

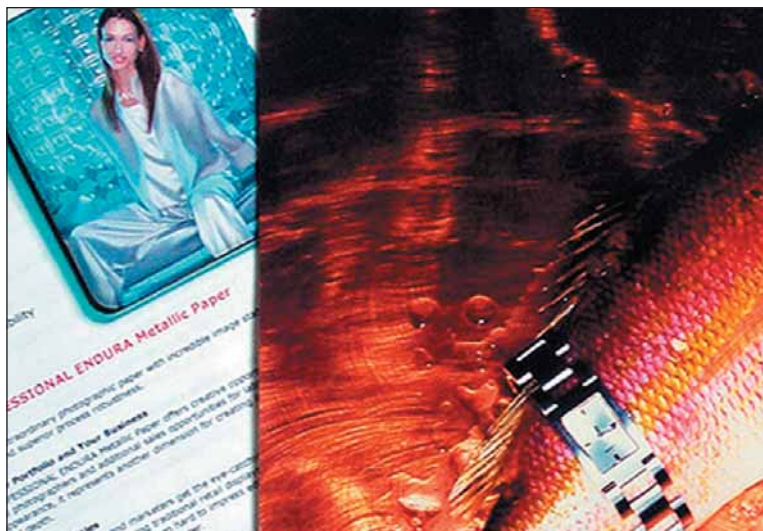
Mastering Mounting



by Chris A. Paschke
CPF, GCF, CMG

Metallic Photos & More

In 2003 Kodak Endura Metallic photo paper hit the scene. This revolutionary image appears to have a metallic finish, which naturally translates into one that is out of the norm and may require special handling. These photos have now been around for many years and have been routinely embraced for all aspects of portraiture and social imaging, including senior portraits, sport cards, weddings, glamour shots, and special events of all kinds. Plus, the opportunities are endless for commercial displays and in advertising.



Kodak Endura Metallic RC photo paper may be treated like any traditional RC photo.

The metallic look of the paper is only a support feature that is accomplished by inclusion of

mica in the base rather than actual metallic particles. The image stability and lightfastness of Endura metallic papers are excellent at 100 years in typical home display, 200 years in dark storage, but only 1 to 5 years in commercial display. It shares the same emulsion as the Kodak Supra Endura paper and

performs in similar fashion. This is a resin coated (RC) paper and therefore may be mounted or

laminated as you would any typical RC photograph. As such, it is subject to fingerprints and orange peel issues.

Heat Tolerance Tests

In 2003 basic heat testing of the original Endura Metallic photos was done at temperatures of 150°F, 175°F, and 195°F using a Seal 210M-X mechanical press, sheets of permanent ColorMount tissue adhesive, and Crescent 4-ply unbuffered photo board. The photo had no adverse reactions using traditional mounting temperatures and materials. The high gloss surface was also unaffected by any heat applications—including tacking—though it is smart practice to opt for selecting lower temperature adhesives or HA boards, such as SpeedMount or Step 150. Solvent tests on the early surface emulsion using UnStik (UnSeal), Undo, and Bestine Thinner also showed no damage when spot cleaning, but fingerprints were nearly impossible to remove.

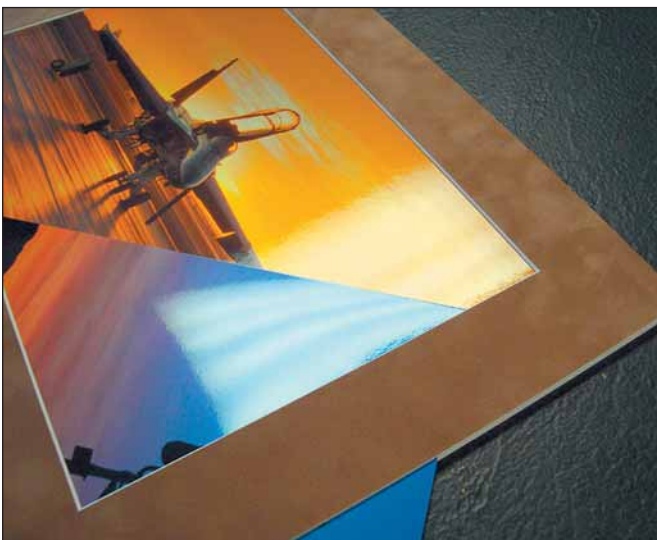
Mounting metallic photo papers requires understanding the prints and carefully following the recommended mounting procedures



The metallic appearance of the Endura Metallic paper is the result of mica in the paper coating beneath the image.



An Océ Lightjet print on Endura Metallic VC (bottom) and an original Kodak Endura Metallic (top). There is a natural orange peel inherent in the Endura Metallic VC paper that was not in the original RC photo paper.



There is a slight orange peel increase in the mounted image (top) compared to an unmounted photo.

