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Rare Platinum Photographs On View at the National Gallery of Art From October 5, 2014 Through January 4, 2015; Symposium to Be Held On This Exquisite Photographic Process



Frederick H. Evans, *York Minster, North Transept: "In Sure and Certain Hope,"* 1902, platinum print, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Carolyn Brody Fund and Pepita Milmore Memorial Fund

Washington, DC—Rare platinum photographs that played a pivotal role in establishing photography as a fine art will be presented at the National Gallery of Art. On view in the West Building from October 5, 2014 through January 4, 2015, *A Subtle Beauty: Platinum Photographs from the Collection* will include two dozen works from the Gallery's renowned collection of photographs. Presented in conjunction with a symposium organized by the National Gallery of Art and sponsored by the Foundation of the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works, this exhibition features compelling prints by Alfred Stieglitz (1864–1946), Edward Steichen (1879–1973), *Gertrude Käsebier* (1852–1934), and other prominent pictorialist photographers.

"Photographers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries were captivated by the lush appearance and rich atmospheric effects they were able to create through the platinum print process," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art. "With their extraordinary tonal range—capable of capturing the deepest blacks, warmest sepias, and creamiest of whites—platinum prints quickly became the preferred process of the era."

Exhibition Highlights

Featuring 24 outstanding photographs from the 1880s to the 1920s, this exhibition reveals the artistic qualities and subtle nuances of the platinum process. Major artists such as Peter Henry Emerson (1856–1936), Frederick H. Evans (1853–1943), Alvin Langdon Coburn (1882–1966), and Clarence H. White (1871–1925), revered platinum prints for their permanence, delicate image quality, and surface textures that could range from a velvety matte to a lustrous sheen.

Focused on the aesthetic and technical aspects of platinum photographs, highlights include Stieglitz's *From the Back-Window—291* (1915), an exceptional print with neutral gray and black tones capturing the diffuse glow of lights in the buildings behind the artist's galleries at 291 Fifth Avenue; Evans' superb *York Minster, North Transept: "In Sure and Certain Hope"* (1902), an affective work whose subject is light more than architecture; and Steichen's evocative *Rodin* (1907), combining platinum with gum dichromate to create a painterly, multilayered portrait.

The curator for the exhibition is Andrea Nelson, assistant curator, department of photographs, National Gallery of Art.

Related Activities

A Subtle Beauty: Platinum Photographs from the Collection also gives viewers the opportunity to examine these prints in light of new research on the process, conducted by an interdisciplinary team led by scientists and conservators from the Gallery. In a four-year collaborative investigation, they have discovered an even greater level of manipulation of the materials and methods used to produce these striking photographs, which required an extraordinary degree of technical and aesthetic expertise.

These findings will be presented at the Platinum and Palladium Photographs Symposium, a two-day program hosted by the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian. Tours of platinum print holdings at the Gallery, the Library of Congress, and the National Museum of American History, and a hands-on workshop will also be held. Registration for all of these events is required. Please visit <http://www.conservation-us.org/platinum> for more information.

Lectures:

Of the 23 lectures planned for the symposium, six will be given by Gallery staff, including:

The Subtle Beauty of Platinum Photographs by Andrea Nelson, assistant curator, department of photographs, National Gallery of Art

Quality, Permanency, and Artistry in Platinum and Alternative Papers 1885-1925 by Sarah S. Wagner, senior photograph conservator, National Gallery of Art

"A Good Day for Palladio" — Alfred Stieglitz's Palladium Prints by Sarah Greenough, senior curator and head of the department of photographs, National Gallery of Art

The Technical History, Chemistry, Degradation, and Analysis of Platinum and Palladium Prints Part II (Platinum Revival and Modern Practices) by Matthew Clarke, PhD., photographic materials scientist, National Gallery of Art

A Technical Study of Paul Strand's Platinum Prints by Alisha Chipman, photograph conservator, and Matthew Clarke, PhD., photographic materials scientist, National Gallery of Art

Alfred Stieglitz's Palladium Prints: Treated by Steichen by Constance McCabe, head of photograph conservation; Christopher Maines, PhD., conservation scientist; all National Gallery of Art

Please visit <http://www.conservation-us.org/platinum> for registration details.

Tours:

October 21 and 24: Leading photograph historians, conservators, and scientists will conduct tours of platinum and palladium print holdings at the Gallery, Library of Congress, and the National Museum of American History. Tours include box lunch and snack; registration is required.

Please visit <http://www.conservation-us.org/platinum> for more details.

General Information

The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden are at all times free to the public. They are located on the National Mall between 3rd and 9th Streets at Constitution Avenue NW, and are open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Gallery is closed on December 25 and January 1. For information call (202) 737-4215 or visit the Gallery's Web site at www.nga.gov. Follow the Gallery on Facebook at www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt, Twitter at www.twitter.com/ngadc, and Instagram at <http://instagram.com/ngadc>.

Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering. Checkrooms are free of charge and located at each entrance. Luggage and other oversized bags must be presented at the 4th Street entrances to the East or West Building to permit x-ray screening and must be deposited in the checkrooms at those entrances. For the safety of visitors and the works of art, nothing may be carried into the Gallery on a visitor's back. Any bag or other items that cannot be carried reasonably and safely in some other manner must be left in the checkrooms. Items larger than 17 by 26 inches cannot be accepted by the Gallery or its checkrooms.

For additional press information please call or send inquiries to:

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