

WHY FRAME YOUR ARTWORK?

A framed and matted artwork helps to protect your artwork from environmental conditions and will visually enhance your image. There are also practical and economical considerations which the artist must remember - a framed artwork sells much more easily and quickly than an unframed one.

Framing an artwork requires both good taste and some basic framing knowledge to ensure proper protection of your artwork. Your personal taste is called upon when choosing the shape and colour of the frame's profile, and the size and colour of the mat. The more knowledge you have about conservation and the environmental hazards which threaten your art, the better you will protect your artwork.

PROTECTING PAPER FROM LIGHT

Light is perhaps the greatest and most common source of damage to works of art on paper. It acts to break up the cellulose molecules — of which paper is made — by means of a photo-chemical reaction which causes the fading, brittleness, and (sometimes) the discolouration of paper. The destructive reaction is assisted by oxygen in the air, pollutants and impurities in the paper itself. Pure alpha cellulose bleaches in light. The purest of art papers, therefore, also bleach with exposure to light. Papers containing additives — such as lignin, ground wood, waxes, plasticizers, reducible sulphur, oxidizing chemicals or other potentially harmful non-cellulose products, yellow with exposure to light and should not be used as art paper.

Ultraviolet radiation is the invisible short wave component of light which is most destructive to paper. The major sources of ultraviolet rays are natural daylight and fluorescent lighting — the former being the most pervasive. Present every day — cloudy or

sunny, ultraviolet light strikes art surfaces from every direction — directly and by reflection. It is particularly damaging when it is reflected off snow and water.

Radiant energy that we are able to see as light is an extremely small part of the electromagnetic spectrum. The wave lengths of light which one can see measure from 420 to 760 millimicrons. Damage to paper occurs from 130 to as high as 4440 millimicrons, so even the light that allows us to see an artwork is damaging to it. The spectrum of light present in building interiors, extends on either side of the visible light measurement.

To avoid damage from light, never hang art in direct sunlight or too close to sources of bright fluorescent light. When sunlight is going to fall directly on a framed work, glaze the frame with UF1 acrylic treated to filter the infra-red and ultraviolet rays. Although filtering acrylic can be effective, it is very expensive. We recommend that you simply not hang a work in direct sunlight.

PROTECTING PAPER FROM MOISTURE

The chief danger of moisture to artwork is its potential, in the presence of iron, to combine with sulphate ions in the paper or atmosphere, resulting in the formation of sulphuric acid. The acid destroys paper and artwork. (The same mixture of elements, occurring in the atmosphere, produces acid rain.) Both stored and framed materials must be kept free from excessive moisture, iron, and pollutants (in the paper and/or in the air). Another byproduct of the moisture and organic materials is the growth of mould. Mould cannot grow unless the relative humidity exceeds 70% — preventive measure, therefore, must include keeping the relative humidity below this level.

Mould growth on paper appears as dull rust-coloured patches — called 'foxing' — which discolour the sheet. Mould eats sizing and paper fibres; it grows easily on pastels which contain good nutrients for mould in their binding media.

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To guard against mould, note the following:

A. Keep the relative humidity from 50% - 70%.

B. Do not store pictures in damp basements.

C. Avoid hanging pictures on the outside walls of the house (especially if they feel cold or damp in winter); in laundry rooms; kitchens or bathrooms.

D. Never frame pictures directly against the glass.

E. Clean frames and storage areas regularly, as dust contains airborne mould spores.

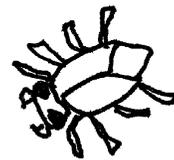
F. Good circulation of air reduces the chances of mould growth. Circulation of air behind a frame is improved by attaching small pieces of rubber, wood or plastic 'bumpers' to the lower two corners to keep the frame away from the wall.

G. Never store pictures directly on the floor. Raise them on supports to allow for circulation of air.

H. Avoid leaving pictures in a closed room or house for extended periods of time without providing for some means of air circulation or de-humidification.

I. Fumigate infected pictures (except oil paintings), and storage containers with thymol fumes to kill mould, and be sure to correct the conditions which originally facilitated the growth of the mould. *

PROTECTING PAPER FROM INSECTS



The most prevalent sources of insect damage to artwork on paper are from the silverfish, termite, cockroach and woodworm. Although termites and woodworms are commonly thought of as enemies of wood alone, they will devour virtually anything made of cellulose - including paper. They will eat their way through pictures to get to flour paste and glue sizing. Cockroaches cause damage to parchment, leather, paper, fabrics, or any glue or painting media containing sugar.

PROTECTING PAPER FROM HEAT



Do not expose artwork to heat since high temperatures accelerate the deterioration of paper. Although the spot above the mantle is often used to hang a work, it is a terrible location because of heat. (Note: ashes can contain sulphates, and soot and gummy residues produced by the fire can adhere to the glass and obscure the picture.)

* Points 'A' to 'I' listed under *How to Care for Works of Art on Paper* by Francis W. Dolloff and Roy L. Perkinson. Published by Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. First Published: 1971



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