



Oscar G. Rejlander

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## OSCAR G. REJLANDER. ARTISTE PHOTOGRAPHE

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With his red hair and Swedish accent, Oscar Gustaf Rejlander was an easily identifiable figure within the London photographic community. Fortunately, he had a penchant for making self-portraits, and so we have been left with a visual record of this multi-talented artist. Yet, the details of Rejlander's early life remained mostly a mystery. His marriage certificate recorded that he was from Sweden and that his father, Carl Gustaf, was a stonemason and a soldier in the Swedish Army. When recording his testimony for naturalization papers in 1852, Rejlander stated that he was born on October 19, 1813 and that he had come to England in August 1838. He was apparently a trained artist. But hardly any of this biographical information has been confirmed through archival evidence. In any event, once in England, after learning the rudiments of photography from Nicolaas Henneman, he embarked on a photography career that would see him contribute to both the technical and artistic development of the medium. His masterpiece, *Two Ways of Life* (1857), would become one of the most important and controversial works in the history of photography. In 1862, Rejlander moved to London where he continued his photography practice along with painting and some lithography until his death in 1875.

While Rejlander is now considered the "Father of Art Photography," primarily for his contributions to the technique of combination printing along with his photographic "art studies" and his humorous and genre scenes, his work has never been brought together in a major exhibition that includes both his photographs and his paintings and prints. The present catalogue, which accompanies an exhibition in Ottawa on what will be the 205th anniversary of Rejlander's birth, is an attempt to look more closely at his contribution and to try to better understand the breadth of his work. It places his practice in the Victorian art contest and analyses his influence on other photographers, like Julia Margaret Cameron, Lewis Carroll, and Lady Hawarden.

The quality of the reproductions, the panorama of the Victorian age, the humour of Rejlander's repertoire make this publication an essential book for researchers and specialists of nineteenth-century photography.

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