

Mastering Mounting

by Chris A. Paschke, CPF, GCF



The Yupo Challenge

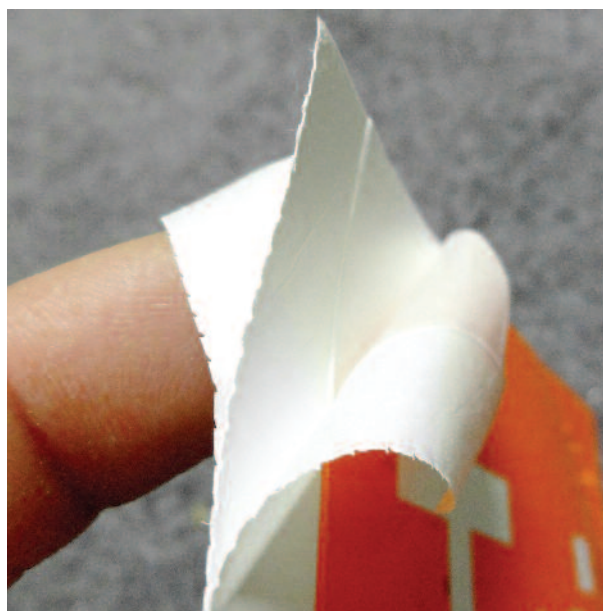
Having been developed as an eco-friendly wood alternative, synthetic papers were originally designed as “green” products for the printing/signage industry. They include various grades of plastics such as polyvinyl chloride (PVC), polystyrene, polyethylene, polypropylene, and polyester/nylon. Since they are receptive to paint, it also stands to reason that artists would embrace them. Many new products are currently being sold for this use by art, paper, and printing suppliers in roll, single sheet, tablet, and/or sketchbook form. The

most popular among these is Yupo.

Yupo is polypropylene, which is satin-coated and feels like a coated paper. Once completed, synthetic original paintings on Yupo still need to be protected and con-

figured into a wall display, but that is where things vary from the traditional. Artists can still mat, glaze, and frame synthetic paper as they would any watercolor paper, but they may also opt for an open-air float frame, cradled box, or mounting to some other rigid substrate for a no-frame look. For larger art, Yupo is available 60” wide x 10 yards. The more contemporary the presentation, the more it tends to require cleats or stand-offs as hanging hardware.

Yupo is a synthetic paper that is increasingly popular among artists, posing special challenges for framers



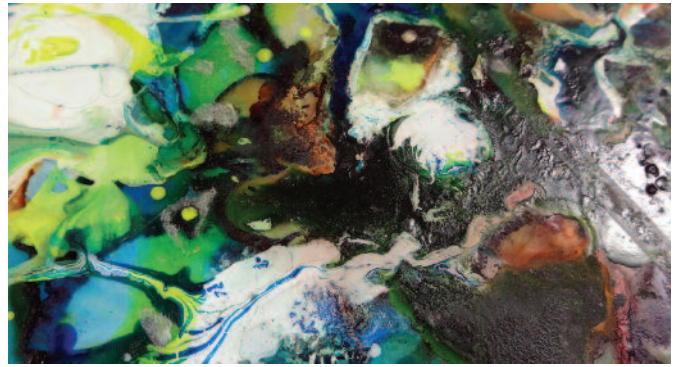
Yupo consists of three extruded polypropylene layers fused together into a sheet. Thin top and bottom layers are fused to a heavier center core.

About Yupo

Yupo is a neutral pH, ultra-smooth, non-absorbent/waterproof, 100 percent recyclable, tear- and chemical-resistant, tree-free sheet. It has properties that make it perfect for a variety of marketing, design, packaging, and labeling needs. Yupo is extruded from polypropylene pellets. There are three layers to the material. Sheer surface and base layers are formed during the extruding process and are bonded to a heavier core, which creates a dimensionally stable substrate. These layers may be split if not handled correctly, which may occur when attempting to remove ATG. It is available in various text and cover weights--translucent and opaque--with 74# white, 144# white, and 104# translucent as the most popular choices of artists for watercolor, gouache, alcohol ink, and acrylic.



(L-R) TerraSkin made of calcium carbonate/polyethylene resin; Yupo polypropylene opaque white 74# and 144#; and Yupo translucent 104#.



This heavily textured mixed media by Tina Dille on translucent Yupo better camouflages paper irregularities and color ghosting once mounted to 1/8" hardboard.

Alcohol ink and acrylic are permanent and do not wash off.

Unlike conventional papers, Yupo's surface may be totally wiped clean to restore the original white of the sheet long after water-based color has dried. So painting is sometimes created by painting the negatives, applying pigment, then taking away color to create the finished image. For example, "Challenge Yourself" by Tina Dille is a 26"x40" watercolor on opaque white Yupo. The artist has left a vast expanse of negative white, unpainted paper surrounding the mouse as an integral part of the painting, as often occurs with letterpress and hand-pulled lithographs. This smooth, unpainted white area allows undulations from adhesive application or substrate choice to be visible after mounting. When color or texture fills the entire page, mounting irregularities are better camouflaged. A second Dille sample is a heavily textured mixed media work on translucent Yupo mounted to 1/8" hardboard.

