

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

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Department News	1-6
1 ♦ Introductions	
2 ♦ Conservation Apprentice	
3 ♦ Landing Page News	
4 ♦ Taking Light Levels	
Exhibitions	7
Support & Acknowledgements	8

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1 ♦ Introductions — The arrival of crisp temperatures, shorter days, and colorful foliage signals a new season of exhibitions and programming at the Museum. In conservation, we are privileged to welcome a number of colleagues who have joined or are rejoining the Department of Photograph Conservation. The influx of new staff, fellows, and interns is a joyous time and speaks to our dedication to the education of the next generation of photograph, bound volume, and time-based media conservation professionals. Photograph Conservation at The Met provides an ideal location for these emerging scholars to pursue their own research while also immersing themselves in the day-to-day activities of our busy lab. These young professionals bring enthusiasm, energy, and new perspectives to The Met, and during their all-too-brief tenures, the benefits are reaped by staff and these emerging conservators alike.

♦ **Catherine Stephens, Research Scholar in Photograph Conservation** — During her one-year Annette de la Renta Fellowship last year, Catherine E. (Cat) Stephens expanded her experience to include the conservation and preventive conservation of photographically illustrated books and albums. Working together with Associate Conservator for Books Georgia Southworth, significant progress was made on an ongoing item-level preventive conservation survey of

all the bound volumes in the collection of the Department of Photographs (DOP). With the help of New York University graduate student Abigail Slawik during the Spring of 2021, they surveyed over 20% of this collection. This meticulous work has revealed [countless binding structures](#) in the collection and has identified a representative sample of photograph albums that will benefit from conservation treatment.

Based on the great success of last year, we are delighted to announce that Cat has returned to the lab this fall as our Research Scholar in Photograph Conservation—a two-year fellowship that allows her to continue her focus on the conservation of albums and photographically illustrated books while pursuing independent research. This is the first time this fellowship has been awarded to a book conservator, a reflection not only of Cat’s excellent skills and experience but also of the need for such specialists at The Met.

For her research, Cat will delve into the flexibility and fold endurance of several conservation adhesives to ensure that treated albums retain their mobility over time and access is not impeded. While most artworks are static objects, a book’s joints and hinges must remain strong and flexible to reveal its



narratives. Albums and other Industrial Age books are often both heavy and fragile, meaning that the books' essential moving parts are vulnerable to cumulative damage. It is often a distinct challenge to effectively repair these areas of a fragile book, and Cat hopes that her research will identify the most appropriate conservation-grade adhesive or adhesive mixture to provide the best balance of long-term strength and flexibility possible. This contribution to conservation knowledge would enable a greater range of treatment options for bound volumes.

As Research Scholar, Cat also will continue to work as part of the Photograph Conservation team and, alongside Georgia, will continue the DOP bound volume conservation survey. Once fully surveyed, the aggregated data gleaned from the collection will be analyzed and published, adding to the growing body of knowledge surrounding the history and conservation of albums and photographically illustrated books. Cat is pleased to continue her research in The Met's

Department of Photograph Conservation this year, and she looks forward to sharing the results of various projects with the broader conservation community and visitors to Photograph Conservation.

♦ **Kayla Henry-Griffin, Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Conservation Fellow** — Kayla Henry-Griffin returns to the Department of Photograph Conservation as an Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Conservation Fellow, working with Associate Conservator of Time-Based Media Jonathan Farbowitz. Kayla was a 2021 Summer Intern in the lab while attending New York University's Moving Image Archiving and Preservation program, where Kayla grew their understanding of, and preservation skills for, a wide range of audiovisual media, from film to video to born-digital art. Their graduate thesis focused on the ever-changing best practices for video game preservation and included, as well, a proposal to consider a second [Pressing Restart](#) conference, an event dedicated



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Images: ♦ Preparing a delicate photograph album page for *Berenice Abbott's New York Album, 1929*, (opening March 2023) Cat Stephens is ensuring that the photographs are in good condition, are well-adhered to the support, and that the black paper that makes up the textblock is stabilized before being mounted for exhibition. Credit: Aleya Lehmann ♦ Kayla Henry-Griffin, surrounded by various time-based media formats from 16mm film to cassette tapes as well as necessary reading material dedicated to their studies as an Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Conservation Fellow in time-based media conservation. Credit: Aleya Lehmann

to having open conversations about current topics in video game preservation. The first conference was held in 2013 at the NYU Game Center and brought together specialists from across the gaming community. As part of their studies this past year, Kayla also held an intern position at the Museum of the Moving Image, supporting that museum's ongoing work with its collection of time-based media. They recently served as Adjunct Librarian for Special Collections at New York University Libraries—a role which included reviewing and assessing the audiovisual content from the NMAI's Native American Film and Video Festival archive.

