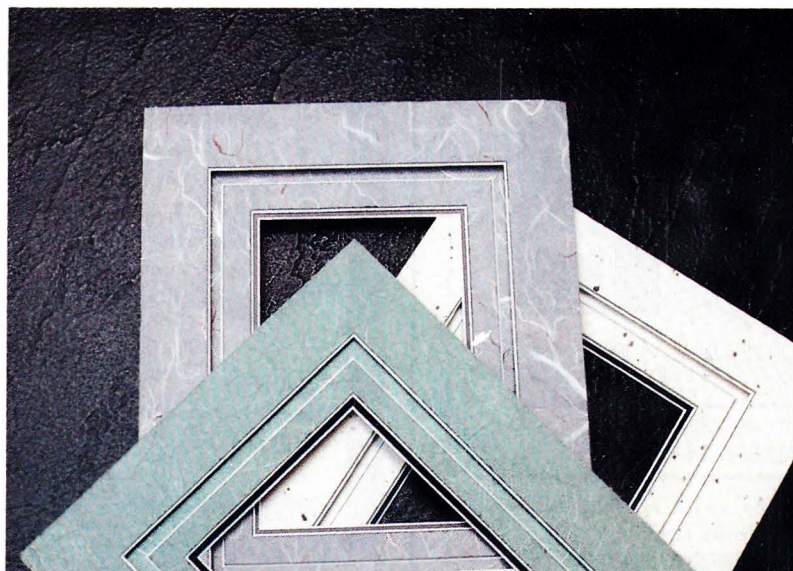




Tiered mats illustrating uses of various unique papers (clockwise from lower left corner): Ogura Japanese handmade paper, Unyru Japanese rice paper, and Sennellier Mouchette de Pombie French imported handmade paper.



Tiered Matting

by Chris A. Paschke, CPF

Innovative framers are always searching for new design concepts to boost creativity, create sales and generate profits. Creating a niche for yourself as a specialist in a specific framing area could put you a cut above the framer down the street. Matting design and its related creativity could be just one of those specialized areas. By combining decorative, lightfast, domestic and imported fine art papers and those of intriguing textures, weights and colors, you can expand your current mat board selection and thus open up

new creative avenues. The heavy-weight, handmade imported papers often used for pastel, watercolor, ink and drawing make wonderfully interesting mat board surface papers. These thick papers increase your bevel depth and, by using contrast colors to the surface of the chosen mat board blank and bevel, you can create fine hairline accent stripes in the exposed bevel.

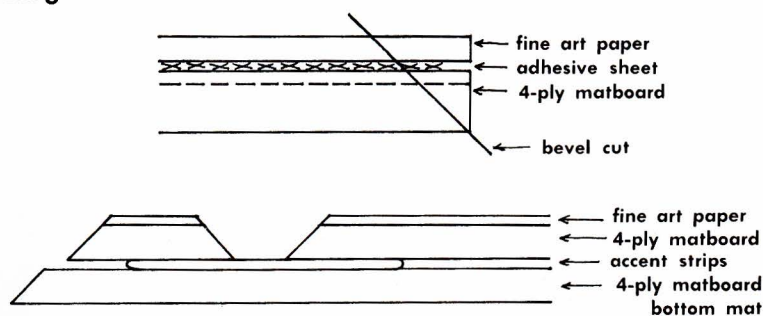
A basic technique uses alternating layers of contrasting colors such as dry mounting a dark fine art paper to a black core board with a white

or light colored surface paper, thus creating a fine white line in the bevel (diagram 1). Mounting a light, fine art paper to a white core board with dark surface paper creates a fine dark hairline in the bevel (photo 1). Single sheet papers often limit the size of a tiered mat since many only come 18"x24" or 22"x30".

