Bi-Level Framing

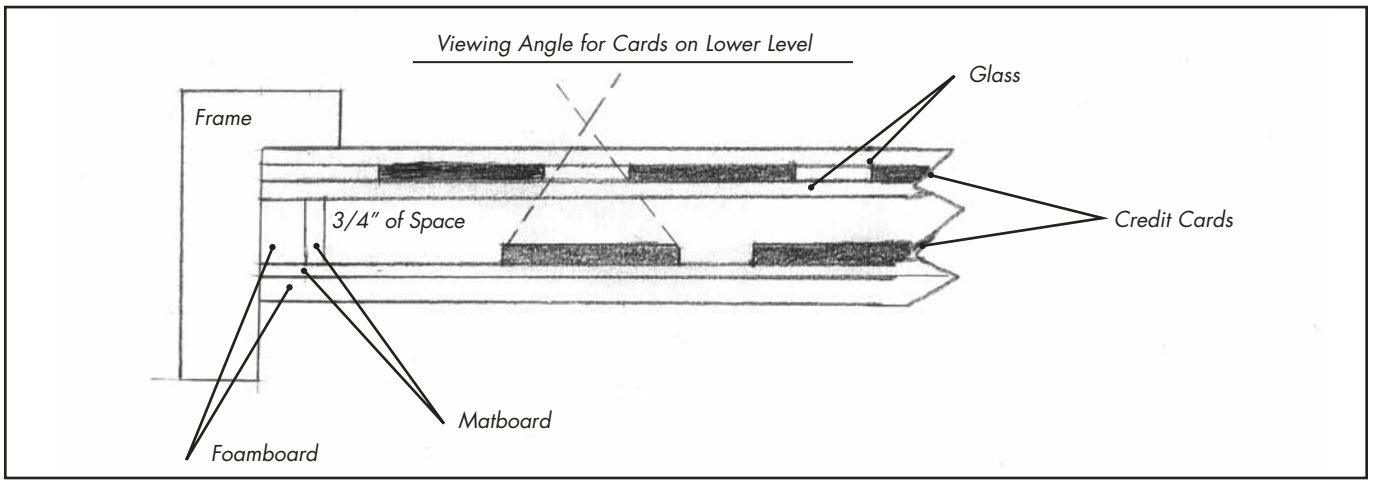
A Collection of Credit Cards Steps Up the Design Process

by Ira Freincle, CPF

When one of your customers comes to you and says, "I want you to frame a collection of credit cards for a gift," where do you start? If the customer happens to be a major issuer of credit cards, you ask them to send you some dummy cards to work with. That is exactly what we did, and about five days later, we received 250 cards in the mail.

When we set to work to create a design for our customer, the obvious answer was to glue the credit cards to a colored matboard, which would serve as the backing board. The closer the cards could be mounted to each other, the more of them we would be able to show. However, this was a clumsy looking solution. Everything was jammed together, and the mounting board would only show around the edges. In trying to give the cards a reasonable spacing, our count dropped to about 80 or 90 cards before the piece was becoming unwieldy in size.

The solution was to arrange the cards on two different levels within the frame. We decided that if we mounted one layer of cards on a backing board, and another layer onto a sheet of glass, we could double our options. We calculated the spacing of the cards so that that cards on one level would alternate with the cards on another level. This way, the viewer could see all of the cards (see diagram above). We decided to space the cards apart by approximately one half of their height and width. The cards measured 3.375"x2.15". We spaced them apart 1.625" horizontally and 1.0625" vertically. We did a test layout using about a dozen



cards, and then e-mailed a digital photo to the customer, who approved the design.

Building the Design

Once we set to work on putting the design together, the process went quite smoothly. I think this was due to planning as well as the use of a long steel rule with insulated spring clamps that helped us in two ways. First, we were able to position each credit card quickly by securing the steel rule to the glass sheet with the spring clamps. This gave us a straight edge to guide us horizontally. With the rule in place, we set to work positioning the credit cards, row by row. We started at the top of the glass with the rule under the row we were applying.

Clear silicone glue was applied to the back of each credit card, which was then placed at one end of the rule. The next card was spaced out by the increment we had calculated earlier.

Secondly, the rule not only acted as a straight edge to align the cards, but because it is numbered, it also provided guidance for spacing as we worked across each row. At the end of each horizontal row, the straight edge was moved down the necessary distance, and the gluing continued across.

The bottom layer of credit cards were attached to the matboard in the same manner (with the starting position adjusted so it would be visible below the top layer of cards). To retain the rigidity of this layer and prevent buckling, the matboard was first glued to a sheet of foamboard.

Assembling the Frame

We assembled the frame package from front to back. First, the face glass was placed into the frame (with a 2½" rabbet depth). Then the second piece of glass, with the credit cards attached, was inserted behind it.

Next, we created space between the top and bottom layer of cards using strips of foamboard and matboard, both cut ¾" wide. The foamboard was hot glued to the inside of the frame against the first layer of glass. Then the matboard was hot glued to the foamboard. While the foamboard was used to create the space, we included the matboard for aesthetic reasons.

We used ⅛" foamboard with the matboard for a combined thickness of 3/16". This was required to prevent the glass from shifting out due to the ⅛" frame allowance.

The matboard with the credit cards attached was then secured in place with brads. The backing paper was applied, and adjustable security hangers were installed. The overall dimensions of the finished piece were 40"x35½". ■

For more on techniques for mounting and framing objects, read the following articles on the PFM website at www.pictureframingmagazine—"Creative Object Mounting," by James Miller, MCPF, May 2002; and "Put Your Foamboard to Work," by Tim Dykstra, March 2000.

Ira Freincle, CPF, has been a custom picture framer for 35 years, and maintains a strong interest in quality framing. He was a founding member of the "Professional Picture Framers Guild" in 1981, and was awarded his CPF in March 1988.