

# MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, HOUSTON

## HOW A DAMS UPGRADE IS STREAMLINING WORKFLOWS AT THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, HOUSTON



Photo Courtesy of MFAH

The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (MFAH) was founded in 1900 and opened to the public in 1924 with a mandate to bring “art into the everyday life” of the Houston community. Today, the museum boasts the largest art collection in the southwest region, and is one of the country’s top ten most visited museums.

With such a large collection and an actively engaged audience, the museum wanted to find new and creative ways to share their objects with the public. The MFAH team was thrilled to receive an IMLS grant to photograph their collection of works on paper, and decided to use the grant project as the impetus to improve their media workflows.

“Media Studio was TMS! There is no need for a complicated separate integration protocol because all the data entered into Media Studio is entered directly into TMS.”

- MARTY STEIN, PHOTOGRAPHIC AND IMAGING SERVICES  
MANAGER AT THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS HOUSTON



### OVERVIEW

- 64,000+ objects
- 29,300 works on paper



### PROJECTED RETURN ON INVESTMENT

- Hours saved on managing a TMS/DAMS integration process
- No cost for integration of TMS and the DAMS
- Streamlined workflows
- More powerful reporting
- Greater staff access to media and information



### PRODUCTS

- The Museum System (TMS)
- TMS Media Studio

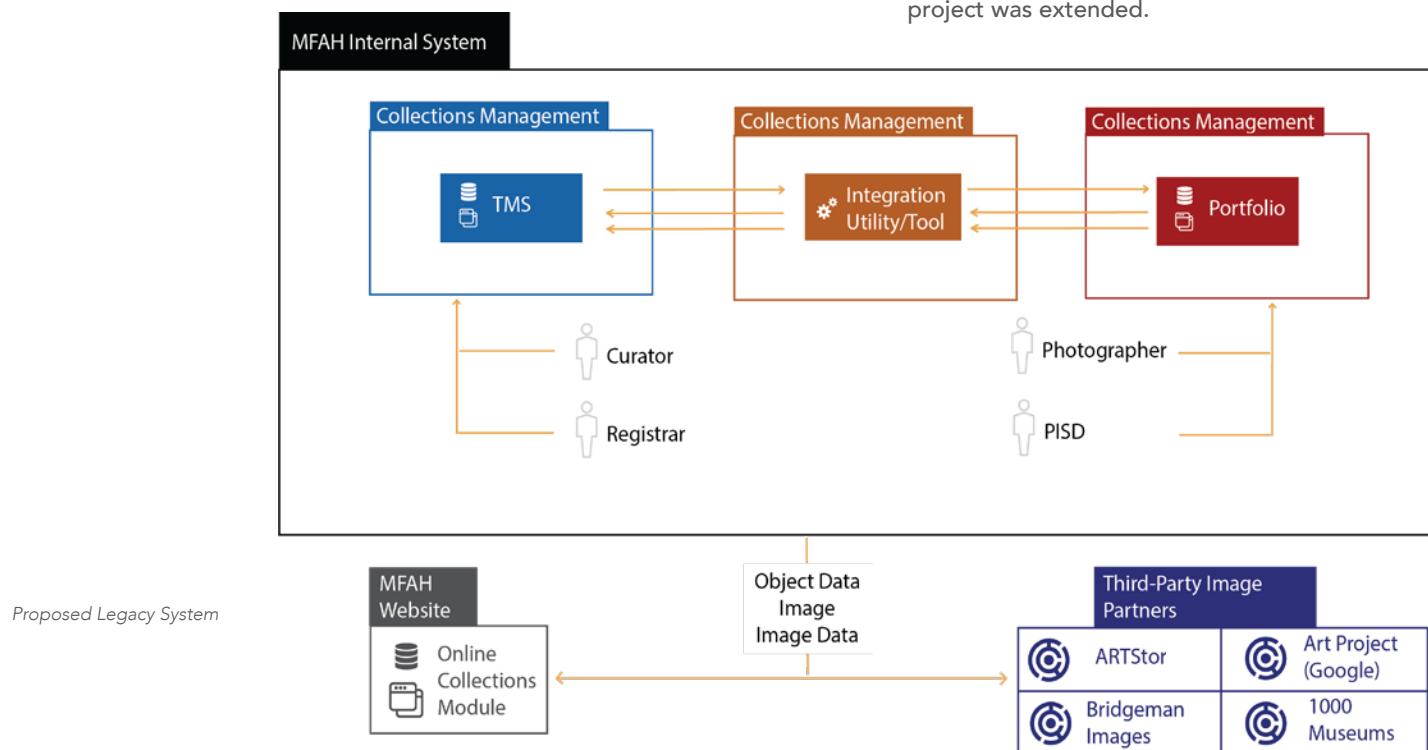


## CHALLENGES

In 2013, the MFAH assembled two teams to work independently on the two main challenges of the grant – to photograph 29,300 works on paper and to link images of these works to the museum’s collection management system, The Museum System (TMS), and make them accessible through the museum’s partnerships with online distributors. The photography team consisted of staff from several departments including Registration, Preparations, and Conservation, while the database team consisted of only three people, Dave Thompson from Information Technology, and Matt Lawson and Marty Stein from Photographic and Imaging Services. In order to make online access possible, the database team initially planned to integrate TMS with their legacy Digital Asset Management System (DAMS).

After mapping the proposed data workflows, some questions were immediately raised: should data be updated and maintained in both systems? Which system would be the authority? After polling the MFAH staff, it was clear that images needed to exist in both systems, so the team had to think about creating a two-way integration between TMS and their legacy DAMS.

“Additionally, our director and curators wanted to add an online collections gallery on our website,” explains Marty Stein, Photographic and Imaging Services Manager at the MFAH. “It was meant to integrate object data from TMS with image data from our DAMS.” The DAMS integration was recalibrated to include the new digital gallery, and the timeline for the project was extended.



New hurdles continued to appear, as changes to the museum's acquisitions documentation and exhibition images procedures were implemented. Marty recalls, "Things are always changing at the museum, and some adjustments to our workflows were made that influenced how TMS and the DAMS were used."

Finally, the team hit a roadblock that couldn't be avoided. "The DAMS vendor changed the database and search structure in our DAMS," reveals Marty, "It meant that if we upgraded, the integration would break, and we would lose our workflows and break the spirit of our grant. We had to decide: either keep what we had, never update our DAMS, and hope it wouldn't crash, or we could pick a new DAMS."



## SOLUTION

The database team set out in search of a new system, "We reviewed many DAMS, and we decided to move forward with Media Studio." TMS Media Studio shares one database with TMS, together with all programs available in the TMS Suite.

"Media Studio was TMS! There is no need for a complicated separate integration protocol because all of the data entered into Media Studio is entered directly into TMS. This fulfills the spirit of our IMLS grant, and frees us from ongoing integration maintenance," explains Marty.

The team will also benefit from the security controls already built into TMS. These features allow them to create security groups, and provide a personalized experience for staff members, some of whom have never had access to TMS.

