

# Common Framing Mistakes

Here are some common mistakes in framing along with tips on how to avoid them.

## Vacuum Press Maintenance

**W**ithout routine maintenance and understanding of your mounting equipment, a number of problems can crop up. Every morning after the vacuum press has been heated—but prior to mounting—the press should be run through one full four-minute cycle with all regular release materials but no project. This will pull any moisture from the press in preparation for the day's mounting. At the end of the day run one last four-minute cycle with the lid fully open to draw air through the system to clear hoses of any moisture.

The platen should also be checked visually weekly to monthly, depending on use, for adhesive residue, and it should be wiped with a lint-free microfiber rag to remove dust, dirt, and particles. These particles and residue can embed a pattern into soft surface substrates like foamboard. Excessive creases and indentations from multiple substrates can also transfer to new substrates.

All release materials should be retired every 50 working hours. It is also a bad idea to use a release board on the bottom of a vacuum press mounting package. The silicone coating can suction to the platen, resulting in immediate or future bubbles. It also prevents the rubber diaphragm from conforming around the edges of a substrate, which provides even pressure against the heat source during bonding. Release boards can be used on top of mounting projects but are never required in a vacuum unit. Occasionally a rigid board may be needed beneath a project with no substrate, as when pre-mounting an adhesive or canvas transferring, but use a non-silicone scuff board just a little larger than the project.

—Chris A. Paschke, CPF, GCF

## Open Framing

**N**ot closing a picture frame tightly can cancel out most of the preservation benefits and lead to deterioration of the art or objects inside. This is true even if a frame is just partially open. Framing without glazing exposes the contents to the same kind of soiling that clogs a furnace filter. Airborne contaminants, such as cooking fumes, oils, and combustion exhaust, can cause harmful chemical reactions over time. These hazards not only accelerate deterioration of the art but also of all the framing materials. There could also be accidental abrasion or puncture during routine cleaning, which might involve harmful cleaning solutions. A tight dustcover on the back of the frame is also important because heating, ventilation, and air conditioning cause air movement along wall surfaces. This means that all of the airborne contaminants affecting the front of the frame also affect the back.

Even in a clean environment, a frame left open on the front or back suffers unabated exposure to temperature and humidity changes, increasing the effects of expansion and contraction cycles and placing destructive stresses on materials such as paper, textiles, leather, and wood. Glazing, insulated filler, and a tight dustcover all serve to slow the rate of change inside a frame, greatly reducing harmful expansion/contraction cycles. Some framed items are more susceptible to harm than others. A watercolor on paper would deteriorate faster than an oil painting on canvas, for example. Glazing is even recommended in framing canvas paintings for the same reasons as for all objects—it helps extend the life of the item in the frame.

—James Miller, MCPF, GCF



Release Paper



Vacuum Platen