

Preparing Condition Reports

by Paul MacFarland, CPF, GCF

It is prudent to document the condition of an item that is in less than pristine condition when brought to you. Picture framers are liable for any changes that may occur to a customer's item while it is in their care, and completing a condition report for these items should be a standard procedure. It should accompany almost every project that is done in the shop, regardless of the potential value of the art or object.

The reports should not be part of the sales or design order ticket, but rather a separate, two-page form consisting of the report and a grid used to represent the item. Any damage or unusual characteristics can be recorded on the grid at a location that corresponds with the damaged area of the item.

Beginning on page 118, you will find four blank condition report forms for: artwork on stretched textile supports; needleart and related textile substrates; photography and graphics on paper and plastic substrates; and digital artwork on paper, textile, and rigid substrates. These are sample reports that you can use with your customers. Graph paper can be used to create a grid to visually document any existing damage.

Art conservators and museum personnel use detailed condition reports that call for specific information, possibly outside the framing technician's sphere of knowledge. Although the condition report used for the purpose of framing is more general in nature, it is still necessary for the framer to be able to identify the conditions listed on the form and also know when to consult a conservator.

Completed in the presence of the client, and prior to the design process, the condition report will serve as a guide to help ensure a complete survey of the item in a reasonable amount of time. The form guarantees a standardization of information and observation guidelines, thus eliminating potential oversights on the part of the salesperson or frame designer.

When conducting the initial inspection (following the report form), you have an opportunity to introduce

pertinent information and discuss specific framing requirements with the client. The function of the condition report is both about the overall well-being of the artwork and how to properly care for it. The discussion of the presentation process and decisions such as mat colors, design, proportion and frame selection should not occur during the condition examination.

Examining the Artwork

- White gloves should always be used.
- Dust masks or a Mylar overlay sheet should be used for friable mediums such as digital prints or pastels. (There is nothing like expectorating on the art in front of the client to instill confidence.)
- If the artwork is in a frame or matted, both should be removed in the presence of the customer to examine the perimeter of the work.
- The back of the artwork should also be inspected.

To assist in identifying various conditions, two exams should be conducted with a halogen light, or other bright light source. The light should be portable enough to be handled easily and safely over the surface of the artwork.

The raking light inspection: The purpose of this procedure is to identify any potential problems with the artwork surface. Position the light along the outside edge of the art at an approximate angle of 20° or less (almost parallel) to the surface.

At this low angle the light will rake across the surface revealing the raised edge of problem areas, create shadows in the depressions, and illuminate conditions not visible otherwise. Run the lamp slowly from top to bottom and then repeat the procedure from left to right, intersecting the path of the first inspection at a right angle.

The transmitted light inspection: This procedure is used primarily for textile substrates such as paintings on

canvas or needleart. The purpose is to identify any structural damage that allows light to be transmitted through the artwork.

Position the light behind the art on a stand, tripod, or table. Hold the artwork in front of the light moving it up and down, then left to right as in the raking light inspection. If the textile is not under tension, as a stretched painting is, apply a modest amount of tension to further reveal voids.

(Turn to page 118 for blank condition reports.)

The references for the conditions listed on the report forms beginning on page 118 are provided in the following bibliography:

PPFA Guidelines for Framing Works of Art on Canvas

PPFA Guidelines for Framing Works of Art on Paper

A Handbook on the Care of Paintings, by Caroline K. Keck, published by Watson-Guption, New York, NY

Framing Needlework and Fabric by Vivian Kistler, published by

Columba Publishing, Akron, OH

Framing Photography by Allan

Lamb, published by Columba Publishing, Akron, OH

Paul MacFarland, CPF, GCF, has been involved in the fine art framing industry since 1977; frame carver and gilder; retail frame shop owner; production manager for a moulding manufacturer; national sales manager for framing products distribution firm; CPF since 1986; active in PPEA; co-founder of the New Mexico Zia Chapter and VP of Northcoast (Cleveland) Chapter; 1992 founded Art Preservation Resources, a company located in Athens, OH providing product testing, consulting and training services for the industry's leading manufacturers, publishers and product distributors.



