



Tiered Matting Series: Part II Under Tiering

by Chris A. Paschke, CPF



Photo 1 (above). This Norman Rockwell, traditionally a homey, country image, is brought into a more "contemporary" concept to fit into a modernized office of metallics and 90's coloring. By "under tiering" the top mat, additional colors were introduced, and the rose colored metallic moulding fits better with the image and desired end product.



Detail of Photo 1. Four Layers of Crescent Colored Art Paper: two P1083 Chocolate & two P1051 Olde Tan to the back of Alphamat 8489 Lasso. Mounted with Fusion 4000. Liner mat Alphamat 8528 Garnet.

In last month's "Surface Tiering" article I discussed the concept of mounting multiple layers of mat boards and quality fine art papers to create not only a "new" look but also to pull more profits from your heat mounting equipment.

In part two, "Under Tiering", I will illustrate the individual steps and give examples of when and why I have used this particular design concept.

Based on the pie graph (PFM April 1993, Mastering Mounting) illustrating the framer's requirement for mounting "creativity" in order to achieve maximum profit from his press, it would be simple to say I designed this concept to use my heat press more. Actually, there is a more specific design reason why these mats came about.

Color And Design

An understanding of color is integral to both frame

design and the creation of a matting combination that gently guides the eye to the inner image being framed. Naturally we want to sell "up", but always sell up "aesthetically", in the most delicately and refined way. The entire concept of the framing package is to enhance the *artwork*, and not the *framing*. They must always work together.

I'm not discussing conservation framing with these tiered mat

designs, although the concept and presentation can be adapted if the proper conservation technology, materials and methods are practiced.

Visual Flow

Consider the "Carousel" etching (photo 2), and why the under tiering works well as an alternative matting design.



Control of the color contrasts became the ultimate reason that additional colored paper applications were added to the existing mats in this project.

The colors within the etching are delicate yet distinct. I set out to echo the beige tones of the horses, while pulling the rich browns of the background into the mat design. The two mat colors selected, Alphamat #8560 Sultan Tan for the bottom/liner mat and #8525 Almond for the top mat were perfect for the colors within the etching. But the differentiation between the two was lost when the white bevel was introduced. Quite simply, there was a lack of contrast.

By layering darker fine art papers to the back of the top mat, the white bevel was contrasted against the bottom mat, setting off the bottom color. By dry mounting Crescent Colored Art Papers using a heat press and a pure film adhesive (i.e.: Seal Fusion 4000, Drytac Flobond) to the back of the top mat I was able to slow the flow of the eye so the mat colors could be viewed more completely.

I also introduced a fine line of dark brown to match the brown ink in the etching itself. To achieve the proper weight, I decided to layer three sheets of Crescent P1096 Sepia, one sheet P1088 Mist, and then another three sheets of P1096 Sepia to the back of Alphamat #8525.

Once mounted, the now 8 or 9 ply mat was sized and cut as a regular mat. The completed project illustrates a delicacy created by the fine hairline look at the bottom edge of the bevel. It picks up the ink colors and sets the two mat



Photo 2. The "Carousel Horse" etching is a perfect example of why under tiering developed. The need to create a color contrast between the two beige tone mats and the white bevel set the stage for layering fine art papers to the "back" of the top mat (see detail).



Detail of Photo 2 (above). There are seven sheets of Crescent Colored Art Paper dry mounted to the back of Alphamat 8525 Almond using Fusion 4000 in a 190° press for 10 minutes.

colors apart. A similar result could have been achieved by using a ruling pen for the fine brown accent line, but there would have been no visual break between the beige mats and the white bevel.

Color Selection

When selecting the paper colors to layer behind a mat, a sampler or scraps of papers can be assembled to give a visual color image of the end product. Though this is only a rough look, it will help decide whether the proposed colors will harmonize or set off the artwork as desired (photo 3).

You can also take these hand held scraps and cut them at a bevel to expose the actual edges that would show. Many times a chosen color in

the art, though matched to the selected art paper perfectly, will not register the correct shade. Perhaps a lighter, darker or different color altogether will better enhance the image.

Mounting

With the colors and number of sheets (to determine line weight) selected, mounting is next. Size all materials 1" to 2" larger around than the mat to be cut, layer the board

