

Mastering Mounting



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Refurbishing Framed Art

Retro, or traveling back in to an earlier time, is a very popular design trend these days, particularly in decorating with everything from the look of the silver,

black, and red diner of the 1950s to the pop art images of Andy Warhol.

Colors, patterns, and art images have embraced the eras and style of the past, but that does not mean that art should still be mounted and framed as it was back then. True retro in framing would bring with it examples of lesser framing practices, including corrugated cardboard backing, hinging with masking tape, and other

practices very frowned upon today.

Refurbishing Framed Art

Framers have all had projects requiring simple repair or

remounting of bubbled open edition images that have hung in a bathroom or a poster pressed against glass to hold it flat. These are simple reframing jobs that allow previous mounting weaknesses to be corrected or the initial level of framing improved.

Products and techniques are constantly advancing, so occasional refurbishing is important. It is imperative that framers periodically check older framed art, particularly when these pieces have been subjected to the forces of nature, including light, humidity, bugs, and pollution. Rechecking framed art reinforces the need to educate customers and encourages them to bring their framed art in for review every five years or so. Whether a framed piece needs remounting or just a new matboard to go with the new paint in the bedroom, it will be updated and refurbished with a fresh, new look.

Rooster Examination

One of the first three pieces my father ever framed was a watercolor I completed in high school. It was done with Grumbacher watercolor on absorbent heavyweight rice paper, and it has been hanging in assorted locations at my parents' and then brother's houses, finally making its way back to me. Through the years it has withstood much abuse, including moving, poor handling, and direct light. It was way overdue for refurbishment.

Initial exterior examination showed the typical 1970s handling of this custom framing job: non-glare glass, paper matboard, thin



Above: This watercolor was framed in 1970 with a chopped aluminum frame, single paper core mat, and non-glare glass—simple, direct, and state-of-the-art at the time. Below: The reframed art uses a 3" double mat and Bevel Accents with bevels deep-wrapped with decorated paper to set off the work.

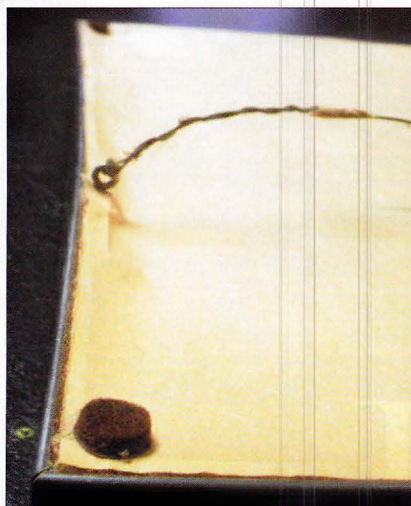


Photo 1: The side moulding was badly warped inward from the weight of the frame on the wire. The sides had been reinforced by small wood strips where the screw eyes were fitted for hanging, but the hanging wire was badly worn and broken. The corrugated cardboard backing had a severe arch in one side, probably from moisture and partially because of the 8" between diamond points. On the positive side, the Kraft paper, which was attached with ATG tape, was still holding as were the felt bumpons.

aluminum wood-backed moulding, Kraft paper dust cover, felt bumpons, screw eyes, and uncoated wire (Photo 1). The side moulding was badly warped inward from the weight of the frame on the wire while the Kraft paper attached with ATG tape was still holding quite well. Close examination showed that the threads of the wire were badly worn and broken. It was a matter of time until this piece hit the ground.

The thin frame sides were also reinforced with small 4"x1/4" wood strips glued where the screw eyes were fitted for hanging. Removing the dust cover and corrugated backing revealed that the art had been attached to the back of the window mat rather than to the backing board. Also, the diamond points had been placed too far apart, at 8" rather than the more accepted 3". This had allowed the corrugated



Photo 2: The original ATG strip along the top edge was still very much intact. The masking tape was only holding because of it sticking to the ATG as seen where the edge past the ATG is lifting from the mat. Both would need to be removed.

backing to severely warp along one side so that it was not evenly supporting the art.

