

MASTERING MOUNTING

Selling Your Way Clear to Emboss Mats With Laminating Films

by Chris A. Paschke, CPF



Chris A. Paschke, CPF, is the owner of Designs Ink in Oxford, Connecticut, specializing in commercial framing, design, consultation, and education. Ms. Paschke is a second generation, self-employed professional picture framer who teaches, lectures, and demonstrates at various workshops and seminars on mounting, matting and design for manufacturers, distributors, and associations, including Bienfang, Dahle, Fletcher-Terry, Larson-Juhl, PFM, PPFA, Tru Vue/Miller Artboard, and Seal Products.

With Spring just around the corner, and this the annual mat design issue for PFM, I am once again stressing creativity. As always, I'm keeping in mind the promotion and growth of laminating films as well as the use of heat presses as logical profit-makers. I'm also hoping to stimulate your natural desire to design and create unique and wonderful projects. Besides, isn't it that creative venue in framing that many of us really look forward to, and wish we had time for, especially when we are backlogged with work?

I first embarked upon my journey into laminating creativity back in May 1991 with such Paschke classics as "Leather-Look" and "Contempo Panels," both decorative approaches to mat enhancement using laminating films. Since mat design remains the point at which most framing profits are made, and where the most creative designs may be achieved, my series continues. This time I will focus on embossed mats.

Embossing defines as "decorating a surface with raised ornament." Any ornament solid enough to tolerate adhesives and the abuse of the surface covering material will be suitable. This could be anything from flowers to sand, from lace to miniatures.

Fabrics usually come to mind when considering the embossing process, but the clear nature of laminating films expands the design potential in a different direction—a transparent one. The natural colors

and textures of flowers, laces, and mat boards remain visible and are usable as a design element (photo 1).

Since fabric embossing covers the item used to create the design or shape, the effect is monochromatic, or a white-on-white concept. It's essentially a shadow design enhanced by selected fabric wrapped around a mat, with a pattern created by the object trapped beneath it.

Laminating films are ideal for embossing. Because they are a vinyl, they become very pliable when heated and easily conform to any given shape. They are sold in a variety of finishes and textures. Since they are clear, the item being embossed can be seen through the film. This allows for creating embossed mats without sacrificing the color selection of matboards to coordinate with the artwork being framed.

Laminating Mechanics

Always consider all the proper TTPM (time/temperature/pressure/moisture) procedures when mounting or laminating. Vinyl laminating films require a heat press of 180°F to 225°F. The items selected for embossing must be tolerant of temperatures to 225°F; crayons and birthday candles may not be the best choices for this type of design. A suggested mounting time of five to eight minutes may vary depending upon the substrate thickness and the overall size of the item being laminated. (I will cover the moisture concern a little later in this article). Note that I

continued on page 60

MASTERING MOUNTING

continued from page 58

am referring specifically to single-sided surface lamination, not encapsulation using polyester films.

Although overlay foam is required during the mounting of laminating films, it is especially important in embossing. Overlay foam is required to even out the pressure of the platen, the heating elements in the top of the press,

