

Mastering Mounting



by
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Wrapping a Sacred Fig

Though framers are familiar with stretching canvases and hinging watercolors, in the April issue I discussed mounting options for painted art on more unusual surfaces, including the Bo Leaf. The Sacred Fig, *Ficus religiosa*, also

known as Bodhi, Bo (from Sinhalese Bo), Pipal (peepal), Ashwattha, or Buddha tree, is a species of fig tree in the mulberry family native throughout the tropics from India, south-west China, and Indochina east of Vietnam. It is also a favorite collectible for travelers.

Religiosa is the sacred tree for Hindus and Buddhists, and it is the oldest tree in Indian art and literature. It is said to be the mythical “Tree

of Life” or “World Tree” that is frequently planted in temples and shrines. It is highly honored for supreme knowledge and awakening and is often integrated in ceremonies surrounding births, deaths, marriages, and rites of passage. The large mature leaves are widely used as a substrate for small paintings picturing mythical and religious themes and simple rural village scenes.

The leaves are somewhat spade-shaped and grow very large at 4" to 10" long and

3" to 8" wide with up to a 4" distinctive extended tip (Photo 1). Once painted, the delicate, sheer leaves are tack-supported to a black or dark backing to show the lacy nature of the leaf pattern. Then they are covered with glassine to protect them from damage during storage or sale (Photo 2).

Designing the Project

In preparation for decorative framing, the leaf must first be carefully removed from the backing (see this column in the April 2007 issue). As with any sheer art, the color placed behind it will ghost through the painted leaf. Selecting a dark background will best showcase the delicacy of the leaf and keep the painted colors from washing out. Consistency in the selection of blacks is vital. There are warm blacks with red or yellow base and cooler blacks with blue base. All chosen blacks—fabric, paper backing and frame—should be from the same base color family or they may appear faded or off-color.

Texture must also be considered. A lightfast, pigmented, 100 percent cotton, handmade, cool black sheet of Moulin de Larroque Columbe paper has a lovely, soft, yet distinctive texture that nicely enhances the leaf while developing visual interest. Black linen fabric was chosen for the wrap so that the background and the wrapped mat would each maintain textural independence and not blend together when viewed (Photo 3). Dyed papers are more likely to fade by visible light, so even if UV glazing is used the backing would still fade. Light fading can also be a problem for fab-



Photo 1: The leaf used for this intricate and detailed painting is 5½"x8" to the tip.

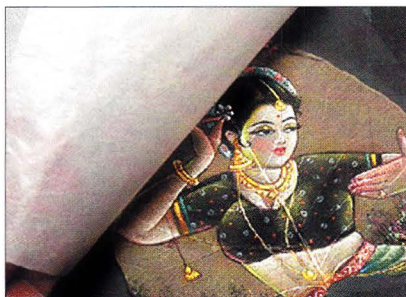


Photo 2: Leaves are tack supported along the leaf spine to temporary black paper backing and covered with glassine to protect them from damage during storage or sale. This leaf is 6½"x9" to the tip.



Photo 3: Black linen fabric, black Spanish Columbe handmade paper, 3/16" foamboard and a gilded moulding were chosen for this project.

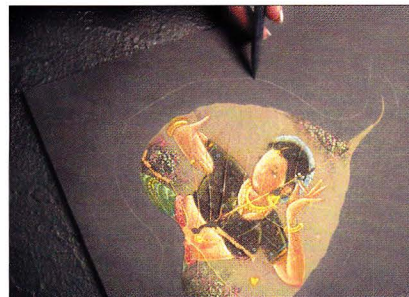


Photo 4: Place the leaf face down on the foamboard and trace the outer shape onto the foam. Reversing the leaf ensures it to be correct after cutting the window.

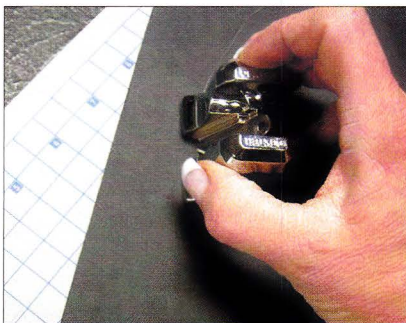


Photo 5: A Dexter Mini Mat Cutter was used to cut the 3/16" foam board window mat. It was cut from the back following the pencil pattern.



Photo 6: Notice the long over-cut line at the top of the window. This ensures a clean corner on the front side. The three little slices in the center show where the blade was punched through to set blade depth. A clean cut fallout will drop from the window.

