

# Mastering Mounting

by  
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## Thinking Through Tight Spaces

Whether you're opening a new frame shop or relocating to a larger or more efficient location, the layout of the workroom should be of primary importance. We need to consider proper and easy-to-reach storage; the location and placement of equipment; and all the things that will help us save time, and help prevent errors. The ideal would be adequate room to accommodate a special work area or station for each step of the framing process, including mounting, mat cutting, glazing, and fitting.

In my book *The Mounting and Laminating Handbook*, I discuss the specifics for controlling your mounting environment. Part of this is knowing what is required. When spray mounting you'll need vented spray hoods or booths to meet all health regulations. Wet glue and conservation considerations would include running water and a space large enough for a work area and items drying under weights. When dry mounting, electricity is important, such as whether 110V is adequate or if 3 or 4-prong 220V wiring is required. Since these needs are not negotiable, it seems we often sacrifice space when designing our work area.

### In a Perfect World

Let's first examine the ideal or perfect world, then the real world. I have talked

about setting up your mounting department in a very regulated and convenient layout. I have also noted that a perfect world is very unlikely. I have had my frame shop in numerous locations both in California and now in Connecticut, and in all five situations I was never able to lay out the perfect floorplan. There are four basic areas that should be considered when arranging your mounting area: light, organization, storage, and proximity.

### Light

Regardless of the method of mounting you use, the primary concern beyond making it stick down is to make it do so without dust or air trapped beneath the mounting. Having a good solid understanding of your selected technique along with knowing the basic guidelines of time, temperature, pressure, and moisture (*PFM* January through April 1995), will usually eliminate the air. Dirt is still an issue.

Light is the major concern. If the light in the mounting area is dim, dark, or full of glare and shadows you will never be able to see the dust particles beneath the poster or the adhesive residue remaining on the release paper. You can't clean it if you can't see it. Even though non-corrective fluorescent light is both UV damaging and color-altering, it will allow you to better see what you are working with.

All release materials must be routine-

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ly checked and wiped down with a soft lint-free rag to prevent adhesive residue from transferring to the next dry mounted poster. Removable adhesives unintentionally transferred may sometimes be removed by reheating the adhesive and rubbing it free, but permanent adhesives require solvents which could damage the inks of a poster. Besides, the time spent repairing or correcting a careless mistake will often escalate into more than a few minutes, and usually goes from a little bad to much worse (just ask Freddy). Lighting the way to good mounting helps to see the release paper surface better when cleaning it.

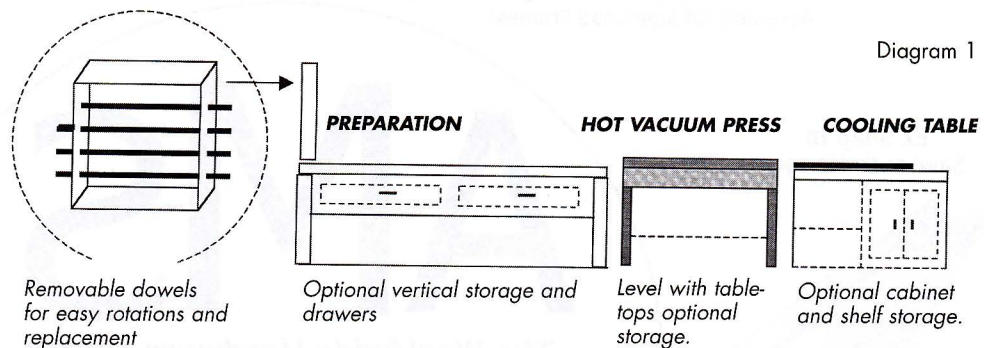
## Organization

This entire article may sound like a discussion on organization, but it's also about the placement of tools and adhesives for ease and speed. This is a guideline that is very achievable regardless of the size of your work area. Drawers for tools in the front of the table you mount on might be best; alternative space savers could be small rotating tool caddies for scissors, zippy cutters, rulers, and more. Also don't let garbage, clutter and scraps pile up in the mounting work area.

Pegboard alongside the worktable may offer places to hang ATG guns, and tacking irons. A roll rack to the left of the press is a time and space saver when sizing and tacking if the table end is against a wall (Diagram 1). Shelves beneath the table or vacuum press make a good place to store adhesives, laminates, and release materials as well as fabrics for wrapping.

## Storage

Mounting board storage is best when boards are kept clean, dry, and flat, though most storage set ups stand boards on end. When standing up, boards are encouraged to warp during storage, which only adds to the frus-



tration that can be created upon mounting large warped pieces on lightweight boards.

If boards are stored in a basement, warehouse, or other room subject to extremes of temperature and humidity, the issue of predrying these boards prior to mounting may carry over into vacuum mounting systems where predrying is generally not required.

Most vacuum frames and presses are set up with an optional lower shelf, which makes an ideal flat storage space for boxes of foam and mounting board. Sheets of  $\frac{1}{2}$ " foam board make great rigid space fillers to help prevent the warping of vertically stored boards.

Dry mount adhesives should be stored in a clean, dry and accessible locale. They should be well labeled to avoid mix-up and be stored away from release papers for the same reason. A convenient storage or dispensing rack to the side of your mounting press is ideal. This way dry adhesive can be pulled to the desired length, cut, positioned, tacked and mounted with no confusion or clutter (see Diagram 1). A wire grid used by draftsmen or mailing tubes cut in half and banded together work great for vertical storage of rolled inventory.

