

## A Stronger Crosspiece for Hinging

by Hugh Phibbs



**H**inging works of art on paper is the one technique in preservation framing which results in a slight change in the work of art. Even the best hinges, made of well-cooked starch paste and Japanese tissue,

will create a local lamination of the art's paper and will involve some penetration of the paste into the paper. Hinging should only be done by those who have practiced extensively, and once hinges have been applied to a work of art, they should be kept in place for as long as possible to minimize the risks which hinge removal (and the addition of new hinges) can represent. The means used to secure the hinge to the back mat is pivotal to the effort to keep it on the art throughout future rematting.

Even when hinges are properly applied so that no cockling occurs to betray their location, their attachment to the back mat can still generate difficulties. If the hinge is passed through a slit, there may be abrasion of the hinge tissue over time and the creation of the slits and insertion of the hinges can be difficult. Pasting the hinge directly to the back mat, however, eliminates the

possibility of reusing the hinge and may give rise to cockles in the art's paper inbetween the hinges if relative humidity rises.

The use of a crosspiece with the hinge, and without any paste on the part of the hinge which touches the back mat, can work well with pendant hinges. Previously, as was outlined in the *PFM* supplement on hinging (February 1994), when folded hinges were installed, some pasting of the hinge to the back mat was required. Without that paste, the hinge would not give sufficient support. Unfortunately, the removal of such hinges from the back mat was quite difficult. A stiffer crosspiece which could provide enough support without any paste on the hinge can solve this problem.

In creating a stronger crosspiece for folded hinges, it is important to keep it as simple as possible. The introduction of any new materials can lead to unforeseen consequences. A crosspiece which is folded double and pasted to itself uses nothing that would not be present in the original hinge. The portion of the crosspiece which is doubled will have more bulk than an ordinary crosspiece, but it should be remembered that that part of the crosspiece will be near the edge of the window

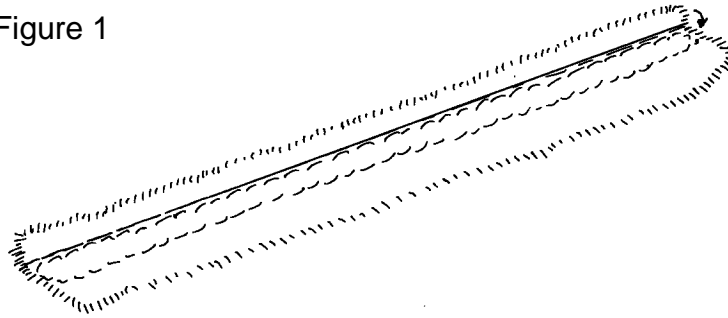
mat or spacer. There is little likelihood that any pressure could ever be applied to that part of the art, rendering the increased bulk of the crosspiece harmless.

This type of crosspiece should be made from a strip of Japanese tissue which is wet so that the strip runs down the grain of the tissue and has a width of 1¼" to 1½". The strip is wet cut to provide "edgeless" feathered edges, both at the margins of the crosspiece and down its interior where the folded portion meets the main part of the crosspiece. The fold in the crosspiece will provide a straight edge over which the hinge can be turned.

When the strips have dried from the wet cutting, they can be folded down their length along a line ¼" from one side. They can now be laid on a clean surface and fresh paste can be painted on the main part of the strip, starting at the fold and extending away from it for more than ¼" (see figure 1). The smaller part of the strip can then be pressed onto the paste down the length of the strip, leaving a small section at one end unpasted so that the direction of the fold will be evident when the strip is dry. (The technique for application of the paste and the reference section at the end of the strip are ideas provided by preservation framer Jamie Stout.)

The strips can be allowed to air dry, since any cockling which may occur will be relaxed when paste is applied to them during the hinging process. The hinges should have been secured to the art in the usual fashion. Once the art is weighted in place, the crosspieces can be torn from the strip. Paste should be applied to the side of the crosspiece where the folded portion is exposed so that this side will be attached to the back mat and will be furthest from the art. It can be difficult to distinguish the

Figure 1



sides of the strip when the paste is dry, and the reference section at the end will be useful here.

The hinge can now be folded up and away from the back mat and the

pasted-out crosspiece can be attached to its underside. The hinge and crosspiece can then be turned under the strip of polyester sheeting which has been weighted in place under the edge of the art as part of the traditional hinging protocol, and then carefully pressed onto the back mat for final drying.

These reinforced crosspieces make future removal of the item from its mat simple. A microspatula can be inserted between the back of the hinge and the front of the back mat and carefully worked from side to side while it is held flat against the back mat. If anything gets torn it will be the crosspiece and not the hinge.

Another advantage comes from increased ease of hinge attachment to the back mat. Previously, the application of paste to part of the hinge could be quite tricky if the hinge was set back from the edge—as it must be if the edge is deckled. The reinforced crosspiece can be pasted out, applied to the hinge, and the combination turned under the interleaf with little effort. Since many things which are floated have deckled edges, the extra step involved in folding and pasting the hinge will be paid back with this easier application of the hinges to the back mat.

Very thin items and heavy ones will still require pass-through hinges. When there is not enough time to allow the crosspieces to dry under the interleaf, the pass-through can provide a short cut. However, for most items which require floating, this crosspiece will simplify application now and will save the hinge in the future. ■