process. This work would be the 'first attempt at illustrating in a complete and systematic manner the state of a country by means of photography'. These photographs included in the exhibit are from this pivotal period.



Baron Alexis De la Grange, "Koutoub pres Delhy", Early 1850s, 7 x 8.5 in.

Although trained as a medical doctor, Dr. John Murray (1809-1898) excelled as a photographer. The Scottish-born doctor was introduced to photography around 1849, while in the Medical Service of the Army of the East India Company. Stationed near the Taj Mahal in Agra, he evidently developed a considerable interest in the Mughal architecture of the region. Throughout the forty-year period that Murray lived and worked in India, he systematically recorded many famous buildings in and around Agra and the northern state of Uttar Pradesh. In the mid-1800s, no simple method of enlarging photographs existed. To make a sizable print, Murray worked with a large-format wooden camera capable of accepting negatives up to 16 by 20 inches. He worked with both glass and waxed-paper negatives; traveling photographers and those in remote places found the waxed-paper negatives particularly useful because the paper did not require immediate development. With this unwieldy equipment, Murray produced a body of work documenting India's architecture that remained unsurpassed in the 1800s.

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