

Top tips: Salvaging flood-damaged paintings

Following these steps will minimise the loss of flood-damaged paintings, preventing further damage.

Mould can develop within 48 hours, but with quick action you can increase the chance of successfully recovering your paintings.

1. Create a plan

Take a moment to assess, survey, and develop a plan. Consider which items may take a priority, weighing between levels of value and damage by sorting according to wetness (light, medium, heavy). Document the condition of your painting with photographs and written notes.



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2. Handle with care

Protect yourself by wearing PPE (waterproof gloves and a face mask).

- Hold paintings with both hands, and if heavy or oversized carry between two people.
- Do not lift frames by their top edge.
- Avoid touching the paint or canvas surfaces and be careful with decorative frames.
- If the painting is still very wet, when lifting, tilt to allow excess water to drain off.

3. Aid the drying process

Work in a dry environment, increase air circulation with fans and open windows. Use a dehumidifier if possible. Allow the paint surface to dry untouched.

Paintings can be placed face-up on raised blocks under each corner to allow air circulation beneath. If there is no space for this, lean your painting against a wall with its bottom edge raised by something rigid and stable. Place cardboard behind the painting's top edge to protect it from the wall.

Separating the painting from its framing can aid drying. However, this can be risky,

especially if glass is cracked. Proceed with care and contact a conservator if you need guidance.

4. Things to avoid

- Do not attempt cleaning or mud removal with wet paintings.
- Do not freeze paintings as this will damage them.
- Do not wrap wet paintings in plastic for storage, as this will promote mould growth.
- Do not try to aid the drying process with heaters or hairdryers etc as direct heat can damage paint layers further.

5. When to call a conservator

Look out for cracking, lifting, or flaking paint layers, mould growth, warping of wooden frames and supports, or any other noticeable change. Contact a qualified painting conservator through NZCCM's public directory for further assistance: www.nzccm.org.nz

For more detailed information on salvaging your paintings, see AICCM's (www.aiccm.org.nz) web resources on drying flood-damaged artworks.