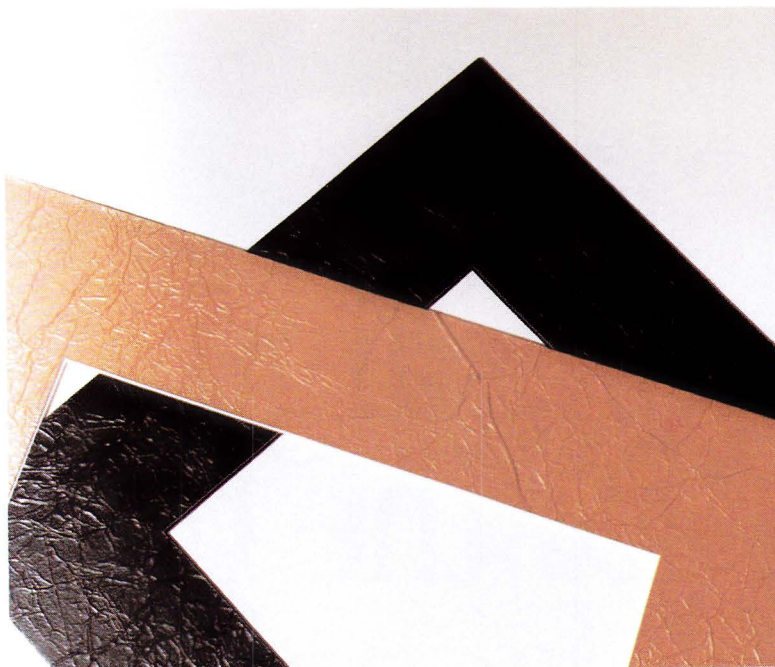




Completed "leather-look" sample mats can be made using light, leather art paper, laminated with pure adhesive on a charcoal board. The dark leather sample of art paper was laminated with pure adhesive on white/blackcore board. Both create a "tiered mat" hairline in the bevel when cut.



Leather-Look: Using Laminates For Mat Creation

by Chris A. Paschke, CPF

The use of leather and suede on moulding and mats has long been an effective approach to creatively tying picture framing into the framing of a natural landscape or animal print. "Leather-look" mats are among some of the most recent developments in using surface heat mounted laminates, previously designed as a glass substitute in textural mat enhancement. They are a natural way to expand the use of your heat mounting equipment and subsequent related mounting materials for increasing profits, expanding mat board selection and supporting an innovative design approach to our state-of-the-art industry and your business.

Laminating films come in a variety of textures (PFM, May 1991), but a

matte laminating film most closely resembles the attempted look of veined, lacquered, dyed leather. By heat mounting the matte laminate to a lightweight, lightfast (non-fading) charcoal or pastel paper of 60# or less, and in turn adhering it to the surface of a high quality, 4ply acid-free mat board with pure non-tissue core adhesive and using a contrasting color surface paper, the "tiered mat" look can also be achieved (PFM, February 1991).

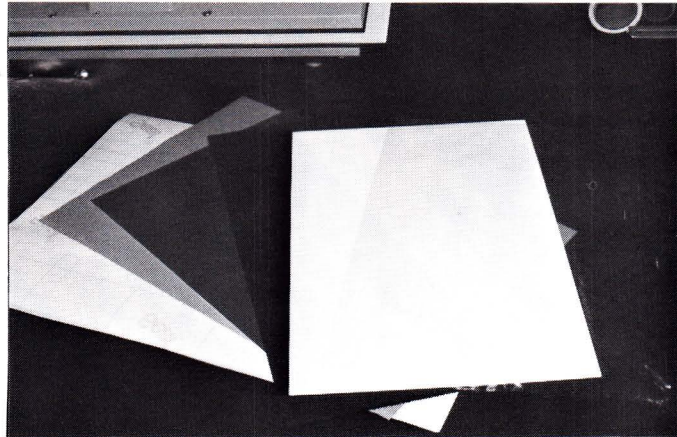
Anytime a textural surface mat design is used to alter or enhance an existing mat board, it is suggested that only the highest quality materials be used. Mat boards should be acid-free for clean black or white bevels, or pure, 100% museum rag

