Caring for Framed Artwork

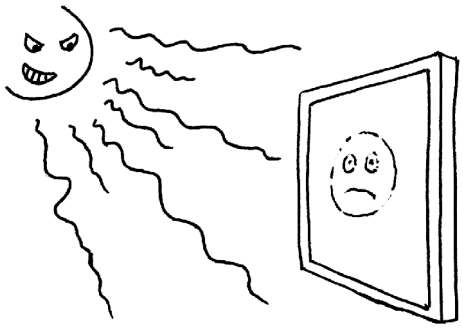
To get the most from your framed artwork and to ensure your frame is not damaged, it is important to take good care of it. Care and maintenance of your frame will keep it looking its best and will help to protect the artwork inside.

Conservation of an artwork relies on storing the frame and artwork in the correct environment. It is important for the conservation of your art to avoid environments which could be damaging.

Below are some tips for keeping your frame and artwork safe:

Do not position artworks in direct sunlight

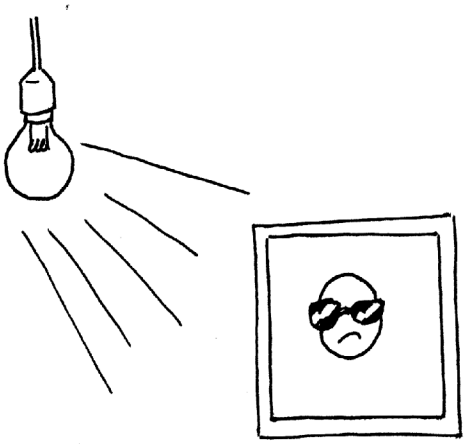
Direct sunlight will fade artworks severely even if you have UV filtered glass on your frame. Anything valuable must always be placed out of direct sunlight.



It is best to store artworks in as little amount of light as possible such as a dark room because even indirect light will cause fading. You can also close the curtains of a room when you are not using it to lower the light levels.

Do not place artificial lights too close to artworks

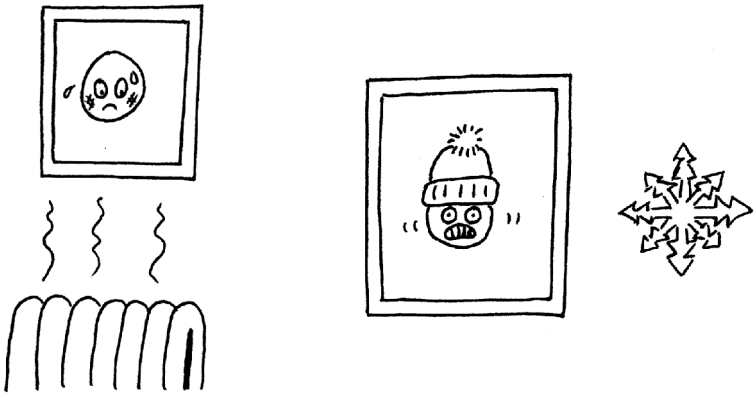
Artificial lights can generate too much heat as well as too much light.



Do not place your frame in excessive temperatures

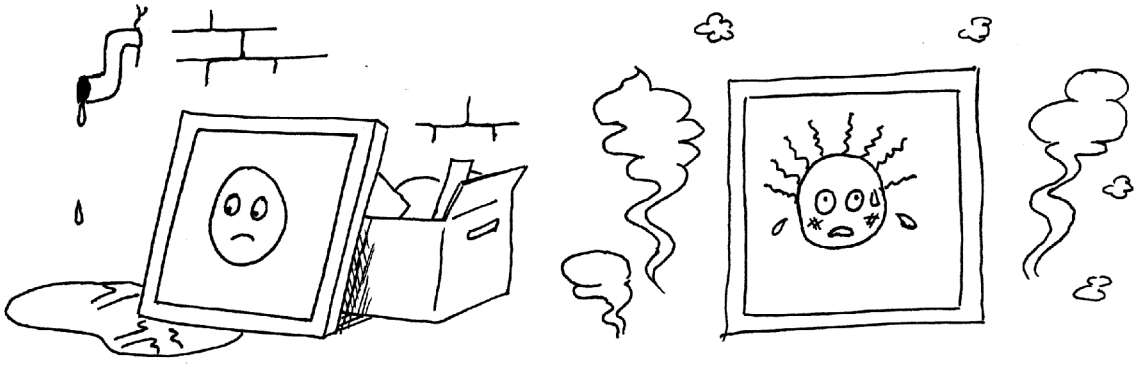
Excessive heat or excessive cold will damage both the frame and the artwork. The normal temperature range for storing artworks is 10-25ºC.

