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Preservation of a Vietnam War-Era Slide Collection: A Master's Project to research, catalogue, digitize and exhibit the photo-documentary collection of Kenneth L. Swain Jr., United States Air Force Veteran

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Abstract of Thesis

The purpose of this master's project thesis is to explore and implement the necessary professional museum practices to care for and preserve the private Vietnam War-era slide collection of Kenneth L. Swain Jr., an Air Force veteran. Through museum practices presented by leading museum professionals, the slide collection was examined and a plan implemented for slide care and maintenance. In conjunction with the preservation of this slide collection, an exhibition was curated in honor of Swain's unique photo-documentary slide collection.

State University of New York
College at Buffalo
Department of History and Social Studies Education

**Preservation of a Vietnam War-Era Slide Collection:
A Master's Project to research, catalogue, digitize and exhibit the photo-documentary
collection of Kenneth L. Swain Jr., United States Air Force Veteran**

A Thesis in
Museum Studies

by

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

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December 2017

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DEDICATION

I would like to formally dedicate this thesis to my grandfather, Kenneth L. Swain Jr., who was the driving force behind this master's thesis project. Grandpa, it has been an incredible honor to learn, explore and preserve your history and involvement in the Vietnam War. And thank you for allowing me to share your story with family, friends, and readers.



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INTRODUCTION

As a museum professional specializing in collections management, the author took on a special project to catalog, scan and curate an exhibit with the private slide collection of Kenneth L. Swain Jr., a Vietnam War-era veteran. The project also called for gathering the provenance of the slide collection and conducting an interview with Swain. The large slide collection is from when Swain served overseas in both Japan and Taiwan during the Vietnam War. These slides document his cultural experiences in which he took the extra effort to share those experiences with his wife back home in Buffalo, New York. With so many photographs collectively taken during the Vietnam War by both photojournalists and amateur photographers, it is important to distinguish the fine line in discussing the uncensored wartime photography. Swain states this perfectly by saying, **“I classify myself as, when anybody asks me, I am a Vietnam-Era veteran, I am not a Vietnam [combat] veteran.”** Through making this statement he illuminates the fine line between types of photography during the Vietnam War (1955-1975). The addition of a simple word, “era,” makes the profound distinction between Vietnam War photography and photography from the Vietnam War-era.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Controversy and mixed feelings have always surrounded the Vietnam War. Opposing views on the war were felt by many which resulted in the extensive and overwhelming amount of literature found in libraries, bookstores and online resources. Offering an unbiased overview of pivotal Vietnam War facts, History.com relays that “the Vietnam War was a long, costly and divisive conflict that pitted the communist government of North Vietnam against South Vietnam and its principal ally, the United States.”¹ Some felt it was not a war the United States should have been involved in; but nonetheless, U.S. involvement in the war began in 1955 and carried through 1975. During that time period, hundreds of thousands of U.S. military men and women served overseas. Author of *The Air Force in the Vietnam War*, John T. Correll, shares that the United States Air Force played an integral role in the war. Not only were aircrafts carrying out “strikes against targets in North Vietnam,”² but the “C-130 was the Air Force’s main tactical airlifter in Southeast Asia” where it carried “cargo on pallets, heavy equipment, passengers, paratroopers, and aeromedical evacuation patients.”³ After military troops arrived in Southeast Asia via C-130 airlifters, some went right to the center of combat zones and others were stationed in nearby countries to support their fellow military comrades in the war zones.

The advancement of camera and film technology led the Vietnam War to be the most documented and uncensored war in history up to that time period. Reporters went into battle with camera in hand to capture the reality of military experiences and report them back home to the United States and worldwide. The demand for accurate and raw reporting was felt all across

¹ “Vietnam War,” *History Topics*, published 2009, accessed September 17, 2017, <http://www.history.com/topics/vietnam-war/vietnam-war-history>.

² John T. Correll, *The Air Force in the Vietnam War* (Arlington: Aerospace Education Foundation, 2004), 3, accessed September 17, 2017, Adobe PDF eBook.

³ Correll, 43.

the world and by news agencies such as The Associated Press (AP), who was the “first private sector organization in the United States to operate on a national scale.”⁴ On that national scale, the AP was so well represented during the Vietnam War that most “reporters agreed then (and now) that the AP owned Vietnam.”⁵ In fact, before the end of the war AP journalists reporting on Vietnam would “win six Pulitzer Prizes,”⁶ which is the highest honor in journalism. Having won such prestigious recognition for their reporting, some of the AP photographs are recognized instantly worldwide. In 2013, the AP published a book, *Vietnam, the Real War: A Photographic History by the Associated Press*, which covers the history of the Vietnam War through photographs taken by their reporters. With his introduction, American journalist Pete Hamill, sets readers up with the history of AP’s involvement in the Vietnam War and the most notable journalists and photographers who worked for the agency. With each following chapter, a brief introduction is given, followed by a series of photographs that have detailed descriptions about the surrounding historical events depicted in each photograph. Working for the AP allowed prints and negatives to be circulated throughout the United States, and often, worldwide. This also meant that the final products -- the developed films and prints -- were well-preserved by the company as important historic documentation now in their possession. As such, it would require careful treatment and a dutiful responsibility of collection maintenance. Abiding by archival guidelines and rules for maintaining these resources and supporting documents ensured the safety and longevity of them.

⁴ “Our Story,” Associated Press, accessed April 14, 2017, <https://www.ap.org/about/our-story/>.

⁵ The Associated Press, *Vietnam, the Real War: A Photographic History by the Associated Press* (New York: Abrams, 2013), 23.

⁶ The Associated Press, 23.

For many of the men and women serving in the United States military, it was their first time overseas in a foreign country. It was not uncommon for servicemen and women to have cameras in hand, documenting experiences for their personal record. They had an opportunity to put their photography skills to the test, whether it be in the combat zone or nearby station

assignment. As shown in an image owned by the *Associated Press*, **Image 1**, comedian Bob Hope and actress Carroll Baker provided some entertainment to sailors. In the

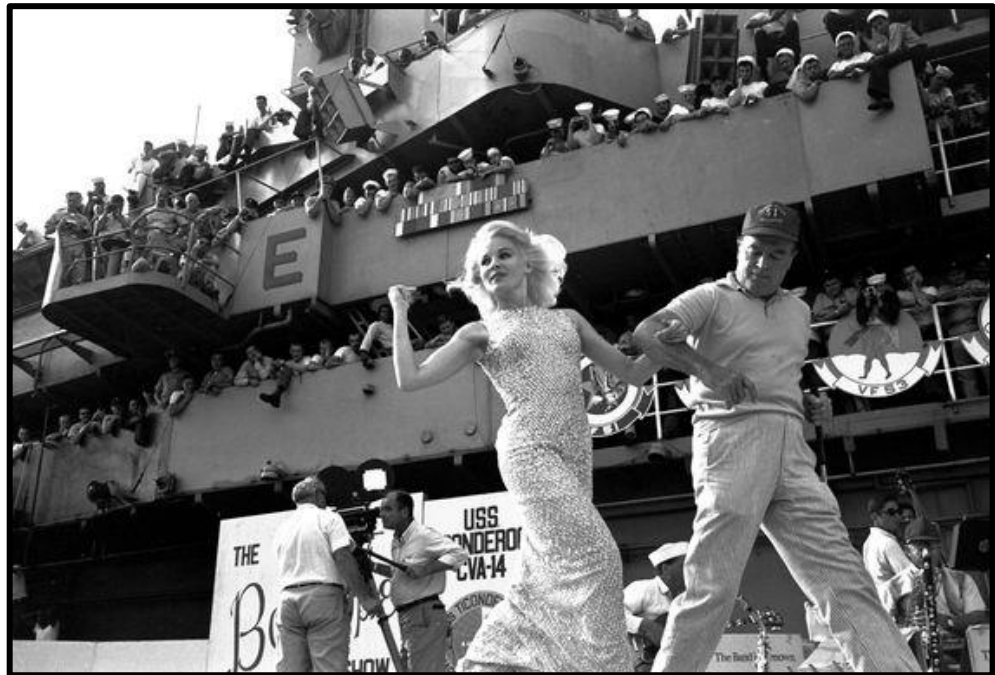


Image 1

background, for example, to the right of Hope, several sailors hold cameras and are taking photographs to remember this particular experience. Most of these sailors would be classified as amateur photographers, non-professionals experimenting with photography as a hobby. They could then get the film developed, choosing to keep the newly captured photographs for themselves or to send some treasured shots back home to the family.

At the time, numerous film products were available to cater to the specific needs of photographers. Some developed a keen liking for products made by the Kodak Company, which was an ever popular brand created by George Eastman in Rochester, New York. In fact,

“Eastman stood at the heart of the subsequent key conceptual and technical changes which created the mass amateur market and played the commanding role in the consequent transformation of the industry.”⁷ Eastman manufactured camera products that made it conceivable for average citizens to be photographers. He worked tirelessly to develop a camera that would be affordable, compact and easily operated. Large format cameras required a lot of equipment, which made it quite difficult -- but not impossible -- to take outside. Nevertheless, between 1861 and 1865, several photographers such as Mathew Brady, Alexander Gardner and Timothy O’Sullivan were among the first to shock the public with their realistic images of the battlefield carnage. However, “photographic processes were simply too slow and the equipment and procedures too cumbersome to record the heated exchange of battle.”⁸ In the late 1880’s, Eastman moved the concept of photography from strictly an intricate artistic practice to what would become an explosion of amateur pastime, thanks to a streamlined, easy to use, portable camera. Reese V. Jenkins, once a history consultant for the Eastman Kodak Company, states that, “ultimately he [Eastman] was responsible for the conception of an amateur camera and a system of photography which would place all of the complexities of photography in the hands of the manufacturer and a simple camera in the hands of nearly everyone six years of age or older.”⁹ After many trials and errors, this concept was a major, truly successful accomplishment. The Kodak Company had now simplified many challenging steps of the photography process for novice photographers. With the camera pre-loaded with film, all the photographer had to do was

⁷ Reese V. Jenkins, “Technology and the Market: George Eastman and the Origins of Mass Amateur Photography,” *Technology and Culture* 16, no. 1 (January 1975): 2, accessed January 19, 2016, Doi:10.2307/3102363

⁸ William S. Johnson, Mark Rice, and Carla Williams, *A history of photography: from 1839 to the present*, ed. Therese Mulligan and David Wooters (Köln: Taschen, 2015), 259.

⁹ Jenkins, 14.

“point the camera toward the desired subject and push the button.”¹⁰ After capturing images and exposing the roll of film, the last step was returning the camera to the manufacturer for the film to be developed. For a fee, the camera was subsequently loaded with fresh film to capture the next adventures on film. With service like that, it was no wonder that the photography business sky-rocketed. The exclusivity of photography as an art form melted away. Being much more cost-effective, it enabled everyone to try their hand at suspending a specific moment in time, forever.

Amateur photographers may not have thought about the upkeep and preservation of their photographs or slides, though; it was an afterthought of the developed hobby. More than sixty years after the start of the Vietnam War in 1955, the physical condition of that photographic material could be deteriorating quite rapidly. Knowing what to do next to preserve photographs from further damage is not an easy task. There are ample books to consult, websites to visit, or professionals from whom to seek help. The author of *Photographs of the Past: Process and Preservation*, Bertrand Lavedrine, has been the Director of the Research Center on the Conservation of Collections in Paris since 1998. He shares with readers that he knows:

the responsibility for preservation and management of collections is not limited to a small group of professionals. Indeed, the participation of the public in preserving and protecting cultural property is not only a necessity, but also a priority. Our photographic heritage – surely one of the most broadly distributed and popular elements of cultural property – richly deserves such public involvement.¹¹

Photography reaches such a large amount of the world population, it would be extremely difficult if preservation of photographic materials were left only to the professionals. With help

¹⁰ Reese V. Jenkins, “Technology and the Market: George Eastman and the Origins of Mass Amateur Photography,” *Technology and Culture* 16, no. 1 (January 1975): 2, accessed January 19, 2016, Doi:10.2307/3102363

¹¹ Bertrand Lavedrine et al., *Photographs of the Past: Process and Preservation*, trans. John McElhone (Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 2009), 3.

from the Getty Conservation Institute to write a book, Lavedrine laid out step-by-step processes to help novices preserve personal photographic materials. The book educates readers on the photographic processes and types of chemicals and materials used for certain developing procedures. The reader will learn about the history of processing photography and how it has evolved over the years since its invention. It is important to have proper knowledge of preservation before embarking on a project to save a photographic collection. Lavedrine emphasizes that “while we are often unable to reverse the damage that has occurred, we may be able to slow down future deterioration by observing some simple principles of sound conservation practice.”¹² There is a distinct possibility that some damage has already happened to older collections of photographs, or there is a potential for some damage. While it is not likely the material could be restored back to its original condition, preventative measures might halt further damages from transpiring. Through use of their well-researched books, authors and conservationists like Lavedrine are helping non-professionals analyze and assess the current state of photographic collections and what the best course of action is to preserve them.

