

In preparation for the 2020 exhibition, *In Focus: Platinum Photographs*, associate conservator of photographs Ronel Namde helped develop exhibition wall text to explain the variations of the platinum process, treated photographs for display, and increased our understanding of collection materials through examination and analysis.

### Wall Text

Platinum and palladium prints are beautiful photographs that are surrounded by apocryphal information. Because their surface characteristics and tone can mimic other processes, these photographs have been notoriously hard to identify without employing non-destructive analytical techniques. A recent publication, *Platinum and Palladium Photographs: Technical History, Connoisseurship, and Preservation* (American Institute for Conservation, 2017), provides in-depth discussions of the creation, nuance, and variety of these materials and features two technical highlights by Ronel. She drew on this knowledge to help curator Arpad Kovacs explain the lesser-understood variations in the printing processes, discuss methods for creating painterly effects, and review additives that impact the longevity of prints.

### Media Identification

Working with Sarah Freeman, associate conservator of photographs, and the Getty Conservation Institute's assistant scientist Art Kaplan, x-ray fluorescence spectroscopy (XRF) was used to identify the metals present, refine our understanding of the photographs, and in a few particularly challenging cases, reclassify the medium. Alvin Langdon Coburn's *Grand Canal, Venice* was originally identified as a platinum and palladium print. But increasingly sensitive analytical methods have allowed conservators to refine the identification as purely a platinum print. Likewise, Alice Boughton's images of Margaret and Frances Boughton were previously identified as gelatin silver prints, but through XRF the media lines were updated to platinum prints.



Coburn's *Grand Canal, Venice* was previously identified as a platinum and palladium print, but the medium line has been refined to platinum print with no palladium present.

Grand Canal, Venice, 1908, Alvin Langdon Coburn. Platinum print.  
The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2014.1. © The Universal Orde



Boughton's images of *[Margaret and Frances Boughton]* were previously classified as gelatin silver prints, but have been updated to platinum prints.

*[Margaret and Frances Boughton]*, 1900–1930, Alice Boughton.  
Platinum print. The J. Paul Getty Museum, 84.XM.165.5.

### Conservation Treatment

Ronel and Sarah treated a brittle and severely undulated album page with platinum prints mounted on both sides. The mount was breaking and disintegrating at the edges, posing a threat to the photographs and a challenge for framing. Both prints were removed from the mount and can now safely be shown individually. The treatment also restored more flexibility to the mount than had been anticipated, and it can now be stored safely alongside the prints.

Myers' *Leopold Hamilton Myers as 'The Compassionate Cherub'* and *[Silvia and Harold Myers]* before treatment (left), showing undulated mount and after unmounting (right).



Before treatment

After treatment

Top: Leopold Hamilton Myers as 'The Compassionate Cherub', about 1888–1891, Eveleen W. H. Myers. Platinum print. The J. Paul Getty Museum, 84.XP.728.26.

Bottom: [Silvia and Harold Myers], about 1888–1890, Eveleen W. H. Myers. Platinum print. The J. Paul Getty Museum, 84.XP.728.27.