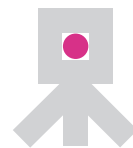


open access article



ESHPH European Society for the History of Photography

Roberto Caccialanza

Stefano Lecchi, from Milan,

Pupil of Daguerre: the Last Biography

European Society for
the History of Photography (ESHPH),
Vienna 16 March 2017, 00:00

Stefano Lecchi ("Eljografia Lecchi"),
The Trevi Fountain, Rome 1851,
salted paper print, 16,5 x 22,2 cm.
The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, 84.XP.768.12.

© ESHPH and Roberto Caccialanza
All rights reserved. No part of this open access article
may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any
means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying,
recording or any other information storage and re-
trieval system, without the written permission of the pub-
lisher. Every effort has been made to locate the copyright
holders for the photographs used in the magazine. We
welcome any pertaining information.



Stefano Lecchi, from Milan, Pupil of Daguerre: the Last Biography

Roberto Caccialanza Stefano Lecchi,¹ born in Milan in 1803² of Antonio and Giuseppa Rossi,³ stands out in particular for having collaborated with Daguerre and making improvements to his *Diorama*,⁴ as well as inventing a method for painting daguerreotypes, a photographic camera with a periscope glass, and for creating a precious reportage of the events that occurred in Rome in 1849.

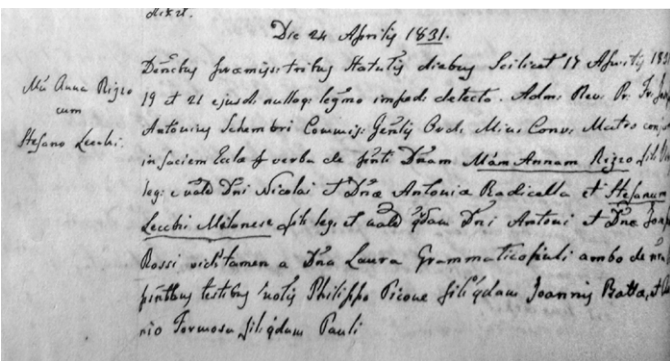


Figure 1
Certificate of marriage
between Stefano Lecchi and Maria Anna Rizzo.
Malta, La Valletta – Porto Salvo,
S. Domenico Church, 24 April 1831.

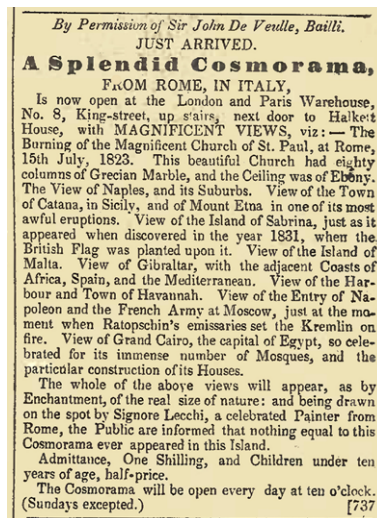


Figure 2
The Argus, 19 July 1836.

The first traces of Lecchi were found in Malta, where he married Maria Anna Rizzo, from Palermo, on 24 April 1831, in La Valletta – Porto Salvo (fig. 1).⁵

The research revealed nothing new until 16 July 1836 when a “splendid Cosmorama, from Rome, in Italy” had just arrived on the island of Jersey and was opened in St. Héliér in an apartment at the London and Paris Warehouse, next door to Halkett House, No. 8, King Street. “Signore Lecchi [...], a celebrated Painter from Rome [...], the distinguished Artist”, presented a first choice of views which he claimed to have drawn on the spot: the burning of the church of St. Paul at Rome (15th July 1823), the view of Naples, and its suburbs, Catania and Mount

Etna in one of its most awful eruptions, the islands of Sabrina and Malta, Gibraltar, the Kremlin on fire (by Ratopschin’s emissaries), the Grand Cairo, the harbor and town of Havana...

A month later, Lecchi informed that he could have offered new views, including the inside of the cellars of the Inquisition in Seville, Madrid, Cadiz, Florence and its surroundings, Palermo, the port of Messina, Reggio Calabria, Vesuvius in eruption. On August 23, before moving to Paris, Stefano exhibited a third series of paintings in his “enchanted hall” (fig. 2).⁶ The show was open every day, “except Sundays”.

In January 1838, Lecchi returned to St. Héliér with his “Grand Cosmorama, from Rome”. For the last week

1. Although books and several articles have been written about Stefano Lecchi and his photographic works during his period in Rome in 1849, the life of this important character has remained somewhat mysterious, see: Maria Pia Critelli, *Stefano Lecchi: un fotografo e la Repubblica Romana del 1849*, Rome, Retablo 2001 (essays by Maria Pia Critelli, Marina Miraglia, Silvia Paoli); Maria Pia Critelli, *Fotografare la storia: Stefano Lecchi e la Repubblica Romana del 1849*, Rome, Palombi 2011 (catalogue of the exhibition held in Rome).

2. Based upon the birth certificate of one of his sons, issued 19 December 1840, Lecchi was 37 years old at the time.

3. No trace of the name Lecchi has been found in the baptismal records of the parishes in Milan and its “Corpi Santi” (outside the Gates), or in the General Population Registers of the Municipality of Milan from 1811. According to the RGP 1811, a Giovanni Antonio Lecchi, of Gaetano and Antonia Scurati, born June 10, 1781, porter, living at No. 398 (Contrada della Vetra dei Cittadini) were

residents of Milan: unfortunately it is not possible to find further information about him and to know if this man could be linked to Stefano.

4. *Le Journal de Toulouse*, 23 October 1842. After the fire that – in less than half an hour on 9 March 1839 – had completely destroyed the *Diorama* in Rue des Marais, Daguerre went back to work recruiting “young painters instructed thanks to his learned lessons, among others Mr. Lecchi, the same that has just led to another kind of research a final refinement to the sublime invention of his Master, the *Daguerreotype*...”.

5. La Valletta – Porto Salvo, S. Domenico Church, Marriages, 1831. In the notice it was specified that “*Stefano Lecchi Milanese*” was widower of Laura Grammatico. It is also signaled that Maria Anna Rizzo’s sister, Epifania, got married in La Valletta – Porto Salvo on January 30, 1825, to Anastasio Pini (“from Florence”).

