

COLLECTION CLEANING

- Keeping the area around the artwork clean can help preserve it. Dust is hygroscopic, so it absorbs moisture. This can lead to mould or dust accumulation between the canvas and stretcher bar of a painting can cause paint loss.
- Dust a work using a soft artist's brush or large makeup brush (avoid using a feather duster). Starting at the top and slowly moving down, brush the artwork gently in horizontal strokes. Do not use cleaning products or water directly on the surface of the work.



- To clean glazed works, use a clean, slightly damp microfibre cloth. If the glass does not have a UV filter, Windolene can be used. If you have museum glass follow their specified cleaning guidelines.
- Contact a professional conservator if close-contact cleaning of the artwork is needed.

FRAMING

- Framing an artwork can contribute to the care of the work including the protection of the corners.
- For works on paper, archival board and adhesives are always recommended. The back of the frame can be completely sealed.
- To further protect your work on paper from harmful UV rays you can ask your framer to use Museum glass which is glare-free with a UV protective coating.
- Due to the static, do not consider Perspex for glazing pastels or unfixed charcoal.
- Never frame a work on paper without using a mat board spacer or window mount, as this protects the work from possible moisture being caught between the glazing and the artwork.

HANGING

Consideration can be given to wall and picture hanging hardware, as well as carefully selected hanging rope.



Hanging hardware and rope.

STORAGE

Taking care of artworks when they are stored is as important as taking care of them when displayed. When setting up storage for artwork, consider the following:

- Select an area which can be carefully controlled, and which is clean, dry and dark.
- When storing works, elevate them off the ground, at least slightly.
- When storing multiple framed works against each other, stack them in size order back-to-back and front-to-front, with interleaves between them. Store unframed works horizontally with archival interleaves in metal cabinets.
- Examine the stored works periodically for any possible changes in condition.



Stack works back-to-back and front-to-front.

Following these guidelines will contribute to the care of your artworks. Make sure to contact a professional fine art conservator for help if you are ever unsure.

<http://www.loc.gov/preservation/care/>
<http://museumsassn.bc.ca/archives/collection/caring-collections/>
<https://aiccm.org.au/conservation/collection-care>

Cover detail; Bill Ainslie, *Mother and Child* (ISANG Permanent Collection)
Photographs: N Pamplin, T Sibisi, L Truter and A Zehnder

DOs AND DON'Ts

Caring for your art collection



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CURATING
the archive



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Caring for and preserving your artwork is preventive conservation, which aims to minimize or delay the deterioration of an artwork. This may involve photographic documentation, consideration of light levels, and positioning so the best temperature and relative humidity can be provided. Methods of hanging and moving artworks also contribute to the care of your collection.

DETECTING DAMAGE

Checking to see if there are signs of damage or deterioration is the first step in caring for your artwork. If the work is damaged, it could be due to harmful environmental conditions or possibly mishandling. Changes due to exposure to uncontrolled display or storage conditions can worsen with time, but can be managed and even reduced with the help of a professional conservator. If your artwork is showing any signs of damage or deterioration, you should seek a professional's opinion and help.

Signs of damage may include;

- Lookout for foxing, as can be seen on this woodcut.
- Lifting of paint, losses, scratches or discoloured varnishes on the painting.
- Damage to the frames of works, such as losses, cracks, or open mitres at the corners.
- Discolouration refers to overall browning appearance, whilst foxing refers to discolouration in small areas. Make sure to check both sides of artworks on paper. Small holes in the work that exude dust may indicate insect infestation.

LIGHT, TEMPERATURE AND RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Light can damage art objects; it can fade colour, accelerate aging. Fluctuations in temperature and relative humidity can cause paper to cockle, paint to crack or blister, wood to warp or split, and metal to corrode.

You can minimize these risks by observing the following guidelines:

- Avoid direct light and keep out daylight as much as possible using blinds and UV filters.
- Do not direct lamps or spotlights too closely to the artwork. As a guide, have the light four metres away.
- Wherever possible use lamps with a low UV content. Most LED lightbulbs are safe to use, as opposed to halogen and tungsten bulbs, which can cause discoloration of works.
- Limit the amount of time the objects are lit. Turn the light off upon leaving the space.
- If possible, do not place objects directly against an outside wall. If you do, leave a space of at least five centimeters between the work and the wall. Outside walls are damper and colder in winter and often warmer in summer than other walls.
- Try to minimize the moving of artworks as there can be changes in temperature and relative humidity in the new space and these fluctuations can be harmful.
- Ensure the indoor climate is as stable as possible, and do not hang artworks too close to open doors or windows.
- Give consideration to the placement of heaters, air-conditioners, candles or lamps relative to your artwork.
- Hanging a precious artwork above a fireplace is not advised.

Various devices can be used to monitor light, temperature and humidity.

POSITIONING, HANDLING AND MOVING

Damage can occur when artworks are moved. To minimize risk, only move an artwork once you are sure the final location to which you are moving it is decided.

- Consider your attire before handling any artwork – remove any jewellery, accessories, or clothing items which could scratch or get caught on the work and thus damage it.
- Always clean hands thoroughly before putting on gloves. Use either white cotton gloves or latex-free nitrile gloves when handling artworks.
- Plan ahead – consider routes and obstacles you may encounter whilst moving the artwork.
- Prepare a clean, safe surface before moving the work by padding the surface with blankets to avoid scratches.
- Hold your artwork with both hands, away from your body and facing towards yourself. If the work is large ask for help. If many works are being moved, an art trolley should be considered.
- Lift artworks by construction elements, not by ornaments, edges or handles. Hold artworks by the sides of the frame vertically.
- Do not place the object in a narrow passageway, behind a door, immediately behind a desk chair, or in a place where it is at risk of being knocked.
- Paintings and prints can be kept away from the wall using plastic, rubber, non-slip placers, or even cork.

Always hold an artwork away from your body when you are handling it.

