Dwon Güvenir Fine Art Photography

Present

Archivally Preserving your Photographic Prints

by Dwon Güvenir, www.OregonPhotoSafaris.com

I worked my way through college at the University of Kansas as an Archival Preservationist in the Kansas Collection Research Library, which instilled in me a passion about the archival potential of art. My prints are true archival prints and rated to last between 70 to 200 years if properly cared for. This article presents the facts about Archival prints and the benefits of true Archival Preservation vs. catch phrase "Archival Photography."

Prints displayed in a frame are NOT truly Archived.

What does "Archival" mean in today's world of photography?

Unfortunately the term "Archival" has become more of a selling point catch phrase used to increase the perceived value of the work and increase the price through Add-On features such as "Archival Glass," "Archival Matte," "Archival Frame Barriers," etc., than a standard that is actually followed. The photographic client needs to be knowledgeable about the facts of truly archiving a photograph so they don't fall victim to catch phrase "Archival Photography" and wind up disappointed in the long run.

Facts about photographic prints.

Modern prints deteriorate over time. Some of the original technology used in the 1800s was actually one of the most durable forms of print making. Prints created in this way could potentially last for several hundred years if properly cared for. In the 1960's, 70's and 80's chemicals were used in the photographic process which deteriorated quickly because they would be faster and cheaper for the general public. The result is today's yellowed prints from those eras.

Jump to today and we are in a race to create digital prints that will last just as long as the original photographic processes. Lab testing has shown that some of the best prints coming from the Epson line of Professional Photographic K3 printers (for instance) generate prints that will last up to 200 years. These inks are pigment based inks with an extremely wide color gamut. What does this mean to you? Today's prints produce the best color and longest life we've ever seen in digital photography. There are many brands of photographic processing printers but as Vincent Versace recipient of the Smithsonian Laureate for Innovation, says, "I print on an Epson printer because... Is there another printer?" Epson has been the industry standard for fine art printing over the past 10 years. The top fine art photographers use these printers. Unfortunately, most lab prints made today haven't improved upon those flawed methods of the 60's, 70s, and 80s. Do not count on your lab prints lasting more than 5 years. Ask at your lab whether they follow the **ANSI NAPM IT 9.16-1993** standards and what printing equipment they use.

The 3 Things To Avoid Doing To Your Archival Prints:

1. Avoid touching your print with your bare hands.
2. Avoid displaying your prints for prolonged periods.
3. Avoid permanently mounting your Archival prints.

1. If you must handle your prints use industry standard white cotton gloves to prevent getting your hand's oils on the prints which can attract dirt and permanently damage your prints.

2. One of the most damaging things to your print is the environment. Exposing your print to the chemicals that may be in the air, light, cleansers, etc. will greatly decrease the life of your print. True Archiving of your Prints means encasing them in a durable and chemically stable polypropylene (or similar material) encapsulation enclosure that will allow airflow while protecting the surface of your print, and storing your print in a cool, dry, and dark location. This means that prints that you purchase for display in your home or office are never truly "Archival". There are many additional expenses that you can add on to the cost of framing that are called "Archival" and they do extend the life of the print if they meet the **ANSI NAPM IT 9.16-1993** standards but TRUE Archival Prints are not meant for display.

3. Mounting your print exposes them to the potential hazard of acidic glues, tapes and other harmful mounting materials. There's also the risk of damage coming from the improper handling during mounting itself. If you must mount your print use unbuffered ragboard mats and archival polyester mounting corners only. This may result in poor display presentation due to print bulging etc., but the benefits are that the print is not damaged in any way other than exposure to natural elements and light.

Alternative to all the add-on costs of "Archival" display portraits.

I have a 100% lifetime guarantee on all my prints which means that if they ever discolor due to natural age and chemical effects of the framing method used which occurs with every image that is displayed, I will replace the print free of charge. I stand behind my work.

If you want True Archival Prints, I offer duplicate Archival prints which are 100% archivally preserved to **ANSI NAPM IT 9.16-1993** standards at a discounted price when purchasing a portrait. The price of this Archived duplicate print is less than the cost to make your Display print "Archival" through framing add-ons.

This Archival print can be archivally stored in a safe place for true archival care while the Display print is proudly on display in your home or office. Both prints are made using Epson's Premium Archival quality K3 inks and fine art papers which is rated to last up to 200 years. Another benefit is that you don't need to worry about the temperature and light levels in the room in which you hang your Display print. You'll know that you have an Archival original that will last forever!

Print Restoration

Another thing to consider is the increase in digital print restoration which is becoming more affordable. This means that new prints may be made from damaged prints at a lower cost than some of the more elaborate add-on costs of archiving a display print.

Bottom Line: Be Informed and know your options.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

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What Does Archival Mean?

by ClearFile.com

The American National Standards Institute
(ANSI) defines archival storage as "*the preservation of records having permanent historic value*".

