

Photography myths exposed

By Jean-Louis Tremblay

Most people do not realize that their colour photographs, whether graduation pictures or ordinary snapshots, will only last 10 to 20 years before they fade to an unacceptable degree. Most people are not overly concerned about this, except Museums, Archives, art galleries, artists, photographers and those who would like their grand children to have memories of their ancestors.

Luis Nadeau is a photographic conservator who has been working for the past 10 years at the Provincial Archives located on the University Campus. Not satisfied with conventional materials commercially available to produce photographs of doubtful permanence, Nadeau investigated the possibility of producing images with more permanent materials. He explains that 'Ordinary black and white photographs have their image made of silver, which tends to oxidize (tarnish) with sulfur pollution and fade in time. Colour photographs are made of dyes that eventually fade,

even if they are not exposed to light. By making photographs with permanent pigments it is possible to insure a much longer degree of longevity.'

The results of his investigation has just been published in a 200 page textbook entitled History and Practice of Carbon Processes. 'Carbon' or pigment processes, it is said in the book, belong to the dichromated colloid systems that were very popular in the early days of photography. Unlike conventional photography, there is no silver involved. A carbon paper can be 'simply' made of a water colour pigment mixed with some gelatine and potassium dichromate and coated on paper. The dichromate is a sensitizing agent. When a negative on such a paper is exposed under a powerful light the pigmented gelatine that corresponds to the clear areas of the negative becomes hardened by the UV radiation. What is not hardened is simply washed away in warm water and a positive image remains. By using the three primary coloured pigments such as used in oil pain-

tings, a full colour photograph can be made.

UNB does not have a faculty of photography per say, but there are some 400 post secondary institutions in North America that teach photography as an art, a tool, or a science. This is clearly the market for which the book is intended. The author has already received some positive news from one of the leading photography centres in the world. Tom Hill, professor at the Rochester Institute of Technology and editor of the newsletter Photographi-Conservation gives full endorsement to the book.

This is not the first time that Nadeau's research is being recognized. For over a year leading institutions such as the Center for Creative Photography at the University of Arizona and well known National Geographic photographers such as Sam Abell visit Nadeau, asking him to use his special archival techniques to reproduce their best photos. The author is also much in demand as a writer and a lecturer in several countries. He has had 15 articles and papers publish-



ed in leading photography magazines and has lectured at the International Center of Photography in New York.

The book is the result of some 8 years of research. It has several hundred references in 5 languages and has chapters that will interest most photographers. Most amateurs will be able to appreciate a description of the gum dichromate process, which can be used with little specialized equip-

ment or skills. Only the most dedicated photographers would attempt the difficult through beautiful tricolour process.

The book is available at the UNB Bookstore. Sample carbon prints can be seen at the author's office at the Provincial Archives, just below the Bank of Montreal.

Luis Nadeau has contributed to the UNB Yearbook when he was a student here.

Coming exhibits...

An exhibition of work by the Art Teachers of School District 26 opens at the UNB Art Centre

with a public reception on Sunday afternoon, October 17th from 2 to 4 p.m. Nine teachers and former art-supervisor Clive Roberts combine their talents to produce a varied exhibit of watercolours, acrylics, drawings, prints, ceramics, enamels and jewellery. The other exhibitors are Brenda Liston, John Campbell, Alex McGibbon, Stephen McDougall, Nora Gaston, Lucy Robichaud, Pat Whipple and Heather Archer.

Also showing in the Art Centre is an exhibition of oil paintings by Molly Lamb Bobak, Impressions of the RMC Graduation.

The exhibitions continue in the Art Centre until November 8th. The Art Centre in Memorial Hall is open from Monday to Friday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and on Sundays from 2 to 4 p.m.



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