

Treatment of Folded Paper Artifacts.

Deborah M. Evetts,
Book Conservator

Folded paper artifacts are a "grey area" between books and art-on-paper, requiring more strength than a matted art-on-paper piece, and more cosmetic consideration than the spine folds of book sections. Because of these and other conflicting aspects of their treatment, the future handling and use-patterns should be carefully weighed before decisions on format and housing are made.

Earlier this year two folded-paper artifacts came to the Bindery for treatment. A Panorama of Queen Victoria's Coronation, dated 1838, and a manuscript Harlequinade, dating from about 1698. The panorama was to be shown as part of a small exhibition commemorating the 150th anniversary of Queen Victoria's accession to the throne, and the Harlequinade was a recent acquisition that needed some repair, and a protective housing.

Treatment - Panorama

One hundred and eighty-two panorama titles are listed in the catalogue of Major J.R. Abbey's Collection*, and can be roughly divided into 5 subjects; places (102), events (39), humorous (29), costume (8), and people (4). They date from 1570 to 1949, with production apparently peaking in the 19th century. The reproduction methods include engraving, aquatint, etching, lithography, and wood engraving, with the first two being the most common. The P.M.L. panorama is a lithograph.

Panoramas were printed on strips of paper which were joined together and then concertina-folded into a compact blocks. "Queen Victoria's Coronation Procession shows no fewer than 390 horses, 205 riders, 50 carriages, 264 servants, 82 foot soldiers, 41 musicians, and 71 passengers. It took 33 strips, varying in length from 14-1/2 to 28-3/8 inches, to make the 60 ft. long total required for so many figures. When folded 93 times it makes a roughly rectangular block 4 inches high, 7-1/2 inches long and 7/8 of an inches thick.

The main problem with a panorama is the difficulty one encounters in trying to handle such an eel-like mass. Even with the most careful approach, it is difficult not to put a strain on the folds in opening out portions, or in just turning through the panorama fold by fold. These difficulties create a conflict: to make the repair strong enough to withstand even careful handling, dictates the use of heavier

tissue; but the heavier the tissue the more disruption to, and obscuring of, the image.

Pasting tissue, even thin tissue, to another piece of paper stiffens the area laminated. This is desirable when you want to support an area that has been folded inadvertently, but it militates against the satisfactory movement of repaired folds. If a fold is repaired flat, it cracks when folded, and if repaired folded, it buckles when flattened, so with the panorama facing up, the image will be alternatively squeezed together on the "V" folds and stretched out over the "A" folds. Obviously it is better to make any repairs on the back of a sheet printed on one side, and it is also desirable to mend on the outside of the fold; but in the case of a concertina-folded object these two requirements can be met only half the time - i.e., only on the "V" folds.

Our panorama was originally protected by a beautiful goldstamped cloth binding, but this had been replaced by a leather case that had rotted, leaving the folds vulnerable to acid migration from the leather on one side, and from light and air pollution on the other. Thus many of the folds had separated and those that had not, were so weak that even when mended with the thinnest tissue, the folded image would break when refolded. And while the Panorama had been in the Library stacks, no longer held tightly together by the binding, New York City's polluted dust had sifted between the leaves and settled onto the pages, looking like thunder clouds hanging over the whole procession.

The paper, a wove Whatman, is watermarked 1838. The strips had been cut from the sheet in both directions, as evidenced by the different directions of the watermarks on some strips, and the varying lengths of the strips. Three batches of paper were used, differing slightly in color, density, and watermark.

Initial treatment consisted of separating the surviving components of the original binding from the boards of the leather binding and the leaves of the panorama, collating and numbering the "pages" and strips, erasing the dust with a Magic Rub eraser and washing in several baths of water, finishing with an alkaline one, to remove the degradation products of one hundred and fifty years, and to separate the strips where they had been pasted together.

