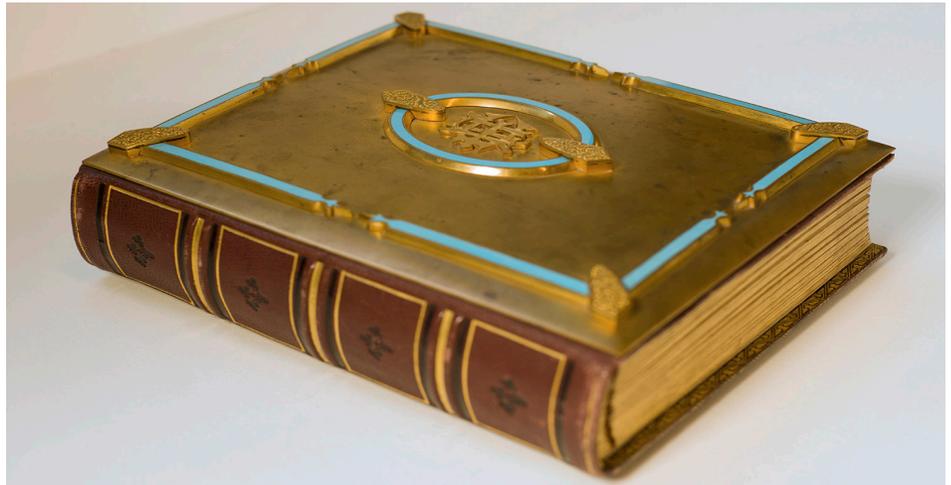


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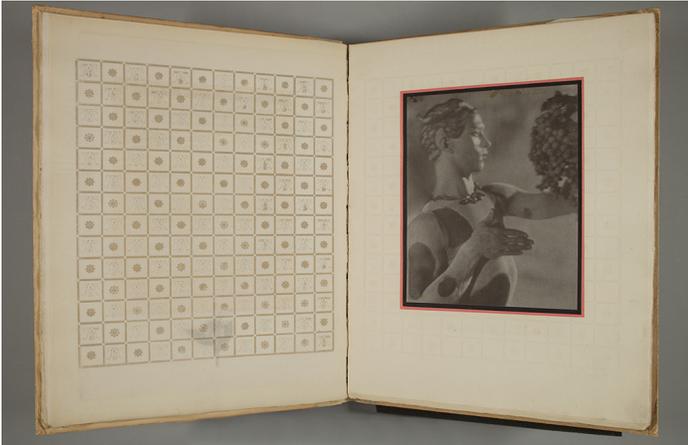


1 ♦ Considerations for Bound Volumes — Photographs are found throughout the collections at The Met, in formats from daguerreotypes and photographs on paper to photograph albums. Museums collect bound volumes, with or without photographs, for numerous reasons. Their contents are often primary, but they are also collected for the beauty of their bindings, their rarity, or for archival or historical significance. Sometimes all these attributes are combined in one precious volume. With photograph albums and photographically illustrated books, the images that enliven the pages serve most often as the reason for acquisition. A great number of photographs in The Met’s collections are housed in albums, books, or miniature cases, so their needs call for the expertise of not only a photograph conservator, but a book conservator as well. Each of these bound volumes presents a unique set of preservation challenges and particular characteristics that affect its accessibility for research or exhibition.

All books are dynamic objects. A book’s function relies on its design, its care, and the continued health of the materials used in its construction. To compare the dynamic book to a dancer, we can say that it functions—or performs—only when the materials and the series of actions that allow it to move remain

healthy. In a bound volume these actions allow the covers to open and close, the pages to turn smoothly, and the materials to remain intact, ensuring access to the content in the leaves of the book. The successful “dance” of any book is made possible by a carefully planned and executed bookbinding design. And as with the long-term “performance” of any mechanical device, the design and the materials employed in making the artwork must continue to work together through the years, in the face of varying rates of inherent degradation found in common bookbinding materials like leather, cloth, threads, and the variously employed papers and adhesives. Even in the best storage and environmental conditions, papers made with wood pulp may discolor and embrittle, rubber-based adhesives will desiccate and lose efficacy, the fiber structure of threads can break down, and the integrity of acidic leathers will fail. Any (or all) of these preservation issues can cause the structural breakdown of a volume’s function. The continued ‘health’ of these mechanical actions is critical, and if even one is compromised, access to the artwork may become compromised as well.

