

Certified Contempo Panels

by Chris A. Paschke, CPF



With the kids back in school, thoughts of advertising campaigns begin to ready us for the holiday season. Let's examine for a moment the school issue in conjunction with holiday gift giving. Young children, as early as preschool, are awarded certificates of achievement for everything from drinking their milk each day to graduating from kindergarten. As the years pass, their achievements and accomplishments become more important, like perfect attendance, and ultimately culminate in that labor-intensive high school diploma.

So what are parents to do with these milestones of their child's progress through the years?

Presentation Ideas

From newspaper ads to samples on your wall, it is your job to stimulate those parents to do more with those keepsakes than simply store them in a manila envelope in an old chest of family stuff.

Though the investment of big dollars to frame a child's "milk drinking" accomplishments may seem unlikely to you, it isn't your responsibility to determine what is sensible or affordable for your customers. Since the psychology of child-raising actively involves positive reinforcement, why not promote an "Reinforce Your Child's Accomplishments" ad campaign?

Child's Play Turned To Profits

A somewhat insignificant, yet certified, accomplishment can be easily mounted to a piece of colored mat or foam board without a great deal of investment. Float mount the certificates by applying adhesive first, trim to size, tack and mount onto a colored backing. Then, by decorating the somewhat "temporary" treasure with contempo panels or border designs, the small memorable token may be showcased in a less than the higher priced framed alternative (photo 1).

It isn't a matter of not selling the higher framed design . . . it's more the idea of pulling in additional quick, small projects that would have never crossed your threshold at all.

Contempo Panels

I first introduced contempo panel designs to the industry during the summer of 1991, and it's been going strong ever since. The concept originated in an effort to utilize endcut scraps of vinyl surface laminating films (primarily matte finishes) that have been cut into strips, using a well calibrated and properly squared mat cutter.

Laminating film comes rolled with a grided release paper backing. Once the release backing is removed, the repositionable film will stay wherever placed until it is permanently fused in a hot vacuum, dry mount mechanical, or hard bed press.

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The laminate darkens the area where it is applied, creating a wet or shadowed appearance, emulating a surface decorative tape which matches the board it's mounted to perfectly. What a design concept!

The featured contempo designs are created using heat set matte laminates. The designs appear more visually pleasing when used on dark mat surfaces rather than light colors (photo 2).

The Step By Step Application

If a shadow stripe design is to surround either a window opening or mounted child's certificate (photo 3), cut the desired strips on your mat cutter in preparation for assembly. The laminate is cut face up with the grided paper backing on the bottom (photo 4). The slight natural curvature of rolled film assists flattening during cutting, which allows for straighter strips. They may be accurately cut as small as 1/8" for shadow stripe designs, and all cutting may be done on the bevel cutting side of the bar, as the bevel will never show once the film has been heat mounted.

Peel the release backing from the laminate (photo 5), align the strips around the opening overlapping them at the corners (photo 6). Cut

