

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

RULES FOR MEASURING ART COLLECTIONS

GENERAL

1. Works of art are measured in both the English and the metric systems. Give complete English measurements first followed by metric measurements in parentheses. English measurements are expressed in inches (not feet), and metric measurements in centimeters. The metric measurements include one digit to the right of the decimal point, even if it is zero.

EXAMPLE: (Painting) 14 x 20" (35.5 x 50.8 cm.)

2. Frames, bases, etc., which are not integral parts of the work, are measured in the English system only. Frame size is omitted from Museum Collection records unless the frame was made by the artist as an integral part of the work.

EXAMPLE: (Frame) 24 1/8 x 36 1/2 x 3 1/4" d.

3. List height first, then width, then depth if needed.

EXAMPLE: (Low relief) 36 1/2 x 20 5/8 x 3" d. (92.7 x 52.4 z 7.7 cm.)

4. All measurements are taken to the next larger unit, not the nearest unit.

EXAMPLE: Actual size 13 1/64" h. (33.07 cm.); record as: 13 1/8" h. (33.1 cm.)

5. Whenever possible, both English and metric measurements are made directly from the work and at the same time.

6. If a work is irregular in shape, the abbreviation "(irreg.)" follows the measurements in parentheses.

EXAMPLE: (Drawing) Sheet 14 x 20" (35.5 x 50.8 cm.) (irreg.)

PAINTINGS (essentially two-dimensional works in any medium on a rigid support such as a stretcher, strainer, panel, or cradle)

1. Measure to the next larger eighth of an inch and to the next larger millimeter.
2. Measure the rigid support (stretcher, panel, etc.) only. Measure on the back if possible.
3. Measure:

*Rectangular paintings --- Right and lower edges

Circular paintings --- Diameter

EXAMPLE: (Painting) 63 7/8" diam. (162.3 cm.)

Oval paintings --- Major and minor axes

EXAMPLE: (Painting) 42 1/2 x 28" (oval) (108.0 x 71.1 cm.)

Lozenge-shaped paintings --- Major and minor axes

EXAMPLE: (Painting) 27 3/4 x 27 3/4" (diagonal measurements) (70.5 x 70.5 cm.)

Irregular paintings --- Maximum height and width, and whatever else is necessary (describe shape)

*NOTE: Since paintings are measured from the back, the left and lower edges are used. If one side is considerably different, this should be noted.

4. If the frame was made by the artist as an integral part of the work, measure the frame (in both inches and centimeters), including depth (total projection from a flat surface).

EXAMPLE: (Painting) 86 5/8 x 57" (220.0 x 144.8 cm.)
Artist's painted frame: 90 x 60 1/2 x 3" d. (128.6 x 153.7 x 7.6 cm.)

5. Because paintings change slightly in size, old measurements may be incorrect. Existing records should not be changed unless there is a discrepancy of at least 1/4". Paintings must always be remeasured after conservation work other than cleaning.

WATERCOLORS AND DRAWINGS (works other than prints, photographs, or posters, on paper or similar nonrigid material, including oil on paper if it is not mounted on a rigid support)

1. Measure to the next larger eighth of an inch and to the next larger millimeter.

2. Always give sheet measurements first preceded by the word, "Sheet."

EXAMPLE: (Drawing) Sheet 8 7/8 x 7" (22.6 x 17.8 cm.) (irreg.)

3. If it is impossible to measure the sheet, measure the mat opening. Give this measurement first preceded by the word, "Sight." This is to be avoided whenever possible.

EXAMPLE: (Pastel) Sight 9 x 12 1/2" (22.9 x 31.8 cm.)

4. If the artist has made an outline, give this measurement also, preceded by the abbreviation, "Comp."

EXAMPLE: (Watercolor) Sheet 21 3/4 x 36" (55.2 x 91.5 cm.)
Comp. 20 x 34 1/2" (50.8 x 87.7 cm.) (irreg.)

5. In some cases where there is no outline indicated, it may be advisable to measure the composition or decorated area in addition to sheet measurements. If this is done, type "Comp." before the measurements. (See p. 5, No. 3, Lithographs and Woodcuts.)

6. For various shapes, see PAINTINGS above.

SCULPTURE AND CONSTRUCTIONS

1. The goal in measuring sculpture is to determine the dimensions of the smallest rectangular area which could enclose the object.
2. Measure to the next larger eighth of an inch and to the next larger millimeter.
3. Always record height. Then measure the width and depth if either extends beyond the base, or if there is no base. Give all three dimensions of the base.

EXAMPLE: (Bronze sculpture) 29 1/8" h. (74.0 cm.) including bronze base
6 h. x 5 w. x 4 1/2" d. (15.3 x 12.7 x 11.4 cm.) Wt. 56 lbs.

