

Mastering Mounting



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Recycled Wood Framing

In this era of recycling and renewable resources, being green is on the forefront of everyone's mind. I recently met a client with a hobby that embraces cast-off materials by turning them into usable items. During the summer of 2010 Greg Loskorn came in with an unusual request. He had six 16"x20" photos of trains that he needed framed for an art show at the opening of the Tehachapi Railroad Museum. He wanted them mounted,

matted, glazed, and fitted, and he wanted to supply the frames to me. This is not an unheard-of request; little did I realize what he really meant by "supplying" the frames.

Greg is a fine art photographer who has a passion

for the high desert, railroad, and anything to do with airplanes. Though he has been photographing area terrain and attractions for a long time, he had never exhibited his images in a formal gallery. Greg, who owns Milepost Imaging in Tehachapi, CA, is an avid hiker who ventures into the Mojave Desert for hours following old railroad tracks for unexpected photographs. On one such trip he found some buried, deteriorating wood boards that may have once been a fence used to prevent excess sand from building up around the tracks. Most of these planks were cracked, warped, rotten, and very

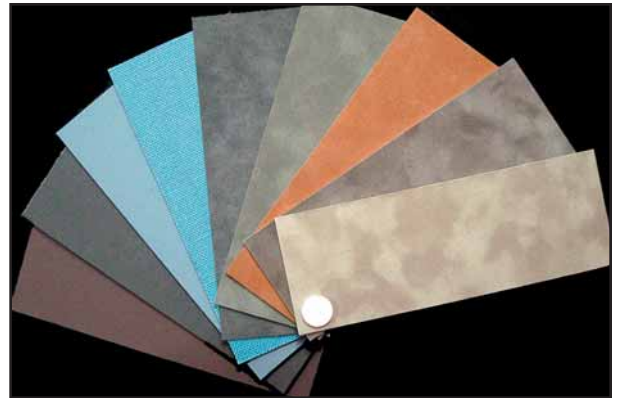


Photo 1: The mats for the photos and frames needed to have a neutral palette. (L to R) Rag Mat Sable Brown 1184; AlphaRag Black Shadow 8669; AlphaRag Colonial Blue 8651; Degas Blue Linen 4026; Artcare Shadow Suede 4197; Artcare Mist Suede 4196; Crescent Twig Suede 5639; Artcare Fango Suede 4206; Artcare Dusk Suede 4195.

weathered. But they needed a home, and these broken old boards triggered an idea of turning them into perfect frames for his railroad and desert images.

Designing For Unity

On his first visit, Greg brought in his photos and a small 6" piece of scrap wood as a sample of color and texture. He was launching a new website with cards, prints, and high-end photos, so we needed to design a layout that would be flexible in color and style that would allow design continuity between current and future images.

The frames would be a weathered green-gray, though some planks were slightly more neutral brown. Because of the texture of his landscape images, we selected 4-ply suede board as the top mat. The liner mat would be a solid-core museum rag or conservation board in a color that would help draw the eye into the photo.

A palette of earthy neutral suedes was selected, with Bainbridge Mist and Dusk being the first two

With the help of the right matting and mounting, old pieces of wood from the desert have been recycled into appealing frames for photographs



Photo 2: Mist Suede matting was used on black-and-white images while Dusk was perfect for the color photos.



Photo 3: A sand fence frame was accented with Brushed Pewter and Copper Gold Precious Metal paper-wrapped 3/16" foam bevels as a visual spacer between the top and bottom mats.



Photo 4: Four black-and-white and two color photos were mounted, with the mats cut and assembled, awaiting the frames.

chosen. Artcare Mist Suede #4196 was the perfect pale gray-green color to make the transition from the sand fence frame to each of the photos (Photo 1). Dusk Suede #4195 was a perfect match for the texture and colors of the sandy earth beneath the tracks and in the engine in his color images (Photo 2). Brushed Pewter and Antiqued Copper Precious Metal paper was selected to wrap 3/16" foam bevels as a visual spacer between the top and bottom mats, and all six photos used Bainbridge Black Shadow #8669 as liners (Photo 3). Though the wrap may seem incongruous with the earthy, barnwood-like nature of the photos, it really helped tie all the elements together.



Photo 5: Microfiber cloths are perfect for removing dirt and dust prior to mounting photos. The back of image and the mount board both need to be wiped.



Photo 6: All assembled mat packages were book hinged along the long side to the mount board with the photo.

