

Publication



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How to Display Your Work



How to Display Your Work

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Are you unsure how to display your amazing piece of art? Are you overwhelmed by the number of options available to you and can't tell which one would look best?

Knowing how to display and install your projects will always result in a better art experience. Before going ahead with installation, take time to figure out your options. Remember, you don't have to settle for using push pins and masking tape (unless it is the look you're going for).

Ways to Display Your Work

Start thinking about why you're making your work. How will it be seen or presented? You can get it framed, build shelves, make plinths, use suspensions, or try something completely new. How it's presented will dictate how one reads the work. When the presentation is nice, you've done half the work for your audience. Here are some display options, tips and tricks.

1. Mounting on a Board

If you are not interested in framing your work, you can mount your work directly on a backing board such as foam core, a wood panel or metal. Panels come in all types of shapes, such as circles, triangles, ovals, hexagons, etc.

At Emily Carr, a variety of wood panels and rigid supports can be fabricated easily if you have access to Technical Shop resources through your program. You can also find options to purchase shaped panels at local vendors.

In certain instances, foregoing framing may cause the work to decay at a faster rate.

2. Framing

Framing takes time! Make sure to include framing in both your production timeline and budget. It's useful to do some of your own framing research beforehand (YouTube is your friend). You should prepare a detailed plan including the materials you'll need, your chosen size, the location of your installment, etc. Framing is also a great option for protecting and elevating your work when you are presenting, original prints, watercolours, drawings, pastels, etc.

Frames can be repurposed in different ways. You can place pieces of paper on wooden frames or install canvas panel boards to the back of the panels to create your own frame.

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- **Think about the profile of the frame and your work.** How far do you want it to sit from the wall? You can adjust the profile with panels of various profiles, woods, and widths.
- **Make sure your frame fits the style your work.** The frame doesn't take away from the work itself—you want to see the work for what it is. The more extravagant the frame, the more expensive it becomes. Consider where the material of the frame is from. What is it made of? Figure out what colour frame you want (the most common is a neutral palette).
- **Do you want to use a frontloading or backloading frame?** Most conventional frames will be backloading. Frontloading “snap” frames are sometimes used for posters and other non-sensitive material.
- **Consider the weight of the frame and its materials.** Small frames are often lighter; as the frames get bigger they also get heavier. Certain styles of frames are also more archival than others. Plus, You might need to scale down on size or make multiples that can be connected together if your frame gets too heavy. Don't forget that carrying large panels on public transportation can be difficult.
- **Consider the frame's afterlife.** Can your frame be repurposed after you're finished with it? Can it be repainted, cut down into size, or combined with another piece? Always choose the most sustainable option if possible!

When you decide on framing your work, consider how professional it looks, your budget, as well as your long term expectations of the work.

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Matting

Mats allow you to hold onto the artwork without actually touching (and potentially damaging) it. You can be as creative as you'd like when it comes to matting: you can introduce different colours with a double mat, do custom mat cuts, float your work, the options are endless. Prior to diving in, consider the following:

- **Consider the mat board window's size and thickness** and think about how it will affect your work.
- **Do a cost analysis.** Nothing will look more refined than a mat from a place that specializes in framing, but these specialists come with a cost. If your work is a standard size, you can find standard size mats and frames at places such as Michael's or Opus.
- **Consider your backing board options.** Adding a foam core or coroplast backing board can help elevate the work and add dimension. You can hinge your mat window to the backing board with adhesive tape.
- **Consider using archival materials.** If you're planning on keeping your work on the mat for longer than a couple of months, you should look into using archival materials as much as possible. Non-archival mat boards may transfer acid into your work, causing it to change colour and yellow.

You should also ensure that the adhesives you use to mount your work are also archival grade. You can use archival or acid-free linen tape. If you're worried about tape damaging your work, you can look into mounting strips or photo corners. Whatever the strategy you use, make sure it needs to work and stay adhered otherwise, your work may fall off the mat or backing due to the environment it's in. You never want the lasting impression of your work to be unprofessional.