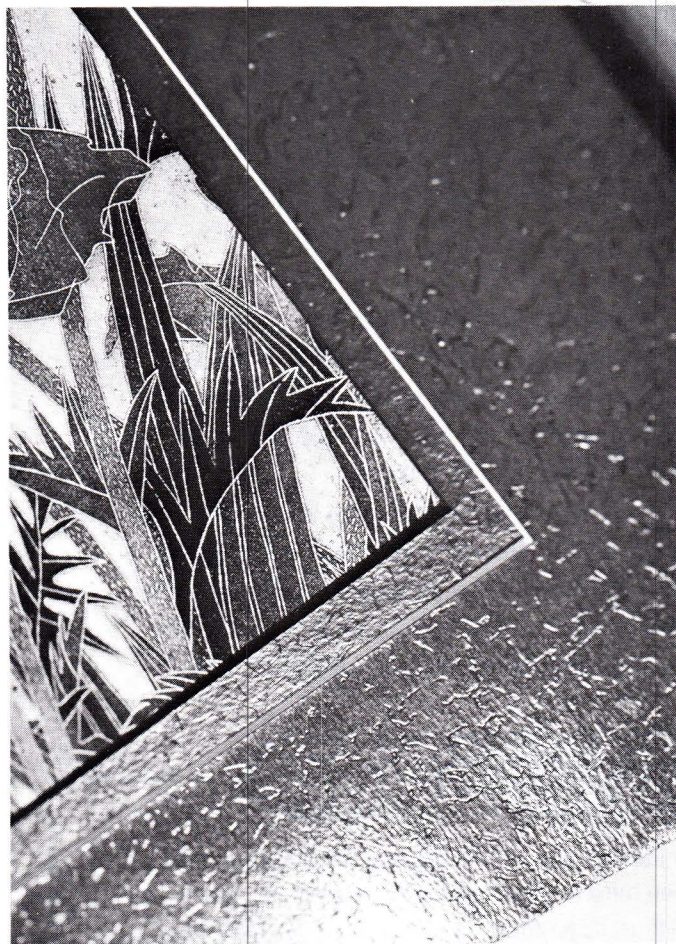


Photo 2: Both mats were resurfaced by a process that will be featured in next month's column. Additional retexturing of laminating film may be incorporated into the entire embossing process, adding still another dimension to the design. Creative matting always means greater profits.

against the natural highs and lows of the film for proper adhesion to produce the desired finish. If the foam is not used there is a chance that the lack of even pressure may not adequately mount the film as designed. Slight cloudy areas could result over a dark image.

Embossing Basics

Encasing alien objects such as flowers, dried grasses,

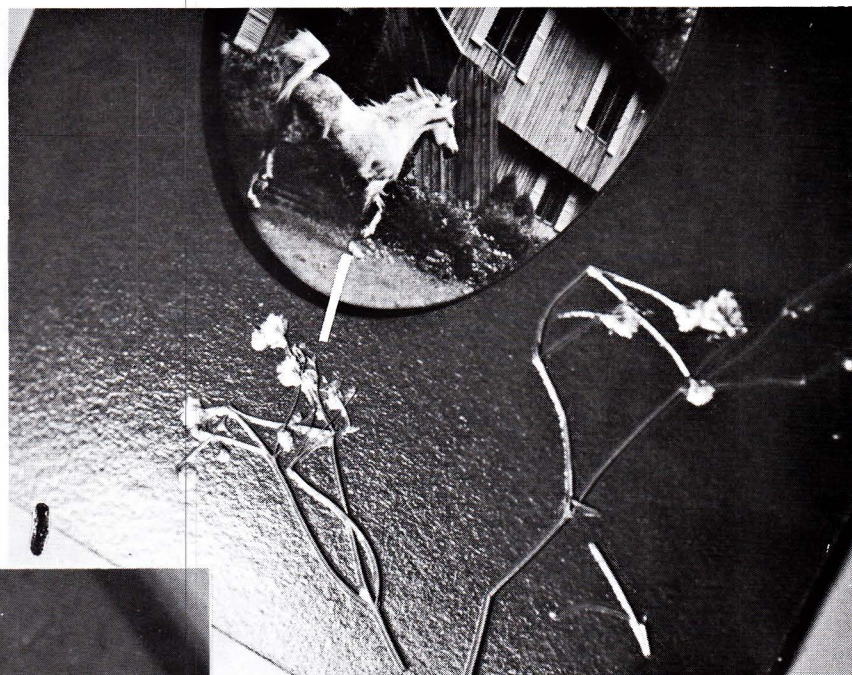


Photo 1: Embossing the surface of a 4 ply matboard with clear laminating film allows the color and texture of both the board and the natural flowers to be utilized as part of the overall design. If the photo is also laminated, the package may be fitted directly into a photo frame without additional glazing.

matboard silhouettes, or montaged photographs can produce a designer mat protected by a laminate. This may then be glassed and framed as usual, or may be framed without glass. The film will produce a protective laminated surface, or glazing substitute on the mat, so the poster, print, or photograph being framed will not require glass for completion (photo 1).

The mounting set-up or package is very simple (diagrams 1a and 1b): release paper bottom sheet, mat as the substrate, adhesive (if applicable), object to be embossed, laminating film, overlay foam, and release paper top sheet (not a release board). The embossed effect seems to be best achieved with release paper as a top sheet, which allows greater contour flexibility for adjusting to the foam during the initial compression of mounting.

Some large items may require adhesive mounting in addition or prior to laminating to hold them in place to prevent lifting or bubbling. Narrow stemmed plants and smaller items probably won't require mounting with adhesives beneath the film, for the tension of the stretched film being forced to contour to the three dimensional item will affix it in position.

