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Repairing a Damaged Canvas: Patching vs. Lining

There are two methods of repairing a torn or punctured oil painting on canvas. The damaged area of the painting can be patched or the entire painting can be lined (adhered) onto a new supporting canvas. Several factors discussed below should be considered to determine when patching may be a good choice for repairing a damaged oil painting and when a full lining of the entire canvas should be considered instead.

In deciding which repair method to use, bear in mind that a patch may become visible from the front of the painting over time, and can be avoided by lining the entire painting. A patch in a busy part of the painting may be less noticeable than a patch in a solid area.

Generally, patching of an oil painting should only be performed if the tear or puncture is small. Large or multiple tears and punctures usually call for lining the entire canvas to provide the painting with the strength to make the repair successful. It can generally be assumed that the canvas of an old oil painting with multiple tears is in a fragile state and susceptible to additional damage if it is not reinforced with a new supporting canvas. Lining a damaged oil painting onto a new canvas rather than patching is advisable if the canvas is in a weakened condition: brittle and fragile canvas, thinning areas of the canvas, torn where it wraps around the stretcher frame, flaking paint, cracks in the paint, or multiple tears and punctures.

If the damaged oil painting is in good condition other than the tear or puncture, patching offers a quick, easy, and less expensive alternative to repairing a damaged canvas, while keeping the rest of the painting in its original condition. A patch adhered with Gainsborough's PC-1035 Lining Compound or Beva® 371 Film can easily be removed if lining the painting to a new canvas is desired at some point in the future. However, the filled-in and inpainted area will be damaged during the process and will have to be re-applied.

Patching may be preferable to lining if a tear or puncture occurs in a relatively new oil painting, because the paint and varnish are still soft. During the lining process, fresh

paint and varnish can stick to the paper, impasto can be flattened, and varnish and paint can be removed while removing excess Lining Compound.

When a tear or puncture occurs in a very large painting, patching may be the only viable solution due to the size of the piece.

Using Gainsborough's PC-1035 Lining Compound for Lining Oil Paintings:

Gainsborough's Complete Manual of Oil Painting Restoration (B-5000) provides step-by-step instructions for lining an old oil painting on canvas using Gainsborough's PC-1035 Lining Compound.

Using Gainsborough's PC-1035 Lining Compound for Patching Oil Paintings:

When patching a tear or puncture in an oil painting on canvas, Gainsborough's PC-1035 wax-resin Lining Compound is advisable for repairs that require consolidation of flaking (loosened) paint, for tears or holes greater than 1/8" (0.32 cm) in width, or for large tears and holes requiring a strong patch. Lining Compound will penetrate through the patch and into the original canvas to hold down any loosened paint as long as the paint film and ground are separating from the canvas (bare canvas showing where the paint has flaked off) rather than paint film separating from the ground or undercoat (paint color and not bare canvas showing where the paint has flaked off). If the paint film is separating from the ground or undercoat, a torn oil painting can still be repaired by patching with PC-1035 Lining Compound or Beva® 371 Film, but the consolidation of the paint will need to be done from the front of the painting. A patch adhered with PC-1035 Lining Compound is removable with an iron at any time in the future, and the wax-resin residue can be removed with Gainsborough's PC-11 Neutralizer or PC-89 Lining Compound Remover. **Gainsborough's PK-2 Complete Patching Kit for Oil Paintings comes with the products and instructions necessary to patch an oil painting using this method.**

Using Beva® 371 Film for Patching Oil Paintings:

When patching a tear or puncture in an oil painting on canvas, Beva® 371 Film is suitable when the damaged area can be closed to within 1/8" (0.32 cm) or less, and does not require consolidation of loosened paint. It may not be suitable for large tears, since Beva® 371 Film produces a "nap bond" and does not penetrate through the original canvas or linen patch. Therefore it does not provide as much strength as a patch adhered with Gainsborough's PC-1035 Lining Compound. Beva® 371 Film may be a good choice for relatively new paintings, because a lower iron temperature is used, and you will not need to remove any waxy residue on the face of the painting, risking the removal of fresh paint and varnish. A patch adhered with Beva® 371 Film is removable with an iron or Gainsborough's PC-11 Neutralizer at any time in the future. **Gainsborough's PK-3 Non-Penetrating Patching Kit for Oil Paintings comes with the products and instructions necessary to patch an oil painting using this method.**