



On the authenticity of photographs in Museum

Merilis Sähka
Estonian History Museum

Tartu - September 27th, 2008

“The whole sphere of authenticity is
outside technical reproducibility.”

Walter Benjamin
(Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical
Reproduction, 1936)

Reproductions of the worlds' first photograph



Joseph Niépore Niépce (?-1833). View from the window in Le Gras. 1826.

Reproduction. 1953. Silver gelatine print, 20,3 x 25,4 cm. Retouched with watercolours in 1952 by Helmut Gernsheim.

Gernsheim collection, Harry Ranson Centre, Texas University, USA.



Joseph Niépore Niépce (?-1833). View from the window in Le Gras. 1826.

Reproduction. 2003. Digital colour print on paper, 20,3 x 25,4 cm.

P.Getty Institute, Los Angeles, USA.

<http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/exhibitions/permanent/wfp/>

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**Permanent
exhibition in
Estonian
History
Museum: the
Hall of Soviet
era. 03.03.2008.**

Digital image,
2816x1880px.

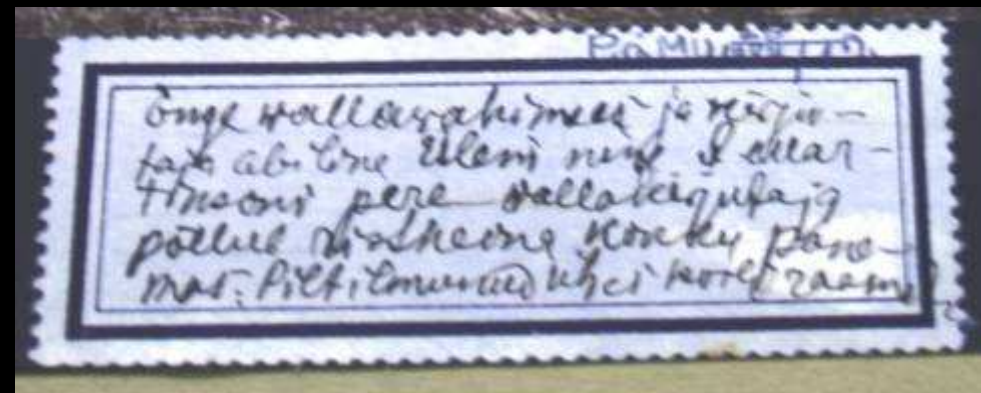
Private collection.

Analog photos in digital era



Museum of Pärnu

Example of reproductions (digital prints) of photographs and their descriptions in the permanent exhibition. 22.09.2008



Vaade Tari silole 1932. aastal

Enge-valla vahimees ja kirjutaja abiline Ülem ning A. Martinsoni pere vallakirjutaja põllul ristheina kokku panemas. Piit ilmuvad ühes koollraamatus.