The Moisture Issue

Always keep in mind the TTPM concept of successful mounting techniques and use materials that are either pre-dried or are capable of being pre-dried before embossing. Wet materials will often produce condensation and trap moisture under the mounted film. If you wish to use flow-

continued on page 62

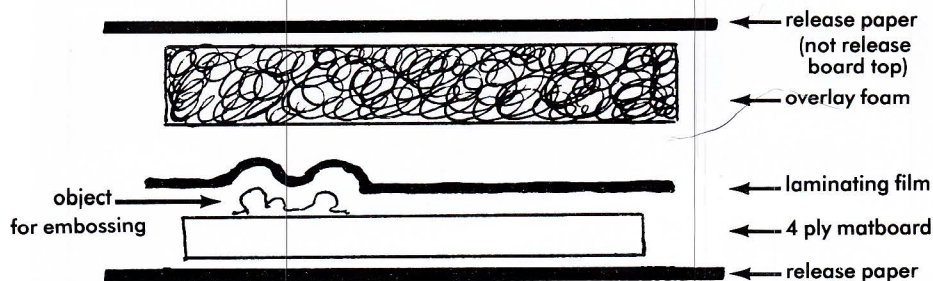


Diagram 1a
A laminated embossed mat is generally mounted as in the diagram shown here, with the opening cut afterwards. This process won't work if thick bulky items are mounted and embossed—think it through.

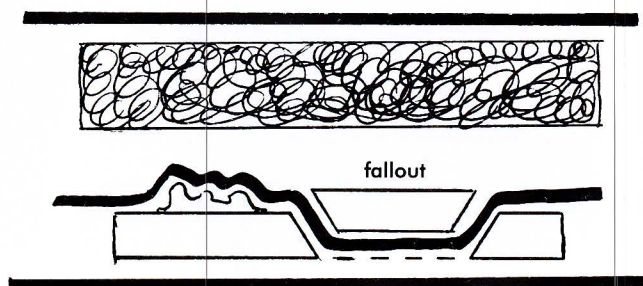


Diagram 1b
If an entire bevel-covered, laminated mat is desired for a photo frame, the fallout may be cut, then fitted back into place prior to embossing. Complete the mat as any wrapped mat. The question remains: for the extra trouble, does the bevel really need to be wrapped with film?

MASTERING MOUNTING

continued from page 60

ers, leaves, or grasses for embossed mats, they need to be dried first.

Moisture is not an issue with fabric embossing: if non-dried plants are used they continue drying since the fabric covering is breathable; films are not.

Glycerinized (or dried, treated) Baby's Breath may be purchased from a florist, or you may press and bury fresh naturals in silica gel yourself to pull out the moisture prior to mounting. This takes a number of days, so additional time needs to be allowed for this procedure.

If you allow leaves and flowers to dry in the open air, they are prone to crumbling when compressed or flattened in a press. The "shattered" plant piece will actually survive the embossing process quite well, however.

All you really need to do is use your common sense. Any finish of film works well, although the textures will compete with the decoration. Also, don't attempt to mount anything too thick; vinyl will only stretch so far.

Project Ideas

For a quick photo frame option, affix a mounted/laminated photo and laminated embossed mat together with a photo easel back made of scrap fabric mats. The idea is to create a point of purchase display which stimulates ideas. Samples on your counter could motivate your customers to return, hopefully with their 4"x6" snapshots to be embellished and customized with embossed mats.

Remember that photos and prints smaller than 8"x10" are generally matted and backed with fallouts and scraps, making them the most profitable mats of all. Although customized laminated embossed mats have a great deal of potential, don't overlook the option of mass producing numerous standard sized mats in assorted colors and designs for gen-

Confused
by
Too Many Fabric Choices?
There is a better way!

?

Try!
Fabrimat Inc.

Where you will find
great delivery, courteous service,
and competitive pricing are a way of life!

2269 S. University Dr., Suite 269 • Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33324
Toll Free 1-800-223-5802 • Local (305)472-5802
Fax (305)370-7797

MASTERING MOUNTING

continued from page 00

eral impulse sales. Rectangular and ovals mats cut to fit 3½"x5" or 4"x6" photographs are a perfect idea, especially if you also carry photo frames.

Like any creative application, pricing depends upon your particular market. It is easiest to refer to suggested mounting/laminating pricing and add in the mats. If flowers or cut-outs are used, add the cost of materials and additional shop or design time.

Think outside your box, outside your mounting press, outside your normal scope of everyday sales. Recycle mat board scraps and bring in increased sales dollars by creating new innovative designs by embossing mats using laminating films and other materials from outside: leaves, grasses and flowers. Its a natural!