Never place artworks near a fire or above a radiator and avoid warm and humid rooms such as the kitchen or bathroom.



Do not store your frame in damp or humid conditions

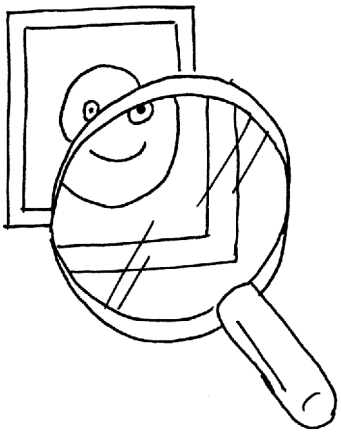
Moisture damages most artworks. Artworks that are created on porous surfaces are often prone to water damage. Paper absorbs moisture easily and will cockle or warp or even develop fungal growth. The normal humidity levels for storing artworks are between 40% and 60%.



Areas where condensation builds up, such as areas close to windows, can be particularly damp. Sheds and garages tend to be cold and damp while kitchens and bathrooms are very humid.

Have your Conservation frame checked every 5 years

Artworks framed to conservation level should be checked every five years by your framer. On the back of your frame, there will be a date when the artwork was first framed and further dates indicating the last time it was checked.

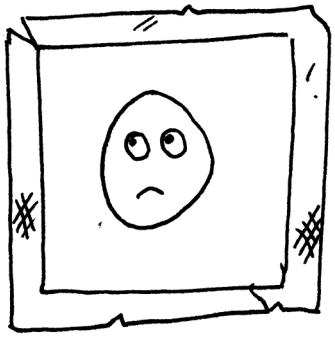


Check your frame every year

Check your frame every year for signs or mould, damage or insect infestation. If the tape on the back has come unstuck, return it to your framer to be replaced.

Avoid excessive handling of your frame

The finish on your frame can become damaged if handled too roughly or too frequently. This is especially the case for gilded surfaces which have only the slightest coating of gold which can be easily rubbed away. Do not wipe gilded surfaces with damp cloths. Try to wear cotton gloves when handling frames and be careful of jewellery and sharp objects that can scratch surfaces.



Try not to touch anti reflective glass

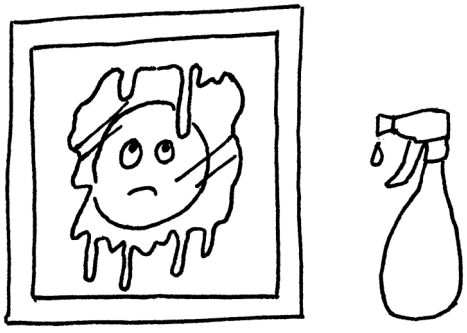
Anti reflective glass picks up fingerprints easily and it is tricky to clean. It is better to avoid touching it and not have to clean it than have to clean it and risk smears. You can dust the surface safely with a lint free cloth and handle the frame with pure cotton gloves.

If you do need to clean the glass, make sure the glass cleaner you are using is suitable for the type of glass on your frame. (see below and see our article **Glass Cleaning Tips** for more information).

Cleaning glass

Do not spray glass cleaner directly onto the glass as the liquid can run down the surface and seep inside your frame and onto the artwork. Instead spray onto your cloth then clean the glass in circular motions. Make sure your cloth is lint free. Pure cotton is fine.

