

Stretching and Mounting

Painting your sumi-e masterpiece is only half of the project. Rice paper is unsized, meaning it does not contain stiffeners or sizing that help protect the paper from wrinkles and shrinkage. Lack of sizing is what gives rice paper the properties that allow ink and paint to blend or bleed, creating the unique look of sumi-e painting.

To be preserved wrinkle-free, your painting must now be stretched and mounted onto special backing paper before it can be framed and displayed.

TRADITIONAL WET STRETCHING AND MOUNTING

Here are the supplies you will need, and basic directions for traditional wet-style stretching and mounting.

If you are new to stretching and mounting, it is best to try it first at a workshop or under the supervision an experienced sumi-e painter. Practice first on a painting that is not your masterpiece but is painted on the same paper with the same ink and paints.

Supplies:

- Mounting paper
- Mounting surface/board (smooth, clean formica, glass, plexiglass, masonite, wood;
The mounting surface/board must be at least 5" larger than your painting, length and width)
- Wheat paste (Yasutomo Nori)
- Alum
- 2 wide brushes (3" or 4")
- Plastic bristle brush (ton ton)
- Blue masking tape
- Paper towels
- Small spray bottle with water
- Krylon fixative or hair spray

Procedure:

1. Cut the mounting (backing) paper so it is about 1 inch larger than your painting on all sides,
2. Mix about 2 Tablespoons (3 squeezes) of wheat paste and 1/4 teaspoon alum in about 2/3 cup warm water. Completely dissolve all the lumps.
3. If your painting has very colorful areas, lightly spray (OUTDOORS) with Krylon or hair spray on these areas (this prevents the color from bleeding).
4. Place your painting face down on a clean mounting surface.
5. Use a wide thin soft brush (hake type), covered well in the glue solution to cover the back of the painting with an even coat of glue. START PAINTING FROM THE CENTER OUT, little by little, working the wrinkles and bubbles out to the edges. Paper will be very wet.
6. Wipe off excess glue around the painting, so the exposed mounting surface is clean. Pick off any brush hairs or lint.
7. Place the rough side of the mounting paper over the painting, centering it so there is a 1 inch border all around. Line it up along one edge, then let it drape down.
8. Brush with a wide DRY brush from the middle of the painting out to the edges.
9. Spray lightly and evenly with water all over the rice paper, then brush again with the dry brush from the center out. NOTE: When brushing, use some pressure, but be sensitive not to tear or damage the paper. Some paper is very fragile, especially when wet. Lay a couple of layers of paper towel over the painting and pound with the ton ton, all over. This will absorb some of the moisture, and adheres the 2 papers.
10. Lay a couple of layers of paper towel over the painting and pound with the ton ton, all over. This will absorb some of the moisture, and adheres the 2 papers.
11. Lift a corner of the paper and peel the picture away from the surface at an angle, not straight up and lay it down face up (either on the same surface or another one).
12. Again put paper towels on the picture and brush with a large, soft, dry brush to draw out more moisture.
13. Tape the edges of the painting down all the way around. Allow it to dry like this for several hours to 2 days, depending on the weather. Do not let it dry in the wind or sun. Indoors is best.
14. Remove the tape and it is ready for framing, wrinkle free.

NOTE: A painting can also be left to dry face down. If you do this skip Step #11 and #12.

NOTE: While your painting is still wet, and you see a hair or bubble or something under your picture, you can prick a hole over it with a pin, then extract the particle with a tweezer, then tap the hole closed with your finger.