

The PHSC E-MAIL

Volume 14-6, Supplement to Photographic Canadiana, November 2014

The Photographic Historical Society of Canada

Our November 19, 2014 Speaker:

Mike Robinson

The Techniques and Material Aesthetics of the Daguerreotype

Mike Robinson is an artist-practitioner, teacher, and historian of the daguerreotype. He works with the AMC collection in Toronto, serving as researcher and conservator. He has researched and written on the studio practice of Southworth and Hawes (Boston) for the Young America catalogue and for the Daguerreian Society annual.

He has made Daguerreotypes to support conservation research for the George Eastman House, The Metropolitan Museum, the Library of Congress and his own initiatives.

Mike teaches graduate and undergraduate courses in 19th Century Photographic Processes at Ryerson University in Toronto and has taught daguerreotype workshops in Canada, the United States, England and France.

He is also a Phd candidate with DeMontfort University in Leicester, UK, and his dissertation is titled, The Techniques and Material Aesthetics of the Daguerreotype.

Come on out and share an interesting evening with Mike!

PHSC monthly meetings are held in the **Gold Room, (basement) of the North York Central Library, at 5120 Yonge Street**. Inside access from the North York Centre TTC Subway stop and plenty of underground parking. Socializing starts at 7 PM, presentation at 8 PM.



Don't forget our December 17th meeting includes a show-and-tell, gift exchange and silent auction. If you have photographic stuff you'd like to donate to the auction, or have a great photographic show-and-tell to present, let us know at info@phsc.ca



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PHSC Monthly Meetings

are held on the third Wednesday from September to June in the Gold Room, of Memorial Hall in the basement of the North York Central Library, 5120 Yonge St., North York, Ontario. The meeting officially begins at 8:00 p.m. but is preceded by a Buy & Sell and social gathering from 7:00 p.m. onwards. For information contact the PHSC at info@phsc.ca

Programming Schedule:

November 19, 2014

- *The Techniques and Material Aesthetics of the Daguerreotype* – Mike Robinson

December 17, 2014

- *Annual Holiday Show & Tell, Silent Auction and Gift exchange*

Offer your suggestions and fresh ideas for programs at info@phsc.ca.

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Notes on our October meeting with speaker Ronit Novak

Ronit Novak is the Director of Photography for *Canadian Business* and *MoneySense* magazines. She also teaches historic photographic processes such as wet-collodion, Ambrotype, Cyanotypes and VanDyke prints at the Haliburton School of Arts, Fleming College. She loves learning about, collecting, and making historic wet-plate prints.

Working in a mostly digital photographic world, she balances that by working with tactile processes - mixing chemicals, pouring them on sheets of glass, and then watching the magical appearance of an image. Ronit enjoys teaching others about these historic processes. There is a resurgence in the use of the older chemical processes (for example, the tintype which we saw in recent talks by The Tintype Studio and photographer Blake Chorley). The resurgence in her view is due to the alchemy that causes silver to turn dark when exposed to light, plus the hands-on nature of actually making a photograph vs. the digital world where a computer program “develops” the image.

In reviewing a brief history of wet plates, Ronit emphasized that collodion is the binder that glues the light sensitive salts to a prepared glass plate. She explained that collodion is made by first immersing cotton in a mixture of nitric acid and sulphuric acid to make guncotton. This mixture was discovered by the European chemist Christian Schönbein. As the story goes, Schönbein accidentally spilled a mixture of the two acids and used his wife's apron to clean up the spill. When he washed the apron and hung it in front of an oven to dry, it abruptly ignited with a loud “boom” accompanied by deep black smoke. In 1847 a French scientist by the name of Ménard combined guncotton with ether and alcohol making the famous solution called collodion. Collodion originally had non-photographic uses. It was first used during wartime in 1847 as a sealant to protect wounds. It is



PHOTO BY ROBERT LANSDALE

used today in special effects to create artificial wounds on actors. In England, Frederick Scott Archer combined collodion with salt and silver to create a light sensitive solution. Salted collodion is poured carefully onto a glass plate (an art in itself). This is followed by a silver nitrite solution making the glass plate light sensitive as long as it remains wet. Photographers of old had about 10 to 20 minutes to put the wet plate in a camera, expose it, and develop the exposed and still wet plate. Historically, this photographic process's exposure times in sunlight were on par or slightly faster than daguerreotypes. As well the process from start to finish was much easier, cheaper, and more accessible than that of the daguerreotype.

