

London Transport Museum Poster Collection

Collection care guidelines



Introduction

London Transport Museum is a heritage and education charity, and an accredited museum recognised by Arts Council England as having a Designated Outstanding Collection.

The Museum cares for a collection of more than 30,000 posters, representing up to 7,000 different designs, which include both preparatory artworks and finished printed posters.

TfL, London Transport and predecessor companies have been major commissioners of poster art in Britain since the beginning of the twentieth century. From 1908 onwards a wide variety of artists and designers were commissioned, ranging from the unknown to the well-established. This resulted in a collection of posters that reflect a huge range of artistic and graphic styles.

Guidelines

These guidelines provide information on handling, storing, and moving posters within museum collections.

Posters are usually created for short-term use and are often lithographically printed on to poor-quality paper. The paper can degrade with incorrect handling, use and storage.





Handling posters

- Before handling a poster, assess its condition to check that it is stable and durable enough for handling and look for any tears and weak areas.
- If posters are not in an archival polyester sleeve, handle them using thoroughly clean and dry hands. Oils on even clean hands can cause marks, so be mindful not to touch the printed area.
- Ensure that the poster is lifted using both hands and that it is supported adequately and no part is trailing.
- If moving a poster to another area, ensure your route is clear of obstructions and that the space you are moving to is clean, dry and uncluttered.
- Always lift to move, don't drag a poster across a surface as this can cause scratches.
- Only use pencil when working with posters.
- Never have food or drink near posters or leave liquids nearby that could spill or leak on to it.
- Do not lean on, or write on top of a poster, as this can leave an impression.

Marking numbers on to posters

- Only pencil should be used to mark a poster with its accession number (or other identifying number). The pencil should be soft, such as 2B grade. Harder grades will scratch into the surface.
- As with other museum objects, marking should be reversible, so write lightly. Write the number on the reverse making sure the poster is on a hard surface to avoid 'embossing' the number into the paper, which will be visible on the front.
- Use a good-quality eraser to remove numbers, such as a Staedtler Mars Plastic Eraser, which leaves no smear or residue.



Storage conditions for posters

Paper can be damaged or weakened by extreme or changing levels of temperature and relative humidity (RH).

- Store in cool and relatively dry conditions. 16-20°C and 40-60% RH.
- Keep light levels as low as possible for display, and ideally dark for storage.
- Store away from heat sources such as radiators and vents.
- Store flat.
- Use containers, such as drawers and boxes, that fit tightly to keep insects and dust out.
- Use Integrated Pest Management in stores.



Using polyester 'Melinex' protective sleeves

- Make sure that protective sleeves are polyester (not just plastic) and archival quality. These are inert and will not discolour or degrade.
- Be careful when inserting damaged or flimsy, delicate posters into sleeves. Insert using an acid-free paper or card support, which can be removed or left in place. Sleeves that open on the long, side edge are better for this.

Packing posters for transportation

Posters may need to be packed for transportation for a variety of reasons. The following measures should be used:

- Use a sturdy, archival solander box or case to transport posters.
- Sleeve or interleave with unbuffered acid-free tissue paper sheets.
- Use a box that is an appropriate size to accommodate the posters within their sleeves or tissue.



- Alternatively, pack the inside of the box using inert materials such as plastazote blocks or tissue wads, so that the posters don't move around too much inside.
- Make sure the box is kept the right way up by placing signs on the outside.
- Try to ensure the box will not tip in transit. If a box is tipped on its side, the contents will slip down and get damaged.



Archival/conservation product suppliers or services

Companies used by London Transport Museum for poster and artwork care

Preservation Equipment Ltd (PEL)

www.preservationequipment.com

Conservation by Design (CXD)

www.cxdinternational.com

Secol Ltd

(for polyester sleeves)

www.secol.co.uk

G. Ryder & Co Ltd

(handmade conservation storage boxes)

www.ryderbox.co.uk

Hanwell Environmental monitoring

(sensors and other devices)

www.hanwell.com

Historyonics

(for pest traps and insecticide spray)

www.historyonics.com

Clare Reynolds Paper Conservation

(cleaning, preservation and mounting)

www.reynoldspaperconservation.co.uk

Ph7 Paper Conservators

(cleaning, preservation mounting)

info@ph7thepaperconservators.co.uk



Further reading

www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/caring-for-the-paintings/paintings-and-their-environment?viewPage=3

www.nationalgallery.org.uk/research/research-resources/technical-bulletin

www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/c/caring-for-drawings

www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/c/caring-for-your-books-and-papers

www.vam.ac.uk/content/journals/conservation-journal/issue-29/the-power-of-the-poster-and-paper-conservation

www.bl.uk/help/how-to-handle-prints-drawings-and-photographs

WOOD LANE

TO
ANYWHERE



ltmuseum.co.uk

Registered charity number 1123122

Copyright London Transport Museum, 2022

Photography by Hannah Stevens, Khadija Saye Photography Fellow 2021/22