

Selling the Mount: Can We Talk?

by Chris A. Paschke, CPF



I've written and lectured a great deal about expanding the uses of the mounting press to bring in additional dollars. I've also said time and again how easy it is to sell creative mounting applications, tiered matting, contempo panels and the like. Having convinced many of you to tap into the greater two thirds of the heat press pie, what about the original one third of basic mounting? If our bread and butter is supposed to be the basic procedures, then . . . "Can we talk?"

Mounting Statistics

If you own a mounting press system, whether cold frame, hot vacuum or mechanical dry mount, and are selling poster graphics in your store, then 90% of what walks out your door should be mounted. I do not mean signed, limited editions of original art. After all, it is the job of a framer to enhance and protect the art he works with. This should apply both to formally framed items as well as decorative or poster art.

The beauty of press mounting includes the speed with which prints may be mounted, the ease surrounding the process, and the long term permanence of a professional presentation. If it looks good, your customer will remain happy, but if it bubbles or cockles, your customer may never return.

Reconsider Your Offerings

When targeting your market, consider the competition in your area for open edition paper art, posters and

cards. This decorative market ranges as wide as disposable brightly colored pictures for a child's room to thought provoking images for a college dorm.

I realize the best case scenario is to have any poster (especially 24" x 36") matted, glazed and framed to the tune of \$100 to \$125. But if the customer just wants to buy "the print", that means they are planning on framing it themselves, having it framed somewhere else (in which case you really need to work on your sales approach), or are going to tack it up on the wall as is.

If you currently sell poster prints shrink wrapped with a piece of foam board for rigidity, consider selling it as a mounted poster shrink wrapped for presentation. Often the best way to sell basic mounting for paper art is not to offer it sold any other way. That way you are at least one step beyond one of the basic objections when quoting a framed poster at \$100: "does it have to be mounted?"

Immediate Mounting Profits

If the unmounted print sells for \$40 retail, once mounted it will be sold at that base retail plus the mounting charge. So now the print retails for \$45 or \$48, rather than the original \$40. Once this practice is implemented two things happen.

First, prints will always leave your shop mounted and you will have guaranteed that additional mounting charge, even if complete framing is never sold. Second, when quoting the framing price, the mounting charge is already included in the price of the print, therefore lessening the span between the print cost and

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the completed framing price. Psychologically, the sticker price will be a little less of a shock.

Sales Pitch

As framers, it is our job to pitch the entire sale. Mounting is not the most glamorous part of a frame design—in fact, if done properly it should not be noticed at all. This is perhaps why so many customers are clueless when it comes to understanding what mounting is and why it is needed.

In business courses we are frequently taught not to break down the final quoted price into every tiny segment, but rather to quote the entire bulk price. I suggest modifying that just slightly while maintaining the same concept, making it much more palatable.

Once the total price is calculated, present it as: “OK, Ms. Paschke, the total job comes to \$175.58. Now



Photo 1: There are lots of ways to illustrate the benefits of mounting, many of which showcase different extremes. The black image (center left) has been wet with a sponge, while the center, right example demonstrates damaged paper.

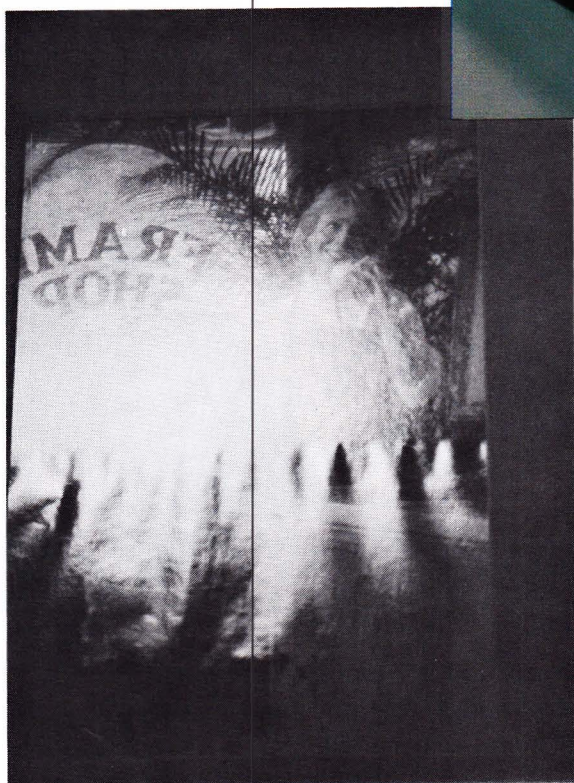


Photo 2: This magazine page, courtesy of Larson-Juhl, clearly illustrates the top half smoothly mounted while the bottom has gently cockled from environmental humidity. The lighter weight the sample, the better the example.

that's \$75 for the frame, \$15 for the glazing, \$70 for the double, surface tiered panel mat with gold accent strips and spacers as we selected . . . bringing it to the \$175.58, which of course includes mounting and fitting.”

