

# Mastering Mounting

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## *Hinge Failure and Shipping*

**T**here is a fine line between the failure of a starch hinge because of rough handling and the failure of a hinge due to weak application. A mulberry paper hinge is

designed to be the weakest link in a preservation mounting procedure, and it is meant to be sacrificed by breaking to protect the art it is displaying. This could be the result of an aggressive jolt to the art

package, such as it falling from a wall during an earthquake or damage during shipping. Broken hinges are easily replaced with new ones and the art generally remains undamaged.

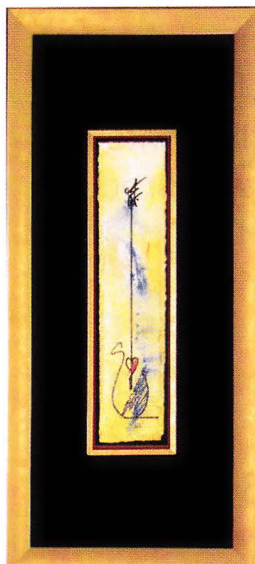
At the 2010 PPFA International Print Framing Competition finals held in Anaheim, CA, this past February there were 36 finalists competing for money and awards. These finalists needed to win their local PPFA chapters to advance to the finals. This year's competition print was "Heart Rod Guitar" by Rod Morris, a hand-embellished monoprint on heavyweight paper with four deckled edges, which

called out for float mounting.

John Gaston was one framer who placed in his local chapter competition (Photo 1). Though frames of the finalists may be hand-carried to the competition, it is preferred for them to be shipped ahead. Unfortunately, six of the final competition pieces that had been shipped—including John's—arrived with bond failure, and all had been hinged (Photo 2).

Since the pieces are not disassembled during judging, it was difficult to tell whether these were failures due to the hinges having torn during transport or if the technical application and adhesive had failed. When John examined his returned entry after the competition, he found that the hinges had broken above the glue line, meaning that the starch had not failed. In other words, the

*When shipped art arrives with failed hinges, is it the hinge or the packaging that is at fault?*



*Photo 1: This is a shot of John H. Gaston's regional award winning framing entry from New England Chapter PPFA prior to shipping.*



*Photo 2: John's piece arrived with a classic case of broken hinges, having done just as they were supposed to do—break above the glue line to save the art.*



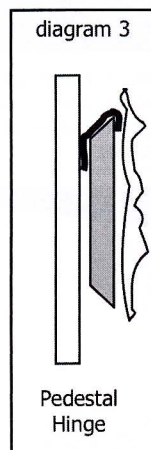
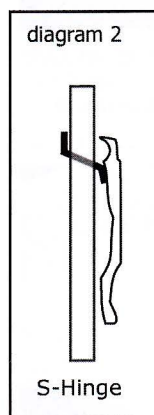
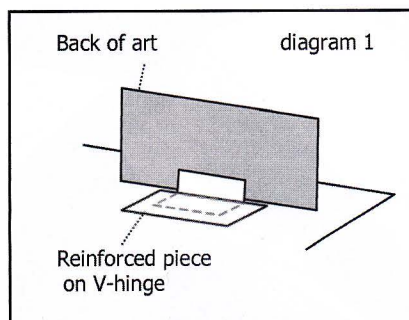
starch hinges broke under stress just as they are supposed to do.

## Float Hinges

When float mounting, both V-hinges and S-hinges allow 100 percent visual exposure of all edges of the art. A V-hinge is a folded piece of Japanese paper applied to the back of the art and then to the backing board as an inverted "V". The starch is applied to the upper 1/8" to 1/4" edge of the hinge strip, allowed to lightly dry, and then aligned to the very top edge on the verso side of the art. Layer a small piece of spun polyester (Pelon) on the wet hinge, top with a dry blotter, and weight the hinge as it dries. After the hinge has dried, lay the art face down in position on the backing board, apply paste to the opposite end of the hinge, smooth the wet hinge to remove air, and feather the edges. Layer with Pelon, blotter, and weight to dry.

Gravity creates a constant pull on a folded hinge that often allows it to peel from the art or mount, so a V-hinge should always be reinforced with a crosspiece (Diagram 1). Unlike a pendant hinge, the crosspiece is often placed horizontally, with the length of the hinge pasted to the art.

S-hinge, pass-through, and suspension tab are different names for the same type of more secure hinge that allows the art to visually float in the center of a frame. This is ideal for deckled, torn, uneven, or naturally feathered art that shouldn't have its edges covered by window mats (Diagram 2). In this case, hinges are pasted on one end to the back of the art, while the



other end is fed through and glued to the back of the mounting board.

## Pedestal Hinge

The platform, pedestal, wrap, or float all refer to the same basic technique—a hinge that allows the artwork to be raised off the surface of a decorative backing board (Diagram 3). Bevel cut the platform smaller than the art and lightly sand the sharp edges. Paste 1/8" of hinge to the top back edge of the art, weight and dry. Wrap the dry hinge over the smoothed edge of the top to the platform and glue to the back of the pedestal.