Personal motivation is often the reasoning behind preserving a photographic collection whether it be within the family or a small contracted project. Jane and Richard Long, co-authors of *Caring for Your Family Treasures*, divide their book into sections to discuss methods of preserving items that are part of family heritage, items that might be passed down generation after generation. In the chapter on “Photographic Prints and Transparencies,” the authors state that, “family history is American history,” further explaining that “collections of prints and slides, and family albums with pictures accumulated over most of the century, are a major source

¹² Bertrand Lavedrine et al., *Photographs of the Past: Process and Preservation*, trans. John McElhone (Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 2009), 274.

of historical and biographical information as well as family fun.”¹³ Personal photographs contain history of both family and American history. Photographs can also have important historical information such as battle zone images of the Vietnam War; thereby being a combination of historical and biographical information.

A group of Vietnam veterans were brought together by personal motivation in 2004 at Texas Tech University, where “they decided to pool their stories, photographs, and artifacts, creating an extensive archive to preserve their experiences and make them available to scholars attempting to understand the war.”¹⁴ Their collected information and artifacts are so profoundly helpful and insightful for scholars to study. The archives are even available online in which the website offers access to “stories, images, documents, maps, and artifacts donated by veterans and their families...visitors learn about Vietnam in the first person.”¹⁵

Whether on a large institutional scale or a small private endeavor, there are proper steps one should take in organizing a photographic collection. The American Alliance of Museums (AAM) “has been bringing museums together since 1906, helping to develop standards and best practices, gathering and sharing knowledge, and providing advocacy on issues of concern to the entire museum community.”¹⁶ Consulting text written by the AAM will lead anyone organizing a collection in the proper direction. Even in organizing a small private collection, it would be highly beneficial to seek advice from the leading organization that provides standards for museums across the United States. One way in which the AAM provides the best practices and

¹³ Jane S. Long and Richard W. Long, *Caring For Your Family Treasures*, ed. Inge-Lise Eckmann (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Incorporated, 2000), 47.

¹⁴ Susanna Robbins, “Vietnam in First Person: The Virtual Vietnam Archive,” *OAH Magazine of History* 18, no. 5 (October 2004): 65, accessed January 20, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25163726>.

¹⁵ Robbins, 65.

¹⁶ “About Us,” *American Alliance of Museums*, last modified 2013, accessed February 10, 2017, <http://www.aam-us.org/about-us>.

standards for museum collections is through a manual titled, *Museum Registration Methods*. With their 5th edition published in 2010, the AAM provides a history of registration methods explaining that “after museums formed and began to gather collections for the use of the public, museum personnel began to systematically describe and order their collections to make them accessible.”¹⁷ Founded in 1906, the AAM worked for the next 50 years to “establish standards for the care and use of museum permanent collections and to apply those standards, as needed, to museum activities other than accessions.”¹⁸ The text also discusses best practices for storing objects, what materials should be used to prevent further damages, and paperwork essential for documenting collections.

Learning what types of materials work best for a collection should then provide enough information to purchase archival supplies for a collection. It would be beneficial to consult archival supply stores or websites such as, Gaylord Archival, Hollinger, and Archival Methods, to browse and compare different options available for purchase. Comparing prices of materials and storage solutions for a collection works very well through an internet search. Gaylord Archival, which has been in business since 1896, has a mission “to promote the preservation of the past, allowing history to endure for future generations.”¹⁹ The Gaylord Archival website lists items available for purchase with preservation of photographic collections in mind that range from storage boxes, folders, sleeves and protectors, album and scrapbook kits, and different equipment and supplies necessary for proper long term archival care. Similarly, Hollinger and Archival Methods also carry an array of archival photographic preservation products that are

¹⁷ Rebecca A. Buck and Jean Allman Gilmore, trans., *Museum registration Methods*, 5th ed. (Washington, D.C.: The AAM Press, 2010), 2.

¹⁸ Buck, 5.

¹⁹ Gaylord Archival, “Get to Know Us,” last modified 2017, accessed February 24, 2017, <http://www.gaylord.com/get-to-know-us>.

available for purchase. Trying to decide which company to buy supplies from may come down to the pricing of products or a personal preference.

CHAPTER 1

Photography during the Vietnam War

When learning about the history of the Vietnam War, a majority of the world already has a predisposed knowledge that it was a controversial war. It was a bloody and gruesome war, not like any other, for the fact that the military did not censor photographers or the media reporters. Therefore, photojournalists who reported on the war were able to share their images and stories with the world. A stigma surrounds the subject of the Vietnam War, garnering mixed reactions and feelings from scholars, students and even family or friends. Much of society is guilty of lumping together all Vietnam War veterans into one group. Often society has not realized the fine line between Vietnam veterans and Vietnam-*Era* veterans. Before starting an interview with Kenneth L. Swain Jr., who served in the United States Air Force during the Vietnam War (1955-1975), he wanted to make one thing perfectly clear, in which he stated, “I classify myself as, when anybody asks me, I am a Vietnam *Era* veteran, I am not a Vietnam veteran [serving in the combat zone]. [I] was not assigned to Vietnam, and thankful I never was.”²⁰ Making this distinction is important in that soldiers who served outside of the combat zone are giving credit to those military men and women who deserve it the most; to the soldiers who sacrificed their lives and those who were in immediate combat zone danger. Through making this distinction, Swain was able to put his own Vietnam War-era slide collection into perspective, telling viewers they would not see any photographs of combat zones – nothing gruesome or what some might find offensive.

²⁰ Kenneth L. Swain Jr., interview by author, Cattaraugus, March 19, 2017.

Types of imagery from the Vietnam War

A vast majority of photographs associated with the Vietnam War came directly from photojournalists on the front lines. The Associated Press (AP) was strongly represented by photojournalists in Southeast Asia and most other photojournalists overseas wanted to learn from the AP employees who established an office there in 1950. Pete Hamill, who wrote the introduction to *Vietnam, the Real War: A Photographic History by the Associated Press*, was a reporter in Vietnam for AP in 1965. Hamill explains that, “they [American editors] wanted bang-bang. That is, stories about combat, with all its violence, heroism, and sacrifice. Because of the demand for truthful reporting, both reporters and photographers were welcome to join a platoon or battalion at their own risk. Hamill shares that “there was no censorship, and for the first time in American history, and almost certainly the last, the thing that mattered most was the truth.”²¹ Having no censorship in reporting directly resulted in the gruesome images that accompanied newspaper articles and even images displayed on televisions, which are called to mind when anyone makes mention of the Vietnam War. In fact, “say the word *Vietnam* today to most people of a certain age; the image that rises is usually a photograph. An AP photograph.”²² One of many most notable photographs from the Vietnam War, *The Burning Monk* by Malcolm Browne (**Image 2**, next page), is an image that many remember and directly associate with the horrific events that happened. Looking at the photograph, eyes are immediately drawn to a figure engulfed in flames. Upon further inspection, a can is seen not far from the flames, so it can be deduced that the figure engulfed in flames has done this to himself. Onlookers are seen

²¹ The Associated Press, *Vietnam, the Real War: A Photographic History by the Associated Press* (New York: Abrams, 2013), 23.

²² The Associated Press, 23.

on the outskirts of this horrific event, behind a car with its hood raised. The photograph evokes shock, sadness and outrage. If the photograph were unaccompanied by any text, it would still provoke a viewer to conduct further research to find understanding and meaning. Fortunately,

the series of photographs captured by Browne has been accompanied by an article, “*He Was Sitting in the Center of a Column of Flame,*” written



Image 2

by Browne himself in June 1963. Here, readers learn the figure is a Buddhist monk, Thich Quang Duc, whose public protest to the war through self-immolation is dramatized by the presence of dozens of onlookers who do not intervene. Browne elaborates on the event that unfolded before his very eyes: “I could see Quang Duc move his hands slightly in his lap striking a match. In a flash, he was sitting in the center of a column of flame, which engulfed his entire body.”²³ Shared with the world, “the photograph aroused worldwide outrage and hastened the end of the Diem government.”²⁴ Browne’s series of photographs evoked emotions from people all over the world, for a photograph can illustrate the experiences that are often too difficult to

²³ Milton J. Bates et al., comps., *Reporting Vietnam: American journalism, 1959-1975*, (New York: Library of America, 2000), 33.

²⁴ The Associated Press, *Vietnam, the Real War: A Photographic History by the Associated Press*, (New York: Abrams, 2013), 64.

read about. Another historic and deeply emotional photograph associated with the Vietnam War was taken by Nick Ut, titled *The Terror of War*. The photograph depicts a girl, Kim Phuc, who is running down the street naked and crying with other children in her family suffering from a

napalm attack (**Image**

3). The children are

followed by soldiers

who are also fleeing

the town, the town

which is engulfed in a

dark cloud of

chemicals behind

them. After snapping

several photographs of

the event, “Ut put



Image 3

down his camera to help” and then “drove her in his van to a village hospital, where doctors and

nurses saved her life.”²⁵ Both of these images, along with hundreds of others, will always be

associated with the Vietnam War. They represent the horrors experienced and witnessed during

a war that used extreme guerilla war tactics by all sides. Photojournalists were able to shape the

views of Americans and people worldwide with the images they took. They were able to evoke

emotions from viewers, sparking an urgency to end the war. Those photographs are how the

Vietnam War is remembered; they will be forever associated with Vietnam War photography.

²⁵ The Associated Press, *Vietnam, the Real War: A Photographic History by the Associated Press* (New York: Abrams, 2013), 32.

The alternative side to Vietnam War photography is photography from the Vietnam War *Era*, which is inclusive to photography taken overseas during the time period of the Vietnam War (1955-1975), but does not have imagery of combat zones and gore. Swain's slide collection strictly documented his travels around the countries in which he was stationed in. His photography was of personal exploration of a culture he was newly immersed in as a direct result of serving for his country overseas. Swain's photography is considered to be amateur, in the sense that it is not "commercial photography."²⁶ Reese V. Jenkins, author of the article, "George Eastman and the Origins of Mass Amateur Photography," explains to readers that amateur photography is "the change in practice of photography from the dominance of the professional to that of the amateur" and has "revolutionized both the photographic industry and the social role of photography."²⁷ Photography moved from predominately an artistic expression, not only in the sense of creating an artistic image, but in the art of photographic production – the technical aspects of chemicals and proper light exposures. From *The Amateur Photographers Handbook*, author Aaron Sussman writes:

Photography is more than a means of recording the obvious... It is a way of feeling, of touching, of loving. What you have caught on film is captured forever, whether it be a face or a flower, a place or a thing, a day or a moment. The camera is a perfect companion. It makes no demands, imposes no obligations. It becomes your notebook and your reference library, your microscope and your telescope. It sees what you are too lazy or too careless to notice, and it remembers little things, long after you have forgotten everything.²⁸

²⁶ Reese V. Jenkins, "Technology and the Market: George Eastman and the Origins of Mass Amateur Photography," *Technology and Culture* 16, no. 1 (January 1975): 1, accessed January 19, 2016, Doi:10.2307/3102363.

²⁷ Jenkins, 1.

²⁸ Aaron Sussman, *The Amateur Photographer's Handbook*, 8th ed. (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, Inc., 1973), Foreword.

The Eastman Kodak Company simplified the complex and time-consuming practice of photography so much that all an amateur photographer had to do was find a subject to photograph and click the button; then the manufacturer took care of the film development. In his newly acquired hobby, Swain was able to document his experiences, creating a timeline to look back on.