By using 2-ply colored museum rag board with contrasting fine art paper between layers, 4, 6 and 8-ply mat boards with various combinations of bevel tiering can be

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Diagram 1



Completed Basic Tiered Mat w/Accent Strips

1



Diagram 2A

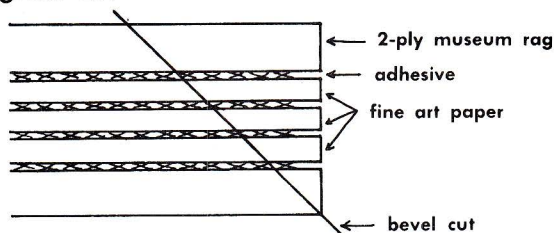
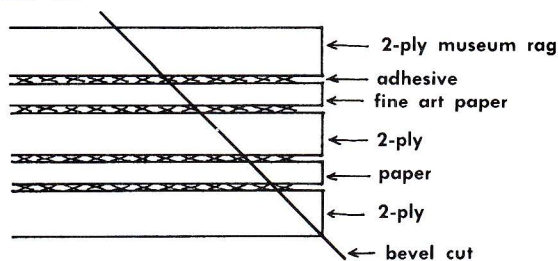
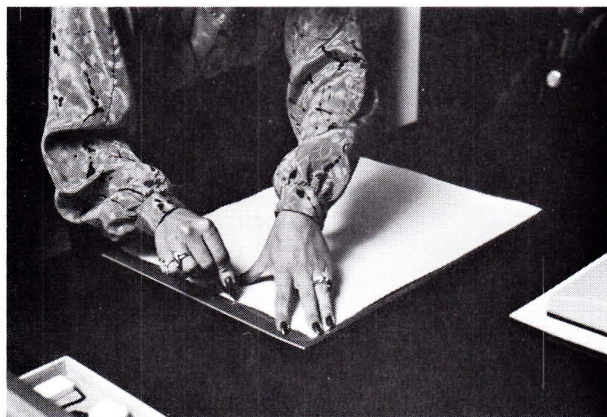


Diagram 2B



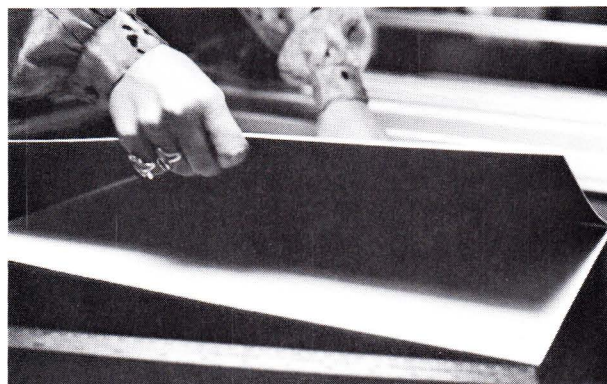
Basic sideview of the structure of a basic pin-striped bevel "Tiered Mat" (top) as well as a completed "Tiered Mat" after assembly.



2



3



4

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achieved. Since rag board has the same color core throughout as the surface paper, the bevel striping can involve colors other than only black and white, creating pin-striped bevels (diagrams 2A & 2B). Your imagination, color availability of museum rag and fine art papers will be your only limitations.

All layers are heat fused (mounted) in a dry mount or vacuum press using pure adhesive between all layers. This clear, acid-free adhesive is the preferred permanent bonding for two major reasons: first, no additional tissue layer colors are integrated into the bevel striping and second, the adhesive bonding between layers is at a maximum with no tissue absorbing any adhesive.

After selecting your materials, cut the paper, board and adhesive larger than the desired mat blank which will in turn be trimmed after mounting (photo 2). The example demonstrated here will end up as a 14"x19" "Elevated Tiered Mat" using a piece of imported French handmade paper on dark charcoal, white core mat board. The inner bottom mat is a brick colored white core. Borders will be 2" and 2½" respectively. It is suggested to work with even margins and trimmed down sides if a weighted bottom is desired, until you become comfortable with the formulated process.

The "Elevated Tiered Mat" (explained here) is an extremely successful, original design created a number of years ago by *Designs Ink*, formerly of Redding, California. Although other adhesives, mounting methods and mat cutting procedures may be used, this particular formula has proven to be the most time and cost effective for us.

Pre-dry and tack papers and boards whenever possible to prevent moisture and shifting in the press. Dry mount the art paper or 2-ply layers for 3-5 minutes at 190-200 degrees (depending upon the thickness and layers of heat penetration required for bonding) and always use release materials (photo 3). Remove the materials from the press and cool for one minute under a glass weight to ensure proper bonding. Trim and size the mat blanks to the required dimensions. Then prepare all other

remaining materials and boards.

