

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

***Platinum and Palladium Photographs:
Technical and Aesthetic History, Connoisseurship, and Conservation***

**National Museum of the American Indian
Rasmuson Theater**

Day 1

Wednesday, October 22, 2014:

- 8:00 Registration
- 8:30 **Welcoming Remarks**
Kevin Gover, Director of the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian
Morning Session Chair: Christopher McGlinchey, Museum of Modern Art
- 8:40 **The Subtle Beauty of Platinum Photographs**
Andrea Nelson, National Gallery of Art (US)
- 9:05 **The Technical History and Chemistry of Platinum and Palladium Prints
Part I (up to World War I)**
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, Buffalo State College
Christopher McGlinchey and Lee Ann Daffner, Museum of Modern Art
Tatiana Cole, The Better Image
Saori Kawasumi Lewis, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art
Alice Carver-Kubik, Image Permanence Institute
Anna Vila, Statens Museum for Kunst, Denmark
Pradip Malde, Sewanee: The University of the South
- 9:50 Morning Break (Rasmuson Theater Lobby)
- 10:30 **The Technical History and Chemistry of Platinum and Palladium Prints
Part I, Continued**
Mike Ware, Independent Chemist and Printmaker, UK
- 11:00 **Quality, Permanency, and Artistry in Platinum and Alternative Papers 1885-
1925**
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 and its Use in Platinum Development**
Adrienne Lundgren, Library of Congress
- 12:15 Q & A
- 12:30 – 2:00 Lunch

Day 1 – continued

Afternoon Session Chair: Debra Hess-Norris, University of Delaware

- 2:00 **Holland Day's Platinum Prints: Historical and Technical Examination**
Verna P. Curtis and Adrienne Lundgren, Library of Congress
- 2:25 **P.H. Emerson's Platinum Prints in *Life and Landscape on the Norfolk Broads* and *Photogravures in Marsh Leaves***
Philippa Wright, Independent Historian, Curator, UK, and John Taylor, Author, Editor, Curator, UK
- 2:50 **Paul L. Anderson at the Center for Creative Photography**
Rebecca Senf, Center for Creative Photography and Phoenix Art Museum, Tucson
- 3:15 Afternoon Break (4th floor Conference Center)
- 4:00 **Maurice Vidal Portman's Platinum Prints from Eastman's Paper Negatives**
John Falconer, British Library
- 4:25 **An Evolving Craft: Adam Clark Vroman's Platinum Prints of Indigenous Artists of the American Southwest**
Heather Shannon, National Museum of the American Indian
- 4:50 **Toward a Critical Indigenous Photographic Exchange**
William Wilson (Diné/Bilagaana), Independent Artist
- 5:15 **Platinum Photographs in the Digital Age**
Larry McNeil (Tlingit and Nisgaá), Boise State University
- 5:40 Q & A
- 6:00 Reception — National Museum of The American Indian**
Sponsored by The Better Image, Bostick & Sullivan, Charles Isaacs Photographs, Inc., Hans P. Kraus, Jr. Inc., the Image Permanence Institute, Paul M. Hertzmann, Inc., Throckmorton Fine Art, Inc., and Starr Hill Brewery

This Collaborative Workshop in Photograph Conservation is presented by the Foundation of the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works, in collaboration with the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, National Gallery of Art, Library of Congress, and the Smithsonian National Museum of American History.

It is funded by grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

***Platinum and Palladium Photographs:
Technical and Aesthetic History, Connoisseurship, and
Conservation***
Symposium Program
Day 2
Thursday, October 23, 2014

8:00 Registration

8:30 **Welcoming Remarks**

Mervin Richard, Chief of Conservation, National Gallery of Art

Morning Session Chair: Patrick Ravines, Bufflao State College

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

Tatiana Cole, The Better Image

Patrick Ravines, Buffalo State College Art Conservation Program

Lisa Barro, Anna Vila, and Silvia Centeno, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Christopher McGlinchey and Lee Ann Daffner, Museum of Modern Art

Dana Hemmenway, Library of Congress

Pradip Malde, Sewanee: The University of the South

9:30: **Salting the Collection with Platinum and Palladium:**

The Photographic History Collection at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History

Shannon Thomas Perich, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution

9:55: Morning Break (Rasmuson Theater Lobby)

10:30 **Investigation into the Platinum Print Technology of the Austrian Pictorialist Heinrich Kühn**

Andreas Gruber, Wien Museum

10:55 **Gertrude Käsebier's Platinum Prints**

Michelle Delaney, Smithsonian Institution

11:20 **"A Good Day for Palladio" — Alfred Stieglitz's Palladium Prints**

Sarah Greenough, National Gallery of Art

11:45 **A Technical Study of Paul Strand's Platinum Prints**

Alisha Chipman, National Gallery of Art

12:10 Q & A

12:30 – 2:00 Lunch

Day 2 – continued

Afternoon Session Chair: Andrew Robb, Library of Congress

2:00 Irving Penn’s Platinum-Palladium Prints

Vasilios Zatsis, The Irving Penn Foundation

**2:25 The Phenomenon of Platinum “Image Transfer” to Adjacent Papers:
Degradation of Cellulose in Contact with Platinum and Palladium Metals**

Jennifer K Herrmann, Sara Shpargel, Lauren Varga, Henry Duan, Karen Gaskell, and Mark Ormsby, National Archives and Records Administration

2:50 An Overview of Historical Post-processing Treatments

Erin Murphy, Weissman Preservation Center, Harvard University

3:15 Afternoon Break (4th floor Conference Center)

3:50 Alfred Stieglitz’s Palladium Prints: “Treated by Steichen”

Constance McCabe and Christopher Maines, National Gallery of Art, and Mike Ware, Independent Chemist and Printmaker, UK

4:15 Articulating a Contemporary Vernacular for Platinum and Palladium Prints

Pradip Malde, Sewanee: The University of the South

4:40 Q & A, Thank-you

5:00 Adjourn

This Collaborative Workshop in Photograph Conservation is presented by the Foundation of the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works, in collaboration with the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, National Gallery of Art, Library of Congress, and the Smithsonian National Museum of American History.

It is funded by grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.