



CCI Notes

11/9

Framing Works of Art on Paper

Why Frame?

There are three main reasons for framing a work of art: to protect it, to display it more easily, and to enhance its aesthetic appearance.

What to Frame

Almost any single-sheet paper artifact can be framed: prints, drawings, watercolours, manuscripts, letters, posters, small maps, silhouettes, and photographs. However, framing manuscripts on parchment, vellum, palm leaves, papyrus, or birch bark is more complex and may require the attention of a professional conservator.

Choosing a Frame

The actual choice of frame and style of moulding is a matter of personal preference. The frame should have a rabbet deep enough to accommodate the thickness of a mat, a backing board, and a glazing material (about 2 cm in total). These should fit snugly but not tightly in the frame. Metal clip-together frames are not always deep enough to accommodate all three components.

The technique by which the artifact is sandwiched between two sheets of glass or between glass and board held together with clips is not recommended. It offers little protection from dust or atmospheric pollution,

which can still intrude through the exposed edges, and it puts unnecessary pressure on the artifact.

Re-using Original Frames

Examine an original frame carefully for damaged or missing moulding, lost gilding, loose joints, warping, etc. before re-using it. Replace any glass that is chipped, broken, or brittle.

Spacers

In some cases, it may be necessary to return a work of art to its original frame without a window mat (for example, if the rabbet is not deep enough to accommodate one). Hinge the artifact to a sheet of acid-free matboard in the conventional way (see CCI Notes 11/5, *Matting Works on Paper*), and insert a spacer to separate the artifact from the glazing material. Spacers can be made from strips of acid-free matboard attached to the rabbet with 3M #415 double-sided tape, Framespace polyester strip, or Inner Space acrylic strip, which can be cut to any length and inserted into the frame (Figure 1).

NOTE: A spacer may not be deep enough to prevent an unstable artifact, such as one with a friable image (i.e., pastels, chalk, charcoal), cracked or flaking paint (i.e., gouache), or planar distortions (i.e., cockling,

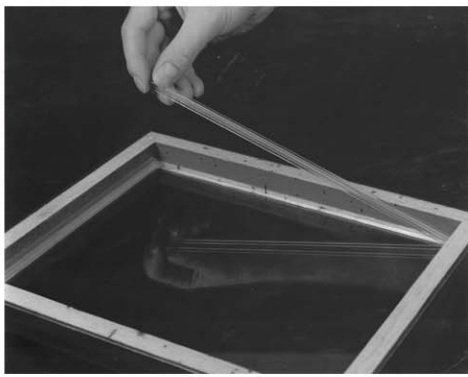


Figure 1. Inserting spacer into frame.

buckling of the paper or board support) from touching the glazing material. Such contact may result in pigment transfer or in partial adhesion. This method is therefore only recommended for flat, stable works of art.

Glazing Materials

The suitability of various types of glazing material is discussed in CCI Notes 11/3, *Glazing Materials for Framing Works on Paper*.

Backing Boards

For additional protection, a neutral pH backing board, which is not part of the mat itself, should be placed in the frame behind the mat. The choice of material will sometimes depend on the depth of the rabbet (Figure 2).

What to Use

- Acid-free, 100% rag-content matboard (4-ply).
- Cor-X, Coroplast, Poly-Flute: extruded twin wall plastic made of polypropylene.

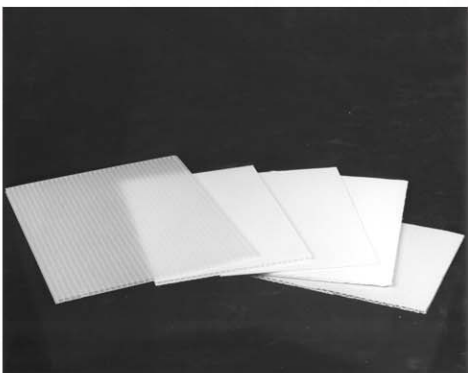


Figure 2. Backing boards.

- Fome-Cor, Artcor: surface layers made of paper and central foam layer made of polystyrene.

What Not to Use

Many materials commonly used as backing boards often contain harmful acids and resins that may eventually migrate to the artifact. Therefore, masonite, corrugated cardboard, wood, and other materials that are not acid-free are not recommended.

Securing the Backing Board

Secure the backing board using finishing nails (inserted with a brad pusher or tack hammer) or glazer's points (Figure 3), taking care not to split the moulding.

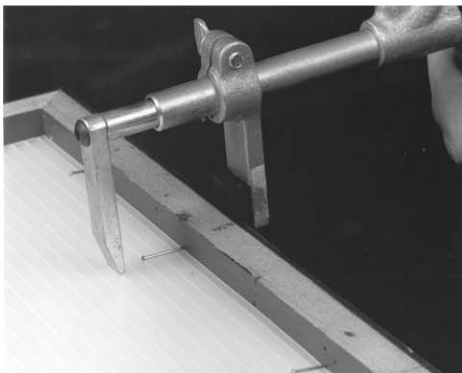


Figure 3. Securing the backing board.

If the rabbet is not deep enough to insert a backing board, the board can be attached to the back of the frame with screws and cup washers (Figure 4).