CHAPTER 2

Photographer Background

Kenneth L. Swain Jr. developed a fondness for airplanes at a young age that has carried with him throughout his life. Swain attended Burgard Vocational High School for four years where he took courses in aviation mechanics. In a newspaper clipping from 1970, the *Courier-Express Sunday Pictorial* explains that “Burgard established its Aviation Department in 1923 and over the years it has been expanded to meet the ever-growing demand for skilled aircraft technicians.”²⁹ In fact, the aviation program curriculum reached such high quality, it became “certified by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA),” which permitted “Burgard to award FAA certificates to students who successfully complete the required course of study in power plant and/or airframe mechanics.”³⁰ Burgard needed to expand the “aviation program to include a fifth year of training to graduates of the regular four-year courses;”³¹ but post-graduate studies were expensive, so Swain could not afford to obtain certification from the FAA.

With that, Swain enlisted in the United States Air Force at the age of nineteen and served from 1963 to 1967. For the first 3 years of his service, Swain was stateside and worked with the Strategic Air Command (SAC), where he refueled tanker airplanes that assisted B-47 and B-52 bombers for the Cold War. In the last year of his service, Swain was shipped overseas, to Tokyo, Japan and then to Taichung, Taiwan, where he served with the 50th Troop Carrier Squadron, Pacific Air Forces (PACAF) branch in assistance for the combat troops in Vietnam. He was not a soldier in immediate danger on the front lines of the war, about which he later remarked, “the

²⁹ Clare Allen, “At Burgard Vocational High School: Training Aircraft Technicians,” *The Buffalo Courier-Express*, February 1, 1970, 4-5, Archives & Special Collections Department, SUNY Buffalo State.

³⁰ Burgard, 4-5.

³¹ Burgard, 4-5.

people that had to go to Vietnam, I prayed for them.”³² Working overseas in the Tactical Air Command division, Swain was an air frame mechanic on C-130 airplanes, which meant he



Image 4

inspected the integrity of the plane’s frame, conducting maintenance checks and any repairs required to prepare the plane for its next flight. Above, **Image 4** is an example of a C-130 airplane that

Swain would work on. Swain never felt like he was in immediate danger in either country where he was stationed. He even explained that he was not required to carry a weapon at any point in time while overseas.

When stationed in Tokyo, Swain decided to try his hand in the growing popular hobby of photography. Individuals who dabble in the art of photography with no formal training are often referred to as amateur photographers. The Oxford Reference describes amateur photographers as “someone who does something for the love of it” and further explains that “amateurs photographed for their own improvement and pleasure.”³³ Swain said he had a familiarity with one of Kodak’s Brownie cameras, most likely the Hawkeye model.

³² Kenneth L. Swain Jr., interview by author, Cattaraugus, March 19, 2017.

³³ Robin Lenman and Angela Nicholson, 2006, *Amateur Photography: history*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, accessed February 15, 2016, <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780198662716.001.0001/acref-9780198662716-e-45>.

Prior to buying a camera from the Tachikawa Air Base commissary, Swain bought some photography magazines to research what kind of camera to purchase. He also knew he would get a good deal on cameras in Japan, where many models were being manufactured because the country was advanced in technology. Having looked at several different makes and models of cameras, Swain said he went with the Yashica Lynx 5000 because, “it was cheap.”³⁴ Swain got a package deal when buying the camera which included a leather case, a bayonet flashbulb, and a cable release which assisted photographers with long exposure times. One important feature on the camera that Swain particularly wanted was the battery-operated light meter, which assisted photographers in manually adjusting the camera features to the correct amount of light exposure.

Now that Swain had made the tough decision of what camera to buy, he encountered another hurdle of learning how to use the camera properly. He admitted to being a total “novice of the 35mm camera” because “you had to make all the adjustments manually”³⁵ to obtain proper film exposure. Using a 35mm film camera and 36-exposure film, Swain said “the bad feature about 35mm film is you [do not] know if they turned out until two weeks later [after they were developed].”³⁶ In fact, Swain shrugged his shoulders and said, “I know some did not turn out,”³⁷ further indicating that some of the photographs came out black or they were under-exposed or over-exposed. He was not upset over the mistakes because he was teaching himself how to operate the camera and he anticipated that things like that could happen. Learning to use the camera became Swain’s hobby, but it also doubled as a useful tool to document his cultural experiences overseas. Not only was he able to document days off; he also found a clever way to share his experiences with his wife who was back home in Buffalo, New York.

³⁴ Kenneth L. Swain Jr., interview by author, Cattaraugus, March 19, 2017.

³⁵ Swain.

³⁶ Swain.

³⁷ Swain.

Using both Kodachrome and Ektachrome transparency film, Swain took more than 400 photographs of his cultural experiences while serving overseas. The 35mm transparency film was developed into slides, which measure 2 x 2 inches when encased in small cardboard holders. The color transparency film went through a chromogenic process in which “a positive photographic image on a film support is composed of three superimposed layers of gelatin, each containing a dye image, either yellow, magenta, or cyan. The photosensitive material is a silver halide included in the gelatin layers, and the dyes are formed only at the time of the development of the silver image.”³⁸ However, Swain mostly used Kodachrome transparency film, which “was unique among chromogenic materials in that it did not incorporate the color couplers in the film; these were introduced only during processing, which was one of the most complex processing sequences for any photographic material.”³⁹ His reasoning for choosing that slide transparency film was simple: Swain said it was “a cheaper route to develop film that way.”⁴⁰ He also emphasized that the slides were inexpensive to mail back to his wife in Buffalo, where she could then view and share in her husband’s cultural experiences. Swain purchased all the equipment his wife would need to view his slides – a slide projector, slide trays and a small hand viewer – at the commissary on base and then shipped them home for her to utilize. Along with the slides sent home, Swain would write out a detailed list of descriptions of what each slide depicted which was very useful for his wife’s viewing. Swain’s process was to have the roll(s) of film developed; then, about two weeks later, he would receive the slides and use a hand viewer to write a short description of what each slide depicted. When Swain was asked why he chose to use slide transparency film he said “I figured slides would last longer” and they are “easier to

³⁸ Bertrand Lavedrine et al., *Photographs of the Past: Process and Preservation*, trans. John McElhone (Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 2009), 87.

³⁹ Lavedrine, 88.

⁴⁰ Kenneth L. Swain Jr., interview by author, Cattaraugus, March 19, 2017.

keep than prints.”⁴¹ He further explained that he would rather have several boxes of slides than big photo albums, and even chuckled, adding “how many photo albums would I need for all those slides?”⁴²

⁴¹ Kenneth L. Swain Jr., interview by author, Cattaraugus, March 19, 2017.

⁴² Swain.

CHAPTER 3

Photographer's Methodology

Once Swain was equipped with a camera and accessories of his choice, he began to photograph subject matter that interested him the most. Having never before visited countries with such drastic cultural differences, Swain found Buddhist temples, street markets, and landscapes very interesting.

Exploring Japan

What drew Swain's interest toward the temples were the architectural work, the ornate details of décor, and artistic use of colors. He explained that "the little details were marvelous.

You [do not] see anything like that in the United States."⁴³ In one of his first trips, he traveled to the city of Kamakura in the Kanagawa Prefecture, Japan, where he visited the Kotokuin Buddhist temple that is renowned for



Image 5

its "Great Buddha."⁴⁴ Taken in 1966, Swain captured an image of not only the "Great Buddha" statue, but the immense popularity of the temple (**Image 5**). In his caption for the image,

⁴³ Kenneth L. Swain Jr., interview by author, Cattaraugus, March 19, 2017.

⁴⁴ "Great Buddha of Kamakura," Japan-guide.com, copyright 1996-2017, <http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e3100.html>.

“Buddha, note Kimono on women,” he acknowledges the small group of women in traditional Japanese dress. This image does a good job at signifying a specific place and another culture being experienced, with the women in traditional Japanese clothing making that apparent.

As Swain was learning to use his new 35mm camera, he experimented with the different settings to see which ones worked best for certain lighting scenarios or action shots. When he



Image 6



Image 7

was traveling from Japan to Taiwan on a C-124 airplane, he made several attempts to photograph the airplane propeller with a technique called stop action, in which a clear image of the propeller would be visible. In his first attempt, (**Image 6**), Swain captioned

the slide: “Try at action stop on the prop – didn’t work.” His second attempt, (image 2016.005.035, not pictured here), the caption reads, “another try at stop action – worked a little better.” With an understanding of the photographic technique he wanted to use, Swain knew the only

way to master it was to keep trying. Therefore, he attempted a third time to catch the propeller in

a stop action photograph on a new roll of film (**Image 7**, previous page), captioned “try at stop action of prop, almost worked.”⁴⁵

Exploring Taiwan

When stationed in Taiwan, Swain befriended a Taiwanese man, Peter, and his sister whom he met at a “fancy nightclub that had traditional [Taiwanese] dancers and singers.”⁴⁶

After seeing the siblings several times at the nightclub, Peter offered to show Swain around the area and take him to different tourist destinations.

Learning what Swain’s interests were, Peter was able to take him to several Buddhist



Image 8

temples and to experience the local scenic countryside. In return for his generosity of touring Swain (and his buddies) around, Peter wanted nothing but an honest friendship. However, to show his appreciation of Peter, Swain paid for the different modes of transportation and meals on the trips they took. Thinking about their modes of transportation, Swain was delighted to share that one method was by rickshaw (**Image 8**). In this image, Swain is sitting in a rickshaw that was commonly used for transportation in Taiwan. When asked who took the picture, he

⁴⁵ Kenneth L. Swain Jr., interview by author, Cattaraugus, March 19, 2017.

⁴⁶ Swain.

explained that “Peter or his sister were more advanced and knowledgeable about electronics”⁴⁷ so it was easy for them to use Swain’s camera.

Swain also confided that Peter came from a wealthy family, which might be another reason why he would not accept any monetary payment for touring the men around parts of



Image 9

before their excursions of the area. Swain was clearly impressed with these living conditions, because he took many photographs at the compound, which document elaborate gardens with large rock formations (**Image 9**), zoo-like arenas and cages with exotic pets (**Image 10**), koi ponds with fountains, and ornate marble fireplaces inside the living quarters.

Taiwan. Peter’s father “was upper management in the Taiwan sugar plantation business,” Swain explained, “which is one of the main industries in Taiwan at the time.”⁴⁸ All of the executives of the sugar plantation business “lived in a walled in, secured compound,”⁴⁹ where Swain would meet Peter



Image 10

⁴⁷ Kenneth L. Swain Jr., interview by author, Cattaraugus, March 19, 2017.

⁴⁸ Swain.

⁴⁹ Swain.

Significance of Photographic Descriptions

As mentioned earlier, Swain wrote descriptions for every photograph he took while stationed overseas. Fifty-one years ago, these descriptions were valuable to his wife, so she could understand the content of the slides. Presently, the slide descriptions are still with most of the trays of slides and have been extremely helpful in the scanning and preservation of Swain's slide collection. Not every tray of slides has a set of descriptions with them today, but ten out of thirteen trays still do. When an electronic catalog was created for the collection, the slides that had descriptions made it significantly easier to organize and date each rack of slides. Swain was unaware at the time of creating these descriptive lists, that he was utilizing archival methods in the arrangement of his collection.

His descriptions created an "original order," which is an archival principal stemming from archival arrangement that "dictates that papers" or in this case slides, "be kept in the order in which their creator used them."⁵⁰ Polly Darnell, the author of chapter 5 titled "Arrangement" within *Museum Archives: An Introduction*, further explains that: "this order may be chronological, alphabetical (by name or subject, for instance), numerical (e.g. by accession number), or a combination of the above. As long as the records you receive are in some recognizable order, maintain that order if possible."⁵¹ All of Swain's slides have been kept in either the same order of their development or the order by which Swain stipulated. One rack of slides taken in Taiwan was singled out by Swain to have a specific order, which he wrote down to make the viewing a better orchestrated narrative (**Image 11**, next page). He used the numbered slides, based on film exposure chronology, to create a preferred viewing order.

⁵⁰ Polly Darnell, "Arrangement," in *Museum Archives: An Introduction*, ed. Deborah Blythe (Chicago: The Society of American Archivists, 2004), 36.

⁵¹ Darnell, 36.

Without that list of descriptions to correspond with the slides, his preferred order could have been lost forever, which would have jeopardized the integrity of his intended original order. For this reason, it is very fortunate that the descriptions for the rack of slides were still in the box.

