



CARING FOR YOUR PERSONAL COLLECTIONS AT HOME: AN INTRODUCTION TO COLLECTIONS CARE

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LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The School for Advanced Research (SAR) is located on traditional lands of the Tewa people, **O'gah'poh geh Owingeh** (White Shell Water Place), or Santa Fe, New Mexico. Surrounding our campus are the landscapes of the Pueblo, Apache, and Navajo communities, who people continue to maintain vital connections to this place.

As an institution privileged to the stewardship of Indigenous cultural material and committed to uplifting Indigenous voices, we strive to maintain respectful and mutually beneficial relationships with these communities. We not only honor the ancestral stewards of this land but celebrate their past, present, and future.



BRIEF INSTRUCTOR BACKGROUND

- Nearly 20 years in the field (since 2003)
- History with SAR since 2008
- Denver Art Museum new building renovation and move
- Center of Southwest Studies, Fort Lewis College
- Northern State Conservation Center: online teacher
- Numerous mentoring to emerging museum professionals
- BA in Anthropology
- Graduate Certificate: Collections Management and Care
- MA: American Studies
- Passion for collaborative indigenous collections care considerations

CLASS STRUCTURE

December 6, 2022 (Class 1): Overall collections care introduction and ways to minimize and monitor deterioration. **TIPS**

December 8, 2022 (Class 2): Details on specific types of materials: a lightning round with general tips of care for pottery, baskets, paintings, textiles, and much more.

- Housing enclosures and materials
- Terminology

December 13, 2022 (Class 3): In-person at IARC vaults (limited to 10). Hands-on demonstration of objects and materials to highlight collections care mitigation and tips.



CLASS 1 DISCUSSION



- Building Enclosure
- Handling
- Pests and House Pets
- Pesticides History
- Environment: Temperature and RH
- Light
- Pollutants
- Packing: Moving or House Renovation
- Cleaning & When to Call for Help
- Emergencies
- Security & Insurance
- Appraisals and Documentation

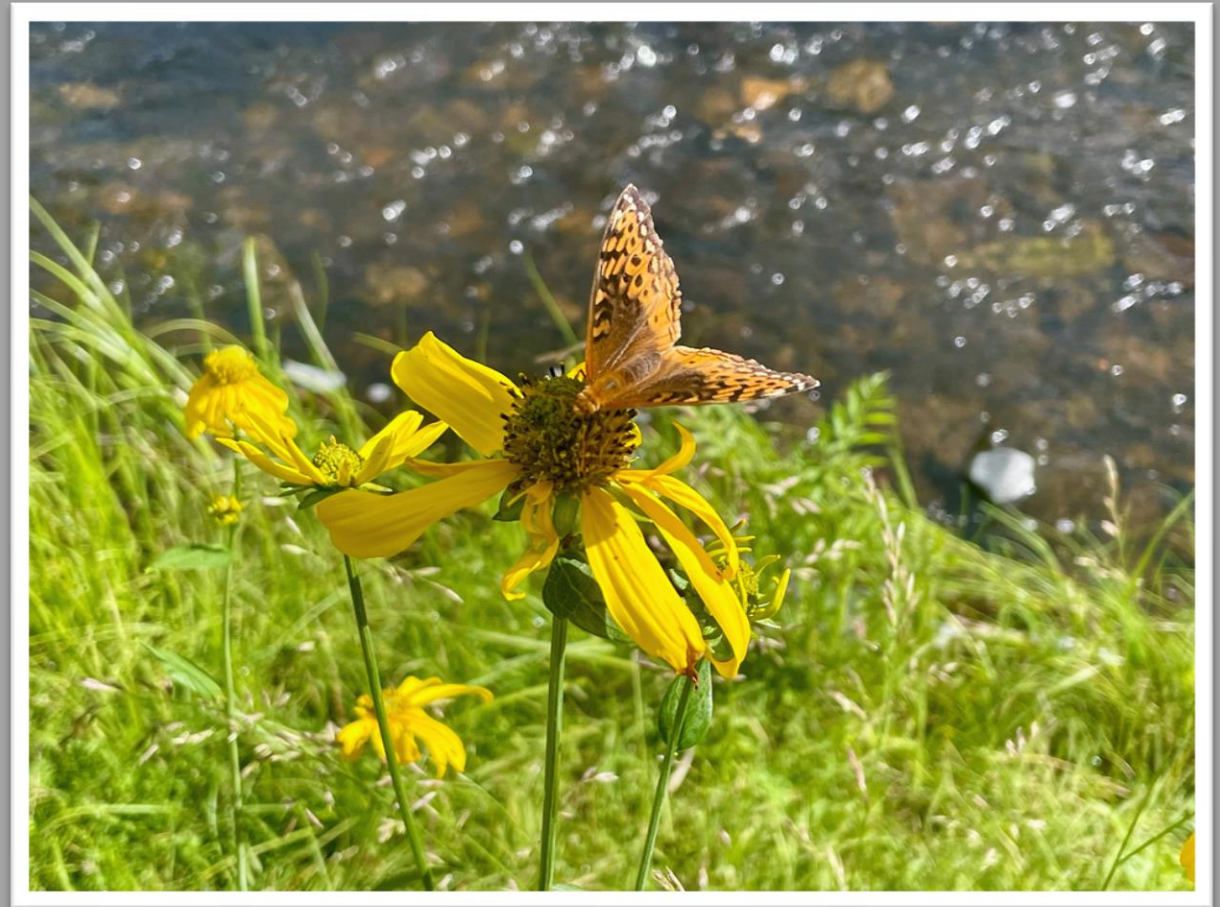
HOUSE STRUCTURE/BUILDING ENCLOSURE

- Sealing gaps in doors and windows: dust accumulation, environmental fluctuations
- Black out curtains, UV film, blinds
- Display:
 - Closed cabinets
 - No bathrooms
 - No kitchens
 - Basements and attics
- Special activities, events, Christmas decorations, etc.
- Fireplaces and smoking
- Landscaping/Plants
- Emergencies: Natural disasters, theft, unexpected
 - Water protection
 - Fire mitigation



