



Félix Nadar. *Charles Baudelaire*
BnF, dép. Estampes et photographie



Self-portrait of Adrien Tournachon
with straw hat. round 1854
BnF, dép. Estampes et photographie



Paul Nadar, *Sarah Bernhardt in «Pierrot assassin»*, 1883
BnF, dép. Estampes et photographie

The Nadars A photographic legend

The Bibliothèque nationale de France presents the first survey on the three Nadars. Félix Nadar (1820-1910), his brother Adrien Tournachon (1825-1903) and his son, Paul Nadar (1856-1939) were both photographers, painters and inventors...

The exhibition embraces the entire history of the Nadars studios from the early 1850s until the end of the 1930s, including individual studios on the three photographers as well as their collaborations in order to reveal the legacy of one of the major and lasting photographic studios of the early history of Photography.

The selection of 300 objects includes original photographic prints, drawings, engravings, paintings and objects. These iconic and unpublished works, are drawn from the significant archive and collections of the BnF, and the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), the John Paul Getty Museum (Los Angeles), the Musée d'Orsay, the Musée de l'air et de l'espace (Le Bourget), the Ecole des Beaux-Arts (Paris) and the Société française de photographie (Paris).

The first part, « The Nadars by the Nadars », sheds light on the family history with a selection of the numerous portraits and self-portraits made by the three photographers and members of their intimate circle. This section illustrates the Nadars' personal involvement in the studio, their complex relationships and how they used their own images to promote their work.

These portraits – often staged and disguised – tell real stories. They build a family legend from portraits studio in the 1850s to Paul Nadar's snapshots in the 1880 -1890s. The exhibition sheds light on the numerous workshops of the Nadars in Paris and in Marseille, including views revealing the backstage of shootings.

The second part, « Art and Portrait Industry», is dedicated to the Nadars' heritage in the field. It includes iconic portraits of the most famous and leading figures of the period. This section focuses on the Nadars' different approaches of photography and reveals the evolution of photographic techniques and taste through a century. It includes masterpieces of photographic portraits by Félix Nadar and Adrien Tournachon. The friendship between Félix Nadar and Gustave Doré or Baudelaire also gave birth to very intimate portraits.

Finally, the last part of the exhibition, « The Nadars and the promotion of Photography », emphasizes

the Nadars' interest for innovative photographic practices and their large field of activity beyond portraiture. The production of the Nadars studio is also representative of the rise of sciences in the second half of the 19th Century, and how Photography contributed to its researches as well as its promotion. As a proof of this involvement, there are the photographic reports by Adrien Tournachon on cattle or horses breeds, or his collaboration with the Duchenne de Boulogne doctor to understand the mechanism of human physiognomy. As for Félix Nadar, he gained his long-lasting reputation by being a pioneer in the use of artificial lightening : night portraits in studios, reports in the sewers and catacombs of Paris, photographs taken underwater in watertight caissons, in the port of Marseille. He is also known for his first aerial photographs that resulted from his famous passion for air navigation. Paul Nadar distinguishes himself in the field of instantaneous Photography, as the first representative of the Eastman Kodak Company in France and with the photographic equipment he created.

Exhibition

The Nadars - A photographic legend

16 October 2018 | 3 February 2019

Gallery 2

BnF | François-Mitterrand Library

Quai François Mauriac, Paris XIIIe

Tuesday – Saturday, 10 a. m. > 7 p. m.

Sunday 1 a. m. > 7 p. m.

Closed on Mondays and public holidays

Publication

Exhibition catalogue

23x30 cm, 352 pages, about 250 illustrations

Editions de la BnF

Organization

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