

Platinum and Palladium Photographs – Symposium, Workshop, and Tours
October 21-24, 2014

Foundation of the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works
National Museum of the American Indian
National Gallery of Art
Library of Congress
National Museum of American History

Platinum and palladium prints are among the most highly valued photographs in today's art and history collections. The wide tonal range and variety of surfaces provided photographers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century a broad palette with which to depict their most important subjects. The collections of the Smithsonian Institution, for example, include platinum prints for photographers' finest portrayals of the lives of Native Americans. The study of exceptional platinum photographs by photographers such as Gertrude Käsebier, Edward Steichen, and Clarence H. White, reveals cross-cutting themes, such as the role of women in society, religion, spiritualism, and fashion at the turn of the nineteenth century. Irving Penn was responsible for the resurgence of the practice of platinum-related photography in the mid-twentieth century. More recently contemporary photographers have been eager to explore this alternative historic process.

Conventional wisdom regarding platinum and palladium prints held that they are charcoal in hue with a matte surface, and that they are quite stable and do not fade. In recent years, however, inconsistencies have been observed. The image hue can range from sepia to blue-black, and paper supports have sometimes been found to darken, yellow, and become brittle. In some cases actual images have faded. These issues, along with other observations of the physical attributes of platinum and palladium prints, have established a new paradigm regarding the chemical and the aesthetic characteristics and permanence of these photographs. These recent insights presented the opportunity for the National Gallery of Art to initiate a multi-year collaboration to study these materials and reassess approaches for their conservation treatment, long-term preservation, and safe display. This interdisciplinary research will culminate in a four-day program of lectures, workshops, and tours in Washington, DC, to be held in October 2014.

The programs will provide an opportunity for members of the conservation, scientific, curatorial, and educational fields to glean knowledge from the NGA-led team of research collaborators. Sharing the results of the multi-year endeavor will advance the collective understanding of platinum and palladium photographs and our ability to preserve them for future generations. The speakers' breadth and depth of knowledge and their commitment to disseminating new information will provide an essential foundation for those responsible for the interpretation and preservation of some of the most rare and important photographs in the collections of museums, libraries, and archives.



Joseph T. Keiley
A Sioux Chief, ca. 1898
platinum print
Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 1933
Metropolitan Museum of Art
33.43.174

The Program

The Platinum and Palladium Photographs program consists of three related activities, taking place over four days (October 21-24, 2014):

- A two-day symposium of lectures will be held at the National Museum of the American Indian's 300-seat Mary Louise and Elmer Rasmuson Theater. Distinguished subject experts will present the results of the collaborative research, focusing on the technical, chemical, and aesthetic history and practice of platinum photography. The preliminary program is included below.
- A one-day, hands-on workshop hosted by the National Gallery of Art will explore the chemistry of platinum and palladium photographs and consider how variations in processing affect the appearance and permanence of the prints. The workshop will be held twice and will be led by Christopher Maines, Conservation Scientist, Scientific Research Department, NGA, and Mike Ware, Photographic Materials Chemistry Consultant to the NGA.
- Tours of collections held by the National Gallery of Art, Library of Congress, and the National Museum of American History will be conducted by leading photograph historians, conservators, and scientists and allow up to 60 participants to see rare examples of historic and contemporary platinum and palladium photographs.

These events are being presented by the Foundation of the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (FAIC) and are funded in part by grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.



Two platinum prints by Joseph T. Keiley demonstrate his use of a glycerin developing technique led to dramatic differences in these prints from the same negative.

Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division. Gift of Stephen Keiley, PR 13 CN 1985:647

October 2014 Platinum/Palladium Symposium Program
(Preliminary)
National Museum of the American Indian

Day 1 – Wednesday, October 22, 2014

8:00 Registration, Refreshments

8:30 Welcoming Remarks (TBD)

8:45 *Why Platinum?*

Andrea Nelson, National Gallery of Art

9:10 *The Technical History and Chemistry of Platinum and Palladium Prints*

Part I (Up to WWI)

Mike Ware, Independent Chemist and Printmaker,
UK

Summary presentation includes work by key research collaborators:

Christopher Maines, Matthew Clarke, Constance McCabe, Sarah Wagner, Alisha Chipman, National Gallery of Art

Lisa Barro and Silvia Centeno, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Andrew Robb and Dana Hemmenway, Library of Congress

Patrick Ravines and Juan Juan Chen, Buffalo State College Art Conservation Program

Christopher McGlinchey and Lee Ann Daffner, Museum of Modern Art

Tatiana Cole, Amon Carter Museum of American Art

Mark Osterman, George Eastman House

Saori Kawasumi Lewis, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art

Alice Carver-Kubik, Image Permanence Institute

Anna Vila, Centre for Art Technological Studies and Conservation, Statens Museum for Kunst, Denmark

9:50 Morning Break (refreshments)

10:30 *The Technical History and Chemistry of Platinum and Palladium Prints*
Part I (Up to WWI) continued