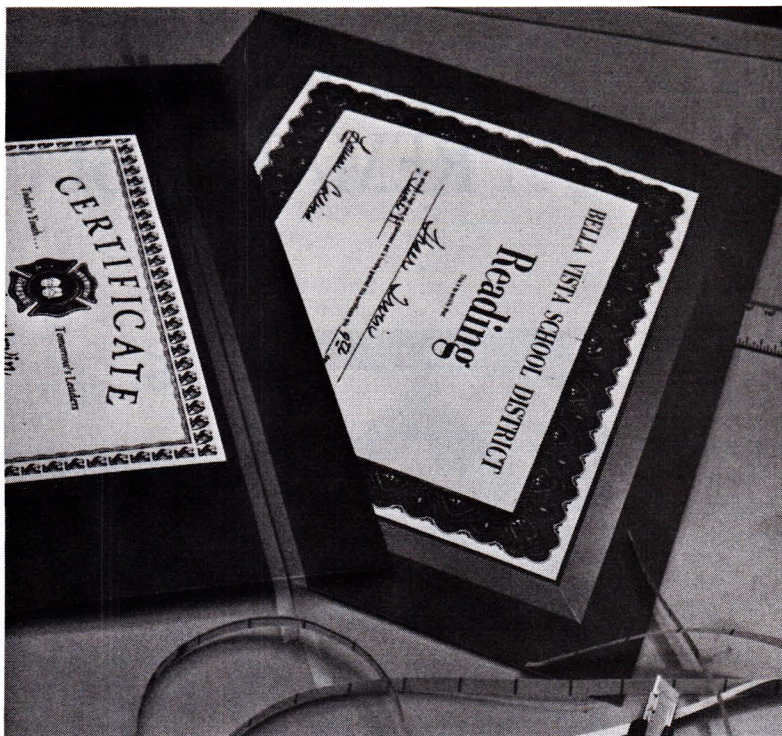


Photo 1: Mounted certificates are surface-decorated with laminating films for contempo designs.

through both layers of film at the same time to ensure a perfect mitered match (photo 7). Remove the tails, taking care not to stretch the film when removing the under piece (photo 8).

You may also use the mat cutter bar to align the pre-cut laminate strips around the mat window or certificate if assistance is required for more accurate or proper placement.

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Photo 2: The laminating film darkens where it is applied to the board, giving the look of a perfectly matched surface decorative tape. These samples are window cut mats rather than float mounts . . . ready for glazing and a frame. (Add a small spacer to keep the film from contacting the glass.)



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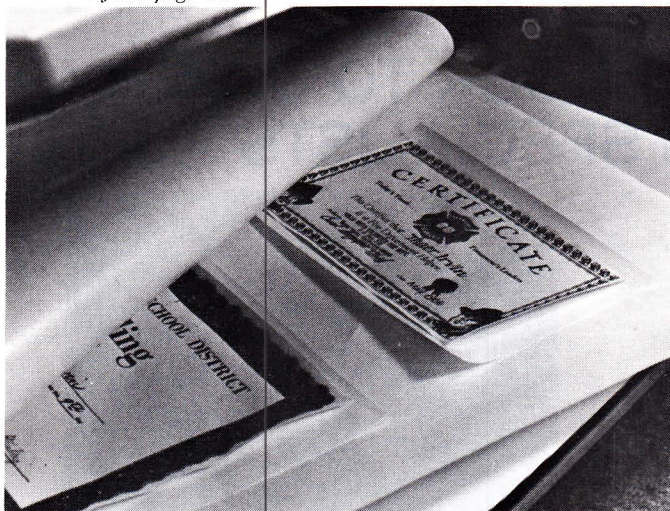


Photo 3: Pre-mount tissue adhesive to the certificate with no substrate, then trim, tack and mount it to the colored backing.

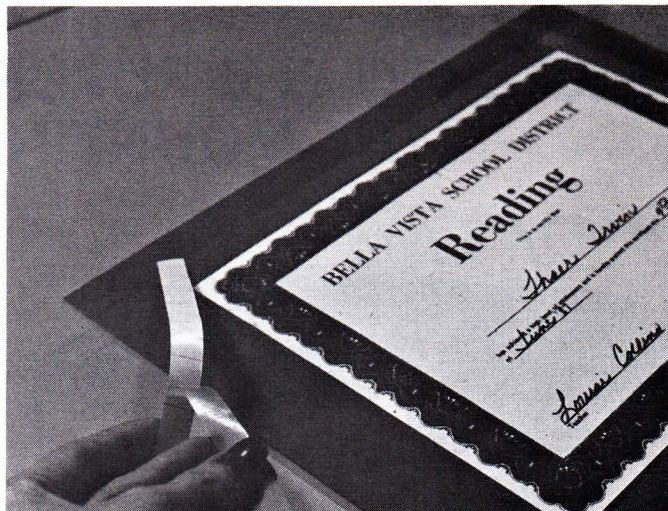


Photo 5: Peel the release backing from the repositionable laminate.