HOUSE STRUCTURE TIPS

1. Identify risks with the house that could pose harm to items in your personal collection (a drafty window, a leaky roof, a mouse problem, etc.)
2. Resolve and monitor these risks
3. Utilize cabinets or cases with doors to help with dust protection
4. Glazing and backing boards on paintings
5. No gallery lights to prominently display.



HANDLING



Please do not grip at the handle

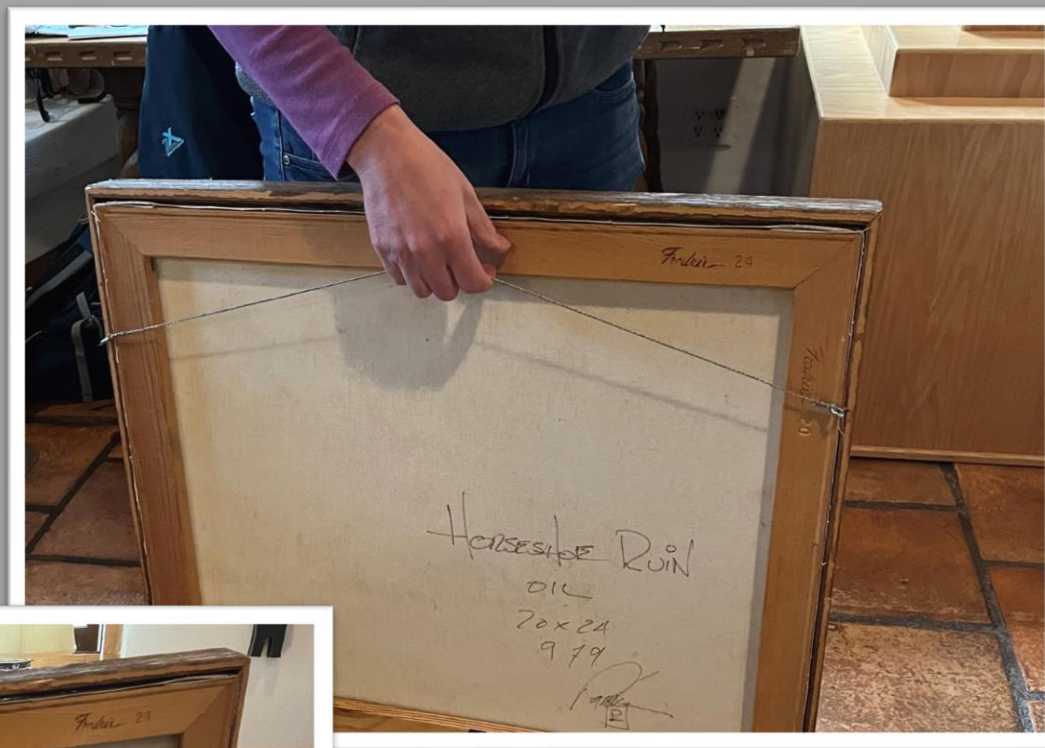


For large items, get more help.
Communicate well when using ladders.

Please do not grip at the handle



Never handle items by the rim



Never handle framed works by the hanging wire or by the frame at top. Always use two hands.

- Nitrile, latex-free, powder free gloves. Good grip, recommended for most materials. Use when handling pesticide materials.

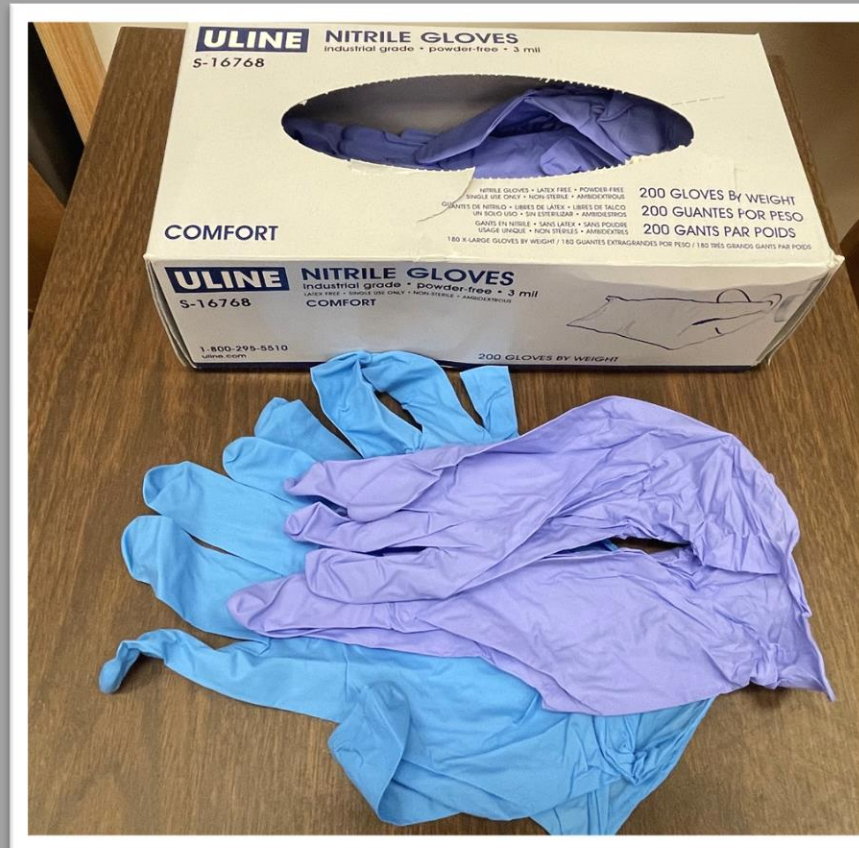
- White cotton gloves: not recommended. They are slippery when handling, can snag on some items, transfer dirt.

