Methods of Looking
and
A Vocabulary for Identification

Image Permanence Institute
2017-2018

Photographic Identification Webinar #4

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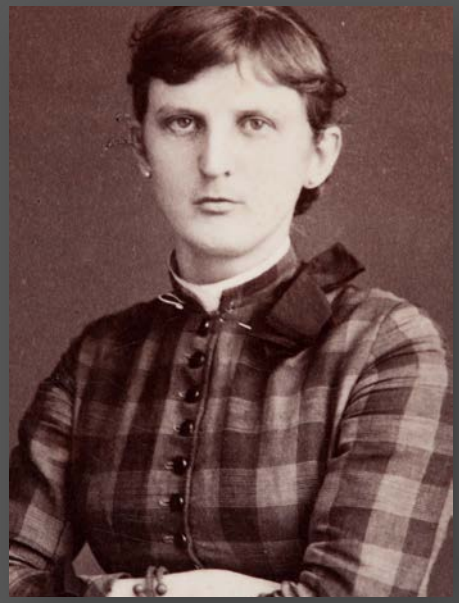
Process Identification



1

2

3

4

These are 4 different processes!

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Key ID Features

Each process has a unique "fingerprint," called its key identifying features.

These features are a result of the materials and technologies used to make the object.

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Key ID Features

- Image color/tone
- Surface characteristics: sheen and texture
- Image structure
- Layer structure

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Methods of Looking

- Object View
- Surface View
- Magnification View

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Object View

Characteristics visible with even illumination and no magnification.

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Object View

Image Clues

- Clothing
- Vehicles
- Hairstyles
- Buildings

Gelatin POP

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Object View

Format

- Cased (1840s-1860s)
- Carte de visite (1860s-1870s)
- Cabinet card (1870s-1900)
- Stereograph (1860s-1930s)
- Folder (1900-1930s)
- Postcard (1900s-1930s)
- Mounted
- Unmounted

Albumen print, CDV

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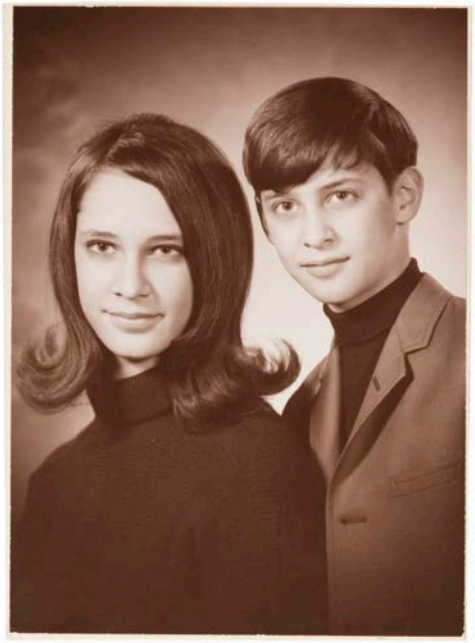
Object View

1



2

3

4

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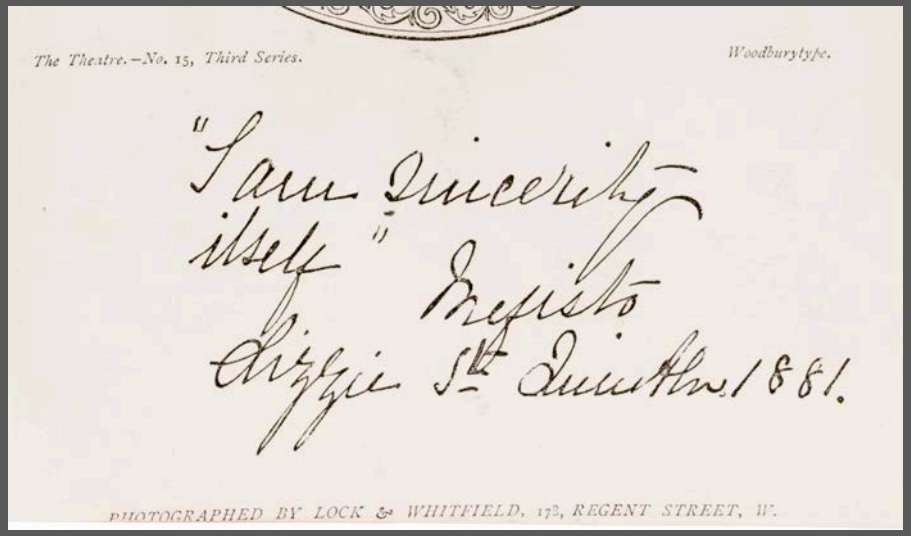
Object View

Information written or printed on the object

- Back print
- Back stamp
- Dates
- Inscriptions

4



3

Object View: Info

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Object View

Primary Support

- Paper
- Plastic
- Glass
- Metal
- Ceramic
- Fabric
- Leather

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Object View: Support

Paper support

- Most common support
  - Pre-photographic prints
  - Photographic prints
  - Photomechanical prints
  - Digital prints

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Object View: Support

Glass
- Ambrotype
- Wet plate collodion negative/transparency
- Gelatin Dry Plate negative/transparency

Metal
- Daguerreotype
- Tintype

Fabric
- Salted "paper"
- Cyanotype

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Object View

Image Color/Tone

- Black
- Purple/Red
- Brown
- Yellow
- Other Color
- Full Color
- Hand Colored

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Object View: Image Color

Image formation + Image material = Image color

- Metal
- Pigment
- Dye

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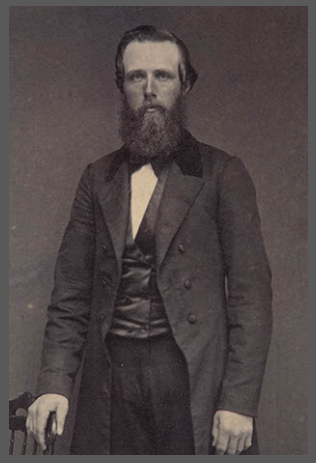
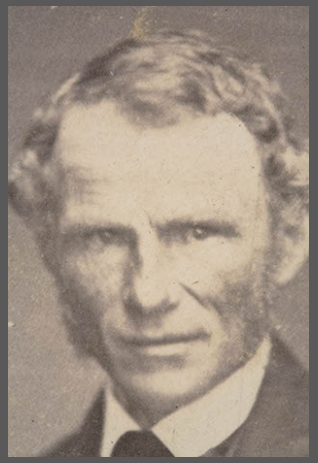
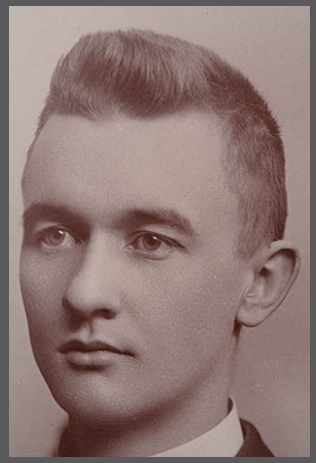
Object View: Image Color

The color of silver

Printed Out

Object View: Image Color

The color of silver

Printed Out

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Object View: Image Color

The color of silver

Printed Out

Developed Out

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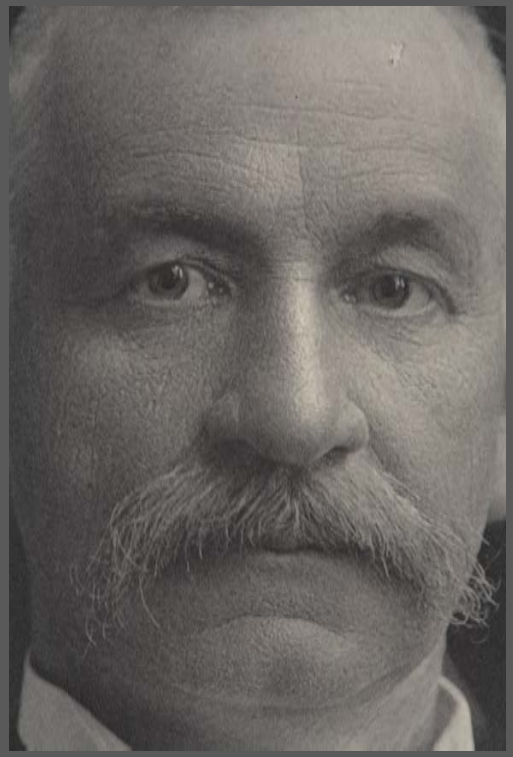
Object View: Image Color

The colors of platinum



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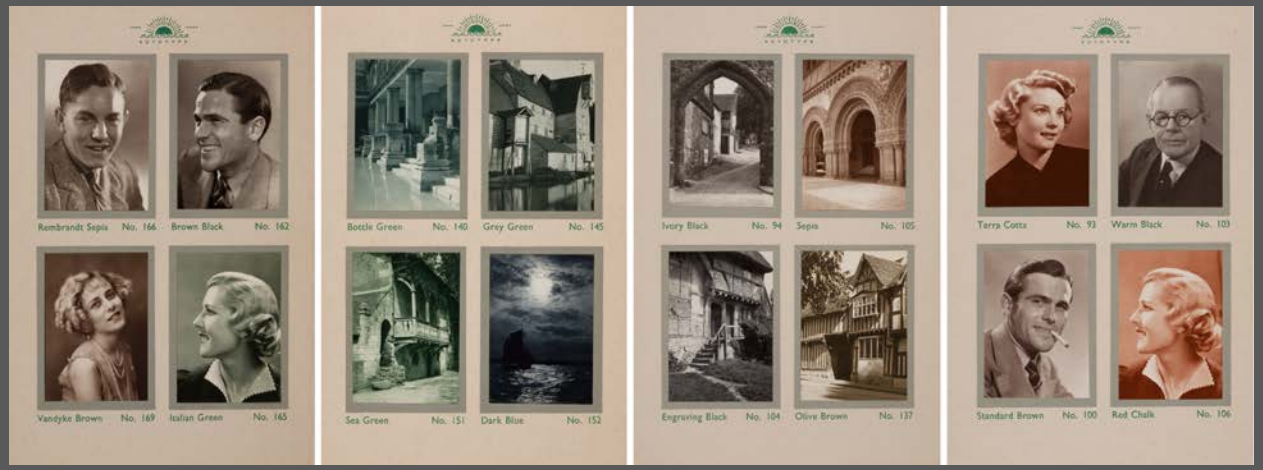
Object View: Image Color

The colors of pigment



Pigment Processes: Carbon, Carbro, Woodburytpe, Direct Carbon (Fresson), Gum Dichromate, Bromoil, Bromoil Transfer

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Object View: Image Color

The colors of dye

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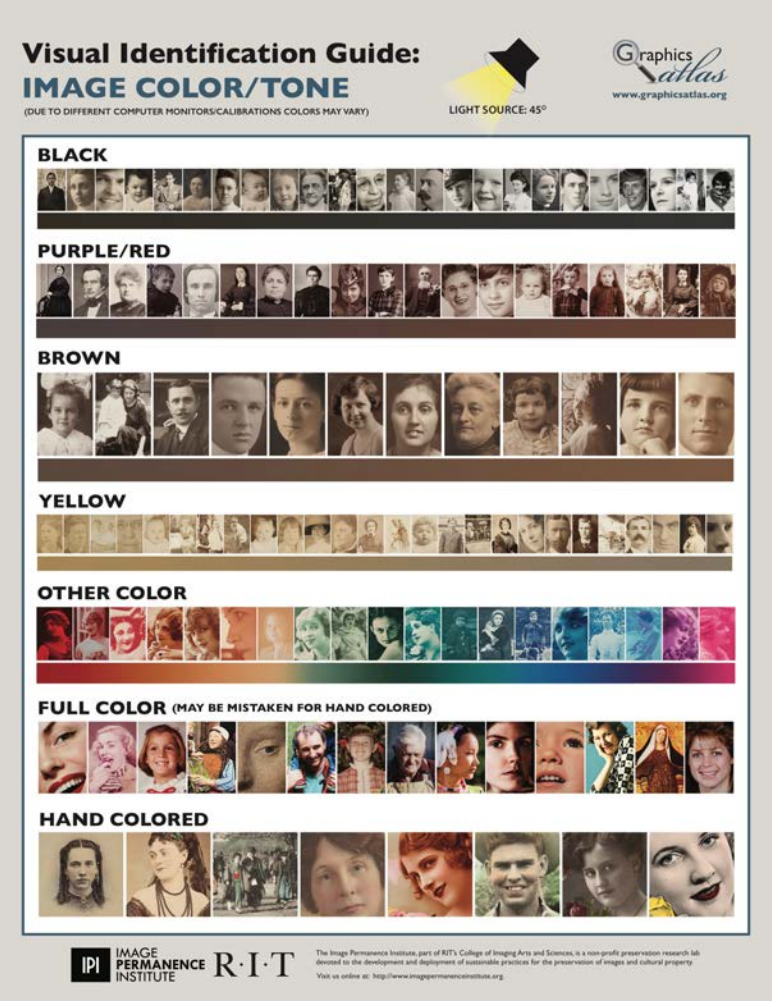
Object View: Image Color



