

The Flow of Preservation

by James Miller, CPF

Reproductions on Paper: Lithograph and Giclée

This is the second in our series of articles on client/framer communication in preservation framing. The term “reproductions on paper” covers a lot of ground. On the low end, it includes the cheapest posters. And on the high end, it includes collectible, one-of-a-kind, hand-modified reproductions of significant value. The first three steps were described in article one, “Original Art on Paper,” but let’s review.

Design Step One: Establish Value of the Art

Early in the discussion, learn the client’s perception of the art’s value. Even if it has little market value, there may be high sentimental value. In any case, framer and client need to agree on this. If perceptions differ, choosing preservation features can become difficult and uncertain. When value is agreed upon, the frame design can include the right balance of preservation features appropriate for the art, the client’s purpose, and the budget.

Design Step Two: Discover Client’s Knowledge Level

The best frame designs are borne of clear understanding between framer and client. The framer needs to know the client’s knowledge of framing in general, and preservation in particular. Then the framer knows what further information

the client needs to make choices about suggested framing features.

Design Step Three: Discover Client’s Preferences

Frame designers have expertise in decorative presentation, and customers value our opinions. But it is most important for clients to take home a frame design that reflects *their* preferences. Part of the framer’s job is to learn these preferences and work them into the design. Or, if there’s a mistake in the making, we should discuss alternatives.

Design Step Four: Focus on the Art

Now we’re ready to talk about alternatives for preservation of the art. This is the technical part of design, where the framer’s knowledge is most valuable to the client and the art. Technical discussion can be divided into distinct topics: mounting, matting, decorative features, glazing, and fitting.

A typical flow of conversation is depicted on the following pages, which generally applies to all art reproductions on paper. These flow charts illustrate common choices for three preservation levels: minimum, moderate, and maximum.

Please note that in the real world, preservation framing cannot be so neatly categorized. Every part and procedure has a positive or negative effect on the preservation of the art. Design combinations

may be infinitely varied and the level of preservation may be as well.

However, the point is that frame design can be—and should be—organized into a conversation that makes sense to those unfamiliar with the process. Therein lies the difference between a client who leaves in a daze of confusion, and one who leaves with confidence in her framer’s ability to do the best job for her money.

Now let’s discuss the art at hand. **Lithography** is the most popular form of art reproduction today. The cheapest posters are lithographs, and so are some of the highest quality, most valuable limited editions. Market value (or lack of it) may be firmly established, but remember to ask about sentimental value.

The **Giclée** process, relatively new to the mainstream of art reproductions, is a little over a decade old. Basically, it is an inkjet print of high quality. The innovative Iris printing process is the genesis of what we now call giclée. That’s French for “spitting” or “sputtering,” and refers to the process of applying the inks. Today, in addition to the Iris process, the Piezo process and thermal printing are also used to create giclées.

This method of art reproduction has taken some time to catch on, mainly due to longevity ques-

tions. The early papers and inks were known to have limitations unacceptable for quality art reproduction. Beginning around 1996, ink and paper testing and

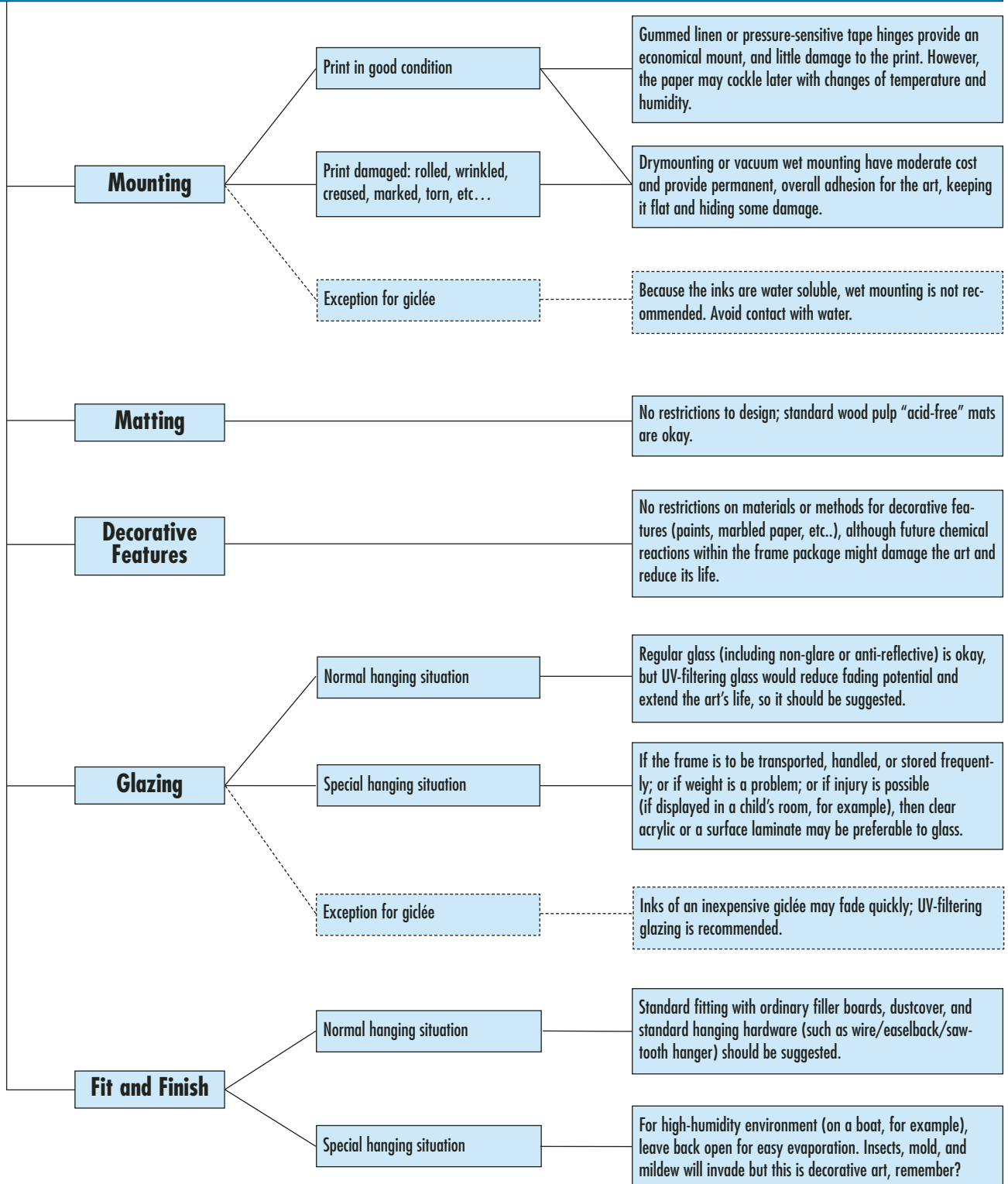
technical improvements were done and have advanced giclées to become widely available and gaining in popularity.