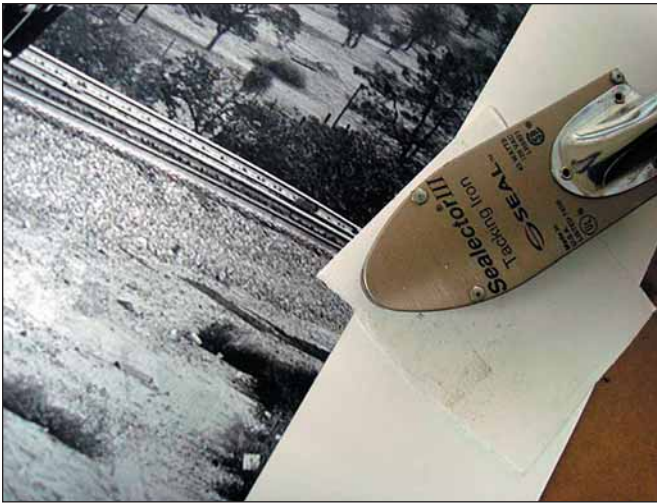
Kodak vs. Fuji

Kodak released an updated version called Endura Metallic VC Digital Paper a few years ago. Since thinner digital papers are more likely to show orange peel from the substrate and the paper also has a surface texture, Kodak suggests using the lowest mounting temperature, pressure, and duration time to minimize impact on the final print appearance. This newer version is very sensitive to surface scratching and orange peel. It is totally different than the original Endura Metallic paper. Endura Metallic VC paper is compatible with numerous other manufacturers' digital LED printers for developing both traditional film and digitals, so images from Océ Lightjet, Durst, Noritsu, and/or Gretag are all names that could be printed to the back of a metallic image.

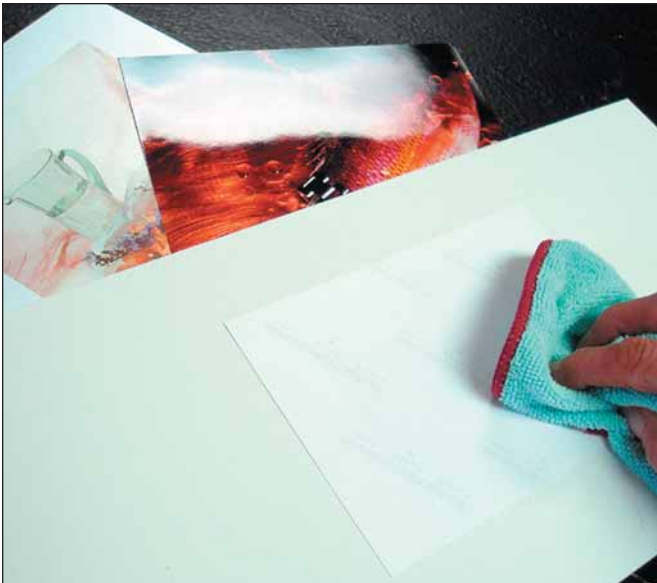
Fuji released its own version of metallic photo paper called Fujicolor Crystal Archive Digital Pearl Paper. Pearl-like crystals give silver halide color prints (RC) a distinctive pearl luster, emulating the metallic appearance of the Kodak paper. Pearl paper contains pearly mica crystals covered with a thin layer of metal oxides—titanium dioxide—resulting in a silver-white and metallic reflection. Recent mounting experiences with Fuji Pearl had less than stellar results even with low temperature, short dwell time, heat-activated (HA) boards, indicating that hinging or cold mounting might be the preferred method for these digital photo papers.

Online photographers on the blog www.photo.net have discussed the two papers as far back as 2007. In order to best identify a metallic finish you must be able to discern between luster, gloss, and metallic. Luster has an eggshell finish and does not show fingerprints or glare like glossy and metallic prints. Glossy has a shiny image with more saturated color. Metallic is also glossy, though it has a reflective layer that gives images a metallic appearance. These are not inkjet prints; they are printed on silver halide photographic paper processed with RA-4 chemistry.

Unfortunately, since the photo base is paper and not polyester, these media cannot be static mounted like an Ilfochrome Classic (Cibachrome) or FujiFlex can; therefore it must be handled in an alternative way that might still maintain the dignity of the high gloss image. Recent mountings indicate that hinging might be a better solution to maintain the smoother surface of the unmounted photo. It has been standard practice to mount traditional fiber-based and RC photos over the years, and that



Tack photos at the outermost 1/4" of the image.



Wipe down all surfaces with a clean micro-fiber rag prior to mounting.



A single indent from a particle will ruin the image.

remains the usual practice even with today's thinner digital papers. However, there are far more problems associated with digital photo papers, including surface scratching and mottling of the emulsion surface, so proper technique must be stressed.

Extra Care Needed

Today's high gloss metallic/pearl photos are very sensitive to surface scratching, are tacking iron sensitive, and easily translate the texture of the selected mount board through to the emulsion surface. It is important to keep the tack at the very outer 1/4" of the photo so if the emulsion is altered it will be hidden beneath the window mat.

