Form:

“Each daguerreotype is a remarkably detailed, one-of-a-kind photographic image on a highly polished, silver-plated sheet of copper, sensitized with iodine vapors, exposed in a large box camera, developed in mercury fumes, and stabilized (or fixed) with salt water or “hypo” (sodium thiosulphate).”

Black and white; no usage of color, only grey areas in between

Function:

Duality

Medium of artistic expression

Powerful scientific tool

Artists feared photography would eventually supplant painting

Photography was in itself an art form; even if not considered such at the time

Content:

Anatomy of a daguerreotype

One-of-a-kind image on a highly polished, silver-plated sheet of copper

Handful of still lifes, Parisian views, and portraits from the dawn of photography

Images of other works of art

Sculpture, painting, photography, etc.

Responses to the new medium of photography:

Emerging middle class embraced it.

“Photography perfectly suited an age that saw artistic patronage continue to shift away from the elite few toward a broader base of support. The growing and increasingly powerful middle class embraced both the comprehensible images of the new medium and its lower costs.

Mixed responses among artists, especially painters

Some welcomed it, like Delacroix, who looked to it for answers on how to best render an image in paint.

Others were threatened by it and refused to consider it art, seeing it as displacing the painstaking work of skilled painters dedicated to representing the optical truth of chosen objects.

Context:

Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre (1787–1851)

Daguerrotypes accompanied the invention of photography

Less than 25 of his photos survive the devastating fire on March 8, 1839