Begin by trimming the bottom (inner) mat blank $\frac{1}{8}$ " smaller than the top mat blank with the newly mounted fine art paper. Keeping it as centered as possible, temporarily adhere the center face of the bottom mat to the back of the top mat with two short strips of ATG tape (photo 4). This prevents shifting, and since you will not be refitting the fallout into place as traditionally taught when cutting double mats, the tape can be readily removed from the fallouts which may then be reserved for future uses.

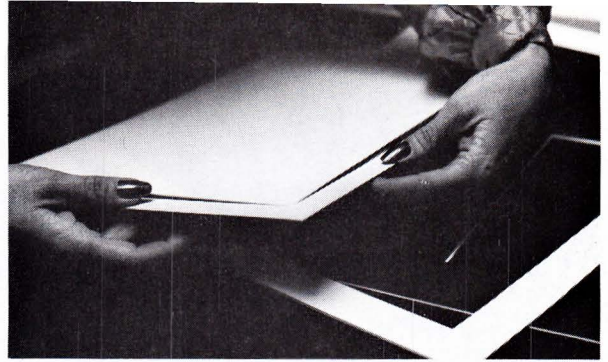
Always remember to pencil mark the bottom back of each mat to ensure proper placement later. Set the mat guide top and bottom stops at $2\frac{1}{8}$ " and cut the bottom mat. Remove the outer piece and set it aside, peel off the fallout from the back of the mat and rub off any excess ATG tape. Also, remove any remaining tape from the back of the top mat. Reset the mat guide and bottom stop at 2" and the top stop at $2\frac{1}{8}$ ". Cut this first opening on all four sides, noting the fallout will be held in place at each corner by the intentional $\frac{1}{16}$ " undercut created by the top stop (photo 5). This is done to pre-cut the actual required mat opening for the top mat and prevent the time and materials required to refit the fallout if entirely cut out.

Reset mat guide top and bottom stops all at $1\frac{1}{4}$ ", cut all four sides of the top mat and carefully remove the fallout so as not to pop the inner fallout corners. Turn this fallout face up and experience the look of the tiered bevel for the first time. Set the mat guide at $\frac{1}{4}$ -" $\frac{3}{8}$ "", move the top and bottom stops out of the way and trim all four sides of the fallout with the angled bevel blade. Using a sharp blade, hand trim the $\frac{1}{16}$ " undercut holding the inner fallout in place, reserve the float (panel) piece and discard the fallout.

Always burnish all the bevel edges with a bone burnisher to professionally finish every mat. To add accent strips, first cut four 1" wide strips of matching or accent paper with the mat cutter. Reset the mat guide once again, this time at $1\frac{3}{4}$ ", and draw light pencil lines on the face of the bottom mat. This step will

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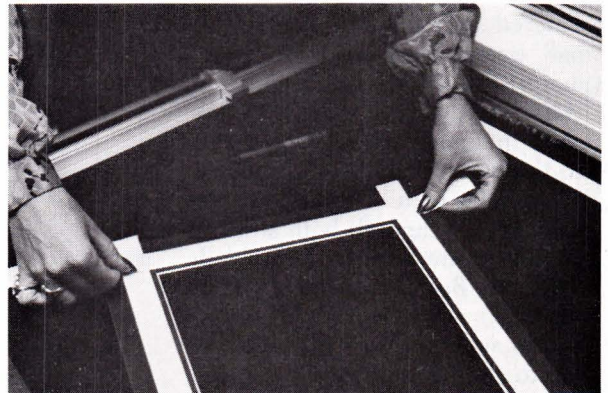
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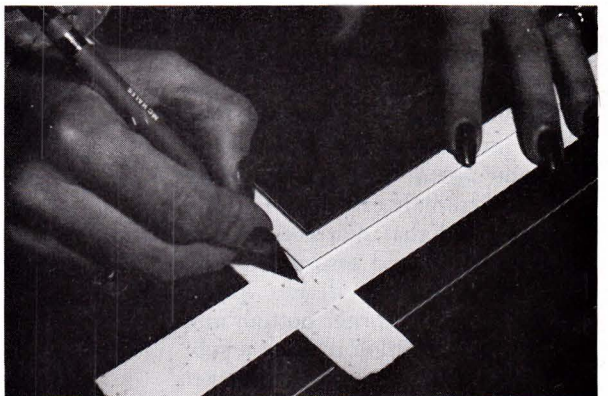
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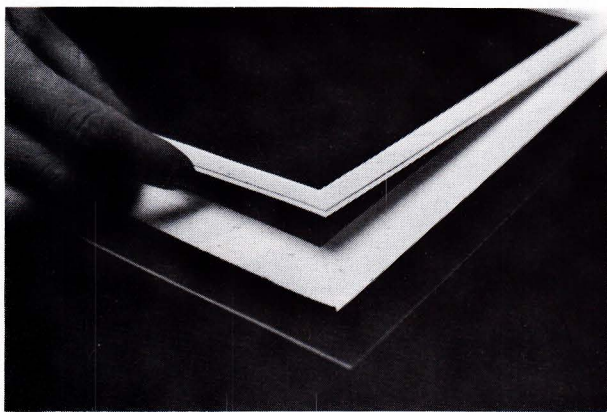