At this point, once you pick them up off the floor, they may or may not have even noticed your reference to mounting. If no questions are asked, obviously you'll offer no more discussion. But dead silence is also bad, so don't hesitate to ask for the sale, with: “You can put 50% down or you can pay the whole thing at once if you prefer”.

The Perfect Example

About 50% of your customers actually *hear* the entire verbiage of the pitch, rather than simply the bottom line price. Personally, I feel this “new awareness” is the result of all those

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Photo 3: This 8½"×11" flier, courtesy of Seal Products, both physically and intellectually reinforces the mounting concept. It has been wet down manually with a wet sponge to accelerate the wrinkling of the right half.

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television shopping networks; people are learning how to listen better. These professional shoppers will often question what the difference is between mounting and fitting, and why both are necessary. This is why a picture is worth a thousand words. One of the best ways to sell mounting is through a visual example of something poorly mounted. (Photo 1)

The best sample is a large (24"×36"), glossy, lightweight, inexpensive poster, preferably in black or any dark color. Mount the top half or left half, leaving the other half unmounted. Then live with your new sample, allowing the unmounted half to bubble and cockle as you shower with it for the next week. Creating an environment of extreme steam or humidity can accelerate the expansion of paper, so you can most easily illustrate the change in paper by moisture absorption. (Photo 2)

After all, lots of people love to

hang thin, cheap magazine prints and posters in their bathrooms and near the steamy stove top in the kitchen or, for that matter, anywhere in the house during a normal summer in Florida or Texas.

Hanging your new bubbled print is also important. Try to hang it up high and toward the front of the store, wherever there is a nice glare on the print when viewed from your sales area. It must appear to be obviously in need of something; mounting perhaps?

Another Alternative

If showering or cooking with your new sample is too time intensive, then a reasonable alternative is to simply wet down the dry half with a well saturated sponge and/or mist bottle. Remember, this half is meant to look pretty bad. In fact, the worse it looks the better the mounted half will look.

Another visual sample (if you do not have the space to hang a large impressive bubbled print) is to have a small 8"×10" over-the-counter sample with the same procedure. This may or may not be glassed and framed but must be well mounted and cockled. (Photo 3)

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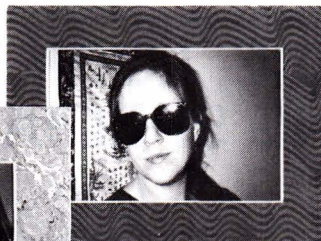
Photo 4: This is a perfect under-the-counter visual sales aid for explaining how wrinkled paper may indeed be mounted flat, but clearly illustrates that permanent broken fiber paper damage may not be healed.

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mastering mounting

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Recap

Now, in review, how do you sell mounting?

(1) Mount all saleable poster art onto some type of frameable substrate, such as foam board, prior to shrink wrapping. It gives a nice presentation and is half the mounting battle.

(2) Never ask: "Do you want this mounted?" That's a closed yes or no question and you have a 50/50 chance they will say no! Quote the price stating, "of course this includes mounting and fitting".


(3) Create great visual samples by showering with a print, or illustrating just exactly how much correction is

When making your
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to sell up.

available after permanent paper damage has occurred. (Photo 4)

The Final Pitch

When making your sales presentation, always remember to sell up. Start with more than you may anticipate the sale will include. If you figure on a double mat, offer a triple and so on. This doesn't apply to mounting. In many cases remember that due to the proposed use (ie: bathroom or kitchen display) the only way to ensure the best presentation is to mount the puppy.

Shoot for the moon. You may not always achieve the \$100 framed poster sale, but you may at least end up with a shrink wrapped poster print walking out your front door that is very well mounted! 

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