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Katie Oates

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imperial legacy influenced fairs in both the metropole and the periphery of the American Empire in the decades following the Spanish-American War of 1898. With that being said, *The Spanish Element in Our Nationality* is still a beautifully illustrated book—it includes twenty plates and eighty figures. It is also an informative work and a must-read for individuals interested in art history, world's fairs, immigration to the United States, and US-Spanish-Latin American relations at the turn of the twentieth century. ¶

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1. Gregg French, "The Foundations of Empire Building: Spain's Legacy and the American Imperial Identity" (PhD Dissertation: University of Western Ontario, London, Canada, 2017); Richard L. Kagan, *The Spanish Craze: America's Fascination with the Hispanic World, 1776–1939* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2019); Christopher Schmidt-Nowara, "Spanish Origins of the American Empire: Hispanism, History, and Commemoration, 1898–1915," *International History Review* 30, no. 1 (March 2008), 32–51.

Lori Pauli, ed.

Oscar G. Rejlander: Artist Photographer

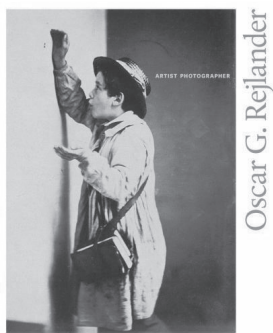
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Oscar G. Rejlander: Artist Photographer, edited by Lori Pauli and with essays by her, Jordan Bear, Karen Hellman, and Phillip Prodger, is an essential text that celebrates the artist's life and work. This catalogue was an accompaniment to, and extension of, the exhibition of the same name organized by the Canadian Photography Institute of the National Gallery of Canada; the exhibition

opened in Ottawa in October 2018 on the 205th anniversary of Rejlander's birth and then travelled to the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles in March 2019. The catalogue constitutes "the most thoroughly published investigation into Rejlander's entire practice" and highlights his contributions to the history of photography (15). He not only mentored famous photographers such as Julia Margaret Cameron, but his elaborate combination prints were unprecedented in their time and set the groundwork for understandings of photographs as malleable and manipulated images, as we know them today. The show, the first Rejlander retrospective, featured a hundred and fifty works, while the catalogue accommodates an extra forty-four images that, in totality, cover the many aspects of his career. The images illustrate the narrative complexity of Rejlander's work, his technical ability as evidenced in anatomical and scientific studies, his playful uses of the camera through visual puns, and his references to Ren-



aissance paintings, all while aligning photography with other modes of representation such as drawing and painting.

The catalogue features four essays, a chronology of Rejlander's life, and a list of images to give readers a sense of the exhibition and to support the authors' visual analyses. Full-page reproductions are featured at the back, with in-text

images dispersed throughout the book for direct reference to the essays. Each contribution focuses on a different facet of Rejlander's career. Pauli's "On Becoming the Father of Art Photography" establishes the book's foundation by guiding readers through his artistic and technical development of photography. Pauli's essay is divided into neat subsections that demarcate Rejlander's work thematically and geographically, from his move from Sweden to England in August 1839 to his death in 1875. It traces Rejlander's career in Wolverhampton, where he lived and worked for nearly twenty years, and in London, where he operated his final studio beginning in 1862. Pauli details his practice as a portraitist before he began experimenting with combination printing (using multiple negatives in a single image) and expanding into diverse subject matter, which included military traditions, anatomical studies to be used by artists, landscapes, architecture, moralizing and humorous scenes from literature, and scientific studies of human expressions. She analyzes his epic allegorical study, *The Two Ways of Life, or Hope in Repentance* (1857), a sensation when first exhibited, and she discusses how its controversial reception afterward defeated him financially and caused him doubt about the legitimacy of "art photographs" (38). Rejlander addressed this in his 1863 publication, "Apology for Art-Photography," in which he vividly recounts his first lesson in the medium, provides methods for combination printing, and articulates the usefulness of photography for artists. Pauli assures readers that he persevered in his studio practice, creating domestic scenes and portraits, and contributing to major exhibitions until his final years. The author bookends each section with in-depth biographical details—his initial training as a painter in Italy and Spain; his 1846 study of photography with William Henry Fox Talbot's assistant Nicolaas Henneman; his exhibiting