## Proximity and Placement

Location, location, location. It even applies to equipment. First, we want to save time and steps by allowing all mounting materials, adhesives, and boards to be nearly within arm's length. Moreover, we want to prevent the location of the other dust and particle-producing stations from being too close to the mounting area. Mat cutters produce huge amounts of paper dust that is kicked into

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the air just waiting for the magnetic pull of a release liner from laminating film to provide it with a place to land.

Metal and wood saws should be protected from other clean areas to prevent excessive dust from being thrown into the air. Glass particles may rarely be found trapped beneath mounted posters. This is because of their weight—not the fact they are not in the work area. The idea here is to reduce the potential of trapped dirt by cutting down on its circulation into the environment. This will also help during the fitting process.

The actual location of the equipment will vary depending on whether you have a vacuum, mechanical or hand application system as well as space limitations and ventilation requirements. If setting up a mechanical press, the ideal situation is to recess it into the worktable so the sponge pad is even with the table surface. This will allow easy level insertion into and out of the press (Diagram 2).

The mounting table should have a cover sheet of clear plate glass. Glass is excellent to use as a cooling weight, may be seen through, and may be used as a cutting surface. This glass should be large enough to accommodate most of the anticipated mountings, but still small enough to handle.

Maintain adequate space around a mechanical press to allow the benefits of oversized mounting in bites. When designing a new workspace, try to imagine all of the extremes, such as multiple production mountings, oversized mountings, laminating, and creative applications. Keep materials handy yet out of the way, to be as efficient and productive as possible.

## The Real World of Tight Spaces

So after reading about all the ways your mounting area should be, welcome to the real world, which will often find us cramped for space. I can lecture all day long about the glories of a set-up table, press area and cooling

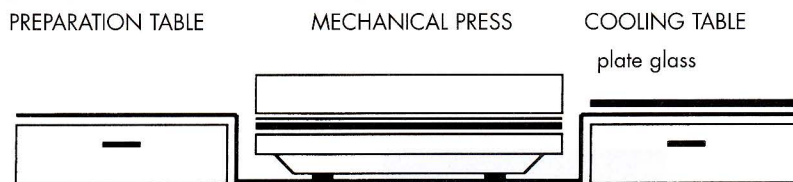


Diagram 2: Top of the mechanical press sponge pad should be set level and aligned with the tabletops on either side for easy entry into or exit from the press.

table, but we are often forced to use the space we have been given in the most efficient and clean way possible. The result is to “think through the tight spaces” and still produce excellent and predictable mountings.

Yes, I realize it is difficult to set separate stations apart from each other in a small location, in fact the same tables are often used for most stages of work...but at least keep the activity down to one process at a time. Try to avoid mounting laminates while mat cutting is being done. Be conservative with storage space and still think about using every corner of the shop.

My current mounting set-up uses the same table for cutting, tacking and cooling, but it is different from the mat cutting area. The gridded upper left corner is a wire rack used to hold rolls vertically, while there is additional storage for larger rolls and foam on the shelf under the vacuum press. There are bookcase shelves to the ceiling (also in the corner) to store alternative mounting materials such as wet glues and sprays. (See Diagram 3.)

I have not completed the floorplan for the mat cutting, design, chopping and moulding storage areas, but this diagram will help show the tight multi-use area I use for mounting and fitting. No, I do not have the designated ideal layout; no special area exclusive for mounting. But, when Japanese hinging or wet gluing, I can use the top of my vacuum press as a drying area also. It's out of the way and always clean of stacked stuff so it can regularly be utilized.

## Technique Is Vital, But Not Everything

Once all of the above physical elements of the mounting



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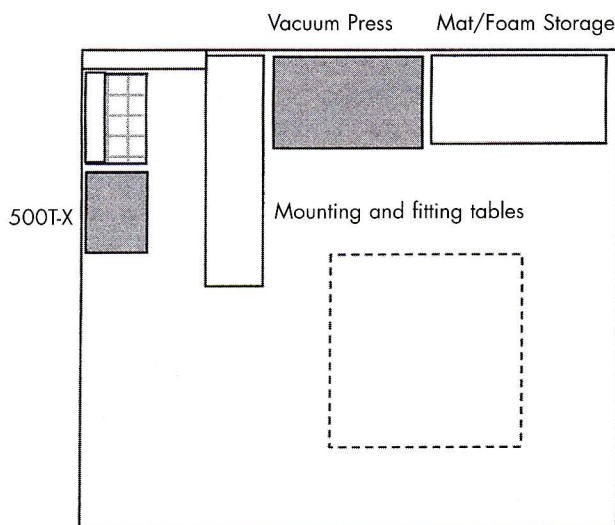


Diagram 3

work station have been addressed, then the concept of proper technique must be examined. Understanding the proper methods of wet, spray, pressure-sensitive and dry mounting will definitely improve your end results. Having all the proper tools, equipment and placement will truly help your efforts.

Organization often lends itself to a clean workspace. You must organize the mounting area to accommodate your specific requirements. Cleanliness, or lack of, will often transfer directly to the art. Dust and debris circulating in the air may become trapped under the mounted art or fabric. Tiny pinhole indentations usually indicate dirt on the platen or release paper surface, while bumps are dirt trapped between the print, adhesive, and substrate. Bottom line: clean area + clean process = good mounting.

Proper tools and equipment should be ergonomically placed within reach for easiest execution. Lost time looking for misplaced tools or removing unwanted dust from beneath a tissue adhesive translates into burned up profits. So, look at your work area and reconsider the lighting, organization, storage, and proximity of your mounting area to the other framing operations. And consider that tight spaces are better than no spaces at all. ■