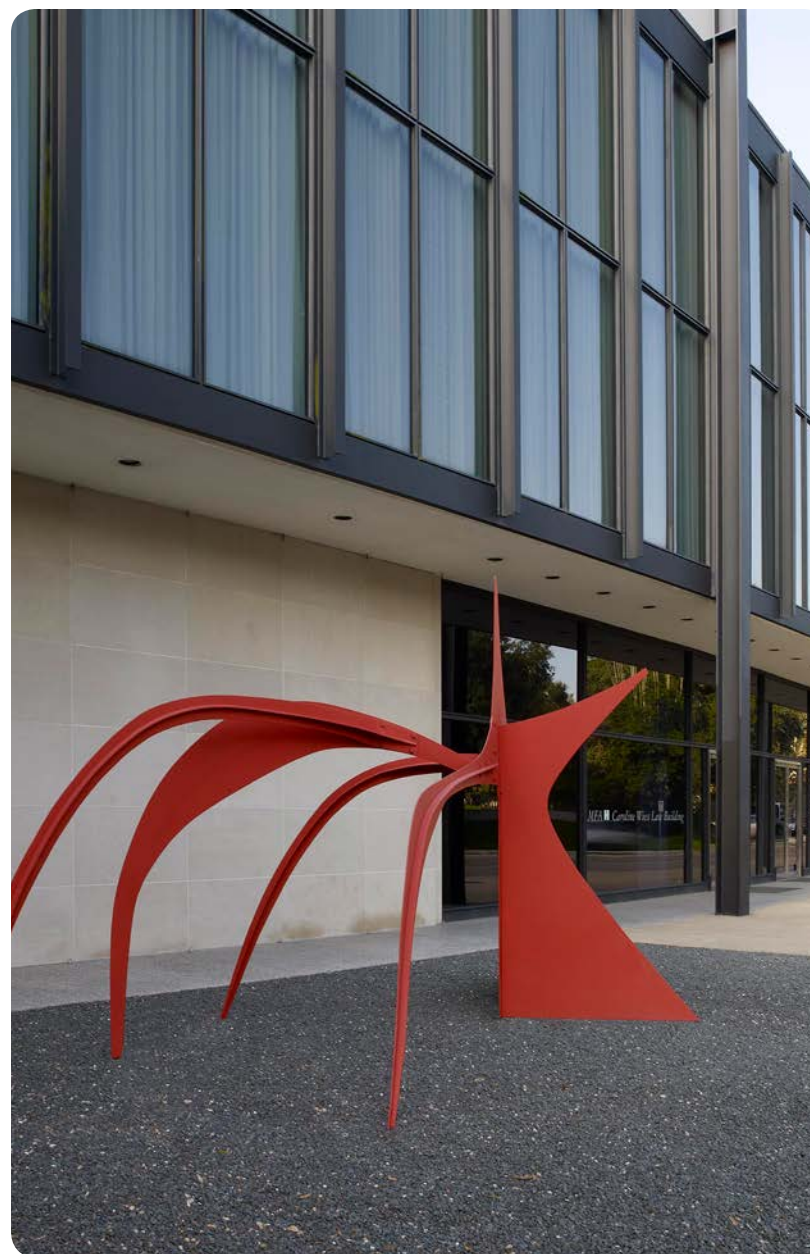


Photo Courtesy of MFAH

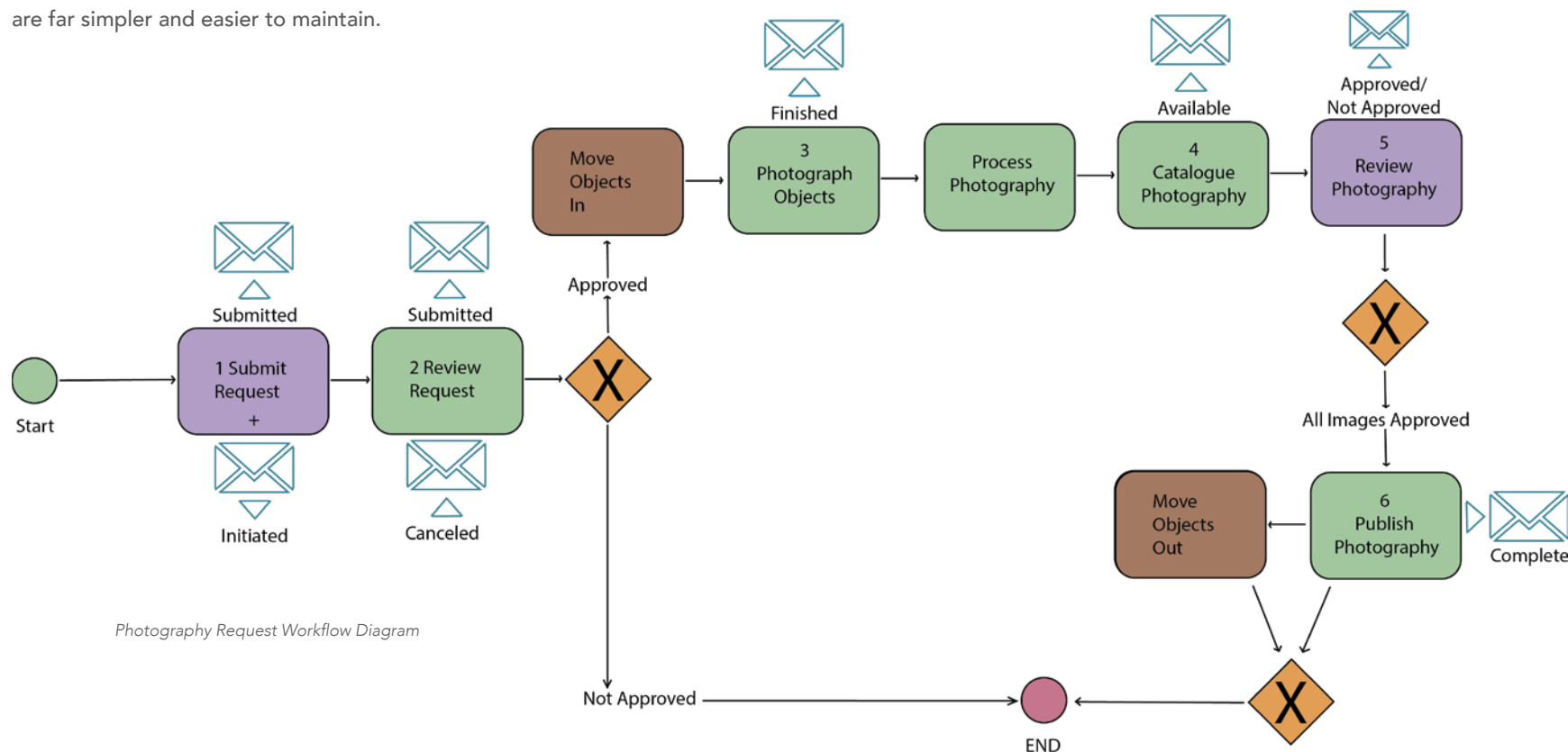
Marty adds, "The other features are just icing on the cake. For example, TMS has the ability to track rights information in both the Objects and Constituents module, so there is no longer a need to maintain that information in two separate systems." As the team discovers the power behind Media Studio during their beta testing, it continues to unlock possibilities for them, and they are finding their process for customized workflows and reporting immensely simplified.

