

Mastering Mounting



by
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Gilded Scrolls *The Basics of Mounting and Laminating*

A beautiful pair of gilded scrolls, “Bountiful Life” and “Summer Evening,” were recently released from Wild Apple Graphics into the company’s Aurora line of higher end, open edition reproductions. These images are printed 13½" x 38" on a heavyweight paper stock, with foiled accents. The Chinese characters in the first one actually say “beautiful life” but I suppose a beautiful life could also be bountiful. The prints made for a great subject for this month’s discussion of mounting and laminating images for framing. (see Photo 1).

Design Options

When designing for this pair of Asian prints, one must consider the way they might be handled if in China. They are authentic characters freely written in what is called the grass or running script, and are on a background of contemporary, painterly paper reminiscent of an abstract oil painting. The inner scroll is then surrounded by metallic gold leaf with typical scroll borders top and bottom. A traditional calligraphy scroll written on rice paper would have been mounted to silk fabric and left freehanging and soft for easy rolling and storage.

These prints have a contemporary flare and could end up on a plaque, canvas transferred, or matted and



Photo 1: Gilded Scrolls—This pair of Asian, open edition reproductions are a perfect pair for mounting and laminating because of their subject matter, Asian proportions and paper weight. (Artist: Chris Paschke; Images courtesy of Wild Apple Graphics).

framed. But even within a frame there are various design and framing options. They are smooth surface scrolls that feature long, narrow, Asian proportions that should be maintained. If they are matted, the elongated scroll look would be somewhat sacrificed. Perhaps simply mounting and laminating them without a mat, then framing in a narrow moulding would best enhance and maintain the Asian look and feel.

In May's edition of this column, "Canvas: Part III, Illusionary Boxes and Other Canvas Alternatives," I discussed the option of mounting and laminating open edition images then creating the illusion of a box or deep-wrapped canvas by adding depth to the sides. The canvas look would not be a good choice for this pair as an illusionary box, but the box design concept could work as an alternative if the laminate of choice was a non-textured finish of gloss, semi-gloss, or satin matte.

By framing with a narrow moulding and no mats, the Asian proportions are able to be maintained while the contemporary nature of the gilded images shines. Because of the foiled background, I opted for a beautiful water gilded Musée moulding from Larson-Juhl. It is a narrow $\frac{5}{8}$ " black-sided profile that matched the gold in the image background while the black sides of the moulding keep the eye moving back to the central black characters in the artwork (see Photo 2).

Materials and Set-Up

The basic materials selected for this project included $\frac{1}{2}$ " foam board, film adhesive and matte fin-



Photo 2: Opting for a Frame—By framing with a narrow moulding the Asian proportions are able to be maintained while helping bring this open edition art into the realm of higher fine art. (Like a well-framed Monet poster from the Metropolitan Museum of Art.)



Photo 3: Materials—The basic materials selected for this project included $\frac{1}{2}$ " foam board, rolled dry mount adhesive, and satin-matte finish surface laminate.

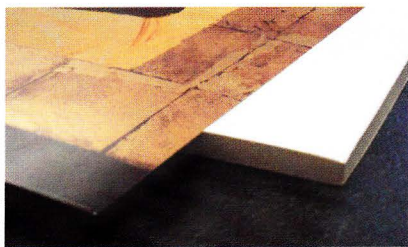


Photo 4: Finishing Options—The added thickness of the $\frac{1}{2}$ " substrate could also have allowed for there to be a strip of simple black linen tape wrapped around the edges, a Formica strip, or a $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 1" trim piece of black painted wood used as a mock frame that is called a baguette.

ish surface laminate (see Photo 3). There is no specific reason I opted for film adhesive other than to use up the final few yards of a roll. As a matter of fact, a permanent, porous tissue should have been the my first choice. Tissue is cleaner and less likely to leave residue on

the release paper than film, which has no carrier.

The satin-matte laminate was selected for reduced reflection, but any finish would be fine. Laminating applications' times and temperatures vary depending upon the manufacturer and press selected. Heat-seal laminating film used in framing is a thin vinyl, which sets at a temperature of between 190°-215°F. The time required is five to 10 minutes depending upon the brand of laminate, overall size of the project, and thickness of the substrate. Basic set-up and preparation for applying films remains fairly constant between manufacturers.

The $\frac{1}{2}$ " foamboard was chosen because any long narrow image that has been mounted and laminated would warp and require counter mounting if left as an illusionary box. Though the images were to be placed in a frame, narrow mouldings can become more stressed when the substrate is warped.

Photo 4 shows how the added thickness of the $\frac{1}{2}$ " substrate could also have allowed for there to be simple black linen tape wrapped around the edges, or a 1" trim piece of black painted wood to be used as a mock frame edging. These may be low end, economical options that might suit certain custom framing jobs. After all, it is a mounted and laminated project.

First Mount, Then Laminate

One-step mounting and laminating may be a very time efficient and profitable technique when the images are small enough to handle and the process is applicable. But,

mounting first, then laminating is the safest and most basic rule of thumb on pieces 16"x20" or larger. It is also a mandatory practice when performing the mounting and laminating in "bites," as was done with this project.

