

MASTERING MOUNTING

“Canvassing” RC Photos Part 1: Technique

by Chris A. Paschke, CPF



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In the past few years there has been an increasing interest in the transfer of prints and photographs to canvas to create the look of an original oil painting. (photo 1/detail). There are numerous companies who specialize in the process of print transferring, but independent framers also have an opportunity to experiment with a number of transferring processes capable of being done on their own premises.

This month's article features one rather simple technique of transferring a resin-coated (RC) photograph onto canvas. In a later article I will offer marketing and project ideas surrounding this same basic photo transferring technique.

Limitations

It is important to always select the most compatible materials for any procedure, no matter how basic.

Since this transferring process involves a permanent fusion between the resin-coated emulsion of an RC photo and a vinyl heat set laminating film, only RC photos (photographs with resin coating on either side of a paper core) may be used in this particular procedure. This process is not recommended for use with fiber based photographs, Poloroid auto-develop photos or anything other than RC photos.

As illustrated in this month's Back To Basics, it is necessary to understand the use of perforated films when using non-breathable photographs. Since RC photos are used,

perforated films must also be utilized in canvas transfers.

Best results are also achieved when using smooth finishes (ie: matte, satin, luster, gloss) rather than the textured (ie: linen, canvas) films on the market. The textures tend to fight with the canvas appearance rather than enhance it.

Perforation And Release Materials

The canvas-transfer process includes laminating the photo with perforated laminating film, stripping the laminate/emulsion from the core paper, transferring the photo decal to a commercially prepared canvas product and mounting the entire piece one last time in a heat press (photo 2). The tiny perforation holes will re-seal during the initial mounting process of the laminating film to the photo. Remember, there is no adhesive or substrate in this step.

Begin by inserting the photo into a self-made envelope of perforated laminating film and its removable backing paper (photo 3). It's still a good idea to use release paper, both top and bottom, to ensure a clean platen and felt pad. As I have stated, it is rare for a release board to be used on the bottom, since it generally inhibits even pressure from surrounding the substrate.

Since there is no substrate in this case, a board beneath the mounting is recommended. A board used beneath the film/photo envelope also helps prevent wrinkles from being

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pressed into the back of the photo by the felt fabric and rubber diaphragm in a vacuum press.

Laminating And Stripping

In this demonstration, Seal PrintGuard-UV Matte is used in a mechanical press at a constant temperature of 225°F for about 10 minutes (see Laminating Photos, this issue).

Once the photo is removed from the press, the film/emulsion may be physically pulled from the remaining paper core. Begin at the corner to separate the layers initially, then separate them across the entire top of the photo. On a small photo, the surface is easily handled by one person, but an 11"×14" or larger might be handled easier with two, one to support the paper core and one to pull the emulsion decal from it.

Pull with a steady, even pressure; it will peel very easily (photo 4). The key is to separate the layers at almost a 180° opposition of laminate to paper, or simply keep your knuckles

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Photo 1: To create the overall look of a painting, this 8"×10" color RC photo was transferred to CanvasMount fabric, mounted to foam to keep it thin, and framed with a deep bevel wrapped liner 3/16" foam mat.

Detail: The three-dimensional canvas texture pushes up through the laminated photo decal for maximum tactile and visual texture.

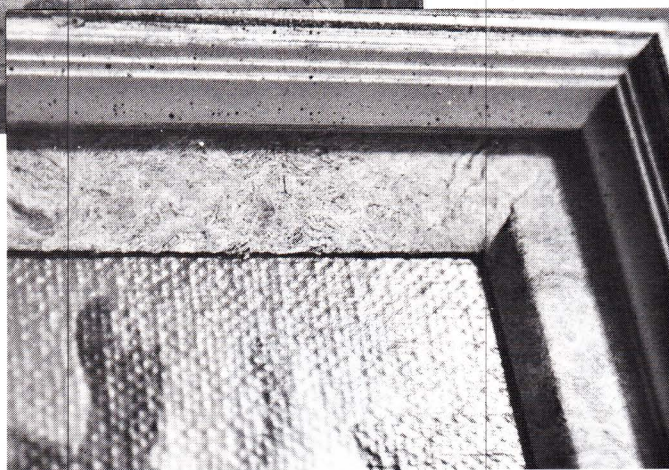


Photo 2: A visual transformation, shown from right to left, illustrates the prepared perforated film with photo sandwiched and ready to mount. Middle sample shows the completed laminated photo with no sign of perforations. The left sample is the laminated photo decal after emulsion/paper separation ready to mount to canvas.

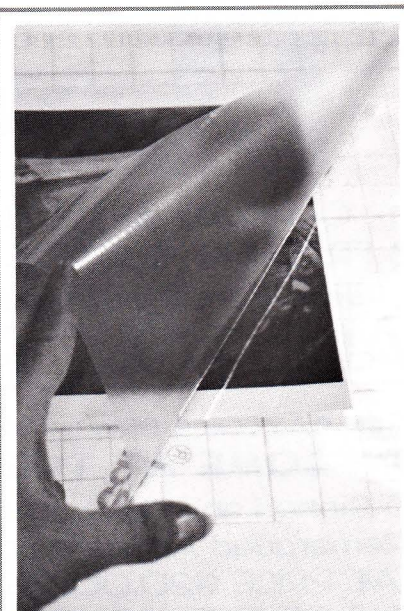


Photo 3: Insert the photo between a sandwich of perforated film and its own release backing.