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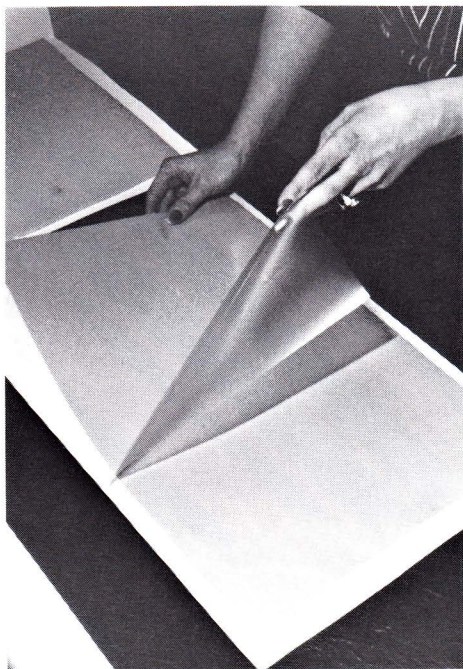


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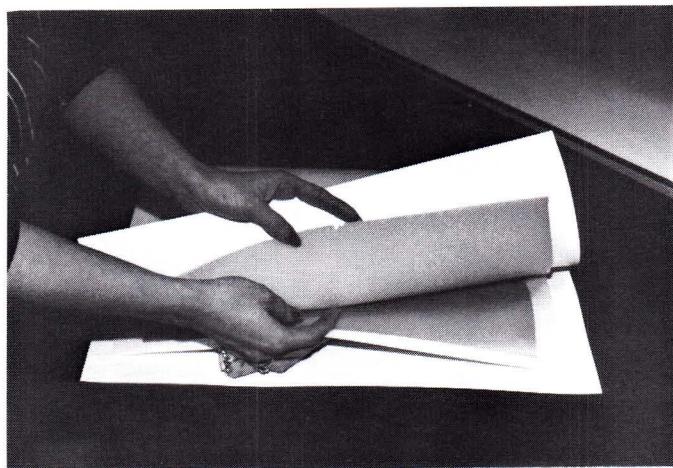
1. Supplies for this "step-by-step" project include art paper, matte laminating film, pure non-tissue core adhesive and black mat board. Supplies for both light "leather-look" on dark/white core board as well as the dark "leather-look" on white/black core board are shown.



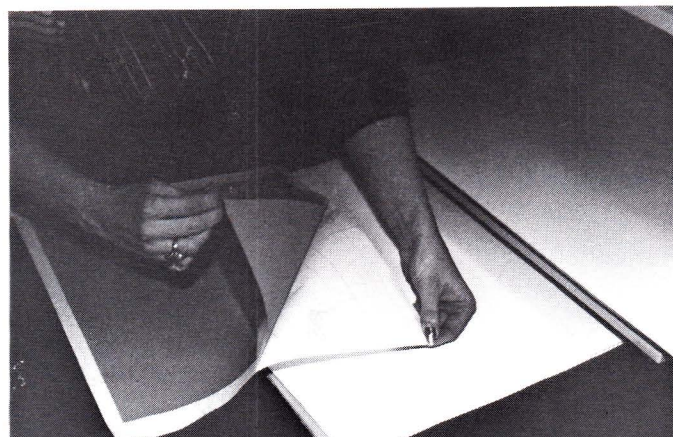
2. Sandwich art paper, centered between laminating film (2" larger than paper) and its release paper backing.



3. Mount the film to the art paper at 225°F for two minutes, with foam overlay on top of film in an envelope of release paper.



4. Remove laminate mounted to art paper from press, remove backing paper from laminate sandwich and let cool.



board for solid core bevels. These boards are excellent for fine art protection, as well as a consistent, long term, non-discoloring look to the completed design creation.

Pricing textural surface mat enhancement is extremely important. Too often, a creative framer will develop a unique design or specialized mat board and either ignore or hesitate to charge accordingly for his original design efforts. As a professional executing any type of creative mat design that's out of the realm of standard matting (i.e. "leather-look" or "tiered" mats), you are presenting a uniquely rare commodity. The pricing formulas for "leather-look" will be covered later. First, it is important to understand the procedure for creating "leather-look" to be able to fully comprehend the suggested pricing formulas.

Creating "leather-look" is a simple, cost effective and time economical process, making it extremely attractive as a potential profit-maker. Begin with a sheet of lightweight, non-fading, charcoal, pastel or drawing paper. Papers of 60# or less in weight are suggested since the wrinkling process is much more difficult and resistant to tight visual veining with heavier weight papers. These papers generally run 18x24 to 22x32 in size, which is usually the only limiting factor. It is possible to tear and tack papers to achieve larger, leather-look mat blanks or deep bevel wraps (a subject for another article). Keep in mind however, that a "leather-look" mat has a plastic laminated surface and must not be touched directly with a tacking iron or it will melt.