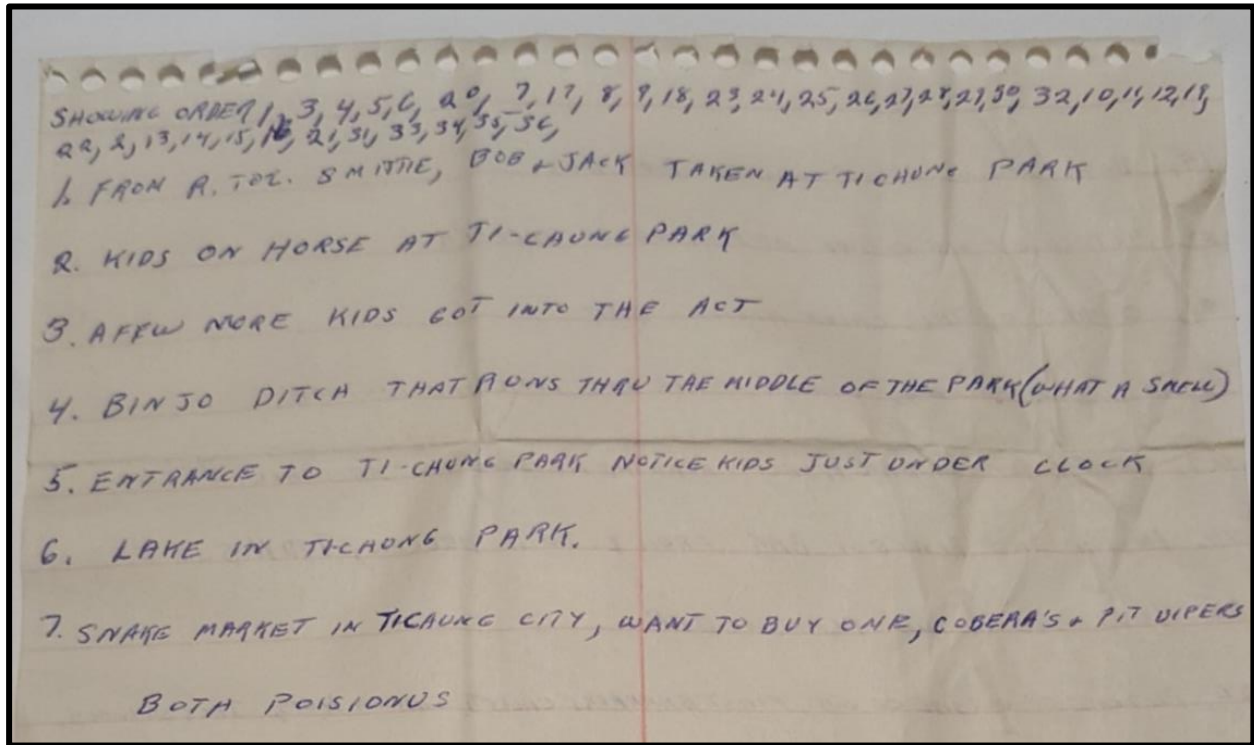


Image 11

CHAPTER 4

Best Practices for Slide Maintenance and Storage:

Identifying Potential Threats and Damage

With camera technology readily available and affordable, amateur photographers could take as many or as few photographs that they could afford to process. In Swain's case, he took well over 400 photographs while serving overseas from 1966 to early 1967. He managed to get all the slides home to Buffalo, New York, but what did Swain do with the slides afterwards? Within the past fifteen years, Swain made a couple attempts to share his Vietnam-era slides with his children and grandchildren, setting up the slide projector and screen. However, "the family was more interested in seeing the family pictures, of the children growing up."⁵² So the slides were "just sitting in there," Swain motioned to his bedroom during his interview, in "the same conditions for fifty years."⁵³ Several cardboard boxes sat on the floor in Swain's bedroom and inside of those boxes were the racks of slides he had originally arranged, with no temperature control or other means of protection either. Fortunately, the slides have fared very well for half a century considering their storage conditions, although that has not prevented some deterioration over time. Timothy P. Whalen, Director at the Getty Conservation Institute wrote that:

Photographic practice had produced an extraordinarily rich cultural legacy. This legacy is now under threat, as the pace of artistic and technical innovation has meant that processes that were once prevalent have now disappeared entirely. Simultaneously, the photographic images that remain are aging and fading. These facts suggest that research into both the practice and materials of photography is essential if we are to preserve this quintessentially modern art form.⁵⁴

⁵² Kenneth L. Swain Jr., interview by author, Cattaraugus, March 19, 2017.

⁵³ Swain.

⁵⁴ Bertrand Lavedrine et al., *Photographs of the Past: Process and Preservation*, trans. John McElhone (Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 2009), foreword.

The advancement of photography grew by leaps and bounds so rapidly that conservationists are playing catch up on procedures and practices for how to preserve photographs from various time periods. A former research chemist with the Kodak Company, George T. Eaton explains that “temperature, moisture, light, and atmospheric contaminants are probably the primary causes of deterioration. Chemical reactions are accelerated at elevated temperatures, particularly in the presence of moisture. The intensity and duration of exposure to light, especially in display situations, has a very significant effect on color images.”⁵⁵ Transparency slides will also fade, no matter if there are in ideal storage conditions or not. Over the years, the slides will continue to lose the color pigmentation, leaving slides looking faded and dated.

Environmental Factors: Temperature and Humidity Recommendations

As many amateur photographers may not realize, there is an ideal climate for slides and photographs, and Swain’s slides were not being housed according to those parameters. A great risk is taken if temperature fluctuates too much which could result in rapid deterioration of slides. Swain lives in an old farmhouse where temperatures vary quite often. Sitting in a cardboard box in his bedroom, the slides were exposed to ice cold temperatures in the winter months and quite warm and humid conditions during the summer months. Bertrand Lavedrine, Director of the Research Center on the Conservation of Collections in Paris, explains that “temperature and humidity are critical environmental factors; specific standards for the storage of photographs have been established that prescribe different ranges for temperature and

⁵⁵ George T. Eaton, *Conservation of Photographs* (Rochester: Eastman Kodak Co., 1985), 79.

humidity depending on the type of photograph to be stored.”⁵⁶ From a chapter on Preservation written in a textbook titled “Museum Archives,” author Sarah R. Demb shares that an acceptable environment for photographic collections is “within the general range of 65°F – 70°F and 40-50% relative humidity (RH).”⁵⁷ However, Lavedrine emphasizes that there are no ideal “environmental conditions that is optimal for all photographs;” therefore, “it becomes necessary to create conditions specific to each medium and support category.”⁵⁸ Here, Lavedrine is talking about creating environments with temperature and humidity controls, which is quite an expensive venture depending on the size and scale of the photographic collection. Constructing an elaborate controlled environment such as that would be nearly impossible for a small family collection. The alternative to creating an ideal environment as suggested by Lavedrine and conservation experts is to search out the ultimate storage location in your house, one that is cool and dry. Storage locations to avoid would be “cool but humid environments, such as basements...as are dry locations that experience wide temperature variations, such as attics.”⁵⁹ Eaton, author of *Conservation of Photographs*, explains to his readers that “high humidity is particularly detrimental to photographs. Its effects include negatives sticking together, mold growth, ‘foxing’ of pages, chemical degradation of the support and rusting of metal cans.”⁶⁰ The opposite side of the spectrum, as Lavedrine shares, is dry humidity which “leads to embrittlement of many kinds of photographs.”⁶¹ It is extremely fortunate that Swain’s slides have held up quite well despite the lack of temperature and humidity control.

⁵⁶ Bertrand Lavedrine et al., *Photographs of the Past: Process and Preservation*, trans. John McElhone (Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 2009), 280.

⁵⁷ Sarah R. Demb, Preservation, in *Museum Archives: An Introduction*, ed. Deborah Blythe (Chicago: The Society of American Archivists, 2004), 104.

⁵⁸ Lavedrine, 280.

⁵⁹ Lavedrine, 280.

⁶⁰ George T. Eaton, *Conservation of Photographs* (Rochester: Eastman Kodak Co., 1985), 79.

⁶¹ Lavedrine, 280.

Exposure to light

Slides can deteriorate quite rapidly depending on their treatment and long term care. A common rule of thumb for photography is knowing that exposure to light plays a massive factor in the longevity of slides, negatives and prints. Lavedrine explains that:

The dyes of most chromogenic process photographs will fade quite rapidly when exposed to light; but they will also fade, albeit much more slowly, while they are in dark storage. And since one dye may fade more rapidly than the other two, this may lead to a change in the quality of the color rendering. This is the reason we often observe a color shift toward the blue or toward the red, depending on the film brand and on its storage and display history.⁶²

Luckily Swain's slides have been viewed less than a handful of times in the past fifty years, keeping the slide transparencies in considerably good condition. Swain himself knew that he had "to keep them out of the light"⁶³ and minimize the light exposure on the slides. Eaton tells his readers that "projection times should not exceed one minute per slide"⁶⁴ if the slides were to be projected for a showing. However, Lavedrine makes a point of explaining that slides "will also fade, albeit much more slowly, while they are in dark storage" to which "the image will show a shift toward the yellow, the red or the blue."⁶⁵ While the fading of slide transparencies is inevitable, it is best to keep them in the dark to slow down the process.

Mold Infestation

Another factor that can cause distress and further deterioration of slides is fungus. "Often called mold or mildew," Eaton discusses that, "fungus growth is another form of deterioration

⁶² Bertrand Lavedrine et al., *Photographs of the Past: Process and Preservation*, trans. John McElhone (Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 2009), 88.

⁶³ Kenneth L. Swain Jr., interview by author, Cattaraugus, March 19, 2017.

⁶⁴ George T. Eaton, *Conservation of Photographs* (Rochester: Eastman Kodak Co., 1985), 69.

⁶⁵ Lavedrine, 88.

that can be damaging to negatives, transparencies, and prints. It is the result of high relative humidity – 60 percent or more – that often prevails in tropical countries and in the United States during the warm summer.”⁶⁶ It was discussed previously how it was wise that Swain kept his slides in the dark to prevent further deterioration; however, fungus thrives in darkness and quickly spreads to other materials. Seeming like a lose-lose situation, perhaps keeping the slides in the dark while conducting periodic maintenance checks for fungus would be the best solution for these problems. Lavedrine describes the appearance of a mold infestation. It “is indicated by the appearance of gray blisters or small spots surrounded by threadlike networks – sometimes colored – accompanied by disappearance of the image at these locations.”⁶⁷ When evidence of fungus spores is present, remove the contaminated slides immediately to prevent it from spreading and destroying entire collections. There was some uncertainty whether any of Swain’s slides had mold growth on them, so to err on the side of caution, the twelve slides in question were removed from their trays and housed separately from the rest of the collection.

Poor storage materials for slides

While a cardboard box might be considered a safe way to store slides, it can actually do more harm than good in this case. In fact, Richard and Jane Long make clear in their book, *Caring For Your Family Treasures*, that “photographic prints may also be harmed by exposure to certain chemicals found in mounting materials, albums, or the boxes or envelopes in which they are stored. Exposure to acidified paper or glue of any sort is especially harmful.”⁶⁸ The

⁶⁶ George T. Eaton, *Conservation of Photographs* (Rochester: Eastman Kodak Co., 1985), 84.

⁶⁷ Bertrand Lavedrine et al., *Photographs of the Past: Process and Preservation*, trans. John McElhone (Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 2009), 279.

⁶⁸ Jane S. Long and Richard W. Long, *Caring For Your Family Treasures*, ed. Inge-Lise Eckmann (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Incorporated, 2000), 48.

cardboard boxes in which Swain is storing his slides are acidic and will be harmful to the slides, causing further deterioration. The slides themselves are each housed in a 2 x 2 inch cardboard carrier that was commercially mounted at the time of the film being developed, adhered together with glue which is another harmful chemical to slides. These mounts for slides may have seemed like a good method of presenting the transparencies, but damages have occurred many years later. Some of Swain's slides have developed a visible yellow-like stain in the photograph, most likely caused by a chemical reaction from the mounts.

Ideal storage materials for slides

When storage conditions are not ideal, change and improvement are necessary to ensure the best possible longevity of the slide collection. Eaton makes a relevant observation, saying, "Appropriate actions should be taken to prevent further damage to the whole collection. Often this involves changes in how or where the photographic artifacts are stored or displayed."⁶⁹ Swain's slide collection desperately needs improvement in storage materials. Conservator Bertrand Lavedrine suggests that "envelopes and boxes are effective means of protecting photographs from dust and abrasion while also limiting contact with ambient air that may be carrying pollutants."⁷⁰ More specifically, he says to "carefully choose plastic envelopes or sleeves for negatives and transparencies as well as plastic storage pages for albums."⁷¹ Products that come highly recommended are "polyester and polyethylene" because they are "physically and chemically stable," while the "only disadvantage seems to be [their] tendency to accumulate

⁶⁹ George T. Eaton, *Conservation of Photographs* (Rochester: Eastman Kodak Co., 1985), 10.