Queen Victoria's Coronation Procession will be used mostly for exhibition, so it was decided not to rejoin, re-fold or rebind the strips. This meant that the repairs could be made with stronger tissues, and inlays could also be used to repair losses. (Repairs were made with Kitakata and Sekisu oriental tissues and rice-starch paste.) The strips were then encapsulated and housed in a book box, along with what re-

mains of the original binding.

Treatment - Harlequinade

In Percy Muir's English Children's Books*, he describes the fashioning of Harlequinades by hand as a popular pastime in the seventeenth century and possibly earlier. The lifting up of the flaps to disclose another picture below, which may turn Adam into Eve, or Eve into a mermaid, probably accounts for the other names for these creations, "metamorphoses" or "turn-ups". The name "harlequinade" derives from the fact that several were put out between 1766 and 1772, by a publisher named Sayer, who capitalized on the popular pantomimes and harlequinades of the leading London theatres, and "Harlequin" was always used in his titles.

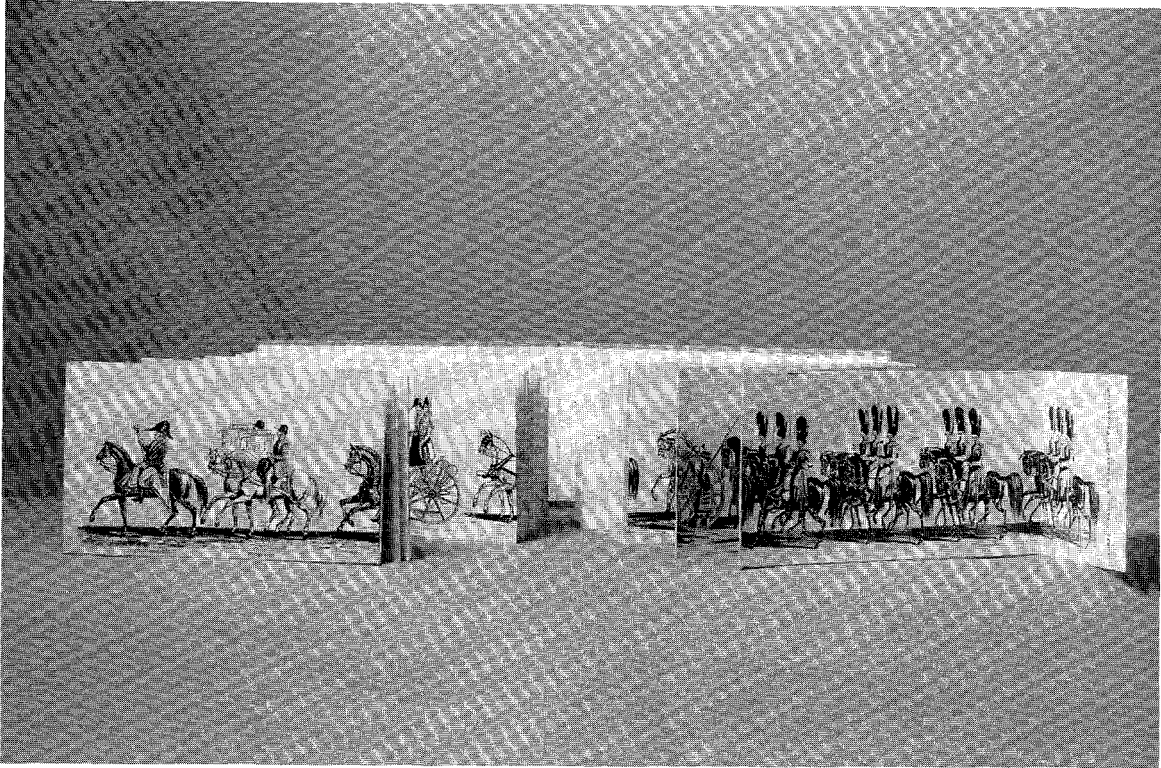
A harlequinade presents a completely different problem from a panorama, because it does not "read" unless it is folded and then opened section by section. Our harlequinade is a single sheet of paper 12-1/2 x 16 inches, divided into four vertically using three folds, and three horizontally using two folds. The top and bottom quarters of the vertical folds are cut, so that each top and bottom section can be lifted independently of the others, there by increasing from six to nine, the permutations of changing images visible to the viewer.

