

**DESCRIBING UNCATALOGUED PHOTOGRAPHS IN
NINETEENTH CENTURY ALBUMS: A PRACTICAL PROJECT
IN COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT**

by

Trish Odorico

Bachelor of Arts – Media Studies and Photography

Guelph-Humber, 2010

A thesis presented to

Ryerson University and George Eastman House

in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in the Program of

Photographic Preservation and Collections Management

Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 2013

©Trish Odorico 2013

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

A Thesis by Trish Odorico

DESCRIBING UNCATALOGUED PHOTOGRAPHS IN NINETEENTH CENTURY ALBUMS: A PRACTICAL PROJECT IN COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis or dissertation. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I authorize Ryerson University to lend this thesis to other institutions or individuals for the purpose of scholarly research.

I further authorize Ryerson University to reproduce this thesis by photocopying or by other means, in total or in part, at the request of other institutions or individuals for the purpose of scholarly research.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

ABSTRACT

Describing Uncatalogued Photographs in Nineteenth Century
Albums: A Practical Project in Collections Management

by

Trish Odorico

Master of Arts in Photographic Preservation
and Collections Management

Ryerson University and George Eastman House, 2013

This essay documents and justifies a practical project in collections management, in which I surveyed ten albums of photographs and recorded information about them, using a system of my own devising. The descriptive tables included here serve as a finding aid for the contents of albums that are not catalogued at the unit level, offers quick comparison among the albums, and efficiently assembles necessary information for unit-level cataloguing. It also demonstrates a model approach to pre-cataloguing surveys, especially when a particular genre is being studied in more than one album. A system such as this, customized for a specific category or genre of photograph, can provide researchers with thorough and appropriate information specific to their needs. This project deals specifically with the genre of photographic reproductions of works of art, found in ten nineteenth century albums of travels to Italy in the collection of George Eastman House.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I offer grateful appreciation to Alison Nordström, whose guidance, motivation and attention to detail were essential to the development of this paper.

Special thanks are extended to Joe Struble for knowing my interests and tirelessly pulling collection material to match them. Here I must also thank Selina Lamberti for her archival assistance.

For inspiring my obsession with photographs of objects and art, I would like to thank my friends and supervisors at the V&A, Ken Jackson and James Stevenson.

For their support and friendship, I would like to thank my peers, Sean Corcadden, Krista Keller, Ross Knapper, Suman Gurum, Robin O'Dell, Meghan Shaw and Will Green. Thanks are extended to museum staff; to Rachel Stuhlman for her guidance, Travis Johansen for his support, and Mark Osterman for his calming wisdom and reminders that life goes on after a Master's thesis. Special thanks are extended to Nick Marshall for his genuine interest in my topic, his advice and his willingness to share his own creative journey with me.

I am especially grateful to Angela Ausen for her unwavering motivation and her willingness to spend long hours editing and guiding my project.

Finally, none of this would be possible without the love and encouragement of my family; Mom, Dad, Katrina and Mandy, thank you for always supporting my academic and creative endeavors.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	II
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	III
LIST OF TABLES	V
LIST OF FIGURES	VI
ALBUM SPREADSHEETS	VII
INTRODUCTION	1
LITERATURE SURVEY	3
ON METHOD	3
ON PHOTOGRAPHIC REPRODUCTIONS OF WORKS OF ART	4
NINETEENTH CENTURY TRAVEL ALBUMS AND TOURIST PHOTOGRAPHS IN ITALY	7
ALBUM SPREADSHEETS	9
DATA INTERPRETATION	33
TOTAL ARTISTS AND ARTWORKS	33
CITY AND INSTITUTION INFORMATION OF PHOTOGRAPHS OF GALLERY VIEWS	35
CATEGORICAL DATA KNOWN OR INCLUDED WITH PHOTOGRAPHS OF ART.....	36
METHODOLOGY	37
CATEGORIES.....	38
CONCLUSION	53
BIBLIOGRAPHY	54

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Spreadsheet Categories Including Examples.....	38
Table 2: Spreadsheet Classifications and Total Count of Each Classification	43