⁷⁰ Bertrand Lavedrine et al., *Photographs of the Past: Process and Preservation*, trans. John McElhone (Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 2009), 285.

⁷¹ Lavedrine, 289.

an electrostatic charge.”⁷² This could be a detrimental disadvantage to your collection, as Sarah R. Demb emphasizes that “the static charge in polyester sleeves can lift certain pigments and graphite off the pages, so these sleeves should be used sparingly, if at all, with works of art on paper and materials written in pencil.”⁷³ This does create problems for any information written in pencil around the cardboard mounts holding the slides, the static could lift the graphite markings off, erasing vital information. The next storage materials needed to rehouse the slides are acid-free binders or boxes. It is necessary to choose materials that are “acid-free” because “acidic containers contribute to the transfer of acid to the materials;” therefore, “transferring materials from acidic storage (cardboard boxes, old manila folders) slows deterioration and gives materials proper support.”⁷⁴

⁷² Bertrand Lavedrine et al., *Photographs of the Past: Process and Preservation*, trans. John McElhone (Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 2009), 289.

⁷³ Sarah R. Demb, “Preservation,” in *Museum Archives: An Introduction*, ed. Deborah Blythe (Chicago: The Society of American Archivists, 2004), 107.

⁷⁴ Demb, 105.

CHAPTER 5

Preserving History, Building a Collection

In 1989, a group of Vietnam veterans from west Texas gathered at Texas Tech University. The reason for this gathering was to discuss “ways in which they could use their experiences in Vietnam in a positive, constructive manner.”⁷⁵ They decided that they would “pool their stories, photographs, and artifacts, creating an extensive archive to preserve their experiences and make them available to scholars attempting to understand the war.”⁷⁶ With that, in November of 1989, “the board of Regents of Texas Tech University established the Vietnam Center, with the dual missions of funding and guiding the development of the Vietnam Archive and encouraging continuing study of all aspects of the American Vietnam experience.”⁷⁷ This Vietnam Archive will preserve the history of the United States involvement in the Vietnam War, both home and abroad. From the collection that started with the group of Vietnam veterans, the Vietnam Archive now has “millions of pages of material and tens of thousands of photographs, slides, maps, periodicals, audio, moving images, and books related to the Vietnam War, Indochina, and the impact of the war on the United States and Southeast Asia.”⁷⁸ What started as an all-around incredible resource to have available for scholars in the vicinity of Texas Tech University has been made into a worldwide resource. The Virtual Vietnam Archive was a massive project to digitize all items in their possession using a variety of equipment which includes “HP flatbed scanners, Fujitsu high-speed and flatbed scanners, an EPSON large bed

⁷⁵ Susanna Robbins, “Vietnam in First Person: The Virtual Vietnam Archive,” *OAH Magazine of History* 18, no. 5 (October 2004): 64, accessed January 20, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25163726>.

⁷⁶ Robbins, 64.

⁷⁷ “General Information,” Vietnam Center and Archive, last updated September 6, 2017, accessed September 27, 2017, <https://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/general/>.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

scanner, Nikon slide scanner, HP large format scanner/plotter, Otari reel-to-reel and cassette digitization system, an Elmo 16 mm film digitizer, and an 8mm film digitizer.”⁷⁹ The list of equipment alone indicates the volume of items in their archive and the size of staff and volunteers needed to make the virtual archive possible. If compared on a scale of collection size, the Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech University is at one end of the spectrum, while Swain’s slide collection is all the way at the other end. Although the size of the collections are drastically different, there are similarities in subject matter, type of collection, the desire to preserve the contents from further deterioration, and a desire to share a history.

Slide Preservation

Another preservation strategy is to use current technology to scan slides to create digital copies, and preserve the originals in appropriate new storage materials. In 1985, George T. Eaton informed readers “if valuable color pictures are to be displayed or projected frequently, the best preservation technique that can be used is to make duplicated prints or transparencies and display the duplicates.”⁸⁰ Even if slides are not projected frequently, they can still fade in the dark, just at a slower rate. Therefore, the ideal option is to scan a slide collection and keep it from deteriorating any further. Eaton gives several “other reasons why copying and duplicating techniques are important to the conservation of photographic artifacts,” such as “to convert a potentially unstable record into one having improved stability.”⁸¹ Several decades ago, Eaton’s advice was referred to copying transparencies using duplicating film made by Kodak, but that method is both dated and no longer available. Today, the easiest method to preserve slide

⁷⁹ “General Information,” Vietnam Center and Archive, last updated September 6, 2017, accessed September 27, 2017, <https://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/general/>.

⁸⁰ George T. Eaton, *Conservation of Photographs* (Rochester: Eastman Kodak Co., 1985), 69.

⁸¹ Eaton, 110.

transparencies is to scan them, to create a digital copy of the image. A leader in photographic preservation, Lavedrine states that:

digitization has become a formidable tool for cataloguing and accessing the images held in photographic collections. But while digital resources allow rapid access to images and reduce handling, a digitization program should not be thought to constitute conservation of the original photographs. Digitization on its own is not a way of ‘saving’ photographic collections.⁸²

Lavedrine is absolutely correct, while scanning slides to prevent further deterioration and lessen the handling of the collection, it is only one step of the preservation process. After a collection is digitally scanned, several things still need to happen: 1) creating a catalog to the digital files that were just created; 2) properly conserving the digital files that were created; and 3) conducting maintenance and conservation of the collection itself. The original collection maintains incredible importance in which he explains, “a photograph has a material, physical manifestation that its digital copy lacks,” and “neglecting the original photograph once it is digitized, is comparable to deciding that a painting can be left to deteriorate once a good reproduction exists.”⁸³

Processing Kenneth L. Swain Jr.’s Slide Collection

In the infancy of planning a project involving a private slide collection, it was necessary to obtain permission from Swain to conduct research, handle the slide collection, and utilize the images in both research and public display. With his eager approval, the process of rediscovering fifty-year-old slides could begin. A majority of the project took place at Swain’s farmhouse in the country because that is where the slides were originally located in boxes on the

⁸² Bertrand Lavedrine et al., *Photographs of the Past: Process and Preservation*, trans. John McElhone (Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 2009), 306.

⁸³ Lavedrine, 306.

bedroom floor. At the start of the project, the quantity and condition of slides was unknown. The two boxes contained his personal family slides intermixed with all of the Vietnam War-era slides in a disorganized combination. Swain was riddled with excitement as these slides were being re-discovered. He was both available and eager to answer any questions that surfaced along with the slides.

Luckily, Swain's Vietnam-era slides were found in batches because he had kept most of them in plastic trays with covers like the one in **Image 12**. As mentioned in Chapter 3, one truly



Image 12

remarkable discovery was the accompanying slide descriptions that created an original order. At first, some of the written descriptions were misplaced or not with the correct slide tray; but the specific texts made it easy to match them with the correct corresponding set of slides. While all of the slides did not have descriptions, approximately 75% of them do. Swain's perspective of his experiences

was preserved in his titles, providing insight for what details might have been lost with aging memories.

Fortunately, Swain already had a slide converter in his possession. He explained that his family had given it to him as a present one year with the intention of having all of his slides scanned into digital images. The slide converter was made by a company called Innovative Technology, a fairly generic brand that had this slogan on the box: "Convert old film and slides to JPG's for storing and sharing." The carrier used to hold the slides for scanning was able to hold four slides at a time. Slides were scanned at 3600 DPI (Dots Per Inch), a measure of

resolution of printers and scanners. The digital scans were saved as JPG's, "a file format that varies in size but are much smaller and require less storage space,"⁸⁴ in a folder on Swain's computer. For each separate tray of slides that was scanned, the digital copies were put in their own labeled folder, keeping Swain's true original order.

After the scanning process was complete, a catalog of the collection was created using Microsoft Excel. A simple spreadsheet gathered all of the slide provenance – who the artist is, artist dates, the date the image was created, the type of medium, dimensions and accession

Slide Group	Accession Number	Artist	Artist Dates	Date Created	Where?	Medium
Box 1 - Japan	2016.001.001	Kenneth L. Swain, Jr.	B: 03-22-1943	Jan-66		Photography
Box 1 - Japan	2016.001.002	Kenneth L. Swain, Jr.	B: 03-22-1943	Jan-66		Photography
Box 1 - Japan	2016.001.003	Kenneth L. Swain, Jr.	B: 03-22-1943	Jan-66		Photography
Box 1 - Japan	2016.001.004	Kenneth L. Swain, Jr.	B: 03-22-1943	Jan-66		Photography
Box 1 - Japan	2016.001.005	Kenneth L. Swain, Jr.	B: 03-22-1943	Jan-66		Photography
Box 1 - Japan	2016.001.006	Kenneth L. Swain, Jr.	B: 03-22-1943	Jan-66		Photography
Box 1 - Japan	2016.001.007	Kenneth L. Swain, Jr.	B: 03-22-1943	Jan-66		Photography
Box 1 - Japan	2016.001.008	Kenneth L. Swain, Jr.	B: 03-22-1943	Jan-66		Photography
Box 1 - Japan	2016.001.009	Kenneth L. Swain, Jr.	B: 03-22-1943	Jan-66		Photography
Box 1 - Japan	2016.001.010	Kenneth L. Swain, Jr.	B: 03-22-1943	Jan-66		Photography

Image 13

Classification	Dimensions "Sight"	Dimensions with Frame	Original Order	Descriptive Title
Slide Transparency	8/15" x 1 3/8"	2" x 2"		Taken on Tamoto AFB. Trying to get snow on mountains in background
Slide Transparency	8/15" x 1 3/8"	2" x 2"		Taken from roof of dept. store in Tachikawa
Slide Transparency	8/15" x 1 3/8"	2" x 2"		Same roof, base in background
Slide Transparency	8/15" x 1 3/8"	2" x 2"		Same roof again. Note cage left of blue sign contains monkeys
Slide Transparency	8/15" x 1 3/8"	2" x 2"		Amusement park on top of same store roof
Slide Transparency	8/15" x 1 3/8"	2" x 2"		Tea cup ride on same roof
Slide Transparency	8/15" x 1 3/8"	2" x 2"		Better view of monkey's in cage
Slide Transparency	8/15" x 1 3/8"	2" x 2"		Same roof view of Tachikawa city
Slide Transparency	8/15" x 1 3/8"	2" x 2"		Crowd of people on roof (a little dark)
Slide Transparency	8/15" x 1 3/8"	2" x 2"		Around main gate Tachikawa AFB, store with park on top in far distance

Image 14

number – so the information will stay with the slides (**Image 13 & 14**). In the Museum Registration Methods manual from the AAM, Buck explains “it is vital that a systematic numbering scheme be used” because numbers are assigned for permanent collection objects and then “noted on all

⁸⁴ Rebecca A. Buck and Jean Allman Gilmore, trans., *Museum Registration Methods*, 5th ed. (Washington, D.C.: The AAM Press, 2010), 280.

documentation associated with the objects.”⁸⁵ Furthermore, “the most common accession numbering system now used is a compound number separated by a point or hyphen.”⁸⁶ From **Image 13**, the second column is for an accession number, which have been assigned to Swain’s slide collection. The first number indicates the year the object is accessioned, this date being 2016 in which the project of scanning the slides began. The second number indicates the sequence of the transaction in which object(s) were taken into the collection. For Swain’s collection this second number indicates how many groupings of slides there are, a total of thirteen different sets of slides. If there are multiple objects within a grouping, then a third number is assigned to each item within the group – this being the individual slide within each grouping. The accession numbers from the second column in **Image 13** indicate that the grouping of slides were acquired or assigned a number in 2016, starting with the first set of slides (001), and then each individually numbered within the set starting from one and ending at thirty-six.

⁸⁵ Rebecca A. Buck and Jean Allman Gilmore, trans., *Museum Registration Methods*, 5th ed. (Washington, D.C.: The AAM Press, 2010), 206.

⁸⁶ Buck, 207.

CHAPTER 6

Vietnam War Exhibitions: Examining methods of presenting and displaying Vietnam War artifacts

There are many ways in which to present Vietnam War artifacts to the public. Depending on the intended audience, some options could include: an informational table top book, a curated gallery show, an online exhibit, or any combination of these methods.

