

THE NATIONAL GALLERY

GLAZING FOR PICTURES RISK MANAGEMENT STATEMENT

GLAZING FOR PICTURES October 2011

Policy owner: Director of Conservation

Introduction

The Gallery prefers to show its paintings unglazed when possible, chiefly because glazing is always an impediment to the public's full appreciation and enjoyment of the collection. Even the most modern low-reflecting glass has a slight but perceptible effect on the colour of a painting and only reduces rather than entirely eliminates reflection.

However, glazing is sometimes necessary to meet security requirements, for the protection of vulnerable paint surfaces, and for other related reasons.

Risks

The following are considered the principal risks related to glazing:

- Damage to unglazed pictures caused by vandalism;
- Financial loss arising from damage to pictures, either through staff time involved in the repair of pictures or in extreme cases the loss of the picture itself;
- Reputational impact of damage to pictures, even where that damage is repairable;
- Damage to paint surfaces while pictures are in transit;
- Compromised visitor experience where pictures are unnecessarily glazed.

Policy

The main categories where glazing may be necessary are:

- All works on paper, except for oil studies on paper attached to canvas or on millboard, etc.
- Glue-size paintings.
- Paintings in less easily invigilated spaces.
- Paintings which do not have barrier rails in front of them.
- Unlined, or particularly fragile paintings.
- Pictures with relatively leanly-bound passages of exposed vermilion or vermilion-rich paint.¹
- Unvarnished paintings.
- Small and highly important loans, or loan paintings whose owners wish them to be glazed.
- Recent acquisitions which have attracted a lot of publicity, perhaps because a great deal of public money has been spent, and which it is felt might be the subject of vandalism.

¹ Some of these works are within large altarpiece constructions that are not possible to glaze, however.

- Famous paintings which attract so many visitors that they are difficult to invigilate, or are of the highest cultural significance.
- Paintings which the public have an impulse to touch or which may be vulnerable to persistent pointing.
- Loans from the collection are glazed if the borrowing institution does not have barrier rails or sometimes for conservation reasons.

Responsibilities

The Director and Director of Conservation are responsible for making decisions about whether or not a particular painting should be glazed.