Because of aging and wear - it was made for children and has had much "loving" - the harlequinade is vulnerable to handling. But it is made from a good laid paper, and if carefully handled and laid on a flat surface before being unfolded, should survive for many years to come. It was possible to use a very lightweight tissue to mend the harlequinade because there is no weight on the folds. The tissue was used in wisps so as not to cover the image, and in slightly larger pieces where more strength was needed. The finer tissue reduces the stiffening effect of the mends and facilitates folding. A photocopy facsimile will be used to keep handling to a minimum, and to show both sides when it is exhibited. It will be housed in an acid-free paper folder inside a book box.

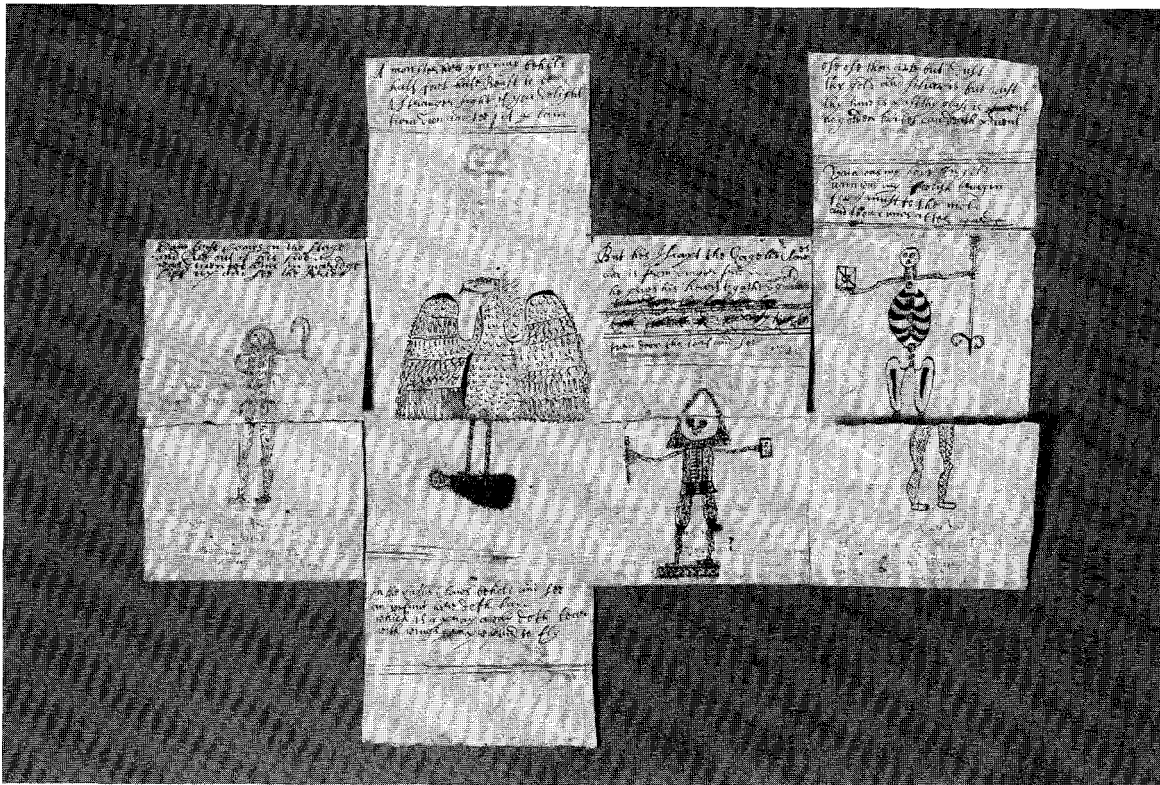
*Life in England in Aquatint and Lithograph, 1770-1860, Curwen Press 1953.