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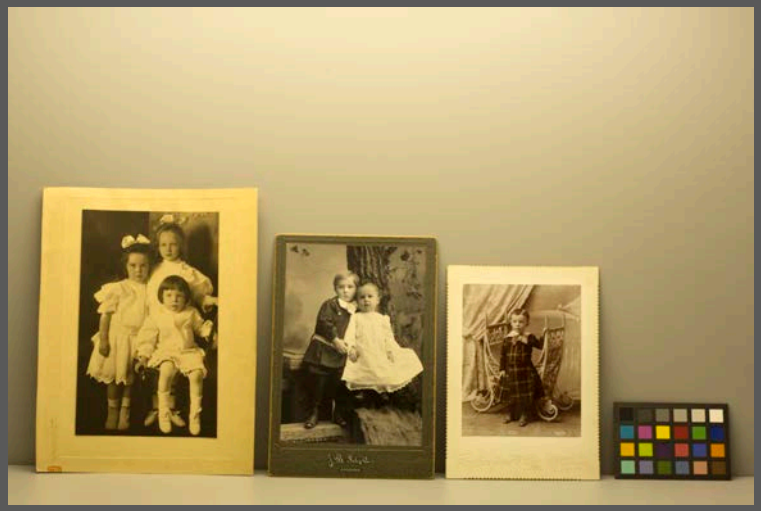
Object View: Image Color

Daylight



Fluorescent

Tungsten

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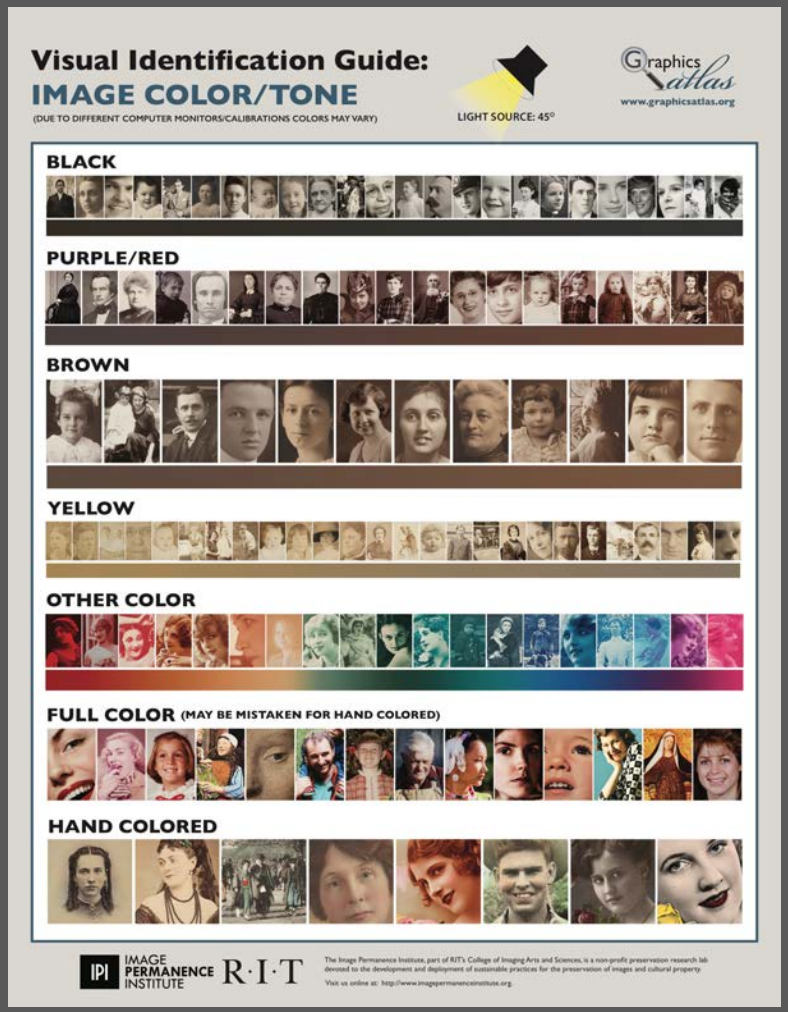
Object View: Image Color



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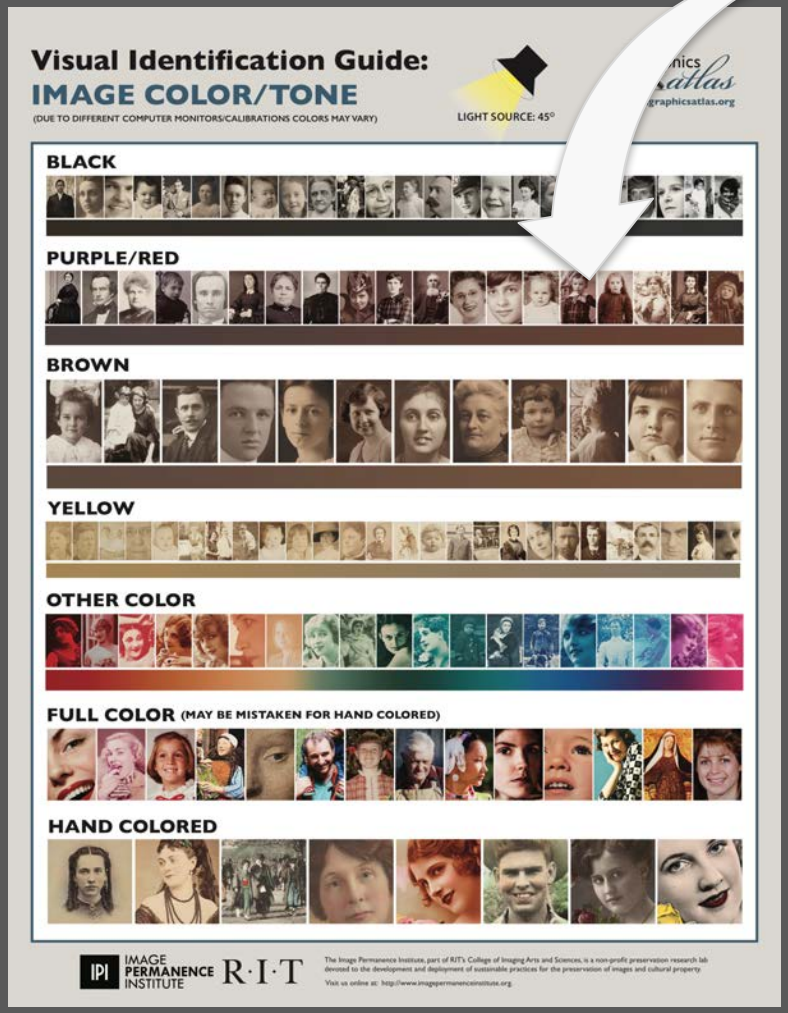
Object View: Image Color



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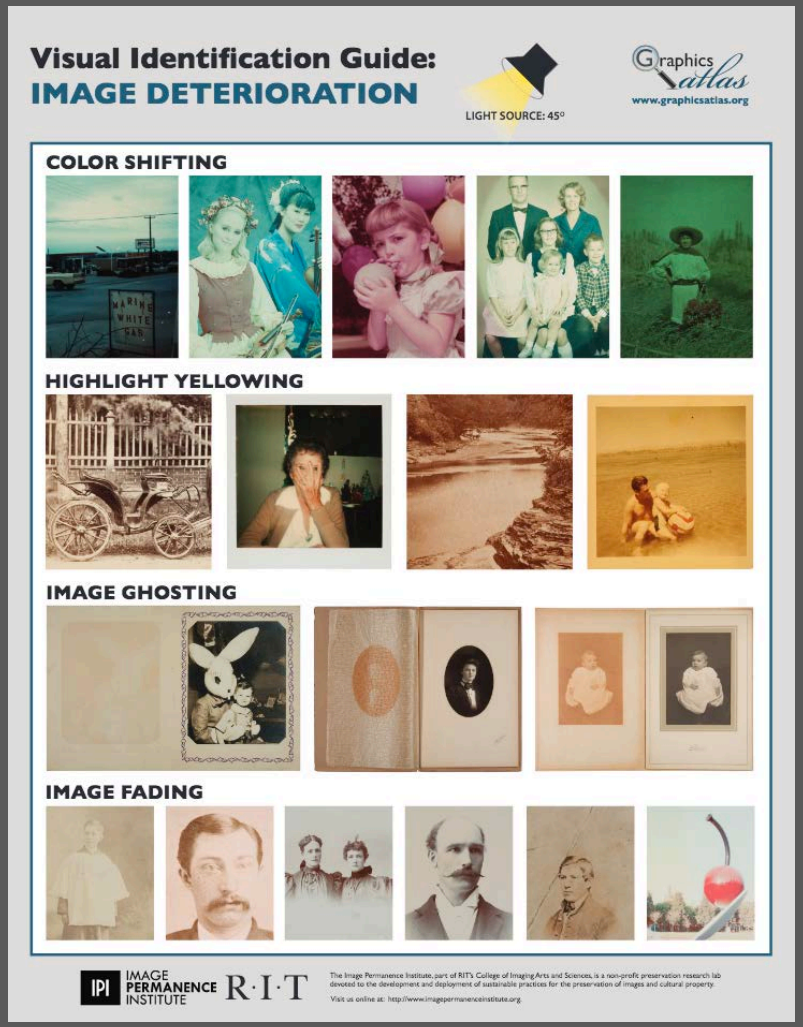
Object View

Deterioration

- Color shifting
- Highlight yellowing
- Image ghosting
- Image fading



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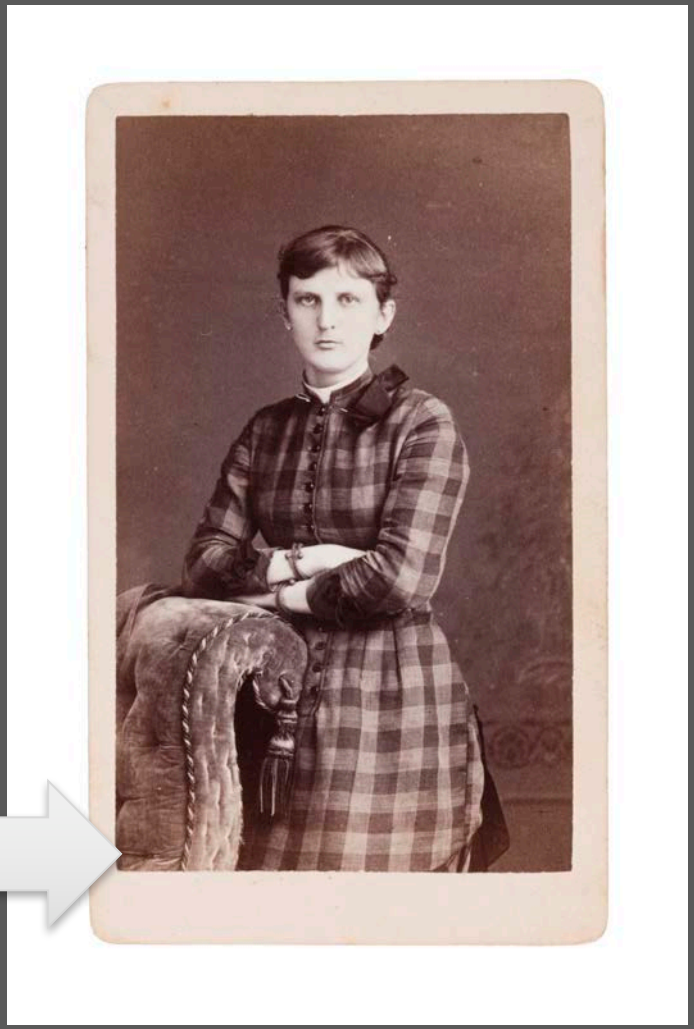
Object View: Deterioration

1

- Image Fading
- Highlight Yellowing



Object View

Key Identifying Features

- Primary Support
- Image Color
- Image Deterioration

Other Clues

- Image Clues
- Format
- Back print/Back stamp
- Other information printed/written on the object

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Surface View

Characteristics visible with directional illumination and no magnification.

