

Communiqué de presse Paris

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An historical album by **Gustave Le Gray**  
produced during the Paris Salon in 1852  
to be sold at Sotheby's Paris on 15 May

Est : € 240,000-280,000 / \$315,000-368,000

Paris, April 2012 - The forthcoming Photographs sale at Sotheby's Paris, to be held in the Galerie Charpentier on 15 May will feature an exceptional album with 9 salt prints from waxed paper negatives produced by **Gustave Le Gray** during the Paris Salon in 1852. Estimated between € 240,000 and 280,000\* (\$315,000-368,000), this album surely is one of the sale's most eagerly awaited lots.

Following the photographer's success of the *Mission Héliographique* the previous year, Philippe de Chennevières, inspecteur des musées de province and in charge of the exhibition of living artists commissioned Gustave Le Gray to photographically document the principal works of the 1852 Salon.

In 1852 the Paris Salon is held for the second and last time in the Palais Royal, opening on Thursday 1 April. In addition to the provisional buildings already constructed for the Salon 1850-51 the exhibition took place on the first floor of the Palais itself, where a new gallery with skylights was established just above the glazed passage known as the "galerie d'Orléans".

One of the very rare surviving copies of this album is known to be in the collection of the Musée d'Orsay in Paris, the second is the one sold at Sotheby's Paris. Both copies equally contain nine salt paper prints each bearing the photographer's blind-stamp "Gustave Legray".

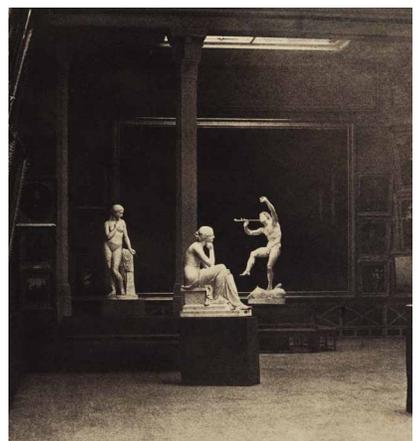
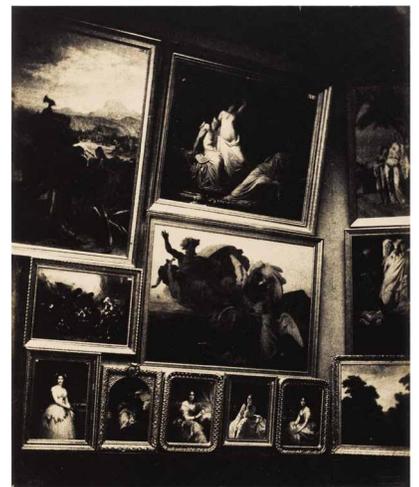
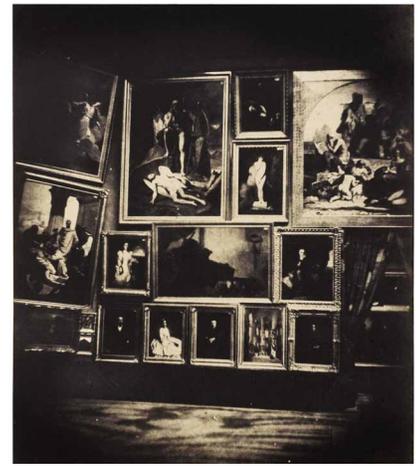
In both cases, the ninth plate represents not a view of the 1852 exhibition but a view of the 1850/51 Salon beautifully accentuating a group of sculptures, amongst which the *Toilette d'Atalante* by Pradier now in the Louvre.

On two of the views dating from 1852 **Gustave Courbet's *Les Demoiselles de village***, today in New York's MET, is noticed to have changed place completely. In fact, the regulations of the Salon allowed for five days of closure in order to rearrange the hanging of the exhibits. It is likely that the painting which belonged to a notorious collector, the Comte de Morny, was initially exhibited in the main room and moved to a less prominent place following unfavorable reviews.

The two known copies of this album have the same dark-green shagreen binding, the one here only differing in its more elaborate embellishment, such as the additional gilded frame lines, the imperial eagle above the gilded title letters on the front and the **gilded crowned monogram M on the back cover**. The monogram may potentially be attributed to **Mathilde LaeticiaWilhelmine, cousin of Napoléon III**. At the time of Le Gray's commission the director general of the French national museums and authority over the institution in charge of organising the Salon was Comte Emilien de Nieuwerkerke who, between 1846 and 1869, was officially the companion of Princess Mathilde.

Princess Mathilde was very much involved in Paris' cultural scene, presiding over her own salon, a patron of the arts and well acquainted with Nadar who portrayed her. Of her companion, the comte de Nieuwerkerke who headed the Louvre and the Salon, exists a portrait by Gustave Le Gray in the *Société française de Photographie*.

Four years after the 1852 Salon Le Gray, today the most coveted 19th century photographer at auction, showed his grand maritime views in public for the first time at the *Photographic Society* in London. It would be the starting point for his international success that remains undiminished to this day.



## EXHIBITION

From Thursday 10 to Monday 14 May (excluding Sunday) 10h-18h