Pääravere mehed ja naised 1913. aasta juulis

Rehepeks Koonga kihelkonnas

Heinatalgulised Pärnumaal

Analog photos in digital era

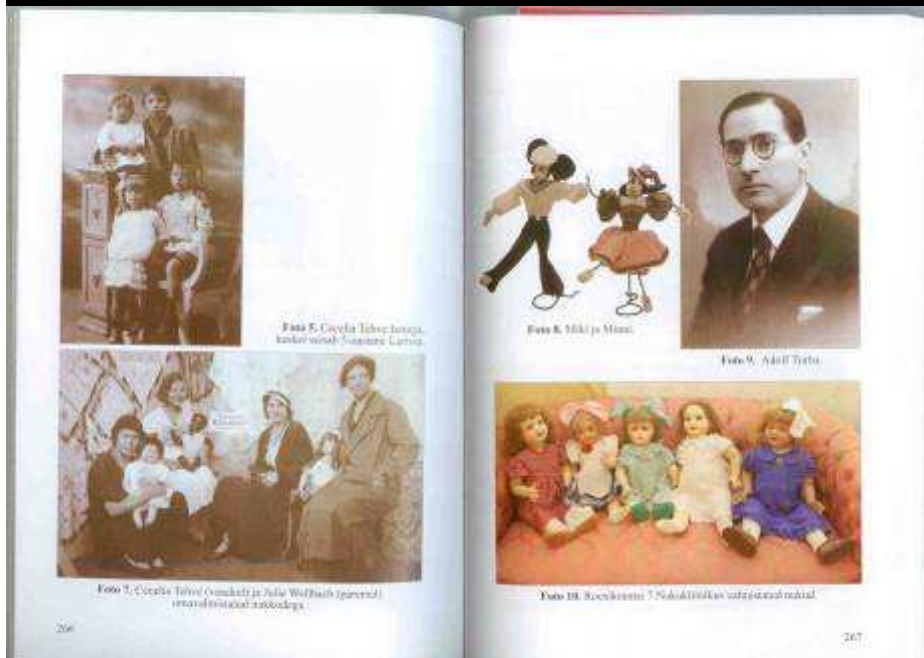
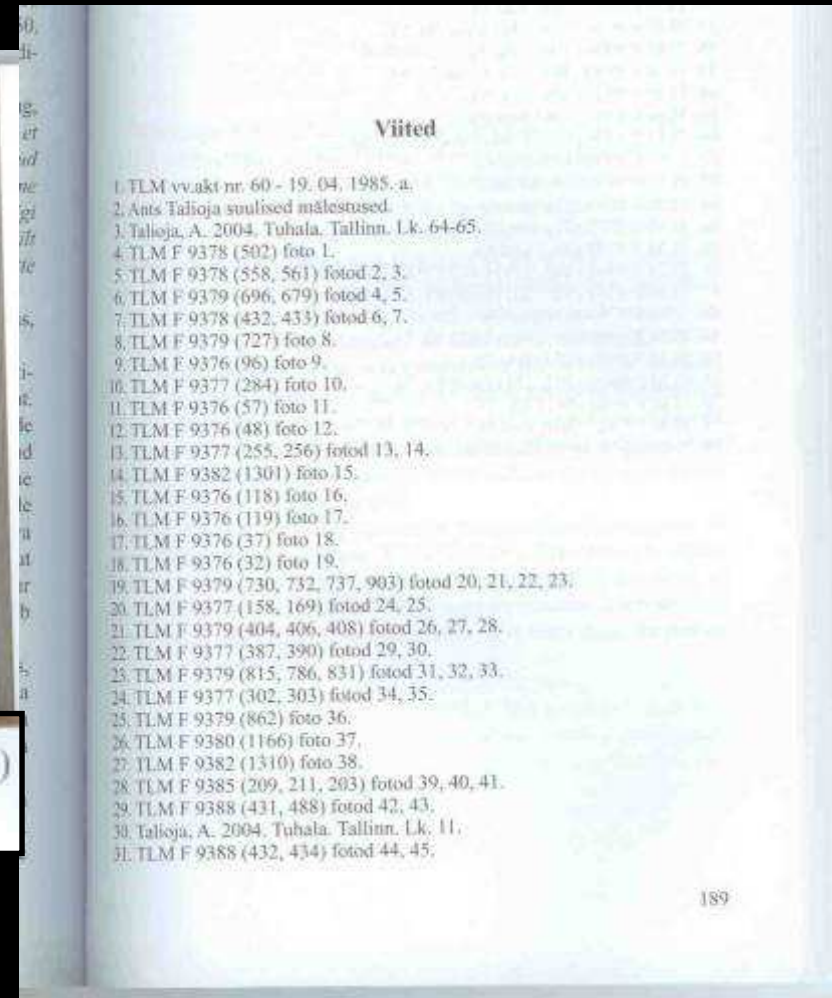


Foto 7. Cecelia Tehve (vasakul) ja Julie Wellbach (paremal) omavalmistatud nukudega.

Tallinn City Museums' Yearbook – 2005/2007. Pg.266-267. Reproductions for an article on toy production in Estonia. No further information about the reproduced photographs in the references of the article.



Collection numbers of the photographs are listed in the references of the article.

Analog photos in digital era



Estonian History Museum.
Reproductions of photographs (digital print on plastic) in the permanent exhibition. 3.03.2008

Information next to the exhibited reproduction contains the name of the object and owner institutions' name shortening.

