

BMA Behind the Scenes

Winter 2011-2012

Preparing Prints for Exhibition

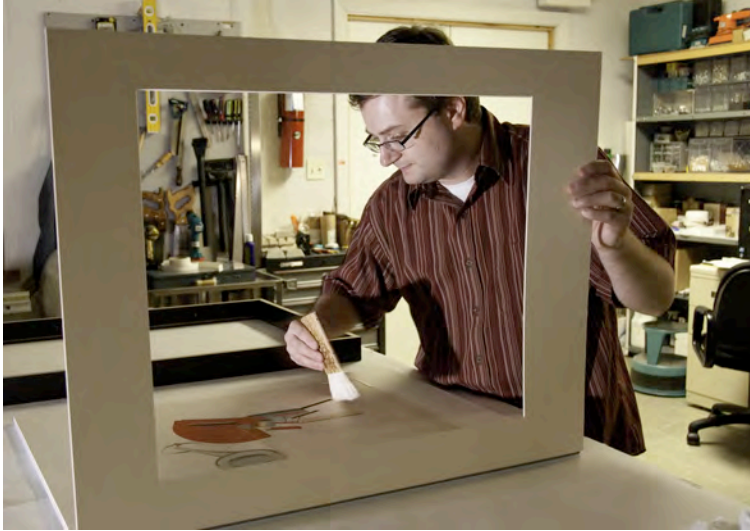


Photo by Mitro Hood

Micah Cash, the BMA's Conservation Technician for Paper, spent three months preparing nearly 350 prints for exhibition—painstakingly measuring each print and designing a mat uniquely suited to its proportions. Each mat required precision cutting, and each print had to be impeccably hinged or otherwise attached to the mat under a spotless sheet of plexiglass. Visitors to the BMA galleries may be so engrossed in the prints that they fail to notice Micah's work, but he takes that as a compliment. His goal, after all, is to present the prints as the stars of the show.

Here we see Micah lifting a window mat as he gently brushes a print to remove any stray speck of dust or strand of hair that might distract the viewer's attention from the image itself. He had already used a tape measure to determine the print's exact dimensions, a mat cutter to produce perfectly straight edges, and a tiny spatula or tweezer to lift the edge of the print before tucking it under a narrow strip of paper in the corner that holds it in place. Soon he will cover the matted print with a sheet of plexiglass, polish it with a cloth to remove all fingerprints, and finally add the black frame waiting on the table.

Connecting to 21st Century Skills

Even when deadlines loom and hundreds of prints await his attention, Micah Cash must remain calmly focused, working with the utmost attention to detail. Otherwise, ill-proportioned mats, wobbly ragged edges, stains, rips, or stray cuts could be the unfortunate result. Above all, he must use his considerable skills to handle and present each artwork with profound respect.

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El Lissitzky. *Announcer*. Plate 2 from the portfolio *Figurines: The Three-Dimensional Design of the Electro-Mechanical Show "Victory over the Sun."* 1920-1921, printed 1923. The Baltimore Museum of Art: Print Fund, BMA 1956.39.2. © 2011 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

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