

# Mastering Mounting



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CPF, GCF, CMG

## *Recycling for Wall Groupings*

**C**ustom-framed inexpensive posters, prints, and portraits are fast giving way to more inexpensive open edition online sales and multiple-image digital photo frames. One aspect of custom framing that continues to grow is the framing of keepsakes and collectibles. The custom framing of memorabilia will probably continue forever because it offers unique, personalized framing projects that cannot be bought online. Another popu-



*Photo 1: The family portrait wall remains a popular decorating trend. Notice the asymmetrical placement and dried flower cluster on the right. All frames feature different mouldings and assorted frame design elements from fillets to marbled decorative paper.*

lar home decorating feature is framed wall groupings. These may combine personal collectibles, inexpensive store-bought images, or upper-end fine art. And they can be created by recycling scraps from jobs that have already been done.

### **Wall Groupings**

Art hung in clusters or rows on a wall as an accent has been a popular design element for a long time. Family portrait walls have been seen in dining rooms (Photo 1), hallways, and following a diagonal staircase to upper level bedrooms. And even with the digital craze, a home decorating magazine can rarely be opened without some type of wall grouping being showcased. Wall arrangements are as variable and diversified as the art and framing. Full-length hallways lined floor to ceiling with stacked art; clusters of items all framed alike; and eclectic montages of frames covering entire walls like wallpaper are all popular. There is very little that seems unacceptable when hanging in multiples.

### **Strength in Numbers**

When designing with multiples, unity can be achieved in a number of ways. Intrigue may be created using a collection of assorted types of art and frame profiles, while visual continuity (unity) is usually achieved through the similarity of the art, matting, or moulding chosen (Photo 2). Art in series is popular, either as a triptych—a single image cut into three—or as a set. These are commonly replacing one long horizontal piece of art in decorating over a sofa or on a long accent wall. For example, all three are framed identically to maintain consistency.

Multiples and square placement of four, nine, or more are also common in room decorating. Even narrow walls may be accented with framed art as a vertical grouping. The featured dining room shows a series of assorted ceramic tiles with matching





*Photo 2: Frames on the left are assorted sizes, shapes, and depths for an eclectic presentation. The series on the right features objects all framed with the same frame and float presentation to create a unified look.*

frames for each separate set, while creating an overall unified group assortment in the corner of the room. The unity is maintained by them all being tiles regardless of the mouldings being different.

## Hidden Potential

The day of just being a well-known local framer is no longer enough to be competitive, and everyone has to offer something special to bring in customers. Find your niche and capitalize on it. For years I was the only framer in Redding, CA, that had the equipment to dry mount or laminate anything. I advertised and offered that to my customers, and I also subcontracted the service to other framers in town. There's hidden profit potential there.

Your niche might be offering special services to others, but it also might just be creating small high-quality frames and mounted art that isn't available at local discount stores or on the Internet. Consider recycling. When purchasing length moulding, the unused end cuts and scraps may easily be recycled into small readymade frames of common standard sizes or to fit outdated store inventory. And rather than fitting each with mat and glass



*Photo 3: Prints are selected, then their edges and white borders are torn or cut away in preparation for mounting.*

scraps, sell them as potential coordinates, like shopping for slacks and a shirt. That way customers can mix and match their frame, mat, and glazing choices.

Many framers offer reduced reflection, conservation, museum, and UV acrylic glazing, so their glazing scraps are of superior quality to typical box store photo frames or readymades. If you specialize in decorative and tiered matting, then high quality one-of-a-kind specialty mat fallouts also serve as wonderful "higher priced" standard-sized mat specials, and with a CMC there is no excuse not to be recycling all these scraps into additional profits.

## Designer Corner

Since most end cuts and scraps have already been paid for by the original framing project, any money made off these smaller frames, mats, and glazing only need to cover the time spent to cut or join them. Plus, if they are selected and fitted for a customer, then that charge will be added, too. The frames may be economy-priced to get customers into the shop and to encourage multiple-unit purchasing, such as for wall groupings.

