

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

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1 ♦ Ways of Giving: Angelica Zander Rudenstine and the Mellon Foundation — The field of Photograph Conservation reached a new milestone recently with the advertisement—internationally—of more than eight new positions for photograph conservators. While this number may seem unimpressive compared to other professions, it is unprecedented in our own field. As a point of comparison, in the 1990s there were fewer than ten institutional positions for photograph conservators internationally. In the 2010s this figure had more than doubled. The growth in the number of positions is due to many factors, among which are art market prices, awareness of the significance of photograph collections, and even the overtaking of analog photography by digital imaging. In addition to these factors, significant credit for this expansive growth belongs to one individual and to the institution that she represented. That individual is Angelica Zander Rudenstine, and that institution is the Mellon Foundation.

Angelica Rudenstine was the Program Officer for Museums and Art Conservation at the Mellon Foundation from 1993 to 2010. A serious scholar, she thoroughly researched the field of conservation, and a strong focus was placed for the first time on photograph conservation. As a result, several initiatives

over the years were undertaken to build the field by providing new training opportunities and institutional positions. A two-year post-graduate program was launched; regular five-day intensive workshops and seminars were established; and endowed senior full-time positions and post-graduate fellowships were funded in those few museums that have major photographic collections.

At a time when the training of individuals in the photograph conservation field was almost non-existent, the two-year post-graduate program in photograph conservation produced five cohorts of eight conservators each between 1999 and 2009, many of whom have moved into leadership positions around the world.

Angelica Rudenstine's other major undertaking was the establishment of science and scientific inquiry—as part of her conservation initiative—at a number of major museums in this country and at the State Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg, Russia. Although conservation science is not a single discipline, it is vital to the analysis of photographs and other works of art. Positions for exceptional scientists—and some junior positions—were endowed by Mellon at several major museums.



At The Met, the Mellon Foundation has been one of the Museum's most significant foundation donors. Since 1973 it has made grants totaling nearly \$30 million, including endowments and programmatic assistance for conservation, science, and scholarly initiatives. In addition, it was largely Angelica Rudenstine's potent influence that helped make photograph conservation another of the Museum's already impressive group of specialties. During her tenure, a dedicated lab was established, a conservator position established and named, and a Research Scholar fellowship endowed. In 2015, an independent Department of Photograph Conservation came into being with two full-time and two part-time positions. Today the Department has grown to encompass six staff members. It has become the home not only for

photograph and book conservators, but has welcomed the latest newcomer to conservation, time-based media, with the hiring of the Museum's first specialist in this field. The Department is active in education and guides interns and Fellows along their path into the field. There is no doubt that without the visionary leadership of Mrs. Rudenstine at the Mellon Foundation, the field of photograph conservation would not be in the robust position it now proudly holds, with more than eight new positions advertised for photograph conservators internationally. We extend our deepest gratitude to the Foundation and to Angelica Zander Rudenstine for their advocacy and support.

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Image: ♦ Angelica Rudenstine with members of the Department of Photograph Conservation during a visit to the lab in April 2022. Credit: Marco Leona



2 ♦ DEIA Update — The Met is working on various fronts to implement Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility initiatives across the Museum. In July 2020, the Museum made public its [13 Commitments](#) as a road map for addressing these issues and has been working steadily, making significant progress in bringing both short- and long-term goals into effect using numerous tools. The Museum hired its first Chief Diversity Officer in January 2021. In this critical role, the CDO has built a Diversity & Inclusion staff, overseen staff-wide diversity training, and introduced an independent and confidential online resource, [tEQuitable](#), for staff to surface their concerns—an online ombuds and learning tool. Longtime arts advocate and supporter of The Met, Adrienne Arsht, made [a transformational gift](#) to provide paid internships to all of the yearly undergraduate and graduate level interns at the Museum, helping to lower barriers into careers in the arts. Employee Resource Groups bring attention and support to communities of LGBTQIA+, Women, Parents, Disabled, and BIPOC staff members, and with input from across the staff, The Met celebrates Heritage Months with in-person and digital programming. In addition, numerous fora around the Museum have implemented their own DEIA working groups or committees, including the Forum of Curators, Conservators, and Scientists; the Assembly; the Collections

Care Group; and union-supported employees that focus on area-specific concerns surrounding equity and inclusion. Communication bridges are being bolstered among these different groups, helping to pull our broad Met community closer together, with the recognition that our work requires full community participation to succeed.

The fields of conservation, curation, and conservation science benefit from these efforts to diversify and expand the voices within our respective professions. Building more welcoming and accessible pathways into these careers is a particular area of focus. For conservation, this requires introducing the field to younger, more diverse audiences, messaging the importance of preservation and conservation to museum-goers in the galleries, expanding our audience to local communities, and providing support and encouragement to future professionals traversing the long academic route into the field with paid internships, academic programs, and early career fellowships. As decisions about the preservation of cultural heritage increasingly involve collaboration with community stakeholders, a diverse field of conservators from all backgrounds and cultures will be better prepared to continue this work with nuanced expertise here at The Met and around the world.

