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## Western Art – Western Mends

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With all the many useful applications of Japanese tissues in conservation, it is also true that they are rarely an aesthetic match for Western art on paper because of the different qualities of the fibers used. Mends with thin tissues made from Western paper fibers are far more likely to be complimentary to the artwork. And while building a color palette of samples may take some time originally, it greatly facilitates the mending process.

Western paper-mends are made from the pulp of antique papers and cast in thin strips. The advantages of these strips are the malleable nature of the dry pulp that can be manipulated to blend with the artwork; the compatibility of fibers with the original; the purity of the pulp; and the ease of application.

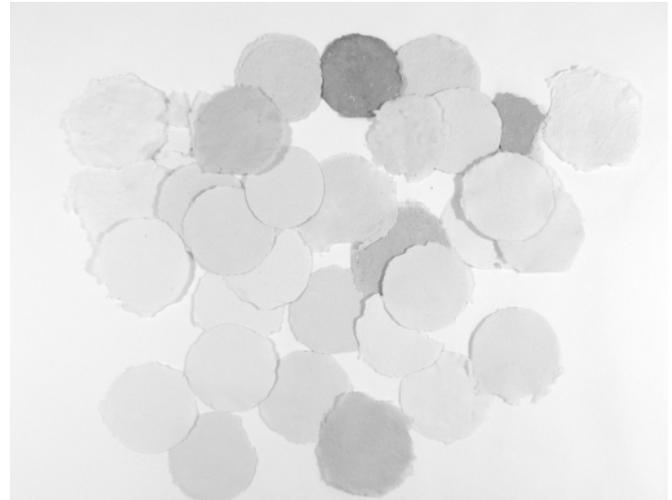


The process is simple and familiar to paper conservators. Antique paper is washed and pulped, similar to preparation for typical pulp fills. Older papers behave best as they have less sizing, no fillers, no synthetics, and if hammer-beaten, defi-

brillate well. Addition of either chemical neri (available from Hiromi Paper, suggested by Joan Irving) or isopropyl alcohol will assist with an even distribution of fibers.

With the use of a bulb or dropper, the pulp is deposited on hollytex over an absorbent material and left to dry. Depending on use, the pulp can be burnished, tooled, added to, shaped, or edges cleaned up. The result is a length of hollytex with dried pulp mending strips ready to use or to store.

A distinct advantage is that no in-painting of the mends is needed. This depends on a large color palette of mends available so that a perfect match can be made. Over time, it is possible to build up a supply so that color matching is effortless.



In general, this is done by pulping and casting many shades of white and brown tones and storing them in an organized manner. I use clear photo pocket sleeves and cast a larger reference disk along with the mending strips.



The color disk can be used for fills or to make more pulp in the future. These are stored in a binder by color family and makes matching easy. Since the mending strips are already dry, there is no guessing with color-matching. Because the pulp has been previously washed, there will be no color shifts.

For a standard mend, the matched strip is pasted on the hollytex support, turned over the gap and burnished through the hollytex onto the tear. Alternatively, the mending strip can be removed from the hollytex, pasted out and applied. Since these strips have no sizing and are lightly held together, more care is needed when handling them. Sometimes it is easier to apply the paste to the tear, apply the mending strip, burnish into place, and weigh until dry.



Often it is preferred to mend the front of the tear with very dilute gelatin to secure position and alignment of fibers and to secure the internal network to be mended. When dry, the reverse can be mended with the matching mend and starch paste. An interdental small stiff brush is useful in rolling out compact fibers and helping them to lay flat.

Ideally, the fibers will work together, zipper-like, rather than overlapping so that the eventual mend on the reverse provides opacity to thin areas and is complimentary to the blended mend on the front. This creates a near-invisible mend.

Western fibers are opaque which makes them suited for covering flaws on the surface of an artifact. A particularly difficult mend is a cracked plate mark that is split presenting as a dark gap that is distracting to the print. If mended from the reverse, the split still shows.

A very thin Western fiber mend on the front is opaque enough to cover the split, yet compatible and invisible as a mend. Using gelatin, funori, or starch paste with some glass beads added can change the refractive index and make the adhesive invisible in the mend. This same technique can be used for other surface flaws or dirty tears on the face of the artifact

