

Kenosha Public Museum Guidelines for Mounting Works on Paper for Exhibition

The KPM has established the following mounting requirements for works on paper that will be shipped to the museum for exhibition, with specific recommendations for watercolor paintings.

Framed artworks often arrive at KPM improperly assembled or with preventable damage. Float mounts and flexible framing points, in particular, have proven to have a higher rate of failure during shipping. *Artists whose works require re-framing by KPM will be consulted, and charged accordingly.*

This alphabetized list is meant to define common methods, issues, and mounting options. A quick web search for any of these terms will provide a wealth of resources (websites, books, and articles) with detailed instructions, tutorials, and materials. If taking your work to a professional picture framer, please inform them of the requirements in the Exhibition Prospectus.

All framing must foremost meet the requirements set forth in the Exhibition Prospectus, such as a white mat, acrylic glazing (no glass), and a standard wood or metal frame wired for hanging. Unless allowed according to the prospectus or loan agreement, crudely constructed or overly unique matting or framing may result in rejection of your painting. *Not permitted:*

- ✓ Frames improperly joined, loose, or gaping at the corners, with sharp or unsafe edges
- ✓ Acrylic or wooden shadowbox frames that are poorly fitted, loose, or gaping
- ✓ Over- or under-sized glazing or backing (bowed, protruding, or falling out of the frame)
- ✓ Large works backed with plywood or other heavy material, especially if thicker than the rabbet
- ✓ Highly decorative or embellished frames, especially with loose, fragile, or sharp elements
- ✓ Rough, rusty, or unsafe salvaged materials including window sashes or storm windows
- ✓ Flexible tabs or framers points that bend easily, allowing art to be easily removed
- ✓ Poster and certificate frames, brittle resin mouldings, and glass frames

The opening of the back of the picture frame (rabbet) should be large enough to accommodate the art package (glazing, art, and backing).

Standard frames are cut to include a small allowance (+1/8" or +1/16") for the backer and glazing to fit edge-to-edge. *Backing boards and glazing must fit the frame rabbet and not gap, warp, or spring out of the front frame opening.*

All materials and methods used in mounting, matting, and framing art being shipped to KPM must be safely assembled *and secure enough to withstand shipping whether laid flat or with "any side up"*.

Archival framing materials should always be used to mount fine art. Artists using other materials including self-adhesive tapes, velcro, and boards, *must be sure they will remain secure*. Please be aware of the risks of immediate and long-term damage to your art from non-archival materials.

Backer/backing board should be rigid, lightweight, and properly fit the frame rabbet. Archival materials including rag board, archival foam board and rigid extruded, honeycomb, or corrugated plastic sheets made for conservation framing are recommended. *KPM strongly*

discourages using plywood, masonite, and other heavy materials in large frames.

Float mounts allow the paper edges to be seen. *Floated art pulls loose during shipping more often than other mounts.* Heavier paper should be pre-stretched before painting, and must be dry and flat for mounting. KPM recommends mounting with cotton paper strips and paste, with an additional cross-strip at the fold; *mounts must be dry before framing.* Large or heavyweight paper may require additional strips. Other methods should be pre-tested, especially if adding spacing layers (if approved in Prospectus).

Glazing is required for all framed art exhibited at the KPM. *Glass is not allowed.* Plexiglas, Acrylite, and other brands of optically clear, framing-grade acrylic. Non-reflective is allowed; non-glare/frosted is not allowed. Any grade can be used—regular, abrasion resistant, UV-protective or other. Acrylic thickness should be chosen by frame size. Acrylic that is too thin for the frame size will bow outward and may “pop out” of the front of the frame.

Framing Acrylic Thickness Guide:

Frames up to 40" on the longest side = 1/8" acrylic

Frames from 40"-60" = 3/16" acrylic

Frames over 60" = 1/4" acrylic

Matting or spacing is required to protect artwork framed under glazing. Float mounts will require frame space (rabbet strips) or a shadowbox-style backer to provide air space between art and glazing. Archival conservation rag mat (made from cotton) should be used on fine art. Regular mat board is buffered with calcium carbonate, but will discolor and damage art and should be changed over time.

Mounting corners and strips are the preferred, most archival method for mounting art at KPM, as no adhesive contacts the art which remains “free floating”. Archival corners or strips can be readymade and self-adhesive (Lineco brand or other), or folded paper adhered with mounting paste to the backing board or mat. Place at all four sides or corners, with a bit of “wobble room” to allow the art to expand and contract to prevent ripples, buckling, tearing, and separation. Additional strips will be needed for large or heavyweight paper.

Mounting hinges are acceptable for smaller or lighter-weight paper. Traditionally designed to fail under stress, thin hinge mounts are meant to pull loose or tear instead of the art—and may therefore fail during shipping. KPM recommends using archival mounting corners or strips as the primary mounting method, or as a backup to traditional hinge mounts. Please note: self-adhesive tapes may not stick to watercolor paper that contains sizing, or that has not been wet-stretched prior to painting. Self-adhesive tapes also require solvents for removal, and are therefore not archival.

Rigid framing points must be used to install art in wood frames being shipped to KPM. Flexible framing points (i.e. Fletcher FlexiMaster) and bendable “quick change” tabs often bend or fall out during shipping, causing damage and breakage as the art and glazing separate from the frame.

Shadowbox backers, if allowed by the prospectus, must be securely joined and properly fitted.

Sink mounts may be used for paper that is too cockled, textured, or rippled for traditional matting or floating. A depression or “sink” holds the paper, which is held in place under a cut mat.

Water media on paper must be thoroughly dry and flat when framed. Paper shrinks as it dries, and may warp or pull loose. *Please take special note of requirements for each weight of paper.*

Regular or lightweight paper can be mounted with any traditional method. If using t-hinges under a mat, a backup of mounting corners or strips is *highly recommended* to prevent the work shifting or slipping during shipping.

Medium to heavyweight paper can be mounted with any traditional method. If using t-hinges under a mat, a backup of mounting corners or strips *is required* to prevent the work shifting or slipping during shipping.

Pre-stretching watercolor paper prior to painting (taping to a panel and wetting thoroughly) is recommended, and is usually necessary for any paper that will be floated/float mounted.

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A Few Resources:

The Library of Congress Preservation Guidelines for Matting and Framing <https://www.loc.gov/preservation/care/mat.html>

Gaylord Archival Materials <https://www.gaylord.com/c/Matting-Mounting-and-Backing-Boards>

Frame Tek articles <https://frametek.com/articles/> float mounting a watercolor <https://frametek.com/articles/float-framing-a-watercolor/>

Frame Destination website offers a great conservation framing why and how overview: <https://www.framedestination.com/blog/resources/does-archival-framing-matter>

Watercolor Artist Magazine Article, Chris A. Paschke, CPF GCF CMG "Floating Deckle Edged Watercolors", October 2013 <https://www.designsinkart.com/library/WAM-FloatingDeckleEdgedWatercolors201310.htm>