Single light source from above

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Surface View

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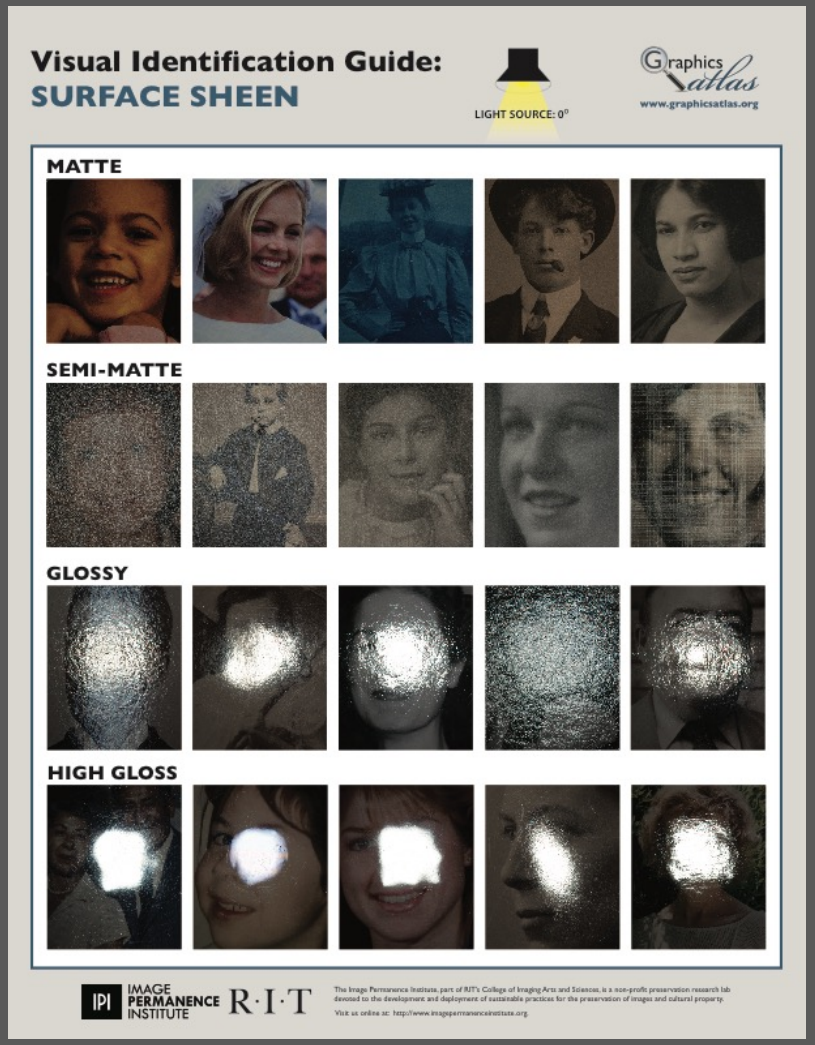
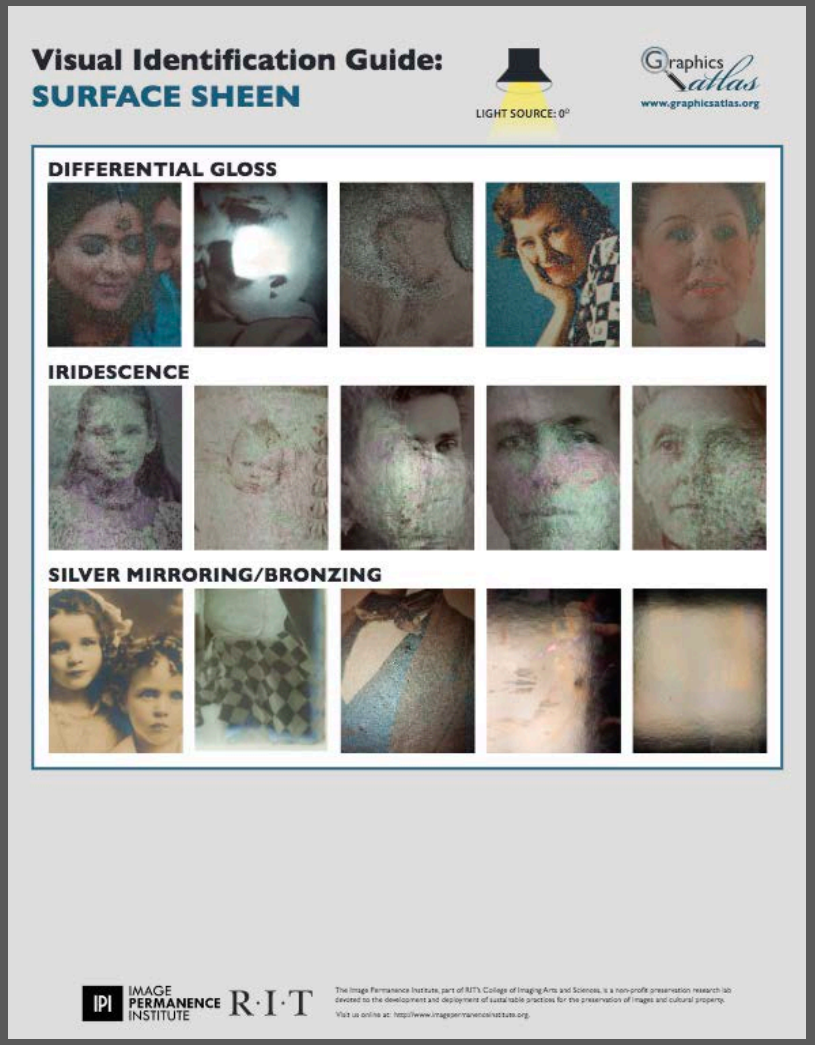
Surface View





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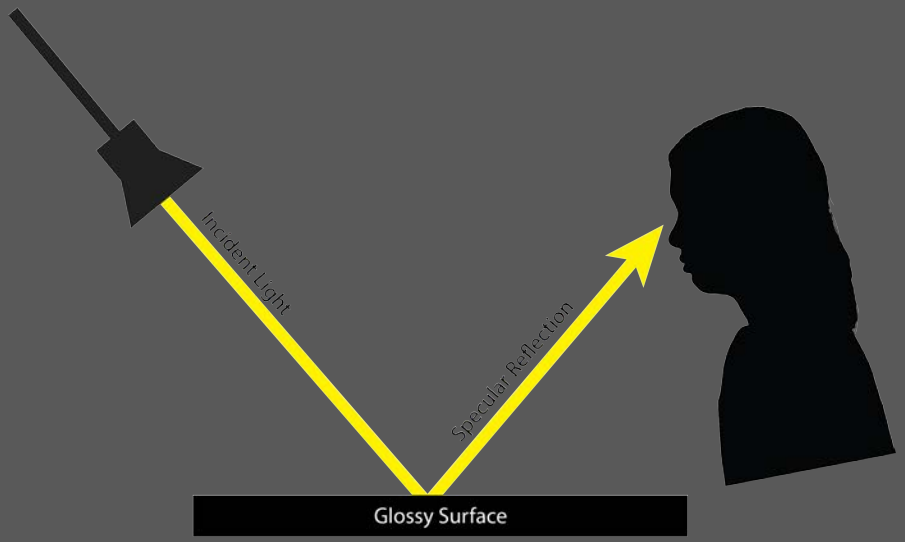
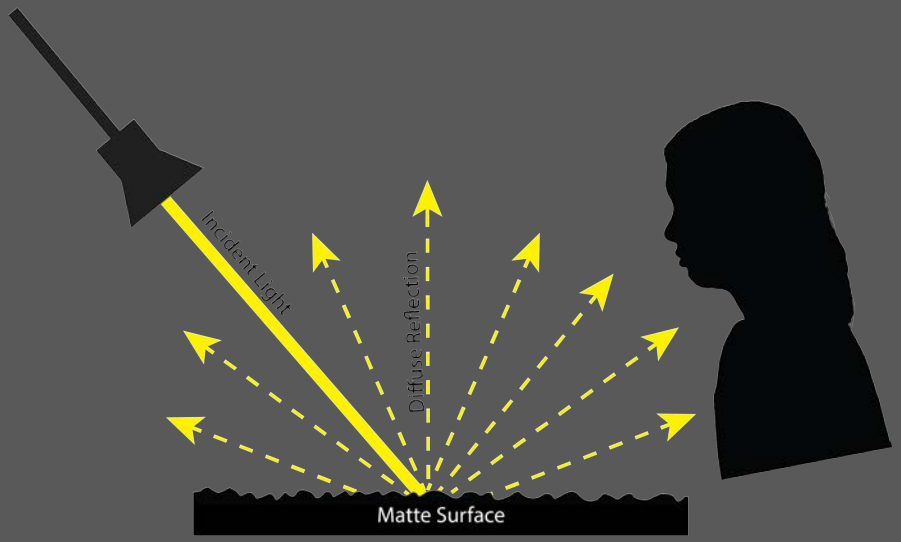
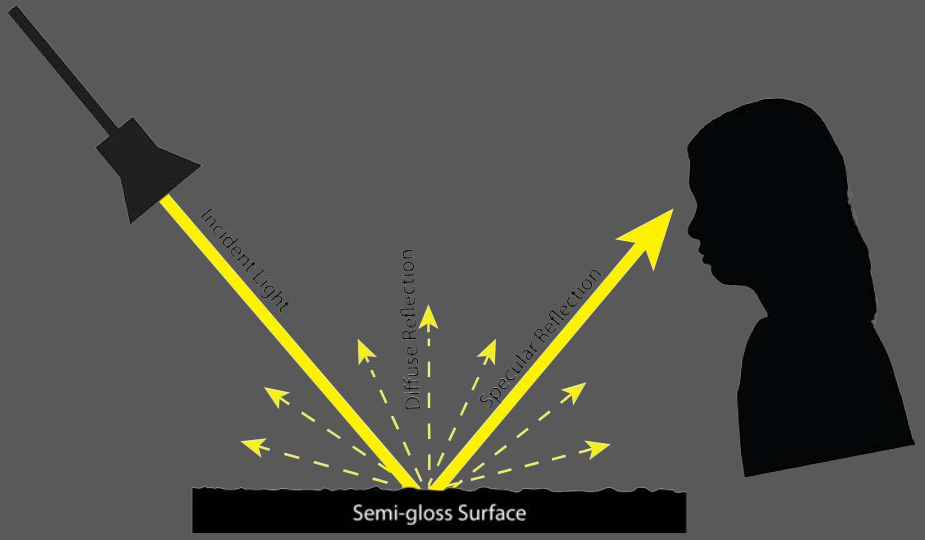
Surface View







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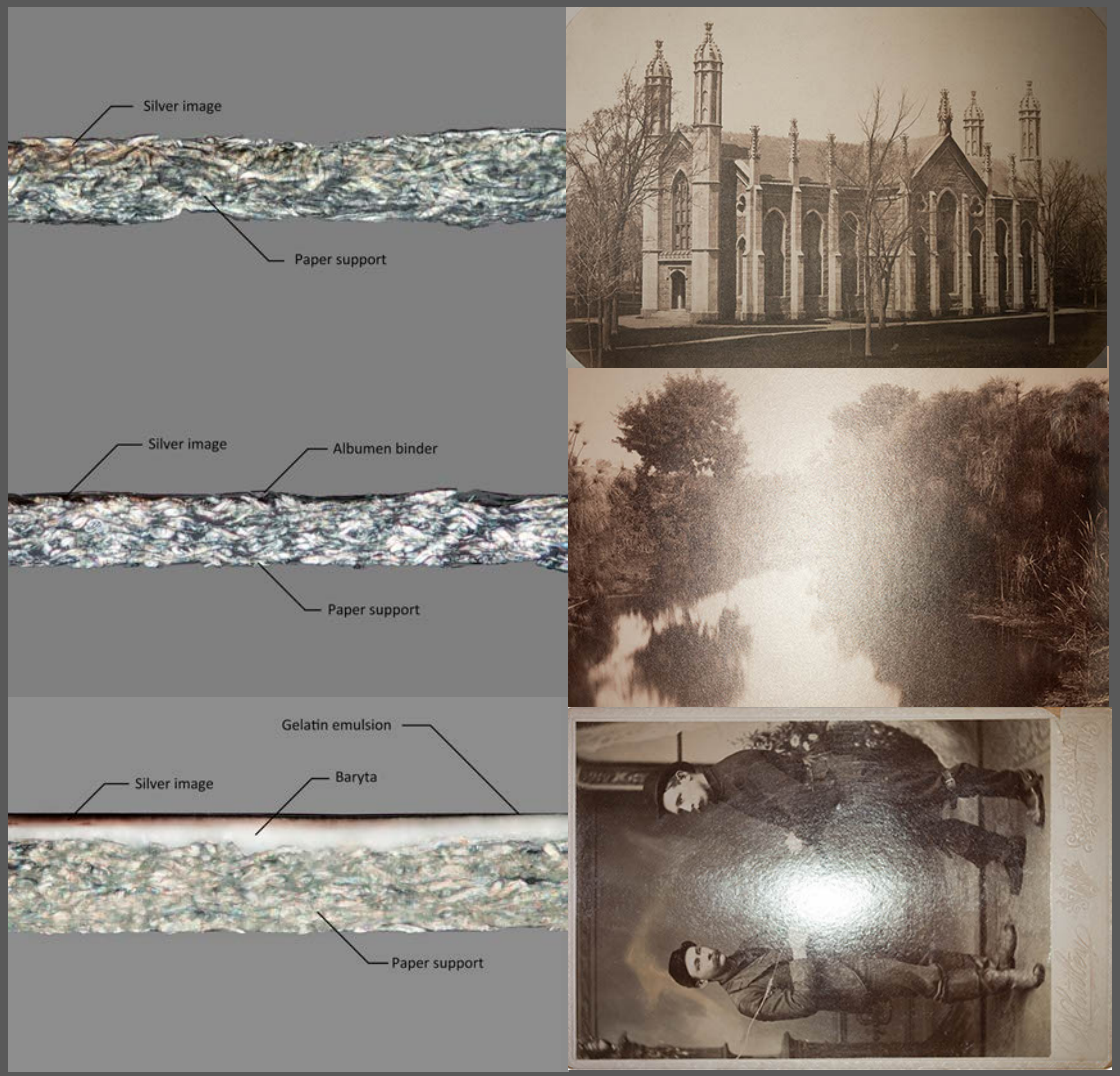
19th Century



The surface characteristics (texture and sheen) are related to the layer structure of the print.