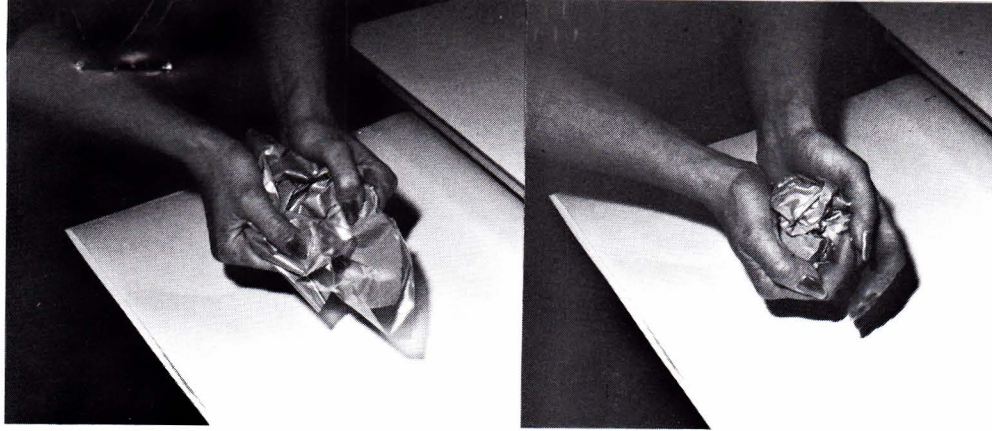
For the purposes of this demonstration I will be using a sheet of lightweight charcoal paper, matte laminating film, pure adhesive and a piece of black mat board (photo 1).

Cut a piece of matte laminating film approximately 2" larger than the art paper (i.e. paper/18x24, film/20x26) and sandwich the paper between the film and it's removable backing paper (photo 2). Mount the laminate to the art paper in a 225°F mechanical or hot vacuum press for two minutes, always using a sponge

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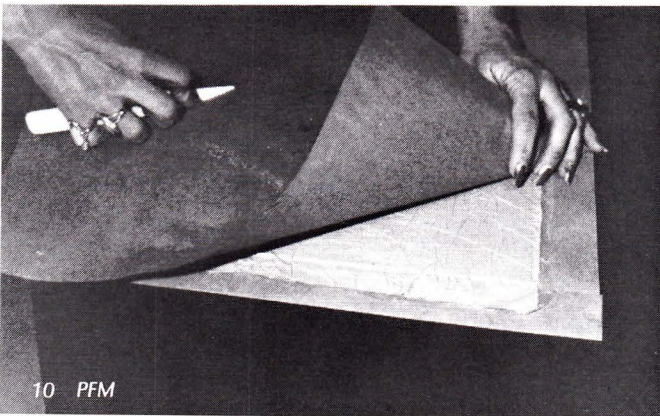
5. Wrinkle laminate/paper unit into ball for initial visual veining pattern. Flatten out unit prior to re-wrinkling.



6. Reinforce wrinkles in the art paper using a diagonal pattern. The more the art paper is worked the more the fibers will break down and the softer the paper will become. This makes veining much easier.



7. Place a sandwich of overlay foam, wrinkled and flattened laminate/art paper, pure adhesive, and mat board in an envelope of release paper and place into a mechanical or hot vacuum press for 5 minutes (adhesive and board should be 1" smaller than the laminate).



8. So as not to pull the surface, place the new "leather-look" board in an envelope of kraft paper and burnish with a bone burnisher. You can burnish directly onto the new laminated surface, but do not press too hard as you may pull the warm plastic laminated surface.

overlay on top of the film in a release paper envelope (photo 3). Remove the mounted film/paper unit from the press, removing the backing paper from the laminate unit, and let cool (photo 4).

Crumple or wrinkle the laminated, yet unmounted, art paper into a tight ball to establish the initial veining patterns. To check the basic visual pattern for the first time, flatten out the paper (photo 5). You must then re-wrinkle the paper to reinforce the veining pattern in a diagonal pattern across opposite corners of the laminated art paper (i.e. upper right and lower left corners—photo 6). The more you work the paper the softer it will become by breaking down the inner fibers and, in turn, increasing the veins in that area. By intensifying the smaller wrinkles or veins as opposed to more wide spread wrinkles, the more the completed "leather-look" mat will resemble the veining in an actual animal hide.

