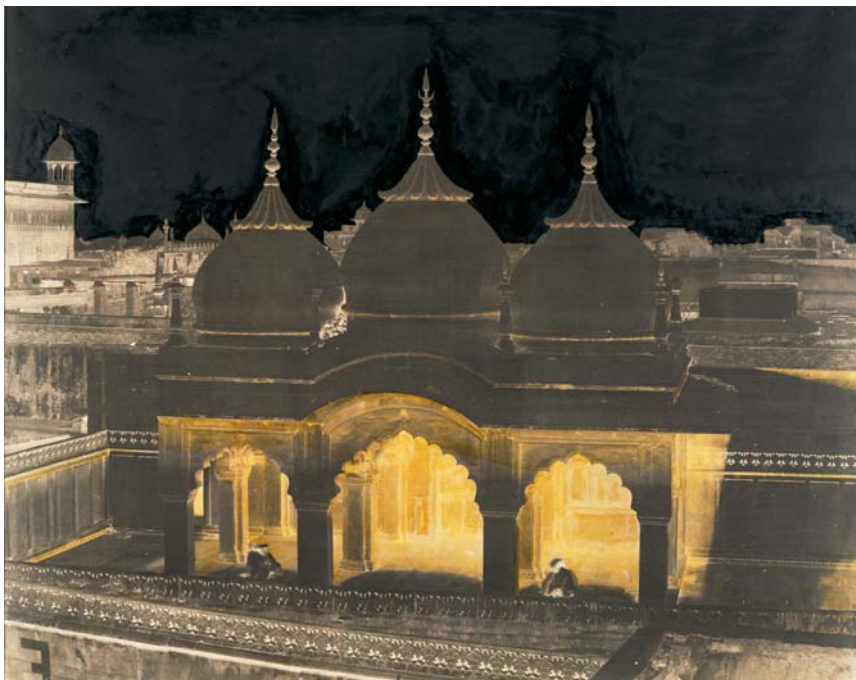




The Emperor's Private Mosque in the Marble Palace, Agra Fort, India, Dr. John Murray

The Emperor's Private Mosque in the Marble Palace, Agra Fort, India

Dr. John Murray, 1857–1860
Waxed-paper negative
14 1/2 x 18 1/16 in.
98.XM.7



Background Information

This large waxed-paper **negative** displays a view of the private mosque built for the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan in Agra in the 1630s. Dr. John Murray, who made this negative while working in India, altered it to improve the visual harmony and luminosity of the finished positive print. He achieved increased contrast by blocking out the sky area with pigment and bleaching the deeply shaded section under the roof to more clearly show the mosque interior.

The **waxed-paper process** was particularly useful for traveling photographers like Murray because the paper did not require immediate development. It also offered more translucency than other commonly used paper negative methods. The process involved rubbing wax into the paper negative before it was sensitized and exposed. The wax created a smooth surface and reduced the blurring effects of paper fibers. Both the negative and the final print display great clarity of detail, as in the piercings of the surrounding wall and the outlines of distant buildings.

About the Artist

Dr. John Murray (Scottish, 1809–1898)

Although trained as a medical doctor, Dr. John Murray excelled as a photographer. The Scottish-born doctor was introduced to **photography** around 1849, while in the medical service of the army of the East India Company. Stationed near the Taj Mahal in Agra, he developed a considerable interest in the Mughal architecture of the region. Throughout the forty-year period

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that Murray lived and worked in India, he systematically recorded many famous buildings in and around Agra and the northern state of Uttar Pradesh.

In the mid-1800s, no reliable method of enlarging **photographs** existed. To make a sizable print, Murray worked with a large-format wooden **camera** capable of accepting light-sensitive materials up to 16 x 20 inches. He employed both waxed-paper and **glass negatives**. With this unwieldy equipment, Murray produced a body of work documenting India's architecture that remained unsurpassed in the 1800s.

Questions for Teaching

What do you notice first when looking at this photograph?

How is this picture different from pictures you take with your own camera?

What shapes do you see?

What lines do you see?

Based on what you see, what could be the purpose of the building in the photograph?

What are possible reasons for photographing this type of building?