So it is imperative to have a



*Photo 4: A full sheet of heat-activated Step 150 foamboard is fitted with as many assorted prints as possible to make each press run as economical as possible.*

special location in your store, perhaps a "designer corner" where specialty—not closeout—items are sold. That area should show samples of wall grouping ideas in a design book and on a design display wall. There is always something to be made, glass or mats to be cut, or items to be framed for a new seasonal wall grouping.

Many framers have old print and poster inventory in assorted sizes that would make fabulous items for a wall grouping. Just as with recycling moulding end cuts, mounted and occasionally laminated images also offer potential sales in a new designer corner. Many times old inventory includes items that have been discontinued from manufacturers, are out of print, or simply no longer available—even on the Internet. I receive many calls from interior designers looking for my discontinued prints from Wild Apple, which I have drawers full of. These make fabulous designer corner sales.

## Multiple Mounting

When working with open editions, there are no limitations. So prints may be folded, spindled, and mutilated to make a profit. The most



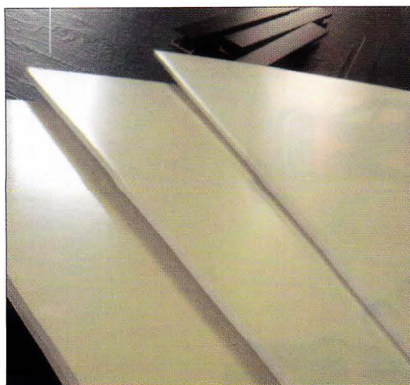


Photo 5: The similarity in surface gloss of HA Bien-fang Step 150 (left), regular clay-coated foamboard (center), and Gilman HA Insite foamboard (right) makes the adhesive side difficult to identify.

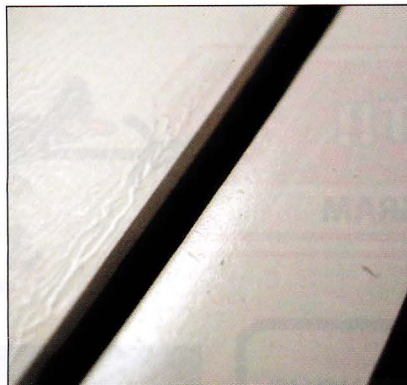


Photo 6: The adhesive coating of the HartMount (left) has more of a wave pattern while the Gilman Insite (right) is much smoother. Both bond equally as well, and the adhesive smoothes during mounting.



Photo 7: This sample was mounted first to prevent image shifting, then one full sheet of laminate was applied over the entire board for an additional press run. The top end is aligned while the liner is being peeled off from under the stuck film, which is hand rolled for easier handling.

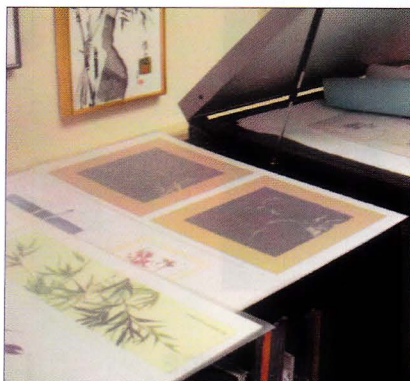


Photo 8: Many boards were prepared with laminate and stacked to wait for the press run. Each board must have a lower sheet of release paper—not board—and be covered with a piece of foam overlay to properly laminate.



Photo 9: The mounted and laminated images are now ready to trim to size.

equally as well, and the adhesive smoothes during mounting.

## Laminating

If the prints are to be laminated rather than glazed, they may be mounted and laminated in one step. Or you can make two runs through the press: once to mount, once to laminate. Though it may be a more effective use of press time to run both simultaneously, the extra time to align and verify the laminate offsets the two press runs. If they are mounted first, there is no chance of the tacked prints shifting as the large vinyl film is aligned onto the substrate making any large 32"x40" or 40"x60" application less stressful (Photo 7). The top edge of the film should be lightly tacked into place while the liner is pulled from beneath the film and hand rolled for better control.

Prepare many boards with laminate, then stack them for a press run. Each board should be laminated with a lower sheet of release paper—not release board—and be sure to cover everything with a piece of foam overlay to properly apply pressure and to allow for air removal during lamination (Photo 8). Make

profitable way to do that is by trimming off white borders or unused edges and mounting in clusters (Photo 3). Always select and prepare images as though you are custom framing them for a customer. Think through how they might look in a frame, not simply mount them to a backing board for bin storage or sale. That way the item is prepared in a more creative way and end-cut frames can be chosen that best suit them.

