



Tiered Matting Series: Part One

Surface Tiering

by Chris A. Paschke, CPF

“**T**iered matting” is a relatively new technique of heat mounting multiple layers of white, black, and solid color core mat boards with domestic, handmade and imported papers. Since 1986, the tiered matting concept of working with single sheet papers and dry mounting equipment to

create unusually unique mat boards for calligraphic fine art and for the specialty framing for my clients, has been evolving. I first wrote about this process for PFM in “Tiered Matting”, February 1991.

During this four part series on tiered matting, the basic layering techniques behind using dry mounting equipment to create traditional surface tiered matting, under tiering, pin striped bevels, and full bevel banding will be explored.

“Surface tiered” mats are those created with light colored fine art papers dry mounted to dark (i.e., black) surfaced white core mat boards including Bainbridge Alphamat, Crescent Rag Mat and TruVue Miller Ultimat. (Photo 1).

Dark colored fine art papers would in turn be mounted to light (i.e., white) surfaced black core boards including

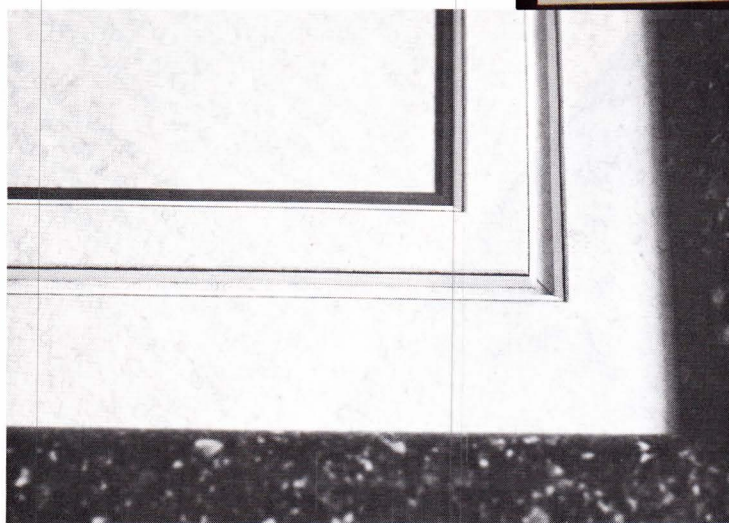
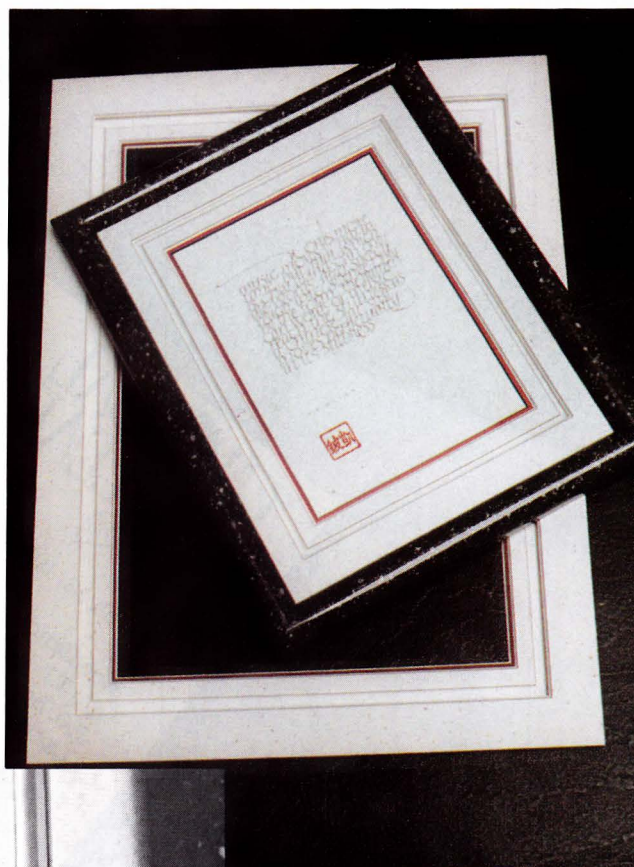


Photo 1. Detail of lower right corner of opening photo.
See hairline at top edge of bevel.



