

EXHIBITION INSTALLATION AND DISMANTLING

Item Handling and Housing

A. For general handling precautions for paper artifacts, see *Caring for Paper Artifacts and Handling Paper Artifacts Preservation Do's and Don'ts*.

B. For examples of housing options and alternatives for paper artifacts, see *Housing and Environment Options for Display, Housing and Environment Options for Storage*, or consult a conservator.

1. All items should be properly housed before being loaned or transported to insure their safety during travel and subsequent handling. Rehousing by a borrower institution should be discouraged unless approved by a conservator in conjunction with the owner. When possible, items should also be properly housed before being submitted to exhibition personnel.
2. Housing for display should be sympathetic to the nature of the item: i.e. books and magazines should not be mounted vertically but should be supported by a slanted cradle to avoid strain and distortion of their bindings. Only 1 or 2 polyethylene straps should be used to secure open books, only when necessary, and then on only the outermost margins, loosely attached to avoid differential fading and tearing. (Polyethylene is recommended over polyester film for this since it is more flexible and less likely to tear the edge of a text block.) Matted and framed prints should always be placed against a wall and not suspended unsupported in open space. Parchment should be string-matted whenever possible.
3. Display housing techniques should be appropriate for or adaptable to permanent storage housing to:
 - a) up-grade the security of the collection,
 - b) protect the item during handling for display,
 - c) eliminate the need to disassemble housing after an exhibit,
 - d) protect the item in storage.
4. Whenever possible, items should be housed in standardized units (up to 10 different sizes, for instance) in order to facilitate and economize on storage, and to make calculations for design measurements easier and more accurate.
5. Items framed or dust-sealed in a "passe-partout" technique with UF-3 plexiglas should remain so as this is the best housing currently available, and the expense in materials and time warrants rearrangement and even expansion of storage facilities if necessary.
6. Polyester film encapsulation should be used only for non-sensitive media such as photomechanical or lithographic prints with no hand-coloring or glazing, or manuscripts. In contact with friable media such as graphite, pastel, watercolor, gouache, etc., polyester film may cause ferrotyping (in high humidity), scratching (if not absolutely clean), or delamination (due to its static charge). A polywelder rather than double-sticky tape should be used to seal the encapsulation, according to techniques outlined by a conservator.
7. Measurements for matting and spatial requirements should be calculated taking into account:
 - a) whether the item is to remain in its original housing (in which case the outside measurements of that housing should be noted).
 - b) when measuring an item, note the size of its outermost edges, its

- platemark or border, and the actual image. Add at least one inch all around the outside measurement to allow for safe handling once matted, and always cut the window to allow visibility of the platemark or border. Be aware that not all items are regular, and that one side might be different in measurement from another.
- c) try to use a standard measuring device to avoid slight discrepancies in measurement.
 - d) be aware that item size may change significantly after conservation treatments such as washing or flattening.
8. For unusual or oversized paper pieces the following considerations should be worked out:
- a) ample supplies of all materials needed for housing should be on hand.
 - b) ample space should be assured.
 - c) ample time must be allotted to accommodate complicated mounting procedures.

Frame and Case Requirements

- A. Paper items should be exhibited behind UF-3 plexiglas to protect the paper and media from light degradation. If the media is friable (i.e., pastel, charcoal, etc.) or the paper is thin or light-weight, glass should be used in place of plexiglas (which has a high static charge), and light levels should be kept low (3-15 foot-candles) and monitored.
- B. Paper artifacts should be protected from dust and cleaning solutions, etc. either by an enclosed case or properly dust-sealed, moisture proof frame.
- C. Neither glass nor plexiglass should ever touch the surface of any paper artifact, book, pamphlet, etc.
- D. Framed items should be placed against a wall or platform or within a case to protect them from visitors and vibrations. They should not be suspended in open space, endangering the media.
- E. Cases should not be placed near an outside door or window, in direct line of light from a window, under exposed pipes, over or near a heat source or an air conditioning unit.
- F. Paper artifacts should be in contact only with acid-free materials. Nothing in the case or frame should emit volatile acids (i.e., adhesives, fabrics, paints, etc.). All materials should be tested and/or cleared by a conservator.
- G. Items should not be in contact with each other since some deterioration products can migrate from one item to another and since any overlapping, even without contact, can cause differential fading or discoloration.
- H. Paper items should never be in a partial shadow cast by another item, case edge, polyester strap, suspension chain, etc., as this too will cause differential fading.

General Installation and Designer's Precautions

- A. Clamps and brackets must be padded with non-abrasive, inert materials (i.e., acid-free matboard, plexi, etc.).
- B. Items should be mounted in ways that avoid physical stress or unbalanced weight distribution (i.e., books should not be forced open to a page which will crease or cause the spine to crack).
- C. Paper artifacts should not be held in place with tacks, staples, nails, etc. Nor should unapproved adhesives such as pressure sensitive tapes, linen tapes, or dabs of glue be used. Unless cleared by the owner, responsible division and conservation, only polyester film of acid-free paper corners or Japanese tissue hinges with wheat starch paste should be used.
- D. Persons installing the exhibit should have clean hands, and not wear jewelry that might snag or injure an item.
- E. No item should be altered, cleaned or repaired without the written permission of the responsible division in conjunction with a conservator.
- F. Paper artifacts should be protected by folders or acid-free interleaving material when being moved.
- G. A conservator should be contacted well in advance of the installation and dismantling dates for consultation.
- H. A conservator should be notified about all paper items expected to travel in order to ascertain possible risk to the artifact, determine treatment parameters, and develop suitable housing for travel with respect to its conservation needs.

Environmental Controls

- A. Light levels on organic materials should not exceed more than 3-15 foot-candles in any part of a case. Light levels should be checked throughout the case to insure that no area has excessive light. (For more specific instructions, see the Guidelines for Light Levels)
 - B. Paper items should never be exposed to heat exerted from a light source.
 - C. Visitor activated light sources should be used wherever possible and practical.
 - D. Temperature and Relative Humidity should remain constant at about 70 degrees Fahrenheit and 50%.
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Dismantling

- A. A conservator should be consulted in advance concerning plans to dismantle so that problem pieces may be identified and monitored.
- B. Plenty of time should be allotted for dismantling so that items can be inspected, handled, and rehoused properly.
- C. Whenever possible, items well-housed should not be disassembled. Lending institutions should be given an opportunity to accept their items back in proper housing if they so desire.

Prepared by [D. van der Reyden](#), 1984 (revised 1999).