

**MetroWomen Chemists' Committee
Seminar**

**Preserving Photographs at The Metropolitan Museum of Art:
Scientific Approaches to Practical Problems**

Seminar Speaker: Katherine Sanderson
Department of Photograph Conservation, Metropolitan Museum of Art
Date: Thursday October 17th 2024
Time: 3:25 pm (in-person)
Location: Pace University, One Pace Plaza, New York, NY 10038

For further information, please contact Rita K. Upmacis, Ph.D. (rupmacis@pace.edu)

Abstract: The field of Art Conservation combines art, history, and science to both understand and preserve artworks for future generations. Distinct from an art historical approach, conservation focuses primarily on the materiality of an artwork, rather than the subject alone. How was the artwork made and how do the materials deteriorate over time? Photographs are chemically complex materials, produced by harnessing the light-sensitive properties of metal halides to produce a final image. A photograph may combine this image material with a variety of additional components such as gelatin, albumen, paper, metal, or plastic, all of which have their own unique physical characteristics.

Caring for a photograph requires proper identification of the component materials, as well as how they age. The deterioration of a photographs may be caused by inherent vulnerabilities of its component parts, materials used to house the works, or the environmental conditions of storage or exhibition spaces. This talk will present an overview of the technology and structure of historic photographs and how practical decisions about storage and exhibition of the collection at The Metropolitan Museum of Art are informed by technical research and analysis.



Katherine Sanderson is a Conservator in the Department of Photograph Conservation at The Metropolitan Museum of Art. She earned her M.A. in Art History and Certificate of Advanced Study in Photograph Conservation at the Conservation Center, Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, where she has been a member of the adjunct faculty for the last ten years. Prior to her current position, she was the Andrew W. Mellon Research Scholar in Photograph Conservation at The Metropolitan Museum of Art and worked at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, The Better Image Conservation Studio, and the New York Public Library. Her ongoing research involves the measurement of color change in photographs over time with the goal of developing a better understanding of the effects of exhibition and

storage conditions on photographic collections.