Pictured are tiered mats created with handmade Larroque Mouchette de Pombie surface papers on a sheet of black Alphamat, with a red blackcore liner mat. Added panel mat design with accent strip behind and $\frac{3}{16}$ " acid-free Foam Board spacer brings the united inch price to \$1.75. (Above)

Bainbridge Black Core, Crescent Black Core, and TruVue Miller UltiBlack. (Photo 2). The resulting effect upon bevel cutting the sized mat blank is a very refined hairline

at the top edge of the mat bevel. (Photo 1, again).

Creativity

Without ever setting out to do so, I managed to establish a “creative” niche for myself as an upper-end matting design specialist and artistic framer. Anytime you begin to develop and perhaps specialize in something about which you are particularly driven, it is easy to evoke the enthusiasm necessary during a sales presentation to close the sale featuring your particular “passion”.

Since, like many framers, I am located far from any local distributors, much of the motivation behind my development of the “tiered” concept had to do with limited accessibility of supplies for me. (Merely meaning I had to special order boards for UPS delivery rather than enjoying the

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luxury of "will call pick-ups" at a local distributor.) By retailing single sheet, handmade and imported papers as an art supply retailer, it also allowed me a design freedom since many of the papers I elected to use were regularly kept "in stock".

Papers

When selecting a particular paper to use in a tiered mat, it is important to make certain of the lightfastness and permanence characteristics of the paper. I will be presenting an article on the "Lightfastness of Materials" in an upcoming issue which will address this issue more directly. Lightweight Oriental rice Unyru, Ogura and Mulberry fibered papers; midweight Strathmore Charcoal, Crescent Colored Art, and handmade Roma; as well as heavyweight handmade Richard de Bas, Velasquez, Larroque Mouchette de Pombie and Columbe, are all visually effective and a good cross section of the vast possibilities for surface papers.

There are a number of paper suppliers around the country who mail order these beautiful papers (see ads in PFM) as well as many well-stocked complete service art stores who sell single sheet papers, many in larger university towns.

Test the lightfastness of papers by investing in sampler books of papers you are interested in using; fan them to the ones you like and place them in a window for a few weeks to test the fading properties. (Photo 3).

Single and double ply mat boards also fall into the category for potential surface tiering application. A

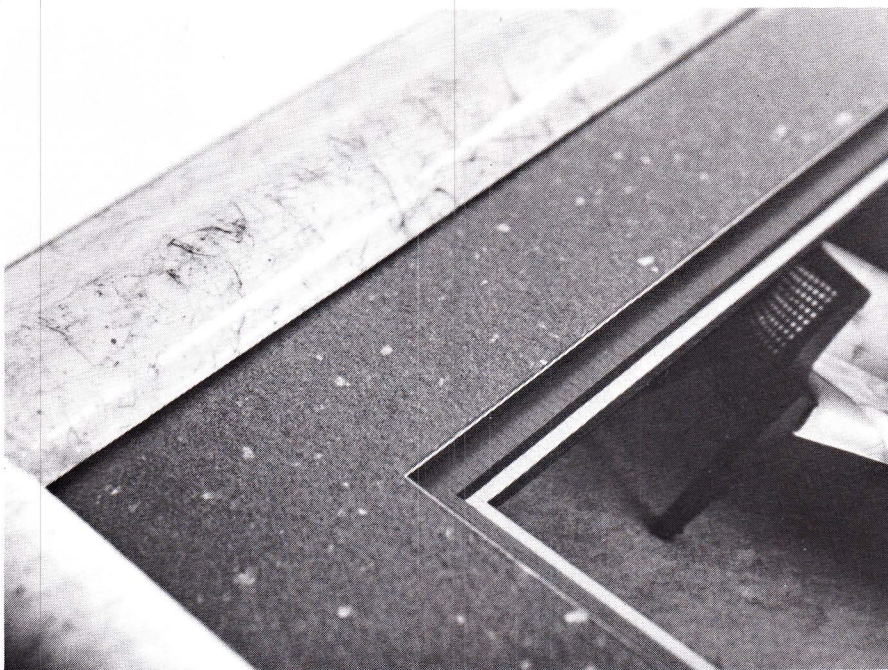


Photo 2. A dark sheet of Larroque Mouchette de Pombie Green handmade paper on white Bainbridge blackcore board with $\frac{3}{16}$ " acid-free spacer between the two lower mats and top "tiered mat".

black core is used.

