MATTING, MOUNTING & FRAMING
WORKS ON PAPER

Archival Presentation Materials

Proper presentation of your artwork will enhance its life and beauty. It is extremely important to use the correct materials (archival) because these products are stable. Without them, your artwork and presentation materials will deteriorate rapidly by becoming brittle, changing color and stain. This is because non-archival products are made of wood pulp – the same thing as newspaper.

Archival presentation materials are museum quality. They are acid-free and pH neutral, providing a stable environment for your artwork.

Aesthetics

Your choice of frame and mat is critical to your piece. Enhancement is your goal. Inappropriate selections will sentence your artwork to visual casualty. This finishing touch should never be slapped together with poor taste, poor quality materials or weak craftsmanship. To disregard its importance or to resist being informed is irresponsible and unprofessional. Remember, you are creating a complete artistic statement which includes your artwork, frame, and mat. Effective presentation is the mark of a professional.

One need not be conservative in their choices. Creative, funky and lively can be dynamic and preferable to something sedate and unenergized. Sumptuous materials that provide innumerable options are available from many sources.

OUTLINE OF PROCEDURES

1. Flattening the artwork
2. Matting or mounting the artwork
   Mounting
   Window Mat
   Well Mat
3. Wrapping in polyester (or acetate)
   OR
   Framing
   Metal Frame
   Wood Frame

PRESENTATION METHODS

The following body of information is intended only as a primer. Many volumes exist which describe these techniques in detail. If you are unfamiliar with this aspect of preparing your work for exhibition, this information should point you in the right direction and get you started.

Flattening the Artwork

Watercolor paintings and prints can warp by the time you finish painting or printing on the paper. You should flatten your artwork before doing any presentation to it.
On a table top or flat area, lay a piece(s) of white blotter paper. Place your artwork face down, on top of the blotter paper. Using an atomizer bottle with tap or distilled water, moisten the reverse side of your painting, taking care not to over saturate to the point of puddles. Also, be careful not to move your piece during this process or do anything to cause paint to begin to bleed. When you have finished atomizing the artwork, place another piece of blotter paper on top of it. Now lay 2 pieces of particle board or similar heavy flattening material on top of this package. Additional weight may be needed in the form of more boards or heavy objects. (I use several boards and 6 small lithographic printing stones.) Allow this to remain for 24 hours. Undo your package after the time has passed, and your painting should be dry and flat.

Not flat enough: not enough water or flattening time or weight. Follow instructions and re-package.

Not dry: too much water; re-pack with fresh blotter paper and allow 24 hours more of flattening.

This diagram illustrates the layering of the package:

**Mounting**

1. Measure the dimension of your piece.

2. Add 1” to the top and side dimensions; add 2” to the bottom dimension. More is added to the bottom to compensate for an optical illusion that occurs. If all sides are even, the artwork appears to be “heavy” toward the bottom of the mat. By adding an extra inch to the bottom dimension, this optically centers the artwork.

3. Measure and mark your matboard with that dimension. Using a T-square and an X-acto knife, cut the matboard.

4. Place your artwork appropriately on top of the matboard. Attach it with linen tape “hinges” to the matboard (backing board). The following diagrams illustrate these directions:
Hinges are fashioned to look like this:

Velcro® can also be used:

Attach the hinges to the back of your artwork, and to the matboard. Locations for a vertical and a horizontal artwork are illustrated. These are positioned approximately 1/8” – 3/16” below the top of your artwork. Gravity and the weight of your artwork will expose the hinges if you place them even with the top of the artwork. X marks the location of your hinges:
Matting

1. Follow steps 1 through 4 for mounting.

2. Cut another piece of matboard the same dimension.

3. Measure for the size of your window (opening in the mat for viewing the artwork).

   **Window Mat:** 3 1/4” on the top and sides of the mat, 4 1/4” on the bottom. This style conceals the edges of your painting under your mat.

   **Well Mat:** 2 3/4” on the top and sides of the mat, 4 1/4” on the bottom. This style reveals the edges of your painting, as well as the mat color that you have mounted your painting on.

4. Cut the window in the mat by using a Dexter® mat cutter. This device will cut precise bevels for the window edges.

5. Attach the mounted artwork to the window or well mat by using linen tape/Velcro® across the top inside edges.

The following diagrams illustrate both styles of mats: a corner section of a bevel cut mat, and the attachment of the mounted artwork to the window/well mat:
Wrapping in Polyester (or Acetate)

1. Cut a piece of polyester/acetate so that it is at least 6" larger in each direction than the artwork and presentation.

2. Stiff backing for the presentation package is required. Cut a rectangle of foamcore, the same dimension as the matboard.
3. The artwork/matting package should lie face down on top of the polyester/acetate.

4. Cut away triangular sections from the corners of the polyester/acetate, otherwise these will be bulky and overlap.

5. Fold the polyester/acetate and the use masking tape to attach it to the back of the package. Begin in the center of each side with one piece of tape. Rotate by attaching 2-3 pieces of tape per side until the polyester/acetate is completely attached. Space the tape approximately 1 1/2” – 2” apart.
6. Using wide masking tape, cover and reinforce the smaller pieces. Also seal the corner areas so that all edges of the polyester/acetate are not exposed.

7. Reinforce the corners of the acetate/polyester, on the front side, with clear cellophane tape.

**Completed Artwork with Reinforced Corners**
Framing

The following components are recommended for use in an archival frame package:

1. **Frame**: Aluminum sectional is preferable.

2. **Glazing**: Clear acrylic (plexiglass) or double-strength glass. Ultraviolet filtering is preferable. The artwork should never touch the glazing. Air space for expansion and contraction of the artwork must be allowed to keep the artwork from rubbing against the glazing. This friction will “wear away” at the artwork. Waterspotting and mold growth can also occur. Frame spacing devices, mouldings with built in frame space and matting techniques are creative and technical options for creating this environment.

3. **Mat**: A window or well mat cut with beveled edges from 2-ply matboard.

4. **Frame spacing option**: A “hidden window” of foamcore can be inserted as a layer to create the necessary airspace between the glazing and the artwork. Cut this window (opening) so that it is larger than the mat. It will remain hidden from view.

5. **Artwork**: Mount the artwork with neutral pH linen hinges to the mounting matboard.

6. **Mounting Mat**: A 2-ply thickness is adequate.

7. **Backing Board**: Usually foamcore, it should be stiff to keep the package pressed firmly against the glazing. (Cardboard is not archival.)

8. **Paper Seal**: Used to keep dirt and pollution out and create a professional look. This is used as a finishing touch on a wood moulding frame.

The following diagram illustrates the layering of this package:

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FRAME       GLAZING      MAT
SPACING     ARTWORK     MOUNT
BACKING     SEAL
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