

Mastering Mounting



by
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Canvas Transfers: Still Alive & Well

Canvas art in the framing world offers many alternatives. Whether it involves an oil painting, a starving artist mass-produced original, an Asian import, a lithograph, or a digital reproduction, stretching and framing canvases remains the rage. With all the assorted canvas variations and current consumer demand for them, framers are turning back to in-house, heat-

laminated canvas images first introduced to the framing industry in the early 1990s.

Transfer, Print, or Inkjet

Making an image appear to have been originally produced on canvas is not a new process.

There are three basic ways in which a canvas image can be produced. The first is coating, peeling, and reapplying a printed image to canvas, called canvas transferring. A second

is offset printing directly onto canvas. And a third is printing on treated canvas with a digital printer, called an inkjet or giclée.

Digitally printed canvases, giclée canvases, or inkjet prints reproduce the original art by scanning it into a computer and then printing it directly onto specially coated canvases designed to receive digital pigment and dye-based inks. These often have an edition number and may also be signed by an artist. Open edition offset canvas reproductions are not signed or numbered.

Canvas transferring, on the other hand, is

a process by which the top, inked layers of an offset reproduction on paper are lifted from its backing and reattached to a heat-activated (HA) adhesive-coated canvas. The bonded print and canvas is fused under pressure to achieve maximum canvas texture. Completed transfers may also be enhanced with brushstrokes or can be crackled and aged.

Profit Potential

Canvas transfers have been around the photo industry since the late 1960s and were popular in framing during the mid 1990s. But it's only been in the past few years that canvases have really become dominant in the home and wall decor market. But as with any process, canvas transfers will never sell unless they are promoted with samples. Commercial print transfers are available from many sources, including Lieberman's, Bentley Publishing Group, and Image Conscious among others, while special custom applications may be sent to Haddad's Fine Arts, Art Transfer Inc., Old Grange Graphics, and other suppliers.

In-house transfers are produced with regular framing equipment and should be priced at a minimum of \$1.50 per united inch for the outside dimensions of the fabric being stretched, not the image. Add to that another \$0.50 to \$1 for stretching and \$1 to \$2 for brushstrokes, and the basic transfer should retail for \$3 to \$5 per united inch.

HA Canvases

The lamination process of transferring offers three major suppliers of HA canvas products:

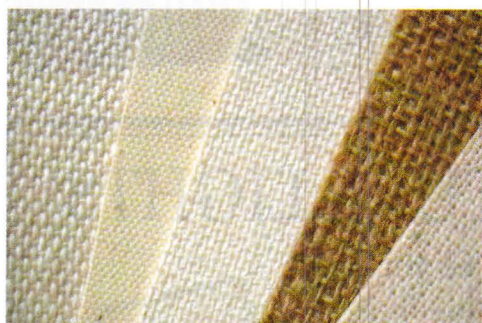


Photo 1: (From left) Drytac MMP 12-ounce canvas medium weave three-ply cotton; MPP 7-ounce Artist Canvas smooth textured cotton duck; MMP 10-ounce canvas one-ply cotton; MMP 10-ounce jute irregular texture, natural and rugged; and Bienfang CanvasMount shown in Traditional Natural.

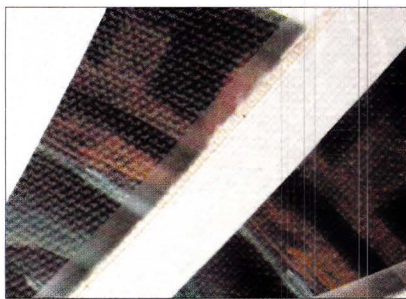


Photo 2: Drytac ArtShield Matt laminating film was applied to the far left image then onto coarse fabric, while Matt film was applied, peeled, and transferred onto Bienfang Traditional CanvasMount at right.

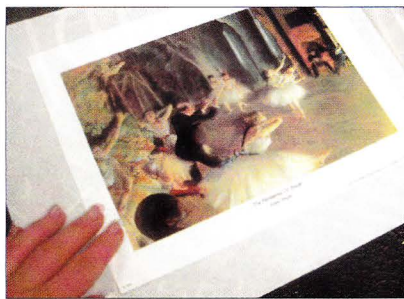


Photo 3: Lay the laminate face up and peel back the laminate from the liner without totally removing it, then center the art print on the liner.



Photo 4: Roll the laminate back over the print and close it against the release liner.

Drytac, Bienfang, and PrintMount. Drytac's MMP 12-ounce canvas is a medium weave, three-ply cotton with white, HA adhesive. The MMP 7-ounce Artist Canvas is a smooth, textured cotton duck, and the MMP 10-ounce canvas is one-ply cotton. Both have an HA adhesive. The MMP 10-ounce jute, designed for production, has an irregular texture, is natural colored, and has a clear HA adhesive (Photo 1).