Cut a piece of mat board, as well as a piece of pure adhesive, about an inch *smaller* than the full size sheet of newly wrinkled laminated art paper. Layer a sandwich of overlay foam, laminating art paper, adhesive and mat board in an envelope of release paper and place it into the press for five minutes, initially setting the veins (photo 7). Using a burnishing bone, burnish the warm board through a piece of kraft paper (after removing it from the press) to reinforce the veins (photo 8).

Remember that the new mat board surface is a plastic, and although burnishing can be done directly on the laminate, do not apply too much pressure while it is warm as it can pull. The board may be placed back into the press one last time, with a cover sheet of kraft paper only (no overlay foam), and left to press for ten minutes or more (although this step is not entirely necessary, it will additionally compress the veins, thus reinforcing a more flattened, tighter pattern). Do not place the "leather-look" laminated board in direct contact with the release paper, as it can cloud the laminate.

Size your desired mat from the full size sheet and cut the mat border

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width as needed. Trimming excess "leather-look" paper from the outside edges of the new mat board may be necessary prior to sizing the mat for completion (photo 9). It is actually a good idea to trim all excess laminate prior to re-pressing in kraft paper because if you elect to use an envelope rather than a cover sheet, the laminate may fuse to the bottom kraft paper.

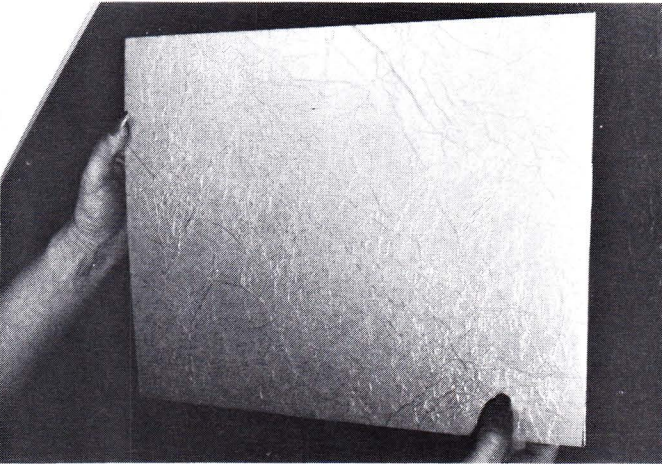
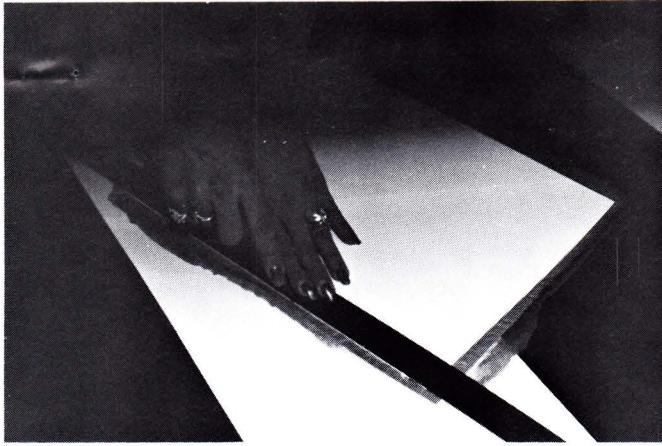
Use the full size sheet of art paper to create the initial mat board, trim the new textural "leather-look" mat to the required size and you may end up with reserve board ready for the next project without having to start from scratch.

The recommended pricing structure should include the calculated cost of a full size sheet of art paper, laminate, adhesive and labor time along with the "leather-look" united

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9. Trim excess paper from the edges of the mounted board prior to sizing for mat completion. It is also a good idea to trim all excess laminate/paper from beyond the mat edges prior to re-pressing with a kraft paper cover sheet, to prevent laminate from sticking. This final repressing step, although optional, reinforces & sets the veining nicely. You should also use release paper (as always) when using a hot press.