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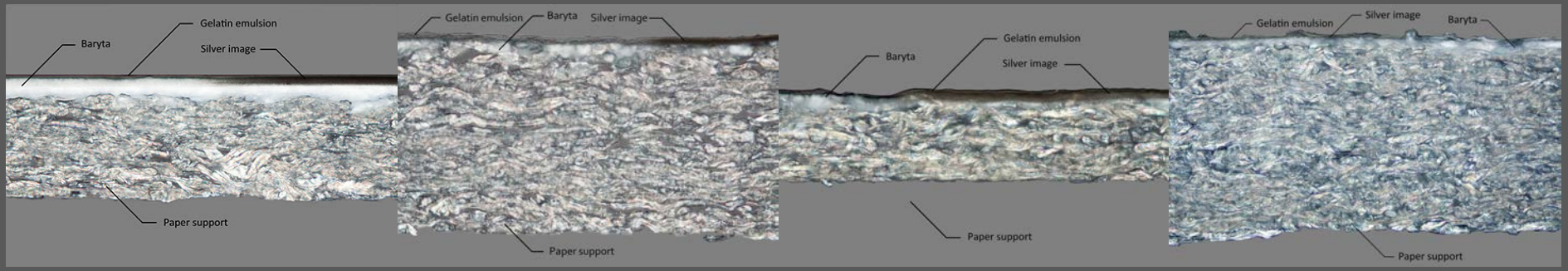
20th Century



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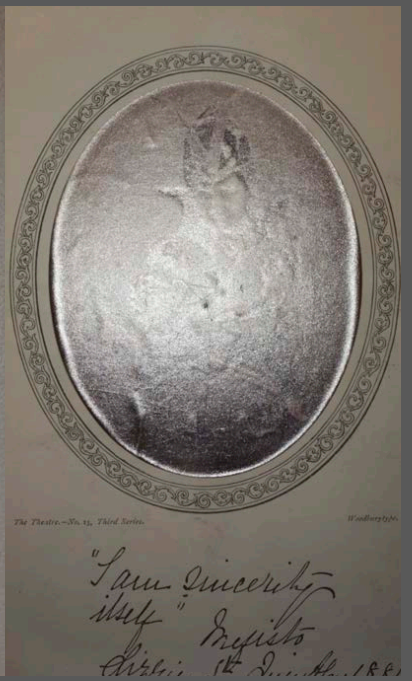
Surface View

1

2

3



4

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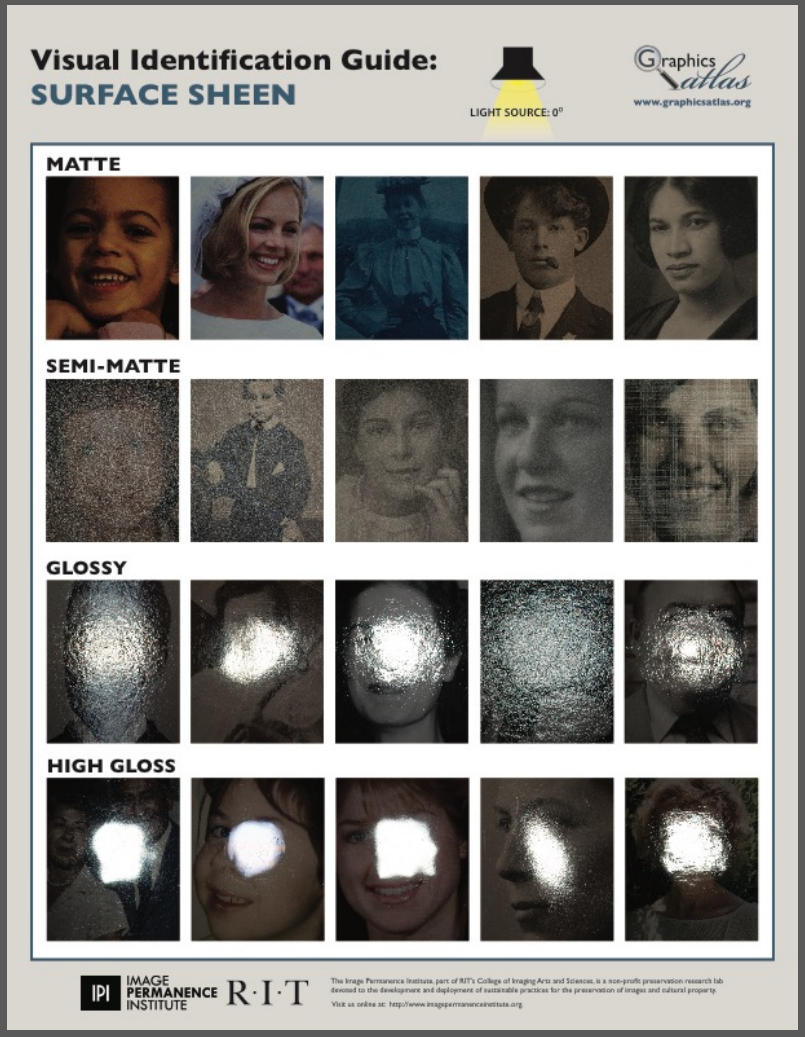
Surface View



Semi-Matte

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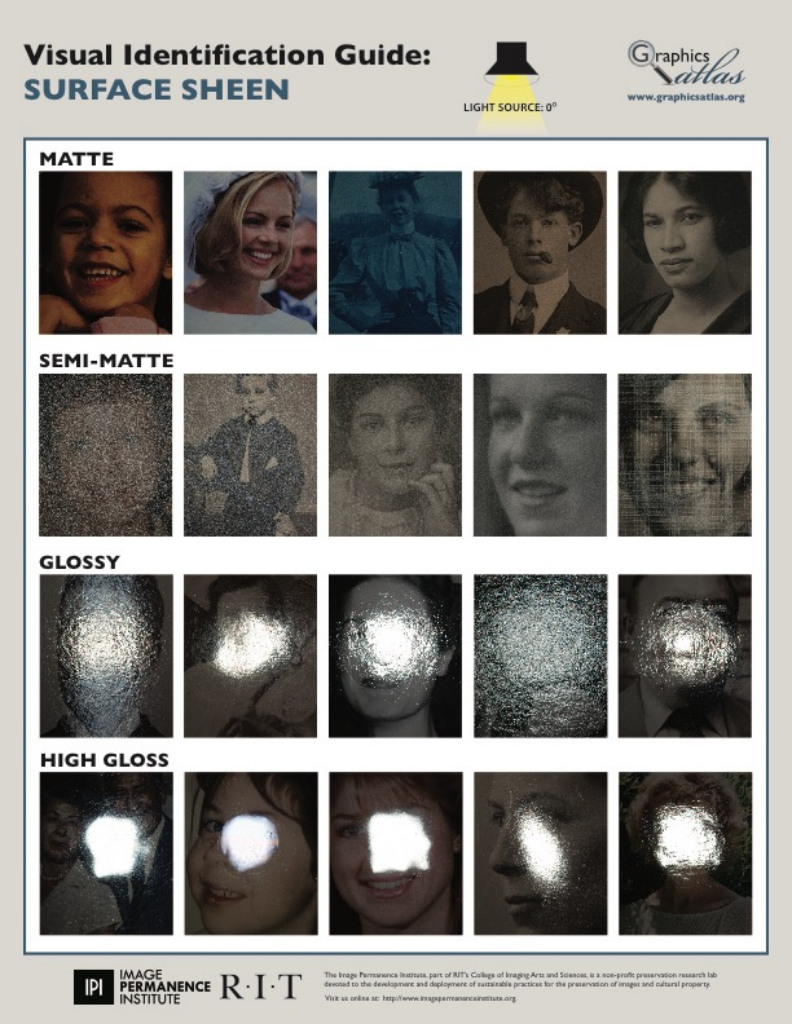
Surface View



1 Glossy 3

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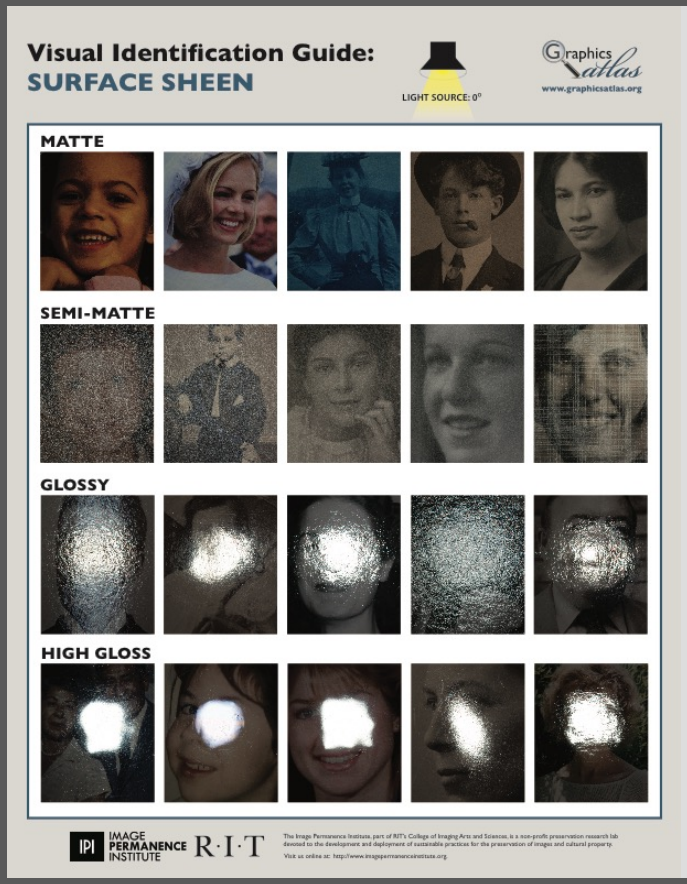
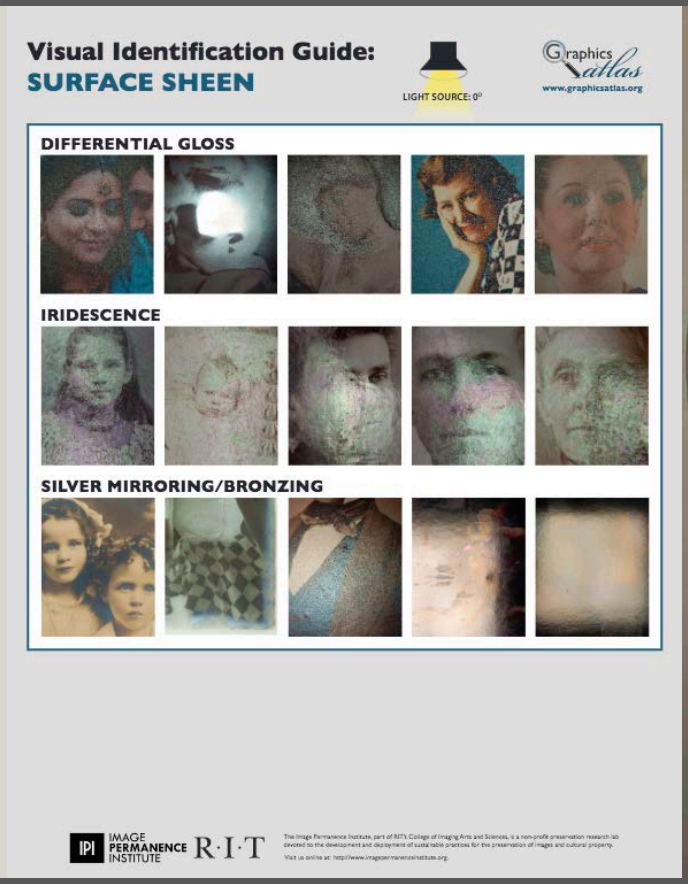
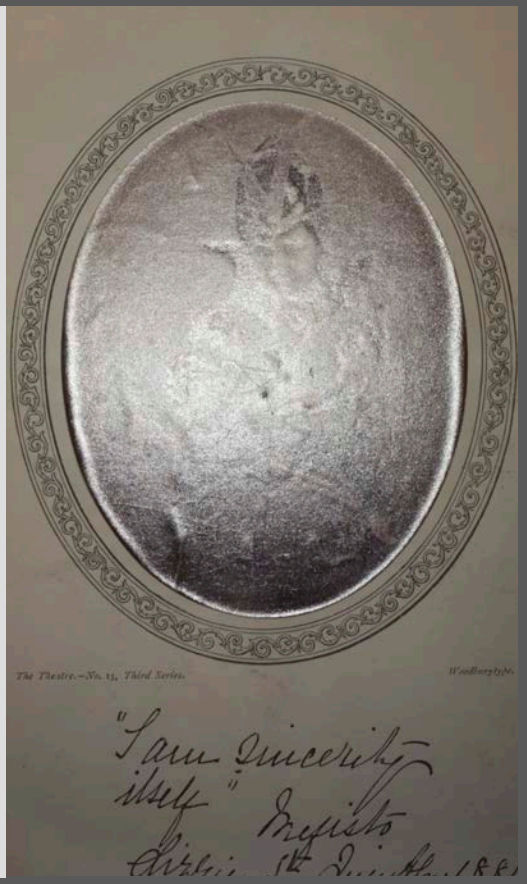
Surface View







4

Glossy
Differential Gloss

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Surface View

Key Identifying Feature

- Surface Sheen

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Magnification View

Characteristics visible with even or directional illumination and the use of magnification.

