

R E S E A R C H A T T H E M I N O R W H I T E  
A R C H I V E , P R I N C E T O N U N I V E R S I T Y ,  
P R I N C E T O N , N E W J E R S E Y . 0 6 / 0 8 / 1 9 9 9 .

Notes on photographs from The Minor White Archive.

**Negative No. 2342A. 1949. 4" x 5" contact print.**

2 men, white shirts, dark ties, interior, table with glass on it. One man seated with hand resting on table, the other standing with hand on hip. Strong sunlight behind. Quite a brown tonality to print. Dark skin tones.

**Negative No. 2342I. 'Ernest Stones and Robert Bright'. 1949.  
6" x 6" contact print (?)**

One of my favourite Minor White photographs. Same men as above but lighter skin tones. RICHNESS - tonality in shirts is amazing. Much more contrast than the reproduction, Plate 32 in **Bunnell**, Peter. Minor White: The Eye That Shapes. Boston: Bulfinch Press/Princeton University, 1989. Much more clarity than the reproduction, Plate 62 in **Ellenzweig**, Allen. The Homoerotic Photograph. New York: Columbia University Press, 1992, p.111.

*The presence of the hand on the shoulder is incredible! Such an intimate image between two men!*

**Negative No. 2347. n.d. 4" x 5" contact print.**

Portrait of man, with naked shoulders, shadow on left shoulder. Sun on nose causing half of face to be in shadow.

**Negative No. 2349. n.d. 4" x 5" contact print.**

Same man, ultra close up of face. Head tilted to one side and cropped above eyebrows, probably seen already 'in camera'. Full lips, glint in one eye, squinting. Only one ear visible. Do I like it?

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**Negative No. 2350. n.d. 4" x 5" contact print.**

Same man, hand on chin, face in full light, skin tone of shoulders is darkish.

Semi-smiling face, loving? joking? Head cropped above eyes.

**All 3 prints have good contrast.**

**Negative No. 28. 1943.**

Photographs of his war buddies. Man in helmet, turned up collar on combat jacket.

Face half in shadow, light around helmet edge, chiaroscuro. Rembrandt? Dark skin tones. More light on background. Mounted on brown card.

**Negative No. 30. 1943.**

Same guy as above, side lit. Image is full of diagonals.

**Negative No. 40. 1943.**

Pensive study of man, light on wall behind. Very moody, dark skin tones.

**Negative No. 41. 1943.**

Same guy staring out of camera with a vacant look on his face. Lighter print with beautiful tones in it.

**Negative No. 52. 1943.**

Profile of man in helmet in shadow. There is light on line of nose and one cheek, under one eye but not one eye. **STUNNING. Like a dead stare moving.**

Amazing tones and strong contrast.

**Negative No. 672. 'Gino Cipolla, Portland'. 1940. 6" x 6" contact(?)**

Nude man on fabric on carpet. Upside down, twisted, in strong light. Beautiful, smooth, masculine Italian type body. Quite built. Raised knee nearly touches top edge of image. Head goes into bottom right corner. Tones are dark but lush and the body has a beautiful presence in original print. **Skin tones are amazing!!**

See Plate 9 in **Bunnell**, Peter. Minor White: The Eye That Shapes. Boston: Bulfinch Press/Princeton University, 1989, p.249.

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**Negative No. 673. 'Gino Cipolla, Portland'. 1940. 4" x 5" contact.**

Nude of same man as above lying on his side on fabric/carpet in strong light (looks like a directional spot as body in a round halo, edges of print much more in shadow). Print has dark brown sepia tones. Horizontal print.

**Negative No. 675. 'Gino Cipolla, Portland'. 1940. 4" x 5" contact.**

Vertical nude of same man with limp cut dick hanging there. The contour outline of the left hand side of the body is outstanding. Brown tonality to the print.

**Negative No. 676. 'Gino Cipolla, Portland'. 1940. 4" x 5" contact.**

From the same series of photographs as above. Same fabric/carpet. Small print, much darker than the reproduction. Print has a blue tonality to it.  
See Plate 15 in **Bunnell**, Peter. Minor White: The Eye That Shapes. Boston: Bulfinch Press/Princeton University, 1989,.

Much more intense. The body is almost like a human version of Edward Weston's peppers (the famous one) in its textuality and shape. The light on the body is sensational!!

**Negative No. 676. 'Gino Cipolla, Portland'. 1940. 4" x 5" contact.**

Same image as above but printed even darker! Really dark. It has a brown tonality to it but still retains the beautiful light on the body.