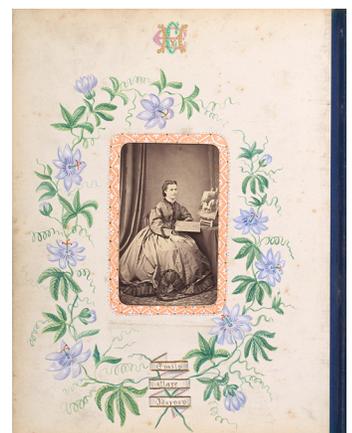
Bound volumes that contain photographs present their own distinct set of preservation issues, housing needs and exhibition concerns. The photographs themselves may be



susceptible to deterioration in ways that differ from the printing or manuscript inks found in traditional books. The various attachment methods used to mount the delicate photographs to the pages, which may include tipping in an image with a line of adhesive (image, top left), adhering a photograph overall (image, top right), using paper photo corners, or inserting images through a slit in the tail of the leaf, may leave the images vulnerable, physically and chemically. In an unfortunate coincidence, the early decades of photography align with an historical period when bookbinding materials were of inherently poor quality due to the introduction of wood pulp papers and boards that supplanted the high-quality rag papers used across earlier centuries.

Conservation treatments often involve decisions about how best to keep these dynamic objects functioning. Maintaining the various moving parts may require stabilizing the existing material or sometimes replacing an original aspect of an album. Invariably, ethical questions arise in each treatment plan. Should a leather outer joint be replaced with new leather, which, based on its acidic nature, will break down over time? Is it appropriate to introduce a different material to the structure, despite being a departure from the original design? If the sewing threads are broken in one part of a volume, should the entire book be re sewn, though the treatment is more invasive? If photographs have detached from their pages, should the conservator use a different, more reliable method of reattachment, or repeat the original method? How can manuscript captioning below a photograph be preserved if the paper on which it is

written is inherently so weak that the photograph is separating from the page? How does the conservator wrestle with the pervasive issue of photographs made with stable materials that are kept in proximity to poorer quality papers and adhesives while striving to retain the integrity of the album as a singular object? These are among the various ethical considerations that keep book conservator Georgia Southworth on her toes! The thorough study of each object's history, material structure, and the consideration of conservation treatment options guide the decisions that allow The Met's photograph album collections to keep performing now and into the future. These efforts allow the Museum to share with the public the hidden and treasured images in the photograph albums and photographically illustrated book collections.



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Images: ♦ Top left: See page 1. ♦ Top right: An albumen silver print from a glass negative, depicting a view of Yosemite, California. The photograph is adhered overall to the page in a traditionally sewn volume employed as an album. The deformation of the textblock leaves results over time from the natural contraction of the photographic albumen or egg white layer, which in turn pulls the mount with it as the photograph curls inwards on itself. Carleton E. Watkins (American, 1829–1916). [*Trees in Calaveras County and View of Yosemite, California*], ca. 1878. Each image 5 × 5 in. Gilman Collection, Gift of The Howard Gilman Foundation, 2005. (2005.100.5561-73)
♦ Above: The title page (left) next to an example, picturing Clare at her easel, of one of the 22 albumen silver prints mounted to the pages in [*The Harvey Album*], each of which is surrounded by delightful hand-decorations. Singular albums like this are perfect examples of the intimate nature of these objects. Emily Clare Harvey, (British, 1844–1916). [*The Harvey Album*], 1868. Album closed: 9 3/8 × 7 1/2 × 1 1/2 in. Purchase, The Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation Gift, through Joyce and Robert Menschel, 1998. (1998.166)

2 ♦ Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access Updates — We are excited to share the news that The Metropolitan Museum of Art has hired its first Chief Diversity Officer (CDO), Lavita McMath Turner. Ms. McMath Turner joined the staff at the beginning of the year and is actively getting to know the Museum staff and learning more about the many DEIA-focused groups and initiatives throughout the institution. Additionally, Jeanette Brizel joined The Met as Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO) on March 15. The close collaboration between the CDO and the CHRO, the rest of the Museum leadership, and the staff will propel The Met forward as we continue to work towards the goals laid out in the 13 Commitments announced in the summer of 2020.

