

by Hugh Phibbs



Innovative Sink Mounts

Once you have been involved in framing for any length of time, you know that solving the wide range of preservation problems which come into your shop requires innovative thinking. How can you know that something new will work?

Preservation depends on the use of materials and techniques which have proved themselves in the past. The safest

If the paper mounted to the front of the board extends beyond the edges of the board itself and the board is quite strong, the simplest approach relies on the creation of a tight sink made of conservation quality corrugated board. This sink should be shallow enough to accommodate the board while leaving the paper to extend above its surface.

Thus, if you were faced with a photo-

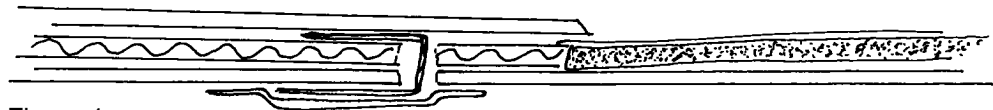


Figure 1.

innovations are those which employ aspects of techniques which have been successful in previous projects.

Works on paper mounted on boards are particularly challenging to house. In the past, such materials were routinely sent to paper conservators so that the backing boards could be removed. Today, certain questions such as if the item was mounted by its maker and if the board is chemically harmful are addressed first. If it is determined that the board is significant to the history of the object and that it does not imperil the paper, an appropriate sink is required. This is also the case when the owner doesn't want to have a conservator treat the object.

graph mounted on compressed wood board, you could lay it on the corrugated board and carefully trace the outline of the wood board onto the corrugated with a microspatula. The traced shape can be cut out and the backing board gently pushed into the opening. The friction between the edges of the corrugated and the wood board should hold it in place, while the overmat will cover the edges of the paper. If the board is too frayed at the edges to be held tightly by the edges of the sink, the window can be secured with strips or lashings of linen tape affixed to its back surface. The tape is put through holes in the sink to the back of the package where they can be secured with linen tape tabs (see Figure 1).

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Preservation Practices

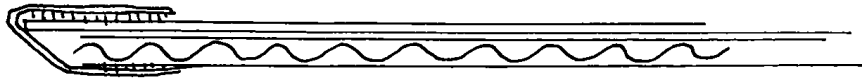


Figure 2.

When the board to which the paper is mounted is not so physically robust, such a tight fitting sink might cause breakage. This is especially true when the mounting board is ligneous cardboard. If the board is causing harm to the mounted paper, you will see an overall discoloration. In some cases, the adhesive layer may provide some isolation between the paper and the board. Here, the greater danger is the possibility that the board may crack and the paper may tear along the crack. Such items are best housed in sinks which have hollow sides with paper stretched over them. One of the simplest to make consists of a back portion of conservation quality corru-

ing and should be spined to a back mat of the same size. A window mat with an opening slightly smaller than the opening in the sink should be prepared and spined to the front of the sink. Lashings of linen tape can be affixed to the appropriate spots on the back mat and the item can be installed in the sink. Here, the lashes come from the back mat forward to the front of the sink and can be manipulated and secured with the sink face-up. The resulting package will look like Figure 3 in cross section.

This housing will provide gentle, non-confining support for the paper/board item. If the paper does extend beyond the margins of the board at any point, it will be



Figure 3.

gated board with a face of two-ply board and Japanese tissue stretched over the hollow.

This sink begins with a hole cut in the corrugated exceeding the edge measurements of the board by $\frac{1}{8}$ " to $\frac{1}{4}$ ", depending on the thickness of the board. Thicker boards will require more clearance. The opening in the two-ply should be cut so that it is slightly smaller than the dimensions of the board being housed. These two components can now be glued together so that their openings are congruent and strips of Japanese or other conservation quality tissue can be glued to the front of the two-ply and pulled around. Then it is glued to the back of the corrugated. The resulting structure will look like this in cross section (see Figure 2).

This sink should have cuts made in it near its open-

gently bent backward, without severe folding.

Each support housing we make involves compromise. Leaving paper mounted on a backing board may maintain some of its history, but the board may continue to chemically challenge the paper. In both of the housings described here, the edges of the paper cannot be exposed or "floated." Owners who request that such items be hinged should be reminded that attachment to the back of these boards is likely to fail since the surface is often weak and will not support the weight of the item. Our best efforts can provide settings which are tailored to the needs of each piece, utilize successful materials and methods from the past, or use these successful methods in well-reasoned new ways. Still, remember that not all styles of display can be safely employed. ■