

Tip: Discreet/Isolated Fills

As a third-year intern in the Asian conservation department at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, I was preparing a number of lined Japanese prints for exhibition. The linings were of thick paper attached with a strong paste; removing the lining would have been difficult and time consuming. In addition, old binding holes and insect damage were present in vital areas of the printed images. Traditional fills, attached to the print's verso would have added more paste and moisture to the already heavy lining, there was also a danger of ink or discoloration transfer. A different, less intrusive and time-consuming technique was needed to address the visual impact of the damage.

Solution: The losses were "filled," but not directly on the object. Rather a fill paper was toned, shaped to match the loss and then secured to the print's back mat. The print was then laid over the fill. Once matted, framed and glazed, the viewer would see a toned fill, thereby creating a straightforward, low time commitment solution.



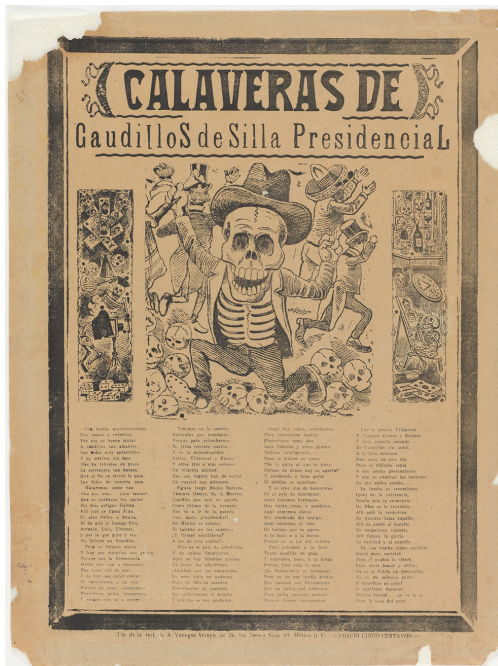
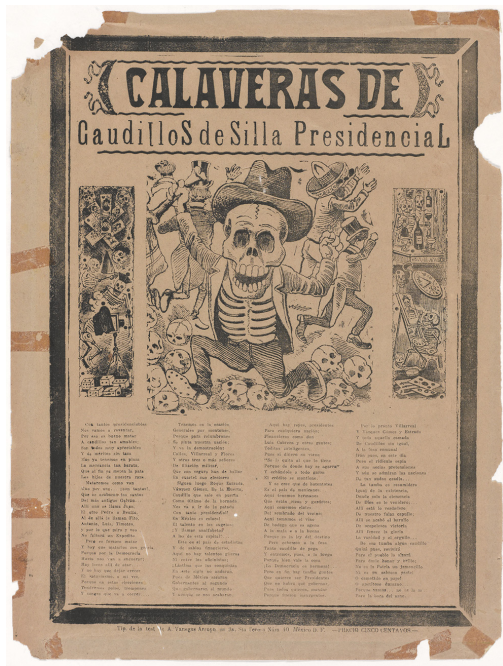
Fig. 1. After treatment, detail, bottom left corner: William H. Johnson, *Jitterbugs II*, ca. 1941, modified screen print, 43 x 46.5 cm, Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth, Texas, Amon G. Carter Foundation purchase, 2000.11.

Over the years I have modified this technique to address objects on thin or brittle paper. A repair acts to secure an area of loss or damage, but the repair must always be "weaker" than the object being treated. This can create visual integration problems when, for example, a fragile work like José Guadalupe Posada's broadside prints, or a William Johnson screen print on brittle newspaper need fills and structural repair. In these two cases the repairs and fills were created using lightweight, pre-toned Kozo fibered paper. The objects were made more stable by this approach but it did nothing to visually integrate the fill with the object. The technique above was used to rectify this problem. An opaque paper was toned, generally cut to shape, and secured to the object's back mat. (fig. 1)

The thin translucent fill attached to the object when laid over the opaque toned paper on the back mat, together made a visually acceptable combination that did not attract the eye, allowing the viewer to see the object and not be distracted by the repaired damage. (figs. 2-5)

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LEFT TO RIGHT
 Fig. 2. Before treatment, normal light, recto: José Guadalupe Posada, Calaveras de caudillos de silla presidencial, ca. 1890-1913, etching, 40.1 x 30.2 cm, Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth, Texas, Amon G. Carter Foundation purchase, 1978.52.

Fig. 3. After treatment, normal light, recto: José Guadalupe Posada, Calaveras de caudillos de silla presidencial, ca. 1890-1913, etching, 40.1 x 30.2 cm, Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth, Texas, Amon G. Carter Foundation purchase, 1978.52.



Fig. 4. Treated Posada print next to mat board with toned and shaped fills adhered to back mat: José Guadalupe Posada, Calaveras de caudillos de silla presidencial, ca. 1890-1913, etching, 40.1 x 30.2 cm, Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth, Texas, Amon G. Carter Foundation purchase, 1978.52.

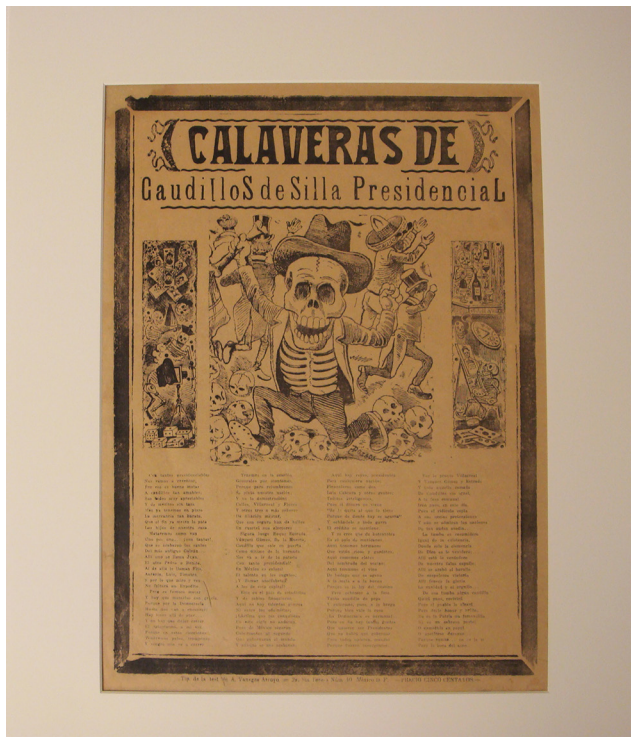


Fig. 5. Treated Posada print with window mat closed: José Guadalupe Posada, Calaveras de caudillos de silla presidencial, ca. 1890-1913, etching, 40.1 x 30.2 cm, Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth, Texas, Amon G. Carter Foundation purchase, 1978.52..