

Fundamentals of the Conservation of Photographs



SESSION: History of Photograph Conservation

INSTRUCTOR: Grant B. Romer

SESSION OUTLINE

ABSTRACT

Relative permanence was basic to the viability of photographic invention. Since 1839, the issue of permanence has influenced the evolution of the technology and industry of photography. Culturally, the photograph was rapidly understood to be highly vulnerable to deterioration. Commonly, preservation of the photographic image has depended upon copying and duplication by photography, itself. Less frequently, chemical means were used to restore faded and stained photographs. Photographers and photographic chemists were the professionals called upon to remedy the preservation and restoration problems photographs presented.

The 1939 hundredth anniversary of the introduction of photography brought widespread scholarly interest in photographs as objects and artifacts. The special material qualities and problems of rare and fine photographs became better appreciated. Certain photographers, advocating for the acceptance of Photography as a Fine Art, promoted archival processing as an aspect of high craftsmanship. The international collecting market for fine and rare photographs formed in the late 1960's. Soon thereafter, a professional specialty in the conservation of photographs began to develop in France, England, Germany and the United States.

Changes in the technology and the cultural valuation of Photography have, are and will greatly change the profession of photograph conservation. The present moment is one of dramatic and profound change. It is of particular historic significance and should be observed, recorded and comment on by anyone devoted to the conservation of photographs.



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

As a result of this session, participants should be able to:

- Observe with historical consciousness the constantly changing nature of the photograph conservation profession.
- Clarify their own motivations and decide future directions as professionals.
- Actively direct the future development of the field.
- Promote understanding and respect for the profession.

CONTENT OUTLINE

1. The Concept of Permanence in Photography
2. The Importance of Permanence in the Evolution of Photographic Technology and Industry
3. The Legacy of Photography
4. The Photographer as Restorer
5. The Chemist as Restorer
6. The Collector/Dealer/Curator as Restorer
7. The Paper Conservator and Photography
8. The Photograph Conservator – The Era of Treatment
9. The Photograph Conservator – The Era of Minimal Intervention
10. The Photograph Conservator – The Era of Characterization
11. The Photograph Conservator as Historian
12. The Conservation Scientist as Connoisseur

ASSIGNMENTS

ASSIGNMENT # 1:

Make a list of the ten most influential figures in photograph conservation.

ASSIGNMENT #2:


READ:


Maynes, Pau, and Grant Romer. 2001. A Research into the History of Photograph Conservation: George Eastman's Legacy. *British Museum Occasional Paper* (145). 2001.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


 = Essential reading material


 = Available online

 Cartier Bresson, Anne. The French Situation of Photograph Preservation
http://cool.conservation-us.org/iada/ta91_175.pdf (Accessed July 1, 2010).

 George Eastman House. Advanced Residency Program in Photograph Conservation. Projects and Research. <http://www.arp-geh.org/indexsep.aspx?nodeidp=49> (Accessed July 1, 2010).

*Hess Norris, Debra and Jennifer Jae Gutierrez, ed. 2001. *Issues in the Conservation of Photographs*. Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute.

 Maynes, Pau, and Grant Romer. 2001. A Research into the History of Photograph Conservation: George Eastman's Legacy. *British Museum Occasional Paper* (145). 2001.

 Mendoza, Alejandra. Conservation Treatment of Photographs.
<http://www.photograph-conservation.blogspot.com/> (Accessed July 1, 2010).

**This book provided to all participants in Module 3*

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