6. *Le Chronique de Jersey*, 16, 23, 30 July, 6, 13, 20 August 1836; *The Argus*, 19, 26 July, 9, 16, 23 August 1836; *L’Impartial*, 20, 27 July, 3, 17, 24, 31 August 1836.

COSMORAMA,
No. 8, KING-STREET.

DERNIÈRE SEMAINE.

Le Propriétaire a l'honneur d'informer les habitants de cette île que pour la dernière semaine avant son départ, il donnera le grand

PANORAMA DE LONDRES
ET SES ENVIRONS.

Cette vue, qu'il est inutile de vanter, est la même qui se voit tous les jours au Colloséum à Londres, et qui ne cesse d'attirer un grand nombre de visiteurs.

L'INTÉRIEUR DE LA
GRANDE INQUISITION
A SÉVILLE, EN ESPAGNE.

On y distingue le Grand Inquisiteur et ses affidés, employés au châtiement des victimes de cet infâme tribunal et masqués d'une tête de mort.

ST.-PAUL, A ROME.

Cette superbe basilique fut incendiée le 15 Juillet 1823.

LA BRILLANTE VUE DE GIBRALTAR.
NAPOLÉON ENTOURÉ DE SON ÉTAT-MAJOR.
Prix d'entrée, 6d. British, et 4d. les enfans.

LIST OF ALIENS.

I, *John Macdonald* Master or Commander of the Steam Vessel *Ocean* do hereby declare, that the following is a true Account of all Alien Passengers on board of the said Vessel, arrived from *Calais* this *24* Day of *June* 18 *38* at London, to the best of my knowledge, and that no Aliens have been landed at any other Port or Place.

Signature, *John Macdonald*

Christian and Surnames.	Quality.	Country.
Prenoms et Noms.	Profession.	Pays.
<i>M. Lecchi</i>	<i>peintre</i>	<i>Italie</i>
<i>M. Lecchi</i>	<i>peintre</i>	<i>Italie</i>

Figure 4

List of aliens disembarked from the vessel "Ocean" at the port of London, 24 June 1838.

MAIRIE DE TOULON. **ARRONDISSEMENT DE TOULON.**

Du *vingt-neuf* mois *de décembre* an mil huit cent quarante *sept* heures du matin

ACTE DE NAISSANCE de *Marin Antoine Lecchi*

né à Toulon, le *vingt-neuf* du courant à *vingt* heures, du *soir* de *Marie Lecchi*, née à *Milan (Italie)* profession de *peintre* âgé de *vingt-neuf* ans, domicilié à Toulon, et de *Marie Anne Biggo*, *Savoyenne* âgée de *vingt-neuf* ans, domiciliée à Toulon.

Il a été vérifié que l'enfant à moi présenté est de sexe *masculin*

Sur la déclaration à moi faite par *le Dr. Picchi* père de l'enfant

Agé de *vingt-neuf* ans, profession de *peintre* domicilié à Toulon.

Premier témoin, *Antoine Secchi* âgé de *vingt-neuf* ans, profession de *peintre* domicilié à Toulon.

Second témoin, *Maria Schiavilla Rolce* âgée de *vingt-trois* ans, profession de *officier d'administration* domicilié à Toulon.

CONSTATÉ, suivant la loi, par moi *Joseph Casside Jacquinet* Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur, adjoint délégué par M. le Maire, remplissant les fonctions d'Officier public et lecture du présent acte a été donnée à la partie déclarante et aux témoins, qui ont signé.

P. Lecchi *Secchi* *Jacquinet*

Figure 5

Birth certificate of Marin Antoine Lecchi. Archives départementales du Var, Mairie de Toulon, No. 1620, 20 December 1840.

before leaving, he exhibited – once more in the lodging on King Street – the view of London and its surroundings, Napoleon and his general staff, plus some subjects offered on the first trip (fig. 3).⁷

On 24 June Stefano sailed to the port of Calais on the boat "Ocean" to reach London (his name is on the list of foreign passengers as "S. Lecchi – pitore [sic, as painter] – Milano"), but it has not been possible to find information about his presence in England (fig. 4).

Two years later, on 2 February 1840, a Diorama was opened in Toulouse with attractions identical to those mentioned a month before; however, the local newspaper does not report the owner's name.⁸ In any case, it is certain that, in June 1840, the "Italian painter" Lecchi had "just arrived" in the same town to perform a Diorama show near the Cirque not far from Place Lafayette. Lecchi's paintings were particularly appreciated by this public, after having also been shown in Paris and other major French cities: three great scenes representing the interior of the St-Étienne-du-Mont Church in Paris, Naples with Vesuvius (calm and after the eruption) and Salomon's Temple.⁹

On 10 August, Stefano opened his Diorama on Place des Arènes in Nîmes, where views of St-Étienne-du-Mont (midnight mass),¹⁰ Place de la Concorde and a panorama of Paris from the towers of Notre-Dame, as well as the Moscow fire were displayed. The performance was available until 23 August.¹¹ The magazine *Le Semaphore* attests Lecchi's presence in the building of the *Maternité*,¹² in Marseilles in the first days of September with his *double effect Diorama*, a variation of Daguerre's Diorama, showing a sequence of the same spot at different moments and under various light conditions.¹³

During the month of December, the painter was in Toulon, in the "large and nice building" once occupied by the Delaury Brewery on Place St-Pierre. The newspaper *Le Toulonnais* explains that the "director of the Diorama" had "reproduced on the canvas, by means of the Daguerreotype, the wonders of nature and art. He defined the views in less gigantic proportions than those of the Diorama in Paris, but on an appropriate scale that allows you to easily distinguish all the details and all the contrasts of the images." The show, which was staged regularly from 13 December until the end of the month, seems not to have had much success,¹⁴ but Lecchi's disappointment was somewhat eased when Maria Anna gave birth to his son "Marin Antoine" (Mario) at 5 pm on 17 December (fig. 5).¹⁵

7. *Le Chronique du Jersey*, 6, 13 January 1838; *Le Constitutionnel*, 6, 13 January 1838; *Le Jersais*, 13 January 1838.

8. *Journal politique et littéraire de Toulouse et de la Haute-Garonne*, 31 January, 2 February 1840.

9. *Journal politique et littéraire de Toulouse et de la Haute-Garonne*, 13 June 1840.

