

Department of Photograph Conservation
Sherman Fairchild Center for Works on Paper
and Photograph Conservation

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1 ♦ Diana Díaz-Cañas Joins Photograph Conservation

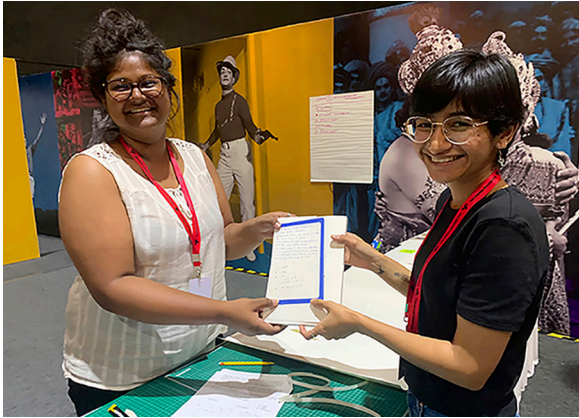
We are very pleased to announce the recent appointment of Diana Díaz-Cañas as Assistant Conservator of Photographs. She joins us from the University of Texas at Austin, [Harry Ransom Center](#) where, from 2012-2019, she served first as Conservator of Photographs and, more recently, as Senior Conservator of Photographs. Prior to that she was Adjunct Faculty with the [National School for Conservation \(ENCRyM\)](#) in Mexico City, Mexico. Also during this time, she managed her own private practice at Centro de Permanencia de la Imagen (CEPI), and was also a contract conservator at the Frida Kahlo Museum, The Blue House, in 2009 and 2010. In addition to her experience working with both fine art and archival photograph collections, Diana is an avid researcher and an enthusiastic and gifted teacher.

A native of Colombia, Diana studied at the Universidad Externado de Colombia (2002-2007) and completed her postgraduate work at ENCRyM (2008-2009). She is an active member of numerous professional associations, including the [American Institute for Conservation](#) (AIC), the [International Council of Museums](#) (ICOM), and the [Texas Emergency Response Alliance](#) (TX-CDERA). Diana is the [Photographic Materials Working Group](#) Coordinator for ICOM's Conservation Committee for the current triennium. Additionally, Diana is the

newsletter coordinator for [APOYOnline](#), a non-profit organization that promotes communication, exchange, and professional development in the field of heritage preservation in the Americas and in Portuguese- and Spanish-speaking countries.

With Diana's arrival, the Photograph Conservation Department is now staffed with five specialists in photograph, book, and time-based media conservation, ready to address the needs of our diverse collections throughout the Museum. In her first weeks, Diana has been assisting with three major exhibitions including *Gerhard Richter: Painting After All*; *Photography's Last Century: The Ann Tenenbaum and Thomas H. Lee Collection*; and *Making The Met, 1870-2020*.

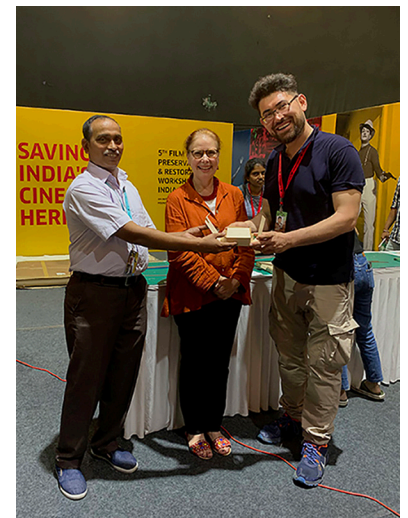
"For me, becoming a part of the team is a dream come true," Diana remarked. "I am thrilled to be joining a leading institution committed to the highest professional standards and I share the department's high sense of social responsibility and ethics. I am excited about contributing to the department's busy agenda and to their mission of advocacy and education, and look forward to collaborating with colleagues in many of the curatorial, science, and conservation departments across the Museum. And of course I am eager to discover all that New York City has to offer!"



2 ♦ Film Preservation & Restoration Workshop in Hyderabad, India

A goal for the proper care of all photograph collections is a cool, dry, consistent storage climate. This is a challenge in many parts of the world. The creation of micro-environments such as preservation housings and boxes is one way to help moderate the effects of poor climate conditions. These enclosures provide additional layers of protection from the effects of high humidity and dusty or polluted air, and they help slow down the fluctuations in relative humidity inside the package.

