

Framed Artwork Check-Up

Here are some things to look for to determine if your artwork should be brought in for a thorough inspection, if you are concerned that the art is framed with the most up-to-date preservation framing:

MATBOARDS. Has the beveled edge of the matboard (where it touches the artwork) turned brown or a deep creamy color? If so, the matboard is likely not free of acid and lignin and is therefore “burning” the art. A caution.....there are some matboards that are not free of acid and lignin termed “white core matboard”. These matboards are manufactured so that the beveled edge does not turn brown, but the board is still damaging your art. A trained eye can generally discern this type of board.

Some preservation quality matboards are termed “solid core matboards”. Most matboards have a white or black bottom surface (core) and a top surface of another color. When the boards are cut, the bevel is white or black depending on the bottom surface. Solid core matboards are uniform in color throughout the board. That is, the bottom surface and the top surface are the same color. Thus, when the board is cut, the bevel will be the exact same color as the top of the matboard. If that is the case, your artwork is ‘in good hands’.

If the bevel of the matboard is black, it again takes a more trained eye to determine if the board is preservation quality or not. In general, black core boards are not. This is especially true if your artwork has been framed for a long period of time. Preservation quality black core boards are a relatively new addition to preservation framing choices. If you have a black bevel, please, bring it in. We will be happy to inspect it at no charge.

GLAZING (Glass or acrylic). Does the matboard or artwork appear to have faded? This is often difficult to discern without taking the framing apart and removing the matboard. If there is fading, that matboard will have a distinctly more intense version of the visible color where it was hidden under the lip of the frame (the rabbit). Faded artwork will become apparent if the portion of the artwork under the matboard is brighter or more intense in color than the rest of the artwork. UV filtering glass or acrylic will help prevent further fading.

Check for cracks or chips in the glazing. Besides the obvious aesthetics, broken glass can easily scrape, tear or puncture the art. Ensure the glazing is fitting properly in the frame.

Glazing that does not fit snugly into the frame rabbit provides an opening for insects.

For unmatted artwork, look for spacer (material that creates a separation) between the glazing and the art. Art that is not somehow separated from the

glazing will eventually adhere to it. Such artwork is also especially susceptible to damage from moisture that may get under the glass. **DON'T EVER SPRAY GLASS CLEANER DIRECTLY ON THE GLASS. SPRAY IT ON A CLOTH OR PAPER TOWEL, THEN CLEAN.** Use only ammonia-free cleaner.

ACID-BURN. If you have the framing package apart, look for a brownish line around the artwork where the mat touched. There may also be damage from the backing board, especially true if the backing is wood slats or cardboard. Examine the artwork for mottled dark areas or dark lines. Acid burns are illustrated on the website at [How art is damaged](#).

FRAME. It is important to have a sound frame to prevent falling. Check frame corners for separation. Is the hanging system free of splits where screwed into the frame? Is the wire solid, free of fraying or unraveling?

DUST COVER. The dust cover is the paper backing that seals the artwork and protects it from dust and insects. If there are any holes in the backing, it should be replaced. Check also, for insects, cocoons, webs, etc.

If you see any signs of damage or just want to be reassured by the advice of a professional, please bring your piece in. We will be happy to take it all apart and give it a thorough examination.