



Swiss Camera Museum – Vevey
Mining Photography
The Ecological Footprint of Image Production

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The Ecological Footprint of Image Production

Exhibition from 13th February to 8th June 2025

Press release

Downloadable from www.cameramuseum.ch



© OPTICS DIVISION OF THE METABOLIC STUDIO (Lauren Bon, Tristan Duke and Richard Nielsen) *Lake Bed Developing Process*, 2013.



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Unknown photographer, *Silver bars in the Kodak vault*, 1945. Used with permission from Eastman Kodak Company.



Mining Photography

The Ecological Footprint of Image Production

February 13th – June 8th, 2025

The Swiss Camera Museum is hosting the exhibition *Mining Photography: The Ecological Footprint of Image Production*. Designed by the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe in Hamburg, the exhibition is being presented for the first and only time in the French-speaking world, in a version specially adapted to the museum's spaces.

Is Photography Polluting? The exhibition *Mining Photography* is dedicated to the material history of the main resources used to produce images, addressing the social and political context of their extraction and waste, as well as their relationship to climate change. Since its invention, photography has depended on the global extraction and exploitation of natural resources. In the early 19th century, these included salt, fossil fuels such as bitumen and carbon, as well as copper and silver, all of which were used for the first images on copper plates and salted paper prints. By the end of the 20th century, the photographic industry was one of the largest consumers of silver, responsible at its peak for more than half of the world's consumption of this metal. Today, with the rise of digital photography and the ubiquity of mobile devices, image production depends on rare elements and metals such as coltan, cobalt, and europium. The storage and distribution of images also consume immense amounts of energy. A researcher recently noted that Americans produce more photographs every two minutes than they did throughout the entire 19th century. Featuring historical photographs, contemporary artistic works, as well as interviews with restorers, geologists and climate researchers, the exhibition tells the story of photography as an industrial process, showing how deeply this medium has been linked to human environmental change. By focusing on the ways in which the industrial production of images has been materially and ideologically involved in climate change, rather than merely using photography to depict its consequences, the exhibition adopts a radically new perspective on the subject.

Curated by: Boaz Levin and Esther Ruelfs

An exhibition by the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, Hamburg.

Short text, 750 characters

Is Photography Polluting? The exhibition *Mining Photography* is dedicated to the material history of the key resources used in image production, exploring the social and political context of their extraction and waste, as well as their relationship with climate change. Since its invention, photography has depended on the exploitation of natural resources, such as bitumen, copper and silver in the 19th and 20th centuries, and rare metals such as coltan and cobalt in the digital age. Historical photographs, contemporary works and interviews with experts tell the story of photography as an industrial process, illustrating how deeply this medium is tied to human-induced environmental change.



Off-site Exhibition by Davide Monteleone

From April 3rd to June 8th, 2025

In parallel with the exhibition *Mining Photography* and in celebration of Leica's 100th anniversary, the Swiss Camera Museum presents an off-site exhibition at the Place du Marché, Vevey, dedicated to Davide Monteleone, winner of the 2024 Leica Oskar Barnack Award. In his series *Critical Minerals – Geography of Energy*, the Italian photographer questions the multiple consequences of the energy transition. His images explore the often-overlooked realities of copper, lithium and cobalt mining in Chile, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Indonesia.

Supported by Leica Camera AG



©Studio Davide Monteleone/Davide Monteleone

“Photography and ecology”: a new tour in the permanent exhibition

To complement the exhibition *Mining Photography*, the Swiss Camera Museum invites visitors to rediscover the permanent exhibition through the lens of ecology and the exploitation of natural resources. In a free booklet available at the museum's reception, a tour highlights various objects in the exhibition, questioning their environmental impact. Visitors are invited to reflect on the raw materials used in different photographic techniques and the gradual environmental impact of photography over the centuries. After the exhibition, this tour will remain accessible to the public.

The booklet is suitable for ages 10+.



Agenda

“Silicon Islands and War”

Video by Daphné Nan Le Sergent, 35 min

Thursday, February 13th, 2025, at 7pm

On the occasion of the opening of the exhibition *Mining Photography*, French videographer and photographer Daphné Nan Le Sergent presents her latest video on the geopolitical issues surrounding semiconductor production. This technology, essential to the engines of artificial intelligence, has become a strategic player on the global playing field. The video essay invites viewers to reconsider the history of photography, where the resolution of our images increases as the Asian industry miniaturizes semiconductors etched on silicon wafers, sparking rivalries in the Pacific region

Open to all / free of charge / no reservation required

“A Camera Without a Lens?”