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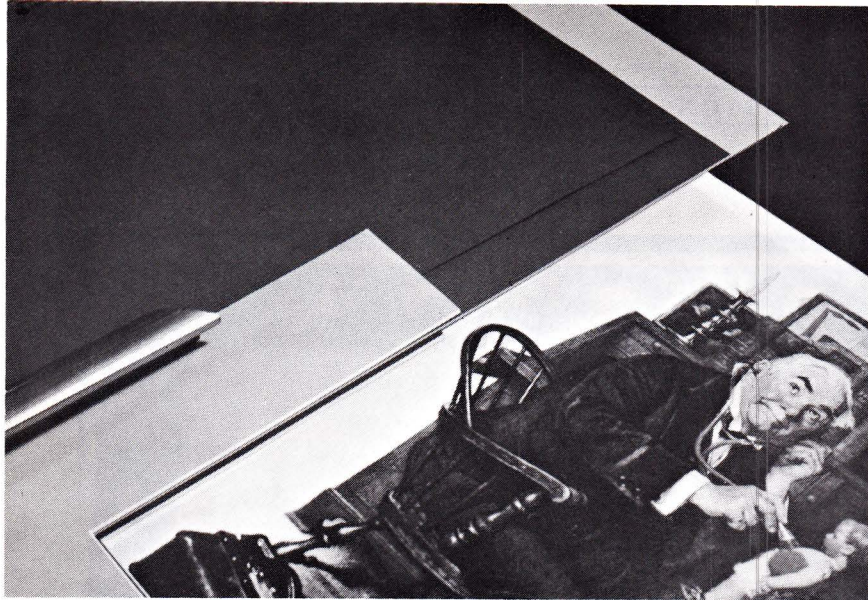


Photo 3 (above). Line scraps of papers and boards along the edge of the print as you would with any double mat selection process. Attempt to determine the number of added paper layers by the desired width of your accent lines at the bottom of the top mat bevel.

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with the colored art papers and interleave them all with single sheets of clear pure adhesive.

Line up the mat blank, papers and adhesive sheets into a common corner to simplify the final sizing of the mat blank after mounting.

Sandwich all of the materials into a release paper envelope and mount (all at the same time). Since the materials being fused together are essentially raw materials, not artwork, the amount of time the unit is held within the press will never damage, or even affect the resulting mat.

Leave the mat unit in the press long enough to heat all of the layers to the mounting temperature necessary to achieve proper adhesion. I often work at 190°F when layering tiered mats, and always leave them in the press longer than I feel is actually necessary. The "Rockwell" mat (16" x 20") was left in the press about 10 minutes.

Since the pure adhesive is removable, it will bond outside the press as it cools. Place it under a weight and allow it to cool prior to testing for total fusion.

After it has cooled, the excess adhesive may be trimmed off prior to sizing the mat blank on your straightline or wall cutter (photo 4).

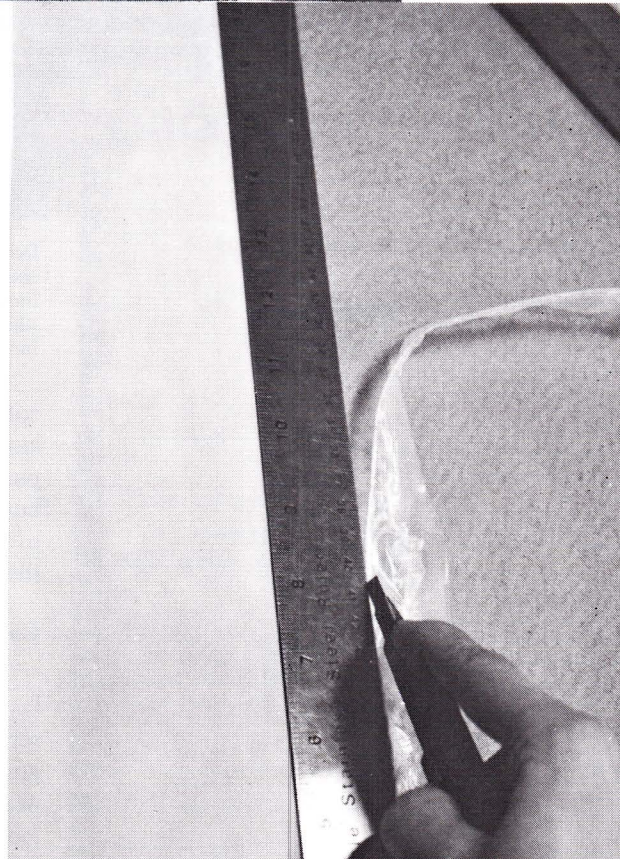


Photo 4 (above). After mounting, trim the excess adhesive from the sides of the tiered unit in preparation for sizing the 8 or 9 ply board for final cutting on a straightline mat cutter.

Photo 5. This detail shows the back of the completed mount, sized and ready to cut into the above double mat "under tiered" layout.

Once sized, the mats are ready to be cut into the basic double mat design. Follow all the multiple ply cutting guidelines ("Multiple Ply Cutting", PFM May 1993). If you are unable to execute a perfect corner, reconsider the design.

