



## Stone and Photography: FROM THE MIDDLE AGES TO MEDIEVALISM

"A small group of 12<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> century architectural elements--capitals, bosses, columns, and corbels—is juxtaposed with a group of 19<sup>th</sup> century photographs from the so-called "Mission Héliographique." This exhibition not only offers the opportunity to retrace the allied histories of two media—architecture and photography—it sets up a dialogue, even a certain tension, between the surviving fragments and a reconstituted past. The exhibition takes place at the gallery Les Enluminures at the Louvre des Antiquaires from Tuesday May 4 to Saturday July 31, 2010.

•••

Baldus covered a total of 1,949 kilometers, Le Secq 2,316; Bayard traveled only 733 kilometers, while Le Gray and Mestral crisscrossed France racking up 3,212 kilometers. In 1851, usually on horseback, sometimes by train or carriage, loaded down with equipment weighing more than twenty pounds, these five men set out to create a photographic record of a remarkable series of medieval monuments. The brain child of Prosper Mérimée, the director of the Commission of the Monuments historiques, this "Mission Héliographique" became the first public program in the history of photography. Léon Delaborde assisted Prosper Mérimée, and in April 1852, Emile Pécarrère completed the work.

Sixty years after the turmoil of the French Revolution, the Commission drew on the modern invention of photography to create an inventory of buildings on French soil. National and historic significance determined the choice of the buildings, with a marked predilection for things medieval. But the coup d'état of Napoleon III interrupted the project and, before being exhibited or published, the fragile calotypes were for the most part forgotten for more than a century.

Today, the shots of these views of architecture, with their idiosyncratic compositions, often appear surprising, and both the play of light and the capturing of ornamental details fascinate us. The images convey a history of desire and loss. They are born of the will to save the architecture from oblivion in order to elevate the buildings to a status of national identity. But they also communicate a loss, because they record a state of preservation that often no longer exists. What better homage to these photographs than to juxtapose them with the original subject: medieval art.

The architectural fragments presented here are born of the same impulse regarding the patrimony of medieval art. The secularization of ecclesiastical property as well as the projects of restoration conducted by the Monuments Historiques caused much medieval sculpture to enter the public

**Press Release**



## Stone and Photography: FROM THE MIDDLE AGES TO MEDIEVALISM

domain. Of sandstone, granite, limestone, and wood, these sculptural fragments are striking for the power of their forms and the workmanship of the stone. By their fragmentary state these objects recall the extreme precariousness of the material past at the same time that they perpetuate its memory. Like the photographs to which they are juxtaposed, these sculptures are at once revitalized by the ravages of time and witnesses to a living past.

These fragments of the past call for our reappraisal, as they continue to fascinate us. This desire to recreate and to preserve the world is none other than the desire of the collector.

• • •

The fourteen vintage photos exhibited here include works by participants in this project, such as Henri Le Secq and Emile Pécarrère, as well as those by other photographers contemporary with them such as Charles Marville. Included are prints of the famous "Portal des libraries" of Rouen Cathedral by Henri le Secq, Marville's views of the facades of the Cathedrals of Reims and Chartres, and shots of the cloister of Saint-Trophime d'Arles by Pierre Émile Pécarrère. Prices start at 500 € for the photographs; all works are framed.

Among the thirteen sculptures exhibited, there are many Romanesque and Gothic fragments, mostly from monuments in France including: a Head of a Woman from Eleanor of Aquitaine's Abbey, Nieul-sur-Autise, c. 1100; a twelfth-century Corbel of a Griffon perhaps from Angoulême; a Corbel of a Grimacing Demon from Parthenay of the same date; and several fantastic images of Green Men, either as Bosses or Corbels. Prices range from 8.000 to 35.000 €.

For further information:  
[info@lesenluminures.com](mailto:info@lesenluminures.com)

To view the works online:  
[www.lesenluminures.com](http://www.lesenluminures.com)

**Press Release**