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Glazing

Glazing is the final step in framing. It ensures your work is safe from dirty hands!

The most common forms of glazing are plexi-glass and glass. Glass can be more advantageous for some works as it doesn't scratch as easily as plexiglass. That said, the bigger the piece, the more dangerous it would be to handle glass.

If you are worried about minor scratches in your plexi, you can easily fix it with Novus Scratch Remover (blue), which is available to buy from most home hardware stores and auto stores. You can find pre-cuts at most framing stores.

- **On a budget? Get creative.** If you're not using museum-grade plexi, you might want to consider using a thick covering, like velvet. Sunlight can also cause unwanted reflections that make the work difficult to view. Make sure you consider non-glare glazing.
- **Consider where you are presenting your work.** Does it get direct sunlight? If you get museum-grade glazing, you will protect your work from UV damage (and not surprisingly, this comes at a price).

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3. Plinths and Shelves

Shelves can be a great alternative to displaying items on a wall without having to attach them to anything, whereas plinths give an instant elevation to your work—these options look nicer than just simply putting something on an institutional campus table.

- **If making a custom shelf, ask yourself** how big (or small) do you want your shelf to be? Do you want it to be shallow? Wide?
- **Consider floating shelves.** You can buy floating shelves from furniture stores such as Ikea if you don't have the time and resources to make your own custom shelf. To make your work look customized, you can shape your shelf triangular or add extra finishes and touches such as extra pieces of plywood on corners or ends.
- **Consider 3-sided shelves.** These shelves will be useful if you require an angled platform (to display books for example).
- **Think about hanging pieces from shelves.** You can embed magnets between the shelf and a panel to hang fabric, paper, or silk canvas from a shelf.
- **If using a plinth, consider its dimensions.** The height and width of your plinth can help you achieve the effect you want.
- **Consider encasing with a plexiglass top** if you are worried about your work being damaged.

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- Consider securing your plinth especially if your work is heavy. Make sure you have a chat with the exhibition liaison and ask about their thoughts. The sealing would depend on the floor type, but some options include velcro straps, silicone, or screws.

At Emily Carr, you can learn how to build your own plinth or simply borrow one from the school.

Remember, in pursuing any of these options, give yourself plenty of time to plan out your design, include this in your budget, and be realistic in what you want to accomplish.

On a final note, think of the future of what you are building. Not only do you need a plan on how to accomplish in building your exhibition furniture, but you should have a plan for what you'll be doing with it afterwards. Throwing it out shouldn't be an option.

4. Lightboxes

Lightboxes require time and resources to make but can be a great way to display your work. With lightboxes, you need to consider not only the framing but also the electronics.

If you're looking to build your own lightbox, you'll need a wide array of materials such as wood, plexiglass, frosted plexi, LED lights, etc.

Alternatively, you can buy already made lightboxes online from medical stores or websites such as Craigslist, Kijiji, or Amazon.

If you're not using an easy plug-in LED light strip, be careful about the safety of the lamps you are choosing. Lightboxes lamps can cause safety issues through the heat it generates while running. If you are not careful, your lightbox can burn the wall that it's hanging on and start a fire. It's best to speak to a Technician regarding your Lightbox, especially if you're building it from scratch.

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5. Projectors

When installing projectors or media equipment, you can rig your projectors, monitors, lights using a rosette arm, the most common being the Noga Holding System. These systems can hold moderate weights and can fasten objects in a precise position, giving you more control. Otherwise, you can build a shelf strong enough to carry its weight and attach it to the wall and hide it in an appropriate sized plinth or box. If the projector is inside a box, there needs to be enough airflow to keep the projector from overheating. To remedy this you might need to put multiple or large enough holes in it. Depending on the type or positioning of the projector, you might need to suspend the projector on a wooden platform attached to the ceiling, which visually looks like a swing. Whatever the option, getting a second opinion or professional assistance will ease any uncertainty in this process.

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Alongside making sure whatever you're hanging stays up, determine how you will be putting the work up and taking it down—make this process easy for yourself and do a test run before-hand!