The idea of a glass plate positive or ambrotype was claimed by many people. In 1854 patent battles in the courts resolved the issue in favour of James Ambrose Cutting, who added Ambrose to his name in order to align himself with the process already thusly named. Ambro comes from the Greek, meaning immortal. There are many ways to identify an ambrotype: The highlights have a milky yellowish tinge; bubbles often appear on the image; and many subjects have candid poses (the process is even fast enough for animal subjects). The ambrotype was historically encased like a daguerreotype. It has a three dimensional quality when it is encased

because of the spacing between the glass plate and the black backing it is mounted on. The image highlights are on the front of the glass while the shadows are created by a black glass, black painting on the back of the glass, or a black velvet backing inside the case.

Ambrotypes were short lived in popularity - about the decade of 1855 to 1865. They were replaced by the far cheaper and sturdier tintypes which used a polished black metal surface. Further, cameras with multiple lenses could take eight or more identical images simultaneously. After rapid development and fixing, the tin plate was cut up to make eight or more identical prints for the customer. This process remained in popular use up to the 1850s.

Ronit described how she learned to make ambrotypes a decade ago using 19th century texts like *The Silver Sunbeam* published in 1864 and available to download on archive.org, as well as online forums like collodion.org. The historic texts report all the problems the photographers had - problems a modern day ambrotype photographer will still encounter (other than the risk of explosions - old photographers often smoked while preparing and developing their plates). In wet plate photography, under-exposed and otherwise defective plates can be re-used after a thorough cleaning. Leaving a faint image - by accident or design - allows a spirit image to be created. In fact, spirit photography began at the time of the wet collodion process. The most famous spirit photographer was William Mumler. On many of his plates you can see a clear portrait as well as a ghostly second image.

Ronit discussed in detail how you make an ambrotype - from the cleaning and preparing of the glass plate to the finished varnished image. She cautioned the audience that while the necessary chemicals are readily available, they are very toxic and corrosive, flammable, and explosive.

..continues

All must be treated with great respect. She recommends using protective gear like safety gloves and goggles in a well ventilated dedicated space (not something casually done in the kitchen). Most of the chemistry is available from Nymoc Products in Toronto. The exception is gum sandarac varnish used for coating the plate after it is developed. You can order it from American supply houses or simply use a less authentic but locally available clear spray varnish.

The whole process is a hands-on learning process - you have to manipulate the chemicals and plates constantly. All chemicals are poured onto the plate. Developing takes only about 15 to 20 seconds. Errors make for very interesting effects. Artistic effects can be fashioned in the final image by making such "errors" on purpose, or allowing spontaneous accidents to happen.

Wrapping up, Ronit showed finished images made by her Haliburton students plus her own collection of purchased and self-made images. She noted that ambrotypes can be made with an adapted view camera indoors or out. Lacking a camera, one can use positive slide film and print to the collodion with an enlarger in a darkroom with red or amber safelights. The hardest thing today is finding where to process modern slide or print film!

Another issue is the restoration and preservation of ambrotypes. Katharine Whitman in Toronto does professional restorations at the Art Gallery of Ontario and for private clients. A careful amateur can clean the emulsion-free side of the glass, replace the black background with a piece of velvet or another piece of black glass, but any restoration more extensive should be left to a professional. There are quite a few professionals here in Toronto thanks to the photographic preservation courses offered by Ryerson. Contemporary Ambrotype photographers include Sally Mann, France Scully, Mark Osterman and Jody Ake, who each bring their own creative voice to the traditional process.