The Pritzker Military Museum & Library located in Chicago, Illinois curated a show that opened on September 24, 2015 and is due to close December 13, 2017 titled “Faces of War.” The collection of photographs and motion pictures were “captured by the special operations photographers of the Department of the Army Special Photographic Office (DASPO)” and these photographs “provide a unique perspective of the war.”⁸⁷ The exhibit is “a raw, unfiltered look at the Vietnam War through a collection of images and motion pictures by the special operations photographers who served on its front lines.”⁸⁸ The photographs coupled with the motion pictures provide a deeper level of understanding of experiences during the war. The Pritzker Military Museum & Library also has an extensive interactive permanent online gallery for the *Faces of War* exhibit. Having both a physical exhibit to visit and a permanent online gallery, allows the content of the exhibit to reach Vietnam War scholars worldwide.

On October 4th, 2017, an exhibit curated by Marci Reaven opened at the New-York Historical Society in New York City, *The Vietnam War: 1945-1975*. In an interview conducted

⁸⁷ Pritzker Military Museum & Library, “Faces of War,” last updated 2017, accessed September 10, 2017, <https://www.pritzkermilitary.org/explore/museum/permanent-current-upcoming-exhibits/faces-war-photography-front-lines-vietnam/>.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

by a Senior Multimedia Producer for PBS station THIRTEEN, Reaven shared that the “exhibit occupies over 3,000 square feet” and includes “interpretive displays, digital media, artwork, artifacts, photographs, and documents.”⁸⁹ Reaven, who is vice president of history exhibits at the New-York Historical Society, explains that the exhibit “will provide an enlightening account of the causes, progression, and impact of the war... the narrative will incorporate perspectives that cover both the home front and the war front.”⁹⁰ Curating an exhibit that spans thirty years of history, Reaven and her team had to conduct an extensive amount of research in which they did a lot of reading and watched both documentary films and fiction movies. The team explored how other museums, both in the United States and in Vietnam, were telling the story of the Vietnam War. Knowing how other museums worldwide are conveying the history of a war is incredibly important so that organizers do not reproduce or duplicate a curated theme. With this Vietnam War exhibit, Reaven said that they were looking to meet military veterans, female volunteers who had gone to Vietnam as nurses or recreational aids, and people who had been really active in the anti-war movement in the United States. The opportunity to hear personal stories, learn from this specifically targeted group and incorporate that into the exhibit are what make the show incredible. Reaven was asked about how she approached the targeted audience when creating an exhibition about the Vietnam War, which for many is a sensitive topic from their experiencing trauma and loss:

There are many times that New-York Historical Society takes on topics that involve histories that are very painful for the people, especially for the people who experience them directly. So we’re always thinking about that, the audience in general, and the many different sectors of the audience and what people are going to be bringing to our exhibits, and what emotions, what knowledge, what kind of stake they have in it. The best we can

⁸⁹ Thirteen: Media with Impact, “Vietnam War Exhibit in NYC: New Finds, New Stories,” Inside Thirteen, Published September 28, 2017, Accessed November 15, 2017, <http://www.thirteen.org/blog-post/vietnam-war-exhibit-nyc-new-york-historical-society/>

⁹⁰ Ibid.

do is really try to make sure that everybody feels welcome and acknowledged and never judged. Ultimately what we're trying to do really is get the story right.⁹¹

The ultimate goal Reaven has in conveying the story accurately to her targeted audience is most important when curating an exhibit about one of the most divisive conflicts in history. The Vietnam War exhibit runs through April 22, 2018.

In 1981, a group of Vietnam veterans displayed their artwork in a small gallery in Chicago, Illinois. The culmination of this gallery show ultimately brought the group of veterans together, forming the Vietnam Veterans Art Group. One of the members of the newly formed group was Joe Fornelli, “an artist at his core” who “created many pieces throughout his tour in Vietnam in 1965-66.”⁹² Fornelli would use “whatever he could find, painting on scraps of paper with C-ration coffee, drawing with map ink, or using a bayonet to carve a piece of teak wood that he recovered from an exploded building.”⁹³ However, up until the exhibit in 1981, Fornelli kept his artworks to himself, because they acted more as coping mechanisms to help process the horrors of the war he experienced. The purpose of the exhibit was to “shed truth and light on what it meant to be a Vietnam vet,” said Fornelli, because “art is my language” and “it communicates more than any of us could say with words.”⁹⁴ The concept of this gallery thrived and evolved into a permanent National Vietnam Veterans Art Museum. In 2010, one year prior to the 30th anniversary of their first exhibit, the museum chose to drop “Vietnam” from the name, making it an all-inclusive museum of artworks by United States veterans. Original artwork by Fornelli can be found in the collection at the National Veterans Art Museum, where he continues

⁹¹ Thirteen: Media with Impact, “Vietnam War Exhibit in NYC: New Finds, New Stories,” Inside Thirteen, published September 28, 2017, accessed November 15, 2017, <http://www.thirteen.org/blog-post/vietnam-war-exhibit-nyc-new-york-historical-society/>

⁹² Robin Hoecker, “Celebrating 30 Years of Art Created by Veterans,” Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Spring 2011, accessed November 15, 2017, <http://www.vvaw.org/veteran/article/?id=1823>.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

to volunteer his time. **Image 15** (next page), a painting by Fornelli titled “Going Home Early” is a piece he painted while stationed overseas during the Vietnam War. From an audio interview with Fornelli in 2015, he explained how he utilized whatever available materials he could get his



Image 15

hands on, for example, making a watercolor solution out of coffee from his C rations.⁹⁵ In the image painted by Fornelli, three figures are seen carrying out another figure on a stretcher. In the interview, he remarked that the title, “Going Home Early,” came naturally for the image as the only way you could go home early was either wounded or dead.⁹⁶ The different brown tones created with the coffee watercolor solution provide viewers with a muted vision. The softness of the painting creates a stark contrast to the horrors of war experienced daily by these veterans. The soft lines and subtle tones also invites viewers to privately have a moment of silence for the fallen soldier.

⁹⁵ <http://soundoffatnvam.org/joe-fornelli-on-being-an-artist-vietnam-and-making-art-in-the-midst-of-combat/>

⁹⁶ Ibid.

CHAPTER 7

Honoring a Vietnam War-Era Veteran

After digitally scanning, cataloging and re-housing Kenneth L. Swain Jr.'s photo-documentary Vietnam War-era slide collection, it seemed natural to organize and implement an exhibition showcasing selected prints from the collection. Pragmatically, Swain's actual slides could not be displayed; rather, prints of the scanned slides were made and then displayed with a looped slide presentation of the digitized copies. There were many details to curating a gallery show, even on a small scale like this one. Plans evolved with a lot of trial and error to manage the logistical phase of planning an exhibition in response to unanticipated factors.

Curating With a Limited Budget

Something to consider first and foremost is a budget – one must plan to balance costs with financial resources. Curating a show on a part-time salary limits any large expenditures and requires resourcefulness in utilizing whatever supplies were on hand already. An itemized budget was not created prior to buying supplies for the gallery show; however, a budget should always be set at the beginning to guide planning and creative problem-solving for projected costs of supplies and services to be purchased. Not wanting expenses to reach an exorbitant amount, a price cap for the project was set at \$200, with the overall total expenses for the project reaching \$157.15 (see **Appendix B** for a full list of expenses).

Location, Location, Location

Perhaps the most important task and biggest challenge is finding a venue for a master's project exhibition. Ultimately, the selected venue will determine how the show can be set up. Factors to consider: How much wall space is there? What are the available hanging systems and hardware in the space? What are the lighting conditions? What is the foot traffic flow for the area? Is the space very public or a quiet setting? Who is your targeted audience? How will the exhibition be marketed? Will the security of the displays be compromised if the setting has no supervision? How long will the show be? How long do you have to prepare for the show? Do you plan a special reception to open or close the exhibition?

The search for an appropriate venue included many options. One of the first venues for consideration was the Art on Main Gallery inside the art studios for the Cattaraugus County Arts Council (CCAC) located in Allegany, New York. Two reasons this venue was considered to be an option were that Swain is from Cattaraugus County; and the executive director of CCAC, Tina Hastings, is a professional acquaintance of the author. Having contacted the CCAC to check for availability, I learned that the space inside of the art studio was a twenty-five foot wall that has an existing hanging system to utilize for displaying artwork. However, the venue had limited availability with a short amount of time between scheduled shows. After further planning, the Art on Main Gallery ended up not being a viable option for the following reasons: 1) the desired schedule was not available; 2) the desired audience to include Swain's family and friends would suggest a venue geographically located closer to the city of Buffalo in Erie County; and 3) at the time, the exact number of displayed pieces and how to mount them had not yet been determined. Therefore, quickly planning and preparing for a gallery show remained uncertain.

To explore more options in the city of Buffalo, several locations on the Buffalo State campus were considered for venues, including the Bacon Student Art Gallery in Upton Hall, the Circulation Gallery in E.H. Butler Library, and a new lobby being converted into a gallery in Rockwell Hall. At first, the gallery space in Bacon Student Art Gallery was at the top of the list. It had the desired space to hang prints and an opening reception could take place in the lobby. But plans fell short when availability could not be accommodated. In addition, it appeared that accessibility might be restricted to fewer hours for primarily art students and faculty; whereas the intended audience included people also interested in American history and the art of photography preservation.

The lobby gallery located in Rockwell Hall was graciously offered by the Arts and Humanities department to host a show. However, the space was still transitioning from a lobby into a gallery venue at the time of discussion in April 2016. This made it difficult to envision the Rockwell Hall lobby gallery being completed on time to be ready to host a show.

Finally, narrowing the venue choice down to the Circulation Gallery in the Butler Library became the favorable option because it was a central location on the campus allowing for plenty of exposure to the greatest number of academically diverse audiences. The Circulation Gallery was also handicapped accessible, which was an extremely important factor both for several of Swain's family members who needed that option, and other public visitors. Another incentive for choosing this venue, was its provision of the necessary hanging hardware, thereby eliminating some anticipated expenses.

Selecting Show Dates

Another difficult task was scheduling the show. At first, when considering locations, I contemplated rushing preparations in order to lock in a venue with an early June 2016 date. On reflection, project advisor Nancy Weekly suggested coordinating the schedule to coincide with the start of the 2016 Fall semester. By then, students would be back on campus so more people would benefit from the opportunity to view the exhibition. With this in mind, an electronic exhibition agreement and gallery proposal were submitted at no expense. As this was an academic project, no charge was required for utilizing the campus gallery space. The gallery show was scheduled for August 23rd through September 18th, 2016, with an opening reception taking place on August 22nd, 2016 from 6-8pm. The exhibition coordinator for Butler Library was quick to respond within a few days, granting permission to have Swain's gallery show in the Circulation Gallery.

Playing with Words

Before creating any publicity, I had to contemplate the perfect title for this exhibition. An inviting title conveys to the public and viewers the topic or theme of the show. The title gives the public an indication of what they will encounter and provides incentive to visit. Several ideas were debated in the effort to choose what might work best in representing Swain's photography and slide collection. Some of the options considered for titles included:

- Through his eyes: preserving family history
- A Grandfather's journey through photographs
- Through his eyes: my Grandfather's cultural journey
- Through a Soldier's eyes: my Grandfather's cultural journey

Working through the possible options for a title, writing them down and revising them helped me gain a clearer idea of which title would best convey the idea of the show to viewers. The audience needed to know that the photographs were visions of another's viewpoint, not taken by the curator of the show. It was also important for viewers to know that the photographs depicted a journey of discovery and cultural experiences. The title that best expressed the desired information to the public was: *Through a soldier's eyes: my Grandfather's cultural journey*.

Drumming up publicity

With my submission of the electronic exhibition agreement, Butler Library subsequently promoted details of the event in a public announcement to the Daily Bulletin at Buffalo State. This was helpful and free advertisement. Another resource for free publicity was creating a Facebook event where invitations and calendar reminders could be sent to friends and family



Image 16

over the internet. This took the form of an announcement for the opening reception, inviting people to attend on August 22nd. The event announcement included a brief description of the gallery show, a photograph of Swain that came from his slide collection, and most importantly the dates and location (**Image 16**). The dates for the full run of the show were also

included in case someone was unable to attend the reception, but wanted to see the show on their own time. Responses from family and friends were enthusiastic; many expressed such enthusiasm for the project.

