

CARE AND FRAMING OF ART

If you own art in any of its many forms or if you are the caretaker of those irreplaceable family treasures, there are things you need to know. Not all artwork is alike and none of it comes with a maintenance manual. So how do you know when and how to care for it? This question has been a matter for debate in professional art care circles since the beginning of time, you may even have heard about the controversy over the cleaning of the Sistine Chapel or how Rembrandt's Night Watch changed when cleaned. Art care is a complex problem. dependent upon several sets of circumstances and conditions. How the artwork created. where it has been and under what conditions, what kind of care or treatment has it had. The more you know about your artwork, the better care you can take of it. This care should start with your decision to frame and display it.

When you decide to have framing done it is most often because you have something you wish to display. You may even have a idea of how you want it to look. You may even have been told to use only acid free materials, UV glazing and hinges on the artwork. All important items but not always necessary. What colors, size, shape, and style your framing takes determines how it looks in its surroundings and how well it shows off the item or artwork it contains. The other elements such as materials selection and techniques used in the framing have a relationship to lasting qualities and future condition of the art or item.

With this in mind, let's take a look at your framing options and what they mean to the art or item you are having framed. When framing there are three basic options or guides to be considered:

1. The decorative qualities, color, style, design, and size are your most important considerations then you and your framer may choose any framing material and techniques based solely on meeting your decorating needs.
2. When the preservation of your art is also an important concern, the selection of framing materials and the techniques used must all be directed toward the preservation of your art or item.
3. When both the preservation of your artwork or keepsake and the decorative value of the framing are equally important, you may have to make some compromises to either your decorating expectations or to the best preservation your artwork or item. An experienced and knowledgeable framer will be able to explain the differences between materials and their compatibility with your art. Just as no two works of art are the same, no two materials are the same either. Materials may differ in composition, resistance to environmental conditions, pH levels, and more and they need to be selected individually for each item based upon what it is and under what conditions will it be displayed.

To better understand the reasons for all these choices let's take a look at some of the most obvious options. Paper is not a flat medium, it reacts to changes in temperature and humidity, swelling when the humidity is high and shrinking when its low. This constant change is illustrated by the wavy condition of paper from time to time. To eliminate these changes in paper and to keep paper flat it always flat it is most often mounted. Mounting means adhering the paper to a ridged support most often cardboard, several sheets of paper already adhered together. There are several methods and materials used for mounting the greatest objection to fully mounting your art is that it makes it harder to conserve at a later date and mat introduce additional materials into the original paper that may not be removable. The alternative to this full mounting is hinging the artwork. This type of attachment

only effects a small area of your art as light paper strips are attached to small area at the top of the art and the art is allowed to hang free. This also allows it to change with temperature and humidity.

The materials used to surround your art will also have a direct effect on it. This is where we hear words like acidic condition, acid burn, acid-free all used in connection with mat boards and backboards. The condition of acid in these materials is in the changing composition of the material itself and is accelerated by light. Most of these materials have an additive or buffering agent to reduce any acidic condition which may occur this makes the materials alkaline the opposite of acid. Some items such as old photos and many organic materials have a reaction to high alkaline conditions, so the materials need to be of a more natural condition. pH or the potential for hydrogen is the scale used to measure the percentage of acid or alkaline balance in any material. The scale is logarithmic and ranges from 1 to 14 with pH neutral at pH 7, the dividing point between 1 to 6 on the acidic side and 8 to 14 on the alkaline side. There are many considerations when preservation of the art or item is the most important consideration. It is not only how it is to be framed, but where it will be displayed that must be considered, for regardless of the framing materials or methods for your art to maintain condition it will also need care.

Protecting the surface

Surface protection is important to all artworks; it keep foreign substances off the surface providing a degree of protection from the surface. Glazing, glass or acrylic is the surface protection for art on paper, generally all artwork and graphics done on paper as well as many other items and photos. Surface protection is important as many of these items have soft or porous surfaces and air born dust will damage them. The glazing in both glass and acrylic choices are many and include important considerations such as UV protection, glare, static electricity, weight, and breakage. Painting is protected by picture varnish. This is a special material just for the varnishing of pictures in most cases it should be applied after the art has been cleaned so as not to trap the always their layer of dust or surface dirt. This is best left to a professional who is experienced with the cleaning and varnishing of art.

Conditions of display

How and where your art is displayed will have a direct effect on your future enjoyment as well as the condition and longevity. This consideration should be a part of you discussion at the time you are selecting the framing. All environmental elements, light temperature, humidity, and pollution all can and do effect condition and longevity. Discuss where you intend to hang your art with your framer when you are designing how it will look and how it will be preserved. Display condition can greatly affect the way your artwork will look and last.

Everyday care & maintenance

Art like everything else needs care, sometimes this care and maintenance should be performed by a trained specialist, when in doubt ask your framer. And remember in the arts no one person regardless how well trained or experienced has all the answers or can perform all treatments always ask for credentials and referrals. Making informed decisions about your framing will add to your enjoyment and improve your arts condition and longevity.

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