TruVue Miller Artboard carries a metallic Florentine series that when purchased as UltiBlack features a beautiful white hairline between the metallic surface paper and the black core itself. This then creates a "natural" tiered mat effect at the top of the black bevel. The same holds true for some of their darker surfaced flannels.

When a company does not create this dramatic effect in its regular acid-free designer board line, you can initiate the look on your own. The above mentioned Kinder Collection sheets would work wonderfully on solid core museum rag or on a simple black surfaced blackcore board.

Adhesives

When working with the mounting of tiered layers, always use a pure adhesive film such as Seal Fusion 4000 or Drytac Flobond. The clear nature of a film adhesive will prevent a white tissue layer from being visible between layers in the completed bevel cut design. The design control should always be up to you; don't fall victim to the white tissue carrier in

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Photo 3. Buy a sample book of papers you are considering for use, fan open to display them, and place in a sunny window or under fluorescent bulbs to expedite fading process. Note the drastically faded papers on the right side!



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MAT DESIGN



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regular "tissue" adhesives.

I have a strong preference to the strict use of dry mounting tiered layers, since I often use creative mat cutting designs such as "panel mats". Past experience has shown a release of these porous papers after only a six month period when only spray adhesive was used. A good quality cold vacuum glue may work well, but I suggest doing some time testing prior to executing a panel design for a client.

My personal horror story involves the "surface tiered" corner sample of Larroque handmade paper (properly "permanently" spray mounted) which floated off the corner mat

board sample as I moved it across the table to lay it on my client's project. The moral of the story is to work with materials you can trust. Back to the lightfastness issue: make sure your paper colors won't fade away; do your light tests.

Pricing

Pricing of a basic tiered mat is best explained by a formula pricing united inches. Some people prefer to use a flat hourly design rate added to their base mat design, and that would also work. I will explain it based on the united inch scale using imaginary prices. You need to plug in the prices that directly relate to your shop's standards and figures.

Always use the price of a full sheet of fine art paper at the full retail price. Imagine a sheet retails for \$10, and the mounting charge for an 18x24" sheet is \$10. Add the two figures together (\$20), then divide by the united inch (UI) total of that sheet of paper (42"). The number will be the retail price you add to the base UI price of a double mat. (\$20.00 divided by 42" = 47.62 cents per UI). Bump the \$.47 up to \$.50 and add it to \$.40 (top mat) + \$.40 (liner/bottom mat) = \$1.30 (tiered

top mat + bottom mat).

The entire point here is to be certain you charge for the added fine art paper and the mounting. Also don't be afraid to cover the design costs, and always charge the upper end to cover all of your expenses. By that I mean if you calculate a rice paper at a lower UI price (i.e., \$.35) maintain your initial calculation of \$.50 as calculated above. Also consider adding spacers for another \$.15 or an accent

strip for \$.15. Remember each additional thing you do to a mat will increase that initial united inch price.

Then once the price has been figured for a particular tiered combination, and you've

now created your corner sample, mark the back of the sample UIP 0175. For that particular sample your "united inch price" would be \$1.75.

Sounds a little confusing, perhaps, but it's really quite basic. Once you understand the principle of calculating the retail paper price plus the cost of physically mounting the sheet, add it to your regular matting charges.

Tiered matting is a specialized matting design area that allows framers individuality and expression. Remember to keep it at an "upper end" level of framing by using only wonderful, lightfast, handmade, textured papers. That way it remains exclusive. It's a very unique concept and sells wonderfully well for wedding invitations, birth announcements and anniversary memorabilia, and as always, show framed samples!

Chris A. Paschke, CPF is the owner of Designs Ink in Oxford, Connecticut, specializing in commercial framing, design, consultation and education. Ms. Paschke is a second generation, self-employed professional picture framer who teaches, lectures and demonstrates at various workshops and seminars on mounting, matting and design for numerous manufacturers, distributors and associations including Fletcher-Terry, Dahle, TruVue Miller Artboard, Bienfang, Larson-Juhl, PFM, PPFA and Seal Products.