It was a super evening with many interesting post presentation questions. Ronit gave a well received take on an old photographic process with a modern twist.

PHSC Thesis Prizewinner Selected

PHSC is pleased to announce the winner of this year's thesis prize, given to the top thesis produced by the Masters of Arts in Photographic Preservation and Collections Management (PPCM) Program at Ryerson University. This year's prize is awarded to Anna Krentz for her work entitled *Snapshots With an Edge: A study of the deckle*

edge in the North American snapshot. Congratulations to Anna! The prize is an annual initiative by the Society to encourage and recognize research and writing excellence in the area of photographic history. Anna will be presenting her work to the PHSC! - Check out future newsletters for more info.

PHSC Returns to Campbell House for CONTACT 2015: *More Real Than Reality*



After last spring's successful PHSC CONTACT showing at Toronto's historic Campbell House Museum, we will be returning with another terrific exhibit in May, 2015. PHSC is lucky to have the assistance of three Master of Information students from U of T to curate this exhibit: Kaitlin Normandin, Shelsie Tunks, and Danielle Varadi-Starer. They will be bringing this year's topic to Campbell House, "*More Real than Reality*": *Composite Photography in Canada, 1870-1930*. To quote from the exhibit submission, "Composite photography takes the everyday world and subverts it, yielding images that range from the staid to the fanciful. A skating carnival where everyone is perfectly posed? A fountain of babies?" Look for more info soon on this exciting event!

Apologies to Our September Speaker

The PHSC newsletter would like to apologize to Lorne Shields, PHSC's September speaker, and longtime member and contributor to PHSC. Several inaccuracies were presented in our October newsletter's summary of his presentation. Lorne has graciously taken the time to rewrite and correct the article, and it may be found in the updated version of the October newsletter online - please check it out at http://phsc.ca/camera/?page_id=4079 [click link to Newsletter 14-5]

PHSC Fall Fair: New Location, Same Great Event!



PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROBERT LANSDALE

One of the *three rooms* of Photographic Deals!

The challenge of a move back to a transit-accessible location in the city didn't deter us from having a busy and successful 2014 Fall Photographic Fair. The new location meant the PHSC executive was busy with many extra concerns: a new table layout, providing a ramp for access, signage, hiring security, and a dead battery on fair chair Mark Singer's van in the wee hours of Sunday morning!

A substantial line of eager shoppers was outside the hall by the time doors opened at 10 AM. Our vendors provided a fantastic variety of equipment and images to please users and collectors. We were glad to see both the usual buyers plus a large number of new faces cruising the tables.

Many thanks to Mark for taking on this onerous task once again. Further thanks to Clint Hryhorijiw and Oscar Li for many hours of extra work, to John Morden and Sonja Pushchak for front door duties, Bob Lansdale our photographer, Tony Fernandes, Gulian Morasutti, Win Morris Egon Kellner, Wayne Gilbert, David Bridge, Louise Freyburger and Bob Carter. Thanks also to Iwonka and the staff of the Trident Hall..great perogies!

We will be back on May 31, 2015 with our Spring Fair!



Stamping in the first in line



Crowds in second room



Lots of 35mm cameras



Abraham Vinegar and his tables of plenty!



Francois LeMai with projector



Elizabeth Chen and studio cameras



Chris McCallum and red bellows

More Highlights from the PHSC Fall Fair



Replica Daguerreotype camera



Busy tables



Premier detective camera - Rochester Optical Co.



Bob Wilson & 1890's periodicals



Drago and Basket o' Flashes



Rody Lo & 8x10 Calumet Kit



Neil MacDonald & 1900 photogs' kit



Jean-Francois Tardie with enlargers



Kodak model D



Classic projectors and viewers



Karen Addison and Kodak posters



Careful image shopping



Ikoflex, Contaflex and John Bock



Nik Njegovan family



Homemade perogies!

