

Topic 1 - The History of Photography

Learning Outcomes

In this lesson you will learn about the earliest work that led us to the photographic devices we have today.

To fully appreciate the potential and capabilities of digital technology, and, indeed digital photography, one must recall the ground-breaking discoveries of the auteurs and inventors who came before us.

Where does the name 'Photography' come from?

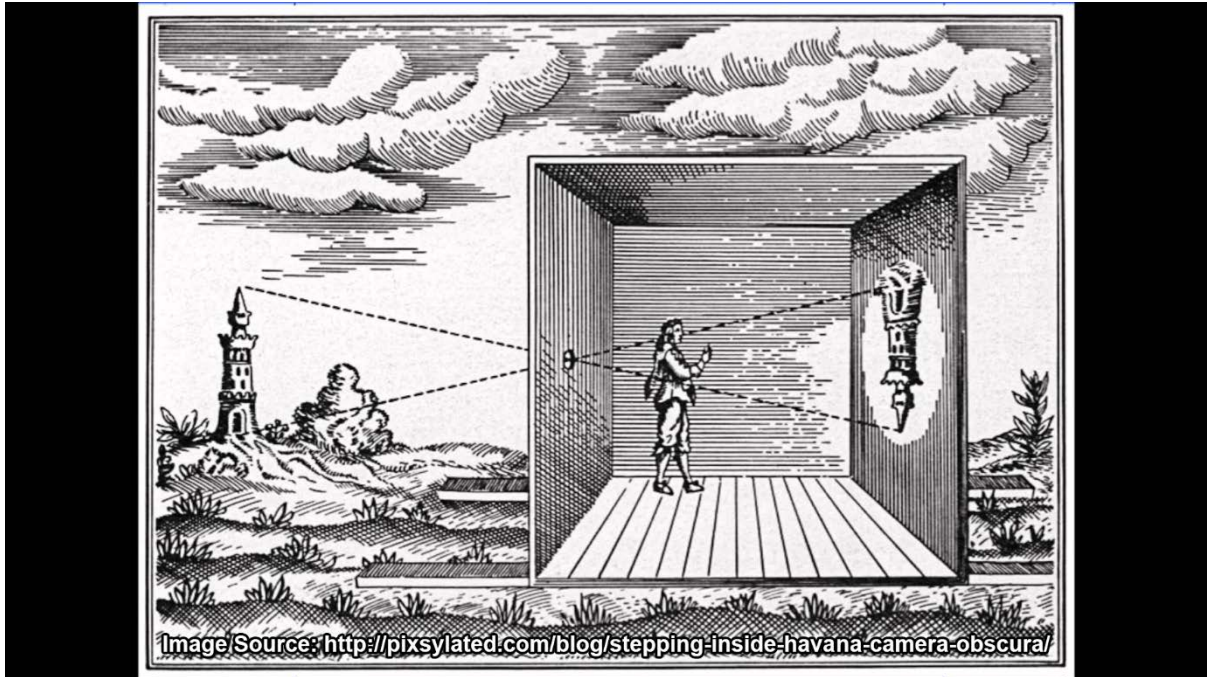


Well, it is worth mentioning Sir John Herschel, who published several key research papers and coined the term "Photography", from the Greek words "phos" and "graphe" which translate to *Light* and *Drawing*.

Introduction to Photography

Camera Obscura

Photography's history dates back as far as the 1400s and is hinged on the discovery that if you cut a hole in the wall of a dark room, you create a *Camera Obscura*.



Essentially, the light that passes through this hole is projected upside down and retains colour and perspective. There are early mentions of the process by philosopher Mozi, and artist Leonardo DaVinci notes his use of a Camera Obscura when tracing pictures in his workshop. This discovery eventually led to the creation of modern eye glasses and laser beams.