With their return to The Met, Kayla will study the nuances of collecting multi-media artworks and research new preventive conservation practices for software-based art. Institutions worldwide are expanding their time-based media art collections, and experienced, well-trained conservation specialists are more and more in demand. Fellowships like Kayla's, which are dedicated to building the advanced skills of a new cohort of conservation professionals, help meet the needs of this rapidly growing collection area.

♦ **Felice Graciela Robles, Conservation Intern** — Felice Graciela Robles is currently a fourth-year Mellon Fellow in Time-Based Media Conservation at the Conservation Center of New York University's Institute of Fine Arts and joins the Photograph Conservation Department for nine months as a graduate intern, the final requirement of her program before graduation. Conservation graduate students at the IFA follow three years of focused academia with the fourth year spent in a conservation lab, furthering their understanding of the inner workings of an institution or private business, and honing their connoisseurship and hand skills. While at The Met, Felice will work alongside department conservators with a focus on the conservation of photographs, time-based media, and their interface.

Felice has taken advantage of numerous internships and work opportunities while attending courses at the Conservation Center and during the summers in between. She completed internships focusing on documenting and assessing a software- and light-based artwork at the Art Institute of Chicago and processing media collections pertaining to the Smithsonian's Native American Film and Media Festival at Elmer Holmes Bobst Library at NYU. She was awarded a Polonsky Internship in Digital Humanities to complete a risk assessment project on a work of net art in tandem with the



Whitney Museum; interned in photograph conservation with The Better Image, a private conservation practice; and had the opportunity to carry out independent coursework and treatment here in the Met lab. Prior to attending NYU, Felice spent several years working as a pre-program technician with Gawain Weaver Art Conservation on the West Coast and learning from additional internships in private practices and libraries, including at the Library of Congress.

The Met internship will add to Felice's already considerable experience with the chance to work with a wide range of professionals in a major art museum, including collection managers, technicians, designers, registrars, packers, scientists, curators, and conservators in other areas of specialization. These graduate internships are an important means of putting years of theory learned at the Conservation Center of the IFA into practice. She will assist Associate Conservator of Time-Based Media Jonathan Farbowitz and

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Image: ♦ Felice Robles examining a selection of rare Hicromes donated in 2016 by Eileen Cohen to the Photograph Conservation Study Collection. Introduced by Frederic Eugene Ives in 1915, this early assembly color process was short-lived in part due to its complexity. Credit: Aleya Lehmann

join with fellow Kayla Henry-Griffin to become familiar with TBM acquisition procedures as well as the steps needed to prepare TBM art for exhibition. Felice and Kayla will also create documentation for time-based media artwork that describes both the work itself and the decision-making behind each installation. Felice has a strong interest in color photography, as well, and will be researching some early color processes in the Department of Photographs and the Photograph Conservation Study Collection. Stay tuned for updates on her research.

2 ♦ Michaela Lott, Conservation Apprentice — With great excitement, we announce the hiring of Michaela Lott as the very first Conservation Apprentice at The Met. Combining targeted advocacy and the collaboration of numerous Met staff, the Museum has developed an official position designed to offer full-time, paid experience for a one-year period to a young professional pursuing graduate school in conservation. This position, generously funded by Bank of America, answers the call for remunerated early career work and will be a building block to support the conservation field and its future practitioners and leaders. We received an overwhelming number of applicants for this position, so many of whom are talented, experienced and certainly deserving. It was an awe-inspiring window into the many impressive young people seeking to enter this competitive field.

The Conservation Apprentice will work directly with a selection of photographs that are part of the [James Van Der Zee Archive](#). A transformational acquisition, the Archive enters the collection after decades of careful stewardship and advocacy by Mrs. Donna Van Der Zee and The Studio Museum in Harlem and is described in The Met's press release as "a landmark collaborative initiative to research, conserve, and provide full public access to the remarkable catalogue of photographs by" the remarkable portraitist, whose career spanned the early days of the Harlem Renaissance through the 1980s.

