

Presentation Abstracts

(in order of program)

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AI P A I N T I N G S
CCM S Y M P O S I U M

revivify 2016

14th AICCM Paintings Special Interest Group Symposium

National Portrait Gallery, Canberra

26 - 28 October 2016

Lining: the hazards and some helpful hints of lining on a vacuum hot table

Full presentation

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Most of us working in the field of paintings conservation are well aware of the potential hazards of lining a painting, and for this reason many of us are reticent about undertaking such a major conservation treatment. However, the fact remains, there are some paintings that are so structurally compromised the only way to ensure their long-term survival is to line them.

We have all observed the negative results of a badly lined painting: weave interference/intensification; reduction/breakage of impasto; or inadequate adhesion between the lining support and the painting. Most of these problems are the result of poor methodology and can be alleviated or better still eliminated through intelligent preparation and the appropriate choice of materials.

There are several factors which determine a successful lining outcome, and of these, heat and pressure are the two most important. An excess of these and you have problems: not enough of these and you have problems. Obtaining just the right amount of both is the key to success, but this is extremely difficult to accurately gauge. It's been my experience that lining hot tables are very temperamental machines each with their own idiosyncrasies. An intimate knowledge of your equipment is therefore essential.

The second most important factor when lining paintings is the appropriate selection of lining materials for the job in hand. The principal materials used in the lining process are: adhesives, lining fabrics, facing tissues and in certain cases, interleaves. When lining on a hot table, Beva 371 in solution or film form is the adhesive most commonly used. The reasons for this are well recognised: it is highly reversible, stable and does not darken the paint film, a complaint which has been levelled against traditional wax-resin adhesives. When choosing the type of material to be used for the lining support the particular requirements of the painting being lined is the determining factor. For example, a painting that is painted on a heavy weight canvas requires a lining canvas of similar weight. If there is an inscription on the back of the original canvas a transparent or semi-transparent lining fabric would be desirable. Interleaves come in a variety of forms and are valuable in a multitude of ways. They are a particularly effective as a way of introducing more rigidity to the canvas support. This is especially beneficial when lining paintings with severe structural damages such as large tears and/or extensive cracking. They can also be used to reduce the occurrence of weave intensification by providing additional cushioning between the paint film and the hard table surface.

Lining a painting need not be an intimidating process. The aim of this presentation is to provide the conservator with some useful techniques to mitigate the potential risks encountered with lining. When it is successful, it can be enormously rewarding for the conservator and has the ability to not only revivify an artwork, but to amazingly transform it.

Siân Griffiths graduated in Paintings Conservation from the University of Canberra in 1998. Since 2000 she has been the senior paintings conservator at David Stein & Co. She has extensive knowledge of all aspects of paintings conservation but is a specialist in complex structural repairs.