

Presenting Artwork

FOR 2D ARTMAKERS

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Basics Considerations

FOR BETTER PRESENTATION

- consider the **work**:
how durable or delicate is the media and substrate? how big is the work? What are the proportions involved? does the work allow viewer interaction? will the work need to be removed from the mat/mount frame in the future?
- consider the **audience**:
Is it for gallery / art fair patrons? conference attendees? college students? preschool students? Are there any potential safety issues? does the work or installation of the work exclude any potential viewers, or make it difficult for some viewers to access?
- consider the **venue**:
Is it indoor or outdoor? longterm or temporary installation? what kind of traffic will it get? will there be an attendant on site? what else happens in the venue? is it someone's home, what part of the home?
- consider the **bankroll**:
What is your budget? can you meet the needs of the above with alternative means if necessary?

Guidelines

FOR PRESENTING 2D ARTWORK

Media

- delicate media like **pastel**, **watercolor** and most **drawing** and **printmaking** media **should be protected** from the front and the back (to determine delicate media apply “dropped pencil” and/or “sneeze” test)
- durable media like **acrylic** or **oil paint** can be **presented without glazing** as long as it is on a supportive substrate like **canvas** or **panel**.
- **photographs** that are printed on more delicate substrates like watercolor paper or RC (resin coated) papers **should be glazed**. Thinner papers and **resin-coated papers** **should be dry mounted** for longterm presentation to keep them from buckling.
- photographs that are printed on durable materials such as canvas or panels usually **do not need to be glazed** (depending on the printing process)

Substrate

- To display and protect **prints**, **drawings** and **works on paper** they can be **hinged** to a **foam core** board or **4ply mat**. **Avoid** cardboard, news board or acidic mount boards.
- **Photographs** can be **dry mounted** to **foam core board** or **4ply mat board**. In lieu of mounting, photos can be mounted with mylar corners.
- durable substrates like **canvas** or **linen** can be **stretched** on wooden stretcher bars. **Make sure the stretcher bars are straight and thick enough** for the size or the canvas so they do not warp over time because of the pull of the material. Cross bars and additional bracing may be necessary for larger pieces.
- **canvas**, **linen** and **thicker papers** can be **dry mounted** (with tissue or film and heat) or **wet mounted** (with PVA glue) to **plywood panels**, **foam core board**, or **Sintra board**. **Make sure the panels are thick enough** or **cradled** to avoid warping over time. Make sure the media can handle the heat /moisture from the process.

Matting and Mounting

- **Conservation** matting and mounting techniques protect the artwork long-term:
use archival, acid-free materials
use reversible hinges and mounts
protect the work from exposure to UV light
- to **hinge** a work on paper to **foam core** board or 4ply mat use **linen tape**, **artist** or **framers tape**, or **rice paper** with **rice or wheat paste**. In general, your hinge **should be thinner than the paper** you are hinging. **Use paste, PVA or linen tape on absorbent papers** that are meant to take water, like watercolor and printmaking papers. **Avoid these on hydrophobic papers** like photographs on resin-coated paper, as it will cause the paper to buckle. Instead, use artist tape, framers tape, or something with an acrylic adhesive that adheres to the surface and doesn't soak into the fibers of the paper. **Avoid** acidic tapes like masking tape and scotch tape and non-reversible adhesives.
- **dry mounting photographs** and works on paper is done with a heat activated adhesive that is either a **film**, like **Fusion** or **Beva**, or a **tissue**, like **Colormount**. Heat is applied in a heat press or vacuum press. It is meant to be a permanent bond, but can usually be reversed with heat.
- **Wet mounting** of thicker works on paper, canvas or linen **should be done with an archival grade PVA glue** and needs a study support like **plywood** or **Gatorfoam**.
- Mat board can be cut with a beveled opening that lays over the edge of the work, holding it in place, called a **window mat**, or **over-mat**. It also provides a clean space to allow a more isolated aesthetic experience. Inside a frame package it provides a small amount of space in-between the face of the art and the glazing inside a frame.
- One of the mat edges can be taped to the backing board so that it allows the mat to be opened to inspect the hinged work underneath, like a book. This is called **book mat**.
- If the entire sheet of paper, or the edges of a print or drawing are to be seen, the work can be hinged on top of a larger mat board. This is called a **float**. It protects the edges of the work without hiding it. A float inside a frame package **requires a spacer**, usually made of mat board, foam board or plastic, to keep the glazing off the surface of the work.