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on the table as you pull. As the angle of separation decreases (if you begin to pull up at 90°) to the backing, more paper will be left attached to the decal. Too much paper residue on the laminated decal will prevent a good canvas pattern from pressing through during the final step. The image of the photo should be clearly visible through the back with very little white paper remaining (photo 5).

Canvas Mounting

The canvas fabric used in this article is Seal Products Canvas-Mount, a self adhesive canvas product with a release paper backing. Fold down the top two to three inches of the release backing to expose the adhesive (photo 6). Align the laminated photo decal, beginning at the bottom to ensure proper placement. Walk the decal up from the bottom with your fingers to the exposed adhesive at the top (photo 7).

Once the laminated decal touches the canvas adhesive, they will be difficult to separate, so initial alignment is important. Reach beneath the decal and grasp the folded edge of the release backing, carefully remove the release sheet, and gently follow the decal from top to bottom to tack it in place for mounting (photo 8).

Make certain all the shiny adhesive of the canvas material is covered by the laminated photo decal prior to the final mounting. It's better to have a slight overlap of additional decal to ensure material coverage. If the adhesive comes in direct contact with the overlay foam, the foam will adhere to the adhesive. It will not harm the canvas-mounted photo, but it will tear up the foam, making it unusable for future laminated projects of this size. If there is adhesive beyond the film, simply trim it with a straightedge and blade prior to mounting (photos 9 and 10).

Place the prepared canvas/decal

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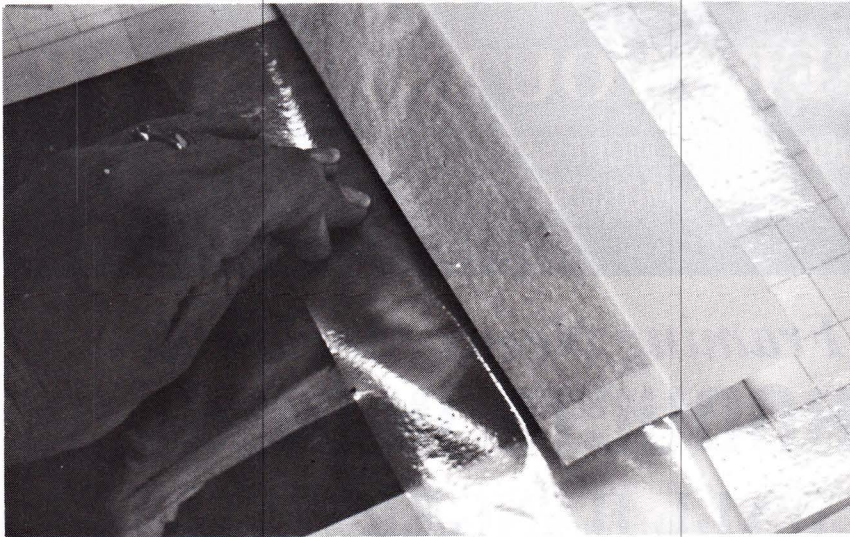


Photo 4: Once separated across the top, gently pull at an 180° angle with knuckles against the photo to complete the separation.

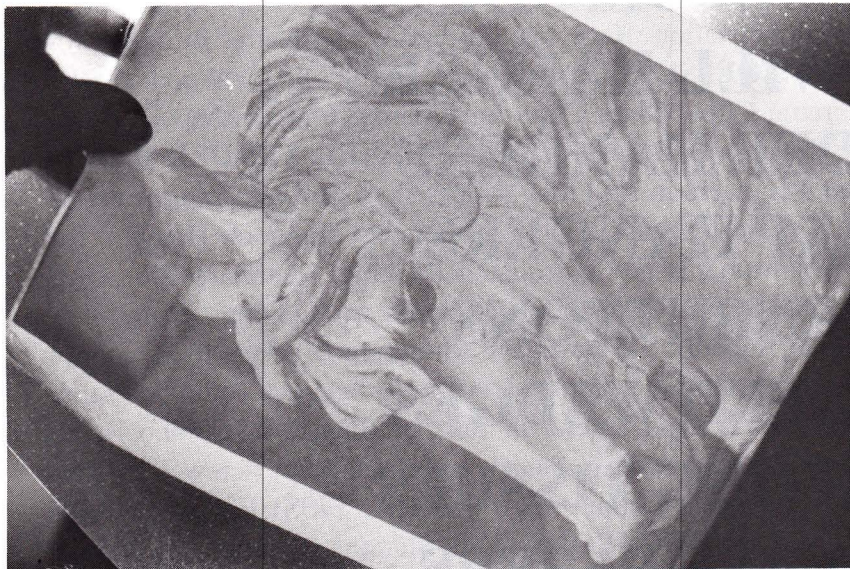


Photo 5: Once the separation is complete, a view from the back will easily show the translucent nature of the emulsion decal. Very little white paper core remains. (This view is from the back of the stripped photo.)