Photograph Conservation staff is committed to expanding the voices that make our professional work successful, aware that these efforts require dedicated focus. We are involved in numerous endeavors to promote and sustain equitable practices across the Museum. For example, Associate Conservator Katie Sanderson plays an integral role in helping to shape and communicate the goals of the professional staff as the Chair of the Museum's Forum for Curators, Conservators, and Scientists. Associate Conservator Georgia Southworth is an acting Co-Chair of the Forum's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Access *ad hoc* Committee (DEIA), comprising almost 50 conservators, scientists, and curators working to make the professional arena of the Museum more diverse and equitable. This enthusiastic committee's goals include working across departments to improve the internal culture of the Museum; build further support for incoming staff, fellows, and interns; and develop concrete policies that welcome a wider diversity of students into these careers. Assistant Conservator Diana Díaz-Cañas is translating into Spanish various preservation resources for both the conservation community and the broader public, all of which will be accessible online in the coming months. Associate Conservator for Time-Based Media Jonathan Farbowitz, together with Associate Curator Maia Nuku, recently presented a workshop to the Forum entitled "Indigenous Collections, Collaborative Stewardship and Conservation Practices". The workshop cited many examples of more inclusive practices for archives and museums with collections produced by or depicting Indigenous communities, among them the *mana tuturu* (Māori Spiritual Guardianship) principle employed at Ngā Taonga Sound & Vision archive in New Zealand, as well as multiple collaborations with Indigenous artists and cultural representatives on conservation treatment and exhibitions, including The Met's 2019 show *Atea: Nature and Divinity in Polynesia*.

Nora Kennedy, Sherman Fairchild Conservator in Charge, Department of Photograph Conservation, has worked for decades to broaden the international scope of photograph conservation, reaching out to colleagues in underserved parts of the globe, initiating and collaborating on conservation efforts where possible. With the understanding that these essential improvements are long-term endeavors, the staff seeks to ensure not only that the work that we undertake is accessible to a wide audience, but that the professionals who populate the conservation field are themselves an ever-more diverse group. By expanding the inclusion of countless voices that inform the histories of objects we collect and share with our visitors, The Met moves forward on many fronts to diversify the interpretation, presentation, care, and access to our collections, making them more meaningful and impactful than ever before.



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Images: ♦ Marie el Khazen (Lebanese, 1899–1983), *[Two Women Dressed as Men]*, 1927. Gelatin silver negative on cellulose nitrate film, 3 9/16 × 2 3/8 in. Mohsen Yammine Collection, Courtesy of the Arab Image Foundation, Beirut ♦ Marie el Khazen's photograph is a double portrait of el Khazen seated with her sister Alice, both smoking, wearing Western-style men's suits and Middle Eastern-style men's hats known as tarboosh. This image exists only as a negative, as seen here at top (with its digital positive below), one of over 100 negatives given by el Khazen to journalist Mohsen Yammine during the 1970s and now in the collection of the Arab Image Foundation. ♦ This portrait is featured in the exhibition catalogue for *The New Woman Behind the Camera* opening on July 2.

3 ♦ Summer Youth at The Met — In August of 2020, the Education Department organized a virtual Career Panel for teens as part of the Museum's annual engagement with New York City's Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP). Photograph Conservation was represented by Assistant Conservator of Photographs Diana Díaz-Cañas, and Associate Conservator of Time-Based Media Jonathan Farbowitz, along with colleagues from the Digital, Development, and Imaging Departments. Each panel member spoke for five minutes about their job at The Met and what makes them passionate about their career.

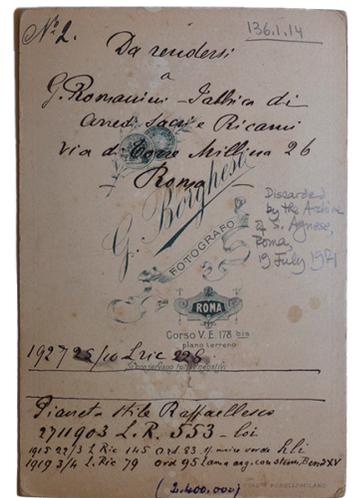
Diana started the presentation with a brief definition of conservation and its connection to cultural heritage, art, science, and other related fields. She discussed the skills and knowledge that are employed in conservation practice, as well as the opportunities to collaborate with many disciplines. She explained the material diversity and evolution of the photographic medium, showing examples from the 19th century to the present, and closed with highlights of research, conservation treatments, and artist collaborations carried out in the Department.

