The French supreme court ruled in 1862 that photography is art, and Daumier did this lithographic cartoon in response. Daumier was a friend of the famous photographer Nadar, who even had even shot his portrait, but the caricature uses wit and Nadar's fame as an aerial photographer to offer a tongue-in-cheek commentary on the question of whether photography is art.

Who was Nadar? an early champion of photography and the greatest of the early portrait photographers. He loved going up in hot air balloons produce aerial photographs (the first in the world).

Casts Nadar as a mad scientist of absent minded professor

Function:

a clever pun, alluding both to Nadar's literal elevation (in the balloon) above the city of Paris and the debate about whether photography could be considered a fine art.

Form:

Lithograph = printing from stone or metal to mass produce images

He uses the precarious diagonals to create the illusion of wind and suggest danger (balloon photography was actually slow and steady)

The implied speed of the climb alludes to the risky climb of photography to a form of art

Landscape is recognizable as Paris.

All buildings are photography businesses, showing the exploding popularity. The number of them undermines the idea that they are artists.