- Image Structure
- Layer Structure

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Magnification View

Magnification Tools

- 10x loupe
- Pocket microscope
- Microscope

Magnification View

Magnification Tools

- 10x loupe
- Pocket microscope
- Microscope

10x loupe

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Magnification View

Magnification Tools

- 10x loupe
- Pocket microscope
- Microscope

10x loupe

30x pocket microscope

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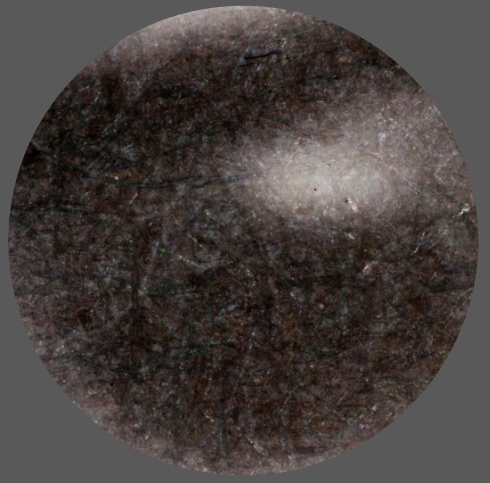
Magnification View

Magnification Tools

- 10x loupe
- Pocket microscope
- Microscope

10x loupe

30x pocket microscope



50x microscope

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Magnification View

Loupe with flashlight

Pocket Microscope

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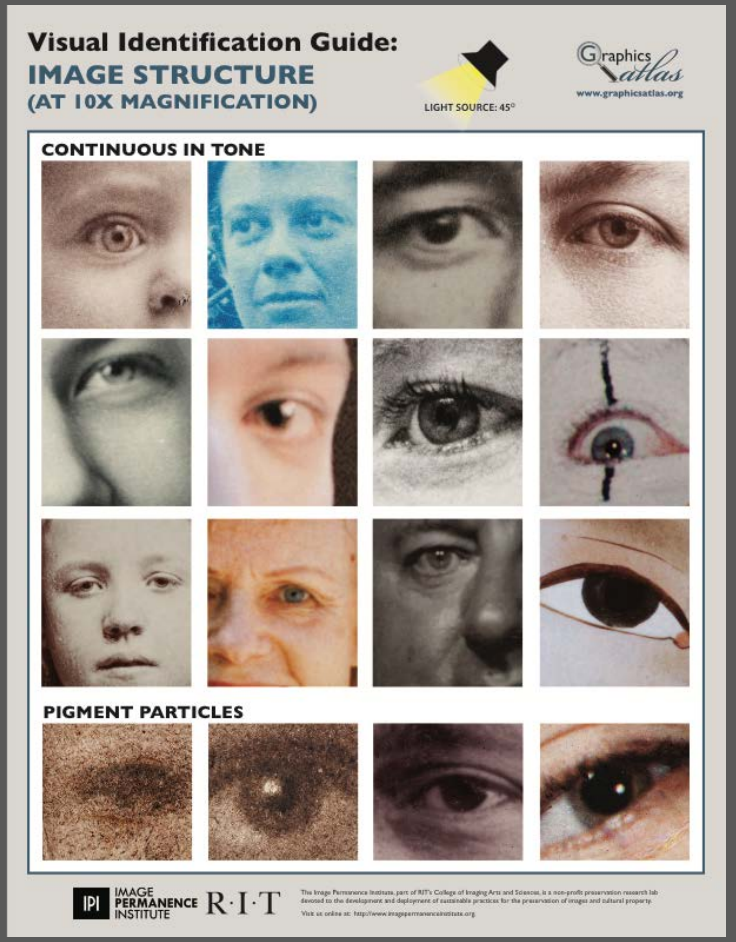
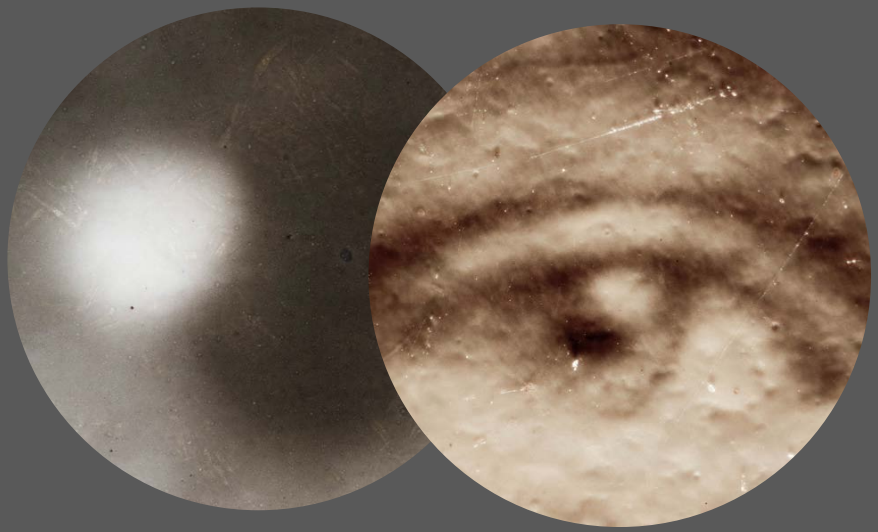
Magnification View

Image Structure

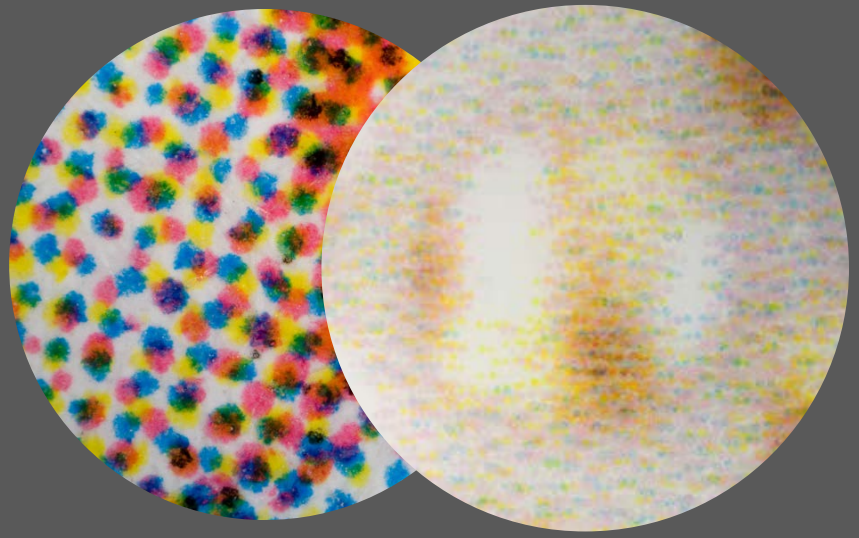
- Continuous in tone
- Pigment particles (Continuous in tone)
- Patterned
- Image grain (high mag)



Magnification View: Image Structure



Photographic
Continuous in tone



Photomechanical or Digital
Patterned

50x magnification

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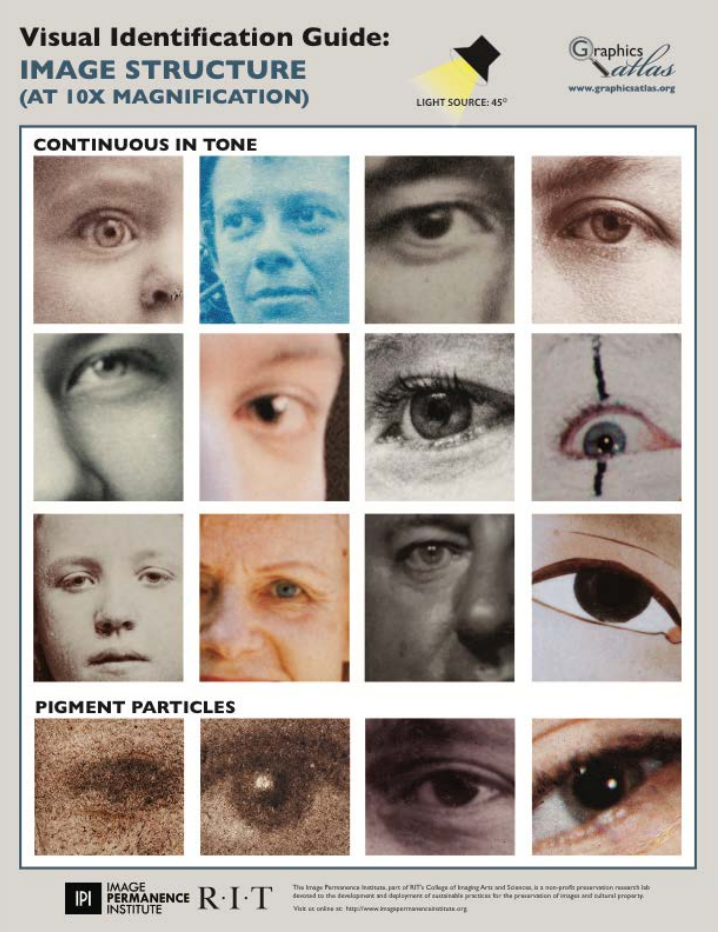
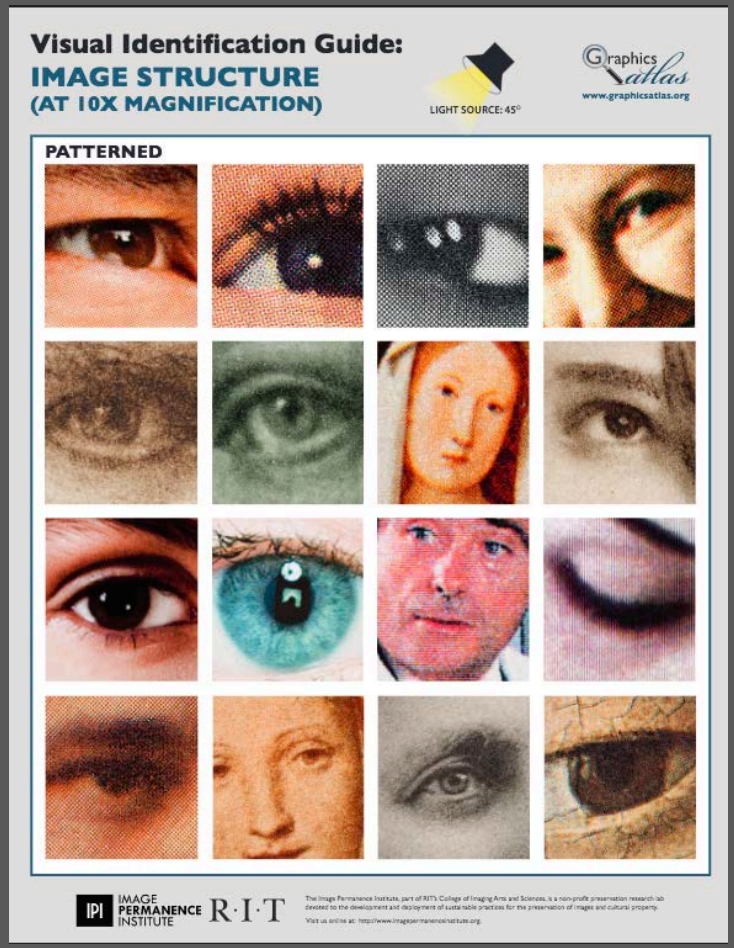
Magnification View: Image Structure





