Preserving Argentina's Visual Memory

CIFHA Foundation

Non-profit organization

CIFHA
CENTRO DE INVESTIGACIÓN
FOTOGRÁFICO HISTÓRICO
ARGENTINO



Group of students and teachers. Misiones, Argentina (c. 1920)
Ramón Ruda Dorrego Collection - CIFHA Foundation

+2.000.000

irreplaceable documents

The CIFHA Foundation Archive brings together photographs and historical documents by different authors, from different periods, using a wide range of techniques and formats.

It is one of the most important repositories of Argentine visual culture in the world.

Its collections document political, social and cultural life in Argentina and Latin America, including everyday life, workers, migration, agrarian life, industrialization, territories, urban transformations and iconic public figures, while also tracing the region's photographic practices and visual culture.

Each piece is a unique document

Its preservation is urgent



Street vendor. City of Buenos Aires (1901)
H. G. Olds Collection - CIFHA Foundation

13 years of proven work

CIFHA Foundation is a nonprofit organization that has been working since 2013 to preserve, research, and promote Argentine and Latin American photographic heritage

Team and infrastructure

- **Permanent staff**

  Professionals working in conservation, archival science, research, curatorship, and management

- **Climate-controlled storage vaults**

  Temperature and humidity control 365 days a year

- **Active analog laboratory**

  One of the last operational labs of its kind in Argentina, offering B&W and C-print analog printing

- **Specialized cataloguing and digitization**

  Based on international archival standards, including ISAD(G)

Collaboration and support from national and international institutions

BRITISH LIBRARY

UCLA Library

Embajada de los Estados Unidos en Argentina

FUNDACIÓN WILLIAMS

UNESCO
Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura

Comité regional para América Latina y Caribe
Memoria del Mundo

FUNDACIÓN BUNGE Y BORN

Fondo Nacional de las Artes

MECENAZGO
Participación Cultural

Santander
Fundación

Materials and Formats

PHOTOGRAPHIC HERITAGE

19th-20th-21th centuries

Photographic processes

- Daguerreotypes
- Ambrotypes
- Tintypes
- Albumen prints
- Photographic albums
- Cartes de visite and Portrait cabinet
- Vintage gelatin silver prints
- Collodion glass plate negatives
- Gelatin silver glass plate negatives
- Nitrate negatives
- Flexible acetate negatives (from large format to 35mm)
- Stereoscopic glass plate negatives/positives

Devices and technologies

- Photographic cameras made in Argentina
- Stereoscopic photographic viewers
- 35-16-8 mm film projectors
- Audio recordings and videocassettes
- Enlargers for black-and-white and color processes

Printed materials

- Period postcards (photomechanical prints)
- Photographic magazines edited in Argentina
- Books on photographers and techniques
- Manuscripts



Domingo F. Sarmiento, c. 1873
Christiano Junior
CIFHA Foundation
Carte de visite



Recuerdos de la Campaña de Buenos-Ayres, 1864
Esteban Gonnet
CIFHA Foundation
Photographic album

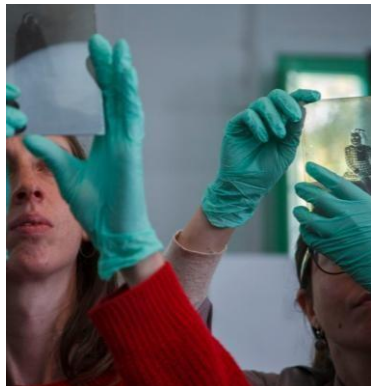


Humanario, 1976
Sara Facio and Alicia D'Amico
CIFHA Foundation
Photobook



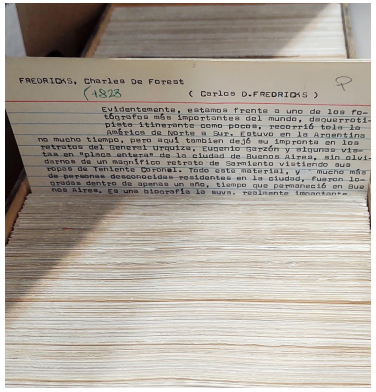
Eva Duarte and Juan D. Perón
Diario Democracia Collection
CIFHA Foundation
4 × 5 in. negative

Preserving a photograph is a long-term process



01 Assessment

Identification of the photographic medium and its condition



02 Cataloguing

Coding, description, and contextualization



03 Cleaning

Preventive conservation and stabilization



04 Treatment

Conservation treatment of collections and holdings



05 Digitization

Capture, processing, and digital preservation



06 Storage

Placement in climate-controlled storage

The process combines material care, documentation, and technology

Across time and formats

The CIFHA Foundation collection brings together different periods, territories, photographic processes, and materialities, forming a diverse archive that allows us to trace multiple histories of the image.