- Hyflex gloves: nitrile coated gloves with nylon or cotton liner

- Clean hands method: Pending type of materials, washing hands prior to handling is best (paper materials, for example)



GLOVES



GENERAL HANDLING TIPS

Handling is the #1 risk to physical deterioration of an object. Humans can be a dangerous threat to collections! Every time an object is moved it can be in jeopardy. Treat each item as if it were irreplaceable. Do not handle an item unless it is absolutely necessary.

1. Use two hands. Never grab by rim, handle, wire of frame, top of frame.
2. Always plan where you are moving an item to.
3. If an item is large, ask for help ahead of time.
4. Assure the surface the item is being moved to is stable (no wobbly tables).
5. Stabilize the item, so it does not roll off the surface (a pot or a tall vase you could temporarily roll a cotton T-shirt up into a snake and wrap around).
6. Know your item well and identify the fragile or vulnerable areas ahead of time, so you can properly handle.
7. Wear comfortable clothing.
8. No food, drink or smoking near items.
9. Take off long jewelry like necklaces that could scratch an item, snag or pull.

PESTS AND HOUSE PETS



Moths

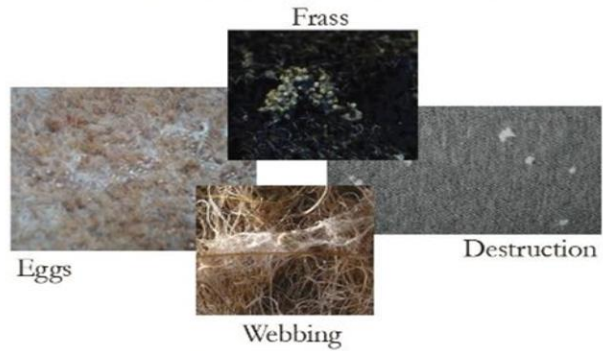
Webbing clothes moths



Case-making clothes moths



Additional signs of presence of clothes moths and larvae



Other common moths



Army cutworm
(Colorado miller)



Great Resource: <https://museumpests.net/>



PEST & PET MITIGATION TIPS

1. Try not to eat over valuable items in your homes: (for example, crumbs on a textile).
2. Identify pest risks: what personal items do you have that are a food source (for example, webbing clothes moth love protein materials like feather, fur, wool and silverfish love paper).
3. Cleaning is one of the best medicines. Dust accumulation ignites a fuel for pests to munch on.
4. Monitor house with bug traps that are near vulnerable organic materials.
5. Decluttering is your friend. Do not create an inviting environment.
6. Keep a regular house cleaning schedule. Use dust covers or protective enclosure boxes.
7. If you have a small chest freezer and a textile collection, keep a gap of space available for the unexpected infestation (plastic sheeting and freezing process covered later).
8. If you have house pets that can reach valuable items, put up high and keep out of reach or separate space by closing doors.

PESTICIDES BRIEF HISTORY



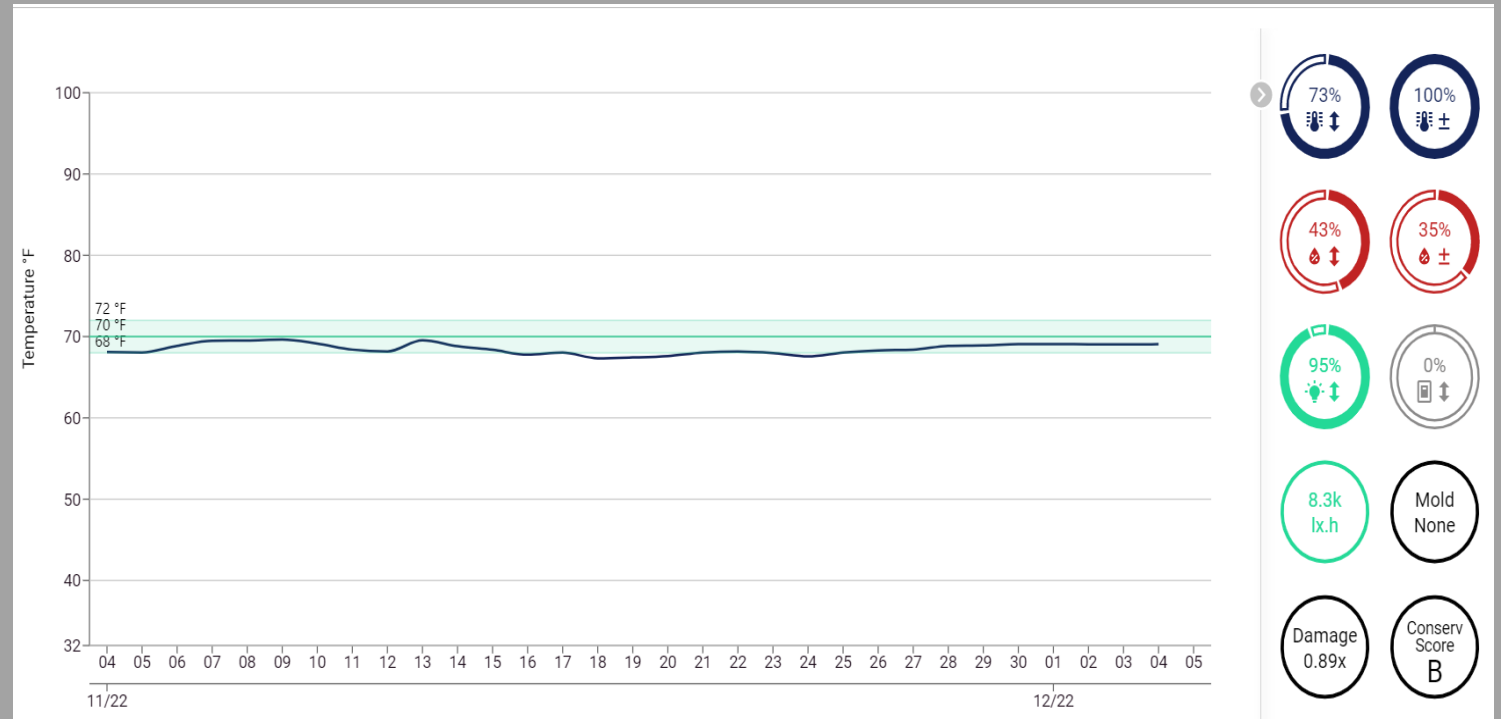
Great Resource: *Old Poisons, New Problems* by Nancy Odegaard