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Image: ♦ A still from "OUT / SIDE OF TIME", 2021, Jenn Nkiru, (British, born 1987). Five-channel digital video, black-and-white, sound, 5 min. Courtesy the artist, commissioned by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2021. ♦ On view in *Before Yesterday We Could Fly: An Afrofuturist Period Room*.



3 ♦ Notes from Storage: Travel Frames — Contemporary artists often opt to present photographic works unglazed. While this may enhance the viewing experience by removing the physical barrier between artwork and viewer, it leaves the photograph's surface exposed and susceptible to physical damage. Protecting these vulnerable artworks in storage and during travel is essential, so at The Met we house them in custom enclosures called travel frames. Each unglazed artwork is mounted into its own travel frame, which protects the surface from damage and dust while in storage. If the piece is lent to another institution, the travel frame can be packed directly in a crate for shipping.

This one-time expense is best made at the time of acquisition, which is the current policy for new acquisitions at the

Museum. The Department of Photographs has worked diligently over the past few years to procure the travel frames needed to safely store a group of artworks acquired before this policy was enacted. With generous support from The Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation, Inc., the Department was able to house all the remaining artworks waiting for travel frames.

For two weeks in February, Met staff from multiple departments, including collections managers, technicians, conservators, packers, art handlers, and registrars collaborated on a project to pack 23 artworks from the Department of Photographs into travel frames before moving them to off-site cool storage. The artworks are better protected in their new travel frames, and we freed up much-needed storage space on-site for other collection objects.

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Images: ♦ Pictured here are some of the staff members at work on the project: Predrag Dimitrijevic, Department of Photographs; Ryan Franklin, Department of Photographs; Tim Dowse, Registrar's Office; Garth Swanson, Director's Office; and Katie Sanderson, Department of Photograph Conservation. Credits: Nora Kennedy



4 ♦ Support for Ukraine — Like so many others around the globe, we are shocked and saddened to witness the ongoing destruction in Ukraine, and we struggle against feelings of anger and helplessness as this crisis continues to unfold. During any conflict, human life must always be prioritized over saving objects, no matter how valuable those objects might be. Where there are opportunities and willingness to save cultural heritage objects from destruction, however, we wish to facilitate those efforts.

At The Met, two conservation colleagues have been working tirelessly to provide assistance to heritage institutions in Ukraine. Textile conservators Olha Yarema-Wynar and Janina Poskrobko are originally from Ukraine and Poland, respectively, and as such have contacts in both countries who can communicate immediate needs. In response to requests from Olha's Ukrainian contacts, many conservators at The Met created short films about packing artworks for travel and storage under duress. Our department participated in this effort, producing four short videos demonstrating efficient and economical ways to pack glass plate negatives, framed photographs, photograph albums, library books, and rare books, for short term storage. These videos were filmed and edited by Georgia Southworth, Associate Conservator for Books, Rachel Tabet, Andrew W. Mellon Conservation Fellow, and Catherine E. Stephens, Annette de la Renta Fellow. Olha very generously translated captions and voice-overs

into Ukrainian, so that they could be shared electronically with those wishing to temporarily secure Ukrainian cultural heritage objects from destruction and damage. Olha has already forwarded several follow-up questions from viewers of these videos, and we are pleased to provide as much remote assistance as possible.

Videos created by the staff and fellows in the Department of Photograph Conservation are available in both Ukrainian and English, and can be viewed on the department's Instagram account, [@MetPhotoConservation](https://www.instagram.com/metphotoconservation). The suggestions in these videos are for safeguarding collections over the short term, rather than storing collections for a long period of time. For example, we do not recommend the use of bubble wrap for long-term storage, though it can be an invaluable layer of protection in urgent cases where human conflict risks harm to heritage collections. We understand that high quality packing materials may not be immediately available, and we agree that substituting non-ideal packing materials is better than having no protection at all.

