Southworth & Hawes
American, active 1843-1861
(Albert Sands Southworth (1811-1894) and Josiah Johnson Hawes (1808-1901))

Southworth & Hawes operated a daguerreotype studio in Boston and are heralded as the finest practitioners of the daguerreotype, crediting with elevating the medium to the level of art. A Southworth & Hawes daguerreotype broke an auction record in 1999, as the first photograph to sell for more than $1 million. George Eastman House holds the largest collection of Southworth & Hawes daguerreotypes, totaling more than 1,200. The Southworth & Hawes collection in its entirety (estimated at 2,500 images) is the largest collection of daguerreotypes in existence from one single studio.

Southworth & Hawes took artistic portraiture to a new level beyond common commercial photography. In service of an elite and famous clientele, they worked with large 8x6-inch plate sizes, technically more challenging but aesthetically more beautiful. As their unique daguerreotypes attest, Southworth & Hawes focused lavish attention on national and international celebrities who traveled to their Boston studio, capturing likenesses in picturesque fashion.

These photographers were gifted and aspired to superior artistic achievement. They pledged, “We will excel. Our customers shall have the best work. We will deserve and claim by right the name of our establishment, The Artists’ Daguerreotype Rooms” — proof that the partners considered themselves artists. Southworth & Hawes daguerreotypes today, as in their time, offer a rare visual experience in photography.

In the mid-19th century, when the culture of the United States was drawn toward social idealism and technical virtuosity, no artists exemplified the emerging spirit of the country better than the daguerreian masters Southworth & Hawes. Their mastery of style and practicality, politics, and promotion placed them among the very best artists of their day.

Eugène Atget
French, 1857-1927

At the turn of the 20th Century Atget worked as an independent entrepreneur taking on small assignments for Bibliothèque Nationale, the Société d’Iconographie Parisienne, and other organizations wanting to fill in the gaps of their picture collections.

Despite his limited resources and what was considered to be his antiquated and awkward photographic technique, Atget developed a private photographic approach and visual style that drew from both documentary and pictorial photography traditions. He focused his attention on the overlooked and previously disregarded features of daily life; in his work he could infuse a sense of drama and brooding mystery.
Late in his life, a postwar generation of artists and writers attracted to new studies of man’s unconscious mind took up Atget’s mysterious and haunting images with extraordinary enthusiasm. Known as surrealists, these individuals recognized in Atget an untethered vision similar to their own.

Alexander Gardner
American, b. Scotland, 1821-1882

Alexander Gardner photographed throughout the course of the Civil War. He left Matthew Brady’s studio to set up his own rival business in Washington, D.C. during the war and with his establishment of an excellent reputation among peers and political leadership, he was asked to record the events following Lincoln’s assassination.

The portrait of conspirator Lewis Payne [sic Paine] was taken aboard the naval monitor U.S.S. Saugus, where he was held after his capture by federal forces in April 1865. Gardner, with Timothy O’Sullivan’s assistance, photographed the execution of the conspirators involved with Lincoln’s murder. In a bravura performance of skill, the photographers were able to document the execution in a sequential manner – unusual for the day – thus rendering a disturbingly haunting narrative of the conspirators’ final moments.

Nickolas Muray
American, b. Hungary, 1892-1965

In 1921 Harper’s Bazaar asked Muray to photograph a celebrity portrait for their publication; soon after his portraits were being published in every issue of the magazine. Muray’s career spans the 1920s to 1960s and provides a look into the changing styles in fashion and in photographic techniques. His early portraits, such as “Gloria Swanson”, were photographed in a pictorialist style, with a softened focus that places emphasis on form over line, balanced masses over depiction of detail, mood over information.

An avid fencer, Muray was supposed to duel artist Jacques La Salle in 1920 however, upon meeting at the site where Aaron Burr killed Alexander Hamilton in a similar battle more than a century before.

Muray had an on-and-off-again relationship with artist Frida Kahlo for ten years. He had hoped to marry Kahlo when she divorced her husband Diego Rivera in 1939 but she remarried Rivera a year later.
Nadar (Gaspard Félix Tournachon)
French, 1820-1910

Careers of artists like Honoré Daumier had been made through the reproduction of their work as lithographs in illustrated newspapers and journals. Daumier’s caricature of Nadar precariously photographing from his balloon capitalized both on the international notoriety of the eccentric photographer as well as the popular mania for the medium itself, represented by a landscape populated almost entirely by photography studios.

Nadar’s fame rivaled that of his illustrious sitters, and the combination of his name with theirs proved lucrative, selling many larger prints for his studio.

Lewis Wickes Hine
American, 1874 –1940

Hine was an American sociologist and photographer. First working as a teacher, he took up photography in 1905 to concentrate on “the visual side of public education,” working for the National Child Labor Committee, the American Red Cross, and the Works Progress Administration.

Hine is most famous for his images of labor, including child labor, immigration and Ellis Island, and the construction of the Empire State Building in New York City. His important documentary photographs advanced progressive social causes, such as improved housing and the abolition of sweat shops and child labor.

In the 1930s Hine was recognized by early historians of photography, such as Beaumont Newhall and Berenice Abbott, as an early exemplar of documentary style and intent.

The Hine archive is held by George Eastman House — more than 6,000 prints and 3,800 negatives, as well as correspondence, publications, and manuscript materials.