



Sandstone Panel: *Rag Roll With A Brayer*

by Chris A. Paschke, CPF



1. This piece of framed art work is 13 x 16, complete with a triple mat package. The top mat was enhanced with a 1/4" "sandstone" panel of Mat Magic™ dry pigment Adobe, followed by inks of Bone, Adobe and Classic Gold. They were then accented by 2 embossed lines, 1/8" apart to the outside. A richly embossed narrow gold frame pulled it all together and reinforced the carved patterns on the horses' bridles.



In a previous issue of PFM (October '91) I discussed how to achieve the look of fine marble through a process of surface mat decoration or enhancement. This month the lesson continues with a similar approach, yet quite different application. By using wet and dry pigments with a process of painting borrowed from theatrical set designers called "rag roll", you can turn an artist's brayer into an extremely efficient and economical tool for texturing mat board and creating panel designs.

Texturing and painting mats has fast become the design Mecca of the 90's. Not only does it enable the

creative framer to expand his potential mat board selection, but also his profit margin and individuality. We all should realize that with some 30,000+ framers in the United States alone there is a bit of competition out there. What better way to compete with the framer down the street than by making a statement with your creative designs. Not only will you establish a reputation for innovative, unique designing but it can make your job even more enjoyable. As a trusted professional picture framer you are afforded the privilege of being part interior decorator, part artist, plus a respected member of the fine arts community.

There are a great many wonderful techniques and applications for painted panel designs that utilize many innovative and clever tools. Materials such as sponges, dried out artists' brushes, toothbrushes (new and used), cheesecloth, eye droppers, Q-tips™, toothpicks and even dried twigs, leaves or weeds might become your tools of choice. Never overlook the obvious and remember to collect everything. Shoe polish sponges from hotels are wonderful, yet they have a rather short life span.

The step-by-step procedure illustrated here will explain both the fully textured mat and the narrow

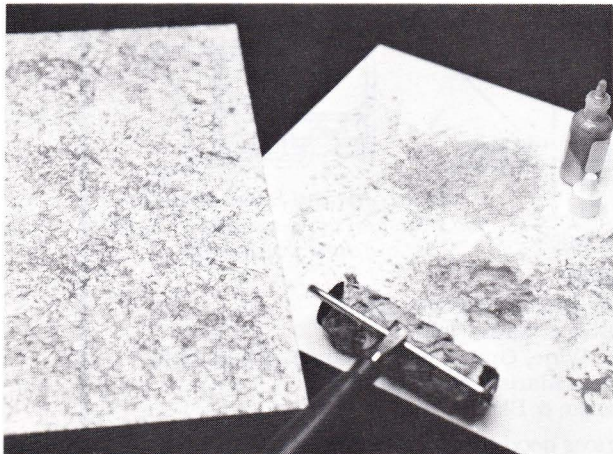
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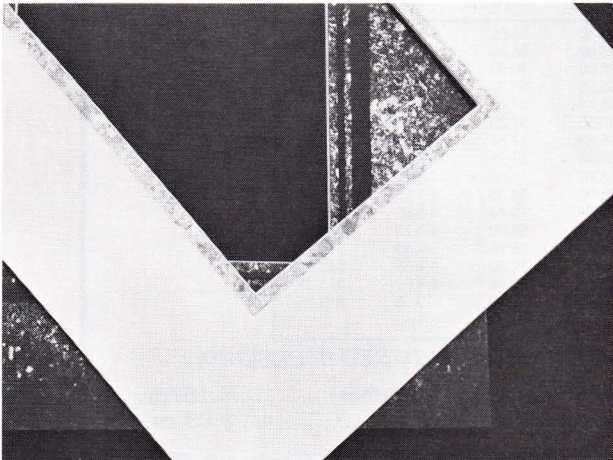
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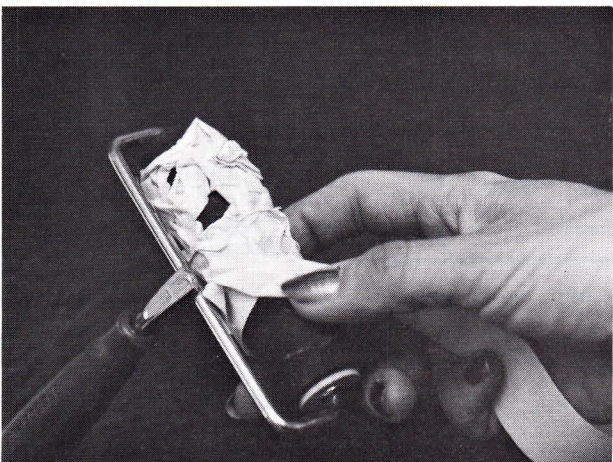
2. The supplies used in this process may be located in an art store: wet and dry pigments, a mat marking tool, parallel cutters, a burnisher, 1 1/2" and 4" brayers, stencil paper, cork backed steel ruler and masking tape.