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROBERT LANSDALE

PhotoHistory XVI Symposium Report

This October marked the sixteenth incarnation of Rochester's *The Photographic History Society's* signature event, the PhotoHistory symposium. Held every three years at George Eastman House in Rochester, this event brings together photo-historical groups from all over the world for several days of lectures, socializing and collecting. Several PHSC members joined the attendees from all over North America and abroad for this not-to-be-missed opportunity to hear world renowned experts present.

The weekend began with a registration and reception gathering at the hotel, where many met old friends or encountered internet acquaintances face-to-face for the first time. The majority had attended previous symposiums, and in fact it was revealed that two parties had attended all sixteen!

Saturday morning saw a shuttle bus transport those at the hotel to Eastman House for a morning buffet, and early 8 AM start of lectures. After a welcome by Dr. Bruce Barnes, director of George Eastman House, a series of speakers filled our ears with an overabundance of photographic history, stories and food for thought.

More info on the eclectic range of subject matter can be found at the TPHS website. Particularly gratifying was the time given for questions and discussion with each speaker. The concurrent book clearance sale by Eastman House was a well attended bonus. A buffet dinner and lecture on the social media future for photography finished the day.

Sunday morning's photographic show and sale brought vendors from around the U.S. and Canada and collectors together. The merchandise was approximately an equal mix of images and equipment, all of which was of high quality. PHSC was represented at the show with our membership booth, distributing free samples of PHSC's deluxe print journal, *Photographic Canadiana*. Our distinguished journal editor, Bob Lansdale, wore a second hat as photographer for the whole event, much to the gratitude of the TPHS organizers.

In all, the PhotoHistory committee did an excellent job of mounting such an ambitious and important event, and we would like to thank them for their efforts. It left us wishing we did not have to wait another three years for its return!

/db



Part of the Canadian contingent



Arriving at the theatre at GEH



Attendees from Ryerson Archives and Special Collections



Presentations were the heart of the event



Examining Kodak/Sasson first digital camera



George Eastman House book sale



Dr. Barnes, director of George Eastman House



PHSC booth and reps



View of the show and sale



Shopping for Images

PHSC Launches Canadian Photo History Facebook Group:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/CanadianPhotoHistory>



Not only does PHSC have its own Facebook page, now there is a Facebook discussion group too! "[Canadian Photographic History](#)" Sign up and join the discussion! We welcome all those who have an interest and passion for Canadian photographic history.

Typical of the interesting images discussed on our group: View of the east block, parliament buildings in Ottawa, looking north on Elgin St. Note the distant tower of the original centre block, subsequently destroyed by fire. Image courtesy John S. Rochon.



New Photo Links: Items of Photographic Interest

Compiled by Louise Freyburger. Texts from the respective websites.



Ryerson's Peter Higdon (centre) and friends at his retirement party

http://www.ryerson.ca/news/news/General_Public/20141029-Making-an-impact-in-the-big-picture.html

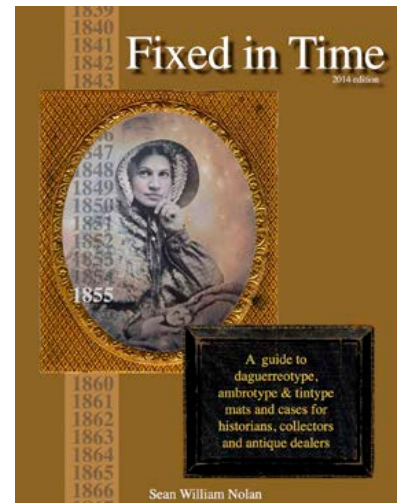
When Peter Higdon joined Ryerson as the founding collections curator for the School of Image Arts, he presided over a photography collection that could fit in a single basement room. Thirty-five years later, Ryerson boasts one of the most extensive archives of historical photographs in the world – so much so that the Ryerson Image Centre (RIC) was opened in 2012 to preserve and display it.