*English Children's Books, 1600-1900 by Percy Muir B.T. Batsford 1954.

The Pierpont Morgan Library, September 1987



Facsimile of Queen Victoria's Coronation Procession Panorama



Harlequinade

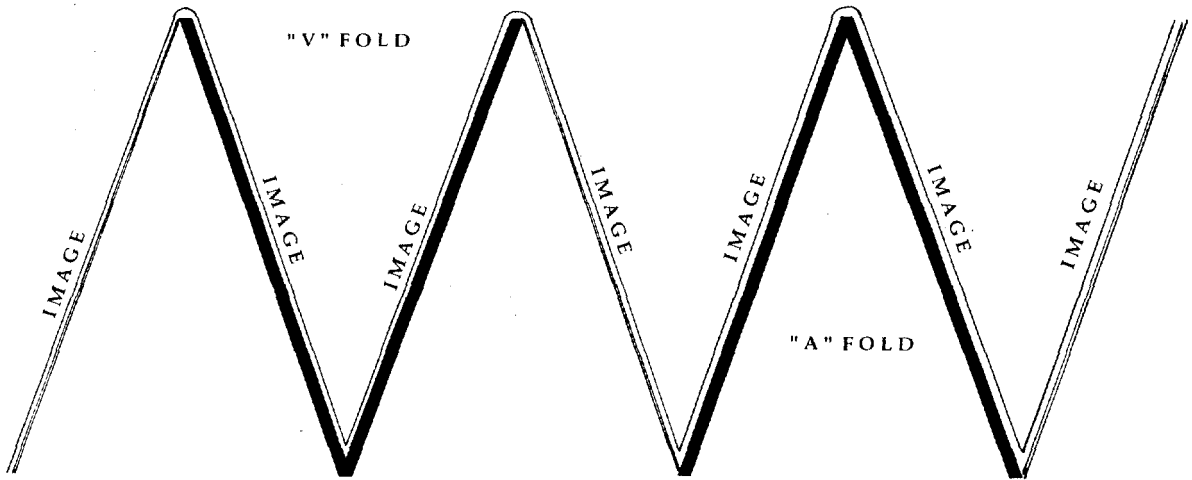


Figure 1

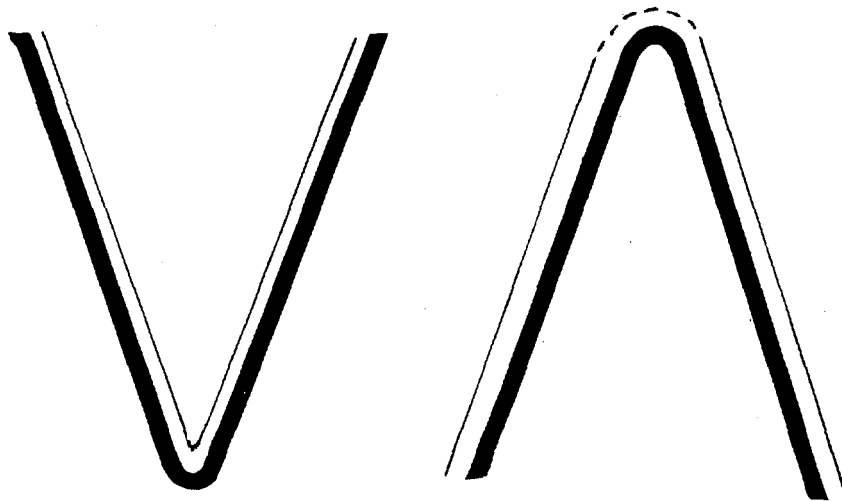


Figure 2