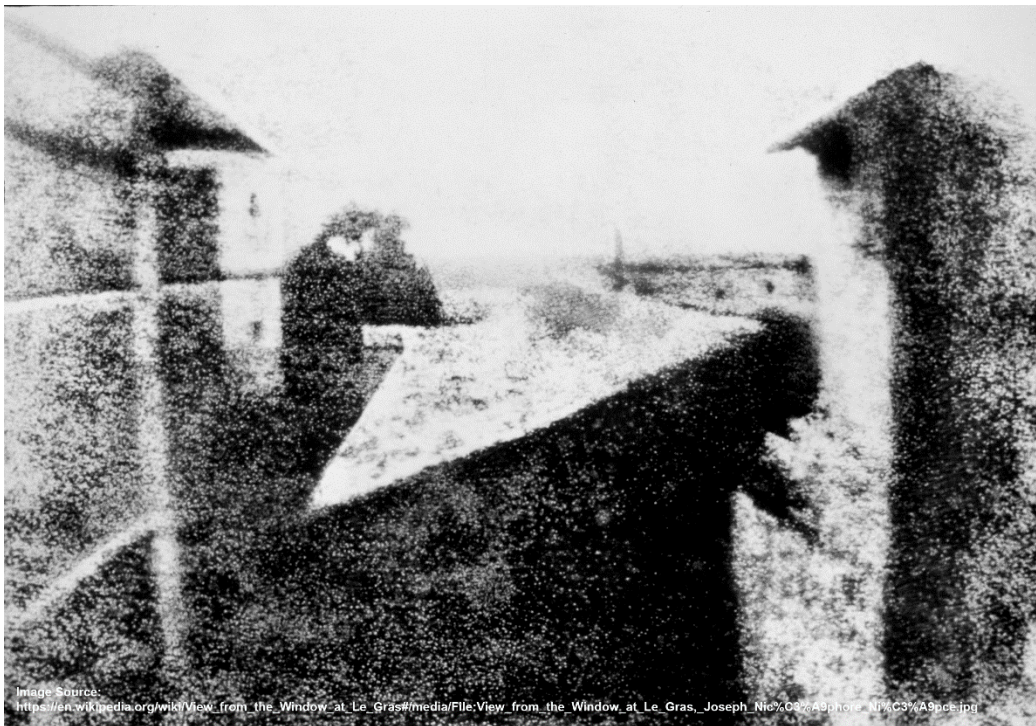
Introduction to Photography



Johann Heinrich Schulze recorded fleeting sun prints of words using:

- stencils**
- sunlight**
- mixture of chalk & silver nitrate.**

It all really started with the first image recorded in 1717 when Johann Heinrich Schulze recorded fleeting sun prints of words using stencils, sunlight and a bottled mixture of chalk and silver nitrate. This was an experimental demonstration that the mixture darkens when exposed to light.



Introduction to Photography

In 1826, the world's first photograph is taken by Joesph Nicéphore Niépce in France using a procedure called *Heliography*. The exposure for this photograph took several days, and, as you can see, the sun lights up both sides of the building.

In 1835, Henry Fox Talbot produced the first durable silver chloride negatives on paper. He also conceived the two-step negative positive procedure, used in most non-electronic photography up to the present day.



The Daguerreotype (1833)

Image Source:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daguerreotype#/media/File:Susse_Fr%C3%A9re_Daguerreotype_camera_1839.jpg

Louis Daguerre had created the first practical photographic process with the aptly named *Daguerreotype* in 1833, continuing from the success of Nicéphore Niépce, and in 1839, the French government purchased the Daguerreotype, opening access to the public.



Introduction to Photography



Image Source: http://benbeck.co.uk/firsts/2_The_Human_Subject/photo1h.htm

The process produced highly detailed photographs onto silver sheeted plates of copper. The procedure exposure time was over ten minutes so traffic moving through the street was not captured. Interestingly, the photograph did record a man who had been standing still on a path as he had his shoes polished. This human figure is the first to be recorded in photography.

The First Selfie

Although you might believe that the selfie is a recent phenomenon, in 1839 the world's first self-portrait was taken by a man named Robert Cornelius.



Image Source: <https://spaceandtime.org/robertcornelius/cornelius-self-portrait-the-first-ever-1839>



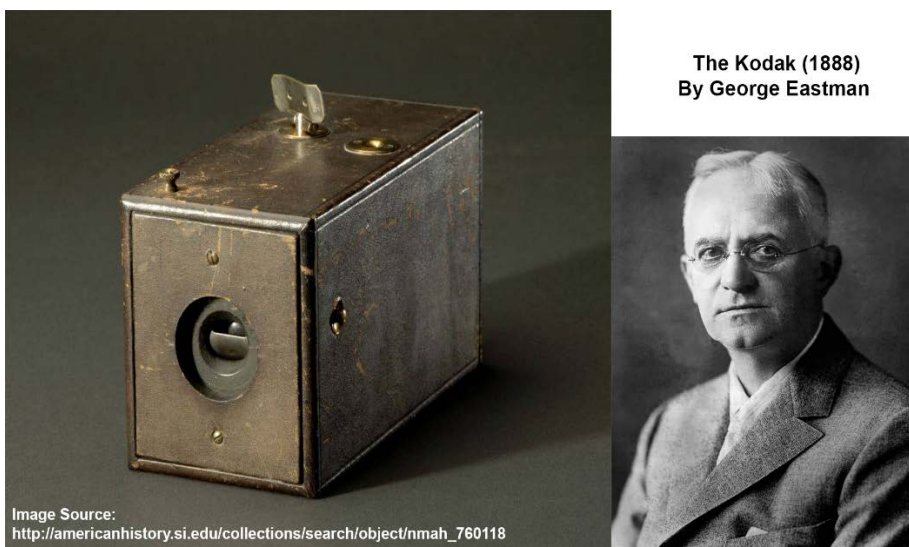
Introduction to Photography

Ever wondered why nobody smiles in early photos? Exposure times were roughly three minutes in the early days of photography so people had to keep incredibly still.