Paraguay
Tiburcio González Rojas Collection - CIFHA Foundation
Medium-format negative



Mar del Plata (1925)
Bernardo Croce Stereoscopic Collection - CIFHA Foundation
Stereoscopic glass plate positive



From the series Triple Frontera, Puerto Iguazú (2008)
Alfredo Srur Collection - CIFHA Foundation
C-print analog

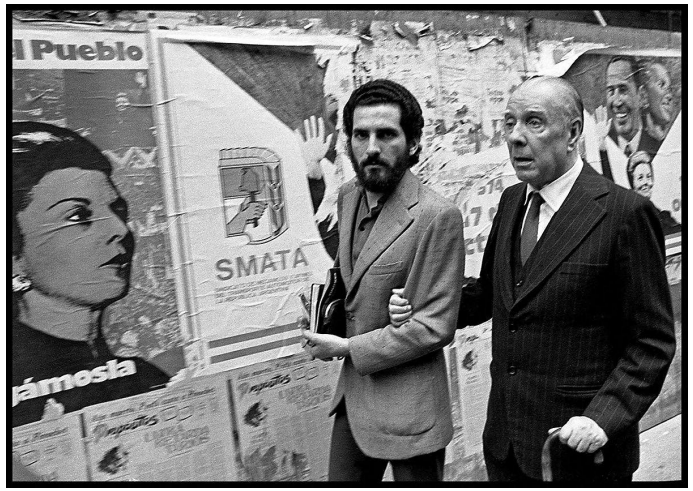
The archive brings together images with very different origins and contexts, allowing new connections to emerge between photography, history, and contemporary culture.



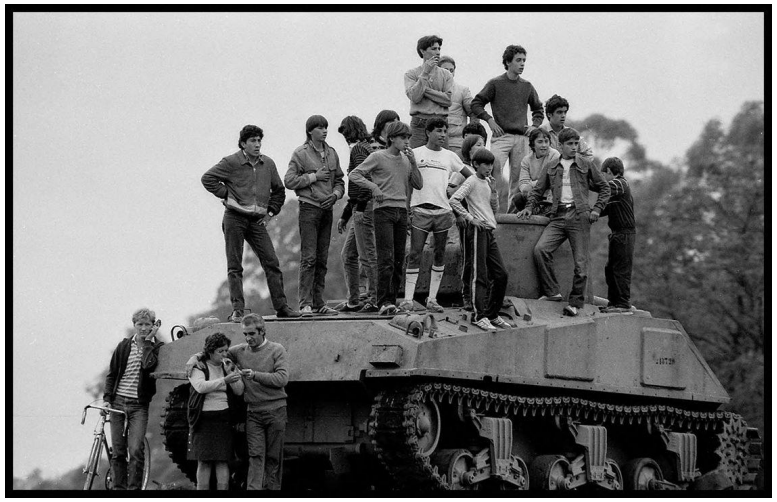
Diego Maradona in his first Coca-Cola advertising campaign (1981)
Luis Videla Galli Collection – CIFHA Foundation
C-print analog



