

Damage Limitation

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As framers we are presented with a variety of challenges, not in the least a customer bringing an old or damaged frame along with the contents. These might include artwork on paper or textiles along with the associated problems that one might expect. Whilst each situation may call for a different approach this RRL considers some of the actions one might consider.

First, a good inspection is important and this should be completed whilst the customer is present. This is essential in order to determine the extent of any damage, the advice and any recommendations one might offer the customer and finally, to determine the customer's requirements.

In some cases and very much dependent upon the value of the item a condition report is advisable detailing the extent of any damage, any restorative actions that may include the services of a conservator, and the detailed work to be completed by the framer.

With experience one can quickly recognise a number of major problems, these might include:

- Mould and/or insect damage. Care should be taken not to ingest any mould spores when dealing with mould. Further, insect damage should be carefully inspected, particularly on fabrics, where this may have caused a complete breakdown of the fabric.
- Damage to materials through the ingress of moisture. e.g. staining and tidelines.
- Distortion of materials due to rapid expansion/contraction of materials. e.g. flacking/cracking of oils, buckling/cockling etc.
- Pigment discolouration due to fading/ the effects of UV radiation.
- Evidence of acidity due to the effects of weak/strong acids (see RRL 004 Aug 2014) e.g. discolouration/yellowing of papers, foxing, staining due to ligneous bevels etc.

Before opening one should be mindful of any of the materials or labels that might need to be saved and possibly re-used. Labels will provide authenticity and convenience. Following a careful and thorough inspection one should open the back by removing any old hardware and the backing. This has the potential to be difficult or cause problems if the hardware is rusted. At this stage one will be able to initially assess the condition of the artwork and the previous framing methods employed and materials used. Carefully remove the entire framing package including the glass, mounts, artwork, undermount and place on the bench being cautious that no damage is done to any attachments or the method of hinging.

The next step is to remove the glass but before attempting this action ensure the mount or artwork is not attached to the glazing. This may be achieved by carefully sliding a micro-spatula between the glass and mount package. If safe to do so then slowly and carefully remove the glazing from the mount package starting at one corner - place the mount package onto a clean support.

The framer should now be able to determine how the artwork is hinged/attached to the mount or undermount. Often this will be using pressure sensitive tape which may have dried and detached from the artwork leaving a brown residue. At this stage the decision on the way forward rests with the customer. There is very little that a framer is qualified to complete and the employment of a conservator may be considered but this is very much dependent upon item's value; remember, the framer remains responsible for the artwork if he/she sends this to the conservator.

Questions:

1. What might cause 'tidelines' on artwork.
2. Describe two effects of UV radiation on artwork and the frequency range of both.
3. What is a condition report and outline what should be described therein.
4. Briefly describe the difference between a restorer and conservator.
5. Why is it important to keep removed labels or materials.
6. Outline what insects might attack cellulose materials, especially fabrics.
7. What might a framer notice on the inside of glazing that has touched the artwork.
8. What is 'foxing.'
9. What would you expect to notice if pressure sensitive tape had been used to mount artwork and how taping the artwork along all four edges might affect the artwork.
10. When sending artwork to a conservator who is considered responsible for any damage.