Mounting Nightmare

The dominant original hinge was a strip of 1/2" ATG applied to the top inside edge of the back of the window mat. The watercolor was then overlapped onto it by 1/4" and burnished to hold (Photo 2). It was still holding. There were also two 2" strips of masking tape applied on top of the ATG and on each of the remaining three sides. The eight pieces of masking tape were peeled first from the mat to loosen the three sides of the watercolor. Removal of the masking adhesive tore the top layer of paper backing from the mat but did not pull fibers from the rice paper (Photo 3). Once the three taped sides were removed from the back of the window, the art then needed to be freed from the ATG strip across the top.

Tapes and Residue

Removing the art from the back of the window was easy because the masking tape adhesive had dried out, leaving little adhesion. When the art was lifted from the window, the ATG split and tore the top layer of mat paper but did not pull from the art. There was no discoloration or



Photo 3: Removing the art from the back of the window mat was the first step. The masking adhesive tore the top layer of paper backing from the mat but not the rice paper. The ATG tape split and separated when the art was lifted from it, taking the top layer of paper mat while remaining adhered to the art. The fibrous nature of the rice paper easily allowed the remaining tape to be lifted with only a very few fibers remaining. No visible damage appeared on the art.

acid burn beneath the tape on the mat. The remaining ATG on the art needed to then be removed. The fibrous nature of the rice paper easily allowed the tape to be lifted with only a few fibers. There was no visible damage or color loss. Though the ATG lifted the top layer of mat-board backing paper, it did not stick well to the rice paper. The strip easily removed in pieces without damage or discoloration to the art, which was a pleasant discovery.

The remaining masking tape on all sides then needed to be removed from the watercolor. The tape easily lifted from the painting because the pressure-sensitive (P-S) adhesive had dried out enough to allow it to peel with no fiber tear or separation. There was no discoloration under this tape, either. In fact, after years of bad display, terrible handling, and lack of UV glazing, there was no visible damage to the art at all.

The common worries about P-S adhesives are that they dry out, ooze, or soak in too aggressively, causing irreparable damage. But after 37 years in a custom framed package, the pressure-sensitive adhesives of the ATG, the masking tape,



Photo 4: While the common worry about pressure-sensitive adhesives is that they will dry out, ooze, or soak in too aggressively, but these tapes and felt bumpers were still hanging on after 37 years.

and felt bumpers were still holding (Photo 4). Inside, the masking tape was dried out and easily peeled off. But on the outside of the package—though warped and bowed—everything was still stuck and padded.

The Refurbished Design

So now the "Roosters" of my youth needed to be upgraded into a fine custom framing presentation that



Photo 5: The new design used a double mat of AlphaRag #8664 Special Creme and Bainbridge Bevel Accents #8228 Gilded Black. Two strips of ATG were applied to the Bevel Accent board, one on the paper accent close to the window and one close to the outer mat edge.

would both properly enhance and protect it while still fitting into my design tastes. The refurbished frame design needed to be clean, neutral, and have a hint of a contemporary Asian flair, so I decided to go with a Design Guild $\frac{3}{4}$ " Satin Black Stem moulding #10015; double AlphaRag #8664 Special Creme 4-ply mats; and Bainbridge Bevel Accents #8228 Gilded Black



Photo 6: The first Bevel Accent strip was aligned to the back of the window at the corner of one side. These strips were not set flush to the bottom edge of the bevel but rather about $\frac{1}{8}$ " inside the window to show more of the decorative paper.

(Photo 13). Unfortunately this particular Bevel Accent has been discontinued, but it has long been my favorite and I had plenty in reserve.

