

Six tips to prevent mold!

To prevent mold on paper art:

- Don't hang pictures on outside walls or in finished basements.
- Don't store prints in dark, damp, closed areas – basements, attics and vacation homes.
- Keep relative humidity below 70 percent – 50 percent is ideal.
- Never have artwork framed without using a mat or spacer.
- Good housekeeping is a must! Dust contains airborne mold spores.
- Use bumpers on the back of all frames to encourage air circulation behind the frame.

What is mold?

Molds are fungi whose spores are always present in the air and apparently are able to remain dormant for long periods of time. When they encounter an environment receptive to their particular needs they attach themselves to a surface and germinate.

Molds will grow on paper if the temperature is over 70 degrees Fahrenheit and if the relative humidity is above 70 percent, where there is a lack of air circulation and when there is organic material to feed on.

The inside of a framing package is an ideal environment for potential germination if the moisture content is not properly controlled. Molds will encourage the breakdown of paper and leave stains of various colors.

Look for the fuzzies!

Often molds appear white and fuzzy. However, some mold growth is hard to detect because it can appear in a variety of forms and colors. This can allow it to be overlooked if it is within the print image instead of on the border.

Molds may also be invisible with only a musty odor to indicate its presence. You need to inspect your artwork closely on a regular basis.

What to do?

If mold is visible, immediately contact your picture framer who may be able to clean away the mold. However, if the mold growth has progressed beyond the surface stage a paper conservator will need to be consulted to remove any resulting stain.

Keep mold at bay!

If paper art is returned to the same damp, still environment after cleaning then molds will certainly rear their ugly, fuzzy head again.

Careful attention to environmental controls will go along way in preventing damage to artwork. The use of air conditioners and dehumidifiers will prevent the moisture, warmth, and lack of air circulation that encouraged mold growth. If these aren't available, ceiling fans encourage the evaporation of moisture and discourage mold spores from taking up residence on your artwork.