10. The most important paintings by Louis-Jacques-Mandé are mentioned in several magazines starting from 1834, as well as in *Description des procédés de peinture et éclairage inventés par Daguerre et appliqués par lui aux tableaux du Diorama* (1839). Among them, there are those representing midnight mass in St-Étienne-du-Mont Church and Salomon's Temple.

11. *Gazette du Bas Languedoc*, 9 August 1840.

12. "Hospice de la Maternité".

13. *Le Semaphore*, 5 September 1840. The last performance in Marseille was on 17 September.

14. *Le Toulonnais*, 9, 18, 25 December 1840. The Diorama was open every day from 4pm to 9pm (six daily shows).

15. Archives départementales du Var, Mairie de Toulon, Birth certificates, No. 1620 of December 19, 1840 ("Marin Antoine Lecchi"); Église catholique du Var, Archives de la Diocèse de Frejus-Toulon, birth certificate of St-Louis Parish (Toulon), December 20, 1840.

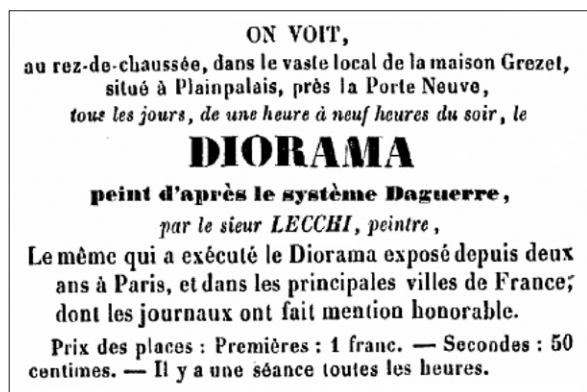


Figure 6
Le Journal de Genève, 20, 27 April 1841.

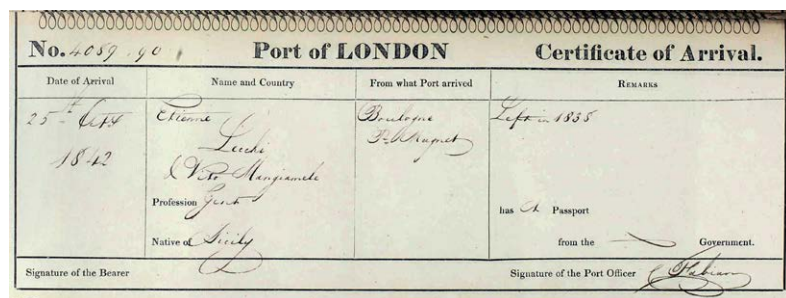
Mario also appears in the 1841 census of the population of Marseilles, the city in which the Lecchi family resided at 24, Rue Sainte (the domicile was transferred to 2, Rue d'Armény on October 2). The family comprised of Stefano "artiste peintre", his wife and his children Marin and Achille (an annotation informs us that he was three years old and had been born in Paris).¹⁶ Lecchi established a daguerreotype atelier in his dwelling in Marseilles, where he produced "wonderful" portraits in just one minute at the price of 10 francs.¹⁷

From 20 April to 2 May, Stefano was in Geneva, where he once again promoted his *Diorama*, "painted with the Daguerre system", that he displayed in his great room in Grezet's house in Plainpalais near *Porte Neuve* (fig. 6).¹⁸

On 24 March 1842, Lecchi opened a daguerreotypist cabinet at the Aix-en-Provence Museum. Some portraits, displayed in the bookshop on the main street, had a "stunning brightness." The artist, appreciated for being able to paint "perfectly resembling portrayals" in less than one minute, left the city in Provence on 12 April.¹⁹

On 25 September, the *Courrier de la Drôme et de l'Ardèche*²⁰ stated that, "until that time, the attempt to paint the products of daguerreotypes had been failing" and that this "great problem" seemed having been solved by "Mr. Lecchi, Daguerrian artist, who showed us very surprising examples." In connection to this, it is necessary to remember that, in the 10 October session of the Paris Science Academy, François Arago presented – in the name and on behalf of Lecchi – some daguerreotypes made with this new system, appreciated "for their colour full of truth and the freshness of the represented objects."²¹ The method consisted of applying layer after layer of the chosen colour to each and every part of the images and then removing it shortly thereafter by washing the plate with warm water.²²

A piece of news aroused particular interest: on 25 October 1842 "Étienne Lecchi, gentleman", disembarked from the vessel "Magnet" on the London docks coming from Boulogne-sur-Mer (fig. 7). He travelled with Vito Mangiamiele, a child prodigy who became famous all over the world because of his extraordinary skills in mathematical calculus.²³ Unfortunately, no further news about Lecchi and Mangiamiele's trip and presence in the United Kingdom is available.



16. Archives de Marseille, Census of 1841 [2 F 144 p. 115 v.]. The Lecchi family lived in a *meublé* (or "logé en garni") owned by the renter Étienne Petit.

17. *Le Sémaphore*, 1, 2 October 1841.

18. *Le Journal de Genève*, 20, 27 April, 1st May 1841.

19. *Le Mémorial d'Aix*, 20, 24 March, 10 April 1842.

20. The magazine was published in Valence.

21. *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Sciences*, 10 August 1842 session, 752; *Journal de Toulouse politique et littéraire*, 23 October 1842; 'A repository of coloring photographic pictures, by M. Lechi' [sic], in: *The (Newton's)*

London Journal of Arts and Sciences, London, Patent inventions 1843, 130.

22. *The London Journal of arts and sciences and repertory of patent interventions*, London, Newton 1843, 130; Giovanni Alessandro Majocchi, *Annali di fisica, chimica e matematiche*, Milan, Guglielmini 1843 (July-August-September), 215.

23. The son of a humble shepherd, born on 21 September 1827 in Sortino (SR), moved to France at the age of ten years and four months. François Arago introduced Mangiamiele to the Paris Science Academy, where he was considered the most skilful calculator of all times. He obtained tenure in mathematics at the Sorbonne University in Paris and died in that city on 17 October 1898.

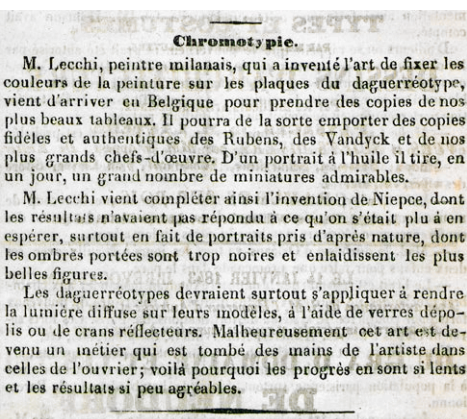


Figure 8
Le Courrier Belge, 22 December 1842.

