



Article: Poitevin's Precious Plates: Current Research at the Rijksmuseum (Abstract)

Author(s): Martin Jürgens

Topics in Photographic Preservation, Volume 15.

Pages: 269

Compiler: Jessica Keister

© 2013, The American Institute for Conservation of Historic & Artistic Works. 1156 15th St. NW, Suite 320, Washington, DC 20005. (202) 452-9545, www.conservation-us.org.

Under a licensing agreement, individual authors retain copyright to their work and extend publication rights to the American Institute for Conservation.

Topics in Photographic Preservation is published biannually by the Photographic Materials Group (PMG) of the American Institute for Conservation of Historic & Artistic Works (AIC). A membership benefit of the Photographic Materials Group, *Topics in Photographic Preservation* is primarily comprised of papers presented at PMG meetings and is intended to inform and educate conservation-related disciplines.

Papers presented in *Topics in Photographic Preservation, Vol. 15*, have not undergone a formal process of peer review. Responsibility for the methods and materials described herein rests solely with the authors, whose articles should not be considered official statements of the PMG or the AIC. The PMG is an approved division of the AIC but does not necessarily represent the AIC policy or opinions.

Abstract: Poitevin's Precious Plates Current Research at the Rijksmuseum

Martin Jürgens

*Presented at the poster session of the 2013 AIC & ICOM-CC Photographs Conservation
Joint Meeting in Wellington, New Zealand.*

Sixteen small, metal plates were donated to the Print Cabinet of the Rijksmuseum many years ago. The donor vaguely associated them with Alphonse Poitevin, the 19th century engineer who is known for his pioneering work with bichromated gelatin processes, among many other experimental photographic and printing techniques. This intriguing detail sparked an ongoing research project into the plates' history, materials, and original function. At first glance, the plates are not much to look at; they appear to be experimental rejects: from paper-thin copper sheets to mechanically damaged daguerreotype plates. However, close examination of the plates and extensive research in collections of French institutions has shown that at least two of the Rijksmuseum plates hold partial images, and that precisely these images were used by Poitevin in the 1840s for his experiments on converting daguerreotypes into intaglio printing plates. The plates are currently assumed to stem from one or all three of Poitevin's early processes: gravure photochimique (1842-48), gelatin transfer (1851), and/or helioplastie (1855). Research to date has included chemical analysis by XRF and SEM-EDX, surface analysis by Hirox microscopy, and study of the literature. More technical analysis is in preparation. The long-term goal of this project is to determine the nature and original function of these plates and then to re-create the processes, thereby gaining the knowledge to accurately identify similar plates in other collections.

Martin Jürgens

Photograph Conservator
Rijksmuseum
Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Papers presented in *Topics in Photographic Preservation, Volume Fifteen* have not undergone a formal process of peer review.