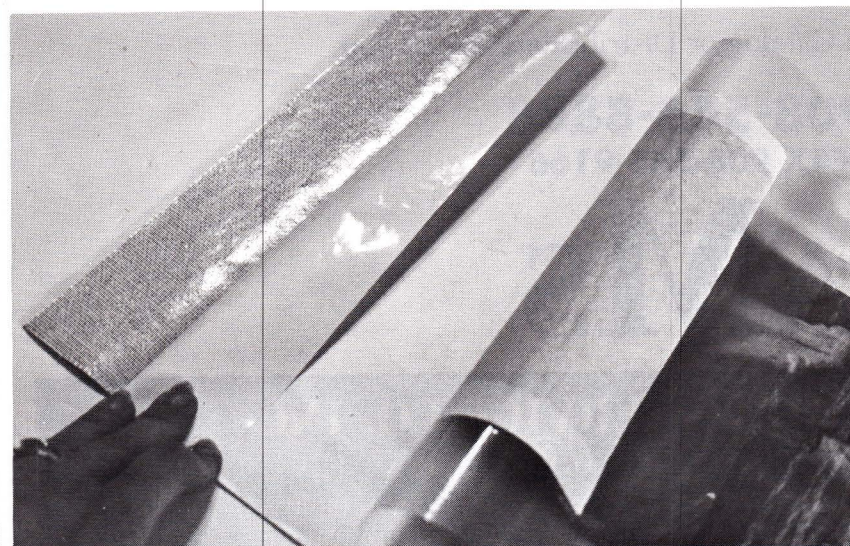


Photo 6: Fold down the top release backing about two to three inches to expose the adhesive canvas. Align the stripped photo from bottom to top.

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unit into the press for final mounting. The temperature of the press remains at the top end temperature, in this case 225°F for a final five to 10 minutes. The order of final mounting layering is: release board, CanvasMount fabric with layered laminate photo decal, overlay foam, and release paper.

Variations

As mentioned in the Back to Basics laminating article, the technique varies when mounting perforated films in different heat presses. A vacuum press will demand the lower to higher temperature alteration during first step laminating, but the final mounting step will allow the press to stay at the higher temperature of 225°F without any variations. Mechanical presses may remain at the higher chosen temperature for every stage of the photo laminating and canvas transferring.

Completion

Although this procedure may sound a little confusing, it's worth the learning curve! The profit potential of this particular process, as well as the manual completion time, makes it a quick turn around. As I will show you in a follow-up project article, the possibilities are almost endless.

Once completed, a photo canvas transfer, like a print transfer, may be stretched onto bars and then fitted as a stretched canvas or mounted onto foam (photo 1). Professional portrait studios have been offering this service for years at an upper end price (quite successfully, I might add). Don't you think it's about time to cash-in on a proven market? So let's quit canvassing the RC photo and begin to canvas transfer it instead! 🐘



Photo 7: Walk the decal from bottom to top and tack into position, checking for square to the CanvasMount fabric.



Photo 8: Reach under the decal, grasp the release backing at the fold, and pull it down to expose the remaining adhesive.

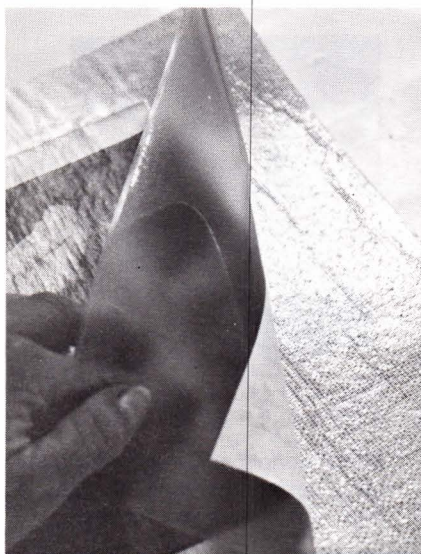


Photo 9: Make certain all of the shiny adhesive is covered by the laminate prior to mounting. Roll the laminate down gently, rather than pulling at the corners.

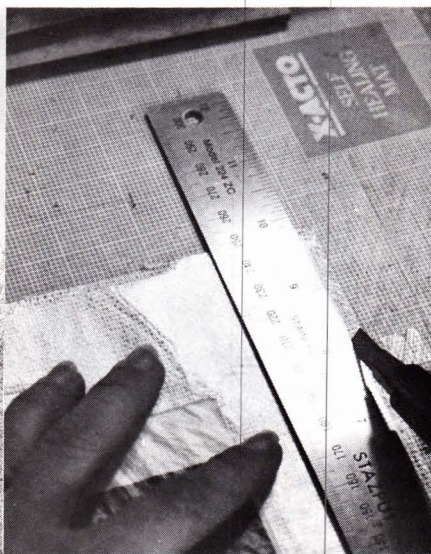


Photo 10: Excess CanvasMount must be trimmed to prevent the overlay foam from sticking to it during final mounting.