Article: Mounting Large Format Photographs at the National Gallery of Victoria, Australia
Author(s): Pip Morrison
Topics in Photographic Preservation, Volume 12.
Pages: 141-142
Compiler: Brenda Bernier

Topics in Photographic Preservation is published biannually by the Photographic Materials Group (PMG) of the American Institute for Conservation of Historic & Artistic Works (AIC). A membership benefit of the Photographic Materials Group, *Topics in Photographic Preservation* is primarily comprised of papers presented at PMG meetings and is intended to inform and educate conservation-related disciplines.

MOUNTING LARGE FORMAT PHOTOGRAPHS AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA

Pip Morrison

In preparation for an exhibition of over 50 large format photographs, and in order to address the backlog of unframed oversized photographs in the National Gallery of Victoria collection, a system was devised to permanently mount and frame works in a manner that could be achieved effectively, efficiently, and with little assistance. In collaboration with the Senior Textiles Conservator, Bronwyn Cosgrove, and the Conservation Technician, Gervais Battour, a variety of adhesives and hinging materials were tested for their effectiveness on various contemporary photographic supports. The materials deemed the most successful and their method of use are outlined briefly below.

1. A film of 2:1 Lascaux 360HV:498HV is made by rolling the adhesive mixture on to a sheet of tensioned polyethylene with a glass rod. This is air dried, and then one of the edges is cut to provide a straight edge. It was found that this adhesive mixture provides the desired amount of adhesion and flexibility, but if brushed on to the hinge, it seeps through and both sides of the hinge are tacky.

2. 34 gram Hollytex strips are cut to the desired width. Hollytex, a non-woven polyester, was chosen as it can be pulled extremely taut without breaking or warping, and does not have as fibrous a surface as Reemay.

3. 1cm strips of the Lascaux film are heat set on to the Hollytex hinge using a heated spatula at 80°C (176°F). Large numbers of adhesive edged hinges are made in batches, and stored for future use. The polyethylene acts as the adhesive carrier.

4. The Hollytex hinges are cut into strips of approximately 20 cm to reduce the risk of the hinges warping and creating tension at the edge of the photograph. The polyethylene is peeled off, and the hinges are heat set along the edges of the verso of the photograph through silicon release, using the heated spatula at 80°C. Lower temperatures can be used, but it was found that risk of burnishing the emulsion surface is reduced at 80°C as less pressure is required to activate the adhesive.

5. Dibond® is used as the secondary support, and can be cut in-house to the required dimensions. It has a polyethylene core, with aluminum on either side, and remains rigid at large sizes. It has passed the PAT performed at the National Archives of Australia.

6. With the photograph face down, the Dibond® is put into position and weighted. The hinges are wrapped around to the verso of the Dibond®, pulled taut, and attached using pressure sensitive Velcro. The Velcro enables re-tensioning of the photograph at a later date if any buckling has occurred.

7. The mounted work is then housed permanently in a box frame of standardized profile, with a spacer width dependent on the size of the photograph, UV protectant acrylic glazing, and a Fome-Cor backing board.

With ready made hinges, it takes one person between one to two hours to mount one large photograph. A second person is only needed to assist with lifting the Dibond into place if large, and for the framing. The hinges can be reversed by peeling them back at an acute angle, and any adhesive residue removed with a crepe eraser. Photographs of up to over two meters in length have been mounted and framed successfully using this technique for the last year. In this year, the photographs have been transported to an off-site exhibition space, been on display for five months, and then returned to storage. The photographs mounted this method appear not to have buckled, indicating the system is holding in various environments. They will continue to be monitored.

PIP MORRISON
Conservator of Photographs, National Gallery of Victoria, Australia

Papers presented in *Topics in Photographic Preservation, Volume Twelve* have not undergone a formal process of peer review.