Hinges placed at the sides or bottom should be loose enough to allow the art to move without restriction (Photo 3). The art/platform unit is then attached to the backing with PVA (white glue) or 3M #3797 TC Jet-Melt hot glue and Polygun-TC.



*Photo 3: Only 1/8" of the pedestal hinge is attached to the back of the art while it doesn't matter how much is glued to the bottom of the platform. Top hinges touch the edge while the bottoms are loose.*

## Hinges and Shipping

Hinges are only as strong as the rice paper and the starch used. V-hinges are the weakest of float hinge options, so if rough handling or shipping is likely, then the S- or platform hinge might be a better choice. When shipping framed art, there are two considerations—the strength of the mounting and the protection of the shipping box. Since hinges are designed to tear to save the art, they may not be the best mounting method if framed art is to be shipped upon completion.

Mylar corner pockets are also known to break open at the fold if the shipping package receives a hard jarring, so they are not advised, either.

There are other preservation methods that will not infringe on the art while still likely to hold the art if the shipping box is roughly handled, but these may not allow deckled edges to be visible all around. Edge strips or side straps are a possible solution if the art is to be matted. Sink mounting is perfect if a window mat is to be used in the design.

## Rigid Packages and Filler

There is a misconception that the



## Cushioned Boxes

Foamboard boxes are perfect for shipping. They may be custom sized to the art being shipped and are reusable. (Directions available in *Creative Mounting, Wrapping and Laminating*, pages 84-89, available at PFM bookstore.) The drop spine box in Photo 7 is a single unit that closes over the box bottom, giving the wall a double thickness and even more structure. Boxes are assembled out of 3/16" to 1/2" foamboard and should be sized to allow a full 2" sponge padding on all sides of the frame (Photo 8).

A basic hinged box takes less time and uses fewer materials, and it is a perfect, well-padded box— par-

ticularly if a commercial-grade, denser egg-crate sponge is used (Photo 9). The gray acoustic egg-crate foam, also called convoluted foam, is available in 72"x80"x2-1/2" sheets online from the Foam Factory.

## The Final Hinge

It is not possible to know if the hinges on the contest art would have broken if the framed art had been packed with more cushioned shipping boxes. Cushioned boxes will allow wrapped art to bounce inside rather than solidly pound. If the art was hinged and packed in sponge, there would have less tendency for those hinges to break during ship-

ping. Had they failed in the adhesive bond, the starch recipe would need to be reviewed or the application technique might need additional practice. Though a broken hinge is disappointing, at least it proves you know your skills. ■

**Chris A. Paschke, CPF GCF CMG**, mounting editor, owns Designs Ink in Tehachapi, CA, featuring custom framing, fine art/graphic design, and consulting. Specializing in mounting, matting, design, and fine art, she teaches at The National Conference. She has written four books on mounting including *The Mounting and Laminating Handbook* (third edition) and *Creative Mounting, Wrapping, and Laminating*, available from PFM PubCo. She may be contacted through [www.designsinkart.com](http://www.designsinkart.com).

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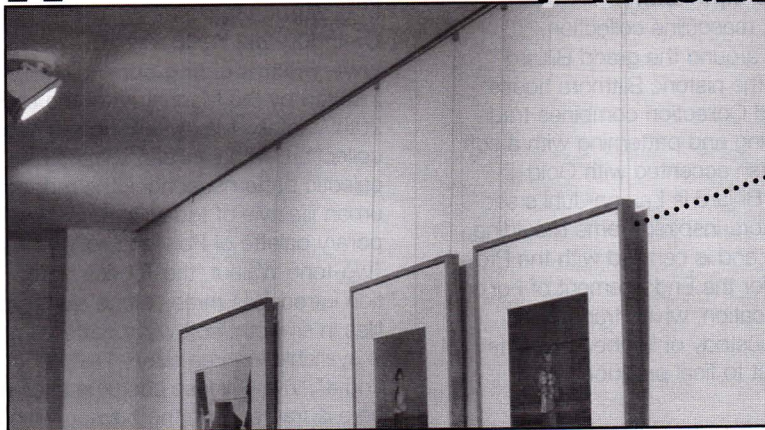
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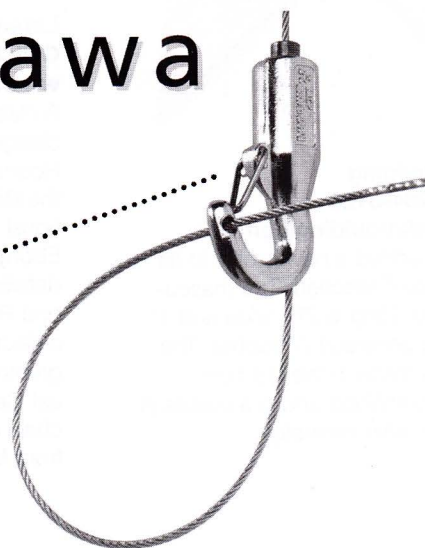


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