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The Stirling Maxwell Research Project

The First Photographically Illustrated Book on Art: The Talbotypes Volume of William Stirling's *Annals of the Artists of Spain*





The Stirling Maxwell Research Project is an international collaboration between the University of Glasgow, the National Media Museum, Bradford and, in Spain, the Prado Museum and the Centro de Estudios Europa Hispánica (CEEH), Madrid.



Annals Talbotype no. 41: Alonso Cano, Penitent Magdalen, pen, ink and wash with chalk, c. 1630-40. Talbotype photograph by Nicolaas Henneman. Photo © National Media Museum/ Science and Society Picture Library

The task of the three-year project, begun in August 2010, is to study the first photographically illustrated book on art: William Stirling's *Annals of the Artists of Spain* (1848). To the three volumes of text of the *Annals*, William Stirling (Sir William Stirling Maxwell) added a limited edition volume of 66 photographic illustrations. These were the first photographs ever published of Spanish paintings, drawings, sculpture and prints, by artists including El Greco, Velázquez, Murillo, Zurbarán, Ribera and Goya, in addition to examples of architectural designs and book illustrations. The photographs taken by Nicolaas Henneman used the Talbotype (or Calotype) process invented by William Henry Fox Talbot. The new process was still at an experimental stage: only fifty copies of the *Annals* Talbotypes were produced, and their deterioration, due to daylight, chemicals and other factors, began immediately. It may now be slowed only by restricting the conditions for viewing surviving copies. Thus, the volume is so rare and fragile that very few people, even specialist scholars, have ever seen a copy.

Links

- [National Media Museum](#) 
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- [Centro de Estudios Europa Hispánica](#) 
- [Special Collections, Glasgow University Library](#)
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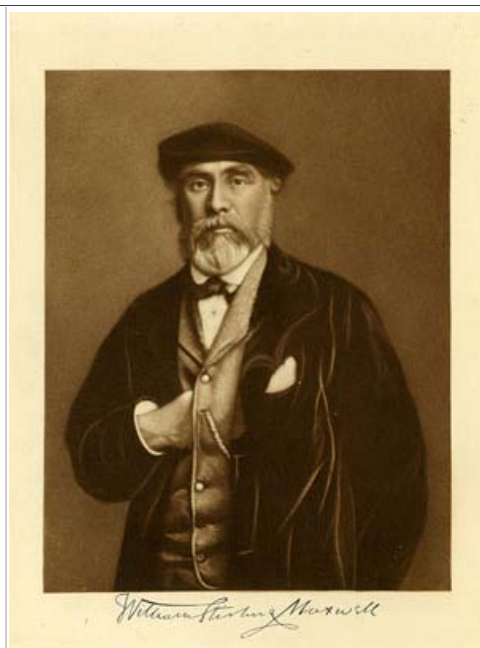
Despite its limitations, the *Annals* Talbotypes volume marked the beginning of the study of art through photography and photographically illustrated books. With these tools, art history as an academic discipline became possible, and access to knowledge of art became available to a wide range of people. The project's aim, therefore, is to examine the significance of this landmark within the context of the history of art, the history of photography, and the use of photography as an essential tool of art history. The major outcome will be a facsimile and critical edition of the volume which will demonstrate, as far as possible, the quality and condition of the Talbotypes at the time they were produced, based on the best surviving examples. An interactive electronic resource will also be produced.



Annals Talbotype no. 63: Francisco de Goya, *Tauromaquia* no. 19, etching, 1816. Talbotype photograph by Nicolaas Henneman. Photo © National Media Museum/ Science and Society Picture Library

Sir William Stirling Maxwell had close links to the University of Glasgow as its Chancellor from 1875 to 1878. He also donated money for the present main University building at Gilmorehill. As a Member of Parliament he campaigned vigorously for the reform of university education in the United Kingdom and was in favour of university education for women. The University Library contains Stirling Maxwell's unrivalled collection of emblem books. Glasgow City Council likewise has outstanding holdings of Stirling Maxwell material, including part of his extensive collection of Spanish art which is displayed at Pollok House (administered by the National Trust for Scotland). For further information on research projects relating to Stirling Maxwell, visit [Centro de Estudios Europa Hispánica](#) ^{en}.

Funding sources for the Stirling Maxwell Research Project currently include Santander Universities, Santander Shareholders and the Kress Foundation.



Sir William Stirling Maxwell, Bart., 1818-78, mezzotint engraving, from a photograph by R.B. Parkes, c. 1870. Reproduced as the frontispiece to Works of Sir William Stirling Maxwell (London 1891), vol. VI: Miscellaneous Essays and Addresses

Project Team

University of Glasgow: [Dr Hilary Macartney](#) (Project Director), **Prof Nick Pearce** (Head of the School of Culture & Creative Arts), **David Weston** (Assistant Director and Keeper of Special Collections, University Library)

National Media Museum: **Brian Liddy** (Curator of Collections Access), **Colin Harding** (Curator of Photographic Technology), **Paul Goodman** (Collections Director)

Centro de Estudios Europa Hispánica: **Dr José Luis Colomer** (Director)

Prado Museum: **José Manuel Matilla** (Head of Drawings and Prints)

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