

## Framing, Conservation and Storage of Prints

### 1. Suppose I do buy a fine art print. Where do I go to get it properly framed?

Ask for references from knowledgeable friends, print dealers, or museums. Since improper framing can permanently damage your print, it's important that you find a professional framer who uses archival materials.

### 2. What does that mean - "archival" materials?

Basically, the framer is assuring you that everything that comes in contact with the print is pH neutral, or acid-free. This means that nothing in the framing materials will alter or destroy the paper or inks of the print.

### 3. How could non acid-free materials harm my print?

Matboard which is not chemically inert and free of acid transfers its acidity to the paper, which over time causes it to turn brown (known as mat burn), become brittle, and even to disintegrate when removed from the mat. Museums recommend that mats be made from 100 percent cotton rag matboard, at least two-ply in thickness. A less expensive alternative is "conservamat", or conservation board, which is made from highly purified pH neutral wood pulp. Some fabrics like linen, cotton, and silk are also safe to use.

### 4. Do I need to have a mount around my print?

No. A window mount is a matter of personal taste. Often, a print with a large border is simply hinged to a backing - this is called "floating" the print - and requires a spacer, hidden by the edges of the frame, to keep the print from touching the glass in the same way that a window mount does. A window mount may cover the edges of the paper if you prefer (although the edges are considered to be an integral part of the print) or the print may float within the window.

### 5. You mentioned hinges; what do you mean?

Prints are never glued or taped directly to a backing with double-sided tape; hinges made of linen or fine Japanese paper hold the print to the backing with nonacidic, non-staining, reversible adhesives.

### 6. Why shouldn't my print touch the glass?

Both glass and acrylic sheeting (perspex/plexiglass) condense moisture from the air, and if your print touches either, it may actually stick to the surface and be ruined.

### 7. Which is better - glass or perspex/plexiglass?

Both will protect your print and filter some of the harmful rays of light. Glass is cheaper, but it breaks easily. Ultraviolet filtering glass and perspex are available at a higher cost. Since glass is heavier than plastic, it may be impractical for very large prints. Always use clear glass and not the non-reflective type. Perspex although lighter, is more expensive than ordinary glass, scratches easily, and carries an electrostatic charge which causes it to attract dust. With time, perspex also tends to sag in the centre, possibly touching your print.

### 8. How can light damage my print?

Bright daylight and even bright artificial light can cause colours to fade and papers to discolour and become brittle. Too much light is harmful even when ultra-violet rays are filtered out, so make sure your print is exposed to moderate light for limited hours at a time. Think, too, of rotating your print collection from time to time to give them a rest.

### 9. How should I store my prints?

When handling unframed prints, make sure you work with gloves or very clean hands. Finger smudges, dirt, or dents and tears caused by carelessness will affect the value of your print. If you must handle your print, hold it by

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grasping two diagonally opposite corners to avoid creasing. Prints should be stored flat, either in or out of mounts, layered between sheets of non-acidic interleaving tissue. Never put your prints on surfaces like corrugated cardboard or wood; not only are these materials acidic, they also have textures that can imprint themselves on your artwork. Needless to say, your storage area should be clean, dry and protected from insects and vermin. Cockroaches, fishmoths and mice are common despoilers of paper. Simple, relatively inexpensive nonacidic boxes will protect your prints from environmental acidic boxes will protect your prints from environmental damage; they are available from art and preservation suppliers.

#### **10. How do I transport my prints?**

If a print can be transported flat, it is best to place it between two sheets of acid-free tissue paper, sandwiched between two sheets of stiff corrugated cardboard cut larger in size than the print to be packed. If prints need to be packed in a tube for mailing or airline flights, use a large diameter tube so that the print won't be rolled too tightly. Sandwich the print between two sheets of thick card, which are bigger than the print, and roll them up together. Tape this roll closed to prevent it from springing open in the tube. Detailed packing instructions are available on request.

#### **11. How can I keep up with the current value of my print?**

Most reliable printshops keep records. Galleries, art appraisers, and large auction houses that handle prints may also be of assistance. Websites like [artprice.com](http://artprice.com) are also a useful guide, as is the International Fine Art Print Dealers Association.

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