Figure 9
Unidentified author, *La Famille de Rubens*,
daguerreotype 12,4 x 14,7 cm.
Collectie Fotomuseum Antwerpen,
Antwerp, Belgium, inv. P/1977/32/14.

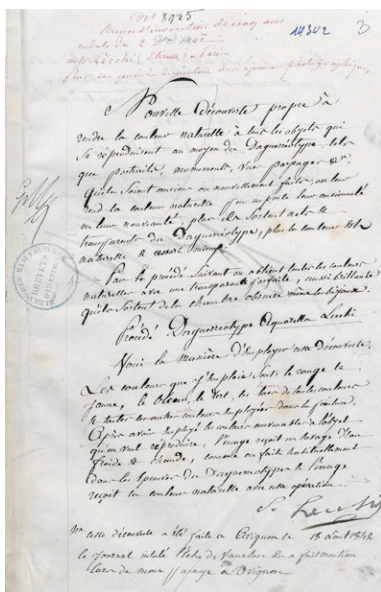


Figure 10
INPI Archives, Stefano Lecchi,
Brevet d'invention de cinq ans pour des procédés
propres à colorer à l'aquarelle les épreuves obtenues
par le Daguerreotype, n. 14342 (IBA10511),
1 October 1842, page 3.

The painting procedure of daguerreotype plates met with great resonance in France and in many other European countries including the United Kingdom. The news was

published with great excitement in Brussels in December 1842: "Painter Lecchi, from Milan [...] has arrived in Belgium to reproduce our most beautiful paintings. In this way he will be able to take authentic copies of Rubens', Van Dyck's works and of our greatest masterpieces. He creates, in just one day, a great number of remarkable miniatures out of an oil painting..." (figs. 8 & 9).²⁴

On 1 October 1842, the artist, who was living at 2, Rue du Coq-St-Honoré in Paris, sent his application to be assigned a (5 years) patent for the invention of his own procedures for watercolour paintings of Daguerreotype plates (obtained on 2 December).²⁵ Lecchi included a description of his technique and a "drawing-portrait" in the file as a demonstration. A certificate of addition and improvement was later granted to the patent, issued on 31 December.²⁶ In his description, Lecchi wrote about a "new discovery useful for the reproduction of natural colours of all those objects reproduced through Daguerreotype, such as portraits, monuments, sights,

landscapes, etc..., old or new ones; it is possible to give them their original and natural colour, it doesn't matter if they have been produced recently or not; the more they are clear and transparent with the Daguerreotype, the more their colour is going to be natural and the final result good. Thanks to this technique [...] it is possible to have all the natural colours with a perfect, brilliant transparency, identical to the one come out from the darkroom. [...] I use to apply the following colours: red, yellow, blue, green, varnishes of all colours, and all the other colours used in paint. After having applied colours suitable for the object I want to reproduce, I will wash the image with cold and warm water, as it is usually done..." In a note found in the description of patent No. 14342 issued by the French Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce, the inventor clarified that the discovery had been made on 18 August; thanks to this piece of information, it has been possible to find the published article in which the editor explained having just seen, in Lecchi's Diorama displayed during those days in Avignon, "a Daguerreotype portrait in which colours are reproduced with an incredible clarity and transparency. Those colours had never been obtained before on plates made of silver copper. We distinguish in a very clear way the colour of complexion, the gold of jewels, but also the colour blue stands out in a considerable way; the soft shade of eyes and hair in this portrait is of a vivid blonde and they are reproduced with great precision; the tones of complexion are particularly true..." (fig. 10).²⁷

Meanwhile, on 10 December 1842, Lecchi granted the rights of use of his invention to Jean-Thomas Rameye and Jean-Pierre Glenisson, two artists from Paris, who obtained the patent in order to use it in an exclusive way for the Department of Puy-de-Dôme and

24. *Le Courrier Belge*, 22 December 1842. The article was later republished in summary form by the magazines: *Journal de Bruxelles*, 24 December 1842; *Münchener Politische Zeitung*, 24 January 1843; *Kunstblatt*, 2 March 1843; *The Athenæum*, 11 March 1843; *The Art Union*, April 1843; Association nationale pour favoriser les arts en Belgique, *La Renaissance: chronique des arts et de la littérature*, Bruxelles, Société des Beaux-Arts 1842-1843, 143.

25. INPI Archives, Stefano Lecchi, *Brevet d'invention de cinq ans pour des procédés propres à colorer à l'aquarelle les épreuves obtenues par le Daguerreotype*, No. 14342 (IBA10511), 1 October, 1842.

26. *Description des procédés et machines consignés dans les brevets d'invention, de perfectionnement et d'importation*, Paris, chez Mme v.ve Bouchard-Huzard 1847, 230-231.

27. *L'Écho de Vaucluse*, 28 August 1842.

of Yonne respectively, starting from 20 January 1843. Edme Bailly and Joseph Belnot from Paris (“Bailly et Belnot” company), acquired the certificate for the Departments of Somme, Gironde, Haute-Garonne, Nièvre and Cher.²⁸

Under the heading of ‘latest news’ in Paul Lacroix’ *Bulletin de l’Alliance des Arts* of 10 January 1843,²⁹ we find that Lecchi, “known in Germany for a couple of months”, would soon arrive in Paris to demonstrate the excellence of his printing technique of Daguerreotypes. Lerebours wrote about him in his *Traité de photographie*, published in June of the same year.³⁰ Moreover, at the 17 July session at the Academy of Science, a letter from Mr. Desaix was presented stating that he had tried to print using Lecchi’s method but the image seemed at first to have been removed by washing; however, when left in the air and light for more or less two weeks, it reappeared clearer than it was before, startling Desaix.³¹

We cannot ignore the news that in this period, Stefano, in the company of Vito Mangiamiele, went back to the United Kingdom: they sailed from Le Havre on the liner “Monarch”, docking in Southampton on May 28, 1843. One notices immediately, on the passenger list, the striking difference between the excellent handwriting of Mangiamiele (“viaggiatore siciliano”, Sicilian traveler) and the insecure, almost trembling one of Lecchi, who wrote his surname, a word almost incomprehensible (“viagato”, meaning “viaggiatore”, as if he had forgotten Italian) and his home town: Milan (fig. 11).