Giclées are similar to litho-

graphs in terms of framing requirements, except that they are extremely water-soluble. Some special considerations for giclées are noted in the flow charts. ■

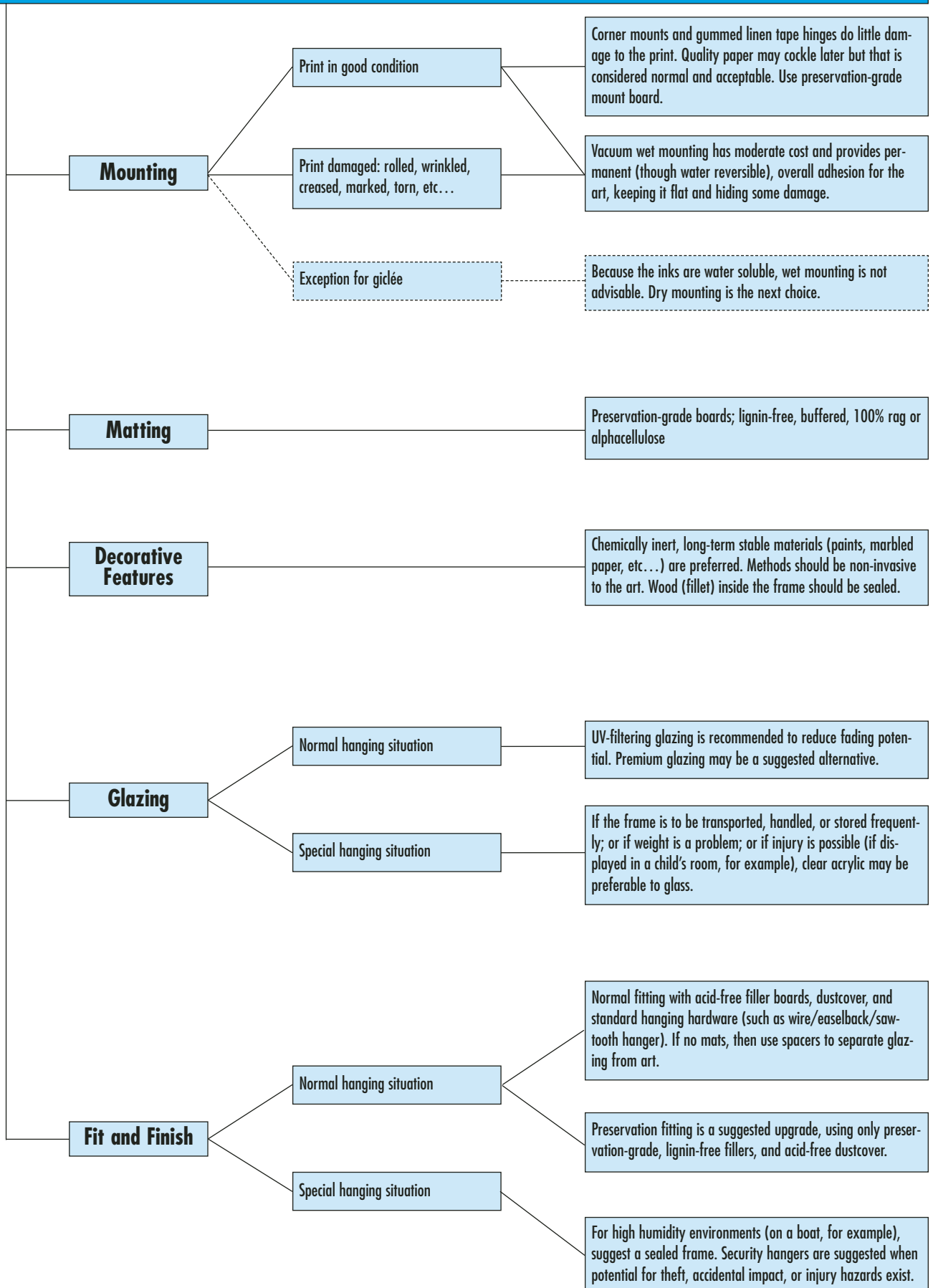
Minimum Preservation

(no significant sentimental or monetary value; decorative value only)



Moderate Preservation

(some sentimental or monetary value; moderate preservation recommended)



Maximum Preservation

(high sentimental or monetary value; ultimate preservation recommended)

