



Sir John Herschel, plate 11 from the album "Alfred, Lord Tennyson and his Friends"

Date

1867 (published 1893)

Primary Maker

Julia Margaret Cameron

Medium

Photogravure, mounted on matboard

Description

Julia Margaret Cameron began making photographs in the 1860s, relatively late in her life and at a time when the field of photography was just developing. She soon surpassed the realm of the amateur, becoming one of the first female artists of significance working in the medium. Much of her work focused on individuals in her upper-class British social circle, either in portraits or in tableaux vivants representing biblical narratives or scenes from literature. This portrait depicts Sir John Herschel (1792–1871), a British scientist who served as the first president of the Royal Astronomical Society. Herschel, who had learned of the discovery of photography in the late 1830s by Henry Fox Talbot in

England and Louis Daguerre in France and had made some experiments of his own according to their methods, introduced Cameron to photography years before she received her first camera. (He also coined the terms “photography,” “positive,” and “negative.”) In 1842, Herschel enclosed in a letter to Cameron two dozen photographs—the first she had ever seen. “I remember gratefully that the very first information I ever had of Photography in its Infant Life of Talbotype & Daguerreotype was in a letter I received from you,” Cameron recalled in 1864. Although shot in 1867, this photograph was printed after Cameron’s death by her son to be published as plate 11 in *Alfred, Lord Tennyson and His Friends*. The album, produced in an edition of four hundred, included photographs by Cameron of the famous poet, who had died the previous year, along with members of his circle. David Garfinkel, Class of 1978, and Shelley Spector Garfinkel, dedicated collectors of early photography whose numerous gifts helped to develop the College’s collection, gave this work to the Emerson Gallery in 1990. (SOURCE: Alcauskas, *INNOVATIVE APPROACHES, HONORED TRADITIONS*, 2017) Portrait of Sir John Herschel

Dimensions

Image: 9 3/4 × 7 3/16 in. (24.7 × 18.2 cm) Plate: 11 9/16 × 8 11/16 in. (29.3 × 22 cm) Sheet: 17 11/16 × 14 5/8 in. (44.9 × 37.2 cm)