The archival label on a product suggests that it is permanent, durable, or chemically-stable, and can be used for long-term preservation purposes. However, it needs to be understood that the term archival does not in itself guarantee a specific standard or length of time that a material will be safe. The American National Standards Institute is the industry's definitive source for recommended and proven guidelines for photographic film and print storage. All photographic enclosures should pass the photographic activity test to determine the materials' level of inertness. This test is specific in **ANSI NAPM IT 9.16-1993**, and consumers should contact suppliers to see if their products comply.

Many factors influence the permanence of a photograph.

Two of the most important are proper storage materials and a safe environment. By controlling these factors, the deterioration of a photographic collection can be greatly reduced.

Plastic enclosures seal your photographic materials from the outside environment. Since most chemical deterioration in a photograph is catalyzed by the presence of moisture and sulfides in the air, such protection may prolong the life of an image. However, plastic enclosures can trap moisture and cause ferrotyping (sticking, with a resulting shiny area) of an image under extreme conditions. The stitched sealing method increases air flow between pockets and therefore protects against ferrotyping, moisture buildup, and mildew. Plastic enclosures also have the advantage of allowing an image to be viewed without removal from an enclosure which reduces the chances of scratching or fingerprinting the photographic materials.

Archival plastic enclosures can be made from polyester, polypropylene or polyethylene. Although polyester is the most inert of the three, it can generate static electricity which attracts dust and is very expensive. Polypropylene is a stiff, high clarity, and chemically stable plastic.

Bottom Line: Make sure all ingredients in your photographic enclosure meet or exceed the **ANSI NAPM IT 9.16-1993** standards. Ask your photographer and framer if they follow these standards.

Have a duplicate Archival print made to store in a safe place.

CARING FOR YOUR PHOTOGRAPHS

by Deborah Derby with assistance from M. Susan Barger, Nora Kennedy, and Carol Turchan, 1997

We often use the word photograph when referring to the positive image on paper that is a familiar fixture in our daily lives. In reality, a photograph can be one of many processes in which light-sensitive media are employed to create a visible image. The prevalence of photographs allows us to forget that they are potentially fragile objects that can be easily damaged by careless handling, improper storage, and exposure to environmental influences such as light, humidity, and temperature.

In caring for a photographic collection, it is important to know that various components create a photograph. The interaction of these components, with each other and with their environment, has a lasting effect on the longevity of the image. Most photographs consist of a final image material, a binder layer, and a primary support. The final image material - commonly silver, platinum, organic dyes, or pigments creates the image we see. The binder layer is a transparent substance albumen, collodion, or gelatin in which the final image layer is suspended. The binder and final image material are applied to a primary support, usually paper, glass, metal, or plastic. Although many photographs have this three-part structure, individual images may have additional components. For instance, applied color or coatings and original frames or cases need to be considered as part of the photographic object.

MAINTAINING A SUITABLE ENVIRONMENT

Photographic materials require a cool, dry, well-ventilated storage environment. High temperature and relative humidity increase deterioration and promote the growth of mold and mildew, which could mar surfaces and break down binder layers. Avoid storing photographs in the attic, the basement, or along the outside walls of a building, where environmental conditions are more prone to extremes and fluctuations and where condensation may occur. In some storage situations, seasonal adjustments such as dehumidifiers in the summer or fans to promote air circulation may be necessary to improve problematic environmental conditions.

The ideal storage conditions for most photographs are a temperature of 68 F and relative humidity in the range of 30 - 40%. Film-based negatives and contemporary color photographs benefit from storage in cooler environments of 30 - 40 F and 30 - 40% relative humidity.

CHOOSING STORAGE ENCLOSURES

Keep photographic materials in enclosures that protect them from dust and light and provide physical support during use. Chemically stable plastic or paper enclosures, free of sulfur, acids, and peroxides, are recommended. Plastic sleeves should be constructed of uncoated polyester, polypropylene, or polyethylene. For most photographic materials, unbuffered paper enclosures are preferred over buffered enclosures. Alkaline buffering is added to archival storage papers to absorb acidity from the stored material or the environment surrounding it. However, some photographs may be altered by the buffering in alkaline papers, so unbuffered paper is recommended for most processes. Film-based negatives, which can produce acidic gasses as they age,

should be placed in archival, buffered enclosures and stored separately from other photographic materials. Store cased objects, such as daguerreotypes and ambrotypes, in their original cases or frames with the addition of custom-made, four-flap paper enclosures to reduce wear and tear on fragile cases. Place individually housed prints, negatives, and cased objects in acid-free, durable boxes that will afford further protection from light, dust, and potential environmental fluctuations.