Working closely with conservators in the Department of Photograph Conservation, the Conservation Apprentice will undertake documentation and conservation treatments on approximately 500 of the over 19,000 photographs in the Archive. The selection of objects to be fully conserved is a joint decision taken by curators, conservators, and collections managers. Conservation treatment will allow scholarly access, exhibition potential, appropriate rehousing, and



readiness to move with the rest of the collection to The Met's state-of-the-art cool storage facility. Cool storage will help mitigate chemical deterioration of photographs that may be exacerbated at higher temperatures. In addition, the completion of this vital conservation work will make the photographs, and their documentation images, available to the broader public, both in person at The Met, and online. For Michaela, her work on the individual photographs will become part of her portfolio, a requirement for admission to any graduate conservation program.

Michaela joined Photograph Conservation as an Adrienne Arsht 2022 Summer Intern, and we are thrilled to welcome her back to the lab for this targeted work, as she gains experience toward a career in conservation.

Funding for the acquisition of the James Van Der Zee Archive comes from the following: Louis V. Bell, Harris Brisbane Dick, Fletcher, and Rogers Funds and Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, Alfred Stieglitz Society Gifts, Twentieth-Century Photography Fund, Ann Tenenbaum and Thomas H. Lee Gift, Joyce F. Menschel Fund, and Ford Foundation Gift, 2021.

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Image: ♦ Conservation Apprentice Michaela Lott, working in the Department of Photograph Conservation darkroom while studying photographic processes. Process recreation, literature review, connoisseurship, and superior hand skills are all important aspects of photograph conservation education. Credit: Aleya Lehmann



3 ♦ Landing Page News — Just over two years ago, The Met’s Digital Department launched a project to expand the online content on the Museum’s website, extending editorial control to individual departments themselves. This has been a welcome opportunity for Photograph Conservation to widely share many of our departmental international initiatives, research, and education activities that previously could only be communicated outside The Met context. The public can now delve more deeply into the fascinating world behind the scenes that makes possible the Museum’s impressive programming, including scholarship around collections and exhibitions, educational outreach, and collaborative endeavors.

Having added considerable content, we invite you to visit and explore the [Photograph Conservation landing page](#). This ongoing enriching and collaborative project involves curatorial and conservation areas as well as the Digital Department, where Maria Kozanecka, Production Coordinator, and Skyla Choi, Senior Studio Manager of Content and Distribution, have rolled out an intensive series of workshops and tutorials, to ensure that departments have

the skills to accurately update their own webpages quickly and responsively. Visitors to The Met’s main website will find us easily in the [Conservation and Scientific Research](#) section, which is listed in the navigation panel under Research.

Various initiatives, collaborations, resources, and blogs covering specific projects undertaken by the staff are now posted here. Within **Conservation Highlights** are pieces about [How a Book Moves](#), the [Indian Conservation Fellowship Program](#), the [Middle East Photograph Preservation Initiative](#), and a recent [Dye Transfer Gift](#) to our Study Collection. In **Our Work**, subsections are dedicated to [Research Projects](#), [Collaborations](#), [Resources](#), and the [Time-Based Media Working Group](#). Scrolling through the webpage, visitors will be introduced to **Who We Are** and be encouraged to **Dig Deeper** to find [Blog Articles](#), [Videos](#), [Met Publications](#), a [Department Bibliography](#), and ways to **Stay Connected**. We hope you find our new landing page a convenient way to stay apprised of our activities, follow us on [Instagram](#), and read our previous [Bulletins](#). We are continually populating the webpage with broad-ranging content, so do keep checking in regularly.

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Image: ♦ Assistant Conservator Diana Díaz Cañas carries out color measurements on this monumental photograph by Gilbert & George, on view in the recent exhibition, *Alter Egos / Projected Selves*. Credit: Nora Kennedy ♦ Gilbert & George (Gilbert Proesch, British, born 1943; George Passmore, British, born 1942). *Here* (detail), 1987. Hand-dyed photographs, mounted and framed in 35 parts, 9 ft. 10 3/4 in. × 11 ft. 7 1/8 in. × 3/4 in. (301.6 × 353.4 × 1.9 cm); each: 23 3/4 × 19 7/8 × 3/4 in. (60.3 × 50.5 × 1.9 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Anonymous Gift, 1991 (1991.210a-ii) © Gilbert & George



4 ♦ Taking Light Levels — At The Met, as in most museums, even the smallest exhibitions require months or years of preparation and many individual steps before installation in the galleries. One important task in exhibition preparation is the designation of appropriate light levels for displaying each individual artwork. When a curator proposes a new exhibition, a conservator thoroughly examines the entire selection and reviews the objects' exhibition histories to ensure that all can be exhibited safely. In addition to full documentation and undertaking any necessary conservation treatments, a recommendation is made for the maximum allowable light level in which each artwork may be safely shown. These recommendations are recorded in our collections database.