Figure 11
List of aliens disembarked from the vessel
“Monarch” at the port of Southampton,
28 May 1843.

A LIST OF ALIENS.

I, the undersigned, being Master of the Ship or Vessel, named the *Monarch* bound from *Le Havre* to the Port of *Southampton*, do, in compliance with the Provisions of an Act of Parliament, passed in the 6th William IV. Cap. 11, hereby declare, that the following is a full and true Account, to the best of my knowledge, of all Aliens who are now on board my said Ship or Vessel, or have landed herefrom in this Realm, with their Names, Rank, Occupation and Description.

No.	Christian and Surnames. Prenoms et Noms.	Quality. Profession.	Country Pays
1.	<i>L. G. Mangiamiele</i>	<i>Viaggiatore</i>	<i>Sicilia</i>
2.	<i>Vito Mangiamiele</i>	<i>Viaggiatore</i>	<i>Sicilia</i>
3.	<i>Lecchi</i>	<i>Viagato</i>	<i>Milano</i>

The importance of Lecchi’s figure in the field of photography in France in the early 1840s is proved by the fact that even the Daguerreotypist Jean-Thomas Rameye mentioned him – together with Daguerre and Chevalier – as his master (fig. 12).³² But Stefano was already studying another novelty he submitted to the 22 April 1844 session of the Academy of Science: it was about an innovative *photographic device*, differing from ordinary ones because the darkroom was deprived of an objective but provided with a periscopic glass covered with merged tinfoil reflecting the image on the plate and reversing it; moreover, it was then possible to operate by regulating the same plate and glass in order to obtain the maximum of clearness and, therefore, focus. This could be obtained thanks to an indicator on the quadrant reporting distance measures normally used to make portraits.³³ This device was the object of discussion by Edmond De Valicourt who told that Lecchi “wanted to substitute” the traditional darkroom with this new system. The idea, however, was not new at all as it had been published many years before in the United States and in the United Kingdom by Richard Beard, who abandoned this project without achieving acceptable results. Even

PORTRAITS AU DAGUERRETYPE

PAR M. RAMEYE, BREVETÉ,
Elève de MM. Daguerre, Chevalier et Lecchi, ce dernier inventeur, breveté du Roi pour les Portraits au Daguerreotype EN COULEURS.

M. RAMEYE ne livre ses épreuves que lorsqu’elles sont bien réussies; quelques minutes suffisent pour obtenir un résultat et un Portrait très-ressemblant.

Prix : 10 fr.

Un assortiment de Broches, Bracelets, Médaillons, Bagues, Tabatières, permet à M. Rameye d’offrir à ses clients leur Portrait encadré dans ces objets.

S’adresser à son domicile, jardin de la Fontaine, à côté du Cabinet d’Histoire naturelle de M. Crespon, à Nîmes.

Figure 12
Le Courrier du Gard,
26 March, 5, 10, 12 and 23 April 1844.

28. The Secretariat of the Prefecture of the Seine Department signed the transfers on 16 January 1843 (Rameye), 23 January 1843 (Glenisson), 8 February 1843 (“Bailly et Belnot”).

29. *Bulletin de l’Alliance des Arts*, Paris 10 January 1843, 214.

30. Noël-Marie Paymal Lerebours, *Traité de photographie, derniers perfectionnements apportés au daguerreotype*, Paris, Lerebours 1843, 79.

31. *Comptes rendus des séances de l’Académie des Sciences*, 17 July 1843 session, 138.

32. *Le Courrier du Gard*, 26 March, 5, 10, 12, 23 April 1844. Rameye worked as a Daguerreotypist in Nîmes, at his home, Jardin de la Fontaine, next to the Antoine Crespon’s *Cabinet d’Histoire Naturelle* [*Le Courrier du Gard*, 5 July 1844].

33. Giovanni Alessandro Majocchi, *Annali di fisica, chimica e matematiche*, vol. XIX, Milan, Guglielmini 1843, 112; *Comptes rendus des séances de l’Académie des Sciences*, 22 April 1844 session, 754.

Lecchi's device did not score big: the extreme difficulty of focus, the impossibility of operating on a plate of reasonable size without exorbitantly augmenting proportions of the glass, the lack of sharpness, the uncomfortable – and even “embarrassing” – size of the device, together with the excessive price, led to it being rejected by most photographers.³⁴

Tireless Lecchi, “one of the first informers of the Daguerreotype process in Marseilles,” continuously experimented with new materials and processes arriving at developing photogenic paper, excellent for reproducing proofs on which he gave effects similar to etching. In this respect, it is noted that, in October 1844, Stefano was in Aix-en-Provence: “the distinguished painter” arrived in town and settled down at the Hôtel Nègre-Coste, on the main road. The Royal Court Magistrate, Pierre Vallet, published in *Le Mémorial d'Aix*:³⁵

“... a distinguished artist, passing through our town, informed me of the perfect efficacy of a procedure he had invented. It consists of reproducing and multiplying copies of incisions, drawings and texts, [musical scores, autographs, etc...], in such an excellent way that copies can be confused with the original ones. The operation could not be easier: it is very fast [and not expensive]. The mystery relies in the preparation of the paper, on which the copy is made. The artist will teaches us, I do not know at which conditions, the secret of his method...”

Lecchi's invention allowed him to apply a piece of paper directly over what he wanted to reproduce in order to “obtain a tablet with a mathematical precision” thanks to which it was possible to create copies at will. The procedure was elementary and was based on the “chemical reagents” Lecchi used.³⁶ The same edition of the *Mémorial d'Aix* announced the arrival of François Sènes (or Senez), who realized both daguerreotypes and photographic printings on paper using the method invented by Lecchi.

Some local newspapers³⁷ reported briefly on Lecchi's new system and the important news that Stefano was living at 36, Rue Paradis, in Marseilles.