Bevel Accent Application

The frame was built and the mats were sized and cut with a 1" reveal between them to accommodate the deep bevel. Bainbridge Bevel Accent strips are purchased in boxes of four



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Photo 7: The other three Bevel Accent strips surrounding the window were placed in a pinwheel, with the excess extending slightly beyond the edge of the mat. Each successive strip was butted firmly against the previously aligned strip until all four sides were placed. Then the excess beyond the outer edges of the window mat was trimmed off.

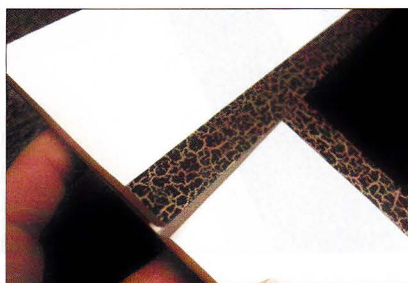


Photo 8: As each strip was sized, a new end undercut had to be cut to prepare it for the next leg of the pinwheel. Each cut was made at a slight angle to provide flexibility in pushing the beveled edges together snugly at the window's corners.

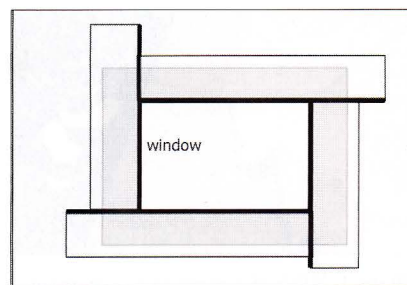


Diagram 1: The four Bevel Accent strips were taped down in a "pinwheel" design.

40" strips with a reverse bevel (undercut) on one end of each. Since ATG tape had been in direct contact with the art but did no visible damage after over three decades, using ATG in the new mat package was fine for refurbishing it.

Two strips of ATG were applied to the Bevel Accent board, one on the paper wrap close to the

window and one close to the outer mat edge (Photo 5). These strips can be placed flush with the bottom of the bevel or farther into the window to allow more of the deep bevel color to be visible. The first strip should be aligned by beginning at the visual corner of the window mat then pressing the strip with the tape on it to hold it in place (Photo 6). This shouldn't be

burnished too aggressively yet as it may need to be slightly readjusted after the other sides are placed. The second strip, also reverse bevel cut on one end, was then double taped and butted snugly against the first strip at the inside corner of the window. The third and then the fourth strips were then added, creating a pinwheel design (Diagram 1). The first strip was then re-examined to make sure it was placed snugly into the corner. Then the surface of the mat was aggressively rubbed to

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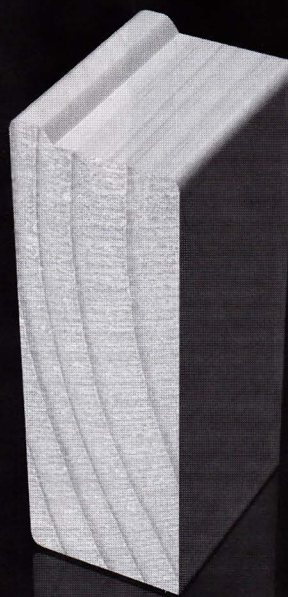
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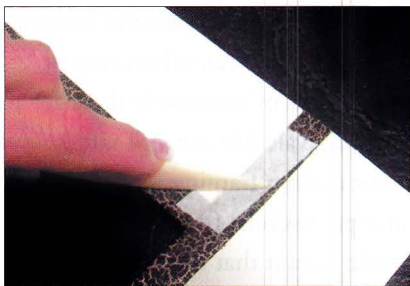


Photo 9: The joint on the back needed to be reinforced with a strip of linen or other pressure-sensitive tape and was burnished firmly to activate as much adhesive as possible.