During the December 2019 Film Preservation & Restoration Workshop in Hyderabad, India, Nora Kennedy, Sherman Fairchild Conservator In Charge, Photograph Conservation, taught participants from India, Sri Lanka, and Afghanistan skills in photograph process identification and the creation of a variety of preservation housings that offer a micro-environment solution for their collections. While much of the week-long workshop focused on the care of moving image collections, classes were offered in preventive care for photographs and paper as well. This is the fifth in a series of workshops organized by the [Film Heritage Foundation \(FHF\)](#) and the [International Federation of Film Archives \(IFIA\)](#).



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Images: Nora Kennedy with (clockwise from top left): Murchana Borah and Gautami Khanvilkar; R. M. Samapalika Wijayanama and Koruwege Ratnasiri Fernando; Vitthal Vanjare and Hezbollah Sultany; Riya Khanna; Rajeev Kumar Choudhary; and Priyanka Shetye. Image credits: Film Preservation & Restoration Workshop participants



3 ♦ Every Disc, Every Bit of Data: Saving Jennifer and Kevin McCoy's *Every Shot, Every Episode*

Jennifer and Kevin McCoy created the installation artwork *Every Shot, Every Episode* in 2001. Shot-by-shot, the artists painstakingly broke down twelve episodes of the 1970s television show "Starsky and Hutch" and grouped each shot into categories based on its contents. The compilations were organized around themes such as Characters, Places, and Sounds and then further divided into 277 specific shot features like "Every Fence," "Every Plaid," or "Every Screeching Tire." After randomizing the shot order in each collection, the videos were burned as Video Compact Discs (VCDs). The VCD format offered an affordable way to publish video content in 2001, when the DVD format was still an expensive investment for such a large project.

All 277 VCDs are meant to be displayed with the artwork's playback system, custom-made by the artists. It consists of a portable VCD player, small LCD screen, and speakers mounted inside of an open briefcase that hangs on the gallery wall. The artwork was intended to be interactive, with visitors selecting a VCD and placing it in the player to display the video of their choice. However, due to the fragile nature of the artwork's components, visitors can no longer handle the VCDs or the player.

This artwork is one of the approximately 300 time-based media artworks in The Met's collection. Duration is integral to these artworks—they may employ audiovisual media such as film, video, slides, audio, computer software, electronics systems, as well as live performance. Even though they often use recent technology, time-based media artworks are highly

vulnerable. *Every Shot, Every Episode's* dependence on specific and esoteric technology makes it subject to aging and obsolescence of the original equipment. VCDs are no longer used for playing video, and VCD players have not been reliably available for years.

Optical storage media such as CDs, VCDs, DVDs, and Blu-rays are inherently unstable. Writable discs, like the ones the McCoy's used, rely on sensitive organic dyes to encode information. If the surface of the disc can no longer be read properly, the data may be unrecoverable. Recognizing these risks to future exhibition of the artwork, The Met's conservation staff—in this case, Alexandra Nichols (former Sherman Fairchild Fellow in Conservation) and Sasha Arden (Digital Media Assistant in Photograph Conservation and student in [Time-Based Media Conservation at NYU's Institute of Fine Arts](#))—sought to preserve the data by copying it from all of the original, artist-provided VCDs. Similar to the way in which conservators in other specialties test a technique's suitability for treatment, they researched the best preservation tool. The data structure of VCDs is uncommon and not all data extraction software is able to accurately read it. Luckily, specialized software was successfully identified, and Sasha created an exact copy of each of the 277 VCDs as a digital file through a process called disk imaging.

The files are now stored in our dedicated digital repository, equivalent to an artwork vault for data. Of course, The Met still retains all the VCDs and the original equipment in physical artwork storage. As *Every Shot, Every Episode* has been selected for the upcoming exhibition, *Pictures, Revisited*, curatorial and conservation staff are discussing the parameters for installation with the artists.