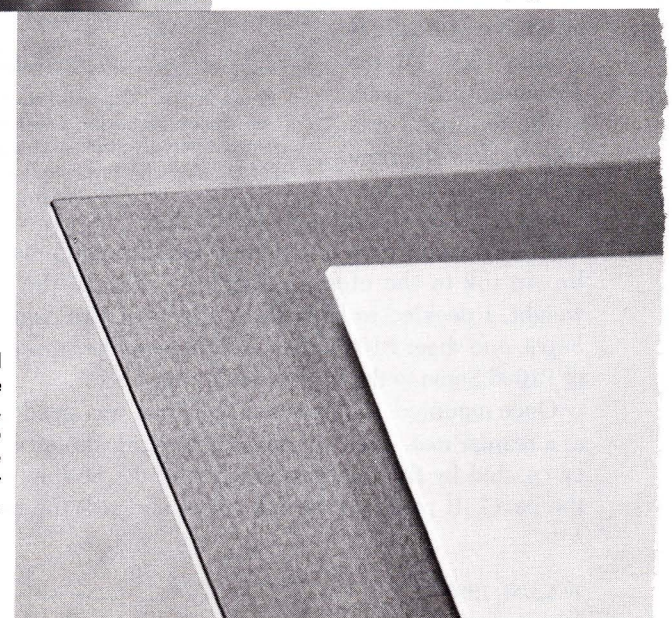
Selling

You can use under tiering to create a visual color break, as with "Carousel", to delicately echo a color from the image with a matching hairline of color in the bevel, or to add a more contemporary element to a piece of art.

Recently, a client wanted her Norman Rockwell poster prints to be "modernized" to fit into an environment more contemporary than one might expect to see them in. By adding the under tiered highlights, the images looked better with the selected modern metal mouldings (photo 1).

Creating an under tiered mat requires a good eye for color and the ability to visualize an end product. Since many customers are unable to truly visualize what we speak of, I suggest you keep a photo album of completed works and cut scrap fallouts into smaller 3" x 7" samplers (to be held together on a ring) for reference (much like your regular corner samples).

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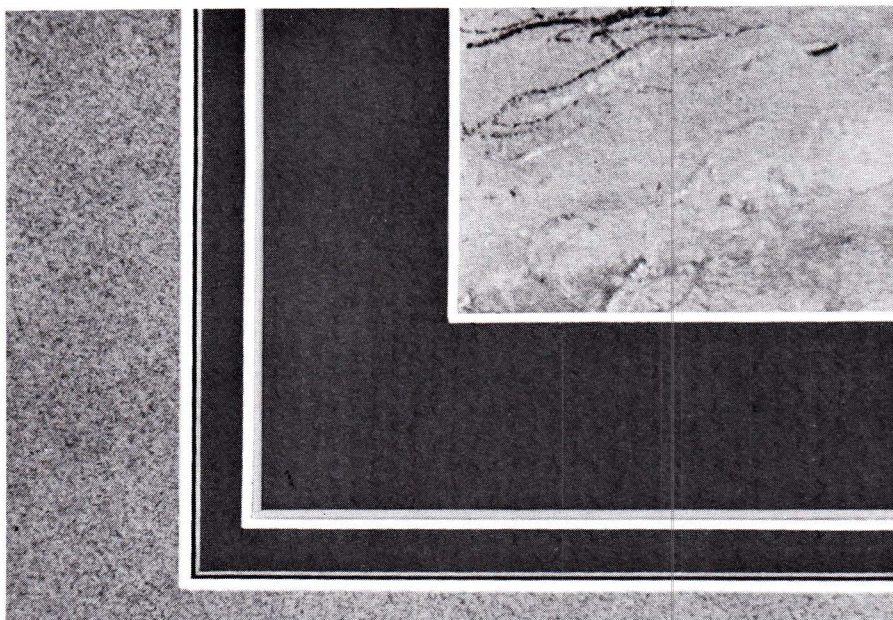


Photo 6. Detail corner of "Stockbridge in Springtime" featured in "Calligraphy for Framers: Part Two", PFM April '93. Under tiering was used in conjunction with v-grooves and calligraphy to showcase, modernize and market unique design elements. Four sheets: two P1096 Crescent Sepia and two 340 "Mi Teintes" Canson oyster to back of Alphamat 8808 Gypsum 4 ply mat.

Use "under tiering" as a design edge, something perhaps only you offer in your area. Showcase it and suggest it. It can't sell itself without your enthusiasm and encouragement, though samples will always do a lot!

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Pricing

Make certain to cover the costs of heat press use, adhesives, paper sheets and design time when calculating a tiered mat price. When pricing an under tiered mat, select the formula that works best for you.

United inch pricing doesn't work as readily for these designs as it does for surface tiering.

I begin with the mounting cost of a poster the size of the completed project, which is designed to cover the actual mounting expenses, and then add \$5.00 for each layer of paper to be used. For the Carousel etching, I began with \$15.00 for the initial mounting, then added 7 x \$5.00 (\$35.00) to the actual mat board costs. So add \$50.00 to the regular double Alphamat charge, then add the surface design and spacer charges.

If I anticipate that a great deal of paper piecing or layering will be required, or if the job is over-sized or if I'm not certain about the colors I wish to use, I may add an hour of

shop time as "design time". The price may be quoted as either one single mat design price or as the difference between the price of the mats without the enhancement and the price with the additional enhancement (i.e.: "It's only \$30 more for the additional under tiered bevel enhancements.").

As with surface tiered designs, frame samples, corner samples and salespersonship all go hand in hand when successfully adding pizzazz to your designs and sales. They will rarely sell themselves. But once these designs begin to sell for you, it will become second nature to pull the concept regularly into your sales presentation.



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