

CXD Sampler Article

A combined project to conserve and frame an early nineteenth century sampler belonging to the Conservation Department of the University of Lincoln. Framing to be completed by Harlequin Frames.

The sampler comprises embroidery worked with silk threads on a background of fine linen with approximately 54 holes to the inch. It is divided into 11 different sections by single rows and columns of satin stitch and has a border of cross stitch around the whole. The top section repeats the alphabet twice, in upper and lower case and includes the numbers 1 - 11 in cross stitch. There follows a three line verse and the numbers 1 to 12. At the lower edge of the sampler there are two smaller blocks of writing giving details of the embroiderer -



Mary Halliday
daughter of Robert and Mary Halliday
aged 9
Redcar 1817

Stitches used over the whole sampler included satin stitch, cross stitch, chain stitch and velvet or plush stitch.

After conservation the sampler was in a particularly fragile condition with three large areas where the background fabric had broken down and some pieces were missing altogether. Areas of stitching had become completely detached from their neighbours where the background fabric had disintegrated. There was a large darn in the top left hand corner and some areas that had previously been adhered had come away from the mount. Where the silk embroidery had been adhered, the adhesive had stiffened and darkened the stitches. There were a few small holes in one of the large central flowers suggesting insect damage but there was no evidence of continued infestation.

The small holes around the perimeter are indication that the sampler had previously been nailed to wooden stretcher bars hence the staining around the holes. But also this may suggest that some of the damage around the edges was due to the breakdown of lignin into its component parts resulting in carboxylic acid attacking the background fabric. Much of the damage is most certainly as a result of major degradation factors which include photochemical reaction and heat and humidity of which UV radiation is the most damaging and may intensify the damage caused by the latter two factors.





The sampler was sewn/couched onto an unbleached cotton support with fine polyester monofilament thread which was then fitted to a piece of pH neutral mountboard, padded with polyester wadding. The sampler was stored within a 75 micron Melinex polyester film cover until framing.

When considering a project such as this, it is important that there is liaison between the conservator and the framer such that each can appreciate the specific requirements and challenges of the other. In this case conservation work took place a number of years before framing and presented the framer with a number of challenges. Firstly, when sewing the sampler to the base fabric, the edges were not particularly square or level and hence the sampler did not sit square in the mount. Secondly, there was very little border between the sampler and the edge of the support fabric resulting in the need to pack out the sampler in order to use a good sized mount. Finally, the thickness of the polyester wadding has the effect of lifting the centre section when the mount is placed level on the sampler thereby reducing the distance between the material and the glazing hence requiring a deeper mount is required.



A complete list of materials used in the framing can be found at the end of the article.

In framing the sampler, two challenges needed to be addressed. Because of the thickness of the supported sampler and its backing combined with the mount, a moulding had to be chosen with sufficient rebate depth to accommodate the package whilst keeping the sampler a suitable distance from the glazing. The second was to choose a material to pack/support the sampler in order to allow a mount with suitable borders to be used; the material chosen was Plastazote.



Construction of the Mount. The aperture was determined and, whilst attempting to ensure all the scrolling around the borders was visible, it was accepted that inevitably, some of the nail holes close to the edges would also be seen. The aperture was measured at 475 x 660mm. When this was combined with borders of 70mm sides and top with 80mm, bottom the overall mount dimension was 625 x 800mm. The mountboard used was Arqadia's Timecare



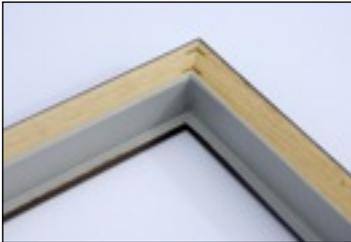
Heritage Museum Board D3307 thickness 2.2mm. I intended to use a double mount. The bottom mount comprised two sheets of board, depth 4.4mm, glued together with Evacon-R with the bevel being cut as one. The reveal between the bottom and upper mount is 10mm which included the width of the deep bevel. The two mounts were glued together using Evacon-R.

Packing out the Sampler Package. As mentioned, Plastazote(thickness 12mm) was the chosen material for packing the sampler. This provided an inert packing that enabled the mount to sit evenly and slightly above the level of the sampler, thereby avoiding pressure on the sampler or

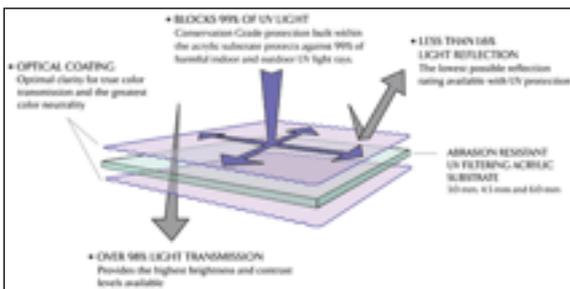


causing the polyester wadding to lift. A piece of Plastazote was cut larger than the outside mount dimension and from which the size of the sampler package was cut and glued, using Evacon-R, onto 550micron conservation board. The sampler was placed in the cut-out with the finished mount on top and the Plastazote was marked and cut accordingly. This ensures that the sampler is secured in position without the use of any adhesives.

Frame Construction. The moulding chosen to complement the sampler was Larson Juhl Foundry(332900). The rebate of this moulding was just sufficient to take the whole package. Arqadia's chop service was used whereby the moulding is pre-cut to the sizes required and a glass size is given to which a couple of millimetres is added prior to cutting. The frame was assembled and the rebate taped with aluminium foil tape in an attempt to prevent any off-gassing.



Materials Glazing/RIBS Foil. Tru Vue's Optium Acrylic glazing was chosen because it is a high performance glazing providing 99% UV protection. In addition, its high light transmission enhances colours and brightness and contrast levels which, combined with its anti-reflective coating, provides almost invisible glazing.



When framing samplers, I often use RIBS Foil as this provides two important aspects; firstly, it helps prevent

the ingress of any moisture through the back of the frame and secondly, the foil acts as a scavenger neutralising any atmospheric pollutants, oxidising gases and by products of off-gassing.



Assembly. The protective film was removed from the 'Optium' and the glazing placed in the frame along with the mount and sampler package. RIBS Foil was cut to size and placed in the back followed by the backing board which was pinned in place. This was then sealed with brown gummed paper tape. Finally, the frame was strung and felt bumpers placed at the bottom corners to allow air circulation over the back of the frame.

This project gave a very successful outcome, allowing the sampler to be displayed within the University's Conservation Department.



List of Materials

Material	Supplier	Reference	Description
Moulding	Arqadia	LJ332900	Foundry-Brass Chop Service
Mount Board	Arqadia/CXD	Timecare Heritage D3307	2.2mm Museum Cream
Glazing	Tru Vue/Arqadia	Optium Acrylic BDTVOM3000	High performance Acrylic glazing
RIBS Foil	CXD	SURIBS1219	Reactive Interface Barrier System
Plastazote	Arqadia/CXD	BDPLAB0012	Nitrogen expanded foam used for packing
Backing Board	Arqadia	999120000	Aqua Conservation Backing Board
EvaCon- R	CXD	SUEVAR002	Conservation Adhesive