The retexturing or resurfacing of

Diagram 2a

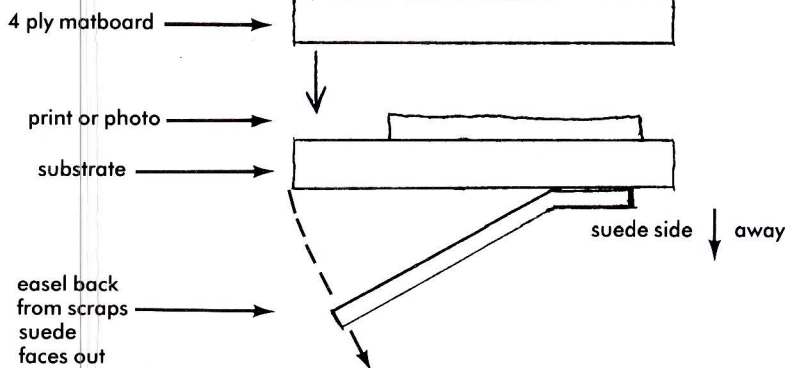
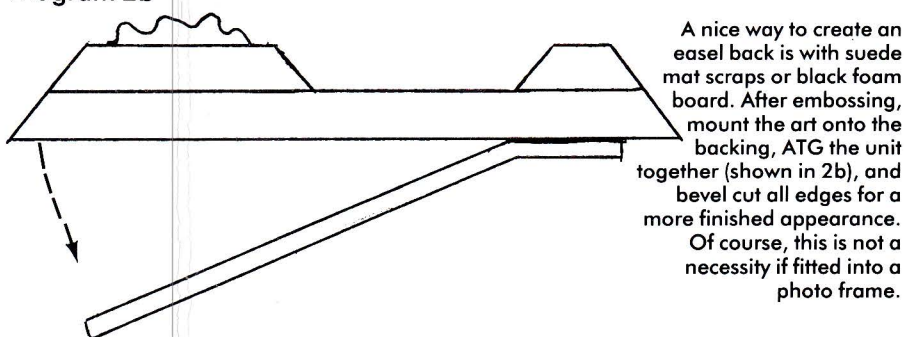


Diagram 2b



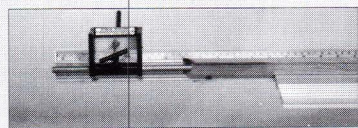
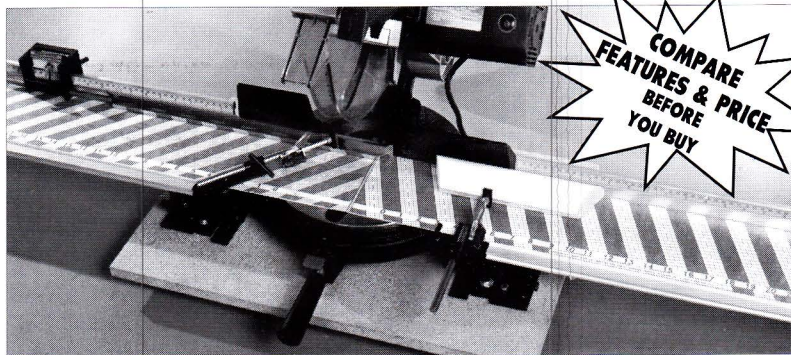
A nice way to create an easel back is with suede mat scraps or black foam board. After embossing, mount the art onto the backing, ATG the unit together (shown in 2b), and bevel cut all edges for a more finished appearance. Of course, this is not a necessity if fitted into a photo frame.

laminating films (photo 2) in addition to embossing is also a design possibility in relation to mats, foam boards and shadow boxes. Foil retexturing

will be featured in next month's column on creative laminating, and may also be incorporated into embossing designs as well.

INTERLOK™

Precision Mitering System



BACK FENCE EXTENDS UP TO 100"
TABLE WIDTH IS 5¾"
STANDARD TABLE LENGTH IS 64"
MEASURED FROM BLADE... LIKE
GETTING TWO SYSTEMS IN ONE!

COMPARE
FEATURES & PRICE
BEFORE
YOU BUY

- ✓ IT WILL FIT ANY MITER SAW
- ✓ SETS UP QUICKER THAN OTHER SYSTEMS
- ✓ NO DRILLING OR BOLTING INTO SAW
- ✓ MEASURE GRID STARTS AT BLADE
- ✓ HEXAGON & OCTAGON GRIDS AVAILABLE
- ✓ CUT WITH RABBET TOWARD OR AWAY FROM FENCE
- ✓ CALL TODAY FOR MORE DETAILS

WE ALSO HANDLE PREMIUM QUALITY BLADES, LUBRICANTS, MITER SAWS AND SHRINK WRAP SYSTEMS.

Advanced Precision Products Inc. • P.O. Box 38 • Harris, MN 55032

1-800-553-6060