

Most Asked Questions For 1996

by Chris A Paschke, CPF

After writing this column for five years, I introduced my first "Most Asked Questions" article last December. I really liked the concept because of the numerous repeat questions I get throughout the year from readers and trade show attendees. I use it as a source for gentle reminders and for the concepts I really need to drive home. So welcome to my annual "questions, tips, 'n tricks" article"...vintage 1996.



HOW DO YOU KNOW IF AN OBJECT IS HEAT SENSITIVE?

Great question! To find out, it must be tested. I'm not suggesting placing the item directly into a press, but rather treating the corner of the potential project (only a tip or corner, mind you) by touching about 1/16" with a tacking iron.

If heat is integral to creating the original (such as a FAX, thermographic printing or low-temp lacquers) it will turn black when heat is applied. A Protix address label (photo 1) was flatly ironed across the center as a sample — which is obviously not a good idea!

The ticket has been ruined, for

once the paper has been activated by heat it will remain darkened for life. This type of original ticket has no visual clues that it is heat sensitive; it looks like any slick paper stock, like a typical ticket. Be careful.

If the object you are to frame is heat sensitive, find an alternative mounting method utilizing spray, wet, or pressure sensitive adhesive to prepare the item for framing. Be aware, however, that this heat-sensitive ticket will darken gray to black anyway over time on display as the internal temperature of the framing unit naturally heats up with exterior temperature fluctuations.

If the item is heat tolerable, mount as desired for the finished project. No amount of internal frame temperature will darken it.

ONCE AGAIN...HOW DO YOU MOUNT CIBACHROMES?

You may be fortunate and rarely (or never) have to deal with a Cibachrome, but I think the reason this question comes up again and again is that we look for answers only when problems arise. If an Ilfochrome Classic (aka Cibachrome) has never been brought into your shop for framing, you may never have thought of it (see PFM, "What To Do With Ilfochromes," October 1992).

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Mylar pockets will suspend a small 11" x 14" print without the center sagging, but larger images may buckle and sag from their own weight, pulling out of the upper corner pockets. A flange or v-hinge across the top will nicely support the photo, and since it is 100% polyester, will not absorb adhesives.

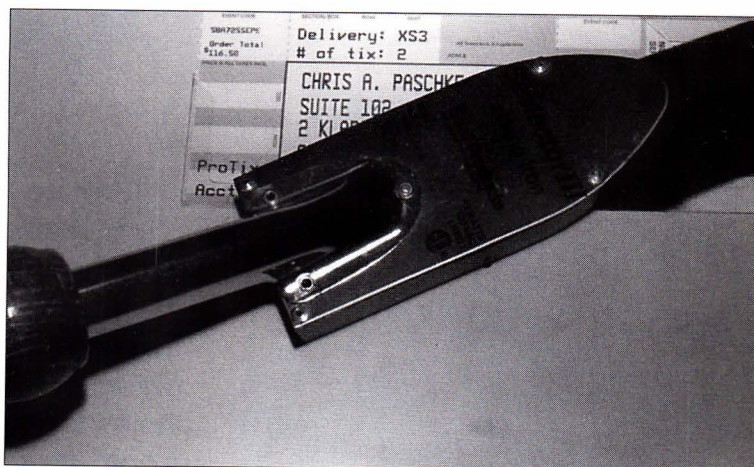
If the customer is also the photographer, discuss mounting options with them. Although they consider you the mounting and framing expert, they often have very specific concerns about the way their work needs to be mounted or suspended. The beauty and dignity of a Cibachrome is its mirror smooth surface. Any orange peel or distortion on the surface will destroy the original concept.

WHAT IS ORANGE PEEL AND HOW DO YOU PREVENT IT?

Come, come...have you never been to Florida? Orange peel is the uneven surface texture of a photograph (or poster print) when it takes on the rippled appearance of the outside peel of an orange.