Guided Tour by Isaac Pante

Thursday, March 20th, 2025, from 6-7pm, followed by a reception

Isaac Pante, a specialist in digital cultures and publishing, will reflect on the connections between artificial intelligence (AI), the photographic industry, and energy costs. How is the camera evolving? What can be said about the production of images using AI?

In collaboration with L'éprouvette, the Science and Society Laboratory at UNIL.

Open to all / free of charge / reservation required: www.eprouvette-unil.ch/unil-x-cameramuseum/

“Photography Against the Environment?”

Guided Tour by Estelle Sohier and Olivier Lugon

Thursday, April 3rd, 2025, from 6-7pm, followed by a reception

Estelle Sohier, a specialist in visual studies and a teacher of geography and environmental studies, and Olivier Lugon, a historian of photography, will discuss the connections between photography, its representations, techniques, and ecology.

In collaboration with L'éprouvette, the Science and Society Laboratory of UNIL

Open to all / free of charge / reservation required: www.eprouvette-unil.ch/unil-x-cameramuseum/

“Art and Culture, Allies of Sustainability?”

Guided Tour by Greta Ortalli and Zoé Berney

Thursday, May 8th, 2025, from 6-7pm, followed by a reception

The team of Martin Müller, an expert in ecological transitions, will explore how cultural institutions can mobilize to accelerate the transition towards sustainability. In collaboration with L'éprouvette, the Science and Society Laboratory of UNIL

Open to all / free of charge / reservation required: www.eprouvette-unil.ch/unil-x-cameramuseum/

“Critical Minerals - Geography of Energy”

Lecture by Davide Monteleone

Thursday, May 22nd, 2025, at 6pm

In parallel with his exhibition at the Place du Marché, Italian photographer Davide



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Monteleone will give a presentation of his series *Critical Minerals – Geography of Energy*, focusing on the mining of certain natural resources. The lecture will be in English, with a Q&A session available in French.

Open to all / free of charge / reservation required

Riviera Museum Night with Daphné Nan Le Sergent

Saturday, May 24th, 2025, from 5-11pm

On the occasion of the Riviera Museum Night, come discover our activities, including the latest video by French artist Daphné Nan Le Sergent, *Silicon Islands and War*, which explores the geopolitical issues surrounding semiconductor production, now essential to both photography and artificial intelligence.

Open to all / free of charge / no reservation required

"Daguerreotype" Workshop

Friday, May 30th and Saturday, May 31st, 2025, from 10-5pm

Join New York artist Jerry Spagnoli to learn how to create an authentic daguerreotype, the first photographic technique officially announced in 1839. This is a unique opportunity to explore this fascinating process in a workshop organized by Peter Michels! The workshop will be held in English, with translations available in German and French.

Information and registration: <https://peter-michels.ch/shop/daguerreotype-2025/>

Turn Your Old Objects into Pinhole Cameras!

Sundays, February 23rd / March 16th / April 27th / May 11th

1-4pm

Bring an item to recycle (tin can, shoebox, etc.) and transform it into an original and functional pinhole camera! A fun way to recycle your belongings while learning the basics of photographic technique.

Open to all ages 10 and up / 35 CHF (materials included) / reservation required

Guided tours of the permanent and temporary exhibitions

Sundays, March 2nd / April 6th / May 4th / June 8th

→ 11am for children (accompanied)

→ 2pm for adults

Come discover the history of photography and the exhibition *Mining Photography* with the help of a museum guide!

Open to all / free of charge / no reservation required

Guided tours for groups are available from Tuesday to Friday by prior arrangement only.

Photogram workshop

Develop your own photograph in the form of a photogram to take home as a souvenir of this workshop.

Open to all ages 7+, individuals or groups of 5 people maximum.

Reservation required / 7 CHF + admission



Black and white print workshop

Bring your developed black and white negatives (NB 135 or 120) and learn how to make your own prints.

Open to all ages 10+, individuals or groups of 5 people maximum.

Reservation required / 7 CHF + admission

The Club

Wednesday afternoons

On Wednesday afternoons, this course alternates between practical workshops and assignments using photographic equipment loaned by the museum. It continues with the processing of images, both silver and digital, as well as discussions and advice. The Club offers genuine access to today's creative photography.

10-16 years / 200 CHF for 11 lessons / reservation required

Birthdays

The museum offers two activities to choose from for celebrating birthdays: the "Photogram Workshop" or "Laterna Magica".

