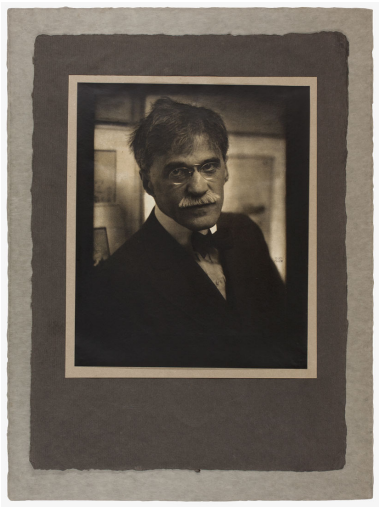

Edward Steichen (American, born Luxembourg, 1879–1973)

Portrait of Alfred Stieglitz

1915
Gum bichromate print
Alfred Stieglitz Collection

AIC accession number: 1949.827

Stieglitz Estate number:

Inscriptions: Signed and inscribed recto, on image, lower right, in black pencil: "STEICHEN / MDCCCCXV"; inscribed verso, on third hinged paper, upper left, in graphite: "Steiglitz [sic] / by / Steichen 1915"; verso, on paper affixed to third hinged paper, upper center, in graphite: "Alfred Stieglitz / 1111 Madison Ave [underlined]"

Dimensions: 25.1 x 20.2 cm (image); 29.4 x 24.2 cm (paper); 51 x 38 cm (final support)

Print thickness: N/A

Surface sheen: Low gloss (8.4 GU @ 85°)

Paper tone: N/A

Mount: Original

Mount tone: 1) L*63.26, a*4.40, b*15.99

2) L*35.31, a*1.91, b*4.53

3) L*58.43, a*0.64, b*8.91

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

X-ray fluorescence (XRF) spectrometry:
See below

Fourier transform infrared (FTIR) spectrometry:
N/A

CONTEXT

This portrait of Alfred Stieglitz, taken in the galleries of 291, was made using gum bichromate, a medium favored by the Pictorialist photographers. However, it shows very little of the brushy effects that were so appealing to the "gummers." Instead, Steichen pushed the process to its limits, capturing the fine, dark-on-dark detail of Stieglitz's suit as well as the range of midtones in the artwork behind him. The two lightest spots on the print, behind Stieglitz's left ear and on his collar, reveal that Steichen did resort to wiping away the emulsion. But unlike his *Self-Portrait with Brush and Palette*, the brushed effect is minimal, used only to provide tonal rather than textural contrast.

TECHNICAL SUMMARY

This photograph is a gum bichromate print on a thin, trimmed paper. The print is adhered at all four corners to three consecutive mount papers. The first mount is a slightly larger sheet of trimmed cream paper, the second is an untrimmed sheet of dark green paper, and the final mount is a sheet of trimmed and mottled light green paper. At the right corner of the print, Steichen signed his name in block letters and dated the work in roman numerals. Steichen typically dated his prints according to the year they were printed, rather than the negative date. It is therefore not unusual to have the date on the print conflict with other dated prints from the same negative. Adhered to the verso of the print is a paper label with Stieglitz's name and home address circa 1915. No other works in the Art Institute's Stieglitz Collection bear a similar label. When the surface of the print is examined under high magnification, the fibers from the paper are visible and the pigmented gum arabic sits directly on the surface of the paper. Some heavy retouching by the artist is noticeable in brighter areas, by the suit collar and next to the upper part of Stieglitz's proper right ear, for example. The mottled background of the print demonstrates that this method of printing does not allow easy gradations of color. The print does not fluoresce when exposed to long-wave UV radiation. Chromium and lead were detected using XRF spectrometry. Chromium is used to sensitize the gum bichromate. While lead is less commonly used in gum bichromate printing, the resulting signal is likely from a component of the pigment used in the gelatin layer.

X-RAY FLUORESCENCE (XRF) SPECTROMETRY

XRF spectral readings were taken from the recto of the work and from the mount when available. The elements listed below have been positively identified in the work; elements in bold have been attributed to the processing of the print.

Print: **Cr**, Pb

Mount: K, Ca, Ti, Fe, Cu, Zn, Sr

The graph below shows XRF spectra for three distinct measurement areas on the print: the darkest, maximum-density image area (Dmax, purple); the lightest, minimum-density image area (Dmin, green); and the mount, when available (orange). The background spectrum (gray) represents the characteristic contribution of the instrument itself as measured on a Teflon reference and is included in order to discount irrelevant elements from the print's signature. Elements were identified based on the presence of their characteristic peaks. Analysis was performed with a Bruker ARTAX air-path portable micro-XRF system equipped with a laser pointer, an integrated camera system, a Mo 12.5µm filter, and a Mo tube. Measurements were taken for 250 LT at 50 kV and 800 µA. The spectrum below illustrates the significant peaks for this print in the energy range from 3 to 15 keV.

Figure 1. (right)
Locations of XRF measurements

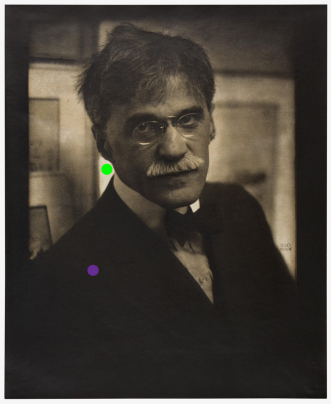

Figure 2. (below)
XRF spectra from the Dmax, Dmin, mount, and background signal produced by the analyzer.