



Alfred Stieglitz (American, 1864–1946)

The Net Mender

1894

Carbon print

Alfred Stieglitz Collection

AIC accession number: 1949.690

Stieglitz Estate number: 67B

Inscriptions: Signed recto, lower right, on image, in graphite: "Alfred Stieglitz / 1899[?]" ; inscribed verso, on mount, lower left, in graphite: "Alfred Stieglitz / The Net Mender, 1894. / Leica #67B / The Alfred Stieglitz Collection"; verso, on mount, upper right, in graphite: framing diagram; verso, on mount, along right edge, sideways: "Stieglitz / [illegible] / Oak / [illegible] #XXVI / [illegible] 16 1/8 x 21"

Dimensions: 41.8 x 54.3 cm (image)

42 x 54.5 cm (paper/mount)

Print thickness: N/A

Surface sheen: Low gloss (2.7 GU @ 85°)

Paper tone: N/A

Mount: Original

Mount tone: L*77.07, a*9.45, b*27.19

Ultraviolet-induced (UV) visible fluorescence (recto): None

X-ray fluorescence (XRF) spectrometry:
N/A

Fourier transform infrared (FTIR) spectrometry:
N/A

CONTEXT

In an 1899 article Stieglitz singled out *The Net Mender* as his favorite among his own pictures: “It expresses the life of a young Dutch woman: every stitch in the mending of the fishing net, the very rudiment of her existence, brings forth a torrent of poetic thoughts in those who watch her sit there on the vast and seemingly endless dunes, toiling with that seriousness and peacefulness which is so characteristic of these sturdy people.”¹ He noted that the exhibition prints of the image had been produced as enlarged carbon prints because “the subject needs size to fully express it.”² Indeed, a sketched diagram in pencil on the verso reveals notes on framing, indicating the care Stieglitz took presenting his works for exhibition.

TECHNICAL SUMMARY

This photograph is a carbon print. It has been mounted overall to a thick wood-pulp board. Fine cracking at the edge of the print indicates that it was likely trimmed after it had been fully mounted. There are several inscriptions in graphite on the verso of the mount, including the artist’s name and a sketch for a framing profile, possibly done by the artist. The variation of gelatin thickness on the print itself creates areas of differential gloss between the high- and low-density areas, which are visible in raking light and characteristic of carbon prints. When the surface of the print is viewed under high magnification, paper fibers are visible beneath the gelatin layer. Black pigment particles are also visible within the binder, as well as slight relief from the carbon process, particularly at the interface of high- and low-density areas of the image. This print is extremely matte and does not fluoresce when exposed to long-wave UV radiation.

¹ Alfred Stieglitz, “My Favorite Picture,” *Photographic Life* 1 (1899), reprinted in Richard Whelan, ed., *Stieglitz on Photography: His Selected Essays and Notes* (Aperture, 2000), p. 61.

² *Ibid.*