

Mastering Mounting

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Versatile Offset Clips

Where does mounting end and fitting begin? When mounting hardboard, canvas, or panel, it comes down to the hardware. When framing a stretched canvas, adding a liner, or creating a shadowbox, the best design solution is to select a frame deep enough to accommodate the bulk of the inner elements. But there are times when a customer refit or repair doesn't allow for the luxury of frame selection. In either case—deep enough or sticking out the back—offset clips might be the perfect hardware to accommodate the needs.

Offset Clips

This Z-shaped hardware is also referred to as an offset, canvas offset, offset mounting clip, Z-clip, or frame clip and has a zinc-plated stair-step shape with rounded corners designed to affix various levels of stacked frames or liners or to install deep paintings. Clips are available as 1/8", 1/4", 3/8", 1/2", 3/4", 1" and 1-1/4" depths, with and

When the art isn't deep enough or sticks out the back, offset clips might be the perfect hardware

without holes on both ends, though double holes allow for the most options. They are generally affixed to the units with #6

pan or roundhead metal screws at a screw length long enough to hold soundly while not threading through the art board or frame.

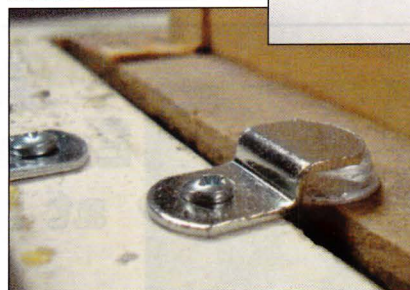
When stacking liners or frames, the second hole allows for screws to solidify the separate units. Liners may be added to frames, and

without holes on both ends, though double holes allow for the most options. They are generally affixed to the units with #6



Offset clips with double holes allow for screwing uneven layers.

In this example, the top end is screwed to the frame while the bottom end is pressing the backed canvas to hold it.



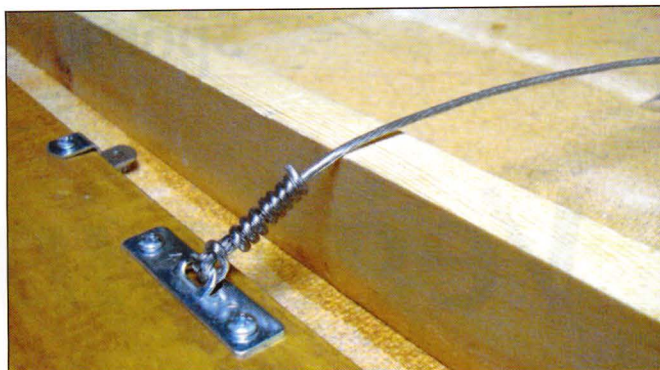
Masonite is held with a 1/8" offset and a 3M clear bumpon.

stacked mouldings may be joined using the offset clip method, too. Though clips come with one or two holes, the second hole may or may not be used. The example shows an antique oil painting backed with 3/16" Artcare Foam, #6 wood screws, and washers. The rabbet was both sealed with aluminum barrier tape and stripped with Volara.

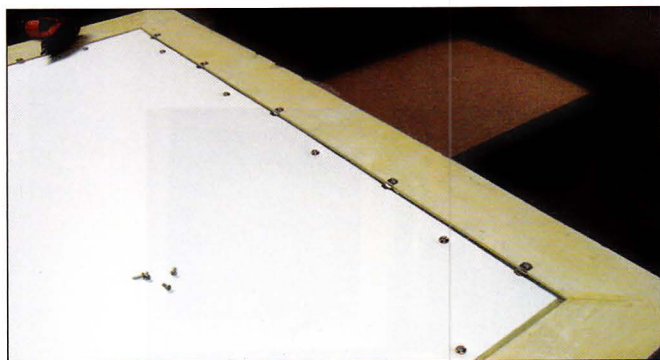
An artist brought in a broken 24"x48" frame that had fallen from the wall for repair and re-fitting. It required 3/8" clips to be added to secure the loose linen-wrapped wood liner into the shallow decorative frame. The original egg tempera painting on 1/4" hardboard had been backed with 1/2"x1-1/2" pine strips glued to the back of the panel. The hardboard art was fitted into the artist's frame using



The lifter is spread at the corners due to warping of the panel.



A screw eye was replaced with a steel plate and heavy wire for more reliability.



This 30"x46" painting has a foam backing screwed to the bars with clips set about 10" apart.



These commercial canvas clips are mounted in shallow wood rabbet.

1/8" clips with clear plastic bumpers beneath to prevent the art panel from slipping while still snugly holding it in place. The fitting was totally reversible, and the panel was held with a 1/8" space on all sides.

The 1-1/2" deep lifter was added by the artist prior to painting to help keep the hardboard from warping, but the four pieces were only glued along the edge when attached to the hardboard and not at the corners. There was a visible gap at the top of each corner where the lifter was spreading, but the artist wanted to keep the strips when refitting.

Mounting and Fitting Art

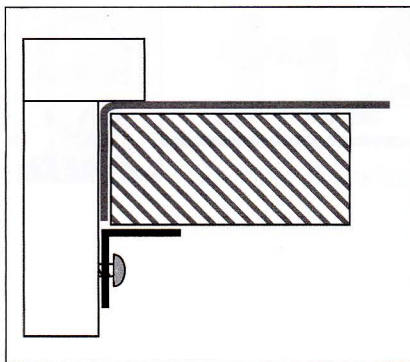
If this frame had been deep enough to accommodate the lifters or if they could have been removed, a 90-degree corner angle could have

been used to hold the framing package. But a corner angle does not allow for stretched art to be suspended from the lip of a frame. A double-hole offset clip allows for suspending a canvas away from contact to the wood frame—sealed or not—thus preventing the surface of the painting from possible surface damage. There is more variety in the length of an offset over a corner angle, and they are available from most framing suppliers.

