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# The Calotypist of Today: The Use of Arsène Pélegry Calotype Process and French Papers for a Travelling Photographer

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## Résumé

The rise of digital photography since about year 2000 has created a shock to not only the traditional industry of photographic technology but also changed the way photographers work. Image makers found it now easy to take pictures, change them using digital technology and spread images through internet. Some, however, turned their interest back to search inspiration in forgotten, historical processes. Among these was also the illusive calotype. Hardly anybody has seen contemporary work of salt prints made from calotype negatives. My personal interest in calotype has two sources, one of a photograph conservator working in Norway and the other more personal, as an artist. Having seen a number of beautiful but aged salt prints and a few crumbling calotypes I was very curious to know what a calotype and a print from it would look like when freshly made. How else would one guess if it was waxed, exposed when wet near home base, or if the sky was retouched, how long would the exposure be?

The first goal was to find out if the Norwegian inventor Hans Thøger Winther's (1789-1851) claim of inventing three photographic techniques on paper 1839-43 would work today. The second goal was to compare his techniques to contemporary and later practices. The third goal was to see if the calotype suited my personal taste and could be a workable process for an artist. Having addressed the first two goals in 2010, and enjoying it on the way I could think more about how the historical calotype practice could be explored today. The process of wet paper calotype involves challenges especially when it comes to travelling.

An improved process, exposed on dry paper, used by amateur photographer Arsène Pélegry (1813-1888) from Toulouse gained recognition by his own publication in 1879, his follower Eugene Trutat (1840-1910) and rev. Burbank in the USA as late as in 1888. The essence of this process lies in the meticulous rinsing of the sensitized calotype paper and the special preserving bath. These are the main reasons behind the excellent shelf-life of papers sensitized this way. The sensitivity, in very bright light conditions allows for exposures below one minute and the sensitivity of the calotype is retained for at least three months. Additionally, development could be delayed by at least two weeks. The Pélegry dry paper calotype has been rediscovered by Richard Cynan Jones, the founder of The Calotype Society in 2010. After introducing a few modifications this is still a perfect combination for a travelling calotypist.

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Illustrations of the iodizing process as well as finished calotypes and salt prints will be presented in Paris. Samples of unused French papers for calotype and salt printing will be available. Both calotypes and salt prints from travels as far as Vietnam will be shown. Some of the author's calotype work had been shown on exhibitions of The Calotype Society and other shows. A set of images has been made especially for Remnants of Prayers, a project at The National Museum in Gdansk, Poland. Most recent salt prints from calotypes by the author will be selected for keeping by The Preus Museum in Norway in 2017.