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Article: History and Stylistic Evolution of Gelatin Silver Developing-Out Paper

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# HISTORY AND STYLISTIC EVOLUTION OF GELATIN SILVER DEVELOPING-OUT PAPER

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*Presented at the PMG session of the 2008 AIC Annual Meeting in Denver, Colorado*

## **Abstract**

Ubiquitous and ordinary, the “black and white” photograph represents one of the most significant, widespread and accessible imaging technologies in history. This success is owed to the rare combination of attributes possessed by gelatin silver developing-out papers. Well processed, and properly stored, a gelatin silver print has outstanding permanence especially as compared to almost any other photographic printing process. Gelatin silver papers have reliable handling properties in the darkroom, allowing quick and large-scale production by amateurs and professionals alike. Capable of subtle manipulations are available in great variety, the paper is a versatile medium for artistic expression, bearing masterworks of modern and contemporary art.

With darkrooms shutting down, photographers, curators, collectors and conservators are being challenged to mark the historic transition away from chemical photography and interpret the gains and losses. Part of this accounting is the growing realization that any understanding of a photographic print must include a comprehension of the historical development, expressive potential and stylistic qualities of photographic paper. This presentation covered the history of gelatin silver developing-out papers from their inception in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to present day.

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