ENVIRONMENT: TEMPERATURE AND RH

- Temperature and relative humidity are inverse to each other. A rise in temperature will result in a drop in the RH of the ambient air. A drop in the temperature will cause an increase in RH.
- Sporadic and constant fluctuations in temperature and RH cause the most damage to objects.
- Monitoring is essential to identify your potential personal items' risks.
- HVAC systems have direct digital control that responds to sensors located in the ductwork or elsewhere in the system.

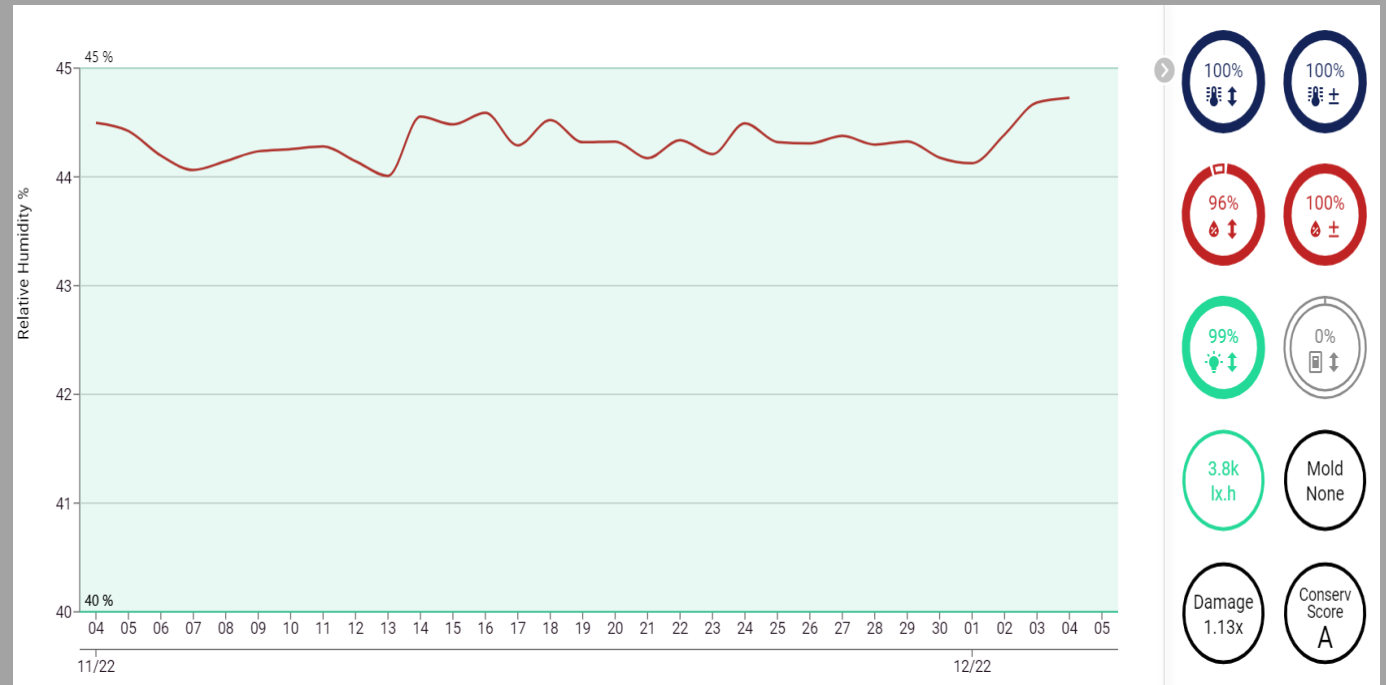
TEMPERATURE

- Improper high temperatures contribute to the oozing of fats and oils, and the softening of resins and adhesives in objects.
- Low temperature embrittles objects or can fracture paints and plastics.
- Low temperatures slow chemical reactions, and that is why cold storage can help protect certain items like color photographs.