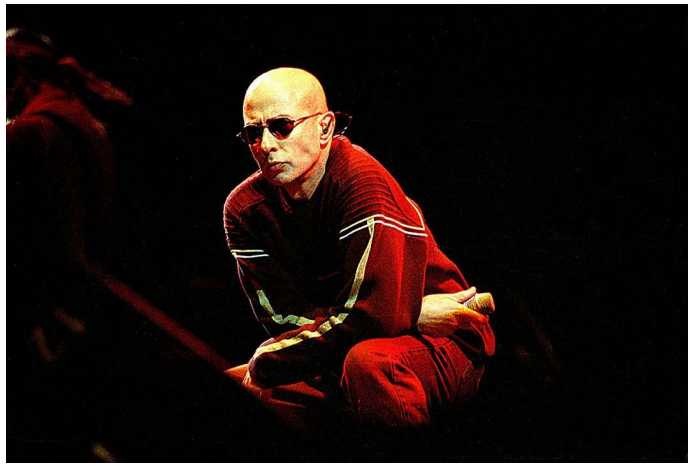
Demonstration (1983)
Silvio Zuccheri Collection - CIFHA Foundation
35mm negative



Borges walking with Enrique Martí (1973)
Tito La Penna Collection - CIFHA Foundation
35mm negative



Campo de Mayo, Argentina (1987)
Tito La Penna Collection - CIFHA Foundation
35mm negative



Indio Solari, Mar del Plata (1999)
Alejandro Kaminetzky Collection - CIFHA Foundation
35mm color transparency

DIGITAL PRESERVATION AND ACCESS

A GROWING ARCHIVE, AN OPEN-SOURCE PLATFORM

Thousands of photographic and documentary materials preserved in digital form

TOTAL

38,000+

DIGITIZED ITEMS

DIGITIZED COLLECTIONS

18,000+ Alejandro C. Del Conte

5,000+ Bernardo Croce

9,000+ Silvio Zuccheri

1,500+ Harry Grant Olds

1,600+ Ramón Ruda Dorrego

2,000+ Carte de Visite & Portrait Cabinet Collection

900+ Juan Müller

DIGITAL ACCESS

AtoM

Photographic and Documentary Archive

EXPLORE →

Koha

Library Catalogue (books, periodicals and bibliographic materials)

EXPLORE →

Free and open to the public. Not all digitized images are available on the platform.

THE H. G. OLDS COLLECTION: FROM ARRIVAL TO CIRCULATION

01 COLLECTION ARRIVES

Year: 2013
We acquired one thousand large-format glass plate negatives in a critical state of conservation.

02 MATERIAL IS STABILIZED

Cleaning and stabilization measures were carried out to prevent further deterioration of the materials.

03 DOCUMENTS ARE CATALOGUED

The original context of the collection is reconstructed, and its documents are described using the ISAD(G) standard.

04 NEGATIVES ARE DIGITIZED

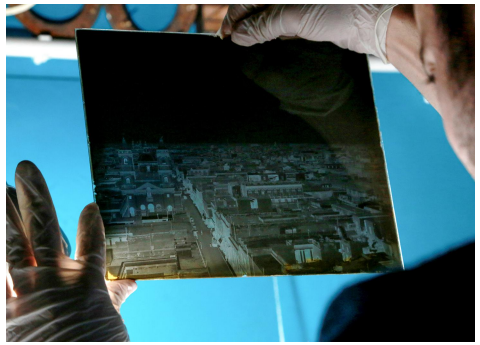
High-resolution digitization reveals details that were previously difficult to observe and ensures their long-term digital preservation.

05 COLLECTION IS REACTIVATED

The collection is approached through interdisciplinary work, enabling new historical and contemporary readings.

06 COLLECTION RETURNS TO PUBLIC VIEW

Curatorial work, research, publications and free public access through digital platforms bring the collection back into circulation and generate new knowledge for society.



Handling of a glass-plate negative from the H. G. Olds Collection



Argentine Pavilion, Buenos Aires, Argentina
Harry Grant Olds Collection - CIFHA Foundation



H. G. Olds. Espejos de Plata / Silver Mirrors
Book published by CIFHA Foundation



Exhibition view, H. G. Olds
FOLA, Buenos Aires (2017)



Contemporary activation of the Harry Grant Olds Collection at CIFHA Foundation

H. G. OLDS: MEDIA, FILM AND RESEARCH



THE ART NEWSPAPER

Art market Museums & heritage Exhibitions Books Podcasts Columns Art of luxury Adventures with Van Gogh Ve

How a man from Ohio became one of Argentina's greatest 20th-century photographers

The unlikely story of H.G. Olds and the photographer championing him

Group of visitors from La Boca neighbourhood posing in front of the mural of H.G. Olds's photograph 621 in *Caminito*. Buenos Aires, S.A
Photo by Alfredo Srur, courtesy CISH Foundation

The dramatic black-and-white photo mural *El Conventillo*, which refers to a type of tenement popular in Argentina, is cinematic in its scope. The main figures, near the front, include young boys dragging on their cigarettes with a sort of premature swagger. In the background, you can make out men hanging over a balcony in front of a clothesline and a woman nearby scowling.