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: 1979:0077:0029. Albumen photograph of "The Last Supper", painted by Leonardo da Vinci in 1495–1498.....	39
Figure 2: Example of photograph of painting with its frame. 1968:0067:0056. Albumen photograph of "Head of Christ", painted by Leonardo da Vinci in 1495.	44
Figure 3: Example of two photographs of paintings without their frames. 1979:0043:0061. Two albumen photographs of paintings by Raphael. On the left, "Madonna del Cardellino" painted in 1507. On the right, "The Granduca Madonna" painted in 1504.....	44
Figure 4: Example of a photograph of an engraving of painting. 1979:0077:0033. Albumen photograph of an engraving of the painting "Madonna and Child in Glory with Cherubs" originally painted by Giovanni Battista Salvi, also known as the artist Sassoferrato.....	45
Figure 5: 1979:0043:0047. Albumen photograph of the sculpture "David" created by Michelangelo in 1504.	48
Figure 6: 1979:0043:0053. Albumen photograph of a detail of the sculpture "David" created by Michelangelo in 1504.....	48
Figure 7: 1979:0047:0021. Albumen photograph of the sculpture "The Statue of Saint Peter" created by Arnolfo Di Cambio ca. 1300.....	49
Figure 8: 1979:0043:0021. Albumen photograph of the sculpture "Moses" created by Michelangelo in 1515.	49
Figure 9: 1973:0209:0094. Album page with albumen photograph of a view of the "Tribuna" in Uffizi Gallery in Florence, Italy.....	50
Figure 10: 1979:0047:0009. Albumen photograph taken by Giorgio Sommer of a gallery of sculptures from The National Museum in Naples, Italy.....	50
Figure 11: 1968:0067:0096. Albumen photograph of a gallery view of the Hall of Jupiter, Galleria Palatina (Palazzo Pitti), Florence, Italy.....	50

ALBUM SPREADSHEETS

Album: 1968:0067:1-95 Photographs of Art	9
Album: 1973:0182:1-70 Photographs of Art	12
Album: 1973:0209:1-190 Photographs of Art	17
Album: 1979:0043:1-140 Photographs of Art	21
Album: 1979:0047:1-32 Photographs of Art	25
Album: 1979:0072:1-53 Photographs of Art	26
Album: 1979:0074:1-58 Photographs of Art	28
Album: 1979:0077:1-44 Photographs of Art	30
Album: 1981:0944:1-23 Photographs of Art	31
Album: 1981:1459:1-106 Photographs of Art	32

INTRODUCTION

When researching a specific genre of photograph, it can be difficult to find exactly what one is looking for within a large museum collection. This is especially true for researchers who wish to understand a specific genre or group of photographs within a photograph album because often, photograph albums are not catalogued at the unit level. Thus, one record exists for the album as a whole but individual records for each object in the album have not been created. Furthermore, systems for cataloguing photographs are usually very general, while certain genres of photographs require an extended and customized gathering of data in order to be most useful. This project demonstrates a model system for recording detailed information pertinent to a specific genre of photograph within a group of albums.

This practical project in collections management consists of a survey of ten albums of photographs. I recorded information about these photographs and albums, using a system of my own devising. The descriptive tables included here serve as a finding aid for the contents of albums that are not catalogued at the unit level, offers quick comparison among the albums, and efficiently assembles necessary information for subsequent unit-level cataloguing. It also demonstrates a model approach to pre-cataloguing surveys, especially when a particular genre is being studied in more than one album. This thesis includes a literature survey outlining scholarship similar or relating to this project, the model system exemplified by ten albums, an explanation of my approach in creating this system and a bibliography containing literature on the topics surrounding this project.

In order to demonstrate how data gathering and organization can be customized to facilitate the study of a particular kind of photograph across many albums, I identified the criteria that would limit my research. I chose to concentrate on photographic reproductions

of works of art from nineteenth century travel albums that include travels to Italy. Although the approach that I will demonstrate can apply to other types of photographs, this selection of material serves as an example of a focused research topic that benefits from such a customized system of recording information.

LITERATURE SURVEY

This literature survey covers three elements: a discussion of method, a discussion of the genre and a discussion of photography and nineteenth century tourism. It represents only the most relevant publications relating to this thesis project; a full list of sources can be found in the bibliography.

On Method

Approaches similar to mine and their justifications are found in specialized journals, most notably *Visual Resources*. Helene E. Roberts' article, "A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words: Art Indexing in Electronic Databases"¹, published in *Visual Resources* in 2002, describes the need for detailed and customized indexing, specifically for photographs of works of art. She explains that without adequate indexing of photographic reproductions of art, this genre is difficult to explore.² Roberts explains:

The main difficulty arises, I believe, because there is not a happy marriage of image and the supporting texts that would provide full identification, historical background, and comprehensive indexing. The images, of course, are vital, but the infrastructure of the archive that cataloguing and indexing systems provide us with is what dictates how it can be used and what results are possible.³

Here, she is describing the difficulties that researchers – art historians specifically – have with the inadequate information available concerning images of art. Often, only basic

¹ Roberts, Helene E. "A Picture Is worth a Thousand Words: Art Indexing in Electronic Databases." *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 52, no. 11 (2001): 911-16. doi:10.1002/asi.1145.