Now that Higdon's time on staff is drawing to a close, two initiatives have been launched in his honour: **the RIC is renaming its research facility as the Peter Higdon Research Centre, and the School of Image Arts is establishing the Peter Higdon Graduate Scholarship.** Both are designed to celebrate his legacy, and enable the next generation of students and scholars.

For Higdon, retirement is a bittersweet. "It's the right time to leave. I can get back to doing things like learning to sleep and reading a book and going to a movie," he laughed. "The Image Centre is only going to get better. The press we've had has been extraordinary, and we've only been open two years. ... On the research side, we've got researchers coming from all over the world. We're really wonderfully well established now."

During Higdon's tenure, Ryerson has acquired hundreds of important photography donations, including the Mira Godard collection in 1994, and the groundbreaking Black Star Collection in 2005. This massive archive from New York photojournalism agency Black Star has been appraised as the largest donation of cultural property to a Canadian university in history.

"It is difficult to imagine a longer, more sustained example of excellence than Peter's patient, methodical transformation of a modest photography collection into a beacon for students, professors, international scholars and photographers across the world," said Paul Roth, director of the RIC.



<https://www.facebook.com/fixed.in.time.book>

Fixed in Time is a free reference to daguerreotype, ambrotype, and tintype case and mat styles, 1840 - 1870. Case and mats are identified by the years they were used, assisting dating early photographs. The latest version of Fixed in Time was released in September 2014. It can be downloaded for free at <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/47bbmpuxguulmaf/AABoSAkGbA5dMVU0mluW6fga>

[Sincere thanks to Sean Nolan for producing this book and sharing it with us and the public - we encourage readers to respond to his request for input to expand upcoming versions!]

Announcing

PHSC's 2015 SPRING LINE UP

Mark your calendars now for this spring's classic events!

Photographic Historical
Society of Canada's

GENERAL CONSIGNMENT PHOTOGRAPHIC AUCTION

Sunday

MARCH 15, 2015

Items accepted 8:30-10:00 am

Viewing 10:00-11:00 am

Auction starts 11:00 am

Canadian Legion #101

3850 Lake Shore Blvd. West,
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Photographic Historical
Society of Canada



IMAGE SHOW

Sunday

APRIL 19, 2015
10AM - 3PM

ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION #101

3850 Lake Shore Blvd. West,
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CABINET CARDS / TINTYPES
STEREOGRAPHIC CARDS
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For more information contact:
Ashley Cook - Show Curator
☎ 416-274-4257
fair@phsc.ca
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Sunday

MAY 31, 2015

10 am - 3 pm

TRIDENT HALL

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(south of the Gardiner,
east of Islington Avenue)

Admission \$7.00
(Free with Student I.D.)



For more information contact:
Mark Singer - Fair Chairman
☎ 416-879-7168
fair@phsc.ca
www.phsc.ca

Membership has its advantages: PHSC members get discounts for participating in some of our events, in addition to exclusive access to our renowned journal, *Photographic Canadiana*. Join up now at www.phsc.ca

PASS IT ON TO A FRIEND – LET EVERYONE READ THIS NEWSLETTER

Current Events

STEPHEN BULGER GALLERY

AFGHANISTAN Larry Towell:

The gallery is pleased to present its seventh exhibition of work by the renowned photojournalist Larry Towell. This exhibition concentrates on photographs made in Afghanistan between 2008 and 2011, the subject of a major monograph published by Aperture Foundation. To November 22, 2014. 1026 Queen Street West, Toronto.

HARBOURFRONT CENTRE

THE NEW SUBURB: LANDMARKS

Robert Burley: "I grew up in rural Ontario but have lived most of my adult life in downtown Toronto. I've become fascinated by a new form of urban landscape just beyond my city limits – places that are both familiar and foreign to me. Unlike most other North American suburbs, I find Toronto's outer fringe – also known as 'the 905 region' – anything but boring; to me it's exotic...." To Dec. 28, 2014, 235 Queens Quay W., Toronto.