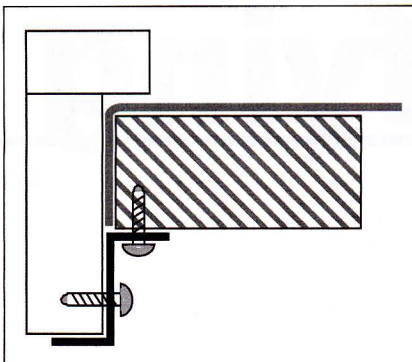
Offsets are also well suited to attaching canvases and cradled boxes to float frames—floaters—and are the logical alternative to screw eyes or pan screws. Screwing to the back of a float frame does leave the screw head projecting out the back, which could damage the wall, so selecting a longer offset and attaching it horizontally prevents screw heads from touching the wall.

When the hardboard fits inside the depth of the allotted frame, offsets may step down to contact the panel. The same artist brought in a second piece for refitting. The frame did not require additional reinforcement or repair, but the original art was on a 1/4" Masonite panel also backed with glued lifters. The 3/8" offsets were also padded with 3M clear bumpers to hold the Masonite panel and prevent it from shifting. By placing three clips per side, the art was held snugly with a 3/32" space surrounding it in the frame.

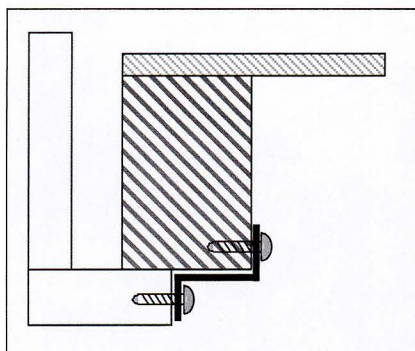
Any time layers project behind a frame, it is difficult to install a dust cover, though in this case one was not needed. There is also the issue of hanging hardware and wire caused by the additional stresses of unusual placement. Originally a screw eye was used to hold the wire,



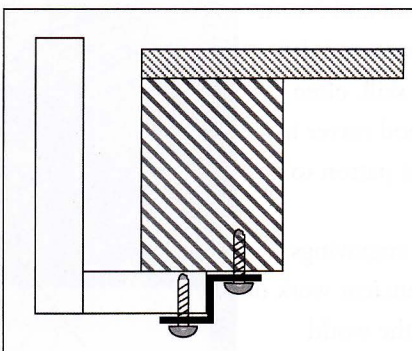
A stretched canvas in a deep cap frame is held by a 90-degree corner angle.



Stretched canvas in deep cap frame is held away from the lip by a 3/4" offset clip.

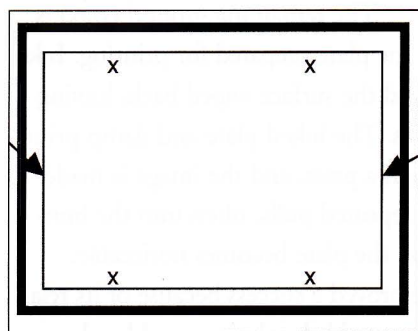


A cradled box in deep float frame is held with a 1/4" to 1/2" offset clip. The screw head touches the wall.



A cradled box in a float frame is held with a 3/4" offset clip on the inside back.

but this was replaced with a two-hole steel hanger and coated wire. The plate will better dissipate the stresses on the wood of the frame, and the heavier wire will better tolerate being stretched across the pine



Offset clips should be placed every 8" to 10" including sides.

liner. Plus, the additional 1-1/4" pine strip that sticks out beyond the back of the traditional frame lifts it from the wall, making it appear to hover and creating additional shadows. Though this may be a popular

look for contemporary photographs on aluminum substrates and acrylic art, it does not bode well for traditional frames and egg tempera. Unfortunately, economy was more important to this customer, so a new frame was not an option.

Clip Placement

At least four offset clips should be used per small painting, two across the top and two across the bottom. Additional clips at the center of each short side may be needed. As the painting gets larger, offsets should be set 8" to 10" apart around the perimeter. The stretched canvas is backed with 3/16" foam, screws and washers set about 9" apart, and affixed into the bars. The clips, in turn, were placed alternately between them.

Canvas Clips

Canvas clips, also called bar clips, are pieces of hardware specifically designed for holding canvases. Sold predominantly to artists, they are designed to work in frames both deep enough for the traditional depth canvas bars and for those that stick a little beyond the depth of the rabbet. For artists, they are simple, one-piece spring-steel clips designed to fit 1-1/2" to 1-3/4" stretcher bars. They are reusable and easy to install, and they require no tools, adhesives, or fasteners. They wedge into the gap between the stretcher and the frame. When pressed down against the bar, the teeth pierce the inside edge of the frame rabbet, while the opposite end of the clip snaps down to grab the inside of the stretcher bar to hold it in the frame.

Though this commercial solution is far better than using a bent nail, it is still not the most secure nor professional solution to fitting a canvas. If canvas clips have been your hardware of choice for the installation of canvases, try offset clips instead. They are far more versatile and reusable and are what the pros really use. ■

Chris A. Paschke, CPF, GCF, CMG, mounting editor, owns Designs Ink in Tehachapi, CA, featuring custom framing, fine art/graphic design, and consulting. Specializing in mounting, matting, design, and fine art, she teaches at The National Conference. She has written four books on mounting including *The Mounting and Laminating Handbook* (third edition) and *Creative Mounting, Wrapping, and Laminating*, available from PFM PubCo. She may be contacted through www.designsinkart.com.