Bienfang CanvasMount is a woven canvas fabric available as Traditional Natural and Bridal White with clear adhesive and a release liner. PrintMount offers Fine Canvas, a 7-ounce double primed, 100 percent cotton, pre-coated

with Fabric Mount HA liquid adhesive. The Medium Canvas 10-ounce traditional artist's canvas and the highly textured Course Canvas 12-ounce are both coated with HA adhesive.

The Laminates

The rolled vinyl films used as surface laminates in canvas transferring are already used by framers as a typical glass substitute. Smooth finishes like Gloss, Satinex, Luster, Super Matte, Satin Matte, Matt, Mattex, and Ultra Matte are preferred when transferring because the threaded patterns of the canvas substrate may better press through the decal from the back (Photo 2). Heavier, more

textured films include Canvas, Deep Canvas, Fine Linen, Coarse Linen, Sand, Canvastex, Linentex, and Emerytex. These have a greater tendency to visually fight with the actual fabric texture when canvas mounted and become more distracting than visually enhancing.

The Process

Size the artwork image, then add 2" all around for a standard stretcher bar application and up to 4" around for a 2" gallery wrap, then cut the canvas fabric. Add another ½" to 1" more for the laminate. The laminate must always cover the entire HA canvas or

Copyrights and Canvas Transfers

For copyrighted artworks, the creation of a canvas transfer for resale may constitute a violation of artists' and/or publishers' rights. Dealing in these types of transfers may subject the printer, publisher, gallery, or framer who creates or sells them to liability. For years, many publishers or framers believed that once an image was purchased by them they could do anything they wished to present it for sale.

In 1988, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit held that transforming works on paper into works on another medium (canvas) without artist permission was a violation of the artist's rights. The court then followed up by researching the Copyright Act's definition of a derivative work as "a work based upon one or more pre-existing works, such as...art reproduction...or any other form in which a work may be recast, transformed, or adapted." This disallows anyone to make a reproduction, or canvas transfer, without permission. It could be argued that mounting or laminating any reproduction is also altering it from its original state.

Mounting images to canvas or any other nontraditional backing is the illegal operation, having transformed the art into a derivative work not intended by the artist. Traditional mounting and framing techniques for display are considered appropriate and would be anticipated, thus approved by the artist.

As a general rule, permission must be obtained from the printer, publisher, or artist in order to legally alter any open edition poster print or studio portraiture by turning it into a canvas backed image for mass resale. It is currently still legal to offer the service of a single canvas transfer to a customer. However, if the open edition reproduction in question is available from a publisher as either a print or canvas image, it must be purchased as a canvas from that publisher and may not be transferred by a framer.

Copyright infringement is an illegal practice, and ignorance is no excuse. For additional information on copyright issues contact the "Lawyer for the Arts" office in your state.

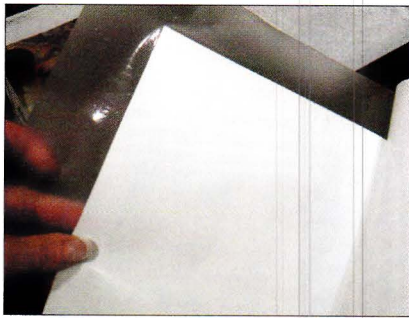


Photo 5: Once the print is bonded, remove and discard the paper release liner from the back of the laminated print.



Photo 6: Submerge the laminated paper print in a vat of water for 15 minutes.



Photo 7: After 15 minutes, remove the print, shake off additional water and place it face up on a hard Formica or glass-top surface. Dry off the print and flatten it against a table, sopping up excess water.



Photo 8: Rub the print to dry it off and to suction the soaked paper down to the smooth table surface.



Photo 9: Once the print is well suctioned to the tabletop, gently begin the separation of the inked image from the backing paper.

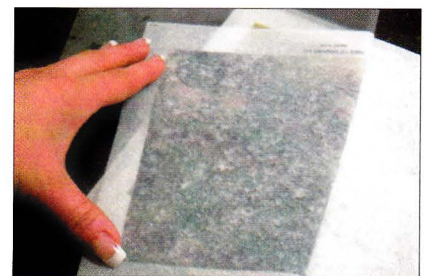


Photo 10: Once the separation is started across the entire top edge, the inked print top layer will very easily roll from the remaining paper backing just from the pressure of your fingers drawing back across the print in a 180 degree hairpin roll.

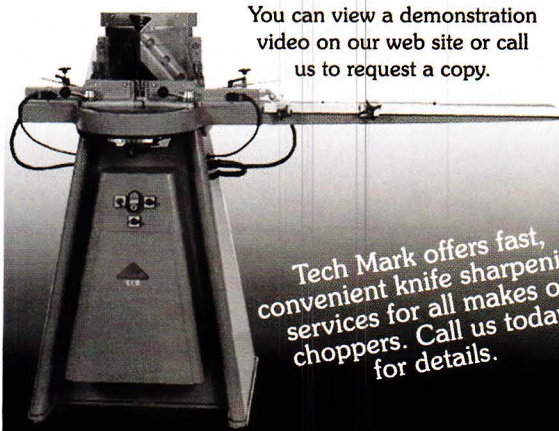
it will bond to the sponge overlay during mounting.

