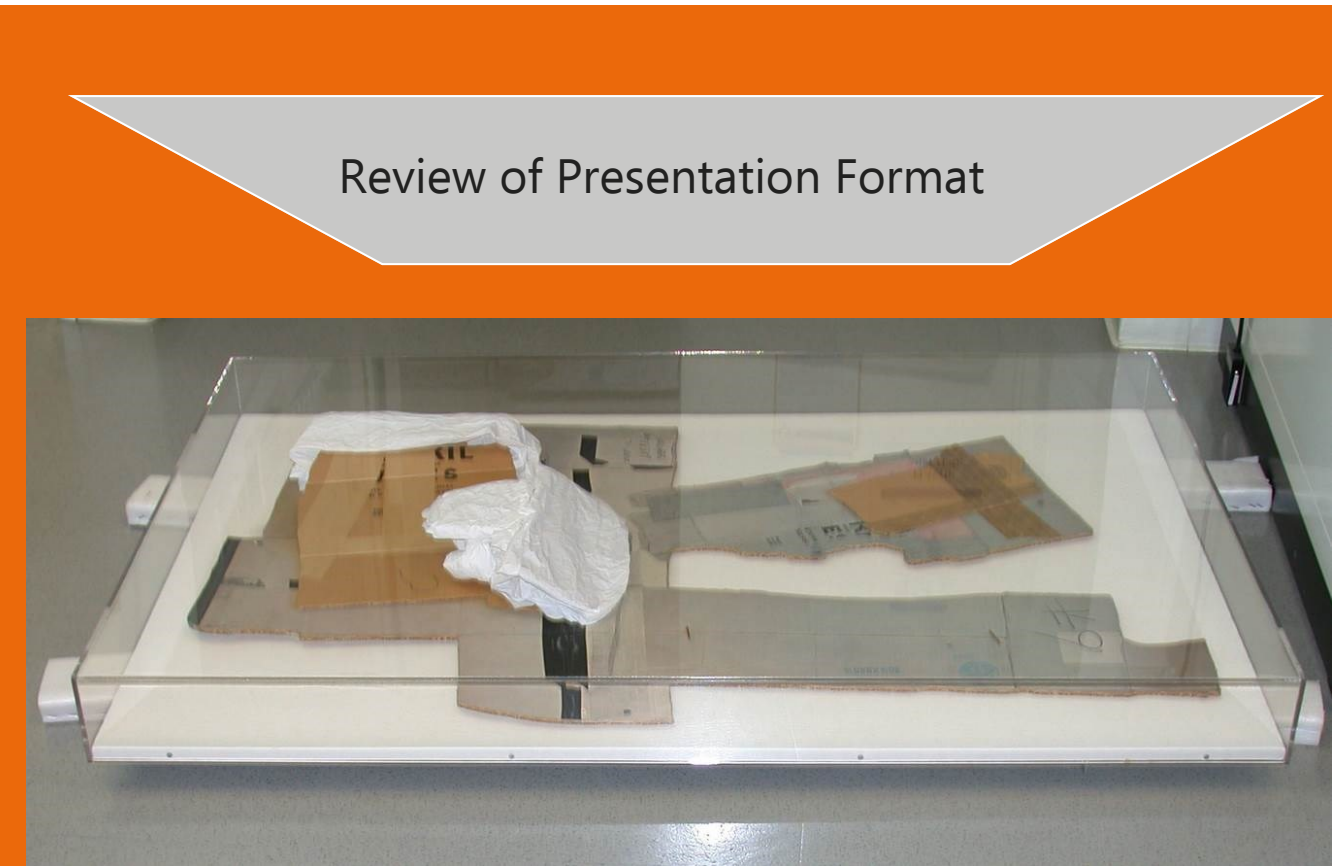


Uncovered and Unconventional: Preserving Works on Paper and Photographs on Open Display



2008: Robert Rauschenberg's ***Cardbird II*** (1971) in the collection of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, housed in an acrylic box. A loan request initiated the review of the display format of the work.



The artist created the the ***Cardbird*** Series in collaboration with Gemini G.E.L. They are made out of corrugated cardboard, tape, steel staples, photo-offset lithographs and screenprints.

