



Real/Ideal: Photography in Mid-Nineteenth-Century France

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In the years following the announcement of the invention of photography in 1839, practitioners in France gave shape to this intriguing new medium through experimental printing techniques and innovative compositions. The rich body of work they developed proved foundational to the establishment of early photography, from the introduction of the paper negative in the late 1840s to the proliferation of more standardized equipment and photomechanical technology in the 1860s.

The essays in this elegant volume investigate the early history of the medium when the ambiguities inherent in the photograph were ardently debated. Focusing on the French photographers who worked with paper negatives, especially the key figures Édouard Baldus, Gustave Le Gray, Henri Le Secq, and Charles Nègre, *Real/Ideal* explores photography's status as either fine art or industrial product (or both), its repertoire of subject matter, its ideological functions, and even the ever-experimental photographic process itself.

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