



BISHOP MUSEUM
Art Conservation Handout

ARCHIVAL MOUNTS FOR PAINTINGS ON TEXTILES

Introduction

Fabric supports such as canvas, cotton duck, and heavy weight linen have been commonly used as painting supports. Traditionally, the paintings have a ground layer or prepared surface on which the paint actually sits. Contemporary painters have experimented with painting directly on fabric. Velvet paintings and silk mourning pictures are more traditional examples of painting directly on fabric. There are several problems caused by this technique.

The ground layer of a painting protects the canvas from exposure to light and the atmosphere. Without this protection, the fabrics tend to deteriorate faster. Discoloration, tears, and the accumulation of surface dust occur faster than in paintings with a ground layer. The ground layer also protects the fabric from the paint itself. The oils and binders in the paint can sometimes weaken the supporting fabric. The ground layer adds stability to the fabric, so that the fabric can more easily bear the weight of the paint.

If the fabric has structural problems such as weakening of fabric, tears, or losses, see a conservator before framing. Likewise, the paint layer itself should be stabilized before framing. If possible, it is always a good idea to consult with a conservator before framing any painting. There may be circumstances not readily visible which would make standard framing procedures inappropriate for your painting. Once stabilized, proper framing can prolong the life of your painting by reducing stress to the fabric and paint layer, giving even, total support to the painting, and protecting the painting from detrimental environmental conditions.

Framing

A solid support mount should be made for the painting. The basis of the mount is a board which is rigid yet lightweight. Acceptable examples are an aluminum honey comb material with acid-free paper laminates on either side; an acid-free paper honey comb (trade name: Tycore®); or acrylic eggcrate (used industrially to cover light fixtures) with two-ply acid-free mat board laminates on either side. The Fomecor® and Gatorboard® that you can purchase in retail stores is not recommended. Both usually contain materials that rapidly break down and become acidic. This will affect your painting over time. Both tend to warp with the high heat and humidity common to our hawaiian climate, especially the Fomecor®.

When you have chosen an appropriate mounting board, further steps should be taken to prepare the mount. The top face of the board should be overlaid with a thin layer of batting. The batting should be cut to the size of the support board. Traditional needlepunch non-woven polyester is recommended. This is available from the Fairfield Company under the trade name Polyfil® traditional batting/quilting fleece. Unacceptable

are battings which are resin bonded. The resin will break down over time and become sticky.

Cotton fabric which has been washed and double rinsed to remove all sizings and finishes is laid over the batting and wraps around the edges of the support board. The fabric should be stretched fairly tightly so that there is no sagging or looseness on the top face of the board. Non-rusting Monel® staples applied through the cotton fabric through the back of the support board will keep the batting in place. White glue (polyvinyl acetate emulsions) can also be used, but it is more difficult to retain the desired tension on the fabric while the glue dries.

The resulting support mount provides an acid-free, slightly padded surface which will evenly support the painting. The cotton fabric will provide a slightly nap surface, which will further hold and support the painting when it is being displayed vertically on the wall.

The decision about how big to make the support mount depends on several factors. Most paintings are mounted by stretching the fabric edges around a wooden stretcher, then tacking or stapling the fabric in place. For velvets, thin silks, or other unprimed fabrics, these edges may over time become brittle and weakened. Striplining is the standard painting procedures where edges are reinforced with new fabric (tacking strips) which can then be stretched over the support mount. This work should be done by a trained conservator. Selection of correct adhesives and fabrics and proper application is important to prevent irreversible damage from occurring. If the damaged fabric edges are very important to the painting, an alternative is to make the support mount larger than the size of the painting with its edges unfolded and flattened. The painting can be held in place by being sewn to the cotton fabric covering of the mount. Raw fabric edges of the painting can be covered with a mat.

Because of the difficulty of removing dust and grime from a textile surface, the painting should be given a glass or Plexiglas® glazing. The glazing should not be placed against the fabric and painting. Condensation and heat may cause moisture buildup and softening of the paint layer. This may result in mold growth and the paint layer adhering to the glazing. Instead, position the glazing 1/4" to 1/2" above the surface of the painting by using acid-free mat board or plastic spacers. The use of glazing material with ultraviolet light filtering capabilities will also prolong the life of the fabric.

The painting is ready for insertion into the frame. If the painting edges have been stretched over the mount, a barrier layer of Mylar D (polyester sheet film) or another vapor barrier should be used between the fabric and the frame. This is especially important if the frame is made of wood. Wood will leach acids and acid vapors over time. This acidic material will cause deterioration and weakening of the fibers in the fabric. The back of the painting and frame edges can be covered with a sheet of acid-free paper to provide dust protection. Bumpers can be attached to the reverse bottom corners of the frame to allow air flow behind the painting when hung on a wall.

A good framer will understand most of the terms and procedures outlined in this handout. Your framer should not, at any time, try to use non-archival materials or try to apply any kind of tape or adhesive to your painting.

Supplies

Product Name	Supplier
Tycore	Archivart or Paper Technologies
Aluminum Honeycomb	Paper Technologies
Acrylic Egg crate	Hardware stores, lighting supply stores
White glue	Hobby and craft stores
Acid-free 2-ply matboard	Hawaiian Graphics, Hopaco or framers
Polyfil 1/4" loft batting	Fabric stores- call in advance, not always in stock
Cotton fabric	Fabric stores
Monel® staples	Hardware stores such as Kilgo's
Plexiglas	Min Plastics or framers
Mylar D	Hawaiian Graphics
Acid-free paper for dust covers	Hopaco, Hawaiian Graphics

Addresses

Archivart

7 Caesar Place, Moonachie, NJ 07074-1781
201.804.8986

Hawaiian Graphics

1925 S. Beretania Street, Honolulu, HI 96822
808.973.7171

Min Plastics

921 Kaamahu Place, Honolulu, HI 96817
808.847.1511

Paper Technologies

929 Kalle Negocio, Unit D, San Clemente, CA 92673
1.800.727.3716

A. L. Kilgo Company

180 Sand Island Access Road, Honolulu, HI 96817 808.832.2200

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The State Museum of Natural and Cultural History

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