RYERSON IMAGE CENTRE

DISPATCH: WAR PHOTOGRAPHS IN PRINT, 1854 – 2008

examines the production of war photographs, the role of photojournalists, and their collaboration with picture editors in the press. From Roger Fenton's collodion plate photographs taken during the Crimean War (1853–1856) to Luc Delahaye's images of the recent conflicts in Afghanistan (2001–present), the photographic representation of war has evolved dramatically in the occidental press over the past 150 years. To December 7, 2014. Free Admission, 33 Gould St., Toronto. See www.ryerson.ca/ric

Camerama Photo Show

Sunday, November 23 2014

10:00 AM - 3 PM

Note Location!

Delta Toronto East

2035 Kennedy Road, Toronto,
Ontario M1T 3G2

(Kennedy Road & 401)

FREE PARKING - ADMISSION \$7

Want Ads...

PHSC Volunteer Wanted

Devise your own Facebook news-feed and find yourself up to date with the latest in the photo-historical world, interacting with other enthusiasts! Contact Louise at ldbrucke@sympatico.ca

GEH Looking for Antique Plate Holders

Mark Osterman of George Eastman House writes:

We are looking for 4x5 glass negative holders for the gelatin dry plate workshops held at George Eastman House in Rochester, NY. Contact me if you have any to spare.

Mark Osterman: mosterman@geh.org

Images Wanted

Ron Polito is looking for scans of images by early Boston photographers Charles E. and Luther Holman Hale, to be used in an upcoming article in the 2014 Daguerreian Society *Annual*. Contact Ron at Ron.Polito@umb.edu

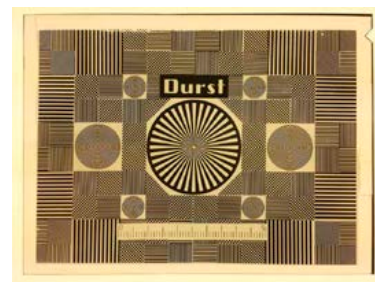
For Sale

Select Images CDVs - Canada West, VIPs, Revenue Stamps, Freaks, Ontario etc., Cabinet cards, Autochromes with diascopes, Stereoviews (Esson, McIntyre etc PLUS personal collection of Sir Daniel Wilson - President of U of T in 19th century), 200+ Daguerreotypes, Viewmaster reels and 50 Victorian photo Albums. Dispersal of collection along with 600 vintage cameras. Email lesjones.covershots@gmail.com 416 691-1555

For Sale

Epson Stylus Pro-7800 24 in. printer with K-3 ultrachrome inks and assorted roll papers, with stand, original documents, cables, \$1000.00, not used much, good shape and well maintained. Details Email spike@spikebell.com or 519-735-2094. Suggest pick-up from Windsor, ON as should not be shipped or laid on side.

Wanted



Looking for test negatives used in the darkroom as an aid for aligning an enlarger. Any shape and size will do. I could pay cash, trade prints or do some matting and framing work in exchange. Please contact Marco Buonocore at mbuonocore76@gmail.com - Thanks!

Wanted

9" square lensboard for an 1862 Samuel Peck 10"x10" Studio Camera (and lens too!) Lens for a #10 Cirkut camera (Perhaps a Turner Reich Anastigmat Convertible f6.8) Lens for a Hunter Penrose 'photo engraving' camera with 24" square plates. lesjones.covershots@gmail.com 416 691-1555

Wanted

Photographs of Bloor Street, between St. George St. and Yonge Street during the 1950s and 1960s for research on milliner Lily Jamon (1918-2009). Deirdre Macdonald ceann.na.mara@gmail.com

Wanted

Copy stand for photographing rocks and fossils. email ian@ransberryphotography.com

Wanted

Well-heeled private collector will pay CASH for your photographic collections and estates. Nothing too big or too small. Contact John Kantymir at 905-371-0111 or Niagaracc@gmail.com.

Wanted

Bicycle & Motorcycle photography – all related items. Contact Lorne Shields, P.O. Box 87588, 300 John St. P.O., Thornhill, ON., L3T 7R3, lorne-shields@rogers.com