

Wrinkled Laminates

by Chris A. Paschke, CPF

Wrinkles in a vinyl over-laminate do not create the most desirable end result. In fact it's not desirable at all...or is it? When we think of new products we usually think of items never before released for use. But sometimes a new product may be the result of an older product redefined. Wrinkled laminates fall into just that category (photo 1).



Revisiting Past Retexturing

I'm not referring to the vinyl laminate itself being wrinkled, but rather a technique of texturing the laminate surface to create a new look. In a past article, "Resurfacing and Retexturing Laminating Films" (*PFM* April 1994), I used aluminum foil to create a crinkled texture by placing it between the laminate and the overlay sponge foam. Though an effective texture for matboards, the foil suspends the laminate preventing it from properly bonding to its substrate. This creates a less than desirable result for use over a poster print or photo.

I also used the release liners removed from the back of the laminate (not release papers) to alter the surface finish by placing it directly on top of the laminate, between the laminate and

the overlay foam. This removes the sponge texture, creating a smooth matte or high gloss laminate finish (photo 2).

European Imports

Additional vinyl laminates have also come into the U.S. framing and photo markets since the original article was first written in 1994. They are found as both European imports and private label brands.

Along with them, other related laminating products, such as acrylic "plastic foil" from Hot Press Supplies, have been introduced. "Plastic foil" creates smooth high gloss finishes without the use of sponge overlay foam (a commercial version of the liner technique mentioned above). It is suggested for use with high gloss photographs to better protect the gloss from heat damage during mounting, similar to Seal's polyester ColorMount Cover Sheets.

Mixing and matching manufacturers' products may very well give you the desired result you wish, but always test the combinations prior to using them on a customer's project. The plastic foil designed for use with Hot Press laminates may not always work with Seal PrintGuard-UV laminating film, for example.

The same remains true for other products. Always remember the importance of predictability; exactly what to

expect from the materials and/or the combinations selected for use?

Getting to the Wrinkles

Once the concept of high glossing is understood, additional creative steps may also be applied. The wrinkled or aged “crinkle” appearance of laminated posters is a highly desired effect. This crinkle effect has been achieved in the past only with commercially transferred prints to canvas, or by purchasing similar commercial textures.

It may also be created from matte or luster vinyl laminates (not textured films) using a wrinkled release liner from the back of the film. Mount and laminate the project using overlay foam as traditional techniques and as manufacturer’s time/temperature suggestions teach. Average laminates will mount at 185° to 225°F, for 5 to 9 minutes.

Once removed from the press, place a wadded up, aggressively wrinkled laminate release liner between the completed laminate and the overlay foam. Place into the heated press for a second mounting of 185° to 225°F, for 5 more minutes.

If the higher gloss appearance is desired, then place it into the press for a third time at the same 185° to 225°F temperature for another 5 minutes. Worth the three visits to the press? If it’s an effect that is easy

to sell and makes additional press profits, it really ought to be!

Basic Rules for Success

There are a few basic rules for success:

1:

Traditional mounting and laminating must be completed first, prior to texturing.

2: Wrinkled laminate liners are then applied to create the “crinkle,” the second mounting.

3: Any smoother high gloss to the crinkle is the third step, or the third trip into the press.

Steps 2 and 3 may be interchangeable, depending upon whether laminated prior to mounting and should be tested for desired results.

Do not use regular release paper; the silicone is different and leaves white blotches.

Always mount and laminate a non-porous photo or print using correct perforation techniques and overlay foam first (air needs to escape), then the crinkle step, then glossing.



Photo 1
Wrinkled/crinkled laminates are a texturing technique as opposed to improperly applied vinyl films.



Photo 2
Smooth gloss finish created by using laminate release liners or plastic foil on top of the vinyl during mounting, beneath the sponge foam.

Do not use prepierced or perforated release liners; the holes will transfer to the art.

Test the process using your specific materials, this is once again pushing materials beyond normal manufacturer suggestions.

Then again, you can also try laminating the project unmounted first, wadding that piece into a tight ball, flattening and then mounting to a solid substrate (photo 3) much like “leather-look” techniques, see *PFM*, June 1991.