Lay the laminate sheet face up, and peel back the laminate from the liner without totally removing it. Center the art print on the liner (Photo 3). Then gently roll the laminate back over the print and close it against the release liner. This

makes a self-contained package ready to be mounted (Photo 4). Cover the laminate with sponge overlay foam and a release paper and place it in a preheated vacuum or mechanical press at 180° to 220°F (depending on the manufacturer's suggested temperature) for 8 to 10 minutes.

When an image and substrate are

bonded, remove and discard the paper release liner from the back of the laminated print (Photo 5) and submerge the laminated print in a vat of water for 15 minutes (Photo 6). All prints only require 15 minutes for soaking, no matter their size. Place the print face up and totally submerge it, making sure there is no trapped air under



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Photo 11: Clean up the soaked backing paper by lifting all in one piece. That way, there will be no tiny paper fibers left behind.



Photo 12: Make sure all of the HA canvas has been covered by the laminate so it does not adhere to the sponge.



Photo 13: The new laminate decal/HA canvas unit may now be placed in the press for bonding.


it that would allow it to float to the surface. The print may be lightly weighted with a plastic bucket of water to hold it under the surface but not heavy enough to prevent water from getting to the paper under the bucket. If additional prints are being soaked at the same time, make sure the tacky laminate edges aren't sticking together and preventing water from getting to the inner paper.

After 15 minutes, remove the

print, shake off additional water, and place it face up on a hard Formica or glass-top surface. Dry the print off and flatten it out against the table, sopping up water (Photo 7). Rub the print to smooth the soaked paper on the table. Make sure the print is well stuck to the table during this step (Photo 8). A clean table is important. A dirty table not only detracts from the suction, but dust also makes the water muddy.

Once the print is suctioned to the

tabletop, gently begin to separate the inked image from the backing paper (Photo 9). Once the entire top edge is lifted, the inked top print layer should be very easily rolled from the remaining paper backing just by the pressure of your fingers drawing it back across itself in a 180 degree hairpin roll (Photo 10). For a large (24"x36" or 40"x60") print, you might need two hands—but just to evenly draw the



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Photo 14: This exposed adhesive would bond to the sponge during mounting.

moist decal. Clean up the soaked backing paper by lifting all in one piece. The beauty of working face up is there will never be any tiny paper fibers rubbed off to create a terrible mess in your work area (Photo 11). The key to the success of this process is to evenly soak at any water temperature and then pull the image evenly with a 180-degree hairpin peel during removal.

HA Canvas No Liner

While it is still damp, align the lami-



Photo 15: Peel back the top few inches of the liner and align the sticky back of the laminate against the tacky canvas; it will hold rather aggressively.

nated and peeled decal over the HA canvas of choice (Photo 12).

Remember to make sure that all the HA canvas has been covered by the laminate so it doesn't adhere to the sponge. The new laminate decal/HA canvas unit may now be placed in a press for bonding (Photo 13). The mount package will be, from bottom to top: release paper, canvas/laminate decal, sponge overlay foam, and release paper. Place this in the preheated press at 185° to 220°F



Photo 16: Once the liner is removed, smooth the image to make sure there are no bubbles.

depending on the film, for 8 to 10 minutes. Larger images could take up to 15 or 20 minutes.

HA Canvas with Liner

Bienfang CanvasMount has a release liner, and the decal application is slightly different. The laminate decal must still be larger than the canvas to prevent bonding to the overlay foam (Photo 14). Peel back the top few inches of the liner and align the sticky back of the



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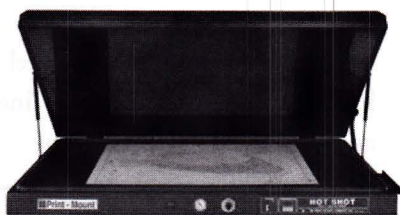


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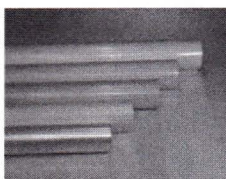
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laminate against the tacky canvas; it will hold rather aggressively (Photo 15). Grasp the liner and gently peel it back from under the decal, then follow it down with your other hand to lay it in place. Smooth the image to make sure there are no bubbles (Photo 16). Mount it as above, placing it in the press from bottom to top. The mount package will be: release paper, canvas/laminate decal, sponge overlay foam, and release paper. Place it back in the preheated press at 185° to 220°F, depending on the brand of film, for 7 to 10 minutes.

The Final Frame

After your transfer has been completed, there are a number of ways to finish it. Transfers may be dry-mounted to foamboard as a rigid backing to be placed in a narrow moulding, stretched over standard stretcher bars and stapled into the sides at an angle, or stretched as a museum or gallery wrap pulled around the sides and stapled to the back of deeper bars. A museum wrap stops the image at the bar edges with white canvas on the sides, while a gallery wrap stretches the image around the sides. Both museum and gallery wraps may be mounted in float frames. The result is the perfect end to a clean, well-done transfer. ■

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.