Orange peel occurs as the emulsion and developing paper of a photograph is relaxed and contours to the surface terrain of the substrate it is mounted to (photo 2). This is most often seen with RC photos when dry mounting, but may occur with aggressive hand pressure (using rollers or squeegees) during the application of sprays, wet glues and pressure sensitive adhesives. Selecting a smoother substrate (ie: foam board, Gatorfoam®, etc....) will cut down on this problem.

A good example of orange peel and paper mounts is found in commercially manufactured release boards. The orange peel effect is the result of single-sided release paper mounted to a board with a lumpy surface of highs and lows. The orange peel texture of the board readily transfers to the receptive photograph, increasing the already possible effect. Release paper maintains a smoother surface, having never been mounted, and therefore is a better choice when mounting photos.



A Protix address label is a thermographic printing process which uses heat to create the image. A hot tacking iron drawn across the surface activates the paper and blackens the image.



Orange peel, though difficult to photograph, is seen on the left half of this mounted cibachrome where the light is reflecting. The photo has relaxed to match the contour of the substrate.

SINCE RELEASE BOARDS DON'T WRINKLE, WHY CAN'T I USE THEM ON TOP AND BOTTOM?

Most heat presses house their heat elements in the top with a sponge pad or flexible rubber support beneath. The function of mounting presses is to create an even pressure around the substrate so it gently supports and presses the mounting against the top-heated platen.

In a mechanical or hardbed press, the substrate compresses lightly down into the base pad for this support. In a vacuum press, the rubber diaphragm, bladder or support base is suctioned up and around the substrate contouring and adjusting to the individual thickness of each.

If a release board is placed beneath the mounting

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package, the pad or rubber will not contour around the edges of the selected substrate. This then could prevent even pressure of the substrate against the heating element. More outer edge pressure and less center pressure could result in center bubbles.

Bottom line...don't use a release board on the bottom!

CAN A RELEASE BOARD BE USED ON BOTTOM WHEN A TEMPORARY SUBSTRATE IS NEEDED?

The only time a substitute substrate is required is in a vacuum press when no stiff substrate is part of the mounting. An example would be pre-mounting an adhesive in order to float mount the image, or during canvas transferring.

If a temporary substrate is required for a project, use a scrap mat board just a little larger than the project.

Release boards can suction too tightly to the platen, not allowing for the air to be properly compressed from between all layers during mounting. No bottom release board in a vacuum press.

DO I HAVE TO READJUST MY MECHANICAL PRESS FOR EVERY THICKNESS?

In a word, yes. TTPM (Time, Temperature, Pressure and Moisture) establishes that proper pressure is a major element in successful mountings. If the thickness of a substrate varies, so will the correct pressure for that particular project. There is a simple trick for quick adjustments that doesn't involve the locking rings and/or adjustment knobs (photo 3).

Adjust the press for a 3/16" foam substrate (see "The Elements of TTPM, Part Three: Pressure," March 1995). Beneath the foam pad there is a 1/4" masonite board. Cut three 4-ply matboard/mountboard scraps the same size as the masonite. These will be used as temporary shims beneath the masonite when substrate thickness changes.



For permanent readjustment of a mechanical press, loosen the outer locking ring and turn the tall inner adjustment knob to loosen or tighten press pressure — or use shims instead.

Make a small strap-ping tape tab for easy insertion and removal on the long side of the board.

If the substrate narrows to 1/8", place *one shim* beneath the masonite. A 4-ply substrate will require

two shims, and a mounting without a substrate, such as during pre-mounting, will use *all three*. Be sure to slip the shims *under* the masonite, not between the foam and masonite. The foam is soft and the rubber will not allow the shim to slip easily into place.

Shims should be the full size of the masonite board, since any additional lumps under the foam could create a distorted base, and uneven pressure during mounting.

WHAT DOES THE TWO-STEP TEMPERATURE SETTING DO?