11:00 *Material History and Manufacture of Papers used in Platinum Prints*

Sarah S. Wagner, National Gallery of Art and Cyntia Karnes, Library of Congress

11:25 *Platinum Enlargements*

Greta Colleen Glaser, Photographs Conservation of DC

11:50 *Glycerine's Uses in Platinum Prints*

Adrienne Lundgren, Library of Congress

12:15 Q & A

12:30 – 2:00 Lunch (on own)

2:00 *F. Holland Day's Platinum Prints: Historical and Technical Examination*

Verna P. Curtis and Adrienne Lundgren, Library of Congress



Edward S. Curtis (1868-1952), *In Mut Too Yah Lat Lat or Chief Joseph (Nez Perce, 1840-1904), c1903. Platinum print. Gift of Citigroup Foundation. National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution (P28574).*

Day 1 – continued

- 2:25 *P.H. Emerson's Platinum Prints in "Life and Landscape on the Norfolk Broads" (1886) and Photogravures in "Marsh Leaves" (1895)*
Philippa Wright, Independent Historian, Curator, UK, and John Taylor, Author, Editor, Curator, UK
- 2:50 *Paul Anderson and Platinum Photography*
Rebecca Senf, Center for Creative Photography and Phoenix Art Museum
- 3:15 Afternoon Break
- 4:00 *Alfred Stieglitz's Platinum and Palladium Prints*
Sarah Greenough, National Gallery of Art
- 4:25 *Indelible: A.C. Vroman, Platinum Prints, and the Vanishing Race*
Heather Shannon, National Museum of the American Indian
- 4:50 *The Critical Indigenous Photographic Exchange: a Platinum Portfolio*
William Wilson (Diné/Bilagaana), Independent Artist
- 5:15 *McNeil Platinum Prints in the Digital Age*
Larry McNeil (Tlingit and Nisgaá), Boise State University
- 5:40 Q & A

6:00 Reception at the National Museum of the American Indian

Celebration of the exhibition of the platinum photographs of William Wilson (Diné/Bilagaana) and Larry McNeil (Tlingit and Nisgaá)

Day 2 – Thursday, October 23, 2014

- 8:00 Registration, Refreshments
- 8:30 Welcoming Remarks (TBD)
- 8:40 *The Technical History, Chemistry, Degradation, and Analysis of Platinum and Palladium Prints Part II (Platinum Revival and Modern Practices)*
Matthew Clarke, National Gallery of Art
Summary presentation includes work by key research collaborators:
- Mike Ware, Independent Chemist and Printmaker, UK
Christopher Maines, Matthew Clarke, Constance McCabe, Sarah Wagner, Alisha Chipman, National Gallery of Art
Lisa Barro and Silvia Centeno, The Metropolitan Museum of Art
Patrick Ravines and Juan Juan Chen, Buffalo State College Art Conservation Program
Christopher McGlinchey and Lee Ann Daffner, Museum of Modern Art
Andrew Robb and Dana Hemmenway, Library of Congress
Tatiana Cole, Amon Carter Museum of American Art
Anna Vila, Centre for Art Technological Studies and Conservation, Statens Museum for Kunst, Denmark
Pradip Malde, Sewanee, The University of the South



Alvin Langdon Coburn
Clarence H. White, c. 1905
platinum print
Patrons' Permanent Fund
NGA 2008.65.2

Here photographer Clarence H. White holds a cylindrical container of platinum paper.

9:25 Morning Break (refreshments)

10:05 *Platinum and Palladium Photographs in the Photographic History Collection*
Shannon Thomas Perich, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution

10:30 *Heinrich Kühn's Platinum Prints*
Andreas Gruber, Wien Museum

10:55 *Gertrude Käsebier's Platinum Prints*
Michelle Delaney, Smithsonian Institution

11:20 *Maurice Vidal Portman's Platinum Prints from Eastman's Paper Negatives*
John Falconer, British Library

11:45 *Irving Penn's Platinum Prints*
Vasilios Zatsis, Irving Penn Foundation

12:10 Q & A

12:30 – 2:00 Lunch (on own)

2:00 *Technical Study of Paul Strand's Platinum and Palladium Prints*
Alisha Chipman, National Gallery of Art

2:25 *The Phenomenon of Platinum "Image Transfer" to Adjacent Papers*
Jennifer Herrmann, Sara Shpargel, Lauren Varga, and Henry Duan, National Archives
and Records Administration

2:50 *A Historical Overview of Post-processing Treatments*
Erin Murphy, The New York Public Library

3:15 Afternoon Break (refreshments provided)

4:00 *Alfred Stieglitz's Palladium Prints and their Chemical Treatment by Edward Steichen*
Constance McCabe, Christopher Maines, Matthew Clarke, and Mike Ware
National Gallery of Art

4:25 *Contemporary Platinum and Palladium Photography*
Arpad Kovacs, J. Paul Getty Museum

4:50 Q & A, Thank-you

5:15 Adjourn