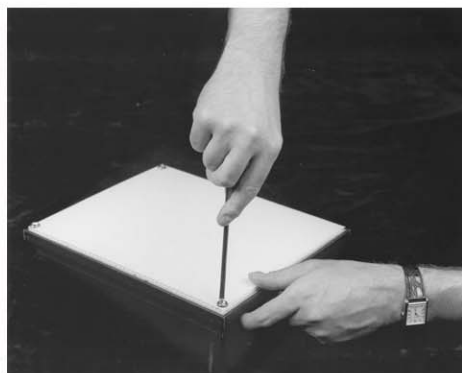


Figure 4. Attaching backing board with screws and cup washers.

Sealing the Frame

To prevent the intrusion of dust and airborne pollutants, seal the frame with adhesive tape across the point where the backing board meets the frame. Brown Kraft tape is commonly used, but gummed linen tape is better because it is more stable. If the backing board is extruded plastic, these tapes will not adhere very well; however, pressure-sensitive cloth tapes such as Filmoplast SH tape and University Products Sealing Tape work well.

Hanging Devices

Various methods for hanging paintings are discussed in CCI Notes 10/3, *Systems for Paintings*, and CCI Notes 10/4, *Environmental and Display Guidelines for Paintings*. Many of these methods will also apply to framed works on paper. If picture wire is to be used, it should be strong enough to support the weight of the frame. A more secure method is to insert picture hooks into the wall and attach the frame's screw eyes to them.

Lighting

Do not attach light fixtures to frames. These lights produce excessive light levels, tend to create a "hot spot" on the picture, and contribute to the fading of dyes and pigments. For recommended light levels, see CCI Technical Bulletin No. 5, *Environmental Norms for Canadian Museums, Art Galleries and Archives*; CCI Notes 2/1, *Ultraviolet Filters*; and CCI Notes 2/3, *Track Lighting*.

Suppliers

Acid-free (neutral pH or buffered) matboard:

- local art and drafting supply stores;
- frame shops

Acid-free (neutral pH) gummed linen tape:

- Kruger Fine Papers Ltd;
- University Products of Canada;
- Frameguild Mouldings Ltd

Framing tapes:

- Vanguard Mouldings;
- Opus Framing Ltd;
- ArcProtec Inc.; local art suppliers

Filmoplast SH:
Artistic Woodwork

Sealing tape:
University Products of Canada

Spacers:
Inner Space:
Framing Experience

Framespace:
Artistic Woodwork

Backing boards:
E.M. Plastics and Electric Products;
Cadillac Plastics; local plastics
suppliers

*Framing supplies (hooks, wire, brad
pusher, tack, hammer, etc.):*
Artists' suppliers; frame shops;
hardware stores; Talas

Addresses of Suppliers

ArcProtec Inc./
Archival Conservation Resources
(Distributor for Conservation
Resources International)
2847-C Sandalwood Drive
Ottawa, Ontario
K1V 7P4
(613) 523-9260

Artistic Woodwork
5830 Cooper Avenue
Mississauga, Ontario
L4Z 1Y3
(416) 890-1234

Artistik Inc.
9991 Saint-Vital Blvd.
Montreal North, Quebec
H1H 4S5
(514) 323-3075
Branches: Calgary, Vancouver

University Products of Canada
6535 Millcreek Drive, Unit #8
Mississauga, Ontario
L5N 2M2
(416) 858-7888
Toll-free: 1-800-667-2632
fax: (416) 858-8586

Cadillac Plastics
(Dayco Canada)
91 Kelfield Street
Rexdale, Ontario
M9W 5A4
(416) 249-8311
Branches: Dorval, Vancouver,
London, Halifax, Edmonton, Calgary

Carr McLean
461 Horner Avenue
Toronto, Ontario
M8W 4X2
(416) 252-3371
1-800-268-2123 (toll-free in
Ontario except area code 807)
1-800-268-2138 (toll-free in other areas)

E.M. Plastics and Electric Products
430 Norfinch Drive
Downsview, Ontario
M3N 1Y4
(416) 665-6111
1-800-268-1252 (toll-free)
or
8010 Devonshire
Montreal, Quebec
H4P 2K3
(514) 731-6411
1-800-361-1432 (toll-free)

L'Étude
9 Ste. Catherine Street East, suite 103
Montreal, Quebec
H2X 1K3
(514) 844-7054

Frameguild Mouldings Ltd
230 Supertest Drive
Downsview, Ontario
M3J 2M2
(416) 661-9333

Framing Experience
Branches across the country except
in Montreal and Eastern Canada
Head Office: Burlington, Ontario
(416) 825-2145

Kruger Fine Papers Ltd
3295 Bedford Road
Montreal, Quebec
H3J 1G5
(514) 731-3561

Opus Framing Ltd
1360 Johnston Street
Granville Island
Vancouver, B.C.
V6H 3S1
1-800-663-1255 (toll-free)

La Papeterie St-Armand
950 Ottawa Street
Montreal, Quebec
H3C 1S4
(514) 874-4089

Singer Encadrements Inc.
6220 Somerled
Montreal, Quebec
H3X 2B3
(514) 482-0243

Talas
568 Broadway
New York, N.Y.
10012 U.S.A.
(212) 219-0770
fax: (212) 219-0735

Vanguard Mouldings
(Distributor for Process Materials)
222 Supertest Road
Downsview, Ontario
M3J 2M2
(416) 661-0111
1-800-268-1220 (toll-free)

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