3. Pictured is an entire mat fully textured with the "sandstone" pattern. As illustrated (intensity needed for article photo), dark colors on light board are frequently overpowering, texturally. Soft subtle colors harmonize best with the board and the art.



4. The fully textured "sandstone" board can be used as an inlay panel in an antique white base mat. Why inlay when it's easier to decorate a surface panel? Perhaps multiples of the same pattern are needed for a series of certificates, or maybe recycling fallouts and scraps is important to you.



5. Applying the masking tape to the brayer should be haphazard and sloppy. Wad the tape prior to and during the application, striving for uneven lumps, bumps and spaces. Do not use removeable drafting tape; although it looks like masking tape, it does not have the holding power.

accent panel (photo 1). As explained in the last issue, many of the materials used already exist in your shop. Unlike the Conte's stick pigments I preferred in the marbleizing article (PFM August 1991), I always return to the soft Mat Magic™ powders for this particular pattern and process. I use Mat Magic wet pigments as well, although Windsor-Newton gouache is also one of my particular favorites. Both wet pigments are lightfast and conservationally sound, yet Mat Magic comes pre-mixed, ready-to-use and is acrylic based, while gouache is tubed, must be thinned and is an opaque water-color (upcoming PFM article—"Gouache for Framers").

Tools needed for the "sandstone" design include both a 1 1/2" and a 4" wide brayer. You may wish to experiment with both soft and hard, though I generally prefer soft artists' brayers. Other needed materials include masking tape, Friskit stencil paper or 3M removable tape, an X-Acto™ parallel cutter, a mat marking guide and an optional ball burnisher (photo 2).

Make certain you always use high quality mat board for your base. Nicely contrasting black, white or solid core bevels of rag are preferable. Also, harder surfaced boards will take much more abuse and moisture. Keep in mind, however, that the more pebbled type of textured boards will add additional visual competition to your design.

When texturing the entire mat (left side, photo 3), or for that matter, when planning to use it in a standard or diagonal inlay format (photo 4), the entire mat will be painted prior to cutting the mat opening. This is done quite quickly and easily when using the "sandstone" pattern. Remaining fallouts may then be recycled into other projects. Realize also, that since any base mat board color may be used, the total range of possibilities is mind boggling.

Brayer Preparation

The first step in creating "sandstone" is to prepare the brayers. For the full mat board pattern use the wider roller. Earlier in the article I mentioned the "rag roll" technique



of creating texture on stage sets. This is done by taking a hand towel size wet rag and saturating it with paint to roll from top to bottom down the side of a wall. The high spots of the rag that touch the wall will deposit paint on the base colored surface, then once dry, a second or third layer is applied for added depth and contrast.

By taking strips of masking tape and wrinkling them up haphazardly, then wrapping them around the clean brayer, we can create a similar textural base to the damp rag method (photo 6).

Sandstone Pattern Full Sheet

Always use a brayer sized to accommodate the area you plan to decorate, otherwise it will take longer to texture the piece. Always remember that "time is money." Using a scrap piece of mat board as a palette, dispense about a teaspoon of color onto the surface and run the tape covered brayer through the paint a number of times to distribute it accordingly. Roll the brayer over the surface of the board to achieve the first level of applied color, being careful not to let the brayer slip when pushing it. Since acrylics (as well as gouaches) dry quite rapidly you may proceed to the next color as soon as the first is completed. I like to use metallics alot for their sparkle and class, and often use two metallics of similar worth or coolness (i.e. bronze/copper or pewter/silver), along with an opaque color.

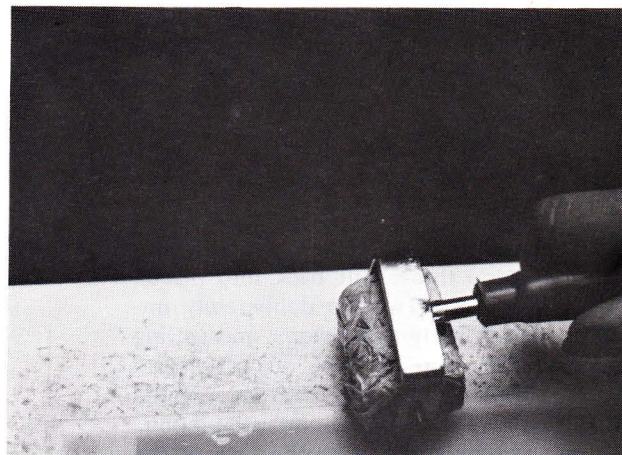
Always try to remember that when coloring a large mass area the colors must remain light or they will easily overpower the art work. Metallics are much more delicate than heavy opaques. Pearlized colors can be extremely effective, as well. Whenever a regular color is mixed with an existing pearlized white it will pearlize the new color tint also, as these too are very delicate in nature. A tint is any color mixed with white.