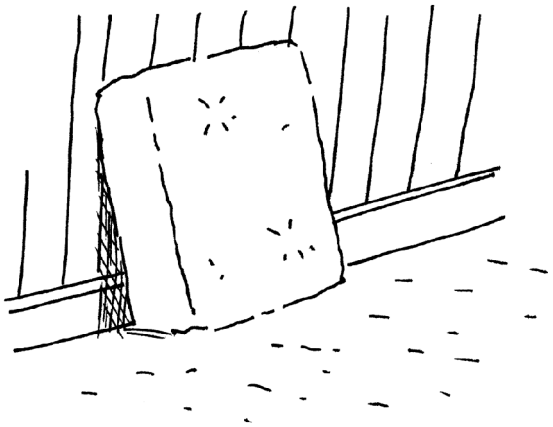
If you have UV filtered glass or anti reflective glass on your frame, make sure the glass cleaner is suitable for the type of glass you have. Most art glass suppliers recommend household glass cleaner without ammonia and low content of tenside surfactants. It is best to check for advice on the website of the brand of glass you have on your frame because some cleaners will damage the special coatings on the glass.



Keep your frame properly wrapped when off the wall

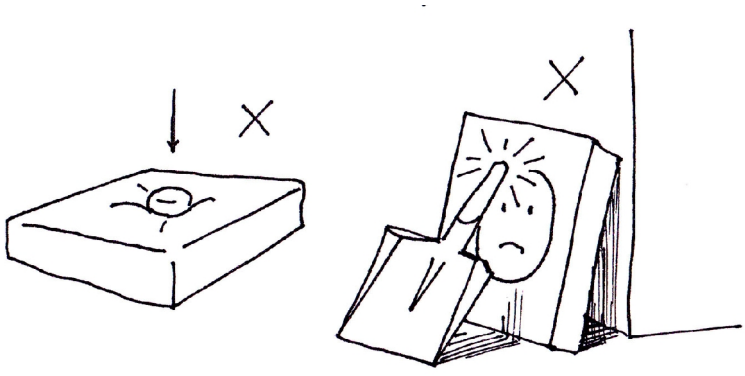
If you remove your frame from the wall, wrap it in protective packaging to avoid accidental knocks and scratches. Keep it stored in a temperature range between 10º-25ºC and humidity levels between 40% and 60%.

Store framed artworks face-to-face and back-to-back: the fixings on the backs of frames can scratch the front of another frame. Only lean frames of similar sizes against each other and avoid leaning objects against the surfaces of unglazed artworks.



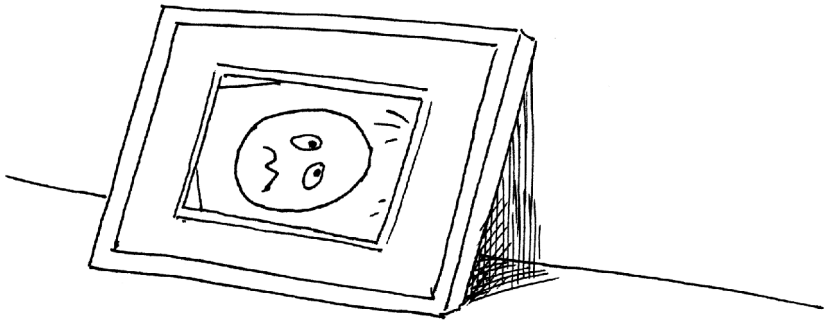
Do not lean objects against the surfaces of artworks

A canvas can be stretched out of shape and form a dint if objects are leant against it for too long, especially if the object is heavy or pointed or has sharp corners. A painting can also become scratched from objects touching its surface. Do not lean objects against paintings or any unglazed artwork.



Do not lean objects against glass

Glass is brittle and does not like to bend. It can also become scratched. Do not lean heavy or pointed items against the glass of a picture frame.

Store your artworks upright

If your artwork has been framed correctly, it is important to keep it upright when it is stored for a long period of time. Storing an artwork sideways can put pressure of the attachments, causing the artwork to twist and buckle and the attachments to break or weaken.