10. Completed "leather-look" board prior to sizing or cutting into mat.

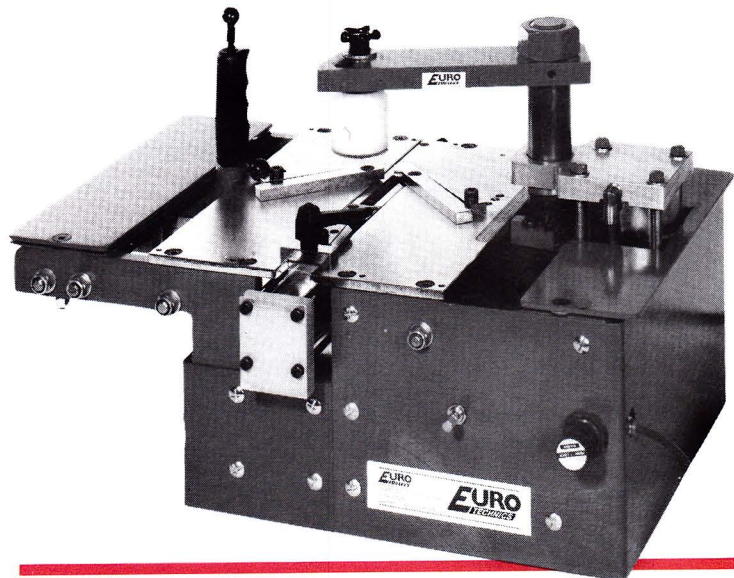


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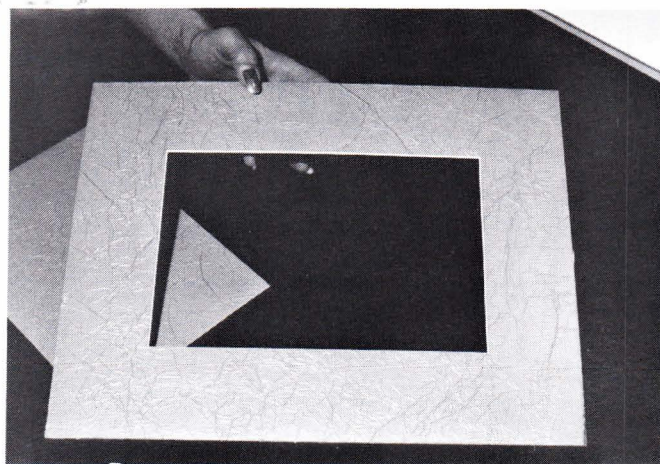
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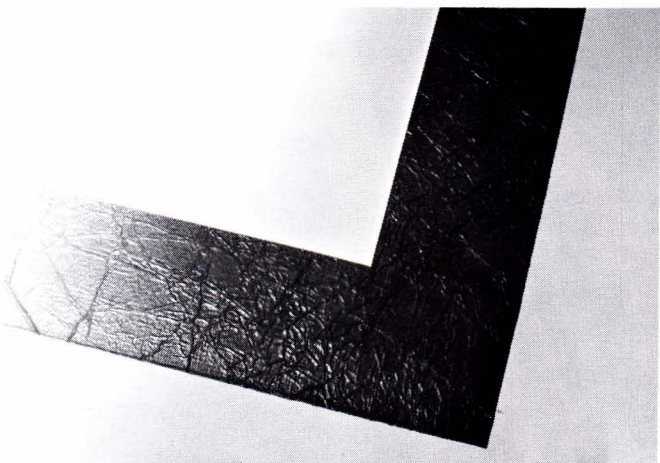
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11. Sized completed board cut into tiered bevel "leather-look" mat.



12. Close up of texture of laminate/art paper wrinkles mounted to existing mat board to create a new look!

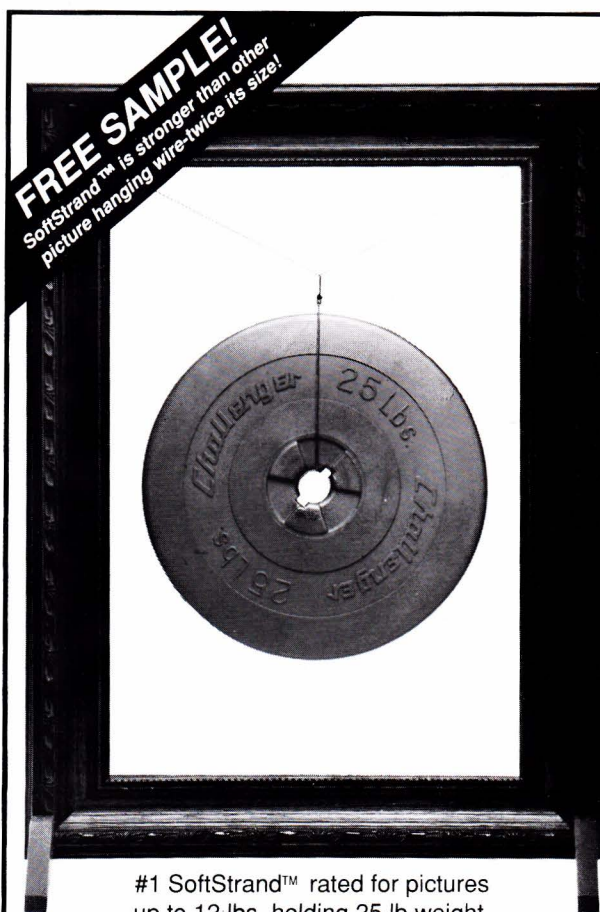
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inch price. The next time you need a "leather-look" mat of the same color you may have adequate scraps or end cuts from this initial piece of previously paid-for board. Naturally you will charge each customer the regular united inch price of the originally created board, making the second mat, completed from the original sheet, almost pure profit.