Photographs are vulnerable to many types of deterioration, which may be induced or promoted by environmental agents such as light exposure, air pollution, heat, and high or low humidity. Light-induced damage is cumulative and irreversible, resulting in varying degrees of fading or color change over time. Color photographs are particularly susceptible. While working to mitigate these color shifts, we also strive for optimal viewing conditions in the galleries, which includes an awareness of the amount of light necessary for accurate color perception. Exhibiting a photograph at an extremely low light level might be slightly better for the object, but it diminishes the visitor's experience, so it may not be the optimal approach. Accumulated exposure is calculated based on light levels and time of exposure, so in some cases,

levels can be raised and exhibitions shortened, or vice versa, to accommodate vulnerable photographic materials. Determining appropriate light levels and exhibition time periods are just two of many aspects of our efforts to balance the preservation of and access to the collection. A conservator's understanding of photographic processes, their physical components, and their distinct vulnerabilities allows them to make targeted decisions that find this balance, allowing The Met to display its remarkable collection of photographs beautifully and responsibly. The lighting designers at The Met do an admirable job of attractively illuminating our galleries while adhering to the conservators' recommended light levels.

In order to maintain complete records of each photograph's exposure history and to be certain that the photographs are not inadvertently over-exposed, conservators review the light levels in each gallery after installation. Carefully archived measurements of light exposure provide a more thorough understanding of an individual photograph's exhibition history and help inform future exhibition decisions. Using a hand-held light meter, we measure the light level at the surface of each framed photograph. For a large exhibition like *Bernd & Hilla Becher*, which contains over 500 individual photographs, this process can take quite a while!

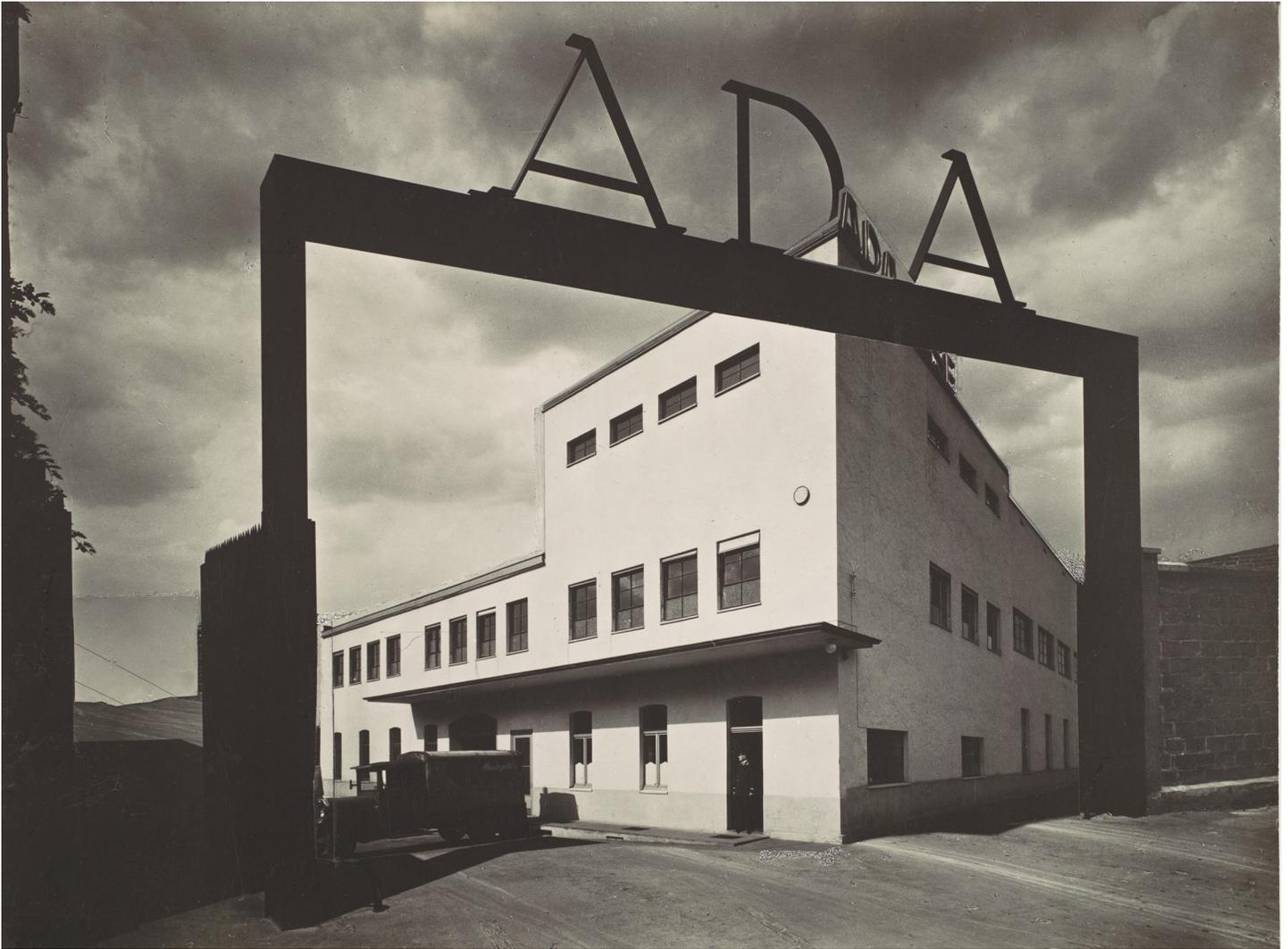
Be sure to visit the magnificent *Bernd & Hilla Becher* exhibition before it closes on November 6th, 2022.