4. In listing dimensions, height comes first, then width (greater horizontal dimension), then depth (the lesser horizontal dimension). If the greater horizontal dimension exceeds the height, the term "length" rather than "width" should be used.

EXAMPLE: (Bronze sculpture) 6 5/8 h. x 11 1/4 l. x 3 1/2" d.
(16.8 x 28.5 x 8.9 cm.) on marble base 2 3/4 h. x 11.1 x 4 3/8" d.
(7.0 x 27.9 x 11.1 cm.). Wt. 6 lbs. incl. base.

Also see above.

5. Mark each measurement with "h." for height, "w." for width, "l." for length, or "d." for depth.

EXAMPLE: See above.

6. Always list weight in pounds of the whole and of each separate piece. If weight includes an attached base, say "incl. base", but if the base and sculpture are actually one single mass of material, omit this.

EXAMPLE: (Wood sculpture with separate stone base by the same artist)
73" h. (185.3 cm.) on stone base 8 h. x 14 1/4" diam. (20.3 x
36.2 cm.). Wt. 124 lbs. (a. 56 lbs., b. 68 lbs.)

7. Bases

- a. Freestanding sculpture with separate base by the artist; height without base (plus width and depth if important), then material, height, width, and depth of the base; then weight of sculpture and weight of base.

EXAMPLE: See "6" above.

- b. Freestanding sculpture with a base of the same material permanently attached or in one piece with the sculpture: height (including base) plus width and depth (if important) plus material and height, width, and depth of the base; then weight including base.

EXAMPLE: See "3" above.

NOTE: Endless combinations of bases, separate and attached, are possible, but rules for almost any arrangement can be derived from the above. Every separate piece must be measured and weighed. Dimensions of the assembled whole should precede those of the individual parts.

8. Reliefs

a. Hanging relief:

Height plus width plus depth (total projection from the wall including any framing element which may be an integral part of the work).

EXAMPLE: (Plaster relief) 34" h. x 23 1/4" w. x 2 1/2" d. (86.4 x 59.0 x 6.3 cm.) Wt. 17 lbs.

b. Relief with "artist's base," attached or not:

Include base measurements as for freestanding sculpture.

EXAMPLE: (Bronze relief) 74" h. x 56 1/2" w. x 8" d. (188.0 x 143.5 x 20.3 cm.) including bronze base 4" h. x 56 1/2" w. x 8" d. (10.1 x 143.5 x 20.3 cm.) Wt. 424 lbs.

9. Special cases

a. Sculpture in two or more separate sections:

If the artist requires that the pieces be shown on a certain fixed relationship, the overall dimensions must be given. If not, treat each section separately.

b. Suspended sculpture (including mobiles): height and maximum diameter

EXAMPLE: (Mobile) 23" h. x 52" (approx.) max. diam. (58.4 x 132.1 cm.) Wt. 10 1/2 lbs.

NOTE: It is often impossible to measure a mobile as precisely as other sculpture. It should be measured in its most extended natural position.

c. Motorized sculpture:

Measure at rest in its most extended position according to rules for freestanding sculpture or relief or mobile, whichever seems reasonable.

PRINTS

1. Measure to the next larger sixteenth of an inch and to the next larger millimeter.

2. Intaglio (etchings, engravings, drypoints, etc.)

a. Measure "plate mark" first.

b. Also measure "sheet" as above under WATERCOLORS AND DRAWINGS.

c. Give "sight" measurements only if it is impossible to measure the sheet.

3. Lithographs and Woodcuts (including wood engravings, cellocuts, etc.) Measure "sheet" first, then composition. In the case of an irregular composition, that is, one which does not fill the entire sheet or have a regular outline, measure the composition by extending an imaginary outline around the outermost parts of the composition. This is easily done by using two transparent triangles or strips of any transparent material.
4. For various shapes, see PAINTINGS above.

PHOTOGRAPHS

1. Measure to the next larger sixteenth of an inch and to the next larger millimeter.
2. Measure the composition only, not the sheet.
3. Usually the size of a photographic print is recorded only when it enters the Museum Collection.

POSTERS

1. Measure to the next larger eighth of an inch and to the next larger millimeter.
2. Measure sheet only.

ARCHITECTURAL MODELS

1. Measure to the next larger eighth of an inch and to the next larger millimeter.
2. Measure height, by length, by width.
3. Mark each measurement with "h." for height, etc., as for sculpture.

DESIGN COLLECTION

1. Material in sheet form:
See routine for WATERCOLORS AND DRAWINGS, PRINTS, or POSTERS, whichever seems appropriate.
2. Three-dimensional material:
 - a. Measure to the next larger eighth of an inch and to the next larger millimeter.
 - b. Give principal dimensions. If height is included, it comes first.
 - c. If handles, bases, etc. are measured, this must be indicated.
 - d. Mark each measurement with "h." for height, etc., as for sculpture.