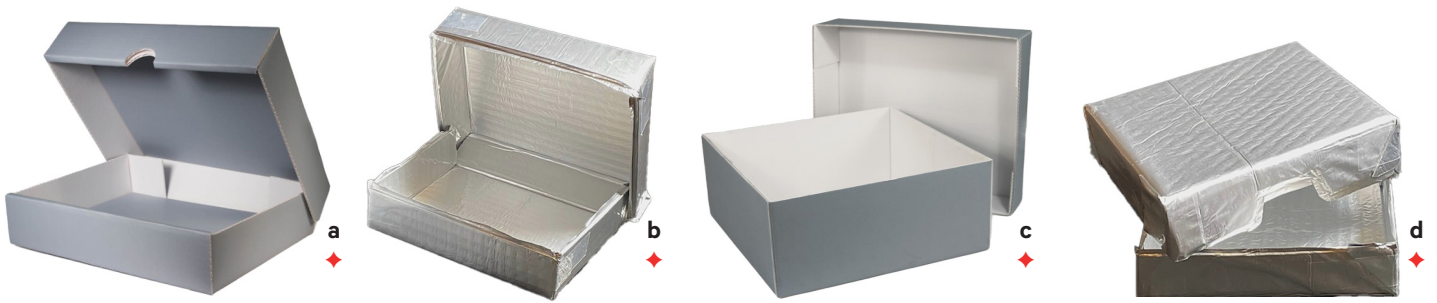
With these videos we hope to provide some help to our fellow cultural heritage stewards in Ukraine. And we send as well our fervent wishes for peace in the region.

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Images: ♦ Screenshots from two of the videos—one subtitled in Ukrainian, the other in English. Special thanks to Olha Yarema-Wynar, Conservator, Department of Textile Conservation, for the Ukrainian translations. Videos by The Met's Department of Photograph Conservation. Credits: Catherine E. Stephens



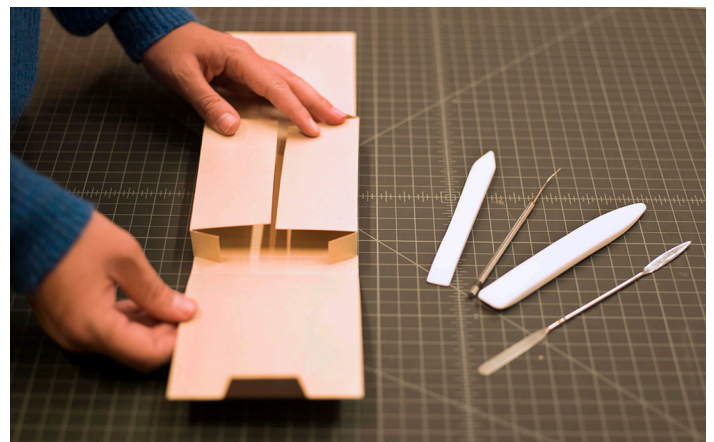
5 ♦ Materials Research: Beirut — Rachel Tabet, former Collections Care Specialist at the Arab Image Foundation in Beirut, Lebanon, is spending the year in the Department of Photograph Conservation (DPHC) as an Andrew W. Mellon Conservation Fellow. Her work at the AIF has made her especially familiar with preventive conservation practices in risk zones. Her work here at The Met has included learning more about storage enclosures, environmental controls, and best practices appropriate for institutions with photograph collections.

Rachel's work is motivated by the need to determine safe methods of storage that can be replicated not only in Beirut, but in various other regions lacking easy access to the types of preservation-quality materials available in the United States. In December 2021, she returned temporarily to Beirut to carry out research on making enclosures for photographs using locally sourced materials. By contacting vendors in the paper-making industry, Rachel sourced two types of cardboard approximating the weight—though not the high quality—of the boards used in DPhC to construct enclosures. One board is lightweight and the other is a standard corrugated board made from waste pulp. Both locally produced products proved rigid enough to provide good support for housing small-format photographic materials, from negatives to delicate unmounted paper prints. She also found a locally-manufactured barrier film consisting of an aluminum film sandwiched between two types of plastic; this product is heat sealable and used in the food packaging industry to store items like nuts and coffee that require a vapor barrier.

In theory, if a box is made from poor-quality board, but is then sealed on all sides with an inert vapor barrier, any harmful emissions from the cardboard will be trapped by the barrier film and will not reach the photographs stored within the box over time. Under the supervision of Nora Kennedy, Sherman

Fairchild Conservator in Charge, and with advice from all Photograph Conservation staff, Rachel has been using these locally sourced boards, heat-sealing the entire cardboard surface between the aluminum-plastic film, and constructing enclosures based on established models. She has successfully made two styles of four-flap enclosures, a two-piece box with separate base and lid, and a clamshell box made from a single piece of board. The properties of the materials and formats require that each design be adjusted and reconfigured to ensure the final enclosure fits and closes properly.

Since her return to work on-site at The Met in April, Rachel has partnered with the Department of Scientific Research to analyze the materials employed in her test housings. This assessment will determine whether the film is successful in trapping harmful emissions from the cardboard, and whether the film itself can be safely used in proximity to photographic materials. If successful, there is potential for broad application of this research across cultural institutions internationally that are working to safely house their sensitive photographic collections for future generations.