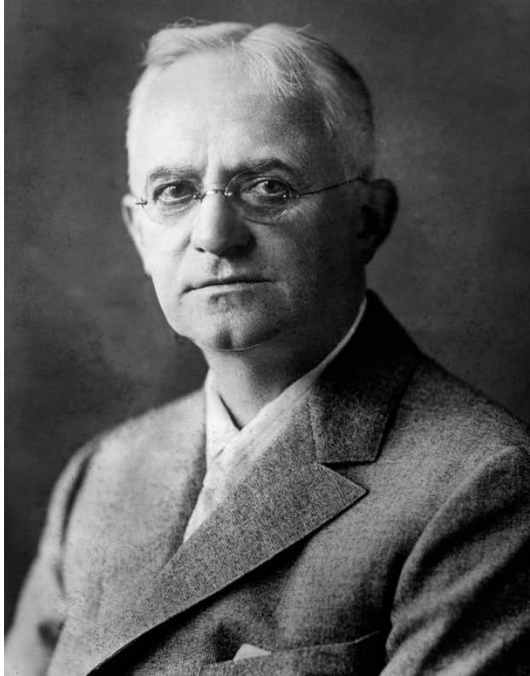
In 1841, Henry Fox Talbot introduces his patented **Talbotype** paper negative process.

In 1878, Eadward Muybridge solved the debate on whether a galloping horse's four hooves ever leave the ground at any one time. He did this by setting up twelve cameras with wire triggers in the path of a moving horse. The world's first photo sequence proves that they do and when Thomas Edison encountered this work, he was spurred on to pursue the development of a motion picture system.



Introduction to Photography

Ten years later, George Eastman invents the **Kodak** in 1888, the first handheld camera, and is sold to the public. This camera came with one hundred exposures that needed to be sent back to the factory to be processed and reloaded.



The Brownie (1900)

Image Source: <http://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/search/object/nmalimage> Source: http://www.brownie-camera.com/_760118



Eastman honed in on mass photography in the early 1900s with the development of the **Brownie**. This made waves because it was a mainstream, affordable camera that introduced the concept of the snapshot.

The Leica 1 (1925) By Oskar Barnack



Image Source: <https://www.shutterbug.com/content/leica-i-camera-change-photography>

In 1925, Oskar Barnack invents the revolutionary Leica 1, allowing photographers to go mobile, a key development that we sometimes take for granted today.

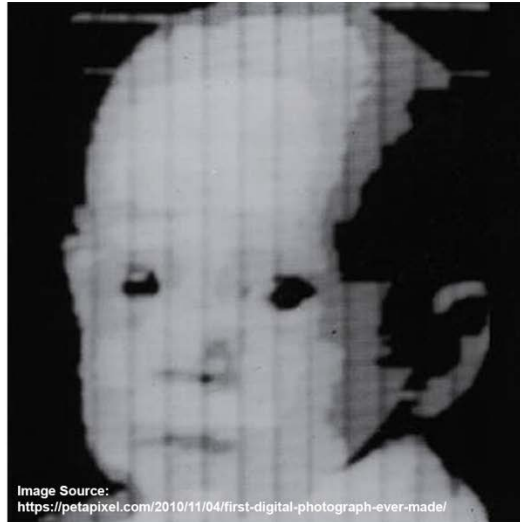


Introduction to Photography

Major Progress: The first SLR Appears in 1949

The first SLR (Single Lens Reflex) camera appears in 1949 and the first digital image is created from a scan in 1957.

The first digital image is created (1957)



Steve Sasson made a huge breakthrough when he invented the Kodak Digital Camera in 1975.

**Kodak Digital Camera (1975)
By Steve Sasson**



The digital revolution really takes flight in the 1990s with DSLRs and Point and Shoots.



Introduction to Photography



First Camera Phone (2002)



Present Day



In 2002, the first camera phone is invented and turned the game on its head. Fifteen years on and modern smartphones have hugely powerful cameras. This technology enables us to capture images in seconds and disperse them online using a variety of social media platforms. This timeline of where photography was, and where it is today, really emphasises the speed at which technology has improved.



Introduction to Photography

What have we learned today? A Summary

Let us recap what we have gone through today:

We have learned about the main inventors and auteurs who have brought photography to where it is today.

We've also learned about heliography, in which exposure times took several hours and even days to create a single photograph.

These early photographic techniques by these pioneers have made modern day photography what it is today.