Frame Criteria

The original sand fence planks averaged 4" wide. Since Greg loves the fractures, holes, and pits in the wood, he wanted to keep as much of the original board as possible. He planed the boards to smooth and level them for sizing, and then he cut the rabbets on a table saw. The frames were then mitered to length and joined. Keeping with the rustic nature, however, he did not fill the corners, holes, or discolorations. And there were splinters while framing.

Because of the wide nature of the frames, we had to increase the mat borders to 5" or narrow them to allow for a contrast between the mats and the frames. We opted for 3" borders for the liner mat and 2-1/4" for the suede top mat, making the outside dimensions 22"x26" plus 1/8" allowance. The wrapped bevel uses color to draw the eye inward from the outer frame to the color and metal of the engines, helping unify the design. Keeping the mats narrower also allowed the frames and photos to remain the dominant elements. Since the frames were being built to



Photo 7: Drill holes and sun fading provide character for frames made from abandoned telephone pole cross arms from the desert.

my specifications (22-1/8"x26-1/8"), I was able to mount the photos, cut the mats, and assemble the package in preparation for the frames. The glass was not cut until the frames arrived to verify size for final fitting.

Mounting and Matting

All of these photos were professionally printed by a high-end lab on matte-finish Endura photo paper. Since control of orange peel was a primary concern, they were all mounted to 3/16" Bienfang Step 150, a 150°F low temperature, 30-second short duration, heat-activated board with a smooth surface that is well suited to photographs. On



Photo 8: A spacer was used rather than wrapped bevel to add dimension.



Photo 9: Narrower inner wood scraps and suede fall-outs were used to create smaller framed photos.



Photo 10: Photos were framed with wood from an old sand fence, telephone cross beams, and studio timbers.

black-and-white and dark photos like these, it is very important to prevent anything from being trapped beneath or imprinting into the mounting. All release materials were cleaned and wiped, and the mechanical press was also wiped and checked for residue. Both the mount board and the back of each individual photo needed to be wiped down with a clean microfiber rag to remove all particles and debris just prior to tacking for mounting (Photo 5). Preparing all photos at the same time may allow new paper dust to accumulate where not wanted.

Each mount board was cut to exact exterior dimension and placement was established by lining on a manual mat cutter. Three-inch margins were lined, and each photo was cleaned, centered, tacked, and mounted. Though it may not have been the most time-effective technique for mass production, it was the best way to maintaining clean lint free mounting for the photos. Once the matting package was complete, all layers were fused and book hinged to 3/16" mount board with the photo attached, ready for glazing and final fitting once the frames arrived. UV Conservation Clear glass was recommended for the first photos, but since then Museum Glass was used.

Other Desert Debris

The next batch of recycled wood and new frames also came from the desert. Just as the space race has left debris orbiting the Earth and on the Moon, it appears that progress has also left behind telephone poles in the desert to slowly rot away over time. A few months ago while on another wood-finding mission, Greg discovered piles of discarded telephone poles and cross arms that had been replaced by high tech metal towers. The old poles, creosote treated to resist rotting, could take generations to degrade.

Greg realized that the cross arms might be perfect for frames. Rich, dark, rustic frames were cut from alternate sides of the heavy 4-1/2" beams, leaving the inner few inches for potential use as smaller frames. One result was an

18"x30" frame surrounding an elongated 12"x24" black-and-white print called "Four Island Lake" (Photo 7). Shadow Suede

4197 and black rag were used with no wrapped bevel for this image, though a 3/16" spacer was placed between the mats. The grays were perfect, the suede picked up the feeling of the fog in the hills, and the spacer added dimension.

Recycling the Scraps

Greg has taken most everything I taught him to heart and has the makings of a real framer, as he never throws anything away. Even his frame scraps get recycled. The inner sections of the telephone beams are being cut and made into 1" wide 7"x9" frames, and he is buying all the suede blanks to cut into 1-1/4" 7"x9" single mats to fit inside to fit his 5"x7" photos (Photo 9). These are priced very affordably for collectors who need to start small (Photo 10).

In this era of recycling and renewable resources, it was nice to find someone willing to spend hours harvesting buried wood and telephone pole remnants to turn into picture frames. Greg has become a loyal customer, and to date we have collaborated on over 20 projects. ■

All featured photos ©Greg Loskorn and courtesy of Milepost Imaging. His photos, cards, and calendars may be viewed on www.milepostimaging.com or at Crossroads Gallery in Tehachapi, CA.

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