at the Photographic Society of London several times throughout his career—that provide ample contextualization for understanding Rejlander’s accomplishments and the processes by which he worked, but also the challenges he faced as an artist in the midst of the debate about photography as art in the late 1850s. This comprehensive essay also links Rejlander’s practice to members of the Victorian social elite—Alfred Tennyson, Henry Peach Robinson, Prince Albert—underscoring his broad social network. Unfavourable remarks from Thomas Sutton of the Photographic Society of Scotland and British photographer Peter Henry Emerson, for example, ultimately diminished consideration of his images by photographic communities by the end of the century, despite friend and critic Alfred H. Wall’s attempt to record Rejlander’s legacy in a series of mid-1890s articles. Edgar Yoxall Jones’ 1973 publication, *Father of Art Photography: O.G. Rejlander, 1813–1875*, reinvigorated interest in Rejlander’s work as the first study on the artist, and spawned other publications, such as Peter Bunnell’s *The Photography of O.G. Rejlander: Two Selections* (1979) and Stephanie Spencer’s *O.G. Rejlander: Photography as Art* (1985). As one of the most iconic, yet enigmatic, photographers of the Victorian era, the exhibition, and Pauli’s essay in particular, examines Rejlander’s oeuvre through a fine arts lens and situates it within his cultural and historical circumstances to elevate his name within the canon. This catalogue contributes to scholarship by building upon and incorporating into it the broad spectrum of his varied career both before and after his best-known piece, *Two Ways of Life*.

Karen Hellman’s “The ‘Plasticity’ of Rejlander’s Studio” explores the artist’s unique engagement with the malleability of photography, focusing specifically on his post-1860 combination prints. She outlines the “unconventional” methods

Rejlander used to achieve depth and to give his photographs the same sense of the third dimension as painting and sculpture (16). He designed his studio to enable sitters to improvise poses and to allow him to spontaneously snap the moment of light that most accurately captured their improvisation. The natural sunlight allowed him to reproduce the immediacy and emotionality with which he saw his subjects. Hellman goes on to explain how Rejlander worked like a contemporary street photographer, finding inspiration in everyday subject matter. Expressions and conversations that he observed and overheard on the streets of Wolverhampton and London were staged and reenacted within the studio. Rejlander’s resourcefulness with props is also detailed, along with his astute ability to remedy photographic problems with inventive solutions. For instance, he dampened and stained thin fabrics of clothing to mimic sculptural and painted forms and create the effect of multidimensional, delineated drapery. Hellman skillfully weaves the analogy of theatre throughout her essay to describe Rejlander’s elaborate techniques and performances. She quotes one of his contemporaries likening him to an actor and director who moved around the studio “dexterously,” swapping out props “until the desired feeling of the scene was conveyed” (60). He enlisted actors for staging photographs, including his pantomime actress wife, Mary Bull, who appears in many of the brilliant photographs featured in the catalogue. Like Pauli, Hellman notes Rejlander’s modest economic status, particularly given his technical and creative aptitude. His continual return to poor and struggling subject matter is perfectly symbolic of his own struggle, as she writes, “against overwhelming odds” (69). She concludes that his ability to create a depth of space that did not exist within the studio, to demonstrate how the potential of photography was not, as he claimed,

“confined to one plane,” was based on his remarkable way of working (57). The malleability of his practice and “the plasticity of photography” remained vital to this work even after he ceased combination printing in 1860.

Jordan Bear’s “Collectors, Copyists and Collaborators: On Rejlander’s Relationships” demonstrates how Rejlander’s work and identity as a photographer helped guide nineteenth-century practitioners. Bear begins by acknowledging critics’ opinions about Rejlander’s work through the dichotomy between aesthetic and commercial imperatives. He uses this framing to effectively show that Rejlander’s loyalty to his aesthetic program was not as definitive as historians have conceived, for, as Bear writes, “Rejlander was simultaneously a self-conscious photographic artist and the proprietor of a busy, often lucrative portrait studio” (75). His oeuvre was recognized by other aesthetically driven photographers in Britain for his ability to strike a balance between “maintaining his artistic high practice” and capitalizing on the dissemination of his images through reduced format commercialized prints offered at drastically lower prices (76). Bear shows how Rejlander’s work was a model for notable photographers Julia Margaret Cameron, Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (Lewis Carroll), and Lady Clementina Hawarden, as collectors, copyists, and curators of Rejlander’s prints. He relates how their practices were shaped by Rejlander and argues successfully that the impact of his work is a testament to his artistic integrity and to his ability to participate in commercialized photography, while simultaneously defending the medium from the thrust of commerce. Bear closes the essay by demonstrating how Rejlander was influential in reconceiving what it meant to be a photographer at this time and, perhaps more notably, “allowing two women to transcend the limited, merely ‘reproductive’

role to which Victorian society consigned them;” a position that would have a significant impact on the ways in which future generations of women photographers expanded the field of photography (84).