Since the sized boards were 13½"x38", they each needed to be mounted in my small Seal 210M-X press in two bites for each step of the mounting and laminating. That means each piece needed to be placed in the press four times; it does not prove to be the most time efficient nor profitable, but is do-able. But, I used the smaller press here to demonstrate some of the benefits of doing so and using the "bite" option.

Basic Mounting

One should always have the basic elements of TTPM (time, temperature, pressure, moisture) when mounting anything, cold or hot. When using a mechanical press you must manually pre-dry all layers and check press pressure prior to mounting. A hot vacuum press will automatically suck out the moisture and readjust for pressure as needed.

Check your mechanical press for proper pressure adjustments by placing the substrate and release board into the closed, but not locked, press. The arm should be at a 45° to the table (see Photo 5). If the arm is at greater than 45° it will be too tight and indent the board; at lower than 45°, it will be too loose and may not bond properly. Since this project is mounted to a ½" substrate, it will require readjustment from a ⅜" format.

Size all materials and tack the print in place at one end. This is



Photo 5: Pressure Adjustments—Check your mechanical press for proper pressure adjustments by placing the substrate and release board into the closed, but not locked, press. The arm should be 45° to the table with all layers inside.

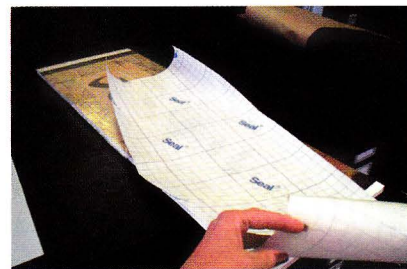


Photo 6: Removing the Liner—Square up the bottom of the lined laminate, reach under the film, grasp the folded liner and slowly pull it from beneath the film to position onto the mount.

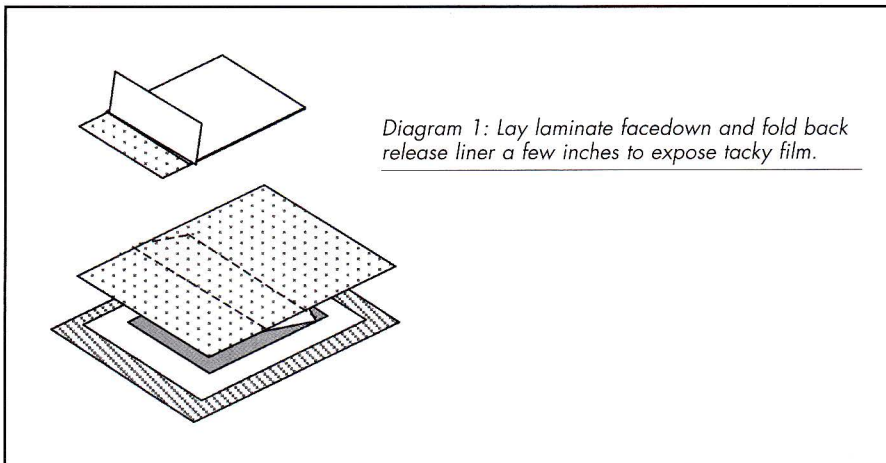


Diagram 1: Lay laminate facedown and fold back release liner a few inches to expose tacky film.

the end that will be fed into the press first. Layer the mounting package (from bottom to top): release paper, substrate, adhesive, print, release board, and mount the tacked end by placing it into the press as far as possible. Overlap the bites as much as possible to make certain the whole project is covered.

Basic Laminating

Once the image has been mounted, cut the laminating film to size and prepare to align it onto the mounted print. Peel back the first few inches of the release liner to expose the tacky adhesive of the film and place the laminate—sticky side down—onto the mounted image (see Diagram 1). The larger the print or poster being laminated, the wider the

strip of sticky film should be exposed.

Square up the bottom of the lined laminate with the edges and bottom of the mounted image making certain all adhesive is covered and the film is properly aligned to the board. Reach under the film, grasp the liner and slowly pull it from beneath the film that will position itself onto the mounted image (see Photo 6).

Slide your fingers lightly across the surface of the film, from center to outer edges, to gently assist air in moving to outer sides. Do not aggressively burnish; a light-feathered fingertip is best (see Photo 7). This helps check for potential trapped air.

If your fingers feel actual speed bumps, there may be a problem area and possible creases once

mounted. Lift the repositionable laminate and roll it back onto the print surface, then recheck with fingertips. If they smoothly move over the surface, it is ready to laminate.

Trim any excess laminate from the outer edges hanging over the substrate to prevent unintentional mounting to anything inside your press (see Photo 8). Cover with overlay foam and place in press for designated time and temperature. The overlay foam is required to apply even pressure to the surface of the film, slow down the heat transfer, and allow air to escape out the edges. The laminating package will be (bottom to top): release paper, substrate with mounted image, laminate, overlay foam, release board (see Diagram 2).