With the integration problem solved, the database team was able to use the museum's new tool kit to address the workflow process that affected the photography team the most, the photography request process. They analyzed the current processes and built workflows and personalized reports to bring their vision to life.

Matt explains the simplicity of the proposed replacement for their photography request process.

### THE PLAN

The complicated dual-integration process that the MFAH originally implemented is no longer necessary, and the new workflows they are building are far simpler and easier to maintain.



First, the user logs in to Media Studio to begin a new photography request. They submit project details, and what views they would like the object to be photographed in. They can also attach examples of how they would like the object shot. After they submit their request, the Photo Services Manager is automatically sent a request alert.

The Photo Services Manager updates the photography request details and schedules it. They also change the alert status in order to notify the Photographer and museum staff who will assist in photographing the object, including Art Handlers, Conservators, and Framers.

The Photographer receives an alert on their dashboard notifying them of the request, with the option to generate a studio photography request PDF, which

includes the objects to be photographed, their tombstone data, example images for shots, and other information the Photographer needs on hand while shooting. After the images are finished, the Photographer alerts the Digital Assets Administrator the images are ready for processing and approval.

From there, the Digital Assets Administrator creates the new media records for the images, and imports the media into Media Studio for approval by Curators and other key staff.

The Digital Asset Administrator then attaches the new images to the project, allowing them to be seen in the record hierarchy. Finally, the new images can be approved by the assigned approver. If the images are approved, the Digital Asset Manager is alerted to finish the workflow.

*New Photography Request with Object Views*

**TMS MEDIA STUDIO**

Projects

Project ID: 1044  
SP.1 SUBMITTED Photo Services - New Request

For Two Dimensional Works

Desired View Descriptions

Make a new row to comment on individual works

Name	Value	Remarks
SP - Views Requested	Overall view of proper front	57.5
SP - Views Requested	Overall view of profile (left)	57.5
SP - Views Requested	Overall view sheet (front)	79.267
SP - Views Requested	Overall view of image	79.267
SP - Views Requested	Overall view of sheet (back)	79.267

Attach Example Images Here

Related MediaXrefs

Drag and Drop. File Here

SELECT A FILE

ADD NEW

LOOKUP

If the images aren't approved, the approver will send comments to the Photographer on what needs to be changed, and the Photographer will be alerted on their dashboard. The Photographer will repeat their process with the new comments, fixing any previous issues.

The team explains how this new workflow will future-proof the MFAH team. "The great thing about this workflow is now that these requests will be saved, we can also query and report on them later for usage data."

As the MFAH team prepares their new workflows for the museum-wide Media Studio implementation, they expect



## MFAH The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

Photographic and Imaging Services

## STUDIO PHOTOGRAPHY REQUEST

2045

REQUEST ID: **2045** TITLE: Modern Contemporary Photo Request - 2045  
 REQUEST NO.: SP.2 NO. OF OBJECTS: **2**  
 TYPE: **Studio Photography** STATUS: **Active - Awaiting Photography**  
 PURPOSE: No MFAH Studio Photography Available REQUESTED: 12/04/2017  
 DEPARTMENT: Modern and Contemporary Art DUE: 12/26/2017  
 REQUESTOR: Matt Lawson BEGIN: 12/07/2017 END: 12/19/2017  
 WORKFLOW: Shelby Rodriguez  
 FACILITATOR:  
 MANAGER: Marty Stein

## OTHER INFO

## DETAILS: Before Photography Considerations

Has curatorial physically seen work?	Yes	all works have been reviewed
Is Conservation review needed before photography?	No	no works need conservation review

## Considerations for 2D Works

Does work need to be unframed?	Yes	79.267
Do corners need to be removed?	Yes	79.267
Does work need to be reframed?	Yes	79.267
Do corners need to be added back?	No	79.267

## Views Requested

Views Requested	Overall view of proper front	57.5
Views Requested	Overall view of profile (left)	57.5
Views Requested	Overall view sheet (front)	79.267
Views Requested	Overall view of image	79.267
Views Requested	Overall view of sheet (back)	79.267