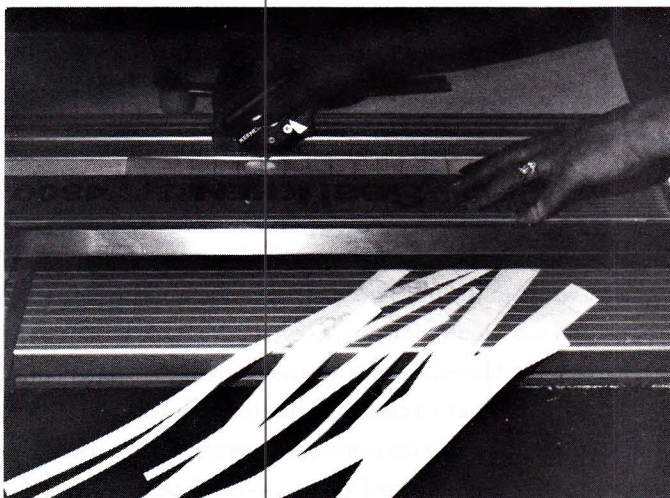


Photo 4: Cut the laminate into strips on a professional mat cutter. This will allow for straight, accurate cutting down to 1/8".

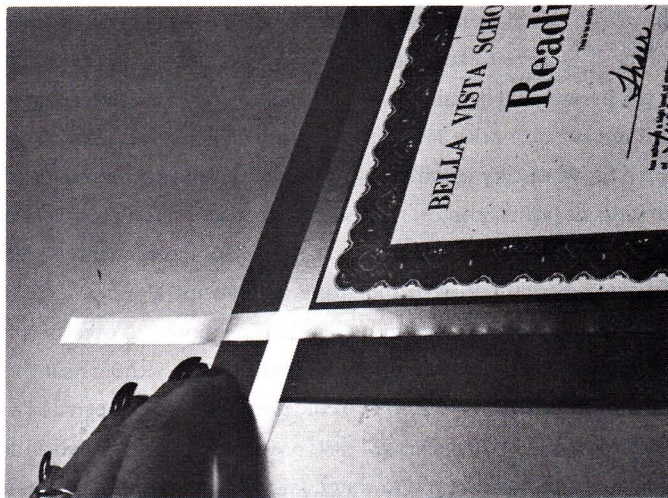


Photo 6: Align onto the board, overlapping strips at the corner.

The quicker and more efficiently you produce a completed project, the higher your profits!

Place the item into a release paper envelope with manufacturers' overlay foam on top of the film, then into the press for the suggested time (3 to 7 minutes), at the recommended temperature (185°F to 325°F). This will permanently bond the surface laminate to the project backing or window mat.

Design Variations

Variable design suggestions include standard conservative "shadow stripe," or basic echoing of the mat window; contemporary "geometric" asymmetrical patterns; flamboyant

"floral" borders; or simple "corner imagery" such as Teddy bears and balloons.

Notice the checkerboard design of the floor tiles extended onto the mat at the lower left corner of "Cinderella," accenting the three and a half-sided shadow stripe panel at the edge of the window opening (photo 9). In this sample, a scrap was layered over the entire lower corner and cut with a blade and straight edge to follow the pattern in the print. The checkerboard pieces were then removed as desired while the remaining laminate stayed in position until mounted, a result of the repositionable tacky backing.

Whether creating a floral border or

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Photo 7: Cut through both strips at the same time to ensure perfect alignment of the miters.

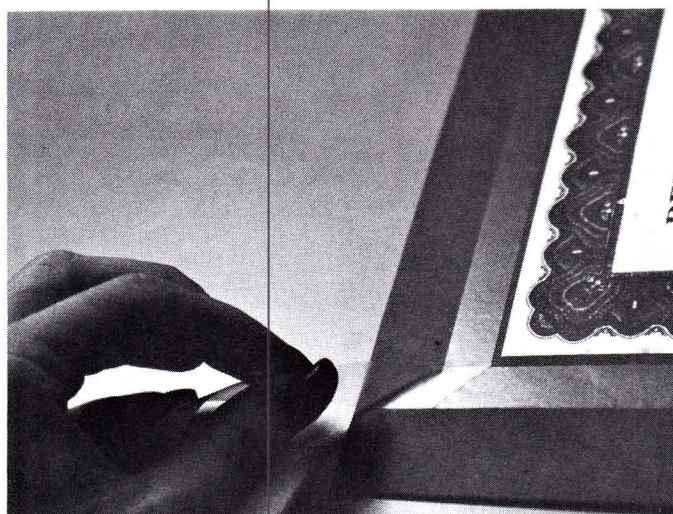


Photo 8: Remove the unwanted end or tails, taking care not to stretch the remaining film.

corner imagery, the process is simple: cut, peel, and mount (photos 10A, B, C, D). Also note: occasionally flowers or designs used to accent a wedding invitation or portrait might need to be applied prior to cutting the window opening, as with diagonal patterns. This allows for better integration of the applied pattern to the mat.