Place in 185-220°F press for seven to 10 minutes. Remove and cool under a weight. Any project may be placed back into the press for additional mounting time, just as when dry mounting. In order to add time, the piece it must first heat the initial time (seven to 10 minutes), plus the added time. I laminated these for 10 minutes for each end because of the $\frac{1}{2}$ " overlay foam on top and release board. (I have been known to hold items in this press for 20 minutes, so stay calm.) With adequate time and temperature, the laminate should appear clear with no tiny white dots.

Laminating Awareness

Anytime laminating films come near heat, the vinyl immediately begins to react to the temperature by bubbling, which is part of the process. Do not attempt to peel up



Photo 7: Checking for Trapped Air—Check for potential trapped air by sliding your fingertips lightly across the surface of the film, from center to outer edges, to gently assist air in moving to outer sides and checking for speed bumps.

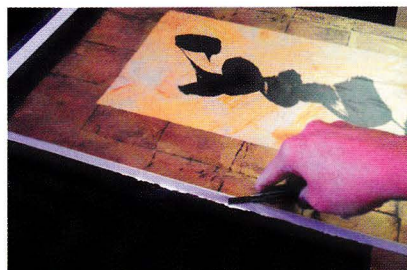


Photo 8: Trim Excess Laminate—Trim excess laminate from the edges of the sized mounted substrate to prevent laminate from bonding to anything else in the press, like the sides of the substrate or the sponge pad.

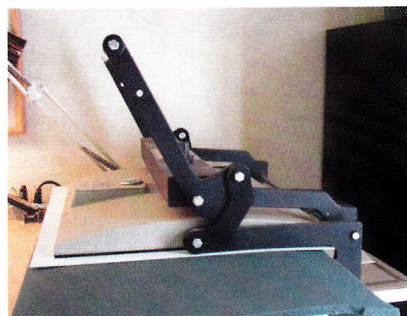


Photo 9: Readjust for Foam—Verify handle adjustment prior to laminating when using $\frac{1}{2}$ " overlay foam. Sometimes contracted $\frac{1}{4}$ " foam will not require the press to be readjusted, but $\frac{1}{2}$ " will always need to be.

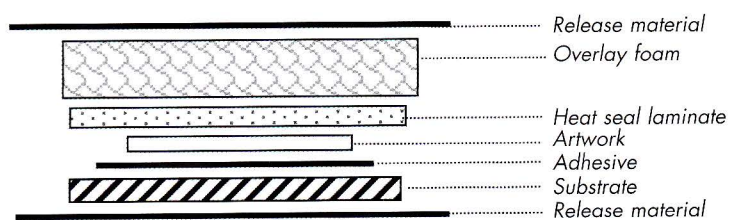
the film after it has begun to bubble because there will most likely be ink removal causing irreversible damage to the image. Understanding the standard procedures for proper laminating will eliminate most potential problems. Pay attention to maintaining a clean area while positioning all films, as static electricity created during removal of the liner can attract unwanted dirt and dust particles.

Biting Issues

When laminating, there is an additional layer of overlay foam used during the process as described above. This will add thickness to the laminating package that requires a mechanical press to be checked again prior to laminating. Overlay foam is available in $\frac{1}{4}$ " and $\frac{1}{2}$ " thicknesses, and I prefer the thicker of the two as seen in this article. Thinner foams can flatten out during lamination which does not diminish their value, but may not create as much benefit as an uncrushed piece. The $\frac{1}{2}$ " foams seem to hold their shape longer.

Verify handle adjustment prior to laminating with any foam thickness but particularly if using $\frac{1}{2}$ " overlay foam (see Photo 9). If left unadjusted the bite may be too tight and will result in a dented substrate. If the release board is forced into an upswept curve when the press is locked to laminate it

Diagram 2



will most likely result in a dented board (see Photo 10). Unfortunately, no matter how many times you place this image back into the press, nor for how long, the dents will remain and the project will need to be replaced.

Release boards are always required whenever a multiple bite project is mounted or laminated. This is to help prevent substrate denting and to dissipate pressure at the bite point. However, they cannot prevent an overly tight press from damaging the substrate (see Photo 11). Be sensible and think through new techniques; they will become second nature eventually.

Mats, Glazing, and Frames

Matted, glazed, and framed art is what we all hope for—it's custom

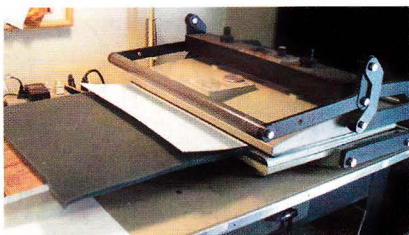


Photo 10: Pressure with Overlay Foam—If the release board is forced into an upswept curve when the press is locked to laminate, it could be a sign the press adjustment is too tight for the thickness of the project. Another sign is not being able to clamp the press closed.



Photo 11: Dented Substrate—This substrate was dented during lamination even with a release board and overlay foam. This damage cannot be undone and the project will need to be replaced.

framing after all. That is where the design potential and added profits are—or are they? Even a low-end mounted and laminated set of prints on 1/2" foamboard can be shown off as high-end art if framed with other upper-end components, such as the water gilded moulding used here. ■

Chris A. Paschke, CPE, 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." She can be contacted at www.designsinkart.com.

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