



Cleaning Tips for Frames

Your intentions may be the best, but if you're uniformed it can lead to the damage of a cherished piece.

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Have you ever tried to clean a frame but only succeeded in making it look worse? Perhaps you've had a frame that needed cleaning, but had no idea how to approach the task. To do a good job and avoid damaging your frame, there are several things to consider.

In choosing the proper cleaning agent and process, it is essential that you take into account the surface composition of the frame. For example, most cleaning products including basic water and do not react well with a "cold" painted or soft chalk surface. Some products often used to clean such a surface may actually result in considerable damage to the frame. One preferred way to clean a chalk-based surface is to simply run a soft brush over the soiled portions of the item for a dry, gentle scrub.

Many problems can be avoided by first "testing" the cleaning agent and process that you intend to use. This is accomplished by either using the product or process on a less valuable frame with the same type of surface, or by applying the product and/or process to only a small area of the frame to be cleaned. By doing so, you will quickly become aware of potential difficulties with the chosen method of cleaning.

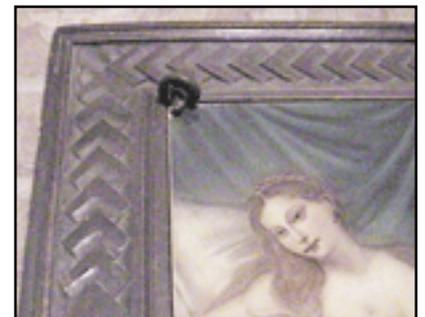
With respect to testing, a few words of caution are necessary. In many instances, the length of exposure to a particular product may be critical. Therefore, your testing should take into account the length of time that your soiled frame will be exposed to the cleaning agent. In addition, two frames with the same surface composition may react differently to a cleaning agent if they have been exposed to different environmental conditions.

Once you have discovered a product and process that works, you are ready to begin cleaning the soiled areas. If possible, do not expose the entire surface of the frame to the cleaning agent. It is preferable to start with a small area first. This can be done by placing the frame on an angle in a shallow pan, with the cleaning product covering only a small portion of the frame's surface.

Working time indicated for the cleaning agent is one factor to monitor. Another is the strength of the cleaning product. Some agents are so potent that the vapors they release can affect the entire surface of the frame, not



Intricate detail/gold frame with fabric within inner/outer frames and gold title/signature plate. Gentle cleaning processing required to avoid damage to fabric, gold, raised design and mounted plate.



18th circa old wood frame with iron screws holding porcelain tile painting of lady. Nice old look of aging/patina could be easily ruined if cleaned wrong.

just the section that's submerged in the agent.

If at all possible, find out as much as you can about the chemical makeup of the cleaning agent you're using. Many cleaning products are composed of chemicals which can be harmful to your skin or emit toxic vapors. Moreover, certain chemicals can be dangerous when mixed together.

The cleaning product you use may come in either liquid or gel form. Some cleaning products are based on vapor locks, while others react to temperature (even some boiling processes). There are certain things you should keep in mind. Any important labels should be carefully removed and stored to be placed back later on. If possible, avoid submerging liquid into a porcelain frame's firing hole(s) or temporarily seal the holes prior to cleaning.

When your frame is submerged in a liquid cleaner, the entire body should be kept under the liquid and periodically rotated during the cleaning process. This is to prevent a "ring" on any areas created by the release of stains, dirt or oils that will float to the surface line. A liquid cleaner should loosen parts of the item that were previously glued together. Therefore, it would be prudent to place a strainer, towel or other device under your frame to capture any small pieces that may fall away from it.

A cleaning agent in gel form offers the advantage of being able to clean a selected area without the necessity of exposing the entire surface to the cleaner. Regardless of the type of cleaning agent used, it is important to see that all traces of the agent have been removed and/or rinsed off upon completion of the cleaning process.

Dry cleaning an object does not require a special brush or tool. An old toothbrush that has been thoroughly cleaned can do the job. There are also various sizes of "bottle" brushes that are helpful. There are soft clay type lifting compounds that can be pushed in to cut detailed design and pulled off to extract dirt, etc. A light sanding with a mild abrasive sponge is sometimes useful to release some areas of build-up.

Caution should be taken not to sand a surface if the sanding will scratch the surface or remove any of the original color and design. Soaks with a liquid cleaner should be monitored regularly and not forgotten for an extended period.

There are some excellent agents for gentle removal of wax build-up. Stains can be removed with some professional formulas that contain peroxide or bleach. The best way to apply one of these products is to lay plain, non-printed towels or thick cotton over the stained surface. Next, place the frame in a sturdy trash bag and saturate with the lifting formula. Remember that more porous or older frames will sometimes drop stains through the piece and then settle in lower areas of the same piece on the



Small porcelain photo frame has sentimental value and needs special care cleaning to avoid loss of gold. Keep cleaning products out of firing hold.

reverse side.

You must rotate and rinse constantly to prevent a build-up of released stain. Wear gloves because these chemicals may burn your skin. If burned, an application of lemon juice or vinegar may counteract the process (no guarantees - read warning label). After a few minutes, check the stains. If the towels or cotton appear dirty, replace them with fresh ones.

When the stains are gone, remove the frame and rinse. Then, soak the frame in fresh water for a while and allow to dry completely before further processing. Lighter fluid can be used to lift off tape that can possibly pull off some of the frame's surface (especially true with golds, silvers, etc.). To avoid a strong hold from the sticky part of the tape, an application of lighter fluid to the tape can sometimes soften the release.

Acetone can be used to "soak" some frames by placing the frame in a plastic bag with a small amount of acetone to create a vapor lock which can also clean gently. This product can be expensive due to the fact that it evaporates quickly. There are also some excellent polishing creams that clean when applied and rubbed off.

Examples of surface types most susceptible to damage during cleaning include hand painted areas, areas with metallic paints (such as silver and gold), applied beading or raised design work, cold painted areas, metal cased pieces, chalk based surfaces and other soft porous body types.

If your frame has considerable monetary or sentimental value, you would be well advised to contact a professional restoration specialist to assist you in the cleaning of the frame. Too often, your best intentions, if uninformed, can lead to the damage of a cherished piece. Contact a restoration web site to request advice on the cleaning of your specific frame type before taking action.

There are many cleaning products out there. A key to remember is how they will react to the surface type you need to work on. It is best that the product not remove the original surface, soak and/or be absorbed into the frame, or leave a wax build-up or other coating on the outer surface. The less cleaning you need to do -- the better.

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