Jonathan defined time-based media as “artworks which unfold over a duration of time”, and showed examples of video, film, software and slide-based artworks, multimedia installations,



and performance art. He explained the challenges in preserving the wide variety of formats and equipment that these artworks might include and closed by showing the main elements of a time-based media conservation lab and the basic principles for transferring and storing digital artworks safely. We are grateful for this wonderful opportunity to engage with our teen audience, and to share our passion for conservation, heritage, and our work at the Museum, with the hopes of opening doors to young professionals with combined interests in science, art, and history.

4 ♦ Researching the Study Collection — Cataloguing our Photograph Conservation Study Collection continues to reward us with new information. We feature here two examples from a set of 40 photographs, discarded by the Archive of Sant'Agnese in Rome in 1971, of mitres, copes, and chasubles by photographer Guglielmo Borghese (active ca. 1880–1930). It appears that these cabinet cards were utilized as “order cards” by Giovanni Romanini, who operated a “fabbrica di arredi sacri ericami” nearby, where he created elaborately embroidered liturgical vestments for the Holy See, as he advertised, as well as for Sant'Agnese, and others. As part of the process of cataloguing, and in recording the copious inscriptions, in Italian, on the verso of each card, we took a deep dive into Roman liturgical vestment construction including descriptions such as “amuèrre cremis” as noted on the card on the left: crimson moiré! And on the right: ordered in 1919 with the coat of arms of Benedetto XV. Order dates, styles, colors, and for whom were all carefully annotated for posterity.



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Images: ♦ Associate Conservator Katie Sanderson presenting examples of photographs by a range of artists to students from the High School of Fashion Industries, during their visit on June 1, 2017. This was during a time when we were able to welcome students in person, something which we look forward to doing again! Credit: Aleya Lehmann ♦ Guglielmo Borghese (Italian, ca. 1860–1930). [*Chasuble Embroidered with Scrolling Vines, Grapes, Wheat Sheaves, and Flowers on a Cross with IHS Christogram*], ca. 1902, cabinet card, verso, 6 1/2 × 4 1/4 in. (PCSC.2010.2.5.18) ♦ Guglielmo Borghese (Italian, ca. 1860–1930). [*Chasuble Embroidered with Scrolling Vines, Grapes, Wheat Sheaves, and Flowers with Column*], ca. 1903, cabinet card, verso, 6 1/2 × 4 1/4 in. (PCSC.2010.2.5.14)

5 ♦ Improving The Met's Digital Storage of Time-Based Media Artwork — Since the arrival of our new Associate Time-Based Media (TBM) Conservator, Jonathan Farbowitz, The Met has been improving the digital storage of time-based media artworks (video, film, audio, slide, or software-based artworks) in its collection, as previously discussed in *Bulletin No. 18*. The Museum recently entered a contract with a digital preservation storage vendor to hold identical copies of artwork files in three different geographic locations for long-term preservation, sparking the involved process of preparing artworks for off-site storage. Prior to Jonathan's arrival, without a TBM conservator on staff, many collection artworks were lacking fixity information, which is used to track the authenticity of digital files and ensure that they have not changed over time. Many artworks (and their digital components) were not consistently described in The Museum System or TMS, The Met's collection management system. When dealing with hundreds of thousands of files, many of which may look identical, consistent organization and cataloguing is essential

While working from home, a cross-departmental group has been methodically examining the files of time-based media works in the collection to audit and improve their cataloging and storage conditions. This group of specialists comprises Jonathan Farbowitz; Diana Díaz-Cañas, Assistant Conservator of Photographs; Caroline Gil, a former Andrew W. Mellon Fellow in Media Conservation; Ashley Hall, Manager of Collection Information; Milo Thiesen, Lead Technical Analyst, Digital Asset Management; and Collection Managers Meredith Reiss (Department of Photographs) and Catherine Burns (Modern and Contemporary Art). The auditing process involves checking the files of each artwork in 15 distinct steps before they are approved for transfer to the off-site storage vendor.



