

Tips for Success: Let's Talk Turkey

By Chris A Paschke, CPF

Every once in a while I receive a phone call, FAX, or — since it's the 90s, after all — some email from an agitated reader who emphatically disagrees with something I've written. This is just fine with me. I mean, I'm not the guru from framer's heaven with the last word on how to mount anything.



My job is merely to pass on to you some factual information about materials, supplies, equipment, procedures, and techniques — ultimately, some tips for success. Sometimes these sound like warnings, but I do not intend to scare you away from trying certain procedures; I just want to help you to understand problem areas. It's your responsibility to adapt this information to best fit your routine. There are no perfect answers or rules; there are only suggestions and guidelines. No two framers have the same floor plan, facilities, or requirements, and you cannot determine the appropriate mounting equipment and techniques until you have decided which market to target.

As technology evolves, so does mounting. Masking tape, for instance, was dismissed years ago as an unaccept-

able hanging tape, and we are now discovering that the digital and thermographic technology of the 90s is altering the way we think about dry mounting.

Dry mounting may currently be the best way to eliminate moisture from a project and ensure longevity, but sometimes the very thing that enhances a presentation — in this case the heat — might be the source of the problem, as is the case with thermographics.

And now, at last, we get to the “meat” of this month's column: suggestions, tips, and tricks. Last year I devoted a full column to tips for troubleshooting mounting and laminating, and it was so well received I'm keeping it in the repertoire.

LAMINATING ENCAPSULATION

In my June and July columns I discussed encapsulating with non-breathable polyesters in a mechanical or vacuum mounting heat system. Though five years ago I successfully executed this procedure, I can't make it a fool-proof process today. What variables have changed?

The manufacturers insist there is nothing different about the films, and there is certainly no difference in my materials, technique, or equipment. I don't have the answer. But until the process once again produces predictable

results I have elected not to use it. Decide for yourself. If the encapsulation market is one you really wish to target, consider investing in a 25" roller laminator specifically for that market (see *PFM*, July 1996).

TTPM

I know I'm obsessed with formulas, but if you really learn this one, it will be invaluable. Once again I'm beating you over the head with TIME, TEMPERATURE, PRESSURE, and MOISTURE (TTPM). There will always be variations in materials, techniques, and equipment, but the four basic elements which need to be monitored are constant: the time required, the temperature of application, the amount of pressure for successful bonding, and the moisture content.

As substrate sizes and thicknesses vary, so will the amount of time required. Wet and spray glues require open or dwell times for proper application, again requiring more time. When an alternative adhesive is used, temperature as well as time must be monitored.

When a laminate is to be layered over a mounting, both time and temperature are affected simply because the materials are different. There are differences between brands as well: laminates range from 185 degrees Fahrenheit (Drytac) to 225 degrees Fahrenheit (Seal). Adhesives must always be taken into consideration as well.

HEAT SENSITIVITIES

Photographs, ink jet IRIS proofs (not IRIS giclees), thermographic faxes, Ticketron-type event tickets — they are all heat sensitive to different extents. They may turn black or melt if placed into a heat press. Paying

attention to what you are mounting in relation to its feel and visual appearance is very important here. Learn to see what you are looking at; identify the mounting project before you select the process.

Glossy ink jet copies could be lightfast but might also be very heat sensitive. An Iris proof looks somewhat like a cross between a color photocopy and an RC photo. Both color copies and RC are reasonably heat tolerable, unlike Iris proofs.

As substrate sizes and thicknesses vary, so will the amount of time required in the press.

MOISTURE SENSITIVITIES

The aforementioned Iris proof is also quite thin, and excessive moisture from wet or spray glues could buckle the image. They could be too thin for mylar corners, so consider hinging or pressure-sensitives — they're probably the best solutions.

I am actively working on a digital imaging/copier project to determine lightfastness, heat, and moisture sensitivities with ink jet images. Stay tuned for details in future issues.

RELEASE BOARDS

Boards are great when used appropriately, but they must not be used on the bottom of a mounting package because they prevent the sponge or diaphragm/bladder from contouring around the substrate and mounting. They were designed for use on top of the mounting package and they resist excessive paper wrinkling. They are wonderful for handling release materials in larger presses.

These same commercially manufactured boards also demonstrate a great deal of "orange peel" texture because of the core material; this will often increase with photos and some higher temperature poster

mountings. You can create a smoother board by selecting a smoother substrate as a base.

FIFTY HOURS TO RETIREMENT

Tired, aged, and wrinkled release papers need to be thrown out rather than overused. Oversized sheets may be cut down and recycled to make smaller envelopes.

We generally throw papers out only when they are excessively wrinkled, yet manufacturers put a lifetime of approximately 50 hours on a release sheet. That means 50 working hours. Working hours are those during which the materials are actually exposed to the extremes of mounting temperatures (whether or not they are used in mounting).

Hence if you have your press on, ready to mount, eight hours a day, 6 days a week (48 total hours), new sheets should replace old sheets weekly.

SUBSTITUTE SUBSTRATE

A hot vacuum press creates a vacuum, compressing the rubber liner up and around the mounting substrate. The goal here is to achieve proper pressure to affix the adhesive and art. There are several techniques that allow you to mount items without a substrate or stiff base. Pre-mounting adhesives and laminating in preparation for canvas transferring are two such processes. There is a risk of the rubber liner wrinkling during the draw of the vacuum, though this would never show when a substrate is present. If the items were being pre-mounted to an adhesive prior to centering onto the selected substrate (see *PFM*, August 1996), there is a possibility a wrinkle could be permanently set into the art at this stage. You can prevent this easily enough during the pre-mounting process by using a temporary substitute substrate just larger than

the project, placed beneath the mounting envelope.

Even if the liner wrinkles, the art is protected. Make certain it remains outside the mounting envelope or beneath the lower release sheet so as not to accidentally adhere it to the project. Also, do not use the release board — it is too large, and the silicone will stick too tightly to the platen to allow air to escape.

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ALL IN A DAY'S WORK

I don't preach the mounting gospel. I only open the book as a source. You must research the chapters and assimilate the information; it's just like college. Test the concepts, improve on the old ways, and challenge my suggestions. We may be a state-of-the-

art industry, but we were built on creative solutions. New techniques are often the product of problem solving. So get in there and help solve those problems by offering feedback and sharing your stories with me (and each other).

Whether you are a seasoned veteran or raw beginner, it never hurts to have an occasional refresher course of "tips and tricks." New techniques replace old ones, and constant reminders help keep procedures in the conscious mind rather than the subconscious. Now that's talking turkey.

Happy Turkey Day! ■

Chris A. Paschke, CPF, owns Designs Ink, Oxford, Connecticut, featuring commercial and retail custom framing, product consultation, design, and education. Specializing in mounting, matting, and design creativity, she works with industry leaders such as Bienfang, Crescent Cardboard, Fletcher-Terry, Larson-Juhl, PFM, PPFA, and Seal Products.