



Winterthur/University of Delaware
Program in Art Conservation
Conservation Report



Accession #: 2001.0017.0035

Object: [Portrait of an unidentified woman]

Object Date: 1870-1890

Artist/Author: Unknown

Materials: Matte collodion cabinet card

Owner: University of Delaware Museums: “The Baltimore Collection”

Permanent Location: UD Museums Collections

Reason for Treatment or Examination: Examined as part of the photograph block documentation project and aimed to add to the curatorial and conservation body of knowledge

Examined by: Julianna Ly, WUDPAC 2020

Report Date: January 6, 2018

DESCRIPTION

This is an oval shaped, bust length, matte collodion portrait of a seated black woman wearing a dress and cape.

CONDITION

The photograph measures 7.8 cm wide by 10.5 cm in length. These measurements vary from those on Artstor. Additionally, Artstor has an additional larger measurement for a mount that is no longer attached to the object.

The photolytic silver image is in overall fair, stable condition. It appears to have discolored slightly and has a slightly yellow cast. The surface has a thin layer of grime and dust. The collodion binder layer exhibits small micro-cracking throughout although there is no active flaking. Several small fly specks and acidic accretions have resulted in a “spotty” appearance of both lighter warm dots and darker spots scattered throughout. There are areas of abrasion, cracking, and small losses visible along the edges, most likely a result of handling. There are three areas around the sitter’s face—underneath her right check, on the edge of the left side of her face, and on the top left part of her head—that appears to have been previously retouched possibly with graphite due to the shiny particle appearance under magnification. Further testing is needed.

On the verso, there is various staining throughout resulting in both purple and darker brown tide lines. This may be associated with mold staining. Additionally, there are remnants of a former dark grey decorative backing that appears to have chemically offset into the paper. The backing is lifting in some areas from the photograph.