With the involvement of so many individuals, the project management software tool, Jira, was adapted to track the progress of auditing each artwork. As part of the process, files are meticulously named and organized consistently both within digital storage and in TMS. Limited access to the Museum does present challenges when examining physical storage components like hard drives and DVDs, but the copies of artwork files in digital storage can be transferred to the vendor over the internet via secure protocols. With the audit well underway, the team is also developing a process for ultimately transferring the data to the vendor safely and securely.

In addition to providing off-site digital storage for the collection, at the completion of the audit project, staff will have gained a clearer understanding of the most critical challenges facing time-based media artworks in The Met's collection, and building on the work of a 2018 assessment of the entire TBM collection, will identify the vulnerable works that require the most attention. Not only will the audit help preserve the digital files of collection artworks long-term, it will also help curators and conservators make more informed decisions about how to exhibit and care for these works in the future.

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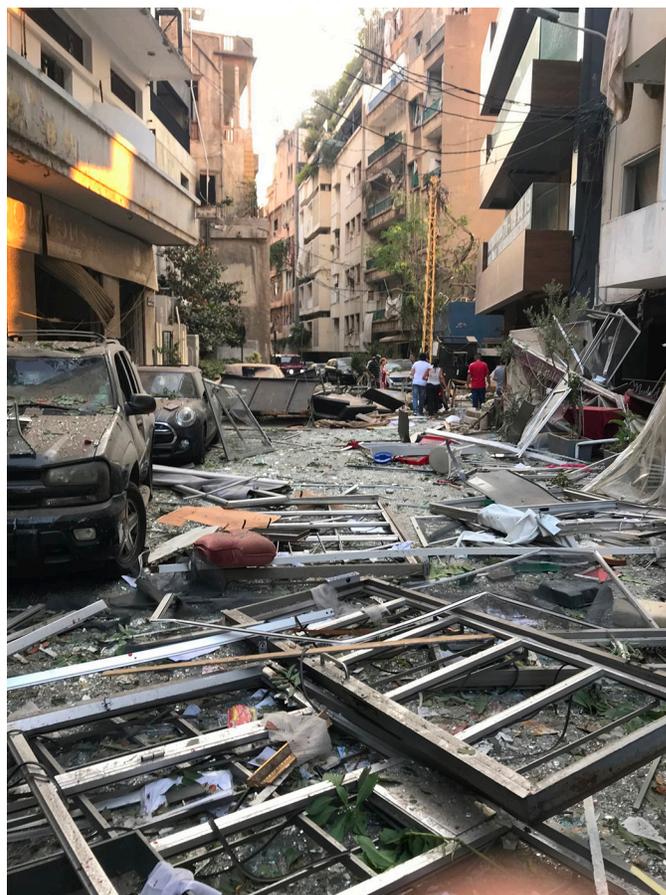
Images: ♦ Associate Conservator for Time-Based Media Jonathan Farbowitz, working from home, on the TBM File Audit Project. Credit: Catherine Ahn ♦ TBM File Audit Team members, clockwise from top left: Diana Díaz-Cañas, Catherine Burns, Ashley Hall, Jonathan Farbowitz, Milo Thiesen, and Nora Kennedy, during a recent Teams meeting. Credit: Jonathan Farbowitz

6 ♦ Disaster Recovery in Beirut — When calamity strikes, whether from natural causes or through human conflict or neglect, the news spreads quickly around the globe, sympathies and support run high, and countries and individuals seek to provide assistance and support in the immediate aftermath. Such was the case in the wake of the massive explosion in Beirut, Lebanon, in August 2020. The blast killed hundreds, destroyed historic neighborhoods, damaged classic architecture, and left thousands injured and homeless, all amidst the pandemic and the country's political unrest. The challenges were immediate and urgent, and help came from all corners of the globe. What is sometimes overlooked is that the challenges continue months and years after the drama of the original event ceases to be publicized in mainstream news and on social media channels. Eight months after the explosion, our friends in Beirut are still struggling to recover.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art is fortunate to have close ties with colleagues around the world. In a tragedy like the one that befell Beirut, our first instinct is to check in on friends and colleagues through calls, emails, WhatsApp, and any means possible. It is key to know that all are safe and uninjured, but also to let them know they are not forgotten and that there is a global family reaching out and caring in their time of distress. In the months that follow, however, it is equally important to keep checking in, to work together on solutions—whether through advice and assistance, or connections with possible funding organizations.