In a memo addressed to “Painters and amateurs of photography,” the *Gazette du Bas Languedoc* of 19 June 1845 explained that Lecchi was available to explain the secret of this new procedure to all those who wanted to subscribe a sum of 100 Francs; once a sufficient number of inscriptions had been collected to cover most of the costs for implementing his research, Lecchi would indicate the day and the hour of the meeting. The editor stated that he had been able to examine some specimen views of Marseilles and its surroundings and had particularly appreciated them (“they are as charming as the delightful drawings by Decamps, Hubert and Bonington”)³⁸ and that Lecchi was staying at the Hôtel-du-Midi in Montpellier, room No. 9, for four days only.

Antoinette Anne (Antonia or Antonina) Lecchi was born at their new home at 2, Rue Sainte, in Marseilles on September 28.³⁹

34. *The Photographic and fine art Journal*, February 1854; Edmond De Valicourt, ‘Des modifications apportées à la partie optique de la Chambre noire’, in: *Nouveau manuel complet de Photographie sur métal, sur papier et sur verre*, vol. I, Paris, Librairie Encyclopédique de Roret 1862 [*Photographie sur plaques métalliques*], 16.

35. *Le Mémorial d'Aix*, 1 October 1844.

36. *Le Mémorial d'Aix*, 3 October 1844.

37. *Le Courrier des Alpes* (Chambéry), 1 February 1845; *Le Sémaphore*, 6 May 1845; *Le Narrateur Fribourgeois*, 24 May 1845.

38. It was about Richard Parks Bonington, Alexandre Gabriel Decamps and Alphonse Eugène Hubert.

39. Archives départementales des Bouches-du-Rhône, Birth Certificates, No. 932 of September 30, 1845.

Figure 13

Stefano Lecchi, *Pompeii* 1847,
salted paper print 15,4 x 21,9 cm.
Ruggero Pini Collection, Mandello del Lario.



Figure 14

Stefano Lecchi, *Rome, Colosseum* 1849,
salted paper print 16,2 x 22,5 cm.
Marco Antonetto Collection, Lugano, inv. 2751.



Figure 15

Stefano Lecchi, *Rome, the Roman Forum, view
looking towards the Campidoglio, with the temple
of Saturn*, 1849, salted paper print 16x20,3 cm.
Marco Antonetto Collection, Lugano, inv. 2750.



Clearly, it was not simple to gather a reasonable number of people ready to pay a considerable amount of money. Five months had passed before the advert of Richard, an optician, was published:⁴⁰

“Paper Daguerreotype, fixed in an unalterable way – Announcement to amateurs – Demonstration of the procedure. The author of this important discovery, Mr. Lecchi, well known to the artists in Paris, will take advantage of his passage in this town in order to gather all photography lovers who want to become aware of it. The demonstration will take place next Sunday, 30th November, 12 am, on the stained glass window, Place des Terreaux, 5. For further information, please address Richard, optician, Quai St-Antoine, where some examples will be exhibited.”

In a letter dated 1 December 1845, sent to William Henry Fox Talbot from La Valletta, Reverend Richard Calvert Jones stated that he had noticed some calotypes, which look very similar to talbotypes, in the windows of some photographers and shopkeepers in Lyon, Avignon and Marseilles; he discovered that they had been made by Lecchi.⁴¹

During the 4 April 1846 session of the *Académie Royale du Gard* a “beautiful image of *Maison-Carrée* in Nîmes was obtained by Mr. Lecchi, skillful artist, to whom the Government is about to give – it is said – a mission in the East.”⁴²

In a letter dated 28 August 1847, George Wilson Bridges, guest of the S. Nicolò d’Arena Monastery in Catania, told that he had met Lecchi in Naples who had been instructed by the Royal Commission to document archeological excavations and was also teaching art for 600 francs for only one lesson: “I have seen very perfect portraits taken in 40” by Claudet’s wet process, equal to Daguerres on metal in detail. [...] Lechie’s skies are perfect – & he succeeds on paper of very inferior quality – no spots seeming to appear, or injure the process.”⁴³ In the same letter, Wilson Bridges observed that some of the works were, in their details, the best ones he had ever seen: Lecchi “is now employed by the King of Naples in copying at Pompeii. [...] I saw him take 14 one morning at Pompeii without one failure...” (fig. 13).⁴⁴

In 1848 Lecchi was in Pisa and he arrived in Rome in 1849 where he met regulars of the *Circolo Fotografico Romano* at their gatherings in the “Caffè Greco”, Piazza Madama 25.⁴⁵ His reputation was now strong at the European level and he met some important scientists and men of culture. In the Eternal City, Lecchi made a famous series of images he took after the siege by Garibaldi (forty-one salted paper prints collected in an album) (figs. 14 and 15).

According to what we can read in *Stati delle Anime* of the S. Giacomo in Augusta Parish, Lecchi’s stepsister, Epifania Rizzo, widow, lived at 92, Via del Corso until 1849 at least.⁴⁶

40. *Le Censeur* (Lyon), 28 November 1845.

41. Letter, Reverend Richard Calvert Jones [Malta – La Valletta] to William Henry Fox Talbot, 1st December 1845, Correspondence of William Henry Fox Talbot, No. 5453 <<http://foxtalbot.dmu.ac.uk/letters/transcriptDocnum.php?docnum=5453#len05453-back>> [10.02.2017].

42. *Procès verbaux de l’Académie Royale du Gard*, Gard 1846, 55–56; *Gazette du Bas-Languedoc*, 5 May 1846.

43. Wilson Bridges wrote the receipt on the back of the letter.

44. Letter, George Wilson Bridges [S. Nicolò d’Arena, Catania] to William Henry Fox Talbot, 28 August 1847, Correspondence of William Henry Fox

Talbot, No. 5985 <<http://foxtalbot.dmu.ac.uk/letters/transcriptDocnum.php?docnum=5985>> [10.02.2017].

45. Another meeting point for artists and photographs was the “Trattoria del Lepre”, Via Condotti 9 (the owner was Mr. Lepri). Richard W. Thomas, ‘Photography in Rome’, in: *The Art Journal*, 1st May 1852, 159; Alessandro Rufini, *Notizie Storiche intorno alla origine dei nomi di alcune osterie, caffè, alberghi e locande esistenti nella Città di Roma*, Rome, Legale 1855, 32, 60.

46. Augusto Höttén, 35 years old, lived together with her and his children: Carmela (14 years old), Nicola (12), Luisa (10) and Antonio (6). In 1850, Carmela was “in Monast.” (in monastery).

Figure 16
ASDRm, Rome, S. Giacomo in Augusta Parish,
Stati delle Anime, year 1850, No. 84.

