

Develop a Critical Eye: 14 Questions For Evaluating Your Work

The Pastel Journal

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Storage Solutions

Take good care of your finished, unframed works of art with the help of these tips for protecting, storing and transporting pastel paintings.

When a group of pastelists come together, there will always be talk of pastel brands, paper and other supplies used in making a painting. But soon to follow that conversation will be a lot of talk about what artists use to store, transport and ship paintings before they're sold. The artist's work isn't over after the final pastel stroke; a finished pastel painting must be protected, even while in storage or on its way to the photographer,

framer or client. I asked three pastelists—Anne McClure of Ahwahnee, Calif., Julie Friedman of Morristown, N.J., and Dawn Secord of Chino Hills, Calif.—to share what they do with their paintings *after* they've put down the pastel stick.

Put in Safekeeping

Whether fixed or not, a finished painting must be securely stored away. To avoid damage, many artists store

finished pastels covered in a flat file drawer. This makes efficient use of studio space since the paintings may be stacked on top of one another, and the multiple drawers in the file help to keep things organized. Artists have come up with a number of different ways, however, to prepare a painting for filing: Friedman, for instance, uses Artist's Tape to attach a painting to a piece of $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch, acid-free Fome-Cor, cut slightly larger than the painting.



Gathering (9x12) by Anne McClure

She then covers the painting with glassine or clear Mylar, before filing.

"I tack all four corners down with small pieces of Artist's Tape, pulling each corner so the painting is completely flat and doesn't buckle in the middle," Friedman says. "I tape right up to the image, which creates a white 'mat' around the painting so I can see it clearly and accurately assess it. I cut the Mylar about an inch bigger than the painting all the way around so I have room for tape. I then write the title and the size on the Mylar so I can reuse the board for another painting once I sell or frame the painting."

McClure routinely paints with her paper fastened to foam board, but most of the time she removes the board before storing the painting. "My flat file is so loaded," McClure says, chuckling, "this allows room for more work." Instead, to store a finished painting, she

places it face-down on either Strathmore tracing paper or Riverside White Sulphite drawing paper, and folds the paper around the back, leaving an inch or so of overlap that she can it tape in place with white Artist's Tape. "Often I'll also put a piece of the same tape on the bottom front to secure it."

To protect her paintings, Secord constructs a rigid folder to hold the painting, and then places the folder inside a plastic sleeve. "I tape the painting to Fome-Cor and fasten a piece of glassine in place with

white Artist's Tape. The bottom of the folder is made from foam board and the top is acid-free backer board," Secord says. She doesn't close the taped edge of the plastic bag unless



Julie Friedman stores paintings covered with Mylar or glassine in the drawers of a flat file. She writes the title and size of the painting on the Mylar, so the foam board can be reused.



Forgotten Flowers (25x24) by Julie Friedman

the painting is being shipped. In storage, she leaves the bag unsealed and places a label on top so she knows what's inside. Secord orders all her foam board and plastic bags online from Impact Images (www.clearbags.com) in several standard sizes. "They cut the foam board and the backer board to my size requirements. It's a bit pricier than cutting it myself," she says, "but the clean-cut sizes look professional. I add the cost into the shipping and packaging fees. My clients often comment on it. The first impression of my painting is this packaging. Everything is white, so it looks tidy and professional. It gives a very nice, clean presentation."

Taking Cover

Tracing paper, drawing paper and Mylar can all be used to cover a pastel painting before storing, but glassine—which can be easily wiped clean and has little or no static cling—is

the material of choice. "I use glassine on finished paintings," explains Secord. "There have been times when I've used tracing paper to save money, but it collects more pastel dust from the surface of the painting than the glassine. Neither one has damaged any of my paintings in the least. I order the glassine rolls online, and also recycle the glassine sheets that separate my giclée prints."

Friedman says her first choice would be to avoid putting anything on top of a painting, to minimize contact with some heavy areas of pastel. "When I have the luxury of space in the studio," she says, "and I know that the painting is going to be framed shortly, I don't cover it." Instead she tacks it to a large Homasote wall in her studio.

Show Time

While a finished painting can be

stored safely away in the studio, sooner or later an artist needs to transport a work for photography, framing or to show to a customer or gallery director. "I have a 14x17-inch Prat portfolio in which I keep my latest or favorite works displayed in traditional plastic sleeves," says Secord. "Over time the sleeves rub together, become scratched and need to be replaced. When I travel, I put paper towels between the sleeves to minimize scratching, and then remove them before presenting my portfolio."

Instead of displaying her work in portfolio sleeves, Friedman stacks her paintings, which are taped to Fome-Cor and securely covered with glassine. "To view the work, I leave the top of the glassine taped and lift it up to show the painting—that way it goes down in exactly the same place and the color isn't compromised," Friedman says. "I have two sizes of the black cardboard portfolios that tie closed. If I want to present a nice amount of work and it's all taped to boards, I use a large vinyl portfolio. I can fit more work in that and it makes for a nice presentation."

McClure, on the other hand, is more casual. "I have an attaché case in which I put photos of work, which I try to keep current. Unfortunately the case gets pretty full. Until I remove some of the earlier photos, I keep a pile of photos in the front pocket."

Tracking System

It's one thing to store a painting safely, and another to remember what you've stored. As paintings go into the flat files, Friedman writes down the image title and the size of the painting for her records. "This way I always know what's in the drawers," she says. "I also keep a running list of frames and their sizes and descriptions, so I always know what's in the studio."



Friedman tacks the corners of the painting to accurately position it on the Fome-Cor before taping all the way around with Artist's Tape, creating a sharp, clean edge.