The Arab Image Foundation (AIF) in Beirut was founded in 1997 by a group of artists and has as its mission the promotion, collection, and conservation of the photographic heritage of the region. AIF hosts residencies and workshops, and contributes to exhibitions and publications. Its collection comprises more than 500,000 images in print and negative formats by amateurs and professionals dating from the 1860s to the present day, from the Middle East, North Africa, and the Arab diaspora. Located in the scenic Gemmayzeh neighborhood, the AIF was a mere 800 meters from the explosions' epicenter on August 4th. Fortunately, on that disastrous day, much of the staff was working off-site.

The tragedy in Beirut focused the cultural community's eye on the region and reminded us once again that unexpected disasters, especially ones as devastating as this, change immediately the landscape of our work, our world, and our lives. We see also the clear benefits of a well-helmed response. Strong



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leadership is key under any circumstance and is particularly relevant in cases of disaster. AIF has benefitted from the cool heads, visionary leadership, and seemingly limitless energy of AIF Board President Yasmine Eid-Sabbagh and Director Heba Hage-Felder. Heba officially started her tenure two weeks after the explosion and was immediately engulfed in the recovery efforts. Within days of the disaster, the AIF had published a blog, spoken with numerous news outlets, and contacted foundations and other funding organizations.

Equally evident is that preventive conservation strategies are vital. The survival of the AIF collection is due in great part to the superior care of the collection, bestowed over decades by AIF staff. The drop ceiling with HVAC equipment and one sheetrock wall collapsed into the collection's cool storage room making it unsafe to enter for the first weeks (see image 4).

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Image: ♦ 1 Beirut's Gemmayzeh neighborhood, home to the AIF, just after the blast. Rawad Bou Malhab, Courtesy of the Arab Image Foundation, Beirut

Once the area was stabilized and the storage boxes accessed, it was clear that all of the disaster preparedness steps the Foundation had taken were well worth the effort. Following best practices, the digital cataloguing and image scans were kept on-site, but also backed up and stored off-site in two different locations. All physical collections were well-housed, and boxes with heavier collection materials kept on lower shelves. Even when the shelves collapsed, the damage was sustained by the boxes, minimizing damage to the contents. The considerable dust generated by the blast was kept at bay by the exterior storage boxes. And, though all of these exterior housings will need to be replaced, the contents were well-protected. The most remarkable survival story is that of the many historic glass plate negatives, which emerged unscathed. This is largely due to the housing materials—layers of papers and card that buffered the glass plates from the massive shock waves—and the fact that the boxes were stored on shelves against a structural wall, with strapping around the boxes to secure them in place on the shelves.

The AIF collections survived the blast because of good practices, but the blast has also revealed some vulnerabilities. Despite best efforts, the pending collections (estimated at 330,000 photographic objects from three collections) are now housed on open shelves and awaiting proper care. The space has been stabilized, but the current premises cannot sustain the AIF's workload in the long run. The team at the Foundation is currently studying relocation options and working on a concept of a collective hub with other cultural entities, in tandem with researching, designing and building a new mobile

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Images: ◆ 2 View of the severely damaged preservation department on the day after the Beirut port explosion. ◆ 3 The preservation department after repairs and renovation was completed. ◆ 4 View of the cool storage room shortly after the explosion. Shelves have toppled, the ceiling collapsed. Only load-bearing walls held strong. ◆ 5 The cool storage room after reconstruction. The drop ceiling has been removed and light fixtures are hanging from improvised wooden support bars. Images courtesy of the Arab Image Foundation, Beirut

energy-efficient cool storage facility. As soon as a new space is secured, and the preservation and digitization labs are properly equipped, the work on processing the AIF's three largest recent acquisitions will begin.

