

Things You Should Know

Presentation and Framing Guidelines for Art Exhibitions

by Gary Freeman, Owner, Artist, Art Instructor
[Heritage Park Art Center](#)

This page will help guide you to having more success in getting your work accepted into juried art competitions. It provides common sense "things you should know" about presenting artwork for gallery exhibitions.

Please be aware that no two art show jurors are looking for exactly the same things. Art appreciation is very subjective. This article provides the most accepted practices for professional art presentation.

***"Poor presentation can make great art look terrible.
Good presentation can make terrible art look great."***

-
- All artwork should be presented in a simple, professional manner. Consider yourself a professional and treat your artwork with respect. Always use the best materials.
 - Whenever possible use archival materials in making and presenting your artwork. Common materials such as paper, cardboard and tape contain acid that will cause gradual yellowing, fading and deterioration. By using neutral-PH materials, you can help preserve your art for future generations of art lovers to collect and enjoy.
 - The finished presentation – front, back, top and bottom - is part of the whole work. It should appear to be new and well crafted, not battered and shop worn or flimsy or fragile.
 - Poor presentation can make great art look terrible. Good presentation can make terrible art look great.

Paintings, photographs, prints, drawings, other similar two-dimensional pieces

- All work must be presented ready-to-hang, preferably with a wire attached to the frame between one-third and one-quarter of the way down the sides of the piece. Stainless steel braided picture wire works best for smooth hanging and deters rusting.
- Do not use sawtooth hangers. They are not strong enough to support the weight of a frame safely.
- Frame molding varies greatly in style and quality. Avoid over powering the art with brighter, bolder, or busier framing materials that distract from it visually and look amateurish, cheap, or out-of-place.

- Some grand masterpieces are well suited to hand-carved gold frames; all other pieces look best in modest real wood or metal frame moldings with clean lines and black, neutral, or natural wood finishes.
- Do not use "snap on" frames, corner-clips with glass or "easel" frames designed for tabletop use.
- Photographs and all two-dimensional work on paper should be matted with neutral tones (white, gray or black only) and covered with clean, scratch-free glass or Plexiglas.
- Matting serves to separate the art from the glazing, but it also isolates it for viewing. The artwork should stand alone without being enhanced or abated by the mat and frame.
- Mat size should be appropriate to the piece. A wide mat is better; it expands the work and makes it appear larger. Narrow borders visually reduce the artwork and look cheap. A three to four-inch mat with an extra half-inch on the bottom gives a nice visual feel to a finished piece. But, do not use extra wide mats just to make a piece fit in a standard size framee.
- Float-mounting the artwork over the mat, so that the edges are seen, is an option when an artwork has a deckle edge or is constructed with handmade paper. A spacer within the frame should be used to keep the art from touching the glazing.
- A stretched canvas requires no glazing because the canvas needs to breathe. The frame may be backed with a dust cover and/or moisture barrier, but this must be perforated to allow air to circulate.
- Large oils or acrylics on heavy-duty stretchers with a gallery wrap do not need to be framed. The canvas should be stapled on the back and the edge should be painted.

Sculpture, pottery, other three-dimensional pieces

- You should provide a base or stand for large three-dimensional work. Instructions for special installations should be attached to the piece.
- Quilts and other fabric wall hangings should have a sleeve or other place for curtain rods or similar hardware or otherwise be ready to hang.

"Enthusiasm is one of the most powerful engines of success.
When you do a thing, do it with all your might. Put your whole soul
into it. Stamp it with your own personality. Be active, be energetic, be enthusiastic and
faithful and you will accomplish your object.
Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm"

Ralph Waldo Emerson

<http://www.onlineartcenter.com/framing.html>