



All Our Yesterdays (1839 - 1939). Life Through the Lens of Europe's First Photographers

As one of the most successful outcomes of the Europeana Photography project, *All Our Yesterdays (1839 – 1939). Life Through the Lens of Europe's First Photographers* is the great multimedia and photographic exhibition about early

photography which offers to the European citizens an occasion to see how life was in Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries. The new born medium of photography framed faces and life in a period of great change, where horses and agriculture made way for machines and industrialization, where work and life were harder than nowadays, and where no videogames and TV could entertain during free time; a period in which there was war but also tech-



188

Uncommon
Culture

nological and societal progress; and although everyday life was different from how we know it, joy and sorrow, stories and dreams turn out to have been strikingly similar to ours.

The exhibition

From 11th April to 2nd June 2014, Europeana Photography's exhibition *All Our Yesterdays (1839 – 1939). Life through the Lens of Europe's First Photographers* was presented for the first time in the magnificent framework of patrician Palazzo Lanfranchi, an ancient building on the riverbanks of the Arno and seat of Pisa's Museum of Graphics. With the camera as a time machine - framing the present, documenting the past and showing a glimpse of the future - men (and women!) have, throughout the history of photography, captured their world from its most beautiful angles as well as its darkest side. To rebuild these stories through a kaleidoscope of early photographic masterpieces, a collection has been compiled from the holdings of important European archives. These exquisite - and often unseen - images of a world in change showcase the mastery and art of the world's very first photographers.



All Our Yesterdays (1839 – 1939). Life through the Lens of Europe's First Photographers. Photo by Rudy Pessina (Promoter srl)

The contemporary twist of the exhibition, which is based on the most advanced technologies of digitisation and print, and which features also a free App for a virtual tour of the rooms, enhances the astonishing quality and value (both cultural and artistic) of the photographic masterpieces that the 19 partners of the Europeana Photography project chose as "best of their best".

Details & Results of the Pisa exhibition

The format of the exhibition, arranged by responsible partner Promoter at the premises of the Museum of Graphics, captured a genuine interest of the public in Pisa: over 5.400 visitors came to Palazzo Lanfranchi to enjoy the masterpieces of early photography selected by the archives of Europeana Photography project, and to discover through the lens of the first photographers how life was in Europe before WWI. Next to the photos, original vintage photographic equipment items showed how the art of photography and techniques rapidly evolved in a very short period of time.



The photographs showcased in Palazzo Lanfranchi. On the left, a vintage camera. Photo by Rudy Pessina (Promoter srl)

The flux of visitors at Palazzo Lanfranchi was more or less continuous since the opening, but a boom of visits was registered on 17th May 2014 during the European Night of the Museums. On this occasion the exhibition was open

until midnight and almost 800 visitors crowded the vintage rooms of the palace, where the photographs are hosted in a truly charming environment. During the Night of the Museums, countless visitors with their inseparable smartphones took their own museum selfies, to converge in the European digital event Kaleidoscope: a digital wall showing the selfies of the visitors in the participating museums all over Europe.

The Pisa exhibition was also a great moment for education and social inclusion: students and children have been participating in laboratories and guided tours to discover the Europe of their great-grandfathers. Moreover, visits of the exhibition were organised by the project “Segni fra le mani” of the University of Pisa: this project involves old people suffering from Alzheimer’s disease, and utilises art, music and other creative activities to stimulate communication and help delay the progress of the disease.



Very young students during a guided tour to the exhibition.
Photo by Rudy Pessina (Promoter srl)

During the exhibition, a digitization station operated by photographic professionals allowed the visitors to digitize their own family photos, in order to contribute to the digital preservation of the memory and local cultural heritage. The impressive amount of almost 1.000 photos were digitised, witnessing a very

enthusiastic response from the citizens to this initiative, and a selection of them was included in a smaller (80 photos) exhibition with a more local flavour, held in December 2014, once again in Palazzo Lanfranchi, under the flags of *All Our Yesterdays* and *Europeana Photography*.



One of the photographs digitised during the exhibition:
Soldiers in Ethiopia (1935), Promoter Digital Gallery 10926

All Our Yesterdays goes Belgian!

The second edition of *All Our Yesterdays* will take place from February 1st to March 15th, 2015, in Campus Library Arenberg - Heverlee and Tweekbronnen Library - Leuven (BE). While, for the greater part, this exhibition will reproduce the first run of *All Our Yesterdays*, its Belgian flavour will be enhanced by including photographs from the Leuven City Archives. At the Heverlee site, traces of local citizens’ “Yesterdays” will figure side by side with those of their international counterparts, as a new but integrated part of the original *All Our Yesterdays*-setup.

In Leuven’s city centre, the public library will host an additional exhibition chapter, dedicated to Trading Spaces / Changing Places: how have the city and its rural surroundings interacted throughout the years and what remains of this? Which century-old street views are bound to draw up a stir when compared to today’s cityscape? To what degree or by what means have people tried to adapt their living environment to something more comfortable



or more agreeable to the eye...? From lost landscapes to stunning portraits and fascinating shots-in-action, *Trading Spaces / Changing Places* seizes the most compelling images from Leuven's past, to make for a powerful injection into present-day city dynamics.



Photo courtesy of Europeana Photography partner IMAGNO.

Milestone marker

The opening of the Leuven exhibition coincides with the ultimate days of Europeana Photography's project term. Small wonder that a project plenary meeting and a scientific conference have been aligned with the official vernissage.

After a day (28 January) of dotting the i's and crossing the t's, reviewing the results of the consortium's endeavours, and discussing its future plans as the association PHOTOCONSORTIUM, the conference on 29 and 30 January will be devoted to *The Impact of Digitization on Photographic Heritage: Memories Reframed*. Hosted by CS Digital (KU Leuven) and the Lieven Gevaert Centre for Photography in the Campus Library Arenberg, this event aims at assembling scholars from the field of photography and professionals from photo archives, in order to develop an understanding of responsible archival practices towards photographic heritage in the context of the promotion of public access through digital portals. Topics to be addressed: archival practices for photo-

graphic heritage, digitisation and preservation, Europeana, public exposure and the archival mission. Confirmed keynote speakers at present are Elizabeth Edwards (De Montfort University, Leicester - UK) and Simon Tanner (King's College, London - UK). Next to their contributions, the program includes collection pitches by all content providers involved in EuropeanaPhotography, presentations from "befriended" Europeana-projects and a roundtable on IPR chaired by Charlotte Waelde (University of Exeter - UK).

About the exhibition:

www.earlyphotography.eu

Final conference:

<http://www.arts.kuleuven.be/cs/onderzoek/digital-culture-1/epconf>

Further information on the Pisa event:

Digitalmeetsculture as media partner published several articles about All Our Yesterdays, with more photos and videos:

<http://www.digitalmeetsculture.net/article/all-our-yesterdays-welcome-to-pisa/>

<http://www.digitalmeetsculture.net/article/all-our-yesterdays-story-of-an-narrative/>

<http://www.digitalmeetsculture.net/article/all-our-yesterdays-europeana-photography-exhibition/>

<http://www.digitalmeetsculture.net/article/vernissage-all-our-yesterdays-pisa-palazzo-lanfranchi/>

<http://www.digitalmeetsculture.net/article/all-our-yesterdays-a-huge-success-for-the-photographic-exhibition/>



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