Sandstone Panel

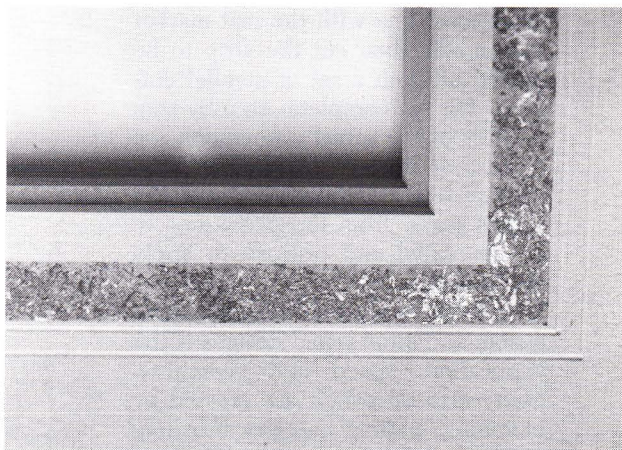
The preparation for almost any originally painted mat panel remains basically the same, regardless of the patterns, tools or materials used. Cut the desired mat opening, leaving the fallout held in place by slightly un-

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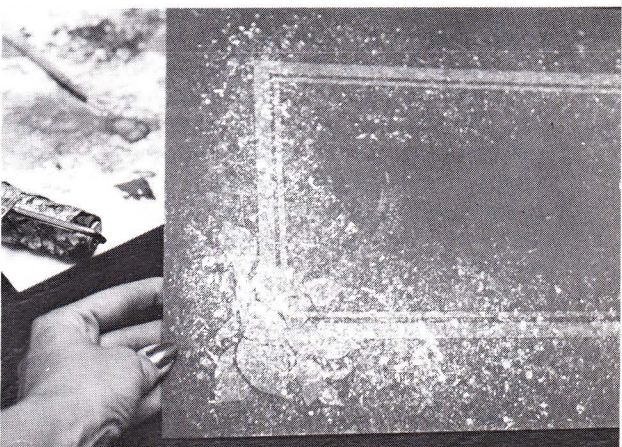
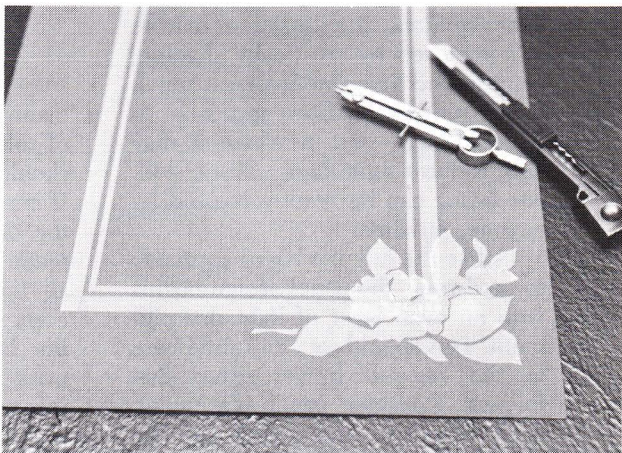
6. The major difference in creating a panel over an entirely textured surface is the application of a smooth, even panel of dry pigment prior to the wet paint "rag roll". Three layers of wet pigment (sometimes less, sometimes more) are then applied over the dry base panel.



7. Upon completion of the panel (after the paint is dry and prior to removing the stencil paper), re-line the surface using the mat marker, establishing corner points for the embossing tool. Place an indentation at each corner where the desired embossed lines are to meet. After removal of the stencil the indented marks remain reference points and no pencil marks will be necessary on the clean mat. Embossed lines are subtle, simple and profitable!



8. "Reverse sandstone" panel design and floral image enhancement—By beginning with a dark mat surface and removing all the protective stencil paper from the bulk of the mat, leaving only the actual panel and design protected, a negative or reverse image will occur. Once again, be subtle in your color selection and don't overdo. When working with the additional floral, consider intensifying the "sandstone" by localizing it more into the area of the accent flower.