Phillip Prodger in “Giving His Body to Science: Rejlander’s Photographs for Charles Darwin” sketches Rejlander’s collaborative project with Charles Darwin in *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872). Prodger describes the naturalist’s enthusiasm for Rejlander’s work, commenting that “even when staged, his photographs possessed a genuine spontaneous quality, which Darwin was unable to find with other photographers” (95). Their collaboration began with Rejlander’s existing inventory of expressive portraits and evolved into a commission that had him producing specific images at Darwin’s request. Prodger observes Rejlander’s “characteristic exuberance” shining through the pictures to create a “strange and wonderful experience” even today (93). *Emotions* features thirty images, of which eighteen were supplied by Rejlander. Darwin used multiple examples to show a range of Rejlander’s posed expressions, and to illustrate how subtle differences could be tracked on the same body. Prodger underscores, like Hellman, that Rejlander was a keen social observer who documented anecdotal information from friends and family, particularly artists and physicians, about emotional expression to enhance his photographs for Darwin’s book. The experimental nature of their collaboration is highlighted with previously unpublished photographs, which Prodger praises as conceptually “unprecedented” (94). The essay underlines Rejlander’s lively, humorous nature, yet at the same time acknowledges the ambiguity of his photographs: though they appear “distinctly cinematic” to contemporary viewers, their visual plausibility made them authoritatively acceptable by nineteenth-century scientific standards

(97). Because the camera had yet to reveal what the naked eye could not register, Prodger concludes that such photographs “cannot be evaluated by modern empirical standards, since they were part of the reason those standards had to be created in the first place” (97).

Overall, the authors effectively reinforce the photographer’s canonical status by showing the multifaceted and previously unexamined techniques of his practice. While most literature centers around Rejlander’s status as “the father of art photography” by analyzing his combination prints, this catalogue shows how versatile his practice was by including his paintings, lithography, portraiture, drawings, and scientific studies. Common throughout the essays is an emphasis on Rejlander’s goal to make thought visible. The intricacy with which he composed images, his ingenuity in the studio, and his ability to capture the feeling of a scene are highlighted by his career-long advocacy for photography as art. The aim of *Oscar G. Rejlander: Artist Photographer* is to highlight his contributions to the history of photography. The catalogue proves successful as a vital addition to art historical literature by showing the complexities around which photography was viewed in the nineteenth century and the processes by which photographers achieved then-ground-breaking effects. As such, the exhibition and its accompanying text broaden the discussion of Rejlander’s career in a way that challenges previous assessments that merely focused on his composite photographs while simultaneously highlighting his expansive mode of working. It can also be viewed as a call to scholars to further explore the breadth of Rejlander’s practice. Though the contributors acknowledge these gaps in scholarship and begin to assess his work in the aforementioned mediums, topics such as the multifaceted nature of his practice, his influence on and relationships

with other nineteenth-century photographers, and his emphasis on the correlation between photography and painting remain largely understudied. In expanding these aspects of Rejlander’s career, scholars could more accurately align his work with recent literature on nineteenth-century photography that explores race, gender, and identity in Western and British culture more specifically, yet also extends beyond monolithic studies of the medium to include, for instance, its relation to literary works and the notion of authorship. As little has been published about the artist, there remains much room for deeper theoretical analyses to contribute to the current discussion. In drawing attention to Rejlander’s ability to push the technical boundaries of photography with exceptional artistry, the catalogue pulls readers into the world of nineteenth-century photography, and in doing so, illuminates his creativity and curiosity as an artist. ¶

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Emmanuel Alloa
Partages de la perspective
Paris, Fayard, coll. Ouvertures, 2020

288 pp. 47 ill. coul.
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Maryse Ouellet

Dans l’essai concluant sa nouvelle parution, *Partages de la perspective*, le philosophe Emmanuel Alloa, surtout connu auprès des historiens de l’art pour avoir dirigé la série de volumes *Penser l’image* (2010, 2015 et 2017), admet l’audace de son projet: tout n’a-t-il pas déjà été écrit sur la