² Roberts, Helene E. "A Picture Is worth a Thousand Words: Art Indexing in Electronic Databases." *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 52, no. 11 (2001): 911-16. doi:10.1002/asi.1145.

³ Roberts, Helene E. "A Picture Is worth a Thousand Words: Art Indexing in Electronic Databases." *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 52, no. 11 (2001): 911-16. doi:10.1002/asi.1145.

information on these images is provided in cataloguing systems and online, while this genre requires a more specialized and detailed approach. Although not specifically discussing photographic reproductions of art within travel albums, Roberts justifies the value of this project by emphasizing the importance of creating a cataloguing system tailored for one genre or group of photographs.

There are numerous publications addressing the structure of databases and cataloguing systems. Paul Crompton's "The Development of a Digital Image Database of Clinical Photographs"⁴, published in 2000, as well as Peter Hepburn's and Joan B. Fiscella's "Constructing Descriptive Records for an Art Image Database: What Do Use Statistics Tell Us?"⁵, published in 2006, both discuss approaches to the inventory of specific types of photographs. Hepburn and Fiscella's article compares three methods for recording images of art and analyses the factors present that influence the retrieval of images in each database. While neither of these articles suggests an ideal cataloguing system for indexing a specific genre of photograph, they do recognize the benefit to creating such systems.

On Photographic Reproductions of Works of Art

While undertaking this survey, it was essential to understand the genre for which the organizational system was developed. Considerations of photographic reproductions of works of art were especially useful in determining what information should be recorded.

⁴ Crompton, Paul. "The Development of a Digital Image Database of Clinical Photographs." *Journal of Audiovisual Media In Medicine* 23, no. 2 (June 2000): 54-60. Editions in Association with the Scottish Arts Council, 1978.

⁵ Hepburn, Peter, and Joan B. Fiscella. "Constructing Descriptive Records for an Art Image Database: What Do Use Statistics Tell Us?" *College & Research Libraries* 67, no. 4 (July 2006): 334-353.

Two classic and influential publications that address the de-contextualizing nature of art reproductions are Walter Benjamin's *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*,⁶ originally published in 1936 and John Berger's *Ways of Seeing*,⁷ published in 1972 and based on the BBC television series of the same name and author. Benjamin states that a reproduction of a work of art lacks the "aura" of the original because the copy occupies a different context than the original work. Berger also discusses the transformation of meaning that an art piece undergoes when taken out of its original context. Both discuss the reproduction as both image and object; this differentiation is important to understand when deciding what information to record about photographic reproductions of art. When considering this genre, Benjamin states, "What is reproduced is not an artwork, and the reproduction is naturally no more an artwork than is a photograph of a painting."⁸ Echoing Benjamin, Berger addresses how a photograph of a painting denies the viewer an accurate representation of the painting, stating, "An image is a sight which has been recreated or reproduced... which has been detached from the place and time in which it first made its appearance..."⁹. These scholars understand photographs of works of art as objects separate from their subject and thus, within my system, I must consider both image and object when recording information. Benjamin's and Berger's texts have set the groundwork for theories concerning the study of photographic reproductions of art and thus were essential in establishing a thorough understanding of the genre selected to demonstrate my pre-cataloguing system.

⁶ Benjamin, Walter, and J. A. Underwood. *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. London: Penguin, 2008.

⁷ Berger, John. *Ways of Seeing*. London: British Broadcasting, 1972.

⁸ Benjamin, Walter, and J. A. Underwood. *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. London: Penguin, 2008.

⁹ Berger, John. *Ways of Seeing*. London: British Broadcasting, 1972.

Other significant books concerning photographic reproductions of art include Anthony J. Hamber's "*A Higher Branch of Art*" *Photographing the Fine Arts in England, 1839-1880*¹⁰, published in 1996, and Helene E. Roberts' *Art History Through the Camera's Lens*¹¹, published in 1995. Both books are part of the series "Documenting the Image" edited by Helene E. Roberts and Brent Maddox. Though published over twenty years ago, these works are the best references for the history of photographic reproductions of art specific to the criteria of my thesis. Both include a comprehensive history of photographic reproductions of art in the nineteenth century, discuss its relevance to the genre of photography and explain how photographic reproductions of art advanced the study of art history.