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dercutting the corners (you may also re-tape the fallout back into place). The easiest way to deliberately undercut is by using stops, and setting the top stop $\frac{1}{16}$ " to $\frac{1}{8}$ " shy of an exact corner. These will then be popped out with a blade upon completion.

Completely cover the face of the mat with stencil paper, mark the inner most line with the mat marker and pencil, then cut the strip to be peeled off with a set of parallel cutters. For a complete step-by-step analysis of the actual preparation see *A Sliver of Stone on Mat Board* (PFM August 1991). Carefully remove the stencil paper from the panel area to be decorated and prepare to apply the colors.

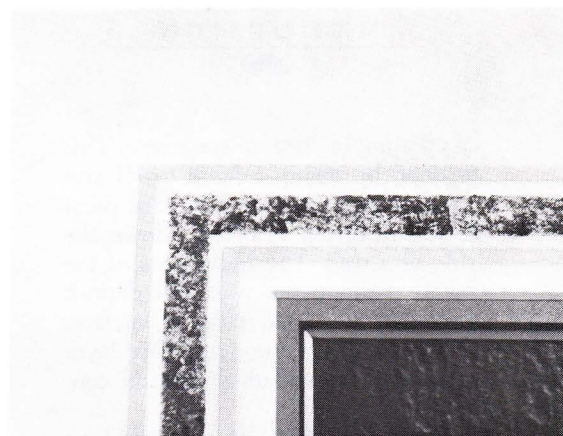
The difference between this panel design and other panel designs is the application, speed and versatility. Many textural panels are created by blotching, patting and dry brushing with a variety of tools, which in turn look very unique unto themselves. In *Sliver of Stone*, the illusion of marble was achieved by artistically shading, veining and layering colors; a much more refined, artistic approach to panel design—one in which it may help to have some basic artistic skill. *Sandstone* can be readily created by anyone, anytime!

Unlike the full mat board approach to sandstone, the panel design begins with an even layer of light dry pigment. This should act as a subtle base for the "rag roll" brayer texture that follows. Consider panel placement, color intensity and width on the overall mat and maintain a good balance between them, meaning intense colors should be narrower.

A narrower brayer should be used on panel designs to conserve paint and contain the potential mass. I prefer a $1\frac{1}{2}$ " soft Speedball brayer, wrapped once again with tape. The colors used in this particular design are very soft, pale metallics and neutral opaques since they are being applied onto antique white, 4-ply, museum rag to match the warm white color of the limited edition print stock being framed.

Three layers of color have been applied evenly, each in the same

9. This "black and white sandstone" is flanked by $\frac{1}{8}$ " even, dry pigment panels on 2-4 ply mat boards, dry mounted in a heat press with pure adhesive.



10. This "Larroque Sable Tiered" mat, used as an inner element as well as part of the tiered bevel creation, was completed by enhancing the top rag mat with two corresponding color "sandstone" panels.



manner (photo 7). Upon completion of rolling on the wet pigments they should be allowed to dry completely. If embossed lines are to be added to the design, once again set the mat marker and draw the pencil lines on all four sides to establish accurate corners. Then put a small indent with the ball burnisher at each corner, prior to removing the stencil. Remove the Friskit and add the embossed lines on either side of the panel to set it off even more (photo 8). Museum rag is wonderful for embossing because of its softer nature.

The completed framed art work deserves a slightly closer look for a moment. The bottom (inner) mat is a simple white core board, however the middle mat is a 6-ply board, created specifically for this limited edition to set off its delicate coloring. It is another white core board, but this one has been turned into a "reverse tier" meaning that multiple layers (five used here) of the fine art paper were dry mounted with Fusion 4000 pure adhesive in a mechanical press (to the back of the mat) to add

the subtle bevel lines of 2-brown/1-cream/2-brown (photo 9).

Variations On A Theme

Consider for a moment the concept of a reverse panel design. The combination of the two designs above a softly textured mat may be created with a plain panel of original mat board, or a floral border design might be stenciled to mask the "sandstone" from contaminating the desired negative or reverse design (photos 5 & 10).

Once again the possibilities are endless. Sandstone becomes yet another stepping stone for your pent up creativity. How can it get any easier than this one? Creativity abounds by adding narrow panels of even dry pigment or layers of fine art papers to create the distinctive striped bevels of "tiered mats". As always there are a number of busy panels, so always be careful of over-designing. Simplicity and elegance are the keys to success! PFM