

Mastering Mounting

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Mosaic Laminating

Leather-look, contempo panels, faux glass etching, and embossing (laminates) are all creative ways to push beyond standard uses for vinyl films and into the money-making world of creative laminating. Emulating the arts throughout history is also a great way to stimulate new ideas. So why not explore the possibilities of cut and paste and the world of mosaic?

Mosaic Throughout History

Mosaic is one of the oldest decorative arts. It has been executed on walls, ceilings, floors, pavements, furniture and jewelry. It was traditionally made of colored glass, stones, marble, wood, pottery, or other hard, imperishable materials, with the earliest works being Sumerian surface decorations that date back to 3000 B.C. Greek and Roman mosaic seem to have evolved out of decoration, with stones and shells set in cement in 500 B.C.

Samples of mosaics are available throughout history. Until about 100 A.D., pictorial mosaics were almost exclusively done on floors and pavement. Mural mosaic did not become common until the early Christian era. Glass mosaic really began to thrive during Byzantine times and became integral portions of architectural compositions of churches. During the Renaissance, mosaic artisans began to produce commissions of designs by

painters such as Raphael and Titian. But as painters in the 15th century began duplicating the look of mosaic in paint, mosaic art declined. Although its popularity has dwindled, it has never totally disappeared, and during the mid-20th century there has been a notable revival of mosaic.

Mosaic Laminating

Historically, mosaics are made of chips and pieces of texture and color, but today framers can continue the concept through mosaic laminating. This is a technique of layering a design of individual laminates of assorted textures and finishes in small areas to contrast the overall laminated background. Granted, in this technique whole areas and subjects are contrasted by different textures rather than the tiny chips of color traditionally used to create a larger image. Loosely defined, this is still a similar concept.

Mosaic pieces are added to enhance the individual images within a laminated poster to set them apart from the background. Most framers who have started offering laminating carry more than one vinyl finish, so the mosaic process is both a great way to showcase the alternative textures and finishes and promote the design concept. Gloss, matte and one texture of linen or canvas are generally on

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hand, with retexturing and resurfacing methods available as alternatives.

Laminate Availability

Films are available in a multitude of surfaces and textures. Laminates come in smooth finishes, including gloss, satin, luster, matte, satin matte and ultra matte; and textured finishes such as canvas, coarse canvas, fine linen, coarse linen, sand and emery. The great news about all these finishes is they are available. The bad news is this list constitutes products from all major manufacturers and it would therefore be tough to purchase all of them from one distributor.

Mounting & Laminating

Mount a poster or photograph to a slightly oversized foam board substrate for the chosen project. Use a permanent, breathable, tissue adhesive at 185°F to 190°F for two to three minutes in a mechanical press, or three to five minutes in a vacuum system and allow it to cool under a weight. A permanent adhesive is required because of the number of times the project could be placed into the heat system, and porous because of the nonporous nature of the vinyl laminate.

Size the base laminate to cover the entire project or the divided background areas and perforate it. Heat-seal films are available perforated from select manufacturers, or unperforated films may be manually perforated. If beginning with one uniform finish for the bottom layer, align the base film as if laminating any standard project,



This 24"x36" project travels with the Hunt Corporation to most industry trade shows.

layer with overlay foam, place into a release envelope and a preheated press.

A mechanical press set at 185°F to 215°F for five minutes will bond even perforated films, while a two-temperature technique is recommended for a heat vacuum system. Begin at the lower mounting temperature (185°F), place the project into the press, turn the heat up to 215°F and extend the time from nine to 15 minutes. The first 10 minutes is to pull up to laminating temperature, the last five to mount the film. This process ensures all air is compressed from between the layers during vacuum draw prior to the temperature being hot enough to bond the film.

Beginning The Mosaic

The background may be either one solid base or strips of assorted textures. This will be determined by the theme and pattern of the image itself. In the sample diagram the background easily divides into strips, allowing for multiple textures to be easily designed into the background (see Diagram 1).

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In Diagram 2, a strip of matte laminate runs diagonally top to bottom just right of center, and both linen and canvas textures are added upper right and lower left to accent the rock patterns and formations in the background. There is a common free form line between the strips and a perfect union must be established. Place oversized pieces of perforated, contrasting films on the areas to be relaminated. Overlap the two pieces of film, and with a sharp, thin blade cut through both layers at the same time following the desired pattern on the image. This will create a perfect common line between them. This is the same theory used for mitering decorative surface strips for French mat panels. Once cut, gently lift the common edges to remove unwanted sections of scrap laminate. This will leave two perfectly joined pieces at a perfect seam ready to place in the press for bonding the base.

Puzzle Pieces Of Film

After the base is completely laminated and the protection has been established, the creation of the remaining mosaic is pure decoration. Select the other areas to be treated and then the texture or finish of the laminate to overlay. Always try to contrast all edges—no two canvases, linens, mattes or lusters butting together. This could be tough to do if numerous areas are to be “puzzled” together. The smaller pieces of film may be temporarily laid down with their liner removed to help in positioning. And remember, all these layers must be perforated prior to use.