The lefts of the original text under the image

Analog photos in digital era

ESTER E-KATALOGI TARTU

Esilehele Minu ESTER

Esilehele Telli Vali kirje MARC kuva Tagasi lehitsema Piira otsingut Tallinn ESTER Uus otsing

(Varasemad otsingud)

MARKSONA portreefotod Tartu TÄIELIK kataloog OTSI

2. kirje 3277-st
Kuva: << eelmine järgmine >>

Autor Riedel, H., fotograaf
Pealkiri Aadu Lüüs sõpradega. Grupipilt [Piltteavik]
Ilmunud Dorpat, [u. 1900-ndate algus]

Hinne Hindamisest... ☆☆☆☆☆

Püsilink kirjele http://ester.utlib.ee:80/record=b1700756~S1*est

LINK
[Juurdepääs digiteeritud versioonile](#)

ASUKOHT	KOHAVIIT	STAATUS	NOTES
TÜR käsik.ja har.rmt.kogu	F 78,Fo Norm 17:163	KOHAL	KOHALKASUTUS

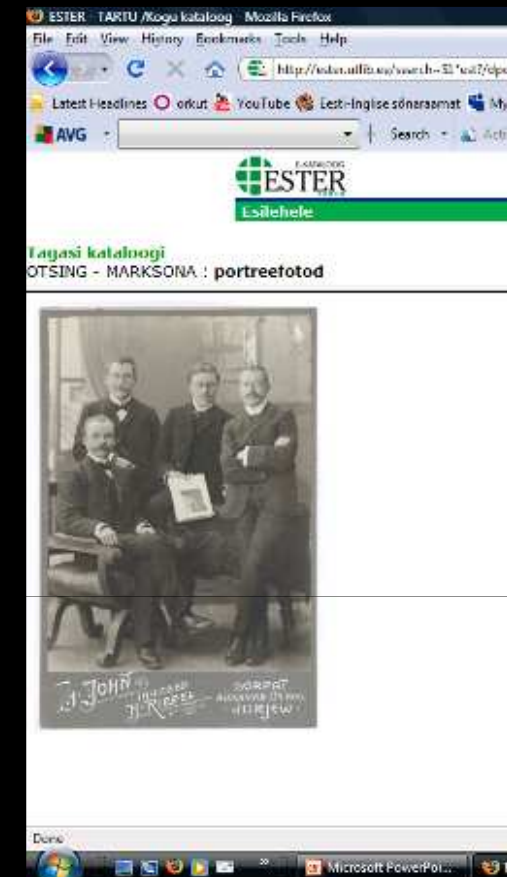
Kirjeldus 1 foto : orig., aluspapil ; 16,5 x 10,8 cm
Märkused Aadu Lüüs vasakult teine
Kättesaadav ka digiteerituna: <http://www.utlib.ee/images/f78/f78fonorm17-163.jpg>

Märksõnad Lüüs, Aadu, 1878-1967
Tartu Ülikool
õppejõud
arstid
arstiteadlased
1900-ndad
20. saj. 1. pool
fotod
portreefotod
portreed
grupiportreed

Kasutusjuhend

Osalevad raamatukogud ELNET Konsortium

<http://ester.utlib.ee/>



Library of Tartu University in the E-Catalog ESTER. Example of a digitized photograph and information about the original photo in the catalog.

Analog photos in digital era

Virtual photo-exhibition in the web-page
of Estonian Theatre and Music Museum:
“Beauty on the stage”