Removing ATG

Artists often use ATG two-sided tape to hold Yupo to a painting board. Since Yupo is a multiple-ply laminated sheet, the bottom layer may be split from the core if the P-S adhesive is not softened or dissolved with solvent prior to removal. A chemical solvent does not



"Challenge Yourself" by Tina Dille is a 26"x40" is watercolor on opaque white Yupo. The vast expanse of white negative space surrounding the image is a formal part of the painting and cannot be cut or covered. This smooth, unpainted white area allows visible undulations from adhesive application or substrate choice to be visible.
Courtesy of Tina Dille (<http://DilleArt.com>).

impact water-based pigment, and water as a solvent won't impact chemical-based pigments (alcohol ink). Using solvents near original art, however, is not something a framer should be considering in the first place.

In a recent project, an artist mounted a completed painting with double-sided tape to a piece of slate as part of a no-frame look. The artist then decided that heavy slate was not easy to display and attempted to peel the Yupo from the stone—rather than using a solvent—and the back layer of polypropylene remained adhered, splitting the layers at the corner.

If a layer of paper remains on the



TerraSkin recoils badly at highest setting of a clothes iron but is fine with tacking iron. Heat should remain below 150oF. TerraSkin UV degradable paper is marketed as "paper made of stone."

back corners of the Yupo, sometimes Windex or Dirtex helps remove the adhesive tape. However, the ammonia in the contents removes dirt, grease, and latex (acrylic) paint or sealer, so framer beware. All too often, repairs end up being far worse than the original damage. These details should always be written in a condition report and be pointed out as damage to the client, including artists, when the original is first brought in. The divot created by the loss of the paper layer could show after mounting.

Archival (extended-term) Mounting

Sometimes you can't have it both ways. Yupo can be sealed, permanently mounted, and displayed with stable inert materials and no frame. Or it may be preservationally framed with hinges, rag mats, glazing, and be fully reversible. The biggest rule is that original art should not be mounted but that

raw, unpainted, virgin paper may be mounted. Photos are best displayed when mounted. Rippled or cockled photos just look wrong, and Yupo may end up looking the same.

Synthetics do not absorb or react with other materials to create a new chemical reaction, rendering them stable and inert, which is good. But since they cannot absorb the adhesive, options are limited. Artists often demand archival mounting, stating that they want acid-free, 100-year bonding that is non-invasive. It is not the adhesive that makes a mount non-archival; it is the adhesive residue that remains after removal. Invasive mounting is non-preservation when adhesive remains on the art once it has been removed. Since polypropylene cannot absorb adhesive, it can be removed cleanly.

Dry mounting any valuable original art, photograph, or document is not recommended, but sometimes it is the best option. Museums are accepting face-mounted digital art these days directly from artists, but generally are not creating that mount themselves. When an artist wishes to display art unglazed, floated, or applied to a cradled box, it requires a mounting method to hold it to the substrate of choice.

Static Mounting

Basic non-starch paste preservation methods, such as corner pockets or edge strips, are a mounting option. Static and cockling may be an issue with larger pieces, however, and flange hinging across the top can cockle polypropylene. Yupo is prone to collecting static, so maintaining at least 42 percent humidity helps control it.

Think of Yupo as a polyester Cibachrome--different plastic base

Resources

<http://legionpaper.com>
<http://neschen.com>
<http://dkgroup.com>
<http://kooltack.com>
<http://codamount.com>
<http://drytacusa.com>
<http://encoreproducts.com>
<http://standoffsystems.com>
<http://frameworkinc.com>

Items

Yupo distribution and information
Neschen gudy 870, 831, 802
Expression Wide Format Laminators and SuperStick adhesives
InstaMount Gatorboard, InstaMount Mighty Tough Laminators, Cold-Mount Gatorboard
JetMounter Roll Laminators, HT pressure-sensitive adhesives
MightyCore, MightyBull
(Gyford) Standoffs
Standoffs

with similar issues. Cibachromes easily show orange peel when mounted to a substrate; so might Yupo. Unfortunately, the benefits of static mounting as a preservation application will not work with Yupo as the polypropylene does not maintain a charge adequate to hold to an acrylic sheet like polyester does.

Though dimensionally stable, hinged and matted Yupo may bow and react to room static, allowing the sheet to buckle into the window of the mat. When white, unpainted portions of Yupo paper are allowed to touch the glass, dark gray splotches appear. Since artwork should never touch glass, it is important to establish an adequate space between the art and the glazing, which may mean mounting. Paper will expand and contract with moisture and temperature changes; the same is true with polypropylene.

Fixatives

Krylon Gallery Series UV Archival Varnish is a favorite product for sealing, so originals may be mounted and displayed with no glazing. Open-air paintings on Yupo require sealing by the artist to protect the medium, but only under glass and with the mats unsealed. If unsealed, Yupo should be treated as gently as a pastel. Like a pastel, artists are resistant to applying fixatives because they can alter the surface pigment colors.

At times, art on Yupo is only to

be sealed when being taken to a framer to help protect it from fingerprints and accidental damage. Yupo is highly susceptible to fingerprints. Once a fingerprint has been sealed over, it will remain forever, so extreme care should be taken when handling Yupo paper, and wearing gloves is highly advised.

White Yupo paper will yellow over time when exposed to UV light, so do not place the artwork in direct sunlight or florescent lighting. All glazing, whether glass or acrylic, should be UV filtering to minimize the yellowing. **PFM**

Afterthoughts

Watercolor paintings on Yupo should be delivered in clear plastic sleeves, possibly with a glassine cover. If they are not protected when delivered, treat them as Cibachromes and place them under a mylar sheet prior to designing. Always fill out a condition report and discuss all of the options with the client.

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 can be contacted via www.designsinkart.com.