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Article: The Proof is in the Print: Characterization and Collaboration in the Thomas Walther Collection Project at The Museum of Modern Art (Abstract)

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**Abstract: The Proof is in the Print: Characterization and Collaboration in the Thomas Walther Collection Project at The Museum of Modern Art**

**Lee Ann Daffner**

*Presented at the PMG session of the 2012 AIC Annual Meeting in Albuquerque, New Mexico.*

Modernist photography developed at a feverish pace in the 1920s and 1930s, fueled by an increasing abundance of gelatin silver papers on the market, a rapid development of photomechanical technologies and a growing cadre of amateurs, journalists, and avant-garde artists. This presentation will outline the objectives and progress of the Thomas Walther Project, a four-year, multi-disciplinary study of a group of important European and American modernist photographs in the Department of Photography at The Museum of Modern Art in New York. Launched in 2010 with the generous support of a major grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, this partnership between conservation, curatorial and art-historical research is designed to advance the scholarship for characterization techniques for twentieth century photographic materials and establish a new model for collaborative research from the perspective of its material artifacts: photographic prints. Our approach to characterization builds on collegial exchange and discourse between the conservation and science communities. This project is part of a gathering momentum of materials-based art-historical research which centers on the artwork as a primary source data. In addition to a *Scholars-in-residence* program, the project aims to reach out to public audiences and share research findings and data through a variety of publication formats.

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