



A Royal Passion: Queen Victoria and Photography

Anne Lyden

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In January 1839, photography was announced to the world. Two years prior, a young Queen Victoria ascended to the throne of Great Britain and Ireland. These two events, while seemingly unrelated, marked the beginnings of a relationship that continued throughout the nineteenth century and helped construct the image of an entire age.

A Royal Passion explores the connections between photography and the monarchy through Victoria's embrace of the new medium and her portrayal through the lens. Together with Prince Albert, her beloved husband, the Queen amassed one of the earliest collections of photographs, including works by renowned photographers such as Roger Fenton, Gustave Le Gray, and Julia Margaret Cameron. Victoria was also the first British monarch to have her life recorded by the camera: images of her as wife, mother, widow, and empress proliferated around the world at a time when the British Empire spanned the globe.

The featured essays consider Victoria's role in shaping the history of photography as well as photography's role in shaping the image of the Queen. Including more than 150 color images—several rarely seen before—drawn from the Royal Collection and the J. Paul Getty Museum, this volume accompanies an exhibition of the same name, on view at the J. Paul Getty Museum from February 4 to June 20, 2014.

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