## After Photography Considerations

Where does work need to be moved to after photography?	Original Location	57.5
Where does work need to be moved to after photography?	Storage	79.267 - SSR9

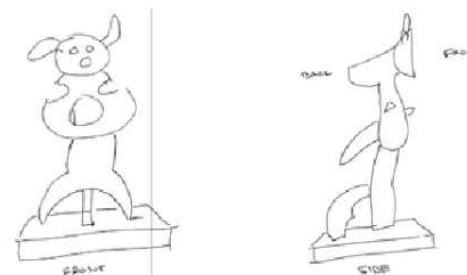
## OTHER INFO

## MFAH The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

Photographic and Imaging Services

## STUDIO PHOTOGRAPHY REQUEST

2045



## OBJECT(S)

## 79.267

Karel Appel, Dutch, 1921–2006  
*Têtes*, no date  
 Lithograph on wove paper  
 Sheet: 22 1/8 x 29 3/4 in. (56.1 x 75.6 cm)  
 02 BECK BUILDING, BECK BUILDING, PHOTOGRAPHY STUDIO  
 5129



## 57.5

Max Ernst, French, born Germany, 1891–1976  
*Moonmad*, 1944, cast 1956  
 Bronze  
 37 1/4 x 15 1/4 x 11 5/8 in. (94.6 x 38.7 x 29.5 cm)  
 01 LAW BUILDING, LAW BUILDING, SSR 1, COUNTER  
 47138



Photography Request Form, Courtesy of MFAH

to see major improvements in their overall efficiency, sometimes in processes that the museum has been struggling with for years. Dave reflects on one of those tasks. "Our colleagues have been asking for a report that displays tombstone data and a single large image of an object for years. I made several attempts using Crystal Reports, all requiring unique customizations,

but was never really successful." Now, this type of report is no problem. "This particular report leverages Media Studio's image cache feature. Media Studio caches four sizes of each image which can be configured, eliminating the need to try to stretch the tiny thumbnails in Crystal Reports, or deal with the actual image files attached to TMS media records."

## MFAH The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

## Contact Sheet



31.44  
Egyptian  
Overseer Shabti of Nekhons,  
1070-712 BC



31.72  
Egyptian  
Sheet with Hieratic Inscription  
about Neskonsu, the Singer of the  
Great God Amun, 1069-945 BC



31.74  
Egyptian  
Model Boat, 2061-1784 BC



31.110.A,B,C  
Egyptian  
Shawabti Chest with Lid and  
Falcon, 332-30 BC



31.111  
Roman  
Bust of Serapis,  
100-150 AD



34.133.A,B  
Attributed to Dodwell Painter  
Oinochoe with Animals and  
Lid, 600-500 BC



34.136.  
Greek (Boeotian)  
Statuette of a Draped Female  
Figure, 400-300 BC



37.5  
Greek (Corinthian)  
Myrtle Wreath, 330-250 BC



37.13  
Greek (Boeotian)  
Statuette of a Draped Female  
Figure, 325-150 BC



37.14  
Greek (Boeotian)  
Statuette of a Draped Female  
Figure, 325-150 BC



37.16.  
Greek (Attic)  
Statuette of Seated Goddess,  
500-470 BC



37.17 A,bBS  
Greek (Attic)  
Pyxis with Three  
Horses, 750-700 BC



37.18  
Greek (Corinthian)  
Alabastron, perfume bottle,  
with Boreas, God of the North  
Wind, 265-600 BC



37.42.1,2  
Greek  
Pair of Earrings in the Form of  
Erotes, 300-101 BC

**MFAH**  
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

The MFAH team is pleased to share a sample of one of his new and improved reporting tools. The example below displays one of the MFAH's new Media Studio reports. "This contact sheet-like report combines object, object rights, and image file data (for the primary object media) that can be added or removed from the report as one wishes."

The new workflows and reports the MFAH team has been creating for their upcoming Media Studio roll out will strengthen their data capture processes and make the entire team more efficient. Not only will they fulfill the spirit of their IMLS grant, but they will change the way they're able to work together. Explaining her excitement with the museum's new workflows and reports, Marty says, "They were always in the back of our minds as something that would be wonderful to have, and we've decided this has been the best return for taking on Media Studio. We've been able to do things we've always wanted to do."

The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston is implementing TMS Media Studio museum-wide in 2018. In part two of this article, they will share what they learn during the implementation, the response of staff members to the new system, how the proposed workflows function, and any changes in their thinking or processes that occur as a result of the live environment. Stay tuned for updates!

Media Studio Report