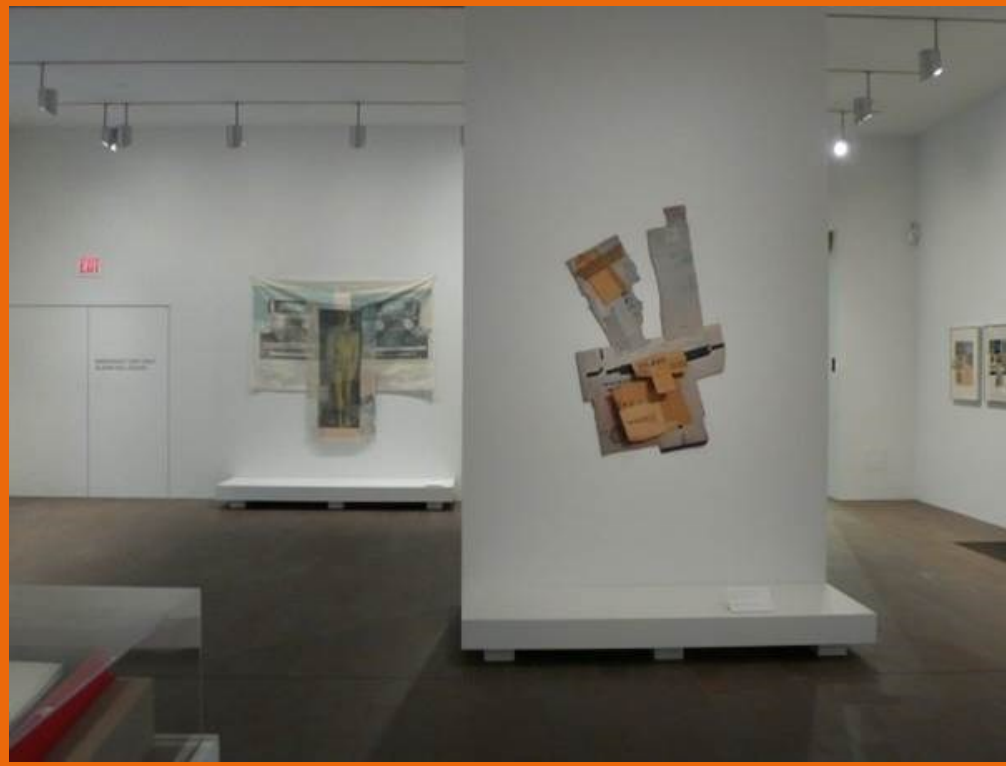
The Rauschenberg studio was contacted regarding the display options of the work: „Bob Rauschenberg always wanted the Cardboards and cardboard-reated works installed directly on the wall... We feel that these works should not be shown in a plexi box“. ²



The object undergoing stabilization treatment in the paper lab prior to the loan.



A mock-up of ***Cardbird II*** was created and used in a trial installation. In accordance with the studio guidelines, the object is affixed to the wall with roofing nails.

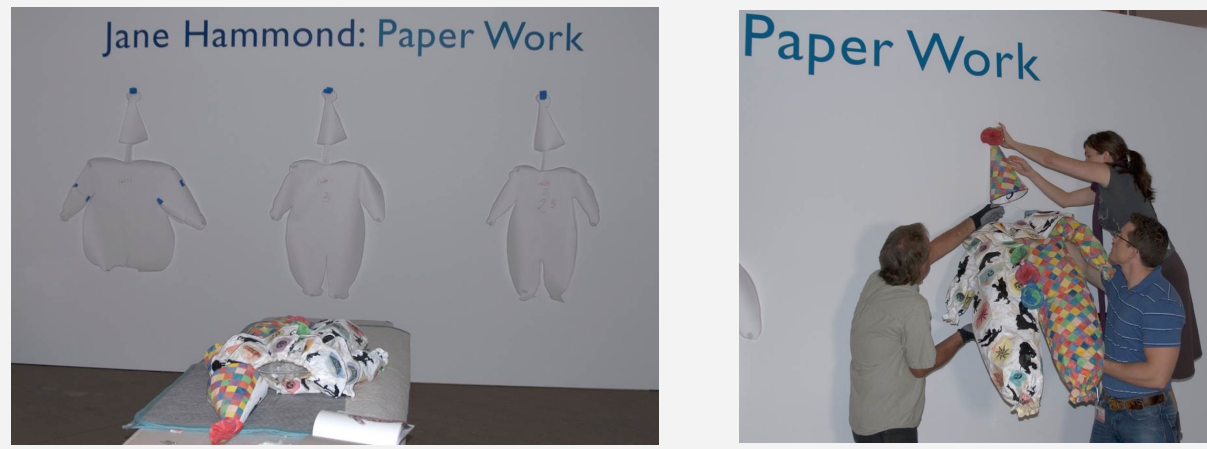


Cardbird II presented uncovered at the De Young Museum in 2009.

