

What's Wrong With This Picture?

by Chris Paschke, CPF

As I sat down to write my annual "trends for the new year" article, I suddenly realized that I was beginning my fifth year of Mastering Mounting, and my sixth as a writer for PFM. Seems impossible that the time has flown by so quickly.

But looking back, I can so how much things have changed, and continue to change. From year to year, new products and procedures emerge as new "state of the art", and it's important to stay on top of things to keep up with progress.



Every year I actively search for new mounting adhesives, techniques, and concepts that help pull us into the Twenty first Century. The trend for 1996 seems to be more of what we've seen in 1995 and 1994: a continuing concentration on conservation and its variations.

Cold Adhesives Revisited?

There is considerably more awareness surrounding potential heat sensitivities of printer inks and thermographic papers which appear to be leading us toward a need for more cold mounting. Now doesn't this sound like we're coming full circle?

It's not a matter of conservation, but rather a need "not to alter" the mounted object through the application of heat. Thermographic papers produce their image by heat stimulation, so the very application of full surface heat could blacken the surface.

Some color copiers react to heat by yellowing the image or a portion of the colors in the image. As we progress into computer generated images, photo manipulation, ink jet printers, etc., it is

more difficult to visually determine heat sensitivities. Perhaps the safest solution will ultimately be "no heat."

So where will the trend lead? Perhaps back to wet glues or pressure sensitive adhesives. What I'd love to see developed is the invention of rolls or permanent, tissue core, dry adhesive activated within a cold vacuum frame! (Manufacturers, take note.)

Not Mounting at All

Now what about that current trend towards no mounting certificates of any kind, because they are originals. More and more we are receiving "how to frame" info sheets with diplomas suggesting that they not be permanently mounted during framing. A trend, or just smart framing? You decide.

I personally feel that it's about time to protect ourselves from future backlashes caused by anything we do with a project. Never forget that framing is our livelihood and we should never put our reputations or future income on the line.

Certificates are a judgement call; a child's attendance award is not an irreplaceable diploma. The best solution for a one-of-a-kind diploma is probably to follow a trend of conservation framing after all. It will then forever remain reversible and protective, valuable or not, irreplaceable or not.

What of Photos for 1996?

Not much different from the photos of 1995 and 1994; the industry seems to have selected high gloss as the finish of choice for the 90's. Along with that comes the heat sensitivity again.

Glossy emulsions appear to have a 50/50 chance of a reaction when placed

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in a 190°F heat press (aside from the typically expected “orange peel”) and might best be mounted with a cold adhesive or pressure sensitive. Remember, the resin coating on the back of any RC photo prevents adhesive from saturating into it to permanently hold it to a mount board. The bond will only be as good as proper TTPM techniques.

What’s Wrong With This Picture?

For this year, I’ve unearthed an early 1970’s framing of my father’s as a great example of how far we’ve come. By taking a nostalgic walk through history, I can best point out a few of the changes, updates, and progresses over the past twenty years. The example is a 1974 vintage advertising postcard of a color etching by Tanna Kasimir-Hoernes promoted by Graphics International (photo 1). Copyright may not have been an issue in 1970 when it came to framing postcards, but today it could be different. We were picture framers for the hobby/craft market and did not carry fine art gallery images. My mother fell in love with this postcard image when it arrived, which my father



Photo 1: A 1974 advertising postcard of a color etching by Tanna Kasimir-Hoernes promoted by Graphics International which was framed by my father, showcasing a wealth of boobos.

lovingly framed as a surprise for her. Twenty years later, to my surprise, I discovered a plethora of framing mistakes and a perfect record of what was versus what is.

Initial Visual Examination

Upon first glance, you’ll probably notice the weighted bottom of the mat was accidentally placed upside down at the top of the frame. (Now really, Dad, pay attention.) The back side doesn’t look too bad. Papered, wired, taped ends, bumpers; okay, so the back looks better than the upside-down front (photo 2). The nail holes at the corners were never filled, and since I know it was routine procedure, I can only assume he didn’t deem it important enough to do for Mom (photo 3).

The front of the postcard shows warpage behind the window opening of the mat, probably accounted for by the fact that my father incorrectly affixed the mat to the card, not allowing for the expansion of the papers and boards (photo 4).

Once the dust cover was opened, I really found how times had changed. The diamond staples were affixed two to a side

rather than every 3” around as suggested. Could this be the cause of the print warpage? And look—corrugated cardboard (photo 5)!

Actually, I expected cardboard to be used as a backing board considering the date of the framing. But I also expected masking tape to be holding the image in the mat window. I was surprised to find white glue—perhaps the 70’s version of wet glue—holding the postcard to the mat. I don’t really ever being taught to use white glue as a mounting adhesive. What that just a chapter he missed telling me?

The glue had released in places along the window, allowing for the buckling viewed from the front. I only hope he skimped because it was a quickie piece for Mom, probably made with scraps he saved just for the right job. I’d hate to think this is the way he framed all the time. Sad but true: this was often the way it was twenty years ago.

Then Vs. Now

We’ve come a long way. Twenty years from today my son could be taking

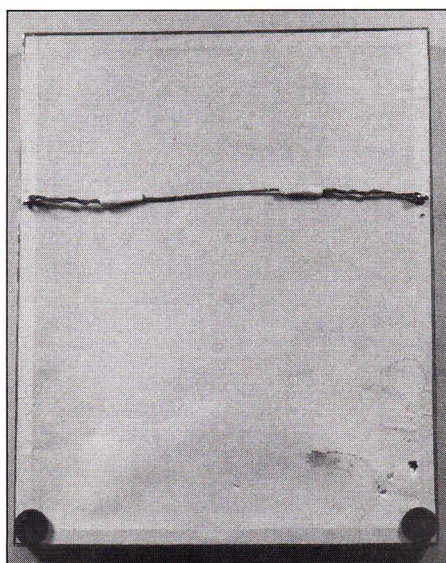


Photo 2: The verso side of the frame looks pretty good, showing traditional kraft paper dust cover, screw eyes, wires with tape wrapping the sharp ends, and felted bumpers.

