

Vivak: An Alternative to Conventional Plexiglas and Museum Board for Exhibition Mounts

ABSTRACT

The installation of exhibitions at the Folger Shakespeare Library led us to the discovery of co-polyester sheets, Vivak 099, from the company Makroform Ltd. We have found uses for Vivak 099 ranging from mounting small- to medium-format books, which are typically set up vertically or horizontally (with a twenty-five degree inclination), to creating supports for small-format frames and holding description labels. Previously we mounted objects using acid-free museum board, but we found that museum board has a strong visual appearance that interferes aesthetically with the visual aspect of the display case. Vivak 099, on the other hand, is a transparent, hand-pliable sheet and therefore does not compromise the appearance of the object being displayed. Vivak has the advantage of being inert, thus posing no threat to the item on display. The Vivak 099 sheet remains hand-pliable at room temperature up to a thickness of 0.062 inch, thus reducing work time extensively in comparison to the typical Plexiglas cradle. The Folger Shakespeare Library has mounted three exhibitions successfully using Vivak for various types of supports. The results have been very pleasing.

INTRODUCTION

Our involvement in the installation of exhibitions at the Folger Shakespeare Library led us to the discovery of the co-polyester sheets, Vivak 099, which we use to mount books, to create supports for small-format frames, and to hold description labels (fig. 1). In the past, at the Folger we cradled books using acid-free museum board that was scored and bent to fit the size and opening of the book. These cradles are typically set up vertically or horizontally (with a twenty-five degree inclination) in the exhibition

This paper was presented as a poster at the AIC 31st Annual Meeting, June 5–10, 2003, Arlington, Virginia. Received for publication Fall 2003.

case. The vertical mounting requires two perforations that are punched or drilled into the backside of the cradle to accommodate the supporting brass nails, which are shot into the back wall of the case with a brad nailer. Aesthetically, museum board has a strong visual appearance that interferes with the visual aspect of the display case. Vivak, however, is a transparent, hand-pliable sheet and does not compromise the appearance of the object being displayed. It also has the added advantage of being inert.

MATERIAL DESCRIPTION

Vivak and Vivak UV are co-polyester sheets that have been patented by the company Makroform Ltd. Uses range from construction and visual communications (displays, vending machines) to medical purposes. Vivak Clear



Fig. 1. Display supports made from Vivak co-polyester sheets



Fig. 2. To shape Vivak, clamp it in the board cutter . . .

099 is what we have found most suitable to our exhibition needs. It is a thermoplastic co-polyester with good manual thermoforming properties at room temperature up to a thickness of 0.062 inch.

The sheet is available from a minimal thickness of 0.020 inch to a maximum thickness of 0.500 inch. The 0.062-inch Vivak is a thickness that can be bent to shape manually without scoring or preheating and will support most small-to medium-format books. With this material, work time is reduced in comparison to the typical Plexiglas cradle, which demands additional time to draw the template, to cut the Plexiglas, and to polish the edges of the cut pieces. Moreover, Plexiglas requires heating prior to shaping and this step, in turn, requires a certain skilled hand and special equipment when bending with heat.

The Vivak 099 sheets:

- are cost-effective (not more than a standard sheet of museum board!),
- have good chemical resistance,
- are inert,
- have good adhesion qualities.

CRADLE MAKING

Record folds to be made according to book opening. (For more on basic cradle making, see Linda Blaser's 1992 article.) The sheet is cut slightly shorter than the height of the book to be cradled, making sure that the grain of the sheet runs from head to tail of the book, to facilitate the bending procedure. The sheet is then placed into the board cutter, using a ruler to measure the first bend (fig. 2). Clamp down and bend the Vivak 099 back and forth until the material becomes pliable (fig. 3). This process is repeated for every fold to be made, by sliding the sheet under the board cutter's clamp to the next measured fold. To achieve



Fig. 3. . . . and bend it back and forth until pliable.

the desired angle after the initial bending, remove the Vivak 099 from the board cutter and "over bend" each fold approximately twenty-five degrees before setting it into its final form. The protective sheet on both sides of the Vivak 099 is then removed. Once the Vivak has been bent into position, it will retain that memory and will set into that position.

CONCLUSION

The Folger has mounted several exhibitions using Vivak for our cradles, for V-shaped stands for flat objects, and for suspending description labels. The results have been very pleasing, greatly enhancing the overall look of our exhibitions.

REFERENCE

- Blaser, Linda. 1992. Display cradles for books: Board construction. *Guild of Book Workers Journal* 30(1): 1-16.

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