



Contexts for Conservation

2013 National Conference - Adelaide 23- 25 October

ABSTRACT

Conservation of Early Photography Material: Interaction between Conservators and Artists

Amalia Alpareanu, Conservation Officer State Library of South Australia and Alex Bishop-Thorpe, Photographic Artist and co-founder, Analogue Lab

The presentation focuses on the collaboration between conservation staff and artists also including a case studies showing conservation treatments applied to a few glass plate negatives from the early twentieth century.

Amalia Alpareanu, Conservation Officer from the State Library of South Australia, has developed a strong relationship with the photography artists from the Analogue Laboratory. The Laboratory's main practice is in alternative photography techniques, including wet and dry plate collodion and recently, daguerreotypes.

The importance of the dialogue between the artist and conservation staff has been recognized—both for the conservation officer to gain information on methods and materials, including contemporary equivalents, and also for the artist to understand how an artifact might perform and change over time.

Working on the State Library's photographic collections, the Library's conservation officers often encounter glass plate negatives with flaking or peeling emulsion. Some of the treatments applied are reattaching of the emulsion flakes as well as full emulsion transfer. The hands-on experience as well as the regular conversations with the Analogue Lab's 'Photo Nerds' (as they called themselves) has enabled Amalia to gain an in-depth understanding of the structure of the early photographs, particularly to more accurately assess, plan and apply the most appropriate conservation treatments.

Biographical Information:

Alex Bishop-Thorpe is a South Australian Photographic Artist specialising in experimental and antiquarian photographic techniques and materials. Along with Aurelia Carbone, Alex is one of

the founders of The Analogue Laboratory, a local darkroom and photographic facility designed for running workshops with the public and allowing collaboration with artists and institutions.

Amalia Alpareanu is a Conservation Officer at the State Library of Australia, artist and curator. Amalia's conservation and curatorial practice are focused predominantly on photography and particularly on early techniques, as well as cross-discipline collaborations. While working on the conservation of early photographs at the State Library, Amalia's curatorial projects involve an exhibition of contemporary daguerreotypes and ambrotypes, showcasing the work of photography artists from the Analogue Laboratory and also two international artists.