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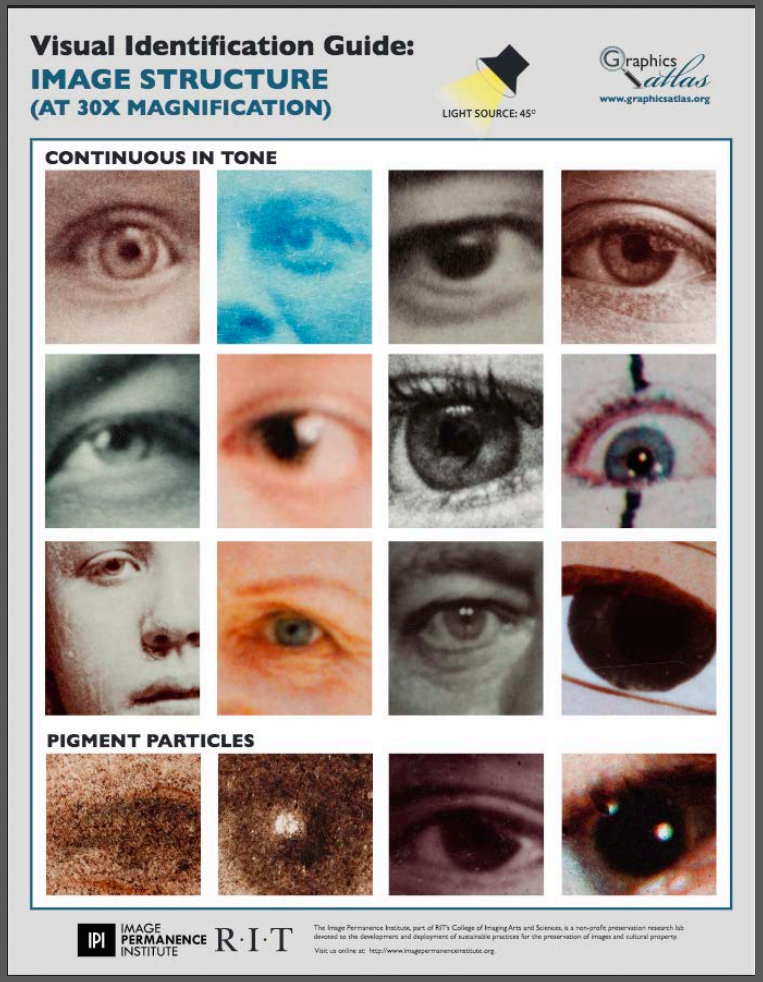
Magnification View: Image Structure



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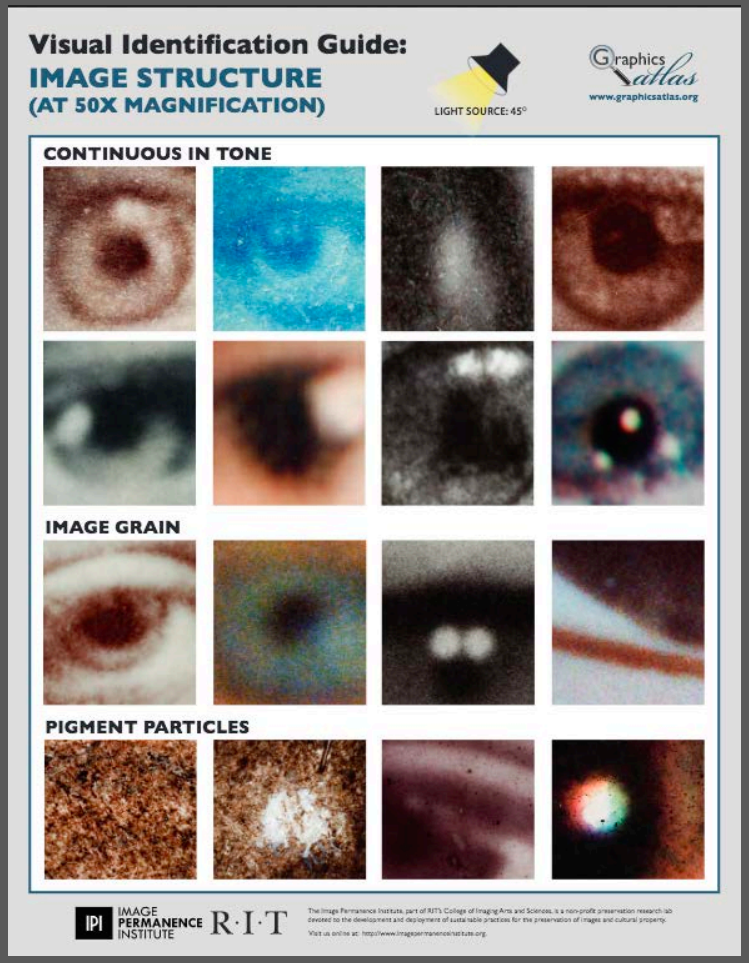
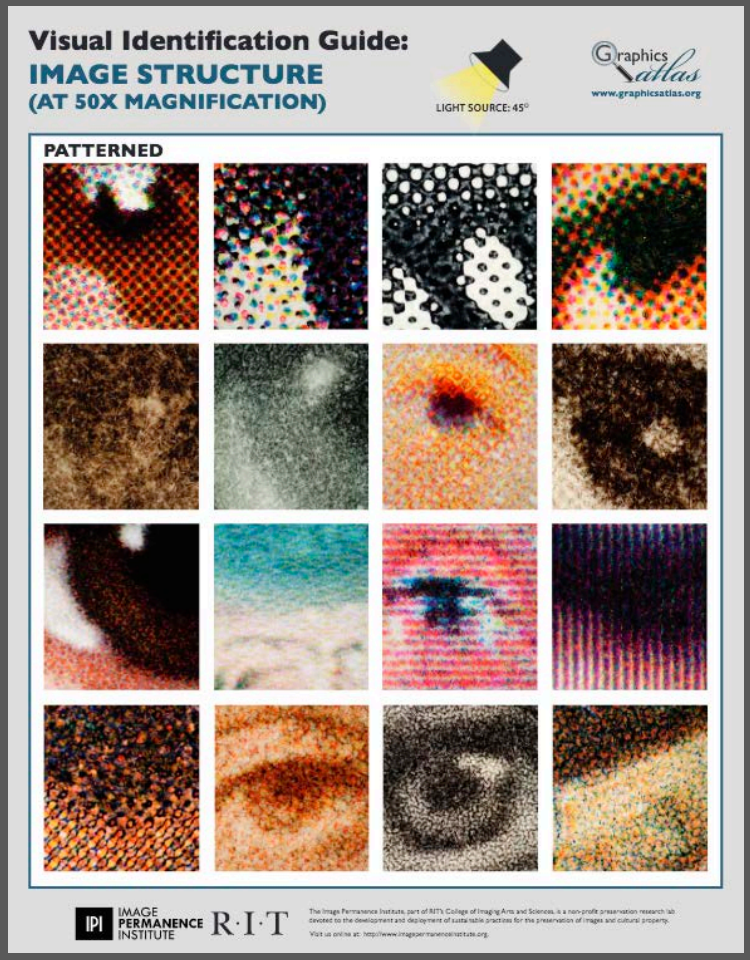
Magnification View: Image Structure





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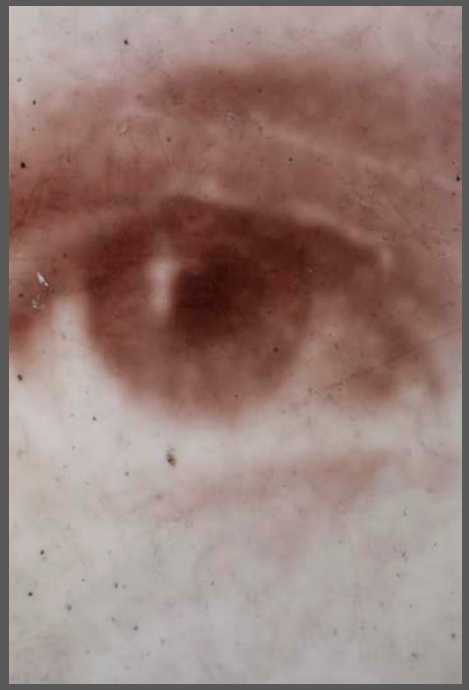
Magnification View: Image Structure

Continuous in tone

1

2



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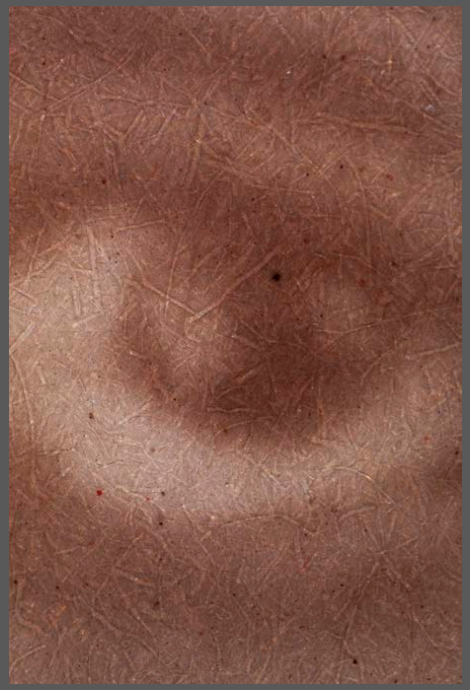

4

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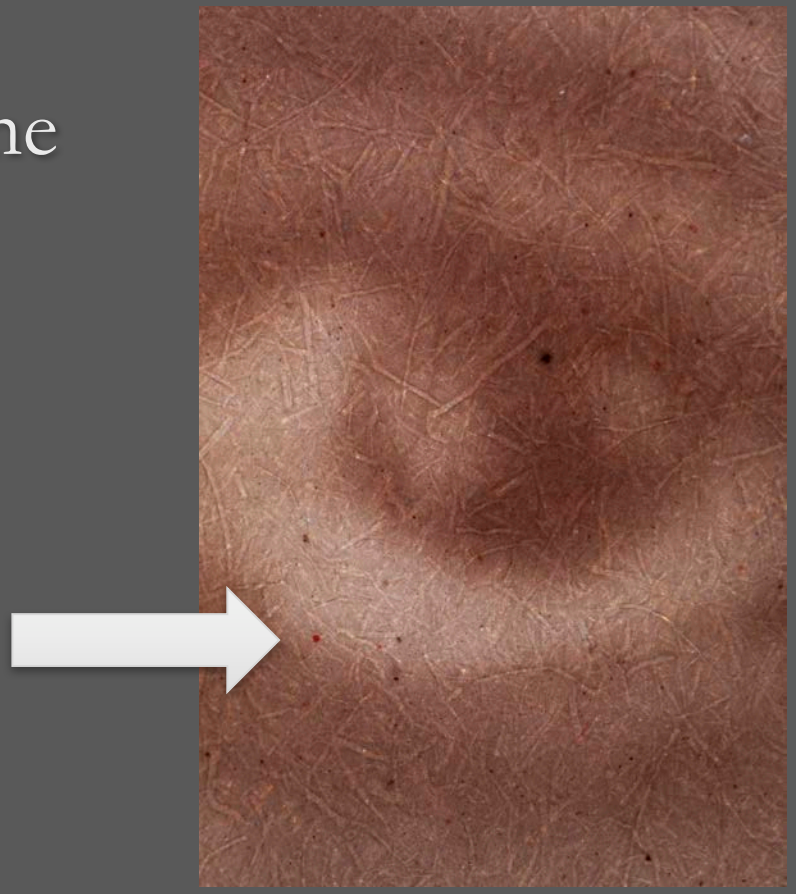
Magnification View: Image Structure

Continuous in tone

Pigment particles



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Magnification View

Raking Light: directional light from the side

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Magnification View

Raking Light: directional light from the side

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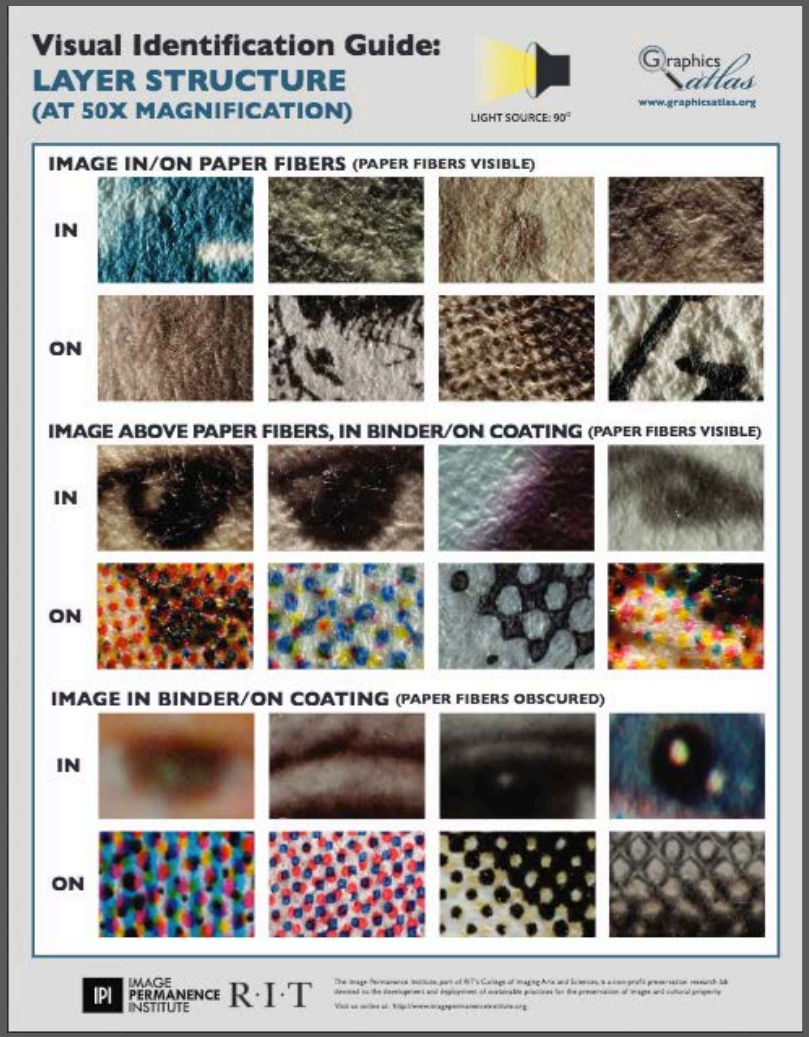
Magnification View

