

# Department of Art History

## Graduate Student Lecture Series | 2018-2019

*The Camera Lens:*



Jean-Baptiste Sabatier-Blot, *Louis Daguerre*, ca. 1844

### *Fully Visible Yet Transparent*

**Andrés Mario Zervigón**

Professor of the History of  
Photography, Rutgers University

In 1890, the Jena Glass Works of Carl Zeiss released the Anastigmat photographic lens and advanced a chapter in optical technology that seemed to have progressed automatically, even in a predetermined manner, since the medium's origins. This valuable innovation offered a consistent field of focus across the photographic plate and corrected for a number of additional aberrations at lower and higher f-stops. But why exactly was Zeiss developing this expensive device and what drove photographers to buy it? This paper suggests that the consistent focus and varied depth of field it provided were not in and of themselves the desired goals of these improvements, but that they were instead visible signals of a pictorial model that makers and consumers had been seeking since the public introduction of photography in 1839. The goal was a transparent realism that remained stubbornly external to the medium, an illusionistic standard that had been mediated by painting since the renaissance and was now apparently possible in photography.

**Tuesday, October 23, 5:30pm**  
**Recitation Hall, 101**



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