

Christoph Engel

»Decode Daguerre (Daguerreotype\_Daguerre\_Atelier\_1837.jpg)«, 2008

The daguerreotype was the first photographic process to be announced to the public, and it led to the proliferation of the photographic medium. To create a daguerreotype, a copper plate coated with a layer of photo-sensitive silver halide was developed by holding it over heated iodine. In the present day, however, a widespread shift to digital photography is underway. Not just pictures but also a wide variety of other data are being digitalized, making information available to everyone, all the time, over the Internet. Simultaneously, discussion about the security of data archiving is growing, and fears of data misuse are increasing.

The work »Decode Daguerre« deals with the mysterious and inscrutable, as well as the undercurrent of fear about digital technology. It shows a mere 800 x 578 pixel JPG-file representing one of the first daguerreotypes (Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre, Atelier, 1837) ever created, published on the Internet site Wikipedia.de ([http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bild:Daguerreotype\\_Daguerre\\_Atelier\\_1837.jpg](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bild:Daguerreotype_Daguerre_Atelier_1837.jpg)). It is not the photograph itself but the digital code of the picture file that is depicted here as a text, using the font »Isonorm« in the format DIN Ao. In this typographic form, the file is extremely sensitive. One missing character can cause an image error or even make the file completely illegible. Thus, the approximately 270,000 characters are a digitalized form of one of the oldest known analogue photographs.

The Picture ist presented as archival pigment print on photolux-paper, vertical format 84,1 cm × 118,9 cm (Din Ao), in a wooden frame.