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Images, Top left: Sasha Arden, Digital Media Assistant, Department of Photograph Conservation, at work on migrating data from the McCoy discs—a process which involved listening to many hours of 1970s disco music from the soundtrack of "Starsky and Hutch". Image credit: Alexandra Nichols **Top right:** Jennifer and Kevin McCoy, *Every Shot, Every Episode*, 2001. Installation view from *Indexing the World*, 2004. Artwork © Jennifer and Kevin McCoy. Image credit: © The Metropolitan Museum of Art



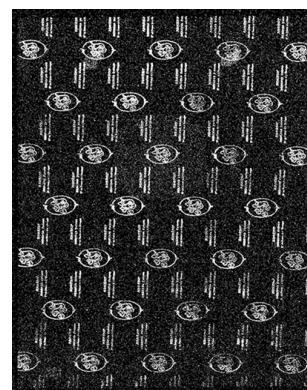
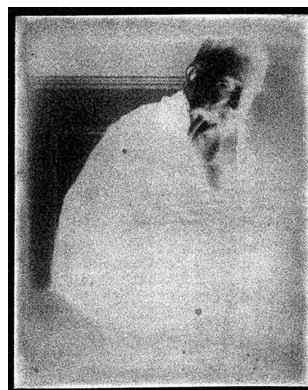
4 ♦ An Evening of Science and Art and Steichen

On a recent January evening at The Met, Silvia A. Centeno, Research Scientist, Department of Scientific Research, and Nora W. Kennedy, presented “Stieglitz and Steichen: Conservation, Science, Scholarship” for the members of the Alfred Stieglitz Society. Accompanied by photographic masterworks from The Met’s collection, they spoke about some of the work the two departments have carried out together, and how a photograph’s composition can be discovered during materials research. Conservators and scientists use non-invasive analytical techniques to reveal subtleties and characteristics about photographs that are impossible to discern with the naked eye.

One featured study covered research into Edward Steichen’s 1907 portrait of George Bernard Shaw. Analysis revealed that this complex photograph is a platinum print with mercury, along with blue indigo and carbon black pigments, which were

used in a gum dichromate process applied over the platinum image. Macro X-ray fluorescence (MA-XRF) showed the distribution of platinum, mercury, and lead in the photograph, confirming that this is a platinum print with mercury used for the toner or developer, as illustrated in the images below. In the left and center images, the lighter areas represent the presence of platinum and mercury, respectively. The distribution of lead observed (right) was unexpected as it revealed the presence of an industry printing ink on a mat board mount used by the artist, now concealed by the photograph.

The evening was engaging and instructional, and it offered the visitors the very rare opportunity to see some of the masterpieces that will be featured in the upcoming *Making The Met, 1870–2020* exhibition without their protective glazing; a treat for the conservators and scientists, as well.



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Images, Top left: Silvia A. Centeno (r) and Giulia Olmeda (l) in the lab in the Department of Scientific Research, preparing the Steichen photograph for scanning. Edward J. Steichen, American (born Luxembourg). *The Photographer’s Best Model – George Bernard Shaw*, 1907. Gum bichromate over platinum print. Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 1949. (49.55.166) Image credit: Nora Kennedy **Top right:** Guests viewing the George Bernard Shaw image at the January event. Image credit: Aleya Lehmann **Above:** MA-XRF maps of the Steichen photograph from the left: platinum (l), mercury (c), and lead (r). Image credits: Silvia A. Centeno



5 ♦ Becoming a Conservator

Conservation graduate students from the University of Delaware's first-year class returned this year to learn about Met conservation practices for photographs, photograph albums, and time-based media with Nora Kennedy, Katie Sanderson, Georgia Southworth, and Jonathan Farbowitz. These students, like those at the New York University, UCLA and Buffalo State College graduate programs, are a highly select group. Each graduate school candidate must have a background in art history, chemistry, and studio art, and some programs require hundreds of hours of experience in a conservation lab prior to admission. American graduate programs are three to four years long, including extended internships in established conservation laboratories worldwide. During their first year, these students examine, analyze, document, treat, and care for a variety of cultural heritage materials—works of art on paper, paintings, textiles, glass, ceramics, metal, photographs, and so on, before focusing on their chosen conservation specialty.

A visit to the Department of Photograph Conservation allows these emerging conservators a rare glimpse into the workings of an active conservation lab. This perspective offers a holistic view of the teamwork and cross-disciplinary approach that the care of cultural heritage requires. At a more granular level, the conservation of an individual artwork often demands the distinct skills of numerous conservation specialists. Lessons learned in the practice of conservation elevate all aspects of our profession. This impressive group of emerging conservators, like their colleagues in other conservation graduate programs, always have great questions and insights to share. Their

dedication to the field and enthusiasm for the artworks is always a welcome tonic. The Met's engagement with students helps to strengthen and grow our profession, but also to keep our practices current and our inspiration levels high.