The Rise of Open Display

While the inherent fragility of paper has typically underscored the necessity for enclosed display, the format of the frame, quintessentially emphasizing the preciousness of a work of art, is often problematic or even undesirable for contemporary works on paper. As the boundaries of materials and format in Contemporary Art keep expanding continuously, art on paper and photographs break free of the confines of frames and vitrines.

Jane Hammond's ***Clown Suits*** being installed at the De Young Museum in 2008.



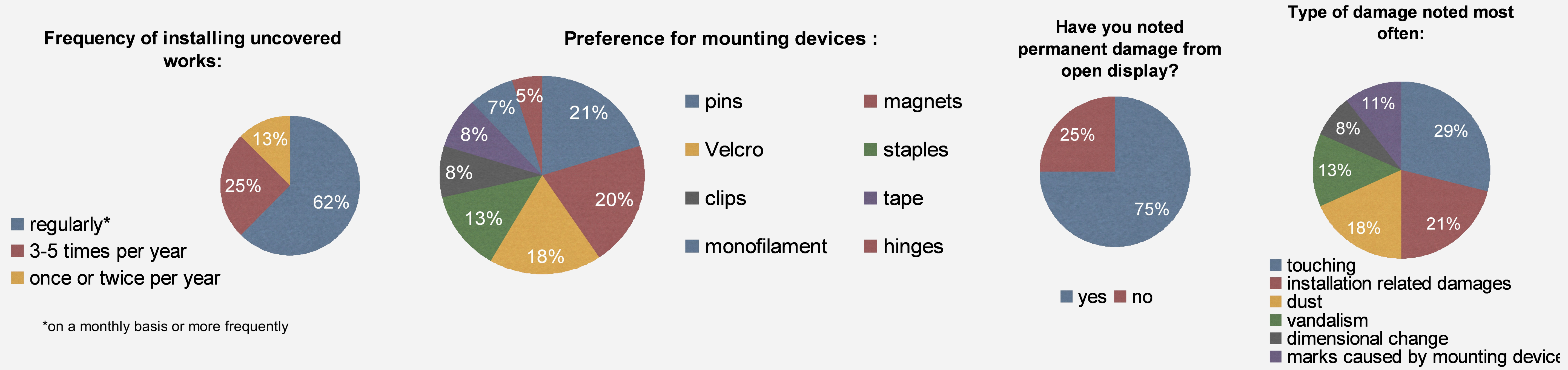
Thoughts on Collaboration

Get involved- early! Protecting uncovered and unconventional works on paper during times of installation, exhibition, travel and storage requires interdisciplinary collaboration. Best results are achieved if conservators are involved early in the process, when a work is first considered for acquisition, display or loan.

We should not assume artists have all the answers! Sometimes artists are stretching the boundaries of what is possible in a gallery situation. Conservators need to look beyond standard practice, but dialogue and compromise is important, too. Younger, inexperienced artists often appreciate advice and guidance,

„Open Display“: Paper Conservator Survey

In 2008, 23 paper conservators in museums and private practice were asked to contribute their experiences with works on open display ³



Problem Solving

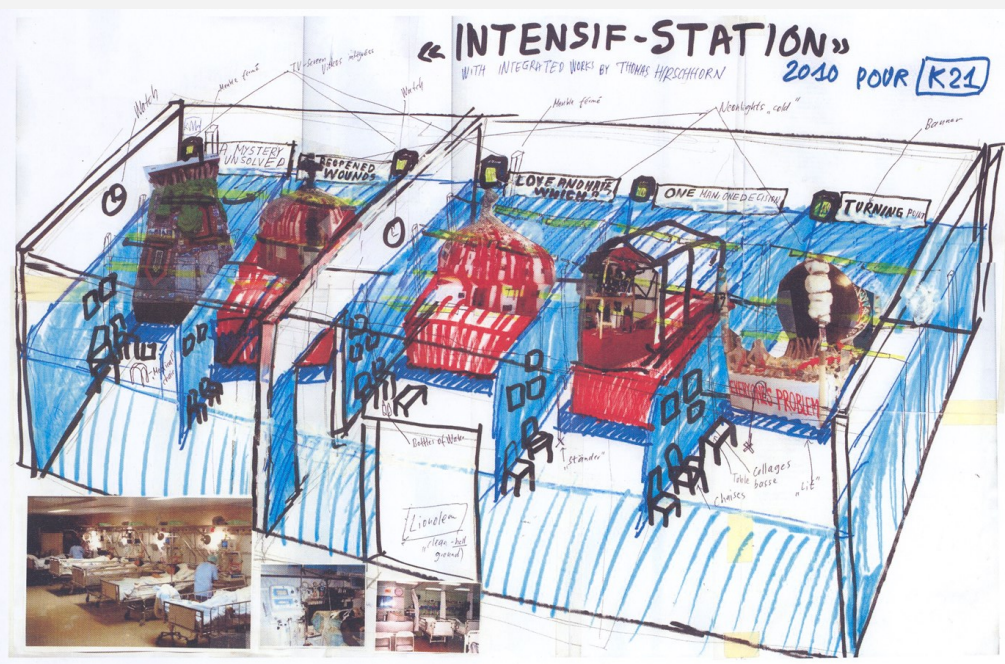
Dust! Light! How do we deal with the inherent vice of open display?