Information : www.cameramuseum.ch/visiter/

Activities for school groups

All activities are available for schoolchildren:
www.cameramuseum.ch/visiter/ecoles/

Laterna magica

For younger audiences, "Laterna Magica" brings back the magic of projections from a time before cinema existed, thanks to a large magic lantern that has been restored to working order.

From 1P / by reservation

Children show the way !

For one hour, children discover the history of photography and its techniques, and learn how to become museum guides for their own families. At the end of the visit, they receive a guide certificate that allows them to give tours of the permanent exhibition to their families and friends, with a reduced group rate.

5 to 8P / by reservation

Photographic excursion to Lavaux

Transform yourself into a photojournalist in an idyllic setting with this discovery day at the Swiss Camera Museum and in the heart of the terraced vineyards of Lavaux.

From 5P / by reservation



Upcoming Exhibitions

Glaciers under cover. A story of preservation

June 24th – August 17th, 2025



Three mountaineers crossing a crevasse on a glacier (unidentified). Magic lantern slide. © Swiss Camera Museum, Vevey. Inv. No. 62145.041

As part of the International Year of Glacier Preservation, proclaimed by UNESCO for 2025, the Swiss Camera Museum in Vevey unveils a double temporary exhibition dedicated to the conservation of these ice giants. The first part presents a selection of phototypes from the museum's rich collections, highlighting its crucial role in preserving this unique visual heritage. Displayed outdoors along the quays of Vevey, the second part features contemporary photographs of alpine glaciers covered with insulating tarps, a measure designed to slow their melting. Curated by Nathalie Dietschy (UNIL), this unprecedented body of work reveals the diversity of artistic and scientific perspectives on these changing landscapes, offering a compelling reflection on the challenges of their preservation.

Flash! A Brief History of Illuminated Photography

September 18th, 2025 - February 22nd, 2026



© Fabian Hugo, retired Swiss rescue dog, 2008

This unprecedented exhibition explores the importance of flash and artificial lighting in the history of photography from the 19th to the 21st century. These innovations have illuminated what was unseen or insufficiently visible, playing a key role in the visual construction of new, previously unknown worlds. From Nadar's exploration of the catacombs of Paris to the paparazzi's flashes, *Flash!* highlights the central role of light in photography, whether to immortalize scenes of nightlife, political realities, or to glamorize movie stars.

Produced by the Swiss Camera Museum, the exhibition is created in collaboration with the French magazine *Photographica*, which will dedicate an issue to flash photography in autumn 2025.



Press images

Downloadable from www.cameramuseum.ch

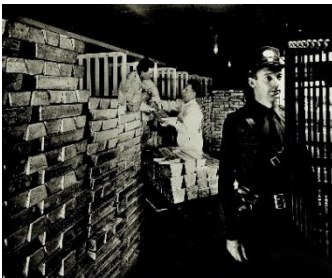
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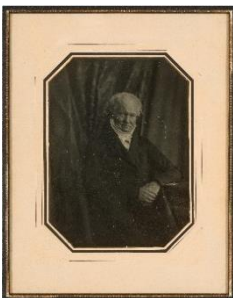
© Optics Division of the Metabolic Studio (Lauren Bon, Tristan Duke and Richard Nielsen), *Lake Bed Developing Process*, 2013



Jürgen Fiedrich Mahrt, *Peat extraction on Hartshoper Moor, ca. 1930*, Mahrt/Storm Collection, Rendsburg/Berlin.



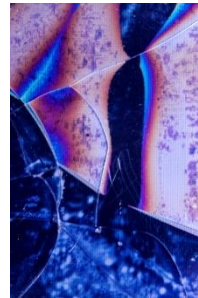
Unknown, *Silver bars in the Kodak vault*, 1945, used with permission from Eastman Kodak Company



Hermann Biow, *Alexander von Humboldt*, 1847, daguerreotype, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg



© Susanne Kriemann, *Falsche Kamille* (False chamomile) from the series *Pechblende/Gessenwiese*, 2017–2020, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, Hamburg



© Lisa Barnard, *Broken mobile phone screen*, Shenzhen, China, 2018.



Theodor et Oscar Hofmeister, *Moorland Flowers*, 1897, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg.



© Studio Davide Monteleone/Davide Monteleone



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Practical information

The museum is open Tuesday to Sunday from 11am to 5.30pm and on bank holiday Mondays.

Musée suisse de l'appareil photographique

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www.ceramuseum.ch