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Images: ♦ **Top row:** Commercially available protective enclosures (images a and c) constructed from materials that have passed the [Photographic Activity Test](#), and Rachel Tabet's samples (images b and d) constructed from materials locally sourced in Beirut. Credits: a and c, talasonline.com; b and d, Georgia Southworth ♦ **Above:** Rachel constructing a four-flap enclosure. Credit: Aleya Lehmann



Locations and Hours

The Met Fifth Avenue

Sunday–Tuesday and Thursday: 10 am–5 pm
Friday and Saturday: 10 am–9 pm
Closed Wednesday

The Met Cloisters

Thursday–Tuesday: 10 am–5 pm
Closed Wednesday

All of the current and upcoming exhibitions listed are on view at The Met Fifth Avenue.

Current Exhibitions

Charles Ray: Figure Ground

January 31 through June 5, 2022

Amar Kanwar: The Lightning Testimonies

February 28 through September 18, 2022

Robert Wood Johnson, Jr. Gallery Rotation

July 15, 2021, through May 31, 2022

Before Yesterday We Could Fly: An Afrofuturist Period Room

Ongoing

Upcoming Exhibitions

Robert Wood Johnson, Jr. Gallery Rotation

Opening July 7, 2022

Bernd & Hilla Becher

July 15 through November 6, 2022

Richard Avedon: Murals

January 19 through October 1, 2023

Berenice Abbott's New York Album, 1929

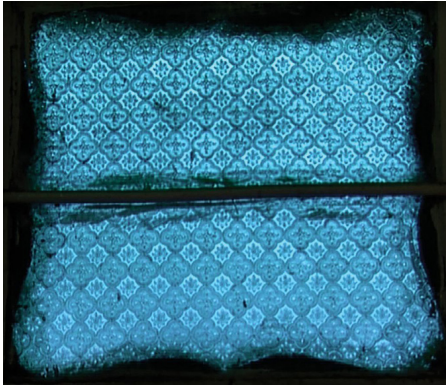
March 2 through September 4, 2023

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Image: ♦ Louis Lafon (French, active 1870s–1890s), *The Foundry*, 1870s–80s. Albumen silver print from glass negative, 14 7/16 x 18 7/8 in. Purchase, Alfred Stieglitz Society Gifts, 2008. (2008.147) ♦ On view in the upcoming Robert Wood Johnson, Jr., Gallery Rotation, opening July 7, 2022.



Support the Department of Photograph Conservation

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

Support

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

Caterina Toscano

Deputy Chief Development Officer for Individual Giving

212-396-5340

caterina.toscano@metmuseum.org

Contribute Online

Donations can be made [online](#) and you may indicate within the "Donation Note" box that your donation is "For Department of Photograph Conservation."

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and Georgia Southworth

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Amar Kanwar: The Lightning Testimonies is made possible by The Modern Circle. ♦ An immersive installation of eight synchronized video projections.

Before Yesterday We Could Fly: An Afrofuturist Period Room is made possible by the Hobson/Lucas Family Foundation and the Director's Fund. Additional support is provided by Art Mentor Foundation Lucerne and the Terra Foundation for American Art. ♦ The Met's quarterly *Bulletin* program is supported in part by the Lila Acheson Wallace Fund for The Metropolitan Museum of Art, established by the cofounder of *Reader's Digest*.

Bernd & Hilla Becher is made possible by Joyce Frank Menschel, the Barrie A. and Deedee Wigmore Foundation, the Edward John & Patricia Rosenwald Foundation, and Linda Macklowe. It is organized by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, in association with Studio Bernd & Hilla Becher and Die Photographische Sammlung/SK Stiftung Kultur. ♦ The catalogue is made possible by the Mary C. and James W. Fosburgh Publications Fund. Additional support is provided by the Mellon Foundation.

Richard Avedon: Murals celebrates the centennial of the artist's birth on May 15, 1923 with the presentation of a selection of the photographer's most innovative group portraits and is organized around four monumental photomurals. ♦ The exhibition is made possible by Joyce Frank Menschel.

Berenice Abbott's New York Album, 1929 is made possible by The Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation, Inc. ♦ Consisting of some 280 small black-and-white prints arranged on thirty-two pages, the album marks a crucial turning point in Abbott's career and offers a rare glimpse of a photographer's mind at work.

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Image: ♦ Amar Kanwar (India, born New Delhi, 1964), *The Lightning Testimonies*, 2007, Eight-channel digital video installation, black-and-white and color, sound, 32 min., 31 sec. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Radhika Chopra, Asha Jadeja, Dipti Mathur and Kiran Nadar, Chairperson, Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, India, 2022 (2022.7) © 2007 Amar Kanwar. All rights reserved. ♦ On view through September 18, 2022 in *Amar Kanwar: The Lightning Testimonies*.