Figure 17
Stefano Lecchi ("Eljografia Lecchi"),
Rome, The Villa Borghese fountain 1851 (?),
salted paper print 15,6 x 21 cm.
The J. Paul Getty Museum,
Los Angeles, 84.XP.768.13.

91	Benedetto di Russo Epifania			
92	In Corte			
	Russo Epifania e Nicola di Malta Geo.	36	c	
	Stetten Carmela	15	c	in Monast.
	Nicola	13		
	Luigi	11		
	Ant.	7		
	Lecchi Stef. e Ant. Franze	40	c	al Popolo
	Rizzo Marianna e Nicola conj	40	c	
	Achille			
	M.			
	Antonina			

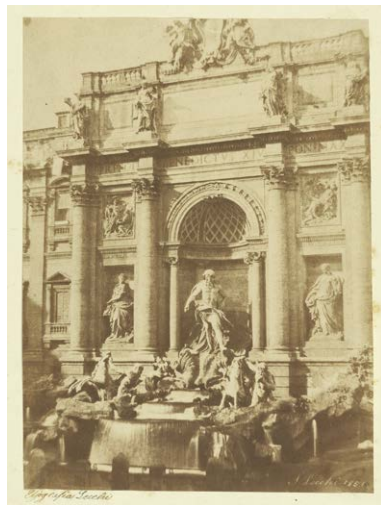


Figure 18
Stefano Lecchi
("Eljografia Lecchi"),
The Trevi Fountain, Rome 1851,
salted paper print, 16,5 x 22,2 cm.
The J. Paul Getty Museum,
Los Angeles, 84.XP.768.12.

Lecchi's family could not be found in the parochial census, but it is worth recalling Adelaide's birth on 12 December 1849.⁴⁷ One year later, the following names are listed at the same address (in the court to the ground floor): Stefano Lecchi, from Antonio, "French", with "Marianna" Rizzo and their children Achille, Mario and Antonina; oddly, the name Adelaide does not figure among them (fig. 16).⁴⁸ In 1851 the family lived at No. 36, Via del Corso. Two interesting photographic salted paper prints date from this period: they are now kept in the J. Paul Getty Museum and represent the Villa Borghese Fountain (fig. 17) and Trevi Fountain (fig. 18) (with the manuscript inscription "Eljografia Lecchi" on the bottom left corner).

In 1852, Stefano lived at 10, Via dei Greci; from 1853 to 1857, at 48, Via Mario de' Fiori (however his absence from Rome in 1853 was chronicled).⁴⁹ During the year 1857, his family moved to 15, Via Vittoria, where they lived until 1859.⁵⁰

It is noted that during that period – and definitely between 1854 and 1857 – Stefano Lecchi was associated foreign correspondent of the *Reale Accademia di Belle Arti* in Naples.⁵¹

Apparently, from 1860 Stefano and his wife, together with Achille, left town. In Rome, in the same year and in 1861, remains a record of their second son Mario, who lived at 158, Via del Babuino together with his sisters Antonia and Maria Anna Riccio, 34 years old.⁵² Mario was registered in the 1870 electoral lists, housed in Campo Marzio⁵³ and passed away in Rome on 28 February 1871.⁵⁴

Stefano Lecchi reappeared in La Valletta in Malta where he set up a photographic establishment in which he produced portraits on *cartes de visites*. We have a record of this activity thanks to a portrait of Giuseppe Garibaldi, found coincidentally in the archives of Falson Palace in Mdina: with an inscription on the back "S. Lecchi – Photographer – 141, Strada Stretta – Malta – Taken at the Imperial Hotel – 24th March 1864."⁵⁵ Another example

47. Christening on 18th December. Archivio Storico Diocesano in Rome (from now on ASDRm), Rome, S. Giacomo in Augusta Parish, Christenings, 1849.

48. ASDRm, Rome, S. Giacomo in Augusta Parish, *Stati delle Anime*, 1850, No. 84.

49. "Fuori di Roma".

50. ASDRm, Rome, S. Giacomo in Augusta Parish, *Stati delle Anime*, 1851-1859.

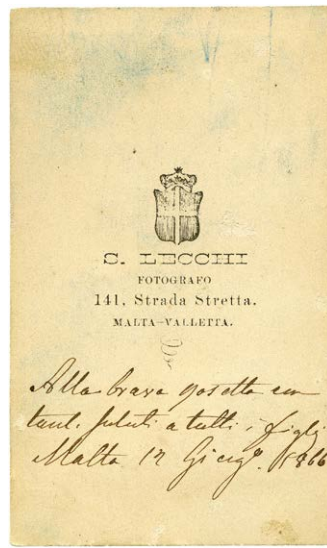
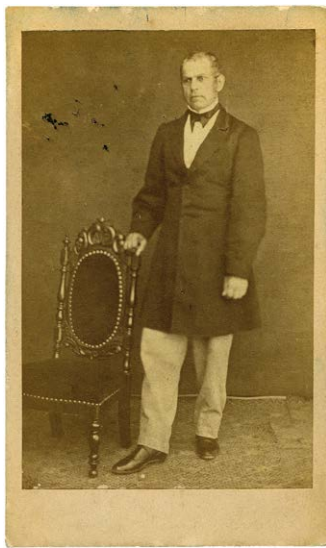
51. *Almanacco del Regno delle Due Sicilie per l'anno 1857*, Naples, Stamperia Reale 1857, 508.

52. ASDRm, Rome, S. Giacomo in Augusta Parish, *Stati delle Anime*, 1860-61.

53. *Bollettino degli atti pubblicati dalle Giunte di Governo e Municipali di Roma dal 20 settembre al 31 dicembre 1870*, Rome, Salviucci 1871, 124.

54. Archivio di Stato di Roma, Comune di Roma, *Stato Civile*, Death certificates, 1871, No. 258, vol. 1, part 2, series B. At this time Stefano had already passed away: so, the period in which to search his disappearance is between 17 June 1866 (when a *carte de visite* was produced in his studio in Malta) and 28 February 1871 (Mario's death date).

55. Giovanni Bonello, *Stefano Lecchi tracked down to Malta in 1860s* <<http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20160214/life-features/Stefano-Lecchi-tracked-down-to-Malta-in-1860s.602418>, 14.02.16> [10.02.2017].