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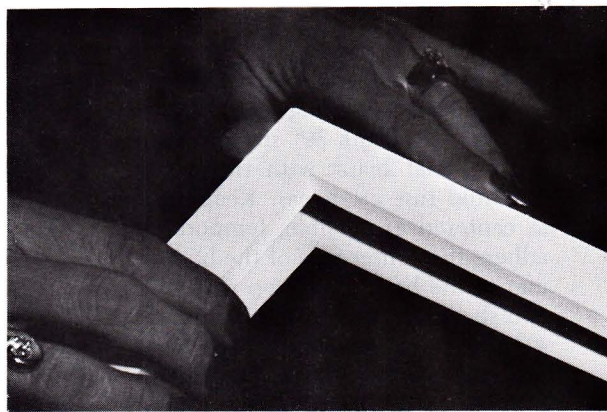
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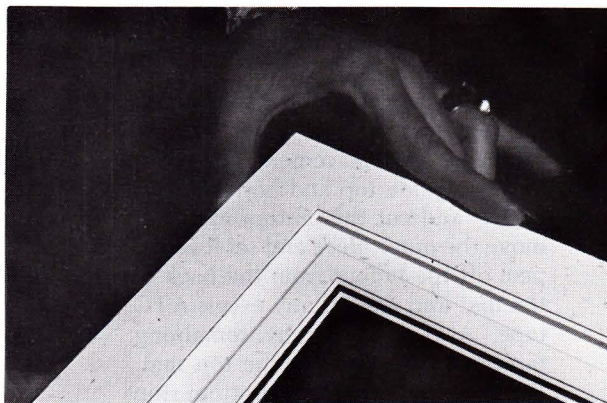


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only work accurately if you properly centered the bottom mat *prior* to the first cutting.

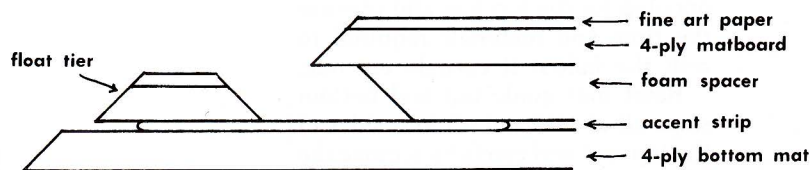
Apply ATG tape to the back of the four strips (photo 6) and lightly tack in place along the pencil lines on the bottom mat (photo 7). Lay the float piece on top of the bottom mat (centered into position) and put a small pencil mark at each corner (photo 8). Set float tier aside.

Miter accent strip corners by lining up the inner mat opening corner and the pencil mark, in each respective corner, with a metal straight edge and cut through both strips at the same time with a sharp blade (photo 9). Burnish accent strips in place.

Once again apply ATG tape, this time to the back of the float piece. Position it in place on the bottom mat (photo 10) making certain no excess ATG has wrapped around the side of the float bevel. Always position the float first to ensure exact placement of the outer top mat. The viewer intrigue created when using the same accent strips and surface paper is extremely effective, but also keep in mind that marbled papers, laces, metallics and assorted fabrics are very plausible design possibilities. An offset corner bottom mat is also a nice addition if using a subtle accent strip. Be certain however that you don't "over-design" or integrate too many design elements. There are already a tremendous amount of subtle lines, texture and color variations going on. Keep in mind that sometimes "less is more."