Another way to publicize the opening reception was creating postcard invitations through Vistaprint. This was done for two reasons: 1) the desire to create and send a formal invitation to a small number of family and colleagues; and 2) the cost was affordable through the use of

coupons (**Image 17**). The formal postcard invitations were sent to Swain's immediate family along with a handwritten note informing them that a private



Image 17

preview of the show would begin at 5:30pm before the public reception officially started at 6pm. It was important to set aside this time for a private preview just for the Swain family because this was the first time Swain's slides would be in public view.

Making Prints

Selecting and printing the selection of slides posed a series of concerns. It is one thing to view the slides from a computer screen, but it is entirely different to see them printed.

Ultimately, slides were printed untouched, exactly the way they looked when originally scanned. This meant some of the chosen slides showed their imperfections, such as scratches from being moved from slide trays, color deterioration, and quite possibly some mold deposits. Editing the scanned slides was not an option for two reasons. First, the appropriate software was not available. More importantly, the slides were not meant to be edited; they are in their pure form. Displaying the unretouched prints gave viewers an idea of what these slides honestly looked like after fifty years of deterioration and no preventative measures taken.

The selection process was based on determining which images had best captured Swain’s adventures and experiences overseas. When Swain was asked what he thought was the most significant subject matter in his photographs, he said they were “primarily the artistry and colors of the temples” because they “differed ever so slightly.”⁹⁷ He also admired the unbelievably beautiful and ornate details and artwork incorporated into the décor of the architecture. As well,



Image 18

some of the slides were chosen because of the descriptive titles Swain had given them. An excellent example of this is the

⁹⁷ Kenneth L. Swain Jr., interview by author, Cattaraugus, March 19, 2017.

descriptive title Swain gave to **Image 18**, “Note how the trees have been trimmed.” For these reasons, the prints made from the slides accumulated quickly because Swain took many great photographs of his experiences.

I chose the website *Shutterfly* to make prints. Using this website, I could upload digital images and then edit size, borders and finishing touches easily with a couple of mouse clicks. The process was really quite simple. Fifty chosen slides were uploaded to *Shutterfly*. Every print, with the exception of one, would be 5 x 7 inches because that size provided enough clarity without being too large to distort the image quality of the scanned slides. The one exception was a portrait of Swain holding his camera, chosen to be a larger 8 x 10 inch print to serve as a focal point on one of the panels, surrounded by other chosen 5 x 7 prints. Upon receiving the order of prints, after inspection, I found approximately fifteen prints that had small black dots on them that were not visible when initially examining them on the computer screen. Those fifteen slides were re-examined at Swain’s house where dust particles were discovered to be causing the imperfections on the prints. After carefully removing the dust particles (of course, never touching the emulsion side of the slide), new prints were made to use in the exhibition.

How to present Swain’s prints to viewers

Options for mounting and displaying prints are quite endless, but sticking with a very limited budget helped keep realistic ideas in perspective. Ultimately, the first decision was to determine how many prints to display. With many favorites to choose from, a total of 50 slides were selected out of more than 400. Having this number in mind, framing each print would be too costly; therefore, internet searches were conducted to find alternative ways to hang prints. One of the most helpful sites ended up being Pinterest, a website where users can conduct

searches and save useful links to crafts, themes, do-it-yourself projects and more. Several alternative suggestions popped up in the search such as using multi-colored tape to affix a print to a wall, creating a border around the image. However, the Circulation Gallery would not allow any adhesives on the walls. Another possibility was using old reclaimed stained wood supports and attaching the prints with clips or clothespins, which could then be hung from the provided hardware. Not completely sold on either of those ideas, I continued the search. A thought occurred to consider different surface materials that surrounded Swain during his service overseas – industrial materials and metal. Magnets! The solution for attaching prints to a solid surface was magnets; but what type of material could be found that was both lightweight and easy to hang? An internet search helped solve that questions – sheet metal. Using sheet metal would work best to give the gallery show an industrial feel, as well as provide a unique way to display the prints and give flexibility in arranging the prints for visual impact. Home Depot had a variety of sheet metal in different sizes and patterns. Overall, five panels of sheet metal were selected. Two of the panels were 12 x 12 inches and the other three were 2 x 3 feet. The two smaller panels had a hole drilled into one of the corners so that they would hang in a diamond shape on the wall. A single print of Swain taken in different locations was hung on each of these panels. One of the larger panels was hung vertically and the other two were hung horizontally. An unexpected problem occurred with the large pieces of sheet metal; they started bowing because of their size. The solution to this problem was to affix pieces of dowels with duct tape to the back of the sheet metal to provide rigid support to straighten them out. Strong magnets and glue dots (or Zots), were purchased from Amazon.com because they had the best deals and prices. Glue dots were put on each magnet, then adhered to the back of the print. This strategy

disguised the magnets and created a pleasing visual effect by slightly elevating the print off the sheet metal surface. **Image 19** shows how the sheet metal panels were hung to display the prints.



Image 19

Informational text panel

Another necessary detail for the exhibit was to create an introductory text panel. An introduction to the show importantly orients the audience to the exhibit's theme. Anybody could walk by and see photographs on display, but the text panel explains what the project was about and who the photographer is. Noelle Wiedemer, a Museum Studies instructor and professional photographer, strongly encouraged using Instructional Resources on Buffalo State Campus to help design a text panel. Its computer graphics services staff offer help, consulting and advising on the design and printing of larger format posters. After contacting Kaylene Waite in the graphic design services department with details of what the text panel would require, a student intern, Shelanise Daniels, became the designer of the text panel. Prior to having a face-to-face meeting with Daniels, as curator, I wrote the text and proof-read the suggested design. Daniels is a talented graphic designer who made the process of creating the text panel very straight-forward

and simple. She worked collaboratively, making suggestions about what might work best on a larger panel, but she also took suggestions on different design options, such as, what type of border to have around the text.

The overall design of the text panel was a clean and sophisticated design with a black background and white text. The white border and simple stylized lines that break up the text, provide a nice design element. The poster measured 16 inches by 20 inches and was mounted on foam core to make the poster sturdy. Mounting the poster on foam core was the best option

for two reasons: 1) it prevented

the poster from curling when exposed to humidity; and 2) it would not have to be framed.

Image 20 references the overall design of the text panel. A complete version of the information included on the text panel can be found in Appendix C.

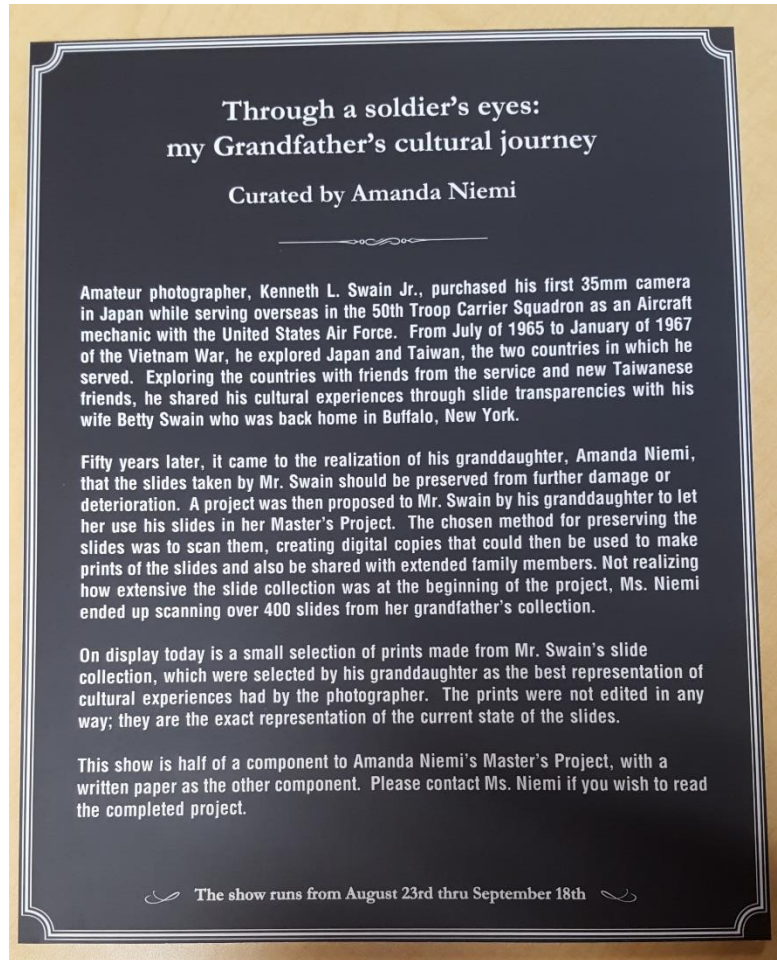


Image 20

Labels for Prints

Labels were created for the prints made from Swain's slides. They were quite simple with the most basic of information, which included Swain's original descriptions, the country where the photograph was taken, and the year the photograph was taken. The labels were attached to the sheet metal in the same way the prints were, but with smaller adhesive magnets. All of the labels were cut to the same size which created a cohesive and



Image 21

uniform symmetry. In **Image 21**, the label might appear too large for the text on it, but it intentionally matched label size for other prints with much longer titles.

Extras

Additional display components were desired to have at the opening reception because it was unrealistic to have prints made of Swain's entire collection of over 400 slides. Therefore, alternative ways to present those slides were visited. Technology today allows for several different approaches to presenting scanned slides. The first idea envisioned was to project a slide show digitally onto a screen, so images would be visible to a larger audience. However, with limited space, that idea would have jeopardized the equipment needed to display the extra slides. There was also an issue of finding an electrical outlet close enough to use. Security concerns

ruled out using long extension cords because they would create tripping hazards for an already busy section of the library. The alternative solution was to bring a small flat screen television to play the slide show. With this idea, an HDMI cable was used to run from the television to a laptop that would play all of the selected slides on a continuous, repeated loop for the night of the opening reception. An extension cord was needed to carry out this idea, but it was not in



Image 22

anyone's way. A table with an adjustable height was used; however, for the small flat screen television to be at an appropriate viewing height for standing people, a box was placed on top of the table to elevate the television. A piece of black fabric was used to hide the box, making the display more professional (**Image 22**). The laptop used to play the slideshow was placed under the table, to be out of sight. Added to the table

for display purposes was Swain's Yashica Lynx 5000 camera that he used to take all of the photographs when he was overseas (also seen in **Image 22**). Prior to Swain being involved in this Master's project, he had given the camera to his granddaughter (author of the thesis). Some might even say that his thoughtful gesture sparked the concept of this very project. These items were only on display for the night of the opening reception. Unfortunately, there were no

lockable display cases in the Circulation Gallery that would have enabled inclusion of these artifacts for the remainder of the viewing period.

Assembling the Show

All of the components for the show were assembled and installed on the day of the opening reception, Monday, August 22nd 2016. The prints could have been arranged and placed on the sheet metal displays beforehand; however, there was fear of the prints getting scratched in transport from one location to the gallery. Although fifty prints were made of Swain's slides, only thirty-one prints were used. Not all of the selected prints were arranged in a specific order; for example, they were not arranged and displayed by location or date taken. The central vertical panel became the intended focal point, because it held the 8 x 10 inch portrait of Swain. Surrounding this print were four images he had taken of airplanes, which were the reason he was overseas as an Air Force mechanic. The two smaller sheet metal panels that were hung in diamond shapes each held a photograph of Swain as well. With the exception of those seven prints, the remaining twenty-four prints were arranged strategically and aesthetically by the curator. After the photographs were arranged, the labels were added. Making sure the photographs were evenly spaced and level required exacting positioning. Each of all four corner magnets moved individually to avoid buckling and to ensure each print would be taut. The text panel was placed to the left of all the sheet metal panels, giving viewers a chance to read about the project before they viewed the images.

For security measures, the slide show and camera on display were set up right before the opening reception started. The setup was quick and easy because the concept of having the slide show on display for opening night was tested beforehand.

Opening Reception

Swain's family arrived early to view the show, and also generously provided refreshments for the reception. These items were set-up on tables provided by the Campus Events team (arranged by an order form submitted prior to the event). Refreshments were offered in thanks to everyone for attending the gallery show, and as an incentive for people to stick around and chat amongst each other.

Many of Swain's immediate family and friends came out in support for both him and myself. Colleagues and fellow Museum Studies graduate students came out for the evening as well. With Swain in attendance, viewers had a chance to have a conversation with him and ask any questions that they might have.