Calculating "united inch" pricing for a base "leather-look" mat is simple and need only be calculated once. After that (for future reference) code or mark your new "leather-look" mat corner samples with the united inch prices.

Based on the suggested national average, united inch pricing summary, begin with the base retail united inch price of an acid-free mat (\$.35) plus laminating (\$.25), plus mounting (\$.25), plus any additional design

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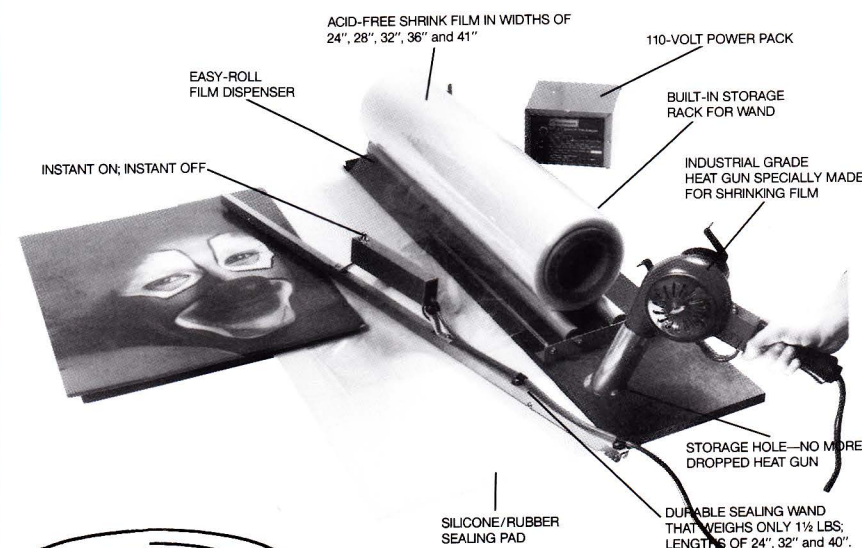
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MAT DESIGN



continued from page 14

labor time (\$.25). Multiply this times the united inches, or length plus width of the desired mat (i.e. 8x10 = 18 united inches times \$1.10 per UI). Thus, an 8x10 "leather-look" mat has a suggested price of \$19.80.

Since this price readily aligns with many pre-calculated pricing charts for the commercial linen, silk or leather specialty mat boards currently on the market, you may elect to use those as your reference instead. You should seriously consider the options open to you for establishing your pricing structures. Although united inch pricing may not be the best system for everything, once you learn to calculate united inch pricing on mat boards it becomes purely systematic and extremely easy to calculate each additional design element you use on a mat.

Being creative with the materials and equipment already on hand can readily produce unique designs for greater profits with little more effort than calculating the price of these new designs for your customer. These "leather-look" boards can be at your fingertips at any time without having to special order them for a particular framing job, plus you have the added creativity of a vast use of variable colors. Your limitations are only the size of the art papers you elect to use, and the time or design restrictions you put on yourself.

"Leather-look" is a natural for many other adaptations to creative framing (besides mats) using heat mounting laminates, adhesives and presses. Consider for a moment "leather-look" 3/16" foam board, "deep bevel" wraps (PFM, February 1991), or "leather-look" quick easy shadow boxes (subject of a future PFM article). Watch for additional creative uses with laminating films in mat design and on glass in next month's issue of Picture Framing Magazine. PFM

Chris A. Paschke, CPF is the owner of Designs Ink in Orange, Connecticut, specializing in commercial framing, calligraphic design, consultation and education. A professional framer and designer for over 16 years, Ms. Paschke has been an active supporter of PPFA, currently teaches workshops and seminars, and demonstrates and lectures on various mounting and matting techniques at numerous industry events and open houses around the country.