The storage of photographs in albums serves the dual purpose of organizing groups of images while protecting them from physical and environmental damage. Albums can be wonderful sources of historic and genealogical information. Preserve them intact when possible and store them in custom-fitted archival boxes. For the storage of family photographs, albums constructed with archival materials are available from conservation suppliers. Magnetic or self-adhesive albums can be detrimental to photographs and should not be used.

DISPLAYING PHOTOGRAPHS

Photographs should be protected from extended exposure to intense light sources. Limit exhibition times, control light exposure, and monitor the condition of the photographs carefully. Prolonged or permanent display of photographs is not recommended. It is important to note that a microenvironment is created when a photograph is placed in a frame for exhibition. Use unbuffered ragboard mats, and frame photographs with archivally sound materials. Use ultraviolet filtering plexiglass to help protect the photographs during light exposure. Reproduce vulnerable or unique images and display the duplicate image; in this way, the original photograph can be properly stored and preserved.

HOUSEKEEPING GUIDELINES

An overlooked area of collection maintenance is keeping the areas where photographs are handled or stored clean and pest-free. Paper fibers, albumen, and gelatin binders are just some of the components in photographic materials that provide an attractive food source for insects and rodents. It is vital that collections areas be free of debris that might encourage pests. Food and beverages should not be allowed. Apart from the potential for attracting pests, accidental spills can irreversibly damage most photographic objects.

HANDLING PROCEDURES

Most damage to photographs results from poor handling. A well-organized and properly housed collection promotes respect for the photographs and appropriate care in handling. When images can be located quickly, there is less possibility of physical damage. The enclosures should be designed in relation to the intended use of the photographs, as well as their type and condition.

Establish handling procedures and adhere to them whenever photographs are being used. View photographs in a clean, uncluttered area, and handle them with clean hands. Wear white cotton gloves to lessen the possibility of leaving fingerprints and soiling the materials; however, gloves may reduce the manual dexterity of the user. Support photographs carefully and hold them with both hands to avoid damage. Keep

photographs covered when they are not being viewed immediately. Do not use ink pens around photographic materials. Mark enclosures with pencil only. If it is necessary to mark a photograph, write lightly with a soft lead pencil on the reverse of the image.

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

Disaster preparedness begins by evaluating the storage location and the potential for damage in the event of a fire, flood, or other emergency. It is important to create a disaster preparedness plan that addresses the specific needs of the collection before a disaster occurs.

The location and manner in which photographs are housed can be the first line of defense. Identify photographic materials that are at higher risk of damage or loss. Remove all potentially damaging materials such as paper clips and poor-quality enclosures. Store negatives and prints in separate locations to increase the possibility of an image surviving a catastrophe. If a disaster occurs, stay calm. If possible, protect the collection from damage by covering it with plastic sheeting and/or removing it from the affected area. Evaluate the situation and document the damage that has occurred. Contact a conservator as soon as possible for assistance and advice on the recovery and repair of damaged materials.

COMMON CONCERNS AND SOLUTIONS

The following problems are commonly encountered in photographic collections:

Broken, torn, or cracked photographs:

If the primary support of a photograph sustains serious damage, place it carefully in a polyester sleeve with an archival board support. If a photograph has a flaking binder layer or friable surface treatments, such as the pastel coloring often seen on crayon enlargements, place it in a shallow box, not a polyester sleeve. Do not use pressure-sensitive adhesive tapes to repair torn photographs. Consult a photographic materials conservator to perform repairs.

Soiled photographs or negatives:

Brush soiled photographs carefully with a clean, soft brush. Proceed from the center of the photograph outward toward the edges. Do not attempt to clean photographs with water- or solvent-based cleaners, such as window cleaner or film cleaner. Improper cleaning of photographic materials can cause serious and often irreversible damage, such as permanent staining, abrasion, alteration, or loss of binder and image.

Photographs or negatives adhered to enclosures:

High-humidity environments or direct exposure to liquids can cause photographs to adhere to frame glass or enclosure materials. This is a very difficult problem to resolve, and great care must be taken to reduce the possibility of further damage. If a photograph becomes attached to adjacent materials, consult a photographic materials conservator before attempting to remove the adhered materials.

Deteriorated negatives:

Chemical instability is a major factor in the deterioration of early film-based materials. If film-based negatives are brittle, discolored, sticky, or appear wavy and full of air bubbles, separate the negatives from the rest of the collection and consult a photographic materials conservator. A conservator will be able to help identify these materials and make recommendations for their safe storage and/or duplication.

Broken glass negatives or ambrotypes:

Place broken glass carefully in archival paper enclosures. Use a separate, clearly marked enclosure for each piece to reduce the possibility of scratching or further damage. For long-term storage, construct a custom sink mat that holds the pieces of broken glass, separated by mat-board shims, in one enclosure. Consult a photographic materials conservator for assistance.

RESOURCES

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