Reframing the Problem: Caring for Framed Objects in Small Institutions

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Conservation

Single Item Treatment
Written Documentation
Visual Documentation
Preservation

Handling

Environment

Storage
Why is framing important?

Because it protects your objects and allows you to get them safely on the wall.
Outline of presentation

• Environment
• Storage for framed objects
• Framing works on paper
• Framing easel paintings
• Caring for frames

Any book, article, or website we discuss will be in the handouts.
Light Exposure
5 foot candles = 50 Lux

Filter out or block UV light and limit light exposure
Temperature and Relative Humidity (%RH)

Ideal = 68-72°F & 45-55% RH
But be realistic for your space
Ideal = as stable as possible; 68-72F & 45-55% RH
In reality slow, gradual transitions are acceptable
Leave wire/D-rings exposed so object can be re-hung on wall or racks.
Storing Framed Objects

Art Storage Screen

1. Vinyl Coated Steel Garden Fencing
2. 1/4" Lagbolt with Washer
3. Wallboard Stud
4. 18" and 24" Markings
5. Fencing Staples
6. 2" x 2" Wooden Vertical Supports

Front View
Side View
Rolling rack storage
Multi-Purpose Storage Shelves
Multi-purpose shelves with dividers

Why dividers are important
• Most works on paper will need to be framed for display
• Important that objects are framed properly with high quality materials
• Problems to look for and when to unframe an object
• Options for standard sized matting: Utilizing one frame for several objects
Matting and Framing

Glazing – Window Mat – Hinges – Backing boards
Cross section:
Glazing
Window mat
Object
Backing boards

Object stuck to glazing
Important to have space between
Poor Quality Materials = Mat Burn Tape Stains
- 100% Cotton
- Fade and Bleed Resistant
- Buffered to Maintain Alkaline pH
- Acid Free and Lignin Free
TruGuard®
UV Protection
Sunscreen For Your Art.
Damage to the surface of the object
Use Caution:
Clean acrylic with soft cloth and non-ammonia based cleaners only
Sealed mat package with Coroplast or polyester sheet can be stored with or without a frame - No backing paper needed

Unsealed mat package needs backing paper to keep out dust
When to unframe a work on paper

- Discolored mat
- Darkening of paper
- Foxing

Severe cockling
Broken glass
Mold

Slipped Hinge
Torn paper

Any other time you believe the piece might be in danger

Just make sure you have somewhere to put the unframed object BEFORE you take it out of the frame…
Presentation Mats/Unframed Storage
Standard sized mats can be rotated through the same set of frames for display

- Less space required to store objects
- Fewer frames to purchase
- Encourages giving your objects a well deserved rest
Poorly framed painting
Reverse of Properly Framed Painting, Backing Board, and Hanging Hardware

1. Back of a traditional picture frame
2. Backing board attached to stretcher with screws and washers
3. “D” rings to hang painting
4. Brass mending plates screwed into frame to secure the painting
5. Rubber spacers for air circulation
If you are framing a painting:
1) make sure the frame fits!
2) line the frame rabbet...
...to avoid rabbet abrasion
3) Secure painting in frame with offset-clips or mending plates, not nails
Offset-clips

Mending plates
4) Use d-rings and when possible, hang from the d-rings not wire
5) Use wire with an appropriate weight rating
Avoid screw eyes
6) secure keys
7) put on a backing board (unless you are in an uncontrolled tropical climate)
Backing boards prevent damage from the verso (and can even mitigate damage from the front)
Backing boards prevent accumulation of grime
Backing boards reduce vibration when the painting is moved and they provide an environmental buffer as climate conditions shift.
When to glaze an oil painting?
If you could do just 1 or 2 things for your easel paintings:

• add a backing board (as long as you are in a temperate climate)
• if it is a heavy piece, add d-rings
Caring for frames

Painting in an original, possibly artist designed frame
Before you do anything, check for insecurity
If you find detached pieces, save them – it is comparatively easy to reattach original.
Having a conservator create molds and castes for replacement ornament is time consuming.
Carved wood frames versus composition (compo) frames

18th-century French pastel in its original frame

19th-century American painting in its original frame
Example of how compo ornament was manufactured
Surface cleaning: dusting with a soft brush
Surface cleaning: dusting with a soft brush into a vacuum
A gilt surface is delicate and can be fragile, so watch out for:

Surface Abrasion
Surface cleaning: painted frames in good condition can often be surface cleaned with high density sponges (i.e. make-up sponges)
Toning back losses with watercolor
In Conclusion…

Whew! That was a lot of information… but hopefully you will be more comfortable coping with framed objects.

Please refer to the handouts for even more information and additional resources.

Lots of time for questions so please stay on and take advantage.
If you need backup

The ICA:
www.ica-artconservation.org
ph: 216.658.8700

American Institute for Conservation:
www.conservation-us.org