

## Conservation treatment of Harold Pinter's photo albums

By Julia Wiland (Paper Conservator at the British Library)

The playwright Harold Pinter's archive was acquired by the Library in late 2007. The Library acquired 15 photo albums, 13 scrap books, 30 desk diaries, 61 ring binders of correspondence, and about 100 box files of scripts and notes.

The photo albums from the archive have recently been conserved. These albums contain not only photographs from productions of his work around the world, but also images of Pinter as a young actor, collecting awards, having dinner with his cast, as well as stills and slides from his film and television productions, and even ink jet prints and web pages.

When Pinter's photos arrived at the Library, they were housed in commercially available albums, with red vinyl covers and gold borders, consisting of sticky pages with peel-back plastic sheets covering each page. In addition to a title page with notes detailing the contents, year and location of the photos, each album had sticky (Avery office type) labels, with notes written in black ink, stuck to the pages.



*Above: Removal of photographs from the original album pages.*

The albums were made of poor quality materials, and the adhesive on the album pages was brittle and yellowing at the edges. Upon closer inspection, it became



*Above: Removal of labels from the album pages.*

evident that although most of the photos were in good condition, many of the photographs had labels stuck to the back, often with Sellotape™, or clumps of adhesive used to secure them in place on the pages, and others needed repairing. At the other extreme, some photographs were loose and at risk of moving and getting

damaged even with careful use. In order to prevent further damage to the photos they were transferred to new albums. This decision was made in collaboration with the curator since preserving the photographs, rather than the unsuitable albums they were housed in, was the main priority.

New albums were constructed of conservation quality paper (Silversafe) mount windows inside clear (Secol) polyester sleeves, which importantly allow the reverse of the photograph to be seen as well. The sticky labels were also carefully transferred to the new album pages. The finished sleeves were sealed and the new albums were assembled.



*Above: Julia Wiland removing photographs from the original albums with a spatula.*

The work is now complete and the photographs can be consulted by readers interested in the work of one of the greatest British playwrights of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.



*Left: A page from one of the original albums, showing the old format with adhesive covered pages, and overlapped images.*

*Right: A page from one of the new albums, showing the expanded format with Silversafe mounts inside Secol sleeves. The transparent sleeves allow the reverse of the photograph to be seen, as well as the whole front of each image.*

