



Article: The Kodak Dye Transfer Process – How Eliot Porter Captured Color (Abstract)

Author(s): Tatiana Cole

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The Kodak Dye Transfer Process – How Eliot Porter Captured Color

Tatiana Cole

Presented at the PMG session of the 2014 AIC Annual Meeting in San Francisco, California.

The Kodak Dye Transfer process was the most successful and popular variation of photography's dye imbibition, three-color assembly process. Materials were manufactured from 1945 until 1993, after which practitioners were limited to either using stockpiled materials, or trying to produce their own. Today, Kodak Dye Transfer prints are highly valued and considered to be relatively stable, but only a handful of practitioners remain.

A study was conducted at the Amon Carter Museum of American Art on the Kodak Dye Transfer process and the archive of American color photographer Eliot Porter (1901-1990). Porter used the process as his primary medium for the entire period it was being developed and improved, thus making his archive an ideal sample group for the study of Kodak Dye Transfer materials.

This presentation will focus on the technical development, characterization, and conservation treatment of Kodak Dye Transfer materials. It will discuss the changes in manufacture of the paper base and dyes, and physical characteristics associated with these changes, such as paper surface textures and gloss, and UV fluorescence. Results will be presented from tests on the effects that various common treatments potentially have on Kodak Dye Transfer materials; treatments such as surface cleaning, tear mending, and reducing planar distortion.

Findings from this study will provide conservators, archivists, and curators with historically interesting and practical information. The goal is to help the community more precisely identify and characterize Kodak Dye Transfer and other dye imbibition type prints, and inform conservation treatment of these kinds of materials.

Tatiana Cole

Associate Conservator

The Better Image