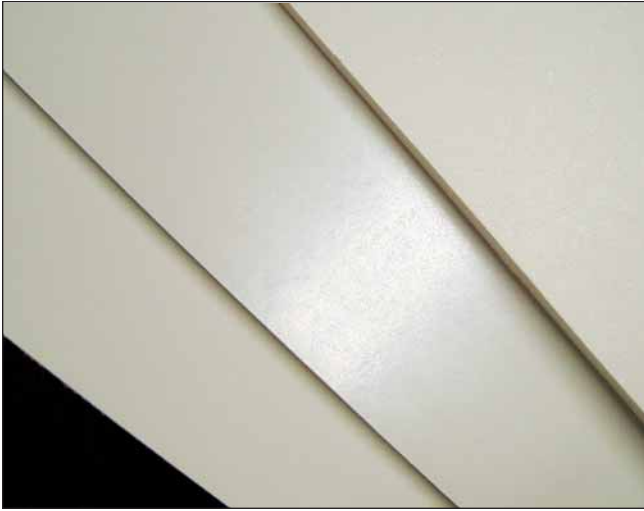
Proper preparation when mounting and close attention to "clean area...clean process" seem even more pertinent than with regular photos. Matte or luster images are far more forgiving than any gloss photo. With any glossy photo make certain to wipe the substrate surface, back and front of the photo, both sides of the release paper, and the platen with a clean micro-fiber rag prior to bonding. It only takes one particle to kill a photo.

The beauty of working with removable HA boards—Step 150, SpeedMount, HAF—is that they may be reheated to allow the photo corner to be lifted to remove a particle trapped close to the edge. An indent from debris is another story. About the only solution to an indent is remove the photo completely, try to smooth out the surface indent in the photo paper, then remount it to a new piece of HA board. There are two reasons the original board must be discarded. First, the indent cannot be repaired and will remain in the board. Second, the adhesive layer will have been compromised and there may not be adequate adhesive remaining for a new bond.

Another issue to watch for with HA boards is the application of the adhesive. It must be a very smoothly applied since any texture on the board surface is likely to translate to the surface of the mounted photo. Properly applied adhesive is very smooth with no globs or spattering. If accidentally mounted to a splotchy HA board, a photo will show similar lumps requiring removal and remounting. If this occurs, make certain that all the adhesive residue is totally removed from back of the photo prior to remounting or blotches will remain even after the new bond.

TTPM

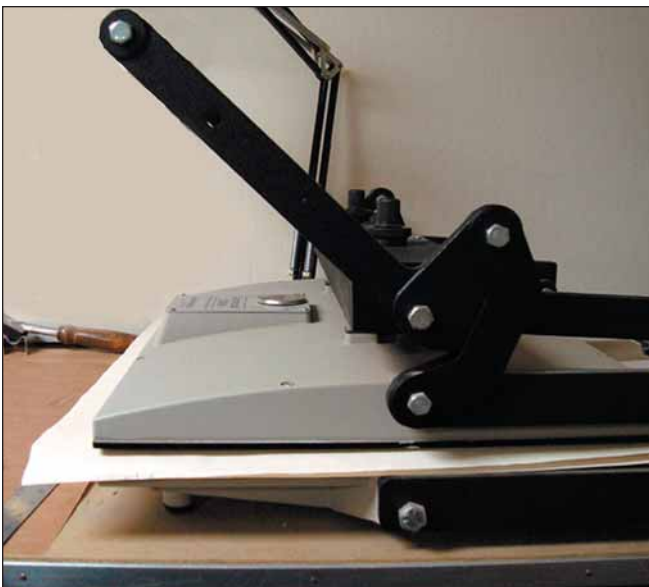
Any time a permanent mounting technique is selected,



Bainbridge HAF (L), Bienfang Step 150 (C), SpeedMount (R).



The splotchy application of the adhesive made the surface of this photo lumpy.



The press arm should be at 45 degrees to the table with all materials inserted.

attention must be paid to good basic mounting technique and the elements of time, temperature, pressure, and moisture (TTPM). Regardless of the tissue adhesive or heat-activated board used, there is a suggested time and temperature recommended by the manufacturer. It is vitally important that this be followed. Altitude does play into the elements of time and temperature, for even at 5,000 feet I must increase the recommended 150°F to 160°F and 15 seconds to 30 seconds for a low temperature, short dwell time HA board to properly activate it. Knowing mounting products and equipment very well allows you to tweak them slightly to work best.

When mounting in a mechanical press—particularly when dealing with low temperature, short dwell time HA boards—the press must be properly adjusted to the correct pressure. Too much pressure will pick up additional board texture; too little pressure will not bond the photo to the board. Pressure is also very important during the cooling process, so always remove the release paper with the project and cool under weight before attempting to remove the release sheet. This will maintain the best bond. Lifting release paper from a removable HA board prior to its cooling can lessen the bond created by cooling beneath a weight.

This all sounds like a great deal of review every time a photo is mounted. But it is no more time intensive than sizing a board or tacking a photo. It is simply a matter of getting into a routine, like switching out release papers after 50 working hours or turning on the lights when you come to work.

Successful mounting means really examining a photo prior to mounting. Is it thinner than a traditional RC? What does it say on the back? Or does it have a metallic sheen? Then always wipe down all surfaces before you tack and mount. If you follow the right procedure, you're far more likely to successfully mount these photos. ■

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