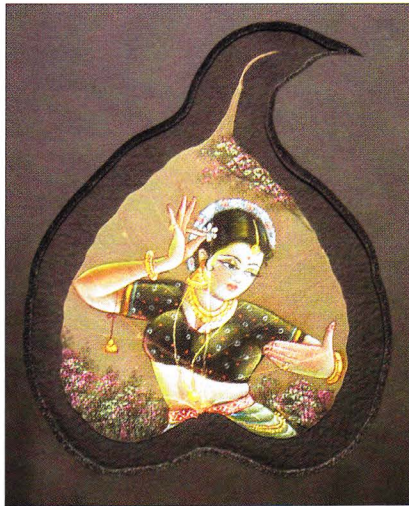


Photo 7: Lay the cut window over leaf prior to wrapping to verify shape, size, space around leaf, and placement.

rics. The frame is Larson-Juhl Musee #191631 which is a 5/8" watergild moulding with black sides.

Cutting the Mat

A 3/16" black foamboard was selected as the base for the free-form deep-bevel wrapped mat, which was to have the window cut to echo the basic shape of the leaf. To draw the mat pattern, the leaf face is placed down on the sized foamboard and the outer shape traced onto the base (Photo 4). By drawing it face down, the window may be hand-cut from the back and will reverse for front view when done.

With a Dexter Mini Mat Cutter extend the blade to accommodate the thickness of the foam

(Photo 5). Always begin with a new blade and check for proper blade depth—just barely projecting through the foam—to create a clean, crisp bevel perfect for wrapping. A blade set too deep will drag into the self-healing mat beneath, and set too shallow will grab the bottom paper layer of the foamboard and bunch the foam. Cut the window by following the pencil line with the cutter blade on the inside of the window. The Dexter cutter may be pushed or pulled and used either right- or left-handed by flipping the blade around. It is ideal for cutting any free-form window mat.

Since the window will be covered with fabric and adhesive, over-cuts will be hidden. It is preferable to cross over the bevel cuts at the

top point for a clean cut on the front of the window. Three little entry point slices in the center of the fallout show where the blade was punched through to set blade depth. A properly cut opening will allow the fallout to drop cleanly from the window (Photo 6). Lay the cut window mat face up over the leaf to verify shape, size, space around the leaf, and placement (Photo 7).

Wrapping the Mat

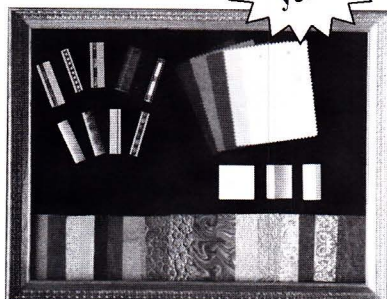
There are a number of ways to wrap a mat. Manual and cold vacuum mounting applications using wet glues are common, but this project was mounted with pure

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Photo 8: Place a slightly oversized sheet of film adhesive over the face up window mat, then the fabric, then reinsert the fallout, pressing it firmly to set it back into the window opening.



Photo 10: Once the opening is cut out the tabs should be cut at 1/4" to 3/8" intervals for a smooth inner curve to the wrap.



Photo 9: The fallout presses the fabric and adhesive into the window opening. The fabric may not be totally bonded to the bevel because of the foamboard acting as an insulator during mounting.

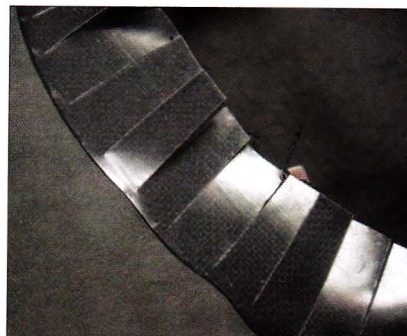


Photo 11: The adhesive aligns perfectly to all the cut tabs because it was mounted as a unit with the fabric.

film adhesive in a mechanical dry mount press. Though the foam mat is cut to final size, the film adhesive and fabric should be cut at least an inch larger around the foam to allow pulling in the fabric when it is pushed down into the window opening during bonding.

Place the film adhesive over the face of the window, then the fabric, and reinsert the fallout, pressing it firmly to set it snugly back into the window opening (Photo 8). Make certain the fallout is properly aligned and well fitted into the window. When wrapping with linen, canvas, or any fabric with a strong visible thread pattern, it is very important to make sure that the threads are vertical with the sides of a rectangular or square window. With a free-form design or circle, this is a little less stringent.

Place this in a preheated 200°F press for one to two minutes using only release papers not a release board. If mounting in a hot vacuum press, mount at same 200°F but for four to five minutes using a release board or release paper with a scrap matboard to hold the fallout in place during the draw of the vacuum.

Once removed from the press, cool this under a weight to set the adhesive. The fallout will have pressed the fabric and adhesive down into the window opening, allowing the fabric to cover all the bevel once the window opening is cut and wrapped. Since foamboard is an insulator rather than a conductor of heat, the fallout may have not allowed the adhesive to totally melt to bond the fabric to the entire bevel (Photo 9). The

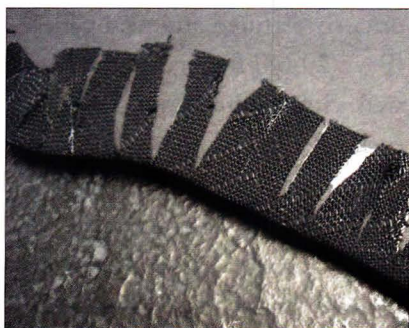


Photo 12: Iron the tabs to the back of the window and make sure all adhesive is melted and well bonded.