Begin with pieces larger than the area being covered,

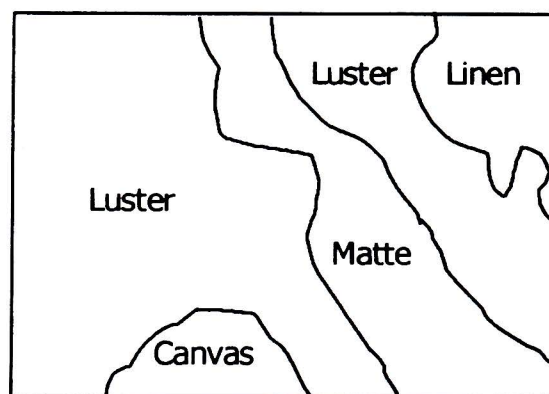


Diagram 1. Areas are matched to films, being careful not to align the same finish alongside itself.

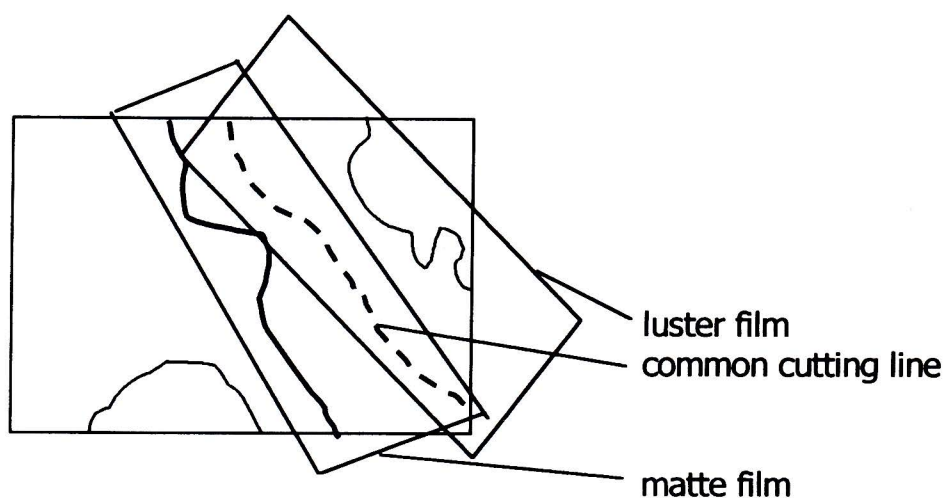


Diagram 2. The background strips are overlapped so a common line may be cut down through both layers. This ensures a perfect union between the films.

trim them to shape, cutting through the new contrasting film following the picture pattern of the poster (see Diagram 3). Remove the excess outer pieces of the cut pattern, and refit as a puzzle, if needed. The contrasting mosaic pieces may be any odd-shaped scrap of film. Align contrasting perforated films and trim to shape as noted above.

Consider using the same textures for like images. All

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of the larger black and white fish (center) have white vertical stripes of liner and black vertical stripes of gloss. All the horizontally pinstriped black fish are canvas. The rocks, coral, even seaweed may all be puzzled with contrasting films.

Stack the mounting package top to bottom:

- Release paper
- $\frac{1}{4}$ " overlay foam or $\frac{1}{2}$ " foam plastic
- Puzzled unmounted project
- Previously mounted and base laminated poster
- Release paper
- Then mount in 185°F to 215°F mechanical press, or two-temperature method in a vacuum press for 15 minutes.

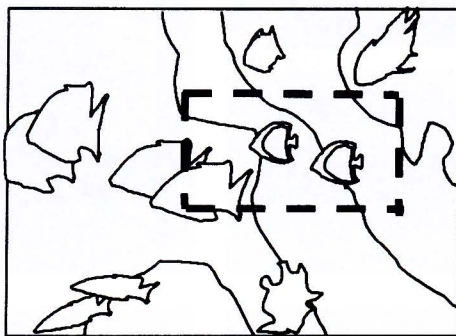


Diagram 3. A separate smaller piece may then be overlapped at the mounted base layers. Follow the design of the image using a sharp blade, scoring through the film. Scoring the bottom mounted layer will not harm the project.

durable, lightweight, UV-protected, and child-safe. Plus each mat has an additional laminating charge applied to it. The mosaic itself should be charged as a mounted and laminated poster with one hour of shop time added to the project. Simple mathematics—a triple matted, mounted, glassed poster has been altered in its presentation to a piece of decorative art, but has increased in sales value by three more laminations and one hour of shop time—

maybe an additional \$60 to \$80.

Wrap Up

As discussed in July's column "Designer Laminates," there are numerous ways to modify matboards by applying laminates, then altering the surface finishes and textures of the films. By substituting traditional overlay foam with smooth or wrinkled laminate release liners, films can be made more glossy or matboard surface papers may even be enhanced to bring out their natural, mottled coloring. Mounted laminates are clear once mounted, but the adhesive saturation that occurs with absorbent substrates (such as matboard) take on a look of more intensified color, almost as if they are wet. This can be capitalized upon as a real designer approach (see *PFM*, July).

Once the basics of surface laminating with vinyl films in a heat press is part of your normal repertoire, offering other creative applications such as mosaic laminating will continue to grow your business. ■

The sample project and photograph shown are courtesy of Hunt Corporation, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Final Steps To Completion

Trim the substrate to size when completed. Although multiple layering may be completed in stages, it is best to position and cut all contrasting layers of film prior to final mounting in the press. Any final contrasting accents, such as a linen and luster overlay in the sample, will be aligned for the final layering at this point. Align film, trim, and mount final layers in the press as above. Make certain to leave it in long enough to bond completely.

The Mats

In the sample, the triple mats were laminated, but they were also resurfaced and retextured (see *PFM*, July, for color detail photos). This project does not require glazing because all layers have been laminated. It is