

# Storing Paintings Properly

*What To Do When You Run Out Of Wall Space*

By HOWARD L. REHS

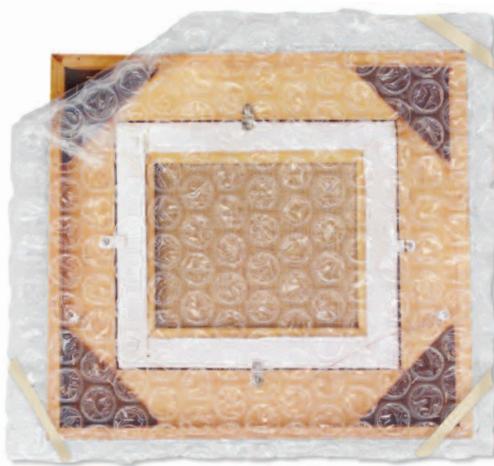
**I**T GOES WITHOUT SAYING that the best place to keep a work of art is on the wall of your home or office, where you can enjoy it, but works of art occasionally need to be stored. There are two options for storing your works safely.

One option is to contact a vault storage company that specializes in handling works of art. The company will pick up the work(s), pack them properly and store them for any length of time. Before choosing a vault storage company, ensure that the storage environment is stable and climate-controlled. Ask if the company offers insurance, or if you must provide it yourself. Determine if you'll have access to the works when you want them, and check the company's references first, to ensure that you're dealing with a reputable business.

I would not recommend using a self-storage facility. While these are much less expensive and easier to access, self-storage units are rarely climate-controlled. Your artworks will be subject to environmental changes, which can be harmful.

If a suitable facility cannot be located, or if the expense is too great, you can store the works of art in your home by following these steps:

1. Find an area with little daily traffic. I recommend a closet, preferably one in the main area of the house,



where changes in temperature and humidity are limited. I would not place works of art in an attic, garage or basement, unless these areas are temperature-controlled.

2. Next, wrap each work of art that will be stored. For framed artwork: Tightly wrap the painting with bubble wrap or a storage blanket, and seal it with packing tape. Do not allow the wrapping material to come in contact with the surface of the painting. Then, place a piece of hard board (corrugated, Fome-Cor, thin plywood, etc.) against both the front and back of the work, and tape this together with additional packing tape.

For unframed artwork: Cover the front of the canvas with a sheet of silicone release paper, then wrap the work with glassine paper. Next, place some hard board (in this case, Fome-Cor would be preferable) against both the front and back. Add a final layer of

bubble wrap or a blanket, and hold the pieces in place with packing tape.

Never allow packing materials (other than silicone release paper) to rest against the surface of your artwork. Bubble wrap and blankets can leave impressions — and sometimes even fabric fibers — in the surface of paintings. I've seen it happen! Keep in mind that the surfaces of most paintings are covered with a layer of varnish. If your storage area gets very hot, the top layer of varnish may get tacky. If something is resting across the front of the painting, it will stick.

3. Stack the works in the closet vertically, to help prevent damage. If you are storing more than one work of art, start with the largest — placing the front of the painting toward the wall — and work your way down in size.

4. Close the closet door, and your works should be safe!

With a few simple precautions, the works can be safely stored for years. ■

HOWARD L. REHS, president of the Art & Antiques Dealers League of America, is writing the catalogue raisonné on both Julien Dupré and Daniel Ridgway Knight. For more information, contact Rehs Galleries, Inc., 5 East 57th St., Eighth Floor, New York, NY 10022; 212.355.5710; [www.rehsgalleries.com](http://www.rehsgalleries.com).