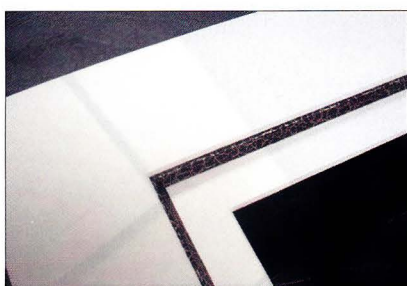


Photo 10: A solid strip of ATG was then applied all the way around the pinwheel and the bottom liner mat was attached.



Photo 11: A strip of linen tape was used to book hinge the window mat unit along its longest side to the backing board. It was then burnished firmly to activate the adhesive.

activate the tapes (Photo 7) and the excess bevel boards trimmed off at the outer edge of the window mat.

As each leg of the pinwheel is cut, the new raw end was undercut to prepare it for the next corner. Cutting at a slight angle rather than square provided the flexibility needed for it to be snugly pushed together so that the beveled edges fit cleanly at the window corner

(Photo 8). The joint at the back was then reinforced with a strip of linen tape (other P-S tape may also be used). It was then burnished firmly to activate as much adhesive as possible (Photo 9).

A solid strip of ATG was applied all the way around the pinwheel on the back of the completed top mat, aligned and attached to the bottom liner mat (Photo 10). The window mat unit was then

book hinged along the entire longest side to the backing board. Linen tape is generally best for this, firmly burnished once applied. The same holds true for the reinforcement of the pinwheel corners (Photo 11).

Before and After

Once the mat was assembled and book hinged, the art was mounted with Japanese hinges and the final



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fitting was completed. The corner detail in Photo 12 shows the cleanly tucked bevel strips that align perfectly into the corner at a 45-degree angle by using the pinwheel technique. The completed renovation shows a $\frac{3}{4}$ " visible liner mat accented by the gilded wrapped deep bevel and satin black stem frame.

The completed project is 24 $\frac{1}{4}$ "x18 $\frac{1}{2}$ " featuring a 3" cream double mat with deep-wrapped bevel of decorated paper. Compared to before, the art has been allowed to open up and visually expand in appearance because it now matches the background colors of the rice paper. In contrast, the original green single mat seemed to confine the art rather than allowing it to "breathe." The window is exactly the same size as the original, but the mat width has increased



Photo 12: A close-up of the corner shows the cleanly tucked bevel strips and $\frac{3}{4}$ " liner mat accented by the gilded, wrapped deep bevel and the satin black stem frame.

from 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ " to 3" around, only enlarging the frame outside dimension. The wrapped bevel of gilded gold lines in the black decorative paper also picks up the delicate, black pen-and-ink hairlines in the watercolor.

A Final Note

Periodically reexamining all framed art can prevent long-term damage.

Though this watercolor was none the worse for wear, others may be the victims of irreversible damage. Keeping valuable artwork safe is what custom framing is all about, and professional framers should make certain that mounting and framing emotional and monetary valuables is correct and up to date. ■

Chris A. Paschke, CPF, GCF, Mounting Editor, owns Designs Ink in Tehachapi, CA, featuring commercial custom framing, fine art/graphic design, and industry consulting. Specializing in mounting, matting, design creativity, and fine art, she works with industry leaders and has taught for The National Conference. She has written two books on mounting: *The Mounting and Laminating Handbook* (now in its second edition) and *Creative Mounting, Wrapping, and Laminating* and can be contacted at www.designsinkart.com.

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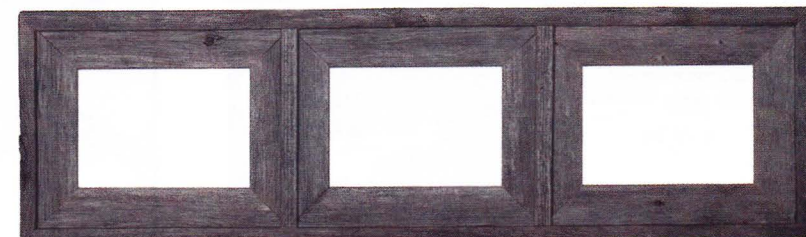


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