The night of the reception also happened to be Graduate Orientation for the new graduates starting the Fall 2016 semester. At orientation, new students have to get their student identification card and the place to get that done is at the Circulation Desk in the same vicinity as the Circulation Gallery. Prior to scheduling the Opening Reception for Swain's show, there was some concern about how busy it could become. Nevertheless, it provided a greater range of visitors, meaning more exposure for the show.

Exhibition Feedback

Swain was delighted with the show, but at a later date said he was slightly taken aback because he was surprised at the results. When Swain gave permission for his slides to be used in this project, he thought of the slides being used in a different historical way. His approach was more about researching the historical importance of the image content, seeing how the architecture has changed over fifty years, how the landscapes and Buddha statues have changed.

Perhaps a comparison would be made of how slides were displayed then versus now, historically, how slides from the Vietnam War were displayed. The project evolved into much more, because Swain's collection is rich with both history and museum-worthy content. Swain did not realize that his slide collection was a perfect case study of how so many collections from amateur photographers end up. He was also surprised by how many visitors came and chatted with him about his experiences and his time in the service. People were going up to him and thanking him for his time in the service as well.

Three weeks after the opening of the gallery show, Joseph Morganti, a student writer for Buffalo State's newspaper, *The Record*, contacted me with questions about the exhibit. Morganti asked two questions: 1) What made you want to create a display dedicated to your grandfather?, and 2) How do you want people to react or get a message from viewing this display? The article was published on September 13, 2016, titled "Buffalo State granddaughter of Vietnam vet displays his photography in exhibition."⁹⁸ In the article, Morganti shared feedback about the show from Buffalo State student Reilly Kelly in which he said, "I think the pictures make [us] aware just how culturally different we are in just separate countries in the same planet, and that we should all respect each culture because we are all unique and great in different ways."⁹⁹ The full article can be found in **Appendix D**.

⁹⁸ <https://buffstaterecord.com/7276/culture/through-a-soldiers-eyes-in-the-e-h-butler-library/>

⁹⁹ Ibid.

CHAPTER 8

Moving Forward – Looking to the Future

Selecting the right storage materials

When it is time to buy archival storage materials for a collection, it would be smart to shop around and compare prices with several different archival supply companies such as, Gaylord Archival, Hollinger, and Archival Methods. Each of these companies allows you to conduct research on their website or they have magazines that could be shipped to a home or business. Perhaps the best way to rehouse Swain’s slide collection is into archival binders with a slip case and polypropylene slide pages. Prices do vary with each of the suppliers, in which **Figure 1**, details the pricing differences.

Supplier	Binder & Slip Case	Slide Pages 50-pack
Gaylord	\$77.99	\$33.40
Hollinger	\$64.95	\$33.30
Archival Methods	\$56.75	\$19.95

Figure 1

Principle master’s project advisor Nancy Weekly provided information on archival storage materials used by the Burchfield Penney Art Center, where she is the Burchfield Scholar and has overseen the museum’s archives in past years. She generously offered to underwrite the cost of supplies for Swain’s collection so that all of his slides can be properly rehoused. After consultation about preferred storage materials and methods, she ordered the supplies from Gaylord: an acid-free 2-inch “Memory Keeper” album with D-rings and slipcase, as well as a package of 100 archival slide preserver pages, each holds twenty 2x2 inch mounted 35mm slides.

The author will transfer the slides into these storage supplies, and make any necessary notations in the data entry spaces on the slide storage pages.

CONCLUSION

Cataloging and preserving a slide collection can be driven by personal, academic or professional motivation. No matter the size of the collection, there is a greater need today to preserve pieces of family history, which melds with regional and national history as well. Through research and practices published by leading museum professionals, like Lavedrine and Eaton, the best methods for preserving and caring for collections can be implemented for private slide collections like that of Kenneth L. Swain Jr.'s Vietnam War-era slides. The preservation of the collection becomes an integral part for Swain, who is now able to share his photographs of cultural experiences more easily with family and even the public. The distinction between a Vietnam War combat veteran and Vietnam War-*Era* veteran emphasized by Swain and created through the use of his slides, can be seen through the different types of imagery and experiences he had during the war. The opportunity to use Swain's slides and curate an exhibition to share with the public his photo-documentary journal with original slide descriptions was an experience any museum professional would be honored to have.

Before my application to attend Graduate School at Buffalo State was even filled out and submitted, it was my desire and intention to conceive a Master's Thesis Project that would utilize Swain's slide collection, to bring forth knowledge of a personal history of a Vietnam-era veteran.

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APPENDIX A

Image Index

Image 1

Photographer Unknown
Hope Baker USS Ticonderoga
1965
The Associated Press

Image 2

Malcolm Browne
The Burning Monk (Thích Quảng Đức)
June 1963
The Associated Press

Image 3

Nick Ut
The Terror of War
1973
The Associated Press

Image 4

Kenneth L. Swain Jr.
“Close up of C-130 E”
April 1966
Vietnam War-Era Collection
2016.004.033

Image 5

Kenneth L. Swain Jr.
“Buddha, note Kimono on women”
January 1966
Vietnam War-Era Collection
2016.001.035

Image 6

Kenneth L. Swain Jr.
“Try at action stop on prop – didn’t work”
April 1966
Vietnam War-Era Collection
2016.005.034

Image 7

Kenneth L. Swain Jr.
“Try at stop action of prop, almost worked”
April 1966
Vietnam War-Era Collection
2016.006.007

Image 8

Kenneth L. Swain Jr.
Swain in a bicycle taxi
Unknown
Vietnam War-Era Collection
2016.013.020

Image 9

Kenneth L. Swain Jr.

“Large rock formation at one end of fish pond outside main house”

1966

Vietnam War-Era Collection

2016.009.027

Image 10

Kenneth L. Swain Jr.

“A better shot of the peacock”

1966

Vietnam War-Era Collection

2016.009.015

Image 11

Slide Description for “Unknown Trip #3”

Written by Kenneth L. Swain Jr.

Image 9 is a photograph of the slide description Swain wrote for a set of slides he sent home to his wife. In this set of slides, Swain organized the slides in the order he wanted them to be seen. It is integral to keep the slides in the order Swain placed them because that is considered the original order, a museum practice in which information and insight is gained through the study of the owner’s placement of original order.

Image 12

An image of the type of slide trays Swain has his slides housed in currently. They are the original slide trays that he had the slides shipped back home to Buffalo, NY in.

Image 13 & 14

These are screenshots of the catalog created in Microsoft Excel to keep record of Swain’s slide collection.

Image 15

Joe Fornelli
“Going Home Early”
1965-66
National Veterans Art Museum Collection

Image 16

A screenshot of the Facebook event created for the gallery show, “Through a soldiers eyes: my Grandfather’s cultural journey.”

Image 17

An example of the postcard invite that was created for mail out to Swain’s family, friends and colleagues.

Image 18

Kenneth L. Swain Jr.
“Note how the trees have been trimmed”
January 1966
Vietnam War-Era Collection
2016.001.017

Image 19

The sheet metal panels had holes drilled in them for hanging purposes. This is a photograph showing how the panels were displayed at the show.

Image 20

A photograph of the text panel that was designed with the help of Nise from the graphic design department in the Instructional Resources department on Buffalo State Campus.

Image 21

An image of how the labels were displayed on the sheet metal panels with the prints.

Image 22

An image that shows how the display table was set up with the slide show playing a continuous loop of Swain's extra slides. Swain's Yashica Lynx 5000 camera is also on the table as well.

APPENDIX B

List of Expenses

Supplier	Product	Quantity	Price
Home Depot	Sheet Metal (24" x 36")	3	\$30.47
	Sheet Metal (12" x 12")	2	\$13.03
	Dowels	3	\$2.98
Amazon	Small Magnets	1	\$10.86
	3/4" Magnets	2	\$13.76
	Zots (Glue Dots)	1	\$5.01
VistaPrint	Postcard Invites	50	\$19.43
Shutterfly	Prints	50	\$32.44
	Re-Prints	15	\$7.67
Instructional Resources	Text Panel	1	\$21.50
Grand Total:			\$157.15

APPENDIX C

Supporting Documents

Example 1

Text Panel

Through a soldiers eyes: my Grandfather's cultural journey

Curated by Amanda Niemi

Amateur photographer, Kenneth L. Swain Jr., purchased his first 35mm camera in Japan while serving overseas in the 50th Troop Carrier Squadron as an Aircraft mechanic with the United States Air Force. From July of 1965 to January of 1967 of the Vietnam War, he explored Japan and Taiwan, the two countries in which he served. Exploring the countries with friends from the service and new Taiwanese friends, he shared his cultural experiences through slide transparencies with his wife Betty Swain who was back home in Buffalo, New York.

Fifty years later, it came to the realization of his granddaughter, Amanda Niemi, that the slides taken by Mr. Swain should be preserved from further damage or deterioration. A project was then proposed to Mr. Swain by his granddaughter to let her use his slides in her Master's Project. The chosen method for preserving the slides was to scan them, creating digital copies that could then be used to make prints of the slides and also be shared with extended family members. Not realizing how extensive the slide collection was at the beginning of the project, Ms. Niemi ended up scanning over 400 slides from her grandfather's collection.

On display today is a small selection of prints made from Mr. Swain's slide collection, which were selected by his granddaughter as the best representation of cultural experiences had by the photographer. The prints were not edited in any way; they are the exact representation of the current state of the slides.

This show is half of a component to Amanda Niemi's Master's Project, with a written paper as the other component. Please contact Ms. Niemi if you wish to read the completed project.

The show runs from August 23rd thru September 18th

APPENDIX D

Press for Gallery Show

Buffalo State granddaughter of Vietnam vet displays his photography in exhibition

buffstaterecord.com/7276/culture/through-a-soldiers-eyes-in-the-e-h-butler-library/

9/13/2016



SUNY Buffalo State is presenting “Through a Soldier’s Eyes: My Grandfather’s Cultural Journey” until Sept. 18 in the E. H. Butler Library Information Commons Circulation Desk Gallery.

The exhibition is a selection of prints from an amateur photographer, Kenneth L. Swain Jr., took during his experiences from Japan and Taiwan where he served as an aircraft mechanic during the Vietnam War from July of 1965 to January of 1967. The pictures were created while exploring the countries with friends from the service, and new Taiwanese friends Swain made during his service.

The slide transparencies created during his service were and still are able to show his cultural experiences to anyone. Especially when Swain returned home to Buffalo.

The exhibition is created by his granddaughter and Buffalo State master’s student, Amanda Niemi, who felt the pictures taken by her grandfather should be ”preserved from further damage” in order to present them in her master’s project. Niemi chose to scan over 400 slides, which created digital copies of each slides. Being digital, it created the opportunity to be able to print the slides and easily show anyone who wishes to view them.

“I wanted to create a display dedicated to my grandfather because he’s my role model,” Niemi said. “He’s always been there for me and I’ve learned so much from him, from teaching me how to cook to teaching me about his photography interests. So in return for all of his help and guidance throughout my life, I wanted to be able to honor him in a way that highlighted his passion and life hobby of photography.”

“I also wanted viewers to see and understand the importance of preserving family heritage. The slide collection is 50 years old and the condition of the slides have deteriorated, so preserving them for my grandfather and my family was most important. Scanning the slides and creating digital copies has also made it easier to share with the family.

“Several times before, my grandfather had set up the projector and screen to show slides to the family, but it was such a big task. With the slides now in digital format, I can give my family copies of those photographs for them to keep and use to their hearts’ content and that means the most to me.”

The small selection of prints displayed in the exhibition, which were selected by Niemi “as the best representation of cultural experiences held by Mr. Swain.”

Pictures from the exhibition include a “Two Cup Ride” located “On Some Roof” in Japan in 1966, and a drill in a Taiwanese base trying to create a well in Taiwan in 1966. Other pictures include main streets of Japanese and Taiwanese cities, civilians, statues, buildings, pictures of Swain himself and pictures of Swain’s aircraft base.

“I think the pictures make it aware just how culturally different we are in just separate countries in the same planet, and that we should all respect each culture because we are all unique and great in different ways,” said Buffalo State student Reilly Kelly.

The exhibition is half of a component to Niemi’s master’s project, with a written paper as the second half of her master’s project. For more information, Niemi’s business cards are located at the exhibition itself.

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