Photo 13: The bevel edge should be smooth, clean and even after ironing the tabs to the back of the window.



Photo 14: Once mounted, aligned and trimmed to size, check frame fit and proceed to glass and final fitting.



Photo 15: (Clockwise from top) Larson-Juhl Musee #191631, closeout Bay 729-68, and Bay 2013945. Each one gives a different feel.

fallout will have created the indent of the window, so trimming and finishing will be quick and easy.

Trim away the exterior fabric edges to the edge of the foam mat; they do not need to be turned and wrapped to the back. With the mat face up, cut the inner window fabric away leaving 1" trim for wrapping the bevel. With the mat face up, cut tabs at $\frac{1}{4}$ " to $\frac{3}{8}$ " intervals for a smooth inner curve to the wrap. Do not cut too close to the bottom of the bevel or the raw foam may be exposed (Photo 10).

After cutting the tabs, use a tacking iron to remelt and reinforce any of the fabric and adhesive on the bevel that may not have melted during mounting. Because the film adhesive was mounted as a unit with the fabric, all the tabs will have adhesive aligned to them for ironing

to the back of the window opening (Photo 11). Turn and iron the tabs to the back of the window by pulling them with one hand while following with the iron. By pulling tabs away from the window, there is less chance of leaving puckered fabric along the bevel edge. Do not rush; it is important that the adhesive is totally melted to create a permanent bond (Photo 12). The bevel edge should be smooth and well bonded after ironing (Photo 13). If there are any sections of loose fabric or puckers, the adhesive may be reheated to reactivate and the fabric shifted to correct the problem.

Mounting the Leaf

Once the mat is completed, the project can be assembled. The backing paper should be adhered to a rag or foamboard for support prior to



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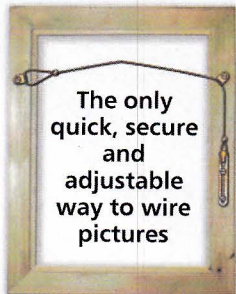
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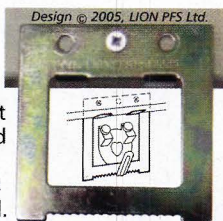
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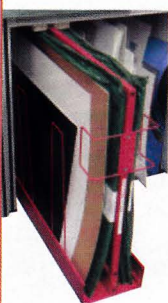
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mounting the leaf. This backing should be cut slightly larger all around. Since this completed frame is 9"x12", the backing should be cut and mounted 10"x13". Lay the window on the backing and mark the desired center for the leaf. Then set the window aside. With tiny dots of neutral pH PVA, glue the center vein of the leaf to the backing, place a blotter and light weight over the leaf, and allow it to dry. Once the white glue has dried, align the window mat and adhere in place. Trim away the excess backing edges and fit glazing and frame over mounted leaf painting (Photo 14).

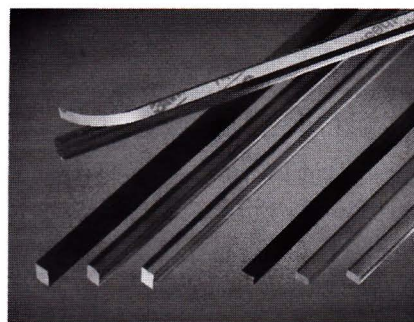
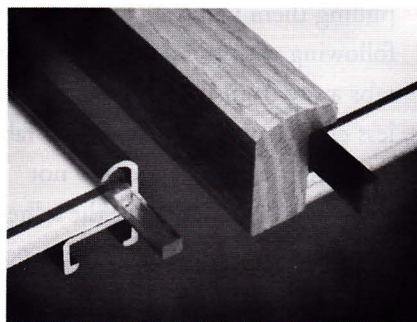
Final Frame

Selecting either a water-gilded (LJ Musee 191631); bamboo, rattan-look (Bay 2013945); solid black or

ornately textured antiqued gilded (Bay 729-68) frame could all work well with this free-from design, each offering it a unique feel (Photo 15). Since the best design fits the art and not necessarily the display location, choosing any of these selections should produce a framed Sacred Fig honoring a trip to the Far East. ■

Chris A. Paschke, CPF, 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* and can be contacted at www.designsinkart.com.

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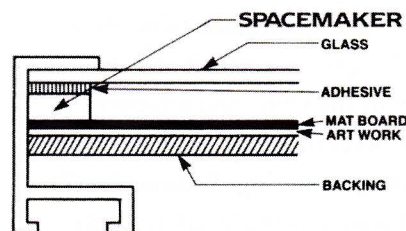


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