Mounting flexible supports to panel, an archival practice

by Andrea Pramuk

5a

Many artists today choose to mount their flexible canvas or paper to rigid supports for a number of reasons. One is to preserve the painting qualities of canvas or paper while gaining the advantages of painting on a panel. The other is that flexible supports are more susceptible to changes in temperature and humidity that can contribute to deterioration of the paint film over time. You can counteract the instability of fabrics and paper and make your paintings more archival by mounting flexible supports on an Ampersand™ panel.

There are many ways to mount a flexible support to a panel. I chose the archival practice that was easiest to do and worked the best. The materials suggested can be mixed and matched in order to suit your purposes. For example, you may substitute paper for the canvas or the Lineco adhesive for the Golden® soft gel medium. After a few attempts, you will develop your own personal preferences.

Ampersand Claybord™ and Gessobord™ are the easiest, least labor-intensive choices in archival substrates for mounting. Because both panels are sealed with the Archiva-Seal™ barrier and then primed with acid-free grounds, it is only necessary to apply adhesive since no sealing is required. Hardbord™ and other types of un-primed woods like plywood, on the other hand, do require sealing—see the extra step. Another time saver is to choose a pre-primed canvas or linen so you don't have to gesso or prime after mounting the fabric to the panel.

1. Begin by trimming the fabric to size. Allow for a 2˝ overlap around the panel (not shown). Note: if you plan to wrap the canvas around the panel, you will need to seal the edges and back of the panel with GAC100 (see Extra Step.) Otherwise, go straight to step 2.

2. To maximize adhesion, thin the Golden soft gel medium with a little water and apply it over the back of the panel (Lineco, not necessary). Be sure to coat the sides of the panel so that the fabric adheres properly all the way to the edge. I usually apply extra gel medium or glue at the four corners because they are the most vulnerable to

lifting. Keep applying medium or glue until you have a fairly thick evenly wet coat. Quickly move to the next step.

3. With the fabric ground side face down, position the panel wet glue-side down in the center and press down firmly. Clean any extra glue off the back with a damp towel to prevent your panel from sticking underneath while drying (3a). Flip over the canvas together with the panel and go over the surface from the center out using a rubber brayer or squeegee to remove any wrinkles, lumps or air pockets (3b).


3a

3b

4. Cover the face of the fabric with either wax paper or butcher paper (something that will not stick to the glue) and place a heavy larger board over the top. I used a larger shrink-wrapped panel. Weight the board down with jugs of water or something heavy and allow it to dry overnight (not shown). If you're doing multiple panels at once, place wax paper or butcher paper in between the panels. Use the larger board with weights at the very top of the stack.

5. The next day, take out your panels and place them one at a time face down on a clean surface for cutting.
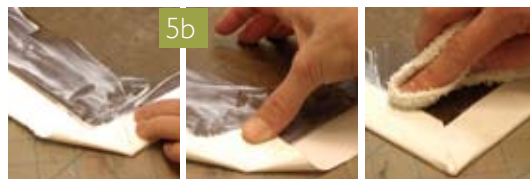
5b

Using a fresh X-acto™ knife, cut flush around the edges for a perfect and clean look (5a). If you would rather wrap your corners (1/8˝ panels only), apply gel medium or glue to the back where the fabric will overlap and quickly pull the corners in to fold (5b). Brayer or squeegee over the folds to smooth. Clean up excess glue with a wet towel. No weight is necessary in this step, but do allow the panel to dry thoroughly. The panels will be safe to paint on or gesso in 1-3 days.

Extra Step: Sealing the Hardbord™

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Extra Step: When using Hardbord™ or any other un-primed wood panels as your substrate, follow the same instructions, but add this important step first. It is important to correctly seal all un-primed wood substrates to prevent support-induced discoloration that can cause your paint film to yellow over time.

Apply Golden GAC100 directly to the Hardbord with the 2˝ paint brush or trowel (6). Allow the GAC100 to dry completely and follow with an additional coat. Do not sand between layers. Before applying the adhesive in Step 2, allow the GAC100 to dry for 1-3 days so that the sealer can coalesce into a uniform film for maximum protection. ■

Materials List

- Claybord™, Hardbord™ or Gessobord™, 1/8˝ flat, 3/4˝ cradled or 2˝ deep cradle
- Primed or un-primed canvas or linen
- 2˝ paint brush or trowel
- Golden® Soft Gel Gloss Medium or Lineco Neutral pH Adhesive
- Large Heavy Board
- X-Acto™ Knife
- Damp cloth or paper towels
- Rubber brayer or plastic squeegee
- Wax or butcher paper
- Water jugs or heavy weights