RELATIVE HUMIDITY

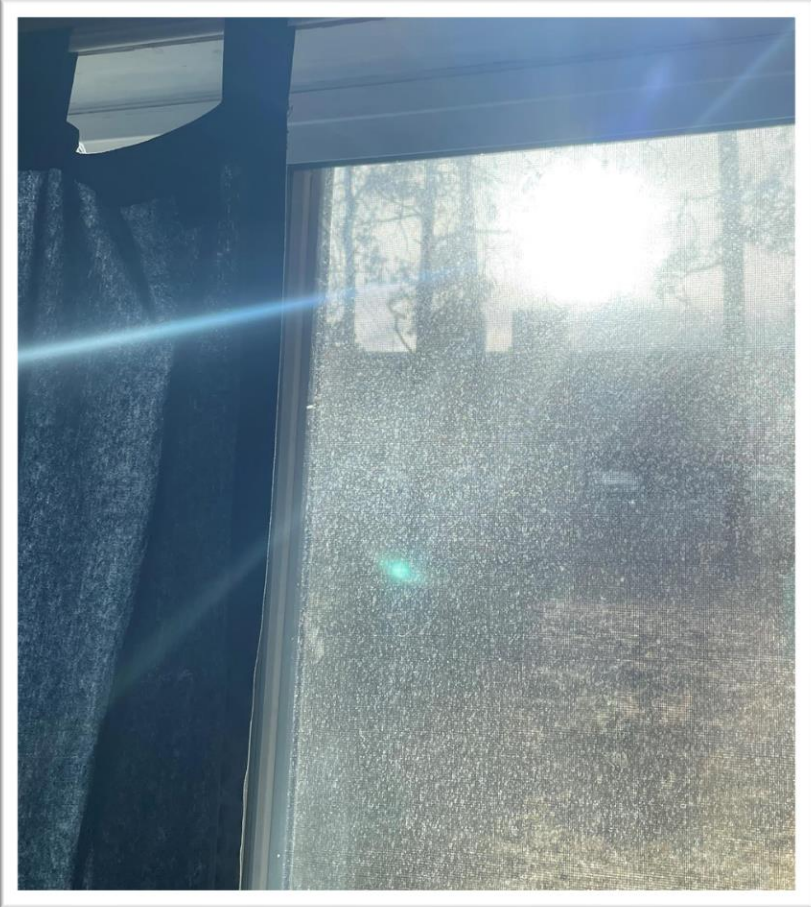
- Relative humidity that is too high promotes pest infestations, mold, and corrosion.
- 70% and higher = mold growth
- The more water vapor that is present in the air, the faster chemical reactions will occur.
- A particular concern at low RH levels are thin materials that are under tension, such as rawhide drumheads. They “relieve stress” by breaking when subject to fluctuations of low RH.



