

PHOTOGRAPH CONSERVATION

**HANDLING GUIDELINES: PHOTOGRAPH CONSERVATION**

1. Wash hands before handling art, even if it is matted.
2. Prepare a clean and uncluttered workspace. Make sure you have a clear path when carrying art to and from the area.
3. Cotton or thin nitrile plastic gloves are recommended for certain materials, including some rehoused cased objects. Be sure the gloves are clean.
4. Never touch the photograph directly. Fingerprints can cause permanent damage to binder layers.
5. Some contemporary photographs are not framed or glazed. Be aware that unprotected surfaces should never be touched with the naked hand. Well-fitted plastic gloves provide protection for the work and good grip for the handler.
6. Do not bend or flex the work of art. This can cause irreversible crescent creases (and worse!) in photographs.
7. Hold the housed photograph with both hands, at opposing corners (diagonal) supporting it underneath if necessary to prevent flexing. If the housing is flexible, use an additional matboard or corrugated cardboard to provide additional support.
8. Remove the slipsheet or interleaving by lifting (not dragging) it off with both hands. Do not slide the sheet across the surface of the photograph.
9. Slipsheets should cover the entire mount area, not just the photograph. They should not be dirty, folded or creased. Generally, slipsheets are made from a lightweight opaque paper. Polyester film has hard, sharp edges and can develop a static charge that attracts dust. Glassine or another material may be used in temporary or special circumstances.
10. If the verso needs to be examined, but is not accessible, there may a photocopy inside the mat or there may be a record on The Museum System (the Metropolitan's collections management database). Please check first before asking a conservator to remove a photo-corner or cut a hinge to access the reverse.
11. Hinges are not always marked and may not be where you expect them to be.

12. Removing a photograph from its stationary photo-corners is *strongly* discouraged. Photographs are too easily damaged through this practice. If it is absolutely necessary, do not attempt to reinsert the photograph. Instead, bring the work to the Senior Departmental Technician so that openable photo-corners can be substituted. Openable folding photo-corners may be unfolded to safely access the reverse of the photograph.
13. Please use caution when attempting to examine the verso of any photograph. If the reverse is accessible, use a piece of paper to slide beneath the support and lift the photograph or its mount. Do not use your fingers to lift the edge.
14. Use graphite pencil to take notes while in the vicinity of photographs, not pen or marker.
15. Any photograph that is not returned to its box should be covered with matboard or blotter, and a three dimensional sign should be placed on top, clearly indicating that artwork is beneath. Paper labels that identify the underlying photograph are also recommended, as they prevent unnecessary handling.
16. To remove a photograph from a stack of matted works in a Solander box, remove the photographs above first, transferring them to the open lid of the box. These can be moved one by one or in well-supported stacks. Use the same technique for re-inserting a matted image into the Solander box.
17. In the Department of Photographs, standard sizes are not commonly used when creating window mats and mounts. Because of this it is essential that photographs stored in Solander boxes be organized with the largest sizes on the bottom. A sheet of matboard (to the dimensions of the largest work, or larger than the mat opening at very least) should be inserted between matted works of dramatically different proportions.
18. Framed works should be grasped at opposing corners or low along either side of the frame, depending on the overall dimensions. Ask for help if the work is too large or too heavy for you to handle alone. Do not take risks.