CONDITION REPORT

Artwork on Stretched Textile Supports

Client _____

Address _____

Phone/Fax/E-mail _____

Artist _____

Medium _____

Title/Subject Definition _____

Size (height/width/thickness) _____

Provenance _____

Declared Value _____

Painting Condition

(Damage location recorded on corresponding grid)

Soil/Stains _____

Mold/Mildew _____ (Front ____ Back ____)

Indentation/Bulge _____

Abrasion _____

Puncture _____

Crease _____

Wrinkle/Pucker/Sag _____

Canvas Deterioration _____

Damage on Bead Edge _____

Damage in Stretcher _____

Blistering _____

Blooming _____

Buckling _____

Cleavage _____

Cracking _____

Cupping _____

Crazing _____

Flaking _____

Discoloration _____

Loss _____

Other _____

A consultation with a painting conservator is required Yes ____ No ____

The client has been informed of and agrees to the conditions described on this form. Yes ____ No ____

The client has been informed of the need for specific framing requirements and agrees. Yes ____ No ____

Client signature _____

Date _____

CONDITION REPORT

Needleart and Related Textile Substrates

Client _____

Address _____

Phone/Fax/E-mail _____

Medium/Materials _____

Description of Subject _____

Size (height/width) _____

Provenance _____

Declared Value _____

Artwork Condition

(Damage location recorded on corresponding grid)

Soiled/Smudges _____

Tape on Edges _____

Hoop Marks/Creases _____

Excess Fabric _____

Missed Stitches _____

Frayed Edge _____

Traveling Stitches _____

Mold/Mildew _____

Out of Square Section _____

Knots in Back _____

Puckers _____

Holes in Fabric _____

Foreign Fiber in Stitches _____

Crooked Pattern _____

Other _____

A consultation with a conservator is required. Yes ___ No ___

The client has been informed of and agrees with the conditions described on this form. Yes___ No___

The client has been informed of the need for specific framing requirements and agrees. Yes___ No___

Client Signature _____ Date _____

CONDITION REPORT

Photography and graphics on paper and plastic substrates

Client _____

Address _____

Phone/Fax/E-mail _____

Medium/Substrate _____

Title/Subject Definition _____

Size (height/width) _____

Provenance _____

Declared Value _____

Artwork Condition

(Damage location recorded on corresponding grid)

Abrasion _____

Crease/folds _____

Tears _____

Loss/holes _____

Bulge _____

Indentation _____

Puncture _____

Fingerprint _____

Foxing _____

Window Mat Burn _____

Fading/color shift _____

Mirroring _____

Embrittlement _____

Cockling _____

Smears _____

Crazing in inks _____

Stains _____

Mold _____

Fly specks _____

Previous repair _____

Other _____

A consultation with a conservator is required. Yes___ No ___

The client has been informed of, and agrees with, the conditions stated on this form. Yes___ No___

The client has been informed of the need for specific framing requirements and agrees. Yes___ No ___

Client signature _____ Date _____

CONDITION REPORT

Digital Artwork on Paper, Textile, and Rigid Substrates

Client _____

Address _____

Phone/Fax/E-mail _____

Artist _____

Medium _____

Substrate _____

Ink set _____

Surface coat _____

Title/Subject _____

Size (height/width/thickness) _____

Provenance _____

Declared Value _____

Artwork Condition

(Damage location recorded on corresponding grid)

Abrasion _____

Bulge _____

Crease/fold _____

Fingerprint _____

Fading/color shift _____

Indentation _____

Ink smear _____

Moisture damage _____

Outer perimeter damage _____

Puncture _____

Previous mounting/hinges _____

Tear _____

Other _____

The client has been informed of and agrees with the conditions described on this form. Yes___ No___

The client has been informed of the need for specific framing requirements and agrees. Yes___ No___

Client signature _____ Date _____