- **Window mats emphasize a window-like opening and a 3D sense of space. Floats emphasize the physicality of the paper, texture and process.**
- Window mats and floats should be **proportioned** so that they **allow enough space for an isolated aesthetic experience**, works smaller than your head should be matted to at least head-size, larger works usually require about 2-3” around the image, consider size and position of the image on the page if floating a smaller print on a larger sheet of paper

Glazing and Framing

- glazing such as **glass** or **acrylic sheeting** protects the work from the front. **Mylar** can be used to **wrap** matted and back work for temporary protection
- glass and acrylic can also **protect against ultraviolet light**. This is **especially a good idea** for delicate or fugitive media, older or acidic paper, or bright color inks and pigment that may be susceptible to fading. This is sometimes designated as **conversation glazing**. This may not be necessary for short term presentation.
- glass is heavier, resists scratching and is susceptible to shattering
- acrylic, or plexiglass is light, shatter proof, but susceptible to scratching
- **Avoid acrylic glazing for pastels, charcoal and other dry media** - it has a static charge that can pull media off the drawing over time
- glazing should be held in place by a **frame**. **Care should be taken to keep the glazing off the surface of the work**, either with a mat in-between or a spacer under the frame rabbet. Some media will stick to the glass if left in contact for long period of time, especially acrylic paint and ink. Having the glazing up against the print also creates a trap for moisture that can lead to mold. **Keep glazed work away from damp areas and always allow a space for any moisture that gets inside the frame to escape.**
- **Wood frames** are rabbeted and glued together at the corners. The work is secured from the back with pins or a **strainer** screwed into the frame from the back. Some times there is a paper dust cover applied to the back.
- **Aluminum frames** are joined at the corners by tension fit plates and can be easily taken apart and refit. The work slides into a channel created by the shape of the

frame with three sides assembled, then the fourth side locks the package in the frame, spring clips push the package to the front of the frame and hold it in place.

- **It is not recommended to use clips that hold glazing in place without protecting the edges** of the glazing from shattering, chipping or accidental injury. If **mirror clips**, which screw directly into the wall, are used to hold the loose glazing in place, the sharp edges of the glass should be sanded smooth first.
- The over-all **proportions of the frame package should be staggered**: wider mat > thinner frame, wider frame > thinner mat, etc. This adds dynamic interest without distracting from the artwork and avoids a static “bull’s eye” presentation.
- Unless the frame is part of the art, **choose minimal frame designs** for your artwork, otherwise you will draw attention away from the art. Likewise, **don’t upstage the art** by having more intense colors or contrast in the frame design than in the artwork being framed.

Hanging and Installation

- Work that is backed with foam board and over matted can be **temporarily displayed** in low traffic scenarios on easels, ledges or vitrines. Adhesive hangers attached to the backing can be used if the package is light enough.
- stretched canvas and panels **do not require** a frame to hang but should have clean edges to avoid distraction. Either **paint the edges**, **tape** them with **book tape** or **gaffers tape**, or cover them with a frame for a better presentation
- Framed work and stretched canvases can be **hung** several ways:
 - with a **wire** on a **picture hook**
 - directly on 2 **D-rings** with 2 picture hooks
 - with a two-piece interlocking **cleat**
 - with a locking **security mount system****Do not use “command strips” or any adhesive-directly-on-the-wall type hanger**
- When **installing artwork**, consider:
 - how the work will be viewed -standing, seated, from above or below
 - how the work will relate to other artwork -grouped together or hung independently
 - how the work will relate to nearby architectural elements

- **Use 60” from the floor as a guide to center the height of the artwork** if there are no other constraining circumstances: this is a good average eye level that is often used by galleries and museums.

Resources

- conservation:
<http://www.conservationregister.com/Plcon-careprintsdrawings.asp>
<http://www.winterthur.org/collections/collection-care-conservation/>
<https://www.nga.gov/conservation.html>
- frame shops:
<https://www.monroestreetframing.com/Home>
<https://megansframing.com>
<http://douglasartandframe.com>
<https://www.artistsframe.com>
<http://www.mandersframing.com>
- framing tips:
<https://www.monroestreetframing.com/Tips>
<https://www.monroestreetframing.com/Design>
- art installation tips:
<https://www.monroestreetframing.com/Installation>
- conservation supplies:
<https://www.talasonline.com>
- mat and framing supplies:
<https://www.artistcraftsman.com>
<https://www.dickblick.com/stores/wisconsin/milwaukee-miad/>
- canvas and stretcher bars:
<https://www.utrechtart.com>
- photo archiving and mounting:
<https://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/browse/Albums-Frames-Presentation/ci/513/N/4077634484>
<http://www.lightimpressionsdirect.com>