

Conservation Hinging

For many years artwork has been attached into the framing assembly using a variety of methods and materials. A large variety of tapes have been used however many have proven to cause damage. Tape removal can be difficult and often the resulting stains are indelible. In addition, damage may occur to the paper itself. The paper upon which the art is executed is subject to change in temperature and humidity and therefore natural shifting will occur. If the paper is restricted, stresses are placed on the paper. These stresses can cause cockling, distortion and damage. The art should be held in place with as little restriction as possible.

Japanese tissue hinges can be used in a manner that will not create these problems since the tissue reacts to the environment. Hinging the paper from the top has proven to be a method that allows the paper to be lightly held in place without being restricted. Japanese tissues are ideally suited as hinges for art on paper. They are fine, strong tissues with long fibres which when torn produce light, feathered edges. Tearing the paper, not cutting it creates the long feathered edges. Cut edges can produce permanent impressions in the paper corresponding to the outline of the hinge.

Hinges should be large enough to provide sufficient support for the artwork. Size and weight of the art determine the placement and number of hinges. Hinges should be evenly balanced to the size of the paper. Generally two are sufficient, but three or four hinges can be appropriate. Hinging fine art with Japanese tissue and starch paste employs materials that are non-damaging and easily removable with water. T or Pendant Hinges are the most common. They are quick, easy and effective. After the hinges have been attached to the art, they can be attached to the under mount with archival tape.

REMOVING JAPANESE TISSUE HINGES

Removal of Japanese tissue hinges attached with starch paste presents on difficulties. Remove the hinge from the under mount by cutting the hinge and place the art face down on a clean surface. Dampen the hinge slightly with distilled water. After a few moments, carefully lift the hinge away from the art. Do not pull. If the hinge does not easily lift off, apply a little more water and try again. To prevent cockling, cover the area with a blotter and weight it until dry.

MAKING STARCH PASTE

Mix 1 teaspoon of dry starch paste with 6 teaspoons of distilled water in a microwave container. Stir until starch is fully dissolved. Place the mixture in a microwave oven and cook at a high level for approximately 30 seconds, stirring after each 10 seconds. The paste should turn translucent and have the consistency of cake batter. When cooking is complete let stand until cool. The paste forms a semi solid mass. At this stage press the paste through a fine tea strainer and dilute with distilled water to a thin creamy like consistency. The paste is now ready for use and can be store in the refrigerator for up to about 5 days.

MAKING HINGES

Making hinges with a feathered edge is as simple as tearing the tissue along the “Chain Lines”. These lines can easily be identified if you hold the tissue up with a light behind it. All hinges should be torn in line with the grain of the paper. First, any “deckle edge” of the tissue must be removed since it is not suitable for attachment to the art. Align a straight edge with the grain of the paper, using a fine brush draw a clear water line along the straight edge. To make a clean separation fold the wetted tissue along the straight edge and gently crease it. Then part the tissue by pulling it away. This will drag out the long paper fibres and produce a soft, feathered edge.

APPLYING PASTE TO THE HINGE

Place a hinge on a clean blotter or scrap of rag mat. Using a small brush, apply a small amount of paste thinly and smoothly to the feathered edge of the hinge, pulling out the fibres to their maximum length. After the past has been applied, let the hinges sit for a few minutes to allow some of the paste’s moisture to dissipate. The paste should be allowed to dry until the hinge is barely moist.

APPLYING THE HINGE TO THE ART

With the art resting on a clean surface, face down, determine the number of hinges and their placement. When the hinges are barely moist they are ready to be placed on the art. Attach the pasted area of the hinge approximately 6mm down from the top edge. Press lightly to assure good contact and cover with a piece of plotter and a weight. Hinges should be dry in 2 to 10 minutes, depending on atmospheric conditions.

ATTACHING THE ART TO THE UNDER MOUNT

After the hinges have been attached to the art and are dry, the art can be attached to the under mount. Place the art on the under mount and align to the required position. Hold it in place with weights. The hinges can be attached directly to the under mount with starch paste, or secured with a strip of gummed archival tape place over and at right angle to the hinge.

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