

Wet Stretching and Mounting No Backing Paper (3-2-2024) Cliff Brown

To be preserved wrinkle-free, your artwork must now be stretched, before it can be framed and displayed. If you are new to stretching and mounting it is best to try it first at a workshop or under the supervision of an experienced sumi-e painter. Practice first on a painting that is not your masterpiece.

I have simplified my stretching method to eliminate the backing paper.

Plan Your Stretching Day:

You should plan to do your stretching on some day when you are home all day. The steps are not difficult, but can be several hours apart. Low humidity can accelerate the drying of your stretched art.

Supplies:

- (1) Mounting surface at least two inches larger than your painting in both length and width. My recommended surface is an acrylic sheet. Acrylic sheets can be purchased at Home Depot or Lowes. Thin acrylic sheets work fine (such as 1/8 inch).
- (2) Wheat glue, I use all purpose white flour, some people like to

spend their money and buy Yasutomo Nori glue.

- (3) Alum, you will find alum in a large grocery store's spice rack.
- (4) Hake brush (two inches wide).
- (5) Roll of paper towels.
- (6) Small spray water bottle.
- (7) Aerosol hair spray or Krylon aerosol fixative.
- (8) Measuring cup (two cup size).
- (9) Immersion blender.
- (10) Hand held hard rubber roller (brayer) three inches wide.
- (11) Blue painter's tape, 1.5 inch or 2.0 inch width.

Procedure:

- (1) If your painting has colorful areas, lightly spray (OUTDOORS) with hair spray or Krylon fixative on the colorful areas (this prevents the color from bleeding). A light spray is three to four seconds. Intense red paint has bleeding problems; spray the red areas several times and let dry between spraying.
- (2) To make the wheat glue mix in the measuring cup: two tablespoons of all purpose white flour, one-half teaspoon of alum and one cup of boiling water. I use an immersion blender to make foamy glue without lumps. Wash the immersion blender before the glue starts to

dry. This recipe should be enough for stretching six paintings.

- (3) Place your painting face down on a clean mounting surface.
- (4) Gently misty your painting with clean water.
- (5) Saturate the hake brush in the glue solution. **START APPLYING THE GLUE FROM THE CENTER OUT**, little by little working the wrinkles and bubbles out to the edges. This process should take several minutes, the paper needs this time to relax. Your art should be fully saturated with glue.
- (6) Use the brayer (roller) working from the center out to eliminate wrinkles and bubbles. This should work excess glue to the edge of the mounting board to be wiped-up with a paper towel. All strokes with the brayer should be in a straight line. The brayer can easily tear wet paper if a twisting stroke is applied. The brayer can flatten small wrinkles in your paper.
- (7) Make a second pass with the brayer to pull more glue and moisture from your artwork. The second pass will speed up the drying.
- (8) Lay the acrylic sheet flat, indoors, out of the wind and sun.
- (9) After an hour or two the corners of the artwork will dry enough so you can apply the blue

painters tape to the corners. It is important to note that the blue painters tape will not adhere to wet artwork.

- (10) After a couple of more hours the edges of your artwork should be dry enough to apply blue painters tape to these edges.
- (11) Continue to lay the acrylic sheet flat, indoors, out of the wind and sun for one to two days.
- (12) When the artwork is completely dry, gently remove the artwork from the acrylic sheet. Pull the blue painters tape off. If the artwork adheres to the acrylic sheet after the painters tape is removed, a long spatula can be used to gently lift the artwork off of the acrylic sheet.
- (13) Admire your stretched artwork.
- (14) Wash your acrylic sheet in dish water to get the glue off. Do not use a cleaner with ammonia (like Windex) on acrylic.
- (15) Bonus item for advanced students. The glue solution can be pigmented to combine a wash with stretching.

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