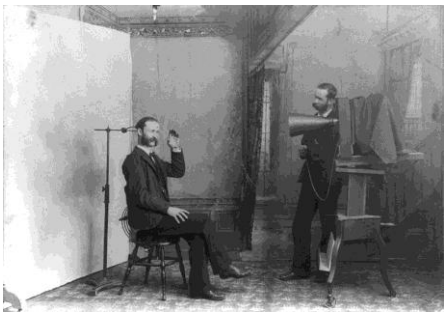

Fundamentals of the Conservation of Photographs

SESSION: Exhibition issues: materials and lighting

INSTRUCTOR: Bertrand Lavédrine

SESSION OUTLINE

Abstract

The very purpose of photographs is to be shown to a wide audience during exhibitions. To achieve that, photographs need to be properly framed and presented in suitable conditions - however this might not always be enough to ensure the protection of the photographic image. During exhibitions some photographs may reveals drastic changes, if some minimal precautions are not taken.

Actually some images are, by nature, more sensitive to light than others. Although silver (black and white) images are generally considered light stable, degradation during exhibitions is regularly reported, and color photographs are susceptible to fading under strong light exposure. Environmental conditions, light levels, spectral distribution, etc. have to be controlled and monitored, and the state of the image needs to be documented.

Learning Objectives

As a result of this session, participants should be aware of light damage on different kinds of photographs and be able to:

- Do environmental assessment and practical control measures
- Set exhibition policy (framing, lighting…)
- Establish priorities and reach safe compromises for exhibiting photographs

CONTENT OUTLINE

Lighting

- Light, spectral distribution,
- Light units: lux and watt/m2
- Filters

Light sources and risks

- Natural
- Artificial (Halogen, Fluorescent, LEDs)

Exhibition of photographs

- Light Damage
- Assessment of light damage
- Monitoring lighting (Exposure and TLD)
- Luxmeters, dosimeters

BIBLIOGRAPHY

🕮 = Essential reading material

💻 = Available online

Wagner, Sarah, Constance McCabe and Barbara Lemmen. 2001. Guidelines for Exhibition Light Levels for Photographic Materials in *Topics in Photographic Preservation (9)*: 127-128. American Institute for Conservation.

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