

HOW SHOULD ARTWORK BE CARED FOR IN THE HOME?

If you are a new custodian of art, you'll want to preserve your acquisitions for future generations and protect your investment. You can do that by regularly monitoring the physical condition of your artwork. The surface of most oil paintings has been varnished to protect against common environmental hazards, but a dull or yellowed appearance may be evidence of an older, discoloring varnish that should be replaced. Cracking on the paint surface may indicate flaking, a condition that needs to be treated to avoid paint loss. Works on paper in your collection should be fitted with acid free materials to prevent chemical damage to their supports. If you notice a discoloration on a work on paper just under the edge of the mat, it may indicate an acidic mat that should be replaced. Because many works of art are fragile, they will require conservation from time to time, but you can help to minimize these conservation needs. Proper treatment to preserve artwork should be left to experts, but there are some general guidelines you can follow in your home. These will serve to keep the art you value in the best possible condition and also help prevent accidents.

- Provide a stable environment for your art, independent of seasonal temperatures, with as few fluctuations in relative humidity and temperature as possible. (Extreme changes in a room's humidity and temperature damage paintings, works of art on paper, and objects by encouraging paint to flake or crack and/or to grow mold.)
- Avoid hanging art in direct sunlight. (Even if you have taken the precaution of covering windows with an ultraviolet filtering coating or with light-diffusing shades, direct exposure to sunlight is still not recommended.)
- Avoid exposing your artworks to constant high levels of indoor lighting.
- Protect art on paper exposed to any light with an ultraviolet filtering glass or Plexiglas™. (Manufacturers recommend replacing these products every fifteen years.)
- Always check the hanging wire on a newly purchased work of art. (The piece may be fit with screw eyes that have loosened over time. Mirror hangers fit with new wire may be a better choice.)
- Have your pictures hung by a reputable picture hanger rather than tackle the job yourself.
- Hang your art on interior walls, which are less susceptible to environmental changes than exterior walls.
- Do not hang works of art near an air conditioner vent, a humidifier, or a working fireplace.

- Do not store works of art in an attic or a basement.
- Never use a moist cloth to clean a painting or a frame, particularly a gilded frame. A synthetic dry duster without quills is the desired tool.

While the condition of your collection should always be evaluated by professionals, the people in daily contact with your art will benefit from clear instructions about caring for it and about the importance of keeping a sharp eye on its condition. The objective is to be vigilant about avoiding damage to your collection.