Multiple mounting is the most effective use of press time, and it's cost effective in terms of using materials (Photo 4). Heat-activated foamboards make the best substrates for bulk mounting because they save

time during preparation and dwell time. They also are easier to trim after mounting and offer print rigidity during storage and sale. If regular clay coat foam is selected, then pick a permanent, porous, tissue adhesive to mount, like Tri-mount or ColorMount.

Many foamboards have a similar surface appearance, and the adhesive side is sometimes difficult to identify from the uncoated side (Photo 5). Get to know the products well. The adhesive coating between HartMount and Gilman HA Insite is very different visually, with HartMount having more of a wave pattern while Gilman Insite is smoother (Photo 6). Both work





Photo 10: These prints have been mounted and laminated with a linen texture film then cut to exact edge size to fit readymade frames. The larger images are ready for a custom frame selection, while smaller florals fit readymades already assembled.



Photo 11: A perfect example of ready-to-hang florals was made from a nine-up print. The mounted and laminated images are ready to be framed and hung as a wall grouping.

certain the boards stay in the press long enough to fully mount the vinyl film. If any tiny white dots are visible when the board is removed at seven minutes, it needs to be placed back into the press for a full 10 minutes, not just for three additional minutes. It must be run through the original time plus the additional time, not just the difference. Once removed and fully bonded, there will be no air bubbles and only the surface texture of the film will be visible.

The mounted and laminated images are then ready to trim to size (Photo 9). Trim each print to exact

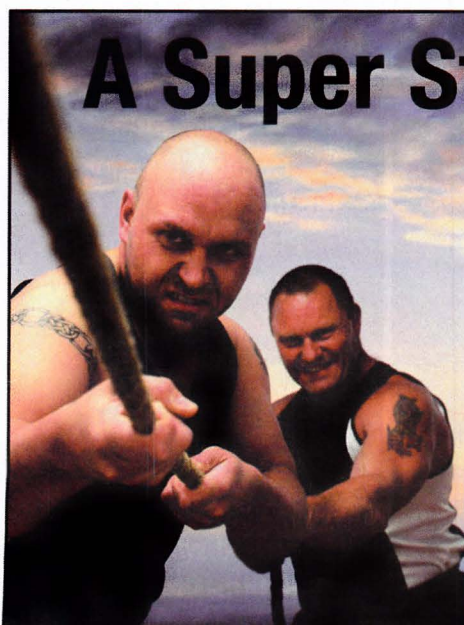
end size, making them fully ready to assemble into a frame—even if they are only to be placed in a plastic envelope and in a sales bin. Assorted images should be mixed and matched to showcase wall-grouping ideas as well as to sell images (Photo 10). The larger images are ready for a custom frame selection while the smaller ones have readymade frames available from end cuts in assorted profiles and finishes. Some small 6½"x6½" florals featured here have been cut down with a beige border to 7"x7" from an original 24"x24" nine-up open edition print. Frames are readymade to fit these 7"x7"

completed laminated florals out of both a wonderful narrow barnwood closeout moulding purchased for 25 cents a foot and a black lacquer (Photo 11).

Now it's time for you to create your "designer corner" and head into the 2008 holiday season ready to make more profits! ■

*Note: Open edition images shown courtesy of Wild Apple Graphics and Designs; original art from Chris A Paschke; and wall groupings from personal collections, Designs Ink.*

**Chris A. Paschke, CPF GCF CMG**, mounting editor, owns Designs Ink in Tehachapi, CA, featuring commercial custom framing, fine art/graphic design, and industry consulting. Specializing in mounting, matting, creative design, and fine art, she routinely teaches at industry trade shows and The National Conference. She has written four books on mounting including *The Mounting and Laminating Handbook* (now in its third edition) and *Creative Mounting, Wrapping, and Laminating*, available from PFM PubCo. She may be contacted through her website, [www.designsinkart.com](http://www.designsinkart.com).



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