**Negative No. 678. 'Gino Cipolla, Portland'. 1940. 4" x 5" contact.**

Slightly different image from above, though same basic pose. Printed much lighter than both above photographs! Head is slightly up from resting on body. Skin tones much lighter.

**Negative No. 658. Portland 1940.**

Tiny contact print, much smaller than reproduction. The tones in reproduction are OK but the original print is a bit richer in tonality and has browner tones in the body.  
See Plate 16 in **Bunnell**, Peter. Minor White: The Eye That Shapes. Boston: Bulfinch Press/Princeton University, 1989.

**Negative No. 665. 1940.**

Photograph of nude man from tits upwards with wavy hair, in front of hessian background. Brown, brooding, sorrowful, skin tones!! Wonderful lips and sensitivity on face. Shadow under chin and nose, so he was lit from above and slightly to one side. No shadow of nose present and the highlights on the face are soft.

**Negative No. 668. 'Gino Cipolla'. 1940.**

Gino again, fabric now thrown over couch, he is looking down and not at camera in reflective mood, print has brown tonality.

**Negative No. 140A/B/C/D. 'Earl Curtis'. 1941. 4" x 5" contact.**

- A.** Darker, more earthy than the reproduction in the book. The body and the wood have more brown tones in them. The figure is small, vulnerable, shy? Hidden genitalia and slim smooth body. His lover? Barn behind.  
See Plate 14 in **Bunnell**, Peter. *Minor White: The Eye That Shapes*. Boston: Bulfinch Press/Princeton University, 1989.
- B.** Same young man, different pose, still strong sunlight. Not so effective a result.
- C.** Same young man, different pose, face almost printed out, background really black.
- D.** Same young man, standing, full back shot this time, still bright sunlight, towel on ground beside him, his weight on right hand foot. Resting his outstretched arms on a beam at chest height attached to barn. Shadow of body falls on ground and barn. Good photo.

**Negative No. 413. 1947.**

Dark skinned man sitting on his haunches, nude, arms hanging on inside of things. Genitalia are nearly all hidden in shadow. He is not looking at the camera, he is looking down, soft highlights over his body and face. His knees are touching the edge of the image, adding tension. Tones of image are beautiful.

*Interesting to note that genitalia in some images are hidden in dark shadow as though MW was afraid to reveal his attraction to them.*

Section M1

**Negative No. 414. 1947. 4" x 5" contact.**

Engaging portrait of nude dark man, much more challenging than Robert Mapplethorpe's images of black men. Features the same carpet used in *Nude Foot*, 1947. Man is photographed on velvet.

**Negative No. 419. San Francisco. 1947. 4" x 5" contact.**

Two nude men, one dark skinned, one light skinned, sit on black velvet(?) on floorboards. White man nearest camera lies horizontally with his back to the camera, cut off at ankles and above waist. Behind darker model facing camera props himself up on one hand whilst leaning back, one leg folded under other upright leg with knee in air. His body is cut off just below the neck. Genitalia is not visible on dark man as in deep shadow and the tones of the print are dark overall. There is no physical touching between the two models, although in the photograph their knees and a hand/elbow nearly touch.

See Plate 22 in **Bunnell**, Peter. *Minor White: The Eye That Shapes*. Boston: Bulfinch Press/Princeton University, 1989, p.252.

**Negative No. 420. San Francisco. 1947. 4" x 5" contact.**

Same models as above. Now the dark skinned man has his legs folded under him in upper mid/right hand side of image, and his dick is visible. White man has rolled over and his form fills bottom half of image, showing off his dick which lies against his stomach. Bodies are just touching in one place. Beautiful image.

**Negative No. 428A/B. 1947.**

- A. Naked guy sitting with a sad looking face staring out of picture frame. He has an erection. Right hand rests on his knee. Left hand rest on left thigh. Lit from right hand side front.
- A. Lighter print of the same negative which makes erection much more evident. The body has more presence but has been cropped just below the models left hand (right hand side of photograph) which rest on his left thigh.
- B. Same man with erection now has left hand hanging by his side. He is looking into camera.

Something defeated in his eyes - anguish? Dicks are always half hidden in shadow.

## Section M1

### **Negative No. 433. 1947. 4" x 5" contact.**

Nude man on his haunches with an erection. Quite a close up image with man cropped at mid-stomach and thigh. Lit from right side above.