A more current work concerning photographic reproductions of art is Stephen Bann's *Art and the Early Photographic Album*¹², published in 2011. This collection of essays is the first to discuss photographic reproductions of art and their relevance to travel albums and tourism. In it, Elizabeth Anne McCauley discusses some of the techniques for photographing art in the nineteenth century, as well as the use of such photographs, suggesting how photographs of art were used as trophies that tourists could show off to their friends at home.¹³

Like this thesis, many articles focus on specific collections of photographic reproductions of art. Jennifer Roberts' "Post-telegraphic Pictures: Asher B. Durand and the

¹⁰ Hamber, Anthony J. "*A Higher Branch of the Art*": *Photographing the Fine Arts in England, 1839-1880*. Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach Pubs., 1996.

¹¹ Roberts, Helene E. *Art History through the Camera's Lens*. Australia: Gordon and Breach, 1995.

¹² Bann, Stephen. *Art and the Early Photographic Album*. Washington [D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2011.

¹³ McCauley, Elizabeth Anne. "Fawning over Marbles: Robert and Gerardine Macpherson's Vatican Sculptures and the Role of Photographs in the Reception of the Antique." In *Art and the Early Photographic Album*, by Stephen Bann, 91-122. Washington [D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2011.

Nonconducting Image”¹⁴ supports my decision to establish photographic reproductions of engravings of paintings as a separate classification. While Roberts’ article emphasizes photographic reproductions of engravings of paintings, Barbara Savedoff establishes the importance of considering photographic reproductions of paintings and sculptures. In "Looking at art through photographs"¹⁵, published in 1993, she discusses the ways photographic reproductions change, limit and affect our understanding of art. Her comments regarding the impact on a reproduction’s spatial qualities of including or not including the painting’s frame is especially relevant in justifying the category ‘Painting with frame’ that I include in my spreadsheets. Similarly, Mary Bergstein discusses the relationship between photography and sculpture in “Lonely Aphrodites: On the Documentary Photography of Sculpture”¹⁶, published in 1992, further justifying the importance of considering photographs of sculpture. Each of these three scholars discusses various types of photographic reproductions of art, establishing their place within the genre. I discuss these theories and further justify the inclusion of each classification further in the ‘Approach’ section of this paper.

Nineteenth Century Travel Albums and Tourist Photographs in Italy

When creating an inventory system for photographic reproductions of art in nineteenth century albums of travels to Italy, one must consider how a researcher might use the system. Therefore, when customizing a system with these specificities in genre and material, it is essential to gain a basic understanding of the history and concepts of such photographs and albums.

¹⁴ Roberts, Jennifer L. "Post-telegraphic Pictures: Asher B. Durand and the Nonconducting Image." *Grey Room* no. 48 (Summer2012 2012): 12-35.

¹⁵ Savedoff, Barbara E. "Looking at art through photographs" *Journal of Aesthetics & Art Criticism* 51, no. 3 (Summer93 1993): 455.

¹⁶ Bergstein, Mary. "Lonely Aphrodites: On the Documentary Photography of Sculpture." *Art Bulletin* 74, no. 3 (September 1992): 475.

Numerous publications address the subject of photographic albums, but photographic albums of nineteenth century travel are rarely the focus. John Hannavy's, *Encyclopedia of Nineteenth Century Photography*¹⁷, published in 2008, offers impressive information on the basic history of travel photography. In Kathleen Stewart Howe's chapter, "Travel Photography",¹⁸ the tourist practice of collecting photographic views for travel albums is mentioned. Also within this chapter is a list of some of the photographers and studios that sold souvenir photographs in Italy in the nineteenth century, including Georgio Sommer, Fratelli Alinari, Tommaso Cuccionni and Robert Macpherson.¹⁹ The emphasis on photographers and studios identifies an essential category to include within my system of recording. Other general histories of photographic albums are Elizabeth Siegel's *Galleries of Friendship and Fame: The History of Nineteenth-century American Photograph Albums*²⁰ and Verna Posever Curtis's *Photographic Memory: The Album in the Age of Photography*.²¹ These publications offer valuable information pertinent to understanding photograph albums, which is useful in determining the essential categories to include in a system designed specifically for photographs within albums.

¹⁷ Hannavy, John. *Encyclopedia of Nineteenth Century Photography*. Vol. 1. London. Routledge, 2008.

¹⁸ Hannavy, John. *Encyclopedia of Nineteenth Century Photography*. Vol. 1. Chapter: "Travel Photography". London. Routledge, 2008.

¹⁹ Hannavy, John. Howe. *Encyclopedia of Nineteenth Century Photography*. Vol. 1. London. Routledge, 2008. Pg. 1406.

²⁰ Siegel, Elizabeth. *Galleries of Friendship and Fame: The History of Nineteenth-century American Photograph Albums*. 2003.

²¹ Curtis, Verna Posever. *Photographic Memory: The Album in the Age of Photography*. New York, NY: Aperture, 2011.