1. Hanging

Figure out what type of wall you're installing on before you hang anything large or heavy. Some walls have 2 layers of drywall, while others are lined with plywood. Plywood linings are not as durable as drywall and may require use of anchors. Don't forget to determine if there's studs or metal in or behind the wall that could cause problems.

Utilize the 3 point hanging system—this helps you hang something heavy. French cleats or proper cleats are best for mounting extremely heavy pieces.

- **Hang your work at the eyesight level.** The rule of thumb when hanging your artwork is that the middle of your work should hit the 56" mark.
- **Consider using a hook.** Does your work have multiple components? Hooks are a great way to hang pieces such as headphones or cords to the wall.

Installing Your Work

2. Suspending

Be cautious when you're hanging your piece from the ceiling—do your best to try and prevent any unnecessary damage. Similar to a wall, you can knock on the ceiling or use a stud finder to find studs. You can then use pins to map out your install.

- Consider the types of hooks you may need. Your options include S hooks, U hooks, ceiling hooks, etc.
- You can use aircraft cables or fishing lines to suspend from one end to another.
- For heavy mounts, you can look to use plates and toggle bolts.
- For suspending works, railing systems are also quite common.

When installing your work, think on safety. Not only safety for the work but most importantly, safety for those appreciating your work. Use properly rated anchors, fasteners, and aircraft cable to the weight of your work when suspending your work.

3. Tapes and Pins

There are various ways you can attach your work to a wall:

- Gaffer tape—for holding down your extension cables.
- Command double-sided tape
- Painter's tape (for temporary uses)
- Archival linen tape (can be bought at most fabric stores)
- Magnets (which can also be painted to match the wall/work)
- Screws
- Tacks/Pins
- Tiny nails
- Key hole (note: you must be extremely precise)

Fancier pins or clips can be bought from stationery or arts and crafts stores (such as Paper-Ya).

Resources

Framing Best Practices from Canadian Conservation Institute

[For Works of Art on Paper](#)

[For Paintings](#)

Youtube Videos

[HoneyBadger WoodWorks: Plinth Building](#)

[Gosforth Handyman: Plinth Building](#)

[Savvas Papasavva: Plinth Building](#)

[Savvas Papasavva: Plinth Painting](#)

[Opus Art Supplies: Intro to the Custom DIY
Framing Service](#)

Appendix

This document is based on the Skill Up Session delivered by **Yang Hong**, Studio Technician, Interdisciplinary at Emily Carr University of Art and Design in Spring 2020. Skill Up Series are co-hosted and co-produced by Career Development + Work Integrated Learning Office and the Shumka Centre for Creative Entrepreneurship at Emily Carr University of Art + Design. These resources are produced with the generous support of the Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills & Training.

Yang Hong is an Interdisciplinary Studio Technician at Emily Carr University. He supports the Painting, Drawing, and Illustration Departments. Yang assists students in the Stretchers and Surfaces Woodshop, as well as maintains the Illustration, Drawing, Painting, and MFA Studios. Yang is an active member of the Degree Show Committee and is the first point of contact for immediate Graduate Studies project inquiries, installations, and liaisons with other Technical Areas. Yang is a resident of Vancouver and has an active studio practice.

The Career Development + Work Integrated Learning Office connects students and alumni with local, national and international employers in the creative industries and beyond. We offer career advising, clinics and strategy sessions, drop-in and individual advising, access to work integrated learning opportunities such as co-ops and internships, co-curricular programming, and industry networking events, as well as the Artswork career portal.

The Shumka Centre for Creative Entrepreneurship launched in 2018 to create programs and partnerships that help artists and designers realize their ideas in the world. The Centre is a place where creative practitioners can find the community, knowledge, and resources they need to launch, fund, and organize projects across the spectrum of contemporary art and design activities- products, projects, curatorial initiatives, platforms, companies, organizations, and more. We believe that tactical support specifically designed for the needs of artists and designers is the first step in achieving a systemic change to empower creative people. The Centre is operated by Living Labs.



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