

---

# Peek at the Past: Glass Plate Negatives from the Marché aux Puces in Paris

Julie Dell-Jones\*†<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of South Florida (USF) – 4202 E. Fowler Avenue Tampa FL 33620, United States

## Abstract

Family portraits. Tree-lined roads. Boats on lakes. Fountains, city crowds. A dirigible and field. Horse-drawn carriages. These are just some of the images I have collected in my serendipitous discoveries of glass plate negatives at various *marchées aux puces* (Paris flea markets). I am not a professional collector nor antiques dealer; rather, I am a frugal traveler with a curiosity for these vintage negatives. During undergraduate studies in photography (1990s), I made my first purchase of a box labeled 1902 that held 10 glimpses of the past, as captured on peeling, chipped, or foggy, 9x12cm gelatin silver bromide glass plates. I knew about glass negatives and I had access to a darkroom to make contact prints with the negatives, but I had no intention of becoming a collector. On a subsequent trip to Paris, an old postcard dealer, tired of keeping the heavy fragile glass plates, gifted me multiple boxes. I returned to the U.S. with boxes in my carry-on and a passion for these elusive glass plate negatives, which only consistently appear in the Paris flea markets. Sometimes sold individually—no date, city, or context, I looked for clues within the image. What can a few images evoke? Reveal? Let's explore the markets and images together. On Sunday (pre-conference) I will offer language/purchase guidance at the market. Later, during the visual inquiry workshop, participants will collaboratively investigate the found images (negatives). Those interested in documenting images and co-constructing narratives about the experience can continue contact for potential co-authoring post-conference.

**Keywords:** Glass plate negatives, vintage photography, Paris flea market rendez, vous, visual inquiry, antique images, decontextualized images, silver, bromide negative on glass, plaques de verre, photo, elicitation narratives

---

\*Speaker

†Corresponding author: [jdelljon@mail.usf.edu](mailto:jdelljon@mail.usf.edu)