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Images: ♦ Research Scholar Cat Stephens and Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Conservation Fellow Rachel Tabet taking light level measurements during the installation of artworks in two exhibitions presently on view at The Met Fifth Avenue. Cat is working in the galleries of the *Bernd & Hilla Becher* exhibition, and Rachel in the latest Robert Wood Johnson, Jr. Gallery rotation. Credits: Rachel Tabet and Cat Stephens



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

Date Night at Met Fifth Avenue!

Fridays and Saturdays 'til 9 pm

Current Exhibitions

The Lightning Testimonies

February 28 through November 6, 2022

Robert Wood Johnson, Jr. Gallery Rotation

July 7, 2022 through January 23, 2023

Bernd & Hilla Becher

July 15 through November 6, 2022

Before Yesterday We Could Fly: An Afrofuturist Period Room

Ongoing

Upcoming Exhibitions

Maha Maamoun: Selected Works

December 5, 2022 through June 5, 2023

Richard Avedon: Murals

January 19 through October 1, 2023

Robert Wood Johnson, Jr. Gallery Rotation

January 25 through Spring 2023

Berenice Abbott's New York Album, 1929

March 2 through September 4, 2023

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Image: ♦ Werner Mantz, German (Cologne 1901–1983 Eijsden). [Entrance to ADA Cheese Factory in Cologne-Rodenkirchen], 1929. Gelatin silver print, 16.8 x 22.7 cm. (6 5/8 x 8 15/16 in.). Ford Motor Company Collection. Gift of Ford Motor Company and John C. Waddell, 1987 (1987.1100.254) ♦ Mantz's photograph pictures a factory where molten processed cheese was mixed and pressed into tubes. Inspired, perhaps, by that combinatory method, Mantz made his print from three different negatives, reconstructing the site's entryway to enliven its design. ♦ On view in the Robert Wood Johnson, Jr. Gallery through January 23, 2023.



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:

Hannah F. Howe

Deputy Chief Development Officer of Individual Giving

212-731-1281

hannah.howe@metmuseum.org

Contribute Online

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

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and Georgia Southworth

Managing Editor: Aleya Lehmann

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

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.

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*.

Maha Maamoun: Selected Works includes *2026*, a nine-minute single-channel video created in 2010, a year before the Egyptian revolution that toppled then-president Hosni Mubarak. The work combines two references to time travel: Chris Marker's experimental "photo-roman" (photo-novel) *La Jetée* (1962) and a science fiction novel by Mahmoud Osman in which the narrator travels to Egypt in the year 2026. Viewed today, Maamoun's work appears to foretell real-world events, while narrating a scene of time-travel in which a revolution has both already happened and has yet to occur.

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 his 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: ♦ Maha Maamoun (Egyptian, born 1972), *2026*, 2010. Single-channel digital video, black-and-white, sound, 8 min., 21 sec., Dimensions: Variable. Art Jameel Fund, 2018 (2018.82) © Maha Maamoun ♦ An iconic scene from Chris Marker's film *La Jetée* (1962) of a man traveling back in time in post-apocalyptic Paris is re-enacted here in a deserted building in contemporary Egypt. The reading of an excerpt from *The Revolution of 2053: The Beginning* (2007), an Arabic-language science fiction novel by Egyptian author Mahmoud Osman, has been dubbed over the photographic sequence. ♦ On view December 5, 2022 through June 5, 2023 in *Maha Maamoun: Selected Works*.