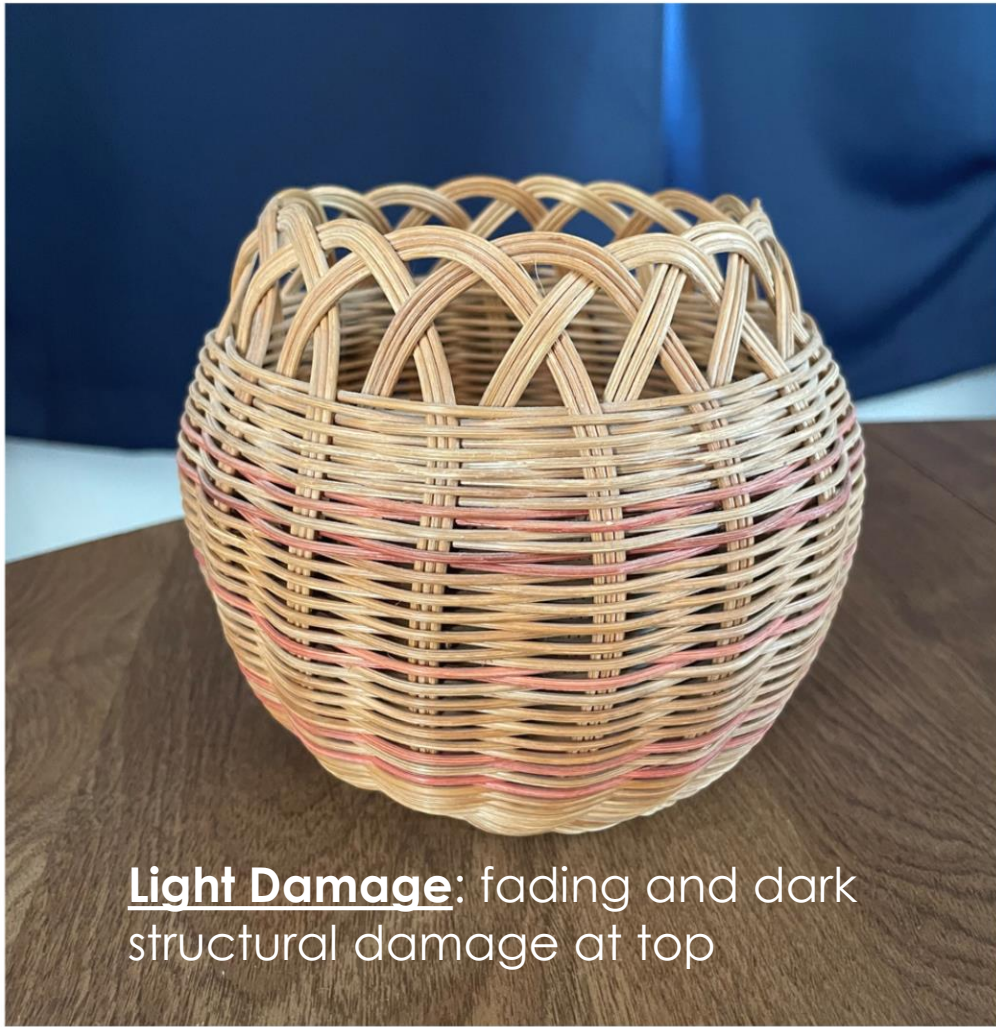
LIGHT



- The damage from light exposure is both cumulative and irreversible.
- Radiation can fade materials; pigments can darken or change color or structural damage can occur.
- UV filters for lights or films for windows are great but it does not erase the light exposure permanently!
- Damage sustained by an object from light intensity is the same for a long exposure at low light levels as it is from a short exposure at high light levels.







Light Damage: fading and dark structural damage at top



1 footcandle = 10.76 lux

Visible Light Levels	Materials
20 foot-candles (200 lux) or less	Metals, stone glass, ceramics
15 foot candles (150 lux) or less	Paintings (oil, egg tempera, acrylics), furniture, painted surfaces
10 foot candles (100 lux) or less	Organic materials (bone, ivory, uncolored plant materials).
5 foot candles (50 lux) or less -Some institutions may recommend as low as 15 lux for very fragile artifacts going on exhibit.	Textiles, paper and books, watercolors, gouache, organic materials (leather, tortoiseshell, parchment, feather, colored or dyed plant materials), plastics.

LIGHT TIPS

1. Use protective enclosures and boxes. House items in cabinets and drawers, if able (*Please note this may not be the best option for culturally sensitive items that need to breathe and have light. Consult with artist or community*).
2. Utilize blackout curtains
3. Utilize UV film on windows
4. Never display an item in direct sunlight. If this cannot be avoided (skylight), rotate items in your home every few months.
5. LED is an alternative to heat generating lights such as are halogen, fluorescent, and incandescent.
6. Fiber optics are generally the coolest light source and are therefore the best if lights should be mounted inside an enclosed case.
7. Many more tips—I can provide more resources!

POLLUTANTS

- A variety of shapes and forms
- Airborne pollutants: ozone (freeway environment)
- Fine particles
- Splatter on object
- Grease from kitchen cooking
- Outdoor dust and pollen
- Indoor generated dust from fibers (carpet vacuuming, sweaters, pet hair).
- Fireplace smoke or smoking
- Glazing for 2D works can help prevent pollutant damage



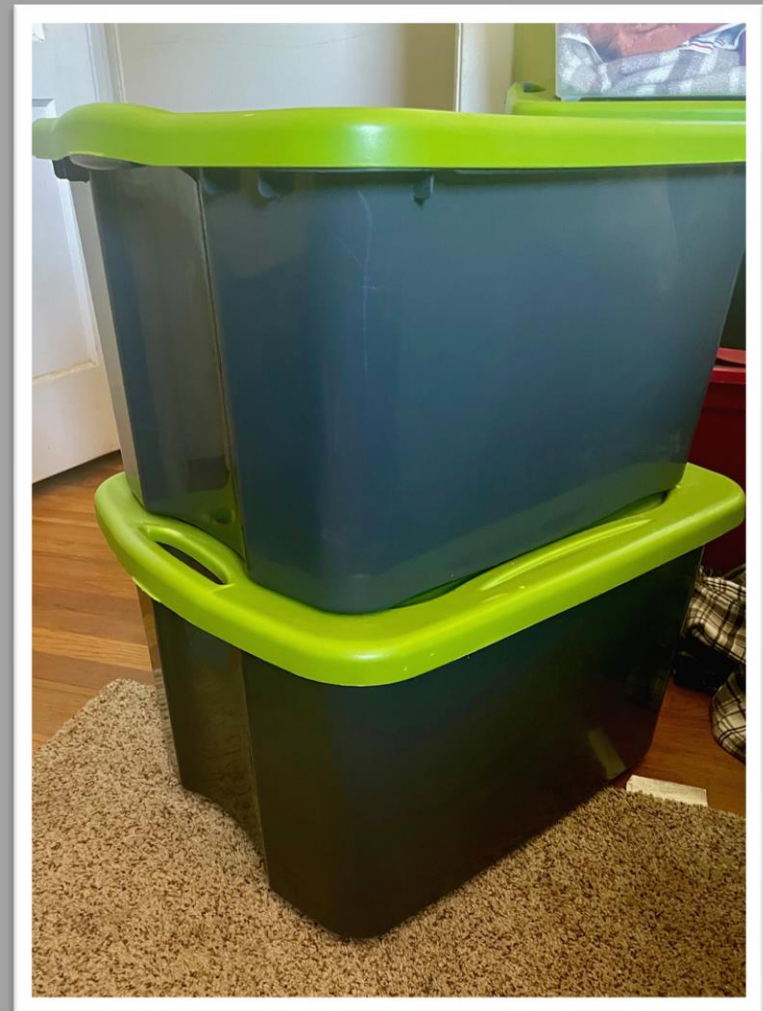


POLLUTANT TIPS FOR HOME

1. Minimize outdoor air from getting in if your environment has a lot of pollution, forest fire, etc.
2. Place item in box or cabinet to protect from dust, which over time is very abrasive.
3. Utilize air purifiers
4. Assure that A/C and Heating systems are serviced regularly.
5. Vacuuming out dust/dirt in your vents regularly
6. Smoke outside
7. Do not hang paintings adjacent to fireplace.
8. Many more to list—I am happy to provide more resources.