This process is used only with vacuum presses when mounting difficult non-breathable projects such as 16" x 20" and larger photographs. The press' 30 second to 1 minute delay prior to pulling a vacuum can be long enough for an adhesive or laminate to begin to permanently mount.

The 20° to 30°F lower temperature is low enough to be completely out of mounting temperature range which allows the press to pull the vacuum before mounting begins. Once the temperature reaches required low-end activation the pressure has adequately compressed the project, mounting may safely begin ("Two-Stepping Is More Than a Western Dance," May 1996).

ARE THE "ARCHIVAL" DRY MOUNT TISSUES CONSERVATION?

No. The adhesives used for dry mounting tissues are inert (7.0 pH), meaning they are neutral and will not degrade. They will not deteriorate, yellow or in any way accelerate the aging of a mounting. The tissue which an adhesive is coated onto for ease of handling may be either buffered

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(7.5 to 8.5 pH) or not (± 6.5 pH). These pH levels are directly noted from manufacturer.

The archival tissues are adhesives coated onto buffered paper, so they are considered neutral pH. What makes these adhesives non-archival or non-conservation is not the adhesive, nor the tissue it is coated onto, but rather the fact that during dry mounting some adhesive will soak into the project itself. Although they may be removable, there will always remain some level of adhesive residue in the paper, even if removed.

It is this adhesive residue that renders the mounting non-conservation. The artwork may never be returned to its original state ("Removable Does Not Mean Reversible," February 1993).

IN RETROSPECT

Questions are always important, and answers may change as new procedures and concepts replace old

stand-bys. We always learn by questioning, and questions are better than trial and error, especially if it could cost you profits.

Just around the corner is yet another year of potentially new adhesives, equipment and techniques. So let's call it a wrap for mounting, laminating and creative exploration in 1996. It's time to explore the trends for the upcoming new year already! Don't work too hard and take some time to enjoy the holiday season! ■

Chris A. Paschke, CPE, owns Designs Ink, Oxford, Connecticut, featuring commercial and retail custom framing, product consultation, design and education. Specializing in mounting, matting and design creativity she works with numerous industry leaders including Bienfang, Crescent Cardboard, Fletcher-Terry, Larson-Juhl, PFM, PPEA, and Seal Products.

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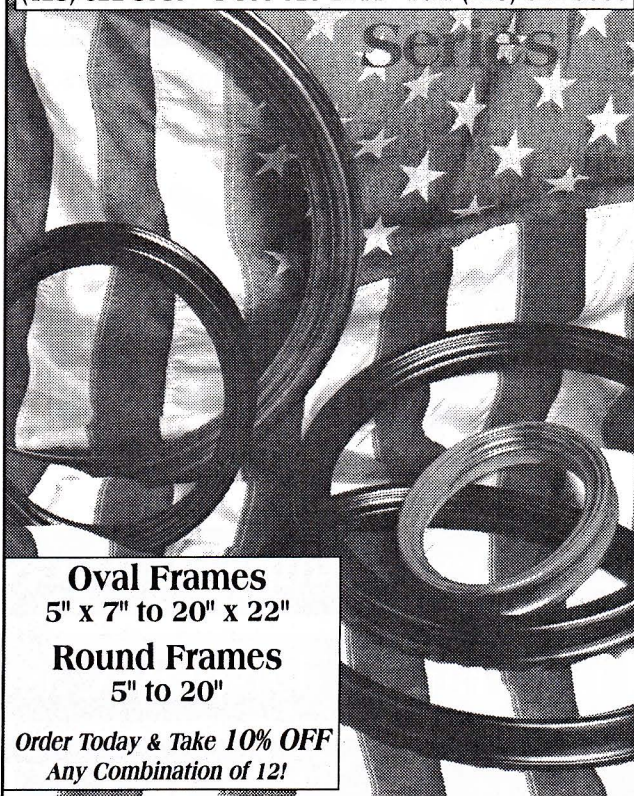
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