Learn more about becoming a conservator at the [American Institute for Conservation ECPN website](#). Additional information on all the North American conservation graduate programs can be found via the Association of [North American Graduate Programs in the Conservation of Cultural Property](#) (ANAGPIC) website.



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Images, Top left: Photograph conservator Katie Sanderson shows students a large wetplate glass negative during a lecture illuminating the technical history of numerous photographic processes. **Center:** Students lean in to view the albumen silver prints in a miniature book, displayed by book conservator Georgia Southworth. Mathew B. Brady (American, born Ireland). [*Miniature Wedding Album of General Tom Thumb and Lavinia Warren*], ca. 1863. Albumen silver prints, brass. Joyce F. Menschel Photography Library Fund, 1999. (1999.89) **Right:** TBM conservator Jonathan Farbowitz shows students an example of artist-provided presentation boxes for time-based media artworks that come to the Met on DVDs, hard drives, and USB flash drives. Image credits: Nora Kennedy **Above:** Nora Kennedy discussing photographs from the Pictorialist era. Image credit: Katie Sanderson



Special Notice

Due to the temporary closure of The Met's three locations, the dates below are subject to change. Please see The Met's [website](#) for updates regarding exhibition schedules.

Current

2020 Vision:

Photographs, 1840s–1860s

Through May 10, 2020
at The Met Fifth Avenue

Photography's Last Century:

The Ann Tenenbaum and Thomas H. Lee Collection

Through June 28, 2020
at The Met Fifth Avenue

Gerhard Richter:

Painting After All

Through July 5, 2020
at The Met Breuer

Upcoming

Making The Met, 1870–2020

Opening TBD
at The Met Fifth Avenue

Pictures, Revisited

Opening TBD
at The Met Fifth Avenue

Related Programs

MetFest—Symposium: Shifting Perspectives on Art and Museums

June 5, 2020
10:30am, The Met Fifth Avenue

Rosanne Cash and A. M. Homes: Eye of the Collector

MetLiveArts

June 20, 2020
7:00pm, The Met Fifth Avenue

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Image: Gertrude Käsebier (American). *Blessed Art Thou Among Women*, 1899. Platinum print. Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 1933. (33.43.132) ♦ After the photographer F. Holland Day introduced Käsebier to Francis Watts Lee, an amateur Boston photographer and printer, Käsebier made this portrait of Lee's wife Agnes and their daughter Peggy, almost certainly at their stylish Boston home. An exquisite description of the Victorian ideals of femininity and motherhood, reinforced by the biblical title and the print of the Annunciation on the wall behind the figures, the photograph also evokes the idyllic domesticity of the Arts and Crafts Movement.



Support

To learn more about how you can become involved and support this critical area at The Met, please contact:

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To learn more about our department, visit metmuseum.org/about-the-met

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Support the Department of Photograph Conservation

With steadfast commitment and support from our friends, The Met's Photograph Conservation Department continues to thrive and be a crucial resource for the preservation of works of art, as well as a vibrant center for research.

Acknowledgements

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Photography's Last Century: The Ann Tenenbaum and Thomas H. Lee Collection is made possible by Joyce Frank Menschel and the Alfred Stieglitz Society. ♦ The catalogue is made possible in part by the Samuel I. Newhouse Foundation, Inc.

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Making The Met, 1870–2020 is made possible by the Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Foundation. Lead corporate sponsorship is provided by Bank of America. ♦ The catalogue is made possible by the Diane W. and James E. Burke Fund, The Peter Jay Sharp Foundation, and the Doris Duke Fund for Publications.

Pictures, Revisited looks back at—and provocatively revises—one of The Met's most memorable exhibitions of contemporary art, *The Pictures Generation, 1974–1984* from 2009, which was made possible by the William Randolph Hearst Foundation and The Andy Warhol Foundation. Additional support was provided by The Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation, Inc. ♦ The catalogue was made possible by the Mary C. and James W. Fosburgh Publications Fund and the Antoinette Kraushaar Fund.

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Image: Alfred Stieglitz (American). *Georgia O'Keeffe—Hands and Thimble*, 1919. Palladium print. Gift of Mrs. Rebecca S. Strand, 1928. (28.129) ♦ This image is an example of print solarization, which occurs when a photograph is briefly exposed to light mid-development. This can lend unusual effects to an image, including dark outlines and a reversal of tones. In platinum or palladium prints, solarization often makes normally bright areas appear gray or black, while the darkest areas appear brown. Alfred Stieglitz claimed to be the first to intentionally use solarization in 1919.