

EVERYTHING YOU'VE EVER WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT THE TECHNICAL ASPECTS OF FRAMING

We are meticulous in our care of your piece and in our selection of materials, and we aim for a piece that is not only presented well, but one that will physically last. We try to stay away from trendy designs and presentations because we want long-lived, timeless works of art. In keeping with this desire for longevity in design, we choose the highest quality materials. We believe that along with presentation comes preservation, or the protection of a work of art. Done properly, the presentation and preservation are seamless, acting in harmony.

Acidity, light, air, and humidity are the critical elements to control in conservation and preservation framing. But the prime directive for fine art framing is reversibility. Everything must be reversible in order to be sure that we remain faithful to the goals of conservation.

GLASS AND GLAZING

In framing, the terms glass and glazing are used to describe the material covering and protecting the art. Whether the covering is glass, Plexiglass or acrylic, the term used is the same, 'glass'. However, not all glazes are the same; some offer specific advantages or disadvantages as discussed below.

Ultraviolet filtering within the glass guards the art from the fading effects of ultraviolet light (UV). Some pigments, dye based as well as watercolors, airbrush inks and many digital inks now popular in desktop publishing are unstable or fade in sunlight, even ambient sunlight. Glass companies offer a film-covered glass to block out ultraviolet light, but it doesn't filter the extreme ends of the spectrum, which are the most damaging. In addition, glass breaks and could cut the art. *Acrylite OP111* offers the best UV protection and has the added advantage of not breaking and tearing paper art when moved. If a valuable piece of art is being framed, we recommend *Acrylite OP111*.

Non-glare glass has become popular for those wishing to diminish interference from light reflection. We do not recommend traditional non-glare glass for several reasons:

- 1) It's designed to be put on the surface on the art, which is not a safe practice.
- 2) This product is produced by etching, which results in a hazy or foggy looking glass, defeating the purpose of enhancing the view of the work and its fine details.

However, glass providing non-interfering, true non-glare qualities is now available. It is not etched, but electro-magnetically coated with a mineral compound. This compound is a glare-reduction film like that used on camera lenses and eyeglasses. A combined filtering and non-glare version of this product, called Museum Glass, is also available. As with other UV glass, this product does not have full spectrum filtering in ultra violet light, but does provide very significant protection.

Fine art should never have the glass sitting directly on the art. A spacer or mat provides the proper air space to absorb spikes in humidity that can be trapped in the paper fibers causing mold growth. The little brown spots seen on old prints, called "foxing", are the result of mold growth. Photographs especially should never touch the glass because the emulsion can adhere to the glass and is not removable without destroying the image. Most paintings on canvas or linen are not glazed, so this is not an issue.

MATTING

In picture framing matting is common on paper art such as prints and watercolors. It used to be that matting material was made of wood pulp, which is extremely acidic. These mats caused "acid burn" on artwork where the acid mixed with air and light. A brown line, sharp on the mat side and fading out toward the edge of the art characterizes the burn. There won't be much burn from the back mat because no air was in contact with the art.

More modern matting material is made of 100% cotton fiber, or is a methyl-cellulose fiber buffered with agents that neutralize the acid in the fibers. An even newer board called "Art-care" has been developed to absorb acid and actually correct an unbalanced environment. The art conservation world has embraced this product as superior to 100% cotton or rag board. The life of the "Art-care" board is still unknown at this point and 100% cotton is seen as the more stable board for picture framing. Both are available at Brian Marki Fine Art and Framing.

MOUNTING

Mounting, the practice of attaching the entire piece of art to a mat board or other substrate, was popularized a century ago as a cure for the warp that photographic papers formed in the the developing process. This full mounting practice has been carried forward to the poster generation to keep inexpensive poster paper flat. However, full mounting, which is non-reversible, is no longer necessary. Plastic-backed photographic paper has cured the warped photograph, and posters are now often on canvas or heavy art paper.

Fine art should never be mounted, but should instead be secured to the mat with small tabs, or hinges of linen or paper. Because hinges are reversible and acid neutral, they are the preferred way to position and hold a piece of art in a mat or frame. There are several types of hinges that can be used to secure a work in a frame depending on the weight and size of a particular piece.

Photo corners are another way of securing art in a frame without attaching anything to the art. These are little paper pockets made of folded paper and secured to the substrate (mat) to hold the art in place. This method is ideal for shipping art because it prevents the art from shifting out of place.

Placing linen lining behind the art is another acceptable way to preserve paper art. This method is commonly seen on antique lithographic posters from the 19th century because the poster paper is

thin and brittle with age. Lining the paper protects the poster from tearing when handled and framed. Conservation labs are skilled in such mounting techniques.

MOLDING

Last, we have moldings that make up the frame itself. For oil or acrylic on canvas, this may be the only treatment or presentation element used. Watercolors, photographs, prints may use moldings with a combination of the elements above. Frames can be made up of one or several moldings put together.

We use imported Italian molding because it is timeless in design, well crafted and of superb quality. The Italian patinas are like none other in the world; many of the recipes date from the Renaissance era. Styles range from contemporary to traditional, but the quality is consistently superb.

WE NEED SOMETHING ABOUT OTHER MOULDINGS.

ANYTHING WE CAN SAY ABOUT HOW THIS COMPARES WITH OTHER (UP-SCALE) FRAMERS in PDX?

Working with the Customer

~~A typical new client for me is one who has had a negative experience with a previous shop and is not happy about having to be put in an uncomfortable situation again. I am pained by the stories I hear about their previous experiences with art and framing. But I know that I just have to work a little harder to bring that client the good experience they should always have.~~

THE PROCESS

We have thousands of moldings and hundreds of matting samples at our fingertips to choose from, but we never want a client to feel overwhelmed. We work to define the design problem and narrow down possible solutions, encouraging our clients to develop and use their own design aesthetic. Once tapped in to, their aesthetic can guide them through even the toughest design problems and decisions.

Whether you're a veteran of the process or a neophyte, whether you've had good or bad experiences, I want to hear your expectations and concerns about the presentation of your piece. I also want to hear the story behind the art— Did you feel an earthquake when you saw it? Was it painted by your Great Aunt? Did you find it in a bazaar in India? There's always a story behind a piece of art, and learning these stories is a fascinating part of the process for us.

So here is how it works: The work of art and the client set the parameters of the design solution. Based on that, We choose four or five different molding samples and set them at the corners of the piece. If a mat of fabric or paper is needed, I also choose several mats that I feel will compliment the piece. By comparing the different samples to each other and how the art is affected the process of

elimination is usually quite rapid. These choices usually inspire the client, and the same client who faced this task with trepidation is soon making decisions with conviction.

It's always worth the time it takes to work with a client— to ask questions and truly listen in order to achieve the best design possible for the client and the art. Presentation directs the eye and tells the viewer how to look at a piece of art. It can enhance the viewer's experience or it can get in the way. It can bring a work of art into the context of its surroundings, or it can bring a new element into an established room, tilting the range of style by a few degrees. The power of presentation and good design will withstand the test of time. When art is framed to the standards we follow at Brian Marki Fine Art and Framing, it can make the piece an heirloom to be cherished and planned for.

Please come in for a design consultation and see for yourself what we can do.

If you have other questions about framing your art, please visit us at 2240 NE Broadway, Portland, Oregon. Or email us at art@brianmarki.com.