During this centennial year of Thomas Eakins's birth various exhibitions and articles have familiarized many people with his scientific photographs of nude runners and jumpers that foreshadowed the stroboscopic photographs of today. But no attention seems to have been paid to the remarkable photographs that Eakins or his associates made as artistic ends in themselves. A very fine series of these was acquired for the Museum through the generosity of David H. McAlpin and Charles Bregler, who is the artistic executor of the Eakins estate.

These photographs take rank among the best American examples of that international movement in photography known as pictorialism. From the nineties until 1914 and later, a small but widely scattered band of photographers labored by every means in their power to make photographs that should satisfy them as works of art. For them no process cost too much in time or labor if they could get the results they wanted. Unlike today's photographers, who usually work with an eye toward reproduction in halftone, the pictorialists worked toward a permanent photographic print to send down the ages like a drawing or a painting.

It is therefore not surprising to find that most of the Eakins photographs were printed on very expensive platinum paper, which was first put on the market in 1880. According to Mr. Bregler this quite difficult printing was done by Mrs. Eakins. Did she also do the photography? This is possible, for she does not appear in any of the Museum's photographs, whereas her husband and many other members of their family do. The question may not matter much since Eakins's way of seeing pervaded that whole talented group of artists as thoroughly as it pervades these photographs. The vision that focused the camera was undoubtedly his.

Almost as little is known about the photo-
graphs that Degas took at various times. The most explicit reference to them is in a letter which he wrote in 1885 criticizing his parody of Ingres's Apotheosis of Homer in greater detail than he ever used in mentioning his paintings. "My three muses and two choirboys should have been posed against a white or light ground, for the attitudes of the women, especially, are lost. Everybody should have been more crowded together." This, for Degas, elaborate analysis springs from the pardonable vanity of an avowed master of his profession who piques himself on excelling at an avocation. One of the after-dinner consolations of his old age was to photograph "in the twilight." The developing was taken care of by his friend of many years, Louise Halévy, who is seen at the top of this page, keeping him company across the lamp.

It is interesting to juxtapose photographs that represent the work of these two artists who are so vastly better known through their paintings. While Degas painted most of his portraits in the far-flung circle of his relations, he seems always to have photographed that most accessible and long suffering of his sitters — himself — by getting his housekeeper to release the shutter. The Eakins photographs of relatives and of the larger family of pupils are as poignant and intimate as his paintings of his wife or a sister at the piano or of himself and his father pushing for rail. Both Eakins and Degas photographed for the sake of photographing and not as a cheap aid to painting, which is not to say that they may not now and then have drawn on some happy discovery of the lens. Though the photographs and paintings were made independently of each other, they show in the case of each artist a complete and personal homogeneity of vision. If a man sees the world in a way that is deeply his own he cannot help registering
Thomas Eakins's classroom at the Art Students' League, Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, about 1893. Charles Cox is painting. A student is posing.
Two girls beside Thomas Eakin’s relief of Arcadia, modeled in 1883
Mary Macdowell, sister of Mrs. Thomas Eakins
Thomas Eakins's mother
that difference in everything he does and says.

Eakins's photographs of the nude become poignant when considered in the glum light of his life. The photograph on page 5, for instance, shows one of the last classes that he held before the scandal of models posing in the nude forced this great teacher to retire. This catastrophe for his career was caused partly by a passion for exploring the structure and mechanics of the body and partly by a disquiet that was shared by others in his industrial and upholstered age. The photographs of nude men outdoors holding models of Greek double flutes to their mouths and of girls draped in white Grecian slips take on a desperate, even heroic, note in view of the frustration that cannot help but ensue from trying to will Arcadia in the stuffiness of an American suburb. But the tragedy of an artist who refuses the welcome that seems to beckon from far-away shores, and refuses also to budge a jot from his ideals, was not peculiar to this Philadelphian. Degas, at home in a city that probably gave the widest personal freedom available at the time, lamented that a better age would have set him to painting Bathshebas and Susannas instead of dismal models wiping themselves in tin tubs.