Mount Boards vs. Foam Boards

The textures of the crinkle effect are affected by the selected substrate, as well as the order of the steps toward the end product. When applying a crinkle to a hard mounting board, the pattern will remain raised above the hard base creating a refined pattern (photo 4).

When creating the crinkle on a foam board substrate, the pattern is often a little more well defined because the foam will give way to the wrinkled

release paper even after laminating.

Suffocating the Project

When working with laminates it is important to remember the porosity issue. Many inexpensive low end poster prints are on clay coated



Photo 3
Laminated, wrinkled (wadded tightly) then ready to mount.

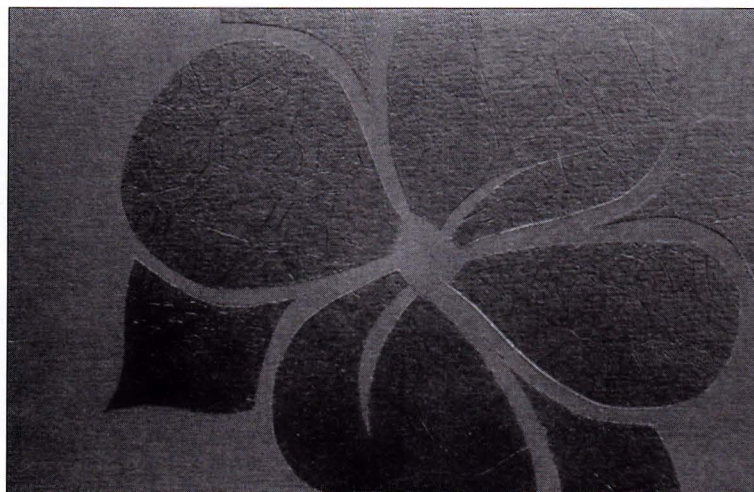


Photo 4
The effect of crinkled textures on a hard mounting or matboard are shown in this contempo panel border flower.

papers which are non-porous. Photographs are also nonbreathable, or nonporous.

When two non-breathables are placed in the same project (photo + laminate) without perforation techniques or prepierced films, the project may suffocate. This appears as dots of trapped air, or in the case of “wrinkled technique” tunnels of trapped air (photo 5). For best results, only one layer may be truly nonbreathable in any given project (photo + perforated laminate).

This is why it is best to traditionally laminate the basic project and only then create the crinkle.

Not Enough Time

Leaves Blotches

Use of products as they are originally suggested by their manufacturers is very important, but not always the gospel rule. I’m known as “the framer/educator who bends rules to create new and interesting effects,” and sometimes it takes a lot of fail-

mastering mounting

ures to find the correct formula that is most foolproof. And even then, failures can still occur.

One of the most common problems I've seen with laminating is when the project has been removed too quickly from the heat press, leaving unmounted areas of film as little white blotches (photo 6). As is true with mounting projects, laminate projects may always be placed back into the press for the original amount of time plus the additional time to attempt to remedy time shortage problem.

Wrap Up

Though wrinkled laminates may not really be a new trend, using wrinkled liners to create a crinkled appearance is a little avante-guard. Whether you call it wrinkled, crinkled, or crackled (as in age and crackle), it is a current technique for taking a smooth finish vinyl laminate and creating a texture for added customer options.

Quite simply one roll of nonperforated laminate can be (1) the base material for its original sponge texture, (2) a smooth or high gloss finish, and (3) a crinkle aged texture. Three for the price of one, not bad in today's market. And think of the profit potential! ■

Chris A. Paschke, CPF, GCF, owns Designs Ink, Oxford, Connecticut, featuring commercial and retail custom framing, product consultation, design and education. Specializing in mounting, matting and design creativity she works with numerous industry leaders. Watch for her newly released book, "The Mounting and Laminating Handbook."



Photo 5
Dots of tiny trapped air or tunnels of air may be the result of suffocation.



Photo 6
A project removed too soon will leave blotchy unmounted areas. Do not confuse them with the trapped air pockets above.