For the more dimensional appearance of this particular design the outer top mat must be elevated by sizing a piece of $\frac{1}{8}$ - $\frac{3}{16}$ " foam board

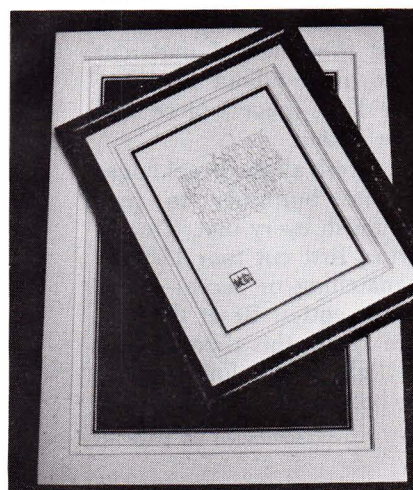
Diagram 3



Elevated Tiered Mat w/Accent Strips

Profile of "Elevated Tiered Mat" illustrating placement of boards and spacers.

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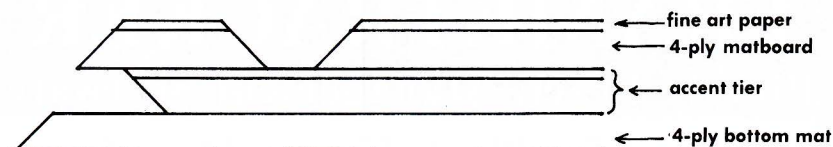
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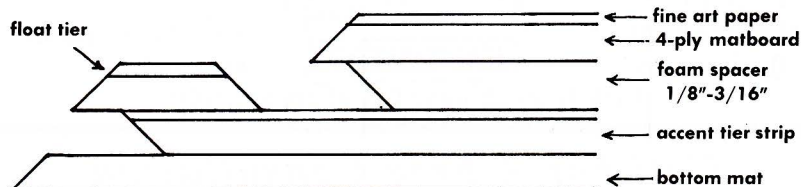
Diagram 4



Equal Elevated Tiered Mat w/Accent Tiered Board

Profile of "Equal Elevated Tiered Mat" created by using scraps of tiered boards for the tiered spacer accent strips.

Diagram 5



Multi-Elevated Tiered Mat

Profile of "Multi-Elevated Tiered Mat" illustrating use of tiered scraps as accent strips, and spacer.

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to the original mat size. Set the mat guide at 1", use a new sharp blade, adjust the blade depth to accommodate the thicker foam, and bevel cut the opening. Apply the ATG tape to the bottom of the spacer and stick it to the back of the tiered mat (photo 11). ATG the back of this tiered mat/spacer unit and position it onto the bottom mat (photo 12 and diagram 3). Always make certain that the accent strips are cut wide enough to be completely covered by the spacer unit (photo 13).

Fallouts and endcuts from tiered designer mats can be saved and used for either small tiered mats, bottom inner mats or tiered spacers (as in "Equal Elevated Tiered Mats"—diagram 4). "Multi Elevated Tiered Mats" incorporate both the "Tiered Mat With Accent Strips" and "Elevated Tiered Mat" concepts, using foam board spacers as well as tiered spacers. Complete the basic "Tiered Mat" (diagram 1) using a tiered spacer with mitered corner accent strips extending to the outer mat edges. Prior to applying the final ATG tape to the top tiered mat, add a 1/8" foam board spacer cut to size and reverse bevel, mounted with the mat guide set at 1". Once again remember to alter the blade depth to accommodate each needed board depth (diagram 5).

All the tiered mats created by *Designs Ink* use acid-free papers and boards. Absolute precision execution is demanded. The profitability factors are very positive when you consider, for a moment, the difference between a basic double mat united inch price of perhaps \$.60, and an "Elevated Tiered Mat" united inch price of \$1.75. The execution becomes much faster as you become familiar and more comfortable with the steps and the profit margin will increase as you become more proficient. Labor time should always be calculated into the tiered united inch price. Scraps and fallouts make great readymade standard mats and are good for both tiered mat practice and additional profits. Corner samples and completed wall pieces are necessary to promote these designer mats, but once they are noticed, framing wedding invitations, photographs, calligraphy and keepsakes will be just the beginning. **PFM**

Chris A. Paschke 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, and 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.