We are delighted to be welcoming Rachel Tabet, Archivist at the AIF, to The Met in the fall as a Fellow. While at the Museum, she will engage in preventive conservation projects such as providing proper custom housings for photographs, conducting testing for paper and plastic housing materials in the Department of Scientific Research, and she will be introduced to basic conservation treatment practices. In return, it will be our pleasure to learn from Rachel's considerable experience with photographs from the Middle East and her depth of understanding of disaster preparedness.

Our world is filled with unexpected disasters of all kinds that threaten lives, human welfare, and also our cultural heritage. We are all called upon to work together with colleagues internationally, to learn from one another, to help each other as we all navigate these challenges, and to build the tools and solutions necessary to mitigate damage to our shared world heritage into the uncertain future.



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Images: ♦ 6 The digitization lab was the first room to be stabilized and served as a makeshift storage space until reconstruction work of other spaces was completed. In this photo, archivists Rachel Tabet and Charbel Al Khoury assess damage to the collections normally stored in the preservation department and cool storage. ♦ 7 Smaller format glass plate negatives are stored in individual sleeves, upright in boxes. Spacers made of paper or polyethylene corrugated board provide support to keep the plates vertical. ♦ 8 Untitled [*Four Boys*] from the Collection of Morocco, 1930s—one of the glass plate negatives, all of which survived the blast. The photographer is unknown. ♦ 9 Digital positive of the Untitled [*Four Boys*] glass plate negative. Images courtesy of the Arab Image Foundation, Beirut



Locations and Hours

The Met Fifth Avenue

Thursday–Monday: 10 a.m.–5 p.m.
Closed Tuesday and Wednesday

The Met Cloisters

Thursday–Monday: 10 a.m.–4:30 p.m.
Closed Tuesday and Wednesday

Current Exhibitions

Pictures, Revisited

October 19, 2020 through May 9, 2021

Rayyane Tabet/*Alien Property*

October 30, 2019 through June 20, 2021

Robert Wood Johnson, Jr. Gallery Rotation

November 19, 2020 through July 12, 2021

Alice Neel: *People Come First*

March 22 through August 1, 2021

Upcoming Exhibitions

The New Woman Behind the Camera

July 2 through October 3, 2021

Jules Tavernier and the Elem Pomo

August 16 through November 28, 2021

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

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Image: ♦ Lucy Ashjian (American, 1907–1993) [*Savoy Dancers*], 1935–43. Gelatin silver print, 9 7/16 × 7 3/8 in. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Gregor Ashjian Preston, 2004. (2004.211.5) © Lucy Ashjian Estate. ♦ Ashjian was born in Indianapolis to Armenian refugees, graduated from Butler University, moved with her husband to New York City and, by 1937, had graduated from the Clarence H. White School of Photography and joined the Photo League. She was an active member of the League during the late 1930s and early 1940s, and worked especially on Aaron Siskind's "Harlem Document". ♦ On view in the upcoming exhibition *The New Woman Behind the Camera*, opening on July 2.



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.

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Pictures, Revisited looks back at—and provocatively revises—*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 Pictures Generation, 1974–1984* catalogue was made possible by the Mary C. and James W. Fosburgh Publications Fund and the Antoinette Kraushaar Fund.

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Jules Tavernier and the Elem Pomo is made possible by Jan and Warren Adelson and The Mr. and Mrs. Raymond J. Horowitz Foundation for the Arts. It is organized by The Metropolitan Museum of Art and The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco. ♦ Accompanied by an issue of *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*. This *Bulletin* is made possible by the William Cullen Bryant Fellows. 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*.

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Image: ♦ Karimeh Abbud (Palestinian, 1893–1940), *[Three Women]*, 1930s. Gelatin silver print, 3 1/2 × 5 1/2 in. Collection of Issam Nassar ♦ Karimeh Abbud was a professional photographer in Palestine by 1930 and stamped many of her photographs, in Arabic and English, with "Karimeh Abbud Lady-Photographer". Abbud operated several studios and also traveled to customers' homes, becoming known especially for her portraits of women and children, as well as for landscapes. She is pictured here, center, in a self-portrait with two family members. ♦ On view in the upcoming exhibition *The New Woman Behind the Camera*, opening on July 2.