### **Negative No. 434. 1947. Square image.**

Real close up of same man as above with hand resting on inner thigh of right leg next to, but not touching, his erection. Left hand is resting on other thigh. Body cropped above belly button. Beautiful print.

### **Negative No. 435. 1947. Square image.**

Lighter print of the above image. The man is now grasping his erection with his left hand.

Although these images would have never been for public exhibition it is still very unusual to find a classical photographer with such a public profile as Minor White taking images of erect dicks, especially in the 1940s! There were no photographs of erect penises in the George Platt Lynes photographs at The Kinsey Institute for example, another gay photographer working in the same era. Of course this does not mean that they do not exist in the work of GPL, but that they might all be in private collections and are not accessible or have been destroyed.

It is interesting to note that George Platt Lynes photographed his own erect penis as early as 1929, although this photograph is not present in The Kinsey Institute Collection and belongs to The Collection of Anatole Pohorilenko (See **Crump**, James. "Iconography of Desire: George Platt Lynes and Gay Male Visual Culture in Postwar New York," in **Kinsey Institute** and **Crump**, James. George Platt Lynes: Photographs From the Kinsey Institute. Boston: Bulfinch Press, 1993, p.151, Footnote 19). I also did not see the photograph titled "Erection, c.1952," (see **Figure 29** on **page 255** of the **hard copy** of the Project notes), while at The Kinsey Institute which illustrates the above article. This is the most sexually explicit photograph of GPL's that I have ever seen but there is no accreditation listed for this photograph in a book which is subtitled 'Photographs From The Kinsey Institute'. Is this photograph part of The Kinsey Collection and if it is why didn't I see it when I was researching there? Please see my correspondence with Jennifer Yamashiro, Curator at The Kinsey Institute about this and another photograph by George Platt Lynes in **Section M6**, notes on GPL photographs in the Kinsey Institute on **pages 358-363** of the **hard copy** of the Project notes.

**THE PRESENCE OF THESE MINOR WHITE IMAGES WAS A GREAT SURPRISE AND DELIGHT TO ME AND VERY EXCITING. THEY WERE VERY INTERESTING NOT ONLY IN RELATION TO MY PERSONAL HISTORY AS AN ARTIST AND GAY MAN, BUT FOR THEIR ARTISTIC AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT.**

**Negative No. 227. 'Tim Asch'. 1951.**

This print was larger than reproduced in the book. The sand has much more presence than in the reproduction. The body becomes more important in the larger size. The inside of the hand is **SO** black!! The zit on his chest and the sand in the crevice of his collarbone are really noticeable as is the sand clinging to his right arm.

See Plate 17 in **Bunnell**, Peter. Minor White: The Eye That Shapes. Boston: Bulfinch Press/Princeton University, 1989.

*No body beautiful here. Just the everyday body.*

**Negative No. 61. 'William Smith'. 1953.**

Good reproduction in the book, the sand is a bit richer in texture and colour.

Very slim, natural body.

See Plate 19 in **Bunnell**, Peter. Minor White: The Eye That Shapes. Boston: Bulfinch Press/Princeton University, 1989.

'THE TEMPTATION OF  
ST. ANTHONY IS MIRRORS, 1948'.

I looked at the only complete, undamaged book in existence.

What an experience and privilege! Beautiful book that has a powerful and intense presence. The book was beautifully sequenced as you would expect from Minor White and features photographs of Tom Murphy. For example there is a series of his hands over the back of a chair in different positions: hanging, curled, splayed, held slightly upwards and these are sequenced with photographs of bare feet and turned up jeans, bare feet and rocks and three other photographs. These were:

**1. 'Tom Murphy, 1948'.**

So small a print in reality, much smaller than the reproduction in Peter Bunnell's book and much more intense. **Anguish.**

See Plate 52 in **Bunnell**, Peter. Minor White: The Eye That Shapes. Boston: Bulfinch Press/Princeton University, 1989.

**2. Similar negative to 'Tom Murphy, 1948'.**

Again the print very small and had a very blue colouration to the print. The print had dark skin tones and was also much darker overall, making the rose stand out intensely. It was a different negative from the one in Peter Bunnell's book taken from a slightly different angle.

See Plate 42 in **Bunnell**, Peter. Minor White: The Eye That Shapes. Boston: Bulfinch Press/Princeton University, 1989.

**3. 'Tom Murphy, 1948'.**

Smaller, much darker and more **introspective** than in the reproduction.

See Plate 125 in **Bunnell**, Peter. Minor White: The Eye That Shapes. Boston: Bulfinch Press/Princeton University, 1989