The mural captures the immediate effects of poverty—on faces, clothes, housing, crowding—in a Buenos Aires tenement around 1900, and is currently being shown in the city's working-class neighbourhood of La Boca, so that immigrants today can come face to face with those from more than 100 years ago. It is based on an 8in by 10in glass-plate negative by Harry Grant (H.G.) Olds, who was an immigrant himself: an American photographer who documented Argentina during a destabilising period of great industrialisation and immigration—what might be considered the country's last stage of modernisation.

READ ARTICLE →



FILM

H. G. Olds´ Journeys

A short documentary tracing H. G. Olds's photographic journey in Argentina and CIFHA's decade-long work to preserve, research, digitize and reactivate his archive.

WATCH →



FILM

H. G. Olds in Gran Chaco, the American photographer and the Qom community, a century later

A short documentary reconnecting H. G. Olds's 1901 photographs of the Toba/Qom community in the Gran Chaco with present-day Indigenous communities, through workshops, archival research and high-resolution digitization.

WATCH →



Daguerreotype conservation and restoration at CIFHA Foundation

Protecting the archive requires resources 365 days a year

- Continuous monitoring
- Controlled temperature
- Continuous power supply
- Stable humidity

A climate-controlled storage vault is essential infrastructure for preservation

Environmental stability reduces the physical deterioration of photographic materials and protects daguerreotypes, negatives, albumen prints, glass plates, and other sensitive formats.



Ethel Rojo (c.1960)
Finquel Studio Collection - CIFHA Foundation
4 x 5 in. negative

The Value of Supporting CIFHA Foundation

Cultural Heritage

Help preserve an irreplaceable part of the history of Argentine photography

Access

Help make Argentina's visual memory freely and openly accessible to audiences worldwide

Education and Research

Foster knowledge production and bring photographic heritage closer to new generations and specialized audiences

Institutional Commitment

Strengthen cultural collaboration among the private sector, NGOs, government institutions, and the community

A Partnership with Visible Results

A partnership with CIFHA Foundation can include services, experiences, and projects connected to our work, specially designed for each institution

- Co-production of exhibitions based on the CIFHA Archive
- Joint research projects drawing on the collection and specialized expertise
- Editing and publication of monographic and thematic books
- Production of limited-edition photographic series, analog or digital, developed from the archive and produced in our laboratory
- Exclusive access to archival materials not available to the general public
- Curatorial services and image research
- Large-scale photographic interventions for indoor and outdoor spaces
- Exclusive educational content and programs for international students
- Brand visibility across web platforms and social media



Two indigenous women at Ingenio La Esperanza. Jujuy, Argentina (c. 1906)
Frank Karl Bruch Collection - CIFHA Foundation



Students and faculty from the National University of San Martín with the foundation’s team at the entrance to its headquarters in La Boca, Buenos Aires.

PATRIMONY, EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY

At Fundación CIFHA, we believe that cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, is enhanced through technical and specialized work, **as well as through educational programs and initiatives developed in connection with the local context.**

We have an agreement with the **National University of San Martín** that promotes collaborative work among faculty, students, young people from the neighborhood, and the CIFHA team, creating **opportunities for exchange, training, and collective production.**

Preserving this archive is a collective responsibility

Let’s make its continuity possible

Discover CIFHA Foundation
Let’s explore a partnership

Support CIFHA from abroad
Donate through GlobalGiving
DONATE→

www.cifha.org.ar · info@cifha.org.ar
Gral. Daniel Cerri 1101/1109, La Boca
Buenos Aires, Argentina



Negative of conventillo. Buenos Aires, Argentina (c. 1902)
Harry Grant Olds Collection - CIFHA Foundation

CIFHA