Figures 19 a & b
Stefano Lecchi, *Portrait of a Man*,
Malta – La Valletta 1866, carte de visite.
Ruggero Pini collection, Mandello del Lario.

is part of Ruggero Pini's collection (Mandello sul Lario): on the back of the card, a lithographic text states "S. Lecchi - Fotografo - 141, Strada Stretta - Malta-Valletta" and the manuscript "Alla brava Rosetta con tanti saluti a tutti i figli - Malta, 17 Giugno 1866" ("to good Rosetta with lots of greetings to all the children") (figs. 19 a & b).

Some research made through several Maltese institutions from

May 2014 to February 2016 could not determine the period in which Lecchi's family lived on the island. Unfortunately, his traces end there. However, it can be assumed that Stefano and his family followed their first child when he moved to Alexandria, Egypt.

Marianna died in Alexandria on 9 May 1882 (she was a sixty-nine year old "housewife").⁵⁶ Moreover, in a list for the enquiry on facts occurring in June 1882, filled out by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it can be found that the claimant Achille Lecchi was given a reimbursement of 1800 Liras.⁵⁷

In December, 1889, the diva Eleonora Duse was on tour in Alexandria: on that occasion she received many gifts, among which there was an oil on canvas by the "distinguished painter Mr. Lecchi."⁵⁸

Achille Lecchi, "from Rome", was considered to be an "as valorous as modest [...] landscaper." He had come to Egypt "after having lived in France and in Malta: In Alexandria, where he died in 189[8], he left a cherished memory as man and a varied and delightful artistic production."⁵⁹

56. Archivio di Stato di Roma, Comune di Roma, *Stato Civile*, Death certificates, 1883, No. 69, vol. 1, Part 2, Series A. The document states that Marianna was "living in [Alexandria], domiciled in the Kingdom [of Italy] in the city of Rome, Province of Rome; she was born in Palermo from Nicola, dealer, domiciled in Malta". Achille presented himself to the Italian Consulate in Alexandria as a witness of the mother's death (he was "forty years old, Painter", residing in Alexandria, but domiciled in Rome).

57. 'Elenco dei reclami degli italiani liquidati fino al 15 luglio 1883 dalla Commissione Mista' [List of complaints from Italian cleared until 15th July 1883 from the Mixed Committee], in: *Gazzetta Ufficiale del Regno d'Italia*, 1st September 1883, serial No. 314 (Achille Lecchi).

58. *Gazzetta Piemontese*, 20 January 1890.

59. Luigi Antonio Balboni, *Gl'Italiani nella civiltà egiziana del secolo XIX: storia-biografie-monografie*, Alexandria of Egypt, Penasson 1906, 342. Achille, "47 years old, painter, born in Paris [...] from Stefano, photographer, [...] husband of Eugenia Maggetti", died in Alexandria, 10 March, 1898 [Archivio di Stato di Roma, Comune di Roma, *Stato Civile*, Death certificates, 1898, No. 585, vol. 2, Part 2, Series C].

Unfortunately, at the time of completing this article, the Italian Embassy in Cairo (in which Civil Status documents concerning Italians living in Egypt during the 19th century are kept) was still closed following the terrorist attack of 11 July 2015, which caused major damage. For this reason, it was not possible to access Achille's notice of death and to make research into the potential presence of Stefano and his wife in Alexandria after June 1866 (carte de visite produced in Malta) and before February 1871 (Mario's death). The writer reserves the right to examine documents as soon as the archive is accessible and to give prompt communication of the results of the enquiry.

Main sources consulted

Belgium: Archives de la Ville de Bruxelles; Bibliothèque royale de Belgique - Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België; Fotomuseum provincie Antwerpen; Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique - Koninklijke Musea voor Schone Kunsten van België; Royal Library of Belgium **Egypt:** Ambasciata d'Italia in Egitto (Il Cairo) **France:** Archevêché, Archives de Cathollicité de Marseilles; Archives de la Ville de Paris; Archives de Marseille; Archives départementales du Département des Bouches-du-Rhône; Archives départementales de la Seine; Archives départementales du Var; Archives Nationales de Paris, site de Pierrefitte-sur-Seine; Bibliothèque municipale 'Ceccano' (Avignon); Évêché de Fréjus-Toulon; INPI - Institut National de la Propriété Industrielle; Institut de France, Archives de l'Académie des Sciences **Italy:** Accademia di Belle Arti di Roma; Archivio di Stato di Pisa; Archivio di Stato di Roma; Archivio Storico Civico presso il Castello Sforzesco (Milano); Archivio Storico dell'Accademia di Brera (Milano); Archivio Storico Diocesano di Milano; Archivio Storico Diocesano di Roma; Comune di Palermo, Ufficio d'Anagrafe e Stato Civile; Comune di Roma, Ufficio d'Anagrafe e Stato Civile **Malta:** Archbishop's Curia, Floriana Malta; Archidiocèse of Malta, The Maltadiocese Digital Archives; The Church in Malta **Switzerland:** Le Temps (Genève); Swiss Federal Institute of Intellectual Property **United Kingdom:** Jersey Heritage; Société Jersiaise, Library; The Jersey Library; The National Archives; University of Exeter, Old Library.

Many thanks to

Marco Antonetto, Anna Baghiani Lewis, Evelyn Bonini, Francesco Caccialanza, Steeve Gallizia, Barbara Gariboldi, The J. Paul Getty Museum, Maud Henry, Josyanne Massa, Marie-Noëlle Perrin, Ruggero Pini, Monica Rigoli, Domenico Rocciolo, Valter Rosa, Luca Saletti, Ian Till, Marie-Françoise Waraksa.

Roberto Caccialanza, Cremona, Italy

Independent researcher and historian of photography, member of the *SISF* (Italian Society for the Study of Photography). Research focus on recognition, dating and correct attribution of photographs produced in Italy in the nineteenth century. Passionate about photography; organizer of several exhibitions and also publisher of research and historical-photographic books: *Fotografi a Cremona fra l'Ottocento e il Novecento* (2010); *Leandro Crozat - Sistema Crozat: biografia e notizie sul brevetto d'invenzione dei ritratti sul doppio fondo fotografico, colorito istantaneo e vernice preservativa* (2015, 2016); the handbook *Private industriali [Fotografia] rilasciate in Italia dal 1844 al 1885* (2016, 2017), the first census of the patents registered in Italy on the subject of photography.