PACKING: MOVING OR HOUSE RENOVATION

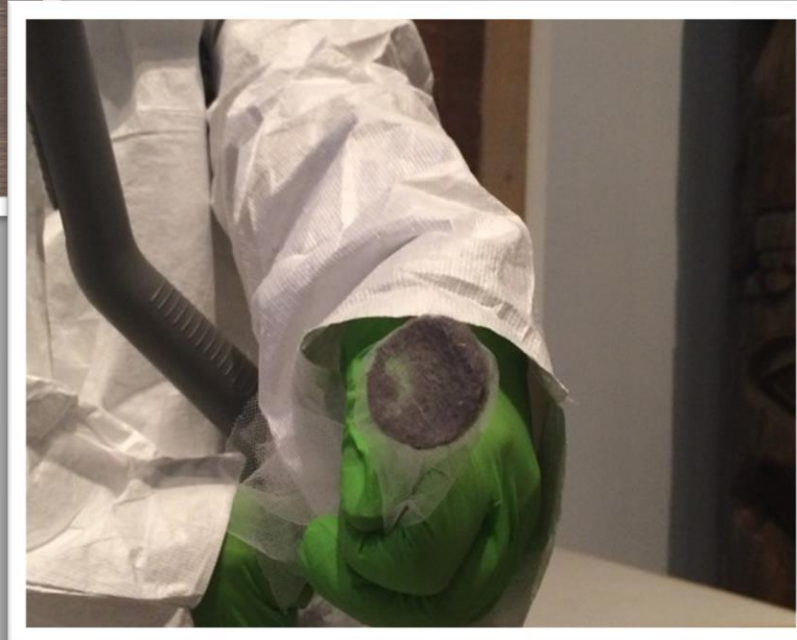


CLEANING & WHEN TO CALL FOR HELP



Hake brushes

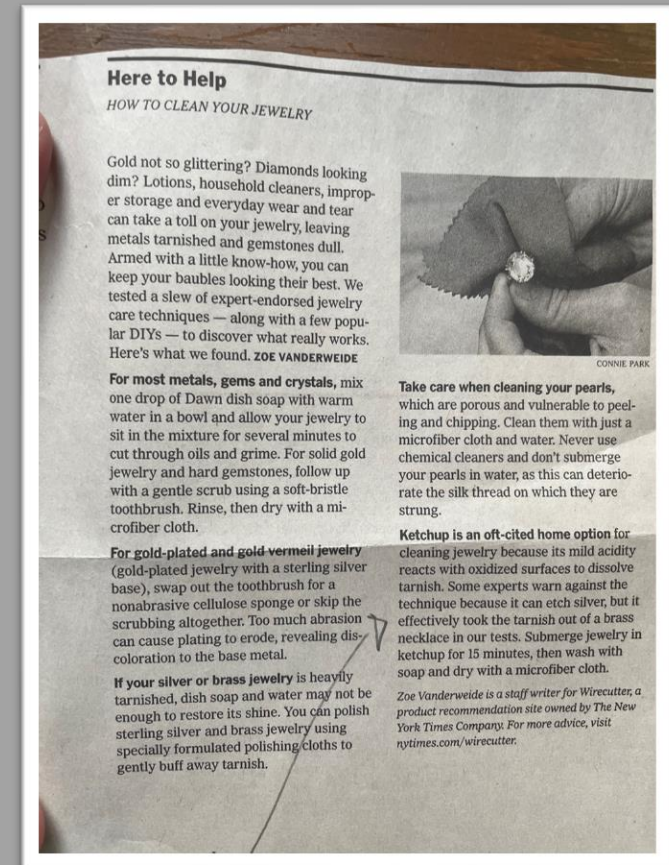
HEPA vacuum with screen
and dust cleaning



CLEANING TIPS

1. When using hake soft brushes, generally try to brush toward a microfiber cloth, so you are not redepositing the dust back into the air or back on the object.
2. HEPA filters vacuums are great (High Efficiency Particulate Air).
3. Never vacuum directly on fragile surfaces. Controlled vacuum suction is recommended.
4. When in doubt, consult a conservator or the original artist (if known). Cleaning can permanently damage objects

[American Institute for Conservation & Foundation for Advancement in Conservation \(culturalheritage.org\)](http://culturalheritage.org)
then “Find a Professional”



Always use caution with articles that give cleaning tips

EMERGENCIES



For dry climates, clearing brush that can create fuel for a fire

EMERGENCY TIPS



1. Daily walk-throughs
2. Have a few emergency supplies available:
 - Buckets/polyethylene sheeting/fans/wet vac/humidifier/dehumidifier
3. Keep electrical equipment unplugged: (example, hot glue guns)
4. Keeping items at least 4-6'' off ground
5. Identify where your main water shut off is in home.
6. Assure that your smoke detectors are in working order and do not need a battery change.
7. Assure fire extinguishers are available and you know where they are!



SECURITY & INSURANCE

- Security cameras
- Are contractors escorted?
- House and pet sitters' references
- Does my homeowner's insurance cover my artwork?



