



Winterthur/University of Delaware
Program in Art Conservation
Conservation Report



Accession #: 2001.0017.0037c

Object: [Postcard portrait of an unidentified man]

Object Date: 1910-1930

Artist/Author: Unknown

Materials: Silver gelatin developing-out print (DOP)

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 while performing stabilization treatment

Examined by: Julianna Ly, WUDPAC 2020

Report Date: January 3, 2018

DESCRIPTION

The silver gelatin developing-out postcard depicts an unidentified African American man leaning against a door outside.

CONDITION

The paper support appears discolored overall with significant grime visible on both the recto and verso most concentrated in the PR top corner and PL edge likely from handling. In the top margin, orange-brown stains appear in two clusters; three centimeters from both the PR and PL top corners. In the bottom margin and slightly into the silver image area, there are four mold stains which are purple in appearance. The mold does not appear to be active and was likely a result from previous contact with moisture. Previous moisture damage is also evident in a large fine line which extends 5 centimeters into the center from the top edge and across the entire width of the silver image.

The silver image is in overall poor, unstable condition. There is severe delamination between the paper substrate and baryta layer and subsequently the baryta layer and the image. There is evidence of frilling and blistering along the edges and corners. The dark brown/black previously retouched dots on the eyes have not shifted in tone suggesting that the photograph was once much darker and most likely a black-and-white image. This demonstrates the severe fading and discoloration that has occurred which is most likely a result of chromophores developing within the organic gelatin binder layer from proximity to acidic materials and pollutants. The photograph appears to have been creased and/or folded in two places—the first, the top PL corner, and the bottom PL corner. This is evidenced by a slightly raised ridge with losses to the image and exposing the baryta and paper substrate along those areas.

TREATMENT

The silver image was dry cleaned with a cosmetic sponge to remove surface grime; and gelatin media was consolidated with a 1% solution of methylcellulose in DI H₂O applied by brush under active flaking areas. The losses were then isolated and inpainted with watercolors to help reintegrate the image.