Layer Structure

- Image in/on paper fibers (paper fibers visible)
- Image above paper fibers, in binder/on coating (paper fibers visible)
- Image in binder/on coating (paper fibers obscured)



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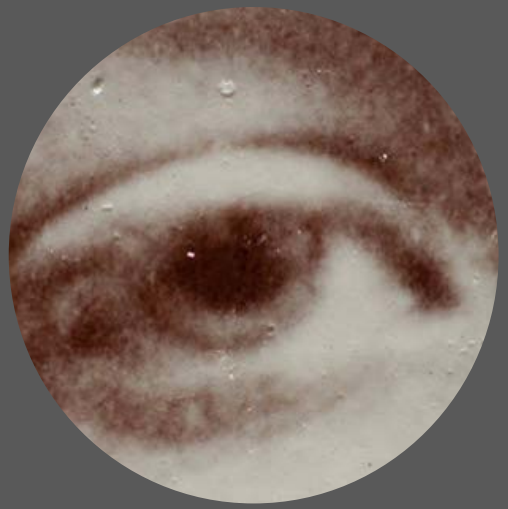
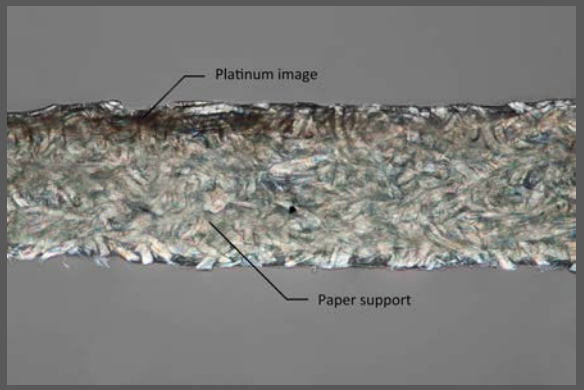
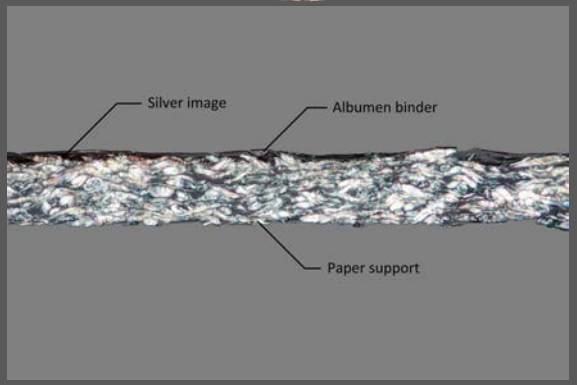
Magnification View







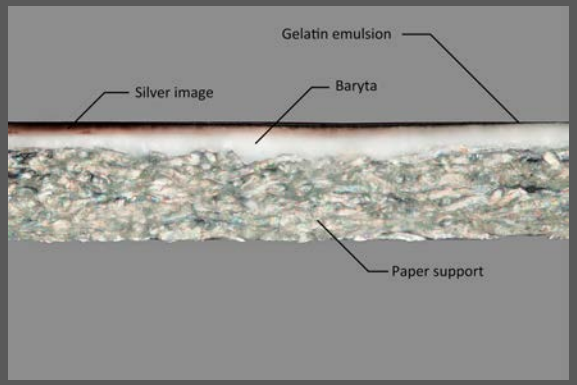


Image in paper fibers, paper fibers visible

Image above paper fibers in binder, paper fibers visible

Image in binder, paper fibers obscured

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Magnification View

Image on paper fibers, paper fibers visible

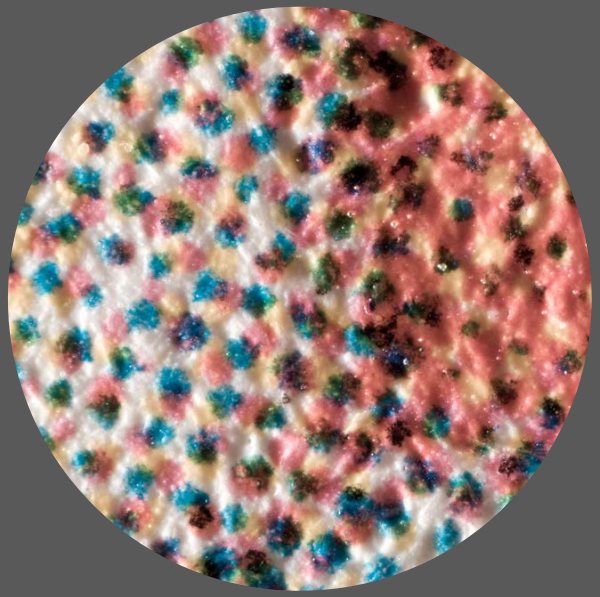

Image above paper fibers on coating, paper fibers visible

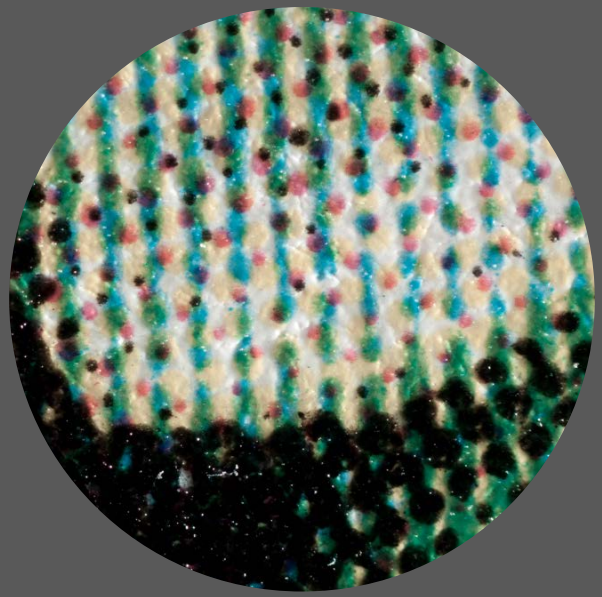

Image on coating, paper fibers obscured

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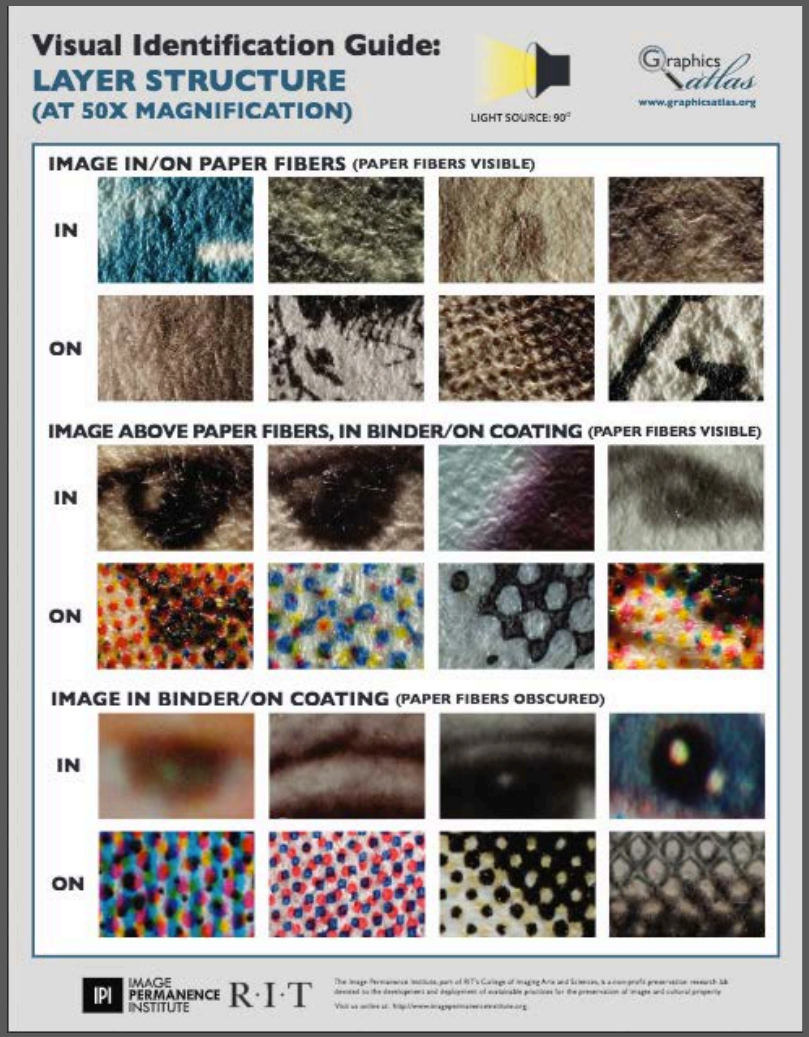
Magnification View

Layer Structure

- Image in/on paper fibers (paper fibers visible)
- Image above paper fibers, in binder/on coating (paper fibers visible)
- Image in binder/on coating (paper fibers obscured)



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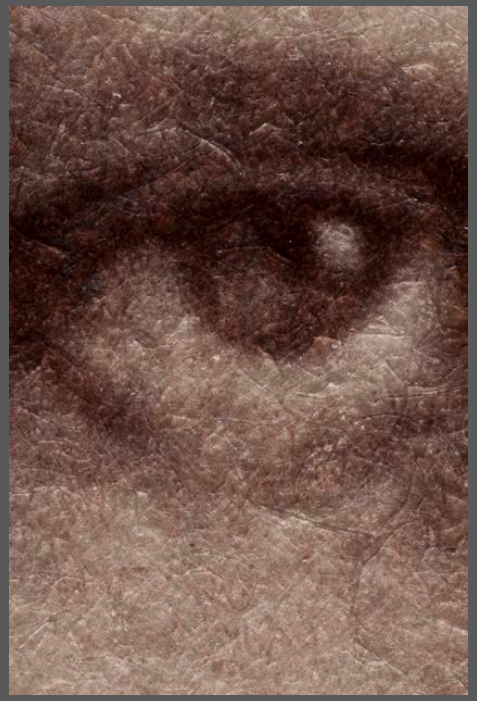
Magnification View: Layer Structure



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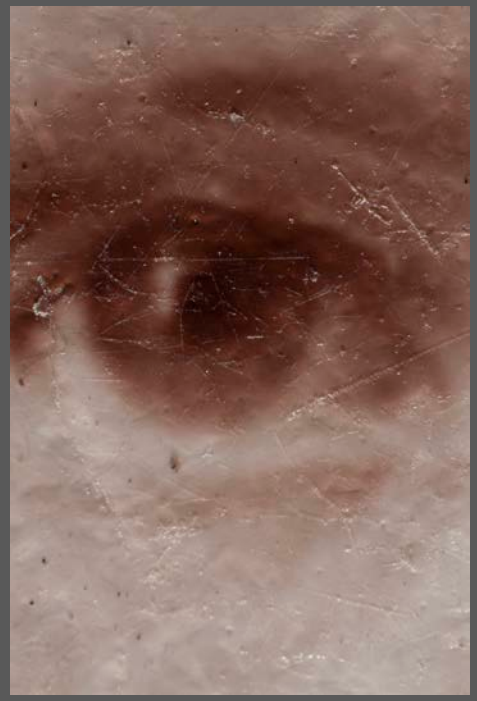
2



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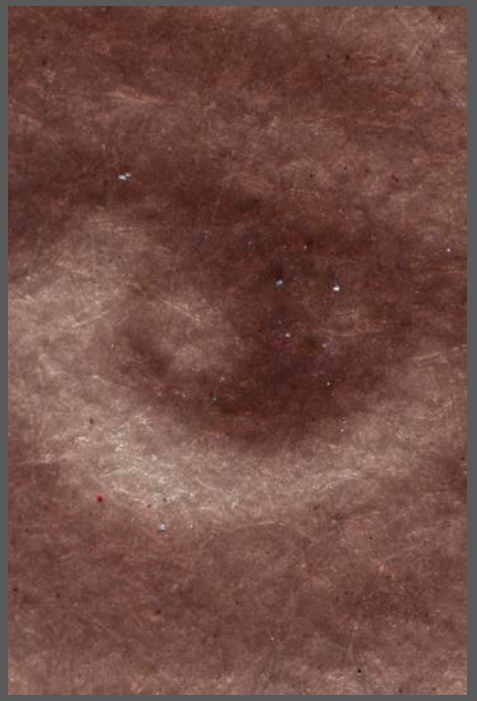