Resources

<https://www.artworkarchive.com/blog/how-to-insure-your-art-collection-the-right-way>

<https://www.investopedia.com/best-collectibles-insurance-5101072>

APPRAISALS AND DOCUMENTATION

- Appraisers Association of America:
<https://www.appraisersassociation.org/>
- Keep an inventory with photographs, provenance, documentation, artist names, etc.
 - Dissociation
- Avoid adhesive labels
- Benefits of cataloging art collection: a blog resource

<https://artcollection.io/blog/benefits-of-cataloging>



DOCUMENTATION FIELD RECOMMENDATIONS

- Item Name/Classification
- Brief Description
- Materials
- Measurements
- Artist
- Culture
- Date
- Provenance (where did you buy it from or who gave it to you)
- Value (through appraisal or record of purchase receipt)
- Photo (detail of signature, if applicable)
- Condition photos if damage occurred



DATABASE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ART COLLECTORS

- These databases focus on private collectors, galleries, etc.
- **Artwork Archive:** [Art Inventory Software - Easy Art Management | Artwork Archive](#)
- **Art Collection:** [Effortless Art Collection Organization | ArtCollection.io](#)
- **Artlogic:** [Art Gallery Software | Artlogic](#)
- There is also a long list of databases museums use, not listed here.

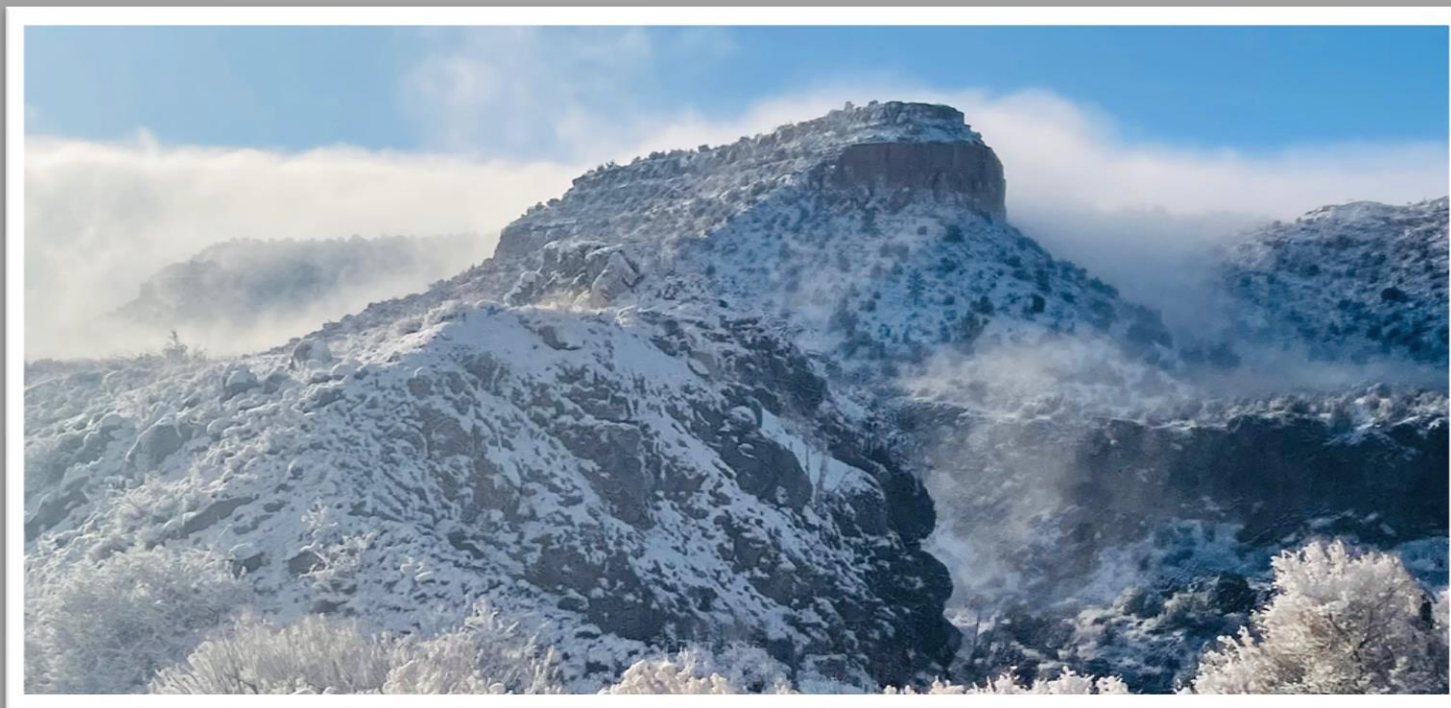




A FEW RESOURCES

- Go directly to the artist you bought the item from (or investigate with other family members).
- Collections Care: An Illustrated Handbook for the Care and Handling of Cultural Objects
- Caring for your Cherished Objects: The Winterthur Guide
- Caring for American Indian Objects: A Practical and Cultural Guide
- Old Poison, New Problems: A Museum Resource for Managing Contaminated Cultural Materials by Dr. Nancy Odegaard
- 11 Preventive Measures for Protecting Collections from Pest Infestations:
<https://www.artworkarchive.com/blog/11-preventive-measures-for-protecting-collections-from-pest-infestations>
- Canadian Conservation Institute (CCI) Notes: several resources on preventive care
<https://www.canada.ca/en/conservation-institute/services/conservation-preservation-publications/canadian-conservation-institute-notes.html>
- Conserve O Gram: online PDF resources for free
https://www.nps.gov/museum/publications/conservoogram/cons_toc.html#collectionpreservation
- Heritage Preservation:
 - Caring for your Collections
 - Caring for your Family Treasures

To learn more about SAR or IARC: <https://sarweb.org/>
Emuseum: <https://emuseum.sarsf.org>



Thank you!

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