

Tobias Kaspar

Unconditional

Sept 17 - Nov 19th 2026

Museum Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach

Humanistische Gymnasium am Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach

Tobias Kaspar's exhibition *Unconditional* features two identical sets of works, each consisting of four photographs, display elements, a manual, logbook and a transport crate.

One set, which will be presented at HUMA Gymnasium, will enter Museum Abteiberg's permanent collection after the exhibition. It is intended to be lent to institutions working in care and education, where it can be presented and used at their own sites. The second set, presented at the museum, will return to the artist after the exhibition.

The photographs show cropped details of a jacket—seams, zips, pockets, openings and folds—while leaving the garment itself almost unidentifiable. Overprinted with silver scratch-off paint, the images appear as monochromes, with the original photographs barely visible beneath the surface.

The wooden display elements, finished in colourful, protective felt, support the photographs and allow them to be arranged in different configurations, including directly on the floor, without being attached to a wall. They are therefore not merely display supports but integral components of the work.

The accompanying manual guides the handling of the travelling set, while the logbook documents its journey and invites recipients to record their encounters with the work. Using a coin, recipients can scratch away parts of the silver coating, gradually revealing the photographs beneath. How much becomes visible, and what traces each encounter leaves, remains open. As the set travels between institutions, both the images and the accounts of encounters accumulate.

The relationship between concealing and revealing is central to *Unconditional*. The scratch-off paint is not merely a means of covering the image, but a material with a specific cultural meaning of its own. Familiar from lottery tickets, it marks a surface that can be scratched away to reveal what lies beneath. It carries a promise: that something lies beneath the surface, waiting to be revealed.

Unconditional is accompanied by an extended, anecdotal subtitle, printed in the manual and on the exhibition poster, recounting an event from the early 2010. Memory is understood here not as something fixed, but as something that changes through telling, looking, touching and passing on. A tension emerges between the title's decisiveness and the open, personal nature of the narrative, and runs throughout the work.

The exhibition's publicity also follows this logic of showing and withholding. *Unconditional* is promoted with two posters: the first consists solely of the exhibition title, without the artist's name, the museum, dates or any other information. The second follows the conventional format of a museum poster and supplements the exhibition information with the unusually long, anecdotal subtitle. Together, the posters establish a particular tone and suggest a possible narrative before visitors encounter the works, while leaving open whether the anecdote is true and whether the expectations it creates will be fulfilled.

At Museum Abteiberg, the four photographs appear as silver monochrome works in a room designed by Hans Hollein for the museum's educational programme. Here, the silver surfaces remain untouched throughout the exhibition, preserving the images beneath the paint.

At HUMA Gymnasium, the first institution to borrow a set, the photographs are displayed on the brick walls of an art classroom. Following the instructions in the accompanying manual, pupils are invited to scratch off the silver paint and reveal the photographs beneath. Unlike at the museum, the images here can be progressively uncovered through the pupils' participation.

Another component of the project is the spatial connection between Museum Abteiberg and the directly adjacent HUMA Gymnasium. The two buildings, both designed by Hans Hollein, are connected by an elevated passageway that is not normally accessible to the public. As part of *Unconditional*, the passage is opened to exhibition visitors for the first time, making this architectural connection part of the visitor experience and giving spatial expression to the collaboration between the museum and the school.