

Remoistenable Tissue Part II: Variations on a Theme

ADDITIONAL USES OF REMOISTENABLE TISSUE

As mentioned in the previous article by Irene Brückle, the remoistenable tissue formula as developed at SUNY Buffalo can be modified for use in a variety of creative ways besides the lining of paper and photographic objects. This short article will briefly outline some of these variations on a "theme."

TISSUE PREPARATION AND VARIATIONS FOR LINING AND REINFORCEMENT

The original formula may be modified and experimented with to adjust the strength of the adhesive layer, while the use of different screens adjusts the thickness and uniformity of film formation. Of course, the choice of an appropriate tissue type and weight plays a crucial role, as it does with standard mending and lining. All three variables can easily be adjusted using this method. For example, one can adjust the ratio of wheat starch paste and methyl cellulose to form a stronger film layer, e.g., by using a 5% methyl cellulose gel instead of 2.5% or by preparing a 1:1 mixture of paste and methyl cellulose instead of the standard 1:2 ratio. This strength of adhesive may be more desirable for lining very thick papers or photographs or even items mounted on boards.

The 1:1 mixture in itself can be diluted to various consistencies with water, gradually weakening what is otherwise a very strong adhesive. While an undiluted mixture coated through standard window screening results in a heavier film formation, the use of Pecap or silkscreen allows one to create "gossamer" thin adhesive films, especially with a diluted mixture. Such gossamer thin coatings on lightweight tissue, e.g., Tengujo or Barcham Green Lens Tissue, are appropriate for lining lighter weight paper and photographic objects.

Thick adhesive layers, as described above, can be applied to lightweight tissues such that some of the adhesive migrates through to the back creating a somewhat

double-sided coating. A double-sided coating is useful for lining a photograph onto a mountboard. In addition, it can be used to repair broken mountboards—the broken mount can be delaminated and the two layers reattached to each other using the double-sided tissue, thereby repairing the break and strengthening the board.

USE OF THE TISSUE FOR MENDING

As discussed by Brückle, the original formula and technique was developed as a lining method for moisture sensitive paper objects. However, the tissue, or one of the modified tissues described above, can be used for the mending of paper and photographic documents, whether or not they are moisture sensitive. Batches of various weight tissues, with various strength adhesive layers, can be prepared in advance, and torn into mending strips to have available for ready use. Not only does this save time in terms of paste preparation, but the remoistenable tissue dries quickly as a mending strip since it needs to be only lightly misted to activate. The remoistenable tissue can be a useful alternative to heat set tissue in some applications, and seems to adhere better than heat set tissue while allowing for easy reversibility. In addition, ultrathin tissues with light adhesive layers may be used to bridge weakened areas, such as those damaged by iron gall ink, while remaining both relatively transparent and also keeping the use of moisture to a minimum.

USE OF THE ADHESIVE FILM

One by-product of preparing the tissue is that the excess of adhesive mixture is forced to the margins of the polyester film used as a coating support where it then dries and forms a thin adhesive film. This excess adhesive film then can be delaminated from the polyester sheet and used as an adhesive when reactivated by the introduction of moisture via brush, ultrasonic mist, or fine spray. The unsupported adhesive film is most useful for situations

where water induced staining is problematic, such as with deteriorated poor quality papers, or when normal paste solutions do not seem to adhere well. For example, the film can be used to set down lifting red-rotted leather onto book boards, to consolidate brittle mountboards whose corners have become worn and delaminated, to readhere the lifting corners of photographs back onto their mounts and supports, and even to mend old tears and breaks that do not usually wet out well enough to allow for good adhesion.

SARAH S. WAGNER
Senior Photograph Conservator
National Archives and Records Administration