Although laminates will mount to any type of board, the selected mat board surfaces affect the impact of the laminate patterns (photo 11). For this reason the (*color, value and texture*) of the chosen board will affect the visual end product. Too light a color may make the contempo design difficult to see, while too textured a

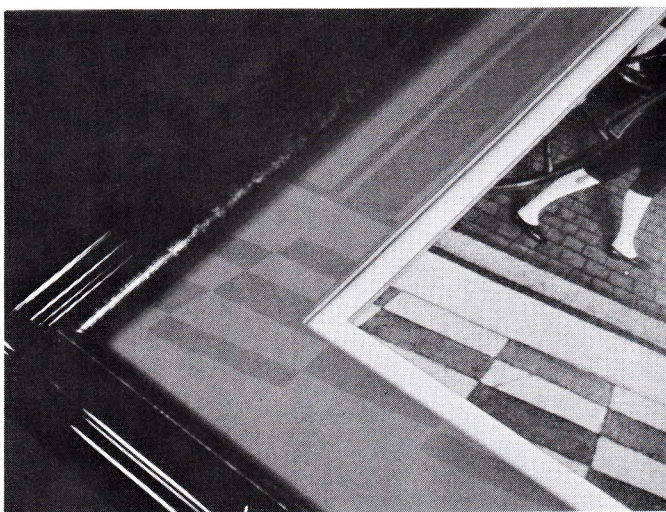


Photo 9: Optional designing ideas include this "corner imagery," where the checkerboard pattern in the print is extended onto the lower left corner of the mat.

board may distract from the chosen floral border pattern. Select your boards to fit the project as with any successful frame design, even if it's only trim surrounding a floated kindergarten award.

Pricing

The added cents to a project such as this makes sense! You can calculate pricing in a number of ways, but remember to always keep it quick and simple so not to scare off customers. Since in many cases the laminates used in these projects are scraps and end cuts from larger poster laminations, the material itself has already been paid for during that initial job. There will be a little labor time involved in the cutting and alignment, as well as the press time, so overheads and hands-on must be considered.

United inch pricing of 15 to 25 cents, per four-sided strip of film, should cover the process. This, added to a float mounted certificate, will generally increase the sale \$5 to \$10. Calculate united inch from the outside of the actual mounted board, not the original certificate size. An

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Photos 10A to 10D: Whether floral border or corner imagery, the process is simple: cut, peel, and mount.

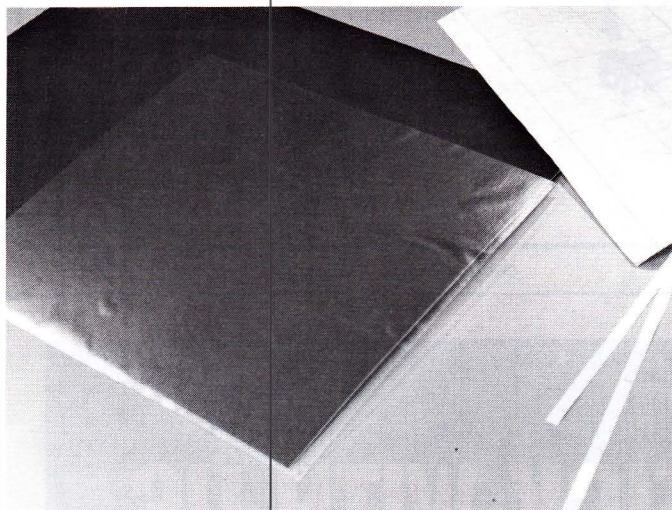


Photo 10A: Cover the area w/film.

