Collection Reinvented: a cross-institutional collaboration

The University of California Berkeley and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art Artist Files Project

Presented by Linda M. Psomas, MLIS 2009
San Jose State University School of Library and Information Science
Introduction

Like so many collections of this nature, the University of California Berkeley Art History/Classics (AH/C) Library artist files collection developed over the years through relatively passive accumulation. Originally moved for a remodeling project, after eleven years in storage the artist files collection was no longer part of the collective memory. Kathryn Wayne, Fine Arts Librarian and Head of the AH/C Library, reviewed the collection and determined that the ephemera might be better placed at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) Research Library. Barbara Rominski, SFMOMA’s Head Librarian, agreed. With the help of Linda Psomas, a student intern from San Jose State University School of Library and Information Science, the collection was re-invented through an uncommon cross-institutional collaboration.
The collection grew over the years with contributions from various sources.
a collaboration was formed. . .

- the artist files collection was no longer part of the collective memory
- ephemera would be better placed at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art Research Library
- new networks opened access to materials
selection criteria

**SFMOMA Research Library + Archives**
- Ephemera related to Modern and Contemporary artists
- All Bay Area exhibition ephemera
- Catalog duplicates
- All photography related materials
- No student or group shows
- No slides or food

**Art History/Classics Library**
- Exhibition catalogs
- Works of extraordinary value
- University records and archives
review

14 vertical files =

• 32 boxes of ephemera (~53.44 linear feet)

• 22 boxes of exhibition catalogs (~36.7 linear feet)

• undetermined amount of recyclables
some highlights from the collection –

Alfred Manessier  untitled lithograph  n/d  481/700
STATEMENT

From December 13, 1966 to January 7, 1967, the Stephen Radich Gallery exhibited sculpture and fabric assemblages by Marc Morrel. In some of the works exhibited, the artist used the American flag. On December 28, 1966, a summons was issued to Stephen Radich for violation of 1425-16D of the Penal Law (Publicly displayed the American Flag that was defiled and mutilated). A hearing is scheduled in the courts for February 10, 1967.

This is an issue which challenges the artist's legal and artistic rights to use all materials available to him when creating and executing a work of art. In an ordered and free society, restrictions cannot be imposed upon the instinct, the imagination or the intelligence of an artist. The creative process is not something that can be controlled by the state.

The Stephen Radich Gallery invites you to sign this statement in support of the artist's freedom to express himself as he wishes, his right to select and use whatever materials and means he chooses, and the liberty to have his work exhibited and viewed by the public in galleries and museums.

Dr. Peter Selz
Professor, University Art Museum
University of California, Berkeley
1931 exhibition catalog donated by the former Department of Decorative Art
The collections are arranged alphabetically by artists’ last names. In the above photographs: on the left Kathryn M. Wayne, AH/C Fine Arts Librarian, and John Ceballos, Curatorial Assistant, prepare for the exhibition catalog arrangement. On the right is a partial view of the four Lektrievers at the SFMOMA Library, estimated to hold over 520 linear feet of artist files. Most files are contained in letter-size manila folders.
Both collections are non-circulating, available to their respective communities daily, and to visiting researchers by appointment.

Users’ expectations for access have changed drastically in the past 20 years. While neither collection is currently slated for digitization, both will be searchable through online catalogs.
findings

This type of cross-institutional collaboration is uncommon, and reflects a paradigm shift and changes in:

- custodianship
- usage
- rights
- access
- social networks
resources


P. Selz (personal communication, 2008-2009).