

# Preserved for posterity

**STEVE FLANAGAN** knew that only the very best materials and techniques would be appropriate when he was asked to frame a rare early Damien Hirst drawing and five pen and ink sketches by LS Lowry

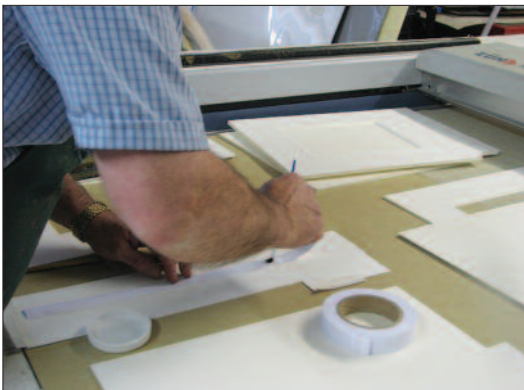
**T**he collector who brought the pieces in for framing was a new customer, who came to us following a recommendation from a friend. When he showed me the artwork, after I'd marvelled at Lowry's skill as a draughtsman, my next

thought was about insurance: I didn't want the drawings on our premises overnight. We agreed that I would take measurements, then order stock and cut materials to size, after which the customer would return with the artwork and my son Darren and I would frame it during the course of a

single day.

The pictures were all around A4 in size and they were in stable condition.

The still life was drawn by Hirst in 1979, when the artist was just 14, and there's a note on the back from his art teacher saying 'Good effort!' followed by 'Mr R'.



Clockwise, from top left: damping the tape before making a book hinge; a corner of the Hirst frame; the framed Damien Hirst drawing; Steve Flanagan positioning the Hirst drawing in the mount



I didn't have to convince the customer that a Museum Level framing job was necessary, and he was happy to pay for the best materials and techniques.

I called the Fine Art Trade Guild as I wanted re-assurance that I was working to the highest specifications. The Guild directed me to call Steve McKee GCF Adv, Dromore Picture Framing, as he was the framing expert on duty that week. I told Steve what I was planning to do, and discussed my choice of materials; he was extremely helpful and put my mind at rest.

I noticed that the Guild was running a Making Pictures event nearby in Coventry, and that Mal Reynolds GCF Adv would be demonstrating museum hinging at the event. Watching Mal hinge artwork and listening to his views on the choice of materials was fascinating and helped me decide how to approach the job.

My customer chose a dark brown frame with a pale gold sight edge from Arqadia's Larson Juhl range. This moulding exudes quality, so I was

pleased with his choice. The double mounts were made from cotton museum board from Arqadia. Fussy mount decoration would dominate the artwork, but we decided that a simple narrow V-groove around each window would be sufficiently subtle, but would help lead the eye into the pictures.

Of course we chose glass that would provide protection from damaging UV light. Artglass UV WW both protects artwork and is practically invisible, ensuring maximum clarity. The frames were backed with Corri-Cor Mark 4 board, which is archival and has a water-resistant coating.

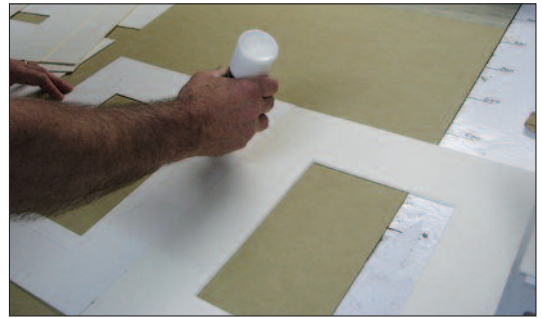
Darren and I wore cotton gloves when handling the drawings, to minimise the risk of oil from our hands permeating the artwork. We hinged the artwork using Arqadia's Cotton Rag Gummed Paper Tape and distilled water. Ordinary tap water can introduce impurities into the framing package.

The undermounts, as well as the double windowmounts, were made from cotton museum mountboard. At

Museum Level you are not allowed to join the two top mounts with ATG tape, so we used EVA adhesive, according to Guild guidelines. The windowmounts were hinged to the undermount with the same Arqadia tape that we used to attach the artwork. They were 'book hinged' along the longest side.

The artwork was attached to the undermount, not the back of the windowmount, as this provides the best level of stability. We positioned two T-hinges along the top edge of the artwork. T-hinges should support the artwork safely, but should not be made from heavier paper, so they would break first in the event of the picture being placed under stress.

The T-hinges overlapped onto the back of the artwork, not the front. We were careful to brush the minimum amount of distilled water onto each hinge, to avoid introducing moisture into the framing package. The hinges were put under weights as they dried, to ensure a strong bond. A piece of silicone release paper was placed between the weight and the hinge to



Clockwise, from top left: one of the Lowries in its mount; joining the two windowmounts with EVA adhesive; Darren (left) and Steve Flanagan; positioning a drawing once the bottom part of the T-hinge is attached; Darren making hinges; one of the framed Lowry drawings

prevent sticking, then blotting paper.

It is good practice to position one T-hinge close to the artwork to hold it securely in place, while the other one should be positioned a few millimetres away, to allow movement. We began by attaching the bottom of the 'T' to the back of the artwork, then, once dry, we positioned the drawings on the undermount and attached the top parts of the hinges.

We made a 'sandwich' comprising the contents of each frame, which was sealed with the same gummed tape that we used throughout. Glazing, windowmounts, artwork and undermount were sealed together. This practice provides added protection to the artwork. It helps prevent insects and dust entering the frame, and can

provide protection from smoke damage in the event of a fire. The tape overlaps a few millimetres onto the front of the glass and is wrapped round the back of the undermount. There should be no gaps at the corners. I used bulldog clips to hold the package together while the adhesive on the tape dried.

The frames were sealed with brown gummed-paper tape, which was once again damped with distilled water. We were sure to press this down firmly and we made sure that there were no 'bridges' or air bubbles that could be torn. The corners of the tape overlapped, instead of being mitred, to provide maximum protection. Tape at the back of the frame is important, as it deters infestation by insects.

Finally, D-rings and cord were fitted to the back of the moulding. Bumper pads at the bottom corners allow air to circulate around the pictures, which is important as this prevents mould from developing and deters the transfer of dampness from the wall.

My customer asked me to take photographs throughout the framing process, which are to be kept with the provenance of each drawing. If he wants to sell the pictures, these will provide proof that the artwork has been carefully framed to Museum Level. This article will accompany the provenances too. ■

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