The nature of damages through exposure to light, as well as dust (and touching-induced grime accumulation) is incremental and not immediately obvious. A room-spanning installation is especially vulnerable to this.

Current research at the Kunstsammlung focuses on the preservation options for Thomas Hirschhorn's ***Intensif-Station*** (2010). The installation comprises 20 collages, 5 large sculptures, various pieces of furniture and medical equipment.

The walk-in environment covers roughly 200 square meters and consists of 5 compartments connected by a passage. The artist designed these rooms to be reminiscent of an emergency room: walls clad with green fabric, floors covered with polyvinyl chloride (PVC), his sculptures placed patient-like in the compartments complete with monitors, chairs for visitors, and empty water bottles. Taped to the walls of each compartment are a number of collages.

The images and text fragments in the collages originate from magazines or the internet, and are printed and/or enlarged in the studio on commercial laser copy paper. Sheets of paper are often adhered together with self-adhesive tape. Red marker pen and ball-point pen has been used to write and paint around the images. Mostly, the paper elements have been covered with a thin plastic foil (florists wrapping material).



Preparatory sketch by Thomas Hirschhorn for ***Intensif Station*** at K21.



Partial installation view of *Intensif-Station* (2010)
Collages mounted with brown packing tape on the wall to the left of the sculpture „North Pole“

LIGHT! All this is presented under harsh „operating“ light—suspended from the ceiling are a total of 60 fluorescent lights!

Collages taped to the top of the walls are exposed to up to 800 lux. Even at the furthest distance from these light sources, artworks are exposed to lux levels of roughly 300 lux. The UV values are much higher than recommended, too, at ca. 60W/lumen.



The printed paper elements are affected by color shifts; the marker and ball point pen elements are fading. Some are bordering on the illegible by now.

Thus we now have to deal with the consequences of exposing the works in the installation to such extreme illumination. When contacted by the conservation department about the fading in the collages, the Thomas Hirschhorn-expressed his wish to **rework** them.

DUST! During the four years of continued presentation of ***Intensif-Station***, maintenance interventions are carried out on a regular basis, as signs of wear are contrary to the clinical appearance the artist intended. Crumpled, dirty or

delaminating packing tape is replaced by the conservators when necessary, made possibly by clear instructions by the studio and extensive documentation after the work was purchased.

Dust and grime accumulating on the surface of the sculptures poses a problem, however. Large areas have been covered with clear plastic foil, which has then been covered in spray paint.

Finding means of removing dust safely from the statically charged surfaces is currently under investigation.

If you take care of a Hirschhorn-environment or Hirschhorn-collages at your institution, please contact us!



Artist Wolfgang Tillmans produces oversized ink-jet prints in his studio. In 2013, an entire exhibition of these works was installed at the Kunstsammlung, in close collaboration with the artist.



All ink-jet prints arrived rolled.



Unrolling the work ***Freischwimmer 220*** against the wall took a team of 7 people. The print was mounted on the wall with binder clips placed along the top edge.



Wolfgang Tillmans, ***Freischwimmer 220*** (2013)

Inkjet print on paper, 242,9 x 614 cm

As uncovered and unconventional contemporary works age, they will likely become both more precious and more fragile. How we deal with this is perhaps the bigger question.

An artist such as Wolfgang Tillmans combines preciousness with his desire to present his photographs in a fully accessible way. He also plays to the strength of photography, where he will provide display copies and collector copies when his work enters a collection.

¹ The study „Uncovered and Unconventional“ was instigated by Debra Evans as subject for 2007/2008 Samuel H Kress Fellowshipship in the paper lab of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.

² Email correspondence with Thomas Buehler, Rauschenberg Studio, 2008.

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