4

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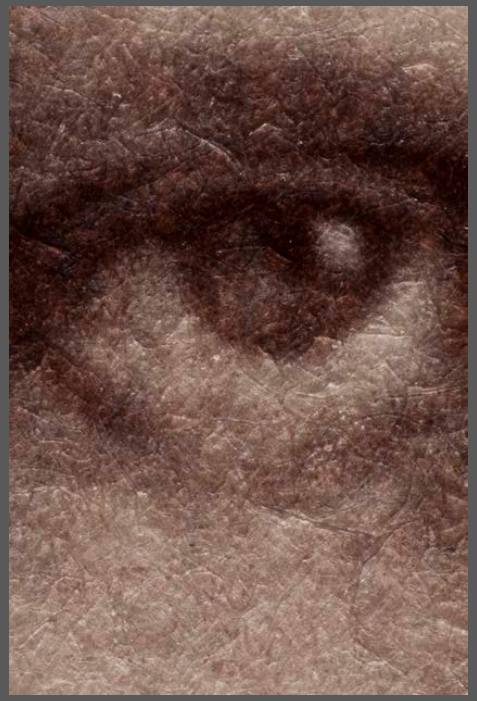
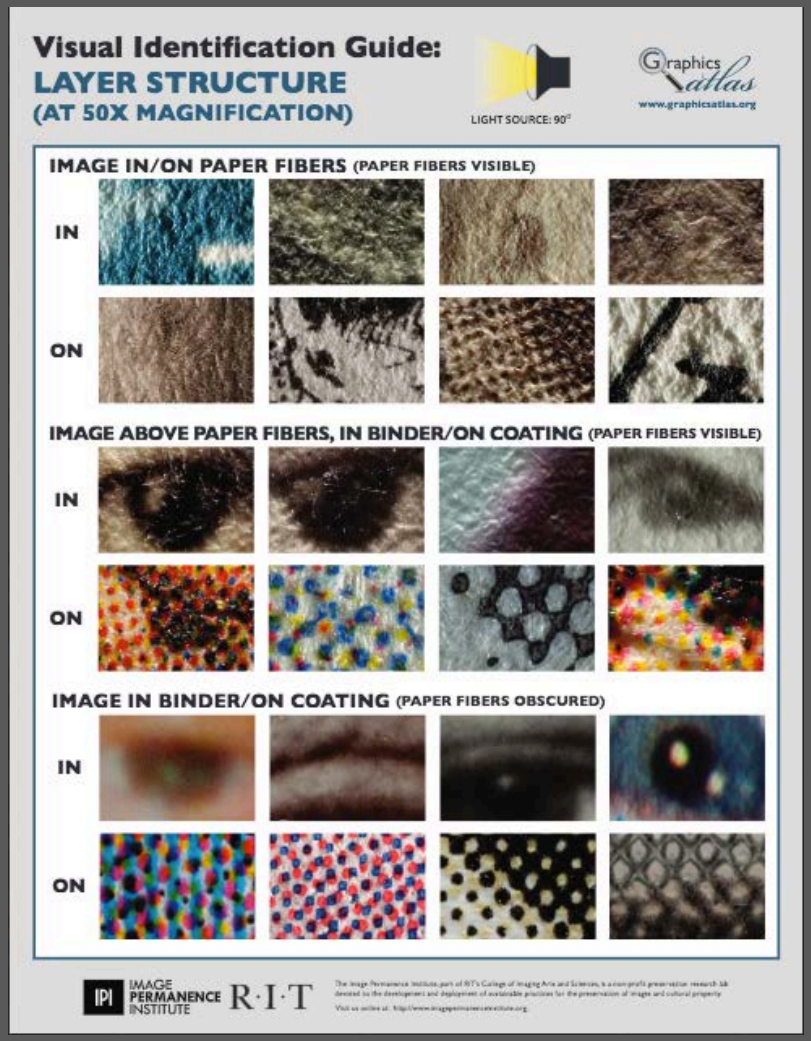
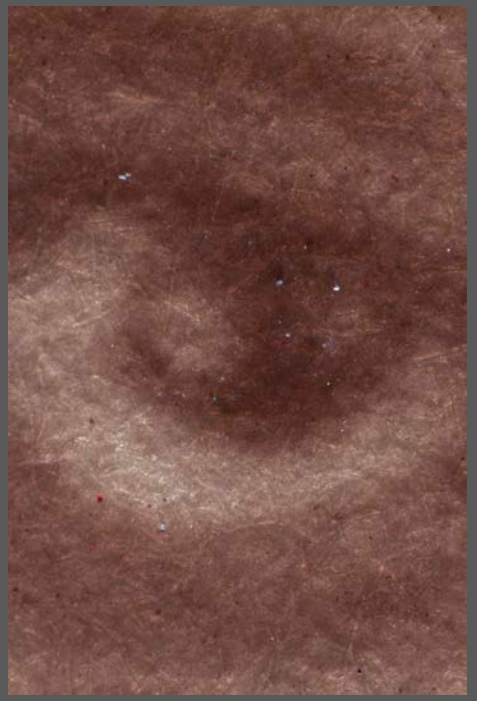
Magnification View: Layer Structure



1





4

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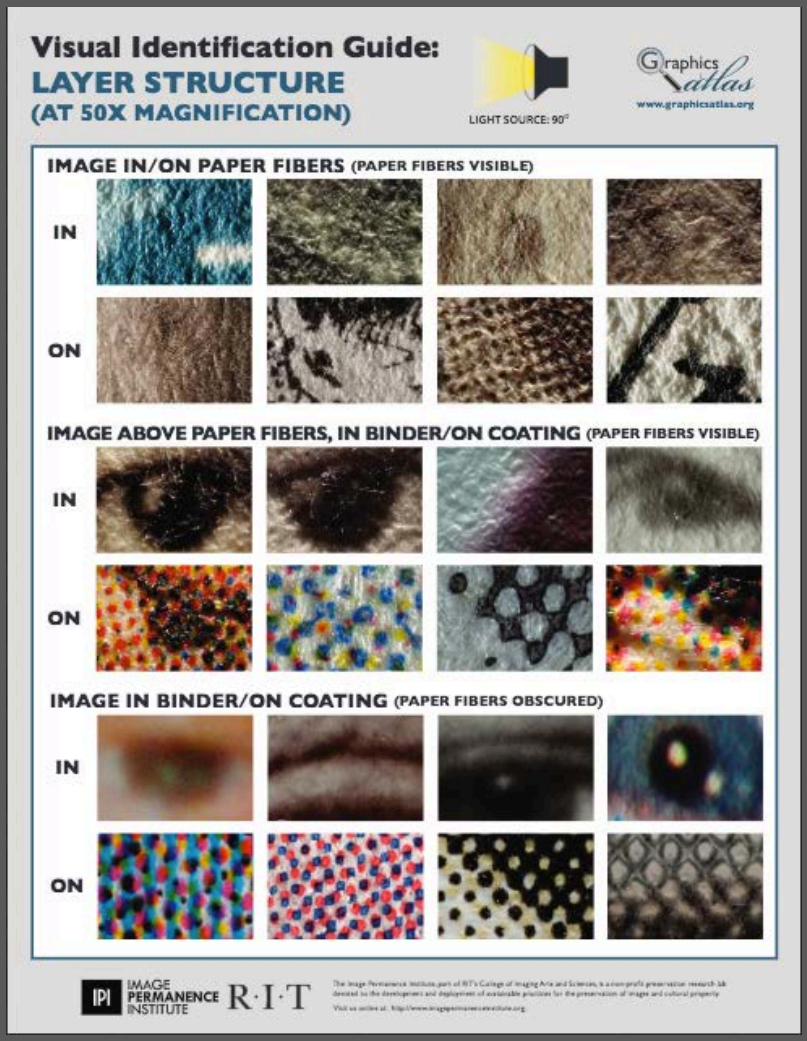
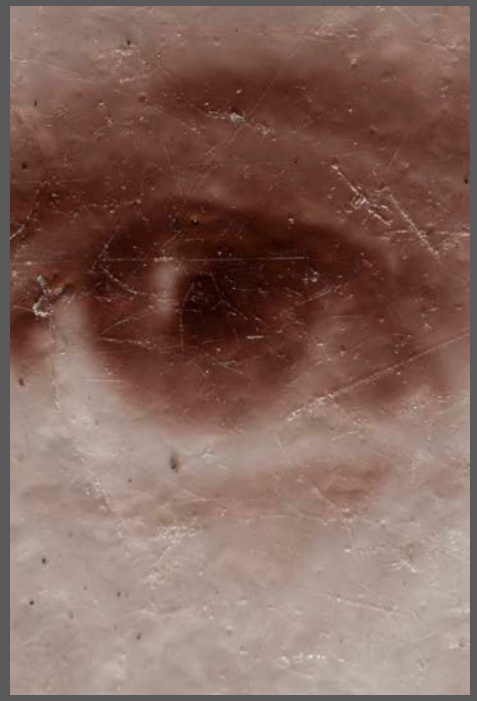
Magnification View: Layer Structure

1

Magnification View: Layer Structure

2





3

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Magnification View: Layer Structure

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Magnification View

Key Identifying Features

- Image Structure
- Layer Structure

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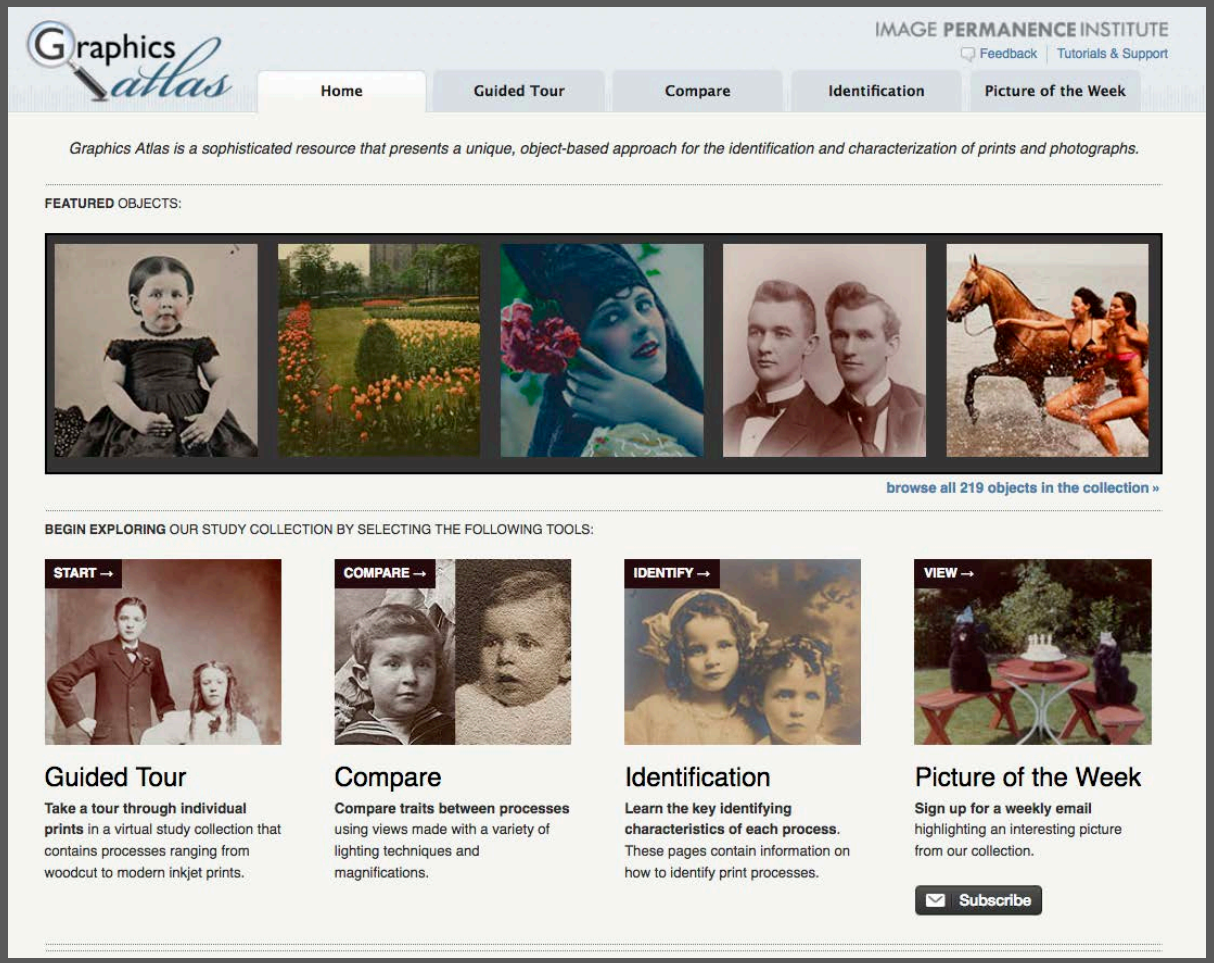
Methods of Looking



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Survey & Thank You

Thank you!

- National Endowment for the Humanities Division of Preservation and Access
- The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

Next Webinar

- Wednesday, January 10, 2:00pm EST
- A Methodology for Process Identification, Part 2

Survey!

- A brief survey will appear at the end, please give us feedback!

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