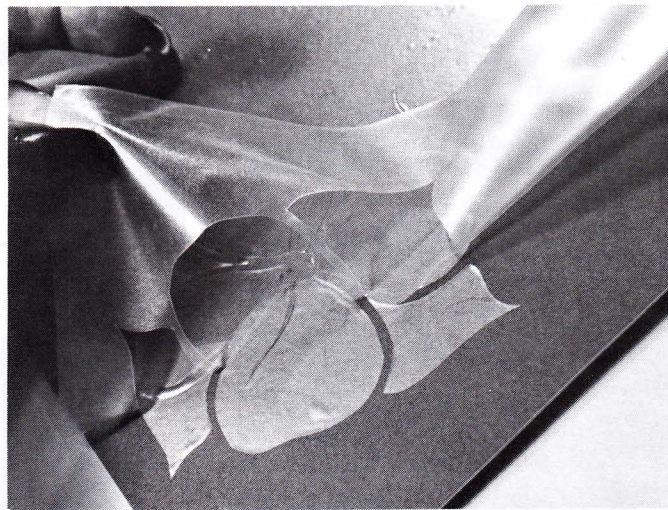


Photo 10C: Peel off unwanted film.

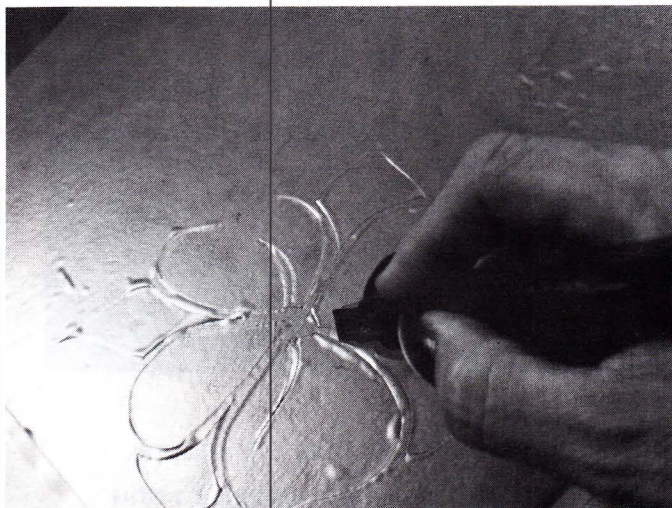


Photo 10B: Cut the design.

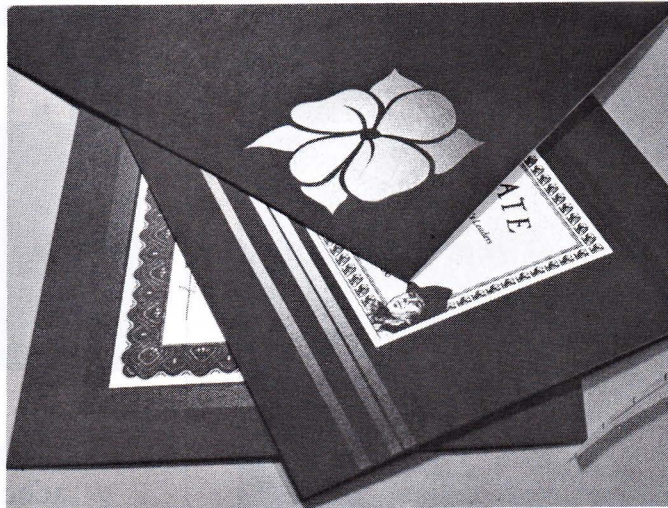


Photo 10D: Mount.

extended border surrounding a standard $8\frac{1}{2} \times 11$ " might measure 11×14 " united inches. A mounting that size averages \$8.00; then add to it \$5.00 to \$7.00 for contempo designing and you've created a \$15.00 "disposable" design for a child's room.

And what about those college graduate diplomas? Weren't they once kindergartners too? The only difference in the framing project between ages 5 and 20 will be the bottom line price of the completed certificate framing, not the pride of accomplishment. Obviously, a higher

priced matted, glassed and framed design is what we are truly after. It's even easier to sell upgraded contempo designs (of \$5 to \$10) on those higher ticket projects.

