



# The Making of English Photography: Allegories

*Steve Edwards*

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Since the production of the first negative by William Henry Fox Talbot in Wiltshire's Lacock Abbey in 1835, English photography has played a central role in revolutionizing the production of images, yet it has largely evaded critical attention. *The Making of English Photography* investigates this new enterprise—and specifically how professional photographers shaped a strange aesthetic for their practice.

*The Making of English Photography* examines the development of English photography as an industrial, commercial, and (most problematically) artistic enterprise. Concentrating on the first decades of photography's history, Edwards tracks the pivotal distinction between art and document as it emerged in the writings of the "men of science" and professional photographers, suggesting that this key opposition is rooted in social fantasies of the worker. Through a close reading of the photographic press in the 1860s, he both reconstructs the ideological world of photographers and employs the unstable category of photography to cast light on art, class, and industrial knowledge.

Bringing together an array of early photographs, recent historical and theoretical scholarship, and extensive archival sources, *The Making of English Photography* sheds new light on the prevailing discourses of photography as well as the antinomies of art and work in a world shaped by social division.

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