

USE OF GORETEX TO DRY SMOOTH, CALENDERED, AND MODERN PAPERS

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The finish of papers that were originally made with a smooth surface, calendered, or hot pressed can be difficult to retain after aqueous conservation treatments. Even on older papers, abrasions or swollen fibers can disrupt and compete with the continuity of a sheet in conjunction with the image. The very smooth, "burnished" quality from the plate of a print in relation to the more matt margins is also important to retain without crushing the impression. The use of goretex during drying can successfully solve these problems.

Previous methods for drying smooth papers have been the use of mylar, parafilm, or dense mat-board (1,2). The use of goretex to replace these methods was discussed briefly in an AIC talk in 1989 referring to drying gampi papers (3). It is also a successful technique for drying groundwood, Rives BFK, Arches, chine colle, and "japon simili" papers, among others.

The technique itself is simple and lends itself to the variations necessary for treatment modifications. I either use it in a "friction" method or a normal drying method with felts. The normal drying method consists of allowing an artifact to drain on blotters until the media is stable and the artifact moist but not wet. A thick etching felt is laid on a table with a blotter on top and a sheet of smooth goretex facing the artifact. The artifact is placed directly on the goretex and the stacking reversed: smooth goretex, blotter, and upper felt. A sheet of glass is placed on top as a light weight, and blotters are changed as needed. Generally, I spray out the felts either overall to slow drying, or at least along all the exposed edges to insure that the artifact's edges do not dry more quickly than its center. Even modern papers are dried evenly and smoothly with this method.

The friction method is similar. The artifact is generally wetter and smoothed off a hollytex support and onto the goretex with a wide Japanese brush: similar to a lining technique. The artifact clings to the goretex while drying and distortions are easily removed.

To retain the "burnished" quality of prints, a piece of goretex is cut following a template of the plate area of a print. The goretex is placed on the plate area during the final stages of drying. The goretex over the plate area can be used with normal

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felt drying techniques. Although an expensive use of goretex, the pieces can later be used for smaller jobs such as delicate hinge removal.

The other instance when I use goretex for drying is when the quality of the image is very delicate and it is important for the success of the image that the paper conforms in a uniform typography and does not compete with the image. An example might be an old master print whose paper has been abraded. Felt drying generally used for these prints, might not reestablish the original conformity of the paper due to the particular damage.

The smooth surface of the goretex prevents disruption of the smooth surface of the artifact. It's porous characteristics allows even drying from both sides.

Notes:

1) Shelley Fletcher and Judith Walsh, "The Treatment of Three Prints by Whistler on Fine Japanese Paper," Journal of the American Institute for Conservation 18 (1979), 118-128.

2) Catherine Nicholson, "The Conservation of Three Whistler Prints on Japanese Paper," in The Conservation of Far Eastern Art, ed. H. Mabuchi and Perry Smith (London 1988), 39-44.

3) Antoinette Dwan, "Nineteenth Century Artist's Use of Oriental Papers: Identification and Conservation," American Institute for Conservation, Annual Meeting 1989.