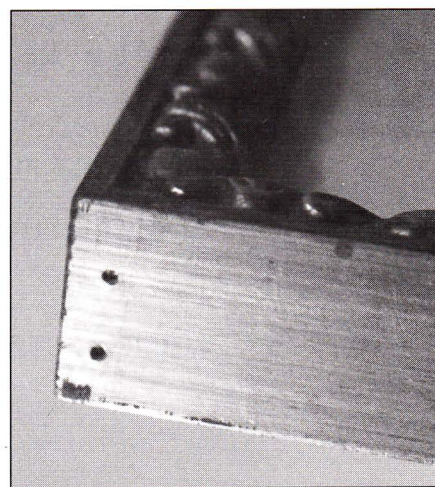


Photo 3: The corner nail holes remain unfilled; a sign of an incomplete job.

apart this same postcard project (I’ve reframed and updated it to 1996), only to find that his mother dry mounted it with

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Photo 4: A close look at the side of the window mat illustrates a warping of the print.

heat activated tissue onto a foam board scrap, using a window mat of black core rather than the paper core of his grandfather's yesteryear.

So what can we learn from this dissection of an old framing job? That we are progressing every day and new concepts in protecting and enhancing artwork change with new developments and research. Conservation is becoming a routine topic when framing most artwork, though it may still never apply to a disposable postcard advertisement.

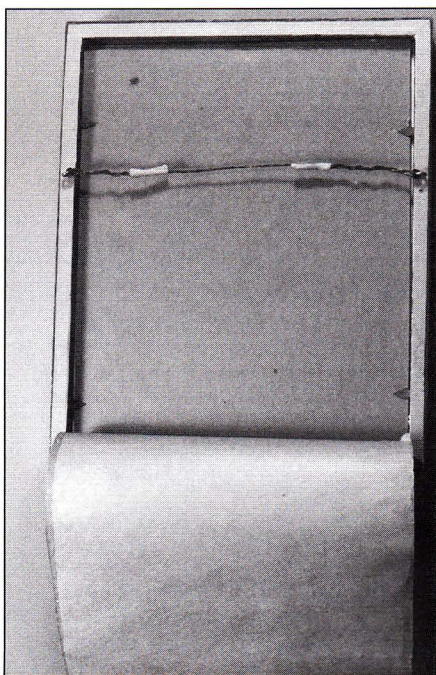


Photo 5: Removing the dust cover revealed an inadequate use of diamond staples and that dreaded corrugated cardboard.

Trends for the 90's continue to evolve. The featured print, if framed today, could have been matted with hundreds of other mat boards with different textures and colors to choose from, in addition to the way it could have been mounted. Plus there's that copyright issue.

If I were framing this project today to truly feature my design specialties, I would probably use tiered matting to enhance the fine black etching lines. Oh yea, and one

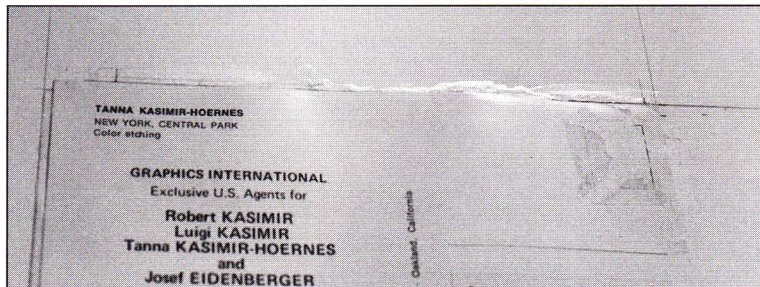


Photo 6: Notice the shiny, dried white glue attempting to hold the postcard smoothly against the window opening of the mat.

more thing — I'd make sure the weighted bottom was really on the bottom!*

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

*P.S. I love you Dad, and thanks for teaching me the fine art of being a picture framer!

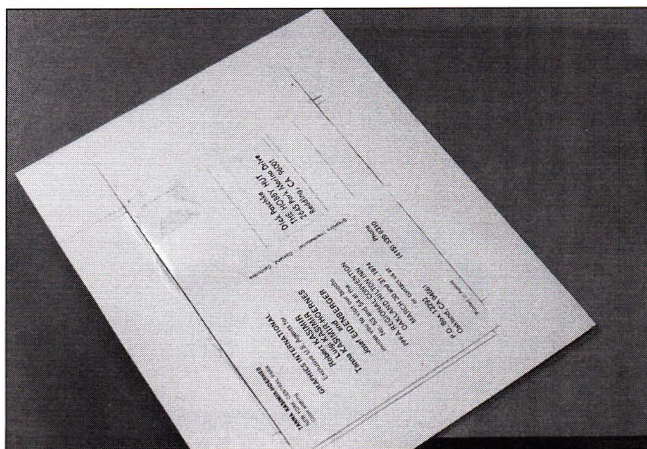


Photo 7: The framed postcard advertisement from 1974 was not feared to be an infringement of copyright as it would be in more recent years. Any lovely and admired image was the making of a framed piece of representative art back then.