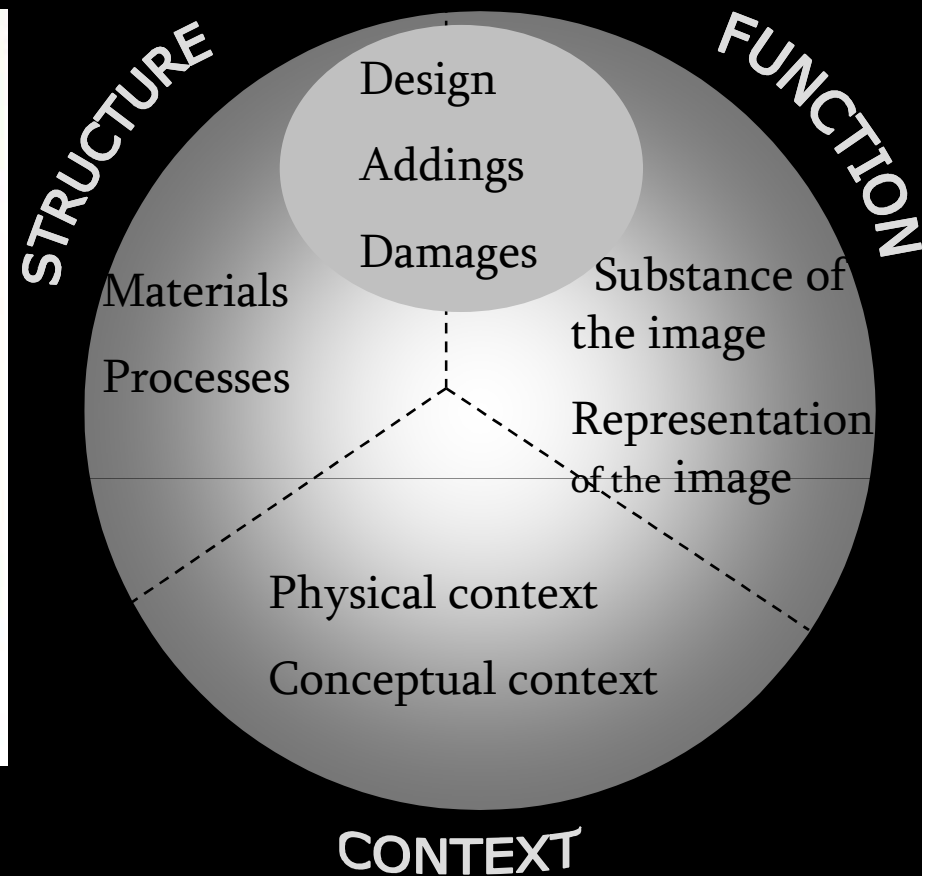
<http://www.tmm.ee/igimehelik/index.php?stend=26>

Documentation on display



Heinrich Tiidermann (1863-1904), Kaarli church in Tallinn – interior, exterior and portrait of the minister, ca 1900-1904.

Composite photograph, collodion print on cardboard, format and design of cabinet portrait. 16,4 x 10,8 x 0,15 cm. Estonian History Museum, F 30680. Acquired from Sirje Annist in 2000.



Informational model of the photograph a historical artefact

Documentation on display

IMAGE & content title +

- **Photographer** or photo studio;
- **Date and place** of photographing the original image
- **Identity and size** of the original photograph – negative, positive or transparency, base material, photographic technique, size (with the original mounting), name of size-standard (postcard, cabinet card, etc.); - to express the original material identity of the source of the image
- Belonging to a **collection, album or series**; - gives (a physical) context to the photograph
- **Owner institution and ID-number** – makes it possible to retrace the original when necessary, and respect owners rights.
- **(Reproduction process** (scanning,(digital) photographing, etc.) – expresses the new identity of the image, minimises risk of misinterpretation of the copy image being the original photograph in an exhibition, for example.)

Documentation on display



Photobooth "Bosco" (mechanical "photographer"). A Triple portrait: (from left) workers of the Volta Factory in Tallinn: Vilhelm Timmermann (planisher), Karl Rohtma (student of the turner), Jüri Kuusman (student of the locksmith, later school inspector in Põltsamaa). Finland, 1906.

Ferrotpe (collodion emulsion on iron plate), in original envelope, 8,3 x 6 cm.

Estonian History Museum, F 3553. Aquired from Karl Rohtma in 1948.

Documentation on display



C.Schmidt. Portrait of August Ferdinand Huhn (1807-1871) – minister of the church of St.Olaf. 1860's, Tallinn. Two-layered, waxed and coloured salted paper print. 18,7x15,2x0,5cm. Estonian History Museum; F5547. Aquired in 1922. Conserved in 2006. (Digital images: front, inside and back of the photograph)

Conclusions

- Photographs are multy-layered cultural objects
- The photographic heritage is too easy to bring down on a single plane while making reproductions. Digitising involves mostly just one part of the original object – its image.
- More documentation data can and should be shared about the photographs used and reproduced by museums (and archives) to preserve the integrity of historical visual heritage.

“Benjamin failed to recognise the ability of those who control the technology to control the image content and reproduction.”

Joanna Sassoon, *Photographic Materiality in the Age of Digital Reproduction*. 2004

Thank you!

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