Another way to price—if you prefer flat rate calculations to united inch—would be to charge whatever you charge for mounting as a flat "contempo" rate. Or hourly shop time in relation to the anticipated time to produce the project. Just remember whatever you charge will end up rather minimal, but the materials are already paid for ... you're mostly getting paid more for


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your creative design sense.

It's Ultimately Up To You

Advertising, samples and remembering to suggest contempo designs during the sale are ultimately up to you. They are easy to sell and people love it.

Those little "certified" milk drinkers were recognized enough to be certified in the first place; now stimulate their parents and grandparents to illustrate how proud they are of them. Positive reinforcement can be a gold mine! 

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

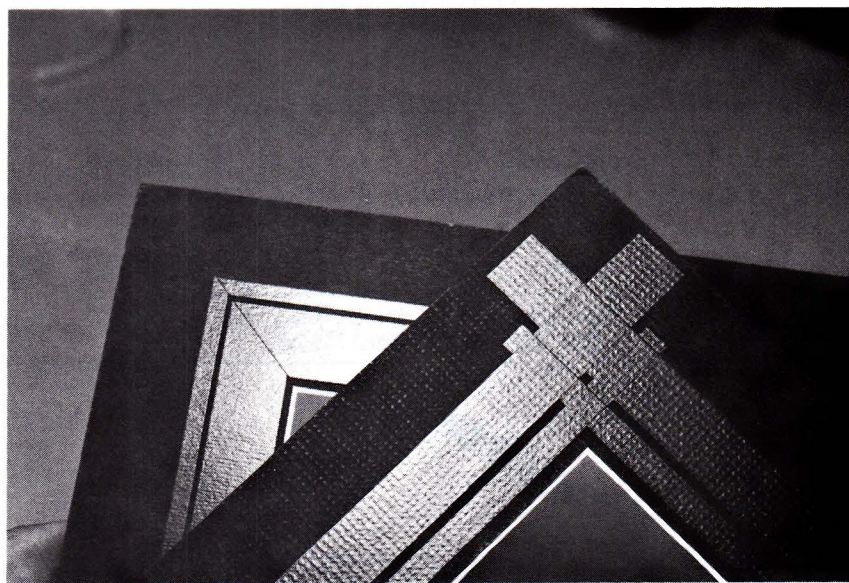
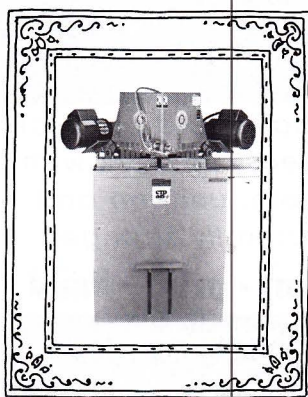
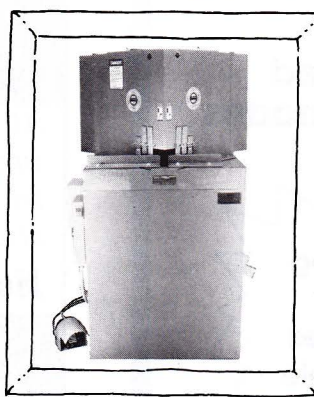


Photo 11: This close-up of two different board surfaces illustrates the impact both board color texture can have on contempo designs.

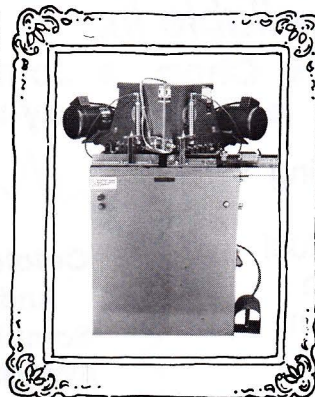
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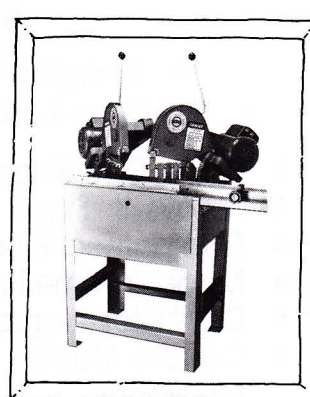
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